

Issue 64
Winter 2018/19

**Update from
the Scottish
Government
and care
review**

The latest
developments
Page 3

**Human rights
weekend**

We joined a
group of young
defenders
Page 5

**Member
conference**

Book your
place now!
Page 6

**Meet
Astroknot**

The power of rap
Page 6

And more!



Hello everyone



I hope you all had a lovely festive break. I started the year with a bracing 'loony dook' as my picture shows, and I was so grateful to the foster carers who cheered me on. I hope you like our cover photo of Kai, one of the youngest members of our Walking Tall steering group.

I'm excited to begin by letting you know about a new project that will be starting soon thanks to funding from Life Changes Trust. It aims to empower young people to combat stigma and facilitate positive change within the education system in Scotland. We will be recruiting for a new project worker post soon – keep an eye on our website for more information.

I was pleased to meet with Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People, in November, and had the opportunity to discuss the current situation with foster carer allowances. Read our response to the Scottish Government's Allowance Review Group's recommendations here: bit.ly/Scottishallowancesresponse0918.

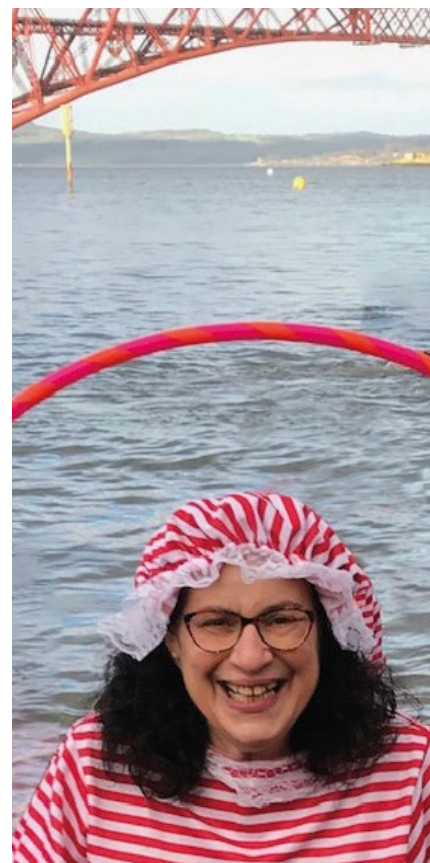
We have now published the report from our State of the Nation's Foster Care survey that we carried out last summer. Thank you to the hundreds of foster carers across Scotland who completed it. Visit our website to read the report and our recommendations: thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sotn.

We are saying a bittersweet farewell to our champions programme this edition, as well as updating you on our ongoing work with young people. I was particularly touched to meet with an inspiring young woman, Sandi Pentland, who shares her care experience through rap. Her brilliant prose has messages which I am sure many young people will identify with. Turn to page 6 to read more about Astroknott.

Best wishes

Sara

Sara Lurie, Director for Scotland



Walking Tall – We can shout too!



What an interesting couple of months we have had. Our disability inclusion co-ordinator, who has joined our Walking Tall project for six months, has been out and about meeting foster carers, fostering services and young people in foster care who have disabilities and complex needs.

This aspect of our Big Lottery Fund project has been developed to explore the complexities of working with disabled young people in foster care and the challenges of their voices being heard. We have met a range of foster carers who work tirelessly to ensure the needs of children are met. It has been a real joy to visit these amazing foster families and learn from them, as well as hearing the challenges they face day to day.

All the foster carers we have met to date tell us that we have a foster care

system where the voice of disabled young people is not being heard. The young people we have met can communicate - they just do so in a different way. They communicate by using board makers and other learning resources, basic body signing, Makaton, limited speech and sounds. They tell us that we all need to be more creative about how we capture their voice.

We are faced with the challenge of finding a way for their voices to be heard. We need child care reviews that allow for a variety of communication tools to be used, and for children's hearings to be the same. Foster carers are often best placed to clearly listen to and communicate for their young people, yet so often they are not given that opportunity.

Continuing Care for young people

with disabilities is another aspect we will be exploring. This has been highlighted as an issue where young people are not being offered Continuing Care but are instead being moved to adult services at 18. We have also heard of others not having any support from adult services post 18.

We will be collating the information we have, sharing the learning from this project, and hoping to make a start on creating change in the system to allow young people with disabilities and complex needs to be heard.

We are looking to hear from more foster carers about the positives and the challenges of fostering young people with complex needs. If you are interested, please contact Sara Smith, Walking Tall disability inclusion co-ordinator, on **0141 204 1400** or scotland@fostering.net.

Update from the care review

Fiona Duncan, chair of the independent care review, has sent the following message to foster carers:

Happy New Year to you all! I hope you and your families had an enjoyable festive break.

2018 was an incredibly busy year for the care review and included some fantastic highlights such as the events over Foster Care Fortnight and Care Experienced Week.

