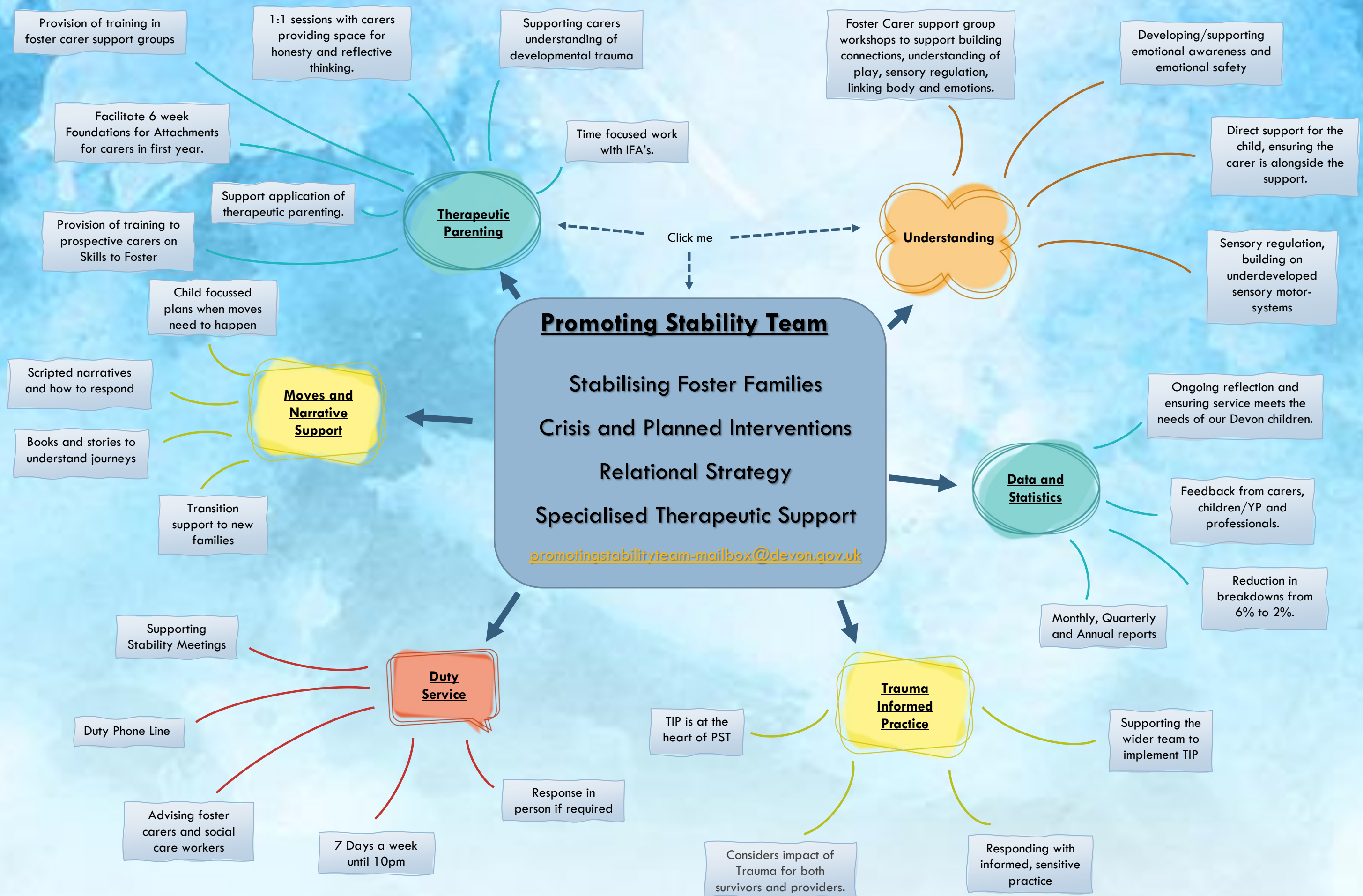


## Promoting Stability Team – What do we do?



## Promoting Stability Team

The aim of Promoting Stability Team is to strengthen stability within our Foster Families through crisis intervention and planned, time limited, therapeutic support. We encourage a multi-agency approach providing specialised support at the right time. PST can be considered at the point of matching, to support a foster family as they all adjust to living together, to try to prevent any struggles from the beginning. As a result, the progress and stability of our foster families is being monitored by regular Review meetings, so there is the opportunity to respond to difficulties and concerns as they arise.



