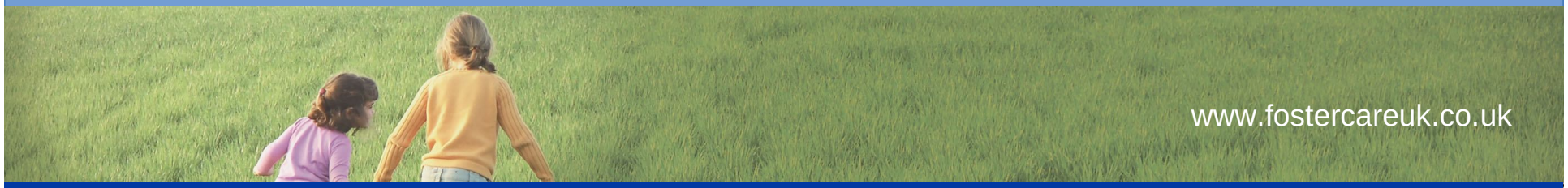
Retention of Foster Carers
A service wide approach

9th December 2010

Jonathan Toomey
Managing Director



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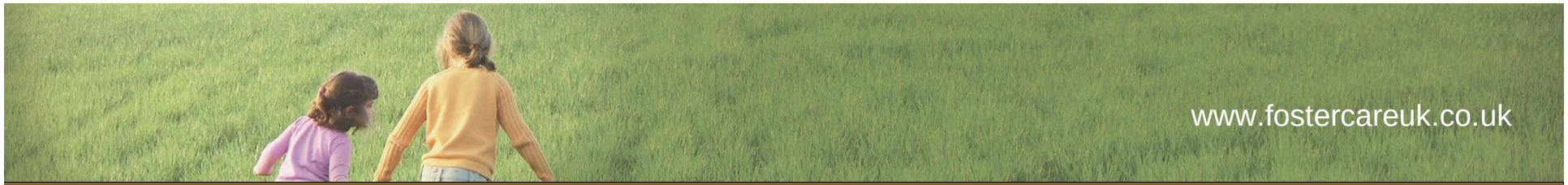
Always consider the Facts…

55% of fostering services reported losing
10% of their fostering households in 2008-09

Recruiting the foster care workforce of the future (the Fostering Network 2009)



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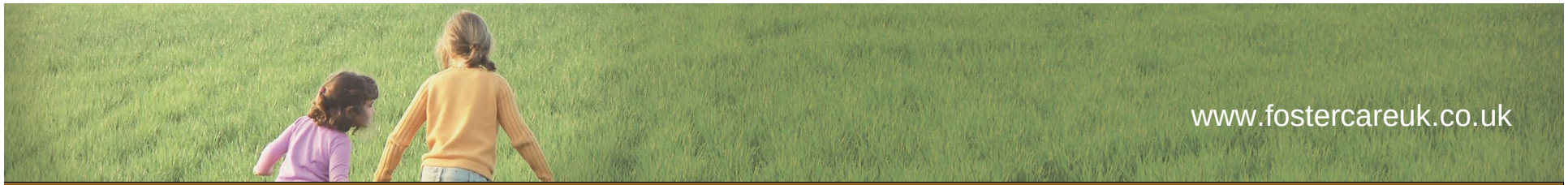
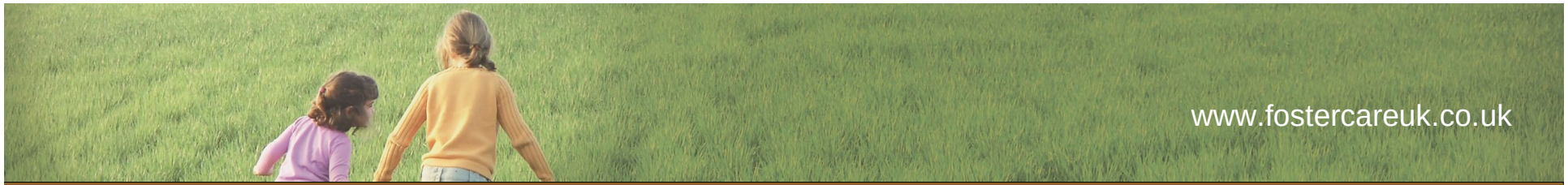
Just over half of fostering services achieved a net gain in fostering households in 2008-09

