

# Fostering

Promoting foster  
care in Scotland

Issue 18 Summer 2007

# in Scotland

## Scottish Executive funding for foster and kinship carers

In July, the Scottish Executive announced a £4million package of supports for foster and kinship carers in Scotland. Included within this, until March 2008, carers can claim a one-off payment of up to £1000 towards training.

The package will also

- support the development of an advice and information line for looked-after children and young people and the children of foster carers,
- establish national guidelines for dealing with abuse allegations,
- support foster carers by providing funding towards the Fostering Network's helpline in Scotland,
- provide training for Councils in the use of permanency orders, giving children the right to settle with foster carers permanently,
- fund a review of national guidelines for councils on the recruitment and training of foster and kinship carers,
- launch a one-stop information and advice service for kinship carers, run by Citizens Advice Scotland.

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## New minister visits East Renfrewshire

**Launching the £4million package** for foster and kinship carers, newly appointed minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram MSP met up with foster carers and children in East Renfrewshire.

The foster carers enjoyed the opportunity to put their views to the Minister and to hear some of the elements of the forthcoming National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy.

Pictured from left to right:

Safaa Baxter (Chief Social Work Officer, Children and Families and Criminal Justice); Douglas Yates (SNP group leader/deputy leader of the Council); Adam Ingram MSP, Margaret Rice - foster carer; Mary Deward (Team Manager, Fostering and Adoption); Senga Williamson, foster carer.

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The training boost will allow foster and kinship carers to access childcare related training courses including SVQ's and will support with costs such as childcare. To access the allowance, carers should identify a relevant training course and approach their Local Authority.

The Fostering Network welcome this package of investments in foster care. Director in Scotland Bryan Ritchie said, 'The funding is a positive step towards creating a world-class fostering service in Scotland. The training allowance will ensure foster and kinship carers are much better equipped to transform the lives of children in their care.'

'The national guidelines for dealing with abuse allegations are extremely important. People who work with children are always in danger of having allegations made against them, and foster carers are at particular risk as they work unsupervised and often alone with some very damaged children. While it is crucial that all allegations are fully investigated, experience shows that many are unsubstantiated. If fostering services want foster families to feel able to continue with fostering after an investigation is completed, they must offer them proper financial and practical support during that time and must speed up their investigations.'

'The introduction of recruitment guidelines are very welcome and will go a long way in helping to tackle the chronic shortage of foster carers in Scotland.'

The *National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy* will be published by the Scottish Executive this autumn

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## BBC launch *Family Wanted* campaign

The BBC launched their *Family Wanted* campaign running for ten days from 11 – 20 July 2007. The campaign featured a range of radio, TV and web programmes focussing on Adoption and Fostering in the UK.

Working with British Association for Adoption and Fostering and the Fostering Network the season featured a range of individuals sharing their experience of care. The campaign also highlighted young people in need of placements and provided information on how to foster or adopt, as well as web information for young people in, or coming into care.

 HandsOnScotland

[www.handsonscotland.co.uk](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk)

This website is a one-stop shop for frontline workers, giving practical information and techniques on how to respond helpfully to children and young people's troubling behaviour, build up their self-esteem and promote their positive mental wellbeing.

Have a look at the website now, to see how it can help you in your work.

The website was developed by Playfield Institute, NHS Fife, in partnership with Barnardo's and the University of Dundee. It was commissioned by HeadsUpScotland, the national project for children and young people's mental health. This website resource is available to everyone free of charge.

## New on-line resource!

*I think it's brilliant! I've looked up things that are relevant to the boy I'm looking after right now, but I've also looked up information on children I've had before – I wish I had that information at the time.*

Foster Carer

*Workers think 'mental health' and think they can't do anything. But the website refers to listening and just taking notice of things that are changing in the young person, and it helps you realise that you can do something.*

Project Worker



# Dear Members,

I am writing this on the first day of the school holidays and the rain is still pouring down! I hope that the last few days of school have been happy and not too eventful! Always a hard time for some young people with all the other uncertainties they face in their life.

