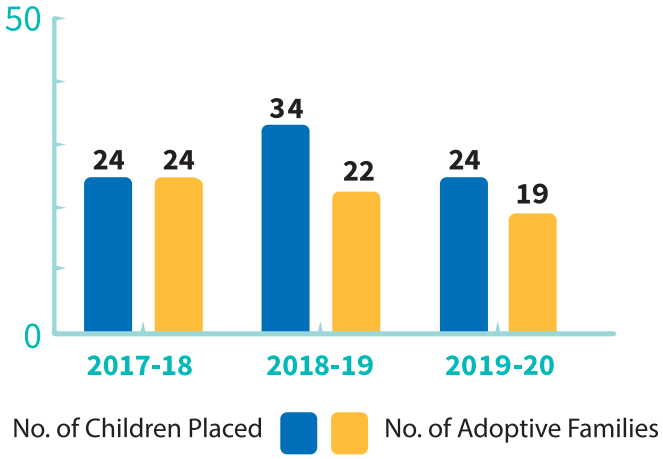
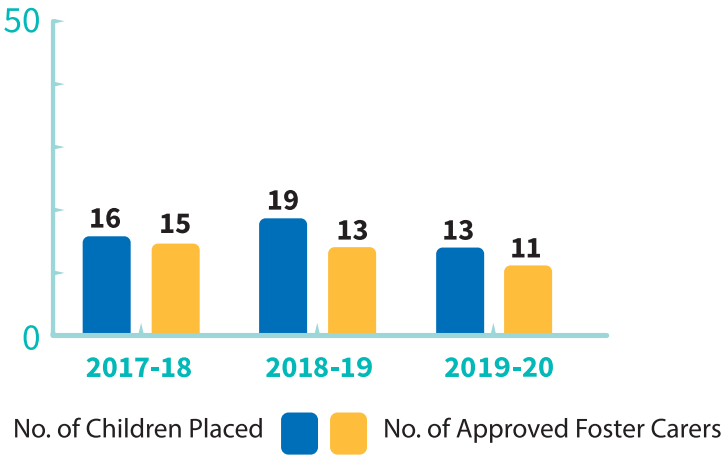
St Andrew's Children's Society

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

Annual Review **2019–20**



Adoption Placements over 3 years



Foster Care Placements over 3 years

Report from our Director

Welcome to this year's Annual Review from St Andrew's Children's Society.

We can look back on this year and should view it as one of consolidation in our work generally. We have a very hard working team of social workers whose professionalism and genuine care about the families they work with is reflected back to us by the kind comments we received from our service users. This has been confirmed by the feedback we received from our Inspector during her Inspection of our services this year. Throughout this annual review you will see some of the positive comments that were reported to the Inspector from those who receive our services.

The impact of Covid-19 on the nation's economy means that our audited accounts for this year will not be available until early in 2021 so we are unable to include them in this year's annual review. They will be available to view on our website and on request before the end of the coming financial year.

This is another year when I would want to commend the staff team and our Board of Trustees who together provide the direction and service delivery needed to keep us relevant for children and their families. Even though the charitable sector faces uncertain times we are always focussed on the potential that our actions have to positively impact on the lives of children who have had adverse early life experiences.

We have maintained a settled staff team again this year and in fact have welcomed a new staff member, Iona Hughes, who comes to us after several years working for West Lothian Council in the Children and Families service. Her enthusiasm and willingness to learn more about adoption has had a positive impact on the agency.

I would fully recommend St Andrew's Children's Society for anyone considering adoption. They are completely supportive and make you feel at ease.

A special mention must be made of the value of our our Fundraiser – the Docwra Partnership. Without the expertise of Dan and Karen Docwra we would not be able to offer some of the adoption support services that we do. Our adoption support services continue to be a central part of our business. We strive to ensure we have adequate funding to do all we can to support adoptive families when they need us.

Finally, as this year comes to an end, we face the prospect of maintaining our services to children and families in the face of Covid-19. There is great uncertainty about how this will affect our work and all we can do at this point is safeguard the health and well-being of our staff and service users by following public health advice while continuing to be 'open for business'.

There is nothing particularly surprising about the figures for adoption support other than the significant drop in families seeking adoption support. We will pay attention to this in the coming years to see if the comparatively high number in 2018/19 is an anomaly. This year's figure is much more in line with previous years.