Recruiting the foster care workforce of the future (the Fostering Network 2009)



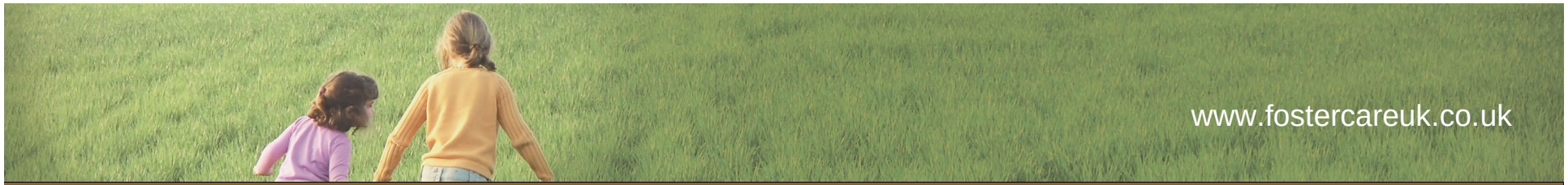
82% of Local Authorities saw a rise in children needing foster homes in 2009-10

Bursting at the seams (the Fostering Network Aug 2010)

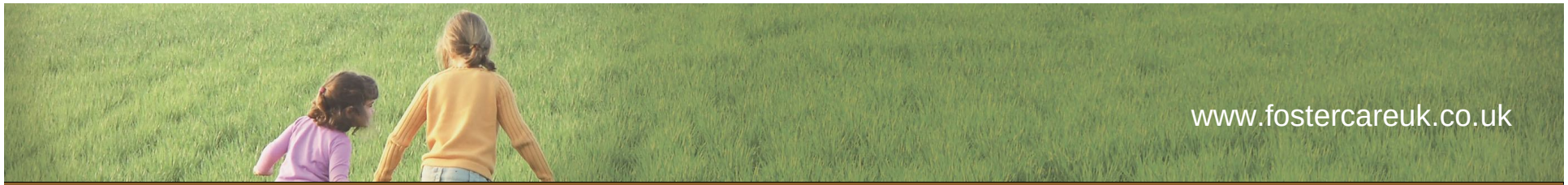


More foster carers needed as care system close to collapse

(Community Care Magazine - 2009)



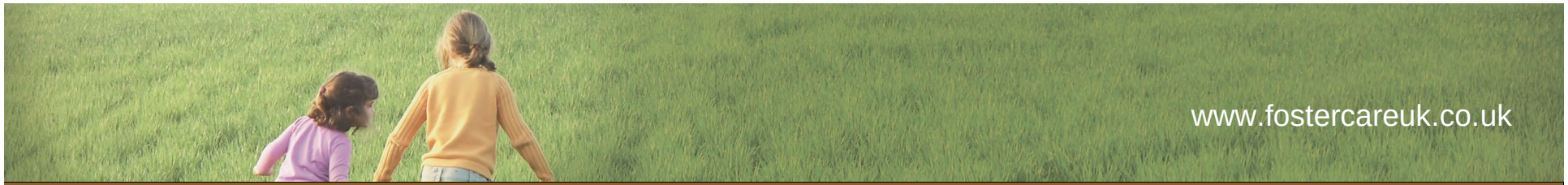
It is crucial that we look at retention holistically, keep it at the heart of our fostering service and have a ‘service wide approach’



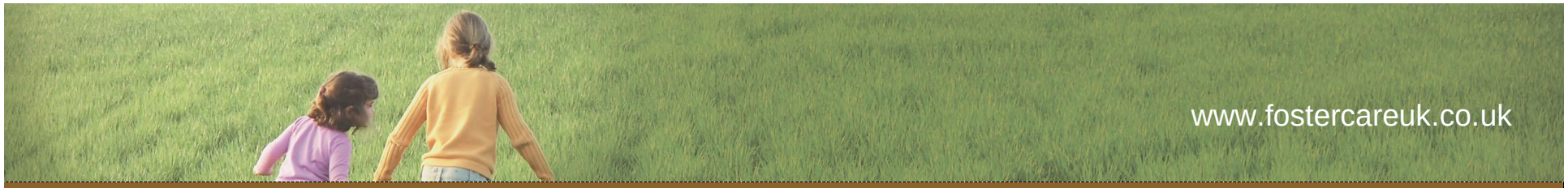
But…

we constantly hear

‘ Retaining foster carers really is an overwhelming task ’

