

Issue 74

September 2022

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And more!



Hello everyone

I hope you have had a lovely summer and are looking forward to schools starting back! It has been a pleasure to meet with so many of you since joining The Fostering Network, and I very much look forward to working with more of you in the months ahead.

We are pleased to showcase some of the fantastic work that is being done as part of our Moving On project in this edition – take a look at page four for news of some of the free events for foster carers we have coming up.

You can also read an excerpt from the letter sent to foster carers by the

Minister for Children and Young People during Foster Care Fortnight, and hear about some of the work going on in Scotland to help implement The Promise. Also, if you know of a young person, aged 16-24, who might be interested in joining our new young person's advisory board, do get in touch with Laura whose details are on page seven.

Remember we are here to help you – Fosterline Scotland is available for all your queries, and our legal and stress helplines can help you with particular challenges. Do get in touch if we can help in any way.



Until next time,

Jacqueline Cassidy
Director of Scotland and Practice

Hearing About Me – new resources on children's hearings

On 4 May 2022, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) launched their revised All About Me forms, which will be replaced with one new **Hearing About Me** form. There is also a new **Going to a Hearing** leaflet for children and young people to compliment this. These will replace the previous Going to a Children's Hearing leaflets and All About Me forms.

In line with Keeping The Promise and our corporate parenting commitments, the new form was developed and designed by hearings-experienced young people on the Proud 2 Care Champions Board in Inverclyde. You will see that the questions, design and layout are very different with a fresh new look. The new form and leaflet links closely with Our Hearings, Our Voice's '40 Calls to Action' and many children and young peoples' requests to have online options to submit their views.

The form comes in a paper format which will be sent out with all notifications, as well as an online option which can be filled out if preferred. The paper **Hearing About Me** form and leaflet will be posted to every child and young person attending a face-to-face hearing. Again, this is available to fill in electronically on our website if the child or young person would prefer that option or if they are participating in a virtual hearing.

Our website also has lots of films and supporting information for children, young people and carers with updates to follow – so please do take a look. SCRA also offers free training on the Children's Hearings System to partner agencies, including foster carers.



You will also see on the form that we have referred to advocacy support for children and young people and the website to access it – **hearings-advocacy.com**.

Please help to support children and young people in letting the panel members at their children's hearing know their views. You can tell them about these new options, and how to access local advocacy support if they wish to have it. Advocacy workers can support children and young people to reflect their views in a variety of ways and can attend face to face and virtual hearings.

If you have any questions, please contact SCRA's participation officer, Jennifer Orren, at jennifer.oren@scra.gov.uk.



**SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION**

Minister for Children and Young People

Clare Haughey MSP

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

To all foster families in Scotland

May 2022

Dear Foster Families

I wanted to take this opportunity to pass on an enormous and heartfelt thank you for the commitment you make every day to ensuring children and young people are included in your families, and are given the love and support they need.

My Ministerial colleagues and I value the invaluable contribution you are all making by providing nurturing and safe environments. You may not be aware, but I was raised in a family that provided foster care, so I am very aware of some of the challenges as well as the rewards that comes from the role of foster caring. I felt a great sense of pride when I was appointed to my current Ministerial role as I fully appreciate the positive benefits of what a loving fostering environment can do to improve the lives and wellbeing of children and young people.

It has been over two long years since Covid-19 first arrived in Scotland and changed all of our lives. There is no denying that the last two years have caused unprecedented pressure that has required work that goes above and beyond your normal role. I acknowledge that it has not been an easy couple of years to navigate, but I also appreciate your tremendous patience, determination and continued efforts to keep life as stable as possible for your families in such circumstances. Your kindness, generosity and love to children and young people in your care has been even more important during the pandemic, so I cannot express my gratitude enough for your continuous hard work and putting your heart into supporting Scotland's children and young people.

A final note of thanks again for the huge difference you are making to some of our children and young people in some of the most vulnerable of situations and the positive effect you are making to their lives.

CLARE HAUGHEY

Clare Haughey

Minister for Children and Young People

Language creates realities...