Our adoption placement numbers have decreased by over a quarter, but what we have seen is an increase in enquiries and assessment of new adopters being undertaken and this gives us hope that we will be able to see the number of children placed next year rise again. We are able to attribute much of this increase in interest in adopting with us to the efforts of our Head of Marketing, Tara Macgregor. Her work to increase our profile by having high visibility during events such as Adoption Week Scotland and LGBT+ Adoption and Fostering Week has paid dividends.

Our Concurrent Planning project continues to make a valuable contribution to the cause of early permanence for the small numbers of very young children who are at high risk of not being able to remain with their birth parents. We continue to monitor this service as there are still challenges related to the Children's Hearing and Court system that impact adversely on timescales for some of these children.

We have seen a reduction in children placed in foster care this year that is as a result of a combination of children placed becoming young adults and so leaving the looked after system and our continued struggle to recruit new foster carers. The fact remains that we operate in a very competitive market but it must also be noted that the kinds of foster carers we are looking for (those willing to

Adoption Support Services	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Adoption Counselling	28	16	20
Adoption Support to Families	81	113	80
Direct work with Children	23	16	14
Information Exchange	7	7	7
Families completed SafeBase (from 2010)	90	94	94

New referrals for adoption support services

There is always someone to talk to.

We had a very positive experience leading up to the adoption of both our children. Nothing can prepare you for the full change, but I knew I had the connections with St Andrew's Children's Society as and when I needed it.

care for older children, 8 plus, on a long term/permanent basis) are the most difficult kinds of foster carers to recruit. Any new carers we have recruited have been specifically approved to provide concurrent care and so if the children placed with them remain, in the longer term, in their care they will adopt them and they will no longer be approved foster carers.

Our five year period of managing Scotland's Adoption Register on behalf of the Scottish Government came to an end at the end of March 2020. We have overseen important developments in this national service such as the move to the online linking service and the introduction of Adoption Activity days. We decided not to continue with our involvement by deciding not to put in a tender since it is now possible for a non-placing agency, Adoption & Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland to fulfil this role. We are sure that, under the continued guidance of Robin Duncan, the Register will continue to thrive and be an important part of the adoption scene in Scotland.

St Andrew's Children's Society enjoys the strong backing of and oversight by a Board of Trustees which is committed to improving the lives of the children and their families. Similarly, our professional standards are closely scrutinised by the volunteers who serve as Adoption and Foster Care Panel members and we continue to be grateful to them for their insight and commitment.

Finally, our thanks must go out to those who come forward to offer themselves as adopters and foster carers for some of the most vulnerable children in Scotland. Our efforts to be the best we can be are only worthwhile because those families are committed to the well-being of these children.

Stephen Small
DIRECTOR

Duty of candour 2019/20

1. **How many incidents happened to which the duty of candour applies?**
   In the last year (1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020), there have been no incidents to which the duty of candour applied.
2. **Information about our policies and procedures**
   In the event of an incident occurring that triggers a duty of candour, our staff would report this to the Service Manager, who has responsibility for ensuring that the duty of candour procedure is followed. Where required, the Care Inspectorate will be notified. When an incident has occurred, we will ensure that subjects are informed, that we meet with them to discuss the incident and apologise. A learning review meeting will be convened to reflect on what has happened and to take actions to prevent any further event.

Adoption support

Adoption support at St Andrews Children's Society has been busy over the past 12 months.

Our coffee and cake mornings in both offices have proven to be a welcome treat – as well as informative to our adopters who continue to look for new ways and fresh insights into supporting their children navigate their way through family life, school and other social settings – all aided by cake and coffee!

By way of looking after our foster carers and adoptive parents we introduced Parent Pamper sessions. These originally began in our Aberdeen office – parents loved them so much we wanted to offer a similar experience in Edinburgh. Again, these were very well received, and have given parents the opportunity to receive some nurture and care for themselves. We had therapists Debi and Kaspers come to our Edinburgh office and offer a range of therapies. Our Aberdeen adopters had the services of Elaine and Ruth who completely spoiled our parents! A huge thank you to the therapists.

