

# Child Concern Consortium

All the latest news  
from our three charities





A leading UK children's healthcare charity  
Registered charity no 296295

## Action for Sick Children

Action for Sick Children's mission is to ensure that healthcare in the UK meets the unique needs of all children and young people and their families. We have more than 50 years' experience campaigning on all aspects of healthcare.

[actionforsickchildren.org.uk](http://actionforsickchildren.org.uk) Registered Charity No. 296295

## What an exciting year 2016 was for us!

2016 was an excellent year for the Dental Playbox® project – especially the first six months where we exceeded expectations with regards to delivering our brushing bags. In the UK 46 per cent of five year olds have experienced tooth decay and 60 per cent of nine year olds have filled or decayed teeth. The key aim of the Dental Playbox® project is to teach children about the importance of good oral hygiene, healthy eating and to prepare them from an early age for a trip to the dentist through the powerful medium of play. We hope that this will, in turn, reduce the number of hospital admissions for tooth extraction in the under-fives.

As part of the project we distribute brushing bags, which contain:

- A brushing chart
- A two-minute timer
- Toothpaste
- A toothbrush
- Information leaflets.



We had a great start to 2016 with almost 4,000 brushing bags being distributed and over 12 months around 7,000 children were reached by the project.

We would like to say a huge thank you to all who were involved and made it possible especially our sponsors for providing the funds to allocate these bags across the UK – smiles all round!!!

We have also been fortunate enough to secure further funding from the Bridgewater Trust to continue our much needed work in the Oldham area of Greater Manchester.

## Our new home

We are now moved into, and very settled at, our new head office premises in Cheadle Hulme, Stockport. It's been a long time coming but we got there in the end!

The refurbishment of the former antique shop, and later beauty salon, was extensive and took just over 12 months to complete. We now have so much room we are about to rent out two of the upstairs offices to create a sustainable income for the charity.

Right: Stockport Lord and Lady Mayoress 'do the honours' at the opening of our new offices



**ACTION FOR SICK CHILDREN**  
Tel: 01663 763004 [www.actionforsickchildren.org](http://www.actionforsickchildren.org)  
Registered Charity No: 296295



## A major new initiative launching in 2017!

Our new initiative Magical Power of Play aims to provide essential play resources to sick children in hospital across the UK. This includes assisting hospital play specialists by supporting the objectives of play therapy and ensuring the essential functions of play are built into the fabric of a child's hospital experience; empowering children and young people to find appropriate play activities while in hospital; and ensuring children and young people and their families understand the child's illness, treatment and management of their condition.



Thank you for your regular gift to the Child Concern Consortium.

# 2017 - a significant year for fostering



# 42%

of foster carers felt their allowance met the full cost of looking after fostered children – compared to 80 per cent in 2014



# 57%

of respondents reported that they received fee payments

2017 could see a significant change in the way foster carers are viewed and treated and The Fostering Network, the UK's leading fostering charity, expects to play a central role in that process. We have an opportunity - perhaps the first in a generation - for fostering to take centre stage and enjoy the limelight which is so often dominated by adoption.

We will be working with the Government in Westminster on its fostering stocktake and the Scottish Government as part of its root and branch review of care. We have also recently given evidence to the Westminster Education Committee's inquiry into fostering, shaped by the findings of our newly published State of The Nation's Foster Care 2016 report.

The report revealed almost half the respondents didn't receive a fee for their work as a foster carer. In addition, too many foster carers (58 per cent) said they were funding the care of

their fostered children out of their own pockets because their allowances – the money provided for a child's care – were not keeping pace with the increasing cost of caring for that child. And while minimum fostering allowances are in place around the rest of the UK, the Scottish Government, 10 years after pledging to act on the matter, is still failing to implement them in Scotland.

Since its inception The Fostering Network and its members have driven improvements in the sector through our campaigning, advice and practice innovation work. But there is still some way to go and we are very concerned the progress made is at risk. We fear ongoing austerity policy will cause the great burden placed upon the fostering system to become unbearable, which in turn will diminish the stability and positive outcomes of tens of thousands of fostered children each year - this cannot be allowed to happen.



Chloe, Paul Givan - Minister for Communities MLA, and Kathleen Toner - Director of The Fostering Network in Northern Ireland

## Not so broken

'Maybe I'm not as broken as I've sometimes felt' are the heartfelt words of 18-year-old Johnny reflecting on his experiences of foster care. He added: 'It's hard to know if my traits are those of a child in foster care or just a child.'