We do offer support to Devon children living in Independent Fostering Agencies, offering a level of consultation even if we do not offer a direct service dependent on the support package already being provided.

We will liaise with the Edge Of Care service when they are supporting children and young people in foster families, to return to live with their families.

The team will provide consultations for targeted support to social workers, wider network of professionals, and Organisations.

The team will provide 1:1 interventions via direct work with children and foster carers. Trauma Informed Practice is our foundation, including Dyadic Developmental Practice, BUSS model and Theraplay approaches.....



Thresholds will be considered and determined on an individual basis. The focus of the support is building the relationship between the carer and child/YP for a lasting relationship that heals Developmental Trauma.

We take into account the behaviour, the way it's interpreted, and the relationship within which this interpretation takes place. The key is responding to the behaviour in an appropriate way rather than changing the behaviour, in order to strengthen stability. The benefit of this approach is the development of a stable, nurturing and responsive care of the child/young person in relation to their attachment needs.



## Trauma Informed Practice

Being Trauma Informed is at the heart of the Promoting Stability Team Ethos.

Exposure to trauma during childhood affects brain development. People who have experienced trauma, therefore respond differently to threat. Developmental trauma impacts on an individual's understanding of relationships and can cause fear and anxiety even when they are no longer in the care of their previous negative caregivers. By being aware, informed, sensitive and responsive to trauma, this increases our chances of helping the children/young people within our care to feel safe, to develop trust and for them to invest in relationships and available services to them.

'Being traumatised means continuing to organise your life, as if the trauma were still ongoing – unchanged and immutable – as every new encounter or event is contaminated by the past.' Bessel Van Der Kolk 2015.

What is Trauma Informed Practice?



- Culture shift not a manualised model
- A “lens” for reflection on practice.
- Emphasis on physical and emotional safety.
- Facilitating connection.
- Core principle of do not harm.
- Minimise the possibilities for re-traumatisation.
- Strength-based framework which considers impact of Trauma with physical, psychological and emotional safety, for both survivors and providers.

Trauma-Informed Practice is not designed to treat the results of trauma – this is the purpose of trauma-specific services. Supporting other parts of the care system to become increasingly aware of the importance of a trauma informed practice is a part of the Promoting Stability Team offer, within individual discussions, meetings and training to carers and Social Work teams.

We don't want TIP to be a bureaucratic process, the priority is that we use TIP to **accept distress, reframe behaviour and understand it.**

## Therapeutic Parenting

This role provides psycho-educational learning of Developmental Trauma to foster carers and other professionals, whilst supporting them with the application of a relational approach to parenting.

Referrals are made by the supervising social worker or the child's social worker and sent to [promotingstabilityteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:promotingstabilityteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

There will be a referral meeting, followed by regular review meetings to measure if the identified needs have been met and if additional support is required.

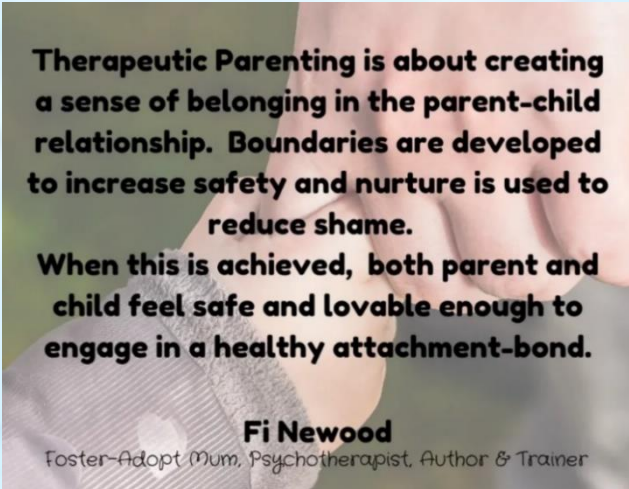
Sessions focus on support to foster carers, in the absence of the child/young person, allowing space to build a relationship between carer and family practitioner which supports honesty, vulnerability and reflective thinking. We apply Dyadic Developmental Practice and support carers to adapt their parenting to the needs of the child/young person.

We offer Support Group sessions and bite-size training sessions on Therapeutic Parenting. We provide psycho-educational learning and reflection pre- and post-panel for new carers to explain therapeutic parenting, the effects of trauma on brain development and how this can impact on carers. We provide Trauma-Informed Practice training for foster carers and professionals, as well as the 6 week Foundations For Attachment group, which is complimented by the 18 week Nurturing Attachments Group and provided by our CIC CAMHS colleagues.

