



SOUTH WEST LONDON ADOPTION

KINGSTON ■ MERTON ■ RICHMOND ■ SUTTON

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2017

## Training

On **Thursday 9 November**, Sarah Lloyd, Specialist Occupational Therapist and Play Therapist, will deliver training on **Improving Sensory Processing in traumatised Children - Building Underdeveloped Systems**.

Children who have been abused and neglected have often missed out on all sorts of movement experiences. For example, small children may have spent long hours strapped in a buggy or left without food and stimulation. While this might seem unimportant compared to some things they have experienced, missing out on these early movement experiences can leave children dysregulated on a physical as well as a psychological level. This means that they may seem quite “hyped up” or frenetic in their activities in a way that feels different to the normal exuberance or energy of children. Their movements often lack the smooth, well co-ordinated quality of typically developing children – they may find themselves bumping into things, tripping up or unable to do things like hold a pencil properly or use cutlery. These children often struggle to settle into their new families and seem to keep reacting to things as if they were still in abusive situations. Although this usually overlaps with unresolved trauma, it is often difficult for the children to make use of psychological therapies or become engaged in learning until they become more able to understand their bodies and tune into how they are feeling on a physical as well as a psychological level.

Sensory Integration Theory describes, on a neurological level, how different sorts of movement experiences in a baby and developing child, taking

place within a nurturing environment, build bodily awareness and functioning. These are the body’s foundation systems on which emotional and social development can be built. If a child can’t tell you whether they’re hot or cold or gauge how tight to squeeze when they give a hug, they’re unlikely to be able to understand and manage their feelings well. So if a child has poor bodily awareness and functioning it is important to address this before thinking about psychological therapies or trying to build social and emotional regulation.

This training day will bring together Sensory Integration Theory and an understanding of the impact of trauma on the developing brain. Sarah will use this to think about the child’s underdeveloped systems and look at how schools, therapists and families can work together to try and rebuild these foundation systems. This model is different to working with children with sensory processing disorders in that it views these systems as underdeveloped rather than there being something wrong with the way the information is processed by the brain. By building these underdeveloped systems children can become better able to understand themselves and really begin to thrive.

Parents who have accessed this training talk about how hopeful and empowered they feel, and follow up sessions have shown how much they have been able to work to improve their child’s sensory processing.

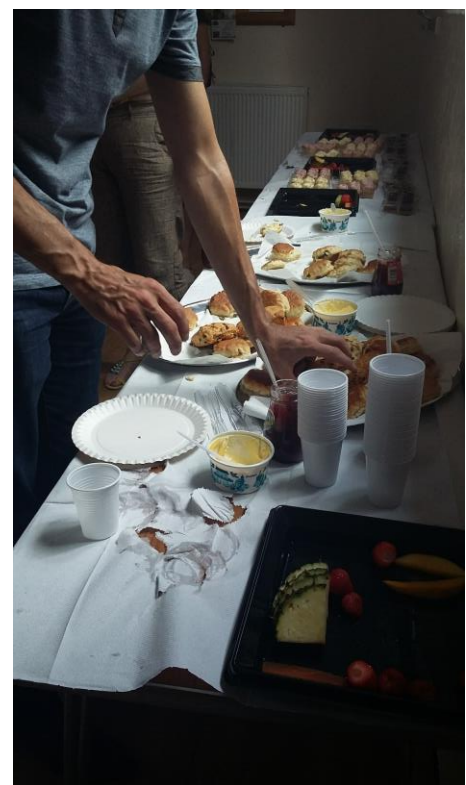
**Save the date more information to follow.**

## Adoption Fun Day

This year our fun day was in a church in Carshalton Beeches and I hope everyone who went agrees that the setting worked well. There was a lot of space both indoors and outside for us to have all our activities - and to seek respite from the wonderful, but very hot, sunshine!

Nearly 70 families came and joined in a variety of activities including making masks, decorating biscuits, having their faces painted and exploring the fire engine. Once faces had been painted and masks were ready to show off, a few of you braved the photo booth to pose like superstars in front of the camera and take your printed photos home as a memento of the day. One little girl proudly showed me her photos on the way out: she had some on her own, some with her brother and I even spotted her favourite cuddly bunny posing in one!

With all that activity going on, the sandwiches, cream tea and cakes were devoured as were the ice creams from our very own ice cream van, which played his music to let us all know he had arrived, adding to the happy and sunny atmosphere of the day.





We didn't forget the adults this year either. Many of you snuck off to a quiet space for a much deserved head, neck and shoulder massage.

The more energetic amongst you made good use of the inflatable assault course to race each other through the swinging bollards, up the rope wall and then finally dropping down the slide at the end. There was also a football pitch set up in garden and the two experts there offered several sessions of learning new skills as well as just running around and playing football.