It's true, words have power. What we say and how we say it is important. Our ongoing work to **#KeepThePromise** has involved stepping back to reflect on how our language might be stigmatising those who have experience of care or their families. Our research has shown that different words hold different meanings to children,

young people and their families. We also understand that some language is linked to legislation and the use of certain words we might not like or agree with cannot always be avoided.

We would like to invite you to reflect on the language you use, and discuss it with the children and young people in your lives. You may like to attend training facilitated by

Each and Every Child -
eachandeverychild.co.uk.

What words do the people we come into contact with prefer? Some may call it respite, some may call it a short break, others call it an overnight or a sleepover. All of these words hold meaning - let's make sure it's not the wrong meaning for those we work and care for. Just ask.

Moving On and foster carer mental wellbeing

Our Moving On project supports positive transitions through and out of foster care, for both the young person in foster care and all members of the families who foster. Being times of huge change, transitions often incur feelings of stress, anxiety and other strains on mental wellbeing for foster carers and their children and young people.

Foster carers have told us that they need a non-judgemental space to share their stress, worries, sadness and frustrations about transitions. Some feel that their fostering services often interpret a need for support as a sign that the carers are not coping with the demands of fostering, which can call their ability to care into question. To provide this safe space, in April Moving On hosted a wellbeing event online and in person in Glasgow for foster carers, which was run by trained counselling professionals. The event allowed foster carers to explore self-care and try out some wellbeing activities such as mindful craft and meditation.

Foster carers shared their advice for other carers, which you can see in these photos and are now part of our office. All these pieces of advice and other wellbeing resources for foster

carers are freely available on request. For more information, please email Bethany Shelton at scotland@fostering.net.

Upcoming wellbeing opportunities for foster carers

Therapeutic wellbeing groups

Join us to receive peer support in a facilitated and positive space. There will be supervised activities for children and young people available.

Our online session will run on Thursday 22 September via Zoom.

To register your interest for this session please email scotland@fostering.net.

Free training events

It can be hugely beneficial to attend training and be in spaces with likeminded people. Sharing experiences and strategies can help people's mental health and reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety. For this reason, we are continuing to run training with Children's Health Scotland to provide exactly that space. Upcoming training includes:

Understanding trauma and supporting recovery Wednesday 2 November 10am - 2pm online via Zoom

It is vital that foster carers are given the knowledge and skills they need to help children and young people through the complexities of understanding trauma and/or abuse and supporting their recovery.



The training aims to support foster carers who look after children and adolescents who have been impacted by childhood trauma.

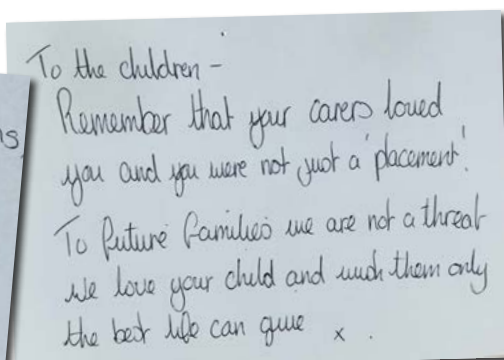
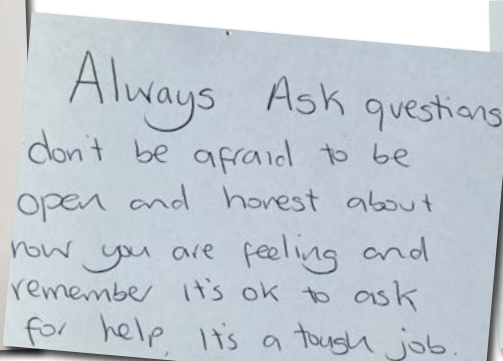
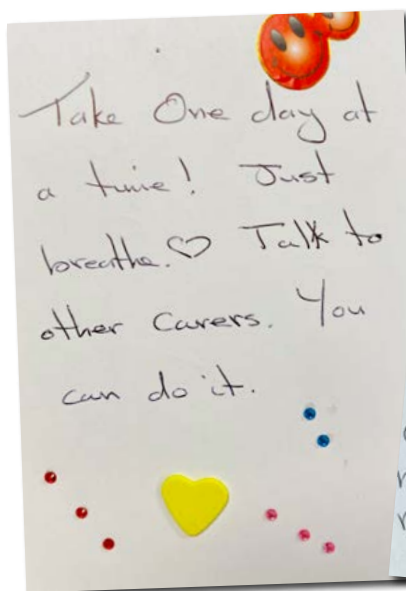
This session gives an introduction to trauma, what it is, where it comes from, how it affects children's behaviours and techniques to support recovery.

