

# Post adoption support – supporting you to achieve the best out of family life

In Southend we recognise that while parenting can be a rewarding and enjoyable experience at times it is also the most exhausting, frustrating and difficult journey you will ever be part of.

From experience we know that support is something that most families will require at different levels at different times throughout their adoption journey and these events have been developed to help provide you with this.

The children who join your family often come from a background of trauma, poor care, inconsistent parenting and have experienced losses prior to their placement for adoption. We therefore accept that to parent these children you are going to need additional tools, strategies and ideas.

Your children need to learn how to feel 'safe' and develop a relationship with you that will enable them to challenge the inner beliefs they have often developed about themselves through the early relationship experiences. It is therefore strongly believed that when adopters seek to develop their own insight and understanding into some of the challenges their children have previously experienced and how they present; that they in turn are supported to know how to respond and know when to seek additional support and guidance.

The purpose of sending you this leaflet is to ensure you are aware of the range of support available in Southend. Different topics will be relevant at different stages in your adoption journey and child's particular stage of development and we encourage you to stay connected and get involved.

We look forward to seeing you at these events and also would like to encourage you to send any feedback that you have regarding what has worked well or what you feel could be improved to:

[adoption@southend.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@southend.gov.uk)

You can also contact us in the following ways,

Southend Adoption Service  
Floor 7 Civic Centre  
Victoria Avenue  
Southend, Essex  
SS2 6ER

Tel 01702 212004

Send your contact details to [adoption@southend.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@southend.gov.uk) to join our mailing list and be kept updated on upcoming events

Find us on: Facebook – Southend Adoption Agency

## Core support for all adopters

### Sparkles

Sparkles is a parent and pre-school group run to provide further support to families at the beginning of their placements – it is an expectation that families with preschool age children will attend this group and this will be part of the adoption support plan for Southend children.

Parenting is not only the most important task adults do but it is widely accepted that it can also be very difficult at times and that is when adoption is not even part of the equation!

For adoptive parents they have they have the added adjustments to make i.e. Becoming new parents of children who have already experienced life in many different aspects and arrive with all of the demands any child has plus often many additional layers.

Historically adopters have suggested that 'Parent and Toddler' groups available within the wider community can feel inaccessible at times. The parents have often known each other since their ante- natal period and discussions often focus around birth and development details and many adopters have suggested they feel either that they end up sharing information about adoption they may otherwise not have wanted to, that other parents cannot share or understand the same feelings and experiences and that if their child has behaviour challenges they do not feel comfortable taking them to these environments.

The idea of the Parent and Preschool group for adopters is to create a further opportunity for you to meet with other adoptive families, but primarily provide an opportunity for you to play one to one with your own child using theraplay techniques.

### What is Theraplay?

It is a lively, fun, interactive play which seeks to enable children to replace inappropriate solutions and behaviour with effective responses and at the same time promote secure attachment and increase self-esteem. It is physical and active.

The primary focus is the relationship between the carer and child and the basic assumption is that change if needed is possible and that attachment is enhanced.

Parents have said:

I do hope people make the effort to come as I am sure they will benefit as we have.

I did find some of the exercises really useful and I do use them at home. They have been particularly good for Sonia as she does have an issue with contact and the songs allow me to touch her and get close without her feeling awkward. It is fine to be close when on her terms though!!

Thanks for your time and effort and that of your colleagues.

Sparkles has been wonderful for us and I think it is such an important resource to help support new adopters and their children. It really helped us find our feet in the early days and get used to getting out and about with a new little one. It helps lead into braving new playgroups. The early days can be a bit of a whirlwind and having something like Sparkles is like having someone hold your hand.

I wish Sparkles had been around when I adopted my two older children. I would have loved to have taken them to such a fantastic group where everyone is accepted for who they are and there isn't any discrimination. Thank you

## Additional support available for all adopters

### Support Training Advice Guidance Group (STAG)

The STAG group is a bi-monthly group meeting and is open to all adopters and prospective adopters and approved adopters waiting and those with children placed in their care.

The aim of the group is not only for adopters to come together and share their own unique experiences but also to have the opportunity to gain further information, strategies and ideas regarding a host of topics from the Adoption Team and Guest speakers.

The STAG group is also an opportunity for our Adoption Forum to come together to share ideas and feedback with the service as a whole.

#### **Topics include:**

Self-Care and wellbeing

Transitions

Supporting your Child in Education

Adolescence and parenthood

Emotional Wellbeing of a Child

Trauma informed parenting/therapeutic parenting

Sharing Difficult Information

Child Brain Development/Attachment/Neuroscience

Walk The Line – The challenges of social media

## Adopt East Groups

There are several groups run through Adopt East based in Essex that Southend families are able to access, please contact either your allocated social worker at Southend or the Duty Social worker to find out more.

