

Adoptive family forum

The Adoption North
London Newsletter



Issue 6

**Body and soul
support**

**Reunion
and beyond**

**VIPP parenting
sessions**

**Keeping Life
Story Books
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**Great
behaviour
breakdown**

**Family recipe
- traditional
German cake**

We are family



Editorial board

- Angela Winston, parent
- Rachel Field, parent
- Lorna Rook, Adoption Consortium Manager
- Natalie Salaman, Adoption Support Social Worker
- Jo Mendel, Adoption Support Social Worker
- Valerie Forrest, Adoption Support Senior Practitioner
- Vijay Jeshram, Marketing Officer



Welcome to the Adoption North London newsletter. This has been produced by Adoption North London, a consortium of six north London boroughs Camden; Barnet; Enfield; Hackney; Haringey and Islington. Further information about the consortium and the work we do can be found at www.adoptionnorthlondon.co.uk

We want this newsletter to provide you with news and information you need to know and want to read about. Your stories can help us achieve that so if you have anything you wish to share with us please get in touch with your adoption support social worker.

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Training dates for your diary

To book a place at one of the training sessions below, please contact your adoption support social worker or visit www.adoptionnorthlondon.co.uk for further details.



Talking to Your Child about Adoption (under 11s)
Trainer: Judith Ellis, Hosted by Barnet

Great Behaviour Breakdown Model

Trainers: Denise Golding and Zach Gomm
NB: Two sessions to choose from. Each session consists of four days. An application for funding is made through the adoption support fund.

SESSION ONE



SESSION TWO



Contacts

Barnet

T: 020 8359 5705
E: adoption@barnet.gov.uk

Camden

T: 020 7974 6165 or 020 7974 3082
E: ssdpermanentplacementteam@camden.gov.uk

Enfield

T: 020 8379 8490 or 020 8379 8190
E: adoption@enfield.gov.uk

Hackney

T: 020 8356 5379
E: permanencyservice.duty@hackney.gov.uk

Haringey

T: 020 8489 3706
E: adoption@haringey.gov.uk

Islington

T: 020 7527 4400
adoption@islington.gov.uk

Body & Soul Adoption Support Programmes

Since 2015, Body & Soul has been providing Adoption Support Services for our Consortium (North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium) and beyond. The Young Explorer Programme (children 8-12 years); Teen Spirit (young people 13-16) and the Parents' Place begin with a four-session course for each age group. They take place on Saturdays at Body & Soul's unique, purpose-built, centre in Islington.

For Young Explorers and Teens, these sessions provide an opportunity to express themselves and explore life's challenges with others who have a shared experience of adoption. The dedicated team is professionally experienced and skilled in teaching, drama-therapy, adoption, mindfulness, film, youth work and music and some are personally

motivated by their own experience of adoption. With an emphasis on group support, young people have the chance to try out new things and activities they already know they like. It is somewhere they can be themselves and feel supported through anything they might be facing in their lives. At the same time parents have a break for the duration of the session They can access learning and support delivered by therapists helping to manage the emotional stress of parenting and meeting the needs of their child.

Everyone is provided with the opportunity of continued support, through monthly 'reconnection days', continuing to build peer relationship, access ongoing therapeutic support and build a greater sense of community connection.



"When I first saw it I was a bit nervous, but I was excited because you could meet other people who were going through the same experience as you. I thought it wouldn't be as good as it is...I don't know, it just sounded a bit weird, but it's so much better"

A Teen Spirit Adoption Member

Feedback on our programmes has been extremely positive!



"Love the fact that they get a call from a mentor which means a lot to her, and the fact that the young people are adopted like her and parents share similar problems."

"It's fun because you get to learn about other people and how they feel about being adopted."

"I can talk to other people here and I don't have to hide anything"

"It has helped parents to look at things differently"

"My favourite activity has been being with everybody every week"

"I've learnt from other people in the group that it's okay to share your feelings about being adopted."

"It seems pretty brilliant all round to me!"

"It has helped me to cope when feeling angry or sad"

"It is fun, calming, and doesn't feel like therapy."