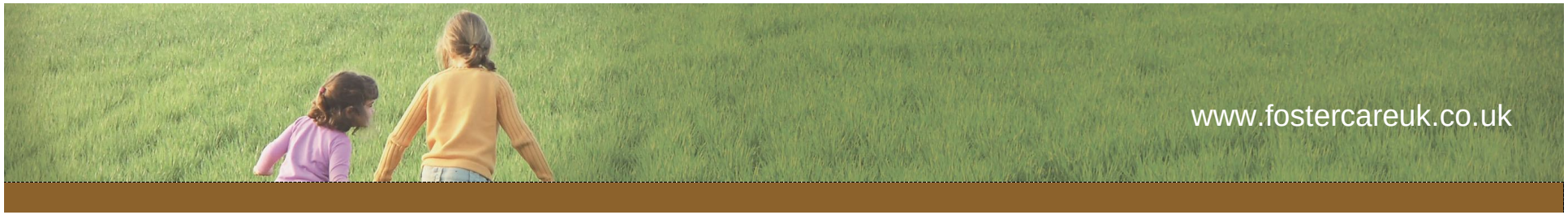


At FosterCare UK we have a service wide approach that focuses on:



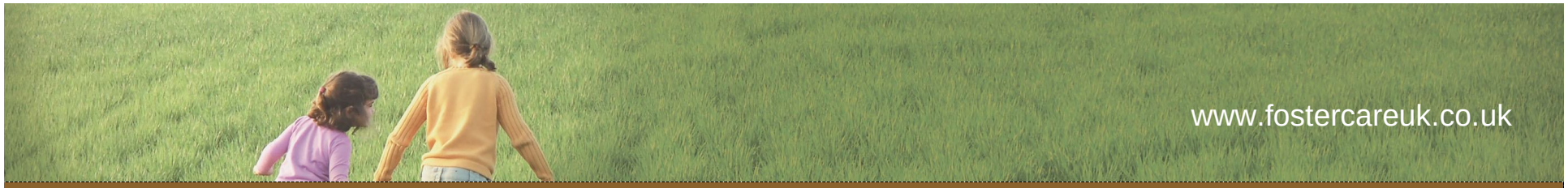
What children & young people deserve

- To feel safe and secure
- To be part of a family setting
- Improvement to their life chances
- To be listened to and advocated for
- Consistency of care and placement stability
- To be supported to develop and enjoy a successful future



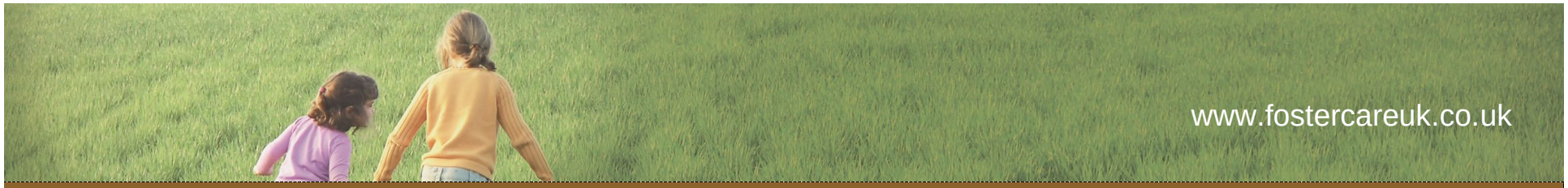
What foster carers expect

- Treated as a professional and be part of the team
- Consistent, timely and appropriate supervision
- To have support, when they need it (not when next scheduled)
- To feel valued, appreciated and respected
- An honest, open and transparent approach
- Comprehensive training and development opportunities
- Vision and foresight from their fostering service
- An organised, structured and consistent approach to practice



