



WBAS Adopters Newsletter

Winter 2023- 24

Introduction



Hello there!

Welcome to the winter roundup edition of the WBAS Newsletter for adopters and professionals!

As ever expect updates on the latest developments and highlights from across the service - spanning our recruitment, family finding, support and therapeutic teams. We'll also keep you covered on what's coming up next and how, as always, we need your help and involvement! Take it easy!



Team WBAS ♡



Peer Support Group for Parents of Teenagers

Lot's of fun and laughter is being had at our parenting groups for children aged over ten recently. The groups which take place in person every last Wednesday at 7.15pm currently in Tregelles but are due to change location soon. The groups currently have a very relaxed and informal feel to them, primarily being a space for parents to exchange, vent and feel heard.

Some recent topics of parenting conversation have included things such as whether to let a teenager have a phone for Christmas and the subsequent decisions that arise around usage. There is a lot of honesty in the groups and a lot of connection as people realise they are not alone in the parent predicaments they face. Recent gatherings have also included games such '2 Truths 1 Lie' reflecting the fun, laid back nature of the groups. The groups are headed up by 2 social workers and a therapist but the emphasis is on a natural structure with whatever is on the adopters minds coming to the fore in a non-judgemental way.





Christmas Playgroup

Teulu the Bear made a special appearance at our much-loved WBAS Playgroup during December. Teulu presented the little-ones with some special gifts capping off what has been a very successful year for the group - sessions have increased due to demand to bi-monthly and there is a regular and supportive group of parents who attend.

Upcoming dates are - 16 April | 3 May | 21 May | 7 June.

Contact  j.swain1@westernbayadoption.org with any queries.





WBAS Christmas Party

We returned to what appears to be a firm-family-fav venue in the form of Wiggley's Fun Farm for our annual Christmas Party! Teulu the Bear and Disney characters helped to make the event special in addition to of course a visit from the big man himself, Santa, giving gifts to the children in his festive grotto. We've had some great feedback from the party so we are looking return again for the WBAS Summer Party!





WBAS Play and Filial Therapist Amanda



Amanda is our Play and Filial Therapist, let's learn some more about the benefits and importance of play and why it's so essential in a child's development.

As a Play Therapist I meet children in their world, on their terms, and build therapeutic relationships to help them gain an understanding of themselves. Play therapy is powerful, children often express themselves through play rather than language.





Filial Therapy is a form of family play therapy where I support parents to learn the therapeutic play skills that they will need to hold their own sessions with their children – so parents join their children on their therapeutic journey.

Play is universal. Adults play, children play, animals play. When I trained as a therapist I learnt about a tribe in South America where the children played out the rituals surrounding the death of a member of their community. This helped them to make sense of the massive loss and learn the skills they would need to take part in these rituals themselves as adults. Play is so powerful and works on so many levels. Play can help children to realize the life skills that they are going to need as an adult. It can be cathartic, deeply connecting and highly self-regulating. It's a natural way of making sense of the world, it's a child's language. By looking at children's play it gives us insight into their inner world.

Children will always find a way to play in the most surprising and inventive ways:

– Cooperative play with other children. All play is beneficial, a range of different play experiences is important but cooperative play also helps to develop socialisation and problem solving skills in a group setting.



- Experimental and explorative play. This can include so many things such as: mud pies, water play, making a mess, role play, drawing, cooking, sensory explorations. When we trust a child's process and enable them to seek out the play experiences that they need play can be remarkably healing, on an emotional and physical level.
- Embodiment play/physical. This can include dancing, telling stories, singing, playing with voices and different characters.

Play is all about building confidence and new skills, children will always find new and magical ways to play. For example den building – it's so simple, with a blanket and a table, the potential spaces that can be created with everyday things such as cardboard boxes, chopsticks as magic wands...The magic of play can often reach out to us as adults as we watch our children play and we are transported back to our own childhood experiences and our own inner child. As adults we often want to lead our child's play but we shouldn't underestimate the capacity of children to lead their own play and create. Part of Filial Therapy is learning how to set healthy boundaries in play that doesn't disrupt the natural development of things but keeps things safe. Parents can do this by acknowledging their child's needs or feelings, and redirecting their child's impulse to something different and perhaps safer.