The Fostering Network is eagerly looking forward to the launch of the *National Foster and Kinship Care Strategy*. Many people have worked very hard to try to ensure that fostering gets the resources and the supporting legislation that is needed. Many carers contributed to the consultation and we hope that there will be lots to celebrate in the Strategy.

At this time of the year the Fostering Network has to look forward to electing some new Board members and we hope that some of our members will decide to stand for election.

I come to the end of my time as a member of the Board having served two terms or six years! In terms of our constitution I have to retire. I feel that it is essential to have a Scottish Perspective at the Board meetings as it is easy for the very large England agenda to dominate our Board meetings.

I know that you already lead exceptionally busy lives but I do ask you to think about standing for election to the Board. We will be organising an information session in Glasgow to talk to anyone about what it means to stand for the Board and be elected. If it is easier for members I am happy to speak to you on the phone about it.

We have been busy looking at the shape of Board, what powers it should have, what kind of Committees we need and the continual question 'How can we engage more members in issues and policies affecting children and carers?' There is a questionnaire for members on the Fostering Network website *21C: The Fostering Network in the 21st century – a consultation*, so have a look at that and let us know what you think. Log in to the members area and visit [www.fostering.net/members/content/all/governance.php](http://www.fostering.net/members/content/all/governance.php)

The Board will be looking at all the responses to the questionnaires and will be preparing a set of options to put out for consultation with members about the shape of the Board and Committees. This will be around October.

We are also holding the AGM on 24 November, separately from the Annual Conference in London on 28 and 29 September to give time for discussions on the governance options we will have prepared.

It sounds a lot to ask of you all, but out there I am sure you have examples of how other organisations manage their affairs and we can all learn from others!

We are trying to work out how some of the Board could visit Foster Care Associations or other fostering groups to let you hear the plans directly and to ask questions and importantly give us some ideas of any other ways the strategic management of the Fostering Network through the Board could be improved.

The changes in fostering from the Scottish Executive or from the Board of the Fostering Network will take time. We do believe that the Fostering Network needs to ensure that the work you do and the care you provide is valued. We will go on campaigning for better conditions for carers, a fair and consistent system for investigating allegations, access to support and allowances and fees that reflect the costs of care and the skills that you bring to the tasks.

Sarah has been busy organising membership meetings and focus groups so I hope that many of you will manage to attend. Look at the details in this newsletter!

All the staff at the Fostering Network and many carers and agencies have given a lot of their time and energies to make sure that foster care had a strong voice in the important debates. Before this newsletter reaches you, we will know if all that hard work has made a difference. I am confident that it will have made that difference and we can look forward to the next developments in the Foster Care services.

I hope that you will find some sunshine somewhere this summer and that you get some time to relax and enjoy a change from the day-to-day routines.

With best wishes,



**Vice-chair, UK Board**  
Chair, Advisory Committee

## Run for funds

The **Great Scottish Run** is being held in Glasgow on Sunday 2 September 2007.

On any given day, almost 50,000 children find themselves in need of foster care. The Fostering Network are the voice of foster care, campaigning for higher standards, helping to recruit new carers and providing practical help to foster families. The Fostering Network are a membership based organisation, with projects funded by charitable foundations and trusts.

If you fancy taking part in the Great Scottish Run, or if you are taking part in an event near you and would like to raise money to support the work of the Fostering Network, contact us at the Glasgow office.





# Can we learn from our past mistakes?

Debbie Booth

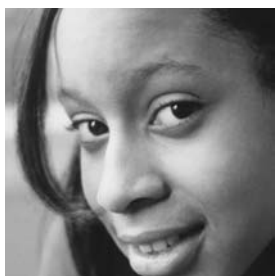
Education! Education! Education! For some, this well-known 'sound bite' represents a pretty hollow mantra, particularly for many looked-after children and young people, for whom the reality of education, education, education is definitely 'must try harder'.



In January 2007, the Scottish Executive published a document called *Looked-after children and young people: we can and must do better*. This document reflects the findings of a working group, which was established specifically to consider the educational outcomes of looked-after children and young people. What it found was that many children and young people leaving the care system do not have a successful experience of education.



