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

Reflections

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

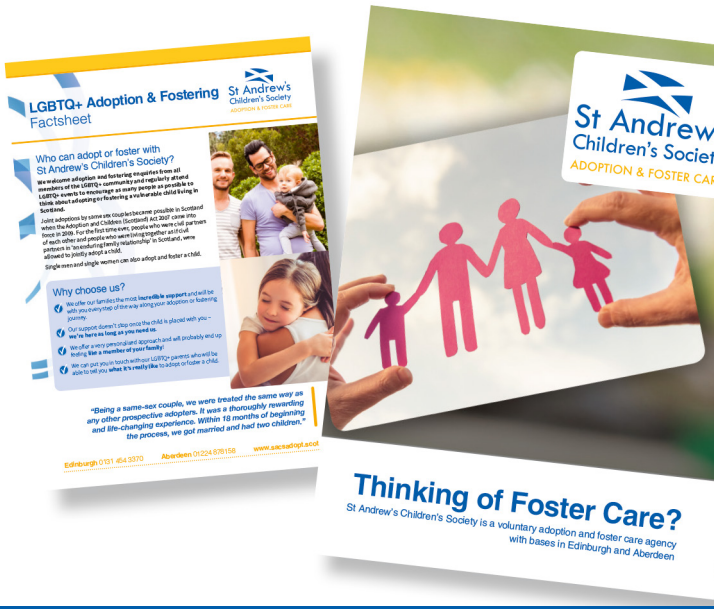
Issue 29 | Winter **2023**

Welcome to our winter newsletter!

We have had a very busy summer, with the numbers of children looking for new adoptive homes rising, and subsequently we have seen a lot of children moving to their new adoptive homes.

This is looking like it will continue over the winter months. This does seem like as good an indication as any that the 'system shock' caused by Covid-19 has finally started to abate with permanency planning for children being prioritised. With this in mind, we need to be more active than ever in our efforts to promote adoption as a positive option for those who feel they have something to offer children through this route to parenting. We are mindful of the financial climate and how unpredictable some people's living situations are which may affect their confidence about committing to the care of a child through adoption.

In this edition of our newsletter, we have a feature on our new foster care recruitment campaign. We have already had some success in the early stages of this recruitment drive, in that we have a number of enquiries from prospective foster carers that we are following up. We hope to continue over the winter months to promote the positive 'career' choice fostering can be for some families who have something to offer vulnerable children. We know that the pressure on statutory foster carer services is significant because of the number of children we get referred to us weekly who need foster placements. We hope to be able to help alleviate



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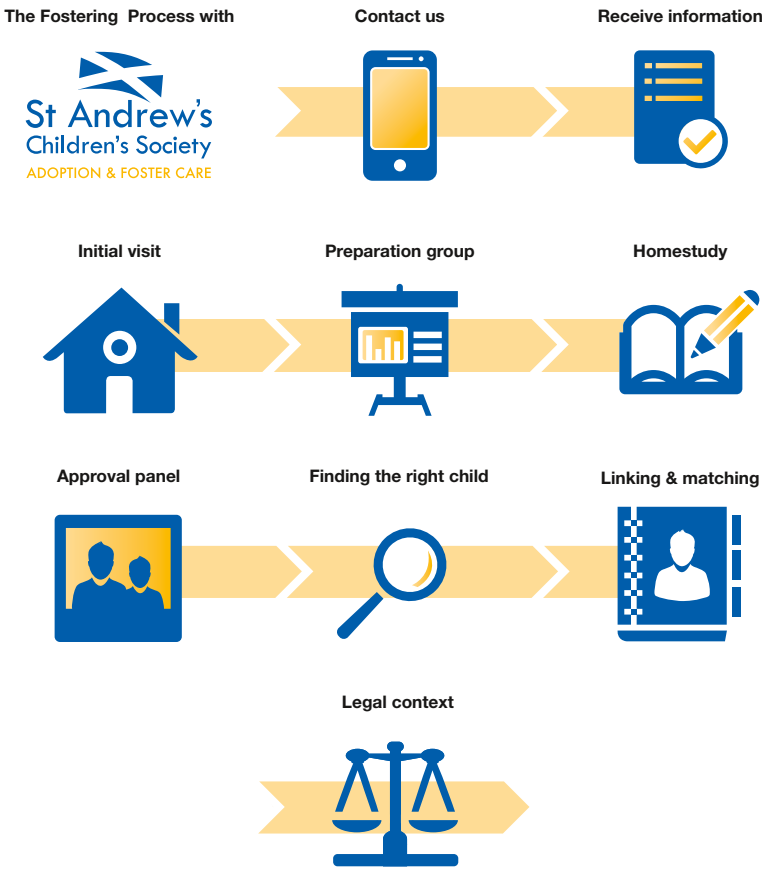
this pressure in a small way by the recruitment of new foster carers.

