

Fostering

in Scotland

Issue 30
Summer 2010

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Dates for your diary - meetings,
workshops and events

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...and more!



the fostering network
the voice of foster care



Hello and welcome...



...to the latest edition of *Fostering in Scotland*. It has been a busy few months for us in the office in Glasgow and we hope to update you on some of our work in this newsletter.

The Fostering Links project has been really busy over the past few months with Sara Lurie (Director) and I travelling to Shetland and the Western Isles to meet with members there and hear about the issues foster carers in the Islands experience. I am looking

forward to meeting more of our members in the more remote areas of the country with a visit to Orkney planned for October.

The project also held some really interesting training sessions for foster carers on media skills, assertiveness skills and advocacy skills. I'm hoping to hold some more sessions after the summer, so please get in touch if these sessions are of interest to you, and best of all – they're free!

Katie and I met with colleagues from Hong Kong who had attended the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) annual conference in June. Peter, Pax and Maggie were really keen to find out more about fostering, 'looked after children' and learn about our work across Scotland. We had a great discussion with them and Ian Milligan from SIRCC in our office in Glasgow, (see picture below).

Membership events are planned across Scotland in September and November. Of interest to foster carers and fostering services these half day sessions will provide an opportunity to discuss topics of interest as well as 'network' with colleagues.



The issues facing men in foster care

Tuesday 14 September,
10.30am til 1.30pm, Glasgow

The issues facing men in foster care

Tuesday 21 September,
10.30am til 1.30pm, Dundee

When things go wrong: responding to allegations against foster carers

Tuesday 28 September,
12pm til 3pm, Edinburgh

When things go wrong: responding to allegations against foster carers

Tuesday 2 November,
10.30am til 1.30pm, Aberdeen

These sessions are free to members - please get in touch to book your place!

October will see the Fostering Network holding our annual UK conference in Belfast – I look forward to meeting some of you there. Also in October across the UK we will be celebrating the role of sons and daughters – please keep us posted on what you are doing!

And finally, Thursday 18 November is the next meeting of all those involved in the focus groups. Taking place in Perth, this central meeting will bring together representatives from across Scotland to discuss current challenges and identify ways to address these.

A huge thank you to everyone who has sent in information for this newsletter – I really enjoy hearing all your news, as well as trying to fit it all in!

Until next time, I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer and I look forward to meeting with some of you at some of the meetings and events we have planned!

Sarah Crangle

Fostering Links project worker

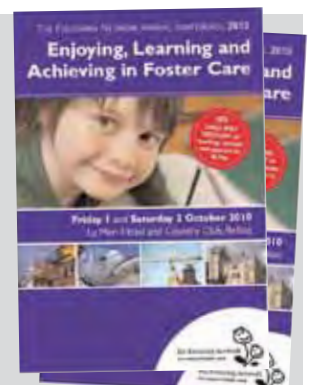
The Fostering Network's Annual Conference

Enjoying, Learning and Achieving
Friday 1 & Saturday 2 October 2010
La Mon Hotel and Country Club, Belfast

The Fostering Network's annual UK conference is established as an essential event for everyone with an involvement in fostering and provides a fantastic opportunity

for best practice and new ideas to be shared. This year's conference will be held at La Mon Hotel and Country Club in Belfast and will focus on improving educational outcomes for children and young people in foster care.

For further information or to book your place visit www.fostering.net/conference



Dear Members,

After the last edition of *Fostering in Scotland*, the Young People's newsletter and the UK magazine with its focus on Scotland, we have a lot to live up to in this edition!

It was really exciting to read the Young People's news- what a talented bunch of children both those in foster care and the sons and daughters of carers are. I was delighted to meet some of the 'stars' at the launch of *Foster Care Fortnight* in Glasgow's George Square. Releasing 1,700 orange and white balloons was a great way to mark the need for 1,700 more foster carers. Adam Ingram was excellent and spoke to all the foster carers and young people recognising them from the magazines. The cake cutting was fun with the young son of a foster carer insisting that he would take charge of cutting the cake!