In August Aberdeen had their annual picnic, which is always well attended, and Edinburgh also had their annual Teddy Bears Picnic and Storytelling event, which always goes down a treat, and of course Ailee our storyteller adds such a lovely dimension to the experience.

Our team in Aberdeen began a Pizza night for Mums and one for Dads. This was a novel and much appreciated activity, enjoying something to eat and sharing some of their challenges in a relaxed and informal setting.

In conjunction with another adoption agency we ran a workshop for parents and adopted children to enable them to talk about adoption and manage the often tricky questions on the subject of adoption in places like school/with friends etc.

St Andrew's Children's Society has been running a training evening for Family and Friends of adopters (twice yearly), and this has been a great success as well as equipping extended family members'understanding of adoption. This training is in addition to the work our assessing colleagues do with their prospective adopters and their family/supportive friends.

In September 2019, we had two trainers come to Edinburgh to deliver training to foster carers and adopters on Sensory Integration. We had a strong response to this. The workshop was experiential as well as informative. Feedback from parents was excellent and included them getting some of the aids used on the day.

I could not have managed the first six months without them! They were kind, responsive and supportive and most importantly human in their approach.

The prep groups were very informative and gave a realistic view of adoption and the challenges which may be faced. During our home study our social worker also prepared us for what to expect. We felt fully supported and no question we asked felt stupid.

Christmas is such a busy and festive time, and both of our offices organised their annual Christmas parties. This often feels like the 'cherry on the cake' as we see so many of our families come together to enjoy entertainment, food and of course a visit from Santa.

We had an opportunity from Musicares to have a workshop in our agency for children interested in learning to write a song, learn an instrument or learn DJ skills. The workshop was such a hit, that some of the young people went on to work in a recording studio and record the song they collectively wrote together. This experience had a wonderful effect on their self-esteem and belief in their creativity. A big thank you to the fantastic tutors who facilitated this, namely Lorna and Moteh.

The introduction to using Theraplay™ activities is also a regular feature in our adoption support, and is well attended by adopters/prospective adopters. It reminds people of the importance of play in children's lives, and the power it has in so many aspects of their development, and ultimately capacity to learn trust and heal.

The Single Adopters Group meets three times a year and offers valuable support to those adopters who are quite simply amazing. Parenting alone can be rewarding and have lots of positives though we also know it can be exhausting and challenging.

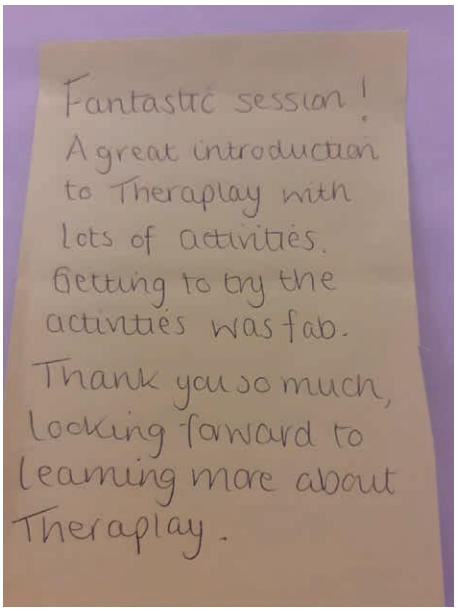
The RelaxKids workshops have also become part of our training/support calendar events. The children respond really well to the activities as well as learning how to regulate their breathing and become aware of feelings and how to express them safely. Parents also pick up easy and effective tips on how to use the strategies at home.

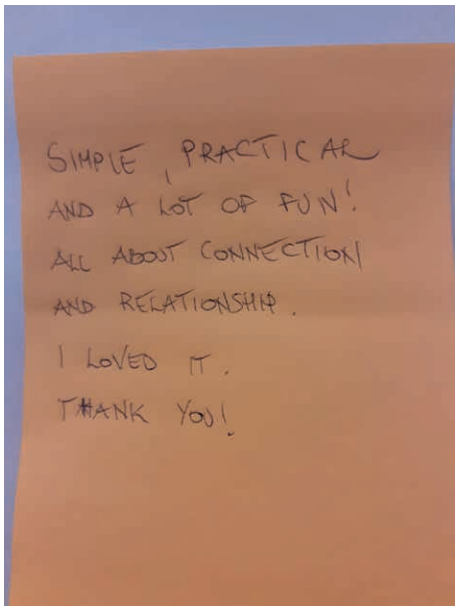
We began our Girls Group for those aged 12–15 years and this is still developing its identity and sense of belonging.

