

Community of Practice for Siblings Newsletter

Keeping the Promise to Brothers and Sisters

➔ Pause and Reflect

The Community of Practice for Siblings continues to go from strength to strength. In our third newsletter, Tom Boyd from our planning group, reflects on progress...

“The Community of Practice for Siblings continues to grow as a nationwide network of connection, learning and energy as Scotland works to keep the promise to sisters and brothers and those with similar sibling-like relationships of loving connection. Supported by a broad Planning Group, the Community is a welcoming and collaborative space for those who are passionate about this agenda, bringing together change makers from across the country and in leading national organisations. It meets regularly, both on-line and in person, and we always welcome new faces. By working together, we can truly make a difference for brothers and sisters across Scotland.”



Upcoming Meetings

- **20 August 2024** – ONLINE, 10am – 12:30pm: **BOOK NOW**
- **1 October 2024** – in person, 10am – 3:30pm at Rossie Young People's Trust
- **21 November 2024** – ONLINE, 10am – 12:30pm

➔ Round up: May Event

More than 70 Community of Practice members joined our online event in May. The session had a focus on supporting sibling relationships in kinship care settings and how we support sibling relationships when families are affected by imprisonment.

We heard directly and powerfully from a kinship carer about how he, his wife and the children in his care were navigating circumstances of real complexity with the support of a kinship team, alongside inputs from Families Outside on the Staying Connected work and resources, AFKA Scotland on the recent Kinship and Housing Knowledge-Exchange Project and West Dunbartonshire Council on the next steps in their data work to better understand how well they are doing to keep the promise to siblings.

Families Outside – Staying Connected Project

At the Community of Practice's recent webinar, attendees heard from Chloe Sharkey, Project Officer at Families Outside about the work as part of the Staying Connected project which explored the topic of care-experienced siblings separated by imprisonment or secure care, and the gap in knowledge surrounding this. Additionally, sharing of resources and facilitated discussion of how we can support children and young people who are affected by imprisonment.

Attendees took part in two breakout rooms to discuss a case study which focused on a scenario where two brothers who had been separated from one another, and sharing some thoughts around the emotional impact, what supports would be helpful. The second breakout room focused on a letter writing activity to support the two brothers to re-establish contact after a period of separation through a letter writing exercise. Lots of rich discussion and learning coming from attendees of different professional backgrounds whose work intersects with this.

Significant themes arising from the research findings and discussion include the impact separation has on children and young people, key barriers for children and young people staying in touch, facilitating family time, resources that were created coming from the findings of the report to support children and young people and professionals who work with them.



Families Outside – Staying Connected Project

The videos, rights resources, report, child friendly report and Social Work Guide created as part of the Staying Connected project can be found on the [Families Outside website](#). Additionally, further materials for professionals and resources for family members affected by imprisonment are available on [the website](#). The Promise Partnership has funded Families Outside and ProjectChange to respond to and build upon the findings from the Staying Connected Phase 1 project.

The project has moved on to Phase 2 which aims to increase access to effective support, and to raise awareness and cultivate better standards of support amongst the statutory workforce and third sector agencies in contact with this group directly, or indirectly. These different elements of the project aim to motivate cultural significant changes, improving working practices and helping sector professionals focus their work more effectively.



As part of Phase 2, Families Outside are working to deliver training in partnership with ProjectChange to raise awareness and upskill staff internally and externally through creating resources, training, and enhancing our modes of data collection. Additionally, they aim to develop and deliver training, and improve their modes of data collection and share this learning with other agencies and partners working with children and young people.

➔ June Event at STAR

On 25th June, the Siblings Community of Practice was hosted by Siblings Reunited (STAR) in Fife for the launch of AFKA's evaluation report of the service. We were joined by about 60 people from around the country who are all passionate about Scotland Getting It Right For Brothers and Sisters. This was the largest in-person gathering of the Community of Practice to date and it was great to see many people joining us for the first time, as well as familiar members of the community. A marquee was hired for the occasion and as always the team at STAR did an excellent job of creating a welcoming space and an ideal environment for connection.

The principal messages from the evaluation of STAR include recommendations for the future development of STAR, as well as key considerations for the development of other 'STAR-like' resources, and for those seeking to otherwise support relationships between brother and sisters who have been separated through involvement with the care system.