Reunion and Beyond

By adopted adult John* aged 37 *not real name



I was thinking about it for a long time. Finally, aged 37, I took steps to search for my birth parents. Before then, even though my adoptive parents have always been open about my adoption, I felt this would upset them too much.

At first, I was just curious to know the reasons why adoption might have been the best or the only option for me. But I could not avoid the feeling of having been rejected. I felt that finding out the real story would be the best way to confront or dispel that .

When I saw my adoption file, I soon discovered that my guesses were completely wrong. I only realised in retrospect that I'd been assuming my birth mother was in some helpless situation, because it was more comforting if my adoption was inevitable. But when I read the truth, I preferred it: she was a law student, my birth father an English student. I liked this version better because I could recognise some of myself in it.

Later I travelled to the records office

to see if my birth mother had later married (she had, and I had a half-brother and half-sister) and if so, to find out her new name. Once I found that, it took only a moment to find her online. But the reality is that this simple process took me many months: with each new discovery, I found I needed to take time for it to sink in and to get my courage up for the next step.

The hardest one was to get in touch with my birth mother. Everything before this point seemed just theoretical, but this would be real, and carried the real risk of rejection. I couldn't then - and can't now - say precisely what I hoped for in making contact. But when, several weeks after the social workers had written to her, I had a call to say that she

had called back and wanted to hear from me, it was overwhelming. In quick succession, I felt panicked (there's no going back now!), tearful and excited.

Since then, we've been exchanging letters and gradually getting to know each other. And at the same time, something similar has been happening in my relationship with my adoptive parents: it hasn't been harmed at all by my search; if anything, it's better now as I'm being more open about the impact of adoption on me.

John's words and emotions are indicative of many adopted people who choose to try and find out more information about their birth family and their history. Many adopted people wonder what their birth parents/ family look like; and if they resemble any of them. Some approach their local adoption support services for help to find their records, provide support and prepare their files to be read.

Many children adopted today have some form of exchange contact with birth relatives. Once your child turns 18 they can choose how to continue this. They can ask their Local Authority for an intermediary to approach an adult birth relative about contact or reunion. The social worker will discuss the process with the adoptee and help organise, manage and support a reunion. Adoption North London runs a bi-monthly support group for adopted adults. It is run by adopted adults with support from the adoption support teams and takes place in Islington.

If you have any questions about any of these services please contact your local borough's Adoption Support Service – see page 2 for contact details.

Seeing more clearly



I was upset. I had been round the houses trying to get professional help for my daughter who was exhibiting extreme behaviour around food. We had finally been referred to CAMHS (Child and

Adolescent Mental Health Services) and after an assessment their solution was to offer me parenting sessions to support attachment – something called VIPP. I felt they were blaming me for my daughter's behaviour. How was it MY fault?

VIPP-SD stands for Video Feedback Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting and Sensitive Discipline. The programme has been so successful that is offered to all adoptive parents in the Netherlands. It is currently being rolled out in the UK by the Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

Reluctantly, I swallowed my pride and agreed. After all, I reasoned, none of us are perfect parents. I didn't want to say I had turned down something that could have helped us all.

Looking back now, I know it was one of the best decisions I have taken on behalf of our family. From feeling out of my depth, I now have confidence born from tools and strategies to cope with the inevitable difficult behaviour. I also have a deeper understanding of my daughter, of how she thinks and how she sees the world.

Some highlights and lightbulb moments for me:

- Watching the film of her catching hold of her own fingers behind her back as she struggled to obey 'don't touch the toys'
- Seeing how she constantly glanced towards me for reassurance, before doing nearly everything; how my attention was like sunlight to her
- Hearing my husband say incredulously 'but you make it look so easy!' as I explained just how hard it was for me to manage the constant attention needed, the responding, rewarding, cajoling ...

The programme is manualised, so that the learning is delivered in a uniform way for each participant. However there was always plenty of time to talk to the practitioner about the programme, about behaviour, and about my own feelings. I always felt heard, always supported, never felt judged.

VIPP S-D Q&A

Q Who is the programme for?

A The VIPP programme is for families with children aged six months to six years old. Research suggests it's best to start the programme between 3-12 months after you joined together as a family.

