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

Text **CHILD5** to **70255** to donate **£5**

Reflections

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

Issue 34 | Spring **2026**

Welcome to our spring edition

Spring is a time of renewal and hope, and I think that the articles you will read here give a very positive picture of adoption and foster care with St Andrew's Children's Society. Children and young people who have been in the 'looked after' system face many challenges and potential disadvantages. What our adopters and foster carers do is provide these children with a sense of renewal and hope for the future and our job continues to enable and support this.

You can see from the articles that reflect the support opportunities we provide from our Aberdeen and Edinburgh offices, some of the ways we work alongside our adopters and foster carers. We continue to be open to suggestions from you about things you think we could do in terms of training and support. It you have any suggestions then please send them to Mel Thomson (mthomson@standrews-children.org.uk) our Adoption Support Manager.

In this edition, Velga McDougall, Office Administrator in Aberdeen, talks a bit about her role in the over ten years she has been with us. The support that our administrative team provides to the professional work of the agency is vital and it is no exaggeration to say that she has, and continues to 'keep our Aberdeen Show on the road', through thick and thin.

It is always heartening to see how many of our families support our work by their fundraising efforts. Voluntary fundraising is a requirement for us as we aspire to provide the support to families that they deserve. This is what distinguishes us as a sector because we choose to work in adoption and foster care as opposed to the statutory sector who have legal duties to provide their services. We are always looking at different funding options, and I know that Tara Macgregor, our Head of Marketing and Fundraising, would love to hear from

anyone associated with St Andrew's Chlldren's Society who has a fundraising idea (contact taramcgregor@standrews-children.org.uk).

Finally, I would like to highlight an event that took place during Adoption Week Scotland in November 2025. We approached the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise, Natalie Don-Innes, to see if she would be interested in meeting some children, young people and their adopters and foster carers. We feel that it is important that our political leaders understand what real experience of the care system our young people have so that they legislate with insight and care to improve the life chances of adopted and fostered children and young people. She was eager to meet with us and so invited adopters, foster carers and concurrent carers to bring their children along to meet her at The Scottish Parliament. I think she was moved by the things the young people and their parents told her about their positive experiences of adoption and foster care but also about some of the barriers that exist to achieving the best outcomes for care experienced children and adults. She saw the vital importance of us *Keeping The Promise* in a meaningful way.

I hope you and your families have a great spring and summer in 2026!

Stephen Small CEO

Write a blog

When we publish one of our families' blog posts on our website, we regularly get thank you emails from other families saying how much it's helped them to hear from someone experiencing the same as them.

What you won't see on Facebook is just how much these blog posts help to raise our profile as post views aren't visible to our followers. For example, 'Our adoption journey', which was written by a person who adopted a child through St Andrew's Children's Society with her partner, has been viewed almost 5,000 times on Facebook since it was published in July 2025. Over 87% of those views were by people who don't follow us. Views like this increase the chances of prospective adopters and foster carers hearing about us and possibly going on to give a vulnerable child a safe and loving home.

You don't need any previous experience to write a blog post. People want to hear your story. What has adopting or fostering a child through St Andrew's Children's Society been like for you? Please consider sharing your story – write a blog post!

Birds of a feather flock together

It's so well known that people often like to spend time with people who have similar interests and values, that there's even an idiom about it! That's why we wondered if you could hold a coffee morning for your friends and family members who might be interested in adopting or fostering? Or perhaps ask your workplace if they might be willing to hold an adoption or fostering information event?

We'd be happy to come along to chat to people.

Adoption & Fostering Support

Aberdeen & The North East

Our regular update from our northern office…

Writing this, I find myself smiling as I look back on 2025 and the support we have offered our families. After Shiona's retirement, we have functioned as a smaller team but as the overused saying goes, "good things come in small packages". Velga, Gill, Brian, Lisa and I have worked hard to try to continue offering our families varied support.

I believe that support is like a pick and mix; one style does not suit everyone so although some of our groups may have been small, that makes them no less valuable for the families who attend. This is why on an in-service day in November we trialled a small arts and crafts group called 'Quiet Kids Club'. This followed on from Lisa and I running our Saturday Kids Group earlier in the year where we realised, that some children could benefit from a smaller group setting. This group was successful, so we are running another session on our next in-service day. I recall one beaming, glitter-covered father, leaving with works of art that his proud daughter had made him. He talked about how much he had enjoyed the session with his daughter as it had allowed him to focus and spend time with her. Those couple of hours of calm, quality parent and child interactions are what makes this job sometimes, especially when we see families facing real challenges in day-to-day life.

