

Fostering

in Scotland

Issue 28

Winter 2009/2010



'Those crazy folks at JMT Fostering didn't let the cold weather stop them recruiting!'



the fostering network
the voice of foster care



Hello and welcome...

...to the latest edition of *Fostering in Scotland*! This quarterly newsletter is produced as part of the Fostering Links project which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund. You can read more about the work of the Fostering Links project elsewhere in this edition, or for further information please get in touch with me directly!

This newsletter is mailed out to all our members in Scotland including foster carers, fostering services and a range of other organisations. We also send this out electronically via email to all elected officials, including local councillors and MSP's, and reaches over 5,000 people who have a real interest in foster care! If you have any news you would like to include in the next edition, please get in touch – we would love to hear from you!

I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to this newsletter. In particular Nicole, Laura and Kieran, the daughters and son of foster carers, and to foster carers Emmeline, Mary, Betty and Robert for taking time out from their fostering day to update us!

It's a new year and 25 years since we opened our office in Scotland. The team here in Glasgow are delighted to welcome two new members to our office to take forward the Recruitment and Retention project and also the Young People's project! We look forward to finding out a bit more about



them both and the work they will be undertaking in the next edition of *Fostering in Scotland*.

In December the Glasgow team attended our Staff Day in London. This gave us the chance to catch up with our colleagues from across the UK and find out all the exciting developments which are taking place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as share what is happening here in Scotland. We hope to update you on these developments throughout the year, as well as on our website. It would be great to see you at some of the meetings, events and training sessions we have planned for 2010.

We would like to thank JMT Fostering for sending in a photo of their recruitment activity over the past month (front cover image)! If you have a photo for the cover of our next edition we would love to see it!

As always, we hope you enjoy reading this. Please get in touch if you have anything you would like to include in our next edition!

Best wishes,



Linda, Sue, Deborah, Joy and Sara heading to our staff day

Do you know if you are a member of the Fostering Network?

If you are receiving this newsletter then there is a good chance that you are a member of the Fostering Network, but if you are unsure then please get in touch with us to check.

Remember, membership not only provides you with a wide range of information and access to our 'members only' area of the website, but it also provides foster carers and their families with legal protection insurance which provides legal assistance and representation in the event of an allegation.

It is really important that your membership fee is up to date before you need legal support, otherwise our legal protection insurance won't cover you. For most foster carers their membership of the Fostering Network is paid for by their agency, therefore, for fostering services it is vital that as soon as foster carers are approved they are added as members. It doesn't take long to update your foster carers details and allegations can happen at any time, so please don't wait to do a batch renewal.

Sandra Moody, Fosterline Scotland worker, says: *'In recent months there have been situations where newly approved carers have had allegations made against them and found they were not covered by the legal protection insurance because their agency had not notified the Fostering Network of their approval. This could have involved considerable expense to organise legal representation. Agencies also need to renew their membership promptly to avoid situations where foster carers are not covered.'*

Further information about legal protection insurance is available to download at www.fostering.net/members

Are you a newly approved foster carer?

Check that your membership is up to date before accepting a placement, or you won't be covered by our legal insurance

Dear Members,

A very Happy New Year to you all!

I hope that you all managed to survive the intense cold and the dreadful travel conditions which started off 2010, and I imagine that for many of you the winter break may have been extended with schools closed across the country!

As ever work at the Fostering Network's office in Glasgow has continued to be busy and the staff have all worked very hard this past year and as a result many developments are in progress. I am always impressed by the willingness of all the staff in Ingram House to do that bit more than I ever expect and with a cheerful approach. I want to thank them all on your behalf as there are so many unseen tasks that they just get on with day and daily to ensure that members get a good service!

It is an exciting time for the Fostering Network in Scotland as we welcome two new members of staff to the Glasgow team and look forward to the start of the Young People's project and to a new project worker taking forward the short term Recruitment and Retention project. We are also hoping to appoint a Fosterline Scotland worker soon who will work alongside Sandra Moody in offering advice, information and support across the country.

