

FOSTERING in Scotland

**Issue 68
August 2020**

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Hello everyone



I do hope you are all well during these surreal times. Who would have ever imagined we would have been thrown into a situation like this, but throughout lockdown I have been so impressed with how well foster families across Scotland have coped and adapted to ensure the children in their care continue to be nurtured and loved, despite the most difficult of circumstances.

Remember, we are here for you if you need someone to talk to. We have expanded the hours of our Fosterline Scotland service in response to demand and are providing interactive webinars and support sessions for foster carers when needed, in addition to restarting our formal training programme which was put on temporary hold but has now moved online (see the back page for more details of this). I want to assure you that we are listening to you, and are in continuous dialogue with the



Scottish Government, Social Work Scotland and other organisations, reflecting the concerns you raise. Foster Care Fortnight may be some

time ago, but I would encourage you to read the Minister's letter on page 3, and recognise the true value of the work you do. I'm pleased to also share with you an update on our exciting Young Advocates project - if you know a young person who may be interested in getting involved, do get in touch.

Finally, I want to thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to improving the lives of children and young people in foster care, whatever role you play. It is challenging to keep pace with the rapid changes that are taking place across Scotland, and indeed globally, but I hope you find this newsletter of interest and relevance to you.

Until next time

Sara

Sara Lurie
Director for Scotland

The care review's Promise

'We grow up loved, safe, and respected so that we realise our full potential.'

Scotland's ambition for children and young people

On 5 February 2020, the independent care review published its conclusions and made a promise to children and families in and on the edges of the care system. The Promise reflects the views of more than 5,500 care experienced children and adults, families and the paid and unpaid

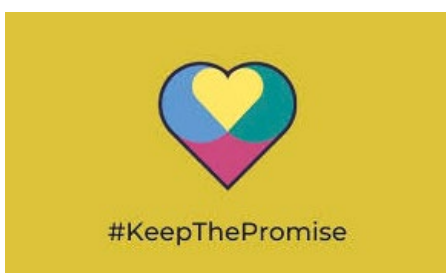
workforce. The Fostering Network is extremely grateful for the input from foster families across Scotland.

Chaired by Fiona Duncan, who led the care review, the Promise Scotland will be responsible for ensuring Scotland keeps the promise made by the care review. The Promise states that 'Scotland must not aim to fix a broken system but set a higher collective ambition that enables loving, supportive and nurturing relationships as a basis on which to thrive'. This requires a collaborative approach and, with the backing of the Scottish Government, an implementation group started up in

July and an Oversight Body is being recruited with at least 50 per cent of its members having lived experience of Scotland's care system.

We, at The Fostering Network, look forward to working closely with the Promise Scotland to help create meaningful change. If you would like more information on this, please contact Sara Lurie at scotland@fostering.net.

The evidence and research collated through the care review is available through their website at carereview.scot. This is a resource for Scotland, and a reminder of the promise made to our children.



#KeepThePromise

19 May 2020

Dear foster families



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

FOSTER CARE FORTNIGHT 2020 - 11-24 May 2020

I write to you all today at the start of a very different Foster Care Fortnight™.

We are all living with restrictions on our lives that we could never have anticipated and I know how much additional pressure the Coronavirus pandemic must be putting on all families, far less families who are nurturing children and young people who have experienced trauma or neglect in their lives.

I would firstly like to reassure you that we have been working closely with organisations like The Fostering Network and CELCIS who have worked hard to collate as much information as possible to help support you and fostering service providers during the Covid-19 health and safety restrictions. These are already well populated links to advice on maintaining family contact, children's hearings and fostering panels and are being updated regularly as issues arise. I have included links above to both sets of guidance.

Also to remind you that you can call Fosterline Scotland for any other advice or guidance you may need at this time. They have helpfully extended their hours on a Tuesday evening till 9pm to help with any additional support you may need during the Covid-19 crisis. You will already hopefully be keeping an eye on the regular televised advice and Scottish Government updates, but it's also worth keeping an eye on the regular Covid-19 publications on our website as we are continuously assessing how to improve access to testing that's needed and the supply and distribution of PPE equipment.



