

Fostering

in Scotland

Issue 35
Autumn 2011

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And more!



the fostering network
the voice of foster care



Hello and welcome...



Hello and welcome to the autumn edition of *Fostering in Scotland*. This is the Fostering Network's quarterly newsletter and is produced by the Fostering Links

project thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

The Fostering Links project works across the country offering a range of opportunities for our members, in particular our foster carer members in Scotland, to develop connections and feel part of a larger community. This is achieved by running a range of meetings and events throughout the country allowing a sharing of current fostering practice and knowledge.

We are delighted that we have a growing number of our members attending these events but we would like to meet more of you. If you haven't been to one of our

meetings or events previously, why not get in touch and book a place. Those who attend say that they really value the events and enjoy the opportunity to meet with others. Best of all the events organised by the Fostering Links project are free!

If you aren't able to come along to one of our events but would like to share your experience, why not email or write in and we could look to include your views in a future edition of the newsletter.

As always, we hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and welcome your comments and feedback.

Best wishes,

Sarah

Update from the Fostering Links project

Over the past few months the project has been busy with a number of events including a **membership meeting** highlighting ways to keep safe online. Our next session on this topic is taking place in November, and we are delighted that this course is now full. It demonstrates how much in demand this topic is for foster carers and social workers across the country.

Katie and I have met with a number of foster carers at their support groups having been invited to meet with foster carers in the Scottish Borders, Edinburgh and Perth. This provided a great opportunity for us to meet with our members and hear what is happening locally. It also allowed us to provide an update on the work currently being undertaken by the Fostering Network.

The project's **Assertiveness and Advocacy** skills one-day session has further dates planned:

Friday 4 November,
10am til 4pm, Perth

Saturday 5 November,
10am til 4pm, Oban

Friday 3 February,
10am til 4pm, Ayr

Saturday 4 February,
10am til 4pm, Glasgow

Funded for foster carers, these free one-day sessions aim to offer a fun, interactive, supportive, safe and encouraging opportunity for participants to explore issues in relation to getting their point across assertively and advocating on behalf of others.

'This was one of the best training courses I have ever done. The tips I learned are used at all the meetings I attend. Absolutely brilliant training!' (Foster carer)

Our next **focus group meeting** will take place on Thursday 10 November from 10am til 3pm in Perth. This meeting will encourage discussion on a number of current fostering topics and will be attended by foster carers and family placement workers from across Scotland. If you are interested in attending, please get in touch!

We also have our **Working with the media and campaigning for change** workshop for foster carers taking place in Glasgow on Thursday 17 November from 10am til 2.30pm. Find out more information on this session elsewhere in this newsletter.

To find out more about any of the work of the Fostering Links project contact Sarah Crangle,
t 0141 204 1400
e sarah.crangle@fostering.net

Are you receiving tax credits?

HMRC have asked if we can pass on the following message to new foster carers or to those fostering additional children:

Yes: If you are receiving tax credits you will need to let HM Revenue & Customs know about this change in your circumstances.

No: If you are not receiving tax credits, you may be entitled to them. Call HM Revenue & Customs for advice.

When you phone you will need to tell them that you are a foster carer. They will then give you the appropriate help and advice on how to complete your tax credits claim form. They may call you back at a more convenient time to discuss your circumstances.

Contact HM Revenue & Customs Tax Credits Helpline
t 0845 300 3900.
For the opening hours go to www.hmrc.gov.uk

New approaches to foster care: theory into practice



This year's annual conference at the America Square Conference Centre in London on Tuesday 22 November will look at the latest thinking in foster care and how it can be applied.

Foster carers, fostering services and young people will come together to hear about methods such as social pedagogy and evidence-based programmes, and

take part in a range of workshops and seminars.

Speakers will include England children's minister Tim Loughton and Professor Pat Petrie, a leading pioneer in social pedagogic thinking.