I am also looking forward to the range of meetings and events that Sarah Crangle is planning across Scotland as part of the Fostering Links project. It is always a pleasure

to meet foster carers and workers and to be involved with the debates on the issues that matter to you and the children looked after in fostering services.

Work continues on a number of big policy and practice issues with the guidance on the *Looked After Regulations* nearing completion. The long awaited guidance on responding to allegations or concerns raised about children placed with foster carers is being revised further but we hope that some best practice guidance will not be too long delayed. We are hoping to do some further work on this with colleagues from the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care as many of the responses to concerns in residential care need the same careful approach as that recommended for fostering.

If you have not already signed up for the Fostering Network's Together for Change campaign I hope you will go onto the website and add your voices to the changes proposed.

I am really looking forward to meeting many foster carers, workers and young people during 2010 - please keep a look out for dates for events!

Best wishes,



Anne Black
Chair, the Fostering Network
Advisory Committee

Training from the Fostering Network...

... STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP ...

We still have limited places available on our new **Assessing and Working with Same Sex Couples** course which is taking place on Wednesday 17 February in Glasgow. This one-day training costs £110 +VAT (including lunch) and is being facilitated by Dr Helen Cosis Brown, Principal Lecturer in Social Work at Middlesex University. This course will help participants to think through, effectively and in child focussed ways, how to recruit, assess and support same sex couples as foster carers.

We also have further dates for our open courses including:

Competency Based Assessment of Foster Carers

28 and 29 April, Glasgow

Men in Foster Care

12 June, Glasgow

These courses fill up quickly so please get in touch with Joy Crawford,
t 0141 204 1400,
e joy.crawford@fostering.net
to avoid disappointment.

Sue and Joy in our training team are always happy to discuss your training needs with you, whether to book a place on one of our open courses, (attended from participants from across the country) or perhaps to run something 'in-house' (within your agency).

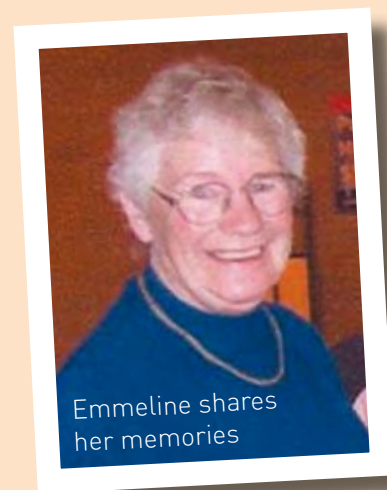
The Fostering Network is on Facebook

If you are a member of Facebook, why not join our Facebook group and keep up to date with our work?
www.facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork



Reflections over the past 25 years...

In 1985, eleven years after being established in England, the Fostering Network (previously NFCA) opened our office in Glasgow to work with all those involved in fostering across Scotland. Now 25 years on we are proud to be the UK's leading charity for everyone with a professional or personal involvement in fostering. With celebrations in the pipeline for reaching this landmark during 2010 we are delighted that foster carers from Dumfries and Galloway who have been involved in fostering for over 25 years share their recollections with us...



'My name is Emmeline Carnochan. I have been a foster carer for Dumfries & Galloway Council for twenty-eight years and I first became interested in fostering when my six children left home. I had a large house, plenty of energy and time on my hands. I also worked in a children's home in Strathaven and would often take the children home at weekends. I got a lot of reward out of helping others and giving the young children opportunities and new experiences.'

'It was around 1973 I approached the Social Work Department to express an interest in fostering and since then, I have had on average about fifty children, ranging from single placements to family groups. I have had one placement lasting twenty-four years. The young man in question came to me at the age of one year old, and apart from a period at University he has remained in my care spending all his free time from University with myself at 'our home'.'

