

St. David's Children Society

Autumn Newsletter 2018

Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant



St David's Children Society

Notes from the Editor



Hello to you all and a very warm welcome to our 2018 Newsletter.

As always, we have lots of news to share – of exciting developments, new faces and new families, changing lives.

We have seen a rise in the number of children in Wales waiting for their permanent family, with some of these children waiting for over 12 months or more. Alongside all our partners that make up The National Adoption Service in Wales, our colleagues in the Regional collaboratives who provide adoption services for the 22 Welsh Local Authorities and the other Voluntary Adoption Agencies we are working extremely hard together to meet this need.

From April this year, we are delighted to announce that we have already successfully placed 16 children (this is how many we placed in the whole of 2017!) with new families, with lots more activity happening over the coming months.

We are also delighted to let you know that our new and exciting initiative Adopting Together has really gathered momentum in the past 12 months. With the support of the National Adoption Service and working in partnership with colleagues in the Regions and 22 Local Authorities, AUK, After Adoption and Barnardo's, St. David's is leading on an innovative model to recruit and therapeutically support families with children referred to the project. We have been privileged to work with Cardiff University School of Psychology and Cardiff Business School during the development and implementation stage of the project. Dr. Katherine Shelton and her team in the School of Psychology will be evaluating the outcomes of the project from the perspective of the adoptive family, social worker and foster carer. We are also working extremely closely with Dr. Viv Norris and her team from The Family Place. We are greatly indebted to the therapeutic knowledge, skill and wisdom they have brought to the project.

We are immensely proud that the project has been shortlisted for two awards for innovation and collaboration. I must take this opportunity to thank both Coralie our KTP Associate and Dr. Jane Lynch from Cardiff University Business School in driving forward the award entries on behalf of all the partners.

There is more about the project (and the awards!) inside the newsletter with contributions from Dr. Katherine Shelton and our new Adopting Together project manager, Singeta Kalhan Gregory. We were really delighted to welcome her to the team in May.

We are also thrilled that Zoe Edmunds has joined our great social work team and we welcome with open arms Martina McCrossan as our new team manager. Elaine Williams is also soon joining us as a new social worker! Congratulations to you all. More from Singeta, Zoe and Martina inside!

During the past year we also said goodbye to two stalwarts – Helen Hawksworth our Adoption Services Manager. Helen was a familiar face to many of you and her passion and dedication to children installed confidence in all who came into contact with her. We were all very sad when Helen left us and we are therefore very pleased to let you know that Helen has decided to return to St. David's as the new Operational Manager for AFA Cymru. I am sure you will meet her in this new training role!

During the past year we also bid a fond farewell to Gail Donovan. Gail has been part of the St. David's family for many years firstly as an independent worker and more latterly as part of the social work team. Gail has decided to pursue her long held interest in birth record counselling. We will miss her calmness and dedication to all the families she has worked with and wish her all the very best as she embarks on the next stage of her career.

Following the departure of Helen in June we did some internal restructuring and I am delighted to let you know that Mel Oates and Anna Nyamhotsi are now job sharing the Adoption Service Manager post. Many of you will know Mel and Anna – they bring huge energy and creativity to their work and share the same determination and passion to ensure all families who adopt through St. David's receive the support they need for however long this is required. We know that as parents the joys and the challenges can come in equal measure at different times and support can help us through those difficult times. On that note of adoption support Jodie Farley Morris has recently accepted a six month contract as Senior Practitioner with particular responsibility for Adoption Support. We very much look forward to working with Jodi in developing this new role.

We always enjoy seeing people at our quarterly support groups and our Summer and Christmas celebrations, and are very happy for you to give us a ring or pop in to see us if you want to discuss anything.

