

Quarterly Newsletter



The Scottish Newsletter of the
National Foster Care Association

MAY
2001

Welcome to the first Scottish Newsletter of the National Foster Care Association, soon to be called **Fostering Network (Scotland)**.

This newsletter is one of several methods to share information between all the carers, young people, carers' children, workers and managers in agencies who are interested in the Foster Care Service in Scotland.

This newsletter is for you and we would welcome your contributions, suggestions and ideas.

If you haven't met us at Membership Meetings or other events, we are Anne Fisher and Margaret Sim, the Membership Project Workers. Margaret works in the west of Scotland, whilst Anne covers the east of Scotland. Our post is funded for three years by the National Lottery. The Project aim is to unite all

Membership Meetings across Scotland, which provide carers with an opportunity to meet together, hear from a variety of speakers on relevant topics, take part in related workshops on a topic which is relevant for all of those involved in the Foster Care Service. A crèche is provided for children, with workshop/groups for young people.

Reference Groups have been established across Scotland with groups having had their first meetings in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. These groups will be held twice yearly and will be attended by representatives of all the fostering agencies and authorities across Scotland. Those attending are Foster Carers, Carer's sons or daughters, young persons who are accommodated, Children's Rights Workers, staff members who have responsibility for the Foster Care Service and supporting children and young people.

The purpose of these groups is to discuss issues of common concern or interests, such as training, practice development, allowances and recruitment. They will hopefully benefit the services throughout Scotland and will provide an opportunity for those in a geographical area to make links and have ongoing contact. As each group will have a carer

representative on the Steering Group of NFCA, this will promote the sharing of issues across Scotland.

The geography of Scotland often gets in the way of carers and workers sharing issues of common concern. We hope to ensure that the views of all of those involved in foster care, carers, their families, children and young people and their families, workers and managers who all have important things to say about the future of the service, have more opportunity to ensure that their views will be heard by policy and decision makers in Scotland.

Deborah Cook, administrator for the Project can be contacted on: 0141 204 1400 or emailed: membership@fostercare-scotland.org.uk

Deciding on a new name for the Association is just one of the developments for NFCA this year.

Fostering Network is to be the new name. It is hoped that it will underline the way that fostering depends on contributions and hard work and skills of a whole team of people. The name change does not alter our aim to work towards the highest standards of care for children and young people placed with foster carers.

The structure of management of Fostering Network reflects all these people at Board level. The Board of Directors which meets in London has foster carers, fostering agencies, local authority staff as members and young people have recently joined the Board as observers. This group has responsibility for the direction and policies of the organisation.

In Scotland we have a Steering Committee which has responsibility for overseeing the direction of the work in Scotland and providing support for that work. Again it has foster carers and local authority staff and a media manager on the Committee. Young people are also on the Steering Committee and give their views on the work needing to be done.

The foster carers in future are to be elected to the Steering Committee by the 3 Reference groups, which are meeting across the country in geographical areas. This will ensure that the work of Fostering Network in Scotland is given the benefit of your views directly.

The Membership meetings give other opportunities for hearing what members are thinking about topical issues for foster care in Scotland and hopefully giving all members the chance to meet others and discuss a particular topic as well as having some general discussion.

The Newsletter is your paper. We will rely on you to tell us what good practice is happening in your area. It will give you opportunities to raise issues for discussion, to ask questions and for others who have met the same problem to try to help with some answers. With the help of carers, young people and foster care workers and children's social workers, this will be the voice of foster care in Scotland !!

Anne Black

April 2001



Deborah Cook Margaret Sim Anne Fisher

those interested in the Foster Care Service throughout Scotland, by distributing information, providing opportunities for carers to meet together and to develop membership of the National Foster Care Association.

In addition to the National Foster Care national magazine we plan to distribute this quarterly Scottish newsletter. You may have already visited our recently launched NFCA Scottish web-site - www.fostercare-scotland.org.uk

The Project will also offer carers opportunities for personal development through media training, public speaking and facilitating training.

