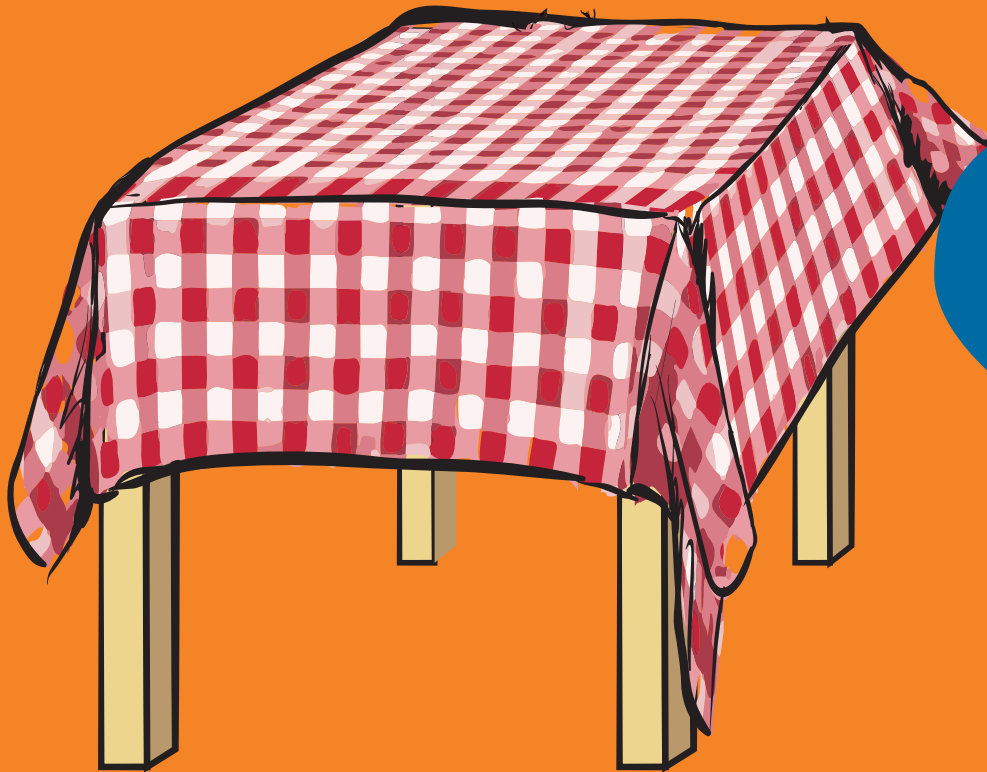


A Kitchen Table Revolution

40 years of The Fostering Network

Johnny Burke and Julie Pybus



with an
introduction
by
Jacqueline
Wilson

The
Fostering
Network

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Introduction by Jacqueline Wilson

I've written exactly 100 books for children but my most popular title by far is *The Story of Tracy Beaker* – a tale of a child in care, desperate to be fostered. It's wonderful to know that The Fostering Network does such sterling work with similar children, building brighter futures for so many.

This excellent and thoroughly practical charity started at a kitchen table meeting in Camden in 1974 – and for the past four decades it has grown in strength and achievement, so much so that it is now the leading fostering charity in the UK.

I have long been a proud supporter of the work of The Fostering Network. It does its very best for children and foster carers, making a crucial difference. Real-life *Tracy Beakers* are given a chance to lead positive and fulfilling lives, reaching their full potential.

The Fostering Network has helped countless children in this way and will always continue to do so.

Jacqueline Wilson

September 2014

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To be a foster carer in the 1970s was just about being a mum, that was all that was required. There was no reading up. You needed empathy, but not a lot of knowledge.

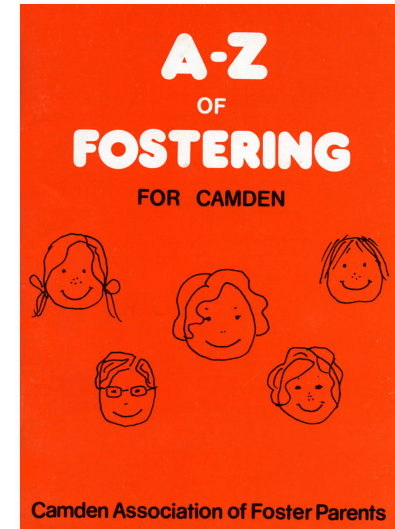
Pat Verity, Lewisham foster carer and delegate at inaugural meeting, later deputy director of NFCA

1974 How it all began

In the early 1970s, fostering was very different to today. A typical foster family might be loving parents with space in their home, and time and energy to give to another child. While they did everything they could to make their fostered children feel welcome and happy, they didn't have much training or support – they may well have felt isolated and, at times, have struggled with the challenges their fostered children brought.

At this time, a young couple called Chris and Susie Gardiner were living in north London and fostering five brothers and sisters. They asked their social worker if they could meet other local foster carers. They wanted to find out if the sort of behaviour their fostered children were displaying was typical. They wanted to compare notes, share experiences and learn from others.

