

Fostering

Promoting foster
care in Scotland

Issue 19 Autumn 2007

in Scotland



Fostering Links project comes to an end



Established in January 2005 and funded by the Big Lottery Fund, the Fostering Links project has worked over the last three years in bringing together foster carers, fostering workers, policy makers and a range of organisations throughout Scotland to build on the strength of the fostering community.

The project's aims were to strengthen supports within the foster care community, reduce isolation and highlight the issues which face the foster care service in Scotland.

The project has contributed to the development of a range of activities, meetings, events, publications and training, many of which involve and complement the overall service provided by the Fostering Network in Scotland.

The main parts of the Links project include this quarterly newsletter, *Fostering in Scotland*, focus groups,

membership meetings, media training of foster carers, the independent and voluntary providers forum, the Fostering Network website, www.fostering.net, publications and surveys and the 'Island's Initiative' - providing training and reducing isolation for the fostering community in the more remote areas of Scotland.

A recent independent evaluation found that the Fostering Links project had substantially achieved its aims at individual, agency and national level. It reports that foster carers feel more empowered to participate in meetings and service planning at a strategic level. It also found that through the media training, foster carers were more skilled, confident and able to participate in media work and public presentations, as well as increasing the profile of fostering in Scotland.

By creating an effective method of

consultation and communication through the focus group structure and membership meetings, the evaluation highlighted that the project has worked with colleagues throughout the fostering community to identify key issues and influence the Scottish Government. In particular, it found that these consultation groups played a central role in informing the Scottish Government about the forthcoming *National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy*.

The independent evaluation was completed by Mary McKenna who says: 'This has been an excellent project. The focus groups have established a really effective model for consulting the fostering community in Scotland; bringing together foster carers and workers from different agencies and from all over Scotland. There is no doubt that these meetings, together with newsletters, training and publications have helped people and the Fostering Network to become better informed of the needs of its members and to become the voice for foster care in Scotland.'

Project worker Sarah Crangle says: 'It is encouraging to see many of the key issues being listened to and acted upon at policy level. Without the focus groups and other meetings it would have been very difficult to ensure that the issues facing Scotland's fostering service are not only collectively identified, but identified by those directly affected by them.'

'We are currently seeking further funding to continue the work of the Fostering Links project to allow us to continue to work together to improve the lives of our children and young people.'

We would welcome your contributions on any news, views, articles or ideas.
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Family and friends as carers report relaunched

The Fostering Network and ADSW joint report *Family and friends as carers* produced in 2003 has recently been redesigned and is now available to download from our website.

For many children who have to leave their birth parents, the placement of choice will be with known family or friends. Although exact figures are unknown, in Scotland there may be in excess of 2000 children living with family and friends as their carers. Many of these placements may be unknown to local authorities.

This report, based on the findings of a working group, explores the issues for 'kinship carers' across Scotland, and outlines suggested training, assessment and investment required to ensure adequate preparation and ongoing support for family and friends, and the impacts that caring will have on all family members and relationships within the family.

Visit www.fostering.net/news_campaigns/campaigns/scotland/family_friends.php to download the report.

Support to foster carers

Following a Scotland wide survey of foster carers and providers, the Fostering Links project has compiled and recently produced the findings of the *Support to foster carers report*.

The survey sought to identify if and where gaps existed, and where additional supports are needed.

The report found that the most valuable supports for foster carers throughout the country are their family placement worker, family and friends, respite, other carers, training and 24 hour support.

Available to download on our website www.fostering.net/activities/scotland/fostering_links/ or contact Sarah for further information.

It also found that only a minority, (26% of local authority), foster carers made use of formal respite in spite of the value in having this support available.

A further finding was that only 21% of local authority foster carers were able to access 24 hour dedicated fostering support.



Dear Members,

I was very lucky to be able to attend the Annual Fostering Network Conference in London at the end of September. There was a very good turnout and it was lovely to see several Scottish carers and workers taking part in the debates and in the dancing!

The topic was *For Love and Money: towards a professional service* - very similar to our topic for the last two membership meetings here in Scotland. There was a lot of excellent debate and some very moving presentations including one from Debbie Booth from Dundee. She and another carer definitely were the stars of the show. I hope that Debbie will let the Fostering Network have a copy of her presentation so that more of you can read it.

