

**Issue 66
August 2019**

Could you be a young advocate?

Launching our
new project

Page 2

We're still Walking Tall

Legacy of the
project

Page 3

Minister's letter

Maree Todd MSP
addresses all foster
carers

Pages 4-5

Fancy a challenge?

Support us
through the
Kiltwalk

Page 6

And more!



Hello everyone



I'm delighted to extend my thanks to the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, who invited a group of our Walking Tall young heroes along to Bute House to meet with her (see our cover photo). The children were in awe, and we all appreciated the time she spent engaging with them, genuinely interested in hearing their thoughts and ideas. Turn to page 3 for more information on our Walking Tall project.

As part of the Walking Tall project, we welcomed foster families along to the Scottish Parliament for an evening during Foster Care Fortnight™. They were joined by Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner, and Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People, amongst others and we are delighted to be sharing Maree Todd's letter to foster carers with you on our centre spread.

The Scotland report from our State of the Nation survey is now available on our website. It captures the views of 500 foster carers from across Scotland, highlighting the issues of most concern to them. You may wish to benchmark your views, and your service, against the responses received. For more information, visit our website thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sosfc.

Once again, we have an update from Fiona Duncan about the work of the care review on page 7. As you may have seen when we released our State of Scotland's Foster Care report, we have expressed some concerns that the care review may have had the

unintended consequences of preventing change in key areas regarding fostering that either did not need to be wrapped up in the review or, indeed, are perhaps not being considered by the review. We are seeking clarity as to what is and isn't in scope for the review. We remain seriously concerned that a national allowance for foster carers has not been introduced, despite the SNP manifesto pledge to do so. We are calling on foster carers to write to their MSPs about this issue using the letter and email tool on our website thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/scotlandallowances.

Finally, I should draw your attention to our new legal and stress helpline number which is listed on the back page. In addition to our Fosterline Scotland service, we offer this support to all our members.

Until next time

Sara

Sara Lurie
Director for Scotland

Introducing our new Young Advocates project

Calling all 16- to 25-year-olds! Would you like to be part of an exciting new project, working alongside The Fostering Network?

Do you have experience of care? Have you been part of a fostering family? Would you like to share your experience to help inform others?

Our Young Advocates project will be led by young people, including care experienced young people and the sons and daughters of foster carers. The project will raise awareness and reduce stigma within education. Funded by Life Changes Trust and Young Start Fund, this group will tap into existing networks and groups across Scotland to build upon what we already know about how to improve school for care experienced children and young people.

Together you will create learning opportunities for teachers and trainee teachers around what the day to day experience of education can be like for children and young people who are care experienced. As part of this group you

will also spend time speaking with foster carers to share with them your experience of education and help build their awareness of how they can best support the children in their care.

We will shortly be recruiting a dynamic individual who will lead the young advocates as project worker. Please be sure to keep an eye on our website and social media for more updates on this opportunity.

If you would like to find out more about joining the group, or if you know any young people who would be amazing young advocates, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Sarah McEnhill on scotland@fostering.net or **0141 204 1400**.

youngstart

Delivered by

COMMUNITY FUND

life changes trust
Creating better lives.

We're still Walking Tall

Although project activities have ended, the legacy of Walking Tall lives on. We were delighted to welcome 77 guests along to an event at the Scottish Parliament during Foster Care Fortnight™ in May.

The evening, sponsored by Rona Mackay MSP, brought together children, young people, foster carers, social workers and other professionals, all of whom are passionate about making sure foster care is the best it can be.

Children from our Walking Tall steering group led the evening. They were kept busy welcoming guests including Maree Todd, the Minister for Children and Young People, and Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland (below right). The children, along with the grown-up members of the steering group, shared the activities they had used during the workshops. These activities helped to inform the design and creation of the amazing Walking Tall booklets, posters, reports and training course for adults.

The children also enjoyed the chance to speak in front of the guests, sharing with them what it was



like to be a part of the project. The guests valued the chance to have Maree Todd give them a tour of the debating chamber.

A week later, the children were amazed to be invited along to meet with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at her official residence, Bute House in Edinburgh. The First Minister was sorry she had been unable to come along to the reception at Parliament and was keen to hear from the children about the importance of listening to children and hearing what they feel is important to know about fostering.