Q What does it involve?

A A specially trained professional comes to your family home for up to seven visits, with each visit taking about an hour and half.

You and your child are given some basic things to do such as playing together, tidying up and having a meal, which are recorded on video. After the filming, you and the practitioner watch the recording from the previous visit, and think together about what can be seen.

Q How long does the programme last?

A The programme is spaced over a 4-6 month period and the visits are usually arranged between two weeks and one month apart.

Q How can I sign up for it?

A An application to the Adoption Support Fund can be made to pay for this programme. If you are interested in taking part your social worker can refer you to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, once the funding has been approved.

Q What is the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust?

A Based in North London, the Trust is known nationally and internationally for excellence in the mental health and emotional wellbeing field, and we provide many services for children and families.

Q Where can I get more information?

A You can contact the programme leads Dr Rachel James or Paul Dugmore on **020 8938 2632/2042**, or email rjames@tavi-port.nhs.uk or pdugmore@tavi-port.nhs.uk

You can also contact your adoption support social worker from the Consortium borough that is supporting you – see page 2 for contact details.



Power of Poems

Since I was adopted in 2005, every year I decided to write a letter or a poem to my mum. I wrote them to show my appreciation and love for her, for everything she has done (and continues to do) for me. Every year gets trickier, because I have to write something "better" or more intricate, to raise the bar as such. One year I decided to write a full length poem. The first half is more metaphorical, a story that painted a picture. The second half was more freehand and more relaxed.

Of course, when I showed it to her I didn't realise she would love it that much. She suggested I send it to the Council's Social Services team in the hope it would get published. To my surprise, the team said yes – I just had to write a side explanation of our story and my inspiration behind it.

My only goal is to let my mum how much I love her. To show her (instead of just saying it all the time) that I respect her, I think of her as my role model, that I love her so very much. That sometimes

I forget that I'm not of her blood, and that there are some things more important than biological relationships. That nurture and kindness goes much further than "naturally" having a child yourself. I say naturally because my mum is naturally my mum. It's everything I know, really.

So every year I aim to encapsulate all my feelings in writing.. Since the poem I find myself wondering, for several months before our anniversary: "how do I make this year's letter better"? It's not so much to beat myself, but to show my mum how much I've changed, and matured. Apparently I can do it, because as I grow older and learn new things and gain new experiences, I can reflect on how I feel.

That poem symbolised a turning point, I think. It symbolised the change in my outlook and personality. When I changed from a child's respect for a parent to a more refined and



July 2017: graduating from Swansea University.

understanding view. This view was only strengthened when I went to university, both in the UK and the US. Living alone really made me think about the people I loved and the people I cared about. I'm in a long term relationship, but my number one love will always be my mother, because no one will ever be there as much as she has been, and how much she will be.

*There comes a time in every life
when trials fill the soul*

*And all around no help is seen as
heartaches take their toll.*

*Nowhere it seems (that) can she
escape whose life is plagued
with hurt*

*And the pains that fill that life of
gloom, no joys can come to avert*

*When all around on every hand
only struggles can be found*

*And through that life would like
to sing, the heart seems chained
and bound*

*Downward ever falling, that life
would soon lose hope*

*Distresses seem to hang that life
at the end of no small rope.*

*But in that time I rebelled, when
my heart was cold and black I
seemed to feel a loving touch,
t'was a hand upon my back*

*And when I looked to see whose
hand was extended in my aid
I saw a loving woman with no
profits to be made.*

*The love of life reached deep
within and made my heart anew.*

*I honestly don't know why you
picked crazy wild me*

*Out of all the different girls that
you did see*

Mature, simple, kind

But you never did seem to mind

So I thank you now mother

*For sticking with me these past
eight years*

*Even though you tend to smother
You always seem
to deter my tears Now that I'm
regrown I can understand*

*Why there is such a high demand
To adopting kids*

*Because all the parents want to
be like you*

*They want to rescue kids amid all
that trouble*

*And be their knight in shining
armour*

Live life with no regrets,

Now thanks to you, now I will.

