

Fostering

Promoting foster
care in Scotland

Issue 16 Winter 2006/07



in Scotland

Carers at the Castle



150 invited young people, foster carers, kinship carers and representatives from fostering groups gathered in the Great Hall of Edinburgh Castle on 6 December 2006 to attend a reception hosted by Hugh Henry, MSP, Minister for Education and Young People and Robert Brown, MSP, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People.

Formally launching the *National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy*, both Ministers thanked carers for the valuable contribution they continue to make in providing a positive future for the 5500 children and young people looked-after in foster and kinship placements across Scotland.

Guests enjoyed the opportunity to meet with both Ministers and share their experiences, as well as meeting up with carers and colleagues from across the country. For some, the evening finished with a tour of the Honours of Scotland, while others went on to enjoy a night out in Edinburgh!

The launch of the *National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy* marked the opening of the consultation process, which will close on 16 February 2007. This is available online at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/07091551/0

We would welcome your contributions on any news, views, articles or ideas. Please send to Sarah Crangle, The Fostering Network Scotland, Ingram House, 2nd floor, 227 Ingram Street, Glasgow G1 1DA
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Day in the park for East Dunbartonshire



East Dunbartonshire took all their foster carers, their children and foster children on a day out to M&Ds fun park at Strathclyde Park with lunch at Toby's Carvery. Almost all of the staff went along, including the Resource Manager!

A great day was had by all, even though the sun failed to shine. The children enjoyed the rides and were a credit to their foster carers and parents. The water ride and rollercoaster were particular favourites with the children and those adults brave enough to try them!!

The photo is of some of the Carers and staff.

The day was a great success. Foster carers, shared carers and respite carers were all together for the first time, and over the course of the day were able to start establishing relationships which East Dunbartonshire hope to build on in Carers Support groups and training events.

Forthcoming **training courses**

The Skills to Foster Leaders' Course

Three-day course
Tuesday 20, Wednesday 21 and
Thursday 22 February
also Tuesday 24, Wednesday 25
and Thursday 26 April
GO Business and Training Centre,
Glasgow
Price: £225 + VAT (including lunch)
(£450 + VAT non-members)

** Please note, venue for the April date has changed from that previously advertised and will now be held in Glasgow **

Men in foster care

One-day course
Saturday 3 March
Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Glasgow
Price: £75 + VAT (including lunch)
(£150 + VAT non-members)

The Role of the Supervising Social Worker

Two-day course
Wednesday 7 and
Thursday 8 March
GO Business and Training
Centre, Glasgow
Price: £150 + VAT
(including lunch)
(£300 + VAT non-members)

NEW FOR 2007

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

One-day course
Monday 4 June
GO Business and Training Centre,
Glasgow
Price: £75 +VAT (including lunch)
(£150 + VAT non-members)

This course is facilitated by foster carers with many years experience of caring for children suffering from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. It will consider the definitions, signs and symptoms of FAS and other disorders identified with it.

It will discuss how alcohol affects the foetus, the implications for the future of the child and offer some suggestions to help the child and adult as well as identifying possible sources of support for the carer.

For information on this or any of the above courses, please contact our training team
Sue Robertson e sue.robertson@fostering.net Joy Crawford e joy.crawford@fostering.net t 0141 204 1400

Dear Members,

I am writing this letter on one of the darkest and wettest December days for many years. I hope that the rain will have stopped before Christmas but I know that I am much luckier than many people across Scotland who have had to leave their homes and possessions as the floods rise.

It gives me some idea of the upset and the fears that children have to face when they must leave their home, family and familiar routines and come into care and move into other people's houses and fit into different family ways.

The last few months have been exciting for fostering in Scotland with the publication on the 6th of December of the consultation on the National Fostering Strategy. Most of the people to whom I have spoken feel very pleased that the Scottish Executive have listened to the voices of carers and agencies and that they are consulting about the issues that we know matter.

We need to ensure that the Executive get a very big response to the consultation so that they see that these are important issues for children, carers and agencies. I hope that you will find time to reply.

The Fostering Network is busy arranging a series of meetings across Scotland to get views on the proposals so I look forward to seeing some of you at those meetings.

It was a busy summer for me with a lot of activity at the UK Board and a lot of meetings to attend and issues to be resolved. We now have 6 new members of the Board,

5 of whom are carers and one from a social work agency. We have a new Chair of the UK Board, Jim Bond, a carer from Essex. Some of you may have attended his workshop at the Annual Conference. He fell in love with Scotland when he was here for the AGM so I am sure that he will come up during the year to meet carers, agencies and tFN staff.

Unfortunately Debbie Booth, a carer from Dundee was not successful in the election and missed being elected by a small margin. We need to get more members from Scotland to vote in the next election and I will remind you of that in the summer.