The staff in Glasgow have all had a busy time over the past few months. Heather has been occupied with the shared pilot for recruitment in East Lothian, Mid Lothian, Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders. The pilot has been very much welcomed by the Councils. There will be lots to learn from it for the future and how to achieve better sharing of resources across Scotland. Heather has helped the Councils to keep moving forward and we hope the efforts will result in higher levels of enquiries.

The Learning and Development team continue to be busy delivering training across the country, but we were sad to say goodbye to Sue Robertson at the end of June as L&D manager. We look forward to welcoming a new member to the team shortly.

Katie is now well established within the team as Fosterline Worker and has kept me right on a couple of queries! The fridge magnets included in the previous *Fostering in Scotland* certainly led to an increase in calls!

Ros has been busy working with young people to produce the resource for younger children and Sarah C has been busy organising a range of meetings across the country as

part of the Fostering Links project – see elsewhere in the newsletter for further details of all the work.

Sara L and I have been involved in discussions with social work, education and health as well as Through Care, Who Cares?, the Scottish Children's Reporters' Administration and the Scottish Government. Care planning and finding permanent placements for children are high on the discussion list as well as ensuring the foster care workforce is supported, trained and respected. Sara and I will try to keep you updated as the work goes forward.

We want to hear about how Councils are using Permanence Orders for children living with foster carers and the positives and any downsides from these new orders – please share your experiences.

Also coming soon is the Annual Conference for the Fostering Network – this year it is to be held in Belfast on 1 and 2 October. I hope that some Scottish carers and workers will get to that event – we can always learn from the other countries! The AGM also takes place at this event and it would be good if members started thinking about standing for the Board of trustees. Philip Coghill and Adrian Clark are currently on the Board from Scotland, but Adrian is stepping down so it would be good to have another Scottish voice to join the Board. We are grateful to both Adrian and Philip for being prepared to travel to London for meetings to ensure that the special features of foster care and social work in Scotland are understood.

Have a good summer and I hope to meet many of you at the meetings in the autumn.

With best wishes,



Anne Black
Chair, Scottish Advisory Committee

Report into the Cost of Foster Care published

The Fostering Network and the University of Loughborough have published a new report, the *Cost of Foster Care* showing that an additional £580 million is required across the UK to develop a properly resourced fostering service that meets the needs of children in care. The Fostering Network is calling on the Government to ensure children in care remain a priority and that funding is available now and in the future so that foster carers are properly supported and the children they look after do not suffer.

Concerned MPs in the House of Commons have signed up to an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons supporting the Fostering Network's campaign. To see the report go to www.fostering.net/resources/reports/update-cost-foster-care-report



Sons and daughters' of foster carers will be celebrated across Scotland this October as we mark *Sons and Daughters' Week*. The Fostering Network is encouraging fostering services to pick a week in October and use it to celebrate the enormous contributions that foster carers' sons and daughters make to fostering.

We would love to hear what fostering service's are planning to do to celebrate this important group of young people this year and we will be providing advice and ideas so fostering services should look out for our toolkit on how to get involved. If you would like to be the sons and daughters' contact for your fostering service let Harriet Campbell know on harriet.campbell@fostering.net

Barnardo's Scotland 30th anniversary

Congratulation to Barnardo's Scotland on their 30th anniversary. Marketing & Communications officer, Suzanne Higgs tells us about their celebration...



We all gathered together on Sunday 9 May at Stirling Castle for the

30th anniversary celebrations of Barnardo's Scotland Fostering and

Adoption. Carers & staff came from Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and our service in Edinburgh. Our star guest for the evening was Darius Campbell and he charmed us all with his easy going manner and endless patience for having photo's taken with everyone that wanted them.

Sally Ann Kelly (Head of Operations) welcomed everyone and did the introductions, followed by speeches from Ester Browning (an adoptive parent and foster carer) and Kay Jackson (foster carer with Edinburgh service), who told the story of the Barnardo's boy on the Titanic.

We were then piped through to the Great Hall for music and dance. We rounded off the evening with Darius and Carol Douglas cutting the cake and Darius surprised us all with a lovely speech that brought a tear to a few eyes!