Their first meeting with 17 other foster carers was a success. They moaned



A-Z of Fostering for Camden – one of the first publications dedicated to foster carers

about the tough moments they faced, shared their successes, reassured each other that they were doing a great job, and offered to help each other out. After their meeting, they went to the



Dr David Owen (with NFCA's first chair Chris Gardiner) speaking at the inaugural meeting on 11 May 1974

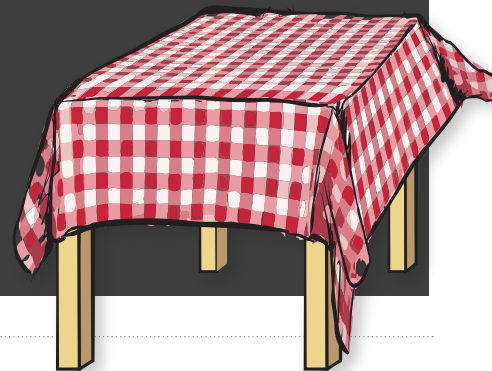
pub together and decided that they would see each other again.

This group became the Camden Association of Foster Parents. From then on they met regularly around the kitchen table of the Gardiners' small terraced house, produced leaflets and publications, and began to wonder if there were other groups like theirs elsewhere in the country. They also thought that foster carers in other areas might benefit from seeing their *A-Z of Fostering for Camden* booklet – a guide to the fostering role and how things worked in their area.

So they got in touch with local authorities around the UK and invited other foster carers to a meeting in their local school in May 1974. The response was overwhelming. That day, the important decision was taken to create a UK-wide organisation – and so the National Foster Care Association (NFCA) was born.

The kitchen table

The Gardiners' kitchen table is described by Chris as the 'nerve centre' of the early days. It was not only the hub of the meetings of the Camden Association of Foster Parents, but it also had sitting on it a great big old printing machine (which had been thrown out by a business across the road) to produce the association's newsletters, and which the family squeezed past every day to eat.



“

We hit the right nerve at the right time with lots of foster carers all over the country. People were worried at the lack of training. Some felt they were being exploited. They felt a lack of support from social workers. There was a feeling that there was a need for changes at a national level. People thought we could improve the service.

Chris Gardiner, chair of Camden Association of Foster Parents and first chair of NFCA



Attendees at the inaugural meeting, held at Acland Burghley school in Camden, London. It was at this meeting that the National Foster Care Association was formed.

The early days milestones

1972 Camden social workers organise a series of meetings for foster carers in the borough. Out of these meetings develops the Camden Association of Foster Parents.

1972 Camden Association of Foster Parents publishes its *A-Z of Fostering for Camden*, described as an 'excellent comprehensive guide to fostering' in a foreword by Tessa Jowell, the council's social services committee chair at the time. This was one of the first publications dedicated to helping foster carers understand their role.

1974 On 11 May the inaugural national meeting of foster carers is hosted by Camden Association of Foster Parents at Acland Burghley school, Camden. The National Foster Care Association is formed.



One of the first NFCA logos

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We had no fear at all. For the first meeting we wrote to Barbara Castle [secretary of state for social services at the time] to see if she would come to speak. She sent her deputy minister instead – and that was David Owen.

Chris Gardiner

The 1970s A force to be reckoned with

One of the speakers at the NFCA's inaugural meeting was newly appointed health minister, Labour MP David Owen, who spoke about the Children Bill which he was steering through Parliament at the time.

The fledgling organisation immediately had a big task ahead of it – to get foster carers' views listened to by ministers as an important piece of legislation affecting their work was debated.

In spite of having little experience of lobbying MPs, or influencing the legislative process, the group's energy, enthusiasm and expertise had a big effect. NFCA had what Pat Verity, the secretary at the time and later deputy director, said was an 'enormous impact' on the Act. 'We got the principle accepted that children's needs were paramount,' she says. 'We were very pleased with ourselves.'

In these first few years, NFCA went



Christine Reeves, appointed as NFCA's first director in 1978

from strength to strength. Funding from the Department of Health and Social Security meant that the office could move out of Pat's bedroom and into a rented office in Kentish Town, London. Pat became the salaried part-time secretary, supported by Arthur Burch as development officer. Later, Christine Reeves, previously the chair, became the first director.

But this handful of staff could never achieve the organisation's ambitions and a lot of work was done thanks to volunteers and goodwill.

During the rest of the 1970s NFCA worked hard: it recommended rates of allowances for foster carers; ran national and international conferences for foster carers and social workers, as well as events for fostered children; influenced government policies; and began – little by little – to change local authorities' attitudes towards foster carers.

Foster carers, emphasised the NFCA, were the people entrusted to care for some of the country's most vulnerable children and they needed better support and recognition to do this job well.

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We prepared for one meeting with an MP while we were sitting in Parliament Square in a campervan. Can you imagine that now? We weren't political animals at all, but we learned about it as we went along.

Pat Verity



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I regard one of the major functions of the association to be that of acting as a forum for foster parents to make their views known to policy makers at both central and local government levels.

David Owen MP, writing in the first issue of Foster Care, January 1975

The 1970s milestones



1978: TV presenter Lesley Crowther hosts NFCA's Grand National Draw fundraiser

1974 Following the formation of NFCA, the first membership meeting took place in Birmingham. Christine Reeves was elected vice chair and Pat Verity became minutes secretary.

1975 NFCA registers as a charity.

1975 NFCA publishes *Recommendations on Rates and Allowances and Report to the DHSS Working Party on a Code of Good Fostering Practice*.