The Conference in Glasgow was a great success with the keynote speakers both distinguished in their field but very aware of the issues for foster children and for foster families. The debate on Smoking was interesting and we need to look at what we do from here.

For me one highlight of the weekend was the one woman play by Naomi Breeze called *Holly*. It was such a moving drama focusing on a young person coming into the care system and the barriers she faced as well as the support that she received. We hope to be able to make the play accessible for many more of you in the months ahead. The other highlight for me was meeting so many carers and hearing about the work they were doing with young people.

I was delighted to be invited to the Reception for Carers held at

Edinburgh Castle by the Ministers for Education and Young People. It was a freezing night on the Esplanade waiting for the minibuses but the Castle and the Great Hall are impressive despite being a bit warlike! The reception was a public recognition of the work of foster carers, and also this year of kinship carers, who are looking after their grandchildren or nieces and nephews often with little or no financial or emotional support. I felt that the kinship carers had a lot of issues and needs that were the same as foster carers.

We have changed the composition of the Scottish Committee of the Fostering Network and we now have an Advisory Group that has very clear links with the Focus Groups across Scotland. We hope that this smaller focused group will be able to provide Bryan and his staff with a sounding board for taking the work of the Fostering Network forward and to discuss developments that would make a difference to children and to carers.

The staff at the Fostering Network in Scotland have worked exceptionally hard over the Fostering Strategy and of course the Annual Conference. I want to record my thanks to them for all that they have achieved this year.

Although this Newsletter will not be out till after Christmas, it will be out soon enough for me still to be able to wish you all a very happy 2007.

With very best wishes,



Anne Black

Support for Sons and Daughters in Edinburgh

Sons and daughters of foster carers in Edinburgh met up in October at the first meeting of their support group. The children and young people ranged in ages from 5 to 15.

Resource worker Morag Ewing and foster carer Arlene Cull facilitate the group, and are planning the next

meetings, hoping to hold these quarterly, starting the New Year with a belated Christmas night in January 2007.

For more information, contact Morag Ewing
t 0131 334 9933

Young People's Advisory Groups

The Young People's Project is consulting with young people across Scotland on the National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy.

If you would like further information please contact Alison Boswell.

FORGOTTEN VOICES

Forgotten Voices from Foster Care

'I wasn't placed correctly, they got lucky'
(Young Person involved with the Young People's Project)

This was the title of the Young People's Project workshop at the annual conference of The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum at Crieff Hydro Hotel in December.

The film *Forgotten Voices* was screened and participants had the opportunity to hear direct from a young person who has recently left foster care of his experience of the throughcare process. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss good practice in relation to their role as the corporate parent and where improvements are needed to support young people moving on from foster care.

BASW

Jemma and Sean from the project delivered a presentation to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Forth Valley branch meeting on their personal experience of fostering by their families.

Dorothy Sutherland, secretary of the branch said, 'It was a remarkable learning experience. They both offered a real life presentation of their experiences still ongoing, and their perception of the support or lack of support by social services.'



Family Placement Teams

Alison Boswell who manages the Young People's Project met with family placement teams in Angus, South Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire and heard about the work they are doing with sons and daughters of foster carers in their respective areas.

Read on for more information about this...

Angus

October 12th was the date of the activity day for birth children of foster carers – in Angus known as Activity Day for Children Who Care.

We arrange a day twice a year to say thank you to children of foster carers for all their support in the fostering task and to explore issues relevant to the children and young people.

We had a good turn out of young people aged 6 to 15 years. They took part in a series of group activities gaining points for their team on the way. Named and decorated eggs, made a parachute to safely transfer their egg from a 14ft balcony to the ground and devised a catapult to travel more than 3 metres from elastic bands, sheet of paper and a chair. The trick was to read the instructions very carefully and work as a team.



After a lunch of sandwiches, cake and a juice, it was down to work. The children in their teams worked through a number of scenarios which posed a dilemma around confidentiality. The final task was to design a poster to encourage prospective carers to attend an information meeting. Last but not least we had a game of rounders.

We had an award ceremony with certificates and medals given to all participants.

It was a great day with a mixture of fun activities and discussion with the emphasis on sharing experiences and working together.

South Ayrshire

South Ayrshire Council value and recognise the support and hard work which birth children give to their parents and accommodated children and young people and in recognition of this, have a programme of support available.

Each caring family has a designated support worker who will visit at times when children are at home and will actively seek their views in relation to the caring role. It is hoped that birth children will build up a trusting relationship with the worker who would be able to negotiate on their behalf if required.

Foster carers are required to have annual reviews and birth children are encouraged to make their views known by completing the relevant forms. They are also encouraged to be part of the meeting and the chair of the review will thank both the parents and birth children for their participation in the caring role over the previous year.