Keeping Life Story Books Alive

Natalie Salaman, Adoption Support Social Worker



to the events that have led them into the care system and then on to adoption but it will include a much more expanded account of their present life and past life in your home. An updated book can be a source of pride and interest over a life time and may serve to make the child feel more connected to their present and history. The crucial part they play in creating this up to date version of themselves can raise their sense of control about their life. Using the arts may bring the book alive whether it is a physical one or an online creation with links to YouTube clips and other internet resources.

It can be hard for adopters to actively engage with the original books and sometimes they get tidied away in lofts or backs of cupboards as the time never feels quite right to share. This is very understandable but not always helpful to the child long term.

Do get in touch with your local adoption support service if you need help with thinking through how to share the book. A therapeutic outsider working with the adoptive family can help a child to really understand that their removal from their birth family was for reasons that were independent of the adoption. Sometimes children get confused with the route that they have come to adoption and equate it with the adopters need for a child rather than social services removing them for their own safety.

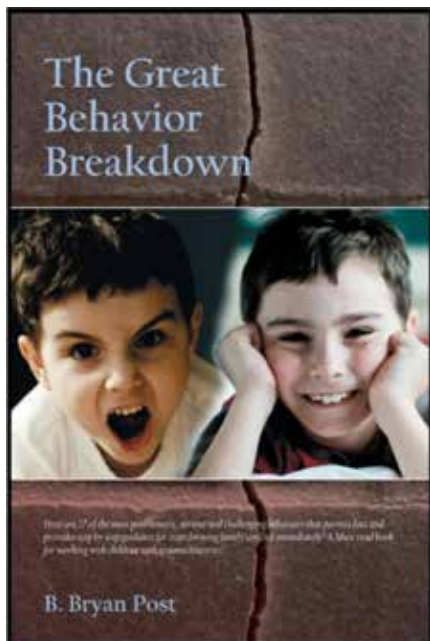
The Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 enshrined the principle that every child should have a life story book by the time they are adopted. Unless the child is an infant, the book is ideally the result of a dynamic process of engagement with the child. The purpose of the book is the same as the purpose of the life story work, the later life letter and finally the memory book - usually a photo/memorabilia album from the foster carers. All these communications aim to raise the child's self-esteem and give a clear account of the major events of their disrupted lives. It is done in a way that makes emotional sense to them and allows them to address feelings of doubt, confusion and sometimes a sense of a lack of connection. The importance of the work can't be underestimated and yet very challenging to think about. The impact of the work and the book will vary enormously from child to child and be dependent on their history and what they are capable of grasping because of their age, their levels of attachment, and their emotional development.

Sometimes adopters are concerned that too much information may be disturbing or set the child back in some way. So much will depend on the emotions and approach taken by the person who shares it and of course the sharing of their early past in different forms at different times is part of the ongoing role of an adoptive parent. Do approach your adoption support service for advice and help with engaging in life story work. They may access the adoption support fund for therapeutic life story work or you may have an adoption support worker who does this themselves. Creating a new book electronically or in 3D form can be an enjoyable and absorbing experience. Using the arts and accessing the internet can expand life story work's potential to tune into a child's needs and the questions and interests they have. Adopted children were often too young to have actively participated in the creation of their original book.

The book they co-create with you or an outsider can be added to their original one. It will again refer

Do have a look at www.lifestoryworks.org which was created to help adopters with the many issues connected to their life story that come up through the course of a childhood. There are example life story books here and links to other useful books and websites as well as a DIY guide to create your own book. This includes suggestions for the words to refer to in conversation about the difficult background stories they come to you with.

Great Behaviour Breakdown



The Great Behaviour Breakdown is a ground-breaking parenting approach that has helped even the most difficult of family situations find stability and healing. Be supported by a group of parents/carers who understand how difficult parenting can be! The 'Great Behaviour Breakdown' technique has helped families find the strategies that they have been looking for after years of trying everything but with no success.

This training programme acknowledges the importance of educating parents to enhance their parenting skills in order to meet their child's needs adequately. It will help families shift away from anger and blame, frustration, and/or hopelessness into a place of understanding, compassion and love.