SWIIS launches new Permanence Service

SWIIS Foster Care Scotland have recently set up a new Permanence Service. The aim is to recruit permanent foster carers to meet the needs of children for whom local authorities have agreed a permanent plan, but cannot match within their own resources. Carers will initially be recruited within one hours travel from Dunfermline but children can be referred from anywhere in Scotland. For further information about the permanence service contact Marion Geddes on 01383 842284 or e: marion.geddes@swiis.com

Race for Life

Inspired by training officer Janette Harkin's determination throughout her cancer treatment and recovery a number of Glasgow's Families for Children workers took part in the Race For Life at Glasgow Green on 6 June.

Janette said: 'I had no idea how emotional the Race for Life was going to be - I couldn't stop smiling and it

made me feel proud to join woman and children taking part in something so special. My colleagues were wonderful and had written messages of support to encourage me on my way.'

The team raised over £1000 – congratulations and very well done on this huge achievement.



The team wearing their ffc t-shirts and proudly showing off their medals

East Lothian meets Eastern Bohemia



During the last week in April, East Lothian Council's Children's Services hosted a short visit from 13 social workers from Pardubice in the Czech Republic. Celia Borland, Area Resources Manager updates us on the exchange...

Pardubice is a city to the east of Prague situated in Eastern Bohemia which has engineering, oil and sugar refining as its main industries and hosts a famous annual horse racing event. In East Lothian we too have a Horse Racing Course at Musselburgh. It was touch and go whether our visitors were going to arrive as all airports were at a standstill the previous week due to the volcanic ash cloud – but they made it!

Several of our visitors worked in state run social work agencies specialising in Youth Justice and another with families affected by domestic violence but most worked for a non government organisation called Amalthea.

Amalthea was established by a group of social workers in November 2003 who believed a different approach was needed to reduce the number of children who live in residential care in the Czech Republic. 20,000 children are growing up in what our Czech colleagues called children's homes or other residential units if children have physical or learning disabilities.

Since January 2004 Amalthea has developed a successful fostering service and recruits, supports and trains a growing number of foster carers from Pardubice and the surrounding area. They have since developed a small adoption service and family support team to support children being reunited with their parents.

What was evident when we first met our visitors was their passion and commitment to making a difference to the lives of all the children they were supporting. Their mission is to recruit more foster carers and empty the state residential units. One of the managers was a parent of three children and he and his wife also foster a sibling group of two brothers. Another shared a little about his childhood growing up in residential care.

We organised a very busy programme, picking up on areas they had requested. They met with our Area Reporter, attended a Children's Hearing, spent time with our Child Protection Unit staff and in Child Protection training; a group met staff from BAAF in Edinburgh; some dined

with young people and staff in our two (6-bedded) residential resources and some spent time with our Family Placement Team.

We arranged for the group to go out with supervising social workers to the homes of foster carers in the afternoon for a cup of coffee and blether about fostering in Scotland and the Czech Republic. Despite the language barrier these visits were voted a big success. Our visitors returned very interested in the training we offer in particular the Fostering Network's *Skills to Foster Preparation Materials* and the six *Pathways Through Fostering* books that we have provided to all our foster carers as a resource library.

Our Czech visitors reflected that social work practice is less developed in the Czech Republic than in Scotland particularly around child protection. They also said they could not begin to aspire to young people placed in foster care having their own rooms as few people have a spare bedroom and therefore sharing with sons and daughters of foster carers is common practice. Housing planning and policy is very different.

Spending time talking about our different practice, standards, procedures and regulations was a very valuable exercise and there was learning on both sides. Our visitors drive and determination to recruit, train and support the best foster carers in the Czech Republic was just the inspiration our Family Placement team needed as a run up to our Shared Recruitment pilot with Edinburgh, Midlothian and Scottish Borders Councils launched during *Foster Care Fortnight*.

I know two of the party from Amalthea had an added bonus of skinny dipping in the sea at sunset on a deserted beach at Yellowcraigs. When you come from landlocked Czech Republic to a Scottish local authority with a beautiful coastline it has got to be on your wish list! This visit was funded by an EEC grant awarded to Amalthea and they will fund an exchange visit for three or four workers from East Lothian in September this year.

