

## OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

When the Covid crisis emerged, our work continued. We have found ways of supporting for our clients through the emergency, re-inventing our services to suit the prevailing circumstances.

For example:

- We keep in telephone contact with all parents on at least a weekly basis, more often if they want it.
- We offer advice and information about available resources in the present crisis, including sending regular newsletters
- We send out weekly education packs for the children
- We have set-up a private Facebook group and post many stories and songs for the children to enjoy
- We make regular deliveries of useful goods and supplies for our clients
- We also regularly provide a box of fresh fruit and vegetables
- We run on-line parenting and healthy eating classes

Meanwhile much work is going into planning the re-opening of the nursery, and eventually our day centre, in a way that will keep clients and staff safe.

I can promise everyone that our commitment to clients remains undiminished. I would like to pay tribute to our wonderful staff for their response in these most difficult times.



John Price – Chair of Trustees



## Meetings now held on-line

The Managers and Trustees of The Family Haven have moved their meetings on-line. This way they are able to keep the communications opened and enabling them each week to have their group discussions on what the next steps of action is needed to get through this difficult time. They have also shown great concern over staff members each week by contacting all staff to make sure we are all keeping well and safe.



**Helping vulnerable families  
to a brighter future  
since 1988**

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## Before the Covid-19 virus and lockdown.

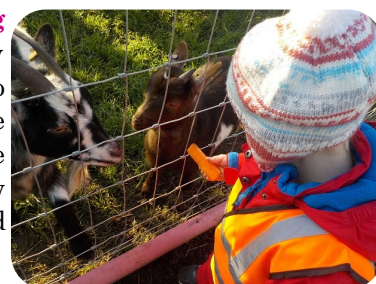
I hadn't had a chance to produce our April newsletter with details of what The Family Haven had been up to between January and the end of March due to the Covid-19 lockdown. I have decided in this newsletter I would add a few cheerful moments before the lockdown.



**Chinese New Year:** The children in nursery have been finding out about Chinese New Year. They have been experimenting with using chopsticks and trying traditional Chinese food. This year 2020 it is the year of the **Rat** according to Chinese zodiac. We would like to wish all our Chinese families a very happy and prosperous New Year!



**A visit to St James City Farm and Riding School:** The children love going to St James City Farm. They get excited whenever we take them. To see their faces light up when feeding and petting the animals is a delight. They enjoy visiting Peach (the baby goat which we adopted in 2019) and to see how big she has grown. We continue to visit Peach and all the other animals as often as we can.

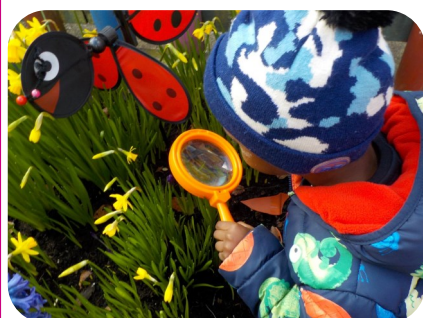


**World Book Day:** We were all so excited to participate in this day! Staff were keen to dress up and apply face paints, ready for the children, who were just as eager upon arrival to nursery. We did have several children that came in outfits, which was fantastic. We don't normally ask parents to bring them dressed up as that's putting a bit of pressure on parents to source dressing up or to make something themselves. We have plenty to choose from, so this helps the families immensely.

When the children had all been through the dressing up box and decided what character they wanted to be for the session, we helped them dress and find the masks or other items. One little chap was so proud to be wearing a batman costume, he told us over and over again who he was. We ended up calling him Batman for the rest of the day as he wouldn't answer when his real name was used.



We all walked into town to visit Waterstones book store as they were holding a special World Book Day story time session. The children were invited to dress up as favourite characters from books. When we arrived at the book store the children were able to join a story that was being read. They really enjoyed a story from 'The Detective Dog' range. When the session was coming to an end the children were able to take their own tokens and look for a book themselves. This gave them a little independence, they were able to look and decide which book and then take it themselves to the counter, pay for the book and get a receipt. All very exciting when you've not been given such responsibility before. They were eager to hold them on the way back to nursery, however we did suggest we keep them safe by placing them in the bag and all holding hands. Lots of chatter and reciting verses from favourite stories on the way back, it was a great morning with lots of socialising with everyone on the way to and from the book store.



**Looking for bugs in the garden:** The children do enjoy looking for bugs and creepy crawlers of any kind with their magnifying glass. Some for fun like to look at faces and the sounds of laughter is very pleasant and enjoyable and makes us all laugh. There is nothing like hearing and seeing children having a lovely time.



## The Lockdown

The next 3 pages of this newsletter is to inform our readers just what The Family Haven staff has been doing in making sure all our families and children are well, safe and how we were able to assure our families we are still here for them. Also to let you our readers meet some of our staff members and what they have been up to.