'In comparison to when I first started, there is a remarkable change in terms of the help and support available to carers. I feel having a designated Fostering Team and Social Worker has been of huge benefit and has decreased the feeling of isolation.'

'I have also been keen to offer support, advice and guidance to parents of the children I have had in my care. My home has been open to many parents during assessment and rehabilitation periods.'

'The only thing I struggle with and feel sad about at times is when the children have to move on. I have been told this is a healthy feeling as it shows

the attachment between myself and the child has been strong.'

'I have been keen to maintain contact with children who have moved on. Many of the children are keen to return for visits or keep in touch by phone. Some of the children in my care are now parents themselves and to date I continue to support one particular family in her role as parents/carers.'

'In comparison to many years ago, I feel my views and opinions are taken into account. I am aware that information I have shared with agencies has contributed to the ongoing assessment and decisions about children and young people's futures, particularly in relation to Child Protection issues. I also get a lot of enjoyment out of making a difference to a child's life.'

'Despite the fact I am seventy-nine years of age on my next birthday, I believe fostering has helped me keep 'young and active'. I strongly believe children 'come first' so therefore waste no time sitting around. Visits to the local park, feeding the horses and many outdoor activities are to the fore at all times.'

'Taking all of the above into account, I strongly recommend fostering to anyone showing an interest. There have been many challenges, hurdles and upsets but the rewards hugely outweigh all of these put together. I have no intention of giving up yet and look forward to many more fostering experiences.'

Mary Anderson adds: *'Fostering has come a long way and changed a lot in the 25 years I have been a foster*

carer. As well as fostering many, many children, my late husband and I adopted five children, all of whom have grown up and 'flown the nest'. Although we adopted, we continued fostering and I now foster only babies.'

'I really enjoy working with the social services. My Link Worker from the Fostering and Adoption team is a real gem. The social services have greatly improved over the years and I hope to continue for many more years to come!'

Fostering and Adoption Team Manager, Jackie Dean says: *'We have a very energetic, enthusiastic, committed group of foster carers here in Dumfries & Galloway. This is a largely rural area and many foster carers live in fairly isolated spots so good support from the staff on our fostering & adoption team is crucial to supporting them in their care of the children we place. We are proud of the work we do and the carers we support.'*

'We have five foster carer households where the carers have been approved for over 25 years (some have adopted and come back to us again to foster more children).'

'We all hope to be able to share your celebration of 25 years of fostering.'

Thanks to Jackie, Mary and Emmeline for sharing their experiences. We would love to hear from you, and hear how you think fostering has changed over the years.

Please get in touch with us, **e sarah.crangle@fostering.net**, or by phone or post to our office in Glasgow.

Minimum allowance rates

Each year, the Fostering Network publish recommended minimum rates for fostering in the UK which vary according to the age of the child. These are designed to cover the cost of looking after a fostered child, and do not include any form of reward for the carer.

These will remain at the current levels during 2010-11 despite the overall fall in the cost of living this year. For further information on how these are calculated, visit www.fostering.net/resources/statistics/recommended-minimum-allowances