January 1975 First issue of *Foster Care* published, featuring a cover article by David Owen. Membership rate is advertised as 10p per family.

October 1975 the first *National Foster Care Week* is held. Its success in raising awareness of fostering and generating enquiries from potential foster carers led to the decision to make it an annual event.

1976 With the support of secretary of state for social services Barbara Castle, NFCA secures government funding to establish a head office in Kentish Town and appoint two members of staff



Barbara Castle MP was an early champion of NFCA

May 1976 First NFCA annual report is published.

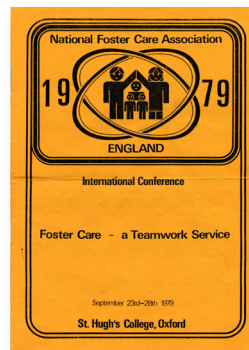
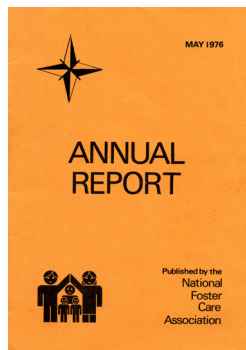
1977 *Education and Training in Foster Care* is published, a report which looks, for the first time, at the need for specific training for foster carers – a theme that remains paramount throughout the next four decades.

1978 Christine Reeves becomes NFCA's first director:

1978 *Foster Care* is published in magazine format for the first time.

1978 TV celebrity Lesley Crowther hosts NFCA's Grand National Draw fundraiser for the second time. He was one of NFCA's patrons along with Spike Milligan, Eric Morecambe, Brian Murphy and Esther Rantzen.

1979 NFCA stages an international conference in Oxford to coincide with the United Nations International Year of the Child. This leads to the formation of the International Foster Care Organisation.



1976: the first annual report (left); 1979: the first NFCA international fostering conference in Oxford (centre) led to the formation of the International Foster Care Organisation; 1978: Foster Care was published in magazine format for the first time (right)

“ These first two years have proved to be more successful and busy than any of us might have dreamt at the time of establishing the Association. Without doubt the need for such an association has truly been realised.

Extract from the first annual report, May 1976

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There was more paperwork involved in renting a TV than in handing over a child to foster care. The casualness with which discussions took place between social workers and foster parents in the placement of children was astonishing.

*Christine Reeves, director
1978-1987*

The 1980s Professionalisation and partnership

The view that foster carers were simply parents with a bit of extra space to spare in their home was beginning to change by the 1980s, thanks to the NFCA's efforts.

'There had been an idealistic and naive concept that fostering was just about parenting another child,' says Christine Reeves, who was director until 1987.

Christine and her colleagues argued that foster carers needed a lot more knowledge to deal with children from outside their own families and those with specific needs. To help develop carers' skills, NFCA published its first foster care training course in 1980, entitled *Parenting Plus*. This course had been adapted from one run by the Child Welfare League of America in the USA, but throughout the coming decades the organisation devised its own courses for foster carers as well as social workers, and took a leading role in promoting the importance of training.



Marion Lowe became director in 1987

In addition to the right skills, foster carers also need support from social workers and this was another key strand of NFCA's work during the 1980s. In what Christine describes as 'an important turning point' for the organisation, in the middle of the decade membership fees for local authorities were recalculated according to a new formula, meaning they made a greater

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You have given a voice to foster parents which needed to be heard, both in local decisions and in national policy making. We need to give all the encouragement we can to the goal of improving the status and skill of foster parents.

David Owen, speaking at NFCA's 10th birthday party

contribution to the organisation's work. This, she says, placed a greater value on the NFCA and emphasised the importance of social workers and foster carers working in partnership to get the best results for children in care.

These themes continued to be developed throughout the 1980s under the leadership of Marion Lowe, a former social worker who became



Actress Joanna Lumley with David Owen at NFCA's 10th birthday party in 1984

director in 1987. Speaking about her ambitions to *Foster Care* magazine at the time, she said: 'I had a good deal of contact with foster parents when working as a field social worker, and I'm committed to a development of their role as professional care givers, with a right to be heard in child care decisions.'

The Foster Care Charter, published the following year, reflected this, emphasising that good fostering should be a partnership between many people – the carers, social workers, children's families and the children themselves.

A brand new training course to prepare foster carers, *The Challenge of Foster Care*, reinforced this as well as tackling the increasing complexities of the fostering task.

Another priority of Marion's was listening to the children themselves – and this was something that took off in the decade to come.

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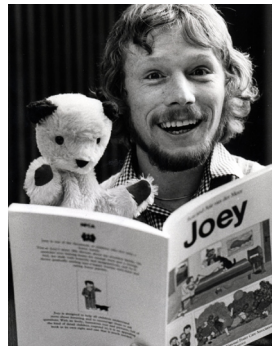
The Charter reflects the ideal that carers should work alongside parents and social work staff to promote the best interests of the children in their care.

Susan Williams, NFCA chair at the time of the launch of The Foster Care Charter in 1988

The 1980s milestones

May 1980 NFCA launches *Parenting Plus*, its first training course for foster carers.

1980 NFCA publishes *Joey*, a children's book about a boy in foster care, which is launched by Matthew Corbett and his puppet Sooty. Esther Rantzen contributes an 'afterword'.