Covid-19 - Additional Expenses

We have been hearing that some of you may be experiencing additional costs as a result of having children at home, keeping them up to date with their school work as well as entertained for longer than normal. If this is the case for you, I advise you to claim these from your local authority or agency, who I understand will deal with these on a case by case basis. You will be aware that the Scottish Government has provided a generous package of additional funding to local authorities to assist those who are most affected by the Covid 19 crisis including a £350 million Communities Support Fund.

Foster Care Fortnight 2020

I know The Fostering Network had planned to hold an event to celebrate this year's Foster Care Fortnight that many of you would have been able to attend and meet up with other foster carers to share experiences. Although that will now not happen, I encourage you to participate in the online opportunities to still share stories that will help inspire others to see the rewards of becoming a foster family. See The Fostering Network's website to help you with ideas on how you can go about that: Foster Care Fortnight 2020 You may be wondering about other work we had planned to improve the care system pre-Covid 19. Here is a brief update on some of these:

Independent Care Review

The Independent Care Review reports were published on 5 February and you can read them on their website. As part of the Care Review The First Minister listened to over 1000 voices of care experienced children and young people and is determined that these will continue to be at the centre of how Scotland implements the conclusions of the Promise.

The First Minister has committed the Scottish Government to work with all of its energy and focus, along with local authorities, care providers and all relevant stakeholders, to make the changes to the system that the Care Review considers necessary and to deliver that change as quickly and as safely as possible. Discussions are currently ongoing to agree the best approach to take to ensure implementation of 'The Promise' and Scottish Ministers will seek to update Parliament about future plans in due course.

Care Allowances

Many of you will already be aware that we conducted a national review of care allowances for both foster and kinship carers which reported its findings in September 2018. We have since then been in regular discussions with CoSLA to discuss and agree the implementation of a fairer and more transparent system across Scotland and we are hopeful that agreement can be reached so that an improved system can be implemented this year.

Continuing Care and After Care

I also want to re-highlight a really useful booklet designed to explain young people's rights to continuing care and after care support. I encourage you to use it to discuss with your young people how they want to be supported as they move into adulthood and further and higher education or employment. cypcs.org.uk/rights/young-peoples-resources/continuing-care-and-aftercarebooklet

Support for Care Experienced Young People

For those who may not already be aware, care experienced young people are entitled to a council tax exemption and a care-experienced bursary. These measures will support them in their choice to continue into further or higher education or into more independent living.

I do hope I have managed to point you and your families to where you can find helpful support and information during the Covid-19 crisis and also reassured you that we are continuing to listen closely to key stakeholders like The Fostering Network and CELCIS so that we can help address your issues as quickly as possible.

Thank you for selflessly providing caring and loving homes for some of our most needy children and young people. You are an inspiration to the children and young people you care for please help us to also inspire others during Foster Care Fortnight.

Yours sincerely

Maree Todd

The young advocates

We, the young advocates, are a group of inspirational people who have been working hard to make a positive change and challenge stigma for care experienced young people, in particular within education. Although we haven't had the same opportunities to go to restaurants, organise and attend events, and do fun activities together during lockdown, we have still been meeting up virtually.

We have played games, watched films, engaged in activities and ordered our favourite takeaway food, so we can chat and eat together. We have also achieved and contributed to helping raise awareness and reduce stigma about being care experienced in Scotland, which is fantastic. We have provided feedback to a number of inquiries from the Scottish Government and organisations about how to support people during and after lockdown, in particular regarding education. It is important to us that our voices are heard and we will continue to do our best to make sure people feel supported when returning to school or higher education. We are confident we can make positive changes.

We are looking forward to having discussions with teachers, foster carers, and others and sharing experiences with them. If you know anyone who would like to be involved, please tell them to email Amy Adair at scotland@fostering.net. We are excited to see each other in person again soon and we would love to welcome new members to our group.



Would you like to join the young advocates?