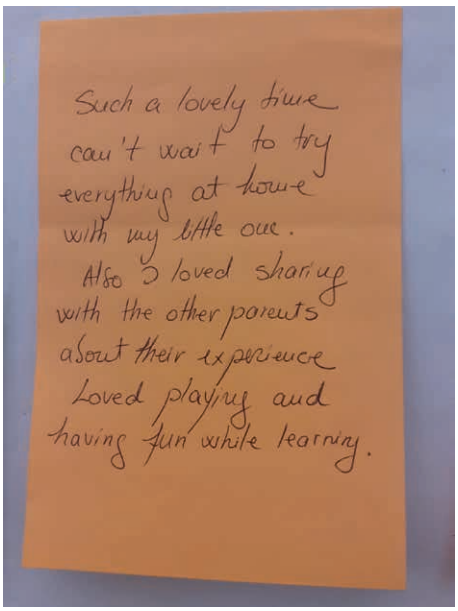
The adoption support team continue to provide Parenting Consultations to our adopters as well as Life Story Work, and Parent and Child Theraplay sessions. The request for our support at school meetings continues, as does the request to be an advocate to services such as CAMHS and local authorities.

Our experience of providing adoption support to families continues to grow and develop. Our commitment to providing a good and effective service is, we hope evident, in the longevity of involvement, and availability of our team.

Rita Grant
ADOPTION SUPPORT MANAGER







Parent Pampering Feedback

"How special to start a Monday like this. I feel totally taken care of. I can tackle anything now 😃. Self care is so important but finding time can be hard. Thanks for taking care of me. Now I can take care of my family ❤ ."

St Andrew's Children's Society
ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

SafeBase in Schools Training

St Mary's Primary School, Bathgate, West Lothian.

> It was very professional, full of great examples, suggestions and ideas of how to deal with the children.

> The content of this course has had an immediate effect on two of our most vulnerable children. Staff are much more understanding and the children are flourishing. Thank you so much.

> I have already passed information on about the course to my friends in another early years centre.

safebase SCOTLAND

Our support – a family's story

The support we have received from St Andrew's Children's Society has been invaluable.

Our children needed support and understanding during a difficult, raw time and we were struggling. We received evidence based advice and support which was translated with empathy and tailored to our needs as a family. Any time I have called for advice, I have been listened to and when in self-doubt, supported or gently guided. This is important because sometimes it's difficult to admit you need support and when you feel able to take on board guidance then your children benefit and as a result the whole family feels better.

We had fortnightly home visits from an adoption support worker for a time when we needed help with transitions to teenage life and this made a world of difference to our home. The activities we took part in revealed things about our children and ourselves that through understanding helped us to build relationships. Our children seemed to feel a little more confident to speak up, which was a relief. It was also fun – we continue with some activities.

One of the most valuable things for me is that I trust the staff at St Andrew's Children's Society. This trust has formed through finding that I can call or email and my children will be supported. The knowledge and experience of the staff means that they can help you unpick complex situations; just when you think "oh this is awful, my child has… What did I do wrong?" – they will help you to see things from your child's potential perspective. When you face a crisis someone will be there. For us as a family this meant that we were able to calm a distressed child rather than respond to the behaviour in a way that would make things a lot worse. I'm not sure of where we would be as a family without this support.

The support is not always about reacting to situations (although thank goodness they have) but we have also attended SafeBase training, which was a real turning point; training on sensory processing, which resulted in a much cosier home and an understanding of why our children might respond differently to different tastes and sensations; and self-help strategies.

Our Adoption Support worker has also attended meetings at school to support access to learning and a safe learning environment. This liaison service is an area of importance because in my experience teachers generally find it difficult to understand why adopted children may find it difficult to engage in learning. One size does not fit all.

Not only are the St Andrew's Children's Society staff a wealth of information about other services which may be available such as CAMHS, OT, voluntary services etc., our children have both taken part in activities organised through or by St Andrew's Children's Society. They loved Musicares, and have both been involved in girls/boys groups. Both have a tendency to turn down opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities but they tend to happily take part in those organised by St Andrew's Children's Society.

