

Fostering

in Scotland

Issue 29

Spring 2010



In this issue

Your handy Fosterline magnet!

Foster Care Fortnight – May 2010

Together for Change –

have you signed up?

**Updates on our work
across Scotland**

... and more!

Fosterline Scotland	
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the fostering network
the voice of foster care



Hello and welcome...



...to the Spring edition of our *Fostering in Scotland* newsletter! On the front cover of this newsletter you should have your Fosterline Scotland fridge magnet – keep this handy and get in touch if you have any queries or issues we can help with!

We have had a few additions to the team in Glasgow over the past few months with Ros Craig joining us as Young People's project worker; Heather Dickson leading the Recruitment & Retention project and most recently we are delighted to welcome Katie Alibone to the team as Fosterline Scotland worker. You can find out more about their work and what they have planned in this edition.

We are all sad to say goodbye to Sandra Moody who retired at the end of April and will be missed by all, not least for the huge wealth of knowledge she had gathered during her 19 years with the Fostering Network.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition, and as always we would love to hear from you so get keep in touch and share your news!

Best wishes,

Sarah

Fostering Links project update...



Groups focus on challenges in fostering...

The project held the first round of 'focus group' meetings across Scotland during March. These events brought together a range of experts in foster care including foster carers, family placement workers, team leaders and service managers, and provided an opportunity to share practice, discuss challenges and identify priorities for the future of foster care.

These events were the first in a series being held throughout the project to identify the issues prominent across Scotland. By bringing people together the Fostering Links project aims to reduce the isolation people can feel in their fostering role, as well as supporting individuals to take a more active role in highlighting and driving forward the challenges in foster care.

It was fantastic to have such positive meetings which in total brought together 85 participants, (including 38 foster carers) from across 22 local authorities and 8 independent & voluntary fostering providers. The buzz among participants and the feedback received made it clear



that members really value the opportunity to take part:

'It was excellent to discuss issues with other foster carers and it was good to know you are not alone and to find out I enjoy discussions'

'Interesting to hear various priorities for workers and foster carers and also to hear about the Together for Change initiative'

'From someone who was thinking of not continuing to foster, having met with other carers I may well carry on.'

'An excellent day. Well organised and helpful. Everyone had an opportunity to be heard and their opinion valued.'

Next meeting

We are planning a follow up meeting for 18 November 2010 where we hope to bring all participants together in one central location ... watch this space for further details!

The feedback from all three events will be collated and shared widely. For further information on any part of the Fostering Links project, or to find out how you can get involved, contact project worker Sarah Crangle,
t 0141 204 1400
e sarah.crangle@fostering.net





Growing support means a stronger voice...

THANK YOU to everyone who has signed up and encouraged family, friends and colleagues to get involved in the campaign. Since we launched, hundreds of individuals and organisations across the UK have pledged their support but we still need more.

We need YOU to spread the word and encourage everyone to sign up and support the campaign – why not ask five friends to sign up and show their support for the important work YOU do. Remember, it's only by working together that we can bring about crucial changes in the key campaign areas of:

- Status and authority
- Learning and development
- Support
- Pay

Visit www.fostering.net/tfc-sign-up to sign up today!

We are planning a stakeholder event for our members in Scotland to give you the chance to come along and hear more about the campaign and talk to us about your priorities for what needs to change in the coming weeks, months and years to ensure that together we can build a foster care service fit for the 21st century. Get in touch to find out more!

Fostering moves up the political agenda...

In December, calls for better pay and support for foster carers were made loud and clear during a debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly and in January the Fostering Network hosted a debate at Westminster in London where we were joined by politicians,

representatives from think tanks, foster carers, care experienced young people and social workers for a discussion on the future of foster care and recommendations for public policy.

Those who were unable to attend the event were able to follow live commentary via an online blog through our website, which meant we were able to put YOUR questions directly to the speakers for an immediate response. If you missed this event or want to know more view clips from the debate on our website.

Get in touch with your MP or prospective Parliamentary candidate...

With the general election in early May it's a good time to speak with your local MP about why fostering is important to you. To help you take the opportunity to ensure that local foster care issues are fully understood by a new group of politicians with new priorities and a new agenda and by current MPs standing for re-election the Fostering Network have created a helpful 'toolkit'.

Available to download from our website, www.fostering.net/together-for-change/contact-your-mp, the toolkit will help you engage with your current or prospective MP (constituency representative) and will help you feel fully prepared and confident about talking about what is important to you in your fostering role.

You can go alone and talk about what is important to you and your family or you can go in a group, as part of a local foster care association (FCA) or invite the politician to come to your support group or FCA meeting.

