

**CHILD FRIENDLY LEEDS:  
SUPPORTING ENRICHMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOSTER AND  
KINSHIP FAMILIES**



**Making  
Leeds a child  
friendly city**



# SUPPORTING ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOSTER AND KINSHIP FAMILIES

Our ambition is for Leeds to be the best city for children and young people to grow up in and thrive. Child Friendly Leeds (CFL) is the golden thread bringing everyone who shares this vision in the city together.

Since its launch in 2012, Child Friendly Leeds has been successful in building up a wide network of partners and ambassadors who support this vision. They also support our focus on enabling the most vulnerable children and young people in the city to access opportunities to help them to achieve their potential.

The Enrichment Team (part of the Child Friendly Leeds communication and engagement team) work with city wide partners to identify and develop enrichment opportunities, events and activities for foster and kinship families, looked after children and care leavers. They work in close partnership with the fostering service and front line social care colleagues to develop enriching activities and opportunities which contribute to positive learning experiences. In particular we recognise the importance and value of fostering positive, safe and nurturing relationships between children, young people and their carers. Seeking ways in which to do this is a recurrent theme in our work and is highlighted in the more detailed information provided below.

We work with partners to develop and manage a rolling programme of opportunities that offer support to foster and kinship families, and provide access to positive experiences which nurture and support fostering relationships. The opportunities that we seek to develop are in sport, extra-curricular, outdoor learning, the arts and culture.

The list below shows examples of valued partners who we have collaborated with to deliver enrichment opportunities for children in care and care leavers.

Think Like a Pony  
West Leeds Activity Centre  
Leeds Carriageworks Theatre  
Leeds Town Hall  
First direct bank  
First direct arena  
Grammar School at Leeds  
Harrogate Theatre  
Skelton Grange

DJ School UK  
White Rose Shopping Centre  
Trinity Leeds  
Hyde Park Picture House  
Active Leeds  
Herd Farm  
The Outward Bounds Trust  
Leeds United Foundation



## A

# Child Friendly Leeds ambassador network

Our ambassador network is more than 800 strong, and these important partners support our ambition for children and young people through engaging with our ambassador 'asks'. These include:

- Becoming a foster carer with Leeds City Council
- Becoming an independent visitor to support a looked after child
- Offering adoptive/foster/kinship parents and carers the same employment rights as natural parents
- Offering discounts/incentives to foster families
- Running a skills-based project for children in care
- Offering supported lodgings for young adults leaving care
- Offering work experience opportunities
- Offering supported internships for young adults with special needs and/or disabilities
- Offering apprenticeships
- Offering career advice/talks to young people in Leeds schools

Child Friendly Leeds is an established brand in the city and has extensive reach on social media. We work with internal and external partners, fostering teams and the children's social work service to signpost families to events and activities taking place in the city through Twitter and Facebook.

## B

# Child Friendly Leeds Fund



The Child Friendly Leeds Fund was launched in 2017 as part of celebrations of the initiative's fifth birthday. The aim of the Fund is to enable partners, businesses and individuals to support children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and help them access enrichment opportunities aimed at helping them to grow in confidence, make friends and acquire essential life skills. Previous recipients of a similar fund, the Looked After Children's fund, enjoyed a wide range of projects which included sport, art, outward bounds and cookery.

The projects also helped cement the young people's relationships with their carers and independent visitors. The CLA fund has now been moved under the umbrella of the Child Friendly Leeds Fund and its remit broadened to support more disadvantaged and/or vulnerable children and young people in the city.





## Enrichment projects and programmes (developed through CFL partnership)

### **C** Therapeutic programmes – Think Like a Pony (CFL ambassador)

The Child Friendly Leeds communication and engagement team have worked with local riding and youth development centre Think Like a Pony (TLAP) since 2015. We have a strong partnership with the organisation who are a valued Child Friendly Leeds ambassador, and the team have coordinated and supported the delivery of several projects over the last three years at the centre for children in care and care leavers.

The purpose of TLAP's therapeutic programme is to empower children and young people to develop social and communication skills through learning to interact safely, empathetically and effectively with horses. Many children and young people have accessed the projects so successfully that it has proved to be a massive catalyst for change in their lives, and supported their personal and emotional development. This has been particularly powerful for a number of children who are looked after. We have seen improvements in the children's attachments and empathy for the horses being reflected in their overall relationships with carers. In some cases this has enabled very traumatised children to engage in further therapeutic work which has had a significant impact on their behaviour and overall outcomes.