Offering a space where children can express themselves more freely and safely helps, having water play or messy play outdoors can make it easier to allow children to splash and become more immersed in the sensory experience. It's important to notice your child's feelings and the underlying drive in these instances. Play can help to fill gaps in missed development





Meet your Life Journey Team

Meet Sarah, Claire, Jenny Sue and Amanda - our fab and friendly Life Journey Team here at WBAS! The team are on hand to help your child to understand who they are, where they have come from and how they have come to be adopted, shedding light their journey from birth family to foster family to adoptive family. The team use a variety of materials including the CARB, court papers and the child's file, later life letter and life journey book, to transition and Letterbox materials.

Life journey work is essential to you and your child because it helps to build your child's sense of identity and to give a understanding of their personal history. It also provides a realistic account of early events and to dispel fantasies about the birth family - helping to link the past to the present and to help both the child and the adopter to understand how earlier life events continue to impact on behaviour.






Further life journey work can help with acknowledgement of issues of separation and loss whilst also enabling adoptive parents to understand and develop empathy for the child, and possibly their birth family. This all contributes to enhancing the child's self-esteem and self-worth, helping the child to develop a sense of security and permanency - promoting attunement and attachment.

It is common for some parents to have fears over tackling these areas, which is completely natural, worried that it might affect relationships negatively. Of course fears can also be present in children when approaching this too, with worries over upsetting or hurting their parents. This is why the parents role is crucial, being the key people to share your children's story with them and help them to manage their feelings. Ideally this starts from the beginning of placement.

We are here to support you with this every step of the way, e.g. [] workshops & advice on resources, advice on your child's narrative.

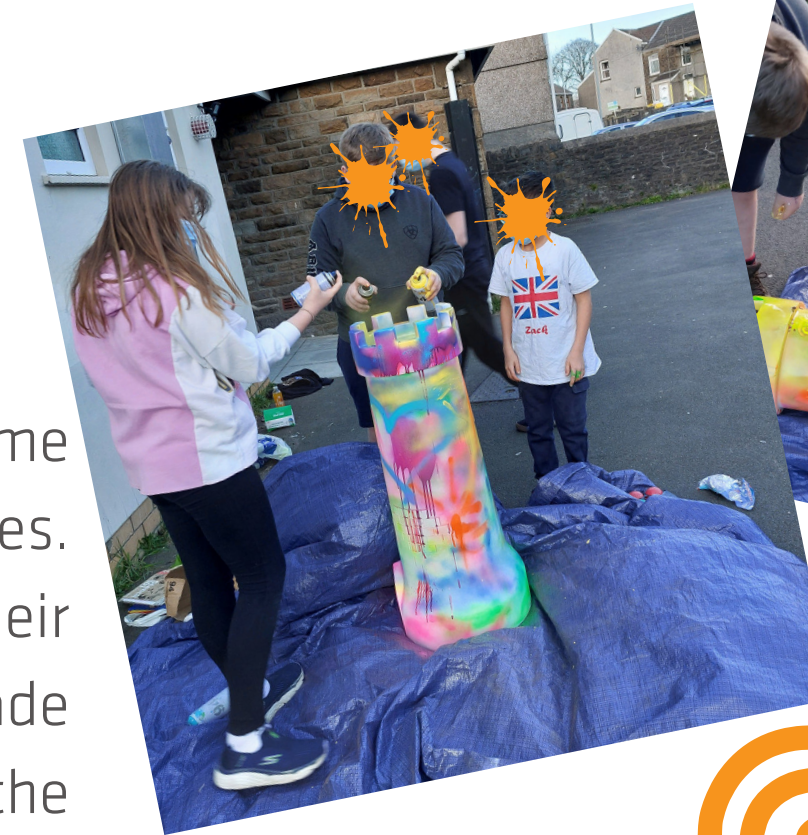
Upcoming workshop dates are:- 13 May (6+ Years) | 7 Oct (0-5 Years) | 21 Oct (6+ Years)
Email Sarah on  s.vaughan1@westernbayadoption.org to book your place.



