



the fostering network  
the voice of foster care



A toolkit for getting  
involved in the  
Fostering Network's  
*Sons & Daughters*  
campaign 2013

**Sons & Daughters**  
Celebrating the foster family



# Contents

Introduction	3
Why get involved?	4
- Show your appreciation	
- Recruitment and retention	
How to get involved	6
- Running an event	
- Top 10 ideas	
- Case study	
The Fostering Network's activities	8
- Discounted day out to UK attractions	
- Walk the Difference	
- Blogging competition	
- Event promotion	
- Thank you cards	
Spreading the word	10
- Letting your sons and daughters know	
- Media	
- Ways to generate coverage	
Resources	12
About us	13



## Introduction

*Sons & Daughters: Celebrating the foster family* is the Fostering Network's annual campaign to celebrate the phenomenal contribution which the children of foster carers make to foster care.

Every year in October, fostering services across the UK run events and activities to recognise and reward children and young people for their help in making foster care a success for many children in the care system.

The campaign provides a valuable opportunity for fostering services to collectively participate in a UK-wide initiative.

**'I have loved being a big brother. I enjoy teaching fostered children how to build blocks, throw a ball and play hide and seek. Saying goodbye is hard but there is always another "hello" around the corner.'**

Ben, 13

**This toolkit provides ideas and information to help your fostering service get involved in the *Sons & Daughters* campaign and also explains what the Fostering Network is doing to support you this year.**

*Sons & Daughters* is part of the year round support that the Fostering Network provides to its members. As a member, you will have access to online resources including this toolkit, help with publicising your events and the opportunity to share expertise with other people who work with the children of foster carers through our online community.



## Why get involved?

### 1) Show your appreciation

Expectations of the sons and daughters of foster carers can be extremely high. While most report that they are happy being part of a fostering family, they also acknowledge that there are many challenges that can be difficult to handle.

Knowing that what they do is appreciated by the fostering service can make a real difference to how these young people feel about fostering.

Getting involved in *Sons & Daughters* is your chance to make sure the sons and daughters of your foster carers get the recognition and support that they deserve.

**'A while ago all the sons and daughters of the foster carers got taken out for a Chinese meal with the link workers. It was really good meeting other kids like me and I have seen them again at the Christmas party. I really like sharing my home and get excited when my mum or dad talks to me about someone new coming to stay.'**

Robbie, 10



## 2) Recruitment and retention

Many people cite the potential impact on their birth children as one of the major barriers to becoming a foster carer. Some of the questions fostering services receive from prospective foster carers include:

*'How will my child cope sharing me and my partner with a stranger?'*

*'Will it affect my child's school work?'*

*'What if we foster a child whose troubled start has a negative impact on how my child behaves?'*

The reality is that many children benefit from being part of the support network offered by a fostering family to a vulnerable child. Seeing life from another's perspective can be an enriching experience and can help a child learn and develop as an individual.

Involving older sons and daughters in recruitment information sessions during *Sons & Daughters* and throughout the year gives them a chance to tell their story and help allay some of the fears of your potential future foster carers, encouraging more to submit an application.

Supporting sons and daughters through groups and activities helps them meet other children who foster like them and share their experiences in a fun and safe environment. This in turn can support your foster carers and boost your foster carer retention if they feel confident their whole family is supported and valued.

Being part of our *Sons & Daughters* campaign helps you communicate all the benefits of being a son or daughter of a foster family, as well as acknowledging the crucial role they play.

**'As sons and daughters of foster carers, it can be challenging. Learning to deal with new situations and having the responsibility of consistently being a good role model and setting a good example can be hard. To share everything – your home, your parents, and even the food in the cupboards – sometimes feels a lot to be expected! One thing guaranteed though is that you will never be lonely. You will learn lessons your friends may not until they reach adulthood, and your aims in life may change completely.'**  
Jade, 17



## How to get involved

Since *Sons & Daughters* was launched by the Fostering Network five years ago, fostering services across the UK have organised fun activities and events, showing imagination and dedication to the children they work with.

We appreciate that budgets are tight at the moment but even small events and gestures will be hugely appreciated by the children and young people, and by their parents.

### Running an event

#### To run an event you need to:

##### 1) Pick a day in October

During the autumn holiday is usually best and can help your foster carers keep their children entertained while they're off school.

##### 2) Decide on what you would like to do

Think about the ages of the children involved and how much time and resources you have. See some of our top ideas on page 7 for inspiration.