Education outcomes for looked-after children and young people continue to be well below the national average. In Scotland, of the young people who left care in 2005-06, beyond the minimum school leaving age of 16, only half (50%) had at least one qualification at SCQF level 3 (Standard Grade) or above, and only just over one third (34%) had both English and Maths at SCQF level 3 or above.



This falls far short of the nationally reported 'average' attainment of 7 standard grades at any level (*Learning with Care, 2001*) and the national target of both English and Maths standard grades to be achieved by all children (*Social Justice Milestone No.8*).

With increasing numbers of children and young people being received into foster care as well as those 'looked-after' but remaining at home with their birth families or other relative carers, the continuing decline in positive education outcomes seems unstoppable.

Well, not according to those who contributed to *Looked-after children and young people: we can and must do better*.

But what makes this document so special? After all, haven't there been other, similar, publications in the past?

Remember *Learning With Care*? The HMIE and Social Work Services Inspectorate published this jointly in March 2001.

Now, hands up everyone who can remember attending their *Learning With Care* training? Come on, it shouldn't be too difficult if you were paying attention!

The report described the educational experiences of looked-after children and made recommendations in order to achieve progress. In addition to this, a package of training materials was designed to help staff (including teachers) and carers of looked-after children and young people raise their education attainment and improve outcomes. These were published in May 2003, and the intention at that time was to 'roll' these materials out across every local authority.

Now, hands up everyone who can remember attending their *Learning With Care* training? Come on, it shouldn't be too difficult if you were paying attention! No? One or two of you maybe? The rest of you, see me after class!

It appears that although these materials have been 'used extensively' across Scotland there has been 'no consistency' in their implementation.

Despite their 'extensive' use, they appear to have made no significant impact on improving the education outcomes of the children and young people as intended.

Now let's just think about the other national policy contexts within which those who play a role in the lives of looked-after children and young people are considering at the moment.

There is *Getting it right for every child*, or 'GIRFEC'. The Scottish Executive published its initial implementation plan for *Getting it right for every child* in June 2006, with a further consultation paper on the *Draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill*, in December 2006.

This implementation plan and proposed legislation changes aim to reform children's services in the areas of practice (developing and changing the tools professionals need to do their jobs), the removal of barriers (what gets in the way of agencies working together), and legislation (placing new duties on agencies and professionals to foster further co-operation and take action to meet the needs of children and young people).

## 'So, what are the specifics of the recommendations from *Looked-after children and young people: we can and must do better?*'

Then there is *Extraordinary Lives*. The Social Work Inspectorate published this document in June 2006.

It reviewed what good care for children and young people who are looked-after by local authorities looks like, identified good practice and recommended further areas for improvement.

It sets out key messages that show there is nothing inevitable about looked-after children and young people doing less well in education, having poor health or being involved in crime.

And let's not forget *Evaluating Services for Children and Young People Using Quality Indicators*. The HMIE published this document in 2006.

It sets out a self-evaluation framework for assessing the quality of services for children and young people, identifying strengths in this provision and highlighting areas where further development or improvements in services are required.

It allows those involved in delivering an integrated approach to services for children and young people to prepare for anticipated inspections by the end of 2008. This will include Education Departments.

Take all of the above, and you can see how the recommendations and resulting action points from *Looked-after children and young people: we can and must do better* sit in a national policy context of change, improvements in 'working together', and a greater degree of collective responsibility, and might, just might, begin to make a difference.

So, what are the specifics of the recommendations from *Looked-after children and young people: we can and must do better?*

*Looked-after children and young people: we can and must do better* identifies five key themes under which there are a further 19 specific action points.