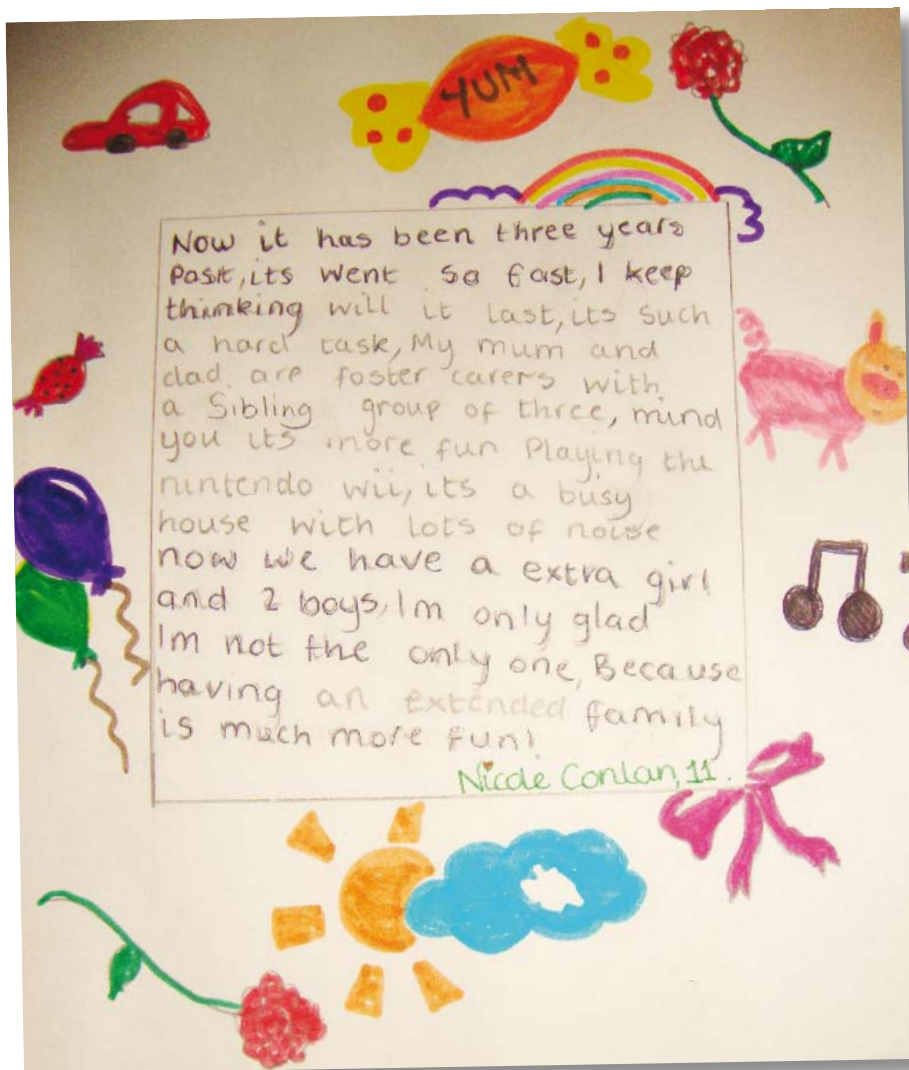
While half of local authorities in Scotland are meeting our recommended minimum rates,

Minimum weekly allowances for fostered children, from April 2010 (2009 rates in brackets):

| | | |
|------------|---------|-----------|
| Age 0-4: | £125.09 | (£125.09) |
| Age 5-10: | £142.49 | (£142.49) |
| Age 11-15: | £177.38 | (£177.38) |
| Age 16+: | £215.74 | (£215.74) |

there is no government minimum allowance in Scotland and many foster carers are left with the choice to dip into their own pockets or see their fostered children go without. National minimum allowances have been set by the governments in England and Northern Ireland and the Fostering Network want to see a statutory national minimum allowance in Scotland so that all foster carers know they will be able to cover the costs of fostering.

Sons and daughters



Sons and Daughters Week was marked by South Lanarkshire Council who invited children of foster carers to submit a poem, story or drawing that expressed their views of being part of a fostering household. The winning entry in the senior age group was submitted by Laura Niven, aged 13 years. Laura and her family have been fostering since April 2006 and have looked after a wide age range of children from just a few weeks old to 15 years old. They have helped children move back to their birth families and have also seen children move on to permanency. The family get a tremendous sense of satisfaction working as part of a team to provide positive outcomes for children and they enjoy the challenges and rewards that the fostering task brings to each member of the family.

