

# Fostering

Promoting Foster  
Care in Scotland  
Issue 10 Summer 2005



# in Scotland



Pictured are Euan Robson MSP, Depute Minister for Children and Young People with Tiya, James, Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland, Kathleen Marshall and Cheryl

## Launch of Foster Care Fortnight

The Fostering Network Scotland were joined in Edinburgh on 9th May by Kathleen Marshall, Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland, Euan Robson, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, Young People, foster carers and workers from across Scotland.

Elaine Thomson, foster carer, promoted her, and her families experience of foster care, and young people showed a hard-hitting film about fostering to launch Foster Care Fortnight in Scotland. They also made their own recommendations for the future of foster care straight to Euan Robson, MSP and Kathleen Marshall.

Tiya and James presented the following recommendations for change to foster care in Scotland:

- The number of placement moves should be reduced. There should be better matching and placement choice; we should be given a chance to meet carers first and decide if we want to live there. There has to be a reduction in the number of placements per foster home
- There needs to be an increase in the numbers and the types of foster carers. To attract and retain current foster carers all fostering agencies must pay them the full cost of caring and reward them according to their skills and training. They must be provided with adequate training and support

*(continued on page 3)*

We would welcome your contributions on any news, views, articles or ideas.  
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**Fostering Links project** Sarah Crangle

## Hello Folks!

**The last three months** have been about endings, we have said farewell to a number of staff as their projects have come to the end of their funding. We have closed down half of our office in Glasgow due to financial constraints. I spend a third of my time searching for funding for our work in Scotland, and each year it seems to get harder to find all the funds to keep our services going.

Talking about finances, the Government are, as I write this, waiting on the proposals from Local Authorities as to how they intend spending their allocation of the £12m announced last year, the aim for the Government is to improve recruitment and retention and every Local Authority has to set out how it intends to do this.

Also finished at last is our report on fostering in Scotland. It's taken eighteen months to complete and should be with Ministers by mid summer. We have called it *Caring for our Children* and we hope copies will be widely available across Scotland in the near future.

May I take this chance to wish you a good summer; hopefully we'll see some sunshine!

**Bryan Ritchie**

Director, the Fostering Network Scotland

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Young People's project  
focus groups  
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**Kausar pictured with some of the young people involved with the Fostering Network**

**After four years** as Young Person's project development worker, Kausar Karim leaves the Fostering Network to take up a new challenge with Glasgow City Council.

During the past four years, the Young Person's project has been instrumental in raising the profile and awareness of the needs of young people and sons and daughters involved in foster care at both a local and a national level. Having developed a successful network of young people's advisory groups across the country, the project has been able to influence both Scottish Executive policy and Local Authority and social work practice.

The Young People's project will continue, and the Fostering Network Scotland is hopeful of having a new appointment in place shortly. More details will be announced in the next edition of *Fostering in Scotland*.

# Dear Members,

**I have been delighted** to meet many members at the focus groups across Scotland. The topics raised at them have been varied and challenging to all parts of the fostering service. They will be the key ones for the Fostering Network to take forward with your help. There was a real buzz about the meetings despite a rather chilly Aberdeen, a downpour in Edinburgh and trains running late to Ayr!

The issues from the groups have now been collated by Sarah, who organised all the meetings with the minimum of fuss and made everyone feel welcome. The focus group regional advisers from the three areas will be meeting in late June with Bryan, Sarah and me to look at the future programme for work.

We had a Scottish Committee meeting in May and were very pleased that Robert Tapsfield, our Executive Director, made time to come and share with the Committee some of the developments in the Fostering Network. We looked at the draft Strategic Plan for the next 2 years in the UK and added our Scottish perspective to the draft. There is a UK Board meeting in June so we will be finalising the Strategic Plan then.

The Fostering Network has also been involved in a major piece of work to assess the real costs of Foster Care. It is rarely done but the paper produced is to be presented to all UK Executives in July and we hope that many discussions will follow to try to ensure that the service is

better funded in the future. Remember to tell your MSP about fostering when you have a chance!

We also had a successful launch of *Foster Care Fortnight*, which is reported elsewhere in the newsletter. I would just like to say that the young people were stars and so was our foster carer!

The young people and all at the Fostering Network will miss Kausar very much as she leaves to take up a post in Glasgow as a Team Leader. Thank you for all your work, Kausar, and we wish you good luck for the future.

Finances continue to be a problem and many trusts are not giving out money for what we see as the core of our work. We will keep trying!

Linda and her staff have done very well to keep the office running smoothly as we had to give up half of our Ingram House office to cut our costs. They survived the rebuilding of a partition and the finished effect is good. We do rely so much on the hidden support of Linda and her staff, so thank you to them.

