

Fostering

in Scotland

Issue 40

Winter 2012/13



In this issue...
Festive e-card entries
Letterbox Club pilot in Scotland
Get Ready for Foster Care Fortnight
...and more!



the fostering network
the voice of foster care



Hello and welcome...



Hello and welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly *Fostering in Scotland* newsletter which is circulated to all our members in Scotland, including all foster carer members and fostering social workers. While the newsletter will be continuing, this is the final edition being brought to you by the Fostering Links project as the three year funding from the Big Lottery Fund has now come to an end. You can read more about some of the project's successes elsewhere in this edition.

As always there has been a lot going on. The Scottish Government have published their analysis of the responses to the consultation on the

Children and Young People Bill which included questions on foster care. Our new approach to Safer Caring was launched at our annual conference in London and we were pleased to hold an event in Glasgow at the end of January to explore this very crucial area for foster care. Read on to find out more.

We were delighted to receive some fantastic entries from children and young people for our festive e-card competition and hope you enjoy these – see centre pages for all the wonderful pictures.

Our congratulations to Sara Lurie and her new husband Matthew Shaps

(pictured) who were married in New York at the end of December. Theirs was the third wedding the Glasgow office celebrated in 2012 and we wish them all the best for their future.

As always, we hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and welcome your news, views and ideas for the next edition.

Until then, happy reading!

Sarah McEnhill
Fostering Links project manager



The Fostering Network annual conference

The Fostering Network held its 2012 annual conference in London in November, which focused on the theme of *Safer Caring: a new approach*. It discussed how the culture within the care system has become too risk averse and is preventing foster carers from helping children in their care to have a full experience of family life.

Delegates from across the UK heard from many speakers, including the children's minister with responsibility for fostering in England, Edward Timpson MP and shadow children's minister, Lisa Nandy.

Learning and Development update

At the end of January our team of associate trainers came together to plan for the year ahead and ensure that our program of training courses remains current and up to date. Please look out for future dates for more of our popular training courses.

We still have a few places on the following courses:

The Skills to Foster Assessment Materials

Tuesday 26 & Wednesday 27 February 2013, Glasgow

New Course

Caring for Children who have been abused: a male perspective

Saturday 9 March 2013, Glasgow

Places for these courses are going fast – to make sure you don't miss out on attending contact Joy Crawford, **t** 0141 204 1400 **e** joy.crawford@fostering.net

Remember, our training sessions are also available to purchase as in house training courses, delivered locally within your fostering service.

Dear Members,

Very best wishes for 2013!

2013 will be a significant year for foster care in Scotland as we hope that the Review announced by the Scottish Government will address many of the issues that members of the Fostering Network has been concerned about over many years. Sara Lurie is to be a member of the Review group and she will ensure that key issues are put on the table. The Review group plans to meet foster carers, fostering agencies and young people to hear the wider range of views of what needs to be supported in the current foster care system and what needs to be changed. We must take the opportunity to let people know what a skilled, and on many occasions tough, job fostering is but also what rewards there are from seeing children grow and develop with more confidence.

Sadly there is still a lot of uncertainty about what level of funding the Fostering Network may get from the Government in future years. The system for allocating funds to voluntary organisations which provide a Scotland wide service has been reviewed and we hope to be able to update you on developments in later months as things become clearer.

Welfare Reform is another area of concern as significant changes are planned for areas including housing benefit and universal credits. The Fostering Network's UK wide *Foster Care* magazine includes a feature on these issues and aims to provide you with the best information available.

Despite these worries I am very heartened that foster care across Scotland continues to thrive and that the Fostering Network continues to play a significant part in supporting

foster carers, fostering agencies and young people across Scotland.

To end on a very positive note, Sarah McEnhill heard recently that she had passed all her final exams and will graduate in April with first class honours in Social Work. It is an amazing achievement to get this degree while continuing to travel the length and breadth of Scotland for membership and other meetings. The entire team in the office also deserve congratulations for the way that they too have supported Sarah to achieve this!