Finally, I could not end without a mention about Gerry our Chief Executive for 30 years. He has finally decided to retire and spend time with his family. I know it is a decision he has thought long and hard about as his life work has been devoted to ensuring those children who have a very poor start to life and cannot live with their birth family have an opportunity to grow, develop and thrive in an adoptive family. Gerry always reminds us of the UNCRC – The Right to Family Life and his work at St. David's has been an embodiment of that. We will miss so much of the person that is Gerry, his capacity to drink copious amounts of coffee with anyone he can persuade to have a drink with him, his ability to quote statistics and research anywhere and everywhere, his humour even in the most difficult of circumstances and his tenaciousness, creativity and vision – As he goes off to enjoy his retirement, he can do so knowing he has brought St. David's to a fine place and his legacy will live on through the work of this organisation. I hope that many of you will join us at our Christmas Celebration party on 1st December at Minister Church to celebrate Gerry's many years with us and wish him a long and happy retirement.

I would also like to add my thanks to you all for continuing to support the St. David's family. Without your continued support we would not be able to achieve all that we do for the many children who have been adopted and those who wait for their forever family. We are all deeply indebted to you.

With very best wishes to you all for the rest of 2018 and for the coming year ahead –

Wendy Keidan

CEO Annual Report



A MESSAGE TO YOU ALL FROM GERRY



Most will have heard through the grapevine that after 30 years of working with St. David's Children's Society, I finally submitted my notice to retire. The trustees have been informed of my decision and as is their duty, have proceeded to advert. The Society is very fortunate to have a highly effective and professional Deputy Director in Wendy Keidan, supported by our experienced social work and admin team, skilfully led by Mel and Anna our adoption managers. You can be assured that during this transition period, the Society will not be without the drive and leadership that is required.

The Society is highly regarded as an outstanding provider of adoption, training and consultancy services. Strategic partners view the agency as sector leading. Placement activity is on the increase, prospective adopter enquiries are high, Adopting Together is attracting national interest and AFA's position in the market place is well established; all in all, it is a good time to go.

My tenure at St David's will always remain memorable. It has been an exceptionally happy 30 years which saw approximately 700 children placed with their adoptive families. As the longest serving adoption agency in Wales, St. David's remains a very special place for families who wish to adopt children.

It really has been a privilege and honour to serve so many, many extraordinary children and families and to watch these families blossom. On countless occasions, it has been humbling to witness these families give everything to help wounded children heal. Who could not love a job like this!

I would like to thank the members of our adoption panel and the advisors to the Society who so generously share their experience and expertise. Their informed reporting enabled me to feel confident in the knowledge that I was making safe decisions for children. Thank you to our Trustee Board whose steadfast and fierce commitment to the Charity's objectives constantly left me feeling

supported and assured. The Board's leadership and clear vision for the future continues to create a lasting legacy for generations.

Thank you to those who unceasingly support the work of the Society through covenants, gift aid and other donations. We rely on your generosity to continue to provide high quality support services to children, work that is so vital in ensuring placement success. Your support makes such a very positive difference to the lives of the children we all serve.

St David's really is a wonderful organisation. The last thirty years will always be considered as a very unique and special part of my life. I am proud to have been part of such an outstanding team and I wish St. David's only the finest in all of its future endeavours.

Gerry Cooney



The Adopting Together project is a new and exciting child-focussed adoption project and is now live! Supported by the National Adoption Service we are a VAA collaborative project in Wales finding families for priority children – those who wait longest for a permanent family.

Led by St David's, our project brings together the Voluntary Adoption Agencies in Wales (VAA's), St David's Children Society and Barnardo's to find families for children who may be waiting for a long time for their forever families. In addition to the VAA's Adopting Together brings together expertise from our partner agencies Cardiff University, Adoption UK for adoption peer support, and from a specialist therapeutic centre, providing on-going professional insight from psychology services.

This ground-breaking model provides specialist adopter recruitment, including adopter-led events, enhanced training for adopters, peer buddying, and customised therapeutic transitions sessions prior to, during, and after the child moves to their forever family. Post placement on-going clinical support is provided through child psychology consultations. Our model focuses on strengthening the parent-child relationship and is offered as early as possible so that relationship grows and develops. We know this early work will really help to set the foundation for positive life-long relations.