Themes from the evaluation highlighted:

- the role of the natural environment and fun & inclusive activities in sibling family time
- the importance of enabling siblings to be brothers and sisters together, and
- the value of supporting relationships between caregivers.

➔ June Event at STAR

During the day we participated in group discussion and heard about:

- The experience of attending STAR from a young person's perspective.
- A volunteer and young person's experience of STARCAT (STAR & Canine-Assisted Therapy)
- A reading from the book *The Magic of STAR*.
- Glasgow's Family Connections Assessment & Plan - this is designed to help social workers understand and support the important relationships for children in care.
- Aberdeenshire & Barnardo's Staying Connected Project – a mobile resource that provides a neutral and nurturing space for siblings separated by care to meet and have fun.

It was inspiring to hear from so many voices within the community, including examples of innovative practice from around the country. It was particularly welcome to have young people speak to their experience as this contributed immeasurably to the day. The event concluded with reflections from Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter at SCRA, and Fraser McKinlay, CEO of The Promise Scotland, emphasising the importance of ongoing support for sibling relationships in care.



Feedback from our members

"The Community of Practice is always thought provoking, affirming and allows me to hear and share innovative and aspirational practice in the collective effort to ensure that we help our children and young people stay connected throughout their care journeys. I feel that coming together as a group of like-minded practitioners is reenergising and provides renewed focus on the task in hand."

"What I took away from joining the Community of Practice event is that community really is at its heart. We heard from carers and professional then had the time and space to talk, learning from each other. I believe this is a space where meaningful change can be made."

"This meeting had a very different feel from most other online events, even though the format – three speakers and two breakout sessions – was broadly similar. This was partly (for me) due to the warm facilitation – both in the main session and in the breakout spaces – and partly due to the really grassroots nature of the topics under discussion. It was very clearly a space for sharing and for participants for find common ground to be nurtured into the future. It felt like a place where relationships could begin to form and a community to flourish among all of us who carry the fundamental conviction that sibling relationships are valuable and need to be protected and championed."

"The Community of Practice for Siblings session was insightful and thought provoking, especially the session on Kinship care where came on and talked about his experience in looking after his grandchildren – it really hit home what can be reality for many children and families."

"It was a really inspiring event. I loved being part of it and hope to also be part of taking forward the learning and commitments that were generated."

➔ Scottish Government Update

We would like to congratulate the Community of Practice and STAR for their very successful event on 25 June. The sun was shining and attendees were treated to some warm hospitality and presentations that were both interesting and inspiring.

National Foster Care Recruitment

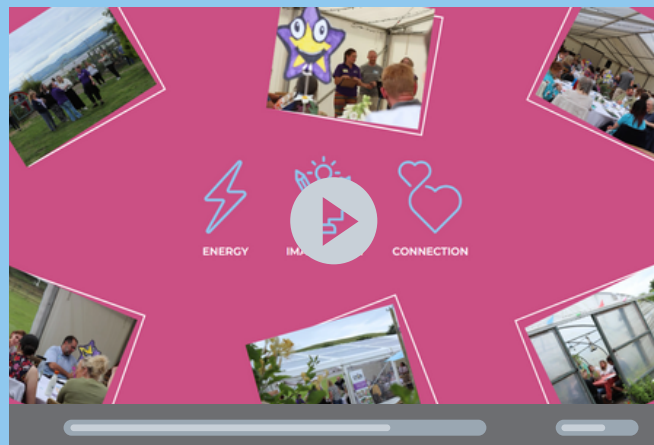
Work is currently underway to develop a national marketing recruitment campaign for foster carers. This national campaign will support local initiatives, reaching potential foster carers with consistent, clear and motivating messaging. The campaign will seek to recruit a more diverse workforce that reflects the children in care. We are looking at how we can focus on carers to support particular groups, including siblings.

Siblings Data

Work continues to improve the data on siblings in care. Reporting to the Scottish Government on four new data categories related to siblings commenced on 1 August. Craig Kellock, Scottish Government, will attend the Siblings Community of Practice meeting in August to discuss how the data can be developed further in more detail.

And finally...

If you want to see more photos from the June event, check out this new and improved video and share it on!



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Siblings
Reunited



Stand Up
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