You will hopefully have received your papers and used your vote in the elections for the vacant seats on the UK Board of the Fostering Network. I have to retire this year having done the maximum number of years possible. It has been a great privilege to be taking a Scottish perspective to the Board from my many contacts with carers, workers and young people involved in foster care.

Scotland is so far ahead of England in our meetings and contacts with so many members and I hope that we can keep up the links between the Board and Scotland with new Scottish Board members.

The *National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy* is due out later in the year. Bryan and staff have put in a lot of work to try to ensure that the final document addresses the issues you have said are important to you. We have been lucky to have the support of

Jackie Brock and her team from the Scottish Government and she has been keen to listen to what carers and agencies want from the Strategy.

Training for carers has also been given a higher profile with some money being allocated for carers to access training. The Fostering Network organised a meeting recently to try to encourage agencies to get together over commissioning training as this is going to make the money go further as well as letting carers and social workers see what is happening outside their own authority.

We have one more membership meeting this year and education issues will be the focus in Edinburgh on November 8.

So a lot is happening in foster care. It is a good time to be involved with the debates and I hope that you will let us know what matters to you so that we can build in those topics to next year's membership meetings. Sarah's funding runs out later this year but we are pulling out all the stops to try to get more money to fund the Fostering Links project for longer.

If any of you have won the Lottery recently, then remember Fostering Network would love to share your good luck!

With very best wishes,



Anne Black
Chair, Scottish Advisory Committee

Fostering Network membership meeting

8 November 2007, Edinburgh
Education: are we doing better?

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, for many young people leaving the care system, the prospect of having had a fulfilling, positive and successful experience of education was, definitely not A+.

This one-day event will allow delegates to hear from a range of speakers and explore how, almost one year on from the report, the educational opportunities and outcomes for looked-after children and young people in Scotland have been affected.

These events are open to anyone interested in the foster care service in Scotland, in particular foster carers, social workers, and others wishing to expand and develop their knowledge in this area.

They are a great way to chat and share ideas, and best of all - the meetings and lunch are **free!** Please note spaces are limited, so hurry and register your interest - contact Sarah
t 0141 204 1400

Media training for foster carers

A media training session in Glasgow in October once again allowed participants from local authorities and independent agencies to hear from experienced trainer and journalist, Bryan Christie.

The training discussed the various parts of the media, and aimed to increase confidence of the foster carers in being interviewed for press and radio.

Mock radio interviews and playback of these allowed participants to hear different styles of interviews and to share different experiences of foster care. Positive feedback from the day highlighted that foster carers felt more confident and better prepared for future work with the media.

With places already filled for the next session in Kilwinning in November, it is hoped that further training sessions

will be arranged in 2008 to allow more foster carers to share their fostering story.

For further information, contact Sarah
t 0141 204 1400
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Professionalisation on the agenda in Dundee and Glasgow

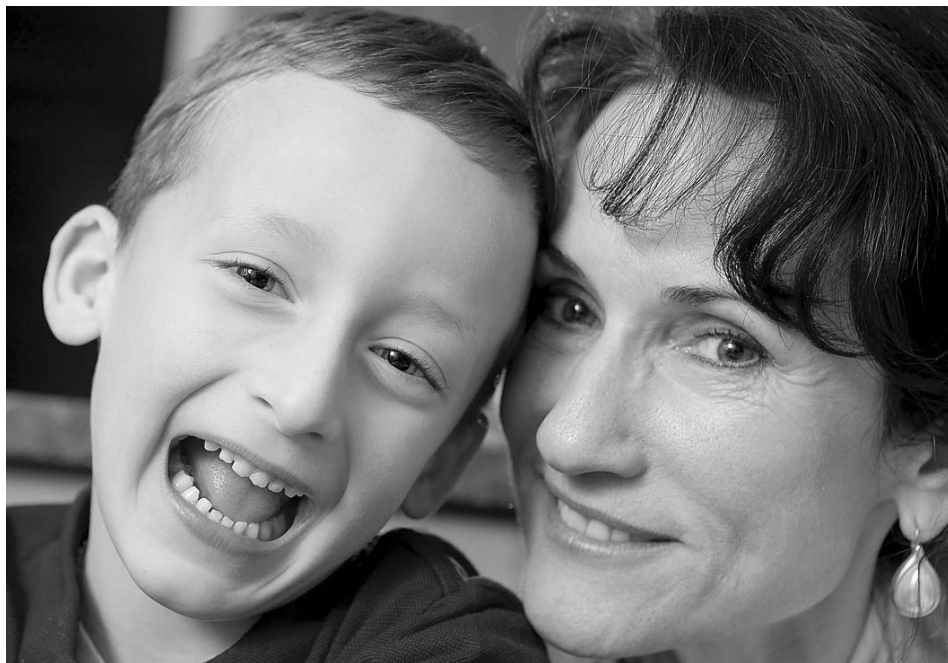
Recent membership meetings were held in Dundee and Glasgow in September, with discussions focussing on the future of Scotland's foster care service.