In 2019, the **journey**, the third stage of the care review, will gain momentum. The **journey** is critical; it's when the care review will begin to deliver daily improvements for infants, children and young people in care, while still listening to and thinking about what needs to be done to enable long-term change.

To make the future 'care system' the very best it can be, the care review needs to hear from children and young people as well as the adults at the heart of it.

As foster carers, you are already doing so much to change the lives of babies, children and young people for the better. So, the care review really wants to hear from you and learn from your experience.

What do you think needs to change?

The care review continues to ensure that all its work and thinking is led and informed by people who have experienced the 'care system' and meets regularly to investigate and understand a wide range of issues relating to this experience. This vital work will inform and help to develop the care review's final recommendations planned for spring 2020.

In advance of any final recommendations, work is underway to support immediate changes within the 'care system' that cannot wait. The change programme which is called 'STOP:GO', has been developed in

response to what children, young people and adults with care experience told the care review must change now. This has the support of all 32 local authorities, national bodies and charities. You can read more on the website at carereview.scot.

The care review is always really keen to hear from people who haven't previously been involved or heard. Please do spread the word and let anyone you know who might be willing to share their story with the care review know that the team will always listen and learn.

The care review is committed to listening to you in 2019. Please look out for the range of opportunities for foster carers and their families to be involved throughout the **journey**. A programme of activities and events will be launched in February for the whole year, and all the details will be on the website at carereview.scot/get-involved.

Taking part in the care review will always be at a pace and in a way that suits you and support will be provided if and when you need it.



An organisation called Health in Mind provide a dedicated wellbeing service to anyone who is taking part in care review work and who does not have existing support in place either through organisations, networks and groups they are involved in. More information about how to access this can be found on the 'Get Involved' page of the website.

Please do let me know if there's any way I can make it better or easier to get involved.

If you are on social media and can spare a minute, please help the care review reach more people and spread the word. You might even want to make your pledge to the work via the website carereview.scot/pledge.

My hope is that this year, I will meet you at care review or The Fostering Network events, and I really look forward to opportunities to do this during Foster Care Fortnight in May!

Best wishes,
Fiona

Independent
Care Review

Scottish Government update

The review of allowances working group commissioned by the Scottish Government has published a final report with 12 recommendations, along with a report on their consultation findings:

tinyurl.com/y8lwxqph and tinyurl.com/y9gvzdkm.

The Scottish Government and CoSLA are in discussions about the findings and recommendations and will be publishing a joint response to the report soon.



Fostering Community Champions



the end of an era!

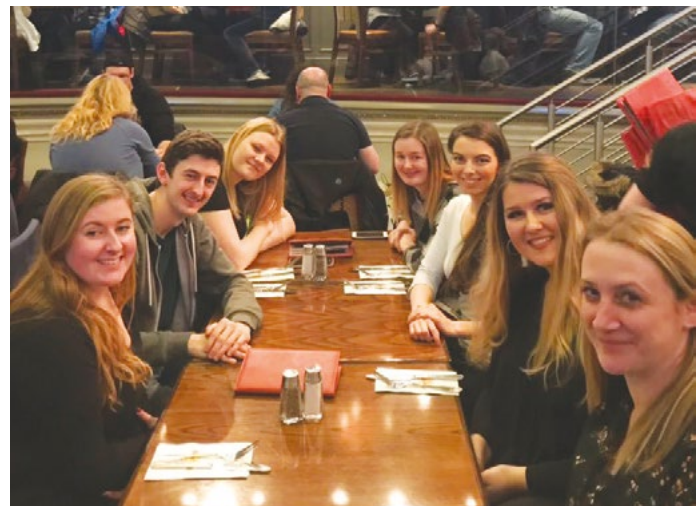
After more than four years of funding, we said a teary but cheery farewell to all those who supported our Fostering Community Champions programme. Our foster carer champions have been an incredible peer support to other foster carers, particularly at times of crisis and upset where they were able to offer much needed emotional and practical support. In addition, their insight and experience has helped shape and inform the wider work of The Fostering Network as their views fed into a number of ongoing consultations and responses. To express our gratitude, we held an enjoyable afternoon tea for our champions.

The young champions also came together for the last time as a formal group. They enjoyed a meal together with project staff before heading out to enjoy the pre-Christmas Glasgow nightlife. While the group may be small in number, the influence and impact they have had across the country and beyond has been huge! Their voice has ensured that The Fostering Network has kept young people at the heart of our work across Scotland, with their invaluable experience and insight guiding our practice. Their presentations at conferences and events have helped influence a wide range of practitioners including foster carers, social work staff, academics as well as teachers and many others.

To find out more about this amazing project visit thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/champions.

The Fostering Network is grateful to The Big Lottery Fund for providing the funding to enable this amazing project to take place. The final thank you must go to all the volunteers involved throughout the project. We are indebted to you all, without you we couldn't have done it.

