



newsletter

Summer Issue 06

Setting high standards for adoption support for parents

How many times have you heard the phrase, "There isn't a course on how to be a good parent, you just have to do your best."

We want to share our exciting new development with you. We can now offer valuable support to our families with post adoption training. Following training on how to deliver 'The Incredible Years' parenting course, devised by Carolyn Webster Stratton at Seattle University, we have recently run a pilot course. This took place here at DFW Adoption earlier this year, one morning per week and was well attended. We also secured a valuable volunteer, Claire Dale, who is a qualified social worker and play therapist who acted as joint leader and provided the essential telephone support between sessions. Two student social workers called Received Dube and Laura MacIntosh also helped us with the delivery of the programme.

The feedback from the parents who attended has been very positive. They all felt that they benefited from their new skills which helped them to manage their children's behaviour better. It was also a great confidence boost for them to receive reaffirmation that they were already providing very positive parenting. An important aspect of the experience has also been the support offered within the group. The parents have said that they will miss these Thursday morning meetings.

Now that the 'Incredible Years' pilot is complete, we have learnt a lot both from our own observations and the also from the invaluable feedback from the pilot group. We are now planning to use this experience to devise our own six week parenting course for adoptive families. We want to offer this course on a regular basis, possibly three times a year, so that in the early months of a placing a child with a family, a course would be available to all of our adoptive families.

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We are keen to talk to anyone who might be interested in attending the first course planned for the autumn.

Pauline Reed, Adoption Social Worker

Dave Harrop, Adoption Social Worker



Photo kindly supplied by Edwin Hicks

Sharing global experiences

Lesotho and Durham marked the 25th anniversary of their link and as part of the visitors' two week stay, they met their counterparts in medicine, law, administration, youth and schools work. Margaret Bell and Judith Bryant led the discussions, when they came to see DFW Adoption to understand more about how adoption works here in the UK, and given the increasing number of child-headed households in Lesotho, due to HIV/AIDS, this was of particular interest to the group.

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A glimpse into our history

DFW Adoption has been at the forefront of adoption for over 100 years. We're giving you a brief insight into what's been happening over the last 30 years so that you can see how we're progressing, for the benefit of our adopters and their families.

- 2010/11** – DFW Adoption launches pilot parenting program based on Webster Stratton Incredible Years.
 - First Single Adopters Resource Group held.
- 2009/10** – Rated Outstanding by Ofsted for the second inspection in a row.
- 2007/08** – Hosted National Conference on the Connected for Life program.
 - Work with Darlington Council around Independent Support Services for Birth Parents.
- 2006/07** – DFW Adoption runs first Adopted Adults Support Group.
- 2003/04** – Rebrand the agency as DFW Adoption.
 - DFW Adoption celebrates 20 years at Agriculture House.
- 2002/03** – Durham Family Welfare debates rights of same-sex couples under new legislation. It is decided that same-sex couples would be respected and their rights validated by the agency.
- 1992/93** – Parents Without Children project launched to work with Birth Families.
- 1985/86** – Durham Family Welfare place more children than any other volunteer agency of a similar size.
- 1979/80** – A shifting emphasis on finding families for hard-to-place children, creates a new vision for the agency.
 - Eighton Lodge, mother and baby home, expands women-in-need criteria.



Case Study: Michael and Sarah

Four years ago we considered adoption and approached a local authority, but because they did not have black minority ethnic (BME) children in need of families, we didn't get further than the initial discussions.

We decided to approach DFW Adoption who had no geographic restrictions on where in the UK they could look for children to place with adoptive parents.

We were very pleasantly surprised to find that they welcomed prospective adopters from mixed races. Moreover, as the adoption procedure progressed we were asked for our ideal choice in a child. Naturally we expressed a preference for a child who would represent our ethnic mixture, never imagining that we would be offered such an opportunity.

We had hardly passed the adoption panel when we were made aware of two children (brother and sister) with the same mixed race background we had asked about! We were delighted to adopt these two, who were then aged three and eighteen months.

To say we are very grateful to DFW Adoption (and especially to our tireless social worker) is an understatement. Based on our first experiences we very nearly stayed childless. Now we are a happy family of four.

