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

Reflections

Newsletter of **St Andrew's Children's Society**

Issue 22 | Summer **2020**

We've adjusted to the new 'Normal'

For all of us the world has changed immeasurably and unexpectedly since we last sent out a newsletter to you with what we hope are interesting articles and developments for St Andrew's Children's Society.

What we have been very keen to let people know is that, despite our personal and work commitments being significantly restricted since the end of March, we are still very much in business. However, our 'business' needs to be funded and, like all charities, we don't know when we will get back to normal and earn the money we need to provide our services to families. St Andrew's Children's Society has had to take steps to safeguard our finances during this pandemic and we are confident that these steps will mean we are in a strong financial position to 'hit the ground running' again.

Since we closed our offices in Edinburgh and Aberdeen on the 23rd of March our staff have worked tirelessly to get themselves set up to work from home so that they can continue to assess those interested in adoption and foster care and to support the families we have already placed children with. You will be able to read in more details how we are trying to keep connected with families in the interesting Adoption Support section

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News

We've adjusted to the new 'Normal' (continued)

in this edition of our Newsletter written by our Adoption Support Manager, Rita Grant.

Virtual meetings and other forms of digital communications have proved invaluable to us to ensure we can maintain our work with and support to families but it cannot be a substitute for proper human interaction. The basis of all the work we do is human contact and communication so by the time you read this, we hope that we will be much clearer about when we can re-open our offices and start to be in contact with people face to face again.

Everyone at St Andrew's Children's Society wishes you, your children and your wider family members the very best and we all want you to know that we are here if you need us.

Best wishes,

Stephen Small DIRECTOR

New home for Scotland's Adoption Register

St Andrew's Children's Society has been happy to provide a home to Scotland's Adoption Register since 2015 and decided not to tender to continue with this. We had stepped in at a time of crisis when the Scottish Government asked us to manage the Register on a temporary basis.

Four years on and it now feels right that it should be located within an organisation that is not directly involved in adoption placement activity but has a more strategic and training role in adoption in Scotland. We are pleased that from the 1st of April 2020 Adoption and Fostering Alliance Scotland (AFA Scotland) now have the task of overseeing the financial management and policy development of the Register. We can be proud that while we have had responsibility for the financial running of the Register the linking of children with adopters has moved to an online platform and become embedded in adoption practice across the country. We are sure that the relevance of the Register to the timely placement of children for adoption will continue and we wish the staff, that we got to know so well, the best for the future.

Another positive Care Inspectorate report in 2020

The statutory inspection of our services by the Care Inspectorate took place during the week of the 20th of January.

For both Adoption and Foster Care the following areas were focused on this year:

- Quality of care and support: 5 – Very good
- Management and leadership: 5 – Very good

We are so pleased that all our efforts in our work with children and their families is recognized but these grades are as much a reflection on the caliber of those adopters and foster carers and the remarkable resilience of the children they care for.

We have included a few of the comments made to the Inspector by adopters and foster carers throughout this edition of our newsletter…

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

LGBT+ Adoption & Fostering Week

We worked very hard again during LGBT+ Adoption & Fostering Week to raise awareness about adoption and fostering amongst the LGBT+ community.

We held four events in LGBT+ friendly venues: The Regent in Edinburgh; Speakeasy in Glasgow; Cheerz in Aberdeen and MacArts in Galashiels. As you can see we got some impressive media coverage as a result of our 'LGBT+? Think you can't adopt or foster? Think again!' campaign.

In addition to the coverage shown we were also on *Forth 1*, *Borders Radio* and *That's TV Scotland North.* We were delighted to work with Four Pillars in Aberdeen and Scottish Borders LGBT Equality who helped us raise awareness.

As a result of our campaign our enquiries to adopt and foster have increased dramatically!

Adoption Support

Oh how things have changed in these recent weeks since we've had lockdown. Families not only parenting the children, but having to become teachers too in pretty restrictive and confining circumstances. As social workers, we are working from home, and on a steep learning curve with technology!

Pizza nights

In the 'olden days', i.e. before lockdown, we delivered our Friends and Family session at our office in Edinburgh with complimentary pizza provided by Pizza Geeks. We had a great turnout for the evening (maybe the pizza was a bit of a draw!).

