

make someone's day...make someone's life

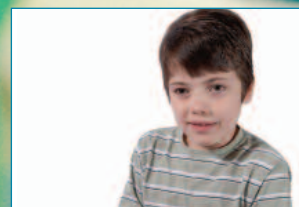
Caring for our Children

The quarterly newsletter for family based carers in Edinburgh Spring 2008

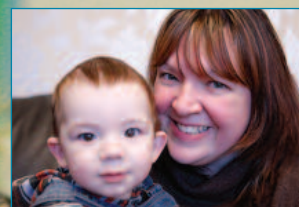
Each child or young person, who needs to be cared for or looked after in a family based resource, is provided with a placement that meets his or her needs, when she or he needs it and for as long as needed.



03 Day carers...



04 Could you care...



08 Panel members...

DAY CARERS

Day Carers across the city provide support for families whose children need time away from home during the week by looking after the children in their homes. The children often need help with learning to play, read and draw. They also need the chance to meet other children, go shopping and do everyday family activities. Parents are offered support and a chance to discuss childcare, and Day Carers themselves can get support to make sure they don't feel isolated in their work:

SOUTH EDINBURGH

So that children are able to socialise (and to give the carers some adult conversation too) some carers have taken the initiative and set up their own groups where they meet for a few hours a day, a couple of times a week with the children they look after. One such group, now based in the Gilmerton Community Centre, has been running in various locations for over 25 years. Around 10 carers attend regularly and the children (babies to five year olds) are kept entertained with a variety of activities from drawing and painting to playing in the ball pit and on the climbing frame.

THE CHILDREN LOVE IT. THEY CAN MIX WITH OTHER KIDS AND IT DEVELOPS THEIR SOCIAL SKILLS AND TEACHES THEM TO SHARE

Janice is the longest serving member of the group: "It's a great way of sharing problems and it's always nice to speak to someone your own age! Sometimes the children we're caring for have certain issues and problems that would make them stick out at your average toddler group. In this environment it's safe and friendly and we can discuss things confidentially as we're all aware of the sensitivities.

And the children love it. They can mix with other kids and it develops their social skills and teaches them to share." And they don't just meet at the community centre, as Linda, who is also a foster carer, explains: "When the weather's nice we take a trip to the local park and each year we go to Ratho on a day out. We also make sure we celebrate birthdays and Christmas too."



NORTH EDINBURGH

Another group that's been established for years is based in the Children and Families Centre in Pilton. Two workers run the group and it's attended regularly each month by around 16 carers.

In this group it's about giving carers some protected time without the children where they can air any concerns, share problems, give advice and get support from others who are experiencing similar issues. As well as this, people from various departments of the Council or from external agencies visit them to give talks, ranging on issues from child protection to family planning. Nicole, who has been a Day Carer for 22 years enjoys attending the group and says: "I get a lot of support from other people through this group. I enjoy my work but what we do can be isolating at times so this gives us the chance to discuss things together and share advice."

There are many more groups across the city, so if you're a Day Carer interested in finding out about a group that could offer support in your area, contact your link worker.

HINTS AND TIPS



Between you, readers of this newsletter have hundreds of years of experience caring for children and your advice, hints and tips could be invaluable to other carers. It was suggested in the questionnaire feedback from November that carers share hints and tips through this newsletter and we think that's a great idea, so let's get it started...

How do I get rid of the dummy?

How can I get the kids to sleep?

What free activities are best to entertain the kids?

What's the best way to manage contact with parents?

How do I prepare for a foster child leaving for adoption?

You're all likely to have opinions on at least one of these issues so why not share your wisdom with others. Simply contact us (contact details on back page) if you have any handy hints or tips or indeed if you have a question you'd like some advice on. We'll publish the responses and questions in the next issue.

day...make someone's life

Could you care for a disabled child?



We urgently need carers for around 50 disabled children in Edinburgh. The children vary from toddlers to teenagers and display a wide range of disabilities and behaviours, from physical and learning disabilities to autism or Down's Syndrome. They need extra special care and stimulation to develop their potential.