Delegates came together from throughout the country to hear from a range of speakers, and discuss the recommendations from the Fostering Network to introduce a structure for foster carers exploring training, allowances, fees and recruitment nationally.

The meetings explored the balance between recognising the skills of foster carers and the role they play in caring for our most vulnerable children and young people, while participative discussions encouraged sharing of positive practice and networking opportunities.

If you missed out on attending these meetings, it's not too late to hear what went on - presentations and group feedback are available on our website, www.fostering.net/activities/scotland/fostering_links/

Our next membership meeting will be held on Thursday 8 November in Edinburgh - for further information, contact Sarah **t** 0141 204 1400



More local authorities meeting recommended rates, says survey

The number of local authorities in Scotland paying realistic allowances to their foster carers has nearly doubled in the last 12 months, according to a new survey published by the Fostering Network.

Seventeen of the 32 local authorities in Scotland are now paying allowances in line with the minimum rates recommended by the Fostering Network, compared with nine last year.

The allowance is the sum of money intended to cover the costs of caring for an extra child and pay for everything from nappies and clothes to food, birthday presents and outings. Based on the UK Government's Expenditure and Food Survey, the charity argues that the minimum required to care for an extra child should start from £118.60 for children under 4 and go to £168.18 for a teenager.

However, there are still 15 local

authorities in Scotland paying below the Fostering Network's recommended minimum, leaving too many foster carers with the choice of dipping into their own funds or seeing their foster children go without.

Bryan Ritchie, director of the Fostering Network Scotland, said 'We are delighted that the number of local authorities paying our recommended minimum allowance has increased so dramatically since last year.

'While we commend the 17 authorities that are paying the Fostering Network's recommended minimum allowance, it is unacceptable that so many foster carers in the other 15 local authorities are being put in a position where they are having to choose between using their own money to buy something their foster child needs or seeing them go without.'

Focus group meeting planned

The next focus group meeting for the Fostering Network will bring together all of the focus group representatives from across Scotland on **Wednesday 28 November in Stirling**.

All local authorities and fostering agencies throughout Scotland are

invited to identify both a foster carer and a fostering worker representative to come together at the focus groups, sharing issues and good practice from their areas and feedback to their areas issues and good practice from throughout the rest of the country.

In addition, our four regional advisers provide an ongoing link between the focus groups, their local area and the advisory committee of the Fostering Network in Scotland.

For more information, contact Sarah Crangle **t** 0141 204 1400 **e** sarah.crangle@fostering.net

The Foster Care Resource Centre - all the information you need, at your fingertips



Members of the Fostering Network can now access more than 5,000 sources of information and advice about fostering through the online Foster Care Resource Centre.

The UK's largest dedicated collection of foster care resources is now available online for the first time through our resource centre catalogue. Members can access our

one-stop-shop for information relating to any aspect of foster care by visiting our website at www.fostering.net/resources. Whether you are a foster carer, social worker, fostering agency or local foster care association, we can help you find the resources you need, when you need them, and fast.

**Available at
www.fostering.net/resources:**

Comprehensive, easy to use search facilities - from quick and basic, to advanced filtering, with results that can be emailed directly to you or your colleagues.

New resources in foster care - a daily update of all resources added to the catalogue in the last 30 days.

Recommended reading - expert staff have compiled lists of recommended resources on key topics, which can be browsed, printed or emailed.

