

Families First

The Adoption North
London Newsletter

Issue 1



ADOPTION
NORTH LONDON



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Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter about adoption in North London. This newsletter is a forum for you to correspond with us, so the content will continue to adapt to what you need to know and want to read about. If you have any ideas for future features or a story to tell us about your life as an adopter or prospective adopter, please do write in.

To send us your comments or suggestions about the newsletter, please send an email to elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk or call **020 7974 1152**.

Adoption North London is a partnership arrangement between 6 north London boroughs: Camden, Barnet, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, and Islington. Five of the boroughs have been working together in an adoption consortium since 2003, with Hackney joining the partnership in 2013.

For information about the consortium, the training we offer and useful adoption support literature, please remember to visit our website www.adoptionnorthlondon.co.uk

Royal visit

The Duchess of Cambridge recently visited our Islington office to meet with foster carers, children and social workers from Adoption North London and to shine a spotlight on fostering and the amazing role that foster carers play in helping to transform children's lives.

Foster carers and care leavers were very excited to meet Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cambridge at a tea party organised to celebrate foster care, in partnership with The Fostering

Network - a charity supporting foster carers. The Duchess heard first-hand how fostering changes the lives of children and how important the role of foster carers is in transitioning children to adoptive placements. Foster carers talked about how rewarding it is to see children thrive in their care, after a difficult start in life. "Some of the children that come to me

are beyond hurt; they've had to deal with so much in their young lives, but the best moment for me is to see them smile", said one of our foster carers.



"You're a smiley one, aren't you?" Little Naya enchants the Duchess who told her foster carer Tigest Tesfamichael "She's chubbier than George!"

New Family Social

New Family Social is a national charity that provides support and information for prospective and existing LGBT adopters and foster carers, while working closely with adoption and fostering agencies across the UK.

LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week is an annual New Family Social campaign, run in partnership with Barnardo's, aiming to raise awareness of the need for more LGBT adopters and foster carers to come forward. This year more than 50 events took place around the UK,

including the charity's main event in London on the 6th of March. These events gave prospective adopters and foster carers the opportunity to meet those who have already been through the process and to talk directly to adoption and fostering agencies.

New Family Social now has almost 2,000 LGBT adopter and foster carers as members, who meet up in London each month for a chat and a coffee while the kids play. People thinking about adoption or fostering are also encouraged to become members.

Last year 7% of adoptions in



England were to same-sex couples (of course that doesn't include the adoptions to gay single people) and the number is growing all the time. Research from Cambridge University found that children adopted by gay couples were doing just as well as those adopted by heterosexual couples.

To find out more, visit www.newfamilysocial.org.uk

The Adoption Support Fund



The Adoption Support Fund will be available nationally from May 2015. This is being established because many families need some kind of support following adoption and too many have struggled to get the help they need in the past. The Fund will enable them to access the services they need more easily in future.

Who will be eligible for the Adoption Support Fund?

The Fund will be available for children up to and including the age of 18 (or 25 with an SEN statement) who have been

adopted from local authority care in England or adopted from Wales but living in England. Local authorities will be able to submit applications for funding before an Adoption Order, so that they can provide you with a continuous package of support from the time of placement.

What will I need to do?

To access the Fund, you will need to have an assessment of your family's adoption support needs by the local authority. The local authority that placed your child with you is responsible for assessing your adoption support

needs for three years after the adoption. After three years it becomes the responsibility of the local authority where you live (if different). Where the social worker identifies that therapeutic services would be beneficial to your family, they will apply to the Fund on your behalf, who will release funding to the local authority. The social worker will be expected to talk to you about who can provide the types of service that you need and which provider you would prefer. This could be the local authority itself, a neighbouring local authority, an independent provider or an NHS provider.

What support will I be able to get?

The Fund will provide money for a range of therapeutic services (the details of which will be made available from May 2015), and will include creative therapies, music therapy, play therapy and attachment based therapy and psychotherapy. The Fund will also be able to finance further specialist clinical assessments such as for Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Where an assessment identifies that you may need other support, such as financial help, or access to peer support groups, the local authority will be responsible for assessing and providing this, at their discretion, as is the situation now.