Calming techniques for carers and their children and young people - Wednesday 9 November 10am - 2pm online via Zoom

Many foster carers have been confronted with a child or young person displaying extreme upset, anger or challenging behaviour. Whether this is in the home or in the middle of a busy supermarket, this training will help explain why this might be happening. It will explain how to avoid it in the first place and provide some practical techniques for coping with it when it does happen.

This second workshop continues many of the themes and ideas shared in 'Understanding Trauma and Supporting Recovery', so it is recommended participants attend both sessions.

Email scotland@fostering.net to register your interest in either or both sessions.



Update from The Promise Scotland

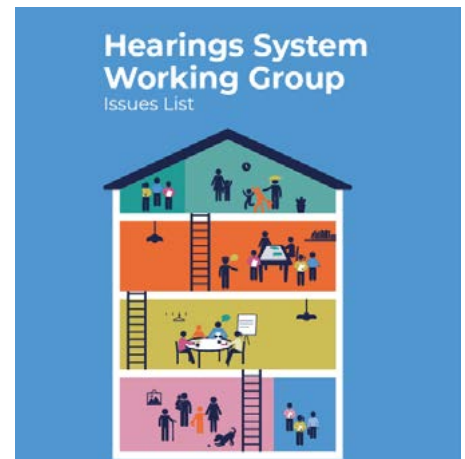
As much as we would want it to be, change is not linear. Implementing the conclusions of the Independent Care Review has a better chance than most change programmes, with cross party commitment, and huge levels of support and political impetus. However, since the launch in 2020, there has been a whole host of external factors that could have derailed progress.

One such curve ball came in August 2021, when the Scottish Government launched a consultation about a plan for a National Care Service that considered the inclusion of children and families social work within it. The confusion and inertia that it caused has been dissipated (a little) as just before parliamentary recess, a bill was laid in Scottish Parliament that provides a framework for a National Care Service. While there are provisions that could allow children and families to be included in the future, it is not the default starting position. There is

space and time to assess and understand whether this will be the right thing to do for Scotland's families and carers.

However, it is all too clear that this continued question will float over all activity to **#KeepThePromise** over the next few years. What we must make sure is that key work programmes that will lead to ongoing sustainable change stay the course.

One of those work programmes is the **Hearing System Working Group**, which is set up to oversee a collaborative redesign programme. There is a whole host of information about the work on The Promise Scotland website, including a webinar, so do take a look. As part of this work and through The Fostering Network, a group of foster carers came together with service designers. They mapped out what the current system looks like from their perspective, and this work is being fed into the eventual recommendations.



As we head into summer, work is on track to conclude in April 2023. Making sure that the hearing system truly delivers on its innovative approach to treat all children through the lens of their needs not their deeds, is as important now as it was when Kilbrandon wrote his report. And a key part of what it means to **#KeepThePromise**.

Fi McFarlane, head of public affairs at The Promise Scotland

Sparking curiosity through fun learning

We are all born curious. It is what leads us to explore, to try the untried, and to ask questions. Like, do goldfish fart? Do bees have knees? And how do all those holes get into Swiss cheese?

It is that feeling of wonder that makes learning fun.

We know that learning can change children's lives for the better, and that some of a child's most rewarding learning experiences happen outside of school. Yet, for many, these opportunities do not exist. Right now, poverty and inequality are standing in the way of their right to learn, play, and express themselves.



But what if every child had the opportunity to learn for fun and pursue their ambitions to the fullest?

Scottish based charity, Curiosity Collective, give children the freedom to explore a world of learning beyond the classroom. Whether that is through supporting children and families to take part in fun activities at home, or teaming up with local communities to turn everyday places into learning spaces.

Their hugely successful home-learning kit, Wonderbox, was initially created in response to the pandemic, designed to support children to learn and play at home. Since 2020, Wonderbox has been gifted to over 8,000 children and they are now working with The Fostering Network in Scotland to reach even more.

