

Fostering

Promoting Foster
Care in Scotland

Issue 9 Spring 2005

in Scotland



Those involved with the mentoring project enjoyed a residential weekend at Wiston lodge in February.

Mentoring moves on

March saw the end of three years of funding for the Scottish Care Leavers Mentoring project. This was a pilot project aimed at researching the value of community based supportive adult relationships for young people making the transition out of foster or residential care into adulthood and more independent living.

Five small-scale pilot projects were set up in partnership with other agencies covering six local authority areas. As mentoring support to the young people often lasts for a year or more, numbers coming through the projects has not been large enough for us to make definitive statements about the value of mentoring.

Young people who have had an opportunity to engage with a volunteer mentor have told us though that the experience has greatly increased their self confidence, their ability to advocate on their own behalf and has given them a clearer sense of what they can achieve in life and how to pursue their goals.

The legacy of the project is that we are leaving behind a number of vibrant mentoring schemes, populated by very committed and able local coordinators and volunteers. We are also leaving behind a training pack for volunteer mentors which will be available in April and a research report that will be formally launched in May.

We would welcome your contributions on any news, views, articles, ideas.

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Fostering Links project

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Hello Folks!

It's been several months since the last *Fostering in Scotland*, and a lot has happened as regards fostering in Scotland in that time. I only have space to mention a few of the developments and would encourage you to check out our new website, or come along to our membership meetings the details of which are enclosed with this magazine, or alternatively contact your local Regional Adviser, whose details are included in this magazine.

For starters we are nearing the end of *Caring for our Children* which has looked in detail at fostering in Scotland, you may remember filling in the questionnaire some months ago, if you are a carer. In part two we asked Social Work Managers what they saw as the major issues, and in part three, which we have just completed, we consulted widely on the core skills required to undertake the fostering task. All these reports are with the Scottish Executive and part one was instrumental in securing the £12m investment announced in the Parliament, in November 2004.

Unfortunately we have had to wind up the Mentoring project, due to us not being able to find ongoing funds, similarly there will be no more Summer Schools as the Scottish Executive have decided not to continue to fund this annual event. I know that those foster families that attended over the last five years will be disappointed that they will not be able to attend any further schools, but we will continue to press the Scottish Executive and who knows!!!

All our projects report that 2004 was their busiest year, our **Advice Information and Mediation service** dealt with over 380 referrals, and helped 46 foster families facing allegations.

Our **Training Team** delivered 86 days training across the country attended by over 200 carers, social workers, and others.

The **Young Persons project** looks to have finally got the government to do something about police checks in terms of overnight stays, an issue that has remained difficult for carers and young people alike.

There's so much more to report, possible changes on Allegations, Post Approval Training, Sons and Daughters Support, Carer/Peer Support Systems, Allowances and Fees.

Check out our website, or give me a call, if you have a support group, association, or if you work in a family placement team we would love to visit you and discuss the issues in more detail, just give us a call on 0141 204 1400

Bryan Ritchie

Director, the Fostering Network Scotland

YoungMinds training

The Scottish Executive are funding YoungMinds to train anyone working with looked after children on how to support and meet the needs of children and young people with a mental health problem. Research shows that children who are 'looked after' have a higher rate of mental health problems than children who remain with their families. YoungMinds are keen to attract foster carers to this training.

All courses are free. YoungMinds is the national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people.

If you are interested in attending this training contact Caroline MacIntyre at Young Minds, 102-108 Clerkenwell Road, London. DC1M 5SA.

t 020 7336 8445

e enquires@youngminds.org.uk
visit www.youngminds.org.uk

Dear Members,

It is really good to be writing this column again after the lengthy gap when we were without staff or resources to continue the newsletter or membership meetings. We all look forward to working with Sarah to get the links project well established. We need your help to ensure that the issues we consider are the ones that would be of interest to you whether you are a carer, a young person in foster care, a fostering link worker, a social worker for fostered children or the son or daughter of a carer.

A lot has been happening in the months since the last meetings and Bryan will be covering the key developments in his contribution to the newsletter. I am delighted that the Scottish Executive is giving fostering the attention and respect it deserves. Euan Robson, the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, has taken a very keen interest in what foster care is about and what the fostering partners need to make the service strong for the children who are cared for by carers across Scotland. I was in Holyrood with Bryan when Euan Robson and many other MSPs debated the fostering service. The value that they placed on the work done was very clear. We will be relying on all of you to keep fostering in the sights of your local MSPs as we work in partnership with the Executive to take some of the key issues forward with the new monies announced by the Minister.

