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

Reflections

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

Issue 27 | Winter **2022**

The Press and Journal
Evening Express

'They helped us form a forever family': Aberdeen couple to run a marathon for adoption charity

Welcome to our winter newsletter!

The summer was a busy one in relation to potential placements for children for adoption. Although we know there are far less children available for adoption post-pandemic, this has not yet impacted on us too much. Our concern is that as the numbers of adopters being approved continues apace, the fewer children around will affect how long people may have to wait. We are talking to our local authority and voluntary agencies colleagues about this current dilemma.

Our centenary celebrations continue and are referred to later in this newsletter, but I wanted to highlight one event that happened recently. The Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, Robert Aldridge, visited our Edinburgh office on 24 October. The focus of this visit was to highlight the partnership this agency has had with the City of Edinburgh over our 100 years of operation in the city. Just as our name has changed a few times over these years, the Council has also been called different things – Edinburgh Corporation, Lothian Region and the City of Edinburgh Council. In the early days our agency provided a wide range of services that were supported by the Council from a probations service and working with offenders to providing nursery places and obviously our family placement services. In more recent times we have worked together to place many Edinburgh children with adopters and launched a joint fostering service that successfully found foster homes that supplemented the Council's own fostering service. I would like to thank all those who came along to showcase the agency and in particular, Robert Swift (our Chair of Trustees and an adoptive parent), Donald Canavan (Trustee and adopted adult) and Claire Smith (Adoption and Fostering Panel Member

Earlier this week it was my pleasure to help mark the Centenary year of the St Andrew's Children's Society. There is absolutely no doubt that @sacsadopt has helped the City greatly in meeting the needs of vulnerable children and their families over many decades.

@LordProvostEdinburgh

and adopted adult). I think their life experiences of adoption greatly impressed the Lord Provost.

Eileen Mitchell is one of our longest serving staff members, having been our cleaner in the Edinburgh Office for over 18 years. She is a proud Leither and recently stood down as President of the local bowling clubs federation. She was allowed to nominate a local charity to receive a £200 donation from this organisation and she chose St Andrew's Children's Society! We are grateful to her for her loyal service to the agency, and for making this kind donation to our work.

As we settle into our new Aberdeen office we are looking forward to welcoming our two new social worker staff to the team in the New Year. Their arrival and our new office base give us good reason to be optimistic about the future and we hope will help us 're-launch' our services in the North East in the coming months.

(above) Some pictures to give a flavour of our visit from the Lord Provost in October.

(left) Eileen passes her donation to Stephen.

With all the challenges we face during these difficult economic times we hope that we can at least help our families manage the challenges they may face with their adopted or fostered children, and as ever, I want all the families we work with to know that we are here if you need us.

Stephen Small CEO

Adoption Support

Aberdeen

This summer has been a quieter time for us in the Aberdeen office as we have spent the time settling into our new premises and supporting our adoptive families.

Thankfully we are better at nurturing our families than we are helping new plants settle into an office as some of our greenery is not yet thriving. I guess that is why we are social workers and not botanists! Just like our families when their children are struggling, rather than 'blaming' our plants for not growing, we are changing our care-giving and environment to help the plants grow. This is an analogy we often use with families in assessment. Plants and children both respond to their environment and they both develop in optimum, positive conditions. They can only manage with what we give them!

Just prior to the summer holidays starting, we have had five children placed with our families. The youngest was not yet one and the eldest was seven years old. Our geographical spread of these families ranged from Tayside, right up to Moray.

On 6 August, we held our annual picnic which was attended by eleven families. Fourteen delightful children attended, with both sunglasses and wellies at the ready, and as generally is the case for our picnic, it rained! Thankfully we had the village hall to hide in; of course, this was only for the adults as none of the children bothered about getting wet. We had hoped to also have a picnic in Moray, but this had to be cancelled due to very few families being able to attend.

August also saw our first ever Safebase course being run in Moray by Rita, Shiona and Gill. Six families came along to the two days training; some of those families have been established for several years whilst others were newly formed families. This mix appeared to work well and feedback was very positive.

Our centenary year has been a big year for the Aberdeen/Moray office and our families. Not only have we found our 'forever office', our families have been incredibly busy. One of our families had applied to run the London Marathon and were given a virtual place. In October, Mark and Mel ran 26 miles around Aberdeen. It was a hard slog but they did it and their two children joined them at the finish line at Duthie Park for the last 0.2 mile. You can read more about their wonderful achievement in the fundraising and marketing sections of this newsletter.

Mark, Mel and their children cross the finishing line after doing the Virtual London Marathon, Duthie Park.