Easy access to resources - each

resource listed provides either a direct link to online content that you can read direct from your desktop or details of where the resource can be obtained.

A complete list of everything produced by the Fostering Network - from publications available to buy, and samples of our most popular titles, to FREE information sheets and resource lists, reports, studies, policy papers, consultations, practice notes, and much, much more.

FAQs on fostering - people thinking of fostering for the first time will find the information they need to help them take that all important next step.

Whenever you use the site, log in using the Sign in button on the homepage to ensure you can access everything the site has to offer. If you are not sure of your login details, you can request them by emailing web@fostering.net and quoting your name and postcode.

Managing Stress in Foster Care

New course programme

It is important for us to take time out to look after ourselves. This is even more important for foster carers as they are caring for others. Secondary stress is well known and it is not uncommon for foster carers to take on this stress as a result of caring for traumatised children and young people. It is therefore even more important for carers to take time and have strategies for relieving stress.

We are running the *Managing Stress in Foster Care Open Course* on 14 February 2008 and have changed the format of this course. We will have our freelance trainer Marjorie Ruddick as the facilitator in the morning where she will explore the different causes of stress for foster carers, helping foster carers recognise their own first signs of stress and become clearer about what helps them manage difficulties. Marjorie will also assist participants in developing different techniques to alleviate stress and identify the ways in which fostering services staff can support carers.

We are delighted to introduce our new freelance trainer Ilene Eason-Hynds. Ilene will facilitate this course in the afternoon where she will offer an opportunity to sample various therapies such as Reiki, the Usui system of natural healing, Crystal Therapy, Aromatherapy Massage and Swedish Massage.

A bit about Ilene

Prior to qualifying as a social worker in 1984, Ilene worked in the Bank of Scotland for two years and Glasgow City Council Housing Department for almost five years. In her spare time, she was a volunteer with Women's Aid, Rape Crisis and a local youth club. Ilene knew that office work was not for her and after a meeting with a careers officer, she decided to train to be a social worker.

Before moving to family placement work in 1997, she worked in area teams always in children and families with child protection cases featuring in her caseload. Being a very stressed person who never relaxed or switched off, Ilene decided to book a reflexology session on seeing the advert in the gym she attended, and found the result to be quite amazing (which surprised her as she was also a bit of a cynic with anything new age) and the rest, as they say, is history! Over the last six years, during weekend and evenings, Ilene has studied for and gained VCTC qualifications in Anatomy and Physiology, Reiki, Aromatherapy Massage, Swedish Massage, Crystal Therapy and Indian Head Massage. She has also attended an introductory course in Feng Shui.

Ilene combines her week by working three days a week as a family placement worker and the remainder of the week as a Holistic Therapist.

If you are interested in attending the Managing Stress in Foster Care Open Course in February or would like to speak to Sue or Joy from the training team, please give us a call on 0141 204 1400.

Project supports young people into college and university

Jonathan Staal

In the summer issue of *Fostering in Scotland*, Debbie Booth from Dundee City Council wrote about the challenge we still face in improving the educational outcomes of looked-after young people.

A positive story, however, is emerging as our Colleges and Universities realise the role they can play in addressing the historically low higher education participation rates among care leavers.

In Glasgow, the *Positive Futures* project is bringing the city's universities and colleges together with the City Council's Education Department to support young people from S2 on, with a particular focus on young people who are accommodated in residential units and those in foster care settings to improve their progression and retention in post-compulsory education.

Dickon Copsey of the University of Glasgow says, 'It is imperative that we, as education providers, work together to address the significant barriers facing young people in care in their pursuit of positive educational opportunities. Clearly, post-compulsory education can offer a wealth of career and life opportunities and colleges and universities have a responsibility to make sure that all young people are aware of them. To achieve this will require close partnership working with the many different agencies already working in this area. Through these partnerships we can hope to offer a continuum of

support for young people in care which will stretch from school, through their transitions to college and university, and onwards throughout their chosen studies.'

On the other side of the country, colleges, universities and local authorities in Fife and Tayside have also been working together for the past 18 months with backing from their Wider Access Forum. Jonathan Staal of Abertay University explains: 'Our initial focus has been on trying to understand the problems each agency supporting looked-after young people faces and how better understanding and closer collaboration could help us improve routes into post-compulsory education.' A successful regional conference in November 2006 brought staff together to consider the problems each agency faced and began to think of solutions.