We are having our PR launch during National Adoption Week and have many events planned! We have interest from Welsh Government, media including TV interviews and print media as well as our social media campaign. During National Adoption Week we will also facilitate our second profiling event in collaboration with an adoption region for priority children. We will also be shortly featuring our first child-specific campaign to recruit adopters for specific children.

The innovative Adopting Together model brings together research, theoretical knowledge and best practice models across the UK. We are very excited to announce that we have been shortlisted in the final 3 UK projects for an Innovation Award by the Institute for Collaborative Working. Winner to be announced at House of Lords ceremony in December 2018. We have also been shortlisted for a GO Wales Social and Community Procurement Award being judged on our innovative approach to working with the statutory sector and how this can positively impact on our service delivery to adopters and children. Winner to be announced on 8th November.



If you would like to find out more [visit the website](#) and the Adopting Together pages for more information for adopters, foster carers and other adoption professionals.

Or call Singeta Kalhan-Gregory, Project Manager, Adopting Together at St David's on 02920 667 007 or click on this link to email your enquiry [find out more](#)

AFA Cymru Newsletter



Over the last year AFA has been increasingly busy. In the last financial year members of the team have delivered 150 days training across Wales and 5 conferences. This new financial year looks set to be just as busy.

Alongside delivering training AFA has undertaken a number of pieces of work on behalf of Welsh Government, the National Adoption Service and the National Fostering Framework.

The Practice Standards for Independent Reviewing Officers over the last year and this is about to go for translation. The process has been an interesting one, co-production is the buzzword at the moment so developing this guidance has involved working with practitioners, foster carers, adopters, birth parents, lawyers, CAFCASS and young people! Once all those views have been collated this has had to be set alongside what the law says IROs should do and then comes the simple task of writing it up! We are pleased with the result and thankfully so are our colleagues in Welsh government. Some final amendments are being made to accommodate some recent guidance and then it's off to translation and ready for publication.

A similar task has been undertaken to develop good practice guidance for social workers who are involved in the assessment of family members, when children need to be looked after away from their birth families, so called kinship carers. This work was funded by the National Fostering Framework and has involved lots and lots of different groups of people as well. We've developed some good skills as a team in running co-production events and are enjoying this way of working – it can result in some very noisy and lively sessions! This work has just been published and will now be used across Wales.

The National Adoption Service central team have also kept us busy. We have developed the Life Journey Work toolkit which is now available on the National Adoption Service website www.adoptcymru.co.uk. This toolkit has a framework for Life Journey work that should put you, the adoptive family, at the heart of the materials that are produced. There is still work to do bedding this in across Wales and evidencing to practitioners the benefits for children and their adoptive families in working this way.

A second strand of our work for NAS involves developing a suite of learning materials that will be free to use from the NAS website when they are ready. Lots of adopters across Wales have been involved in helping us shape these materials with AUK so we hope they will be relevant and useful once complete.

We know that the year ahead will bring challenges alongside the hard work. We are delighted that Helen Hawksworth will be joining an expanding AFA Team and know that you will welcome her back too!

**Good wishes to all
Kathy and the team**

New Faces



Hello, I'm Zoë. I'm a new social worker at St David's and started working here in August this year. I previously worked in Caerphilly's Family Placement Team. This involved working as a fostering social worker, as well as undertaking assessments with people connected to children such as family members, teachers and parents of children's friends, who applied to care for children rather than them go into foster care or be adopted. My experience in this role has given me an understanding about the needs of children who have been removed from their parent's care, their experiences in foster care and their transition into adoption.

I love walking my dog and spending time outdoors. I also love being at home and can easily spend a whole day just pottering around the house, cooking up a feast and watching 'First Dates'.

I'm looking forward to the future working with St David's and have enjoyed meeting families and all those I work with at St David's, who have been very supportive.