The five key themes are:

- Working together
- Becoming effective lifelong learners
- Developing into successful and responsible adults
- Being emotionally, mentally and physically healthy
- Feeling safe and nurtured in a home setting

It also sets out eight notable messages which underpin the whole document and which the 19 action points seek to address. These are;

- The importance of the corporate parenting role;
- The need to raise awareness of the educational needs of looked-after children and young people and improve

training for foster carers, residential workers, lead professionals, support workers and associated professionals;

- The need for clarity regarding the role and responsibilities of the designated person within schools and residential establishments;
- The importance of providing flexible and appropriate support before, during and post transitions;
- The importance of physical, mental and emotional health and well being in facilitating positive educational outcomes;
- The need for good quality accommodation, which supports the education, training or employment of looked-after children and young people;
- The importance of clear advice and a range of emotional, practical and financial support for looked-after young people as they make the transition to adulthood/independent living; and
- The vital importance of stability and continuity within education and care settings.

The 19 Action Points include:

- The funding of a Senior Executive post to work closely with local authority Chief Executives and Senior Officials, to look at issues of educational outcomes and corporate parenting.
- Working with local authorities to help them improve their 'Corporate Parenting'. (The definition of a Corporate Parent is: 'the formal and local partnerships needed between all local authority departments and services, and associated agencies, who are responsible for working together to meet the need of looked-after children and young people').
- Working with COSLA and the Improvement Service to include corporate parenting in the induction programme for new elected members.
- Progress made in improving educational outcomes for looked-after children and young people will be measured and made accountable. This will be done particularly through joint inspections.
- Improve training, particularly by revising the Learning with Care materials and by asking those responsible for the training of teachers to change the course content to include more about the needs of looked-after children and young people, as well as offer additional courses for teachers after they have qualified.

*Continues...*

## Membership meetings

Places are still available at our forthcoming membership meetings.

These meetings are a great way to find out about developments in foster care and allow delegates to meet up with foster carers, social workers and a range of others all with an interest in fostering. Best of all, these meetings are free!

**The future of foster care in Scotland: exploring allowances, fees and training**

*Wednesday 5 September, Dundee, or  
Tuesday 11 September, Glasgow*

This one-day event will allow delegates the opportunity to discuss the recommendations of the Fostering Network to introduce a structure for foster carers that will examine the national minimum fostering allowances set by the Fostering Network; support the recruitment and retention of foster carers; tie in with the skills and experience necessary to work as members of the professional child care team; be resourced centrally to enable payment of fees that equate with comparable employment in the children's workforce; provide continuity of payment for foster carers 52 weeks of the year; and examine the rights, roles and responsibilities of carers and agencies in working within this structure.

**Education: are we doing better?**

*Thursday 8 November, Edinburgh*

This one-day event will allow delegates to hear from a range of speakers and explore how, almost one year on from the Scottish Executive's *Looked-after children and young people: we can and must do better* report, the educational opportunities and outcomes for looked-after children and young people in Scotland have been affected.

For further information, or to book your place, contact Sarah Crangle  
t 0141 204 1400.

- Improvements to the information collected about the education outcomes for looked-after children and young people, and what is done with this information.
- Further clarify the role of the designated member of staff (for looked-after children and young people), in schools and residential establishments.
- Further develop support and guidance around transitions.
- Highlight the particular issues faced by looked-after children and young people around school attendance and exclusions.
- Look at what supports can be increased for care leavers who are in full-time education, training or a modern apprenticeship, providing more information to care leavers as they make this important transition in their lives.
- Work more closely with universities and colleges to increase their awareness and responsiveness to the needs of care leavers.
- Increase access to health supports for looked-after children and young people, including reviews of their health by the Care Commission.
- Provide additional funding to create educationally rich environments in residential settings.
- Clarifying the support arrangements local authorities will give to looked-after young people up to age 21.

So, does this mean that at long last the education needs of our looked-after children and young people will be addressed and improved? Who knows? The report card is not yet in, and for many looked-after young people who prepare to sit their standard grades and highers at this time of year, it may be that they should consider themselves fortunate indeed to be doing just that. Many more are not undertaking this particular rite of passage and will have little or no aspiration to do so. In many cases, this will have a resounding impact not just on their education outcomes but on the very course of their lives and where it takes them and their children in the future.

For those who have these and other educational challenges still in front of them, perhaps there is some comfort to be gained from the fact that, of the above action points, many of them have already begun to happen.

Change takes time. Progress can be slow. Systems and cultures require to analyse themselves and adapt to address this particular need.

