

Fostering

in Scotland

Issue 34
Summer 2011

In this issue...

***Consequences* dvd coming soon**

Ways you can get involved

Dates for your diary

And more!



the fostering network
the voice of foster care





Hello and welcome...

At a strategic level, the work of the LACSIG is continuing and Anne Black, Chair of our Scottish Advisory Committee, has provided feedback on some of their developments. There are a range of publications and guidance materials that may be of interest to some of you including the suicide prevention guidance from SCSWIS.

this is of interest to you, please get in touch to find out more.

There are also some fundraising opportunities to support our work, whether by supporting foster carer Marie MacPherson in her half marathon this September, or signing yourself up to trek Nepal on behalf of the Fostering Network. There are many other ways you can get involved with our work so why not get in touch to find out more.

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of *Fostering in Scotland*. This quarterly newsletter is produced by the Fostering Network's Fostering Links project and is funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Each edition is circulated throughout Scotland to foster carers, fostering services, elected officials and a range of others with an interest in supporting foster care in Scotland.

We have some dates for events taking place this autumn including a new *Working with the media and campaigning for change* workshop for foster carers in September and the Fostering Network's annual conference taking place in London this November.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition. As always, we welcome your thoughts and if you have anything you would like to share in future editions please get in touch,

e sarah.crangle@fostering.net

You will see in this latest edition that there is a great deal of good work going on across the country.

We are looking forward to commencing our pilot of study with foster carers embarking on further learning with the Open University – if

Until next time

Update from Fostering Links

We've had a busy few months in the *Fostering Links* project with media skills training and membership meetings taking place throughout the country. The membership meeting, *Friends with facebook: social networking and keeping safe online* was extremely popular, so much so that we have a further two sessions planned for the autumn.



training. This free training is aimed at foster carers to develop their skills in advocating on behalf of their young people, as well as on behalf of themselves. The sessions also promote effective partnership working, something essential in foster care, by developing assertiveness skills. We have sessions taking place in November 2011 and also in February 2012:

These sessions were led by Charlie Stewart, foster carer and CEO (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) Ambassador, who delivered a presentation highlighting the variety of social networking methods we now have available. While the sessions raised awareness of why it is important to keep ourselves and the young people we care for safe, they also reminded us that the internet and developing technologies can be and are a fantastic resource if used appropriately.

- Friday 4 November, Perth
- Saturday 5 November, Oban
- Friday 3 February, Ayr
- Saturday 4 February, Glasgow

Our new *Working with the media and campaigning for change* one-day workshop will take place:

- Thursday 29 September, Glasgow

We are pleased to be running two

further sessions on this topic, both aimed at our foster carer members in Scotland.

These are taking place:

- Tuesday 6 September, Dundee
- Tuesday 15 November, Ayr

If any of the above events are of interest to you, please get in touch to find out more. Contact Sarah Crangle, Fostering Links project worker, e sarah.crangle@fostering.net t 0141 204 1400.

We have some dates for our popular *Advocacy and assertiveness skills*

Early years briefings from *Children in Scotland*

Children are shaped by many positive and negative factors from their family and community to significant life events. However, what happens to them before they are born is often an overlooked, but crucial determinant of who they will become. *Children in Scotland* is producing a series of two-page briefings of interest to foster carers, starting with two health-related ones: *Fetal Alcohol Harm* and *Preconception Health*.

Fetal alcohol harm describes the range of birth defects that can result from prenatal exposure to alcohol causing permanent brain and nervous system damage affecting learning, behaviour and life chances. These primarily are the result of impairment of the brain's 'executive functions', including the ability to plan, learn from experience and control impulses.

Estimates are that there are currently over 10,000 children and young people (birth to 18) affected by fetal alcohol harm in Scotland. It is believed that many children who are placed in foster care may have fetal alcohol harm as part of their history. Both foster carers and those that recruit/support them need to be fully aware of what such harm can mean not only for the child, but also for those caring for them. Although there is no cure, early identification and intervention can be very helpful.

Alcohol is only one of many pre-birth influences on child development and long-term wellbeing before birth. Preconception planning and health care can make a positive difference to a woman's health before she has a baby and a healthy pregnancy can avoid unwelcome birth outcomes.

To directly receive early years briefings from Children in Scotland contact policy@childreninScotland.org.uk 0131 222 2412.