We look forward to continuing the legacy of this project in our future work.



Bruce Adamson on working with our young champions...

'One of the great privileges that I have as Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland is to work with and support young human rights defenders. The young champions from The Fostering Network Scotland have shown just how important and powerful the voices and experience of young people can be in promoting and protecting rights. Their willingness to share their own experiences has been hugely important in influencing change. The active participation of both fostered young people and other children of foster carers sends an important message about the nature of foster care and the commitment to ensuring all children grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding.'



Young people gather to defend human rights



For the second year running, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland hosted a human rights gathering to recognise and promote the role young people play as 'human rights defenders'. Human rights defender is a term used to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights.

The Fostering Network was delighted to be invited to support the event, which took place in Inverness last November. We learnt a great deal from the amazing young people we met there, and spoke with Sean Thomas O'Donnell, one of the rights defenders, about his reflections.

'We were all quite nervous at first, unsure what to expect. We were split into "family groups" which were a mix of young people with one or two adults. Everybody in the family groups became really close which I think made everyone feel more comfortable.

'On Saturday we heard about some of the fantastic things the young

human rights defenders working with the Commissioner's office had done. Fergus went to the European Network of Young Advisers (ENYA) conference in Barcelona with a report on the stigma around mental health and the effects it has on children and young people. Clara interviewed the UN Special Representative on Violence Against Children at the ENOC conference, a Europe-wide network of children's commissioners at the United Nations in Geneva.'

The weekend was filled with workshops, activities and learning, but it wasn't all hard work. On the final night there was a lovely meal and Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People, joined the group for food, dancing and lots of photo opportunities.

Sean told us: 'One of the key learning points for me was finding out about the work of the Commissioner's office and Bruce Adamson, Children and Young Person's Commissioner, Scotland. I had never heard about the Commissioner's office before this weekend. Bruce's job is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people, and he also has the power to act upon any infringements of these rights. Another learning point

was that most young people already are human rights defenders, they just don't know it. Even simple everyday actions like standing up to bullies is defending our human rights.'

Although nervous at the start, by the end the feedback from everyone was that they would like the gathering to be longer next time. As a result of the weekend, Sean joined the office's Human Rights Defenders Action Group. 'I wanted to get more involved after seeing and hearing all about the amazing things other young people at the gathering had been doing. They asked if I would like to join the group to represent the Highlands. The action group's main focus right now is a report for the Scottish Parliament about young human rights defending in Scotland.

'My advice to young people would be to stand up for what you think is right. Most young people already are human rights defenders without knowing it. To find out more about your rights, visit the Commissioner's official website on cypcs.org.uk'.



Sean (second right) with his family group



Astroknot – the cathartic power of rap



As a care experienced young person, music has been particularly important for me. Many creative activities, such as writing, drawing, or building, provide a less evident way of dealing with things that are difficult. For me, rapping has been my go-to when things got difficult. I've been in care since I was two years old, and generally stayed in my placements for a long time. However, these placements were often difficult, and things happened that were wrong and out of my control. To deal with these issues, I would lash out or break things. It wasn't until I was fourteen that I realised rap could be a

cathartic outlet. I used this to channel my negative feelings and turn them into something positive that I can be proud of. I write often about my difficult childhood and, although some find the stories sad or upsetting, I take pride in the standard of music I have created:

*Coming up for mother's day wish it went another way
Wish that I could see your face wish that you could hug me
Coming up for mother's day wish the pain would go away
Wish that you were here for me wish that you could love me*

I have grown and matured as a person, and I attribute much of that to the role music has played in my life. Music has provided me with many opportunities I may not have had if I had pursued a different career path. I recently started working in youth work, teaching others how to use music as a way to deal with issues. This is very rewarding, as I get to see the difference I have made when I hear the stuff that some of the kids have created.

The care review has recently employed me as a Creatives in Residence, meaning that they will commission me to write pieces about the care system and how we can make it better. Some of my music is available on SoundCloud, but I am planning to release my first EP in April. This will be to stream on most streaming sites, and hard copies will be available from Bandcamp. My music career is supported heavily by the Scottish music scene, particularly 'Poverty Safari' author Darren McGarvey a.k.a Loki, and even First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has shown an interest in my music!

If you would like to support me, please take a look at my website on astroknot.co.uk. I would love to hear from you!

I hope you enjoy my music, and continue to improve the lives of kids like me :)

Astroknot



Bookings open for our member conference

Our member conference will take place on Thursday 21 March 2019 in Edinburgh. We are delighted that Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People, along with a range of other presenters, will join us.

Following on from the success of last year's roadshow, the conference is exclusively for members of The Fostering Network and is a fantastic way of bringing foster carers and fostering services together. You will explore topics current to fostering in Scotland including:

an update on the care review, an update from the Scottish Government allowance review group, and other key issues of interest across the fostering sector.