The Scottish Committee has been meeting and looking at how they can be more active in supporting the Fostering Network staff in their work and what tasks we could do to improve services. We have added a new member to the Committee, Kay Jackson, and she will be the link with the south east parts of Scotland. With Marjorie Ruddick from the north and Katrina Weldon from the west, they will work with Sarah to arrange the meetings across Scotland and be a contact point for foster carers wanting more information about the meetings.

The Board of the Fostering Network for the UK has also been active and we are reviewing the strategic plan for the UK. This plan will be complemented by business plans for each of the countries. The Board is also looking at how Trustees are elected and what skills are needed at that level to ensure that the Board works effectively to promote the interests of all those involved in the fostering service. It is very important that everyone on the Board keeps in the forefront of all work and planning that we are there to help children and young people thrive in foster care.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you as we go round Scotland for meetings in 2005. If you have issues you want to raise with me then please feel free to write to me at the Fostering Network in Glasgow. I will always be pleased to hear from any of our members.



Chair, Scottish Committee
Spring 2005



Admin assistant, Deborah
Cook and Scott Telfer

Scott Telfer, Project Worker for the last two and a half years with the Scottish Care Leavers Mentoring Project, leaves us to take up the post of National Development Manager with the Scottish Mentoring Network. We wish him every success in his future.

Foster Care Fortnight

Foster Care Fortnight is an annual campaign which raises the profile of fostering and highlights the need for more foster carers, co-ordinated by the Fostering Network.

During the two weeks, fostering services around the UK hold events and promote in their communities and through their local media the urgent need for more foster carers. Currently, there is a shortage of 10,000 foster carers in the UK.

Over the past three decades Foster Care Fortnight has helped raise the awareness of fostering, and in particular encouraged people to consider becoming foster carers.

Foster Care Fortnight is supported by television presenter Davina McCall, Madness lead singer and TV presenter Suggs and children's author Jacqueline Wilson.

In Scotland the Childrens Commisioner will be launching our call for 1700 new foster households, to meet the needs of children and young people.

If you get the chance look at our web site, and given it's election time why not ask your local MP what they intend doing about recruiting more carers?

Foster Care Fortnight
9 May - 22 May 2005



What should I do when faced with an allegation?

One carer shared her recent experience of having an allegation of assault made against her by her 10-year old foster child. Her foster child had been in placement almost 18 months and has been assessed as having ADHD and severe attachment disorder. During this time he has displayed extremely challenging behaviours, verbally and physically assaulting those within the household. The carer, with the support of her social worker had researched various alternative methods for managing behaviour that had been proving to have some success throughout the placement.

On the day in question, the behaviours began to escalate, with the carer contacting emergency social work at lunchtime for support. While waiting for support to arrive, the carer had tried to prevent her foster child from running out of the house, resulting in him being scratched. The child was removed, the police interviewed the carer and subsequently charged her with assault. The charge was not proceeded but the carer faces a review and referral to the Fostering Panel.

The carer shares what she has learned from her experience:

- Record all incidents, and send a copy to the social worker
- Seek help from social work, other foster carers, the Fostering Network and the internet on dealing with difficult behaviours
- Take part in training courses
- Do not try to restrain any child unless you have been properly trained in how to do this.
- Try to have someone with you for support, if possible, when being interviewed about an allegation, as you will be very confused and anxious at this time.

Sandra Moody, Advice and Mediation worker for the Fostering Network, agrees with this advice, and also suggests being clear with your link worker as to their role. It is important to have the support of your link worker during this time. Members of the Fostering Network should also contact the legal helpline, and if being formally interviewed by the police, should seek legal advice.

More controversially the carer suggests that all incidents of assault on the carer or their family or at school should be reported to the police, as the police indicated that it would have been helpful to know more about his behaviour.

We would be interested to hear your views on this.



Reception at Edinburgh Castle for foster carers

Over 160 carers attended a reception hosted by the Minister for Education and Young People Mr Peter Peacock, and the Deputy Minister Mr Euan Robson, who has special responsibility for foster care.

Every local authority and agency were asked by the Fostering Network to send at least four carers to this event in recognition of the contribution that they make to the lives of children and young people.

It allowed carers an opportunity to talk directly to both the Ministers but also the civil servants, about the issues facing the service across Scotland.

Bryan Ritchie, Director, the Fostering Network Scotland, attended the evening, 'As you can read in his article Mr Robson found the evening a real success, and all the carers I spoke to certainly enjoyed both the surroundings, and also the chance to talk face to face with the Ministers.'