Wonderbox is designed to help maintain a healthy routine and alleviate stress, ensuring children have access to opportunities which allow them to grow and develop. Each edition of Wonderbox is packed with activities, idea cards, stickers, pencils, themed

gifts and a journal to put the fun into learning at home. It is a valued gift that children cherish and families value.

'I love Wonderbox - there are so many different challenges and things to do. My family all join in with me and it is so fun.' Shannon, age 9.

Wonderbox enhances children's wellbeing, supports family learning and helps to build connections. Provision of these fun learning materials has enabled children to take part in learning and has given children the opportunity to explore the world around them.

If you would like a free Wonderbox* for your foster family, please get in touch by contacting scotland@fostering.net. We are delighted to be collaborating with Curiosity Collective with the intention of creating more resources through our Moving On project. For more information about their work in general, visit their website at curiositycollective.org.uk.

*please note there is limited availability

Fosterline Scotland update



Every month, Fosterline Scotland receives a range of queries from our members. Below we share some of the most frequently asked questions, and our responses

1. Tax and national insurance

As foster carers are aware, they are considered as self-employed and must be registered with this status with HMRC, ensuring they submit annual tax returns.

There is a special scheme for foster carers called **qualifying care relief**, which allows carers to receive certain tax-free payments, with different qualifying amounts. Foster carers can use qualifying care relief to work out their profit from self-employment (if any), and then fill in a self-assessment tax return each year. This saves a lot of time, is easy to use and the records foster carers need to keep are simple.

If foster carers are unsure how to complete tax returns, they can book onto one of our free online tax workshops or webinars. These are run by our membership team and fostering tax experts, from our partners Williams Giles Chartered Accountants.

We also have a Tax and National Insurance webinar on our website in the membership section. You can login to get more information at thefosteringnetwork.org.uk, which covers questions and answers asked by our members.

2. Facing an allegation

If an allegation is made against a foster carer, they can contact our legal

helpline on **01384 885 734**. Once they have spoken with one of our solicitors in Scotland, we recommend keeping in touch with them directly if contacted by the police. If foster carers are members of The Fostering Network they have legal protection insurance – this policy can be accessed by visiting bit.ly/3z8gflh

Callum Anderson from Levy & McRae will be providing more information about allegations in the next edition of this newsletter.

3. Keeping Connected

An issue foster carers can face is maintaining contact with the children and young people who have been moved from their foster home due to a change of placement, adoption or a return to the family home.

Our Keep Connected campaign and Keep Connected Principles are centred around all children and young people who are moving on from foster families. Both initiatives are designed to enable both parties to keep in touch, including with other significant people in their lives. The principles look at the understanding of the importance of this, alongside planning and support. Learn more by visiting bit.ly/3J3nD5P

This is also supported by the Children (Scotland) Act 2020, which brings the law further into line with children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The act also considers sibling rights and places a duty on local authorities to consider how to maintain contact between siblings and those with sibling like relationships and more importantly, to ask for their views on how they are cared for.

The act is an opportunity to look at the other relationships that are important to children, and how these are supported. The Fostering Network are delighted that the Scottish Government has committed to developing guidance and set out how local authorities should help children

to keep in touch with the people that are important to them, including their former foster families.

You can read more at thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/Championing-childrens-relationships-Scotland

4. Carer's approval – reviews and changes

The Fostering Network supports many foster carers with their review panels, including when there is a recommendation of deregistration, and appeals, if deregistered. We provide knowledge and guidance around the regulations, and may also be able to provide independent support at your fostering panel.

5. We are here to help you

There are a whole host of materials which foster carers and fostering services need access to. Please get in touch if you require any guidance, resources, materials or information.

Open from Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm, and evening hours by appointment, Fosterline Scotland is here to assist members with any query.

To book a phone call, virtual appointment or face to face meeting, please get in touch at fosterlinescotland@fostering.net or **0141 204 1400**.

If you need legal advice, members can contact our 24-hour legal helpline on **01384 885 734**. Our stress support service is also there to speak with a trained counsellor, 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **01384 889 549**.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have a query you would like some help with.