Youth CLWB News

Western Bay Youth Clwb continues to go from strength to strength! We keep to the same structure each week which includes activities such as cooking, arts and crafts and games. Over the last 6 months and thanks to the COAST grant, our young people designed their own Youth Clwb t-shirts which they all continue to wear with pride. They also made Christmas baubles to hang on a WBAS Christmas tree at Margam Park. Recently the group have been involved in Wales Air Ambulance "Castle in the Sky" project. They have graffitied and stencilled their own mini castle – please look out for it in a public space in Swansea this summer as well as our WBAS larger Castle at Black Pill!!

All of these activities provide the perfect opportunity for the group to learn new skills, make new friends and build trusting relationships with the youth workers.





We have lots of valuable and interesting discussions with our young people around a range of issues such as family, adoption, school, bullying, substance misuse, hobbies and aspirations.

A single adoptive parent told me last night “This is the only thing Z will go to! I don’t know what I’d do without it!”

Through December 2023 we had more visits from Circus Eruption which was great fun. We could really see how the group have bonded and how they will support each other with new experiences. We also invited in Beth from BAROD (Swansea Young Persons substance misuse worker) to deliver a session focussed on vaping and the risks associated with vapes. The group also got to try on a pair of “Beer goggles”!

We also benefitted from funding from the winter COAST grant so were able to offer trips that the young people chose, to BUZZ trampoline park, Ninja Warrior and Gorge Walking in Glynneath. The trips were really well attended and jumping into the icy cold water of the Neath Valley will be a lifelong memory for sure!! I was so impressed at how brave they all were as well as how they cared for and supported each other with each challenge.

A particular big achievement for one young person was when he spoke at our WBAS conference about himself and how much he loves and benefits from youth clwb. Needless to say he was brilliant and we were so proud of him and was the absolute star of the conference! His dad was also spotted shedding a tear or two!! The strong message that he was really able to convey was “Youth Clwb is the one place where we can all be ourselves”