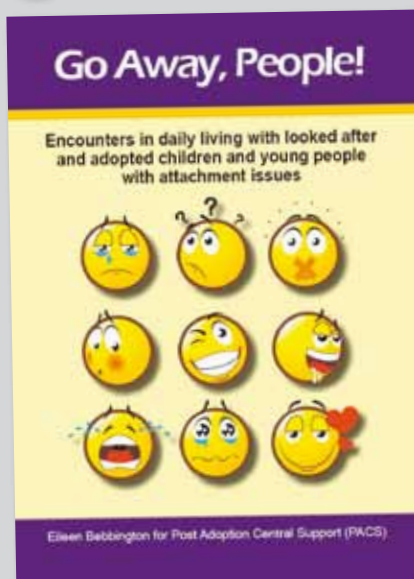
For more information and to book your place visit www.fostering.net/conference

Go Away, People!

Following previous successful publications by PACS (Post Adoption Central Support), a new booklet has been produced.

Go Away, People! makes use of a number of case studies to explore the encounters and common difficulties in daily living for looked after and adopted children and young people with attachment issues.

Priced from £5 per booklet, copies are available by contacting Rena Phillips, PACS Co-ordinator, e renaphillips@hotmail.com



Online training

More and more foster carers are benefiting from our online training, which is now available on key topics in foster care.

Covering *Safer Caring, Contact, Behaviour, Health, Education and Attachment*, our online training courses allow foster carers to work at home at their own pace – all you need is a computer and an internet connection.

Rates start at just £40.85 per course.

For information and to book see www.fostering.net/learning/online

Dear Members,

I hope that you have all enjoyed the October school break, whether at home or further afield. During the month of October we recognised the role of sons and daughters of foster carers across the UK by celebrating *Sons and Daughters* week – we would love to hear how you celebrated this. Over the past few months the team have taken the opportunity to review a lot of paperwork and are currently working on our training materials to ensure that they remain up to date and comprehensive.

We have had a very full programme of meetings and training courses and this will continue into the winter keeping everyone busy. I hope that many of you will get to some of these events and have the chance to share ideas, issues and resolutions to problems.

The *Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group* 'LACSIG' will be holding it's next meeting as this newsletter goes

to print. At the last meeting there was a focus on the SCRA, the *Scottish Children's Reporter Administration*, report. This was a survey of 100 children adopted in the last year and highlighted the length of time that many decisions about permanence take. We all need to try to minimise the unnecessary delays while recognising that many of the delays are beyond the control of social workers or carers. I am sure that this topic will come up at some of our meetings and it will be good to reflect on how foster carers experience the delays and how many of you decide to put yourselves forward as adopters for a child in your care.

The Fostering Network has a small advisory committee in Scotland which meets quarterly. The Committee is made up of foster carer representatives as well as managers from fostering services. I'd like to thank Debbie Booth from Dundee who recently stepped down as one of the foster

carer representatives on the Committee. Debbie has been, and I hope will continue to be, a wonderful ambassador for foster care, speaking at many meetings and seminars and providing wisdom and experience on the Committee.

Looking to the future and finances are an issue for many voluntary organisations. Our fundraiser has been meeting with us regularly to ensure we continue to maintain links with charitable trusts and funders who may be able to support our work. Despite these worries we will continue to meet with and support our members to ensure that we are all working together to improve the lives of looked after children

With best wishes



Anne Black
Chair, Scottish Advisory Committee

Developing the Fostering Network's Strategic Plan 2012-2017

The Fostering Network is about to embark on a process of consultation on a new strategic plan that will guide our work across the UK for the next five years. As a membership organisation, it is vitally important to us that we hear what you – our members – believe should be our priorities over the next few years, in order to continually improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

We are therefore consulting with members and stakeholders on a draft *Strategic Plan* which can be found at www.fostering.net/strategic-plan-consultation. We strongly urge you to take a few minutes to respond to this consultation by email or post, and to tell other foster carers and fostering services about it also, as well as the young people in your care, and your sons/daughters. The closing date for responses is 11 November.