This role within the team receives clinical supervision from the Clinical Psychologist in the CIC CAMHS team.

We work closely with the wider team around the child, offering some support directly to schools to support their knowledge of trauma and responding using a relational approach to the need of the child/young person.

We offer support to independent fostering agencies (IFAs). This support is specifically offers 6 sessions of psycho-educational work, as the agencies will have their own support for foster families too.



**Therapeutic Parenting is about creating a sense of belonging in the parent-child relationship. Boundaries are developed to increase safety and nurture is used to reduce shame.**

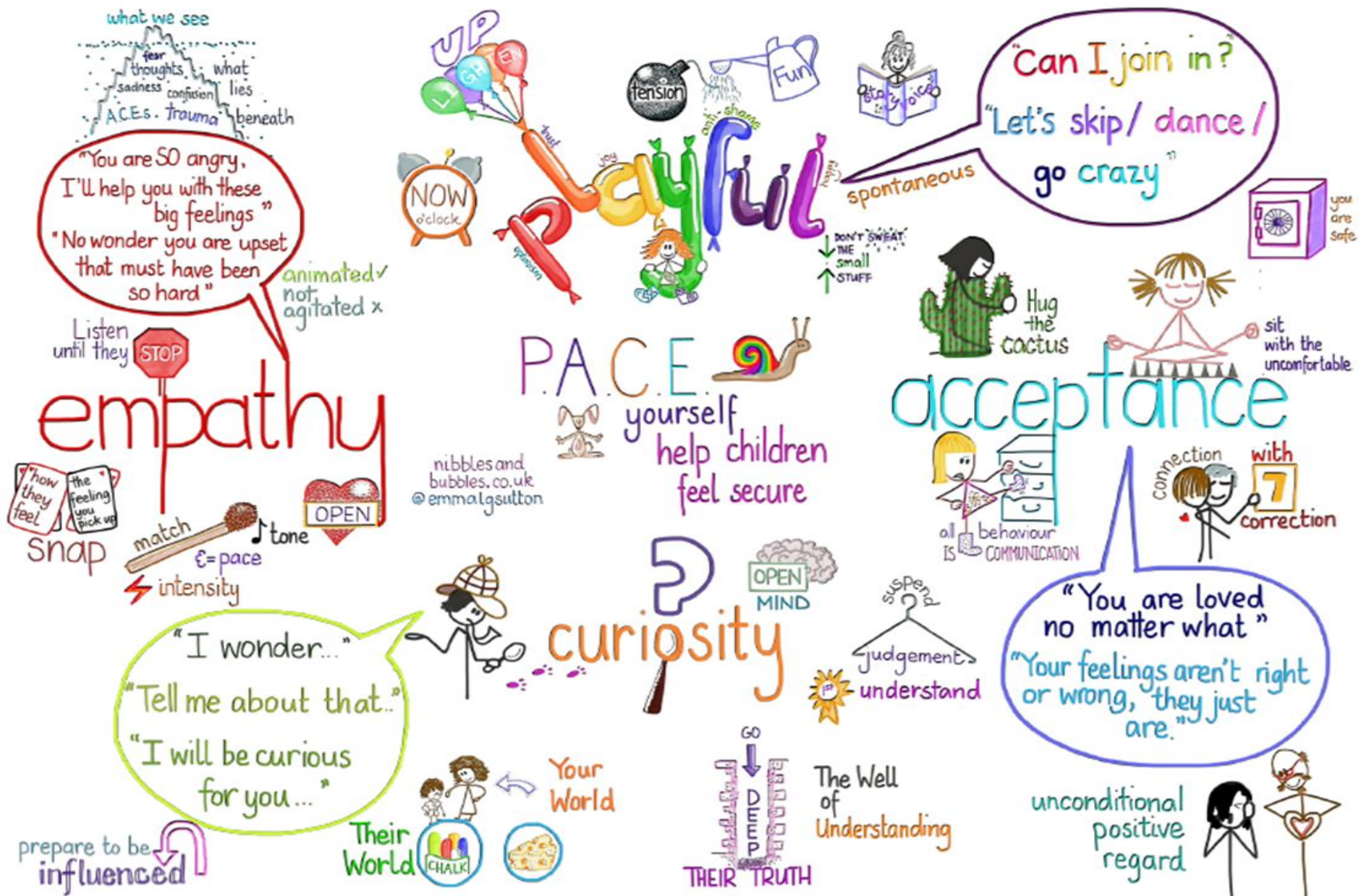
**When this is achieved, both parent and child feel safe and lovable enough to engage in a healthy attachment-bond.**

