

## WFCA Fostering Together – Annual Report 2020

**Members**

During this last year WFCA has gained many more members. Our facebook private group now has 78 members. All of these are approved foster carers for Warwickshire, including connected persons carers. We have 57 households in total as members.

**Types of support given to foster carers**

- We provide regular email updates to our carers about events that we have going on.
- We facilitate coffee mornings on a regular basis to carers from all over the county and have trialled these in various locations including carers homes, garden centres, and parks.
- We organised a Christmas meal out for foster carers, without children.
- WFCA do a live stream on a Friday night on the private Facebook group to provide more personalised support especially during COVID-19. We address carers issues and questions and carers can participate via live online messages.
- WFCA give 1:1 support to carers in a variety of ways ie, online messenger, text, email, virtual face to face chats and telephone calls.
- WFCA provide a 24 hour a day phone number that members can call for guidance and advise.
- Buddying system - WFCA has enabled carers to forge new networks of support and use our buddying system when they need it and with carers that they have a relationship with and hopefully the children and young people also know.

**Types of support given to fostering families.**

- We have organised picnics together with both CLA and birth children.
- WFCA have organised and facilitated craft events with CLA and birth children, for instance making Christmas cards, tree decorations and cake making.
- We have regular social get togethers at the local trampoline centre with CLA and birth children.
- WFCA have organised a social event at Hatton Country World for a Halloween event.
- WFCA organised a bowling social event for the whole family.
- We organised several family meals out in various locations across the county

**Support given to fostering department**

- WFCA have helped to support the recruitment teams on recruitment events.
- WFCA have been on hand to offer opinion on policy reviews when asked and to participate where appropriate in these reviews.
- WFCA have advocated to all carers to work with the fostering department and their fostering social workers during this time of crisis and worked with the fostering department on ways to facilitate a personalised approach for communication between the senior leadership and foster carers.

- WFCA have provided information to prospective carers that the recruitment team have sent our way. Often people want to speak to someone doing the job and this seems to be proving really useful and hopefully another way for WFCA to help to promote fostering.
- WFCA have joined the senior leadership team on their carers forums.

### **Training**

WFCA have started to provide some forms of informal training help for members. I.e, workshops to help with tax self-assessment return, and recording practise for foster carers. Currently these have to take the form of a TEAMS session or simply a Webinar. Previous to COVID-19 we held a face to face workshop on tax self-assessment.

### **Moving Forward**

We would like to see WFCA become a registered charity in this year and to grow our membership even further. We envisage reintroducing coffee mornings, once it is safe to do so and to carry on with our expansion of these to cover more areas in the county and to include as many carers as we can.

We aim to start a support group solely for connected persons carers alongside mainstream WFCA.

We aim to provide specialised support for SGO carers alongside our mainstream support.

We will be organising many more social events, again, once it is safe to do so, making efforts to plan more diverse/different events to appeal to more age groups and interests.

We would like to work more with the fostering department to increase to easy flow on communication and practise between carers and the department.

WFCA would like to become increasingly involved in the training of both fostering social workers and children's social workers.

We envisage a much closer working relationship with the recruitment and assessment team and also being part of the induction process for new foster carers.

Through continuing with the live feeds and Facebook page carers are able to find for themselves people whom they feel are like minded and can find people who are more like minded rather than being budding up with someone you may / may not get along with.

To continue to work to provide support for our birth children in a variety of imaginative ways and to provide a voice for our "kids that foster together". I.e, promotion of the kids that foster together private facebook group.

## What do our members say

“It makes me feel part of something special, something that not only brings people together socially but support and helps those who need it”

“The WFCA has brought carers together in a way that hasn't been done before”

“To understand a foster carer, you have to be one, this is where WFCA comes in.”

“Over the past year the WFCA has provided brilliant support both via the Facebook page and organising events. So far I have attended morning coffee groups at a location near home; I have also attended events organised such as a summer picnic, playing at Jump In trampoline centre and a craft session at Kyla & Clive's home. The Facebook page has been transformative in feeling less isolated as a single carer. I have been able to post questions, request advice and contribute advice and support to other carers when required. The best people in a position to support carers is other carers, thus sharing experiences has been an invaluable aspect of the WFCA and I feel incredibly indebted to that support.”

“It's a great place to get help, support, information or just a friendly ear for a chat.”

“Pooling resources and hard-earned experiences to improve the outcomes of the young people in our care. Supporting new foster carers to deal with the unknown and scary early months”

“WFCA has been a great way for us to feel part of a team especially in the current situation. In this together. Thank you x”

“WFCA has brought Warwickshire carers together and increased their support network The knowledge that there are cares so close and able to give help support and non judgmental advice in a click of a button is invaluable and it's managed by a wonderful management team who give up so much time in an already hectic work/life day”

“I've not been a member for long and already have found it to be extremely helpful. I got a response immediately and was given good advice. The follow up call/message made me feel that people do care about what your going through. The weekly talks are also fun but informative and It gives me something to look forward to. Thank you for all you do”

“WFCA is the unification of south and north Warwickshire foster carers bringing us altogether to work with and support one another. Being part of WFCA means you are never alone and there is always someone to talk to or get advice from someone who understands and lives the day to day challenges we are faced with. WFCA is a unification of children's services as a corporate body and the foster carers, giving us access to the senior leadership team to address any issues we may face and to give us a voice as foster carers. Being part of. WFCA has brought friendship and togetherness for the foster carers and the children we care for in a what can be isolating world. WFCA uses the strengths of each individual person and enables us to share this with other carers to help each other during more challenging times. Therefore making each of us a better foster Carer and to help each other through. This in turn increases the skill set we have to pass onto our looked after children and the service as a whole. WFCA has been a great way of keeping us all united and sane over the COVID outbreak in what has been one of the most isolating periods of our lives! WFCA enables us to share the laughter and tears that comes with being a foster Carer.”

“WFCA has been a great support for me as well as old and new foster carers. I now feel that foster carers have a voice and are listened to a lot more then before.”

“From my point of view its really great to finally see foster carers in Warwickshire coming together with the same voice and supporting each other. WFCA unites us and I don't think that's ever been achieved before or certainly I haven't felt like it has. Fostering has always felt quite isolating but through the events and fb page and everything else WFCA is doing foster carers seem to be talking to each other more than before and working together to bring about some really positive changes”