TO BE UNDERSTOOD

I LOVE FOSTER CARING
 ALL CHILDREN THAT WE HELP
 SOMETIMES THEY ARE ANNOYING AND I CAN SCREAM FOR HELP
 BUT THINKING ABOUT ALL I'VE GOT AND ALL THE CHILDREN NEED
 SOME OF THEM JUST WANT SOME LOVE AND OTHERS ARE SAD
 WITH GRIEF
 THIS JOB WE DO IS NOT EASY AND I'M GLAD OUR FAMILY IS STRONG
 A MUM AND DAD TO TEACH US WHAT'S RIGHT AND ALSO WRONG
 THE CHILDREN THAT WE CARE FOR SOMETIMES DON'T WANT OUR LOVE
 BUT WE JUST KEEP OUR PATIENCE AND GIVE THEM TIME TO ADJUST
 SOME CHILDREN COME FOR A SHORT TIME AND SOME COME FOR
 A WHILE
 THE ONES THAT LEAVE WITH A NEW MUM AND DAD ALWAYS MAKE
 US SMILE
 THAT'S WHY I LOVE FOSTER CARING
 IT'S SUCH A REWARDING JOB
 WE HOPE ONE DAY THESE KIDS WILL LOOK BACK
 AND REMEMBER THEY WERE LOVED.

A huge thanks to Laura for allowing us to publish her poem, and congratulations on winning the competition!

Fostering Links project update

Focus Groups

Now that the Fostering Links project is up and running we are delighted to confirm the dates of our next focus group meetings. These events take place twice a year and allow us to meet up with representatives from each fostering agency – local authorities, independent and voluntary providers – to get the views of foster carers and fostering workers on what issues they are facing locally and how these fit in nationally.

Places are limited for these meetings and ideally we would like to have a foster carer and a family placement worker from each fostering service represented. If you are in regular contact with others in your area and able to represent local issues and feed into our discussions nationally why not get in touch and put yourself forward as a focus group representative?

The next meetings will take place from 9.45am - 3.00pm on:
Wednesday 3 March, Glasgow
Thursday 11 March, Perth
Tuesday 16 March, Inverness

Training

The project aims to increase the confidence of foster carers in being able to share their experience and expertise. Free training opportunities in media skills, assertiveness skills and advocacy skills are planned across Scotland. These will be held:

Tuesday 27 April, Glasgow
Media Skills

Wednesday 28 April, Glasgow
Assertiveness Skills

Thursday 29 April, Edinburgh
Advocacy Skills

Friday 30 April, Edinburgh
Media Skills

If these sessions are of interest to you and you would like to find out more about them, please get in touch,
t 0141 204 1400,
e sarah.crangle@fostering.net



New project worker's for the Fostering Network

We are thrilled to have recently appointed two new members of staff to take forward our work across Scotland and we all look forward to introducing them both to you over the coming months, at meetings, events and in the next newsletter!

It wasn't an easy task to decide on the best candidates for each of the posts as we had a lot of really good applications for the Recruitment and

Retention project worker and the Young People's project worker posts.

Sara Lurie and Anne Black led the interviews and were joined in this process by Tina Conlon (foster carer), Kim Watson (Development Worker with Glasgow City Council) and Kieran Guckian – the son of foster carers. Kieran gives us a taster of what went on at the interview for the Young People's project worker...

I was invited to help with the interview panel in December 2009 for the Fostering Network's new Young People's project worker for Scotland. It was a great experience where I learned many skills needed for doing interviews and had a great time meeting the candidates and getting to know who would be the best person for the job.

Originally there were eight candidates but after the first interview this was narrowed down to four. At the first interview I gave a short presentation on what the job would offer, and what it was like to be the son of a foster carer. The candidates listened and afterwards used much of the presentation to build upon their ideas for the job. They came back with a lot of great ideas for the posts and duties and all did very well.

It was exciting to be in the position of choosing the best candidates for the second interview. The second interview involved the four candidates who were invited back. They gave a short presentation on their ideas for the resource the project will make and for the job. Afterwards, we (the panel) decided who was most suitable. I really enjoyed both interviews and look forward to any more opportunities to help out.

by Kieran Guckian

Thanks Kieran for updating us with this piece and to Kieran, Tina, Kim and Anne for their support with the interviews!