**Lucy Pearce**  
Client and Centre  
Manager

The Family Haven had to close its doors on Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, due to the Coronavirus pandemic. At this difficult time there was some apprehension about how we could continue to support our clients remotely. To begin with we decided that the best way to support the clients would be to telephone them once a week to check in, have a chat, and to see if there was any help that we could provide. The families were also given a mobile number to ring at any time if they were in need of anything and were also able to contact us via private message on our Facebook page.

Soon a private separate Facebook group was set up for our current families so that they could talk with other parents, share ideas and photographs and to ask for advice in a safe space. I'm pleased to say that the group has been a success. The parents are engaging with each other and getting useful ideas and activities for their family. They are also able to access parenting classes and personal development sessions, run by our Family Support worker Gail. Parents have particularly been enjoying the familiar songs and stories with their children read by the staff.

To begin with our clients faced many issues. One client was unable to get any dairy free products for her child due to panic buying. Another single parent was refused entry into a supermarket as they were operating a one per household policy and she had no one to look after her children. A client's pushchair broke and she did not have the funds to replace it. A mum with an autistic child was finding it very difficult to go shopping as he refused to leave the house due to the changes in his routine. We managed to resolve all of these issues and many more throughout this time by having a dedicated team of staff and trustees who have worked together to go above and beyond to ensure that our family's needs were met.

We have since managed to organise a weekly craft pack for the children, a monthly care package for the whole family and a monthly fruit and vegetable delivery, courtesy of Oakesey's fruit and veg shop. This project was put together as during the weekly phone calls, many of the parents had expressed a need for essentials such as nappies and toilet paper but were finding it difficult to source. They were also finding it challenging having to leave the house frequently because they were running out of fresh produce. All of the packs have had very positive results. The fruit and vegetable packs had a lot of variety and the families said it was good quality. One delivery came while the family was having tea, the children abandoned their food in favour of fruit and mum said they got their 5 a day in one sitting! Everyone is so thankful for the care packages they have received. In the words of one of our three years olds "the family haven is the best!" The parents are liking the craft packs as much as the children. It is something they look forward to every week it keeps them entertained and brings the whole family together.



We have also managed to celebrate two festivals, Easter and Eid. The first care packages included Easter eggs kindly donated by The George Whitfield Centre and the latest packs included gifts for Eid for our Muslim families donated by the Masjid E Noor Mosque and the Gloucester Muslim Community. The children's craft pack reflected this too, with tailored activities being included.



As the weeks go on most of the families are coping well, others still need practical help. Many parents are feeling worried and just want someone to talk to. This has been reflected in the active listening sessions with the parents, which have more than doubled since the pandemic began. Many of the clients are wondering what will happen next. Some are very worried about coming back to The Family Haven and others cannot wait. We have reassured them as much as we can and explained that there is no pressure to come back straight away if they do not feel ready. Their place will remain open for them and we will update them with any news and information as it happens. One thing that they have all agreed is how much they have missed us as we have missed them. We hope to see them all as soon as it is safe to do so and we look forward to a new chapter with a renewed appreciation for what The Family Haven stands for.

## Family Support



**Gail Jones**  
**Family Support Worker /**  
**Outreach**

In the first few weeks of lockdown I spent most of the time cleaning the house, gardening and upcycling some old pieces of furniture. It gave me the chance to do some of the things which I'd been putting off due to the lack of time.

Just before Easter I volunteered to help deliver some Easter care packages to our families. It was good to feel useful and gave me the opportunity to see how our parents were getting on. I also spent time voluntarily adding posts onto the Family Haven Facebook page. This ensured the parents knew we were still thinking of them and trying to support them.

On 27<sup>th</sup> April I was asked if I wanted to start working from home. This was an easy decision and since then I have continued to put posts on Facebook which include important information such as accident safety, Icon, safeguarding, mental health information and of course weekly stories for the children.



I have also set up a private group on the Facebook page called 'Parenting, craft and healthy eating'. Having a private page which only staff and parents could access meant I was able to post recorded parenting sessions, personal development sessions, cookery sessions, stories and some ideas to keep children occupied. Recording these sessions highlighted how difficult it is to record on a phone and how strange it is to deliver these sessions without the parents being there to make comments and lead the discussion. I really missed them, luckily, I have been able to talk to many of the parents each week when I have phoned them. The phone calls gave the parents a chance to talk about how they were feeling and to ask for help with the challenges they have been facing being at home with their children for long periods of time.



I have also been helping Lucy to make up care packages and deliver them. I have also delivered items needed by the parents such as shopping, pushchairs, nappies, and clothes. Doing the deliveries meant I was able to see the children and families and have a quick socially distanced chat. I really enjoyed those brief few minutes and I was impressed with how positive the parents were. The children were very excited but kept their distance and often waved frantically from windows!