We are also shining a light on our Aberdeen service in this edition. Now that we are settled in our new office and we have a fully staffed team, we are turning our attention to a 're-launch' of our services in the North-East and we hope that, over the next few months, we will have a renewed visibility across the area to attract new adopters and foster carers.

The next few months will be a time of change for our Edinburgh Team. Three of our long serving staff move into their retirement, Rita Grant, Cathryn Thompson and Sandra Williams, we will miss them but wish them the best in this new phase of their lives. This will likely feature more fully in our summer newsletter, as will our welcoming of new staff who will be joining us.

Stephen Small CEO

Fostering a child with St Andrew's Children's Society



Leavers: Saying good bye to...

Cathryn Thompson

Senior Practitioner

Cathryn joined St Andrew's Children's Society in February 2013, bringing with her a wealth of experience.

For anyone who has ever worked alongside Cathryn they have only praise and lovely things to say about her. Cathryn's quiet calm presence is evident from the moment you meet her. Families who have been assessed and supported by her have frequently commented on her steadfastness and kind nature that has helped them over the years.

As a team we will miss her very much though agree she well deserves her retirement!

Good luck Cathryn and thank you so much for all you have done over the years at St Andrew's Children's Society and for your commitment and work with the children and parents whose lives you have touched.

Adoption Support

Aberdeen

Just prior to the summer, some of the team in the Aberdeen office met with two trainee health visitors who cover Aberdeen City. They both have looked after children allocated to them and were interested in how the adoption process works. Both were former neo-natal nurses so we learned from them too. We now have an established link with trainee health visitors… one can never have enough collaborative working and mutual professional learning!

During the summer, in conjunction with Aberdeen City Park Rangers, the Aberdeen office ran three summer workshops for adoptive and foster families. These group sessions covered three different topics: *Pond Dipping*, a *Sensory Workshop* and *Pollinator*s. They took place in Duthie Park which is central so that families could stay and play afterwards or visit the local park café.

Some of the team also took part in various discussion groups and workshops for *National Neurodiversity Celebration Week*. Many of our established adoptive families also chose to attend some of these online workshops, as did many families who were in assessment. The feedback from all who attended – including our team – was very positive, as were the resources made available afterwards. We are already registered for 2024 and will ensure our families are all made aware of this when next year's date is announced.

Debbie McDonald SERVICE MANAGER

Edinburgh

Already we are into November and preparing for winter. It is hard to believe we are coming towards the end of 2023 and heading into 2024!

Since the last time we wrote in the newsletter we have continued to provide our ongoing rolling programme of training at both offices in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Referrals are steady with regard to adoptee support and counselling, as well as birth family counselling/tracing. Therapeutic *Life Story Work* is proving to be a creative and popular intervention our workers are currently engaged with. The training is excellent, giving the workers new and interesting ways of working with children and young people to understand and make sense of their life journey. A big thank you to the social workers who have taken on these pieces of work with interest and care.

We continue to develop our working relationships with nurseries and schools who have fostered or adopted children in their educational care. In August, Emma and Rita delivered a *SafeBase for Schools* training in a primary school in Glasgow. This was received very positively and many of the teachers/learning assistants commented on how valuable it was in helping them understand the behaviours of some of the children (not just fostered or adopted) they work with on a daily basis. Here is some of the feedback:

The tips on what we can do as teachers was excellent.