South Ayrshire has recently started to give birth children a birthday allowance until they reach the age of 16. This is paid at the fostering rate for their age and has been much appreciated by the children and young people.

As part of the continued support to birth children, we have over the past three years run a group for birth children from 8-16 years. This is held twice per year and consists of a targeted discussion in the morning, lunch and an activity in the afternoon.

At present we are in the process of setting up a group for young accommodated people who live with foster carers and it is hoped that placing social workers will encourage them to attend. This will be a focus group in the morning with a lunch and an activity in the afternoon and, in

common with birth children's group, it is hoped that young people will eventually be able to participate in the running of this.

Within South Ayrshire, we are striving to enhance our practice with young people involved in foster care and take our responsibilities seriously to listen and offer support to them.

West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire Council are committed to the recognition and acknowledgement of the contribution that children of foster carers make to support fostered children. We are looking at various ways to show our ongoing appreciation and as part of this, this Christmas we sent the young people a £15 gift voucher. It is West Dunbartonshire Council's intention to continue to promote and recognise the valuable efforts of foster carers children, to support their parents in being carers and the children themselves.

North Ayrshire

Over the last year, workers from the Family Placement Team in North Ayrshire have been working alongside a group of young people (sons and daughters of foster carers).

This group have participated in a variety of events during the year. This has included a workshop on their experiences of being part of a fostering family and also a few group outings (Loudoun Castle, Bowling and Lazerquest).

The group has bonded really well and appear to gain much from their meetings. A couple of the children were recently involved in the interview process for new family placement workers. They were also involved in interviews with the Care Commission during the recent inspection.

The group got together to attend a local pantomime. It is anticipated that they will gather again in the New Year to participate in some drama workshops where they will be working on issues that impact young people who foster.

For more details about activities in North Ayrshire, please contact Paul Kyle or Liz Crerar Brown, Social Workers, Family Placement Team
t 01294 559 820

If you would like more information about the Young People's Project please contact
alison.boswell@fostering.net t 0141 204 1400

The Interview

Congratulations to Sandra Moody who recently celebrated 15 years with the Fostering Network as Advice, Mediation and Information worker. Sandra (pictured) joined the Fostering Network's Glasgow office, then the NFCA, in 1991, and chats to Jemma about her role.

Hello I am Jemma and I am the daughter of foster carers. My family have been fostering for about three years now. I am involved with the Young Peoples Project at the Fostering Network. I have been to training and different activities run by the Young People's Project.

I am in fourth year at school and had the chance to go on work experience so I decided to go to the Fostering Network for my work experience. I chose this because I really enjoy the training and the activities I have attended, so I thought I may as well go to something I like doing as I still don't really know what I want to do when I leave school.

One particular task I was asked to do was to interview Sandra Moody, who has been part of the Fostering Network for 15 years.

What does your job involve?

My actual job title is Advice, Mediation and Information Worker. I run a telephone advice line. Foster carers and social workers phone me for a whole range of things.

This can include tax issues and what allowances foster carers are entitled to. I have had calls about keeping guns, dangerous dogs and dangerous sports. Lately there have been quite a few calls about foster carers keeping horses.

Some calls are more complex for example when foster carers are having difficulties and they want to challenge their agency.

We hope that we can answer most of these questions quickly.

What is the most important aspect of your job?

I am there to listen and give foster carers information and advice. I can go to meetings and panels to help and support foster carers present their case but I am not their advocate.

There are difficulties for foster carers when there is an allegation made against them. This happens to around 40-50 foster carers every year in Scotland. Foster carers often contact me and I give them information about seeking legal advice and what is likely to happen next.

When allegations are made against foster carers sometimes the police are involved. Often foster carers are told that the children they have been caring for are not coming back. Foster carers complain about the lack of information they receive when an allegation is made. Some foster carers go to court and this is obviously a difficult time for them and all involved.

It can also be difficult for the foster carers' link worker at this time as they often cannot give the foster carers the support they want.

The advice and mediation service first began in England. This was the result of a foster carer committing suicide. It was decided to set up a service which would





offer independent support to foster carers.

My job covers the whole of Scotland. The support, which I give to foster carers, can be face to face or by telephone, some foster carers prefer telephone contact.

My post is independent of local authorities and it is confidential.

Do you have a typical week?

No, we respond to demand. For foster carers who have had an allegation made against them this can take many months to sort out and some calls will be for information. It is fairly busy most of the time.

Have there been many changes over the 15 years of working at the Fostering Network?

It has got bigger, when I first started there were three people in Scotland and now it is eight and the maximum it has been has been twelve.

It just depends as some posts are funded by the Big Lottery and are time limited.

