

Online service for Care leavers and adopted adults, FamilyConnect, wins UCL award

National charity Family Action is delighted to have won the Community Award in UCL's (University College London)'s annual Provost's Public Engagement Awards 2020. The award is for the charity's partnership with the University's MIRRA Project (Memory-Identity-Rights In Records – Access) to develop the charity's exciting new FamilyConnect online service.

FamilyConnect gives care leavers and adopted adults free and clear advice about accessing their care and adoption records, what they can expect to receive, their legal rights and how to go about searching for information in the first place. It provides information, guidance, support and signposting to help.

Family Connect has been enhanced greatly through working in close consultation with the MIRRA Project, the expert knowledge of respected Search and Reunion Consultant, Julia Feast OBE and the tremendous insight provided by the Care Leavers Association. Family Action wanted to develop FamilyConnect as a national resource that would provide high quality and practical assistance to people who have been in care or who are adopted when they seek answers to questions about their origins. We know this is vital if care leavers and adopted adults are to be supported to find the information they are seeking and then to move on with their lives in the most positive way.

David Holmes CBE, CEO Family Action said:

"Family Action would like to say thank you to The Provost and to UCL for recognising the potential of FamilyConnect through the Community Award. We would also like to offer our thanks to everyone connected with UCL's MIRRA Project as their insights, ongoing input and support have only helped to make FamilyConnect better. Our firm intention is for FamilyConnect to become a permanent national resource that will continue to benefit care leavers and adopted adults across the country for many years to come. FamilyConnect will always be a collaborative project that will need to draw on the expertise and life experience of many different individuals and organisations with experience of care and adoption. Family Action is privileged to host this important resource and we know its impact will be life changing for many."

Laura Cream, Director of Engagement at UCL commented:

"One thing above all stood out about this project – that it was all about putting the voice of those that matter most at the heart of the research. Involving care leavers themselves in the development of the Family Connect initiative means that what has emerged is truly what is wanted and needed by the people who are going to use it. It has also given the collaborative team the ability to make a much stronger case to those who develop the policies that affect care leavers' lives about what needs to change. We wish the team, and the project, every success and have no doubt it will go on to have a long term national impact."

To find out more about FamilyConnect, the UCL Provost Awards and the MIRRA group please visit:

- www.familyconnect.org.uk
- www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/projects/provosts-public-engagement-awards-2020
- blogs.ucl.ac.uk/mirra/2018/06/12/introducing-the-mirra-project/

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Family Action is a national charity committed to building stronger families and brighter lives.

Since the charity was founded in 1869, we have continued to help children and families overcome the challenges they face through a wide range of practical, emotional and financial support. With some 160 community-based services across the UK, we currently support more than 60,000 families each year.

We help families to manage their mental health and wellbeing and to tackle behavioural issues and parenting challenges, family conflict and domestic abuse. We also work with families to reduce the impact of social isolation, poverty, addiction and other significant sources of stress and pressure.

Our work covers the whole life span and includes help for parents-to-be and for parents and carers of children of all ages, a wide range of services for children and young people and services for adults affected by mental ill health. Our family work stretches from intensive whole family support to more targeted services supporting families affected by adoption, special guardianship, separation, special educational needs, disability, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Based in and working with Children's Centres, GP surgeries, schools and other local partners, our specialist services include Multi Systemic Therapy, children's trauma therapy, child to parent violence, social prescribing, supervised child contact and a range of mentoring and befriending services. We also provide some 2,000 welfare and educational grants every year to people in financial crisis.

Through the National School Breakfast Programme, we provide a healthy breakfast to hundreds of thousands of pupils every school day. We also offer free and immediate support to adult family members through our national helpline, FamilyLine (via telephone, email, online chat and 24/7 text service), and are recognised as a leading provider of specialist training and consultancy.

During the Covid-19 pandemic Family Action is adapting its service delivery to ensure we are still very much there for the people who rely on us. Many of our services are now being delivered virtually and we have prioritised keeping in contact with people. At the same time we have fundraised additional money so that we can greatly expand our network of FOOD Clubs, provide our most vulnerable service users with emergency financial support and distribute other practical resources to help people get through lockdown.

Registered charity number: 264 713

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www.facebook.com/familyaction/

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