Really informative. Gives better understanding of how attachment affects social and emotional needs of children. Also gave me ideas of things to look out for in challenging behaviours and the reasons as to why they occur.

Thank you for an informative and engaging session.

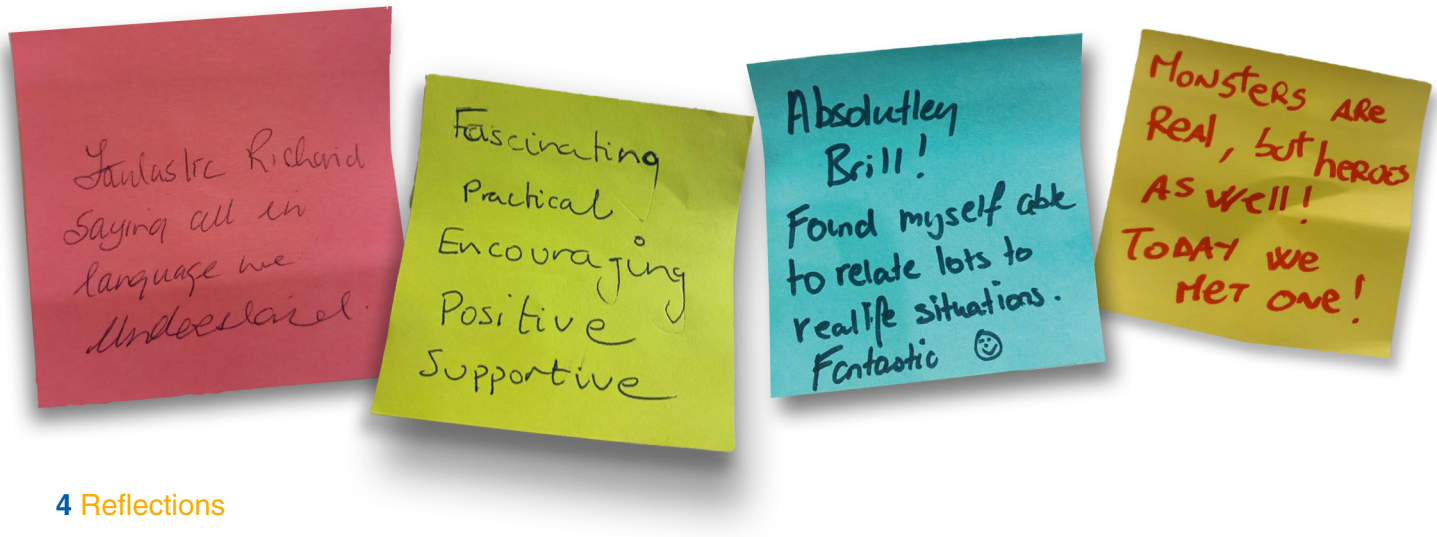
Very good thought-provoking presentation.

We would like to thank Ailie Finley who came along in August to deliver her annual storytelling event at the Edinburgh office. We also would like to express our thanks to the many people, especially our foster carers and adopters, who generously give their time and input in Aberdeen and in Edinburgh when it comes to our preparation courses, and external training.

More recently the team in Edinburgh had the benefit of Richard Rose delivering a training morning to our adopters, foster carers and staff on attachment and trauma. This was very well attended and many of the parents and foster carers commented on how valuable this input was. Later on that same day Richard gave a masterclass to the team on trauma and attachment in respect of some of the work we are involved in which was invaluable. A big thank you to him for his time and expertise.

See the Events Diary for some dates of forthcoming workshops/training events which St Andrew's Children's Society will roll out come 2024. For newer families we would like to remind you of the *SafeBase for Parents* training that is run in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. It is highly recommended by past attendees and we encourage you to talk to your social worker about it.

ADOPTION SUPPORT TEAM



Feedback from Richard Rose's training morning on attachment and trauma.

Fundraising

I have mentioned in previous newsletters, that fundraising can be daunting when you come to the start of another year, and you start planning on how to do even better this year. April 2023 was no exception, with a very successful Centenary year having given fundraising a boost, how to beat that?