Overall I am so grateful to the staff at St Andrew's Children's Society for their ongoing support particularly during these teen years, we are striving to help our children towards a healthy and hopefully happy fulfilling life which I think we would be much less likely to realise without their support.

ST ANDREW'S CHILDREN'S SOCIETY PARENT

We always feel listened to and our views about the service and the young person are valued.

I found St Andrew's Children's Society responsive and supportive. The approval process and the training is thorough and appropriately challenging.

Emma and Adi's story

We have known St Andrew's Children's Society for over seven years now, starting our journey with them in 2013. In 2014 we adopted our first daughter, and just before lockdown this year our second daughter came home.

Ever since our first phone call to St Andrew's Children's Society, we have felt extremely valued and supported. They have treated us with such respect and have always shown a deep understanding to our own life stories before and after we adopted. They have been there for us all along our journey, even throughout the long gap between our two separate adoption processes. St Andrew's Children's Society didn't just make us a family, they became family!

We value their incredible professionalism and dedication to supporting not just the kids who are on their adoption journey, but all of the families too. On our first adoption journey, we as a couple felt very listened to and supported. The second time around, St Andrew's Children's Society have been absolutely amazing at nurturing our eldest daughter and understanding her needs as she became a big sister and her whole universe changed!

St Andrew's Children's Society organise wonderful events to support their families, bringing us all together in safe spaces to play, share our stories and connect with other adoptive families. They know what we need, from a good chat with a cup of tea, to extra support when we are going through difficult times, to a hall packed full of Christmas celebrations to make all of us feel connected and part of something very extraordinary. They plan extra training for us to find different ways to connect with our little ones, and put special clubs in place to bring us together and let our children find their inner superheroes! All that and so much more.

We deeply appreciate the kindness of St Andrew's Children's Society and the understanding they have of the reality of adoption. We have always felt we can talk frankly and seek out advice or help when we needed it, no matter how big or small our concerns are. And they still make the time to share our joys and proud moments along the way too. Their support continues beyond the working hours of 9am – 5pm, being there for us any time of day, year in and year out. We cannot even begin to express how grateful we are to them. Just knowing that we have back up gives us continuous encouragement and absolute peace of mind. We also love being part of something bigger, where adoption is the norm. Our kids get together and play surrounded by their amazing adopted friends. They feel empowered together and install confidence in each other, knowing that it's a very normal thing to be adopted!

Lately we have been in lockdown. Our second daughter arrived a week before the country came to a standstill. But St Andrew's Children's Society made it their priority to still be there for us. Our social worker video called us every week to chat with us and enjoy watching our family evolve. She spoke with us privately on the phone to listen to any concerns and support us, and caught up with us when new information came through regarding our daughters case. We were fully informed at all times and supported abundantly! When our social worker was furloughed for a short time, we had no concerns as we knew we could speak to another member of the team who we knew well. And again, they supported us with those little random requests or questions, and communicated any information relevant to our ongoing process.

We cannot express how grateful we are to St Andrew's Childrens Society and the deep understanding, thoughtfulness and initiative they have for all of their families. Whenever we need help or support, they are there with fresh ears and a friendly smile. We are able to get on with enjoying our beautiful family and the adventures ahead, knowing that St Andrew's Children's Society have our backs. They are amazing!

Emma and Adi Harrison ADOPTIVE PARENTS

> *St Andrew's Children's Society are a great organisation. Children are the priority always. They are friendly and supportive.*

We feel part of St Andrew's Children's Society very much and are proud to be fostering through them.

Why Adopt Through Us?

"My dream came true and there was lots of hard work from myself, but I could not have done it without the hard work, determination and faith from St Andrew's Children's Society."

St Andrew's Children's Society
ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

Why Adopt Through Us?

"St Andrew's Children's Society's support, understanding, kindness, incredible professionalism and encouragement goes beyond the realms of extraordinary, and beyond the working hours of 9–5. They've been there for us anytime of day, year in and year out to support us on our journey. They've become family as well as making a family!"

St Andrew's Children's Society
ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

Why Adopt Through Us?