1980: Matthew Corbett and Sooty launched Joey, NFCA's book for children

1981 Lesley Crowther promotes a *Daily Mirror* campaign to purchase a computer for NFCA's office.



1982 NFCA's most ambitious campaign yet, the *CB Care Convoy Appeal*, sees six Ford Fiestas fitted with CB radio rigs touring the UK to raise funds and increase awareness of the charity. Support is received from Ford and Currys, and the campaign features on national radio and TV.

1983 NFCA submits *A Future for Foster Care* to the Government, highlighting that a 'total and radical review' of foster care is needed.

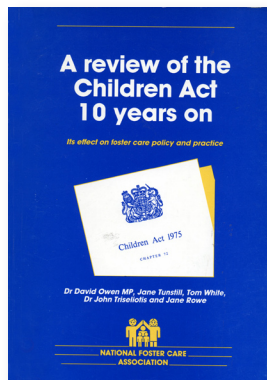
1984 NFCA celebrates its 10th anniversary with a party in its office in London Victoria attended by actress Joanna Lumley and David Owen.

1985 NFCA Scotland opens its first office in Glasgow.

1985 During a fundraiser at London's Walthamstow Stadium, a greyhound named *Streetwise* is donated to NFCA and auctioned to raise funds.

November 1985 A conference is held in London to mark the 10th anniversary of the Children Act.

1986 NFCA is involved with Central Television's *Find a Family*, a series seeking long-term foster carers or adopters for 12 children in the Midlands.



1985: A Review of the Children Act: 10 Years On (above left); 1981: Lesley Crowther (above) campaigning for a computer for NFCA's office in London; 1985: actress Billie Whitelaw meets *Streetwise*, a greyhound donated to NFCA, at Walthamstow Stadium in London

October 1986 *Room for One More: surviving as a foster mum* by Beth Miller is launched at NFCA's annual conference.

1987 Marion Lowe becomes director of NFCA after Christine Reeves steps down to take up a post with the British Red Cross.

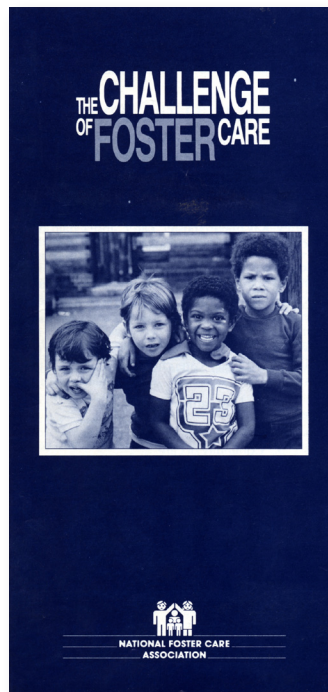
1987 Harry Friend, a foster carer, police officer and member of NFCA's management committee, appears on TV's *This is Your Life*.

1988 *The Challenge of Foster Care* is launched, bespoke training for pre-approval foster carers.

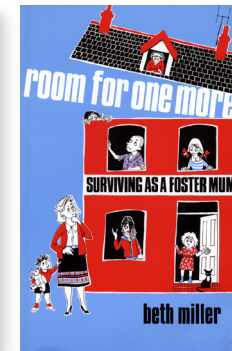
1988 *The Foster Care Charter* is published outlining the way 'a good fostering service should be run'.

1988 A free legal advice line opens for NFCA members.

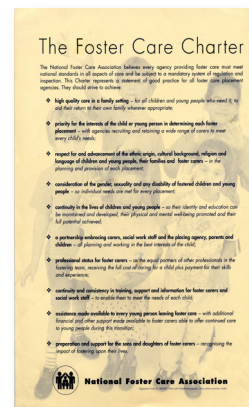
1989 The NFCA's counselling and conciliation service is launched.



1988: NFCA launched its first home-grown training course, The Challenge of Foster Care



1987: Harry Friend appeared on This is your Life (above left); 1986: Beth Miller's Room for One More (above) was launched at the annual conference; 1988: NFCA publishes The Foster Care Charter, outlining the way 'a good fostering service should be run'



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Foster carers are more clear of their own value than was the case 20 years ago. I think NFCA can take some credit for this.

Director Marion Lowe, speaking at NFCA's biennial conference in 1990

The 1990s A blueprint for foster care

NFCA kicked off the 1990s by doing something to combat the shocking numbers of teenagers who left care at 16 – too young and too vulnerable to cope with independence. With alarming frequency, these young people would end up living alone in dingy council flats and drifting into crime, drink or drugs.

The organisation recruited former social worker Ena Fry to head up a project which aimed to give fostered young people more of a chance to fulfil their dreams. Over the next 17 years, Ena's huge energy and enthusiasm helped NFCA work directly with young people in many different ways across the UK, including a care leavers' project and a programme to support young parents in care.

In 1993, the foster care advice line was opened. NFCA staff had always picked up the phone to foster carers with worries or enquiries and did their best to help them. Now there was funding

for a dedicated service. This proved so valuable that it expanded: today, skilled advice workers provide guidance to thousands of carers and other fostering professionals across the UK.

The first *Foster Care Fortnight* took place in 1997 – a bigger and better version of its predecessor, *Foster Care Week*.