In September this year, one of our families informed us that their daughter Jay had been selected to represent at the World Para Surfing Championship in California, in December this year. Whilst this is an amazing opportunity, it comes with a significant financial cost for her family, especially as they had less than three months' notice. You can read more about how we helped our family reach over £9,000 in a matter of days in the fundraising and marketing sections of this newsletter. Mum Lisa and dad Fraser also wanted to use the opportunity to raise public awareness of how rewarding it can be to adopt an older child and/or a child with a disability. Good luck Jay and enjoy every moment. This is your turn to shine and show the world how fab you are.

We are delighted to announce that we have recently held interviews for our vacant post. People often joke that social workers are like buses; you can never find one when you need one and then two come at once… This is exactly what is happening in our Aberdeen office! We were so impressed with two of the applicants that we have decided to appoint both. One will be full-time and the other will be a part-time position. Both workers will be starting at the beginning of January so more to come on this in our next newsletter.

Debbie McDonald SERVICE MANAGER

Edinburgh

We are working on our calendar of training and events and are delighted to say that most of them are now taking place in person. Please note that whilst most of the training offered takes place in both Edinburgh and Aberdeen, there is often some different experiences too, for example, Aberdeen seem to have a great link with the Outdoor Rangers, who do some fabulous stuff with our families.

In January we will be running a two and a half hour workshop in Edinburgh on an introduction to using Theraplay™ principles. This is aimed at adoptive and foster parents. The purpose of this workshop is to give you an opportunity to link the theory of play and how important it is for young babies and children's development of safety, security, trust and their brains. This is always a fun and well attended group…so make sure to check the dates and book a place!

The Friends and Family Training sessions will be online several times throughout the year, as they have proved to work well and have a broad reach to people all over the country, in fact the world!

We are delighted to say we have resumed the SafeBase for Parents Training, and these dates are also on the calendar. It is our commitment to families that they come on this training after your child/ren have been living with you. The feedback over the past twelve years has consistently commented on the value of this training, and we therefore encourage all of our adoptive and foster care parents to come to this. Ask your social worker for more information. This will be delivered in both Edinburgh and Aberdeen. We are also thrilled to resume our Parent and Child Theraplay sessions (six in total). These are so special and give the parent and child the opportunity to engage in a session with other children/ and parents. This begins in May, so do check out the dates.

Picnics, storytelling, bug hunting etc. will be posted on our website and Facebook over the coming year, so do keep an eye out!

The Single Adopters Group has resumed and we are keen to welcome new and more experienced adopters to this group. Julie and Emma are the lead facilitators in this.

Talking to Your Child about Adoption and Adolescence and Identity workshops are a continuing offering and again we encourage you to consider attending these trainings, that will add to your skills in supporting your child/young person.

At the time of writing, we are exploring other options we can offer, and would be happy to hear back from you about what you would find useful.

ADOPTION SUPPORT TEAM

St Andrew's Children's Society changed our lives for the better 25 years ago. They offered us strength and support when we were very sad and hopeless. We have never looked back and our two wonderful children –16 and 22 – make us happy every day.

Cannot thank the whole team for everything they have done for us all. Best decision we have ever made was making our family through adoption.

ST ANDREW'S CHILDREN'S SOCIETY ADOPTER

Fundraising

This spring and summer continued the celebration of our centenary year with events for celebration, participation or contribution.

The supported efforts by Jill Ritchie, Claire Fitzsimmons, Kelly Rossbender, Antony Swift, the H family, and our own Tim Rogerson, Julie Arbuckle and Emma Quinn, got us off to a great start by the end of March with a fantastic £2,918.

Edinburgh Marathon Festival, 28–29 May, saw the unstoppable Hairy Haggis Relay Team raise £1,893 – over three times their target of £500!

Then the London Marathon came to Aberdeen. Mark and Mel Hamilton running the virtual marathon with runners helping along the way to a magnificent £5,014.

As we go to press, the total for our Centenary fundraising is £21,951. As our Centenary Ceilidh and Raffle was postponed to January (see page 7), we decided to raise the target from £10,000 to £30,000!

You still have plenty of time to help us meet that new target – keep your eyes open for our Christmas appeal on our website and Facebook.

During this centenary year appeal, we have been very pleased to have helped Jay take part in the World Para Surfing Championships on the west coast of the USA. Jay is a ten-year-old quadruple amputee, who was adopted through St Andrew's Children's Society. We helped her raise over £9,000, to fund the trip in December. Jay will be accompanied by her family.

St Andrew's Children's Society
ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE
100
A century of care

Trusts and foundations

In addition to all the supporters mentioned, we would like to add our grateful thanks to the following organisations for their generosity:

The Scottish Government's Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund (administered by The Corra Foundation), Dr Guthrie's Association, The Tay Charitable Trust, The Robertson Trust, Bank of Scotland and Allied Vehicles in Aberdeen.

Dan & Karen Docwra
FUNDRAISERS

[top] Jay training for the World Para Surfing Championships.