**I hope that you will all have a good summer when it comes.**

**Best wishes**



**Chair, Scottish Committee**

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## Launch of Foster Care Fortnight (continued)

- When a young person moves from one placement to another they should have proper luggage for their things
- There needs to be better planning and the effects of too many moves on young people's behaviour has to be better understood
- There needs to be greater and better contact between children and their close and extended family and friends. Having more foster carers would increase the chances of children being placed near their own family, friends and school
- The educational needs of looked after children must be a higher priority. Too many young people in care are still leaving school with no or few qualifications. Why should we be disadvantaged in life because we happen to be in care?
- Social workers must do more direct work with children and young people and not only see them when there is a crisis. We need more support with helping us deal with the reasons why we are in care and some of the difficulties we have because we are in care. We might have a safe roof over our heads but that's not enough
- Everyone involved should spend more time listening to what children and young people have

to say. The views of children and young people must be considered in all decisions affecting them. Too many children and young people in foster care still say that they don't feel they are listened to. Have a think, how are you going to help us in the ways we need if you are not really listening to us?

Children's Commissioner Kathleen Marshall, who highlighted a recent survey on the shortage of 1,700 foster families across Scotland, echoed their proposals.

Bryan Ritchie, Director of the Fostering Network Scotland reiterated these concerns, 'The frequent moves have a traumatic and devastating effect on these children who are some of the most vulnerable in society. They have often led chaotic and damaging lives and their need for stability and continuity is of paramount importance.'

The short film, described as 'powerful' by Euan Robson, MSP, was storylined and written entirely by young people involved in the Young Person's project. The audience were given a fresh perspective on foster care in Scotland, straight from the people most effected.



# Schools Out!

**Scottish Executive statistics,** published October 2004, showed that for 16 and 17 year old young people leaving care in 2003-04, six out of ten did not achieve any qualifications at SCQF level three or above. This is a figure that is similar to the previous two years.

Foster carers and their families play a crucial role in supporting looked after young people in achieving their educational potential. Within the fostering household, the sons and daughters of carers also have to find time and be supported in their own education.

As the schools break up for the summer, we spoke with three young people who shared with us their experience of studying within a fostering household.

## **Dawn is the daughter of a carer and has grown up in a fostering household.**

'Having just finished a BA degree in child and youth studies from home, I can relate to how fostering has effected my education, good and bad.

We foster two boys who are very boisterous, and another two who are the opposite; a baby and a teenager, so study after school hours was usually out of the question. This was fine because if I studied enough during the day, I could do other things in the evenings!

**Having just finished a BA degree in child and youth studies from home, I can relate to how fostering has effected my education, good and bad.**

That was until the boys would get themselves suspended from school. I would then have to help out during the day in the care for them, they would be very loud and constantly around which meant my work or essays would get put off until later when I would have time to do them.

Another thing that would interrupt my work would be the constant meetings. While these were taking place, I would have the duty of looking after the children. By this time I was nicknamed the 'live in nanny' as I was there most of the time and it would just be expected of me to look after the children, while my parents went to meetings or for the weekly shop.

However, although this meant my studies usually came second, I did gain a lot of hands on experience of working with children, and this aided me in my work. It gave me insights into the many different problems children have; I would be reading about them in my course notes and witnessing them first hand through the children. So, although I maybe felt I was being taking advantage of, my first hand work with the children played a vital role in my understanding of my course and aided my learning.'

## **Susan has been brought up in care, moving between many placements from the age of three, and has had a less positive experience of school.**

'I have spent most of my life in care in one-way or another. I've lived in about 27 foster placements (it may be more, its difficult to remember all the homes I've stayed in), four residential units and one secure unit. I have also attended eight primary schools, one secondary school and one residential school. I've also had loads of social workers.

All these moves and changes in my life have been really disruptive and have effected my life in so many ways. I feel that I was never really allowed to settle anywhere.

Whenever there was a problem I got moved. I still feel pretty angry with this; things could have been so different if someone stopped to see the damage this was doing to me. Don't get me wrong I'm not saying that some of it wasn't my fault, I know that I was difficult to handle at times but what do you really expect a child to be like who is taken away from their family at the age of three and then moved to so many different places. You feel like you are being punished because of something you have done, even though it wasn't my fault that my mum couldn't care for me. So many people are in and out of your life and you feel as if it is your fault. I often felt that workers and carers didn't care enough to stick with me and try to really help me.