Throughout the training, particular behaviours will be thought about in the context of the stress model and strategies will be modelled and rehearsed through discussion, video clips and role-play. These will include:

- Lying, Stealing, Hoarding and Gorging/ Food issues
- Aggression, Defiance and Battle for Control
- Transitions - Bedtimes. Bath times
- Lack of Eye Contact/Conscience and Social skills
- Sexualised Behaviours, Self-Harm

The courses are rolled out three times a year. See page 2 for 2018 dates and booking information.

Parent feedback:

I found it gave me renewed sense of confidence to give my daughter the support she needs around behaviour and attachment issues.

I read the GBB book about a year ago but going to the workshop took the words off the page and made it interactive, I saw how I could make what I'd read real and work for us.

The workshop has given me a toolbox of strategies I can do right now, basically an alternative way of parenting which is miles better than what I had before. I feel I can say less, choose to let things go and not react, without feeling like I'm wrong or a soft mum, that I'm actually still engaged in supporting her

It has reinforced that my daughter behaviours are fear-based plain and simple, to react with sanctions etc. is last the thing she needs when she's frightened even when it looks like anger.

It was brought alive by the dynamism of the two presenters and the fact that they had evidently been 'converted' to GBB and actually lived by its principles. They literally had an answer for everything.

Parent feedback on children's behaviour:

Child less controlling

Sleep pattern improved

Greater attention span: able to sit and play a game/listen to a story

More regulated

Has a more varied diet

Has an emotional vocabulary and able to talk about his/her feelings

Child is happier and laughs more

Seeks comfort and closeness - comes for cuddles

Less angry and when angry able to recognise this and calm down more quickly

Denise Golding is a senior social work practitioner and counsellor. She has 30 years' experience of working with children and families, including the past 20 years working in adoption.

Zach Gomm is a foster carer and adopter; he has fostered many children over the past few years and is an adoptive father to his teenage son who he has parented using The Great Behaviour Breakdown (GBB) with amazing results for the last 10 years.



Traditional German Cake recipe

– A family tradition



Here is our family recipe. It's a German cake that my mum always made for everybody's birthday. I have made it since I moved to the UK many years ago and could swear that an Italian friend of mine only

invites me to her birthday every year, because she knows I will bring one of these. We have celebrated three birthdays with our little daughter and this cake has always featured centrally and is now an inevitable family

tradition. Needless to say we love it. Even though neither of us likes nuts in things. This cake gets away with it for us because the hazelnuts are ground and give the cake a lovely moisture. Enjoy.



Ingredients

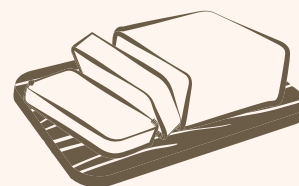
- 125g unsalted butter
- 200g caster sugar
- pinch of salt
- 4 eggs
- 250g ground hazelnuts, hard to get in the UK, I know
- 4 tbsp milk
- 125g plain flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 150-200g chopped chocolate

Method

This cake is normally baked in a ring shaped spring form but could also go into a gugelhupf or any other shape. Make sure the baking tin is well greased and bread crumbed.

Mix together the butter and sugar. Then add the salt and eggs and mix. Then include the

hazelnuts and milk as needed and mix. Finally add the flour with baking powder and mix to dough. When the dough is done I tend to put a thin layer into the baking tin and then mix the chocolate in the rest of the dough. This avoids the chocolate chunks from sticking to the tin. Bake at 175-200 deg C for 50-60 minutes.



The Experience of Non-Adopted Siblings

Rosie Waterfield is a Counselling Psychology Trainee at Regent's University London. She is interviewing non-adopted siblings (i.e. the biological children of adoptive parents) for her doctoral research into the experiences of adopted siblings' search and reunion journey. As she explains:

"So far, researchers have explored the experiences of adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents in this journey. These findings have been invaluable in informing practitioners (e.g. therapists, social workers) in their work with adoptive families, as well as helping adoptive families to understand the impact of search and reunion on family members.

"My research argues the importance of validating each family member's unique experience and aims to gain a deeper understanding of the search and reunion process from a novel angle: through the eyes of non-adopted siblings.

