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

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Reflections

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

Issue 32 | Spring **2025**

Welcome to our spring edition

This spring edition of our Reflections newsletter comes 'hard on the heels' of our winter/Christmas edition. We have decided that spring and autumn are probably better times to let you know what we are up to and what we think you might be interested to hear about. We used to publish our newsletter in June and December, but we thought that people have enough to think about with impending summer holidays and Christmas preparations at these times. So, you will now get this publication from us in March and September.

We have outlined quite a lot of the events and group work on offer to adoptive parents and foster carers that have taken place recently and that we plan to provide over the coming months. We hope that there is something that might be of interest to you.

We have also included a 'Meet the Team' section, and I hope that you find Charlie Egan's profile interesting. You can judge for yourself if he has changed much since he started working with us in 1997!

You will also see that there is no let-up in our fundraising initiatives with Tara Macgregor, Head of Marketing and Fundraising, highlighting several events that we hope you can support over the next few months.

This year began with inspections being carried out in relation to our adoption and foster care services from the Care Inspectorate. We were pleased to be rated 'Very Good' for our adoption service and 'Good' for our foster care service. We will always strive to improve what we do, and this is what our inspections helped us to focus on. However, they also presented us with feedback from some of the people who use our services, and we received some very positive feedback from our Inspectors about how they viewed the work that we do.

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The areas that were focused on during these inspections were, how well we support people's well-being and, how well do we plan our care and support. We have decided to include throughout this newsletter some of the quotes that reflect the quality of the services we work so hard to provide.

The key messages from our Inspection Reports for both our adoption and foster care services are: that children and their families are supported by experienced, skilled and knowledgeable staff; that the support we offer is flexible, individualised and available when needed; that through our commitment to all our staff being trained in therapeutic life story work we are making a significant contribution to children and young people having a clear sense of their identity; and our commitment to concurrent foster care and early permanence for children is reducing the number of moves of home they have before they reach their permanent home. I hope some of the quotes that you read in this newsletter chime with your own experiences of us. If not let me know!

The full Care Inspection Reports can be viewed on our website under our About Us section.

Stephen Small CEO

Dan's retirement

Dan became our Fundraiser in 2009 and one of the first things he did was to produce our 'Reflections' Newsletter. Since then, he has worked tirelessly in his efforts to attract voluntary income to fund the work that otherwise is unfunded. This includes, to a significant degree, our adoption support work, and there is no question that with the over £2m that Dan raised during his time with us, he has had a significant impact on the lives of countless children and their families. His humour, good nature and singing are already missed by us all.

Happy retirement Dan.

Dan, who recently retired, had been our fundraiser since 2009.

We are now an accredited Living Wage Employer.

> *Many members of staff had worked in the service for a number of years which offered consistency and continuity to families. This familiarity gave families confidence in their supports."*
>
> Care Inspectorate

> *Therapeutic interventions helped to build resilience within adoptive families."*
>
> Care Inspectorate

Adoption & Fostering Support

Aberdeen & The North East

(left) Everyone had fun at our Christmas party!

(below) Our mums created some beautiful pieces at our Mum's Christmas crafting group.

It's been a long, cold winter but already following on from the big thaw and nearly three weeks of snow and ice in the north east of Scotland, we feel like we are emerging out of the long, cold nights. However, looking back on the last few months, time has just flown by…

Our Christmas groups started when we held a Mum's Christmas crafting group on a Saturday afternoon in the office. We had seven mums attending and they ranged from being newly adoptive parents, through to mums of over six years, with talk of some of their children starting secondary school soon! We also learned that even planning Christmas activities in November, it will still clash with other activities such as school fayres, etc. so we are going to hold another session in April so that some of the mums who could not manage, can hopefully come along this time. The event was lovely with afternoon tea, lots of chat and painting of ceramics.

We took a different approach with the dads and held a pizza night in December. Again, this clashed with other Christmas plans, work commitments and even Aberdeen FC football but we got there in the end; with four dads attending. Two of these were from established families; one a bit newer and the other dad was in the middle of the matching process, so he gained many words of wisdom from his three peers. We also chatted about how to talk to your child about being adopted when they have been placed as a baby (the new dad was asking about this but so was a dad of five years now that his daughter is at school). It was lovely to see how supportive they were of each other and the suggestions they all came up with through their own family experiences.

> *"All members of the team have been very helpful and our social worker has been beyond amazing with all her support and knowledge."*
>
> Foster care parent

Once again, we would like to thank Ferryhill Community Centre for gifting us their community centre and bouncy castle for our Children's party. We had over twenty children in attendance, despite there having been a weather warning that weekend. Joni the magician was a big success with the children all going home with some balloon art!