Nepal Trek and Children's Project

3-13 May 2012

In previous years we've taken trekkers to Peru and China. Next May it is Nepal, for a fundraising challenge with a twist.

In addition to raising vital funds to support our work in the UK, trekkers will also be making life better for underprivileged children in Nepal. Once they have finished a seven-day trek amid the Himalayas, they will be rolling up their sleeves to muck in with DIY, teaching and play therapy at a children's home near Pokhara. A proportion of the money they raise will buy clothes, toys and essentials for the children.

We have two Scottish foster carers, Stewart Duncan and Ken Millard, who are joining the team taking part in this challenge. They would both welcome your support in helping them reach their targets. You can support them by donating online through JustGiving, visit:

www.justgiving.com/stewart-duncan
www.justgiving.com/Ken-Millard

Successful launch of text donations

You can now support us with instant text donations. Just text a code and the donation is taken from your credit card or added to your monthly bill. Taxpayers can add gift aid and top up their donation by 25 per cent. All donations via the JustGiving.com and Vodafone hosted service go straight to the campaign with no fees deducted, and texts cost your usual rate.

You can help our Nepal trekkers beat their £100,000 target by donating £3. Just text: **NEPL12** £3 to 70070.

For further information on the trek visit www.fostering.net/Nepal or contact Laura Hocking on 020 7620 8403 or laura.hocking@fostering.net



Welfare reform latest

The **Fostering Network** has been working hard to ensure that the Welfare Reform bill currently moving through Westminster does not harm those foster carers who rely on benefits, and that it brings some improvements. We are pleased to announce that the Government has accepted the main points we have been asking for:

- Disregard of fostering income will be continued for claimants under the new Universal Credit.
- When Universal Credit is introduced in 2013, full-time foster carers with a fostered child under 16 will not have any work search requirements imposed. This will also apply for those fostering 16 and 17-year-olds who require exceptional attention.
- Universal Credit will continue to be paid for eight weeks after a fostered child or children leave the placement.

We are continuing to campaign on housing benefit and better training for benefits staff.

See www.fostering.net/benefits-campaign for details and to get involved.

Leading Our Lives online

Our Leading Our Lives website www.leadingourlives.org.uk contains resources and information about events, jobs and training aimed at care-experienced young people and the sons and daughters of foster carers aged 16 to 25, and those who work with them.

The site also showcases photography and films by young people who have worked with the Fostering Network across the UK.

e web@fostering.net with any events and opportunities for the site.





Time to Care

With the theme of **fostering: time to care**, this May's *Foster Care Fortnight* focused on the shortage of foster families for teenagers. We generated media coverage reaching over 35 million people across the UK, with fostering services targeting over 10 million more.

Planning for *Foster Care Fortnight* 2012 is now beginning; make sure 14 to 27 May 2012 is in your diary and keep an eye out for campaign announcements on the website.

Signposts

Popular Signpost titles *Allegations Against Foster Carers*, *Record Keeping*, *Income Tax and National Insurance* and *Benefits* have been updated, providing new and experienced foster carers with up-to-date information on key areas of foster care.



New Scottish centre of excellence welcomed



The Fostering Network has welcomed the launch of the *Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland* (CELCIS).

The aim of CELCIS is to work with partners to improve the lives of all looked-after children in Scotland. It will provide a focal point for the sharing of knowledge and the development of best practice and offer a wide range of services to improve the skills of those working with looked-after children.

The Glasgow-based centre was formally launched on 28 September with presentations from a number of speakers including children's minister Angela Constance MSP. Cheryl Leggett (pictured) shared her experience of foster care through her music.

Sara Lurie, director of the Fostering Network Scotland and an external adviser to the transitional

management committee for the new centre, said: 'We welcome the launch of the new centre. It is an important step forward to have a single organisation representing the needs of all looked-after children and the journey they take while in care.'

'As the majority of children who are looked after away from home live with foster families we hope fostering will be a priority and that the centre will be influential in ensuring that foster carers receive the appropriate support, training, remuneration and recognition for their work.'