- **Early Permanence Support Group ONLINE** – if you are currently looking after a child in ‘early permanence, come to join other families virtually.
- **LGBTQ+ Families Group ONLINE**
- **Global Majority Families Group ONLINE** (in development)
- **Dad’s Group** Groups for Adoptive Dad’s and their children
- **SHINE** – the ‘Sparkles’ for families living in or close to our neighbouring authority Essex for pre-school aged children and families (closest location dates on programme)
- **EPIC** - Adopter led Saturday meets for families of children aged **5-11**, at soft play / activities like climbing walls (closest location dates on programme)

### **Future Initiative Hub Model for Adopters ran by Adopter’s**

This is primarily an Essex based hub model which looks to create a network of adoptive families led by a mentor adoptive family.

### **Future Initiative Online Webinar Sessions with Adopt East**

These will be virtual sessions run for all adoptive families within the Adopt East Alliance, in which different topics will be presented and shared.

## Additional opportunities for support

In Southend we try to offer support that meets the needs of the children and their families from time to time. We have various groups that we can run but are only able to do this when there is the demand and commitment to them.

These can include:

### The Just Right State Children's Programme

The Just Right State Children's Programme uses 'The Scared Gang' books to help children understand the different survival and attachment patterns of behaviour. The aim is to enable children to become more emotionally aware of themselves and of others, to give them simple tools to help them to self-regulate and achieve the just right state. The Parents Programme enhances parents' awareness of their own engagement patterns and how this impacts on their child's emotional state. It also addresses the underlying reasons for the child's behaviour.

### Non Violent Resistance (NVR)– Parent Programme (available through Essex Adoption Agency)

It is recognised that interactions between adults and a child with problems are usually characterised by both sides being locked in a struggle for control of the other. Adults are often unaware of the way they use the language of control and obedience when describing their relationship with their child. It is common for parents to state "he won't let me" or "I have to" to preface their accounts of daily recurring conflict.

Psychological therapy will not help if the young person does not engage. In fact, therapy may even reinforce a young person's negative view of themselves and others, and exclude carers, social workers and teachers from the process. Instead, NVR works with the adults who are caring for a young person so, even if a child does not engage, these adults are not rendered helpless.

NVR is designed to help parents and carers to:

- De-escalate, reduce anger and aggression in the interaction with the child.
- Stop giving in to demanding and controlling behaviour.
- Build a support network between home, school and community.
- Raise their personal presence, determination and persistence by carefully planning and carrying out forms of action with the help of other adults.
- Take action aimed at promoting negotiation, reconciliation and restoration of fractured relationships.

## Nurturing Attachment Therapeutic Parenting Programme (through Adopt East/ Families Empowered)

Children who have been impacted by developmental trauma in their past can often present as though they do not want to be parented, they are unable to trust and are often stuck in their internal sense of shame.

This is a programme which incorporates the principles of dyadic developmental psychotherapy and seeks to support adopters to develop greater insight not only into their child's presenting behaviours but also the impact of what they themselves bring to the relationship.

## Transition Meetings and Education Meetings

For adopted children change and transitions can be extremely challenging as it impacts their sense of safety and as a result they can find it difficult to manage. Change that has been outside of their control has often been a large part of their early histories and even for very young children with no conscious memories of previous events; change can trigger traumatic memories and big reactions.

Education is a necessity for all children but the current nature of schools is such that there are multiple transitions throughout each and every day.

When a child is joining your family if they are of school age we will seek to support you with a transition meeting at the school, to explore strategies and promote awareness to your individual child's needs. These meetings can also be arranged as your child navigates from eg. primary to secondary.

## Super Siblings

When there is a need, we have run siblings groups for either children who are going to have a sibling placed or where they may be a birth child in an adopted family waiting for a sibling to be placed. The groups create an opportunity to meet with other children in similar situations to themselves. We recognise it can be a challenging and difficult time for children to wait for a child to be placed in their family or adjust to becoming a sibling. The group will give your child an opportunity to share their feelings, ask any questions, make new friends and generally have fun together. Activities are centred around theraplay techniques, which your child will be able to play with their new sibling and understand the importance of these simple games.

These are targeted at primary school age.

## Mentoring Programme for Adopters

Initially developed in partnership with Cornerstone ( a group established by Adopter's) we have now established our peer mentoring programme for prospective adoptive parents and approved adopters. The aim of this is to provide emotional support, encouragement, increase confidence and preparedness for the adoption journey ahead

All of the Mentors are adopters themselves and have a wealth of their own experience. They are able to give you emotional support and impartial advice. We encourage you to make use of this programme.

## Support Network Training

These events are run to support your close friends and family to understand what adoption is all about. They will gain insight into the challenges that adopted children may have faced and the types of backgrounds factors that could be present in their past. Your friends and relatives will be encouraged to think about and explore the various ways in which they can support your placement.

*Traditional African Proverb – ‘it takes a village to raise a child’*

## Christmas and Summer Parties

A great social event held twice per year for all our Southend families to attend.

Please do get in touch with us to ensure we have your up-to-date details to ensure you are on our mailing lists at [AdoptionAdmin@southend.gov.uk](mailto:AdoptionAdmin@southend.gov.uk)

## Post adoption assessments

At any point in your adoption journey a family can request an assessment of post adoption support needs.