During lockdown I have spent a lot of time researching parenting sessions, recording information into spreadsheets and doing some professional development training which has included courses on Improving Mental Health through Diet and Nutrition, Food and Nutrition, Digital Skills: Social Media (for Business) and Sports Nutrition.

It has been an interesting few weeks and there have been many challenges, but lockdown has made me re-evaluate what is important in my life which is my family and my health. In my free time I have been going for long walks in the beautiful countryside and going on 20mile bike rides with my husband, which is good for the soul and has made me appreciate where I live even more.



## Nursery



### Working in Partnership

Mohammed Patel of the Barton & Tredworth COVID Support Group kindly donated a selection of arts & craft packs as well as children's books. We received 12 packs and have been sharing them out with our children, we are so grateful for all donations during this challenging time.

Thank you to Imran Atcha, Coordinator of The Friendship Café and St James City Farm & Riding School for thinking of us and putting our charity forward for this support.



### Private Face Book Group

Since early lock down, a private face book group for all our current parents and carers was set up. This helps parents to feel secure and able to share photos of their children within our small community of Haven families. Some children aren't able to have pictures used within the premises for a number of reasons, however parents have been adding photographs of their experiences during lock down to the site, which is a positive and trusting step forward. This group has kept us all informed and updated with what's going on in our local area as well as at The Family Haven.

We have been sharing lots of festivals and celebrations together and enjoying looking at each other's' journeys along the way. Information is added to support parents and carers with specific needs which has been a welcomed addition. Parents have been able to communicate with each other and share ideas about home schooling and supportive suggestions that have been received with great thanks and enthusiasm.

### Parents as partners

Quite soon after we made the decision to close our doors to keep everyone safe, we began telephoning all our parents and carers. This has happened throughout on a weekly basis. We have been able to spend quality time on the phone, checking in to see how parents are managing in these challenging circumstances asking if they need anything as well as giving advice when needed.

As the Early Year's manager, I personally have really enjoyed having the time to talk, which isn't rushed, or interrupted with the parents. Talking through their concerns, especially around their children. Lots of useful support has been shared as well as information about schools for the children that will be moving onto school in September.

Parents have received advice about foods to give their children, especially for families that have had no outdoor access for weeks, to ensure children have been receiving as many nutrients as needed. Also nursery support around when we will try to reopen and what this might look like.

### Phased return

The nursery has had a lot of work to make it safe for reopening. Following government guidelines, we have organised the whole outdoor provision so that bubbles of children can have safe access to toys and equipment in their garden. We have sorted areas for play which gives learning opportunities for all. Parents have commented on the space and have also enjoyed watching their children play, from a safe distance. We will continue to provide time and space for the children to re-settle back into their nursery and enjoy being with other children again. It has taken a lot of time and energy to get to this stage and I am proud of the whole team effort to get us here. Eventually we will be able to open to more children and families and hopefully embrace a new normal that everyone can support.

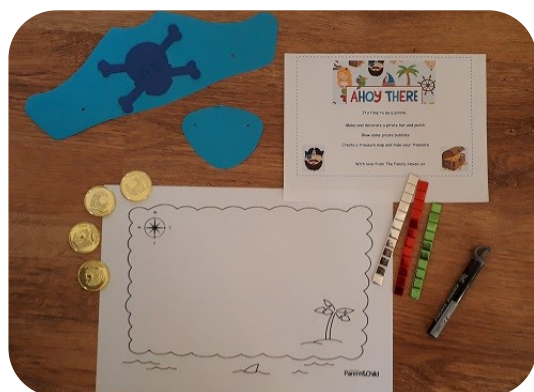
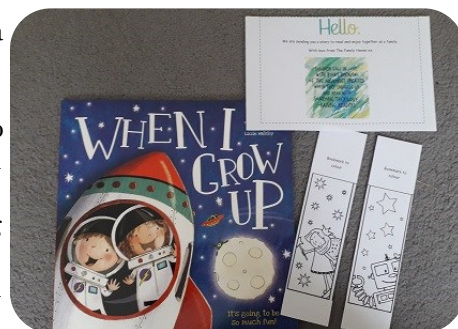


**Claire Bluett**  
**Deputy Manager**

I never imagined that a week at work would include hiding in wardrobes, house viewings and trampoline exercise! This has often been the case since working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown. Each week I have phoned or video called the pre-school children from The Family Haven to say hello, have a chat and catch up with all that they have been doing.

I have been on many adventures with them and it has been so lovely to keep in touch with them in this way. The children often became very excited during our calls and many parents said their child looked forward to the time each week. It has been a lovely way to maintain and nurture our relationships and connections which has been so important during this strange and confusing time.