Good authorities will work together across social care, health and education to provide a holistic package of support. There is further work going on in government to improve mental health support via a Department of Health taskforce and to encourage joined-up assessments of your family's needs. If you have any further questions about the Adoption Support Fund, please contact your local Adoption Support Team.



Recipe of the season

Milk Chocolate Tiffin



Submitted by Jenny, mother of two Arsenal supporting boys.

This is a punchy protein delight. It's full of rich sweetness and is also known as 'Fridge Cake', if you can manage to keep it in the fridge! I think of it as a treat for my boys on frosty winter mornings, when they

arrive back from Sunday's football practice, mud splattered and knackered. It lifts them up and keeps them going until lunch time providing the energy to do their homework... (I wish!)

Ingredients: 200g butter, 140g golden syrup, 90g whole blanched pistachios, 90g whole blanched almonds, 100g ginger biscuits, 70g cocoa powder, 80g sultanas, 320g broken milk chocolate.

1. Line a 20cm square cake tin with baking parchment. Whizz the ginger biscuits in the food processor. Melt the butter in a saucepan and add the syrup, then add to the ginger biscuits and put in the pistachio and almond nuts, cocoa powder and

sultanas. Scrape into the tin and press down evenly and leave in the fridge until cool.

2. Melt the chocolate and cool until spreadable. Spread half the mixture over the top. Leave to harden and then spread the remainder over the top. Smooth with a palette knife and allow to harden. Cut into squares to serve and keep in the fridge if you can.

Please do send in your recipes and why they work for you.

Send an email to elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk with a bit of a background story on why your recipe is special to you and your family.

Recommended reading



Understanding health conditions

A new series of books for children

This series explores health conditions which can be common to many looked after and adopted children. Designed to help children understand the health issues which may be affecting them, or someone they know, each title includes an illustrated story focusing on the personal impact of living with a particular condition. This is followed by a question and answer section which covers a range of queries and concerns, and provides practical information and advice in a straightforward and child-friendly style.

My brother Booh has ADHD

A story about a boy with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Toby and his twin brother Booh were adopted when they were babies. They look so alike that sometimes people can't tell them apart. But there is one big difference between them. Booh is

always getting into trouble: upsetting other children, fidgeting in class and losing his temper.

And as he gets older his behaviour seems to get worse. When Booh is diagnosed with ADHD and helped to understand and manage his condition, day-to-day life becomes easier not just for Booh but for the whole family.

Oli and the pink bicycle

A story about a girl born with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

It's Oli's birthday and she's excited about the present she has been promised. A pink bicycle! But Oli's special day doesn't go to plan and she is so angry that she just screams and screams. Nothing ever seems to go right for Oli. Her first mamma drank too much alcohol and took bad medicine when Oli was just a bump in her tummy. Now Oli finds numbers and spelling difficult, can't always make her arms and legs do what she wants them to and often loses her temper. Oli doesn't know what to do, until the mysterious Aggie Witchhazel sets her a series of challenges to help her discover all the good things about herself.

Sam's trouble with words

A story about a boy with dyslexia
Sam has a secret: he has trouble reading, writing and spelling and is worried that his new foster family will

not want him to stay if they find out. With the help of his carers, teachers and social worker, Sam discovers that his secret is a real problem with a real name – dyslexia – and that lots of clever people have the same problem too! With the right help Sam finds that school can be fun rather than scary.

Why can't I be good?

A story about a girl with behaviour problems

Hanna really wants to be good. Every morning she promises herself that she will be good all day. But somehow it never works out. By the time she is seven Hanna is very badly behaved. She is fed up with being told off and wants to show her parents that she is glad they have adopted her. So Hanna makes a plan: she will try to be good one day at a time in one way at a time. Although it is not possible to be good all the time, Hanna discovers that she can make choices and change her behaviour.

Published by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering, further details about these books can be found at www.baaf.org.uk.

Priced at £6.95 each, copies can be ordered by phoning the BAAF Publications Sales Team on **020 7421 2604** and readers of this newsletter will receive free postage and packing on any orders placed.



her plug the gaps in an early years jigsaw puzzle... a metaphor writ large if ever there was one!