The Fostering Network Scotland Membership Meeting

Facing the challenges

Tuesday 31 May 2005 Forthbank Stadium, Stirling

Wednesday 1 June 2005 Jury's Inn, Glasgow

Time 10.00am til 3.00pm (Buffet lunch will be provided)

The day will look at some of the behavioural challenges faced by children in care, including attachment difficulties, foetal alcohol spectrum disorders and attention deficits.

Speaker: Dr Helen Minnis, Yorkhill Royal Hospital for Sick Children
Includes workshops:

I don't have a problem child, I have a child with a problem Attachment & Challenging Behaviour

This is a one-day event, being held on two consecutive days. These meetings are free and open to anyone interested in the foster care service.

Please confirm your attendance by completing the registration form.

For further information, please contact the Fostering Network Scotland
t 0141 204 1400

the fostering network
helping children to thrive





Message from the Scottish Executive

The contribution that foster carers make to vulnerable children's lives should never be underestimated or undervalued. At times of crisis, foster carers are there offering badly needed support and stability. They are there in the quieter times as well.

Without the help and guidance of fosterers, vulnerable young people would not have the chance to make the most of their lives.

More than 3,500 children in Scotland need to have the support of a caring foster family environment. This means that today the valuable skills of fosterers are in unprecedented demand.

My priority is to make sure that young people who are away from their families, whatever the reason, get the best care available. I want these children to feel safe, valued and ready for whatever challenges they may face in their future.

I want each and every one of them to have the chance to fulfil their potential, to have the confidence to aim high and to know that they can turn their hopes into reality. We must try to end the fate of too many looked after children, which is to fall between the gaps and find

themselves condemned to a life of underachievement.

Fostering is one way that we can try to achieve this ambition. I know that for some young people residential care will always be the best option for them. For many, the emotional support and nurturing that foster carers can provide is invaluable.

Doing well at school and getting qualifications is clearly an element of young people's development. Exam passes influence the future paths of children, helping children choose their paths of work or study. Fostering helps to boost educational attainment.

Children who have a good attitude to learning are more likely to have ambitions for further education and careers beyond that. They have the determination to get there. Fostering helps instil children with the confidence to push their limits and reach for the top.

However the most recent figures show disappointing exam results for all looked after young people. That is why we are providing £6 million to enable local authorities to run pilot programmes aimed at improving educational attainment to learn what benefits not only individual children but communities across Scotland.

If more children are to benefit from the care and support of fosterers, we need to attract more carers. One of the ways we hope to do this is by improving fostering services across Scotland. That is why I was pleased recently to announce a significant boost to the funding of foster care.

We have also linked up with the Fostering Network, so that we can hear first hand about the changes carers want and need to help them cope with their challenging roles.

The Fostering Network has looked closely at fostering services in Scotland, and is especially considering the issues of support and training. The perspective of foster carers themselves will help us ensure that the services and supports are strengthened in a way that will genuinely be of help.

We are also working to update the legal framework for adoption and long-term fostering to reflect changes in society since the law was originally passed some twenty-five years ago. Our proposals for change will be the subject of extensive consultation and we will ensure that the voices of foster carers are heard as part of this process.

It was a privilege to meet dedicated foster carers at the reception we held in your honour at Edinburgh Castle in March. It is important that the contribution you have all made to so many young people's lives is recognised. I found your stories and experiences so inspiring and just want to reaffirm my real admiration for what foster carers do.

Ministers are determined that all Scotland's children get the best possible start in life. There is no doubt that foster carers play a huge role in that process.

Through the care and confidence that fosterers provide, many of our most troubled youngsters now have the self-belief vital to their future. I firmly believe that foster carers are essential in ensuring that all of the next generation is confident and successful.

Euan Robson

Deputy Education Minister



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

The Fostering Network Scotland Open Courses Summer 2005

Caring For Young People Who Have Been Abused

1-day course
Tuesday 17 May 2005
Thainstone House Hotel,
Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
Price: £70 members
(£140 non members),
includes lunch

The Skills To Foster Leaders Course

3-day course
Tuesday 14, Wednesday 15,
Thursday 16 June 2005
Mount Royal Hotel, Edinburgh
Price: £210 members
(£420 non members),
includes lunch

New Course Child Protection

1-day course
Wednesday 8 June 2005
Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Glasgow
Price: £70 members
(£140 non members),
includes lunch

If you would like to discuss any of the above training days or any of our other courses further, please call and speak to a member of the training team on 0141 204 1400



Renfrewshire say thank you to carers

A reception hosted by Renfrewshire Council was recently held, allowing foster carers to take a break from their busy lives and enjoy an opportunity to gather informally over lunch with other carers, heads of social work and council leaders.