##### 3) Spread the word

Let your foster carers and sons and daughters know what you are doing through your website, emails, newsletters, phone calls and face to face meetings. There are some tips for communicating on page 10.

##### 4) Register your event on the Fostering Network's website – [www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)

This gives you the opportunity to show others that you are involved in the campaign, and is also helpful for finding inspiration for future activities. See page 9 for information on how to register your events.



**‘Although fostering can be hard, I get plenty of support with meetings being held for sons and daughters, often in fun places! This gives me a chance to have my opinion heard, and also talk to other children who are in the same position as I am.’**

Abbie, 17

## Top 10 ideas

- An awards ceremony with certificates and a 'thank you' cake.
- Bowling.
- A trip to a theme park (see page 8 for our special offer for 2013).
- Ice skating.
- A thank you card and present or gift voucher (see page 9 for our downloadable thank you cards).
- A Halloween party with fun games and a fancy dress competition.
- A bonfire night with fireworks.
- Indoor climbing.
- A movie night or cinema trip.
- A visit to an interesting local business or organisation, such as a farm or fire station.

**'Since we've started fostering I've had a fantastic time. I have been ice-skating, to Chessington World of Adventures and Thorpe Park and made lots of new friends.'**

Ellie, 11

## Case study

### Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire County Council runs a very successful 'Karing Kids' group. They meet up every school holiday so the children of foster carers have an opportunity to engage in a fun activity and provide peer support and friendship to each other.

They choose different activities each time and make the most of the facilities in their area. In recent times they have organised:

- a Halloween roller disco party, where the child with the most frightening face won a prize

- an outdoor overnight camping experience with a camp fire, night walks and ghost stories

- a day at a Northampton radio station where the children presented a radio show and made a CD

- a trip to Cadbury World

- a four night residential trip where the children participated in activities such as canoeing and caving.

All activities are open to children between 8 and 16 and are on a first come, first served basis. Every year they also invite the children to one of the local pantomimes and this is open to all children.



## The Fostering Network's activities

### 1) Discounted day out to UK attractions

This year we have teamed up with Merlin to offer a discounted day out on Sunday 6 October for the whole foster family to enjoy. The specially discounted attractions in this offer are:

- Alton Towers
- Thorpe Park
- Warwick Castle

This promises to be a great day out for everyone, providing an opportunity for sons and daughters, foster carers and fostered children to meet lots of other fostering families.

We hope that fostering services will treat their foster families to this fun day out, or foster carer members can purchase their own tickets. **Tickets must be booked in advance by calling Merlin and quoting our special code.**

To find out how to book visit [www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters](http://www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters)

Don't worry if you or your foster carers can't make it on Sunday 6 October or want to visit a different Merlin attraction. Foster carer members of the Fostering Network can always get money off entry to many other Merlin attractions across the UK, including:

- Madam Tussauds
  - Blackpool Tower
  - Chessington World of Adventures
  - SEA LIFE centres.

To take advantage of this member exclusive benefit, foster carer members should visit [www.fostering.net/member-offers](http://www.fostering.net/member-offers) (logging in to view the discount code).

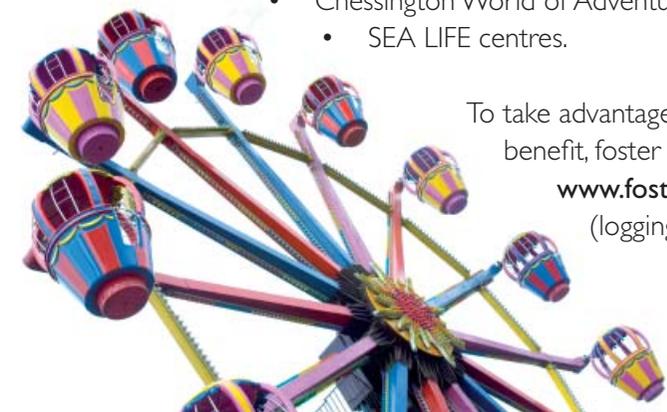
### 2) Walk the Difference

**Help us raise money and celebrate the sons and daughters of foster carers on Sunday 27 October with *Walk the Difference* – a fantastic sponsored family walk over the historic bridges of London.**

*Walk the Difference* is a five mile walk which crosses eight of London's iconic bridges, starting at Westminster at 10.30am and ending at Tower Bridge with a party until 2pm. We've also got a shorter step-free route for pushchairs or wheelchairs, making it ideal for all the family.