Back in January 2020 we held our very first Dads' Pizza Night in Aberdeen after our Mums & Chums Pizza Night a couple of months earlier had been such a huge success. It was a great opportunity for our dads to catch up with each other and share their experiences. The dads had such a good time that after the night out they set up their own WhatsApp group and made plans to meet up to

give each other peer support. We hope to hold another night out in the near future.

Girls Group

Pre-Lockdown, we were also running our girls group, which is developing well for our 12–14 year olds, and look forward to welcoming them back. Our Adoption Support team workers were doing significant Life Story Work/Theraplay™/ parenting consultations with families, as well as advocating on their behalf with schools, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other relevant bodies. In February we delivered a SafeBase for Schools training to St Mary's Primary School in Bathgate, which was well received.

A 'hello' to Iona…

We are very pleased to welcome **Iona Hughes**, who joined us in January 2020, as our newest Senior Practitioner. Iona, who qualified in 2006, started as a Children and Families Social Worker with West Lothian Council not long after graduating. In 2010 she moved to the Family Placement team where she remained as a social worker until starting her new role with us. Outside of work Iona has taken part in some seriously challenging sports including running half marathons, completing a Tough Mudder and being in a Roller Derby Team.

Who knows, you might even see her walking the Kiltwalk for us this year.

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

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

Quotes from the **Care Inspectorate 2020** report

Zoom-enabled support

Whilst we miss not being able to visit our families or have them into the office for Theraplay sessions, support groups, training and Parenting Pamper Mornings (apologies again for having to cancel the recent one) the use of technology has been surprisingly effective in keeping in touch with our families, and colleagues throughout the UK. We have been having sessions with parents and their children, as well as providing support groups in the evenings/afternoons to parents.

Some workers have utilised their Theraplay experience, and have been delivering Theraplay sessions to families via Zoom with positive effect. Parents have reported their child/ren seemed to regress back to when they first moved into their adoptive home, and some old behaviours of insecurity and anxiety re-emerged. With guidance

from their workers, and the amazing power of play/interaction, things have settled down for them, and in many ways helped to strengthen the trust, security and relationship between parent and child – particularly the younger children who don't have as much language skills as older children/young people.

Virtual information session

We have had a very successful information session for prospective adopters and foster carers, as well as our first preparation groups for prospective adopters training course, delivered online which received very positive feedback.

We have been hearing about some new skills our children and young people are learning, such as cooking a meal, baking bread and even delivering baby lambs… you know who you are! Amazing.

We know it has not been easy – if ever there was a time parents could do with a nice cup of tea and a slice of cake, or just the chance to meet and have a chat, it is now. When we are back to some kind

of normality, we will be here to provide just that and more. In the meantime, we will continue to have the virtual cups of tea, chats online and even a laugh.

> *'I could not have managed the first 6 months without them! They were kind, responsive and supportive and most importantly human in their approach.'*
>
> *'We feel part of St Andrew's Children's Society very much and are proud to be fostering through them.'*
>
> Quotes from the **Care Inspectorate 2020** report

2020 Edinburgh Virtual Kiltwalk Weekend

On the weekend of 11–13 September, intrepid staff of St Andrew's Children's Society will be repeating their magnificent efforts of 2018 when they raised over £12,000. They would like to be joined by as many supporters of St Andrew's Children's Society as possible.

This Virtual Kiltwalk is in place of the planned event on 13 September which has had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Even if you can't join us on our Virtual Kiltwalks, please support the staff team by sponsoring them.

Why walk in boring old trousers when you can stroll around the city in a kilt? Just make sure you are keeping within the Scottish Government guidelines, you will stay safe and helping to raise funds for St Andrew's Children's Society.

We would suggest a walk of at least 10 miles for adults and 5 miles for families with young children, who may need a wee bit of help. We will make some suggestions of possible walks for you very soon and hope you might join some of our wonderful staff in their walk. Even if walking isn't for you, you have the freedom to create any Virtual Kiltwalk inspired challenge you wish!

Join hundreds of other people on the **Edinburgh Virtual Kiltwalk**. After you register for the Virtual Kiltwalk, you will receive plenty of top tips and useful hints from both the Kiltwalk team and the team at St Andrew's Children's Society, to help you through your training, preparation and fundraising efforts.

After you have registered, we will send you St Andrew's Children's Society T-shirts, so let us know your size – S, M, L, XL or XXL.

(top) Halley and Craig Bunyan, took part as Team Willow in 2018; (above) Nicola and Graham Livinston also took part.

Fundraising via Kiltwalk: How it works...