Good luck and remember it is only by working together can we bring about the change that we need.

Dear Members,

What a roller coaster of weather we have had these last months! Thank you to everyone for your commitment in braving the elements as part of your fostering role.

I was able to attend two of the focus group meetings and was delighted to meet so many carers and social workers from fostering services. There was a real sense of common purpose from everyone at the meetings about the issues that affect best outcomes for children. The Fostering Network's campaign *Together for Change* stresses many of the things that everyone at the meetings felt were important - we have a lot of work to do across the UK to make them realities!

Late last year a major report was published on residential care proposing many developments to enhance the care that young people receive if they are in residential care. The *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care* report also had several proposals and the Scottish Government is now setting up a Strategic Implementation Group to look at how all the agendas about looked after children can be moved forward. The Fostering Network will be part of that group and we will want to ensure that the voices of foster carers and social workers with children in foster care are heard clearly. We hope to keep you involved with this.

April marked the end of an era for the Fostering Network as Sandra Moody retired. Sandra's knowledge and wisdom will be hard to replace but we are not going to let her go till she has recorded many of the answers to the host of difficult questions she has answered over her years at Fostering Network!

I know that you will all join me in wishing her well for the future and thanking her for her work in the office and across Scotland.

I am delighted that Heather, Ros and Katie are now in post. 2010 also marks the 25th anniversary of having an office in Scotland - we are looking at ways of celebrating that success and the many changes that have taken place in fostering over the past 25 years.

Until next time, with best wishes,

Anne Black

World Social Work day

Coinciding with World Social Work day Sara Lurie attended the BASW Scotland Social Work Awards Ceremony at Edinburgh Castle in March.

Sara is pictured with John McGowan, Open University Tutor & BASW Depute convenor (Scotland), Hilton Dawson, Chief Executive, BASW, and his wife Sue Dawson. Photo courtesy of BASW Scotland.



Death through a child's eyes

Carrie has been part of a fostering family for over ten years. Carrie wanted to share her experience of losing a foster brother with us and how she overcame her loss.

As I am child of parents who foster I have been through many experiences. Many of these are happy and joyful experiences but these are also some that are sad and are very hard to cope with.

I have been a young foster carer since I was four years old and ten years on we are still fostering. We have had several children come into our care over the years but I want to tell you all about one in particular.

David* came for six weeks and stayed for 7 ½ years. He was a very disabled wee boy, with cerebral palsy, epilepsy and used a wheelchair. He was fed through a tube into his stomach as he choked when he tried to eat normally. It might look from the outside that I wouldn't have much in common with David, but that wasn't how it was.

We were inseparable. We were the best 'brother and sister' there was. He had a wicked sense of humour, and would laugh at the misfortune of others and liked nothing better than to cause chaos and mayhem all around him. Life with David was never dull!

And then, in the blink of an eye, he was gone. Not to a new placement either. David died very suddenly, without any warning or illness early one November.

Death is one of the hardest things to go through and when it happens to be a

foster child you have had for over seven years it's even harder as they are part of the family. I was 12 years old, half way through my first year in high school when David died. It is one of the hardest things I have been through in my life. David felt like a brother to me as I knew him for seven years, practically all of my life, so it was extremely hard to cope with. Many of my friends and family were trying to help me through this time but none of them knew how to help me as they had never been through anything like this before. Even though they didn't know how to help me, just being surrounded by my friends and family was great and a relief to see them and have something else to think about.

My grandma from England came up in an instant to come and support at this hard time.

Everyone who loses someone close to them finds different ways to cope with the pain. I have found mine through music. I have always loved my music and for the last couple of years have started to write my own songs. Only three days after David's death I started to write a song about how I felt and how I felt about David. Since then I have written about ten songs about situations I have been in with not only David but fostering on a whole and on changes in my life. Writing and playing my songs to other people is a relief for me. It helps me to cope through hard times and for other people to understand what my life is like and how I became the person that I am today.

This is the song I wrote only three days after David died...

Your Face, Your Smile, Your Eyes

No- one said it would be hard,
No-one said it would be easy,
To know you're not here,
With me now,
In my arms,
Wish you were here,
In my special place to be here forever,
Your face, your smile, your eyes

Cause I'll watch over you,
You'll watch over me,
Even if you're gone,
You're still in my heart

Wish to see your face tonight,
In my dreams we'll be together,
Forever in my eyes,
How can we say we're alright,
With you gone now and forever,

Want to be with you again,
And see your face, your smile, your eyes

Cause I'll watch over you,
You'll watch over me,
Even if you're gone,
You're still in my heart

You were the best,
You were the biggest,
And you were the one,
Who made my day,
We'll be together,
Forever, no matter what they say
No-one knows how I feel about you

Cause I'll watch over you,
You'll watch over me,
Even if you're gone,
You're still in my heart Yeah



Young People's project

The Fostering Network has recently launched their Young People's project to work with children and young people who are involved in foster care in Scotland.