Hi, my name is Singeta Kalhan-Gregory and I started with St David's in May 2018 as the Project Manager for Adopting Together – the exciting new Wales-wide project aimed at specifically finding and supporting families for children who may wait the longest (there is more about Adopting Together in this newsletter). Prior to coming to St David's, I was the Project Manager at the Wales Adoption Register and have been instrumental in bringing Adoption Activity Days to Wales. I have been a social work practitioner since qualifying in 1995 and worked predominantly in Adoption and Fostering around London, Norfolk, Nottingham and Cardiff. I have experience of the statutory, voluntary and private sector and have also worked extensively in therapy and mental health. I am a qualified solicitor. In all my roles, I am passionate about positive outcomes for children and feel privileged to work in this field, and to be joining the team at St David's.

I do not have a great deal of spare time as an adoptive and birth mum to a teen and a toddler, but in my time off I do enjoy walking, reading, box sets and meeting up with family and friends! I look forward to seeing you at the regular St David's events.



Hello! I'm Martina and I'm delighted to have joined the team at St David's Children Society as an Adoption Manager. I'm writing this during my first week in post, so everything feels very new to me, though it helps that I know many of the team from my previous role with the National Adoption Service. It's also been great catching up with some of the social workers here that I worked I've worked with over the years since I first moved to Wales in 2008 - the years have flown by!

I'm joining St David's at a time when we know we need more families for the children who are waiting so to see an innovative project like Adopting Together being led by St David's is just fantastic! I'm looking forward to welcoming lots of new adopters to St David's as well as getting to know the families and all those who support our work.

A developmental psychologist working at the School of Psychology at Cardiff University is collaborating with us on an innovative new project called Adopting Together.



Dr. Katherine Shelton - Over the past few years our team have been working on the Wales Adoption Study which aimed to identify what professional, interpersonal and personal factors helped and hindered families in the first months and years of adoption. Our findings revealed that parents wanted help to support sibling relationships (including siblings living together and apart) and that they wanted to help to make sense of whether some behaviour reflected pre-placement experiences or was just part and parcel of child development. It is also already well known that it's harder to find families for children who have started school and who are part of a sibling group. Taken together, we are now using this information to work with St. David's Children Society and their partners to develop a programme of recruitment and support for families that increases children's opportunity to thrive, whilst also

seeking to ensure that parents feel supported and able to undertake the parenting task. The evaluation of the project and the move to put it on a secure footing with respect to service provision has been facilitated by a Knowledge Transfer Partnership award from Innovate UK (a national research funding council) and is led by Coralie Merchant working at St. David's. The Adopting Together project represents a major step forward in adoption support because it brings a multi-disciplinary group together very early on to consider the psychological and physical needs of the child (and children) and injects ongoing therapeutic support across the post adoptive period. This project is also a UK first because we are working to make the project sustainable through partnership working between the statutory and voluntary sector, underpinned by empirical evidence from academia.

More information can be found here:

<http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/adoptioncohort/>

Meakings, S., Coffey, A., & Shelton, K. (2017). The influence of adoption on sibling relationships: experiences and support needs of newly formed adoptive families. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 47(6), 1781-1799 <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx097>



The QubicaAMF Bowling World Cup, formerly known as the International Masters and AMF Bowling World Cup, is an annual Ten-pin bowling championship and the largest in bowling in terms of number of participating countries. Each country chooses one male and/or one female bowler to represent them in the tournament, and this is done by running a qualifying tournament.

This year our Adoption Team Manager Mel Oates entered the qualifying tournament in Milford Haven and won! She will therefore be representing Wales in the 54th Bowling World Cup in Las Vegas in November.

The qualifying tournament was Mel's first tournament for 16 years and her first since taking a 14 year retirement from the sport between 2002 and 2016. Mel is a previous European Youth medalist and has represented Wales and Great Britain at Ten Pin bowling at amateur level.

Indeed, Mel first played for Wales in the World Cup in Lisbon, Portugal in 2000 and became the first, and to date, the only Welsh winner with 88 countries participating. We wish her good luck!