Best wishes to you all for 2013,



Anne Black
Chair, Scottish Advisory
Committee

Consultation on the *Children and Young People Bill*



The analysis of responses to the *Children and Young People Bill* consultation is now available online. The Fostering Network's response was informed by the three focus group events we held in August and

September 2012, attended by thirty foster carers from across Scotland.

The views of children and young people were also gathered through an online survey and a total of 76 people

responded to the survey. Of those, 37 were sons or daughters of foster carers and 36 were children and young people in care (one respondent did not answer that question). Congratulations to Hollie and Courtney who jointly submitted their response to the online survey and won the prize draw – a fantastic Nintendo 3DS!

The analysis makes for interesting reading and in the sections that focussed on foster care, (page 62 onwards), the Fostering Network are encouraged that 53% of respondents support placement limits and 74% support a minimum allowance set by the government. We would be interested to hear your views on this analysis so please keep in touch!

The Bill is expected early in 2013. To download the full analysis, please visit: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/legislation



'Be Part of Someone's Memories' scoops two UK awards for public services



Morag Darnbrough and Clare Hughes from Glasgow's Families for Children team.

A **Social Work Services** campaign to recruit new foster and adoptive parents has been recognised in two UK awards for public services.

Glasgow City Council's Families for Children team in SWS has scooped prizes at both the Guardian's Public Services Awards and the Municipal Journal's 2012 Awards for the 'Be Part of Someone's Memories' campaign.

Backed by many prominent Glaswegians and highlighted across all media, the campaign helped Social Work to surpass its targets

for recruiting foster carers and adoptive parents.

The council is delighted for all those who worked so hard to make the recruitment campaign a success and the honours received are richly deserved. Increasing the number of carers has made a huge difference to how they can look after the vulnerable children that come into care.

For further information visit:
www.guardian.co.uk/publicserviceawards/public-service-awards-2012

Glasgow currently has more than 1,200 children in foster care and 300 in residential care with 1,500 children living at home with their parents while under social work supervision. 'Be Part of Someone's Memories' led to 55 new foster carers being approved by the council and 58 approvals for adoption over a 12-month period, which exceeded the targets set by Social Work Services.

The Council is always looking for new foster and adoptive parents and so the success of the campaign is a timely reminder for anyone who has ever considered fostering or adoption to come forward now and contact the Council.

The Council's Families for Children team can be contacted on 0845 270 0609 or by emailing families.children@sw.glasgow.gov.uk. More information is available at www.glasgow.gov.uk/memories

The award received from the Guardian was for the best public sector communications project in the UK, while the Municipal Journal top prize was for best contender in the Children's Services Category.

Foster carers who have benefited from our new member offers

Our **foster carer** members have been making the most of the new benefits we introduced in 2012. Over 400 have enjoyed discounts on days out through our Merlin Entertainments offer. To make use of your discount, you need to book online and use the discount code which is available in the members area of our website.

Since the summer, hundreds of members have taken advantage of an exclusive discount on home insurance specifically for foster carers

with Towergate. One member called it "a great product for foster carers" and another praised the "helpful staff".

Also, Endsleigh Financial has been helping our members find a suitable mortgage through our new mortgage advice line. One foster carer from Scotland said their bank "didn't want to help us in any way because we are full time self-employed foster carers", but by calling Endsleigh "we were able to secure a mortgage for our new home".

Find out more about these offers at www.fostering.net/member-offers

News from the online community

Launched in April 2012, the online community has quickly grown into the place to go to discuss anything and everything to do with fostering.

Recently, foster carers have shared their experiences on the challenges they face when a looked after child approaches 18; compared methods for dealing with extreme behaviour; conducted a straw poll on how many placements they had compared to how many they were approved for; and discussed the pros and cons of having contact in their home.