The activity I saw everyone coming out of rosy faced but with beaming smiles was the drumming workshop. Kojo, from The Gary Mason Foundation, was animated, enthusiastic and, from the session I watched, so good with the children and young people – he was gentle and guided them to the right rhythms in a sympathetic and gentle way. He just carried on drumming and the session carried on way beyond the scheduled half an hour but with good reason – I don't think anyone wanted to stop – not even for food.

Many of you have already completed a feedback form. For those who didn't, we would be grateful if you could take the time to do so to help us learn more about what you think will make an even better event next year.

## Adoption Drop-Ins

Achieving for Children (previously Kingston and Richmond) run a drop-in morning for all adoptive parents and children once a month in Hampton. Drop-ins are a great opportunity to meet other adoptive parents in an informal and child-friendly environment.

Join us for a relaxing morning and please feel free to come along with or without your children. We have inter-country and domestic adoptive parents and parents of children of all ages coming along. The next drop-in sessions will be on the following Friday mornings from 9.45-11.45am in 2017:

**Friday 8 September**  
**Friday 10 November**

**Friday 13 October**  
**Friday 8 December**

Children under 5 are welcome and toys and games are provided. If you would like to attend Contact John Grey for venue information on 020 8547 4620 or email him at:

[John.grey@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:John.grey@achievingforchildren.org.uk)

## Adoption UK Support Group Diary Dates

The South London Adoption UK Group welcome adopters from the South West London Adoption Consortium at their events, adopters MUST contact Adoption UK to book onto any event beforehand and it is helpful if they say which Adoption Agency they are with (i.e. Sutton, Merton, Kingston or Richmond). Please contact SW London Group Co-ordinators Amanda or Suzanne via email, for more information. Amanda: [amanda@gouldzone.co.uk](mailto:amanda@gouldzone.co.uk) Suzanne: [suzanne.clark@idealsystems ltd.co.uk](mailto:suzanne.clark@idealsystems ltd.co.uk)

<b>JULY</b>		
Friday 21 July, 10.30am	Wacky Warehouse Soft play in SW19	Parents with pre-school children
<b>AUGUST</b>		
TBA	Holiday meet ups	Parents and children
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>		
Sunday 1 September, 2pm	Wimbledon Common Open Stables Day	All plus dogs

\*Where the numbers are limited we will allocated spaces on a first-come-first-served basis.

## We Are Family

We Are Family are an adoption support community that operates in and around London. They have a group of members with toddlers under 5 who started getting together on a monthly basis in Twickenham. As this is not a regular event, but if you are adopters with little ones who would like to meet other adopters in the same situation, please contact us at:

[richmond@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk](mailto:richmond@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk)

For details of single adopters meetings please contact: [singles@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk](mailto:singles@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk)

For details of Prospective Adopter Group meetings please contact:

[prospective@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk](mailto:prospective@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk)

We Are Family welcome all adopters, including prospective and approved adopters. All types of families attend their activities – gay, lesbian, straight, single or couples. Many fathers come along, either alone or with their partners. They actively support and provide ‘organic buddying’ through the regular initiatives, which you are welcome to attend.

WAF also has a new PAN London WAF group which is working on the subject of Adopted Children in School. This group is currently organising an event together with PAC-UK and Adoption North London for Practical Strategies for support with managing behaviours and the attainment gap, on June 19th in Islington. Spaces are free but limited. If you would like to go along, please contact:

[richmond@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk](mailto:richmond@wearefamilyadoption.co.uk)

**We Are Family's website and blog has moved to a new site: [www.wearefamilyadoption.org.uk](http://www.wearefamilyadoption.org.uk)**

## Confused about Universal Credit!?

Universal Credit is a new benefit for people of working age that's gradually replacing new claims for income support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, child tax credit, working tax credit and housing benefit. We know that many families with disabled children are worried and confused about Universal Credit. Use the postcode checker at

[www.universalcreditinfo.net](http://www.universalcreditinfo.net) to find out if you are in a Universal Credit full service area. A timetable for the roll-out of Universal Credit full service is available at the [www.GOV.UK](http://www.GOV.UK) website. 'Contact a Family' have produced a number of podcasts to help. Watch 'What is Universal Credit?', where parent advisor, Gail, sheds some light on this new benefit being rolled out across the country.



## Alternatives

Many of the adopters I meet have had to be creative in how they parent their children, and often had to adapt to new situations and challenges. I was mindful of this when speaking to an adopter recently, and thought it might be helpful to share her experience of trying something 'different'. She and her teenage daughter were on holiday, and met a Reiki practitioner.

Reiki is Japanese for 'universal life energy', and is also the word used to describe a system of natural healing, or alternative medicine. While clinical research has not been able to demonstrate the effectiveness of Reiki to treat medical conditions, many people have found that it has helped them with emotional and physical suffering.