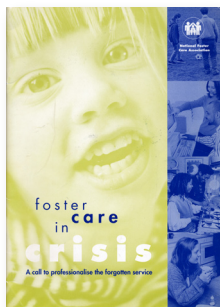


Ena Fry, who boosted NFCA's direct work with young people

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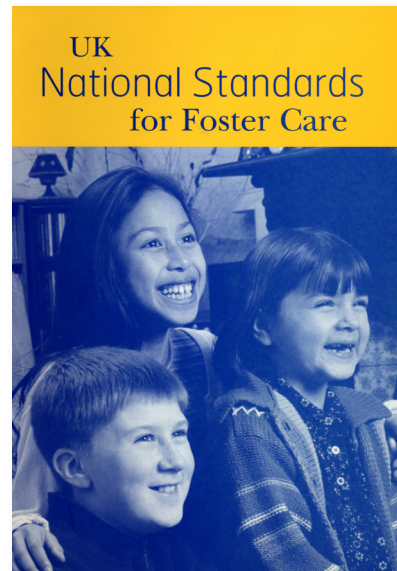
Fostering is at the crossroads. It can carry on as an amateur appendage to social services or it can become a professional, trained and paid service. The options have never been starker.

David Brindle, *The Guardian's social affairs correspondent, writing about Foster Care in Crisis, 1997*



At the same time, the NFCA published a campaigning document called *Foster Care in Crisis: a call to professionalise the forgotten service* which – in another battle in the war to win respect for foster carers – aimed to challenge the traditional view of foster care as a volunteer-based force.

A couple of years later it looked as though this war could finally be reaching its end when the *UK National Standards for Foster Care* were published. This was 'huge – a historic milestone for foster care' says Gerri McAndrew, chief executive from 1995 to



2003. 'This was the beginning of making it OK to talk about the professionalisation of foster care.'

Spearheaded by The Fostering Network, the 25 standards had emerged after many months of discussion with ministers and others involved in fostering, and they aimed to provide a blueprint on how to deliver the very highest standards of foster care.

The 21st century was looming and NFCA was looking forward to a new era for foster carers and the children they looked after.

The 1990s milestones



1991: Princess Diana attended a Mother's Day lunch (hosted jointly by NFCA and Coram) and met Jacqui Hackett (who was fostered as a child) and her children Lucy and Christopher

1990 *A Problem Shared*, a training pack to help with 'difficult foster placements' is launched.

1991 Princess Diana attends a Mother's Day lunch, hosted jointly by NFCA and Coram.

1991 NFCA's Teenage Project produces *Stepping Out*, a guide to help young people leaving care. Pop group The Farm, who had recently scored a top five hit with *All Together Now*, attended the launch (above right).

1992 NFCA celebrates its 18th birthday.

1993 *Making It Home*, which 'celebrates foster care and the first 18 years of NFCA in the words and pictures of those who have benefited' is published.

1993 NFCA's 5,000th member joins.



1993 The foster care advice line is opened.

1994 *Choosing to Foster* replaces *The Challenge of Foster Care* as NFCA's pre-approval training.

1994 *Safe Caring* is published, which highlights how foster carers can reduce the chance of allegations by fostered children. It becomes one of NFCA's best selling publications.



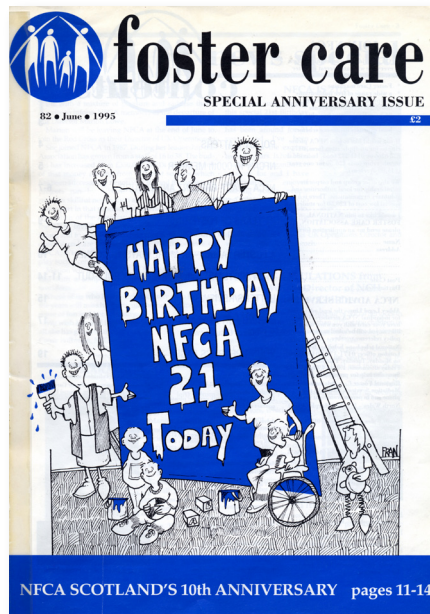
1995 NFCA celebrates its 21st anniversary and NFCA Scotland its 10th. The organisation now has 10,000 members.

1995 Marion Lowe steps down as director and Gerri McAndrew is appointed.



Gerri McAndrew, chief executive from 1995

1996 NFCA develops the first training materials for the sons and daughters of foster carers.



June 1997 The first *Foster Care* Fortnight takes place. *Foster Care in Crisis: a call to professionalise the forgotten service* is published during the campaign.