We have held lots of our usual groups this year, such as our park playdays, our Trauma Informed Parenting Workshop and Park Rangers' sessions. We also held our regular Aberdeen Dads' Pizza Group, but in October, Gill and Brian held our first Moray Dads' Group. Based on our successful pizza model as temptation, we had five fathers come along. This was a mix of some established families and some newer dads, so the group was able to offer peer support to one another. The pizza order is all ready for the next pizza group in Elgin. We have to thank one of our lovely families for offering us the space to run our groups in their local church hall, River Church Elgin. Building on the success of our Moray Dads' Group, we have now added a Moray Kids' Crafts Group and Mums' Coffee & Cake Group, both of which took place in November 2025, facilitated by Gill.

Debbie McDonald SERVICE MANAGER

We all had fun with the Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service.

Quiet Kids Club.

These stones were painted by young adoptees at The Voice group.

> *Thank you for helping me get adopted over 60 years ago.*
>
> *Cannot thank you enough for finding my adopted parents.*
>
> *All children want is to be cared for, and especially loved, which helps their development into kind and considerate adults."*
>
> Kevin Watson
> **St Andrew's Children's Society Adoptee**

Edinburgh

In October 2025 we were delighted to hear that we were successful in receiving a grant for £25,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund for their Strengthening Organisations fund for our Voice project.

The Voice brings together adopted and fostered young people who want to use their lived experience to make changes in our organisation and influence the wider adoption community.

In 2025, five of our young people aged between 15–24 years old began the project by making their own digital life story. This experience led them to begin to think about how they could use their stories and voice to make positive changes for other children and young people.

In 2026, our young people will build on the themes from their videos to create new resources, training and workshops. Being part of the Voice isn't all work and adoption chat. One typical session involves lots of silliness, games and plenty of pizza! The Voice is also the perfect space if your young person is shy or lacks confidence, as we work hard to make sure it's a safe and inclusive group.

Or, if your young person is aged below 15 years old, we also run a teen group (S1 up) and a young males group (ages 16 to 22) which could be the perfect start to trying adoption focused group work.

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

Velga McDougall | Job title **Aberdeen Office Administrator**

This month the spotlight is on Velga McDougall, our Aberdeen Office Administrator.

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

October 2015.

How has your role evolved since joining the charity?

I started part time and within a few months I started working full time. My admin role grew and I took on many of the organisational jobs in the Aberdeen office. I have recently reduced my hours a wee bit to spend time with my beautiful granddaughter.

Very early on in my post, in fact about one month in, I was given free artistic range and collaborated with the social workers on our family tree, which we were quite sad to leave behind in the old office, but I don't think the landlord would have been happy if we had removed an entire wall.

I am usually the first point of contact in our Aberdeen office, and I would like to think I have a friendly demeanour that comes across on the telephone and in person.

My role is not just answering the phone, there's a lot more to admin than meets the eye, (jack of all trades, master of none) and one of my main duties that I take very seriously is minute taker for panel meetings (stressful but satisfying when completed).

Debbie often describes me as the glue that holds our team together, which I laugh at as I am not great at accepting compliments as anyone who knows me will testify to.

I also attend and help at the summer picnics, Christmas parties (this has included dressing up as an Elf and Mrs Clause) and mums support groups offered by St Andrew's Children's Society to our adoptive and foster care families.

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

I like to think over the years I have fostered a good relationship with many of our families and seeing them flourish is fantastic. I would also like to think I am an integral cog in the wheel that helps our Aberdeen office run (mostly) smoothly. I enjoy the banter I have with my colleagues, although some may find me a bit too much LOL...

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

In 2022 after lockdown our newly appointed Aberdeen manager Debbie found us an office in Aberdeen City Centre and that has been our new home. I feel this gave us a stronger sense of belonging and permanence. We are here to stay.

Velga back in 2015.

Velga as she is now.

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. You can also click Unsubscribe at the bottom of the Mailchimp email if you received the newsletter by email.

Fundraising

Edinburgh Marathon Festival 23 & 24 May 2026

After last year's success, we couldn't not take part in the Edinburgh Marathon Festival again this year. This time, we hope as many children as possible will join in the fun. As a thank you, each child who fundraises this year on our behalf will receive a special medal, a Superstar EMF 2026 Finisher sticker and a personalized certificate of achievement at the end. And of course, everyone will receive a St Andrew's Children's Society T-shirt when they sign up.

We raised over £5,000 last year. Help us raise even more this year. Sign up now to run or donate to someone's St Andrew's Children's Society fundraising page.