[above left] Team Hairy Haggis who completed the Edinburgh Marathon Festiva, while…

[above right] Mark and Mel ran the Virtual London Marathon in Aberdeen.

Marketing

We were delighted when Mark and Mel Hamilton, two of our Aberdeen adopters who are mentioned in the Aberdeen and fundraising section of this newsletter, appeared in *The Press & Journal* in September after they decided to raise money for St Andrew's Children's Society as we had helped them build their 'forever family'. The couple were also interviewed by Northsound. They ran the Virtual London Marathon around Aberdeen with thirty volunteers – all wearing T-shirts with our logo on!

We were blown away by the response we got to our crowd-funding appeal for Jay, a quadruple adoptee who was adopted through St Andrew's Children's Society at the age of six, mentioned in the Aberdeen and fundraising section of this newsletter. For the appeal, Lisa, Jay's mum, wrote a superb blog post about Jay which you can read on our website. We are always happy to receive blog posts from our families, so please do get in touch if you would like to write one.

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed speaking to prospective LGBT+ adopters and foster carers at a number of Pride events including Grampian Pride, Edinburgh Pride, Glasgow Pride, West Lothian Pride, Pride in Moray and Fife Pride and will continue to encourage people from the LGBT+ community to adopt or foster.

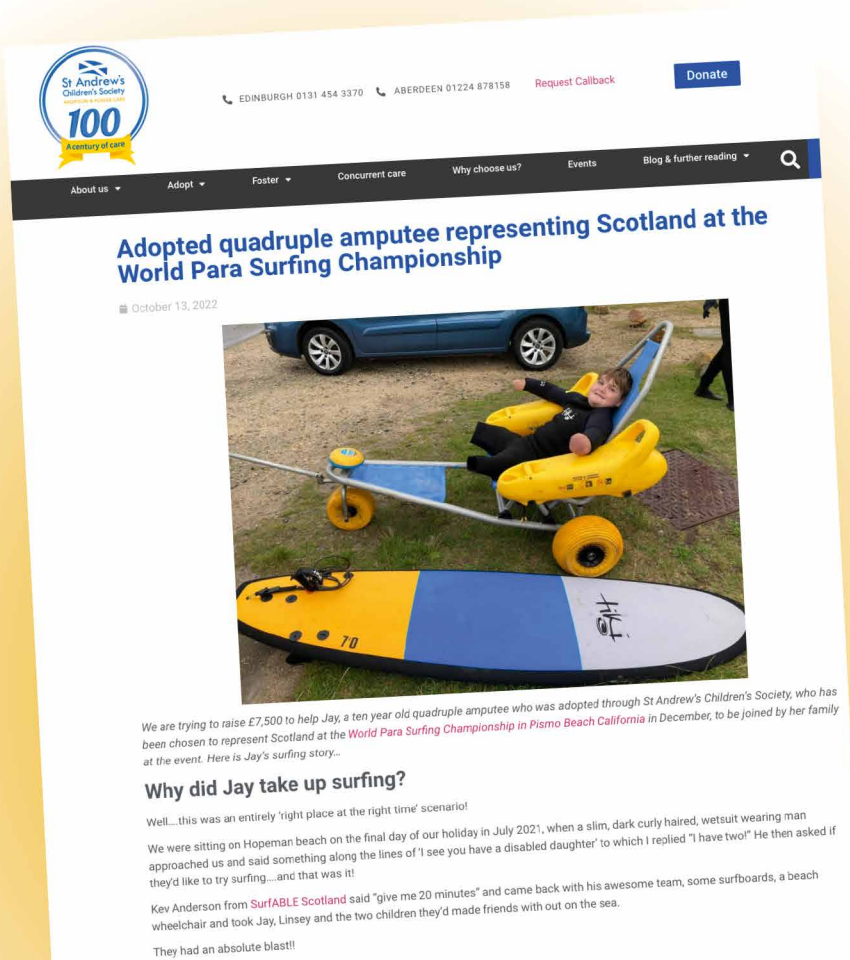
And finally, the blinds are now up in the new Aberdeen office and we hope you'll agree they look spectacular!

Tara Macgregor HEAD OF MARKETING

[above] Our Aberdeen office's new blinds.

[below] Julie at Edinburgh Pride.

[below left] Visit our website's blog pages to find out more about Jay.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About us Adopt Foster Concurrent care Why choose us? Events Blog & further reading

Adopted quadruple amputee representing Scotland at the World Para Surfing Championship

October 13, 2022

We are trying to raise £7,500 to help Jay, a ten year old quadruple amputee who was adopted through St Andrew's Children's Society, who has been chosen to represent Scotland at the World Para Surfing Championship in Pismo Beach California in December, to be joined by her family at the event. Here is Jay's surfing story...