Case Study: Julie

"I was 29 years old when I first decided I wanted to adopt. Two years later, I'm now the proud mother of a lovely nine year old little boy, thanks to DFW Adoption."

"I chose DFW Adoption because of its warm, friendly atmosphere. The small number of staff were all genuinely good, caring people. I was also drawn to their open mindedness and equal opportunities. After all, I was a young, single, overweight woman who had never married, and I had no other children. I never thought in a million years anyone would actually say "Yes" and welcome me.

Throughout the whole process, I was treated with much respect and kindness. I was assigned a key worker, who supported,

encouraged, reassured and reminded me that when things get tough, she was there and that I was only human. They take an interest in how you are growing and developing as a family and they have followed me through my long, bumpy journey - throughout the tears and the laughter.

I'm a good mother - I have a beautiful child, who still causes me pain and heartache at times, but I know that someone will always be there to keep me going, offer advice, tell me I'm doing a fantastic job and, believe me, those few words mean a lot!"

Using Facebook to support each other

DFW Adoption are launching a Facebook group for our adopters. It will be set up to encourage them to swap stories and support one another.

After discussions with adopters it was found that security was their main concern, but by offering assistance and guidance on how to use it, so that the anonymity of the children is protected, the group should benefit from being able to share and support one another. It will be piloted later in the year, and if proved to be successful will be rolled out from there.



Meet the team...

Beth Miller

I wanted to be a social worker since I was sixteen, in part to annoy my mum who thought, and probably still thinks its not a good job. I like what I do, I must, because I've been doing it for sixteen years. No two days are ever the same here at DFW Adoption. My time is spent assessing new adopters, supporting them through matching and introductions, presenting at preparation groups, sharing adoption records with adult adoptees and paperwork... lots of paperwork! I have an interest in Post Adoption Depression and have undertaken some research in this area. I find adoption work incredibly humbling and a privilege to do.

I am a Facebook fan and am still trying to encourage my more mature colleagues to embrace this technology... I haven't achieved this yet. It is vital as adults, that we understand newer technology, so that we can support our young people in the choices that they make in life.

Outside of work my favourite thing to do is spend time with family and friends just chatting. I do like to talk and maybe enjoy the odd glass of wine or two. I like reading chicklit or watching chickflicks and love watching football - both Liverpool and my son.

New support and advice line planned

To improve our adoption services and response rate we will be extending our current one day per week 'duty system' and will be operating a support and advice line during the afternoon from 1pm.

We are planning to implement the service in the autumn and the number to contact will be the main office number; 0191 386 3719.

An adoption social worker will be available each afternoon, during the working week, to respond to callers and offer support. Appointments can also be arranged either in the office or for a home visit. Support and advice will be available for a wide range of adoption issues past and present; including enquiries about becoming adoptive parents.

Margaret Bell

*Support &
Advice Line:
0191 386 3719*

We're recruiting

DFW Adoption is looking forward to adding another member of staff to its team soon. We will be advertising the post of Senior Practitioner at the end of June.

Part of the role of the Senior Practitioner will be to support the Adoption Social Workers with their work and support the Director in the day to day running of the Agency.

In a period of significant growth at DFW Adoption we look forward to welcoming the successful applicant to the post and the sharing of innovative ideas and practice development which will undoubtedly benefit our services to children and families.

We are hoping to appoint the Senior Practitioner by October.

Donations

DFW Adoption works tirelessly to help find the right family for the right child.

We need your help. By donating a small amount each month or indeed an individual donation you're helping children all over the UK find warm and loving families.

If you'd like your donation to make even more of a difference, why not Gift Aid it? This means that we benefit from the tax relief too. Please contact our main phone line for a form on 0191 386 3719.

Please give generously.

A fond farewell to Judith

Judith Bryant has worked for DFW Adoption for 13 years, and during her time with us, she developed considerable expertise and skills, which have benefited our service users and the excellent reputation of the agency.

She will be sadly missed by all her team members and we look forward to keeping in touch on a personal and professional level. Thank you Judith, for all your hard work and dedication.



For more information about DFW Adoption please visit our website:

www.dfw.org.uk

Or call: 0191 386 3719

Or email: office@dfw.org.uk

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