I make no secret of the fact that I spend most of my time on behalf of St Andrew's Children's Society researching potential trusts and foundations to whom I can apply. Since 2009, I have written 1,889 funding applications, which works out at an average of 126 a year, or 10.5 a month. Not a lot you might think – but each is individually tailored to meet the funding criteria of the funder, often involving an application form going to many pages that can take days to complete. The latter with a fair amount of detail to illustrate in words, the fantastic work that St Andrew's Children's Society achieves.

So, there we were, April 2023 and an empty sheet – who to try next? Well, the answer was staring at me from my computer screen, the news that the National Lottery Community Fund has announced a new funding stream, and for once, we met the criteria for funding. An initial enquiry was followed by a phone call from a grants officer and a few days later, confirmation that we were eligible, and the process could begin.

Several meetings with social workers gave me all the additional information I needed, and after several drafts, I was ready to 'submit'. On 17 May, coincidentally my birthday, I received an email from the grants officer, congratulating St Andrew's Children's Society on a grant of £150,000 over three years, towards Adoption Support.

From that good start, we have been very fortunate to receive donations from The JTH Charitable Trust, The HDH Wills1965 Charitable Trust, Miss Isabel Ferguson Harvey's Charitable Trust, The Grand Masonic Lodge of Scotland, The Leach Family Charitable Trust and The Monica Rabagliati Charitable Trust. From April, we were also awarded a further year funding of £42,528 from the Scottish Government's Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund.

Congratulations are due to the intrepid few Kiltwalkers who braved this year's event in September. Special mention to our own Tim Rogerson, who walked with the Jamieson family.

Thanks to all the sponsors who donated over £400.

And a final thought. If someone asks you what you want for Christmas and you struggle to think of anything, point them in the direction of the 'donate' button on the sacsadopt.scot website. You'll be putting a smile on a lot of faces.

Dan & Karen Docwra
FUNDRAISERS

The Jamieson family, plus one of our social workers, Tim Rogerson (middle). Tim accompanied Nathaniel Jamieson on the walk.

In focus: **Aberdeen**

It's over a year and a half since we moved to our very splendid new home on Dee Street in Aberdeen. Our old office, at West Lodge on Greenwell Road, had served us well. However, we had outgrown it and wanted somewhere more central for our adopters and foster carers to visit.

In case you haven't been to see us yet, our new office is within easy walking distance of the bus and train stations in Aberdeen. We also have a car park at the Dee Street office for our families to use when they visit, which is very handy.

Though based in Aberdeen, we help people to adopt and foster within a 60-mile radius of the city, and so have lots of families in Aberdeenshire as well. Gill McHaffie, one of our senior practitioners, is based in Moray which means we are lucky enough to have adopters and foster carers based in and around that area too.

It's great for families to come together and share their experiences of adopting or fostering a child with each other. That's why we hold regular events for our families and any new families would be made to feel very welcome.

If you know of anyone who you think might be interested in adopting or fostering who lives within a 60-mile radius of Aberdeen or Elgin, please can you let them know we'd be happy to hear from them?

Please ask them to call 01224 878 158 or email info@standrews-children.org.uk and someone will reply to them. Thank you.

Fostering

According to the Care Inspectorate's latest *Fostering and Adoption 2022–23 – A statistical Bulletin* published in August 2023, the overall number of foster care households in Scotland has continued to decrease. Furthermore, the number of children coming into foster care exceeded the number of new foster care households in 29 of the 32 local authority services by the end of December 2022. That's why we're so keen to hear from anyone who thinks they may be able to offer a vulnerable child living in Scotland a safe, and loving home.

Wondering if you could foster a child? Here are some common questions we get asked by people who enquire about fostering through us.

Why should I foster through St Andrew's Children's Society? We offer our foster carers a highly personal approach and the opportunity to feel valued and part of a close-knit charity where they can really make a difference in society.

Is there an upper age limit for foster carers? No. We have foster carers in their 40s, 50s, 60s and even their 70s. Never rule yourself out without speaking to us first. We also welcome fostering enquiries from people in their 20s and 30s.