Why did Jay take up surfing?

Well....this was an entirely 'right place at the right time' scenario!

We were sitting on Hopeman beach on the final day of our holiday in July 2021, when a slim, dark curly haired, wetsuit wearing man approached us and said something along the lines of 'I see you have a disabled daughter' to which I replied "I have two!" He then asked if they'd like to try surfing....and that was it!

Kev Anderson from SurfABLE Scotland said "give me 20 minutes" and came back with his awesome team, some surfboards, a beach wheelchair and took Jay, Linsey and the two children they'd made friends with out on the sea.

They had an absolute blast!!

Centenary Ceilidh rescheduled

Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, we made the decision to postpone the Centenary Ceilidh that had been planned for September. We are pleased to say that this has now been rearranged for Saturday 21 January 2023, and will run from 7.30 pm to 10.30 pm at Lauriston Main Hall, Lauriston Street, Edinburgh EH3 9JD.

The band Jiginaboot will provide the music and talk us through the dances. A light supper with a vegetarian option will be provided. There will be a bar selling wine, beer and soft drinks.

Tickets are £15 (£10 for adoptive parents and foster carers). Children are very welcome at no charge, but need to be under the supervision of parents and carers.

Tickets can be obtained by calling 0131 454 3370 or emailing info@standrews-children.org.uk

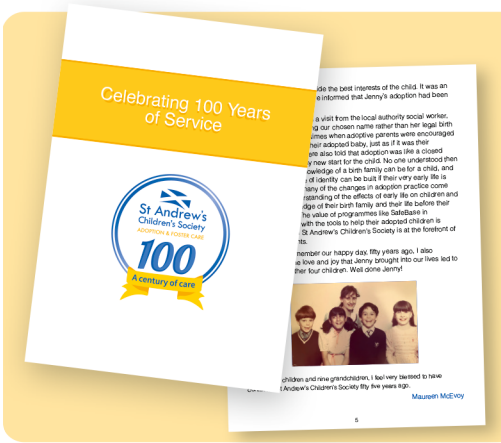
We look forward to seeing you at the ceilidh to celebrate our centenary and dance away those January blues.

I was adopted via St Andrew's Children's Society in 1983. I've had a lovely life, I've always been aware of my adoption as my mum talked to me about it regularly from being a small child. We have a very special bond. Mum was so grateful to St Andrew's Children's Society for the help and support she received, especially from Jo Landgrebe. Years later, I too was thankful for the caring way my request for my birth records was dealt with. I couldn't have been more supported. I traced my birth family, I was very lucky, it went so well. So well that for my 40th birthday next year we are planning a holiday, myself, my adoptive mum, my birth Gran and my birth Auntie! Being adopted has been a huge positive in my life,

I have admiration for my mum and all those who work in making adoption possible. Thank you.

ST ANDREW'S CHILDREN'S SOCIETY ADOPTEE

...and finally



Centenary booklet

Our retired Chair of Trustees and current Adoption and Foster Care Panel Member, Maureen McEvoy MBE, has spent much of the spring and summer researching St Andrew's Children's Society's history over the last 100 years.

The results of her hard work are now available to read in our Centenary commemorative booklet, 'Celebrating 100 Years of Service'. It's available on our website and hard copies can also be picked up, free of charge, from our offices in Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

A thank you

We would like to say a big thank you to Allied Vehicles Group for their very generous donation of £1,000 to help us renovate our new premises in Aberdeen.

John Forbes of Allied Vehicles presenting the cheque to Shiona Freeman, Debbie McDonald and Velga McDougall.

Events Diary

13 Jan
Single Adopters Group

18 Jan 6–8pm ONLINE EVENT
Friends and Family Workshop

25 Jan 10am–12noon
Introduction to Theraplay

27 Jan
Recall Day

3, 10 & 17 Feb
Prep

22 Feb 4–6pm
Post Approval Training

22–23 Feb
Safebase
Aberdeen Office

7–8 Mar
SafeBase
Edinburgh Office

8, 9 & 16 Mar
Prep Group
Aberdeen Office

13–15 Mar
Richard Rose

20–24 Mar
Theraplay

19 Apr
Adolescence & Identity Workshop

21 Apr
Single Adopters Group

5, 12 & 19 May
Prep Group

9, 16, 23 & 30 May
Parent and Child Theraplay Group

17 May
Talking About Adoption Training

For June-Dec 2023, see our next newsletter. **Please note:** All events, unless otherwise stated, are at our Edinburgh offices.

St Andrew's Children's Society would like to wish all our families and everyone who has so generously supported us this year a very happy Christmas and a merry New Year!

Please note that our offices close for the festive period from 12 noon on Friday, 23 December, and we will reopen Wednesday, 4 January 2023, at 9am.

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