During the tortuous, four-hour, car journey home at the end of that week, the two of you sat in the back – your new sister silent and withdrawn, dad and I poleaxed by the emotional intensity of ‘taking’ this little girl away from the people she called mum and dad and you, calm and composed, gently stroking her palm and singing Round and Round the Garden, over and over again.

Did we expect too much of you? In those early weeks, we were all punchdrunk with the excitement of getting to know each other. But, as the months went on, you faltered. Your sister would rebuff your hugs; you’d get slapped or scratched. You’d try not to mind about your precious things being messed with or broken, but the scribbled notice on the door of your room ‘Get out or I will kick your butt!’ told its own story. And whenever you came to me for a cuddle, your sister would knock you out of the way, and cry: “No! MY mummy...!” You never once said what I most dreaded: “NO, she’s not, actually she’s mine!” Instead, your plaintive wail: “Well, she’s my mummy, too!” showed a care for her feelings that not even your white-hot anger could eclipse.

One night, you broke down after your sister was in bed and said she had to “go back”, that she “didn’t like you” and you didn’t like her, either. We explained that wasn’t an option – we were now a family and had to work it out. Then it came out – you missed us and all the years you’d had one, or both of us, to yourself. It was so obvious, then – in trying so hard to be a family of four, we’d somehow forgotten you needed our individual attention, too. We promised that next weekend, and for as many weekends as you wanted after that, me or dad would do something with just you. We also made sure you had a separate, later bedtime so you got time with us to have your own story or watch telly. We made sure your sister understood the boundaries of your stuff being your stuff, your room being your room.

Such simple solutions, yet such a profound effect. I knew we’d turned a corner when, one weekend, you said you’d rather not go off with just me after all; you wanted to be with your dad and sister too.

A letter to our birth daughter

Four years after adopting her younger daughter, Camden adopter Sally wrote the following letter to her birth daughter to share with her when she’s older.

I’ll admit, love, that I’ve always found ‘the baby game’ irritating. The game you most often ask me to play with you, usually at the most inconvenient times. A game I didn’t really understand, or the fascination it held for you. At 10-years old, and nearly as tall as me, you’d want to be a helpless little thing, while your adopted sister, although five years younger, was assigned the ‘teenage babysitter’ role or, if she protested too much, a twin baby to you, but one that was ‘smart’, and could ‘do more’ – the one that didn’t need so much attention.

I’d nearly always sidle off and you’d usually end up playing it yourselves, or I’d reluctantly agree to a quick (imaginary!) nappy change for you, before getting on with whatever it was that was more pressing.

A decade before, you were my newborn, mewling baby – on my belly, eyes locked on mine and I’m tumbling down the rabbit hole. But, when your sister came, she was not the helpless newborn sibling that many of your friends had gotten used to in their lives. She was a wary, demanding, mercurial toddler – and as much a stranger to us as we were to her.

Believe me, the urge to parent again wasn’t, in any way, because you ‘weren’t enough’. In fact, it’s because you were, and are, so special that I was greedy for another chance to watch a life develop in front of my eyes – with all the joy, terror, responsibility and sense of fulfilment that brings. That, and, perhaps, not wanting you to remain an only child, as I am, whose ache for the siblings I never had only gets stronger as I get older.

We patted ourselves on the back that you seemed as enthused as we were about the possibility of another child joining our family. When our social worker had a private ‘assessment’ session with you, she felt you had the necessary self-confidence and personal esteem to handle it.

And it’s been 3 years now since your life changed irrevocably. The other day, dad found some video snippets we made in that heady, eight-day, introduction period with your new sister. Watching them again now, I’m struck by how much has changed – and some things that haven’t. You both look impossibly different – your front baby teeth are missing, you’re at least a foot shorter, and your face carries echoes of the round-faced, doe-eyed baby you were. There’s footage of the two of you bouncing on the bed – when your sister got too close to the edge, you laughingly hauled her back; a game you still play to this day. Then there’s the film of you patiently helping



And now yours is the love story at the very heart of our family – exceeding even my rose-tinted fantasies of a sister relationship.