"Being a same-sex couple, we were treated the same way as any other prospective adopter. It was a thoroughly rewarding and life-changing experience. Within 18 months of beginning the process, we got married and had two children."

St Andrew's Children's Society
ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

I think St Andrew's Children's Society provides an excellent service and I especially want to applaud its approach to encouraging LGBT adopters.

Fundraising report

It is very satisfactory when St Andrew's Children's Society receives multi-year funding for a project. For a fundraiser, it means that one has a foundation on which to build next year's fundraising – it takes the pressure off… for a short time!

First of all came £45,000 for three years from The Garfield Weston Foundation to fund Adoption Support, followed by £30,000 for a further two years from The Robertson Trust – this was extended funding towards the salary of our Adoption Support Manager, Rita Grant. We had already received three years funding from The Robertson Trust so to receive a further grant was testimony to the great work that Rita and her colleagues are doing which was well illustrated in the end of grant report Rita and I compiled together.

Fundraising is definitely in my family's blood. Not only is my wife also a fundraiser, but our daughter came back from Morrisons one day and in amongst the shopping was a leaflet she had picked up, inviting local charities to be considered for Morrisons Community Funding – she thought I would be interested. Several weeks later, we received a cheque for £5,000!

A few years previously my son spotted a fundraising idea which resulted in a £248 cheque from the Waitrose Supermarket at Comely Bank. He was a final year pupil at City of Edinburgh Music School based at Broughton High School. One lunchtime at the checkout, he was given a green token and told to put it in one of the three collecting boxes, each marked with a local charity. Waitrose makes a donation to each charity, depending on how many tokens customers put in the box. Ben nominated St Andrew's Children's Society and encouraged school pals there to put their tokens in.

Over the years, between that cheque for £248 from Waitrose and the fantastic £45,000 from Garfield Weston, there have been donations large and small ranging from monthly donations and funds from sponsored events up to the £40,500 we have been receiving each year for the past 5 years, from the Scottish Government's *Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund.*

I mentioned earlier that my wife is also a fundraiser. In April 2019, Karen took early retirement after 27 years as Senior Fundraiser with Waverley Care. We have now joined forces in fundraising for a number of small charities, but top of the list is St Andrew's Children's Society.

Karen's introduction to St Andrew's Children's Society came at the Staff Development Day on 26th June 2019, which we opened with a presentation about fundraising. The objective was to give staff an insight as to what we do:

- We are storytellers, telling a potential funder about the wonderful work St Andrew's Children's Society does and the outcomes of that work, but told in the most captivating way.
- We are relationship builders, ensuring that we thank our funders and ensure they are kept informed about progress on how their grant has been spent.
- We are money gatherers for the work that St Andrew's Children's Society undertakes.
- We are St Andrew's Children's Society's cheerleaders, because they are a wonderful bunch of people and it is essential, as fundraisers, to be passionate about them and their work.
- We have broad shoulders to take the knocks when a funding application is unsuccessful – ah well! Try again next year – we must persevere.
- We must demonstrate impeccable integrity – we are both members of The Chartered Institute of Fundraising and work to their Codes of Practice and professional standards.
- Finally, we must celebrate success…It was great to be able to announce to the gathering that we had just received a £45,000 donation from The Garfield Weston Foundation in support of our Adoption Support services – so we celebrated by passing around several boxes of … *Celebrations!*

So, another good year with £128,750 coming from trusts and foundations to add to the £1,500 we received as donations from individual supporters.

Dan Docwra FUNDRAISER

We wish to acknowledge the generosity of the many charitable trusts, foundations and individuals who have made donations or have undertaken sponsorship events on our behalf. Without this support, many of our support services just would not be available as widely as it is.

Thank you to: The Scottish Government and Corra Foundation, The Stella Symons Charitable Trust, Morrisons Foundation, The Pump House Trust, The Robertson Trust, The W M Mann Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The JTH Charitable Trust, The PF Charitable Trust, The Tay Charitable Trust, The Kuenssberg Charitable Foundation, The Mary Andrew Charitable Trust, The Dulverton Trust, The Royal Caledonian Charities Trust, The Hugh Fraser Foundation, The Martin Connell Charitable Trust, Miss M E Swinton Paterson's Charitable Trust, The John Gordon Charitable Fund, The Nancy Roberts Charitable Trust, The Welch Trust, The Nancy Massey Charitable Trust, The H D H Wills 1965 Charitable Trust.