We look forward to whatever adventures the rest of 2025 brings us!

Debbie McDonald SERVICE MANAGER

Adoption & Fostering Support

> *The reassurance of ongoing support was the reason we chose St Andrew's Children's Society and although we haven't needed any support since our little ones have moved in, we know they are there if/when we need them."*
>
> Adoptive parent

Edinburgh

Spotlight on Groupwork for Children and Young People

This year, we've extended our group work programme for our children and young people. We've done this because we know from research and what our families tell us, that meeting other adopted/fostered young people is incredibly beneficial.

Young people tell us that sometimes, they feel different from their peers. They also tell us that they struggle to know who they can trust to share their story with. When children/young people come to our groups, as well as having a great time, we provide natural opportunities for them to talk and share. In addition, the small numbers and our trauma informed approach, mean that our groups are a great stepping stone for children who might struggle to be part of mainstream groups.

Right now in Aberdeen, we have a group for primary school aged children who struggle with peer relationships and social situations. In Edinburgh in June, we plan to launch *The Gang*, a series of workshops for adopted/fostered children in P5/6/7. The workshops will be co-facilitated by young people from our *Voice Group* (aged 15–25) in a peer support role. *The Gang* will aim to bring together adopted/fostered children/young people to have fun, make friends, but also support them to navigate some of the challenges of being adopted/fostered. For example, answering tricky questions, making and keeping friends and building confidence and self-esteem.

Clay models made by some of the children who attended the Aberdeen Saturday Kids Club for primary school aged children.

For our pre-school aged children, we'll also be running a new parent and child group *Let's Play* on a Saturday morning in June. *Let's Play* will involve a host of activities and games, which will not only be great fun, but will also support attachment and sensory motor development. The sessions we have planned include messy play, art, music, sensory play for babies/toddlers and outdoor forest school activities. To sign up/learn more about these groups, please get in touch with m.thomson@standrews-children.org.uk

Mel Thomson ADOPTION SUPPORT MANAGER

Let's keep in touch

Do we have your current email address? Did you give us your work email address when you first contacted us but have since moved jobs? So we can keep in touch, please send your new email address to our Duty Worker at info@standrews-children.org.uk.

Meet the Team

Charlie Egan | Job title Service Manager

Welcome to our new Meet the Team feature! This month the spotlight is on Charlie Egan who works in our Edinburgh office.

When did you join St Andrew's Children's Society?

I joined St Andrew's Children's Society as a social worker in October 1997.

How has your role evolved since joining the charity?

When I joined St Andrew's Children's Society, I was part of a small team which included our director, two part time social workers and two administrative colleagues. We were based at the Gillis Centre in Marchmont, Edinburgh.

I have been a Service Manager since 2005 and during that time, have continued to manage a caseload as well as supervising staff and sometimes students. I am also the agency's nominated child protection officer as well as having responsibility for the agency's fostering service and overseeing the work of the fostering and adoption panel.

What's the most rewarding part of your job and why?

The most rewarding part of my job is being part of a team responsible for creating families through adoption and foster care.

I am proud of the difference the agency makes to the lives of children and their families. I know that most of the children I have placed for adoption and foster care will not necessarily know who I am. However, I feel it is a privilege to have played a part in their lives resulting in them finding security and stability as well as unconditional love from their adopters and foster carers.

(left) Charlie at a St Andrew's Children's Society Rose Ball Fundraising event in 2003.

(right) Charlie, now. He has been a Service Manager since 2005.

What one event in our history stands out most for you and why?

I think the decision to move from the Gillis Centre to our offices in Leith signaled the agency's ambition to grow and expand and resulted in more staff joining the team.

Consequently, we are now able to offer families ambitious packages of support whilst still retaining a personal touch, which I think typifies the agency's approach to adoption and foster care.

When Charlie started in 1997, we were based in the Gillis Centre in Marchmont, Edinburgh.

Fundraising

We are committed to offering lifelong adoption support to all the families we work with. What many people don't realise is that we don't receive funding from local authorities for this vital service when a child in their care is adopted through us.

However, we feel that offering our families lifelong adoption support is the right thing to do and our moral duty. All our families know that we will always be here for them if they need adoption support, even if that's many years after they adopted through us.

We allocate a portion of the local authority adoption fees we receive when a child is adopted (1/6th) to support our families, but that's not enough to cover the full cost of the adoption support our families need.

That's why we rely on fundraising to fill the gap and ensure we can continue offering our families the adoption support they need, whenever they need it.

A gift in your Will can help us provide lifelong support to our families.

If you want to leave us a gift in your Will, you can leave a modest cash sum or small percentage, which means those closest to you are still your main inheritors.