The two types of care most urgently needed are:

Specialist Disability Foster Care: Caring full or part-time for disabled children with complex needs.

Share the Care: Caring for disabled children with less complex needs for short, regular periods.

During March we're running a campaign on the radio and in the press to encourage more carers to come forward. So, if you've considered the idea before, or you know someone in your family or a friend who'd be suited to this particularly challenging job, now's the time to take the next step and get in touch.

Con McCormick has been a specialist disability foster carer with the Council for around seven years. Both him and his wife are joint carers and they look after three autistic boys, two through regular respite and the other lives permanently with them.

Con says: "None of the boys speak and two have epilepsy so it's certainly a challenge. The worst thing is not knowing what's wrong when they're upset – they could be physically sore or something out of routine could have unsettled them. But it's the small things that make it worthwhile – a smile or a look lets you know you're getting through to them and making a difference. And they encourage us to learn as a family too. We're learning signalong just now to help us communicate with the boys and even the grandchildren are joining in! Every minute of every day is special with a child with disabilities. It's not easy, but it's worth it."

DURING MARCH WE'RE RUNNING A CAMPAIGN ON THE RADIO AND IN THE PRESS TO ENCOURAGE MORE CARERS TO COME FORWARD

Find out more: Call 0800 174 833 or visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/fostering

Fostering Disabled Children: Facts

Lots of different people can care for a disabled child:

- you must be over 21 years old
- you can be single, married or part of a long-term relationship
- you can be a tenant or homeowner
- you might have children of your own, or you might not
- you don't need to be well-off or in work

What we need from you:

- experience of caring for children
- an understanding or experience of disability
- a spare room in your home
- an adult at home or available out with school hours to support the child
- willingness to work with parents, social workers and other professionals
- energy, patience, commitment and a sense of humour!

What we offer:

- a weekly fee of £361 for full-time specialist care (pro-rata for part-time)
- a daily fee of up to £25 for Share the Care
- generous maintenance allowances for the child
- comprehensive preparation and ongoing training
- high quality professional support
- the chance to meet and share your experiences with other carers.



TOY SWAP

Do you have too many toys in the house? Did presents at Christmas add to the mountains of toys you already have for the children? If you've outgrown your storage then a suggestion from a carer in Haddington is to advertise good condition toys wanted and on offer in this newsletter!

If you have any toys you have that you'd be happy to give away to other carers then contact us and we can advertise them in the next newsletter. Likewise, if you're looking for toys, perhaps for children of a specific age group, you can let other carers know and you may be in luck.

Just get in touch (contact details on back page) and we'll start the ball rolling.



EGGSTRA SPECIAL EASTER FUN

It'll soon be Easter and the kids will be off on holiday for a couple of weeks. If you're looking for things to do then check out these ideas...

AT HOME

Egg Decoration:

Place the eggs in a saucepan and bring the water to the boil, then reduce to simmer for another nine minutes. Cool the eggs by running cold water into the saucepan. When the eggs are cool to touch they're ready to decorate. You can make this as simple or elaborate as you want. Ideally you'd have some acrylic paint and the kids could apply this using a brush, sponge or even with their fingers! And if you want to add some finishing touches, use stickers, foil or cotton wool.

Egg Hunt:

Keep it simple by hiding eggs throughout the house or garden. Colour code the eggs according to age so the four to six year olds search for the red eggs, the seven to nine year olds to look for blue eggs etc. This way, the older children will bypass the obvious in search of their own eggs, giving the younger children a fairer chance. Or for more of a challenge, create an egg treasure hunt. Give each child a map with clues to unravel and solve in each room.

Yummy Chocolate Easter Nests:

You'll need shredded wheat or corn flakes, cooking chocolate, cake cases and milk chocolate mini eggs or jelly beans to decorate. Break up the shredded wheat/corn flakes into a bowl. Melt the cooking chocolate and slowly pour over. Mix together and shape the mixture into nests in cake cases. Once the nests have cooled down and set (give them about an hour in the fridge), you can decorate and your tasty treat will be ready to eat!