From foster care to adoption



Photo courtesy of Falkirk Council

For some children, adoption is the preferred long term option and Falkirk Council's Children and Family team recently featured the experiences of Maria and Roy Dewar and the adoptive parent's during this transition. We hope this is of interest to readers of *Fostering in Scotland*...

Maria and Roy Dewar have been foster carers for more than 20 years with Falkirk Council. In that time they have cared for children from birth up to 16 years, changing their registration to fit with their own growing family. The whole family are now at an age where they are actively involved in the fostering task. Recently, they were very involved moving a young child into an adoptive placement. Here, Maria talks openly about the feelings associated with this new beginning:

Moving to a New Home

'Looking after a baby girl from two days old to seven months - and, hopefully, fulfilling all her needs - to getting the call to say social work have found a hopeful match to the precious bundle you've been caring for is both uplifting and terrifying. The preparation was very good with me getting to meet the new couple following the linking meeting and prior to the matching.

'On the day of matching I felt a strong connection towards the new mum and dad and was happy with the results of the Panel. Two weeks later, and the process of getting to know the baby with six intense days of visits was under way - opening your home and all your ways of working with the child under scrutiny. But at the end of the day it was all in the best interests of the child, which is and should be paramount. The big moving day arrived and it was emotional for everyone but a joy to hear how well things are going for this new complete family.'

Maria and Roy's Supervising Social Worker, Pauline Cochrane, comments: 'Throughout the whole process Maria was child centred, supporting the baby and being aware of what she needed all the time. Maria opened her house up to the adoptive parents completely, welcoming them and sharing all the information she knew about the child with them.

'Maria also shared her own personal experiences and was thoughtful and sensitive to the adopters throughout

the introductions. I know that although the family were sad to lose such a precious bundle they were all delighted to be part of moving her on to her new family.

'From the start, Maria prepared the child well before introductions began by using the DVD and talking book completed by the family. She was very aware of attachment and bonding, even teaching the new parents some baby massage. The whole process went very well and Maria, Roy and their children are looking forward to a visit with the child soon.'

Since the move this baby girl has settled well into her new home and is establishing positive relationships with her new family.

A Seamless Transition...The Adoptive Parents' Experience

We remember feeling quite anxious in the run up to the introductions – what would our new daughter make of us? Would she like us, bond with us? Would she recognise us from our introductions book? It quickly became apparent, however, that our relationship with the foster carers would also be of great importance. These are the people who had cared for our daughter since birth, knew her little mannerisms and forming personality. They were the family she had formed attachments with.

Question Time

We then began to worry what the foster carers would think of us – did they think we would be good enough parents? They would be watching everything we did – from interaction to nappy changing. All of the introductions would be happening within the foster carer's home. Would it feel like we were intruding in their family home? For a child so young the approval of the foster carers was

immensely important to us – if the carers didn't approve, even if not outwardly shown, we worried that our daughter could pick up on this which would impact on the introduction process and possibly the initial bonding.

"The whole process went very well and Maria, Roy and their children are looking forward to a visit with the child soon."

In our case, we need not have worried – we were fortunate enough to meet our daughter's foster carer before we even went to the matching panel. She was very experienced and completely put us at our ease. She was incredibly sensitive to our needs at that very early stage and let us have a sleepsuit of our daughter's to give us an idea of her size, a picture of her and one of her cot toys.

The meeting was well handled by the social workers and was essential to help both ourselves and the foster carer start to picture what could be. The foster carer was also present at the matching panel and we chatted before, again which helped settle us. After we were matched, I (mother) was quite emotional and came out of the room and saw the foster carer. She came over and hugged me, congratulating me and I had not really realised until then how important her approval was, after all, she was the one who knew our daughter, who had cared for her since birth and knew her little personality.

Getting To Know Baby

Prior to the introductions starting, our foster carer had played our introduction DVD and read through our photobook for three days with our daughter. When we met our daughter for the first time she instantly recognised both of us. We can still remember that feeling today. For the help and support our foster carer has given to our daughter and to ourselves, we will always be indebted to her. The introduction period was very tiring but absolutely essential for our daughter and for us. The foster carer was great – she showed us the routines our daughter was used to and then let us try them ourselves, gradually letting us feel more in

control, only making eye contact with our daughter to reassure her about us being there. This helped to build up our confidence and our relationship with our daughter. She knew when to stand back and when to step in, depending on how our daughter reacted. But she always did so in a way which was sensitive to our daughter and to us.

