

Fostering

in Scotland

Issue 36
Winter 2011/12

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the fostering network
the voice of foster care



Hello and welcome...



Hello and welcome to the latest edition of *Fostering in Scotland*. In this issue we hope to update you on some of the work that we have been involved in over the past

few months. With 2012 now well underway, we have lots of things planned over the coming months and hope more of you are able to be involved with our work.

The Fostering Links project is delighted that our funders, the *Big Lottery Fund*, have allowed us to extend the project by four months to enable us to engage with as many of our foster carer members as possible. There are a number of dates for events planned, and we will continue to hold more events across Scotland – it would be great to meet some new faces as well as to catch up with some familiar faces before the project ends in January 2013! Keep an eye on our

Facebook page and website to be kept up to date with these.

We are delighted to have welcomed two volunteers to support our work. Kieran and Gary joined the team in our Glasgow office in December and both have been invaluable in assisting with some of our day to day tasks, bringing in their skills to aid our work. We would all like to say a huge 'Thank You' to them.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments on this *Fostering in Scotland* newsletter. If you would like to contribute to a future edition, please get in touch.

Until next time,
Best wishes,

Sarah

Advocacy and assertiveness skills

Friday 3 February 2012,
10am til 4pm
Ayr

Saturday 4 February 2012,
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.

Delivered by the Fostering Network's Big Lottery funded *Fostering Links* project and aimed at our foster carer members in Scotland this day helps to ensure participants not only feel more confident, but feel able to work in partnership with others in the fostering team.

As one foster carer commented: *'This was one of the best training courses I have ever done. Every time I go into a meeting I think back to the training and use the tips John and Sean (trainers) taught me.'*

The session will also provide a fantastic opportunity to meet with other foster carers and to catch up with all that is happening at the Fostering Network.

Places are limited. To request a booking form and secure a free place, contact Sarah Crangle, sarah.crangle@fostering.net t 0141 204 1400.

Lunch will be included – please advise of any dietary requirements when completing booking form.



Participants and trainers at our recent advocacy & assertiveness skills session in Perth

Focus group meetings

These meetings encourage discussion on a number of current fostering topics and are attended by a range of our members from across Scotland.

By bringing together foster carers and supervising social workers to discuss current topics of interest we are able to gather your perspective on how these issues impact upon your area. At our last meeting in November 2011 we were joined by 27 people, (17 foster carers and 10 social workers), who were able to represent nine local authorities and one voluntary fostering service.

Included in the day were discussions on the Fostering Network's strategic plan and how this represents the needs and views of our members. We have fed these comments back to our team in London to inform the work we undertake throughout the UK over the next five years.

As well as debates on online communities and good practice, we also spoke about how financial cuts are impacting on fostering

services. While it was encouraging to hear that many areas have yet to see any changes as a result of the current financial climate, some areas are beginning to see a freeze on allowances and fees. Other areas are no longer able to access services and supports, such as crèche facilities at meetings, specialised (therapeutic) supports for children and young people and a reduction in the availability of Throughcare support for teenagers preparing to move on from foster care.

We are aware that there are wide variations in practice across the country and would be interested to hear from you if you feel this is representative of your experience. Please get in touch to share your views, or come along to one of our forthcoming meetings.

We have a few dates planned for March and April. During the day you will meet with staff from the Fostering Network, foster carers and supervising social workers from throughout Scotland. These meetings will enable us to share thoughts, ideas and practice:

Thursday 22 March 2012,
10am til 1pm
Aberdeen

Thursday 26 April 2012,
10am til 1pm
Elgin

Wednesday 28 March 2012,
10am til 1pm
Glasgow

Thursday 3 May 2012,
10am til 1pm
Edinburgh

If you are interested in attending, would like to find out more or are wondering if these meetings are for you, please get in touch with Sarah Crangle, **t** 0141 204 1400 **e** sarah.crangle@fostering.net

We need your old phones

So far we've raised over £1,700 from recycling phones and toners. Help us raise even more – if you work in an office, get your workplace involved by ordering a cartridge collection box. Collections are free, and when the donations come through we'll let you know how much you raised to support our work

www.fostering.net/fundraising/recycle



New Chair for the Fostering Network



Sara Lurie and Anne Black pictured with new Chair, Philip Coghill

Foster carer Philip Coghill has been elected as chair of the Fostering Network. With a strong background in nursing, he and his wife Julie have been fostering in Edinburgh for almost 14 years. Philip will be supported by new vice chair Eric Mole, a foster carer since 1998 and founder and chair of Cheshire Foster Care Association. You can see details of all our trustees at www.fostering.net

Membership update

We've recently updated the terms and conditions for our legal insurance ensuring that we are providing the best legal support to our members. This includes support at an earlier stage prior to a barring decision and the insurance now covers a foster carer's own children and dependants.