Sara Lurie, Director, says: 'We were overwhelmed by the positive response to our recently advertised posts. There

are some excellent folk out there and it was a tough decision to appoint – we were sorry we could only appoint two people!'

Remember, to find out more about either project please get in touch with us e scotland@fostering.net

- Are you a young person or the son or daughter of a foster carer?
- Want to be involved in our work?

Email us at scotland@fostering.net and we will keep you up to date with what's happening!

Practice Development Event

A range of practitioners including family placement students, social workers, team leaders and managers came together in Stirling in November when they attended our first practice development exchange event.

Faced with torrential downpours, floods and train disruptions throughout the country we were delighted that 28 colleagues representing 13 local authorities were able to meet up. Many delegates welcomed the opportunity to have time to reflect and share practice ideas and issues with colleagues from other agencies. Our Fosterline Scotland worker, Sandra Moody, hosted 'Sandra's Surgery' where delegates were able to get some face to face solutions to any queries or disputes they were experiencing.

Discussions focussed on the recently published *Looked After Children Regulations* and allowed participants the opportunity to share how these are impacting upon their day to day practice. Issues raised included:

- How frequently are foster carer reviews being held and what is their purpose?
- Are agencies experiencing delays in applying for Permanence Orders due to not being familiar with this new legislation and are there a backlog of cases building up?
- Who has authority in relation to day to day decision making and are ancillary provisions being delegated?
- Are foster carers, children and their families being included in discussions regarding permanence orders and care planning?

There was also the opportunity to reflect on the wider issues agencies are experiencing. Allowances and fees remain an important element, and recruiting more foster carers is a priority. Many agencies are experiencing an increase in the numbers of younger children

needing foster placements and it was highlighted at the meeting that there is a need to ensure that the numbers and ages of children within foster households meets the needs of each and every child. Unfortunately, due to a real need for more foster carers across the country, this does not always happen.

Permanence Orders – we want to hear from you...

Are you fostering a child who was on a Parental Responsibilities Order (PRO) and who is now on a Permanence Order? If so, we would really like to hear what you have been told about these changes and what they mean for everyone involved; most importantly what the young person is being told about these changes and how they may affect them. Please get in touch with us and tell us about your experience.

Together for Change – Campaign update

The Together for Change campaign was launched in October last year and over the last few months we have been working hard to get as many people as possible to sign up and pledge their support for the campaign.

The Fostering Network in Northern Ireland and England have hosted events exploring the core campaign themes - status and authority, learning and development, support, and pay. These events were well attended by foster carers, young people with experience of care and representatives from fostering services and other charities. Delegates were guided through the key campaign objectives which led to lively discussion among the audience, many of whom signed up to the campaign. Look out for similar events closer to home in the spring.

We were delighted to receive positive feedback from the four governments across the UK in response to the campaign launch. Children's minister Adam Ingram said: *'I recognise the very important role played by foster carers in providing secure and stable homes*

for children. The Scottish Government believes that all carers of looked-after children should be provided with equitable and appropriate support in carrying out this valuable service and that systems should be in place to ensure that carers can provide the best possible opportunities and chances to all looked-after children.'

It's only by working together that we can bring about the changes needed to achieve a foster care service fit for the 21st century.

We want to encourage you, your family and friends to add your support to the campaign by signing up at www.fostering.net/together-for-change

Do you use facebook? Keep up to date with campaigns, events and much more by joining our page at www.facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork



Congratulations to Joyce and Ronnie Loveland who recently celebrated 30 years of fostering with Moray Council. The couple were recognised by the fostering team and fellow foster carers at a celebration buffet hosted by the Council and were joined by over 70 people, including foster children and sons and daughters, foster carers, fostering staff and Councillors. Mr and Mrs Loveland have been valuable members of the fostering team for many years and Ronnie has also been involved in co-leading the *Skills to Foster* preparation training for foster carers. A letter of congratulations from Sandy Jardine, (Rangers Football Club), along with a signed football top were presented and were an added surprise for Ronnie!