"Participation would involve a conversation lasting about one hour with me to explore your experience of the search and reunion journey. Travel reimbursement is available, although I am also happy to travel to a location convenient to you.

"You must be at least 18 years old, currently living in the UK and the biological child of parent(s) who

adopted a child. Furthermore, your adopted sibling will have searched for and reunited with their birth family/a birth family member

If you are interested in participating, I can send you an information sheet and answer any queries you may have via email S00803479@regents.ac.uk
Thank you!



We Are Family – The Whys of WAF

Our small gathering of adopters started We are Family (WAF) in 2013 from a strong need to be with other adopters and their children. It now consists of ten groups, mainly in London, each with their own head and steering group of volunteers and reaching out to over 700 families.

WAF is unashamedly parent-focussed. It is in essence about meeting others in the same boat, and we aim to do this regularly and as low key as possible. We take comfort in knowing that we are not alone. This is because the group provides somewhere to share a success story with, just to rant or a shoulder to cry on. We are also very passionate about ensuring you

know about the training and other useful stuff out there - especially if it is good, free or low cost.

WAF offers parent groups, playgroups, family meet ups and other socials across London. These events are all run by our small fleet of volunteer adopters or prospective adopters, who we welcome from stage 2 onwards.

Critical to WAF is a non-judgemental atmosphere as some of our parent groups often have their fair share of heavy stories. It's a group where there is no need to explain about trauma, loss and the other baggage that comes with adoption.

Because we believe you really shouldn't feel or be alone in this

topsy turvy world of early trauma. There should be a group for you too. For more information please visit our beautiful new website wearefamilyadoption.org.uk

Once there please do check out our weekly blog, invariably written by adopters from our community. Finally, do get in touch if you are interested in joining us. We'd love you to.



We Are Family



Your questions responded to

Please contact Natalie by email at natalie.salaman@enfield.gov.uk

Natalie is a social worker who works in adoption support.



Dear Natalie

Our son, Ashley, is nine and we love him to bits! To the outsider he may seem fine, but he is not making the progress at school we expected and yet we are told he warrants no extra help and certainly not an Education Health Childcare Plan (EHCP). This we understand would secure extra input over time. We don't know what do next. We are looked at blankly by teachers and feel fobbed off with 'Give it time' and 'He's not below average according to the national curriculum.' But Ashley was so bright at nursery! He was fired up with energy but now he stares absently into space and his reports mention 'day dreaming'. Our observation of his reading is that it is slow and his written language looks careless - more like that of a six year old. Oh for the days of league tables on the wall where you knew where they stood! Although Ashley reaches out and wants to communicate, his sentence structure is careless and the words he uses are not quite right. For example he will say 'The playground is grand' instead of 'big'. Are we being side-lined by the school because there is no easy category for this? We are reading up again on attachment, ADHD and dyslexia. Should we get an independent private assessment done by an Educational Psychologist?

Jane and Ann-Marie

Dear Jane and Ann-Marie

I can tell you both want the very best for your child. The EHCP you mentioned only gets agreed when a child's needs are likely to be severe, complex and life-long. This, in itself, is time consuming as an EHCP is legally binding but if the school staff do not feel an EHCP is appropriate, they will attempt to meet the child's needs under the special needs provision available to them. A private EP report will not effect change within the state system. The SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) is crucial, along with the relevant teachers, in establishing what provision is best. I don't think an EHCP sounds right at this point. Please remember that when you inform the school of your adoption status they receive the Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) payment (£2,300 from April 2018) per adopted child applicable from reception to Year 11. Ultimately how it is used is at the discretion of the school but if they don't use this directly on your child but it benefits the school more generally then under current Ofsted regulations they must explain why. Extra provision provided by the PPP can provide help to others as well - for example a dance, drama or handwriting group which would be free for your child in or out of school hours. There is considerable scope for creativity and variation between schools on how it is used. Do involve an adoption support social worker with your meetings at the school. You can ask for a 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) meeting as these can be called to reflect any level of concern from a parent. Review meetings

are optional if you want to assess progress and change. TAFs serve to highlight the child's needs in the minds of school staff.