Don't forget our legal helpline: queries are answered by fully qualified and registered lawyers with years of experience helping our members. Foster carers are free to discuss any subject, not just issues relating to foster care. So for advice on any legal matter, call our Legal Advice Line on 0844 581 0404

Dear Members,

Over the past few months the Fostering Network in Scotland has been busy with a variety of activities, including a number of focus groups and membership meetings. These events allowed foster carers and social workers an opportunity to look at some of the key themes in foster care at the moment and some of the dilemmas that foster carers and fostering services face. The topics raised will be given further consideration in the coming months and will help shape our work.

We have a new UK Board of trustees and I am delighted that Philip Coghill from Edinburgh was elected as the Chair of the Board. Philip and his family foster babies for Edinburgh City Council and I am confident that Philip will apply his skills as a Chair and his experience in foster care very well and we look forward to working with him in the months ahead. Certainly we can be confident that the Board

will hear more about Scotland!

Across the UK financial pressures are being experienced and local authorities are being asked to make more and more savings. We hope that you will all keep us abreast of the impact of cuts on the fostering services where you live or work.

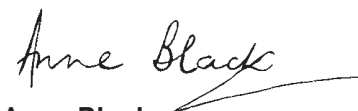
Sara Lurie and I are still very involved with the work of the Scottish Government's 'LACSIG' (*Looked After Strategic Implementation Group*). We will continue to press the Scottish Government to recognise the significant role of foster care and the need for strong foster care services if Scotland is to achieve the goal of better outcomes for looked after children and ensure that all children are able to have a stable and secure family life. We are particularly interested to hear your thoughts on what resources would be needed to ensure, where appropriate, children can remain in a

permanent placement with their foster carers.

As a charity, the Fostering Network is dependent on trusts and funders to ensure we can keep our services running. We are working with our fundraiser Linda Ogston to try to get funds in place to ensure that the work of *Fosterline Scotland* and, looking to the future, the *Fostering Links* project can continue.

We are delighted to announce Sarah Crangle, our *Fostering Links* project manager, is getting married later this month to Gary McEnhill. We wish them much happiness together through the years ahead.

With best wishes to you all,



Anne Black
Chair, Scottish Advisory Committee

New children's minister welcomed in Scotland

The Fostering Network has welcomed the appointment of Aileen Campbell as children's minister in Scotland.

Sara Lurie, director of the Fostering Network Scotland, said: *'We are looking forward to working closely with Ms Campbell as she embarks on her new role. Our aim will be to place fostering firmly on her agenda over the coming months.'*

'We expect Ms Campbell to have fresh ideas to bring to the table and to want to engage with us going forward. This could be a great step forward for fostering in Scotland.'

Aileen Campbell was previously local government minister. She replaces Angela Constance, who held the post since May 2011 and who has now taken up a post as minister for youth unemployment.



Council awards those who care for Edinburgh's vulnerable children



Heather Doig receiving her long service award from Councillor Marilyne MacLaren, Convener of Education, Children and Families and Grant Stott, Radio Forth Presenter.

Awards were recently presented

by the City of Edinburgh Council to 13 families, with a combined experience of 250 years of caring for some of Edinburgh's most vulnerable children.

The event had been organised as a thank you to carers from Edinburgh and the Lothians who look after children with the Council. The celebration held at the City Chambers recognised carers with

more than 20 year's service and those who have undertaken extra qualifications as part of their professional development.

Foster carers, day carers, share the carers, respite carers and befrienders all attended the event. Heather Doig, a day carer, was delighted to be recognised for her long service: *'I can't believe it's been 20 years. There have been ups and downs, but on the whole I've thoroughly enjoyed it. The children are like a family for me.'*

Edinburgh are extremely grateful to the Fostering Network, BAAF and Edinburgh Connect for attending and helping to spread their messages.