Read the briefings:

Fetal alcohol harm:

www.childreninScotland.org.uk/docs/EYFbriefingsFetalAlcoholv6_000.pdf

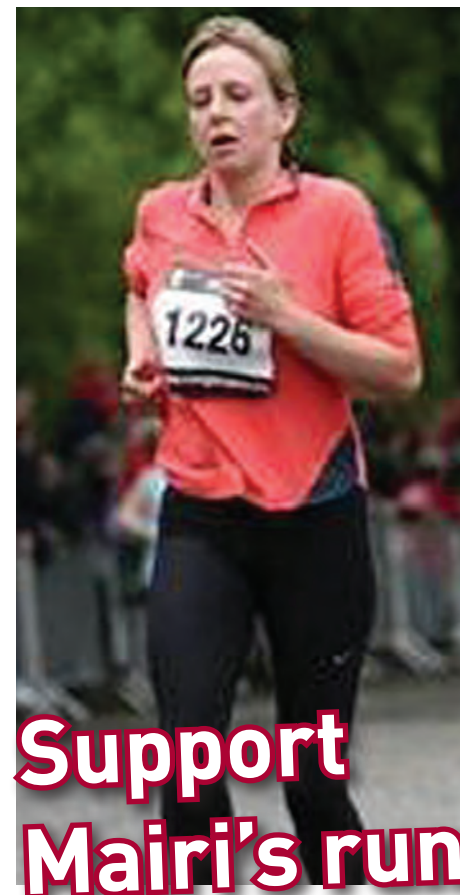
Preconception health:

www.childreninScotland.org.uk/docs/EYFbriefingpreconceptionv3.pdf

Music and fostering

The autumn *Foster Care* magazine will carry a practical fostering feature on looked after children and music - both making, listening and group work. We are keen to hear from foster carers who have helped young people to develop musical interests and from young people, care experienced and sons and daughters, who have found music important in their personal development and in their relationships.

Contact the editor Laurence Pollock e laurence.pollock@fostering.net or t 07801 665961



Support Mairi's run

This September will see Renfrewshire foster carer Mairi MacPherson taking part in the *Great Scottish Run* on behalf of the Fostering Network. On Sunday 4 September Mairi will be tying up her running shoes and limbering up for the half marathon, running over 13 miles across Glasgow to raise funds on behalf of the work we do.

Having been a foster carer for two and a half years, Mairi has been working hard over the past few months, gradually building up her training while fostering a brother and sister aged 15 months and four years. Mairi says: 'I'm quite looking forward to the half marathon and knowing that I am running for a charity makes me more determined to do it. I've never done a half marathon before but lots of 10K's.'

We would love for you to show your support for Mairi. The easiest way to donate is by visiting Mairi's JustGiving page, www.justgiving.com/mairimacpherson

Dear Members,

As I write this, it is a cold wet midsummer day and it is hard to believe that school summer holidays start in the next few days. I hope that by the time you read this, the weather will have brightened up as the holidays can be long and tiring if too much time has to be spent indoors.

As ever the staff at the Fostering Network have been working hard since the last newsletter. We have had a number of successful membership meetings exploring the potential that computers and mobile devices provide to young people including the positives of the internet as well as the potential risks from Facebook friends.

Charlie Stewart from East Lothian did excellent presentations and gave us a real insight into the dangers of meeting up with people who have contacted young people over the internet. He also discussed some of the linked issues that services

will have to face about disclosure of address and contacts with parents that may have been barred at a Children's Hearing. Young people's need to have up to the minute (even if it is at 1 a.m.) news of what their friends are doing seems so compelling and I wonder what all this night activity is doing to a teenager's brain development and certainly to their concentration for exams!

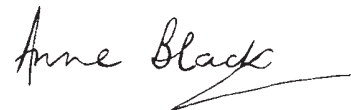
There is a lot of very sound advice and information available for carers and workers and you can contact Sarah for further details of some of the useful web pages to help you to protect the child in your care. I am just so glad that I am no longer a teenager! As always it was a pleasure to meet foster carers at the events and to share ideas and problems.

The Young People's project, despite having run out of money as we only had a two year funding package, have had a recent meeting to talk about another

Stella Book. The first one has been very well received by foster carers and social work services. We are delighted that Ros has got a job with a fostering agency – I am sure her enthusiasm will help the agency to get many of the young people involved.