On other days my living room floor became a packing station with boxes, envelopes and address labels! Throughout the lock down period we have been sending activity packs to the children. These have been themed around a topic or special event such as Ramadan, and have included small activities to have fun with at home. We have seen lots of photos on our Facebook page of the children enjoying these with their parents and siblings. It has been a lovely way to spark curiosity, provide a little entertainment and hold all of our children in mind.



Helen had these paper bags made for the children as a keepsake, I had placed seeds in them and they had been posted out to all the children to plant.

I have been doing a lot of reading, videoing fun things to do at home on our private Facebook page and talking with the children. Which I totally enjoy but nothing better than being back in Nursery. I am looking forward to where we are all back to normal.



The children all know that I love my breakfast! Toast and porridge are my favourites! Here are some fun toast ideas.

I have also just made these porridge bars. They were super easy and could be made by Little hands. Mix 125ml milk, 125g of oats, 1 mashed banana, a handful of blueberries (or raisins etc) and 1 tablespoon of cinnamon in a bowl. Squash in a baking tray and cook at 180 degrees for 20 minutes!



## The Family Haven Needs your help!

During these uncertain times, the people we help need us more than ever. We can't continue the important work we do without your help. If you think you could help us by raising funds for us, please contact us to let us know!

Email: [fundraising@thefamilyhaven.com](mailto:fundraising@thefamilyhaven.com)

*Everyone at The Family Haven (Staff, Trustees and our families) would like to thank you for giving us the support that we need to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable and disadvantage families. If it wasn't for faithful supporters like you and for your generosity, we wouldn't exist.*



## Lorraine Barrett takes early retirement



Our Centre Manager Lorraine Barrett has taken early retirement. Her last day was at the end of March. Lorraine has worked at The Family Haven since 1992 starting as Nursey Supervisor. In 1994 she moved up into the office taken on a new role as Client and Centre Manger and has been there since her retirement in March 2020. For 28 years during the time she worked at The Family Haven she has seen many changes and faced many challenges. She worked hard, very committed and was very dedicated to her job making The Family Haven what it is today. She always showed compassion, kindness, caring, and willingness to help the families. I do not think there is a family who has walked through the doors that do not love and appreciate her for all she has done for them. The families were sad to hear that she was leaving.

She was an excellent boss. She encourage, guided, acknowledge and supported staff to combine our efforts, skills, talents, insights, passion, enthusiasm and commitment. We all enjoyed and will miss the bantering (she was quite good at it).

**From all Staff and Trustees :** Congratulations Boss! We all hope all your future dreams come true and your retirement is filled with joy and happiness. We all hope you will have a great time in retirement! We are going to miss you. And we wish you nothing but the very best for this new chapter in your life! You deserve it! Enjoy your retirement!

*'But remember your retirement doesn't mean that you will stop hanging out with us. Right? Drop by for coffee once in a while. We loved to hear about your adventures.'*

We are all sad to see her go but the rest of the team will strive to keep up the good work and continue to run The Family Haven for many more years.

## The Nursery has re-opened as of 1st June.

At the moment, until we hear any other guidance from the government, we have opened for a two-hour session each morning, 10-12. it's a staggered intake, so each parent has a ten-minute window to arrive and leave. E.G:10.00-10.10-10.20, then the same with leaving at 12.00-or 12.10.

At this time, we have agreed a bubble of 4 children maximum each session. This has been offered to the pre-school first as we obviously want to support them as much as possible before going to school in September. The government have said nurseries are now able to open to pre-school and vulnerable children.

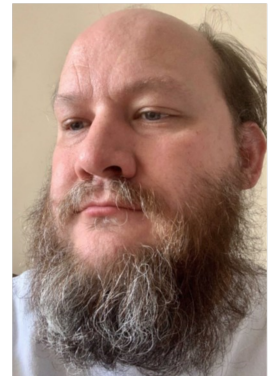
Not all the children are back, some preferring to wait longer to see what the guidance is. The children that have come back have been so excited and happy. They each have defined areas to play, however they don't have to stay in those areas. They are in a bubble and won't be joining another bubble, (so hopefully no cross contamination). The children have been colouring, counting, listening to stories, because apparently 'mummy doesn't read the stories like Claire!'.

## Welcome



The Family Haven would like to welcome Asya Pandor as our new Trustee. She joined the Family Haven in January.

## Welcome



The Family Haven would like to welcome Alistair Holyhead as our new Trustee. He worked as a volunteer as our Internet and computer specialist for 5 years.

Why become a Friend? As a Friend of The Family Haven you will be supporting the trustees and staff in helping provide the services our families so desperately need. Your regular subscriptions and offers of voluntary help are invaluable and support us in delivering our aims.

Call 01452 422971 for an application form or download it from <http://bit.ly/YtnESd>



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