Join today at www.fostering.net/community

Booktrust launch pilot of the Letterbox Club for looked after children in Scotland



For more information on the Letterbox Club please visit www.letterboxclub.org.uk or contact Lizzie.Poulton@booktrust.org.uk

The Letterbox Club sends brightly coloured parcels of books, stationery and maths games direct to looked after children through the post. These exciting parcels and their specially chosen contents inspire children to improve their reading and maths and are also a great way for carers and children to enjoy educational activities together.

In 2013, up to 150 children will be selected to take part in the pilot of the programme in Scotland. Funded by the Barcapel Foundation and Hachette UK, children in P3 and P5 in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverclyde and two more local authorities, will each receive six parcels from May to October next year. As well as fiction and non-fiction titles, maths games developed by the University of Leicester and quality stationery, these parcels will include the best in Scottish writing for children.

The programme is run by the charity Booktrust, in partnership with the University of Leicester and currently runs in Northern Ireland, Wales and England, where they are celebrating their 10th anniversary next year.

Research has shown that as well as enjoying and using the contents of the parcels, children taking part in the Letterbox Club make significant progress in reading and number.



Safer Caring: a new approach

This year's annual conference saw the launch of the Fostering Network's new book, *Safer Caring: a new approach*, which equips foster carers, fostering services and public authorities to properly manage risk. Brid Featherstone, a foster carer, social worker and professor of social care at the Open University, has reviewed the book and says:

"Safer Caring: a new approach is packed with affirming and wise advice that will be of value to all of us as we attempt to make sense of the current policy context."

Members can purchase a copy, priced at £15, from www.fosteringresources.co.uk, book onto the online training course at www.fostering.net/training-and-events/online-training, or find out more about the new approach at www.fostering.net/safer-caring

New digital guide for foster carers

This spring will see the launch of the Fostering Network's new guide to fostering in the digital world. The guide has been written for foster carers and looks at the issues for carers and children in care regarding online safety and the growth of digital technologies.

The guide includes general advice about internet safety, values and principles, as well as providing advice on what to do if things go wrong. The guide also looks towards the future at what foster carers need to be aware of as the digital world grows. Finally, there's also a handy glossary of digital terms, and signposts to more detailed advice and support.

To find out how to pre-order your copy, [e training@fostering.net](mailto:training@fostering.net)



Jamielee



Heather



Megan

Remember, we are always looking for artwork from children and young people to share so please keep drawing, painting and photographing and sharing your creativity with us!

e-card competition



Congratulations to all the children and young people who entered our festive e-card competition. We were delighted to receive over 30 entries from children aged 4 to 14 and we had a really tough time picking a winner as they were all fantastic. Thank you to everyone who took part.

Jamielee, aged 9, was the overall winner with Shannon, aged 4, in second place and Robbie, aged 10, and Yejin, aged 9, awarded joint third place.

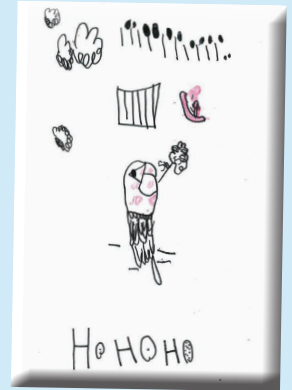
We were really pleased to be able to give everyone a prize voucher and a certificate thanks to the kind donation courtesy of an anonymous donor. On behalf of all the children and young people, and the Fostering Network we would like to say a huge 'thank you' to them for their kindness.



