



# **Annual Review**

for the year ended 31 March 2025

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### Annual Review 2024/25

#### Message from the Chair

As Chair of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to introduce The Fostering Network's Annual Report for 2024–25. It has been another purposeful year, shaped by the development of our new strategy. Our strategy sets out a clear ambition: to enrich, empower, and strengthen the vital bonds within the fostering community. Over the past year, we have seen this vision reflected across many areas of our work.

Our Fostering Friendly Employers' programme continues to grow at pace, welcoming major organisations such as B&Q and Screwfix. Together, our FFE partners now represent a workforce of over 680,000 employees across the UK, championing workplace support for foster carers so they, in turn, can provide the best care to the children and young people they support.

In Scotland and Wales, our Young People's Advisory Boards continue to flourish. These spaces have allowed young people to build strong peer relationships and provide essential insight that informs policy development and drives meaningful change across the sector.

In Wales, our Fostering Wellbeing Pioneer programme is expanding vital peer support for carers. We now have 95 Pioneers offering mentoring and guidance to fellow foster carers - a testament to the power of lived experience in building resilience and community.

Change remains central to our mission. Looking ahead, I am excited to see the continuing impact of our programmes and initiatives with further investment in Mockingbird, National Lottery funding for our Kinship service in Northern Ireland and the expansion of Step Up Step Down. As a foster carer, I really value The Fostering Network's learning and development programme and am pleased to see a new bespoke insurance product available which is designed with foster carers specific needs in mind.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my fellow trustees, most of whom are foster carers, for their guidance and unwavering commitment. I also want to recognise the exceptional dedication of our staff, whose passion and dedication consistently goes above and beyond. And finally, a heartfelt thank you to our members, fostering families, and fostering services. You are at the heart of everything we do.

As we look to the year ahead, we remain committed to working collaboratively to improve the lives of children and young people in foster care across the UK.

Mervyn Erskine  
**Chair of trustees**

### Message from the Chief Executive

It has been a busy and productive year at The Fostering Network, marked by meaningful progress and continued growth. We launched our refreshed strategic plan, unveiled a new and improved website, and saw further expansion of Step Up Step Down, Mockingbird, and Fostering Pioneers - all of which continue to deliver lasting impact across the fostering community.

We've also gained national media attention, featuring foster carers and staff sharing their experiences and insights on platforms such as *BBC Breakfast*, *Sky News*, *ITV News*, *BBC Woman's Hour*, and *BBC Radio 4*. These features not only highlighted the challenges facing the sector but also powerfully showcased the reality of fostering.

Since the new government took office, we have welcomed the encouraging support shown by the Children's Minister, Janet Daby. Her visits to our Mockingbird constellations and engagement with foster carers have shown a genuine interest in foster care. We appreciate her public support and commitment to improving foster care, but it is vital that this is translated into meaningful action. We remain resolute in our advocacy for systemic change to make foster care sustainable and supportive for all involved.

Of course, this year has not been without its challenges. Yet, thanks to the dedication and skill of our staff, the wisdom and support of our trustees, the encouragement of our partners, and above all, the resilience and strength of our members, we have faced those challenges with confidence and determination.

As we look to the future, I remain committed to building on our successes while addressing the areas where we can improve. Our focus is on continuing to serve our members with integrity and purpose - embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and identifying new opportunities for development.

Our vision for the future of The Fostering Network is rooted in partnership. Achieving that vision will require close collaboration with everyone involved in foster care - children and young people, foster and kinship carers, social care professionals, local and national services, policymakers, elected representatives, funders, voluntary organisations, and our wider communities. Together, we are stronger.

As we move forward with renewed strategic goals, I always hold tight to my personal experience of fostering, twenty years' experience of working in the sector, and the insight I have gained from every young person, parent, and foster carer I have been privileged to walk alongside.

**Sarah Thomas**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

### About us

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity and membership organisation. We were founded 50 years ago by foster carers, for foster carers, and our access to governments and policy makers in all four nations of the United Kingdom gives us an unrivalled ability to lead the change necessary to make foster care the best it can be.

We believe that relationships are the golden thread running through every fostering story and are dedicated to supporting, enriching, empowering and, where necessary, restoring the vital bonds between those who work together to offer love, warmth, stability and hope to children and young people.

### Our vision

For foster care in the UK to flourish as the voices of children and young people are heard and placed at the centre of Government plans, empowering a vibrant fostering community to work together to meet the unique needs of every child and young person. Where empathetic and enthusiastic social workers work in partnership with trained and supported foster carers within a connected fostering community where everyone is valued, respected and treated as equals.

Where foster care is embraced by society and viewed without stigma, fear, or barriers so the diversity of foster carers across the UK ensures that every child and young person has the best chance to make and maintain stable, loving relationships and can look towards the future with hope and ambition.

### Our purpose

We believe that relationships are the golden thread running through every fostering story.

So, as the UK's largest fostering network we are dedicated to supporting, enriching, empowering and, where necessary, restoring the vital bonds between those who work together to offer love, warmth, stability and hope to children and young people.

### Our values

We are **genuine**

The Fostering Network was formed by foster carers in 1974 to be a force for change, fairness, and equity across the fostering community. As a not-for-profit organisation, we are entirely focused on making foster care the best it can be; we have no other motive. We are transparent and focused.

We are **connected**

The Fostering Network is an inclusive collective; we believe that 55,000 foster carers and 370 fostering service providers are more than just members of The Fostering Network along with all of us, they are The Fostering Network. Our purpose is to create and enhance the connections that are so vital to ensuring a unified and collaborative fostering family.

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### We are **expert**

Over the last 50 years we have built a reputation for being an authoritative voice and credible source of information, advice, and guidance. We have become well known for our high-quality campaigns, products and services and our independent, research-informed publications. Knowledgeable and reliable, we are a trusted source of both support and advice.

### We are **caring**

We believe that all successful relationships are built upon personal connections, communication, and empathy. We are a warm and approachable organisation, offering an open-door and safe space to the full fostering community. In every action and interaction, we are positive, responsive and responsible.

### We are **adaptable**

The needs of the fostering community are forever changing and we must continue to evolve to provide the necessary leadership. We are proactive and agile, offering innovation and creativity. We celebrate the diversity of our community, providing a consistent national service framework that has the flexibility to be delivered with local relevance.

### We are **brave**

Nothing we have achieved so far has been the result of waiting around for someone else. We must continue to be bold and ambitious, a vocal and passionate voice that amplifies the calls of our members and fights for change. We must use our influence and experience to challenge the status quo and be the powerful champion the fostering community needs.

### Strategic Report

#### What we achieved – some highlights

**Objective: Provide opportunities for children and young people that benefit them, make their voices heard and enable them to reach their potential.**

Throughout the year we have continued to deliver new and existing programmes to support fostering communities throughout the UK.

#### UK-wide

During Care Leavers' Week we ran our 2024 #TicktheBox campaign. Our Tick the Box campaign encourages care experienced young people to tick the box on their UCAS application form to say they have experience of the care system - this ensures they get the support to which they are entitled. In Northern Ireland, we held an in-person event for young people, foster carers and social workers to learn about the available supports from the various universities and colleges, as well as undertaking campus tours.

Throughout the week we shared blogs, videos and quotes from care experienced young people, foster carers and higher and further education staff. We also ran a webinar which was attended by over 100 people, including people with care experience, foster carers, social workers and others who wanted to know more about the support available at university and higher education for people with care experience. The recording has since had over 400 views on YouTube.

#### Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, we have continued to develop and deliver the Fostering Attainment and Achievement (FAA) service—a programme aimed at improving educational outcomes for children in foster care, commissioned by the Department of Health's Strategic Planning and Performance Group.

Over a six-week period in summer, we facilitated 20 outdoor adventure weeks, engaging 191 children and young people. The programme emphasised outdoor learning, fostering confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, we piloted a five-day drama scheme where participants acquired new skills, culminating in a performance for their carers and The Fostering Network staff. One carer remarked, "An opportunity to showcase their play to a wider audience would be amazing. The story was amazing, real, poignant, emotional, and thought-provoking".

Recognising the impact of the drama piece, we arranged for the group to perform at the Foundations for the Future conference on 27 November, attended by 120 individuals, including the Minister for Health, Department officials, senior Trust staff, and colleagues from the voluntary and community sectors. The performance resonated deeply with the audience, highlighting the voices and experiences of young people in foster care.

Furthermore, 15 young people participated in our Pathways to University residential programme, experiencing university life firsthand. They attended taster lectures in subjects such as geography, criminology, and psychology, and engaged in workshops on pharmacy and sports. Staying in university halls, they practised budgeting, shopping, and cooking meals, observed a graduation ceremony, and prepared presentations for their peers.

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Feedback indicated that all participants enjoyed the programme, with each expressing a newfound consideration for university as a future option.

In addition, over 300 children received the Letterbox programme, and we celebrated the achievements of more than 260 children and young people at five award events across Northern Ireland. We also provided educational resources to 1,000 children and young people, including one-to-one tuition, IT equipment, and access to various confidence-building activities.

### Scotland

Over the summer of 2024 we recruited new members to our Young People's Advisory Board, made up of young people aged 16-21 with experience of foster care, including those who are children of foster carers.

We held a residential weekend in Newtonmore which gave the young people the opportunity to get to know each other, build trust, and try activities including kayaking, paddle-boarding and abseiling. They formulated new campaigning priorities, which include transitions and change, stigma and language, and relationships. They are now working on a project which will look at improving education about care experience in schools. They have met with a project worker from Who Cares? Scotland and are planning to meet a worker from Education Scotland to look at existing resources and how they can add to these.

The young people have also participated in two engagement sessions on the Scottish Government's consultations on 'moving on from care into adulthood' and 'the future of foster care', sharing their views on the government's policy proposals. They also advised the Scottish Government on revising their webpage on foster care.

Members have shared being on the board has built confidence, resilience and perseverance. It's a place where they feel heard and have a sense of accomplishment.

### Wales

This year, we strengthened youth participation through our Youth Advisory Board (ages 14–25), recruiting new members, holding monthly meetings, and hosting a three-day residential to develop a youth-led campaign on trauma-informed practice, launching in 2025.

We co-produced a two-part "16+ The Complete Guide" edition of *Thrive* magazine with young people and held activity days in Wrexham, Cardiff, and online, helping reduce participation barriers and promote higher education. Our *Make Your Own Adventure* resource, designed to help children express themselves and connect with carers, was reprinted twice due to high demand and distributed across Wales.

Additionally, we launched the Welsh Care Experienced Participation Network, uniting third sector and statutory services to coordinate and enhance participatory opportunities for care-experienced children and young people across Wales.

### Fostering Wellbeing

Two animations were co-produced with young people from the NYAS Cymru Advisory Board, exploring the themes of "How You Can Support My Wellbeing" and "Team Around the Child." Developed from storyboards and voiceovers created by the young people, the animations were launched at a dedicated cinema event and are being shared widely by stakeholders across Wales as powerful contributions of lived experience to the Fostering Wellbeing programme.



**Objective: Promote foster care to ensure society understands, values and recognises how foster carers transform children's lives**

### **Foster Care Fortnight**

Foster Care Fortnight took place from 13-26 May 2024, with the theme of Fostering Moments. The theme received positive feedback from services, providing a good opportunity for them to share meaningful stories from foster carers and opened conversations at events. Sarah Thomas, CEO, was interviewed live on the BBC Breakfast couch on the first day of FCF. Other high profile broadcast media coverage included ITV, BBC London and The Big Issue

Throughout Foster Care Fortnight (FCF) we posted a mix of video and photos across The Fostering Network's channels – LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and X. Overall reach and engagement was good across all channels, with increases in interactions when compared to previous years.

Numerous events were held across the UK – including a launch event in Northern Ireland, hosted by Robbie Butler MLA. Debates on foster care were held in Welsh Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Westminster, with the launch event in England attended by children's minister, David Johnstone MP. There was also a successful round table event with the Minister for social care in Wales. Minister for The Promise, Natalie Don, attended Foster Walk in Scotland.

For the first time, John Lewis hosted a cookery school at their Waitrose store in King's Cross, organised by the Mockingbird team. Young people attended with their foster carers and learnt to do some cooking. It was a successful day, and the chef team were really engaged with the young people. Foster Walk was a great success –with lots of positive feedback from participants. We held our own walks in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Olympian, Fatima Whitbread attended the walks in Cardiff, Derry/Londonderry and London. Regrettably, her commitments meant she wasn't able to attend the walk in Scotland.

Around 640 people registered for all the walks as teams/individuals. Around 150 people attended the London walk, 100 in Cardiff and 50 in Northern Ireland.

To help understand the strengths and opportunities created by FCF24, a questionnaire was sent to all fostering services. One notable request was to announce the theme and provide the resources earlier, so services have more time to plan.

We've had positive feedback regarding the theme. Feedback included enjoying opportunities to talk to other foster carers about their fostering moments.

The annual Northern Ireland Foster Care awards, in partnership with HSC NI Foster Care, were held in September, attended by 200 people in Templepatrick, hosted by broadcaster Mark Simpson. A total of 12 awards were handed out across 12 categories.

### **Policy**

An engagement pack was shared with all elected representatives across the UK with information on Foster Care Fortnight, explaining how they could get involved and providing details on foster carer recruitment targets for 2024-25.

Foster Care Fortnight was launched in England with a reception for foster carers attended by the Children's Minister. Foster carers spoke at length with the minister about their experiences of fostering and suggested where the Government can do more. Key issues in

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fostering in England were also discussed in a session with officials from the Department for Education's fostering team.

In Wales, foster carers came together for a round table event with the new Minister for Social Care, Dawn Bowden, as well as Welsh Government officials, and the Head of Foster Wales, all of whom shared their fostering moments and their hopes for the future of foster care.

After the round table event, the Minister made her first statement in the Senedd which focused on foster care. She spoke about the event and highlighted many of the issues foster carers had shared with her earlier that day. A briefing was shared with all Members of the Senedd which was used by four different parties in the debate, highlighting the positive work of The Fostering Network programmes in Wales.

In Scotland, our parliamentary motion for Foster Care Fortnight was submitted by Martin Whitfield MSP, and supported by 28 MSPs (22%). MSPs were briefed ahead of the debate on 16 May on the motion in the Scottish Parliament and The Fostering Network policy staff met with three MSPs in the run up to this to secure support. The Children's Minister shared a #FosteringMoment and sent a letter to the fostering community as part of the campaign. The Children's Minister and two MSPs took part in our family Foster Walk on 19 May.

In Northern Ireland, a joint launch event with HSC fostering/adoption took place in Stormont Assembly building with fostering services, health and social care trusts, foster carers, kinship foster carers and young people in attendance.

### **Fostering Friendly Employers**

The Fostering Friendly Employers' scheme continues to go from strength to strength. The scheme encourages and supports employers to play a vital role in strengthening the fostering community by boosting support offered to current and prospective foster carer employees. This includes offering flexible working and extra time off to help settle a child into their home. Over 12 months, The Fostering Network recruited and approved 45 new Fostering Friendly employers, including B&Q, Screwfix, Scottish Government, CMS Cameron McKenna, and Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust. The scheme now covers over 680,000 employees across the UK.

Additionally, we strengthened the support given to our member fostering services to enable them to recruit local employers to the scheme, leveraging new partnerships to support recruitment and retention.

### **Objective: We will influence policy and the legislative framework, so it supports and promotes excellence in foster care**

In 2024/25, campaigning and influencing policy continued at every level. Our capacity to influence more consistently and to better effect across the UK was enhanced, thanks to our newly structured UK-wide policy and campaigns team with some notable campaign successes for fostering.

#### **UK wide**

Prior to the UK General Election, The Fostering Network published the 2024 manifesto to highlight the key areas on which we considered the next government should focus. The manifesto, which centred on recommendations in respect of care experienced young people and foster carers, was shared with political party leads responsible for writing each party manifesto. A template letter was provided to members who wished to write to their local prospective parliamentary candidates to encourage them to prioritise foster carers and children in care. The Fostering Network was pleased to see the Labour Party manifesto reflect these calls and very much welcomed the Labour government's introduction of a Children and Wellbeing Bill to take forward some of these reforms.

Sarah Thomas, The Fostering Network Chief Executive, attended the Labour Party conference in Liverpool where she met new MPs, including Josh MacAlister MP, who led the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. She also attended fringe events with new Ministers and key stakeholders to explore how Labour can reform children's social care.

In September, The Fostering Network published a new report on foster carer fees across the UK, 'Out of Pocket: Fairer Fees for Foster Carers'. The report is the latest instalment in our #CostOfFostering campaign and follows the report on foster carer allowances published last September. It is based on FOI requests from the 2023/24 financial year and highlights the UK-wide postcode lottery and low fee rates across the country. It analyses the impact on foster carers' living costs as well as commenting on foster carer recruitment and retention. The Fostering Network is calling for each nation to review fees and introduce a fee framework in each country of the UK. The report was covered exclusively by Moneybox on BBC Radio 4 in a programme on foster carer finances and featured on BBC5 live and BBC Radio 2's radio show with Jeremy Vine.

The 2024 State of the Nations' Foster Care survey was published in February, the largest independent survey in the sector. More than 3,000 responses from foster carers and former foster carers were received as well as 114 responses from fostering services. Following this, spotlight reports focusing on the findings and specific recommendations for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were produced to launch in Foster Care Fortnight 2025.

The State of the Nations' report was launched at an event which also celebrated The Fostering Network's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, hosted by Josh MacAlister MP. This featured speeches from the Children's Minister, as well as contributions from comedian and foster carer Kiri Pritchard-McLean, care experienced author Rowan Aderyn, and a panel of cross-party MPs. More than 200 guests attended, including MPs, charity stakeholders, officials, academics, corporate partners, local authority representatives, and foster carers and fostering services members.

Ahead of Foster Care Fortnight in 2024, a collaboration with (NYAS) National Youth Advocacy Service resulted in the production of a new report in the NYAS series, 'This is My Home'. Ten children and young people in foster care across England and Wales were

interviewed who sharing the positive impact of foster care had on their lives and what they want to see change.

### England

In one of her first official visits, the new Government's Children's Minister, Janet Daby MP, hosted a Mockingbird hub home in Wokingham as part of a visit to the newly launched South East recruitment hub. This established what has become a very positive working relationship.

The Fostering Network policy and campaigns team is working closely with the Department for Education (DfE) to implement their new strategy 'Keeping children safe, helping families thrive' and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. However, we were disappointed that the Bill had a distinct lack of focus on foster care and did not bring forward key commitments from the previous Government's strategy 'Stable Homes, Built on Love'.

Evidence outlining calls for action was submitted to the Education Select Committee setting out our concerns and The Fostering Network worked with MPs in the House of Commons to table amendments to extend Staying Put to 25, and to introduce opt out delegated authority on day-to-day decisions for foster carers. The Government refused the amendment on Staying Put but agreed to consult later this year on delegated authority. The Fostering Network will continue to influence the Bill as it goes into the House of Lords.

It was pleasing to see, following our #CostOfFostering campaign, the DfE announced a 3.55% above inflation increase to England's National Minimum Allowance for 2025/26 for the third year in a row. They also added a new age category for three and four year old children. However, this still falls short of The Fostering Network's recommended allowance rates. The Children's Minister has written to all local authorities to inform them of the latest NMA uplift and remind foster carers that if their service does not pay, they can ask them to rectify this and can write to the Local Government Ombudsman if they don't comply.

The Fostering Network welcomed the announcement of a new £25 million investment from the Government in the Spring Statement for the fostering system to recruit 400 new fostering households. However, it falls short of the 5,000 new carers needed to tackle longstanding challenges in the system.

The DfE is undertaking a full review of the guidance and regulations on allegations. The Fostering Network has consistently raised this in the DfE Fostering Advisory Board, and data we shared with them from our State of the Nations survey showed this was a key issue affecting foster carer retention.

### Scotland

We have met several times with the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping The Promise to discuss key issues for foster carers and children in foster care. The Fostering Network's Young People's Advisory Board has also met with the Minister and discussed their priorities around improving education for those with care experience.

As we have continued to work to influence the Scottish Government's (SG) work on recruitment and retention, it was positive to see them launch a comprehensive consultation in November on the 'future of foster care' to inform a Promise Bill later this year. The consultation included questions on key The Fostering Network campaign calls such as the introduction of a register and a national recruitment campaign.

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The Fostering Network supported the Scottish Government to run 10 consultation events, attended by 79 foster carers and members of our young person's advisory board across the nation, one of which was attended by the Minister. In addition, we also submitted a written response to the consultation as well as one from the Young People's Advisory Board.

Following these consultation events, The Fostering Network established a new advisory board, comprised of 22 foster carers to strengthen our influencing policy and practice in Scotland. The board held its inaugural meeting where they agreed their primary focus will be foster carers' value, status and recognition.

A response was submitted to the Scottish Government's consultation on 'moving on from care into adulthood'. The Fostering Network Young People's Advisory Board was supported to take part in a consultation engagement session with members of the Scottish Government "moving on" team. A further response was made to the Scottish Government consultation on redesigning the children's hearings system, setting out our view that foster carers should have automatic 'relevant person' status in the hearings system to allow them to most effectively advocate for the children they foster.

It was disappointing to see the Scottish Government freeze the newly introduced Scottish Recommended Allowance (SRA) for 2024/2025 but pleasing to note they commissioned a review of the rates. The policy team with the Assistant Director for Scotland worked to influence the review, highlighting the inadequacy of the current SRA rates, the need for a dedicated rate for Continuing Care, and a national fee framework alongside the SRA.

### **Northern Ireland**

The Fostering Network's senior staff in Northern Ireland were successful, in an externally managed recruitment process, in getting places on several workstreams within the Children's Services' Reform Board including the fostering recruitment/retention and family support workstreams. An in-depth consultation on the recommendations in Professor Ray Jones' Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services was collated in the "Bright Futures" policy report which highlighted the concerns and experiences of foster carers and kinship carers. The Fostering Network has worked closely with the Department of Health to consult foster carers and kinship foster carers on the review of concerns, complaints and allegations in foster care. Recognising allegations are one of the most challenging aspects of fostering, we are working to ensure the revised operational procedure is informed by the views of our foster carer members.

Consultations have also taken place with foster and kinship carers and young people on the Draft Minimum Fostering Standards. This consultation was further supported by the findings of an online survey of members.

The Fostering Network in Northern Ireland have been consistently pressing for revised fostering regulations since the RQIA review of foster care in 2012. The recent announcement of new fostering regulations for foster care alongside draft standards is long awaited and much welcomed. It is hoped these improve the quality of foster care for all involved. It is anticipated the regulations will commence in January 2026 with the standards following soon after.

Staff met with the engagement team from Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman who are rolling out an NI wide complaints strategy across all public services. We hope to explore developing a co-produced document and webinar for foster carers.

### Wales

The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act has successfully passed all legislative stages in the Senedd and has received Royal Assent. Throughout the process, The Fostering Network provided both oral and written evidence, as well as putting forward questions in plenary and proposed amendments with a wider coalition of children's charities. Our Chief Executive continues to sit on the Eliminate Profit Board which is now looking at the next steps in the transition process. The Fostering Network provided support to the Welsh Government, shaping communications to foster carers and services.

The Fostering Network wrote to new members of the Children and Young People's Committee in the Senedd to set out key areas for change and met with Natasha Askhar MS and Buffy Williams MS (new chair) to provide information and briefings.

The Fostering Network continues to work closely with the Minister for Children's Social Care and Welsh Government on the implementation of the programme of reform for children's social care. The Welsh Government has now committed to consulting on a register for foster carers, due later this year.

The Welsh Government uplifted the National Minimum Allowances for foster carers in Wales by 2.6% but this still doesn't go far enough to cover the costs of caring for a child. The Fostering Network has been calling for Welsh Government to act on their review of foster carer finances which has been ongoing for many years and to implement The Fostering Network's recommended rates.

The Fostering Network is part of a working group producing new guidance for the Pupil Development Grant for Children Looked After. This funding is allocated to local authorities to support the educational attainment of children in foster care. The Fostering Network also provided input for the updated guidance for Designated Teachers in Wales.

In addition, our team has been involved in sessions led by Jane Dodds MS, chair of the Cross Party Group for Children in our Care on shaping a new proposal for a Children's Act for Wales. This will be shared with political parties ahead of the 2026 Senedd elections.

**Objective: Support fostering families and the services that work with them to provide the best possible care for children and young people**

### **Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland, the Fostering Attainment and Achievement (FAA) Masterclass programme continues to provide invaluable support to over 270 foster and kinship carers. Almost thirty training sessions were provided across the region, covering essential topics such as trauma-informed practice, emotional regulation, neurodiversity, anxiety, and resilience. Additionally, guidance and advice on educational issues was provided to a further 1,000 carers, ensuring they are well-equipped to support the children in their care.

This year, through FAA, an online education conference was attended by 117 foster carers, social workers, and educational professionals. The event featured keynote speaker Betsy De Thierry, a renowned teacher and trauma specialist, who shared her insights on the impact of trauma on children and effective pathways to recovery. Participants found the conference both informative and beneficial, enhancing their understanding and approach to supporting children who have experienced trauma.

The Kinship Support programme in Northern Ireland has been in place for several years with very limited funding despite the significant growth in the numbers of children looked after by kinship carers. The programme has now been awarded £300,000 funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, for three years from December 2024. This programme adopts a nurturing, needs-led, and strengths-based approach, working collaboratively with families to:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in kinship care
- Support kinship carers in developing enhanced life skills.
- Facilitate participation in activities that combat isolation and foster community connections.

With the increasing number of children and young people in kinship family placements, this additional funding will enable us to extend our reach and provide much-needed support to more families across Northern Ireland.

### **Scotland**

During this period The Fostering Network team in Scotland has seen changes in leadership and management with the appointment of a new Assistant Director, Anne Currie, in June 2024. A key focus of the new AD's role is to connect with fostering services and foster carers members.

Ten nation-wide consultation sessions were facilitated by the Scottish team on behalf of the Scottish government from November-February 2025, providing an opportunity to strengthen connections, explore the needs of services and foster carers in terms of training and support. Suggestions were made by services about the roll out and need for the updated "Skills to Foster" training to prepare for a new national recruitment campaign launched in May 2025 by the Government.

A new foster carer advisory board was also set up to give foster carers a voice on prospective changes in policy and practice.

The team was delighted to be awarded a grant from the Scottish Government to extend Fosterline in Scotland to include a new recruitment line to support local authorities with the aim of recruiting more carers. This was launched during Foster Care Fortnight in May 2025.

### Wales

Through the Fostering Communities Programme, funded by Welsh Government, The Fostering Network conducted 39 interviews and 3 focus groups as part of the Exit Interview Research Project. This explored the reasons why foster carers leave their service. The findings were shared with Welsh Government and sector leaders to support retention efforts. The Programme staff also delivered 11 webinars - surpassing our target - on key topics such as neurodiversity, anxiety, and compassion fatigue, with over 85% of participants reporting increased confidence and intention to apply their learning.

Fostering Wellbeing, also funded by Welsh Government, continues to grow. Over the year, 15 series of Fostering Wellbeing Masterclasses (five sessions per series) were delivered. These 75 sessions provided 187.5 hours of training across Wales, more than 200 delegates attended, including foster carers and other practitioners across health, education, social care, and the third sector. Masterclasses covered core topics including trauma-informed practice, communication, and the role of the team around the child.

Pan-Wales evening sessions improved accessibility for foster carers and working professionals, while face-to-face delivery in regions like the Vale of Glamorgan responded to local preferences. Guest speakers included psychologists, Looked After Children nurses, and education experts, enriching the training with multidisciplinary insights. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive - **over 98% of participants** reported increased knowledge and confidence to support looked-after children.

Regionally, all local authorities have engaged with the programme, with growing participation from education professionals following targeted outreach and time-adjusted sessions. The integration of co-produced animations and pioneer voices into sessions has further strengthened the focus on lived experience and relational practice.

The Fostering Wellbeing Pioneer programme has expanded significantly across Wales, with 95 active pioneers supporting their local fostering communities, and services, as well as supporting strategic change at a national level. Pioneer roles include mentoring, peer support, contributing to recruitment and training events, and shaping local policy and practice. Several local authorities now pay pioneers for their time, and the Pioneer Handbook and Pioneer App, launched in Autumn 2024, have improved role clarity and communication. A national evaluation highlighted the programme's impact - enhancing equality, support, communication, and the capacity of fostering services.

Over the year, the service delivered more than 50 hours of training and events for the Pioneers, with topics ranging from trauma and neurodiversity to coaching and identity. Regional celebration events, such as the North Wales gathering for 40 pioneers, helped develop collaboration and recognition. Engagement levels vary by region, but momentum is growing through recruitment drives, local authority buy-in, and targeted support. The Pioneer Podcast and regular forums for service leads are also helping to share learning and strengthen the Pioneer network across Wales.

### England

A National Foster Care Association Forum was launched to better support foster carer associations across England to connect with each other, receive support from the Fostering Network, and strengthen practice developments for foster carers on the ground and build more direct engagement between foster carers and the Department for Education. This group identified several priorities including influencing an improved allegations framework, professional recognition, remuneration and the inconsistency of staying put.



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Fosterline England and the Member Helpline have continued to deliver a quality service to thousands of enquirers, across a range of practical and practice-based areas. Fosterline England received a user feedback score of 9.7/10 over 2,135 enquiries.

At the end of the year the new Skills to Foster was launched, introducing The Fostering Network's new online learning platform. This represents a significant milestone in bringing greater consistency to foster carers pre-approval training across the UK as well as providing a system that can support a range of training methods from in person to fully remote.

The new programme embeds reflective practice, provides assessing social workers greater visibility of carers understanding and engagement with approaches, concepts and skills gained during the training. The Skills to Foster will now be updated and augmented on an ongoing basis to ensure services can always offer best in class pre-approval training whilst also placing new foster carers into a learning environment to equip them for their caring journey.

### **Step Up Step Down**

Step Up Step Down (SUSD) is a trauma-informed service which supports children to remain at home with their birth families rather than entering care, where this is the best outcome for them. With family support foster carers wrapping around whole birth families, this is an innovative approach to fostering.

The service is fully embedded within the South Eastern Trust in Northern Ireland and Pembrokeshire County Council in Wales. Progress is underway to develop the service in Powys County Council in Wales, and pathways are being explored for further roll out of the programme across the UK.

Support for families which is holistic, nurturing and needs-led includes mentoring sessions for parents, short breaks for children and young people, experiential learning programmes for parents and foster carers, therapeutic nurture groups for children, community supports which reduce social isolation, family activities and school holiday programmes. Over 100 participants have been supported this year.

A particular highlight for the service was the two family residentials, one in Northern Ireland and one in Wales, where families could come together to share in community and engage in a wide range of activities and workshops. Moreover, Northern Ireland hosted a joint Ministerial visit between the Northern Ireland Assembly Health Minister, Mike Nesbitt and the Welsh Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden. The visit provided an opportunity for both Ministers and their officials to hear firsthand from SUSD families about the benefits and impact of the programme. Minister Bowden said, "I was delighted to have the opportunity to visit Northern Ireland on 3rd February to visit their Step Up Step Down project and learn more about the successful pioneering approach which is helping to reduce the number of children entering care."

It is our hope for the coming year to see this service progress, to honour 10 year old Rebekah's wish that "every family who needs this service should be able to have it."

### Our Plans

The Fostering Network Board of trustees has approved a new strategic plan for the next five years which outlines a clear vision for the future of the organisation and for foster care.

#### Organisational priorities:

##### **Strategic goal 1:** Be the catalyst for child-centred change in foster care

The fostering community is made up of different stakeholder groups, each with their own specific objectives and challenges but united by a common goal; to create stability and offer hope and love to children and young people.

This goal relies on strong, functioning and positive relationships between everyone in the fostering community. While many connections are fair, balanced and supportive, there are also instances where this is not the case.

The Fostering Network is dedicated to supporting, enriching, empowering and, where necessary, restoring these vital bonds to create harmony and unity across the fostering community.

##### **Strategic goal 2:** Secure sustainable income through meaningful relationships

Membership is at the heart of The Fostering Network. Through the provision of membership, we create and maintain a UK-wide network of foster carers, fostering services and organisations with shared goals.

We know the difference that membership with our organisation can make, and we want to make this a reality for as many people as possible. We will seek opportunities to grow our network of members and continually strive to improve our membership offer to ensure we are adding value in what we provide.

We will maintain our not-for-profit status and seek to sustain our organisation through income generation and fundraising to meet our charitable purposes. This will be achieved through the development and delivery of high-quality, wide-ranging service delivery and the diversification of our income streams.

##### **Strategic goal 3:** Increase the impact of our work

The Fostering Network is seeking continued change. It's why we were created, it's at the core of who we are, and, what we do.

We are certain that impactful change is part of the solution to improving outcomes for children and young people. We want this change to result in long-term, sustainable improvements and we know that to achieve this we will need to continue adapting too.

To further increase the impact of our work, we will start by advancing our monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. We will continue to listen, build our evidence base and respond with purpose.

We will continue to collaborate and grow effective partnerships to achieve change on a bigger scale. The scale of the problem has grown since we were created and therefore collaboration is key to shaping the future for children and young people.

### **Strategic goal 4:** Drive forward quality improvement in fostering practice

Every day we interact with foster carers and fostering services. Our advice line workers, our practice consultants and our independent support workers listen to the challenges and complexities of fostering, with empathy and understanding.

We always strive to offer support and guidance, with full knowledge that everyone involved is primarily trying to do their very best. These challenges and complex situations unfold against a backdrop of the great pressures facing all aspects of health and social care in the UK.

We want to do more to improve the quality of fostering across the UK and ultimately improve outcomes for children and young people living in foster care.

### **Strategic goal 5:** Influence transformational policy change

Key developments in child and family policy have taken place over the course of the last 50 years since the inception of The Fostering Network. Devolution is one of the key changes, shifting the landscape of the UK and the focus of our organisation.

Some of these shifts have resulted in legislative changes, some translate to guidance and good practice alone. There are still many areas to improve and one of the consistent objectives for The Fostering Network is to influence changes in policy to bring about transformational change.

As a UK-wide organisation, we understand and respect the distinctiveness of foster carers and fostering services in each country. Working across all four nations also offers unique opportunities. Using our holistic view across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales we will endeavour to influence and shape transformational policy change.

### **Strategic goal 6:** Be the best organisation we can be

This goal reflects our desire to create and maintain organisational wellbeing. Caring for each other and creating the best environment for our staff enables us to be there for others who need us.

We are committed to ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion in our workforce and will take active steps to maintain this commitment in our approach to recruitment and retention. We are committed to understanding our organisational impact on the planet and taking steps to reduce this impact. We are committed to providing employment opportunities for people with care experience and will take steps to improve our practice in this area.

## **Our Fundraising**

The Fostering Network is grateful to all the donors, supporters and funders who joined us in our cause and supported us to achieve our mission across the UK over the year.

The Mortgage Brain, John Lewis Partnership, and Picton continued their support through partnerships, staff fundraising and in-kind support over the year.

We are particularly grateful to partners, The Mortgage Brain, who sponsored the State of the Nations' Research Report and launch event in Westminster as part of their ambition to advocate for foster carers needs within the financial sector; creating new services and partnerships.

## The Fostering Network Annual Review 2024-25

We thank those member and supporter organisations who fielded teams in Foster Walk this year and the many community supporters organised their own events or took part in third party challenges.

We are grateful to all our grant funders, including the Department for Education, KPMG Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, The Scottish and Welsh Governments, the Department of Health for Northern Ireland, the South Eastern Trust, the National Lottery Fund for Northern Ireland, Strategic Planning and Partnership Group (NI), HSCNI Regional Adoption and Fostering, The Promise Partnership and The Harrison Frank Family Foundation. This support has enabled us to design and deliver innovative projects that are improving foster care across the UK.

### Fundraising practice

Fundraising activity is focused on organisations and individuals who have an established relationship with The Fostering Network.

The Fostering Network supports and adheres to the code of practice of the Fundraising Regulator and pays their levy. During the year there were no complaints related to fundraising were received. Best practice, as recommended by the Fundraising Regulator, was followed to protect vulnerable people and The Fostering Network did not use third parties to raise funds on our behalf. Most of the fundraising expenditure relates to staff time and a significant proportion of this is spent developing formal bids for major projects and services. During the year the team supported operational staff in winning numerous grants and contracts.

The Fostering Network would like to recognise the enormous contribution to the following funders and supporters have made to our work over the year and to thank them for their vital support, as well as all our generous donors and fundraisers.

Arthur Cox
Department for Education (England)
Department of Health (Northern Ireland)
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Northern Ireland)
HSC NI Foster Care
Hugh Fraser Foundation
John Lewis Partnership
KPMG Foundation
Lennox Hannay Charitable Trust
Louisa Lane Fox
National Lottery Community Fund
Northwood Charitable Trust
Office Space in Town
Picton
Promise Partnership
Randstad
Scottish Government
Sir Jeremiah Colman Gift Trust
Strategic Planning and Performance Group (Northern Ireland)

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The Harrison Frank Family Foundation
The Mortgage Brain
Thomas Sivewright Catto Charitable Trust
Welsh Government
Wexbaby
Young Start Fund

### Key Management Personnel

The Charity's trustees and the senior leadership team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis. The pay of the Chief Executive is reviewed annually and increased when possible following formal approval by the trustees. Key managers and all staff are part of a formal grading system that facilitates fair and transparent comparison of roles. The bands are reviewed each year and salaries are increased when possible following formal approval by the Chief Executive and Trustees.

### Financial Review

This financial results for 2024-25 show a healthy surplus for the year of £1,391k, up from £584k in the prior year, as we seek to grow our Free Reserves to secure the Charity into the future. As a charity, every penny of our income goes towards progressing the Charity's objects, whether directly or indirectly. One indirect way of progressing the Charity's objects is to ensure financial stability, in particular that we have enough unrestricted liquid assets to see us through an unforeseen disaster situation, in order to carry on our direct charitable work. The Charity has made good progress on this front this year, but there is more to do. For more detail on this, see the section on the General reserves policy below.

Unrestricted income for the year has increased from £6,312k in 2023-24 to £7,545k, mainly because of Mockingbird Phase 1 (in Consultancy), while Restricted income has seen a decline from £2,100k in 2023-24 to £1,814k in 2024-25.

Unrestricted expenditure has increased to £6,526k (2024: £5,908k), which is mainly due to the expanded work for Phase 1 of Mockingbird, which goes into the Consultancy line. Restricted expenditure has also decreased to £1,442k (2024: £1,784k), in line with the reduction in Restricted income.

Restricted Funds have increased during the year by £374k to £794k, which is largely due to the carrying forward of funding for both Step Up Step Down Wales and Step Up Step Down Northern Ireland.

Unrestricted Funds have therefore increased by £940k in the year to £4,334k.

Total Reserves are therefore up by £1,391k to £5,128k.

### General reserves policy

We have adopted a new approach to the general reserves this year. We have now set the aim to have free reserves, that is funds that are not tied up in fixed assets or restricted funds, at least equal to three months of our unrestricted expenditure. This would mean that we have the liquid assets to pay our running costs for three months in the event that our income ceased.

## The Fostering Network Annual Review 2024-25

We have not reached that target yet, but we have made good progress this year. Because a lot of the charity's funds are tied up in its property and website, when you deduct fixed assets and the revaluation reserve from unrestricted funds, the charity has free reserves of £277k. In 2024 the figure was -£567k. Our target (three months of unrestricted expenditure) is £1,631k, so while we have made good progress this year, there is still a long way to go. The charity's cash balance remains healthy at £1,858k.

In the meantime, in the event of an emergency that necessitated raising a large amount of funds quickly, we would consider raising funds secured against the charity's property.

### Going concern

We have set out above a review of the financial performance during the financial year and our reserves position at the year end. We have adequate financial resources in the form of cash, the ability to raise financing secured on the charity's property and have the structures in place to manage the business risks.

In addition, our annual budgeting and forecasting processes have taken into consideration the current economic climate and its potential impact on both our various sources of income and expenditure.

We have a reasonable expectation that we have adequate resources and control mechanisms to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

Further, we believe that there are no material uncertainties that may cast doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. Therefore, we continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the annual financial statements.

### Risk management

As a charity operating in the UK, The Fostering Network operates in a rapidly changing environment where it is critical to mitigate the principle risks faced by the organisation. The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for risk management within The Fostering Network. Operational responsibility for managing risks on a day-to-day basis is delegated to the Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team.

Trustees are satisfied that appropriate internal control systems are in place to manage the key strategic and operational risks that are identified. The following framework provides the Trustees with assurance that systems are in place to manage risks:

- The Board of Trustees receives regular performance reports against annual plans and budgets
- The Finance & Resources Committee has oversight of organisational risk and the actions being taken to mitigate them. The Senior Leadership Team and other key leadership personnel review organisational risks on a regular basis to ensure internal controls are operating effectively. New and emerging risks are identified and progress of actions assessed.

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As part of ongoing risk monitoring and management, trustees have considered the following areas of risk:

- **Financial:** Our principal risks in this area relate to ensuring appropriate safeguarding of funds, ensuring we have adequate, and ensuring appropriate financial controls are in place. We have evaluated that we have appropriate policies and controls in place, have professionally qualified accounting staff and detailed budgets and reports to ensure adequate oversight. We have improved our reserves position and continue to focus on our long-term financial resilience through sustainable growth.
- **Operational:** Our principal risks relate to ensuring we have the right staff in the right areas to deliver services sustainably, as well as managing any major disruptive events. We have appropriate controls to ensure all staff possess relevant qualifications, we are covered by relevant insurances and have increased our internal expertise in areas such as IT and HR. Ongoing work includes building on our existing business continuity frameworks, ensuring the upkeep of our London building, and ensuring we get the best out of our CRM system.
- **Legal & Regulatory:** Our principal risks in this area relate to safeguarding, GDPR and cyber security. We have done significant work in all three areas and have appropriate policies and procedures in place. We achieved Cyber Essentials Plus, developed new data protection policies and procedures and have comprehensive safeguarding and risk assessment frameworks. We continue to develop our work in this area and develop our training provision to respond to changes in legislation and the external environment.
- **External:** Our principal risks in this area relate to our reliance on statutory funding and the budgetary challenges our partners in local and central government experience. We continue to work collaboratively with our funders and partners, as well as exploring new opportunities to diversify our income streams to ensure the sustainability of our work.
- **Governance:** Our principal risks in this area relate to the potential for conflict of interest, and ensuring our governance and management structures are appropriate. 10/11 of our trustees are existing or retired foster carers, bringing a passionate and experienced lens to all of our work. We have adequate controls in place to manage conflict of interest and have launched a new policy governance framework to ensure proper oversight of organisational policies.

### Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

The trustees (who are also directors of The Fostering Network for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

## The Fostering Network Annual Review 2024-25

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and group if group and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. In so far as the trustees are aware:

- There is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- The trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

### **Auditor**

Sayer Vincent LLP acted as the charitable company's auditor during the year.

The trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, is approved by order of the board of trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 3 December 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Mervyn Erksine

Chair of trustees



## **Independent auditor's report to the members of The Fostering Network**

### **Opinion**

We have audited the financial statements of The Fostering Network (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulation 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

### **Basis for opinion**

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### **Conclusions relating to going concern**

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on The Fostering Network's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

### Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

### Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- The information given in the trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- The trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements

### Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' annual report, including the strategic report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- Adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- The financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- Certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- We have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

### Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities set out in the trustees' annual report, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the

trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

### **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

We have been appointed as auditor under section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and under the Companies Act 2006 and report in accordance with regulations made under those Acts.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud are set out below.

### **Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities**

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, our procedures included the following:

- We enquired of management and the finance committee, which included obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation, concerning the charity's policies and procedures relating to:
  - Identifying, evaluating, and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
  - Detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud;
  - The internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- We inspected the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.
- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework that the charity operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a material effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the charity from our professional and sector experience.

## The Fostering Network Annual Review 2024-25

- We communicated applicable laws and regulations throughout the audit team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit.
- We reviewed any reports made to regulators.
- We reviewed the financial statement disclosures and tested these to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- We performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud.
- In addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, we tested the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments, assessed whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias and tested significant transactions that are unusual or those outside the normal course of business.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

### Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 and section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Farrah Kitabi (Senior statutory auditor)

5 December 2025

for and on behalf of Sayer Vincent LLP, Statutory Auditor  
110 Golden Lane, LONDON, EC1Y 0TG

Sayer Vincent LLP is eligible to act as auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006

**The Fostering Network**  
**Statement of financial activities** (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

		Unrestricted	Restricted	2025 Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024 Total
	Note	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income from:</b>							
Donations and legacies	2	161,764	-	<b>161,764</b>	306,237	-	306,237
Charitable activities							
Membership subscriptions		2,460,659	-	<b>2,460,659</b>	2,430,677	-	2,430,677
Specific projects		1,532,309	1,814,069	<b>3,346,378</b>	1,413,645	2,099,807	3,513,452
Publishing		39,624	-	<b>39,624</b>	65,748	-	65,748
Training and events		64,325	-	<b>64,325</b>	92,523	-	92,523
Advice services		239,409	-	<b>239,409</b>	215,391	-	215,391
Consultancy		2,856,556	-	<b>2,856,556</b>	1,610,154	-	1,610,154
Other trading activities		96,775	-	<b>96,775</b>	115,654	-	115,654
Investments		93,591	-	<b>93,591</b>	62,083	-	62,083
Sundry income		-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total income</b>		<b>7,545,012</b>	<b>1,814,069</b>	<b>9,359,081</b>	<b>6,312,112</b>	<b>2,099,807</b>	<b>8,411,919</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>							
Raising funds	5	(99,459)	-	<b>(99,459)</b>	(94,403)	-	(94,403)
Charitable activities	5						
Membership services		(2,227,104)	-	<b>(2,227,104)</b>	(2,342,466)	-	(2,342,466)
Project costs		(1,587,436)	(1,442,212)	<b>(3,029,648)</b>	(1,553,416)	(1,784,235)	(3,337,651)
Publishing		(21,964)	-	<b>(21,964)</b>	(74,320)	-	(74,320)
Training and events		(315,048)	-	<b>(315,048)</b>	(278,115)	-	(278,115)
Advice services		(300,729)	-	<b>(300,729)</b>	(411,030)	-	(411,030)
Consultancy		(1,974,118)	-	<b>(1,974,118)</b>	(1,154,407)	-	(1,154,407)
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>(6,525,858)</b>	<b>(1,442,212)</b>	<b>(7,968,070)</b>	<b>(5,908,157)</b>	<b>(1,784,235)</b>	<b>(7,692,392)</b>
<b>Net income / (expenditure) for the year</b>	7	<b>1,019,154</b>	<b>371,857</b>	<b>1,391,011</b>	<b>403,955</b>	<b>315,572</b>	<b>719,527</b>
Transfers between funds		(79,405)	79,405	-	157,616	(157,616)	-
<b>Net income before other recognised gains and losses</b>		<b>939,749</b>	<b>451,262</b>	<b>1,391,011</b>	<b>561,571</b>	<b>157,956</b>	<b>719,527</b>
Gains (Losses) on revaluation of fixed assets		-	-	-	(136,000)	-	(136,000)
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>939,749</b>	<b>451,262</b>	<b>1,391,011</b>	<b>425,571</b>	<b>157,956</b>	<b>583,527</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>							
Total funds brought forward		3,394,093	343,143	<b>3,737,236</b>	2,968,522	185,187	3,153,709
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>4,333,842</b>	<b>794,405</b>	<b>5,128,247</b>	<b>3,394,093</b>	<b>343,143</b>	<b>3,737,236</b>

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Notes 3 and 19 to the financial statements.

**The Fostering Network**  
**Balance sheet**

Company no. 01507277

**As at 31 March 2025**

		<b>2025</b>		<b>2024</b>	
	Note	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets:</b>					
Tangible assets	12		<b>3,445,772</b>		3,518,855
Intangible assets	13		<b>610,717</b>		442,197
Investments	14		<b>2</b>		2
			<b>4,056,491</b>		3,961,054
<b>Current assets:</b>					
Stock		<b>7,120</b>		7,354	
Debtors	15	<b>1,925,920</b>		1,230,673	
Cash at bank and in hand		<b>1,858,063</b>		2,710,642	
		<b>3,791,103</b>		3,948,669	
<b>Liabilities:</b>					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	<b>(2,719,347)</b>		(4,172,487)	
<b>Net current assets/(liabilities)</b>			<b>1,071,756</b>		(223,818)
<b>Total net assets</b>			<b>5,128,247</b>		3,737,236
<b>The funds of the charity:</b>	19				
Restricted income funds			794,405		343,143
Unrestricted income funds:					
Revaluation reserve		1,597,509		1,597,509	
Designated reserve		-		517,121	
General funds		<b>2,736,333</b>		1,279,463	
Total unrestricted funds			<b>4,333,842</b>		3,394,093
<b>Total charity funds</b>			<b>5,128,247</b>		3,737,236

Approved by the trustees on 3 December 2025 and signed on their behalf by

Mervyn Erskine  
Chair of the board of trustees

Martha Adam-Bushell  
Director of Finance and Resources and Company Secretary

**The Fostering Network**  
**Statement of cash flows**

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

	2025 £	£	2024 £	£
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>				
<b>Net income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)</b>	<b>1,391,011</b>		719,527	
Depreciation charges	79,163		72,009	
Investment income	(93,591)		(62,083)	
Decrease in stocks	234		21,806	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(695,247)		406,891	
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(1,453,140)		2,086,958	
<b>Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities</b>		<b>(771,570)</b>		3,245,108
<b>Cash flows from investing activities:</b>				
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	93,591		62,083	
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(6,080)		(412,503)	
Purchase of intangible assets	(168,520)			
<b>Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities</b>		<b>(81,009)</b>		(350,420)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities:</b>				
Repayments of borrowing	-		(252,666)	
<b>Net cash provided by / (used in) financing activities</b>		-		(252,666)
<b>Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year</b>		<b>(852,579)</b>		2,642,022
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		<b>2,710,642</b>		68,620
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>		<b>1,858,063</b>		2,710,642

**Analysis of changes in net debt**

	At 31 March 2024	Cash flows £	Other non- cash changes £	At 31 March 2025 £
<b>Cash and cash equivalents</b>				
Cash at bank and in hand	2,710,642	(852,579)	-	<b>1,858,063</b>
	2,710,642	(852,579)	-	<b>1,858,063</b>
<b>Borrowings</b>				
Debt due within one year	-	-	-	-
Debt due after one year	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,710,642</b>	<b>(852,579)</b>	-	<b>1,858,063</b>

**1 Accounting policies**

**a) Statutory information**

The Fostering Network is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is 87 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8HA

**b) Basis of preparation**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

The subsidiary company did not trade in the year. Therefore the results of the charity and the group are the same.

**c) Public benefit entity**

The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

**d) Going concern**

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern; the charitable company has sufficient reserves and adequate controls to mitigate the risks identified in its detailed risk register.

The charity has very stable, regular income and has forecast future activities, balance sheet and operating surplus for three years. It manages working capital with monthly cash flow forecasts.

**e) Income**

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably. The following specific policies apply to categorise of income:

- Membership subscriptions are recognised over the period of membership (equally over 12 months).
- Publications income is recognised at point of sale.
- Advice, training and consultancy income is recognised on the date the service was provided.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

For legacies, entitlement is taken as the earlier of the date on which either: the charity is aware that probate has been granted, the estate has been finalised and notification has been made by the executor(s) to the charity that a distribution will be made, or when a distribution is received from the estate. Receipt of a legacy, in whole or in part, is only considered probable when the amount can be measured reliably, and the charity has been notified of the executor's intention to make a distribution. Where legacies have been notified to the charity, or the charity is aware of the granting of probate, and the criteria for income recognition have not been met, then the legacy is treated as a contingent asset and disclosed if material.

**f) Donations of gifts, services and facilities**

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the charity of the item is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), volunteer time is not recognised so refer to the trustees' annual report for more information about their contribution.



**1 Accounting policies (continued)**

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

**g) Interest receivable**

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

**h) Fund accounting**

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

**i) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT**

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering member services undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs.
- Other expenditure represents those items not falling into any other heading.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

**j) Allocation of support costs**

Support and governance costs are re-allocated to each of the activities on the following basis which is an estimate, based on internal recharges, of the amount attributable to each activity.

▪ Membership	<b>54.8%</b>
▪ Specific projects	<b>10.3%</b>
▪ Training and events	<b>2.6%</b>
▪ Advice services	<b>0.3%</b>
▪ Consultancy	<b>30.4%</b>
▪ Raising funds	<b>1.0%</b>
▪ Publishing	<b>0.6%</b>

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the charity's activities.

**k) Operating leases**

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

**l) Tangible fixed assets**

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £1,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Freehold land and buildings are recognised under the revaluation model under FRS102, and any excess between the revalued amount and the historic cost of the asset will be shown as a revaluation reserve in the balance sheet. Freehold land and buildings are not depreciated as the property is maintained in good condition and therefore the residual value is considered to be in line with the carrying value.

**1 Accounting policies (continued)**

**l) Tangible fixed assets (continued)**

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

▪ Furniture and equipment	Over four years
▪ Computers and software	Over two to ten years
▪ Freehold improvements	Over three to seven years
▪ Freehold premises	Not depreciated
▪ Freehold land	Not depreciated

**m) Intangible fixed assets**

The costs of developing our new website have been capitalised as an intangible fixed asset, and are held at amortised. The website is considered to have an expected useful life of five years, and so will be amortised over that period.

**n) Investments in subsidiaries**

Investments in subsidiaries are at cost.

**o) Stocks**

Stocks consist of publications for resale and materials for use in training courses. They are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value. In general, cost is determined on a first in first out basis and includes transport and handling costs. Net realisable value is the price at which stocks can be sold in the normal course of business after allowing for the costs of realisation. Provision is made where necessary for obsolete, slow moving and defective stocks.

**p) Debtors**

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

**q) Cash at bank and in hand**

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

**r) Creditors and provisions**

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

**s) Financial instruments**

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

**t) Pensions**

The Fostering Network operates a defined contribution pension scheme and the amount charged to the SOFA in respect of pension costs and other post-retirement benefits is the contributions payable in the year. Differences between contributions payable in the year and contributions actually paid are shown in either accruals or prepayments in the balance sheet.

**u) Management estimates and judgements**

In the process of applying its accounting policies the charity is required to make certain estimates, judgements and assumptions. Examples of these are; where goods and services have been provided but not invoiced to us, we estimate the value of the services; where stock is slow moving we apply a net realisable value if that is lower than cost. Where debtors are materially overdue we reduce their value to zero.

**The Fostering Network**  
**Notes to the financial statements**

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**2 Income from donations and legacies**

	<b>2025</b>	2024
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Donations	<b>65,679</b>	187,935
Gifts in kind	-	-
<b>Core grants</b>		
Northern Ireland Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	<b>21,745</b>	22,284
Scottish Government	<b>74,340</b>	96,018
	<b>161,764</b>	306,237

**3 Projects income (current year)**

**Restricted Projects**

	<b>At 31 March</b>				<b>At 31 March</b>
	<b>2024</b>	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	<b>2025</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>England / Headquarters</b>					
Fostering Digital Skills for Life	23,541	-	(339)	-	<b>23,202</b>
Jon and Kathy Broad Award	601	-	-	-	<b>601</b>
Mockingbird Lewis	(12,125)	-	(12,451)	24,576	-
Quilts for Children in Care	2,607	-	(497)	-	<b>2,110</b>
Recruitment and Retention	1,146	-	(385)	-	<b>761</b>
Fosterline England set up	11,886	-	(36,813)	24,927	-
Fosterline England ongoing	35,142	263,516	(268,092)	-	<b>30,566</b>
Mockingbird Capacity Grant	(4,843)	-	(15,564)	20,407	-
Voices in Action	-	10,000	-	-	<b>10,000</b>
<b>England / Headquarters</b>	57,955	273,516	(334,141)	69,910	67,240
<b>Northern Ireland</b>					
Kinship Care Support	(15,824)	50,870	(41,435)	-	<b>(6,389)</b>
Step Up Step Down	15,379	438,500	(130,253)	-	<b>323,626</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	(445)	489,370	(171,688)	-	317,237
<b>Scotland</b>					
Fosterline Scotland	7,061	70,399	(65,310)	-	<b>12,150</b>
Moving On	(960)	-	512	448	-
Scottish Newsletter	(3,139)	-	(1,590)	4,729	-
The Promise	5,275	-	(119)	-	<b>5,156</b>
Young Start	12,796	94,675	(37,392)	-	<b>70,079</b>
Fostering Friendly Employers	4,000	-	(4,000)	-	-
The Promise 2	66,150	(63,487)	(2,459)	-	<b>204</b>
Young Advocates	(4,198)	-	1,480	4,318	<b>1,600</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	86,985	101,587	(108,878)	9,495	89,189
<b>Wales</b>					
Fostering Communities	1,387	279,428	(279,589)	-	<b>1,226</b>
Fostering Wellbeing	2,871	269,062	(276,299)	-	<b>(4,366)</b>
Step Up Step Down Wales	194,390	401,106	(271,617)	-	<b>323,879</b>
<b>Wales</b>	198,648	949,596	(827,505)	-	320,739
<b>Total projects</b>	<b>343,143</b>	<b>1,814,069</b>	<b>(1,442,212)</b>	<b>79,405</b>	<b>794,405</b>

The negative balances are due to timing differences and all are ongoing projects and the funds are due to be received in Apr 25-March 26.

**The Fostering Network**  
**Notes to the financial statements**

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**3 Projects income (prior year)**  
**Restricted Projects**

	<b>At 31 March 2023</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Transfers</b>	<b>At 31 March 2024</b>
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>England / Headquarters</b>					
Fostering Digital Skills for Life	11,931	13,500	(1,890)	-	<b>23,541</b>
Jon and Kathy Broad Award	1,100	-	(499)	-	<b>601</b>
Mockingbird	-	35,000	(47,125)	-	<b>(12,125)</b>
Quilts for Children in Care	2,844	-	(238)	-	<b>2,606</b>
Recruitment and Retention	12,317	13,300	(24,471)	-	<b>1,146</b>
Fosterline England set up	-	123,198	(111,312)	-	<b>11,886</b>
Fosterline England ongoing	-	143,924	(108,782)	-	<b>35,142</b>
Mockingbird Capacity Grant	-	362,277	(367,120)	-	<b>(4,843)</b>
Digital Engagement	10,169	186,973	(30,000)	(167,142)	<b>-</b>
	<b>38,361</b>	<b>878,172</b>	<b>(691,436)</b>	<b>(167,142)</b>	<b>57,955</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>					
Kinship Care Support	10,117	13,741	(39,682)	-	<b>(15,824)</b>
Step Up Step Down	(15,186)	229,123	(213,744)	15,186	<b>15,379</b>
	<b>(5,069)</b>	<b>242,864</b>	<b>(253,426)</b>	<b>15,186</b>	<b>(445)</b>
<b>Scotland</b>					
Fosterline Scotland	1,113	62,065	(56,117)	-	<b>7,061</b>
Moving On	29,705	-	(30,665)	-	<b>(960)</b>
Scottish Newsletter	1,689	-	(4,828)	-	<b>(3,139)</b>
The Promise	26,817	-	(21,542)	-	<b>5,275</b>
Young Start	-	24,554	(11,758)	-	<b>12,796</b>
Fostering Friendly Employers	-	4,000	-	-	<b>4,000</b>
The Promise 2	-	66,150	-	-	<b>66,150</b>
Young Advocates	(2,598)	-	(1,600)	-	<b>(4,198)</b>
	<b>56,726</b>	<b>156,769</b>	<b>(126,510)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>86,985</b>
<b>Wales</b>					
Fostering Communities	(548)	279,429	(280,084)	2,590	<b>1,387</b>
Fostering Excellence	3,965	-	-	(3,965)	<b>-</b>
Fostering Wellbeing	(6,924)	295,170	(285,375)	-	<b>2,871</b>
Step Up Step Down Wales	95,886	247,403	(147,404)	(1,495)	<b>194,390</b>
YP&Care Leavers Child Protection	-	-	-	-	<b>-</b>
Fostering Digital Skills	-	-	-	-	<b>-</b>
Triumph	2,790	-	-	(2,790)	<b>-</b>
	<b>95,169</b>	<b>822,002</b>	<b>(712,863)</b>	<b>(5,660)</b>	<b>198,648</b>
<b>Total projects</b>	<b>185,187</b>	<b>2,099,807</b>	<b>(1,784,235)</b>	<b>(157,616)</b>	<b>343,143</b>

**4 Unrestricted Projects (current year)**

	<b>Income 2025</b>	<b>Expenditure 2025</b>
	£	£
Fostering Achievement and Attainment	1,532,309	(1,521,159)
<b>Total projects</b>	<b>1,532,309</b>	<b>(1,521,159)</b>

For the year ended 31 March 2025

#### 4 Unrestricted Projects (prior year)

	Income 2024 £	Expenditure 2024 £
Fostering Achievement and Attainment	1,413,645	(1,467,966)
<b>Total projects</b>	<b>1,413,645</b>	<b>(1,467,966)</b>

#### Purposes of restricted funds

The restricted funds relate to the following projects:

##### England

**Fostering Digital Skills for Life** - The Fostering Network is working with Internet Matters and University of East Anglia on the project, Fostering Digital Skills for Life. The project will create and deliver CPD-accredited training, giving foster carers the choice between self-study or facilitator-led learning. The project will also increase understanding across the sector of how supporting foster carers to improve their digital skills can positively impact the digital resilience of children in their care. This project is funded by Nominet as part of the REACH portfolio.