In those initial days, the collaboration with the foster carer was, in our view, essential in the development of our own bonding with our daughter. We are firmly of the view that the relationship of foster carer and adoptive parents cannot be underestimated in terms of a seamless transition from one family and home to the other.

The Big Day

Due to the good relationship we had with the foster carers, the day we finally visited to pick up our daughter and take her home went very smoothly. When we arrived, our daughter was having a morning nap, so we had a coffee and chatted with the foster carer and her family, it was very relaxed. Once our daughter woke up it was her feed time so we fed her milk ready for the journey home. Our foster carer got our daughter ready to go and with some cheery goodbyes we left to go home with our daughter. Although I think that last visit was quietly emotional, everyone was happy, relaxed and it couldn't have gone better. We were so appreciative that our daughter had had such a great start in life and our foster carer trusted us absolutely.

We have a tremendous amount of respect for our foster carer – not only did she and her family raise our daughter from birth but allowed myself and my husband into her home for a week, making us feel very welcome, guiding us regarding our daughter's development and answering all our questions. We saw that foster carers generally have a very demanding and emotional role.

Many thanks to Vivien Thomson, Service Manager, the Dewar's and our adoptive parents for sharing this article with us.



Fosterline Scotland...

UPDATE

Fosterline has been really busy over the last couple of months and during the months of May and June we have received a total of 115 queries. I hope for those of you that have made a call you found the service informative and helpful.

I have attended two training sessions on Managing Allegations and enjoyed meeting the foster carers in attendance. I thank you all for your openness on such a sensitive topic.

I am pleased to announce that the *Best Practice Guidance on Responding to Allegations Against Foster Carers* is finally out for use by authorities and agencies. This is available to download from the Scottish Government via our website, <http://www.fostering.net/resources/good-practice-guidance/responding-allegations-against-foster-carers>.

We do hope that staff commit to follow the guidance which not only aims to enhance the safety and welfare of looked after children in a range of placements but minimises the stress that foster carers experience during such difficult times. The pertinent points for foster carers are:

- that they are given a copy of the local authority's safeguarding children procedure
- have access to legal advice and representation

- understand the process of the investigation and why it is taking place
- as far as possible, know when, where and by whom interviews will be conducted
- are informed about the independent support that will be provided
- are informed about the financial arrangements the fostering service will make in relation to allowances/fees if fostered children are removed or the carer is temporarily suspended from taking further placements.

The fostering agency must also ensure that foster carers:

- know the reasons for the removal of children, if applicable
- know what contact, if any, each member of the foster family is permitted to have with each child affected by the allegation
- understand the current status of their approval to foster
- are assisted in communicating with investigating agencies
- are informed on a regular basis of the progress of the investigation, both verbally and in writing
- understand that if they resign while the investigation is underway, this will not affect the progress or outcome of the investigation.

Whilst we appreciate that the guidance will not totally eliminate the pressures and difficulties experienced by foster carers during an allegation it is hoped that

it will help to keep the lines of communication open between fostering agencies and foster carers and that allegations are managed in as quick a timescale as possible. If any one would like to discuss these further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

In addition to the above there has been an interesting development in our judicial system with a case being heard at the Supreme Court in October regarding Scots Law. Currently if you are being interviewed by the Police you can be questioned for up to six hours without a lawyer present. However the case being presented at the Supreme Court is claiming that this is a breach to an individual's human rights. If the case is upheld then it could have potentially major consequences and is certainly significant for foster carers facing an allegation. Watch this space for more information.

We are delighted that the Scottish Government has now published the *Guidance on Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007*. The Fostering Network and BAAF were commissioned to write the guidance which is available online, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/06/01094202/1>

I hope everyone has a great summer and look forward to taking your calls.

Katie

Katie Alibone
Fosterline Scotland Worker





Ros Craig,

Young people's project worker,
updates us on her work...