Shannon



Declan



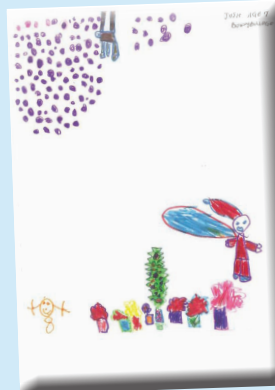
John



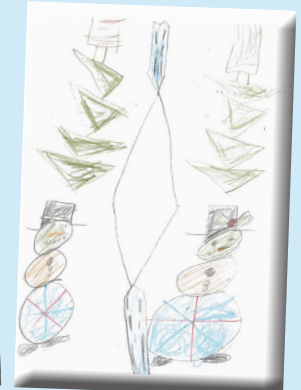
Robbie



Yejin



Josh



Robert



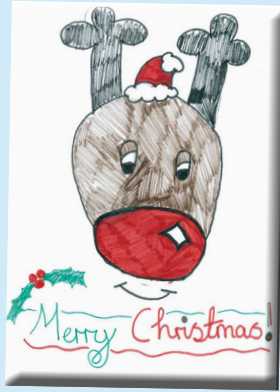
Jake



Robert



Jennifer



Chloe



Demi



Erin



Sophie



Jamielee



Erin



Rhianan



Dana



Hollye



Sarah-Jane



Erin



Kier



Chloe



Morgan



Robert



Dylan



Julie



Lisa



Lisa

Being Heard



use of forum theatre allowed the audience to actively engage with the issues that the children and young people had raised as they were given the opportunity to re-enact scenes to explore the feelings of the characters and create alternative storylines where Alisha was listened to differently (see pictures). The experience highlighted the powerlessness some children and young people can feel when excluded from day-to-day decisions about their lives.

Funded by the Scottish Universities' Insight Institute, this innovative knowledge exchange programme, *Getting it Right for Looked After Disabled Children and Young People* aims to explore and understand the experiences of looked after disabled children and young people in research, policy and practice arenas, in order to inform and encourage change. A series of thematic workshops: Being Counted (October 2012), Being Heard (December 2012), Being Included (February 2013) and Being Valued (April 2013) were developed to bring together academics, policy makers, service practitioners, third sector organisations, service user organisations to discuss and debate the key issues.

Podcasts and further information are available for each workshop. To find out more about the programme, please contact Dr Louise Hill at CELCIS, e.Louise.Hill@strath.ac.uk

In December six children and young people from East Park School in Glasgow performed 'Alisha's Surprise', a play that they had written and directed. This aimed to highlight some of the issues facing 'looked after' disabled children and young people in Scotland. Of the 16,000 looked after children in Scotland it is estimated that at least 7-11% have disabilities yet often constitute a hidden group in research, policy and practice. The group of six children and young people had worked with Active Inquiry, an arts based company, over a fifteen week period to develop a unique Forum Theatre experience on the topic 'Being Heard'. The play made its debut performance at The Lighthouse in Glasgow, in front of an invited audience of fifty academics, policy makers, managers and practitioners from across Scotland. The play was also performed for families and staff at East Park.

Created as a fictional story by the group, 'Alisha's Surprise' consists of five scenes starting on Alisha's 15th birthday and depicts her life within the residential children's unit and portrays relationships with staff, young people and her family. The story highlights how easily plans can change should a staff member fall ill, should disputes

arise with another young person and the finger of blame is pointed in the wrong direction, or where meetings with social work take precedence. The play ends with Alisha upset and frustrated at the unfairness of the situation. Why has nobody taken the time to listen to her?

The play was performed with great exuberance by the young people and staff involved and was hailed a fantastic success. The innovative



Fosterline

UPDATE



If you have benefited from Fosterline Scotland we really want to hear from you and to hear your case studies to enable us to share these with decision makers. Please write in or email fosterlinescotland@fostering.net to share your experience.

Remember we are here to assist you with a range of fostering queries, whether finding out about fostering, support in times of difficulty or just to get some clarification.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have a query we can help with.



As a charity, the Fostering Network Scotland's Fosterline service is currently funded by the Scottish Government. With changes to how and where this funding is allocated we need your support in lobbying the Scottish Government to ensure that we don't lose this much needed service.

Housing benefit changes

While Northern Ireland has yet to decide whether to implement the Welfare Reform Act, in April 2013 new housing benefit rules will come into force in England, Wales and Scotland. In these countries, rooms occupied by fostered children in social housing will be deemed "under-occupied" and will not be covered by housing benefit.