You buy her gifts out of your pocket money; she draws you pictures or makes you something un-nameable every day in school. You cuddle on the sofa and call each other your 'BFF'. When you do argue, and I intervene, you forgive each other instantly and turn your ire on me instead.

There will probably be times, with a 5-year age gap between you, when you'll grow apart for a while – perhaps a 12 and 17-year-old will struggle to find common ground. But at 30 and 35 or 52

and 57 – heck, even 91 and 96! – I hope with all my heart you'll still be making mischief together, consoling each other, laughing your socks off together and sharing your memories of family life, long after dad and I have gone.

But that's all in the future. In the here and now, you're taking your first steps towards a new phase in your life – more time spent in front of a mirror, endless combing of your hair, throwing aside favourite outfits and toys now deemed 'too babyish'. So, just to let you know that I get it, now, and I'm up for playing the baby game, for however much longer you need and want me to. I just hope I'm not too late.



2015 Adoption North London Training Programme



Islington – Managing transitions in Education - PAC-UK



Hackney – Parenting adopted siblings – Louis Sydney



Enfield – Managing Contact



Haringey – Adoption and Teenage – Elsie Price

Adoption Changes

Adoption Changes is a collaborative programme run jointly by adoption support social workers and experienced adoptive parents who have tried and tested the techniques discussed on the programme. We have found running this programme in six half-day sessions has helped families to gradually improve relationships and manage challenging behaviour. Families are able to learn in a safe environment with other adoptive parents and share their experiences.

Parents of children aged 3–10 can really benefit from this programme and we would encourage you to contact your borough's adoption support team to learn more about the success of this training.

The programme will help with:

1. Behaviour and Praise

Praise is such a delicate art; most of us avoid it. Learning to use specific labelled praise can really boost your relationship with your child.

2. Play and positive attention

Learning how to play in a way that will raise your child's self esteem, while enjoying this special time.

3. Ways your child expresses their feelings and regulate their emotions

Learn how to improve your listening skills: sometimes it's best to keep quiet and just listen. Solutions are not always the answer. Naming feelings, using open questions can help a child explore their feelings.

4. An alternative way of giving instructions and setting limits

Reduce unwanted behaviour by changing how you respond to it. Creating reward charts and reinforcing positive behaviour.

5. Getting your child to take responsibility for their actions and establish family rules

An opportunity to get some more ideas about consequences and getting the desired behaviour. Using "I" messages as a way of reducing the burden of being a parent.

"families come back to each session talking about how they have implemented some of the skills and tools they learned in the last session, and it definitely helps them to think about how they are parenting their children and what impact they can have on behaviour and emotions"

Jo Mendel,
Adoption Support Social Worker

6. Your thoughts that could be affecting your responses to your child and ways to take care of yourself

An opportunity to think about your feelings and how to balance these with the task of parenting. Taking time to think about your own needs.



Social networking and the internet

represent a parallel social world to the flesh and blood one for us all, but particularly so for young people who now spend huge portions of their time interacting on it. There are similar highs and lows contained inside that pc, phone, laptop or kindle that have always existed in relationships, for example the potential for miscommunication and upset and more positively, understanding and connection. Mindfulness of the risks in internet safety should be on every parent's agenda, but extra sensitivity is needed around children who have been adopted.

There are particular forums that children get drawn to that may become relevant in relation to them contacting birth family out of the auspices of their adoptive parents. Some routes that could be tempting: blogging, tweeting, location based or facial recognition apps, photos and videos posting to YouTube, webcam, Skype and of course searching the internet for birth family names or even joining missing person sites. Some of these means to contact can also be harnessed by birth family, if conventional post adoption contact has not taken off.

Fear and anxiety about social media and its uses has led to a new wariness about photos being included in letterbox exchange. In some boroughs this has led to a sharp decline in photos being sent to birth parents. Restrictions about the use of photos now form part of many letterbox agreements with the warning that they will no longer be shared, if put on social networking

sites. Sometimes adopters have themselves looked up birth parents and have often found that they have no privacy settings. They have been disturbed to see their children posted up as if they have never left the birth family. Although this may be true in the mind and heart of the birth family, in most cases it is not welcomed by adopters or adopted children. Moreover adopters worry about birth families social networking 'friends' and their consequent capacity to recognise and locate the adopted child, especially if there is not much physical distance between the families.