The event was extremely well received and on the night Scott Dunbar, the new Service Manager for *Looked After Children* pledged to make it an annual event, to great applause.

Carers go on film to foster interest

The City of Edinburgh Council has produced a short film to recruit more foster carers for the city.

Narrated by local celebrity Grant Stott, the DVD *Becoming a Foster Carer with the City of Edinburgh Council* features social workers, foster carers and young people and aims to break down the barriers that stop people from applying to be foster carers by addressing some of the most common concerns and questions.

The DVD is being included in all information packs sent out to prospective carers and it is



hoped it will help to increase the amount of new carers recruited by the Council, who are currently desperately short of carers.



Time to Care

Just a reminder that *Foster Care Fortnight 2012* takes place from Monday 14 to Sunday 27 May.

By now fostering services will have received a guide of ideas on how to make the most of the campaign. Find out more on how to get involved and what support the Fostering Network offers at: <http://fostering.net/foster-care-fortnight>

eCard



In December we emailed our contacts and posted on Facebook asking your children and young people to send in their designs for a festive eCard. We had a great response to this so thanks to everyone who took part. The entries were all of a very high quality and the judging panel had a really hard time deciding on the eventual winner.

After the votes were counted the winners were as follows:
1st place – Jamie, aged 10
2nd place – Megan, aged 9
3rd place – Paige, aged 4

Congratulations to you all and thanks again to everyone who took part.



Stella: a story of caring and sharing

Children and young people involved with our Young People's project contributed to the creation of 'Stella'. Her story will help sons and daughters of foster carers come to terms with new children coming to stay.

See if you can find Stella and her friends in this fun wordsearch.



An interview with...

Kieran

Kieran, 18, is a Social Policy student whose parents foster. He recently started volunteering at the Fostering Network's Glasgow office.

So...Kieran, how long have your family been fostering?

Our family have been fostering since 2003 so that's about nine years now.

In what ways has fostering been a good experience for you?

It's been great to know that you're helping all the kids that come through your door, it's helped me build up a better view of the world. Fostering has also helped me to meet so many great people, like everyone at the Fostering Network, who've helped us through every difficult time we've had.

What would you say are the downsides to fostering?

It can be hard seeing the backgrounds that some children have come from.

What do you think children have liked best about staying with your family?

I think they like that they're secure with us, and they have a stable home with us where they can feel at home.

What tips would you give to people thinking about fostering?

I'd say go for it, you won't regret going for it when you know you're helping every child that comes through that door. If you have room in your home and room in your heart for fostering, there's no reason not to.

Why did you start volunteering at the Fostering Network?

The Fostering Network have really supported us and have always been there for me and my family. I felt like I wanted to give something back, so I started helping out at the Glasgow office.

Lastly, would you foster when you're older?

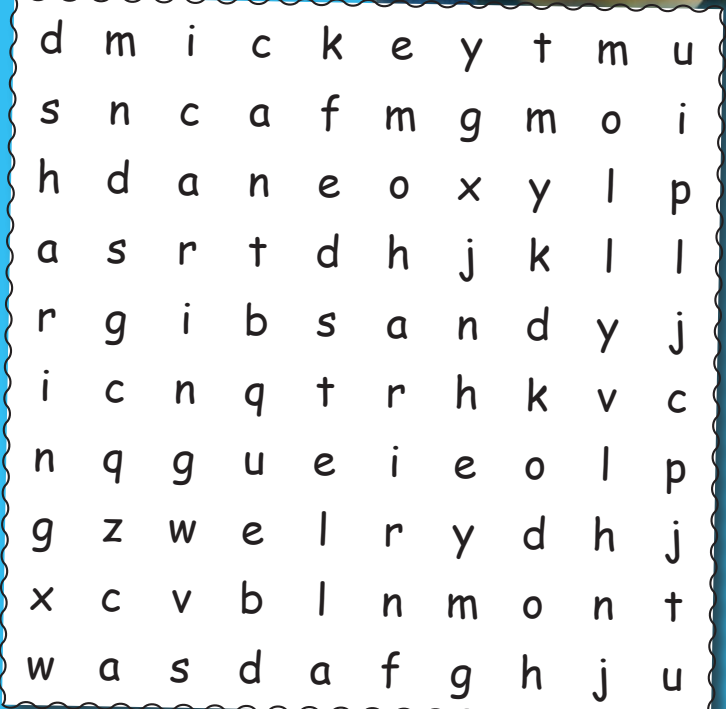
Definitely. There are always going to be children needing looked after and there are always going to be people needed to look after them.