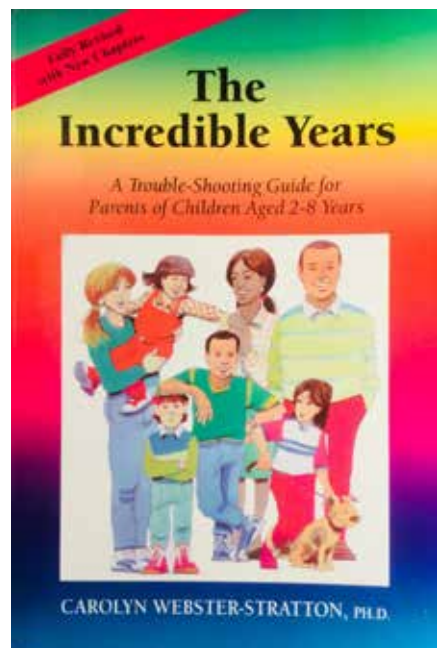
Do you think you are expecting too much of him? His energy and enthusiasm levels at nursery don't unfortunately predict how a child later performs academically. I sympathise with your sadness at feeling he seems less happy with his day dreaming and lack of engagement. I wonder more about his age at placement and what he had experienced in terms of trauma and loss? You will know these factors are key ones and can share features of ADHD. What comes over as possible dyslexia may actually be a lack of concentration due to heightened stress levels in your child which can present as learning difficulty or carelessness as you describe. Did his other carers/parents speak English within the home? The previous homes Ashley lived in will impact on his security with language. His language will continue to develop and change. Keep on trying to find things that increase Ashley's sense of doing well in whatever forum and remember that boys' handwriting is well known to take longer to develop than girls'. If there are feelings that are troubling him, think about the use of the adoption support fund to access therapies involving the arts such as drama, music or art therapy. At nine children often begin to wonder afresh about their origins and life story so use adoption support for more ideas in engaging in your own life story work with Ashley.

Natalie

Useful websites to look at are: www.lifestoryworks.org
www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs
www.nhs.uk/livewell/childrenwithlearningdisability/pages/education.aspx

Book review

By Rachel Field (parent)



The Incredible Years: A trouble shooting guide for parents of children aged 2 - 8 years

Author: Carolyn Webster-Stratton

I have a new title for this marvellous book – “In Praise of Praise”. Written as a practical handbook to parenting, its main premise is that we all spend too much time telling children what NOT to do, and telling them off, whereas it’s actually much more effective to reinforce the behaviour that you want to see. You do this through playing with them and praise - constant positive comments and attention when things are going well.

That will never work, I thought, but – oh my goodness, it does! – almost like magic. It takes some getting used to – never mind a ‘glass half full’ perspective, yours has to be overflowing – but the effort pays off.

Whenever she proposes a behaviour, the author looks at it very practically. Sticker charts had never worked for our little girl - ‘I hate stickers!’ – but I learnt from the book that saving stickers for a reward at

the end of the week was too long for a four year old. A reward needed to be daily – its size doesn’t matter. Bingo – we now use a sticker chart to get through the tricky ‘going to bed’ routine; we’ve even phased out the rewards.

‘A command shower’ was another revelation. Apparently, we give children an average of 17 commands every half hour. They are reeling! Then we don’t follow them up. Reduce the number of commands to those that are necessary, and then be prepared to reinforce them.

Downsides? It’s a little bit too American. It addresses various issues and the solutions are always the same – get involved, praise the good behaviour, ignore the bad, sticker charts and rewards. But hey, it works. Now you just have to remember to do it ...

The more we share, the more we help each other

This newsletter is an excellent way to exchange ideas. We want to make sure it tells you 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 contact your adoption support social worker – see page 2 for details. We will anonymise your story, if needed.

Adoption North London is a consortium arrangement between six north London boroughs: Camden, Barnet, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, and Islington.

Go to our website www.adoptionnorthlondon.co.uk for information about who we are, the training we offer and useful adoption support literature, including our leaflet on adoption support.