We would be very grateful and use it wisely.

There is no need for you to tell us of your intentions and you can state in your Will if you would like your gift used for a specific purpose. Everyone has the right to change their mind, so if you leave a gift to us in your Will you can remove it at any time.

Tour O The Borders 2025

Could you imagine cycling 120km in one day? That's what Bruce Raimondo, one of our adopters is doing when he takes part in the Tour O The Borders 2025 on Sunday 7 September to fundraise for St Andrew's Children's Society.

Thank you Bruce!

> *We are delighted to be a part of the family that is St Andrew's Children's Society."*
>
> Adoptive parent

Thank you

We would like to thank the following organisations for their support. Their very generous donations will help us to continue to support our adoptive and foster care families:

The Hugh Fraser Foundation, The Robert Haldane Smith Charitable Foundation, The Leach Family Trust, The Lady Marian Gibson Trust, The Murdoch Forrest Charitable Trust, The Nancie Massey Charitable Trust, James Weir Foundation, and The Walker-Shoolbraid Charitable Trust.

We would also like to say a huge thank you to our supporters who have a recurring mandate and donate to St Andrew's Children's Society every single month of the year. We are so grateful to you for your incredible ongoing support.

Fundraising

The Edinburgh Marathon Festival 2025

The Edinburgh Marathon Festival (EMF) takes place on the 24 and 25 May. It's one of Scotland's largest and most popular running events, attracting thousands of participants each year. The scenic route takes runners through beautiful parts of Edinburgh, including iconic landmarks like Holyrood Park and the Royal Mile.

Why run for us?

1. **Free entry**
   You won't need to pay to take part in the EMF. We will pay for your charity entry. All we ask is that you raise at least the amount listed next to the race you want to run on our website – sacsadopt.scot
2. **Free St Andrew's Children's Society T-shirt**
   We'll send you one of our lovely St Andrew's Children's Society T-shirts. Just let us know your size!
3. **Free cupcake for every child** who takes part.
   We'll be at the finish line to give every child who races a special St Andrew's Children's Society cupcake (our adult entrees are also welcome to have one).

How to run for St Andrew's Children's Society

Visit the Edinburgh Marathon Festival page on our website for full details: sacsadopt.scot

Do you have a standard entry?

Why not link your place to St Andrew's Children's Society instead? Visit your 'My Running' page, select the 'Fundraising' section, and connect to St Andrew's Children's Society.

See who's signed up already

Thank you to everyone who's signed up already. We are extremely grateful for your support. Your stories have inspired us!

You can see who has signed up to run so far and donate to their pages by visiting justgiving.com/campaign/standrewschildrenssociety-emf2025

Duncan's JustGiving story

I recently became a parent to a wonderful 3-year-old through the incredible support of St Andrew's Children's Society. Their dedication to providing nurturing families for vulnerable children has been unwavering since 1922. The lifelong care and guidance they offer not only benefit our child but also provide invaluable support to us as we navigate parenthood.

In gratitude for the profound impact they've had on our lives, I've committed to running the Edinburgh Half Marathon in May 2025 to raise awareness and support for St Andrew's Children's Society. I urge you all to contribute generously to help this remarkable organisation continue its vital work in supporting families and children.

Duncan Greenhorn, one of our adopters, getting ready for the Edinburgh Half Marathon in May.

Unsubscribe
If you would prefer **not** to receive our newsletter again, please send an email to our Duty Worker at info@standrews-children.org.uk or call 0131 454 3370.

Other news

Our new text-to-give service is now live!

We have introduced a new text-to-give service, which is a quick and easy way for people to donate to St Andrew's Children's Society. If you would like to make a single donation of £5, please text **CHILD5** to **70255**. You can also text **CHILD10** to **70255** to make a single donation of £10.

Please note that you must be aged 16+ and have the bill payer's permission to make a text-to-give donation. You can find out more about text-to-give on our website.

Eileen retiring

Eileen joined us as our cleaner in 2004, shortly after we moved to our current Leith office. She had retired from her previous job but ended up being with us for just as long. Eileen always had a cheery welcome for you in the morning. She put us all to shame with her energy and enthusiasm for all she does which includes bowling, bingo, holidays and keeping up with friends.

Enjoy your retirement, Eileen.

We said goodbye to Eileen (right, with Claire on left), who had worked at St Andrew's Children's Society for over 20 years.

> *"Adoption support was flexible and individualised. The service was both responsive to crises, and also acted in a preventative way to help address any arising issues."*
>
> Care Inspectorate

> *"Children and young people developed meaningful and affectionate relationships within their fostering families. Relationships were based on love and offered lifelong security."*
>
> Care Inspectorate

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