An important part of our work continues to be in

For future newsletters we would welcome your contributions on :

-  **Good news items**
-  **Handy tips**
-  **Forthcoming events**
-  **Courses**
-  **Moves, changes of address**

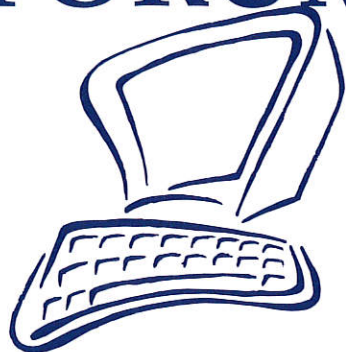
Your letters and views will be especially welcome.

Next issue will include:

- Good news about carers who have received awards !
- Recruitment campaign
- Summer School



E-MAIL FORUM



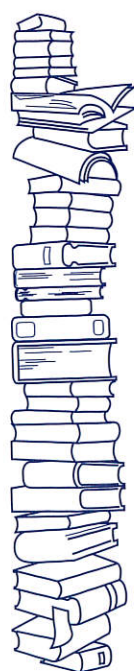
We would be very interested to hear any responses from any of you to an idea we have about launching an NFA e-mail discussion forum. This would be an inter-active version of the letters page in the Foster Care magazine. Ownership of the forum would be very much in the hands of members, a place to raise issues, problems, funny stories that others, carer's, children or interested parties might find interesting.

We would ask you to e-mail us your address if you would like to subscribe to a free e-mail discussion forum with any issues that you could suggest for discussion. We would, on a regular basis, put any contributions we receive into one long e-mail. This would then be e-mailed out to everyone on the list, along with the plea to forward the e-mail to friends who might be interested in joining !!!

We see several benefits to this additional service to members with a chance to interact, as isolation is a common complaint that we receive from carers. A recent survey of carers found that 75% of carers had computers and two thirds had e-mail. It was a small sample of 100 with an interesting result and we believe far above the national average.

There would be benefits for all of us in this and we would hope to flag up and give quick responses. The e-mail forum would be sent out far more regular than any magazine or newsletter and it would only take a few seconds to write a couple of lines rather than find a stamp and paper !!!

We would remove e-mail addresses from the mailing and would evaluate the project after 6 months. Please give us your views and contact us if you are interested in following this up.



"The Lost Boy" – by Dave Pelzer. Published by Orion Media

"The International best selling sequel to A child called 'It', the author describes his life in foster care. Dave moves through five different homes and describes his heart rending encounters with other foster parents and children, some who resent his presence, some who help him. Through it all he is pursued by his mother. Eventually he finds a life for himself, having come to terms with the terrible things inflicted upon him. This is the true story of the triumph of the human spirit over cruelty.

Both books come highly recommended by Margaret Logan, Foster Carer.

"I couldn't put the books down, I read one in a day. It was absolutely brilliant!"

"It gave you all sides of the story – First and foremost it gave you the child's perspective – but it



Father's Pride

by John Timpson, Chairman & Chief Executive of Timpson

Christmas and went to a local children's home. (Twenty years ago, short-term foster care meant a maximum of six months; today, the children stay until a permanent home is found.) Alex was heartbroken, making regular

visits to peer through a fence to see if the two boys were in the playground. Two children had a particularly tough time. The girl had burns up both her legs; she had been held against a gas fire. Her brother had severe bruising on his head, having been bashed against the wall. Both brother and sister had

"Why we had 76 children"

festering wounds across their backs, caused by a fishing rod. All this left emotional damage. The girl played bizarre games with our daughter's dolls house. She turned all the furniture upside-down. "Dad's got a nowt on," she said. Her brother relieved his anger on our garden frames, taking a hammer to 60 panes of glass.

Some children never fully adjust. Our adopted son, Oliver, who came to us when he was six, still has problems at the age of 24. His various attempts to work for our business have always ended in tears.

Each child brings a new challenge. I was a guest speaker in London one night last year when, after the formal speeches were over, I turned to the chairman. "Do you mind if I make a telephone call, my wife is expecting a baby."

The baby had arrived during my speech, after spending six months in hospital where she was born addicted to heroin (her mother was a heroin addict). The baby screamed all night for

Shopping with foster children can be interesting. On my first day as a foster carer, I took two boys to a posh bakers. The elder boy tugged my arm shouting "look John, that woman has got big busters."

Some children came to us because mum was in hospital or prison, or simply couldn't cope. Many others came from a life of abuse.

weeks but gradually recovered enough for us to believe she will lead a normal life.