Johnny's story is one of 13 told by looked after young people and their foster carers in a book published by The Fostering Network at the launch of the 'Not so Broken' exhibition in the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast in October 2016.

The exhibition showcased artistic work produced in a wide range of media by over 100 children and young people in foster care across Northern Ireland. The work, which was exhibited to the public again in Omagh in February 2017, included over 50 pieces of art, the 'Not so Broken' book of personal stories and an animated short film.



**£5** Will ensure a beautiful quilt, handmade by volunteers, will reach a fostered child who is settling into a new home.



**£10** Will contribute to the running costs of a legal advice line which helps keep parents on low income in work.



**£25** Will help provide lessons in sign language for a hearing-impaired child.



## Working Families

Working Families is the UK's work life balance charity. We run a free legal advice service for parents and carers needing advice about employment rights and in-work benefits.

[workingfamilies.org.uk](http://workingfamilies.org.uk) Registered Charity No.1099808 (England & Wales) and SC045339 (Scotland)



# Precarious work

In recent months we have been increasingly advising parents who are in 'precarious' work. For example they could be on zero-hours contracts or contracts where their employer has classified them as 'self-employed'. This often leads to uncertainty about rights and entitlements.

One father who called us, Simon, is a single parent working for a provider of services to the elderly. Although he was employed on a zero-hours contract, Simon had always worked five full days, including Saturday and Sunday, each week. After an unavoidable change in his childcare arrangements, Simon made a formal request to swap the weekends for two days in the week. However, this has been refused by his employer, and Simon feared he may have to give up his job.

While different types of employment contract can offer flexibility that parents and carers need to balance their caring responsibilities, Simon's story shows they can also mean the opposite. In many of the cases we have come across,

zero-hours contracts mean that working hours are being imposed and a refusal to work particular hours may mean no hours are available at all.

Priyanka called us when she was 28-weeks pregnant. She had worked for her employer on a zero-hours contract since before she became pregnant. But at this point in her pregnancy her employer refused to give her any more work and told her she was on maternity leave.

In fact, the law states that it is up to the expectant mother to decide when she wants to start her maternity leave – unless she has a pregnancy-related illness - and this cannot, in any case, happen before she is 29-weeks pregnant.

We advised Priyanka to assert her right to start maternity leave at a later date, and also advised her that she may be entitled to statutory maternity pay from her employer – which she was not aware she may be able to claim.

Without your ongoing support we would be unable to support parents like Simon and Priyanka, who would miss out on the rights they are entitled to in the workplace.

**Thank you very much.**

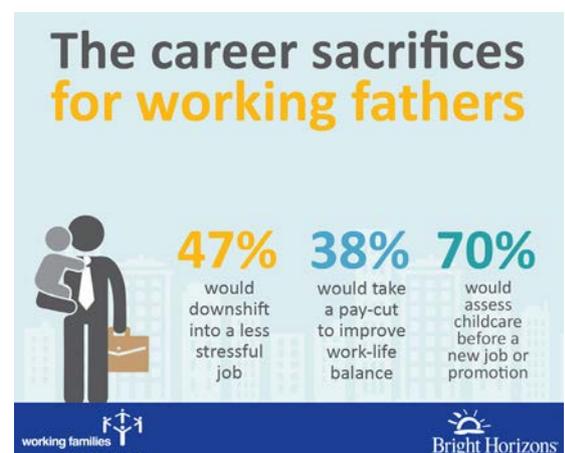
## The Modern Families Index

At the beginning of the year we unveiled new research showing that many working fathers are considering making the same career compromises that working mothers have had to for decades, in order to meet their caring responsibilities:

- Half of fathers told us they'd like to downshift to a less stressful job
- A third of fathers would be willing to take a pay cut to improve their work life balance
- Only one in five families feel they have the right balance between time and money.

We're concerned about the pressure facing many families and facing both working fathers and mothers so we are calling for all jobs to be advertised as flexible as the norm rather than the exception.

**For free advice call 0300 012 0312 or email [advice@workingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:advice@workingfamilies.org.uk)**



Call: 020 7620 6414 | Email: [info@childconcernconsortium.org.uk](mailto:info@childconcernconsortium.org.uk)  
Visit: [childconcernconsortium.org.uk](http://childconcernconsortium.org.uk) | [@ChildConcernUK](https://twitter.com/ChildConcernUK)

87 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HA | Registered charity No. 1103052