One of the main effects of all these moves is that my education was really messed up. I missed out on so much because of all the different schools I went to. When I was in care I was moved all around the country, so I had to move school as well because it was usually too far to travel to stay in the same school.

When I would start at a new school the teachers wouldn't know what level I was at and this would cause problems. Some teachers would put me at a higher level and I wouldn't be able to understand what was being taught. Other teachers would give me work I had already done, so I'd then get bored and stop paying attention. After a while I stopped trying and of course that meant that I got into more trouble and got a bad reputation. I remember by 2nd or 3rd year at secondary school I deliberately got myself chucked out of class and then suspended from school because this felt easier than being embarrassed at not being able to do

## Dates for your diary

8 September    Membership Meeting, Inverurie  
2 November    Focus Group West, Ayr

8 November    Focus Group North, Aberdeen  
18 November    Focus Group East, Edinburgh

the work given to me. I was so far behind everyone else with my education that it was easier for me to get into trouble just so that I wouldn't be embarrassed at not being able to do the work given to me.

When it came to exam time I knew there was no point in even trying to do well as I had missed so much education over the years that I was never going to pass.

When I look back now I can see that some teachers tried to help but I thought they felt sorry for me and I never wanted that. I just wish they had tried to understand what my difficult behaviour was about instead of just punishing me.

If social workers, teachers and foster carers involved in my life throughout the years had spent time listening to me and tried to understand what it was like for me I would have had a more positive experience. I have now moved to my own flat and I am looking forward to the future. I think it is important that no other child ever has to go through what I did.'

**Cheryl, has also been in foster care but has had a much more positive experience,**

'Education has been one of the major issues for young people in care. They tend to have busy and often hectic lives as they are being moved from one placement to the next, or, in some cases, one school to another. These moves often take place during school time, causing the young person to fall behind in their coursework. These moves can also be emotionally challenging for young people, making it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork.

Another problem young people tend to face is being taken out of school to meet their social worker or another professional who may be involved in their case. I was lucky enough to have a different experience from most young people in care. I was not moved away from my own school after I went into care, even when I was moved to a placement over 30 minutes away by car. This provided me with a little bit of stability, as I could see my friends almost everyday at school. I also did not have to get used to new surroundings or teachers and my school life stayed as normal as was possible.

Throughout my time in care, my teachers were kept informed of what was going on and were often involved in some of the decisions that were being made at my review meetings. This was probably the reason that I stayed at my own school with my friends. All my teachers at school were informed of any difficulties I was going through and they were very understanding about it and even lenient if homework was late because of these difficulties. I was also encouraged by everyone to stay on at school and to keep going. I remember my foster-dad driving me to school through snowdrifts, only to find that the school had been closed due to bad weather. I was also encouraged to do well at school. My foster-carers would always make sure that I had done all of my homework, and they gave me lots of time and space to study.

My social worker always tried to meet me outside of school hours, for example, meeting up at lunchtime, or after school. Also, my review meetings were always arranged for as late in the day as

**Throughout my time in care, my teachers were kept informed of what was going on and were often involved in some of the decisions that were being made at my review meetings.**

possible so that I didn't have to miss more work than was necessary.

I was always encouraged to go on to further education. It had been a dream of mine since I was a child, and everyone who was involved in my case encouraged me to go on to university. My teachers insisted that I was capable of going on to university, my foster-carers told me that it would be a great life-experience, and my social worker and the social work department said that they could help me out at university.

When I finally went to university, my foster-carers were there to help me move into halls. When I came to university, the social work department loaned me a laptop so that I could work on my essays from home. They have also supported me financially and have left the door open for me to return to my foster-carers during holidays or for a weekend when I need to go back home. I have now been at university for three years and have plans to graduate in December this year before going on to study social work.'

*Thanks to Dawn, Susan and Cheryl for sharing their stories.*

## No more summer schools

Members will be disappointed to hear that there will be no summer school this year due to discontinued funding from the Scottish Executive. The summer schools have proved very popular over the past five years, and many foster families

will be let down this summer, but we will continue to press the executive for further funding and carers, young people and workers should contact their MSP, pushing for their support and hopefully we will have better news for next year.

# Part of the family-caring for a minority ethnic child

**Betty and Iain** are full time foster carers and have been fostering for five years. During this time they have cared for a number of placements. They have two, now adult, children of their own and two grandchildren who all live locally, as well as four fostered children within their household, and still have space for two more as they are approved for six children between the ages of 0 and 16 years.

The second youngest member of the household at the moment is Michael who has lived with Betty and Iain for almost three years, and is now six. Betty spent some time chatting about Michael.