Ros Craig is the project worker and would love to hear from children and young people of all ages.

By getting involved in the Young People's project here are some of the things you could do:

- Add to the children's newsletter,
- Meet new people and make friends,
- Be involved in making a DVD,
- Take part in fun workshops,
- Be trained to be a fostering panel member,
- Suggest what changes you'd like to see for *Sons and Daughters of foster carers* or for children in foster care.

All you need to do is call 0141 204 1400 or email ros.craig@fostering.net.

We have a fantastic new newsletter, designed by and for children and young people and would love to have contributions from children and young people of all ages for this.

The young people's project is also creating a resource pack for foster carers whose own children are aged between three and five. It will include a storybook on what it is like being part of a fostering family and information for parents on the impact fostering has on their own children and how to support them through it. Ros says: 'We hope that this resource pack and our future work with sons and daughters of foster carers will increase knowledge about the vital role they play and encourage fostering services to provide appropriate support for them.'

And... there will be workshops running throughout Scotland so keep your eyes open in both newsletters for more info!

Thank you Carrie for sharing your experience and music with us all. * Name Changed

The Fostering Network asks – **do many hands make light work?**

With budget pressures upon us all and the need to find more innovative and resourceful methods of carrying out even the most every day tasks, the Fostering Network looks at whether or not the old adage holds any truth!

Funded by the Scottish Government, the Fostering Network is carrying out a project which aims to test the effectiveness of sharing services and resources with the aim of improving recruitment and retention outcomes in foster care for all - service providers, foster carers and looked after children. Outcomes of this pilot work, together with success stories and good practice points from across Scotland, will be reported in two special E-bulletins in May and August of this year.

Already, four local authorities in Scotland have agreed to conduct a joint recruitment campaign coinciding with this years *Foster Care Fortnight* (17- 30 May). East Lothian, Edinburgh,

Midlothian and Scottish Borders are working together to conduct an innovative joint campaign which aims to capture the attention of potential foster carers across the areas by having common campaign materials including bill boards, bus sides/shelters, a web presence and postcards, as well as radio and newspaper features. In addition there will be information sessions hosted by foster carers, and shared preparation groups to compliment the media campaign. Watch this space for feedback on the learning from this exciting project.

On a similar theme, and as part of the same pilot project, local authorities and independent fostering providers have formed a Working Group to look at the potential for developing a national contract template which could be adapted for use throughout the country when commissioning foster care services from independent fostering providers.



The Working Group will use the vast experience of its members, as well as learning from England, who already have a national contract template in use, to work towards development of a contract which will encompass expected standards of fostering, standardisation of payments, and clarification of fostering placements with independent providers.

For further information on any of the above, or to share your recruitment and retention success stories or good practice studies, contact Heather Dickson **t** 0141 285 6400 or **e** heather.dickson@fostering.net

Foster Care Fortnight



We are now in the final few weeks run up to the hugely successful awareness-raising campaign *Foster Care Fortnight*. The Fostering Network is busy making the final arrangements for high profile events and working with the national and regional media to encourage the promotion of fostering and highlighting the need for more foster families.

The campaign kicks off on Monday 17 May under the strapline *do you have the skills to foster?* and fostering services throughout the UK are encouraged to get involved and take part.

Helping you to make the most of Foster Care Fortnight

The Fostering Network is keen to support its members to make the most

of *Foster Care Fortnight*. It is the ideal time to really make a push for more people to come forward across the country. Fostering services can access the following from the members' area of the website:


Making the Most of Foster Care Fortnight 2010 – a guide to getting involved

Making the Most of Foster Care Fortnight 2010 – engaging with the media

Presentations from the three *Foster Care Fortnight* workshops held in January/ February
Online discussion forum

Visit www.fostering.net/members/foster-care-fortnight for further information.

Last year nine out of 10 fostering services saw an increase in the number of enquiries from April 2009 to May 2009, so make sure you are prepared with up-to-date information to send out – why not buy the new look *All About Fostering* available from as little as 75p per copy? It is an accessible, low-commitment way to find out more about fostering in the early stages of enquiry. Available from www.fosteringresources.co.uk



Thank you Sandra!