We are looking for young people from all over Scotland aged 16-25, who either have lived experience of foster care or are the sons or daughters of foster carers, to join us in our Young Advocates project. The project will be running over the next two years and will include a range of fun activities and workshops.

During lockdown we are having regular meet-ups online and doing a mix of fun and focused activities and discussing next steps and ideas together. We are keen to ensure that geography isn't a barrier and are using various technologies to enable young people to participate.

The young advocates agree and decide what they would like to focus on and what new skills they would like to learn, for example song-writing and comic book workshops. We want to use a mix of creative approaches to empower people to share their

experiences and opinions about how teachers and other educators can make a positive change in the education system and address the stigma some young people experience.

We meet roughly each month, sometimes more regularly depending on what the group decides. For face to face meetings (when it is safe to do so), travel expenses will be reimbursed and refreshments provided.

The project is being led by young people and supported by The Fostering Network thanks to funding from Life Changes Trust and Young Start Fund.

You will have the chance to:

- make new friends
- have your voice heard
- engage in fun and creative activities of your choice
- work towards accredited awards

- be part of an inspirational group of people
- help make a positive change for young people in Scotland.

To find out more, or get involved with this amazing group, contact project worker Amy Adair at scotland@fostering.net or call 0141 204 1400.

Have your say!

The young advocates are eager for everyone to have their say about raising awareness and challenging stigma about being care experienced in education.

Please contact Amy Adair at scotland@fostering.net to add your leaf to our 'Tree of Positive Change in Education.'

Caitlin's blog

Caitlin wrote a blog about her experience of being a young advocate. Here are some excerpts from it:

'Since last autumn I have been part of The Fostering Network's new Young Advocates project. We have just started out but over time we hope to create learning opportunities for teachers in order to educate them on what life can be like for those who are part of a fostering family, to reduce the stigma and make them aware of some things they should be aware of. We will also be looking to train foster carers to help build their awareness and ensure they support their kids in the best way possible.

'The first meeting I attended was mostly getting to know one another, eating pizza and beginning to grow our "Tree of Positive Change". This is where we wrote a change we would like to see in education on a paper leaf which we then added to the tree. The tree is being filled fast and we hope to someday have an entire forest. The group is great for being a safe, no-judgement space for us to talk freely about whatever we like, alongside the project.

'I was also lucky enough to represent the project at The State of Child Health 2020 conference at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. I was joined by one of our lovely project staff members, Amy, as well as Sara, the director of The Fostering Network. At the event we brought our tree of positive change as well as some

promotional items for the attendees. I spoke to staff from the NHS, members of the Scottish Parliament, and others from educational/child's health sectors about the ideas for positive changes I'd like to see, as well as the work our project had been up to and hoped to do in the future. I also brought along a poster which I made to illustrate that teachers will very often only see us as a student in the classroom, while there could be so much going on in our lives that they're totally unaware of. I feel it's very important that teachers are sensitive to what could be going on in their students' lives.

'We've also been having a lot of conversations about taking creative approaches in our work, such as illustrating our educational journeys, writing songs and other forms of literature. We had a few events coming up in May, such as the CELCIS education conference, which tied in perfectly as it was during Foster Care Fortnight, but unfortunately these events have been cancelled due to Covid-19. In the meantime, we did some quizzes, watched movies and talked about the future of the project. Amy also organised for us to be sent some materials to encourage our artistic flow and keep ourselves busy during this tough period.



'It would be fair to say we are really disappointed that Foster Care Fortnight has been impacted by Covid-19. But the young advocates are definitely still doing our part to try and raise awareness and encourage more people to make their own fostering story. We are in the midst of making a video - all organised over a Zoom meeting! We are lucky to have technology in these times, that's for sure.

'Even in just a few months, this project has given me amazing opportunities, particularly the chance to speak at a Scottish Parliament conference. It has massively increased my confidence in talking to other people, as well as giving me the satisfying feeling that I am making a difference. My mum has been fostering since I was eight years old, so it's been a massive part of my life for such a long time and I really appreciate the opportunity to raise awareness and reduce stigma.'