Full details on our website – sacsadopt.scot.

Every child who takes part will receive a medal, a sticker and a certificate.

Bruce Raimondo

Huge thanks to Bruce Raimondo who took on the epic challenge of cycling 120km in one day when he completed the Tour O The Borders last September and raised an amazing £1,361 plus £298 in Gift Aid.

Bruce with his children at the end of the race.

The Alex Timpson Trust

We were so pleased to receive £25,000 from The Alex Timpson Trust towards our SafeBase Parenting Programme, which will help us to continue this important work with our families.

The Robertson Trust

We were thrilled to be awarded a grant by The Robertson Trust towards the costs of running our Adoption Support service over the next five years. At St Andrew's Children's Society, we are totally committed to offering our families lifelong adoption support whenever they need it and this incredibly generous award will help us to continue to do just that. It will make a real and lasting difference to our families' lives and we couldn't be happier.

Christmas quiz fundraiser

Thank you to Michael and Val from the Wellington Hotel in Nigg for raising £404 for us at their Christmas Quiz. Michael and Val are regulars to our 'Thank you' section as this is the second Christmas Quiz they have held for us. Thanks again Michael and Val. We really appreciate your support.

Easyfundaising

Did you know that when you're shopping online for groceries, gifts, clothes, or even booking a holiday you could be raising money for us as over 8,000+ retailers like Tesco, M&S, John Lewis, eBay, Argos, ASOS, Booking.com, and more will donate to us for free through Easyfundraising?

It's very easy to use and it won't cost you a penny. Please sign up here:

easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/st-andrews-childrens-society

Easyfundraising is easy to use.

The National Lottery Community Fund

We were delighted to receive a grant for £25,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund as part of their Strengthening Organisations funding programme. The money will be used to help us continue our work with our Voice Group for the next two years.

A heartfelt thank you too, to all the wonderful National Lottery players who make this funding possible.

And lastly… £250 received from the T family

Thank you so much to the wonderful T family from Aberdeenshire for their donation of £200, which once Gift Aid was added, came to £250!

Thank you

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

Allied Vehicles Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, the Scottish Government's Children, Young People, Families and Early Intervention and Adult Learning & Empowering Communities Fund (CYPFEI & ALEC) administered through Corra, The Alex Timpson Trust and The Robertson Trust.

We would also like to thank all the people who have so generously donated to us since the last newsletter, either by making a donation or completing a fundraising challenge. We appreciate your support.

Other news

Free Holiday Homes for Foster Carers

The Alex Timpson Trust, the official company charity of The Timpson Group, support children and young people who have had a difficult start in life, especially those who are care experienced. They recently made a second very generous donation to our SafeBase programme to support our families.

We wanted to make our foster care families aware that The Alex Timpson Trust offer foster carers the opportunity to apply for a **free seven night stay** in one of their holiday homes, which are located across the UK, including Seton Sands in East Lothian. The holiday homes all have a minimum of six births – so there is plenty of room for the whole family and there are lots of onsite activities to enjoy.

Applications will open 1 August 2026, and they generally close as soon as two weeks later due to the high volume of applications, so please get your application in quickly if you would like to apply. Please check the The Alex Timpson Trust website for further details and the link to apply: timpson-group.co.uk/alex-timpson-trust.

The Timpson Foundation, which is also part of The Timpson Group, offer people leaving the care system 1-2 weeks work experience. It's great for the CV and helps to build self-confidence. The work experience can be done in several different businesses like Max Spielmann, Snappy Snaps, Johnstons Cleaners, Jeeves, The Watch Lab and of course, Timpson. If you would like to find out more please visit The Timpson Foundation website: timpson-group.co.uk/about/timpson-foundation

Goodbye

We'd like to wish Rex McBride all the very best as she moves on to her next chapter. Throughout her time with us, Rex brought a spark of enthusiasm and a genuine kindness. Her administrative skills, creativity, and a willingness to support others made a real impact, all whilst completing her degree at Napier in Business Management.

As Rex takes some time out before pursuing a master's – possibly in social work – we hope the journey ahead is fulfilling and full of opportunities.

We're grateful for everything Rex has contributed and wish her every success for the future.

Rex McBride

Text **CHILD10** to **70255** to donate **£10**

Scan me to visit our site to find out more:

sacsadopt.scot **info@standrews-children.org.uk**

7 John's Place, Edinburgh EH6 7EL
T: 0131 454 3370

St Andrew's Children's Society
Scottish Charity No. SC005754

62 Dee Street, Aberdeen AB11 6DS
T: 01224 878158