The walk is FREE to enter, however all entrants need to raise a minimum of £20 sponsorship. We'll support you all the way and there's no limit on how much you can fundraise! On the day entry fees will apply to anyone not registered (adults £5, under 16s £2.50).

Please join us in support of foster carers and their families, and to help raise money for the Fostering Network so that we can keep projects like *Sons & Daughters* going. You can find out more at [www.walkthedifference.org.uk](http://www.walkthedifference.org.uk) or by calling Laura on 020 7620 8403.



### 3) Blogging competition

After the success of last year's competition, we are re-running our blogging competition to give sons and daughters an opportunity to share their experiences of being part of a foster family.

We will display the blogs on our website and the best three will each receive a £25 voucher of their choice. Blogs can be between 100 and 300 words. Please let your sons and daughters know about the competition – they can enter at [www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters](http://www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters)

Here's a snippet from one of last year's entries:

**'Fostering - what does that word mean to me? Well to me it means looking after someone else's child when their birth family can't, keeping them safe and giving them a loving home...**

**I was a foster child when I was younger and I was lucky enough to be adopted so doing fostering now feels like I'm giving something back for helping me out and finding the perfect family for me.'**

Sophie, 15

blog

### 4) Event promotion

Following the success of previous years, fostering services who are members of the Fostering Network can promote their events on our website.

This gives you the opportunity to publicise what you are planning for *Sons & Daughters* and to inspire others to get involved. Or if you are stuck on what kind of events and activities to run, this is a great place to get some last minute ideas!

Register your events at [www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters](http://www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters)

### 5) Thank you cards

Three new 'thank you' cards are now available for members to download. Simply print as many as you need, write one for each of the sons and daughters in your fostering service, and send or give them out alongside your other 'thank you' activities.

Download the cards from [www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters](http://www.fostering.net/sons-and-daughters)



## Spreading the word

It is obviously vital that your foster carers and their sons and daughters know what you are planning for *Sons & Daughters*, but it is equally important to think about how you let the wider public know.

Public recognition will really make the sons and daughters of foster carers feel valued. Furthermore, it is a great way of reminding the public about the positive side to fostering – and is therefore a great way of attracting the interest of potential foster carers.



### 1) Letting your sons and daughters know

Be sure to tell your sons and daughters what you're planning as early as possible. This will help generate a sense of excitement about the activities, and also means you'll have more time to organise and plan.

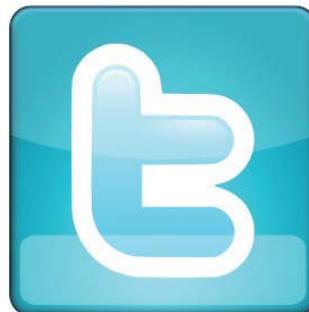
Try spreading the word to your sons and daughters and their parents using your usual channels, such as:

- email
- your website
- social media
- newsletters
- flyers.



Word of mouth can also come in very handy. Make sure all fostering service staff know about your plans and ask them to tell foster carers when they're out on visits. You can also tell the local foster care association (if you have one) so that they can let their fellow foster carers know.

You could also think about including information about *Sons & Daughters* in your email footer. You could say something like: **This October we're proud to be celebrating the sons and daughters of foster carers. Find out how we're saying thank you at [link to info on your website].**



### 2) Media

Media coverage is a great way of promoting success stories and celebrating sons and daughters. Local media outlets, such as newspapers, websites and radio stations, like to feature positive stories about people who may otherwise go unrecognised. Positive media coverage about fostering is also a good way of making sure that people are thinking about fostering and may be a way of increasing enquiries from prospective foster carers.

Think carefully about what you want to achieve and the messages you want to get across. If you would like help with drafting press releases for your stories, please contact [media@fostering.net](mailto:media@fostering.net)



### 3) Ways to generate coverage

#### **Case studies**

Personal stories are crucial to generating local media coverage. Case studies could be sons and daughters who are really involved in fostering or sons and daughters who went on to become foster carers themselves.

#### **Photography**

Alongside case studies, good pictures will be vital to help you get coverage. The media like to feature pictures of children but be sure to get relevant permissions.

#### **Blogs**

We find that blogs written by those involved in foster care, in this case sons and daughters, get a very positive response from the community. They are engaging and can give a great perspective on being part of a fostering family. If you let your local newspaper know that you have blogs available, they may print them as an article during the *Sons & Daughters* campaign. Find out about our blogging competition for sons and daughters on page 9.