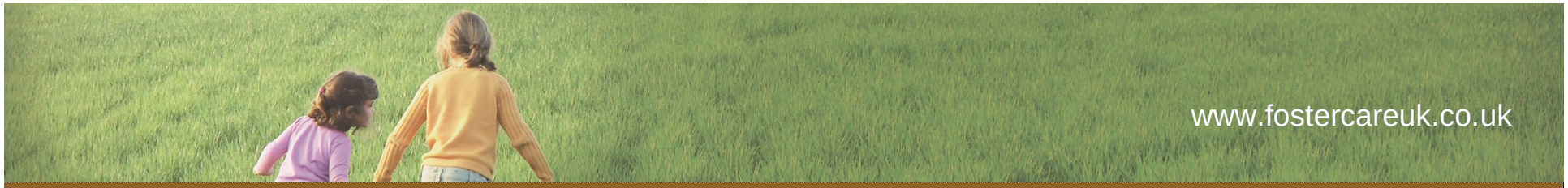
Staffing & Personnel

- Manageable caseloads
- Flexibility and responsiveness attitudes
- Regular and relevant supervision and support
- Access to specialists services i.e health, education, psychological
- Staff surgeries
- Ongoing learning and development opportunities
- Quality guidance and management
- Constructive team meetings
- Consulted and listened to



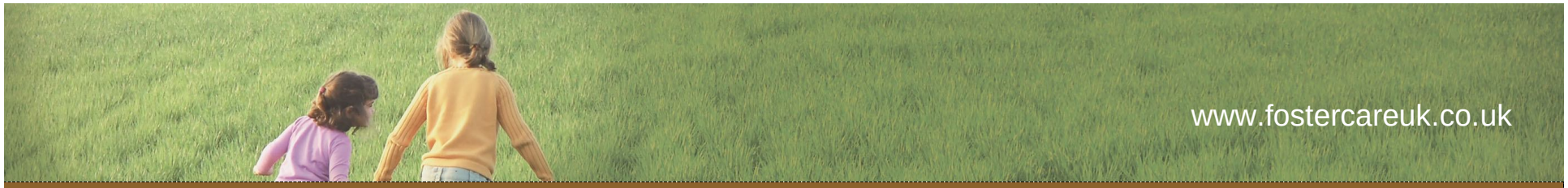
Contracting & Customers

- Short and long term needs
- Partnership approach
- Outcomes focused
- Ethical & transparent practice
- An inclusive service
- Clear and regular communication
- Team around the child approach
- An attitude to deliver success together



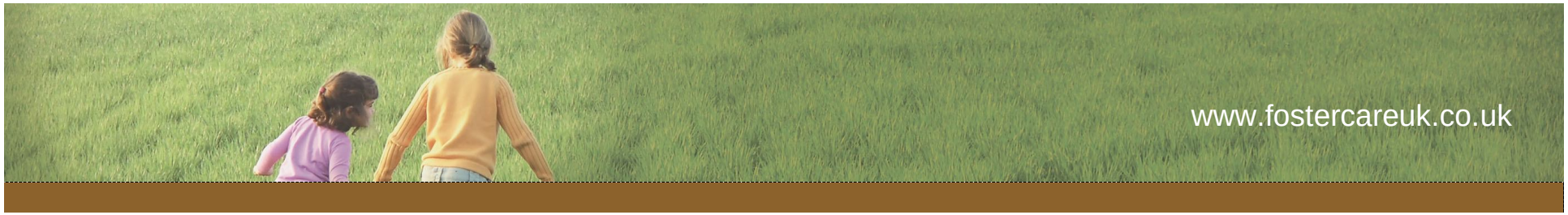
Recruitment

- Targeted & Measured
- Diverse
- Based on fact – (linked to needs of LAC and Local Authorities)
- Fair and appropriate – (existing v new)
- Balanced – (care v commerciality)
- Encouraging local initiatives
- Focused on internal resources