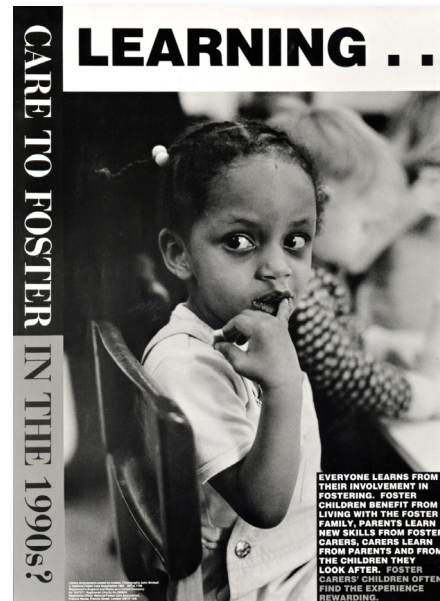
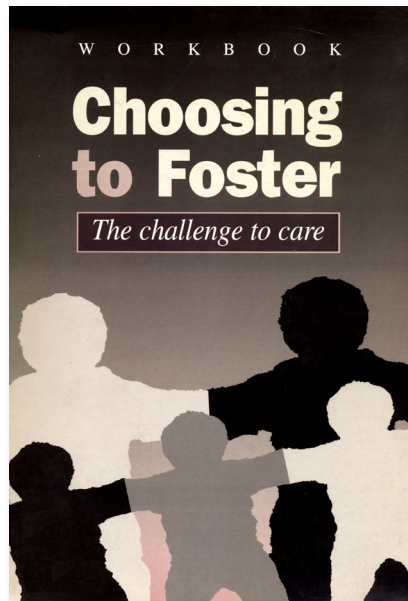
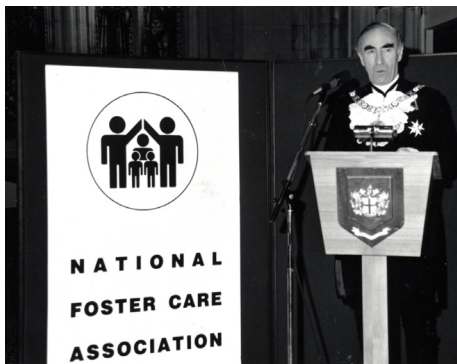


1998 Prince Charles meets foster carers in Bedfordshire at an NFCA consultation meeting about national standards (above).

1998 NFCA deputy director Pat Verity is awarded an OBE for '30 years of commitment to children in care'.

1999 The *UK National Standards for Foster Care* is launched by health minister John Hutton.

1999 Bryan Ritchie is appointed first director of NFCA Scotland.



1998: NFCA founder member Pat Verity with husband Eric and NFCA colleagues outside Buckingham Palace after being awarded the OBE (top left); 1994: Foster Care Week reception at London's Guildhall to promote the Young People's Project is attended by London's Lord Mayor Sir Paul Newall (left); 1994: Choosing to Foster, NFCA's pre-approval training course, is launched (above centre); 1991: Care to Foster in the 1990s? recruitment campaign (above right)

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The name 'National Foster Care Association' has served us well over the last 26 years, but 'The Fostering Network' will take us forward for the next stage of our development. It will better describe the work we do and our ambition to work closely with everyone involved in 'the fostering network' to improve the service for children and young people.

Gerri McAndrew, chief executive 1995-2003, announcing the new brand in 2001

The 2000s Refreshed for the new millennium

The charity greeted the 2000s with a new look: the muted blues and greens of the official livery, the logo of a family sheltering children and even the organisation's name bowed out.

Their replacements were bold and confident: vibrant orange became the corporate colour, and a bouncy new logo was underlined with the motto 'helping children to thrive'. The organisation was no longer the National Foster Care Association, but The Fostering Network. With changes behind the scenes too in the way

the fostering network
helping children to thrive



2002: the first edition of Foster Care with The Fostering Network's new branding

the management was structured, the organisation was revived and refreshed.

In 2002, The Fostering Network became a truly UK-wide organisation following a merger with the Northern Ireland Foster Care Association and the opening of a new office in Cardiff.

Throughout this decade and into the next, rapid developments in communications technology brought

new ways of interacting with members. The organisation's first website, www.fostering.net, flashed into life in 2002, a vibrant email forum buzzed with foster carers exchanging stories, tips and gripes, and by 2009 The Fostering Network's Facebook page delivered up-to-the-minute messages to followers.

In 2007 the Government finally agreed to pay minimum allowances to foster carers in England – after more than 30 years of campaigning for foster carers to be fairly reimbursed for the extra costs involved in raising a fostered child. Minimum rates shortly followed in Wales and Northern Ireland.

This progress gave The Fostering Network the confidence to begin to pick at another financial bone – the need for foster carers to be paid like other professionals in the child care workforce. As the organisation pointed out: 'No other profession that looks after children is expected to do so

without pay, and no other skilled child care practitioner has the responsibility of looking after a child who is not their own for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year with little or no break.'



2005: BAAF's Felicity Collier with Robert Tapsfield (who became The Fostering Network's chief executive in 2004) launch *The Cost of Foster Care*, a joint report that called on governments to increase funding to foster care



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We want people to see foster care as a real career option which is of huge value and which is significant because of the change that you can make to children's lives.

Margaret Hodge, then children's minister, speaking at The Fostering Network's 30th anniversary celebration at Westminster (above)

The 2000s milestones

2000 Lord Laming, former director of social services at Hertfordshire and chief inspector of the Social Services Inspectorate, becomes NFCA's president. Later he chairs the public inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié in Haringey, north London

November 2001 NFCA rebrands to become The Fostering Network.

2002 Offices are opened in Cardiff and Belfast; the organisation now has a base in all four countries of the UK. Jane Butler is director in Wales and Kate Lewis in Northern Ireland

2002 In Scotland, the car company Autosave supplies The Fostering Network with a branded car (above right) to help staff and foster carers who have to travel long distances.

2002 www.fostering.net launched

2003 *The Skills to Foster* training course is launched.



2003 A range of foster carer recruitment materials is made available to members.

2003 Tax threshold is introduced for foster carers so that they don't pay income tax on money from fostering up to a certain level – this follows a long campaign by The Fostering Network.