Some of the most damaging abuse is mental rather than physical. A four-year-old child was very aggressive when he

first came. If we told him off, he responded with, "shut it you f***ing bastard." Then he would lie on the floor screaming with rage. He had every reason to be angry. When a social worker asked his mother what he was like, she replied, "he's just a little shit."

I did warn you this was not my normal light-hearted look at life, but child abuse is serious. One in four children is being subjected to abuse right now and, as a result, more behaviour problems are being stored up for the next 20 years.

So in the spirit of Christmas, what can be done? I am not suggesting that you should change your lives by becoming a foster carer, but if you do think it is a good idea, the first step is to contact your local social services department. You will find their number in the phone book. An easier way to help is by supporting the NSPCC which is running a major campaign right now.

To obtain this book 'Dear James' @ £12.99 per copy, contact Sarah Jane Bagnall on 020 7592 8900 or e-mail sgb1@caspiantpublishing.co.uk This article was first published in the Dec/Jan edition of the magazine 'Real Business'. We are grateful for their permission to publish this article.

REGULATION OF CARE BILL (SCOTLAND 2001)

The Regulation of Care Bill is currently going through the Scottish Parliament, it is likely that this Bill will have major implications for everyone within the Foster Care Service, including children and young people, foster carers, and family placement social workers.

The history of the Bill goes back to 1999. When the Scottish Executive published its plans for modernising the delivery of Social Care Services in Scotland. In the intervening two years, the Executive's plans have focussed primarily on the establishment of what will be termed the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care, and the Scottish Social Services Council.

The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care will be established from April 1st 2002, as a public body charged with taking on the Regulation of Care Services in Scotland. Inspectors and support staff will carry out inspections and the regulation of care services in Scotland. The Commission will regulate and inspect these services against National Care Standards. At present the National Foster Care Association, along with other Child Care Agencies and the Scottish Executive are developing standards based upon the UK National Standards for Foster Care. At present, fostering services provided by local authorities, voluntary agencies and private fostering agencies will be inspected in terms of the arrangements for recruitment, assessment, approval, training and support. In addition, procedures with respect to foster panels, and the matching of children to carers and the support and monitoring of placements, including private foster placements.

The Commission will be based in Dundee, but will have regional offices throughout Scotland.

The Scottish Social Services Council will regulate the social services workforce through the registration of key groups of staff, the establishment of Codes of Conduct, and Practice and Education and Training. It is proposed that registration of individual workers will include all staff in Residential Childcare, all Heads of Residential Care Homes and all Heads of Adult Day-care Services, as well as registration and inspection staff of the Commission. There is a proposed second phase of registration for staff working in Adult Residential Care and staff working in Early Education and Child Care. The National Foster Care Association, along with carers and young people in Scotland has and will continue to lobby Parliament for Foster Carers to be included in this second phase.

Continued on page 4

Book Reviews

also gave the carers side and the difficulties social workers face when moving children".

"It was reassuring to read that David's carers had to deal with the same kinds of difficult behaviour that we do as carers. So we're not alone in dealing with challenging young people, foster carers in America have to deal with these difficulties too". "Spot on!"

'A Child Called It' -- by Dave Pelzer. Published by Orion Media

David Pelzer's story is the story of a child brutally beaten and starved by his emotionally unstable,

alcoholic mother, a mother who played tortuous unpredictable games – games that left one of her sons nearly dead. Dave had to learn how to play his mother's games in order to survive because she no longer considered him a son, but a slave; and no longer a boy but an 'it'.

The outside world knew nothing of the nightmare played out behind closed doors. But throughout Dave kept alive dreams of finding a family to love him, call him their son. It took many years of struggle, deprivation and despair to find his dream and then to make something of himself in the world. This book covers the early years of his life and is an affecting and inspirational look at the horrors of child abuse and the steadfast determination of one child to survive despite the odds.

Thanks to East Lothian Carer's newsletter for this contribution.