Contact us at:

The Fostering Network Scotland
2nd floor, Ingram House
227 Ingram Street
Glasgow
G1 1DA

☎ 0141 204 1400

☎ 0141 204 6588

✉ scotland@fostering.net
www.fostering.net

Sara Lurie, Director
sara.lurie@fostering.net

Linda Curran, Office Manager
linda.curran@fostering.net

Deborah Cook, Administrator
deborah.cook@fostering.net

**Sue Robertson,
Training & Development
Manager**
sue.robertson@fostering.net

**Joy Crawford,
Learning & Development
Co-ordinator**
joy.crawford@fostering.net

Sarah Crangle, Project worker
sarah.crangle@fostering.net

**Fosterline Scotland
Sandra Moody**
sandra.moody@fostering.net
☎ 0141 204 1400

Infoline -
For everyday fostering enquiries
☎ 020 7261 1884

**Legal, medical & stress
helpline**
24 hours, 365 days a year
☎ 0844 581 0404

Registered Office:
87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA
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News from around the country....



South Lanarkshire Council foster carers who achieved their SVQ3 in Health and Social Care for Children and Young People were guests at a recent lunch at Council Headquarters in Hamilton to recognise their achievements. Congratulations to John Clark, Carol Muldoon, Craig Niven, Ken Millard, Denise Fisher, Liz McInnis (all pictured), Hazel Reid, Vicky McCracken, Linda Alexander and John Paul McGinty.

Ada Niddrie, Manager of the Family Placement Team, said, 'We are delighted that so many of our foster carers have been successful in gaining their SVQ3. They have put a great deal of work into gaining this qualification and their commitment and enthusiasm about the fostering task is clear.'

We now have 14 foster carers who have gained this award and hope more carers will want to consider this in the future.'

Scottish Borders foster carers Betty and Ian Falconer wanted to take the opportunity to say 'thank you' to their supervising social worker, Jenny Robb. Betty said: 'She has always been there for us and that means day and night. She often takes the load off our shoulders by listening and advising us what is best to do. She understands the stress of it all and we just think she goes that extra mile for us. All too many times social workers don't get the recognition they deserve. My social worker is one of the best, so thank you Jenny!'

Carolina House Trust have recently moved premises in Dundee and are now located at Dunsinane Avenue, Dunsinane Industrial Estate, Dundee DD3 2QN, ☎ 01382 817 279.

Falkirk Council have been actively trying to enhance their foster carers by providing training throughout this past year. Foster carer Robert Monteith updates us: 'This has been a busy year for foster carers here in Falkirk, with regard to training. It has been really diverse; ranging from Fire Training and First Aid to Resilience, Contact, Attachment and Identity and Stress in foster care. Most of the training has been facilitated by the Fostering Network and various other professionals. The highlight for me had to be a very informative and interesting two day Kate Cairns conference, which according to people I have spoken to since, was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. As well as taking part in training, in October I was fortunate enough to attend the Fostering Network's annual conference in York. I was able to hear all about the Fostering Network's latest campaign Together for Change, which gave me an insight into the way forward for foster carers.'

'Another highlight for my wife and I was when our son (literally) dropped in to say hello after one of our training days in Larbert. (See photo below). It was certainly an exciting end to our day, and I don't think it is one which could be equalled again!'

'So, all in all, it has been a very busy year for myself and a lot of the foster carers here in Falkirk.'

Look out for the **City of Edinburgh Council's** upcoming campaign to recruit new foster carers during February and March 2010. This year the Council was tasked with recruiting 60 new carers across different care schemes. Kirstie Maclean, Service Manager, explains: 'We are looking for local people living within or near the City who have room in their homes and their lives to foster one or more children.' Contact 0800 174 833 or visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/fostering for further information.