Can you find these words?

Stella home
Molly sharing
Mickey caring
Sandy understand

Free copies of Stella's story are available for our foster carer members in Scotland. If you know a foster carer in Scotland who hasn't yet got their free copy, suggest they get in touch with the team in Glasgow and we'll arrange to send one out!





A Snow Dome experience

Foster carers John and Janice recently enjoyed a break in the East Midlands with nine year old Emma. Here John shares some of their experience...

The East Midlands might not be everyone's first choice for a November holiday, nevertheless off we went to the Holiday Inn at Tamworth.

By breakfast on the first morning, Emma had already made friends with the girls at Reception; then off we went to the *Snow Dome*. What a huge and wonderful place it is, a winter wonderland. They have a very well organised disability ski school there, (Emma has complex special needs), and the leader is a very kind and helpful girl with a good name for Christmas: Holly. The ski slope is huge, and they organise it very well indeed, so you can go sledging or boarding as well as skiing if you wish, and late into the night as well.

The ski boots, though, were a bit heavy and uncomfortable for Emma, so we looked for what else we could do. We found a balcony overlooking the ice rink, and she just would not let me take her away. Then we found a lift down to skate hire, and she wanted to stand right where you go onto the ice. All the kids who were going skating waved to her, and I think she would have gone on too, if we had let her. The ice rink was noisy, busy, and great fun; they had loads of Christmas trees, shooting stars, a gingerbread house, and a 'Penguin Collection Point', small penguins with heavy bases, which a kid could hold onto to help them skate. The manager came to talk to us. 'Can you skate?' he asked me.

'It's been a while', I replied, nervously. 'That's OK, we'll lend you some figure skates.' The next morning he organised everything so that Emma was able to go onto the ice in her wheelchair. I pushed her round a few times and everyone acknowledged her and waved to us. Then a young ice-marshal, who had played hockey, asked if she could take a turn. Maddie pushed Emma round at about three times the speed that I did; Emma loved it to bits.

The Snow Dome has a lovely pool as well, and on Friday Emma was able to watch a swimming race night, between the local schools. Then we went to their *Winter Wonderland* show. One of Santa's elves, (whose name I discovered to be Alabaster Twinkletoes) showed us around, and you could play in the snow all you wanted. Next a short play with Zippy and George (and, of course, Santa), and finally they took us to a small children's zoo, with baby pigs, donkeys, and rabbits; best of all were the reindeer.

Since our return, we have pursued the disability theme with Inverness Ice Rink, and they are quite willing to help.

Our thanks to John, Janice and Emma for sharing their holiday memories!

Call for more foster carers in 2012

In December the Fostering Network published new figures highlighting a need for 1,000 extra foster carers across Scotland to avoid a crisis in foster care in 2012.

The figures show the scale of the challenge for fostering services as they struggle to provide the right foster homes for all the children who need them.

Across the UK the number of children in care who need foster homes has risen for five years in a row, and is continuing to rise. There is also an ageing foster carer population and around 14 per cent of the workforce retire or leave every year. Since 2005 the number of children living with foster families in Scotland has risen by a third.

Without these extra families, too many children will have to settle for second best. This might mean living with a foster carer who is a long way from the child's home, school and family, or who does not have space for their brothers and sisters, or even living in residential care when fostering has been identified as the right option.

Nepal Trek and Children's Project 3-13 May 2012 Update

With less than four months to go our 24-strong Nepal Trek team's fundraising has raised over £20,000 so far, as they head towards their target of £68,000. Some trekkers are in their 20's others in their 60's, and they come from across the UK. Many have strong connections with foster care. Two of the trekkers, Stewart Duncan and Ken Millard, come from Scotland and would love you to support them in the trek.

As well as trekking through mountainous villages and forest, the team will be spending two days helping with painting, renovation, gardening and teaching at two children's homes in the small town of Pokhara: StarChildren gives a home to children who have been orphaned by AIDS, some of whom are also HIV positive. Everest Children's Home had to move after their funding fell through, so they need our help bringing the new house up to date. They provide care, nutrition, education and a safe home to Nepali orphans.