One thing is certain; the educational status quo is not good enough any longer for the future of Scotland's looked-after children and young people.

Class Dismissed.

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## Foster carers recognised in Queen's birthday honours list

**The Fostering Network** is delighted that foster carers from across the UK were recognised for the contribution they make to fostering.

David Hadjicostas, foster carer, fire fighter with Essex Fire and Rescue, and president of the Fostering Network, and foster carers Lorraine Taylor from Aberdeenshire, Doreen Sillman of Oxfordshire, John and Moira Doneo from London Borough of Camden and Ann and Denis Holder from East Sussex all received an MBE for their roles in supporting children and young people.

Robert Tapsfield, chief executive of the Fostering Network commented: 'I would like to send our congratulations to these foster carers for their individual contributions - these awards are richly deserved. But they also reflect on the work and standing of foster caring generally.'



# Foster Care Fortnight



**To celebrate** Foster Care Fortnight, the Fostering Network's Young People's project, *The big step* and Glasgow's *Families for Children* hosted a fun creative work-shop for young people with experience of foster care. Issues and themes relating to fostering were explored through drama, movement and dance.

Jacqueline who has been involved with the Young People's project for a number of years participated in the evening.

'Hello, My name is Jacqueline. The night we all got together was really good. I got to meet new people who were really nice, I also knew a couple of the girls there which was even better. We all had to go into groups and put on mini shows and express our

feelings which was really funny and good to watch, we also had a buffet which was really nice. We also did dancing which was fun and everyone enjoyed it. We got a bag full of Bodyshop goodies and a gift voucher, which was very nice!'

## The Fostering Network's Young People's project and Article 12 in Scotland get 'Clued Up'

**Young people** from the Fostering Network's Young People's project have been working with Alison Boswell on issues surrounding their rights – particularly article 12; the right to have your say – for a number of months. As part of this work, Alison got in touch with a young people's rights organisation called Article 12 in Scotland, a youth-led organisation that works with young people to promote their information, participation and equality rights.

Tara McCarthy and Lukasz Wisniewski from Article 12 in Scotland undertook training with the young people as part of the 'Clued Up' project at the MacRobert Arts Centre in Stirling.

The 'Clued Up' project is an initiative that has been set up by Article 12 with three purposes

- to use the UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) for Beginners' resource,
- to better inform young people on the rights that they have and,
- to skill young people in peer education techniques so that they can use the activities in the resource pack with their peer groups.

The information on rights issues that is gathered from their peers

will be collated along with contributions from several other young people's groups across Scotland into a report that will be sent to the United Nations in Geneva to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

This year is a very important time for groups interested in children's rights as the UK government – including contributions from the Scottish Executive and the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies – is currently putting together a report that reflects the state of children's rights across the UK. Non-government organisations also present 'alternative' reports that may highlight issues that have not been included in the government report. The young people from the Fostering Network will contribute to the 'alternative alternative' report that is written directly from the mouths of young people themselves and coordinated by Article 12 in Scotland.

For more information on the UN Reporting Process, the UNCRC and to read the draft Scottish Executive report, please visit [www.article12.org](http://www.article12.org) Tara can also be contacted at [tara@article12.org](mailto:tara@article12.org) or **t 07738 766 853** for more information.

## For Love and Money: towards a professional fostering service

28-29 September 2007

**Following a memorable event** in Glasgow last year, the Fostering Network's flagship UK conference 2007, *For Love and Money: towards a professional fostering service*, will take place at the deluxe Jurys Great Russell Street Hotel in central London, on 28-29 September.

We invite foster carers and young people in public care to join with those involved in both policy and practice to explore the change and challenges underway in foster care.

With a blend of presentations, networking and social opportunities, the conference is designed to be informative, stimulating and also good fun. This year's workshops will focus on a wide range of practical and useful topics, such as pay, new training standards, improving educational outcomes and understanding tax issues.