The Government has pledged £5 million to make up any shortfall but this is not ring-fenced, and we have heard that some local authorities may not be using the fund for foster carers. We are also concerned about foster carers who live in social housing outside the local authority for whom they foster. If you as a foster carer think this change may adversely affect you, please get in touch with our campaigns team campaigns@fostering.net

Recommended minimum allowances 2013-14



and do not include any form of fee for the foster carer.

Fostering services are reminded of the need to distinguish between the allowance and any fee payments in the overall payments they make to foster carers. We also recognise that some services which broadly follow our recommended allowances do make some adjustments to local conditions or to specific individual needs such as exceptional transport costs. The Fostering Network encourages fostering services to raise fees to foster carers in line with the pay awards they make to staff.

Our minimum allowances for 2013-14 will be (2012-13 figures in brackets):

Age 0-4	£137.18	(£134.49)
Age 5-10	£156.52	(£153.20)
Age 11-15	£194.53	(£190.72)
Age 16+	£236.64	(£232.00)

The Fostering Network recommends an additional four weeks allowance to cover the cost of birthdays, holidays and a religious festival.

The Fostering Network is mindful of the need to make recommendations which are fair to children in foster care and to the foster carers charged with their care, and which have regard to the new budgetary constraints under which fostering services are operating. In Scotland there are currently no official recommendations, unlike in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In 2013 the Fostering Network will be revisiting our calculations and will undertake new research to calculate the costs involved in caring for fostered children, which will enable us to assess the needs of today's fostering households. We intend that this research will be available before autumn 2013.

The Fostering Network has recommended an increase of 2 per cent in its minimum allowances for 2013-14. This is based on the forecast rate of inflation for 2013 as shown by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in September 2012. Our recommended allowances are designed to cover the cost of looking after a fostered child,

The new Education Hub

The Fostering Network will soon be launching our new Education Hub, full of resources to help foster carers support children with their education.

You'll find information about exams, transport to school, extra support with homework and fun holiday activities, all in one easy-to-use online space.

Find out more at www.fostering.net/education-hub

Funding for the Fostering Network to look at fostering panels in Scotland

The Fostering Network Scotland are pleased to have been awarded funding from the Big Lottery Fund to undertake a six month scoping project to look at fostering panels.

Starting in February 2013 this will explore the extent to which young people with experience of foster care currently inform fostering panels across Scotland. It is anticipated that the recommendations from this work will shape a larger project that will actively engage with young people to champion their involvement in the approval and review of foster carers across Scotland.

Sarah McEnhill will be in touch with fostering services from February and would be keen to hear from a range of people including young people who are or who have been involved in fostering panels, young people who would have liked to have been involved but experienced barriers in doing so and panel chairs.

Contact **t** 0141 204 1400 **e** sarah.mcenhill@fostering.net to find out more.

Fostering Links update

Between October 2009 and January 2013 the Fostering Network received funding from the Big Lottery Fund to deliver the Fostering Links project. The project aimed to reduce the isolation foster carers experience as a result of their fostering role. To address this the project delivered a range of events and supports for foster carers such as membership meetings, focus groups, advocacy, assertiveness and media skills training and the *Fostering in Scotland* newsletter.

Over the years the project has directly engaged with over 1,500 people (over 1,000 foster carers), enabling them to make connections, develop skills and confidence and influence developments in foster care.

In addition to foster carers completing the evaluation forms at each of the events they attended, the project also undertook a survey between October and December to gather feedback. We would like to say a huge 'thank

you' to everyone who took the time to complete the survey and share their views with us.

The project also commissioned a video evaluation to capturing the real voices of foster carers who have benefited from the project. We look forward to being able to share some of the key messages from this with you also – watch this space!!!

These are just some of the many comments we have received:

"I feel more empowered and listened to."

"[Connecting with others allowed me] to communicate with other carers regarding mutual problems and issues so that as a carer we are not working in isolation."

"Having more knowledge & training increased my confidence & has enabled me to be a better advocate for my foster children."

"By listening to other carers' issues/problems enabled me to learn from them."