Depute Provost Jean Goldie thanked carers for the essential service that they provide within the community. Cllr Tommy

Williams said, 'Foster carers are a crutch in times of need. Today's lunch is a token of esteem.'

Thanks was also given to Marion and Ed Crangle receivers of Provost's community award 2004 for their contribution to foster care over the past 16 years, and to foster carer Margaret Coia who has cared for over 100 placements over the years. Mrs Coia said, 'It's not often I get a chance to chat with the other carers like this. It's

good to keep in touch with what's going on and speak to the other carers.'

Director of Social Work, David Crawford said, 'as well as the recruitment of prospective carers, we must ensure the retention and support of existing carers who are the most valuable resource we have. There is a clear preference to have children in families if at all possible and foster carers provide this essential service.'

The Fostering Links project

The Fostering Network Scotland's Fostering Links project is a new three-year project funded by the Community Fund.

The project aims to strengthen the supports within the foster care community, reduce isolation amongst members and highlight the issues that face the foster care service in Scotland today.

The Fostering Links project will bring members together, raising awareness of the issues surrounding the provision of foster care and will empower

those directly involved in foster care to lobby decision makers, with the Fostering Network providing encouragement, support and training where identified.

A variety of mediums will allow a two-way exchange of ideas, issues and information between the Fostering Network and all the partners involved in the provision of foster care. **Membership meetings**, representative **focus groups**, *Fostering in Scotland* **newsletter** and the development of **support groups** across Scotland, will all feature within

the project, and are all essential channels for ensuring that the views of those on the front line are communicated to decision makers by members, and similarly, are vital forums for allowing communication from decision makers to members.

For further information about the Fostering Links Project contact Sarah Crangle, Fostering Links Project Worker, t 0141 204 1400

e sarah.crangle@fostering.net



Young People's Video Project

The Young People's project will be launching two new videos later this year. Both videos have been made with young people working with the project, across Scotland. One video highlights the experiences of children and young people in foster care and the other highlights the experiences of sons and daughters of foster carers. Young people from across the country were involved in gathering material for the videos. Two young people's planning groups have spent many months working on the style, content and direction of the videos. Jacqueline Scott and James Watt outline their involvement below.

'In 2004 I was offered a place in being a part of making the Fostering Network video making. I was stunned and couldn't believe it! I knew it would be a great thing to get involved with. I was working with other people and they were great. It was good meeting new friends and we all had a great laugh working together.

Every week I would have to meet up with Kausar in the train station so we could get a train to Edinburgh to meet the rest of the group. We would always go for

something to eat before we went to an office room to discuss the filmmaking. I learned a lot after doing this.

I hope it puts a good point to social work. I've learned and seen the two sides of foster people and us. I've learned that its not just about foster kids, its about us too. It's about how we feel and what we need.

We do hope the video works out as we have put a lot of effort into it and tried our best. We have all stuck together and helped each other. Kausar has been a great help to us as well; we couldn't have done it without her. The group got on really well and it has been a great experience for us all.'

'I have been involved with the Fostering Network for about a year. My involvement with them has been educational and fun because I have learned more about foster work and I have met more people who have been in similar situations as mine. I have had fun while I have been involved with this project. I have been on a weekend camp where I got to do cool things such as rock climbing, abseiling and pot holing.

I have recently been working on an educational video. There have been two others helping me with the video. Kausar has helped with the video as well and gave us tips and guidelines to follow whilst writing the script.

The video is going to be for social workers to help them understand how people feel and how people can change their lifestyles and attitudes just by being involved with social workers and foster carers. I have had a great time whilst being involved with this project. I also think that if the Fostering Network gets noticed more by people then they will think differently about people in foster care. They will realise that we aren't bad people, it's just something that happens in life – some go into foster care and some don't. My name is James Watt and I would like to tell people, who are in foster care to enjoy it or at least try, don't live life feeling sad or depressed or even odd because you're in foster care, just be yourself.'

Focus Groups

We welcome the return of our focus group structure in April 2005. Meetings are being held twice yearly in Aberdeen, Ayr and Edinburgh, and involve representatives of both carers and family placement workers from local authority and voluntary agencies coming together to discuss current issues relevant to them, at a grass roots level.

The Regional Adviser for the west is Katrina Weldon

Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dumbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, NCH, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire,

St. Margarets and West Dumbartonshire

The Regional Adviser for the east is Kay Jackson

Barnardos, Carolina House Trust, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Edinburgh City, Falkirk, Fife, the Jane Moore Trust, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, St Andrews, Stirling and West Lothian

The Regional Adviser for the north is Marjorie Ruddick

Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Dundee, Highland, Moray, Orkney, Perth & Kinross, Shetland and Western Isles

These carers would be happy to hear from you if you have an issue that you wish to raise with regards to the fostering service in Scotland. They will take these issues forward with the focus group and Scottish Committee.