You can ask friends and family to sponsor you either by filling in the sponsorship form that Kiltwalk will send a link for (or print direct from the website), or they can donate via the Kiltwalk's chosen online platform, Everyday Hero‡: **www.everydayhero.com**.

All funds raised by supporters should come through the Kiltwalk, who will then send it to us, as this is the only way the Kiltwalk can gather an accurate figure on how much has collectively been raised and allows them to claim any eligible gift aid.

The Kiltwalk retains Gift Aid in order to make their platform sustainable and guarantee that 150% of fundraising can go to your chosen charity.

Please note, that if funds do not come via the Kiltwalk, the additional 50% boost from the Hunter Foundation cannot be paid to your charity. This is part of their terms and conditions and vital to ensuring the sustainability of the Kiltwalk.

‡Please note, that for the Kiltwalk, the online fundraising platform will be Everyday Hero, and not Virgin Money Giving that St Andrew's Children's Society uses for all other donations and sponsorship.

Edinburgh Virtual Kiltwalk Weekend

11–13 September 2020

kiltwalk

Royal Bank of Scotland · Arnold Clark · The Hunter Foundation

All your fundraising will support St Andrew's Children's Society

If you are looking to take on a challenge and to raise money for us, the Virtual Kiltwalk is a fantastic event to take part in. It will be a great day out, walking through Edinburgh, or the surrounding countryside. Every penny you raise for St Andrew's Children's Society will come directly to us – so all the money you raise will help us to give loving and caring homes for the hundreds of children in care and waiting to become part of a family.

The Hunter Foundation has pledged to top up all Virtual Kiltwalk fundraising by 50%, this means that every £100 raised by participants will see St Andrew's Children's Society receive £150!

Unlike many other challenge events, for the Edinburgh Virtual Kiltwalk there is no fundraising target – whatever you raise will help us. Don't forget fundraising deadlines.

To ensure your fundraising receives the 50% boost* from Sir Tom and The Hunter Foundation, please have your fundraising in **no later than two months after you have completed the Kiltwalk**.

Funds will be paid to charities within 3 months of the event. Any funds received after this time will be paid on a monthly basis. Charities can track their funds on the **Charity Dashboard**.

Charities receive 100% of **your** fundraising plus an additional 50% donated by The Hunter Foundation (subject to deadline). If using online fundraising to gather funds, please use **Everyday Hero**, Kiltwalk's online fundraising partner, to maximise your fundraising potential.

Sir Tom Hunter, Scottish Philanthropist, Entrepreneur and Founder of The Hunter Foundation, came in to underwrite the Kiltwalk charity in 2015. Since then, the Kiltwalk has grown from strength to strength. In the 2019 Edinburgh Kiltwalk, 6000 walkers supported charities all over Scotland, raising in excess of 1.7 million pounds.

Edinburgh Virtual Kiltwalk: Register

Go to **www.thekiltwalk.co.uk**, and follow the links for registration. **Don't forget to select that your chosen charity is St Andrew's Children's Society.**

St Andrew's Children's Society will be very happy to re-pay the costs of registration for anyone walking on our behalf. Just send Dan Docwra an email with your bank details, the names of walkers and the amount you have paid, and he will bank transfer straight away (ddocwra@standrews-children.org.uk). Everyday Hero is a fundraising platform transforming how people give, fundraise and connect online with the causes they care about most. Thanks to the multitude of tools available to our Kiltwalkers, the Everyday Hero online platform makes fundraising at the Kiltwalk as easy as possible.

*Please note that the 50% fundraising boost applies up to a limit of £5,000 per walker and subject to trustee approval.

> *'St Andrew's Children's Society are a great organisation. Children are the priority always. They are friendly and supportive.'*
>
> Quotes from the **Care Inspectorate 2020** report

Fundraising Special

Fundraising can be a lonely occupation, especially when one works from home. My lonely situation took a wonderful turn when my wife, Karen, retired as Senior Fundraiser at Waverley Care on 31 March 2019. On 1 April 2019, she joined me to develop our freelance fundraising business. So now, St Andrew's Children's Society has two fundraisers, with me continuing in my downstairs office and Karen in the upstairs office, frequently meeting for a business chat on the stairs!

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 object 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 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*.

Then Karen and I departed for the airport to catch our flight to Kos to visit our daughter (that's us in the photo taken by daughter).

Dan Docwra FUNDRAISER