The children shared the Walking Tall activities with the First Minister, speaking about their hand puppets, the foster homes they had designed and their self-esteem shields. As part of the Walking Tall project the children were given plain white t-shirts which the other members of the group were encouraged to sign

with positive messages. The children wore their signed t-shirts to Bute House and were delighted when the First Minister also added her own personal messages to them. The First Minister was then handed her own t-shirt which they were keen to write on.

Before leaving, the children presented the First Minister with a framed poster from the Walking Tall project. After the event, the First Minister tweeted her thanks (see bottom left).

If you would like to request copies of any of the Walking Tall materials, or find out more about our Walking Tall training, please get in touch with Sarah McEnhill scotland@fostering.net or visit our website thefosteringnetwork/walking-tall.



Ministear airson Clann agus Òigridh
Minister for Children and Young People
Maree Todd BPA/MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

To all foster carers in Scotland
May 2019

Dear foster carers and families

As Minister for Children and Young People, I have the privilege of meeting a wide range of people from all parts of the care sector, many of whom are people like you who make it their priority every day to support our fostered children. I am always really impressed by the devotion and commitment.

For our part, I am very proud to say the Scottish Government's new national outcome, 'we grow up feeling loved, respected and included', is a genuine and important demonstration of our commitment to positive culture change. This also very much reflects the continuing ambition of last year's Year of Young People.

As we move towards this year's 'Foster Care Fortnight' in Scotland, I know the ongoing challenges remain; encouraging dedicated and energetic people like yourselves is on many of our minds.

Children and young people who have experience of foster care have talked to me at length about their foster families and taken time to explain how you make them feel loved, valued and supported particularly when they are facing big life decisions such as considering opportunities in further education and employment. Fostering is no doubt demanding and rewarding in different measures at different times.

This year I was glad to be invited to speak at The Fostering Network's conference in March, where I had the opportunity to update on a number of policy developments being taken forward by this Government. I also had the pleasure of meeting The Fostering Network's young champions, Amy, Sophie and Adam who have been involved in sharing their positive experiences of foster care and helping to reduce the stigma that can sometimes be associated with living in care. Their enthusiasm for sharing their experiences of care and doing what they can to support others too is so encouraging to hear about.

Listening to what our care experienced young people say and acting on it is at the heart of our policy development. You will be aware of all the work that has been underway through the independent review of care who are now into their journey phase with a number of workgroups taking forward deep dives into different aspects of the care system in Scotland. If you have not already had the opportunity to share your views on any issue you have concerns about, may I take this chance to encourage you to make contact with them? There are a variety of ways you can do this. Visit their website at carereview.scot and you will also find an update on the workgroups that are now underway as part of their journey phase.

I would like to update you on some activity that has been underway to support you and also help us improve outcomes for the children and young people we care about:

National Review of Care Allowances

Many of you will by now be aware that the review published its report and also a report of its consultation findings in September last year. The recommendations are themed on improving consistency and transparency in delivering foster and kinship allowances and also the information that's available for families and carers. We are committed to working in partnership with CoSLA to develop a joint response, building on the voices of the many foster carers who participated in the consultation. If you have not yet had the chance to read the reports, they are available at gov.scot/publications/final-report-recommendations-national-review-care-allowances-9781787812109 and gov.scot/publications/consultation-report-national-review-care-allowances.

A Central Register of Foster Carers in Scotland

A central register is something that we have considered previously but it was not considered to be a viable option because of the practical difficulties of setting it up, maintaining it and the costs that would be involved. We have, however, recently been involved in some further discussions about the benefits a central register might bring and we know that these have been presented to the independent care review. If you have views on this, I encourage you to write to the independent review of care to share them.

Continuing Care implementation

We are also aware of some of the difficulties young people, carers and practitioners have been experiencing regarding implementing Continuing Care. We have been working with key partners like The Fostering Network and others and listening to the feedback on what these are. We have committed resources to exploring what more we can do to support a much smoother implementation. We want to do what we can to help more young people exercise their right to stay with their foster carer and benefit from a much more supported transition into independent living. If you have a young person in your care who wants to know more about this, Who Cares? Scotland and the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland have a useful booklet explaining young people's rights to Continuing Care and after care support: cypcs.org.uk/rights/young-peoples-resources/continuing-care-and-aftercare-booklet.

Support for young people in education into more independent living

The Deputy First Minister announced in June last year that £33 million will be made available via the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund to target and support the specific needs of care experienced children and young people, helping to improve their educational outcomes.