Ken, aged 60, has been fostering with his partner, Alice, for nearly 12 years, during which time they have cared for about 45 children and have two, now grown up, daughters who live away from home. The family live in a 230 year old mill house on the outskirts of Glasgow which they bought as a wreck and renovated and currently care for two boys aged 11 and 15. Ken enjoys a range of pastimes including gardening, hillwalking, (vegan) cooking, swimming, reading and is a senior instructor in Tai chi. He also collects antique tins and has a collection of about two and a half thousand of them. Ken's training regime includes getting into the hills around Glasgow as much as possible and going for very long walks with his dog.

In the next edition we will hear from Stewart about his preparations for the trek.



Visit www.fostering.net/nepal to find out more. You can support Ken, Stewart and the team as they prepare for their trip of a lifetime by donating to their JustGiving pages: www.justgiving.com/stewart-duncan and www.justgiving.com/Ken-Millard

Celebrating Sons and Daughters

Sons and Daughters' Week 2011 took place through October in different parts of the UK and was a great success in highlighting the vital role that the children of foster carers play in fostering. The Fostering Network would like to thank all these children and young people for their fantastic contribution.

We are currently looking at what services the children of foster carers would like to have made available to them. This could range from safe online communities to share experiences, to group activities or individual support and recognition. Contact Lucy Townsend at lucy.townsend@fostering.net with your thoughts or for more information.



Get your greetings cards online

We've opened an online card shop. Find cards for birthdays, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and more at: <http://charitycards.fostering.net/>

You can either order blank cards to send yourself, or have them fully filled out with your own message, and posted automatically. Postage is at standard rates, and payment is made securely by credit/debit card or paypal. Each card you send raises at least 20 pence for the Fostering Network



Fosterline UPDATE

For opening hours see
www.hmrc.gov.uk

Please remember, all foster carers are regarded as self employed and should register with the Newly Self-Employed Helpline on 0845 915 4515. This is for Tax and National Insurance purposes. You may then be sent a self-assessment tax return and it has been brought to my attention that many foster carers are employing accountants to take care of this. Whilst this is an individual's choice, I would like to state that this is not at all necessary and people can save this additional expense. The self assessment tax return which takes advantage of the qualifying care relief which foster carers are entitled to is very straight forward once foster carers have the correct form, SA103. If anybody would like to discuss this further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Hello and a very happy new year to you all. I am pleased to open my article with the good news that funding has been secured for another year for the post of *Fosterline Scotland*. There may be some change to my remit but an advice and information phone line will still be available for all fostering related queries.

We are aware that many fostering agencies are struggling with the new PVG scheme and have questions regarding who should join. We have been informed by Disclosure Scotland that new guidance will be issued to clarify this and they will be offering a series of workshops.

I would like to bring to foster carer's attention a new service which has been introduced by HM

Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and which is available through the tax credits helpline. Until now, foster carers have often faced difficulties in getting accurate information when calling the Helpline. After discussion with the Fostering Network the HMRC has implemented a new 'assisted claims' service. When a caller identifies themselves as a foster carer they should be offered a call back from HMRC at a convenient time from a specially trained adviser. This adviser will be able to talk through their circumstances and give advice on completing a claim form. This process should help avoid problems such as whether or not Child Tax Credit can be claimed for children in foster care, and what hours and income should be declared. New foster carers and those fostering additional children should let HMRC know about the change in their circumstances if they are already receiving tax credits. Those who are not receiving tax credits may be entitled to them and can phone the Tax Credits Helpline on 0845 300 3900 for advice.

Until next time,

Katie

Katie Alibone
Fosterline Scotland worker



Forthcoming learning & development dates

We still have places available on the Fostering Network's the *Skills to Foster* assessment materials course taking place in Glasgow in March 2012.

The Skills to Foster: assessment materials

Tuesday 6 & Wednesday 7 March 2012, Glasgow
Cost: £180 (+VAT) members; £360 (+VAT) non-members (includes lunch)

Aimed at all those involved in competency-based assessments of foster carers, these straightforward and user-friendly assessment materials

will help you to assess and approve the foster carers you need.