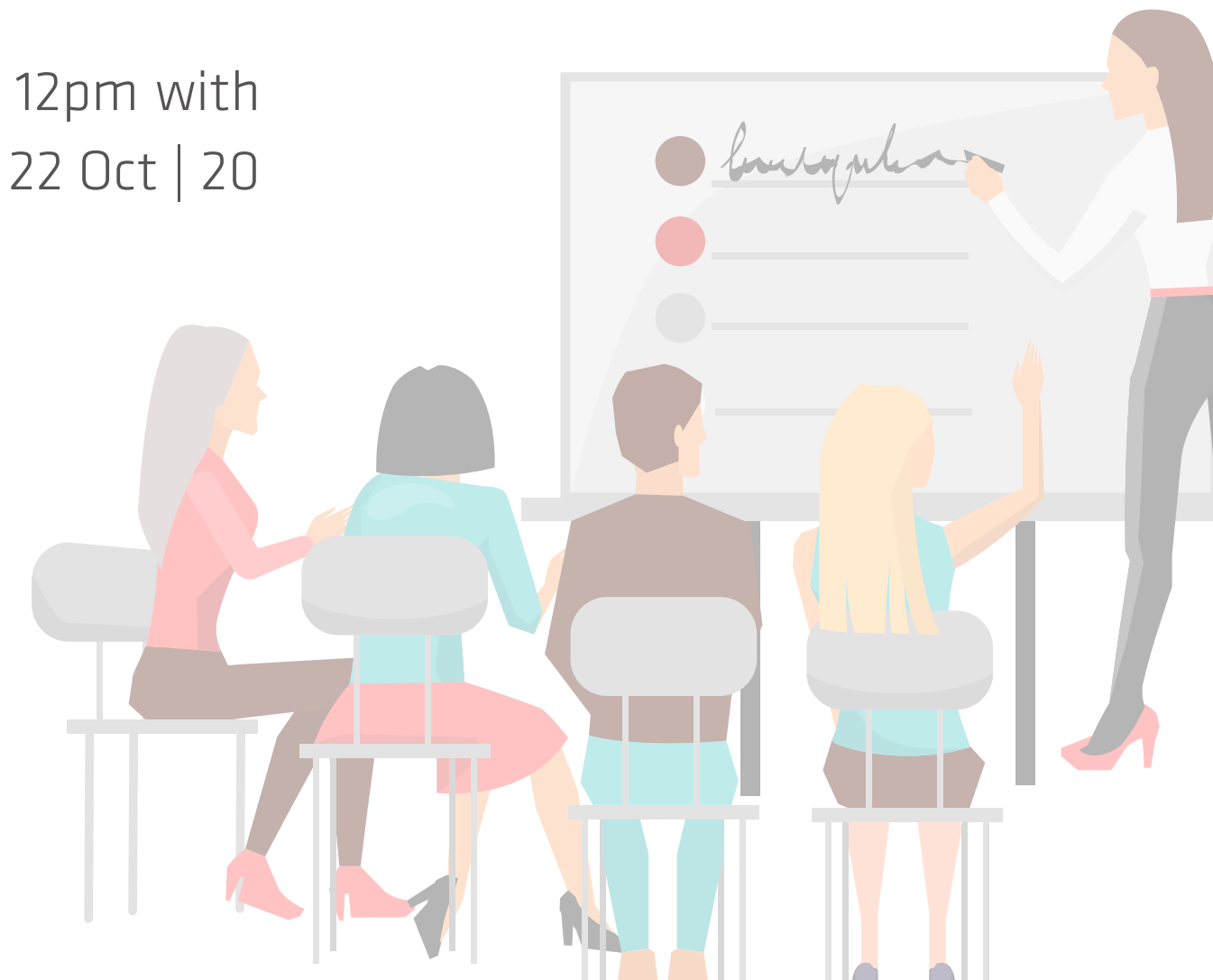


CARB Training

Completing a child's CARB is an essential aspect of any care proceedings where adoption is a potential plan but more significantly, it is a pivotal document in the adoption process. It is used for profiling the child, identifying the right adopters, informing adopters of the child's history and life journey narrative and providing a rich source of information for the child/ren as they grow and into adulthood.

The training is available to any individual who works across the 3 WBAS authorities at 9am - 12pm with the next round of upcoming dates being:- 23 April | 22 May | 20 June | 17 July | 13 Aug | 19 Sept | 22 Oct | 20 Nov | 11 Dec

Email Debbie on  d.doogue@westernbayadoption.org to find out more!





Adopters Working Group

Our 'Adopters Working Group' which we setup towards the tail-end of last year has continued to produce excellent worthwhile and insightful ideas and feedback. Some of the areas we have discussed has included adoption support advertising, attendance of adopters at outreach events, in-house events for adopters and how to better improve business engagement amongst other things. The groups are held quarterly and feature a wide demographic of adopters and those waiting for a match.

The most recent annual marketing plan which has been recently been signed off will also be shared with the group with the aim going forward to get as much as input as possible from adopters when it comes to our event and marketing planning.

As per usual we need your help and involvement in our marketing activity. If you can help us talk to adopters at events, talks or offer advice to those making an enquiry please get in touch with Stuart!



Marketing Highlights



We ‘dipped deep’ for Children in Need during November raising a few hundred pounds for such an important cause. ‘Beary’ chilly! We also as enthusiastically as ever supported National Adoption Week with a cross-authority walk across the region!

We kept up the outreach and partnership work through the winter months with our friends in Foster Wales NPT at the Richard Burton 10k Mini Miller Race in Cwmavon. We also attended the South Wales Police LGBTQ Staff Network Conference making some great links and disseminating our Employer Toolkit to the Force HR Department.

We then brought Christmas in with a bang at the Margam Tree Festival before starting the new year strong at leisure centres across the region providing information on adoption. We also flew the flag for children’s mental health at events across Swansea!



Coming up
next!



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Plenty to look forward and to keep your eyes out for as we head into the Spring and Summer seasons, and hopefully, a bit of sunshine! Of course our events and outreach work will continue as strong as ever being present at the various Pride events across South Wales, whilst we're also super-excited for the launch of the Wales Air Ambulance Castles in the Sky Art Trail that is coming in the Summer. Our adoption support programme of workshops and training continues to be as extensive as ever so please see our website or the Training Programme for more information on what is available.

Keep your eyes out for our next WBAS Newsletter which will be with you in the summer!





GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin
Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE



Thanks for reading!