To view the full list of workshops on offer and to find out more about this year's conference please visit [www.fostering.net/events](http://www.fostering.net/events) or contact Sally Cartwright

**t** [sally.cartwright@fostering.net](mailto:sally.cartwright@fostering.net)  
**e** 020 7620 8415

## Attention focus group reps

**The next focus group** meeting will be held on Wednesday 28 November in Stirling. This meeting will bring together all the focus group representatives from across Scotland. This meeting will examine the soon to be launched *National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy* and how we can work together to best take this forward.

For further information, contact Sarah Crangle **t** 0141 204 1400  
**e** [sarah.crangle@fostering.net](mailto:sarah.crangle@fostering.net)

# Survey of supports report published

Following on from a survey of the variety and levels of supports currently in place for foster carers in Scotland, the Fostering Links project recently published the findings. Thanks to all those who completed the survey and contributed to the findings of this report.

The survey found that:

- Foster carers are multi-skilled, often caring for a range and variety of placements – long term, short term, various ages etc...
- Family and friends play a vital, and often unrecognized role in supporting foster carers, in particular with childcare – babysitting, respite etc...
- 70% of foster carers have family or friends Disclosure checked to provide support with childcare.
- 20% of responses indicated that family and friends of respondents were also foster carers, indicating a positive link in terms of recruitment of foster carers.
- One third of foster carers have to seek other employment to supplement their income.
- 15% of foster carers feel isolated in their role.
- Meetings must be flexible, responsive and sympathetic to

the individual needs of those attending in terms of the routines of children being looked-after, work commitments and geography.

- Independent agency foster carers appear to attend support groups more than local authority foster carers.
- Only 26% of local authority and 50% of independent agency foster carers make use of formal respite available.
- 24 hour dedicated fostering support is only available to 21% of local authority foster carers.
- Most valuable supports for foster carers are link worker, family and friends, other carers, training, respite and 24 hour support.

The report can be downloaded from our website [www.fostering.net/resources/documents/foster\\_care/support\\_survey\\_scotland.pdf](http://www.fostering.net/resources/documents/foster_care/support_survey_scotland.pdf) or for a hard copy, contact Sarah Crangle **t** 0141 204 1400.

## Training from the Fostering Network

### Sons and daughters of foster carers

\*\*New course\*\*

1-day course  
8 August 2007  
Stirling

### Competency based assessment of foster carers

1-day course  
2 October 2007  
Glasgow

### Skills to foster leaders' course

3-day course  
9, 10 & 11 October 2007  
Glasgow

### Role of the Supervising Social Worker

2-day course  
31 October & 1 November 2007  
Glasgow

### Men in foster care

1-day course  
24 November 2007  
Glasgow

Our open courses above are only a small part of the training service we offer – we also provide extensive in-house or tailor-made training across Scotland. In many areas we are providing a programme of post approval training for foster carer's topics include Safer Caring, Child Development, Attachment, Separation and Loss Managing Challenging Behaviour, Contact and many more. All our courses underpin the principles of the Scottish Code of Practice, UK National Standards/National Care Standards and link up to the relevant Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) and National Occupational Standard units where appropriate.

Sue Robertson, Training Manager, says 'I am delighted the Scottish Executive have announced the one off payment of up to £1000 towards training for foster families and look forward to working with Local Authorities and Foster Carer's to support and develop their training needs. Foster carer's place a high value on access to good quality training and are keen to embrace further training.'

For more details/ a training catalogue, or if there is a course you would like us to run, please contact Joy Crawford or Sue Robertson **t** 0141 204 1400, or visit our website [www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)

## Dates for your diary

### Wednesday 5 September

The future of foster care in Scotland: *exploring allowances, fees and training*  
Membership meeting  
Dundee

### Tuesday 11 September

The future of foster care in Scotland: *exploring allowances, fees and training*  
Membership meeting  
Glasgow

### Friday 28 – Saturday 29 September

For Love and Money: *towards a professional fostering service*

The Fostering Network annual conference  
London

### Thursday 8 November

Education: *are we doing better*  
Membership meeting  
Edinburgh

### Saturday 24 November

Annual General Meeting  
London

### Wednesday 28 November

Taking the Strategy forward  
Focus group meeting  
Stirling