OUT AND ABOUT

Parklife

If you're looking to get out of the house then why not take advantage of the 144 parks and 167 free play areas throughout Edinburgh. To find out more visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/Leisure or call 0131 529 7921.

Adventure

Dalkeith Country Park: Woodland, riverside walks, adventure play area, cafe and shop. Open April – September. Adults and children over five £3 entry. www.dalkeithcountrypark.com or call 0131 654 1666.

East Links Family Park (East Lothian): From train safari and go-karting to trampolines and a two-acre woodland maze. Entry £7.50 per adult/£6.50 per child over two. www.eastlinks.co.uk or call 01368 863 607.

Vogrie Country Park (Midlothian): Four miles of woodland walks as well as an adventure play area and miniature railway. Free. Call 01875 821 990.

And remember...

It's the International Science Festival 25 March – 6 April, so there's plenty on for kids of all ages (see back page). And if the idea of a family visit to Camera Obscura appeals to you, have a day out on us by entering our giveaway (see back page).

Campaign success

Thanks to those of you who recommended friends or family to come forward after November's campaign to recruit more foster carers for boys aged 5-12 and sibling groups. And thank you to the foster carers who helped out by being interviewed by the media.

The successful campaign, which included posters, flyers, radio, newspaper advertising and positive media coverage, attracted 52 enquiries over the month and visitors to the foster care website increased by 250%. Fingers crossed that many of these people follow through the process to become carers for some of Edinburgh's most vulnerable children.

And remember, please continue to refer friends and family to the information line or website if they are interested in becoming carers.



Encourage others to care

It's been two years now since we launched our 'Caring for our Children' campaign so we're having a refresh and relaunching in May during Foster Care Fortnight (5 – 16 May). So you'll see new advertising and promotional materials from May onwards, encouraging people to come forward to care for Edinburgh's children. As part of the relaunch we'll be working with the media to promote the campaign and you could help by telling your story as a carer. If you'd be willing to be interviewed by the media then get in touch (contact details on back page).





5 MINUTE INTERVIEW

The Rt Hon George Grubb, Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh

In each newsletter we'll feature a member of staff, local celebrity or community member in a five minute interview. In this edition The Rt Hon George Grubb answers our questions.

Q. What is your job?

A. I am the Lord Lieutenant and Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, which means that I am the civic head and Her Majesty The Queen's representative.

Q. What are the most enjoyable parts of what you do?

A. All of it! From attending community events to greeting dignitaries.

Q. What one thing would you change about it?

A. Nothing. Maybe a bit more time in the day to accommodate the many requests that are received.

Q. If you weren't in your current job what would you be doing?

A. I would be retired enjoying a few coastal walks!

Q. Foster Care – what does it mean to you?

A. The ability to give children new opportunities and stability in life, creating good relationships and continuity.

Q. What is your earliest memory?

A. Going to a garage at Blackhall with my dad, who was looking after a pigeon who had a broken wing.

Q. What is the last book you read?

A. Capital of the Mind by James Buchan.

Q. What is your favourite holiday destination?

A. Arran. It has everything of Scotland from mountains to beaches and wonderful hotels. An extremely relaxing place.

If you would like to take part in the five minute interview or know of someone who could make a good contribution please contact Joanne MacDougall on 0131 529 7210.



Kid's Corner

What's new for 2008? Here's some cool web stuff to check out:

Reviews, previews and cheat codes for the ps, xbox, wii and more: <http://uk.gamespot.com>

Football Mad? Edinburgh's guide to what's happening: www.edinburghguide.com/sport/football

Got a project or hobby or interested in the world, the planet and nature? www.kids.nationalgeographic.com

Bored? Sudoku, puzzles, online jigsaws, crafts and games: www.activityvillage.co.uk

Need help Reading? Download a programme to read with you: www.pixi.com/~reader1/allbrowser

Special needs? Check out: www.symbolworld.org or www.helpkidzlearn.com

Free online suite of simple games to teach early ICT skills to people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, those who need to develop skills with assistive input devices and for very young children new to computers :

www.northerngrid.org/ngflwebsite/sen/intro.htm

Marion Boyle

IT Development Officer, marion.boyle@edinburgh.gov.uk

Make your pet a star and win them a treat:



To celebrate National Pet Month in April, we're giving you the chance to see your pet in print and win them a special treat.