Tickets cost £30 plus VAT for foster carers, and £46 plus VAT for fostering service staff or £115 plus VAT for a group of three. Once again, we hope that fostering services will book places for their staff and foster carers.

For further information and details of how to book, please visit thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/conferences.

Fosterline Scotland update: Disability Living Allowance (DLA)



Hello everyone, we hope this finds you well.

We have received a number of enquiries recently relating to Disability Living Allowance (DLA), asking if it is usual practice for a children's social worker to ask a foster carer for receipts showing how it is being spent.

DLA is paid by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to people who are disabled to provide financial support to meet the additional needs that they have as a result of their disability.

DLA for under 16s is paid to an appointee. If the child is in foster care, in most cases the appointee for DLA will be their foster carer who takes responsibility for administering the money on behalf of the child, and using it appropriately to meet their needs. The financial relationship is between the DWP and the appointee, and the DWP does not require appointees to keep itemised accounts of DLA expenditure.



It is not the responsibility of the child's social worker or fostering service to monitor the DLA or to see receipts as proof of what is being spent. However, there should be regularly recorded discussions between foster carers and social workers about how the DLA is spent, in broad terms, to promote the best interest of the child. You may want to keep records and receipts for larger items purchased from the young person's DLA.

The DLA could be used for things such as activities, equipment and clubs. If a foster carer is in any doubt about what is an appropriate use of DLA, the DLA Helpline on 0800 121 4600 (open Monday-Friday, 8am-7.30pm) can clarify this for them. Generally anything that meets the child's additional care and mobility-related needs will be seen as appropriate spending and can also include holidays, equipment, play and leisure activities, transport and so on. The DLA Helpline is also clear that DLA

is not intended to be saved, DLA is a 'living' benefit and is intended to improve the quality of life of daily living. If the full allowance is not spent on a weekly basis, it is appropriate to save any that is unspent to use for the child in future.

Unless savings are to be placed in a discretionary trust, it may not be advisable to build up a large amount of savings for a disabled child who is likely to claim welfare benefits when they reach the age of 16 or over, as any savings in excess of £6000 will reduce the amount of means-tested benefit that they can claim.

A foster child may be affected by **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** when they turn 16. This benefit replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people aged 16 to 64. We would advise a foster carer to check with the DWP if they have a child in placement claiming DLA who is soon turning 16.

Remember, Fosterline Scotland is here to assist with any query. The service is open from Monday to Friday 10am until 4pm. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have a query you would like help with.

Thanks, Mirren & Julie



Call out to supervising social workers!

Are you a supervising social worker? What would your foster carers say are your strengths and weaknesses? Come along to our two-day training course (detailed below) to explore issues including monthly supervisions, unannounced visits, health issues of foster carers, foster carer reviews and more.

The course will be delivered in our

training suite in central Glasgow and includes lunch:

The Role of the Supervising Social Worker

Tuesday 26 and Wednesday 27 March 2019

£215 plus VAT for members/£430 plus VAT for non-members

Glasgow

This course is also available for fostering services to purchase in-house for their foster carers and supervising social workers to explore their respective roles and learn from each other. For more information, or to secure your place on our open course, please contact Joy Crawford on **0141 204 1400** or **scotland@fostering.net** or visit **thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/events**.

Would you like to sit on a fostering panel?

The Fostering Network is regularly approached by fostering services looking for people with experience of foster care who are interested in joining their fostering panels. We are also in touch with individuals who have valuable skills and experience and are keen to be a part of a fostering panel.

Fostering panels should be made up of a diverse range of individuals with varied backgrounds and experience. They are crucial to the approval and review process for foster carers. Fostering panels carry out roles such as looking at applications from people hoping to become foster carers, making recommendations about their approval (including terms), recommending whether someone should remain as a foster carer, and carrying out a foster carer's first review.

If you would like to register interest in becoming a panel member, please email Sarah McEnhill on scotland@fostering.net.

We also provide panel training tailored to individual needs. If you are from a fostering service and would like more information on this, please contact Joy Crawford on scotland@fostering.net.

Dates for your diary...

Wednesday 13 February 2019

Caring for Children who have been Abused, a male perspective
£110 plus VAT for members and £220 for non-members
Glasgow

Thursday 21 March 2019

Member conference
Edinburgh (page 6)

Tuesday 26 & Wednesday 27 March 2019

The Role of the Supervising Social Worker
Glasgow (page 6)

Wednesday 8 May 2019

Men who Foster
£110 plus VAT for members and £220 for non-members
Glasgow

Monday 13 - Sunday 26 May 2019

Foster Care Fortnight™



If you are interested in attending any of these events, or would like to hire our training suite, please contact us on **0141 204 1400** or scotland@fostering.net



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