What did you do before taking up advice and mediation post at the Fostering Network?

I was a social worker for a very long time. I worked for Glasgow Corporation and then Strathclyde Regional Council. I then moved to Family Mediation and was with them before taking up my present post.

How do you relax and what are your hobbies?

I like cooking, reading and walking. I go to the theatre a lot and like jazz and folk music.

If you have any Advice, Information or Mediation queries, Sandra can be contacted **t** 0141 204 1400 **e** sandra.moody@fostering.net

Thanks to Sandra and to Jemma for conducting the interview.

Launch of National Strategy

The National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy was launched on 6 December 2006 by Hugh Henry MSP, Minister for Education and Young People. This is an extremely exciting time for fostering in Scotland, as the Strategy will shape the future of fostering in Scotland for the next 20 years.

Various issues are raised within the Strategy:

- What children and young people tell us they need from fostering and kinship care
- Meeting the needs of foster carers
- Family and friends carers
- Private fostering arrangements
- Planning fostering services for the next 20 years.

Working with the Scottish Executive, the Fostering Network is holding a series of consultation events across Scotland, examining issues raised within the *National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy*.

These six events are being held on:

22 January Edinburgh	23 January Kilmarnock
24 January Perth	31 January Inverness
1 February Aberdeen	5 February Glasgow

These events will build upon the existing focus group structure of the Fostering Network, and will bring together foster carers, family placement team members and kinship carers. For the consultation events, the term 'kinship carer' refers to where the main full-time care arrangement is provided by a member of the child's extended family or wider network of friends and where the child is looked-after, or would otherwise be looked after, if a kinship carer were not able to provide the care arrangement.

The events are free, however places are limited. For further information, please contact Sarah Crangle, Fostering Links project worker **t** 0141 204 1400 **e** sarah.crangle@fostering.net The Fostering Network is the UK's leading charity for everyone with a personal or professional involvement in fostering, visit www.fostering.net

Groups and individuals can also respond to the consultation independently. The Strategy and consultation is available to download at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/07091551/0>.

The consultation period ends on 16 February 2007.

News in brief

There has been a lot happening throughout the country over the past few months, particularly with foster carers and young people getting together to celebrate and socialise over Christmas. Thanks for your emails sharing what's happening in your area!

In **Angus**, foster carers started off their Christmas festivities with a Festive Celebration for carers on 1st December, with carers getting together for an evening of dining, dancing and drinks.

Sons and Daughters of foster carers with **Barnardos** recently met up in a newly formed support group, and enjoyed a trip to Edinburgh's indoor climbing centre in December.

East Lothian are sponsoring three foster carers to do their SVQ 3, with training starting early December 2006.

Congratulations to **Mary Mathie**, foster carer with Fife Council who received an MBE in the New Year's Honours for her 41 years of fostering. Mary has been fostering with Fife Council since 1965!

Also in **Fife**, more than 250 carers enjoyed their annual Christmas bash, organised by Fife Foster Care Association and supported by Fife Council.

Inverclyde followed up their post summer 'Circus Skills' day with a trip to the pantomime to get foster carers, their children, grandchildren and even the next door neighbours children in the festive mood with a trip to see Mother Goose!

Do you have an event or activity you would like to promote or publicise? If so, please contact Sarah Crangle
sarah.crangle@fostering.net
to discuss.

Presentation in Parliament



Supported by foster carers from across Scotland, Robert Monteith, Falkirk foster carer, attended Holyrood in October 2006 to present to MSP's. On reflecting on the day, Robert says, 'After all of the research and hard work put in to make the presentation, the event was a success in that I raised some MSP's awareness

of some fostering issues that I felt were important.

'Prior to the presentation I was very nervous as to the reception I would receive, but I could have saved myself a lot of anguish as everyone at the Executive were more than willing to assist me.

'The response from the MSP's was very encouraging for me, they listened intently, asked some good questions, and the message I received from them was quite clear – for more foster carers to contact their MSP and relate their concerns, to give them the opportunity to act on our behalf.

'I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who helped with my research, the Fostering Network included, and those who took the time to come to Edinburgh to support me, I really appreciated their effort.'

Ever fancied speaking out about foster care?

The Fostering Links project is pleased to announce more dates for media training for foster carers.

Training will take place:

Thursday 22nd March Edinburgh

Friday 27th April Aberdeen

These sessions are a great way to gain an insight into the media, for those who have been involved in interviews in the past, or who would like to be involved in the future.

The aim of the sessions is to increase confidence in being able to share fostering with the wider community.

Training is free, funded by the Fostering Links project, and there is no obligation to take part in interviews after the training if you feel it isn't for you! Contact Sarah Crangle
t 0141 204 1400 **e** sarah.crangle@fostering.net for more information, or to book a place.