It is here that we return to the issue of life story work and the original reasons the child came into care. These factors are crucial in terms of knowing what risk the parent may carry in terms of communication with the child, should this be kickstarted by the child. In my experience the vast majority of birth parents feel comfortable with letterbox showing respect and appreciation of what adoption means and delight in photos, if these are part of it, which show their child to be alive and well. The question that gets raised for adopters about their children contacting birth family through social networking sites is who else in the parents' network might see and respond to unauthorised contact from the adopted child.

If the reasons for adoption have been an open subject within the home, then it is much easier for adopted children to appreciate what sort of social world they may be entering when they step into communication with their birth family. The adolescent may come to birth family with fantasies of being understood at last. What teenager does not feel misunderstood at times? The adopted young person steps back in time to their beginnings and the birth family may in turn be stepping forward to claim what they feel has been lost and to tell their version. Are some adopted children particularly vulnerable to calling out in internet space to unseen birth family members?

Connection this way could result in something potentially confusing and bewildering to an adopted teenager who may be vulnerable to

the attractions of being so wanted and important to birth relatives. There may be an impulse to believe the truth as presented by the birth family or instead a resistance and distaste to the birth family's version of events and seeds of conflict may get sown. The shadow of rejection may loom again. So much depends on how the years have treated the birth family and whether time has mellowed their understanding and given perspective to their limitations and failings as younger parents.

A lot too depends on the adopted teenager's stability, quality of emotional wellbeing and sense of direction in life. Teenagers struggle here even with straightforward backgrounds.

No one wants to deny anyone adopted the chance to find out directly about their origins, but what any adoptive parent also wants is to help their child exert some control and choice over contact once it begins. Privacy settings on Facebook and YouTube need to be rigorously checked as these do change. Visiting 'settings' to ensure that unsolicited friends are not made is a must. The ideal is that the adoptive parent is part of a reunion or a trusted adult known to the child to be around to guide them through the pathway of highs and lows, expectations and realities.

Make social networking work for you. If it seems inevitable that this is where your teenager will go there is little chance of turning your child away from it. A Facebook page could be set up with your child's birth name on it but with very little else on display in order for your teenager to make contact with birth relatives if this is what they are intent on. This avoids the sharing of identifying and personal information about your child's life which could otherwise be opened to prying eyes. The appeal of this is that it would then be possible to block and stop any contact from unwanted visitors who just might want so much more than your teenager is in a position to give. The virtual world may yet prove safer in an open adoption than the powerful physicality of a face to face meeting with the pleasure and pain this can bring.



Education

Early Years

Adopted children are now prioritised in education in a number of ways. If your child is 2 years old and was adopted from care you are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year (this is often taken as 15 hours each week).

More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/free-early-education>

School Admissions

All children adopted from local authority care now have top priority for admissions for state-funded schools, including academies. This means that your child should be able to attend whichever school you think best meets their needs. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admission-of-children-adopted-from-local-authority-care>

Pupil Premium Plus

In May 2014 eligibility for the pupil premium was extended to all children adopted from care (Pupil Premium Plus) in recognition of the traumatic experiences adopted children may have had in early life and may need additional support, so that they are not at a disadvantage from their peers. PPP funding enables schools to access funding (currently £1900) to help them progress emotionally, socially and academically. PPP is available to those from Reception to Year 11.

Do schools have to spend the additional funding they are getting on the individual child?

The funding is not ring-fenced and is not for individual children. Therefore the school does not have to spend the exact amount on the particular eligible child. Instead schools may decide to use the money on things such as staff training, or whole class interventions. However, it is not intended that the additional funding should be used to complement the general school budget, nor to support other groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs or who are low attaining.

What is the role of parents or carers?

To enable a child's school to claim the allowance, parents should inform the school that their child is adopted, and provide supporting evidence, for example, a photocopy of the Adoption Order (with sensitive information concealed). This will then trigger the payment of the Pupil Premium to the school.