2003 Gerri McAndrew steps down as chief executive.

2004 Robert Tapsfield is appointed chief executive.

2004 *Attracting and Keeping Carers* recruitment project is launched.

2004 Children's author and longstanding supporter Jacqueline Wilson records a BBC Radio 4 appeal on behalf of The Fostering Network (below).

2004 The 30th anniversary is celebrated at an event in Westminster attended by children's minister in England Margaret Hodge. *Foster Care: a manifesto for change* is launched.



2005 The Fostering Network wins government contract to run Fosterline, an advice line for foster carers in England based on its HelpLine.

2005 *The Cost of Foster Care*, published by The Fostering Network and BAAF, asks governments to increase investment in fostering services.

2006 David Blunkett MP (above right) speaks at the first Nancy Hazel Memorial lecture.

2007 Minimum allowances introduced for foster carers in England.

2007 *Can't Afford to Foster* report calls for 'an adequate, realistic fee payment structure' for foster carers.

2007 Ena Fry is recognised as Children and Young People's Champion at the Children and Young People Now Awards (right). The following year she is awarded an MBE for services to children in care.



2007 Fostering Achievement is launched in Northern Ireland. This flagship government-funded project continues today and supports foster carers to help young people realise their potential through learning and development.

2007 Freda Lewis is appointed director of The Fostering Network Wales, replacing Jane Butler.

2008 17 supporters take part in a fundraising trek to Machu Picchu in Peru. They raise £57,000 for The Fostering Network

2008 Sara Lurie is appointed director of The Fostering Network Scotland, replacing Bryan Ritchie.

2009 The second edition of *The Skills to Foster* training is published.

2009 The Fostering Network creates its own Facebook page.



foster care

a manifesto for change



More children are living with foster carers than ever before. Many of these children have special needs and many present real challenges to their foster carers. Improving outcomes for these children requires investment in foster care services.

The Fostering Network is calling on the UK's governments to invest in children's future by increasing their investment in foster care services. This must be used to secure:

- 1 allowances for the day-to-day care of fostered children, set at a rate no less than the Fostering Network's minimum recommended allowances, to cover the full cost of fostering to carers
- 2 a fee structure that pays foster carers for their work and skills and includes realistic retainers between placements
- 3 a framework for training foster carers that is in line with other occupations in the child care workforce
- 4 support systems to ensure that foster carers and their families get the help they need to do their demanding job. These must include 24-hour local advice and support, independent advice and support for foster carers facing allegations, and support for the sons and daughters of carers.

setting the context...

Two out of three children who come into public care in the UK are fostered. The majority of fostered children return to their own families within a year. Some, however, remain in foster care which provides them with the vital care, safety and stability of ordinary family life. It gives them the chance they need to grow and develop despite the difficult experience of being separated from all that is familiar to them.

But fostered children need more than love and care if they are to achieve their potential as adults and become successful parents themselves. They need skilled, individual attention from their foster carers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for however long they are with them.

Almost 50,000 children live with foster families on any given day in the UK, and the Fostering Network estimates that 10,000 more are needed. The current shortage means that many children are placed at a distance away from their own family, friends and school, or they may have many temporary placements before a foster family that is right for them can be found.

As a proportion of the child population of the UK, fostered children are a relatively small group, yet the disadvantages they have to cope with are enormous and can go on to do untold damage to their life chances. Investment in their future is critical or the society that fails them will suffer the loss of their potential.

the fostering network
helping children to thrive



safer caring



second edition
updated by Jacky Slade

the fostering network
the voice of foster care



2006: the second edition of Safer Caring was published. By 2007, this essential book had sold over 100,000 copies

2004: Foster Care – a manifesto for change was launched by children's minister Margaret Hodge at The Fostering Network's 30th birthday party in Westminster

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There is a recognition now that foster carers are key members of the team around the child. There has been a sea change in the expectations of the training and skills that they need to have and this is reflected in guidance throughout the UK.

Robert Tapsfield, chief executive 2004-2014

The 2010s Getting to the heart of foster care

Today, foster carers are much more frequently recognised as professional members of the child care workforce – with the training, support and financial reimbursement that they deserve.

However, the complexities and subtleties of the foster carer's role are not always fully understood and this is something that The Fostering Network worked upon throughout the 2000s and into this decade. Robert Tapsfield, chief executive from 2004 to 2014, recalls that in his early days as chief executive it was frowned upon to link the task of fostering with providing love for a child. 'People were very focused on the role and the need to be professional,' he says.

Today, though, there is a deeper appreciation for the combination of skills that foster carers provide. 'There is an acceptance that at the heart of foster care is the relationship with children – this is an emotional relationship as well as a professional relationship,' he says.



2012: Chief executive Robert Tapsfield with Olympic athlete Fatima Whitbread (who was fostered as a teenager) at the organisation's A Celebration of Fostering event at the Royal Festival Hall in London

This approach is reflected in the way that The Fostering Network talks about foster care today, as well as being reinforced in key publications such as the popular *Safer Caring* book. The latest edition of this was published in 2012, subtitled 'a new approach' to highlight how thinking has changed

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Children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. We believe in their potential and by working with foster families, and the services that support them, we help everyone who is fostered to achieve the very best they can.

Robert Tapsfield

about handling risks in relation to fostered children and enabling them to live the same sort of family lives as their peers might.