The adopter told me that her daughter was willing to try Reiki, but didn't want the practitioner to touch her; the practice usually involves the practitioner passing their hands over the client's body as they attempt to transfer positive energy to the client's body.

The practitioner agreed not to touch the young person, and held her hands above the young person's head for ten minutes, holding them close without making contact. The young person has ADHD, had been hyperactive that day, and requested that her mother stay with her during the treatment as she felt anxious.

The young person's mother told me that her daughter found the experience calming, she observed, "I watched a complete transformation in those ten minutes, the practitioner stated that any longer and she would have been asleep".

While there could be a number of reasons why the experience had that calming effect on the young person, I wanted to share it as it prompted me to think that there may always be something different or new to try, something which may help.

## Childrens Competition

This year's National Adoption Week theme is siblings and a competition is now open to all siblings to show using pictures, words or video 'why you love your brother(s) or sister(s).'

Open to children aged 11 and under. The Judges will be looking for creative entries that capture the spirit of the sibling relationship.

The winner will be invited to attend the awards ceremony and receive a £100 shopping voucher.

Please send all design either by email to [awards@first4adoption.org.uk](mailto:awards@first4adoption.org.uk), or by post to First4Adoption, 48 Mecklenburgh Square, London, WC1N 2QA. All entries will be shown on the First4Adoption website and at the awards ceremony.



## Online Consultation

You may know that in April 2017 the Government passed an amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill that will require the appointment of a Designated Teacher for previously looked-after children and Virtual School Heads to offer information and advice to adoptive and special guardianship families and their children's schools.

PAC-UK are seeking the views of adoptive and special guardianship families. The consultation will give you the opportunity to voice your hopes and experiences of virtual school involvement, and to offer ideas that you may have on what can be done to make these changes workable for everyone.

If you are interested in having your say the survey is short and takes participants an average of 10 minutes to complete at:

[https://goldpsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eXbsGqS9SAluMVn](https://goldpsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXbsGqS9SAluMVn)

## Your News

We would like to hear from you about your adoption experiences, which we can share within this newsletter. Anonymity can easily be provided. Your shared experiences offer so much comfort to others and help to break down that feeling of isolation. So please do contact us so that we can make this newsletter more pertinent to your family. Our contacts details are on the last page.

## TA-HSB

Technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour (TA-HSB) is when children and young people use the internet or other technology to engage in sexual activity that may be harmful to themselves and others.

TA-HSB covers a range of behaviour including the developmentally inappropriate use of pornography, online sexual abuse, grooming and sexting.

Little is known about the full range of TA-HSB displayed by children and young people. So the NSPCC carried out research to explore:

- how many young people participating in our service for harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) have engaged in TA-HSB
- their backgrounds and characteristics
- links between TA-HSB and offline HSB
- how professionals respond to TA-HSB.

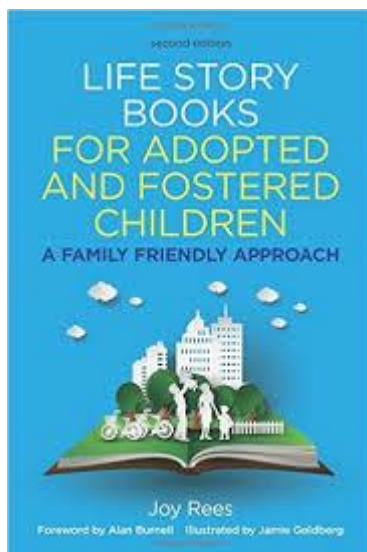
A review of the literature about online harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) was carried out to help inform and update guidance for practitioners working with children and young people with harmful sexual behaviour. The report brings together current research on the developmental appropriateness of children's sexual behaviour online and the comparison and cross-over between children and young people displaying online and offline HSB.

This report is part of our NSPCC [Impact and evidence series](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/review-children-young-people-harmful-sexual-behaviour-online/) and can be downloaded at: [www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/review-children-young-people-harmful-sexual-behaviour-online/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/review-children-young-people-harmful-sexual-behaviour-online/)

## A Good Read

Joy Rees latest book about life story work has recently been published. This book gives very helpful up to date advice about how life story books should be prepared for adopted children. Joy now advises that life story books should have four different sections. The first section, at the beginning of the life story book, should have information about the child's current life with their adopted family. The second section should be about their life prior to being placed with their adopters. The third section should have more information about their current life including information about meeting their adopters, moving into their current home and their Celebratory Court Hearing. The fourth, final, section should include information about their future life, to seek to give the child a sense of a hopeful future.

This book contains very helpful advice and is highly recommended. The title of the book is [Life Story Books for Adopted and Fostered Children](#), the publisher is Jessica Kingsley.



## Contact Us



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