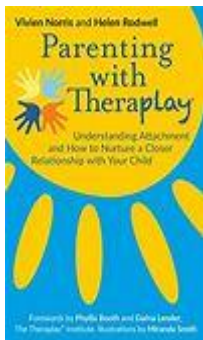


Book Reviews

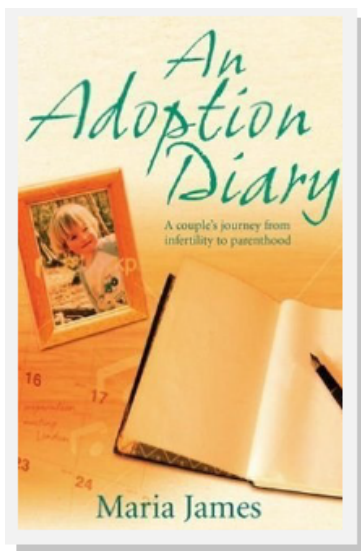


Parenting with Theraplay by Vivien Norris and Helen Rodwell.

Publishers Jessica Kingsley - £12.99



Published in 2017, this is a book I would recommend you add to your “toolkit”. It is written in everyday English and presents the Theraplay approach in a straightforward and accessible way. The book is divided into two main sections. The first part tells you what Theraplay is and the second part suggests ways it can help with everyday situations and difficult behaviour. It has lots of examples of simple activities you can do with your child to help strengthen your relationship and have fun!



An Adoption Diary, Maria James, 2006

This is a family's personal and emotional account of adopting a child that will be of interest to anyone who has ever considered, or is considering, adoption. Written from the point of view of the adoptive parent this moving real life account chronicles every aspect of the adoption process from the moment when the decision to adopt is made. It covers the assessment procedure, the workshops, the heartache of months of waiting, and the final match with a three-year-old boy who lives over 300 miles away! The author talks openly and honestly of the difficulties of a long distance adoption, describes the very hard times as well as the numerous joyful times, explores what it feels like when an adoption finally happens and charts the first few months of new family life. This book is the first in a new series entitled "Our Story" which aims to provide an insight into the highs and lows of adoption and fostering through the real life experiences of a wide range of individuals and families. As well as being deeply personal accounts, the stories published in this series are inspirational, illustrative and instructive.

ISBN 978-1 903699 21 8

£8.95



Podcasts



What is a podcast?

SIMPLY PUT, A PODCAST IS TALK RADIO, BUT ON DEMAND."

It's a series of spoken, audio episodes, often focused on a particular topic or theme, like cycling or start-ups. You can subscribe to the show with an app on your phone and listen to episodes whenever you like on your headphones, in the car or through speakers.

CREATING A FAMILY: TALK ABOUT INFERTILITY AND ADOPTION

Creating a Family: Talk about Adoption and Infertility. Since 2007, we interview leading experts on infertility and adoption each week to bring you unbiased accurate information on all aspects of adoption and infertility. In adoption we cover how to adopt a baby, open adoption, foster care adoption, international adoption, attachment parenting, transracial adoption, special need adoptions and more. In infertility we cover latest advances in in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, infertility medications, emotional aspects, egg donation, surrogacy, how to choose a fertility clinic and much more.

<https://www.acast.com/creatingfamilytalkaboutinfertilityandadoption>

ADOPTION NOW - TELLING YOUR ADOPTION STORY

<https://www.acast.com/adoption-now-telling-your-adoption-story>

THE HONESTLY ADOPTION PODCAST

The Honestly Adoption Podcast features real voices, sharing real hope and encouragement to parents on the journey of foster care and adoption. Hosts Mike and Kristin Berry, and Nicole Goerges share open and honest perspectives from the journey of foster, adoptive, and special needs parenting. Their goal is to be real and honest but also bring hope and encouragement to parents, all over the world.