In addition we have further presentations of our popular open courses:

The Skills to Foster: leader's course, Tuesday 17, Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 April, Glasgow

Men in Foster Care, Saturday 12 May, Glasgow

The Role of the Supervising Social Worker,

Tuesday 26 & Wednesday 27 June, Glasgow

These courses fill up fast. To reserve your place, please get in touch and I will keep you updated on these!

For further information or to book a place on any of our popular learning & development courses, please contact me,
e joy.crawford@fostering.net or
t 0141 204 1400.

Best wishes,

Joy

Allowances for 2012-2013

The Fostering Network has published its annual recommended minimum weekly allowances for fostered children, from April 2012. We encourage fostering services to give these rates to all foster carers – plus an additional four weeks allowance to cover birthdays, holidays and a religious festival – in order to ensure that spending on fostering children is covered. These allowances do not include any reward element for a foster carers time, skills or experience.

Recommended minimum weekly allowances
(London rates in brackets)

Age 0-4	£134.49	(£157.85)
Age 5-10	£153.20	(£179.95)
Age 11-15	£190.72	(£224.09)
Age 16+	£232.00	(£272.13)

Continuing to make a difference

The Fostering Network has been consulting members on its new strategic plan over the past few months. We were delighted that the response to the plan was overwhelmingly positive, and were also pleased to hear people's ideas about what else we could be doing to support our members and continue to make a difference to foster care across the

UK. The Board of trustees signed the plan off at its meeting in November 2011. The senior management team is now in the process of taking it to the next stage – developing business plans and workplans that will help us implement the objectives we have set. We monitor our performance against these plans and this is reported on in our annual review.

The strategic plan can be found at www.fostering.net/about/strategic-plan

The Fostering Network needs you!

Foster carers do a fantastic job but we know that more are needed, and that improvements must be made to the way many are given practical and financial support. The Fostering Network works hard throughout the year to encourage new foster carers to push for change through the media, but for this we need your help.

Becoming part of our media pool means we keep you up to date with our media activity, and ask for your input and advice on story ideas. You can get involved in a range of ways, from talking to local newspaper journalists, through being featured in glossy magazines, to appearing on national radio or television. Recent media work in Scotland has included STV, Real Radio, BBC Scotland and Smooth Radio. The Fostering Network offers advice and support to anyone we ask to talk to the media and the Fostering Links project can also provide training for foster carers on being involved with the media.

Foster carer Steve Conway has recently been featured: *'I wanted to raise the profile of fostering, especially the role of men as foster carers, undertaking a professional service. By getting involved with the Fostering Network and media work I was able to get my point across.'*

To share your story, visit www.fostering.net/time-to-care/spread-the-word or e media@fostering.net

Children's carers centre in North Lanarkshire

We are always keen to hear of good practice occurring throughout Scotland. I recently met with Pauline, John and Vida from North Lanarkshire Council who introduced, and showed me round, their Children's Carers Centre.

Officially opened in May 2010 North Lanarkshire's children's carers centre provides a resource for all foster carers approved by North Lanarkshire Council and all adoptive families living in North Lanarkshire. As well as being a facility for carers the centre is the office base for the Children's carers team. This social work team provide services to foster carers and adopters throughout North Lanarkshire.

A former children's residential unit, the children's carers centre has been used by the service since the end of

2009, and as well housing the *Fostering and Adoption* team and the local *Who Cares?* workers, it also provides a venue for formal and informal support groups, training and foster carer panels and reviews. Having a central base which is available in evenings and at weekends for training has led to an increase in attendance at the range of training opportunities provided.

Foster carers and staff from the local authority were involved in the original re-design of the building, feeding in at an early stage to ensure that day-to-day practicalities were included. There is a well equipped crèche, kitchen, laundry and resource library with internet access, all easily accessed by foster carers and adopters from North Lanarkshire.

The use of the centre by partner agencies such as health and learning and leisure to provide drop in information sessions and training events means that carers have better links and are better informed.

In providing a central point of contact the social work team have become better known, more familiar and more accessible to foster carers and their children who all feel quite comfortable in the building. Carers have started organising informal 'coffee mornings' to meet for a chat and are being encouraged to think of other ways of developing the use of the centre.

If you would like to share good practice from your area, please email: sarah.crangle@fostering.net

The Fostering Network Scotland...



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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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