Foster carers in Scotland: we would love to hear from you!

When: Thursday, 10 September 2020 from 10am - 11.30am

Where: Zoom

This free Zoom session for our foster carer members in Scotland will focus on education in Scotland and the experience of education for care experienced young people.

This session aims to enable you to:

- Make connections with other foster carers.
- Discuss and share education experiences during lockdown,
- transitions back to school and ways to best support children with their education.
- Explore how the rights of children are being met.
- Discuss any changes to policies and procedures locally which have impacted upon children's experience of education.
- Learn more about the Young Advocate's project and how the young advocates are committed to raising awareness within education

and reducing stigma about being care experienced in Scotland.

We are keen to hear what is working well and what requires improvement. If you have any suggestions of topics you would like to be included, please email to let us know.

Please register your interest in advance, including your name, phone number and fostering service, along with the age(s) of children in your household, to scotland@fostering.net or call **0141 204 1400**.

Join Adolescent Matters: a webinar for foster carers



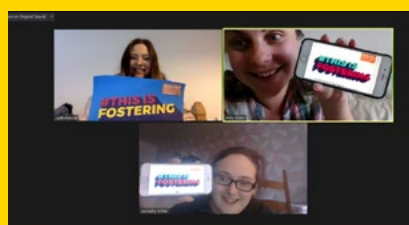
We are pleased to be working alongside Children's Health Scotland to offer you the opportunity to join an online workshop on Adolescence

Matters for Young People in Foster Care. The workshop will take place over two sessions, with some resources to read in between the

sessions. This is an opportunity for carers to reflect on what adolescence is, some of the specific challenges associated with this period, and why it is sometimes more challenging for care experienced young people.

Adolescence is a difficult time for all young people as they navigate the path to becoming independent while also struggling with conflicting emotions as they strive to form attachments to their carers. This workshop will explore how foster carers can best support young people through the sturm und drang (storm and stress) of this period.

Session one will take place on Tuesday 15 September from 10am until 11.30am, and session two will take place on Tuesday 22 September from 10am until 11.30am. If you are interested in joining one of these sessions, please email us at scotland@fostering.net.



The young advocates

The young advocates were excited to be involved with Foster Care Fortnight 2020. They helped raise awareness by sharing posters to show their support, and one of our young advocates, Caitlin, wrote a fantastic blog titled *Fostering during lockdown - a daughter's perspective*, which can be found on The Fostering Network's website: thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/lockdown-daughters-perspective.

Caitlin also raised £85 for The Fostering Network during Foster Care Fortnight. We are very proud and grateful for all her hard work. Thank you, Caitlin!

Children's health challenge

Children's Health Scotland has launched a new 'Children's Health Challenge': a set of fun and interactive online activities for children aged 8-12 (it piloted in schools in June) to promote health and wellbeing and raise awareness of children's healthcare rights.

The Challenge has been developed with input from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) and the Children's and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland (CYPCS). It has been so well received, with favourites being a treasure hunt, board game and wishing wall, that we wanted to make it available to foster families across the summer and going back into school.

We have created a login for The Fostering Network families so that

you and your child/children can access the Challenge at home. There are four levels of activities to complete and children can log in and out to complete them at their own pace. Activities can be done without a printer and have been designed so that children should not need an adult to help them.

We would also love you to complete the survey at the end to let us know what children think.

Children will be able to download a Children's Health Challenge certificate when they have finished!

Login information:

Go to bit.ly/chcScotland

Click continue and enter:

username - tfn

password - Summer2020!



**Children's
Health Scotland**

Promoting the healthcare rights and needs of children and young people

Fosterline Scotland update: pandemic support

I hope this finds you and your loved ones well. We have had a significant increase in enquiries from foster carers and services across Scotland seeking support and clarity during these unprecedented times. Like so many others, we have been forced to adapt our services and, to meet the increased demand for Fosterline Scotland, are offering additional support throughout the pandemic.