As one of our longest serving members of staff, Sandra Moody joined the Fostering Network in 1989 and helped to set up our office in Scotland. Over the past nineteen years Sandra has become a very well known face across Scotland. During this time she has offered endless advice, information and mediation to foster carers, social workers and fostering services on a range of issues from allegations to allowances; pets to placements and transport to training.

The Fostering Network marked Sandra's retirement on 30 April with a 'do' in Glasgow and she will be terribly missed and incredibly hard to replace. I'm sure you will join with us in wishing her all the best – thanks Sandra!

Delegated authority – what does it mean to you?

While foster carers look after children on a day-to-day basis they often have the least authority of all those in the team supporting the child and cannot make the everyday decisions that will allow a child to live a full family life. This impacts on the child being able to go on school trips, participate in other out-of-school activities and gain access to medical treatment.

Ensuring that foster carers are given enough authority to help the children in their care live a full family life is a key area of our *Together for Change* campaign. We are delighted that guidance recently produced in Northern Ireland supports this decision making and would love to hear from you about what delegated authority means to you? Please get in touch.

Fosterline Scotland ...

the new advice and information service from the Fostering Network in Scotland

Funded by the Scottish Government, Fosterline Scotland offers a telephone service to foster carers and fostering services throughout Scotland, providing advice and information on a range of issues and areas.

You can be assured that your queries will be treated in confidence, but some general information will be recorded for our monitoring purposes.

We are pleased that Katie Alibone has now joined the team as Fosterline Scotland worker and we will be recruiting for another worker to the service. For further information about the post please contact Sara Lurie

Currently, the service operates Monday to Friday, 10am til 4pm, with extended hours on Wednesday from 7pm til 9pm.

To help you make the most of this service, you can find your handy fridge magnet with a reminder of how to contact us on the front of this newsletter!



Your thoughts on...

In each edition of *Fostering in Scotland* we would like to look at a particular fostering issue. For our next (Summer 2010) edition we would love to hear your thoughts on respite for foster carers.

Respite for foster carers is something that receives a mixed response. Some foster carers feel they don't need it while others may not have the opportunity to have some time for themselves. There are issues around perhaps upsetting children in placement, or perhaps respite care is not available in your area, or maybe you simply can't afford to not have a child in placement.

Whatever the reason, we want to hear your views on respite and how you ensure it is provided in your area. Get in touch with us: [e scotland@fostering.net](mailto:scotland@fostering.net) or write to us in Glasgow and let us know what you think!

Katie Alibone



Hello my name is Katie Alibone and I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Fosterline advice worker based in the Glasgow office. I am very much looking forward to working with foster carers and fostering services in helping to support the vital and valuable work that you all do.

other things have been a respite foster carer which I hope will provide a sound insight into some of the issues which foster carers face.

I am busy familiarising myself with the office systems as well as spending time researching and reading a variety of publications, not to mention asking Sandra Moody a hundred and one questions! Thank you for your patience Sandra!

I have just recently spent some time in the London office which was a great opportunity to hear about the Fostering Network's national campaigns and work. I look forward to receiving your calls and endeavour to continue to provide an informative and professional service.

I have most recently been working in the field of mental health but amongst

Email me: katie.alibone@fostering.net or call 0141 204 1400



Fosterplus

Fosterplus carers recently celebrated achieving their SVQ level 3 awards in Health and Social Care for Children and Young People at a lunch at the Dakota Hotel. They were accompanied by their supervising social workers, members of the training team and senior management. Well done and congratulations to Dot Cassells, Jock Ovens, Carole Haggerty, Annette McDonnell, Margaret Moyes, Lynn Simpson and Christine Mathers (not in attendance).

Geoff Armstrong, Director of Operations (Scotland) stated that: *'The enthusiasm that carers have demonstrated while undertaking the award has been a credit to them and emphasises their commitment to training and continuous learning. We are pleased that the agency now have fifteen carers who have completed the award and a further eight carers are currently undertaking the award and hope to complete this by December 2010'.*

North Ayrshire Council



North Ayrshire Council has recently appointed a Children's Worker to be based within the Family Placement Team. Lisa Miller took up her post as Children's Worker in the team in January of this year. She has worked as a Social Worker and Family Therapist for many years. Lisa is excited about the prospect of working collaboratively with children, young people and their foster carers. Along with other team members she has started a groupwork programme to help young people build self-esteem and social skills using art as a medium.