This funding is being distributed to local authorities to allow them, as corporate parents to make the best decisions in regards to improving the educational outcomes of care experienced children and young people from birth, right through to age 26.

Other examples of practical help to support care experienced young people have been the introduction of council tax exemption and the care experienced bursary. These measures will support them if they choose to live independently or move into further or higher education.

Learning and Development Standard for Foster Carers

A National Learning and Development Standard has been developed and was published by the Scottish Social Service Council in 2017. Not long after that the First Minister announced the independent review of the care system which was to be root and branch and would identify and deliver lasting change in all areas of the care system and leave a legacy that would transform the wellbeing of children and young people. We thought it would be prudent at that time, not to move ahead with implementing the learning and development Standard, to wait and see what the findings of the review, particularly in relation to the workforce, might be. I understand that the review as part of their journey phase is now taking forward a work stream to focus on the workforce and I look forward to hearing about their findings which will inform how we move forward on this.

Improvements for siblings

You might also be aware that I recently announced that we are going to be strengthening the law through the Family Law Bill that is due to be introduced in parliament in the autumn so that maintaining sibling relationships and contact for children and young people in care will become a much greater priority for care services.

I know there is more work to be done to help improve outcomes for children and young people in care, but I do hope you are encouraged by some of the work we are doing to introduce improvements and we look forward to the findings of the independent care review.

I am more and more conscious that what matters most to the children and young people you look after is that they feel loved, cared for and supported through all the challenges they may face. I can see clearly that meeting these needs is what foster carers do best.

Thank you for so many inspiring conversations over the past year and I hope to meet with many more of you in the future.

Maree Todd



Fully inclusive weekend away

Kay Jackson is a member of our advisory committee in Scotland, one of our associate trainers, and also a foster carer with Barnardo's. Kay describes an outdoor weekend away organised by some of the service's Fife carers. We would love to hear from you if you have had a similarly uplifting experience.

'Activity camps for care experienced children are so rare that our group of 12 foster carers from Barnardo's Fife support group decided to plan our own camp. We headed to Lendrick Muir activity centre in November. Our main criteria was:

- The whole family comes along and participates.
- If a child can only manage a day, or part of a day, that's no problem.
- Lots of self-led activities that don't overwhelm children.
- Activities for everyone, no matter what their ability.
- Carers are responsible for their family at all times.
- Lots of fun, laughter and memories.
- No cooking and cleaning for the whole weekend!
- Being loving, caring, compassionate and supportive to each other.
- Electronics are allowed as some children need them.

'We had lots of free time at the adventure playground, the sports hall, and in the woods. Everyone didn't need to be together all the time. If it was a bit much for your child, you could do your own thing and come back when they were ready.

'No one worried about how their child/children behaved or reacted as the families were all understanding of needs, attachment issues, behaviours and so on. In fact, it was very supportive for another carer to be alongside you, empathising in a way that others can't.

'We developed skills through a range of activities, including: cinema evenings (with popcorn, of course); music; art; sporting fun; an indoor campfire in the cabin with marshmallows and so much more!

'It was amazing to see all children included: birth children, children with disabilities, and carers, with no pressure on anyone. Some families came for the day (then didn't want to



leave) some couldn't make it, but their names are first on the list for next time.

'Our young people discovered the seeds of friendships, some younger ones have had play dates, older ones are in touch through social media and attending events organised by our agency. Number one comment from kids and carers: "WHEN CAN WE GO AGAIN?"

Support children in foster care, enter the Kiltwalk today!



On 15 September 2019, the Kiltwalk will be in Edinburgh – why not enter and raise vital funds for our charity, helping to ensure foster care is the best it can be?

The Kiltwalk is a walking event with three distances to choose from, suitable for walkers of all ages and abilities.

You can brave the 24 mile 'mighty stride', take on the 'big stroll' (15.5 miles), or enjoy the family-friendly wee wander (5 miles). There is a registration fee for each event and then when asked your chosen charity you would nominate The Fostering Network.

For more information or to register directly, visit thekiltwalk.co.uk. Keep an eye on our website for other ideas of ways to support us thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/fundraise/ways-fundraise and don't hesitate to contact us for advice.

Fosterline Scotland update: Scottish Government resources

We hope you are having a great summer holiday. We have received a number of enquiries from families fostering a disabled child, as well as from foster carers seeking clarification regarding consent for the young people in their care. The Scottish Government has recently launched two new online resources providing information and guidance on these issues.