**Fi Newood**

Foster-Adopt Mum, Psychotherapist, Author & Trainer



## Cornerstones of PACE - Therapeutic Parenting



## Understanding

The role of the Understanding family practitioners is to provide 1:1 support to children and young people alongside their carers to enable them to develop their emotional awareness and literacy and begin to build trust and confidence in being open and sharing who they are within an emotionally safe environment.



Referrals are completed by the child's social worker or supervising social worker and sent to our mailbox, followed by a referral meeting. Reviews of support are held frequently to enable all to assess how the support work is aiding the young person and to identify if there are any further support needs. Once the support is completed a planned

ending is organised with the child.

Sessions offer direct work to children and young people to enable and support the development of the young person's emotional awareness. This includes, supporting a young person to recognise and name emotions, this can be undertaken using specific resources or activity based and through play. Family practitioners will promote connection with the young person and enable the young person to begin to express verbally their feelings and naming them. Additionally practitioners will support understanding and the creation of emotional meaning and narratives for children and young people reflecting on how this links with communication such as behaviour.

There will be support to build under-developed sensory-motor systems to support regulation and development. Linking the body and emotions, providing children with early physical experiences that have been missed when they would have grown into their bodies, which would give them more time for regulation and relationships. The carers are the agents for change within the relationship healing.

We provide transition support; we could provide the young person with transition booklets, supporting a young person to express their needs when moving to a new foster family and exploring difficult emotions when transitioning between foster family and school. This role will support the child's life journey and can contribute to the child building memories. Supporting the young person with building a narrative through story telling.

In addition, family practitioners offer workshops within foster carer support groups focusing on support to build connections, understanding of play, sensory regulation and linking body and emotions.



## Moves and Narrative Support



Within the Promoting Stability Team, we recognise the importance of a thorough, planned move and the vital need for a clear and coherent narrative to support a child's understanding of their journey and life experiences.

Children in care can experience many moves in their life and we feel that there is a key role in supporting an adult led, relational approach, to ensure a child can understand the reason they are moving without any additional impact of shame, reinforcement to their negative image of self and feelings of rejection.

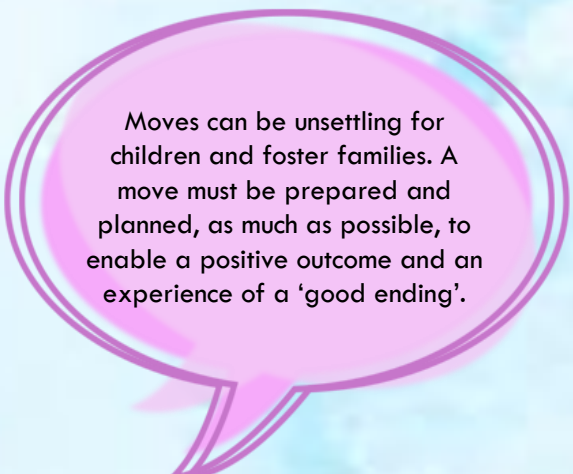
We are able to provide support for foster carers and the wider professional network in thinking about how best to plan a move that is child focussed, balancing the varying timescales that may need to be in place, in order to avoid an immediate breakdown as this can be painful for all and does not meet a child's emotional needs.

We can provide support with narratives to support carers and the wider professional network to feel confident in the message being provided to the child and assurance that the same message is being given to the child by everyone within their network.

We can also provide support in thinking about story books and social stories to further help a child have a developed understanding of what is or has happened to them within the period, and before and after a move.

We will encourage an ongoing relationship for the child and foster family they are leaving, ensuring the child experiences a 'good ending' with support, special memories and an ongoing relationship.

We can provide support if needed to the new foster family to help carers within that transitional period, specifically around understanding the child's emotional needs and help in how to respond to this, including thoughts around routines, attachment and therapeutic parenting.



Moves can be unsettling for children and foster families. A move must be prepared and planned, as much as possible, to enable a positive outcome and an experience of a 'good ending'.