Operational Manager Jane Steele said, *'This is a really exciting development for the team. The idea came from the establishment of our specialist Fostering Scheme for older children, Fostering Xtra. We could see that carers and young people needed direct access to a range of therapeutic interventions, particularly at times of transition or crisis. This is still in development but already we are working in different ways to support carers and young people.'*

Jane and Lisa are aware that this is a unique post in a local authority Family Placement Service and would be happy to talk to other teams who might be considering this kind of development. To find out more
t 01294 311505 or
e LisaMiller@north-ayrshire.gov.uk or jsteele@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

The Glasgow Foster Carers Association

The GFCA was set up in 1998 by Clare Williams and Ken Whitty, two long-standing and very experienced foster carers in Glasgow. Ken and Clare are supported by a Committee of experienced foster carers, chaired by Malcolm McAuley, who meet every monthly.



Malcolm says: *'I have been a Foster Carer for ten years. I am very passionate about the role undertaken by foster carers and the difference that we can make to children's lives. I acknowledge that some foster carers have had exceptionally good working relationships with social workers and I would hope that this could be achieved for all foster carers on a consistent basis'.*

Over the twelve years since the Association was set up, Ken and Clare have successfully represented Glasgow City Council foster carers in many ways, including lobbying politicians, undertaking a press campaign, meeting with civil servants about fostering, joining various consultative groups and committees, but, most importantly, supporting foster carers who have found themselves in difficulty because of allegations and complaints made against them as a result of their fostering activities. This has involved writing reports, liaising with lawyers, meeting

with Social Workers, attending panels, and all on behalf of foster carers who find themselves in a difficult place and who need someone to be there for them.

Sometimes, legal assistance has been required and, to help foster carers who are experiencing financial hardship, a discretionary fund has been set up with voluntary contributions from Members.

The GFCA currently represents about 120 foster families but there is always room for new members. Membership benefits include:

- a web site www.gfca.org.uk,
- a twice-yearly newsletter,
- eligibility for access to the discretionary legal assistance fund,
- and an Annual General Meeting each October.

Additional meetings for Members are scheduled when required. But the most important work of the GFCA is the support they provide to fellow Glasgow foster carers.

If you foster for Glasgow City Council and would like to join the GFCA, or for further information about the Association, please contact
e info@gfca.org.uk or **t** 07920 253153.

Contact us at:

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**Ros Craig, Young People's
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ros.craig@fostering.net

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For everyday fostering enquiries
t 020 7261 1884

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

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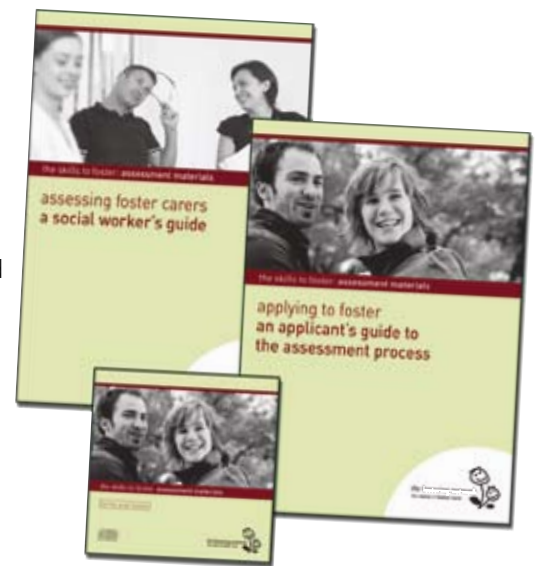


New assessment materials launching...

The Fostering Network's newly-developed assessment materials are launching this May and will help fostering services in assessing potential foster carers on the basis of their skills, knowledge, abilities and experience.

The materials are straightforward and user-friendly and by using a flexible evidence-based approach they will prove invaluable in building ongoing professional development plans for foster carers.

If you would like to find out more, please contact the learning and development team.



Newsletter for children

We are delighted to have our first edition of our quarterly newsletter especially for children and young people in Scotland. You will find a copy of this enclosed with the mailing of this *Fostering in Scotland* newsletter. Please share this with children and young people you know and for further information please get in touch with project worker Ros Craig!



Forthcoming training dates

Our open courses continue to be extremely popular with many courses filling fast. Make sure you don't miss out by booking your place!

Role of the Supervising Social Worker
28 and 29 September 2010
Glasgow

The Skills to Foster: assessment materials (Formerly – Competency Based Assessment of Foster Carers)
19 and 20 October 2010
Glasgow

The Skills to Foster Leaders' Course
(This course will use the second

edition of *The Skills to Foster*)
9, 10 and 11 November 2010
Glasgow

Men in Foster Care
27 November 2010
Glasgow

As well as our Open Courses, we also have a range of courses which can be tailored to your needs.

To find out more or to book a place on one of the above Open Courses, give Sue Robertson or Joy Crawford in our learning and development team a call on 0141 204 1400.