'When Michael first came to stay with us he displayed serious behavioural problems, fortunately we have now worked through these, and he displays behaviours typical to other children his age. Michael has mixed parentage, with a white mum, and we've only recently discovered that his father is of Bangladeshi origin. We have been working over the past years to promote Michael's sense of his culture and where he comes from. When he first came to us he struggled with his skin colour being different, and frequently self harmed, but we take every opportunity we can to promote a positive image. We use television programs like CBeebies, and reading books that show lots of different cultures to promote how special Michael is.'

Betty and Iain are keen to support Michael in maintaining his dual heritage. It has been very difficult though as they find it very difficult to access supports. 'We live in a rural area, and the population isn't very ethnically diverse. There are only about three minority ethnic children at Michael's school. Michael gets on well at school, and doesn't have

any problems within our community. I have built up a great relationship with the school over the years, with my own children going there, and I will pop in and speak with the headmistress if I want to discuss anything.

The family placement team have been really supportive, and give me as much information as they can. They organised for us to attend a training course in London recently. We are also hoping to take Michael to the Rainbow People group in Edinburgh, but this involves a great deal of travelling from our house to get there and back. We are happy to take Michael to the group, but as he is only six it is a long day if he has to spend three hours travelling.

We want Michael to be aware of all aspects of his heritage. We just want him to love himself for himself. We want to be able to involve him and all the kids in the household with cooking various foods, from various cultures. We want to be able to celebrate significant religious festivals but it's very difficult when you don't know where to start looking to get this information.'

Betty and Iain would be happy to hear from other carers about supports that they have found helpful. They can be contacted c/o Fostering Links Project, The Fostering Network Scotland.

Useful sites [www.antiracisttoolkit.org.uk](http://www.antiracisttoolkit.org.uk)  
[www.education.ed.ac.uk/ceres](http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/ceres)  
[www.baaf.org.uk/about/projects/rem/index.shtml](http://www.baaf.org.uk/about/projects/rem/index.shtml)

*Some names have been changed to maintain confidentiality*



**Joy Crawford and Johanna McLauchlan from our training section**

## Open Courses Autumn/Winter 2005

**The Fostering Network Scotland** is planning Open Courses for Autumn/Winter 2005

The courses we are planning to run are-

- The role of the supervising social worker
- Attachment
- Competency-based assessment of foster carers
- Communicating with children through play
- Moving on
- Men in foster care
- Child protection
- Caring for young people who have been abused

If you are interested in any of the above courses, or would like the training team to run another course, please get in touch either by phone on 0141 204 1400, **e** [joy.crawford@fostering.net](mailto:joy.crawford@fostering.net) or **f** 0141 204 6588. Our aim is to offer courses tailored to meet your specific training needs

# Focus group feedback

**Kay Jackson**, regional adviser for the East focus group reports on what happened at our focus groups in April 2005.

The focus groups have had their first meeting and what a lot there was to talk about! Foster carers, family placement workers, social workers, team representatives and a recruitment officer brought the issues. The Fostering Network did a great job co-ordinating the whole thing, and the collaborative approach was undoubtedly successful. There was an update on where things currently stood and what was still left to do. The groups split into two - carers and workers - to identify and discuss what the priorities are in each of their areas. Then came together to discuss and prioritise again. The task wasn't over, these groups didn't meet to bring a list of complaints about the fostering service in Scotland today, they met to bring a realistic picture of some of the difficulties facing the fostering service and suggested practical ways of improving the service for all those involved - not forgetting the children and young people. Many issues were highlighted, with the main themes being:

- **Recruitment and retention of workers and carers**
- **Allegations**
- **Fees allowances and retainers**
- **Roles and responsibilities**
- **Education**

Over the next months, these issues will be pushed forward, and we will keep you informed of how they are progressing in the next edition of *Fostering in Scotland*.

The focus groups will next meet:  
**West Wednesday 2nd November 2005, Ayrshire Management Centre, Ayr**

**North Tuesday 8th November 2005, Marywell Centre, Aberdeen**

**East Friday 18th November 2005, Ramada Jarvis Mount Royal, Edinburgh**

To find out how you can contribute to these very important discussions, contact your regional adviser or Fostering Links project, who will be happy to feed your views into discussion directly, give you the details of the people who are there representing your local authority or voluntary organisation, or tell you how you can get more involved with the focus groups!

## North

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## Individual Learning Account (ILA) Scotland scheme

**The Scottish Executive** have re-launched the individual learning accounts, building upon the success of the previous scheme. Funded until at least 2008, it will help remove cost as a barrier to adult education for thousands of people across Scotland.