'We hope that the centre will complement all of the work the Fostering Network does to support foster carers and all those who work in fostering.'

For more information see www.thenewcentre.org.uk

Partners in Advocacy launch new site



Partners in Advocacy are extremely proud to announce the launch of their children's website www.pianet.org.uk

Funded by the lottery, PIANET is for young people to see how their voices and needs can be heard and listened to – and taken seriously. Young people can contact *Partners in Advocacy* via e-mail at any time, with issues or questions they are looking for support with. Staff within each of their three offices will respond either by e-mail or phone whichever way the young person has suggested is the best for them – it's all about the young person's needs and supporting them to cope and have a voice.

All information shared with Partners in Advocacy is confidential and young people are the centre of their service. *'J was self-harming, fed up and depressed – everyone was making decisions about his future and no one was listening to what he wanted/needed – he wasn't being taken seriously. J's advocate supported him to have his voice heard – he didn't get all he wanted, only some, but things are better and he feels more able to speak up for himself in the future.'*

For further information on any of their services visit www.pianet.org.uk
e Edinburgh@partnersinadvocacy.org.uk
t 0131 478 7723

New online guide for sons and daughters of foster carers

The Fostering Network Wales has launched a new online guide for supporting the sons and daughters of foster carers.

Don't you forget about me: A guide to developing a peer support group for the sons and daughters of foster carers offers fostering agencies advice and practical information. It discusses why it is important for

peer support groups to exist for sons and daughters of foster carers while providing an overview of how to establish a group and ideas of how to organise and sustain it.

To download your free copy visit www.fostering.net/resources



Christmas Cards

Support the Fostering Network's work for everyone involved in fostering this Christmas by purchasing our festive greetings cards. Profits generated from the sale of the cards, designed by Libby Steele, the daughter of a foster carer, will go towards



the vital work we do for foster families. The cards are available now from www.fosteringresources.co.uk

Foster carer wins Pride of Britain award

A member of the Fostering Network has received a *Special Recognition Pride of Britain* award for her dedication to fostering. Julie Coghill, who fosters in Edinburgh with her husband Philip, has cared for 45 babies over the past 15 years.

Julie was presented with the award at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London on Monday 3 October by the stars of ITV's *Downton Abbey*. Julie was also invited to 10 Downing Street to meet with the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg the following

day with the other award winners.

Julie said: *'At first I was very shocked to have even been nominated, but once that had worn off I was thrilled to have won. The awards ceremony itself was a very star studded event, we met everyone from Torvill and Dean to Ronnie Corbett. We have just had a fantastic few days.'*

Congratulations Julie on this fantastic achievement that also highlights the importance of foster care across the country.



Julie and family at Downing Street

The Skills to Foster: assessment materials

Tuesday 6 & Wednesday 7 March 2012,
Glasgow

Cost: £180 (+ VAT) members;
£360 (+ VAT) non-members
(includes lunch)

The assessment of prospective foster carers is a central task for agencies but may highlight differing approaches within the same fostering team. The Scottish Code of Practice recommends that *'The assessment process should be designed to gather evidence of the qualities, skills (competencies) and aptitudes needed in a foster carer. It should have objective and fair standards which are applied uniformly and are understood by all concerned'*.

The Fostering Network's newly-developed *Skills to Foster* assessment materials will help agencies assess potential foster carers on the basis of their skills, knowledge, abilities and experiences.

Aimed at all those involved in competency-based assessments of foster carers, our flexible approach is evidence-based, allowing individuals to build up a portfolio. It can also aid agencies in implementing ongoing professional development plans for foster carers.

Straightforward and user-friendly, these materials



complement the wider *Skills to Foster* range of training and resources from the Fostering Network, ideal for prospective foster carers during the initial stages of assessment.

This course will help agencies implement these recommendations for foster care, and firmly place the assessment process within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.

For further information or to book a place please contact Joy Crawford,
e joy.crawford@fostering.net
or t 0141 204 1400.