For more information and section with Frequently Asked Questions on the Pupil Premium Plus, please visit www.first4adoption.org.uk or speak to one of their advisers direct on **0300 222 0022**.

To achieve the best results from the pupil premium it is good practice for schools to liaise with parents about how to best spend the grant. School staff may be unfamiliar with the background information for some children and issues which may be causing barriers to their learning.

How can the money be spent?

Whereas it is up to schools to decide how best to spend this money, it is important that eligibility for the Pupil Premium is not confused with low ability, and the focus is on supporting disadvantaged pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.

Some schools will choose to spend the grant on individual children to meet particular needs and difficulties, others will pool money together to develop projects or gain additional training.

Here are some ideas about how schools could spend the pupil premium:

For individual children

- Additional Teaching assistant hours
- Individual tuition in targeted subjects
- Specialist assessments (eg Educational Psychologist)
- Child mentoring
- Individual staff training in attachment difficulties and developmental trauma
- Specialist educational consultations
- Therapy support (eg additional speech and language therapy)
- Educational trips
- School uniform
- School meals (if not already eligible for free school meals)
- Before/after school activities
- Music lessons
- Equipment (eg laptop, tablet, stationery etc.)
- Sensory toys/materials

For groups of children

- Additional Teaching assistant hours

- Training and implementation of a key worker
- Small group tuition in targeted subjects
- Training and support of peer mentors
- Professional story tellers
- Safety awareness assemblies
- Visiting theatre groups
- Whole school staff training in attachment difficulties and developmental trauma
- Start up, or development of a school based nurture group
- Start up, or development of school based programmes (eg peer massage, forest school, social groups, circle of friends groups, food dudes etc.)
- Set up, or development of a sensory area

Many thanks to:
Twitter: [@ins_foundations](#)
www.facebook.com/InspiredFoundations.9
Tel: **07870 602296**
Email: Jenny@inspiredfoundations.co.uk

Education Support Service

The Consortium is delighted to announce our new Education Support Service for Adopters, Special Guardians and Permanent Foster Carers, provided by PAC-UK.

Children and young people with a history of early life trauma can present with a range of challenges in school. PAC-UK offers a range of services to enable education professionals and parents, guardians and carers to support and include the Looked After, adopted or otherwise permanently placed children and young people in their care.

PAC-UK provides the following Education Support services for residents of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington:

Education Advice Line 020 7284 5879 (Wed 10am – 12 noon, excluding half term and school holidays)

Speak to PAC-UK's Educational Psychologist about any issues around the educational needs of permanently placed children and young people. Call backs for education advice can be arranged by calling PAC-UK's daily Advice Line on the same number during its opening hours.

Education-focussed surgery sessions held at PAC-UK's offices in Kentish Town.

Parents are welcome to attend with school staff or social worker. Contact PAC-UK's Advice Line or Education Advice Line for details.

Education-focussed group for parents, guardians and carers held monthly at PAC-UK's offices in Kentish Town.

Day and evening sessions, light refreshments provided. Contact PAC-UK's Advice Line or Education Advice Line for details.

Please contact your local Adoption Support Team for more information and a leaflet.



Caring for a child of a different ethnicity

Over the next few editions, we will be running extracts from Bristol City Council's 'Caring for a child of a different ethnicity' publication, with the kind permission of Bristol's Adoption Service.

Transracial Placements: what has changed?

Concern about delays for children of black and minority ethnic background has led to a rethink about what the priorities are for this group of children. There are currently far more black and minority ethnic children in the care system than there are black and minority ethnic adopters. There is also some evidence that many black and minority ethnic people do not consider ethnicity as the most important issue in matching. SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence – The needs of foster children from black and minority ethnic background).

Revised Adoption Statutory Guidance in 2011 advised "if the prospective adopter can meet most of the child's needs, the social worker must not delay placing the child with a prospective adopter because they are single, older than other adopters or does not share the child's racial or cultural background".