Initially, ILA Scotland is available to people whose income is £15,000 or less. It will enable learners to receive funding of up to £200 per year that can be used to pay for any course approved by ILA Scotland.

An additional funding offer, which will not be income restricted will be introduced in Summer 2005 and will offer up to £100 funding support to learners who wish to study Information & Communications Technology up to SCQF Level 5 or equivalent.

Learners must be over the age of 18 and resident within Scotland and must make a minimum personal contribution of £10 to each piece of learning they undertake.

Sue Robertson, training manager at the Fostering Network Scotland says, 'I am delighted the Scottish Executive have taken this initiative forward. It will allow carers more choice in the training they wish to participate in. We are ourselves hoping to become a branded learning centre, and will keep members informed of how we are progressing with this.'

For further information visit [www.ilascotland.org.uk](http://www.ilascotland.org.uk) or contact ILA Scotland on 0808 100 1090

## Media training

**The Fostering Network** is building upon its network of media trained carers and is offering free training to carers interested in getting practical guidance and information on what to expect from a media interview to enable carers to be more confident in sharing their story with the press.

Having carers speaking with the media is invaluable in raising the awareness of fostering across Scotland and allows the experience of carers to be shared with the public.

If you would like to participate in media training, please contact Sarah

Crangle for further information. The training will involve a one-day workshop.

These are being held:  
**Aberdeen 21st September 2005**  
**Edinburgh 27th September 2005**  
**Glasgow 28th September 2005**

# Membership meeting 'facing the challenges'



**The sun shone** on Stirling while the rain poured down in Glasgow, however in spite of this, our membership meetings proved to be successful. The meetings brought together carers and workers from various agencies across the UK from as far travelled as Shetland in the North to Wales in the South.

Dr Helen Minnis from Glasgow University's Child and Adolescent Psychiatry department in Yorkhill Children's Hospital gave an absorbing talk on attachment disorders and updated delegates on her current research into this topic.

Foster carers, Sharon Weir and Coleen Christie, from Northern Ireland presented a fascinating workshop on foetal alcohol spectrum disorders. The Fostering Network Scotland's training manager Sue Robertson led a workshop which further examined attachment difficulties faced by young people, and in Glasgow, an additional workshop allowed Anne Gebbie-Diben and Pamela Boyd from Greater Glasgow Health Board to share strategies for allowing meal times to be a healthy, enjoyable and sociable activity for the whole family.

Although the main complaint of the day was not enough time to fit so much in to, carers and workers enjoyed the opportunity to meet and share views and experiences with each other. The day highlighted that carers and workers have a real need to revisit some topics, and it also offered an insight into what may be a previously unfamiliar topic. 'Membership meetings manage to give you fresh ideas no matter how long you have been fostering'.

After the success of the Foetal Alcohol workshop, it is hoped that a full day course will be run by the Fostering Network. Please contact Joy Crawford in our training section for further information on this.

Our next membership meeting will be held on 8th September 2005. Places are limited, and to secure a place at this, please complete the booking form at the back of this newsletter, and return to Sarah Crangle, Fostering Links project.



The Fostering Network Scotland Membership Meeting

## Forgotten Voices- what you need to do to make fostercare work for us

**Thursday 8 September 2005**  
Thainstone House Hotel, Inverurie,  
Aberdeenshire AB51 5NT

**Registration from 9.45am,**  
**main meeting 10.15am til 3.15pm**

**(Buffet lunch will be provided)**

The day will involve presentations from young people of their experience of foster care. A further workshop will explore how carers can be supported and best support children and young people moving through placement. This is a one-day event. This meeting is free and open to anyone interested in the foster care service.

Please confirm your attendance by completing the registration form.

For further information,  
please contact the  
Fostering Network Scotland  
t 0141 204 1400



## Membership Meeting

**I/ WE WILL ATTEND THE MEMBERSHIP MEETING/SEMINAR  
BEING HELD AT:**

**Thursday 8 September 2005, Thainstone House Hotel,  
Inverurie**

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ROLE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

POST CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

TEL NO: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBER/ NON MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF ADULTS ATTENDING: \_\_\_\_\_

LUNCH REQUIRED: \_\_\_\_\_

ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (Dietary/Access/Other): \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS SLIP BY Thursday 1 September 2005**

Sarah Crangle, Fostering Links project, The Fostering Network  
Scotland, Ingram House, 2nd floor, 227 Ingram Street, Glasgow  
G1 1DA t 0141 204 1400; f 0141 204 6588

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

No confirmation of attendance will be given, if you wish to confirm please call us on 0141 204 1400