I really appreciate the activities that are put on for parents and children throughout the year.

Marketing activities **2019-2020**

St Andrew's Children's Society has had another very successful year of publicity, helping to spread the word about the benefits of adoption and fostering and encouraging as many people as possible to take the next step along their adoption or fostering journey.

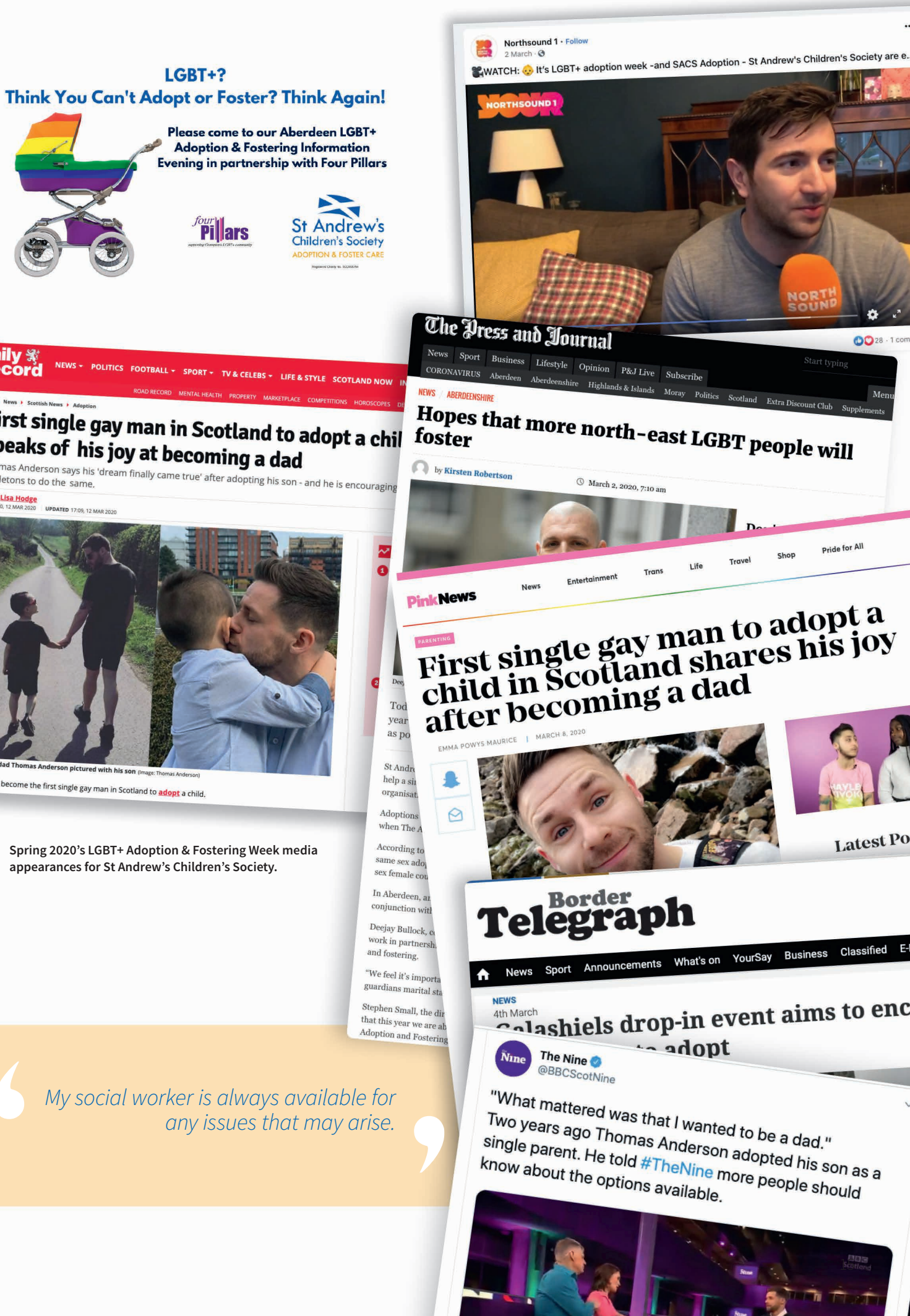
Adoption Week Scotland 2019 was an important time for the agency and we were in *The Scotsman*, *Third Force News*, *The Press and Journal*, *The Herald* and the *i* paper as well as being on Northsound 1, Northsound 2 and Forth 1.