Do I need any fostering experience or qualifications to foster? No. We will give you all the training you need and it will be tailored to you. The main thing is that you can give a child or young person a safe and loving home and are kind, empathetic, patient, good at communicating and resilient.

What sort of fostering support would I receive? The best! In addition to receiving 1-2-1 support and supervision, regular visits and catch ups, help with official meetings and highly competitive fees and allowances you will receive free membership to *The Fostering Network*, the UK's leading fostering charity. On top of that, all our social workers are trained in Theraplay™.This means, if needed, you and the child/children you foster can benefit from their experience.

> If you think you could foster a child, please get in touch. You can call and speak to the Duty Worker without an appointment during office hours (Monday to Friday – 9am to 5pm), email info@standrews-children.org.uk, or contact our Edinburgh office at 7 John's Place, Edinburgh EH6 7EL.
>
> **All our foster carers need to live within 60 miles of Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Elgin**.

Retiring 'hero': Gillian Wiggins

Our sincerest thanks go to Gillian, who after 17 years has retired from fostering.

Gillian and her late husband Clive initially joined the agency with a view to adopt but not only did they adopt their daughter, they opened up their doors to fostering, providing a warm and loving family experience to a lot of children over the years. They have supported children onto adoption, fostering and kinship care. Sadly, Clive passed away in 2021, which was a great loss to the family and the children they fostered. With the support of wider family Gillian continued with fostering, supporting young twins onto kinship care.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Gillian for all her hard work, care and dedication over the years.

Marketing

We are still as committed as ever to encouraging as many people as possible from the LGBTQ+ community to adopt or foster through us.

Over the summer months we enjoyed taking part in a number of Pride events including Grampian Pride, Edinburgh Pride, Fife Pride and West Lothian Pride. We also went on the march at Glasgow Pride's '*Mardi Gla*' with some of our LGBTQ+ adopters, which was a fantastic event. You might have spotted us and our new flags if you were there. We were delighted to be included in the BBC's coverage of the event. Thank you to our wonderful adopters for joining us on the march.

We were pleased when Stephen Small, our CEO, was interviewed in our Edinburgh office by BBC Scotland's *Reporting Scotland* following the report on the security of information held by the National Records of Scotland. Adopted children's names were disclosed on Scotland's People website which is operated by the National Records of Scotland. Stephen also talked to Maria Rodrigues from Premier, the Christian radio station on the same day about the same issue.

Tara Macgregor
HEAD OF MARKETING

Please note, that all our public relations we have generated since the last newsletter can be found in the **'PR & media links'** section of our website (under **'About'**).

Events Diary

2 Dec 12–2pm
Children's Christmas Party
Ferryhill Community Centre, Aberdeen

3 Dec 2–4pm
Annual Children's Christmas Party
North Leith Parish Church, Edinburgh

17 Jan 6–8pm ONLINE EVENT
Friends and Family

24 Jan 10am–12pm
Introduction to Theraplay principles

2, 9 & 16 Feb
Prep Group Edinburgh

5–7 Feb 9.30am–5pm
Richard Rose: Therapeutic Life Story Work For professionals

20 Feb 10am–2pm
Trauma Informed Parenting Workshop
Aberdeen
For adopters and foster carers

5, 12, 19 & 26 Mar 10am–12pm
Parent & Child Theraplay

11–15 Mar 9am–5pm
Level 1 Theraplay & MIM
For child and family professionals

20 Mar 6–7.30pm
Wise UP

20 Mar
Recall day for families Aberdeen

23 Apr 10am–12pm
Adolesence and Identity

24–25 Apr & 2 May
Prep Group Aberdeen

3, 10 & 17 May
Prep Group Edinburgh

22 May 12–2pm ONLINE EVENT
Talking about adoption

3–5 Jun 9.30am–5pm
Richard Rose: Therapeutic Life Story Work For professionals

19 June 6–8pm ONLINE EVENT
Friends and Family

Unless otherwise stated, all events are at
St Andrew's Children's Society, 7 John's Place, Edinburgh EH6 7EL