<https://www.acast.com/the-honestly-adoption-podcast>

THE ADOPTIVE MOM

The Adoptive Mom Podcast is a show for mamas (and dads) in the trenches of adoption, those considering and walking toward adoption, and the tribes that support us through this wild ride.

<https://www.acast.com/the-adoptive-mom>

THE ATTACHMENT PARENTING PODCAST

Providing Attachment Parenting-inspired interviews with researchers, psychologists, authors, and fellow parents. Topics cover pregnancy/birth, motherhood, breastfeeding, co-sleeping, babywearing/touch, responding to babies, free play in nature, positive discipline, and more!

<http://www.attachmentparentingpodcast.com>

KAREN DOYLE BUCKWALTER: ATTACHMENT THEORY IN ACTION

By Karen Doyle Buckwalter: Trauma & Attachment Center

Welcome to Attachment Theory in Action! Our podcast is dedicated to therapists, social workers, counsellors and psychologists who are working with clients from an attachment-based perspective. Interviews are conducted with individuals who are doing clinical work as well as leading attachment theory researchers.

<https://www.acast.com/karen-doyle-buckwalter-attachment-theory-in-action>

RESPECTFUL PARENTING: JANET LANSBURY UNRUFFLED

Each episode addresses a reader's parenting issue through the lens of Janet's respectful parenting philosophy. Janet is a respected parenting adviser, author, and guest lecturer whose website (JanetLansbury.com) is visited by millions of readers annually. Her work informs, inspires, and supports caregivers of infants and toddlers across the globe, helping to create relationships of respect, trust, and love. Her best-selling books "No Bad Kids: Toddler Discipline without Shame" and "Elevating Child Care: A Guide to Respectful Parenting" are available in all formats at Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, and free at Audible (<https://adbl.co/2OBVztZ>) with a subscription. Episodes of "Sessions," a collection of intimate recorded phone consultations with parents, are available exclusively at SessionsAudio.com.

Recommended Best Parenting Podcast by "The Washington Post" and "Early Childhood Education Zone"
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<https://www.acast.com/respectfulparentingjanetlansburyunruffled>

GDPR



As I'm sure most of you are now aware new data protection laws called the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came in to effect in May this year. While adoption legislation and regulations overrides some of the requirements from this act, in relation to the processing of your information, there are still parts where we now need your permission to contact you. This is mainly in relation to contact post adoption for ongoing support events and updates in relation to the organisation. We very much would like to keep in touch with you to share exciting changes and developments with St David's or to let you know about support activities on offer. If you haven't already we would ask that you complete a GDPR consent form (these can also be found on our website) and return them to us as soon as possible. We can then be confident on what information you would like to receive from us in the future.

Recipes and Jokes



RECIPE FOR BARA BRITH

- 1 cup of dark soft brown sugar
- 2 cups of mixed fruit or sultanas
- 1 cup of hot tea
- 2 cups of self-raising flour
- 1 beaten egg

Place fruit and sugar in a large bowl and soak in tea overnight. Mix in the other ingredients and place in a 2lb greased loaf tin. Cook for 1hour 45 minutes at 300F/150C. Cool in tin.

Serve with butter.

Suitable for freezing.



1) Why did the salmon visit the hospital?

-To get cured.

2) Why are pirates called pirates?

-Because they arrrr!

3) What do you call cheese that is always sad?

-Blue Cheese

4) Knock, Knock

Who's there?

Dr.

Dr. Who?

You just said it!

5) Knock, Knock

Who's there?

A broken pencil.

A broken pencil, who?

Never mind, it's pointless.

6) What goes up when the rain comes down?

An umbrella.

7) When does it rain money?

When there's a 'change' in the weather!

8) What does the thermometer say to the other thermometer?

You make my temperature rise!

9) What music are balloons scared of?

Pop music.

10) Where did the music teacher leave her keys?

In the piano

11) Knock, Knock

Who's there?

Boo

Bo,who?

Oh,no don't be sad!

12) I'm so good at sleeping, I can do it with my

Eyes shut