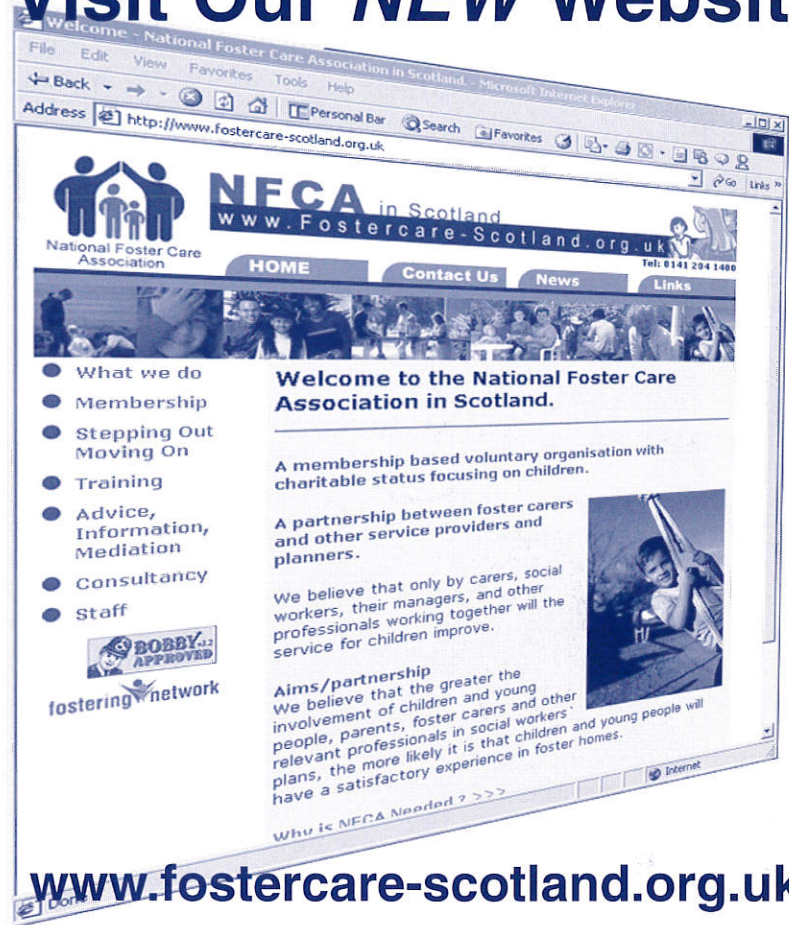
Regulation of Care Bill Continued from page 3

We are concerned that in the Regulation of Care Bill as it currently stands, Foster Carers will not be regulated under Scottish Social Services Council. Unlike Childminders, and Residential Childcare Workers. This is despite the fact that they care for more children than are placed in Residential Care and they do it in their own homes. We realise that to register Foster Carers would be a considerable task, but our view is that Foster Carers must not be seen as second class workers, of lesser importance than either Childminders, or Residential Care staff who look after vulnerable children in different settings.

It seems clear to us that the Foster Care Service, which looks after 3 out of 5 children in care in Scotland, is an important service, and as such, should be given the status and recognition that it deserves. It seems illogical that the biggest Childcare Service will be unregistered. We will continue in our efforts to persuade the government of the need to change it's mind with regard to this issue. At present, it looks as if because Foster Carers are, by enlarge not employees and have no recognised qualification, that they will not be considered as potential candidates for registration. We view this as wrong and will continue to lobby on your behalf.

If you have a view on this, please contact us so we can discuss this with as wide a range of people as possible.

Visit Our *NEW* Website



www.fostercare-scotland.org.uk



Scottish Membership Meeting

SATURDAY 16TH JUNE 2001

**National Foster Care
Association**

MEADOWBANK SPORTS CENTRE,

139 LONDON RD EDINBURGH, EH7 6AE Telephone 0131 661 5351

12.00PM - 4.00PM (A buffet lunch will be provided at 12.00pm – 12.30pm)

TOPIC : MANAGING STRESS IN FOSTER CARE

Main speakers :

Sister Mary Ross
Clinical Director
Notre Dame Centre
Glasgow

Mary Ellen Barton
Alternative Therapy
Practitioner
Edinburgh

Presentation by Young People

**Advance
Notice**

Membership Meeting for Carers to be held on Saturday 10th November 2001 – Perth
Watch this space for further information !!! Topic : Venue : Time

Fostering Network previously known as *The National Foster Care Association*

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