The support offered varies as all situations are unique. This could be provision of advice and signposting. It may also require that we complete a Full Post Adoption Assessment in order to gain an accurate picture of what the need is.

To carry out a Post Adoption Assessment we may ask you to complete various questionnaires, complete a MIM assessment or a Family Picture.

As a family you may be encouraged to participate in one of the available programmes if it would support your needs at the time.

As children grow up they may need some therapeutic life story work to help them make sense of their history in a developmentally sensitive way. This provision can be accessed via funding from the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).

If an additional support/therapeutic need is identified an application can be made to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) for assistance with the cost. There are many types of therapeutic support which are funded by the ASF namely; Theraplay, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Sensory Attachment Integration Therapy, Art / Music / Drama therapy, Attachment Focused Therapy amongst other modalities.

More information can be found on the Adoption Support Fund via the link below:

<https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/adoption-support/financial-support/adoption-support-fund>



## 2023 Support Groups/Activities at a Glance

### January

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Monday 9 January	STAG - Open forum 2	N/A
Wednesday 11 January	Sparkles	Morning
Wednesday 18 January	Friends and family support evening	7pm – 8:30pm
Saturday 21 January	Epic (Essex children aged 5-11 SS4)	3:30pm – 5:30pm
Wednesday 25 January	Sparkles	Morning

### February

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 5 February	Workshop (evening)	6:30pm – 8:30pm
Thursday 6 February	Workshop (day 1)	9:15am – 4:30pm
Friday 7 February	Workshop (day 2)	9:15am – 4:30pm
Monday 10 February	Workshop (day 3)	9:15am – 4:30pm
Wednesday 15 February	Sparkles	Morning
Monday 20 February	Shine (Essex Sparkles)	Morning
Saturday 25 February	Dads group	Morning

### March

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 1 March	Sparkles	Morning
Monday 6 March	Shine (Essex Sparkles)	Morning
Monday 6 March	STAG - Importance of Self Care	7pm – 8:30pm
Saturday 18 March	Epic (Essex children aged 5-11 SS4)	3:30pm – 5:30pm

### April

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 12 April	Sparkles	Morning
Monday 17 April	Shine (Essex Sparkles)	Morning
Wednesday 26 April	Sparkles	Morning

## May

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Monday 8 May	STAG - Parenting a Traumatized Child	6pm – 7:30pm
Wednesday 10 May	Sparkles	Morning
Monday 15 May	Shine (Essex Sparkles)	Morning
Wednesday 17 May	Friends and Family	Evening
Saturday 20 May	Epic (Essex children aged 5-11 SS4)	3:30pm – 5:30pm
Wednesday 24 May	Sparkles	Morning
Saturday 27 May	Dads group (Essex)	Morning

## June

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 7 June	Sparkles	Evening
Wednesday 7 June	Prep workshop (evening)	6:30pm – 7:30pm
Thursday 8 June	Prep workshop (day 1)	9:15am – 4:30pm
Friday 9 June	Prep workshop (day 2)	9:15am – 4:30pm
Monday 12 June	Prep workshop (day 3)	9:15am – 4:30pm
Monday 12 June	Shine (Essex Sparkles)	Morning
Tuesday 13 June	Prep workshop (day 4)	9:15am – 4:30pm
Wednesday 21 June	Sparkles	Morning

## July

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Monday 3 July	Shine (Essex Sparkles)	Morning
Monday 3 July	STAG - Parenting the adolescent	6pm – 7:30pm
Wednesday 5 July	Sparkles	Morning
Wednesday 19 July	Sparkles	Morning

## August

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 2 August	Sparkles	Morning
Wednesday 9 August	Friends and Family evening	7pm – 7:30pm
Wednesday 16 August	Sparkles	Morning
Saturday 26 August	Dads group (Essex)	Morning
Wednesday 30 August	Sparkles	Morning

## September

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 13 September	Sparkles	Morning
Wednesday 27 September	Sparkles	Morning

## October

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 11 October	Sparkles	Morning
Wednesday 25 October	Sparkles	Morning
Wednesday 25 October	Prep workshop (evening)	6:30pm – 7:30pm
Thursday 26 October	Prep workshop (day 1)	9:15 am – 4:30pm
Friday 27 October	Prep workshop (day 2)	9:15 am – 4:30pm
Monday 30 October	Prep workshop (day 3)	9:15 am – 4:30pm
Tuesday 31 October	Prep workshop (day 4)	9:15 am – 4:30pm

## November

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Saturday 4 November	Dads group (Essex)	Morning
Wednesday 8 November	Sparkles	Morning
Wednesday 22 November	Sparkles	Morning

## December

Date	Group/Activity	Time
Wednesday 6 November	Friends and family evening	6pm – 7:30pm

STAG, CAT and evening events are held at the Civic Centre, daytime workshops are held at Tickfield Centre.

Please do contact the duty worker on 01702 212004 / [adoption@southend.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@southend.gov.uk) to book onto any of the ESSEX based support events.