Since then, the group behind the project has been busy raising awareness of the needs of care leavers continuing their studies after school. A staff development workshop is being held at the end of October for college and university admissions and support staff to learn more about how they can make a difference.

Jan Davidson of Adam Smith College comes at the subject from an academic perspective. 'As Director of the college's Centre for Education and Care Studies, I am aware that for many young people leaving care, colleges are often seen as the route into higher education. I am concerned to ensure that we put into place the appropriate measures and work with



others to ensure their needs are met and that they are able to fulfil their potential.'

One of the big challenges facing both projects - indeed, all colleges and universities seeking to improve the support they provide young people leaving care - is working more closely with foster carers and agencies. There are many examples of successful projects around the UK we could follow, such as online information, training and campus visits for you and the young people in your care.

What would you like to see colleges and universities in your area do? Please let us know so that we can best meet your needs as these projects develop. Email your suggestions to StudentAcademicSupport@abertay.ac.uk or call Jonathan Staal on 01382 30 89 62, who can provide more information on the Fife & Tayside Wider Access Forum project. For more information about the project in Glasgow and the West Coast, please contact Dickon Copsey t 0141 330 2818 e d.copsey@admin.gla.ac.uk



The big step

The big step would welcome the opportunity to meet with young people, aged 12-25 yrs old, from Glasgow who have experience of foster care. We offer a range of things to get involved in...

Activities and Outings

Young people recently visited SWAMP

(South West Arts and Music Project) and got involved in radio presenting and DJing.

Board Meetings

Get involved in the big step board and ensure that young people from foster care are represented. If you've never done anything like it before, don't worry full training and support is given.

Youth Bank

Help manage a personal development grants fund for young care leavers.

Information Sessions

Get info on everything from housing issues to college courses.

Conferences and Events

Attend conferences and events... have your say!

To find out more, contact the big step

3rd floor,

93 Candleriggs

Glasgow G1 1NP

t 0141 572 0551 www.gcpl.org.uk

Storytelling events improving literacy

The **Fostering Network** has been awarded a grant from the Roald Dahl foundation to undertake an exciting new literacy project, improving literacy levels of children in foster care. As part of this, five events are being organised throughout the UK.

Research demonstrates that educational outcomes for children in foster care are poor in comparison to their peers, however children who engage with books and reading outside school often perform better. An event organised by the Young People's project will highlight the importance of foster carers reading with children and that this provides a valuable opportunity for foster carers to bond and spend quality time with children in their care. In addition, reading with children helps to develop vocabulary and listening skills.

An event is being held in the macrobert arts centre, University of Stirling on Sunday 27 January for foster carers and children.

There will be the opportunity for foster carers and children to attend a performance of *The Gruffalo*, to participate in storytelling and movement workshops and to meet Julia Donaldson author of *The Gruffalo*. For further information about this event please contact- Alison Boswell at the Young People's project.



More funding for project

We are **delighted** to announce that BBC Children In Need has generously agreed to fund our Young People's Project Worker post for a further year until November 2008.

In 2006 the BBC Children in Need Appeal raised over £33 million and for every penny donated to the charity, a penny will go directly to a project helping disadvantaged children in the UK. The BBC Children in Need Appeal are able to make this promise because the charity uses its investment income to cover all operational costs.

This years Appeal will take place in Friday 16 November.



Jacqueline Wilson storytelling competition

Hi there! It's me, Tracy Beaker.

Remember the name. I bet you I'm really really famous one day. I'm going to be an amazing best-selling celebrity author. My books will be number one smash-hits with titles like *Three Cheers for Tracy Beaker* and *Tracey Beaker Comes Out Tops*.

I'm also quite likely to be an incredible actress, seeing as my mum is a very famous American movie star. She is, truly. I know Justine Littlewood laughs scornfully whenever I so much as mention my Mum, but as if I care what Justine-Total-Rubbish-Littlewood thinks.