The Young People's project helped to launch *Foster Care Fortnight* on 17 May along with Minister for Children and Young People Adam Ingram MSP. The young people held on tightly to the 1,700 helium filled balloons and when released their faces were full of wonder at the sky above. I chatted with some of the children that day and talked about the shortage of foster carers in Scotland being represented by the high number of balloons, which surprised most of the children there.

The children helped Adam Ingram MSP cut a cake celebrating success for the *Foster Care Fortnight* launch, and one even managed to steal a sweetie off the top before everyone else! Adam

Ingram MSP chatted with some of the sons and daughters about what changes they would like to see. Afterwards, the children returned to the Fostering Network's office to chat, draw pictures and provide comments on the draft Stella storybook.



Sons and Daughters Week

Are you a son or daughter of a foster carer? If so get in touch and let us know what events you would like to see in your area to celebrate sons and daughters. Email ros.craig@fostering.net

Why not have a look online to see where there are sons and daughters groups in your area? You can check the online mapping at www.fostering.net and if you know of any or attend any groups that aren't on the web then let us know!!!

Bored during the summer holidays?

The project is holding three days of workshops for young people aged 8-11. Taking place at the MacRobert Arts Centre, Stirling University on Wednesday 4, Thursday 5 and Friday 6 August, there will be arts, crafts, drama, film making, games and more!! These fun workshops will also work with young people in producing a DVD resource. For more info or to book places, contact Ros Craig, t: 0141 204 1400 or e: ros.craig@fostering.net

Training is Child's play

At SWIIS Foster Care Scotland the adults have handed over the training reins to the sons and daughters of foster carers. Corrie Denholm (15), Duncan McLaren (11), Eilidh Wood (15), Kim Duncan (12), Kyle Storrier (9) and Megan Wood (15) all came together over three weeks and gave an invaluable insight into what fostering means to them and how SWIIS can support them in their role.

SWIIS worker Faith Watson said: 'Much fun was had incorporating art, crafts, quizzes and interactive activities to develop a training day for other young people.' Using Session 7 of the Fostering Network's *Skills to Foster* the young people were involved in developing the training manual and deciding on which resources would be used.

The Dundee group CWF (Children Who Foster) have developed a workshop for sons and daughters of potential foster carers. Young People's project worker Ros Craig met with some of the CWF group last month in Dundee and was very impressed with the hard work and great ideas that they have contributed to make the workshop and training material a success. The young people met again on 5 July to make the props and resources needed

The CWF Dundee Group gather together to tell Ros Craig all about their hard work and fun!!

for their workshop, some of which include laminated pizzas!

Quotes from SWIIS YP group on the training:

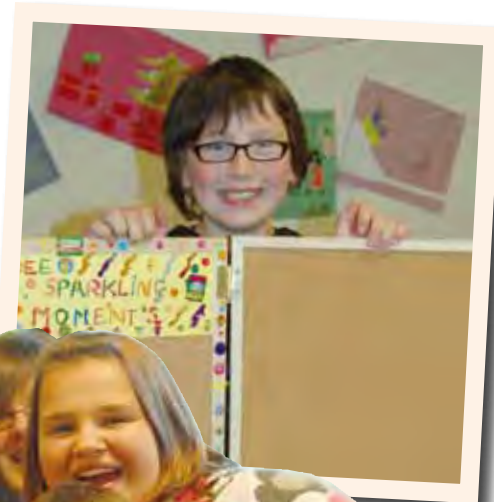
Kyle (9) said:

'It was fun being involved in the training for sons and daughters. I think it will help them not to argue and understand better when a new fostered child comes to stay. The best bit of the training was when Faith, Megan and Margaret drew around me on a big piece of paper for an activity we were doing on feelings inside and outside. I also came up with an idea for an activity called 'Recipe for a good foster family' where you can add in a cup of love and a sprinkle of happiness!'

Kim (12) said:

'It was good being involved developing the training with SWIIS. I think it will help sons and daughters to know more and be aware and ready for what might happen. The best part was finishing it knowing it will be used in a good way to help others.'