Call to recognise role of foster carers in education

The Fostering Network is calling on the Scottish Government to recognise the role of foster carers in Scotland as 'first educators' for the children they foster, and to ensure that they are trained, supported and empowered to help these children achieve their potential.

The call comes as part of the Fostering Network's response to the education and culture committee's inquiry into the educational attainments of children in care, which remains significantly lower than those of children in the general Scottish population.

In its response, the Fostering Network also highlighted the need for children with chequered educational early experiences to be given additional support in their learning.

Frequent moves between homes can also have a negative impact on children's attendance and achievements at school. The consultation response therefore also flagged up the importance of recruiting more foster carers to create greater stability. Introducing placement limits, thereby reducing the number of unrelated fostered children in any household to three,

would also free up foster carers' time to help children with their reading, homework and after school activities.

To read the Fostering Network's full response to the committee's inquiry, see www.fostering.net The committee will also be taking oral evidence in November, and will report to the Scottish Parliament in December 2011.

We know that there are many good examples of children and young people's achievements and would love to hear these. Why not get in touch and share your stories?

Speaking out for foster care

Are you a foster carer? Would you like to take a more active role in shaping the public and politician's view of foster care?

**Working with the media and campaigning for change
Thursday 17 November 2011,
10am til 2.30pm. Glasgow**

As a foster carer you are a crucial part of fostering in Scotland. This free one day session aims to develop your skills in speaking out about fostering, whether to prospective foster carers and the general public, local and national media, or to policy and decision makers.

Delivered by the Fostering Network's Big Lottery funded *Fostering Links* project, this workshop will provide an introduction to being involved with the media and explore effective campaigning. By equipping you with tips and tools the session aims to inspire you to make sure you get your message across successfully to the people who matter. It will also provide a fantastic opportunity to meet with other foster carers as well as catch up with the Fostering Network.

To request a booking form to secure your free place, contact Sarah Crangle, sarah.crangle@fostering.net
t 0141 204 1400.



Make sure your voice is heard



As well as providing our members with expert information, support and advice, the Fostering Network also makes sure your voices are heard. We influence fostering policy and practice across the UK so keeping up to date with our work and letting us know your

thoughts will ensure your voice is represented at the highest levels.

There are lots of ways to keep in touch with what we're doing. Get daily updates, the chance to ask questions

and tell us what you think by liking us on Facebook www.facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork.

Find out what we're up to, what we've achieved and how we can help you by reading our blogs www.fostering.net/blogs or following us on Twitter twitter.com/fosteringnet

Finally, make sure that you are registered for the members' area of our website www.fostering.net/members where you can download exclusive resources and start receiving our monthly e-newsletter.

Take a few minutes to find out more about our work and make sure your voice is heard. Together we really can make a difference in foster care.

Fosterline UPDATE



Hello all! Since my last update in the summer I hope you have all settled back in to the routine that comes along with the busy lives of children.

In September, our Director Sara Lurie gave a presentation at the Children in Scotland conference, *The Future of Foster Care in Scotland: improving outcomes for looked after children*. Sara was calling for Scottish foster carers to be more formally recognised as a core part of the child care workforce, to ensure that foster carers are valued, respected and adequately remunerated and supported to provide children with the best possible care. I thought it would be helpful to expand on this so our members have a greater awareness of what the Fostering Network are campaigning for.

Currently in Scotland all other members of the children's work force such as social workers and residential workers have to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and then adhere to certain codes of conduct. Similarly, there is a national register of childminders. To maintain their registration, individuals need to make use of learning and development opportunities and undertake a specific number of training hours in order to keep up-to-date with current practice.

The Fostering Network believe that registration would be a positive move for fostering. While there is a wealth of good practice across the country, we hear of too many stories whereby foster carers are treated like clients of social workers and not as professional partners who bring a range of knowledge, expertise and skills. Registration would help to ensure foster carers are given the value and respect they deserve. Furthermore, it would highlight the importance of updating and maintaining foster carers' skills

through training and encourage consideration to be given to a variety of learning pathways.

