



Autumn Newsletter

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Visit of Martin Narey, 'Adoption Czar' to Family Futures

In October we were delighted to have a visit from Martin Narey, the newly appointed Government adviser on adoption. As many readers will know, Martin has a long history of public service culminating in being CEO of Barnardos. Earlier this year, he published a report in *The Times* which was a positive critique of current adoption services in the UK. Family Futures wholeheartedly supports many of his suggestions: for example, shorter time-scales for assessing potential adopters, and greater emphasis on post-adoption support. More controversially, he raises the issue of why so many attempts are often made to keep children in their

biological families, at the cost of the children's development and future mental health.

We had a very positive and upbeat meeting with Martin, where we were able to put across our views about adoption in the 21st century (see **WAVE** report below), and he shared with us his vision of adoption services. Meeting Martin was for us a validating and exciting experience; it was marvellous to meet somebody with such experience and influence in government circles with whom we share many areas of common ground and interest.

Adoption UK's 40th Anniversary

We were also glad to be invited to two events in celebration of Adoption UK's 40th Anniversary. The first was held at the House of Commons, hosted by Edward Timpson MP and Families' Minister

Tim Loughton MP. It was great to hear adoptive mother Sue Clifford's impassioned call for Government to support the drive for more adoptions as well as the need for post-adoption support to be recognised. Both MPs spoke from personal knowledge of adoption issues, and it was heartening to hear from them how firmly adoption is now on this Government's agenda.

The second was an evening event hosted by Osbornes, a firm of solicitors, at the British Museum of Film. Several speakers were asked to give their views on three key issues in adoption today and generate a headline about adoption they would like to see in the papers. There must have been 150 people there, many of whom were representatives of the legal profession, including judges. The



presentations stimulated lively debate.

Both events provided interesting and fruitful opportunities for us to meet other champions of adoption. We'd like to thank Osbornes, Edward Timpson, Tim Loughton and Adoption UK for inviting Family Futures, and we'd like to thank and congratulate **Adoption UK** for forty years' hard work, and wish everyone there all the best for the future.

WAVE

George Hoskings and Anthoulla Koutsoudi, respectively the CEO and Company Secretary of the WAVE trust (wavetrust.org) visited Family Futures recently, to exchange ideas about the importance of early intervention in working to end the cycle of violence and inter-generational transmission of trauma (through child abuse, neglect and through the witnessing of domestic

violence). The WAVE Trust is a small but influential charity which educates policy makers about effective, root cause approaches to end violence, and has the ultimate aim of '*creat(ing) a wave of action that will end abuse of all children, everywhere, period*', whilst inviting others to collaborate with their 70:30 agenda – a 70% reduction in child abuse by 2030. Wanting to know more about contemporary adoption practices, George invited Family Futures to come up with a '*Top 20 Wishlist*' for adoption in the 21st century – Alan Burnell (Registered Manager) has compiled this list, and it will be on our website shortly (or email training@familyfutures.co.uk for a copy). Family Futures is happy to become a WAVE Alliance Partner, and to contribute to WAVE's ongoing research and policy recommendation agenda.

CHANCE UK

We've also met with Gracia Grath OBE, CEO of the charity Chance UK which provides mentoring for children aged 5 to 11 who are at risk of developing anti-social or criminal behaviour (chanceuk.com).

Chance UK volunteer mentors raise children's self-esteem via activities such as sports, visiting museums, making scrapbooks anything the child might be interested in.

Liaising closely with schools, family and the child's classmates, Chance UK works in a solution-focused way, so that mentors and staff focus on the child's strengths and what they do well, rather than their negative behaviours. Most of the children they work with are on the verge of being permanently excluded from school, and this early intervention work can help prevent this. Chance UK also has a partnership model so that the work



can be replicated throughout the UK.

At Family Futures we were interested to find out more about this service for the children we work with, who may still be communicating their distress about their early life experience through challenging behaviour in school, and who might benefit from the support that mentoring can provide.