Kyle Storrier shows the Dundee groups Sparkling Moments Board which the children fill with their successes and celebrations at each meeting'



Recruitment and Retention Update

Foster Care Fortnight



This year's *Foster Care Fortnight* in May saw us celebrating the success of fostering and recognising the need for more foster carers. We were joined by children and young people, foster carers and fostering services from throughout Scotland who helped us release 1,700 balloons to represent the need for 1,700 foster carers across the country. Minister for Children and Young People Adam Ingram MSP also gave his support by joining with us at the launch in Glasgow.

Foster Care Fortnight is the Fostering Network's annual awareness raising campaign to recruit more foster carers. Under the strapline **Do you have the skills to foster?** it aims to encourage people from all backgrounds with the right skills and qualities to consider a career in fostering.

Joint success!

In the last issue we mentioned an innovative joint recruitment campaign which was being run by a group of four Scottish authorities in order to assess whether working together and sharing resources would produce better recruitment outcomes.

The work resulted in a joint campaign which took many forms, and also included a freephone enquiry service and a recruitment website, www.fostercaring.org

Although final data on the eventual impact on conversion rates will not be available until later in the year, there has been early success demonstrated by an increase in enquiry numbers with a 75% increase having been achieved across the areas in comparison to normal enquiry levels.

The group are now running a number of informal information sessions, including input from foster carers and social work team members. This allows potential new carers to come

along and get further information and ask questions in a comfortable setting, but also helps to ensure that contact during the recruitment phase is regular and helps enquirers feel their interest is valued. One of the information sessions achieved attendance from nine households (17 people) and attracted people from neighbouring authority areas, reinforcing the fact that providing choices of dates and locations is something which helps involvement. The group are hopeful that the other planned information evenings are as successful as this one!

The next step of the process is provision of joint preparation groups which have two planned outcomes – one of these is allowing workers from the different teams to work together and observe how other teams conduct their prep groups. Importantly, by working together the group also hopes that this proves to be an effective way of offering more choice to new foster carers in terms of prep group timing, and therefore shortening the overall length of the recruitment process whilst keeping in touch with new carers along the way.

An advertisement for Foster Care Fortnight. It features a photograph of four children and a man. Below the photo is the text: "Make a difference - foster a child". Underneath that is a paragraph: "Being a foster carer is rewarding, challenging and fun. We need all kinds of carers to look after children who can't live with their own families. Foster carers are all different. They look after children for a few weeks or permanently, live on their own or as a couple, support one or more children." Below the paragraph is the phone number "0800 158 8008" and the website "www.fostercaring.org". At the bottom are logos for East Lothian Council, EDINBURGH, Midlothian, and Scottish Borders Council.



North Lanarkshire carers get health 'MOT'

As part of their *Foster Care Fortnight* activities this year North Lanarkshire really went the extra mile to ensure that their carers are in good health and that they stay that way when they offered their carers an MOT. All those who attended got a chance to relax and enjoy a 'blether' as well as being offered Indian head and aromatherapy massage and a health check.

Carers were provided with healthy snacks and fruit juice to keep their energy levels up, and health professionals including a Braveheart Nurse, Physiotherapist, and Health Liaison nurse were on hand to provide blood pressure and cholesterol checks, spinal checks and referrals

for specialist support, and information and advice on healthy lifestyles.

The carers had access to a variety of props to help raise awareness of a range of conditions, and judging by the amount of laughter that came from that room the info was well received!

The success of this work has resulted in a spin off monthly clinic where carers get access to the health liaison nurse for advice for them and the young people in their care. For more information to help you develop similar practice, contact Fiona Brown, Senior Childcare Officer on 01236 856356 or **e: brownf@northlan.gov.uk**

FCA cycle challenge



In a bid to raise awareness of fostering during *Foster Care Fortnight* two colleagues from FCA made their way between Britain's two furthestmost points - Land's End to John O'Groats - using nothing but sheer determination and some serious pedal power - congratulations on this amazing achievement!

Learning for local authorities

Something we don't always do as practitioners is stop and take time out to chat to colleagues from other areas in order to help evaluate our own practice.

So - time to share and learn - we have FREE places for local authority foster

care staff at our Practice Development Day in Perth on 12 August, from 10.30am - 3pm.