During LGBT+ Adoption & Fostering Week in March 2020 we partnered with Four Pillars in Aberdeen and Scottish Borders LGBT Equality to raise awareness about LGBT+ adoption and fostering. We were delighted with the coverage we received in *The Press and Journal*, the *Daily Record*, the *Border Telegraph*, *PinkNews* as well as being on BBC Scotland's *The Nine*, Northsound 1, Forth 1, Borders Radio and *That's TV* Scotland.

We saw an increase in enquiries to adopt and foster as a result of the positive publicity.

Tara Macgregor HEAD OF MARKETING

St Andrew's Children's Society featured in important media outlets, during November 2019's Adoption Week Scotland.



Spring 2020's LGBT+ Adoption & Fostering Week media appearances for St Andrew's Children's Society.

My social worker is always available for any issues that may arise.

Who we are

Board of Trustees

Fergus Christie
Solicitor
Chairperson/Legal Adviser

Innes Ledingham
Chartered Accountant
Vice Chair

Kirsty Fergusson
Accountant
Treasurer

Anne Hampton
Independent Social Worker
Trustee

Nicola Kehoe
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Trustee

Jackie Pringle
Solicitor
Trustee

Sheriff Roderick MacLeod
Sheriff
Trustee

Robert Swift
Social Work Consultant
Trustee

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Stephen Small
Director

Charlie Egan
Service Manager

Rita Grant
Adoption Support Manager

Claire McMahon
Office Manager

Edinburgh Staff Team

Carole Bell
Senior Practitioner

Denise Burgess
Senior Practitioner

Katie Delap
Senior Practitioner

Ruth Dolan
Senior Practitioner

Iona Hughes
Senior Practitioner

Lorna MacFarlane
Senior Practitioner

Michael Opitz
Senior Practitioner

Cathryn Thompson
Senior Practitioner

Tracey Turnbull
Senior Practitioner

Carolyn Smith
Administration Assistant

Sandra Williams
Administration Assistant

Tara Macgregor
Head of Marketing

Aberdeen Staff Team

Shiona Freeman
Senior Practitioner

Anne MacLeod
Senior Practitioner

Debbie McDonald
Senior Practitioner

Gillian McHaffie
Senior Practitioner

Velga McDougall
Administrator

Consultants

Stephen Buchan
IT Consultant

Dan Docwra
Fundraising

Dr Ian Fraser
Medical Adviser

Tim Griffiths
Graphic Designer

Alan Lodge
Accounts & Finance

Charles McIntosh
Web Designer

Sarah Trainer
Legal Adviser

Adoption & Fostering Panel

Robert Swift
Adoption Advisor
Agency Decision Maker

Anne Hampton
Adoption Advisor
Depute Decision Maker & Panel Member

Willie Hunter
Retired Social Work Manager
Depute Chair

David Johnson
Policy Officer, Scottish Government
Chair

Marion Wood
Retired Social Worker
Depute Chair

Maureen McEvoy
Adoptive Parent
Panel Member

Ian Fraser
Medical Advisor & Panel Member

Celia Borland
Resource Team Manager, East Lothian Council
Panel Member

Jen McNabb
Social Worker, City of Edinburgh Council
Panel Member

Lesley Hunter
Social Worker, West Lothian Council
Panel Member

John Robertson
Adoptive Parent
Panel Member

Bob McKinney
Adoptive Parent
Aberdeen Panel Member

Shona Grimmer
Adoptive Parent
Aberdeen Panel Member

Sarah Mathews
Adoptive Parent
Panel Member

Steven McFarlane
Adoptive Parent
Panel Member

Claire Smith
Adoptee
Prospective Panel Member

‘We have received an excellent service. They keep in touch when needed and we have been well informed throughout.’

St Andrew’s Children’s Society

Call: Edinburgh **0131 454 3370**
Aberdeen **01224 878158**
or email **info@standrews-children.org.uk**

Find out more at **www.sacsadopt.scot**