We are also interested in Chance UK's finding from their Girls' project that the SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) does not seem to identify girls' distress, which may be a result of the process of internalisation. We would like to explore this further in our continuing review and development of the most effective assessment tools (look out also for information from our Assessment Conference, happening this week with New Zealand Consultant Psychologist Dr Michael

Tarren-Sweeney who developed the Assessment Checklist for Children which we are currently using – visit <http://www.familyfutures.co.uk/services/training/index.html> and see our Winter Newsletter).

If you have any findings about the use of the SDQ in relation to working with girls, we would be interested to hear from you to share findings.

We look forward to developing our connection with Gracia and Chance UK.

Paediatric Input at Family Futures

Our consultant paediatrician, Deborah Hodes, has recently completed a report for us on the benefits of paediatric consultation within our multi-disciplinary work with children and their adoptive parents or foster carers. Her fascinating findings indicate that

despite numerous contacts with medical staff before being fostered or adopted, around 50% of the children had undiagnosed problems widely ranging in nature, that could benefit from paediatric review and input.

For the full report, and Alan Burnell's comments on the findings, please visit the homepage of our website

Book Review

You Think I'm Evil

David Taransaud (Worth Publishing, 2011)

This book is a well-rounded manual for working with traumatised adolescents. One of its strengths is that the author takes complex psychological processes, like defensive mechanisms, and explains the purpose they serve in a really



accessible way. *You think I'm Evil* is not just an academic text. It outlines why traumatised adolescents behave as they do and provides both professional tools for understanding what is happening, as well as practical tools for working with young people.

It's obvious that the author has huge empathy for young people, showing adults how to replace fear with understanding and containment. The key is to be able to engage with the enormous feelings these young people carry and stir up in the people around them. David Taransaud uses the metaphor of the hostage taker and the hostage to describe the relationship between elements of the young person's inner world. Such a clear description empowers both the young person and the practitioner to have an understanding of what it is that they are trying to achieve together.

So much of adolescent difficulties gets hidden behind risky behaviours, defiance, not wanting to relate, an attitude of '*I'm an individual, so piss off*'. Quite often these behaviours get written off as 'normal' within a teenager, and their more vulnerable, traumatised self get missed.

Normalising risky behaviour and defiant attitudes can become a way of not facing up to what is really happening for them. Engaging with a young person's aggressive stance is the big challenge, and this can be scary for professionals. Taransaud shows how metaphors and collaborative art-making can offer a way of making that engagement safer for both worker and young person.

Reading this book has helped me in my thinking about one of the young people I work with, who presents as hostile and aggressive and yet is a terrified little boy inside.

You Think I'm Evil is recommended for anyone coming into contact with traumatised adolescents. Teachers, foster carers, social workers – if they can understand, even if they don't want to work therapeutically, their day will be much less stressful.

Sue Hughes, Social Worker and Integrative Child Psychotherapist, Family Futures



TRAINING

We are delighted to announce a new training programme for 2012

What is Developmental Trauma?
The long-term developmental impact of repeated trauma in infancy

25th January 2012

Ten years ago, children placed in 'permanent' placements were recognised as often having attachment difficulties. Since that time, advances in neuroscientific research and theory have enabled us to recognise that the primary cause of behavioural difficulties post-placement are the result of repeated trauma in infancy. Though this trauma is a result of a failure of the primary attachment relationship to the birth parents, the consequence of this infant experience has a greater impact than just affecting the

child's attachment style. There is now evidence that all aspects of a child's development will be impacted by trauma in early infancy: this constellation of developmental impairment has been called 'developmental trauma'. Experts in the field such as Bruce Perry and Bessel Van der Kolk now recognise developmental trauma as a primary issue for children in the public care system and have advocated a neuro-sequential approach to treatment. This has had a profound effect upon thinking of the **Family Futures** therapy team and upon how we make placements and how we should be supporting children and their families.

The course will provide:

*A theoretical and evidence based framework for developmental trauma

- * An outline of how child assessments should be conducted
- * A model for post-placement interventions with Looked After and adopted children

Who should attend:

Social Workers, foster carers, Panel Members, therapists and all professionals working in the field of fostering and adoption.

Please visit our website for a full programme of the training courses we are offering throughout 2012

Any comments or feedback on our Newsletter?

We'd love to hear from you

Please contact

training@familyfutures.co.uk