Mirren and Julie



Call out to young people – join our advisory board and be the voice of change

‘Empower. Work with, do with, not to.’



Listening to the voices of those with experience of foster care is a key focus of our work to **#KeepThePromise**. The quote above expresses the thoughtful words expressed at our event, VOICE: The Why, which was held at The National Piping Centre in Glasgow in June. It included an expert panel of young people with lived experience of care. They explained to the audience how being honest, transparent and truly listening to young people is the best and only way to involve them meaningfully in our work to make foster care the best it can be.

We are pleased to be offering young people with experience of foster care, aged 16-24, the opportunity to join our new young person's advisory board and be the voice of change. The board will meet monthly, have two residential weekends, and be involved in different projects to ensure the voice of young people is at the centre of everything we do. If you know of a young person who might be interested in joining the group, please contact Laura Graham at scotland@fostering.net.

Principles of Good Transitions through and out of foster care

Our Moving On project has adapted the Scottish Transition Forum's Principles of Good Transitions, to make them relevant to foster families across Scotland.

Transitions for children through and out of foster care can take place for a whole range of reasons, and these can be planned or unexpected. Developing a tool to support all of these would be difficult, however we believe these rights-based principles can and will make a real difference when embedded in practice.

Our supplement to the Principles of Good Transitions gives tips and tools detailing how these principles can look in practice. See some examples under each principle below:

1. Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way
2. Support should be co-ordinated across all services
3. Planning should start early (and continue up to age 25)
4. Young people should get the support they need
5. Young people, parents and carers must have access to the information they need
6. Families and carers need support
7. A continued focus on transitions across Scotland

A draft version of this resource is now available and we would love to hear your feedback, to make it as accurate and helpful as possible. To find out more about this work email Bethany Shelton at scotland@fostering.net.

Join the conversation!

Don't miss out on the chance to hear more about what we are doing and what opportunities are available for you and the children and young people you care for. You can follow us on **Twitter @tfn_scot** for up to date news, training dates and events. We'll see you there!



Fostering Digital Skills - free training

In partnership with Internet Matters and the University of East Anglia, we are offering members our free Fostering Digital Skills For Life online training. The course aims for a future where children and young people are more routinely supported by their foster carers to safely access online opportunities and explores opportunities and issues that are specific to fostering, and the lives of care experienced young people. It has been co-created and refined in consultation with care experienced young people and foster carers across the UK.

The course approach is anchored in the **Digital Resilience Framework** and informed by the latest academic research in this area.

We are offering our member agencies the opportunity to book the training as a **free in-house** course for up to 30 participants a time, though foster carers can also sign up to open courses or take the course as a self-paced eLearning course (via the link below).

You can find out more about the course here: thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/fostering-digital-skills-for-life

Training update

- courses now online!

Our online training programme is regularly updated on our website, so do keep an eye on it for the latest information: thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/events.

Now back by popular demand is the Men Who Foster training course.

Wednesday 28 September 2022

£102 plus VAT for members and £204 plus VAT for non-members

Male foster carers continually highlight a number of significant issues affecting their role. There is concern about how best to work with children who have been sexually abused, worries about abuse by carers and unsubstantiated allegations of abuse in foster care. The course explores the idea of the 'positive male role model' to identify ways in which men can be more effective carers. This course is primarily for male foster carers only and is facilitated by an experienced male foster carer.

All our courses are available to be purchased by fostering services as 'in-house' training. Other courses include: Skills to Foster: Train the Trainers, Managing Allegations Against Foster Carers, Moving Into Adulthood, and The Role of the Supervising Social Worker.

To book a place, please visit our website, or for more information please contact Joy Crawford on 0141 204 1400 or scotland@fostering.net.

Dates for your diary...

Thursday 22 September 2022

Moving On wellbeing session
Zoom (page 4)

Wednesday 28 September 2022

Men Who Foster
Zoom (page 8)

Wednesday 2 November 2022

Understanding Trauma
Zoom (page 4)

Wednesday 9 November 2022

Calming Techniques
Zoom (page 4)



If you would like more information on any of the above, please contact us on 0141 204 1400 or scotland@fostering.net.



With thanks to the funders who supported this edition.

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