Work on the *Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group* (LACSIG) has continued and I will write about this elsewhere in this newsletter.

I hope that you all find some quiet moments amidst the excitement of holidays and I look forward to meeting some of you at meetings later in the year. With very best wishes for the Summer – when it decides to arrive!



Anne Black
Chair, Scottish Advisory Committee

Free forthcoming events for foster carers

The Fostering Links project has a number of **free** events coming up over the autumn which may be of interest to our foster carer members.

To find out more or to request a place contact Sarah Crangle,
t 0141 204 1400
e sarah.crangle@fostering.net

Social networking and keeping safe online

Tuesday 6 September,
Dundee
10am til 1.30pm

Working with the media and campaigning for change

Thursday 29 September,
Glasgow
9.45am til 3pm

Advocacy and assertiveness skills

Friday 4 November,
Perth
9am til 4pm

Advocacy and assertiveness skills

Saturday 5 November,
Oban
9am til 4pm

Social networking and keeping safe online & Viewpoint Awareness

Tuesday 15 November,
Ayr
10am til 3pm

These events are funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Fostering Links project and aimed at foster carers in Scotland. We are always adding new dates to the calendar so please keep in touch if you would like to attend, or if you would like to suggest or assist with organising any topics of interest.



Fosterline UPDATE

Hello everyone, I hope all who are reading this are surviving the school summer holidays and that all you foster carers are not too stressed with long days to fill keeping children occupied.

I have been very busy recently with delivering training as well as attending the number of membership events put on by our Fostering Links project and I have

really enjoyed meeting so many foster carers. I am always impressed by the dedication shown by so many of you. I would like to make a point regarding the value of foster carers and social workers coming together for training. Having both sets of professions attend training helps to promote a real understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, as well as a shared understanding of the challenges that we all face in fostering. This way of working also helps to strengthen networking opportunities and we would encourage this model when agencies are rolling out their own training events.

SCSWIS has launched new suicide prevention guidance for foster carers

and we would encourage everyone to take the time to familiarise themselves with this. Caring for a child who is expressing suicidal thoughts can be a very frightening task and again we would encourage strong partnership work where there is a clear and agreed strategy. If foster carers feel that they need training in this area we would encourage you to speak with your link worker.

And remember, I am available for any queries however big or small. My usual working days are Tuesday-Fridays 10.00am-4.00pm and I welcome your calls.

Have a good summer!

Katie



Nepal Trek and Children's Project

3-13 May 2012

A thrilling trek and community project, against the magnificent backdrop of the Himalayas.

Join us for this once in a lifetime adventure, raise funds for the Fostering Network and make a real difference.

£300 to register £2850 sponsorship target

To find out more, contact Laura Hocking
t 020 7620 8403 e laura.hocking@fostering.net
or visit www.fostering.net/nepal





A Service of Information, Opportunities and Ideas

Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship charity for young people aged 11-26 in Scotland. They provide a range of accessible products and services which support young people to become informed, confident and active citizens.



Young Scot Handbook – A Guide to Growing Up. Young Scot produce an annual handbook, which is given to young people in the transition from primary to secondary school. The first chapter of the book is personalised to every local authority area, offering young people both local and national information, opportunities and useful signposting to services.

Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC card) is a free smart card that gives young people access to over 1,400 discounts and special offers on goods and services across Scotland. The smart-card technology allows the cardholder

access to opportunities at local level, including cashless catering, leisure and library facilities. For more info on how young people can apply for a card and the range of discounts on offer, go to **www.youngscotextra.org/discounts**

National Youth Information Portal: www.youngscot.org. It doesn't matter what the question may be, the Young Scot website gives young people access to up-to-the-minute information on a wide range of youth-related news and issues, including education, training, money, health and much, much more.

Young Scot Extra is a service specially designed for young people 'post-school' who are



embarking on independent living. A special **information portal**, www.youngscotextra.org offers relevant and accessible information, on a range of topics including, housing, employment, volunteering etc.

Young Scot Extra also has a strong focus on increasing young people's confidence to be more financially capable and provides them with information they need to make informed decisions and choices around money-related issues.

The service also has enhanced entitlements on the Young Scot NEC card, with the focus on independent, healthy, active living. The PASS hologram on the card also acts as a voluntary proof-of-age.

For more info, young people can call the **Young Scot InfoLine** - a free and confidential phone (Open: Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm) that gives young people access to high quality, impartial and relevant information on all aspects of their lives.