A family today can be assessed on its ability to positively promote and celebrate their child's ethnicity and identity, even if they do not match the child's ethnicity; essentially the family becoming a multi-cultural family. It is recognised that this is a challenging as well as rewarding additional parenting task for adopters. Support is available to enable adopters to do this.

What does it mean to be a multi-ethnic family?

Parents caring for a child of a different culture and ethnicity to themselves have a responsibility

to help their children define themselves as a member of their own culture and ethnicity at the same time as bringing them into the new culture that is already present in the family. Without connection the child can feel 'lost'. Feelings of basic safety, security, belonging and self-esteem are essential for the child in making secure attachments.

In short, a multi-ethnic family means celebrating your child's ethnicity, engaging the whole family in your child's culture and enjoying all it brings. This means preparing your child and your family for the challenges of racism and prejudice and those 'awkward questions'. It also means embracing the change to your family make-up: you are no longer 'white parents of a black child', but a 'multi-ethnic family'.



Dear Natalie

Your questions answered

Please send your questions by email to elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk

We'll endeavour to respond to you either by phone or email, and may publish a summarised version in the next edition of our newsletter.



Dear Natalie

Night times have begun to feel like nightmare times in our household! Jason who is 7 seems to get new surges of energy as bedtime (7.30pm) approaches. He delays us in every way he can; he is reluctant to get out of the bath, takes ages to decide on a bed time story and then once we leave the room he repeatedly calls us saying he has a headache or stomach ache. Calpol bottles are going down fast. He has recently taken to bouncing out of bed within minutes of our departure to follow us downstairs and sometimes it can take as long as two hours before he finally sleeps. We feel exhausted, exasperated and increasingly desperate for some ideas to help us change what has become the status quo.

Ana and Marco

Dear Ana and Marco

Night time can be a time for all of us when anxieties and fears may have space to roam. It is also a time of letting go alone into the unknown territory of sleep and leaving the pull of attachments to daily life and people. Memories (both unconscious and conscious) of other night times

can rise unbidden spoiling the relaxed state necessary to drift off. There are so many factors here that may be influencing this situation. Is Jason alone in his room? Has anything changed in the household that has changed his behaviour? Is this the only time he gets to have both your undivided attention? Do think more about what is behind the behaviour for here may lie the solutions.

Seven is old enough for there to be scope in talking to Jason about ways that allow him to take control of night times. The right control for him to gain could suit you too and maybe help him to release some of the fearful traits that he is showing. Could you involve him in changes to his room to increase its desirability as a space to spend time in at night? More time between bath and bed, if bath increases not decreases energy levels? A hot but not sweet drink? A night light? Recordings or CDs of bedtime stories that he has helped to choose? It could be the sound of a recorded human voice is what he needs to help him settle after the story that he chooses for you to read. A jam jar could be placed in his room in which he puts a marble/lego block/star or whatever is right for him to represent a 'good going to sleep' night. Five good nights could involve a social reward. Involve him in choosing

what this reward could be, but do set the boundaries. Keep the treats not too demanding or expensive for you, but if quality time alone with both of you is limited, link it up to ideas that may involve this occurring, such as a trip to the park with an ice-cream at the end or an outing, such as ice skating, kite flying or swimming. It may be that Jason's healthy sense of control that comes with successfully managing his fear of night will be enough for you to all feel better.

Space does not permit me to explore more areas around good night routines as well as other present and past dynamics. Jason's particular history before joining your household could be relevant. There is also a plethora of advice on the internet and a resource such as netmums.com has a blog column and many practical strategies.

Please remember that there is always the option of asking for a visit from an adoption support social worker to talk any issue through further. There may be links to present and past dynamics which will help you further appreciate what might be going on for your child and feel better equipped to change the situation.

Meet some of our staff from the Adoption North London Support Teams



Daisy Stone
Islington team



Edna Thomas
Haringey team



Judith Ellis
Barnet team



Nita Patel
Enfield team



Val Forrest
Camden team



Vicky West
Hackney team

WE WANT YOU!

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We are looking for an adopter who would like to join the Newsletter Editorial Board and help with its production and content selection. Meetings are held once a month between 9-5 in the Camden office in Mornington Crescent, so if you're interested in volunteering, please send an email to elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk

