

## **4. Foster Care Now**

### History of Foster Care

Foster Care, or fostering, is a recognised form of care for children and young people whose birth parent/s are unable to provide for their needs due to a wide variety of reasons. Foster care is a well established form of temporary care, however can in some instances be made permanent.

There is long history of foster carers in Scotland sharing their homes and providing care for children in their communities.

Children in Scotland were historically 'boarded out' under the Poor Law Act 1579, however following the Second World War, an unprecedented period in relation to boarding out of children and residential care in Scotland, the Committee on Homeless Children in Scotland produced the Clyde report in 1946 and this contributed to the creation of Children Act 1948 which laid a duty on local authorities to receive children into their care.

The subsequent increase in children living with foster families resulted in the Scottish and British Government taking a more active role in regulating and overseeing foster care. In 1948, the National Assistance Act established a system of local authorities responsible for the provision of fostering services. The Children Act of 1948 further strengthened the legal framework for fostering, emphasising the need to ensure the welfare of children in care.

Between the 1960s and 1990s, the UK saw a significant increase in the number of children being placed in foster care, as the government sought to move away from institutional care towards more community-based services. In Scotland, 'children's panels' and a 'Social Work Department' were created and subsequently the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 was partially implemented, with full implementation of regulations following in April 1986.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, heralded a significant change in terms of supporting all children and young people in Scotland. Since then the Scottish Government has undertaken various reviews, consultations and published regulations to support local authorities and foster carers in the ever changing landscape of social care; these have included the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001; the Getting It Right for every Child in Kinship and Foster Care Strategy (2007); The Looked after Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009; The Guidance on the Looked after Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and the Foster Care Review (2013) and The Promise (2022).

Until the early 2000's, foster care was provided almost exclusively through local authorities or voluntary organisations, and by local people. More recently foster care has been provided in part by local authorities and also through independent fostering providers.

As wider culture has changed over more recent years foster care has evolved. For example, with more dual-income households, greater remuneration has been

provided to foster carers to support recruitment and retention, and with greater geographical mobility, foster care placements may be found further away from a child's birth family.

The demographics of children living with foster carers has also changed over the years, with an increasing number of adolescents, children who have experienced trauma, and unaccompanied asylum seekers in foster care than previous years.