The projects focus on relationship building, healthy attachments and developing life skills. Importantly, they also encourage children and young people to connect with, and benefit from engaging in physical activity within a stimulating and nurturing outdoor environment, which contributes to positive wellbeing and mental health. Since the first TLAP project in summer 2015, over 100 looked after children and young people, and care leavers have accessed projects at the centre.

The enrichment team are currently exploring joint funding opportunities to be able to deliver future projects at the centre, and a funding bid is being submitted to Sport England for 25 subsidised places for horsemanship sessions for look after young people aged 14-20.



# 'Moving on' project for CLA aged 15-16 – for young people in a transitional phase in their life

C1

## Summary of carer and young people's feedback on the 2017 April programme

5 looked after young people completed the programme

**1. Young person** – *"It was nice meeting different staff and being with [pony] May who I remember from last time. I felt this time that I was pushed a little more, I suppose because I am older. I got upset and wanted to cry when I couldn't keep my feet flat. My instructor was really nice though and supported me. It felt great when I managed it in the end. I love horses. I think I am more aware of how I use my body language and personal space. I feel more confident in my abilities."*

**Foster carer** – *"Being able to come along and see J in action helped me to make links for her. J's mind tends to wander and she can go off subject. This is something that she really needs to work on – staying focused! She can be unaware and just having the right vocabulary helps me help her".*

**2. Foster carer** – *"C's behaviour and attitude has calmed down tremendously at home and at school. She now follows instructions more readily rather than answering back and refusing. She is much more mature, grounded and calmer as a person. She is much more pleasant to be around and wants to spend time with her friends too. She is more than happy to come home at the appropriate times when asked. We now receive positive telephone calls from school rather than negative ones is more ready to be honest."*

**3. Foster carer** – *"There were some real positives that S could take away from this course. He valued the friendliness and openness of the staff and enjoyed being with other looked after young people and making friends. He commented on the lovely setting of the farm and the feel good factor he got there. I noted immediately after the course that he seemed to have a renewed sense of confidence. We told him we were proud of him and he appeared proud of himself."*

C2

## August 2017 – Two 3 day projects in August for looked after children (7-11 years)

In total 11 CLA accessed and completed the three day project. Each child recorded their learning and development by completing a personal journal.

**1. Foster carer** – *"D had a great time at TLAP, she certainly came away with the ability to recognise that situations call for calm and patience just like looking after the ponies. As a carer it was lovely to be welcomed into a relaxed calm space, and have an afternoon of watching and learning ourselves about the benefits to the children was a great help in understanding and taking forward the behaviours we are trying to help with"*

**2. Foster carer** – *"A has an empathy with horses and the calming effect of their nature really rubs off on him. He really enjoyed his sessions and I believe that he needs more. I feel that this is something that he feels he is good at and he truly needs that. His particular emotional difficulties at this time have been acute and I hope that he can continue this link again in the near future." – foster carer*

**3. Foster carer** – *"After the TLAP project M went on a week activity camp. Dropping him off on his own he seemed more confident being left. I believe the TLAP project helped with his confidence and helped him realise he can make friends. We knew M was coming on TLAP so we chose to book in this activity week after that, hoping he would have gained some confidence that would help him at the sports centre. The project did just that and helped him to access the sports activity week later on in the school holidays."*



## Outdoor learning programmes to support looked after children

The enrichment team work in partnership with charitable organisations and external partners to develop meaningful outdoor learning opportunities for children in care and care leavers. The team identify funding opportunities and grants as appropriate and have successfully secured a number of opportunities, examples of which are shown below.

Outdoor learning programmes give young people unique opportunities to embark on new adventures, learn new skills and develop on a personal and emotional level. They offer a perfect combination of adventure and challenge. The experience also enables motivation through personal achievement, and key communication and social skills to develop which continue to help children to thrive in many areas of their lives. Programmes like those outlined below also contribute to supporting placement stability and sustaining positive relationships within the family household.

### **D** The Outward Bound Trust “Skills for Life” programme

The Outward Bounds Trust is an educational charity that uses the outdoors to help develop young people from all walks of life. The Skills for Life Award is a 19 day mixed residential programme in different regions across the UK. The aim of the programme is to prepare young people for life beyond the classroom and supports lifelong development which can impact on the next stage of life, whether it is continued education, training or moving into the workplace. The award is specifically created for 15–19 year olds.

To date, 7 looked after young and care leavers have now taken on the unique challenge and successfully completed the programme. 5 places have been secured for the 2018 programme and referrals are currently being encouraged.

#### *Feedback from young people who accessed the 2017 programme:*

*“I learnt a lot of things about myself and I had a lot of time to think about the courses I wanted to do when I go to college, what I want to be when I grow up. In that time, I also managed to turn my future ideas around to come up with something completely different”. Summer 2017 programme*

*“This experience has changed my life in so many ways I don't think I would be able to type but in summary, it's taught me to be more patient and understanding I've met some incredible people all the skills I've learnt throughout the course are definitely transferable to your everyday life or a new chapter you may be endeavouring upon”. Summer 2017 programme*

*“The outward bound course is held with some prestige and is a great thing to put on a CV. It can be a great talking point in job or university interviews. Going forward I'm glad that I have this to hopefully get me where I want to go. I really appreciate the opportunity that was given to me and I believe that I have had a very positive 19 days which has kind of given me a kick-start out of the slump I was going through pre-Outward Bound”. Summer 2016 programme*

## D1 The Outward Bounds Trust Dulux “Brighter Futures” programme

The enrichment team have been awarded two funded places for looked after young people aged 16+ on The Outward Bound Trust Dulux “Brush with Adventure” 7 day programme, in August 2018. The programme is aimed at supporting disadvantaged young people who would otherwise not have access to such an opportunity, and need a helping hand to reach their full potential. This course is a chance to embark on adventure and learn new skills, with participants taking part in rock climbing, navigating through hills, scrambling up waterfalls and an overnight expedition camping amongst the mountains. The course is designed to raise aspirations, give young people opportunities to discover spectacular new places and meet some life-long new friends.

After the course participants who have a desire to improve themselves and have an interest in becoming painters and decorators will be able to apply for a free place on a painting & decorating course, through their Pre-Apprenticeship Training Course. This will be a 6-week pre-apprenticeship training course at a participating Dulux Academy college, with places available in Leeds.

## D2 National Citizen Service (NCS)

NCS is a three-week, government-funded summer programme involving outdoor residentials and a community project. The scheme is available for every young person aged 15 – 17 and is a chance for young people to embark on exhilarating challenges, and build confidence and important skills for work and life.

The enrichment team have been working closely with NCS representatives to help promote the scheme to foster and kinship families and in 2017, 25 looked after young people completed the scheme. Of the 25 young people, 9 of those young people have had previous engagement in enrichment activities coordinated through the fostering team and the CFL team.

**2018 NCS programme** – the enrichment team are now working in partnership to promote the scheme to foster and kinship families, and colleagues within the childrens social work service. The team are facilitating and supporting NCS representatives to attend social care team meetings and fostering support groups.

## D3 Residential and activity camps: West Leeds Activity Centre

Partnership with Leeds Youth Service (CFL ambassador)

The enrichment team work in partnership with the youth service to explore how we can support looked after young people to access activity programmes developed through the centre. These opportunities give children the chance to engage in a whole range of outdoor activities such as climbing, archery, team games and pedal go-karts. They also promote teamwork and contribute to positive emotional wellbeing by getting children active. The shared physical activities can also give children an important sense of belonging and companionship. In 2017 a number of our looked after children (aged 8-14) were supported to attend the centre’s activity camps, and a total of 24 children attended the programme. A summary of the number of children who accessed the activity programmes are below.

**Summer 2017** – 75 free places allocated for looked after children over three weeks in July and August. A total of 22 CLA attended the summer programme with a number of the children accessing more than one day.

**Autumn 2017** – 25 free places were allocated to looked after children in October half term. A total of 20 CLA attended the programme, with 4 children attending twice over the week.

**Christmas 2017** – 25 free places offered to looked after children over Christmas holiday period.

## Events and activities in the city

### E Free tickets at events, live shows and activities in the city

As a child friendly city, we are supported by a number of partners and child friendly Leeds ambassadors who generously offer regular complimentary (or discounted) ticket opportunities/allocated places to events and activities for children and young people who are looked after by the local authority.

Many foster and kinship families, children and young people in residential homes and care leavers have had opportunities to attend a whole range of events and live shows (see enrichment ticket programme for reference). These experiences provide opportunities for families to engage in positive activities and experiences together which help to nurture relationships. For many of the children and families these opportunities will be remembered for their whole lives. As a service being able to offer incentives and rewards, like tickets for shows, also provides a really powerful tool to reward children for participating in our wider engagement programmes that are designed to increase their self-esteem, raise their aspiration and create positive, memorable experiences.

### E1 Foster and kinship family events

The communication and engagement team work in partnership with CFL ambassadors to develop enriching opportunities for families over school holiday periods. For the past 3 years, with support from ambassadors Trinity Leeds and White Rose Shopping Centre, the team have coordinated several Christmas party events for foster and kinship families in the city. These events provide important opportunities for families to share positive, joyful and memorable experiences together within a friendly environment which fully focuses on the needs of the children and their carers.

For children to share such positive experience with adults, and to feel valued and cared about, helps to build their trust and resilience. Carers really value being supported to access such unique opportunities and have opportunities to meet up and connect with other carers. Feedback received year on year is very positive; a sample of the feedback received from December 2017 is shown below:

*"Both S and I had a great time at the WR Christmas party! Firstly I thought the venue, food and Santa plus photo very generous for a freebie! It was lovely to see all of the foster children dressed up beautifully in their Christmas clothes and having a really fun time. I always tell everyone how generous LCC are with their free events and always striving to work with local businesses to offer discounts etc, I don't think many other authorities do this. A very, very positive experience". – Foster carer*

*"Where do we start, well with a big thank you. A big thank you for a very special day, from the greeting at the door to the waves of goodbye at the end. The entertainment for all the children was excellent, I never saw any of the children being left out or feeling isolated, you and the rest of the staff were a credit to yourselves and social services. I thought you all catered for our every need and the kids loved it, their presents were quality and they will keep them occupied enough for us to get a break. The food was top quality and enjoyed by all. The parting gift for adults of chocolate teddies made us feel special too. Once again a mighty thank you to all that took part" – Foster carer*

## Arts and Culture

### F Play in a Day workshop – The Grammar School at Leeds (CFL ambassador)

The Grammar School at Leeds funded a fun, creative drama workshop in April 2017 for looked after children which was delivered by a drama teacher from Harrogate Theatre. The enrichment team worked in partnership with fostering colleagues to identify children and support them and their families to access this opportunity in the Easter school holidays.

8 CLA aged 8 to 13 years attended and had a chance to try acting, helping to create their own group fairy story, set and costume design. The team had full use of GSAL's new conference suite and outside space, with all refreshments and lunch being provided by GSAL. Plans are underway to offer a similar small group opportunity in the Easter holidays this year, April 2018, for looked after children. The carers and families were invited back at the end of the day to watch the children perform their own fairy tale. Some of the foster carers/children's comments is shown below:

*"I really enjoyed the day and wanted to go every day of the holiday. Thank you so much for a fantastic event (and the lovely coffee and biscuits)" – Foster carer*

*"N would like to say he enjoyed doing the freeze frames, he was happy the adults came and watched the play they had made themselves. He also enjoyed his lunch. He would like to say a big thank you."*  
– Foster carer on behalf of child who attended

*"A had a lovely time at GSAL's 'Play In A Day' drama work shop. Please thank all on behalf of A. I also really enjoyed all the children performing."* – Foster carer

### F1 Urban Arts workshop – DJ School UK

The enrichment team worked with DJ School UK in summer 2017 to coordinate and support the delivery of an urban arts workshop at Yorkshire Dance for a group of looked after young people, aged 14–18. Participants had the opportunity to try out DJ-ing, break dancing, rapping and beat-boxing with local artists. They were also treated to free pizza courtesy of CFL ambassador MOD pizza. Supported workshops like this give young people a chance to realise their talents in the arts, develop new skills and improve self-confidence. They also give opportunities for social time and friendships to develop, important for the emotional health and wellbeing.

**Care Officer** – *"Both boys really enjoyed the Urban Arts Day. They both liked that they had an opportunity of meeting new people who are from similar backgrounds to them. D really got on with T and so I have emailed his social worker to try and arrange for them to meet up again. B and A hit it off and we have arranged for them to meet today so it's all very positive! Overall they liked the DJ'ing the best but really liked the beat boxing/rapping session too. They liked the breakdancing but weren't as keen on that session as the other two"*

**CFL engagement team** – *"It went really well, I think the boys rapping in Arabic was really powerful and uplifting for them. Speaking to M the following day it was clear how much he enjoyed the dancing and I believe it would have a positive impact on him going forward if he could access lessons in the future."*