If you would like to get in touch with them, contact 0141 204 1400.

Part of the family – caring for a child with foetal alcohol syndrome

Patsy has been a foster carer for seven years, during which time she has cared for a variety of placements, as well as having six birth children and one adopted child of her own. At the moment Patsy and her family care for three placements, all between the ages of two and four.

Patsy spent some time chatting about looking after the youngest member of their household, two-year old Liam, who the family are hopeful of adopting.

When born, Baby Liam was diagnosed with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). At two and a half weeks old, and weighing 5lbs, Liam came to stay with Patsy and her family. Baby Liam was a planned admission, as his mum was a chronic alcoholic, and had continued to drink heavily throughout her pregnancy.

'For the first three months, he only slept for 40 minutes at a time. He would wake up, not wanting to be held but needing physical contact, just for me to be near him. I would put his basket at the side of my bed and rest my hand on him while we both slept. He could scream for hours on end. He was very jumpy and really rigid as a baby. Although he never slept much to begin with, he slept a lot at nine to ten months old.

Liam has congenital glaucoma and his eyes are really sensitive to light. He underwent eye surgery at four and a half months, and has been wearing glasses from when he was five months old. His eyesight has since improved 50per cent, as the eye continues to develop until the age of two

His feeding has always been erratic, and still is. He was on high-energy milk and supplemental infant feeds, and continues to have food supplements. He seems to like really strong flavours in food, like curries. Possibly as his taste buds have been affected by FAS.

He always seemed to be ill and appeared to have little or no immunity, which meant he would always have a virus. Even on his first birthday he had lumps in the glands in his neck as he had another infection. My daughter once commented how surprised she was because it had been five or six days since he had been ill. I think that over the past two years there have possibly been 10 days without illness. In August 2004, the paediatric specialist prescribed a low dose antibiotic, which has helped, and he will be coming off that at the end of March to see how his health is. When he was a year old, he was functioning as a five to six month old baby. All his internal organs appear to be fine at the moment. He has the classical facial features of FAS and a tiny head the size of a three to six month old.

Liam is now walking about, a hyperactive two-year old, climbing about on anything he can! Approximately 84per cent of children with FAS have some form of ADHD, (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) or ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). Liam often has tantrums, lying on the floor and kicking, but it's hard to say whether that's just his age!

He has passed his two-year developmental assessment, and we are delighted with how he is getting on. We have a very strong bond with each other, and he is very much a part of the family, with everyone doting on him. My grandchildren find it funny that they could have an uncle who is younger than them!

Patsy added that the support she received from the

department, her health visitor and the paediatric specialist at the hospital, as well as the internet were all invaluable sources of information. For further information, try www.fasaware.co.uk and www.fasworld.com

Some names have been changed to ensure confidentiality

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome – What is it?

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and other alcohol related birth defects refer to a group of birth defects, both physical and mental, caused as a direct result of the mother drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

Most infants with FAS are irritable, don't eat well, don't sleep well, are extra sensitive to sensory stimulation and have a strong startle reflex. Some may have heart defects or suffer abnormalities to the ears eyes liver and joints. Permanent neurological damage to the brain of the infant during pregnancy caused by exposure to alcohol can result in various behavioural symptoms. These include attention and memory deficits, hyperactivity, immature behaviour, and vulnerability to sexual, physical and emotional abuse. *(Courtesy of FasawareUK)*

Membership Meeting

I/ WE WILL ATTEND THE MEMBERSHIP MEETING/SEMINAR BEING HELD AT:



Forthbank Stadium, Stirling

Tuesday 31 May 2005,



Jury's Inn, Glasgow

Wednesday 1 June 2005,

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

POST CODE: _____

TEL NO _____

EMAIL: _____

MEMBER/ NON MEMBER: _____

NUMBER OF ADULTS ATTENDING: _____

LUNCH REQUIRED: _____

ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (Dietary/Access/Other): _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS SLIP BY Friday 20 May 2005

Sarah Crangle, Fostering Links project, The Fostering Network
Scotland, Ingram House, 2nd Floor, 227 Ingram Street,
Glasgow G1 1DA t 0141 204 1400; f 0141 204 6588

SIGNED: _____

No confirmation of attendance will be given, if you wish to confirm please call us on 0141 204 1400