If you are interested in finding out more about how Young Scot can support any aspects of your work, please contact Fiona McAuliffe [e fionamca@youngscot.org](mailto:fionamca@youngscot.org) or [t 0131 313 2488](tel:01313132488).



DVD highlights *Consequences* of decisions in foster care

The Fostering Network's Young People's Project recently screened their animated DVD *Consequences* at an event held in Stirling in June.

The DVD has involved children and young people working with the design team from Irwin Stuart in the planning and creation with some even playing a starring role! Funded by the RS Macdonald Charitable Trust, the DVD will also include sign language interpretation.



The event in Stirling allowed some final consultation to take place with those who have been involved throughout the process before public release to ensure the creative team are happy with their final version. Cheryl Leggett had written the title track for the DVD and kindly performed at the event also.

The DVD will be of interest to all those who have a role with regards to placing and care planning for children and young people in foster care including birth families. We look forward to releasing the DVD later this year and will keep you informed – keep an eye on our website for further details, or if you wish to express an interest in this contact us: scotland@fostering.net

Learning & development

Forthcoming dates for our popular open courses...

The Skills to Foster: assessment materials

(Formerly – *Competency Based Assessment of Foster Carers*)

Tuesday 4 & Wednesday 5
October 2011

Glasgow

Members price: £180 + VAT,
includes lunch.

(Non members: £360+VAT).

Men in Foster Care

Saturday 29 October 2011

Glasgow

Members price: £90 + VAT,
includes lunch.

(Non members: £180 + VAT).

The Skills to Foster Leaders' Course

(This course will use the second edition of *The Skills to Foster*)

Tuesday 8, Wednesday 9 &
Thursday 10 November 2011

Glasgow

Members price: £270 + VAT,
includes lunch.

(Non members: £540 + VAT).

In-house courses

And remember, we still have a wide range of 'in-house' courses which can be tailored to your needs and delivered within your fostering service.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of our learning and development opportunities, please contact Joy Crawford, Learning and Development Co-ordinator, **t** 0141 204 1400 or **e** Joy.Crawford@fostering.net

Improved educational attainment for young people in foster care

Latest figures from the Scottish Government highlight that children living with foster carers are more successful in their educational attainments.

The average tariff score for looked after children who left school during 2009/10 was 67, compared to 372 for all school leavers. Children living with local authority foster carers gained the highest average tariff score (160), followed by those living with foster carers working for independent agencies (103). Children looked after at home, which accounts for a higher percentage of looked after children in Scotland than in the rest of the UK, got the lowest scores (32). The tariff score is based on results including those for Scottish Standards and Highers. However, this comparison is influenced by the fact that only ten per cent of looked after children stayed on in education after 16, and were therefore able to gain more qualifications, compared with over 60 per cent of all young people.

“Children in care need stability and local authorities must do their utmost to ensure that they are not moved unless absolutely necessary and that it's in the child's best interests”

Unsurprisingly, the average tariff score for looked after children who had three or more placement moves was significantly lower than for those who had a more stable time in care. For those with one placement during the school year the average score was 68, but for those who had four or more placement moves, the average was 41.

Of all looked after children leaving school, only one per cent went to university, compared with 36 per cent of all school leavers.

Sarah Crangle, from the Fostering Network Scotland, said: *“These figures show that when foster care works it works really well, in this case giving children a chance to succeed at school and of a brighter future. However, there is clearly a long way to go to give fostered children the same chance of academic success as their peers.*

“Children in care need stability and local authorities must do their utmost to ensure that they are not moved unless absolutely necessary and that it's in the child's best interests. Stability really is key to helping children enjoy school and get good results. Foster carers, teachers, social workers – everyone working with the child – must really support and encourage them with their school work if they are to succeed.”

To read the Scottish Government's Educational Outcomes for Scotland's Looked After Children, 2009/10 figures in full, visit www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/23123831/0

Update on 'LACSIG'

By Anne Black

The Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group

have held two seminars, the first looking at the importance of children having the earliest possible chance to form sound attachments. Advances in our understanding about brain development should help us to look at some behaviours as attachment seeking rather than attention seeking. Many of the very young children who have been severely affected by their mother's alcohol or drug misuse will have had their cries for help and comfort disregarded and trust will be hard to regain.