I wish Justine wasn't Louise's best friend now. Louise was always my best friend until Justine stuck her big nose in. But hey, maybe I'm going to get a brand new best friend now. Someone new has come to live in the Dumping Ground. Someone quite extraordinary. Let me tell you ...

Do you ever wonder what it would be like to write a story and see it published so everyone you know can read it? Well this is your big chance.

Jacqueline Wilson, the author of the famous Tracy Beaker books has set the scene for you - so just carry on where she has left off and get writing!

This competition is open to anyone under 13, who is fostered or is the son, daughter or grandchild of foster carers. There are two age groups: under 8s and 8 to 12 years.

The closing date for entries is 15 January 2008.

For under 8s there is a word limit of 500 words and for 8s - 12s the limit is 1000 words. You will find the full details about how to enter, and a list of exciting prizes on our website, www.fostering.net/activities/storytelling/competition.php

Jacqueline Wilson will judge the competition and the five finalists in each age group will be invited to London to meet her. She will announce the overall winner in each category. The winning story for each age-group will also be published in *Foster Care* magazine.

Want to know more about this competition? Contact our Young People's Development Worker, Judy Walsh e judy.walsh@fostering.net , or ask Alison Boswell, Young People's project worker.



Support the Fostering Network this Christmas

The Fostering Network has teamed up with Studio51 to offer a wide array of superbly crafted quality cards. And the good news is, each purchase will help the Fostering Network raise funds in support of our work to improve the lives of children and young people in foster care. We receive 51p in every £1 you spend, a much higher proportion than most charity cards you'll find on the high street.

From £3.99 for a pack of 20, it's a great deal for you and it's a great deal for us. Visit www.fostering.net/christmas to view a full catalogue, and order online.

For further information call 020 7620 8403
or email fundraising@fostering.net



Fostering Network visit Shetland



Sue and Sarah travelled to Lerwick in September to deliver a program of training to a group including foster carers, prospective foster carers, kinship carers, adopters, residential workers and social workers from throughout the Islands, including two fostering colleagues who had travelled from Orkney to participate.

As the most Northerly local authority in the UK, more than 350 miles from Glasgow, and almost as close to Norway as to Aberdeen, the Shetland Isles may sound remote, but this largely unspoilt archipelago boasts a stunningly dramatic landscape, a wealth of wildlife and a warm welcome for visitors from the people.

Although geographically the islands seem remote, the issues in fostering remain similar to those from throughout the mainland, and the visit provided a fantastic opportunity to share experiences and work to reducing the isolation often experienced in foster care.

The three day training course program in Lerwick included Child Development, Attachment, Safer Caring and Caring for Children who have been Abused and allowed participants to refresh existing knowledge, learn new

skills as well as meet with a wide group, offering support to each other, and to hear about the wider developments in fostering across Scotland.

Feedback reported that 'Discussion with carers would indicate that this was a successful training. The atmosphere among the carers was positive and supportive.' Another carer stated 'I found the course very informative and liked that there were opportunities for everyone to participate'

Sarah says, 'It was fantastic to meet and work with the group who were so receptive to not only Sue and I, but also the materials and training methods. The wealth and range of experiences in the room brought the training together and created a really positive buzz throughout the week. It was great to be part of the group.'



The Fostering Network Scotland

Open Training Courses

February - June 2008

Managing Stress in Foster Care

New Course

One-day course

Thursday 14 February 2008

The Skills to Foster Leaders' Course

Three-day course

Tuesday 18, Wednesday 19

& Thursday 20 March 2008

Court Skills

New Course

One-day course

Thursday 24 April 2008

Competency Based Assessment

One-day course

Date to be advised, April 2008

The Role of the Supervising Social Worker

Two-day course

Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 May 2008

Men in Foster Care

One-day course

Saturday 7 June 2008

All the above courses will be held in Glasgow. For further information or to book a place, contact our training team on 0141 204 1400

sue.robertson@fostering.net

Sue Robertson

Training Manager

joy.crawford@fostering.net

Joy Crawford

Training administrator

Training development of foster carers

In July the Scottish Government announced a funding package of £4 million to support foster carers in Scotland. This package includes a £1,000 training allowance for every foster carer, to support their professional development.

Fostering agencies throughout the country are working with foster and kinship carers to identify how their training needs can be met, either individually or as a group.