Book your place/s now by emailing **heather.dickson@fostering.net** or call 0141 204 1400



China Challenge

Congratulations and good luck to Sally Andrews who is taking part in the Fostering Network's China Challenge in October. To raise funds for the challenge, and to raise awareness of fostering during *Foster Care Fortnight*, Sally was supported by members of Perth & Kinross Council's Family Placement Team and other social work colleagues as they conquered Schiehallion in Perthshire! Sally is still trying to reach her fundraising target for China so please show your support and sponsor Sally by visiting <http://justgiving.com/Sally-Andrews101>

Contractual matters

The work to develop a national contract for use when purchasing foster care services across Scotland continues to develop, with the Steering Group overseeing this work meeting regularly to ensure this stays high on the agenda.

Currently, a draft template document is in existence, and the Steering Group are spending the time required to ensure that this is refined and developed using the input and scope of the vast range of experience available through its membership, as well as taking on board good practice from other areas in Scotland. It is expected that a draft will be available for national consultation around the autumn. For any further information on this work please contact **heather.dickson@fostering.net**

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Registered in Scotland SC039338



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Training from the Fostering Network

We still have places on the following open courses. These continue to be extremely popular so make sure you don't miss out by booking your place soon!

Role of the Supervising Social Worker

28 and 29 September 2010
Glasgow

The Skills to Foster: assessment materials

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 contact learning and development co-ordinator Joy Crawford on 0141 204 1400.

Men in foster care

John Syme,
course facilitator

For the last ten years I have facilitated the *Men in Foster Care* course as part of the training programme supplied by the Fostering Network in Scotland. The course is for male foster carers only, facilitated by a male foster carer and looks predominately at male issues. As well as foster carers and respite carers, the course is also attended by male social workers and residential staff, and occasionally the sons of foster carers.

I have presented the course all over Scotland from Stornoway in the Western Isles to Dumfries in the South. I also introduced the course to the Fostering Network in Belfast who now run the course with their own trainers in Northern Ireland.

I believe the success of the course and the popularity with male carers is down to several factors:

- I facilitate the course and am also a male foster carer
- the course is for men only
- the course takes place in an informal setting
- the issues for men are identified and discussed with course attendees
- the course provides an opportunity to meet with peers from different areas and authorities.

I have found that there are common themes and issues that keep appearing and the discussions and content revolve round these, in particular:

- fear of allegations
- physical contact
- lack of recognition
- stereotypes and sexism
- lack of training opportunities

The course normally has a fair mix of experience, from carers with several years experience to carers waiting for their first placement. The safer caring element of the course is just as important to the carers that attend, no matter how experienced they are.

I am always amazed at the standard of our male foster carers and their willingness to learn, many have attended the course several times, their valuable position as a positive role model within the family unit has made such a positive difference to many young peoples lives.

Many men in foster care now identify themselves as the primary carer and this appears to be the current trend. The *Men in Foster Care* course is a rare opportunity for men to have an in depth look at their role along with others that understand the difficult but rewarding job that they do and the amount of people that sign up for the course and our evaluations tell us that it is working!

Here are some quotes from those who have attended the *Men in Foster Care* courses:

'It was great to meet with other men in foster care, share their experiences and the pit falls and also all the varied training methods of the trainer.'

'Very positive, confident about improving role of men in social work environment. Well worth it.'

'This is an excellent course for any male carer who is feeling "Why I am doing this?", i.e. my wife does it all. I now realise that I do have an impact on what we are doing.'

Two membership meetings are diared for September which allow both males and females the opportunity to explore the issues facing men in foster care:

The issues facing men in foster care
Tuesday 14 September, Glasgow
Tuesday 21 September, Dundee

Contact Sarah Crangle for further information or to book a place.



Sue Robertson

Farewell and good luck to Sue Robertson the Fostering Network's Learning and Development manager who left us for pastures new at the end of June.

Sue had been with us for almost ten years and had become a well known

face, meeting many foster carers and colleagues in fostering services while delivering many of our training courses as well as managing the Fostering Network's training across Scotland. Sue will be hugely missed by all of us here in Glasgow, as well as by those she trained and worked with, but we are all really pleased for her to be moving on and wish her every success in her future!