#### **Social media**

Make sure your fostering service shares *Sons & Daughters* events, blogs and other activities through your social media channels. These make great content for Twitter and Facebook in particular and may be widely shared throughout your local community.

#### **Events**

Tell the media in advance about your *Sons & Daughters* event(s) to help with publicity.

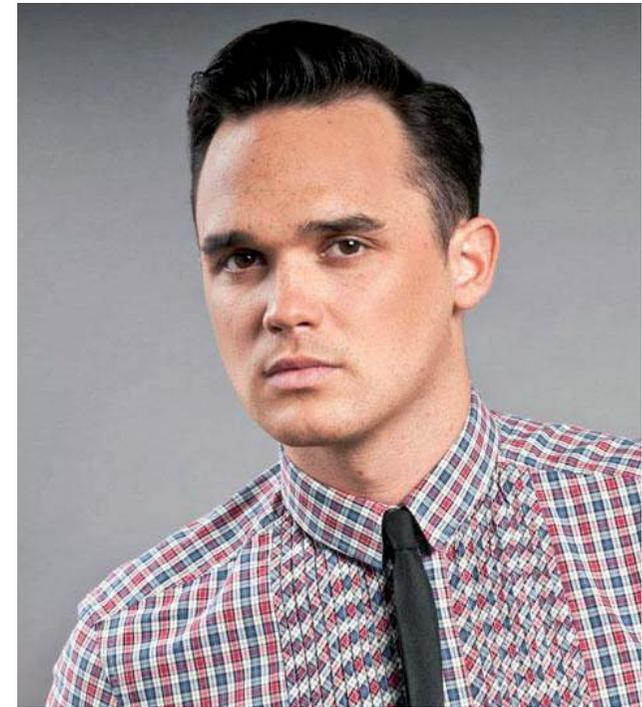
#### **Celebrities**

Working with a local celebrity can increase your chances of media coverage. Think about finding someone famous in your area with a connection to fostering or children, who could be the face of your campaign, attend events and do media interviews. You can use the Fostering Network's celebrity quotes and photographs in your promotional activity.

#### **Letters**

Ask a son or daughter of a foster carer to write a letter to a newspaper, highlighting what their family does and encouraging others to foster.

*Star of stage and screen and son of foster carers **Gareth Gates** has supported the Fostering Network for a number of years. You can use his quote (right) in your media activity.*



**'I am proud to be from a fostering family. My parents put themselves in the frame to care for some of the UK's most vulnerable children. They offered a home, security, stability and love to children because they wanted to make a difference to their lives.'**

**Fostering had a positive effect on my family, it helped me learn more about myself and develop a better understanding of others.'**

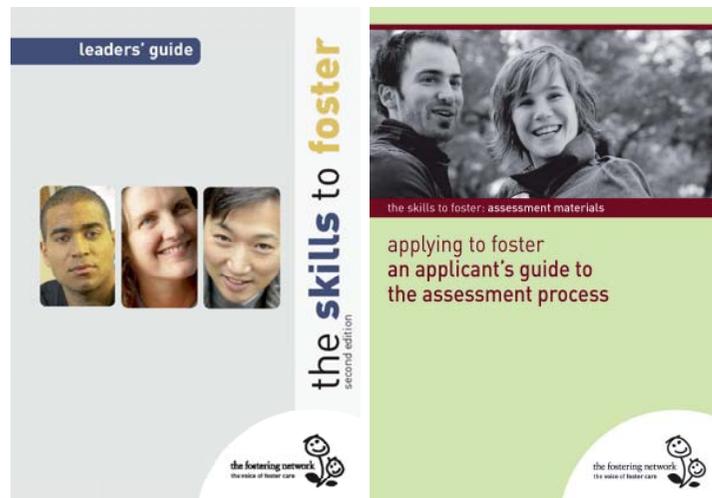
Gareth Gates

## Resources

### The Skills to Foster

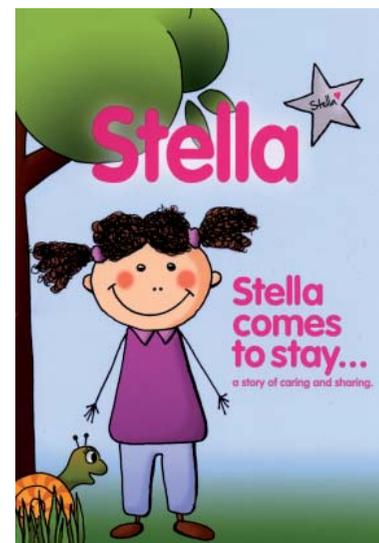
Sons and daughters and their role in fostering should be thought about from the earliest stages. If your fostering service uses *The Skills to Foster* pre-approval training, we strongly recommend that you run 'Session Seven' which is aimed at the sons and daughters of foster carers. The session helps to prepare children and young people for the challenges that fostering presents and ensures that they understand the reality of fostering.