Their resource for families supporting a disabled child aims to provide clear, accessible information on national policies, entitlements, rights and the different options for support available. To access the resource, please follow this link

gov.scot/publications/supporting-disabled-children-young-people-and-their-families.

They have also launched a resource for professionals offering guidance on healthy relationships and consent – key messages for young people. The intention is that this resource can be used by any professional or organisation to ensure that communication with young people on

the topics of healthy relationships and consent is consistent. The resource is available via their website gov.scot/publications/key-messages-young-people-healthy-relationships-consent-resource-professionals-working-young-people.

Should you need additional information on this, or any other fostering-related query, please do not hesitate to contact Fosterline Scotland (details left). This independent and confidential service is open from Monday to Friday, 10am until 4pm.

Remember, we're here to help.

Thanks, Mirren and Julie

Update from the care review

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

**Independent
Care Review**

Hello, I hope you're well! My last newsletter update came before Foster Care Fortnight, back in May.

It was lovely to see so many stories of foster care during those two weeks and how meaningful relationships have made such a difference to children and young people across the country.

The independent care review's Health and Wellbeing work group co-chair, Adam Bennett, did a fantastic job of talking about the positive impact foster care can have when he appeared on BBC Radio Scotland and in the Daily Record. Adam wrote a touching blog carereview.scot/blog-foster-care-fortnight-adam-bennett, which you can read on the care review website.

Adam wrote: 'What makes my relationship so special with my foster dad is not just that he's an amazing, compassionate human being, but he

has given so much of his life not just to me, but to all the boys he has cared for.'

The care review's 10 work groups continue to work hard, researching important questions raised from their specific areas, gathering robust evidence on the challenges and successes across the care system in Scotland.

The Stop:Go work group is working alongside the care review's Implementation Team, and are focused on making change happen by working with people and organisations across Scotland, and with staff and community planning partnerships in all 32 local authorities.

The team is also working with colleagues in the Scottish Government to identify areas of policy that will deliver positive change for the care experienced community of Scotland.

At the time of writing, the independent care review has heard the views of over 3,000 people, with over half having personal experience of the care system.

Taking the time to build these kind of trusted relationships beautifully highlighted through Foster Care Fortnight has been really important for the care review.

The care review's Participation Hub Team would be delighted to hear the views of foster carers, as well as children and young people - even if you've been in touch before. All views are welcome.

Please get in touch to learn more about the care review and to share your views at participationhub@carereview.scot.

Best wishes,
Fiona

Glasgow training suite available for hire

Our training suite is proving extremely popular with local organisations – it holds up to 20 people and is situated in a prized location in the centre of Glasgow.

If you are looking for a central venue in Glasgow for a meeting or event, do get in touch. Our rates are very competitive.

For more information, please contact Linda Curran on **0141 204 1400** or by email scotland@fostering.net.

Do you need help with your tax?

We offer free tax workshops for foster carers throughout the year, but spaces are limited.

In addition, many fostering services purchase a fostering and finance course specifically for their carers and social workers.

Contact us for more information on scotland@fostering.net or visit our website thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/tax.

Dates for your diary...

Wednesday 18 September 2019

Moving into Adulthood
£120 plus VAT for members and £225 plus VAT for non-members
Glasgow

Tuesday 24 September 2019

Men who Foster
£120 plus VAT for members and £225 plus VAT for non-members
Glasgow

October 2019

Sons and Daughters Month
thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sadm

Tuesday 22 & Wednesday 23 October 2019

The Role of the Supervising Social Worker
£225 plus VAT for members and £450 for non-members
Glasgow



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.



With thanks to the funders who supported this edition.

The Fostering Network in Scotland

2nd Floor, Ingram House
227 Ingram Street
Glasgow
G1 1DA
t 0141 204 1400
e scotland@fostering.net
thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

The Fostering Network Head Office

87 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8HA

For help with membership queries:
t 020 7620 6440
e membership@fostering.net

Publications & Resources

t 0844 335 1892
e orders@fosteringresources.co.uk

Legal and Stress Helpline

t 01384 885 734

Registered Charity Number: 280852
Registered in Scotland: SC039338

Fostering in Scotland is produced using recycled paper. When you have finished with this newsletter, please share with family and friends, or recycle.



 **like us on facebook**
facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork

 **follow us on twitter**
[@fosteringnet](https://twitter.com/fosteringnet) [@tfn_sara](https://twitter.com/tfn_sara)