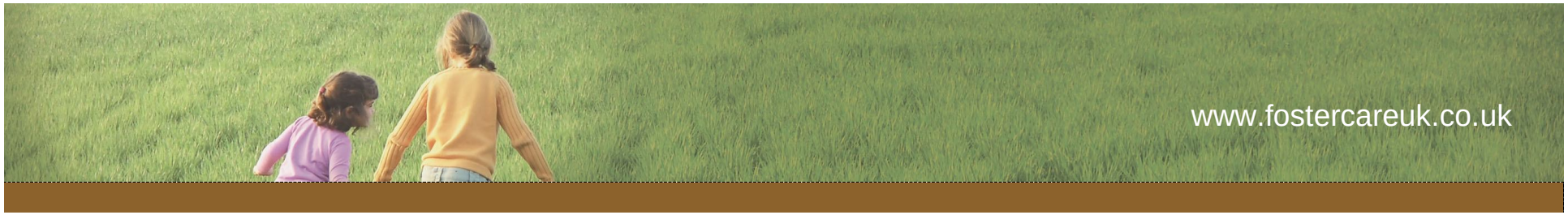
Training & development

- Accessible and recognised
- Regular & relevant
- Foster carers are consulted
- Options – face to face, on line, NVQ, Diploma, other specialisms
- Meet needs rather than just tick a box
- Planned – (annual programme)
- Focused on needs of children & young people
- Reward mechanisms – (payment and presentations)



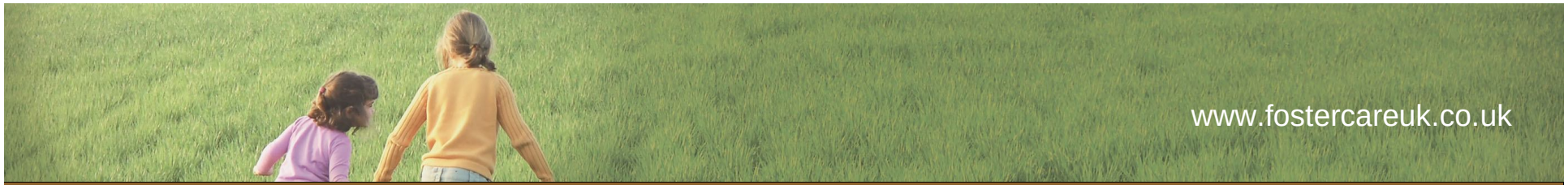
Fostering panel

- Representative – (client group, gender & ethnically balanced, experience, qualifications etc)
- Robust but approachable
- Promote good practice
- Passionate about achieving the best
- A willingness to develop
- Inclusion in the fostering service



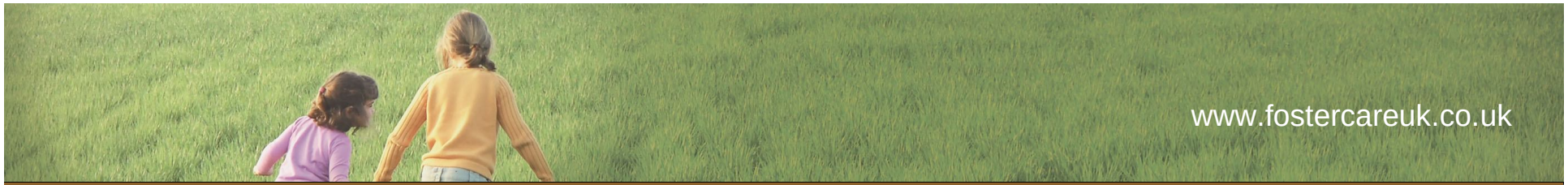
Feel good factors

- Newsletters & updates
- A community approach
- Recognition & thanks
- Openly praise
- Consultation on key issues
- Consistency of staff



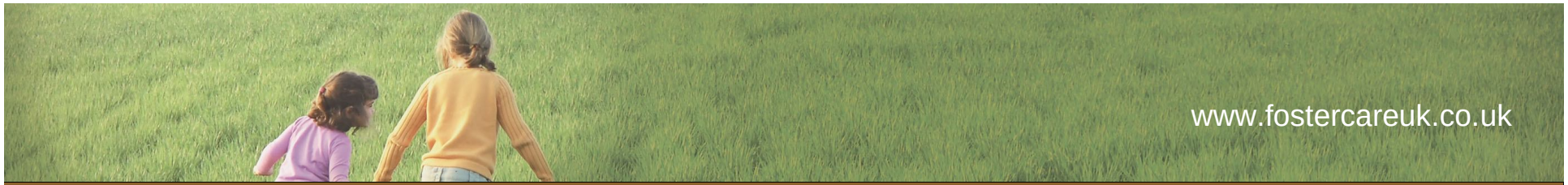
Analyse data

- SSW and LAC SW visits
- C&YP Feedback
- Comments & complaints
- Inspections & audits
- Annual review process
- Consultations
- Support group meetings



And we Communicate.....