## **Duty Line and Rota**

The Promoting Stability Team provides a Fostering Support duty line and rota. This service is covered by all of the family practitioners across the fostering service.

The duty line also monitors the team mailbox:

[promotingstabilityteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:promotingstabilityteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

The duty line is available from 0900-2200 from Monday to Saturday and from 1300-2200 on a Sunday. The aim of this is to provide trauma informed telephone advice and support to foster carers. This might range from advice on behaviours and how to respond to them, self care, psycho-educational support on the impact of Trauma or advice on what ongoing support the service might be able to offer. The duty line also provides advice to professionals who might want to access the service for a short term intervention or a planned preventative intervention to a foster family.



In addition to offering the telephone based service, the duty worker may attend strengthening stability meetings in order to consider if the service may be able to offer an intervention, what this might look like and what it might achieve. In addition we could assess that it is necessary to react quickly and respond in person to support the stability of a foster family. This might take various forms depending on the need of the family, including support to looked after children, foster carers, or

children who foster.

On occasions where the worker has to respond in person the phone line will be diverted to the fostering duty social worker from Monday to Friday 0900-1700, or a standby worker 1700-2200. It is worth noting that from 1700-2200 on Saturday and 1300-2200 on Sundays this is a telephone advice service only.



## Data and Analysis



Detailed information regarding referrals to the team is kept on a database which is used to provide stats on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. These are sent to senior management as part of the reporting process and are used to inform and target the work that the team is providing.

Within our referrals, we have seen foster family breakdowns steadily reduce from 6% of cases to 2% of cases in the past four years.

We have been able to show that although adolescents (12-15 years old) are almost half of our referrals, we have an equal number of referrals coming from children in the 5-11 years age range, which was new information for the service.



PST also send out evaluation questionnaires at the end of any work to carers, children/YPs and professionals and this is extremely valuable in informing our work. It shows that 100% of feedback rates PST as Very Good or Good overall.

There is a high degree of praise for our service, and suggestions for improvement are limited to wanting the support to be automatically available for every foster family – we are a small team but this has been taken forward and is currently being offered for foster families welcoming a new child/young person into their family.



### **Feedback from Young People, Carers and Professionals:**

“This service is really good and so helpful, staff that listen and give you such valuable advice when you need it and you’re not sure how to deal with a situation. I came off the phone feeling I knew what to do next, I felt more positive and had tools to help with the situation. **Foster Carer**

“We would not hesitate to use the Promoting Stability Team again. At times, it was the ‘glue’ that held the placement together.” **Foster Carer**

“It is my firm belief that as a service this is one of the most important services we have in DCC Fostering at the moment.” **Supervising Social Worker**

“It’s been good. I feel like you’ve listened to me, understood me, known what I wanted, you’ve helped become the person who I am. It’s taken me this long to trust you, and to work with a young person this time is really needed. You’ve been the person who’s stayed with me, helped me and made me feel important and cared about.” **Young person (transcribed from a video message to the worker)**

“I think the PST should be involved with every new foster carer, first child placed with them as standard.” **Foster carer**

“(Worker) and (worker) were extremely supportive to our situation and listened to the feelings of our birth children, who up until then, felt that they didn’t have a voice and were unable to express how they felt to anyone, in fact they had never been asked before. This was very much appreciated by us and them.” **Foster carer**

“Therapeutic parenting with my foster child is, I feel, key to this placement – however not everyone fully understands this so you can feel alone at times. (Worker) get this, she gets me, which then enables me to ‘get’ my foster child.” **Foster Carer**

“I found it all very helpful and I found (worker) a reliable, helpful, friendly and approachable person. 5 stars.” **Young Person**



"I can't thank you (worker) enough for all your support, it's been invaluable in supporting our little one and keeping us sane. You listened and guided me through some tough times with (child) and helped me unpick and see things in different ways which meant I could continue to care for her and keep her safe. Thank you." **Foster carer**

"Carers found the support brilliant – leant on (worker) when weren't sure on things and to be able to grasp new ideas and approaches. (Worker) is an excellent practitioner with time and space allowed for carers to reflect and build on their learning week-on-week. His input with (carers) was gauged 'just right' and could not have been bettered – thank you." **Supervising Social Worker**

"I greatly appreciated that we were never made to feel we were getting things wrong while seeking advice on how to try different approaches." **Foster carer**

"A good balance of explanation of attachment theory and what was happening in the brain but also practical advice to address different situations arising in the house. Thank you." **Foster carer**