A seminar on educational planning allowed colleagues from local authorities an opportunity to get together and share their experiences and ideas around improving educational planning for looked after children. This vulnerable group is likely to be in receipt of services from a number of agencies, and work has been going on around the country to coordinate support and intervention.

Other work is focusing on the length of time it takes for some children for whom permanency has been agreed to actually reach their permanent home and family. The research does show that even when decisions

are made at birth that a child is unlikely to be safe at home, the child may have three changes of placement and wait over two years to achieve a permanent placement. The tasks that foster carers do to try to help the child build trusting relationships are made more difficult if timescales are protracted and the child experiences anxiety about their future.

Research also shows that many successful adoptions are by a child's present foster carer and urges workers to look at a child staying in their current placement but with legal certainty. I am sure that once we see how Permanence Orders are working, this will help to give some children the chance to feel more secure. We have to look very carefully at how to make changes that will give children the best chance of a stable family for life.

I am sure that we will return to this topic many times – your views on foster carers becoming adopters of a looked after child would be very interesting and we can maybe get a discussion going – contact Sarah to share your views.



Welfare system reform – **support our campaign**

The Welfare Reform Bill

is currently going through Parliament and, once introduced, will change the current system of welfare benefits and tax credits, bringing them together under a 'Universal Credit'.

The Fostering Network have been assured that fostering income will continue to be disregarded in the

calculation of new credit, but we need you to support our campaign for further changes, including:

- Continuation of payments for a period once a placement ends.
- Better understanding of foster care by staff administering the welfare system.
- Foster carer exemption

from the proposed 'under-occupation' penalty to housing benefit.

See our *Foster Care* magazine for more information on this.

To get involved and support our campaigns, join our email action group at www.fostering.net/rapid-response.

Are you making the most of your membership?

Did you know that the Fostering Network can provide you with information, advice and support when you need it? You should have received the booklet *We're here to help you* in the last edition of *Foster Care* magazine which helps to explain some of the different ways you can access our services. If you haven't had a chance to look at it yet, do take a few minutes so that you always know how you can get the help you need when you need it.

One great way of accessing exclusive resources is through the members' area of the Fostering Network website. If you haven't already signed up for the members' area visit www.fostering.net and click on the button that says 'sign in/join'. Not only will this give you access to special members' only content and sign you up for the membership

e-newsletter, it will automatically enter all foster carers into our prize draw giving you the chance to win a £25 high street voucher every three months.

As a member of the Fostering Network you are part of a community of 56,000 foster carers and hundreds of fostering services. It is the power of this collective voice which makes us so successful in campaigning for positive improvements in foster care so thank you to all of you for helping us to keep making steps forward in fostering. Why not keep up to date with our latest news on campaigns, services, events and more on our facebook group. We have a great facebook page with a really active community exchanging thoughts and ideas, giving each other tips and advice and finding out more about what's going on at the Fostering Network



and in the wider fostering world. Visit www.facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork to see for yourself.

The Fostering Network has over 35 years of experience supporting foster carers and we're always looking to improve our services, so if you have any thoughts about ways that we can help you contact membership services officer on harriet.campbell@fostering.net

Learning pilot with Open University



In our April newsletter we shared information about an exciting new learning pathway being supported by the Open University and the Fostering Network. We are looking to recruit up to 20 foster carers who would be interested in following this study pathway to form our pilot learning group. In addition to the educational support offered by the Open University, the Fostering Network in Scotland will also be funding some additional sessions to provide advice and support to students.

The proposed learning pathway starts with the course *Y156 Understanding Children*,

commencing September 2011. The next module in the pilot is then *U122 Making your experience count*, commencing February 2012.