Also in 2012, the organisation launched a flagship programme, *Head, Heart, Hands*, which aimed develop a new approach to foster care – using social pedagogy – with the ambition that this will transform outcomes for children. It supports foster carers to put together academic knowledge with an understanding of emotions combined with practical action in their everyday work.

The Fostering Network gave a complete overhaul to its pre-approval training programme for foster carers – the third edition of *The Skills to Foster* was published in 2014. With in-depth examination of attachment theory, tackling difficult behaviour, the importance of a sense of identity and much, much more, this introduction to fostering demonstrates the huge range of

knowledge and skills that today's foster carers need in order to do their best for the often troubled children in their care.

As The Fostering Network entered its 40th year, it achieved an important victory for young people. Its *Don't Move Me* campaign, which began in 2007, led to legislative changes in England, Scotland and Wales, allowing young people to stay with their fostering families until they are 21 if they wish to – giving much-needed stability to some of the most vulnerable teenagers who otherwise may find themselves isolated and drifting away from sources of support.



2013: the Don't Move Me campaign achieved success in England, with similar success in Scotland and Wales in 2014

The 2010s milestones

2010 *Sons and Daughters* campaign launched.

2011 The Fostering Network launches @fosteringnet on Twitter.

2012 *Head, Heart, Hands* programme is launched in England and Scotland.

2012 The Fostering Network's president, Jim Bond, is awarded an MBE by the Queen for his contribution to fostering (below).



2012 Online community launches.

2012 *Safer Caring: a new approach* is published, highlighting a more flexible and considered way of dealing with risks and decision-making in relation to fostered children.

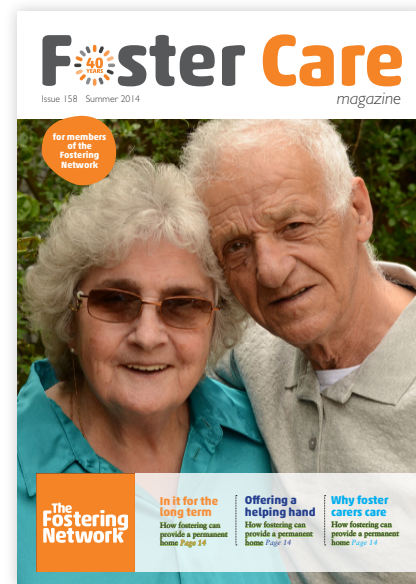
2012 Margaret Kelly is appointed director of The Fostering Network Northern Ireland, replacing Kate Lewis.

2013 *Don't Move Me* campaign achieves success enabling young people to stay on with their foster family until they are 21 in England. This is followed in 2014 with similar legislative changes in Scotland and Wales.

2014 The Fostering Network has almost 60,000 members.

2014 The third edition of *The Skills to Foster* training course is launched.

2014 The Fostering Network is 40! A refreshed brand is unveiled.



The Fostering Network



Looking back, looking forward

After 40 years of hard work, The Fostering Network remains at the heart of foster care across the UK. It brings everyone who is involved in foster care together: social workers, their managers, councillors, foster carers, foster carers' families as well as the fostered children themselves.

The Fostering Network remains passionate about foster care and the difference it makes.

All that has happened over the past four decades has helped it build the charity's current vision: **to see that all children in foster care enjoy the very best life chances and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.** This is the motivation that drives its trustees, staff, volunteers and other supporters forward into the future.

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There is much still to do to ensure that every child who is fostered can fulfil their potential. Fostering and foster carers have the potential to transform this. This was a strong guiding belief when we started 40 years ago, and will continue to be for many years to come.

Jim Bond, president of The Fostering Network, 2014

As The Fostering Network celebrates its 40th birthday in 2014, the following staff and trustees are all contributing to the success of the organisation and to improving the lives of children in care

Staff

Joanna Adande
 Jac Arnold
 Judy Bell
 Lisa Belletty
 Maria Boffey
 Johnny Burke
 Freya Burley
 Rob Cann
 Lorna Cassidy
 Deborah Cook
 Joy Crawford
 Linda Curran
 Alan Currie
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 Emma McAleer
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 Kieran McGuire
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 Bakar Mudhir
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 Lizzie Nelson
 Laura O'Hare
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 Antonella Parker
 Lucy Peake
 Laurence Pollock
 Sarah Powley
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 Angela Sinclair
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 Lizzie Thomas
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Floretta West
 Karen Williams
 Mikhaila Woods
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 Philip Brown
 Stanley Byrne
 Chris Cutler
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 Ian Dixon
 Richard Field
 Helen Holgate
 Anne Hull
 Daisy-May James
 Johannah Muckley
 Michael Rosenbaum
 Janet Williams

President

Jim Bond

A Kitchen Table Revolution

This book has been produced to mark the 40th anniversary of The Fostering Network – an organisation that was created 'around a kitchen table' in 1974 by a small group of foster carers who wanted to make a difference.

A brief history such as this will never adequately cover all of the projects and services that The Fostering Network has provided or the campaigns fought and won, nor pay enough tribute to the dedication and expertise of all the people involved over the past 40 years. This book can do no more than provide an overview of some of the most important themes and events. We nevertheless hope that this is a useful record of what has gone before and serves as a celebration of what has been achieved to date to improve the lives of children in foster care.

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