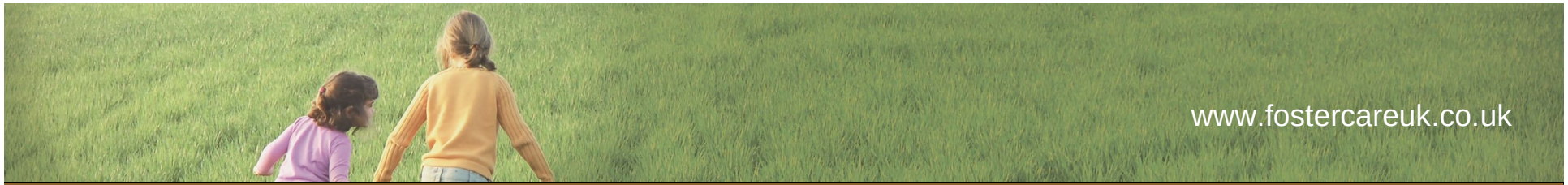
- Frequently
- It is meaningful
- Planned and structured
- Accessible communication formats
- Good practice forums
- It’s not always good news but needs to be said.....transparent approach



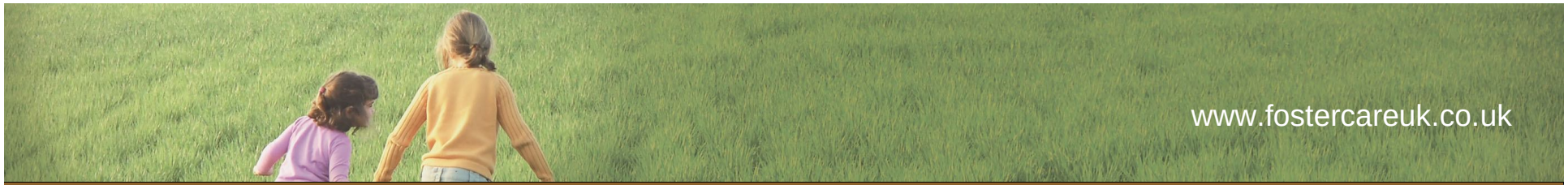
Ultimately…we retain foster carers through a service wide approach:

This means:

- It is the responsibility of everyone involved with FosterCare UK
- We are all responsible for retaining a skilled, active and motivated pool of foster carers – (don't leave issues unaddressed)
- We always consider external influences
- Our approach is adopted and monitored to assess effectiveness



By having a ‘service wide approach’,
we ensure that the retention of foster carers
isn’t an overwhelming task.....



A team approach
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Consider the facts
What foster carers expect
Communication
Analyse data
Retention Success
Staffing, supervision & support
What C&YP deserve
Feel good factors
Training & development
Recruitment
Fostering panel
Customers

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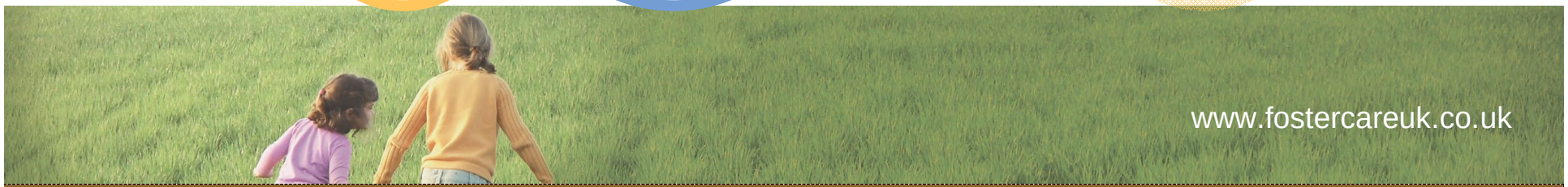
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