We held a series of training webinars over the summer exploring the issue of contact during, and as we come out of, lockdown. The success of these have encouraged us to host additional webinars.

Our tax workshops have also transferred online, and the next one we are hosting will be run on 16

September 2020. Please email scotland@fostering.net to register your interest in attending. If you need support completing your tax return, please get in touch with us.

In addition to telephone support, we are also now providing personal video calls by appointment for anyone who would like one. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you feel this would be beneficial for you.

Due to increased demand for the service, and in recognition of the difficulties foster carers face with children around during the day, we have extended the hours of our Fosterline Scotland helpline which is now open late by appointment.

Remember Fosterline Scotland is here to assist with any query. The service is open from Monday to Friday 10am until 4pm, and evening hours by appointment. To book a phone call or virtual appointment, please contact us by phone or email. Our 24-hour legal helpline remains



open to assist if you are facing a legal challenge. You can access our stress helpline through the same number - **01384 885734**. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have a query you would like some help with.

Thanks, Julie.



Capturing the voice of disabled children and young people in foster care



Our Capturing the Voice work in Scotland was put on hold over recent months due to the pandemic, but as we move out of lockdown we are pleased to be able to continue this work.

Capturing the Voice focuses on the inclusion of disabled children and young people and we are seeking to connect with foster carers and supervising social workers to reflect over recent months and explore what plans are in place to best support children and young people, particularly children and young people with complex disabilities, as we go forward.

We have three online discussions planned, with the same programme at each, and are keen to encourage members to register interest in attending:

Tuesday 8 September
7.00pm – 8.30pm

Wednesday 23 September
1.30pm – 3.00pm

Monday 5 October
10.30am – 12pm

These sessions will allow us to meet up virtually with foster carers and supervising social workers and hear directly from you about some

of the challenges and solutions you have encountered.

We are keen to hear what is working well and what requires improvement. If you have any suggestions of topics you would like to be included, please email to let us know.

Please register your interest in advance by emailing scotland@fostering.net or call **0141 204 1400**, including your name, phone number and fostering service.

Training update: courses now online!

'The breakout rooms were very beneficial and interesting. Learned a lot. Thank you.'

Participant from our Contact webinar

Our training programme was placed on temporary hold due to the pandemic, but we are pleased to say it is now up and running again, with the added benefit you don't need to leave your home!

Don't miss out on our upcoming virtual courses:

Men Who Foster

Tuesday 27 October 2020

£102 plus VAT for members and £204 for non-members

Moving into Adulthood

Wednesday 18 November 2020

£102 plus VAT for members and £204 for non-members

Managing Allegations against Foster Carers

Wednesday 2 December 2020

£102 plus VAT for members and £204 for non-members

We are also able to deliver virtual courses 'in-house' for fostering services to purchase, including Foster Care Finances which will look at tax and national insurance; benefits; care experienced bursaries; and children's savings. Please get in touch with us for more information.

To book your place on one of our courses, or to find out more about purchasing an in-house course, please call Joy Crawford on **0141 204 1400**, email scotland@fostering.net or visit thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/events.

Dates for your diary...

Tuesday 8 September 2020

Capturing the Voice
Zoom (page 7)

Thursday 10 September 2020

Education in Scotland
Zoom (page 5)

Tuesday 15 September 2020

Adolescence Matters,
part one
Zoom (page 6)

Wednesday 16 September 2020

Tax workshop
Zoom (page 7)

Tuesday 22 September 2020

Adolescence Matters,
part two
Zoom (page 6)

Wednesday 23 September 2020

Capturing the Voice
Zoom (page 7)

Monday 5 October 2020

Capturing the Voice
Zoom (page 7)

Tuesday 27 October 2020

Men Who Foster
Zoom (page 8)

Wednesday 18 November 2020

Moving into Adulthood
Zoom (page 8)

Wednesday 2 December 2020

Managing Allegations
against Foster Carers
Zoom (page 8)

If you would like more information on any of the above, please contact us on **0141 204 1400** or scotland@fostering.net.



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