E-mail a pic with your pet's name to

joanne.macdougall@edinburgh.gov.uk

or send a photo (don't worry – we'll return it) to the address on the back page. We'll show the images in a pet gallery in the next issue and the person who sends in the best one will get a £25 voucher for Pets at Home.

So whether it's your pampered pooch, your beloved budge or your cool cat, snap them and send it in.

To find out more about National Pet Month visit: www.nationalpetmonth.org.uk

WORDSEARCH

G K E G G S I B E E
 T D A G R O L L T Q
 E Z S E L O L A D S
 K B T T Z K L H L K
 S U E A P O V O T F
 A N R R C K J L I J
 B N G O L C O I B P
 L Y H C G V Z D B J
 I C N E T M N A A J
 X Y N D A R T Y R B

Test your skills with this Easter wordsearch; find the nine hidden words, each with a holiday theme, good luck!

- EASTER
- BUNNY
- EGGS
- BASKET
- RABBIT
- CHOCOLATE
- HOLIDAY
- DECORATE
- ROLL



Panel members needed

We need new fostering and adoption/permanence panel members. If you have considerable experience working with or caring for children, you could help! Arlene's been a foster carer for over 10 years and has also adopted her son. She has sat on both panels and would encourage other carers to get involved:

"Although I've got a busy family life with six children, I like the time I spend reading up on cases and sitting on panels. It's something for me to do that doesn't involve the kids and I get great pleasure knowing I've helped choose the best place for a child to grow and that I've made many carers and parents happy. I've been on both sides of the table and it definitely helps to have someone there who's been through it personally. If you have the time to spare I'd say 'go for it!'"

What do panels do?

Fostering panels make recommendations about applicants' suitability to offer foster, respite or day care. Adoption/permanence panels consider cases where children need to be brought up permanently away from their own parents. Both would involve reading reports, meeting with applicants and social workers and making recommendations about applicants' suitability.

Who can be a panel member?

We welcome members from a range of relevant professional and caring backgrounds. There's a particular need for men and anyone with experience of disability or from ethnic minority backgrounds.

How much time does it take?

Fostering panels sit every three weeks and last three to four hours. Adoption/permanence panels sit every four weeks for the same amount of time. Reading before the panels can take around three hours.

Are panel members paid?

No, but you get an induction and training and once involved, the knowledge that you're helping change the lives of some of Edinburgh's most vulnerable children.

Want to know more?

Contact Grace Lyons on 0131 524 0839 or e-mail: grace.lyons@edinburgh.gov.uk

New starts

A warm welcome to the following staff who've joined Family Based Care Services recently:

Maxine Coleman, Support Assistant

Maxine is a Support Assistant at Claremont House. She moved to Edinburgh 18 months ago from England, having previously worked in a Post Office for nine years.

Ruth Dolan, Social Worker

Ruth is part of the Permanence Team based at Claremont House. Ruth has worked in the field of family placement for almost 20 years and recently transferred to Edinburgh from a neighbouring local authority.

Kathleen Buchan, Social Worker

Kathleen recently joined the New Opportunities Team at Claremont House. Her previous experience includes both Youth Justice Services and youth work.

Stuart Graham, Social Worker

Stuart is part of the Initial Family Placement Team at Westfield House. He previously worked for the Council's Early Intervention Project for Families as a Case Manager and he has a long history of working with young people in the voluntary sector.