Once a foster carer is registered on a central, national register it would ensure that if they need to move between fostering agencies, e.g. if they move house, there would not be the need for a full re-assessment. Undertaking a full re-assessment can be both time consuming for foster carers and fostering agencies, and can be a drain on scarce resources.

The register should also provide a further protective layer for children and young people by ensuring that previous fostering history is recorded and any relevant concerns disclosed. Registration may well help to standardise terms and conditions for foster carers which currently can vary widely between agencies.

Please let us know your thoughts on the issue and please remember I am available to take your calls on a variety of queries fostering related.

Katie



Open University learning pilot

We are excitedly looking forward to commencing our pilot of learning with the Open University. Not long after this newsletter arrives on your doorstep our first cohort of foster carers will be beginning their studies of the Open University course *Understanding Children*.

• With the course running for 20 weeks, our small group of students from throughout Scotland will be balancing their busy fostering lives alongside studies. In addition to the materials provided by the Open University, the Fostering Network are providing additional opportunities for the students to

• meet and are encouraging the development of peer support networks.

• We hope to keep you updated on how the pilot progresses and perhaps next year some more of our members will consider this learning pathway.

Young people and carers wanted!

- **Are you aged 10 to 25?**
- **Are you living in or have you lived in kinship or foster care?**
- **Are you interested in photos, sound and music?**
- **Do you want to influence how young people are looked after?**

The Sight and Sound Project at the University of Stirling wants to give 30 young people across Scotland the chance to use cameras, sound recorders and/or film in a research project. No experience is necessary.

The project focuses on what makes you feel relaxed where you live and in the places you spend your time. Participants can choose to be involved in up to three activities over 18 months. As a thank you, you will get gift card(s), and copies of your photos, sounds, interview(s) and films.

Are you a foster/kinship carer or an adoptive parent who wants to share your views on helping young people feel they belong in your home?

We have put together some questions and would love to hear your views if you want to email us or write or ring with your thoughts:

- What are your 'top tips' for helping a young person settle in and feel at home?
- What are the constraints (financial or otherwise) you face in doing this?

Have the young people you look (or have looked) after:

- ever told you what things make them feel at home or that they belong? Have you noticed anything they seem to particularly like?
- ever told you about things which make them feel that they don't belong? Or have you noticed anything that may make it less easy for them to feel they belong?

To find out more visit www.spacesightandsound.weebly.com or to get involved contact Sarah Wilson or EJ Milne at sightandsound@stir.ac.uk t 01786 466316/ 07528 246 224 or SASS, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA

Cycle safety



In our summer edition of *Fostering in Scotland* our front cover featured a young person wearing a cycle helmet. Children should be encouraged where appropriate to benefit

from bikes, and cycle safety is an important area. It had been brought to our attention that the image depicts the incorrect way to wear a cycle helmet.

Here are some handy guidelines from *Road Safety Scotland* for wearing a cycle helmet correctly.

When choosing a helmet, there are some guidelines to follow.

- Measure the circumference of your head 2.5-cm (1 inch) above your eyebrows
- Find a helmet with the same circumference
- Make sure that the helmet is snug but not too tight
- Check that it has a quality CE safety mark. The minimum standard is BSEN 1078 (European standard).

The Australian standard SNELL/ANSI was recently recommended by the BMA.

When fitting a helmet

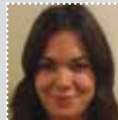
- Make sure that it rests above eye level, covering the forehead
- It should sit level and not tilt
- Straps should not cover the ears. They should not be loose. The buckle should be under the chin.
- Always follow the instructions supplied with the helmet and use the fitting pads when necessary.

For further information, visit www.road-safety.org.uk

The Fostering Network Scotland...



Sara Lurie,
Director
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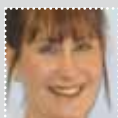
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Other useful numbers:

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

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