"It gives a greater sense of a fostering sector workforce, where there are differences between agencies but there is an overall purpose and goal."

The final report on the outcomes of the project will be available soon. Please contact Sarah McEnhill for further information.

Fundraising Update

Get fit, fight the winter blues and make a difference for children in foster care by getting involved with fundraising this spring! We'll support you every step of the way with friendly advice and a fundraising kit, and we can even help you promote your event by sharing your story via Facebook and Twitter.

We're in the middle of spring-cleaning the fundraising cupboard here at the Fostering Network, and will be refreshing our supporter materials and packs. If you have any fundraising ideas, we'd love to hear your suggestions.

We are also gearing up to launch a new, national fundraising event in which everyone can take part. We'll have a downloadable pack coming soon on our website, with further details to follow. Hint: it's something Britain is famous for...

Gifts that give twice

In these times of rising postage costs, e-cards are fast becoming an alternative to traditional paper cards. When you send an e-card with our partner, **CharityGreetings.com**, you can attach a donation to the Fostering Network, making it a gift that gives twice.

Charity Greetings also deliver paper cards (you can order up to six months in advance, making sure no birthday or anniversary goes forgotten), each of which donates at least 20p to the Fostering Network. Order by going online, charitycards.fostering.net

We're also calling for all unwanted Christmas presents. If you have an unloved gift that you'd like to turn into a donation, why not offer it on eBay? Details on how to do so are here www.fostering.net/support-us/ebay.

Fundraising activities

Nightrider, London, 8-9 June 2013

This year we have a very limited number of guaranteed places in the *Nightrider* cycle challenge at a reduced rate of £39. *Nightrider* is a thrilling 100KM night cycle around London, taking in 50 of London's top landmarks and setting the city aglow. *Nightrider* sells out early every year, so if you're a bright spark who can raise £250, register today to ensure your spot. www.nightrider.org.uk

Kilimanjaro

Last call for Mount Kili! It's your last chance to tackle the highest freestanding mountain in Africa in 2013, and have the opportunity to make a big difference for children in foster care. The 10 day trip is an open challenge, which means you'll have the opportunity to make new friends and meet people from different charities. Departs on 27 September 2013.

If you would like to take part in an activity to raise funds there are a range of events taking place all over the country including the London to Paris cycle ride, Great Swim outdoor swimming challenges, and marathons.

To register for a place or find out more, contact fundraising@fostering.net or visit www.fostering.net/support-us



Get in the Frame for Foster Care Fortnight 2013

We are inviting foster families, fostering services and prospective foster carers to *Get in the Frame for Foster Care Fortnight*, from 13 to 26 May 2013.

We will be turning the media spotlight on fostering by encouraging people to put themselves in the frame and start their journey to becoming a foster carer. To bring the campaign to life we will be placing foster families, celebrities and politicians in our picture frame and sharing the photos to

raise awareness of the urgent need for more foster carers.

We are encouraging fostering services to join in the campaign. To support you we ran a workshop in Edinburgh in January and we are producing an information guide to showcase all the opportunities for you to *Get in the Frame*. For further information please contact James Foyle, recruitment and retention consultant, ejames.foyle@fostering.net

The Fostering Network Scotland...

Meet
the
team



Sara Lurie,
Director

sara.lurie@fostering.net



@tfn_sara



Sarah McEnhill,
Project manager

sarah.mcenhill@fostering.net



Linda Curran,
Office Manager

linda.curran@fostering.net



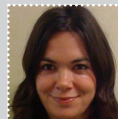
Joy Crawford,
Learning & Development Co-ordinator

joy.crawford@fostering.net



Deborah Cook,
Administrator

deborah.cook@fostering.net



Katie Alibone is our **Fosterline Scotland worker** who works Tuesday to Friday, 10am til 4pm. Katie can be contacted on 0141 204 1400. You can also email Katie **e** katie.alibone@fostering.net or **e** fosterlinescotland@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



/thefosteringnetwork

Other useful numbers:

The Fostering Network - Head 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

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