Lyndsey Robertson, Social Worker

Lyndsey works in the Disability Team at Claremont House. Previously she worked with Edinburgh Young Carers, supporting children who look after a parent with a disability or illness, and at Sycamore, part of Aberlour Childcare Trust.

Jane Ritchie, Social Worker

Jane is part of the Recruitment Team at Springwell House. A newly qualified Social Worker, her previous experience includes time as a Support Worker with SHARE Scotland as well as a Social Care Worker within Children and Families.

Shara Morris, Social Worker

Shara joined the Permanency Team at Claremont after working on a therapeutic project for children in Perth and Kinross. Her background has always been working with children and their families.

Melissa Goodbourn, Social Worker

Melissa moved to Edinburgh in June after working in North Carolina at a mental health agency, providing services to children and families. She's now part of the Recruitment Team at Springwell House.

CAMERA OBSCURA GIVEAWAY

We have five family tickets (each for four people) to give away for Camera Obscura and World of Illusions on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. Enjoy a fun day out with the kids where you can explore the wonders of light, illusion and 3D holograms. Interact with an array of Edinburgh Vision images from Victorian 3d cityscapes to live viewcams which you control. Pick people up on the palm of your hand; and enjoy the breathtaking panoramas from the rooftop terrace!

All you have to do is complete the following sentence: Helping care for Edinburgh's children is worthwhile because.....

Send your sentence, along with your name and contact details to:

joanne.macdougall@edinburgh.gov.uk or to the address below by Friday 28 March. The first five names drawn at random will win!



HAVE YOUR SAY

Let us know what you think about *Caring for our Children* and any ideas you have about what you'd like to see in the next edition. If you want to contribute, please contact the editor with your story, review or idea by 1 May 2008.

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Upcoming Events



Capital Collections Exhibition
Now until 11 April, Central Library, George IV Bridge
www.capitalcollections.org.uk

Capital Collections is an exciting new website giving online access to some of the 100,000 amazing and unique prints including photographs, engravings and drawings held by Edinburgh City Libraries. It's a unique record of Edinburgh past and present, including architecture, people and places. Until 11 April you can see some of these images on display at the Central Library and the exhibition will be touring local libraries afterwards.

Edinburgh International Science Festival
25 March to 6 April
www.sciencefestival.co.uk

The 2007 Edinburgh International Science Festival was a great success, enjoyed by over 11,000 visitors. This year meet eMo, a robot that can mimic human emotions. Find out what really makes your brain tick. Try your hand at a little surgery, or become a Crime Scene Investigator. Plus the usual bogeys, dinosaurs, blood and guts!

Junior, Mini and Great Edinburgh Run
3 and 4 May
 Call 0845 389 2200 or visit: www.greatrun.org

The weekend starts with the Junior and Mini Great Edinburgh Run on Saturday 3 May in The Meadows. This is open to children aged 3 to 8 years covering 1.4km and the junior event is suitable for young people aged 9 to 14 years covering 2.4km. Then on Sunday 4 May thousands of runners are expected to take part in one of the world's most scenic 10km courses around Scotland's historic capital city.

Bank of Scotland Imagine Festival 2008
27 May to 2 June
 Call 0131 228 1404 or visit: www.imagine.org.uk

Over 12,500 children and their families, school teachers and carers enjoyed the best children's theatre the world has to offer last year and this year's set to be just as exciting. Highlights include 'Surprise' - Austrian dance theatre with live music for the over twos; recreations of 'Aesop's Fables' for the over fives and 'Yellow Moon', an award winning modern Bonnie and Clyde tale for those fourteen and over.

Three Harbours Arts Festival
30 May to 8 June
www.3harbours.com

Join in the third annual ten-day festival celebrating all forms of artwork in the three harbour towns of Prestonpans, Cockenzie and Port Seaton in East Lothian. Over 150 artists will be exhibiting work in ingenious spaces in houses, school halls, galleries, garages etc. alongside street theatre, music, dance and boat trails. There will also be a programme of events including music, drama, literature, workshops, demonstrations and children's art activities.