The views of sons and daughters can also be captured at the assessment stage through the Fostering Network's *The Skills to Foster Assessment* materials. Using both parts of *The Skills to Foster* is a great way to engage sons and daughters at an initial stage, prepare them for the challenges they will face and help them to understand what being a fostering family will mean for them.



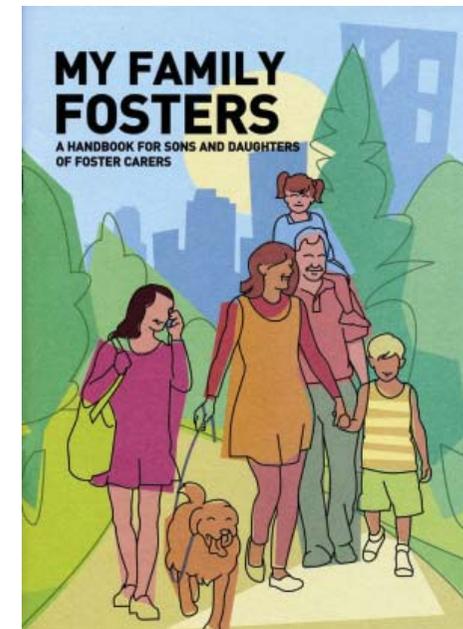
### Stella: a story of caring and sharing

The Fostering Network's young people's project in Scotland created *Stella: a story of caring and sharing* as a book to help children understand fostering and to help parents discuss fostering with them. The book was developed with a group of eight to 11-year-olds with experience of care and is aimed at younger children. It is a tale of a young girl coming to a new home and finding out about the fun and the challenges that face both her and the family that live there.



### My Family Fosters

*My Family Fosters* is a great resource for sons and daughters of foster carers, providing clear, realistic and practical information. This beautifully designed handbook has been developed with the input of sons and daughters of foster carers across the UK. It explains what fostering means and why children and young people come into foster care, as well as tackling some of the concerns that sons and daughters may have.



All resources are available to buy from [www.fosteringresources.co.uk](http://www.fosteringresources.co.uk)

## About us

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering, and we are dedicated to making foster care better for children.

As a membership organisation and the voice of foster care in the UK, we represent 58,000 foster carers and nearly 400 fostering services. We have been supporting foster carers and campaigning for change for nearly 40 years.

### Support for foster carers and fostering services

Through our membership, we provide vital support, advice and information to help foster carers and fostering service staff deal with the challenges they encounter in their day to day roles. Our membership benefits include:

- the latest information about fostering through our website, e-newsletters, and *Foster Care* magazine
- expert advice and support on fostering issues, including legal protection insurance for foster carers
- connections to the UK's fostering community through our online community
- influence at national level on the issues that matter
- a variety of exclusive discounts for foster carers, from money off family days out and holidays, to discounts on home insurance and mortgage fees.

Find out more about membership of the Fostering Network at [www.fostering.net/membership](http://www.fostering.net/membership)



**To find out more about the Fostering Network please contact:**

The Fostering Network  
87 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HA  
t 020 7620 6400  
e [info@fostering.net](mailto:info@fostering.net)

The Fostering Network Scotland  
2nd Floor, Ingram House,  
227 Ingram St, Glasgow G1 1DA  
t 0141 204 1400  
e [scotland@fostering.net](mailto:scotland@fostering.net)

The Fostering Network Wales  
1 Caspian Point, Pierhead Street,  
Cardiff Bay CF10 4DQ  
t 029 2044 0940  
e [wales@fostering.net](mailto:wales@fostering.net)

The Fostering Network Northern Ireland  
Unit 10, 40 Montgomery Road,  
Belfast BT6 9HL  
t 028 9070 5056  
e [ni@fostering.net](mailto:ni@fostering.net)

**[www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)**

Registered in England and Wales as a Limited Company No.1507277.  
Registered Charity No. 280852 in England and Wales and SC039338 in Scotland.