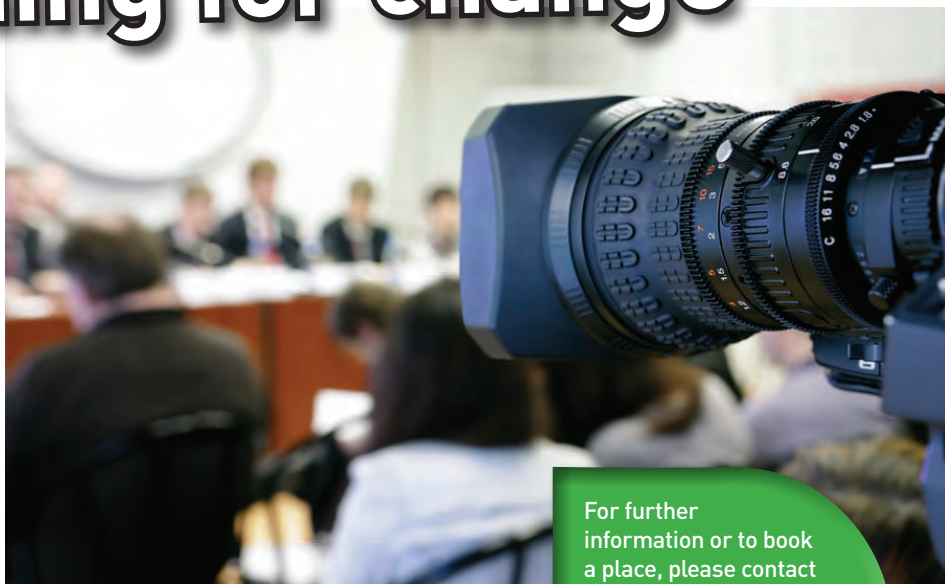
During May and June we held events in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness to allow prospective students the opportunity to find out more. We have had a great response and foster carers are already intimating their interest in joining the pilot, but there's still time to register your interest.

To find out more please get in touch, contact Sarah Crangle, **t** 0141 204 1400 **e** sarah.crangle@fostering.net

Working with the media and campaigning for change

Thursday 29 September,
Glasgow
9.45am til 3pm

Foster carers are a crucial part of fostering in Scotland. This free one day session aims to support and empower foster carers to influence change in fostering through campaigning and influencing. Delivered by the Fostering Network, this workshop aims to provide an introduction to being involved with the media and effective campaigning to provide tips and tools to help make sure you get your message across successfully to the people who matter.



This session is delivered by the Fostering Links project, funded by Big Lottery Fund, and will be of interest to foster carer members of the Fostering Network in Scotland.

For further information or to book a place, please contact Sarah Crangle, e sarah.crangle@fostering.net t 0141 204 1400. Please note places are limited.

Suicide Prevention Guidance launched

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) have launched a practice guide, Suicide Prevention for looked after children and young people.

In partnership with Choose Life and LGBT Youth the guide has been written to protect looked after children and young people who are a small but significant group in Scotland. For a variety of reasons these children and young people are looked after by local authorities. Suicide amongst looked after children

and young people is a tragic but very rare event. This guide was requested by people in the field of social care and social work who care professionally for children and young people.



To access the guide, visit www.scswis.com and search within 'Publications' then 'General Guidance'. Alternatively, contact Sarah Crangle to request a printed copy of the guide.

Tell us what you think

We've just added a review feature to our publication website www.fosteringresources.co.uk and would love to hear what you think about our products. It only takes a few minutes to add a review, just find the publication you want to talk about and click 'write your own review'.

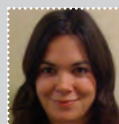
We really value your feedback and would love to hear your views so that we can make sure the products we offer meet your needs.

The Fostering Network Scotland...

meet the team



Sara Lurie,
Director
sara.lurie@fostering.net



Katie Alibone,
Fosterline Scotland worker
katie.alibone@fostering.net



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



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



Deborah Cook,
Administrator
deborah.cook@fostering.net



Sarah Crangle,
Fostering Links Project Worker
sarah.crangle@fostering.net



The Fostering Network Scotland
2nd floor, Ingram House
227 Ingram Street
Glasgow
G1 1DA
t 0141 204 1400
f 0141 204 6588
e scotland@fostering.net
www.fostering.net

Other useful numbers:

The Fostering Network - London office

For queries relating to membership, or how to access the members' area of the website.
t 020 7620 6400

Infoline - For everyday fostering enquiries
t 020 7261 1884

Legal, medical & stress helpline

24 hours, 365 days a year
Your first point of call if an allegation arises. Queries are answered by fully qualified and registered lawyers and nurses with years of experience helping our members. Foster carers are free to discuss any subject, not just issues relating to foster care.
t 0844 581 0404

Publications & Resources

t 0844 335 1892
e orders@fosteringresources.co.uk

Registered Office:
87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA
Registered Charity Num: 280852
Registered in Scotland SC039338



Fostering in Scotland is produced using recycled paper. When you have finished with this newsletter please share with family and friends, or recycle.