**Jon and Kathy Broad Award** - In memory of Kathy Broad, this is an annual award for foster carers caring for children with special needs and presented as part of the charity's Fostering Excellence Awards.

**Mockingbird** - Mockingbird led by The Fostering Network in the UK, delivers sustainable foster care. It is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. The model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community. The model now operates in 65 fostering services, either funded by the Department of Education or self-funded.

**Quilts for Children in Care** - A project to distribute hand made quilts, kindly donated by Helping Hands quilters, to children and young people in foster care.

**Recruitment and Retention** - A research study into the retention and recruitment of foster carers in England, which explore how to achieve a diverse and stable foster care workforce. The project was funded by the KPMG Foundation and conducted by the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI).

**Fosterline England** - Fosterline England is a two year contract (extendable up to 3 years) awarded by the Department of Education to The Fostering Network in 2023. Fosterline is a free, independent national advice service that offers support for both current and prospective foster carers. The services aim to support foster families to stay together during times of crisis, reducing placement breakdown, and avoiding costs associated with this.

**Digital Engagement** - A project to transform our digital engagement with members, supporters and wider stakeholders through the creation of a new website and content management system.

**Voices in Action** - Funded by the Lennox Hannay Charitable Trust to run creative consultation sessions with children and young people, to discover what they think of our current work and the opportunities they would like to see us offer.

##### Northern Ireland

**Kinship Care Support** - funded by Children in Need and Ulster Garden Villages, this programme supports young people in kinship foster care and their carers to access support to help improve their well-being, build their skills and enable their engagement with the programme.

**Step Up Step Down Northern Ireland** - this is a seven year project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund for Northern Ireland operating in partnership with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust works with families on the periphery of the care system from being taken into care and instead support them to stay within their own homes.

### Purposes of restricted funds (continued)

#### Scotland

**Fosterline Scotland** - An independent and confidential service providing advice, information, mediation and support to foster carers across Scotland on all aspects of fostering, funded by the Scottish Government.

**Moving On** - Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the Moving On project is a two-year project focusing on supporting children and young people and foster families with the complexities and challenges of the transitions made through care and beyond of care.

**Scottish Newsletter** - A publication distributed to all our members in Scotland, funded by a variety of grants and donations.

**The Promise** – funded by Scottish Government and arising from the findings of the Care Review in February 2020, this project aims to deliver 'The Promise' in Scotland. We will implement change, challenge thinking where necessary, and create a young person's advisory board to ensure that children and young people are truly placed at the heart of the work.

**Young Start** - A two-year project to empower children and young people living in foster families across Scotland to make connections with the wider community and improve physical and emotional wellbeing and bring about the changes they want to see.

**FFE Scotland** - Funded by Hugh Fraser Foundation to encourage more employers in Scotland to become accredited as Fostering Friendly.

**Promise 2** - Funded by the Scottish Government to establish a Mockingbird demonstration site in Scotland.

**Young Advocates** - This project, funded by Life Changes Trust and Young Start Fund (delivered by the National Lottery Community Fund), will see young people with care experience create learning opportunities for teachers and trainee teachers around what the day-to-day reality of school or college can be like for them. The young advocates will also train foster carers to help build their awareness of how they can best support the children and young people in their care.

#### Wales

**Fostering Communities (including Fosterline Wales) 2020-2025** - This is a new national programme of improvement and support led by The Fostering Network in Wales and funded by the Welsh Government's Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant 2020-2023 (extended to 2025). Embedded within Fostering Communities is a co-production approach, which means we will work in equal partnership with foster carers, children and young people in care and fostering services to plan and deliver the programme. Working together as co-creators and sharing power will enable us to build a strong and resilient fostering community with the aim of improving wellbeing for all. Fostering Communities recognises that everyone in the fostering sector has a vital contribution to make in order to improve the quality of life for children and young people in care and their foster families.

**Fostering Wellbeing** - This pilot programme is funded by the Welsh Government and delivered by The Fostering Network in Wales. The programme aims to test and evaluate social pedagogy principles (focused on education and the upbringing of children) in a foster care environment. This project operates at regional level across Wales, delivering learning, bringing people together and sharing best practice across service boundaries with an aim to embed a shared approach that will support improved outcomes for children and young people.

**Step Up Step Down Wales** Welsh Government and the KPMG Foundation have jointly awarded funding to implement and deliver our innovative Step Up Step Down programme at two demonstration sites in Wales. This funding offers an opportunity to dramatically improve outcomes for families with children on the edge of care. Our programme seeks to embed and sustain delivery beyond the grant funded period and demonstrate a scalable model for further roll out within Wales and beyond. □

**The Fostering Network**  
**Notes to the financial statements**

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**5 Analysis of expenditure**

	Raising funds £	Membership services £	Project costs £	Publishing £	Training and events £	Advice services £	Consultancy £	2025 £
Staff costs (Note 8)	69,405	1,397,545	1,353,734	-	213,588	280,745	841,997	<b>4,157,014</b>
Support costs	6,436	352,618	66,277	3,862	16,731	1,929	195,615	<b>643,468</b>
Other costs	23,619	476,938	1,609,637	18,103	84,729	18,054	936,507	<b>3,167,587</b>
<b>Total expenditure 2025</b>	<b>99,459</b>	<b>2,227,104</b>	<b>3,029,648</b>	<b>21,964</b>	<b>315,048</b>	<b>300,729</b>	<b>1,974,118</b>	<b>7,968,070</b>

**5 Analysis of expenditure**

	Raising funds £	Membership services £	Project costs £	Publishing £	Training and events £	Advice services £	Consultancy £	2024 £
Staff costs (Note 8)	69,899	1,598,452	1,447,783	-	205,832	359,038	358,056	4,039,060
Support costs	6,831	378,372	85,450	2,658	16,311	23,586	117,112	630,320
Other costs	17,673	365,642	1,804,418	71,662	55,972	28,406	679,239	3,023,012
<b>Total expenditure 2024</b>	<b>94,403</b>	<b>2,342,466</b>	<b>3,337,651</b>	<b>74,320</b>	<b>278,115</b>	<b>411,030</b>	<b>1,154,407</b>	<b>7,692,392</b>

**The Fostering Network**  
**Notes to the financial statements**

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**6 Support costs**

	Raising funds £	Membership services £	Project costs £	Publishing £	Training and events £	Advice services £	Consultancy £	<b>2025 £</b>
Facilities	1,615	88,485	16,631	969	4,198	484	49,087	161,469
Finance	472	25,838	4,857	283	1,226	141	14,334	47,151
HR	146	8,009	1,506	88	380	44	4,444	14,617
IT	2,927	160,385	30,145	1,756	7,610	878	88,973	292,674
Management	908	49,735	9,348	545	2,360	272	27,590	90,758
Governance	368	20,166	3,790	221	957	110	11,187	36,799
<b>Total expenditure 2025</b>	<b>6,436</b>	<b>352,618</b>	<b>66,277</b>	<b>3,862</b>	<b>16,731</b>	<b>1,929</b>	<b>195,615</b>	<b>643,468</b>

**6 Support costs**

	Raising funds £	Membership services £	Project costs £	Publishing £	Training and events £	Advice services £	Consultancy £	<b>2024 £</b>
Facilities	2,406	133,254	30,094	936	5,744	8,306	41,244	221,984
Finance	3	143	32	1	6	9	44	238
HR	500	27,668	6,249	194	1,193	1,725	8,564	46,093
IT	3,140	173,933	39,280	1,222	7,498	10,842	53,835	289,750
Management	539	29,868	6,745	210	1,288	1,862	9,245	49,757
Governance	243	13,506	3,050	95	582	842	4,180	22,498
<b>Total expenditure 2024</b>	<b>6,831</b>	<b>378,372</b>	<b>85,450</b>	<b>2,658</b>	<b>16,311</b>	<b>23,586</b>	<b>117,112</b>	<b>630,320</b>



**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**7 Net income / (expenditure) for the year**

This is stated after charging / (crediting):

	<b>2025</b>	2024
	<b>£</b>	£
Depreciation	<b>79,163</b>	72,009
Operating lease rentals:		
Property	<b>44,124</b>	23,834
Other	<b>950</b>	896
Rent receivable as lessor		
Property	<b>40,463</b>	109,537
Auditor's remuneration (excluding VAT):		
Audit	<b>19,000</b>	15,354
Audit underaccrual in prior year	<b>9,046</b>	500
Other services	<b>6,850</b>	2,000
	<b>79,163</b>	72,009

**8 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel**

Staff costs were as follows:

	<b>2025</b>	2024
	<b>£</b>	£
Salaries and wages	3,627,395	3,522,456
Redundancy and termination costs	17,074	19,660
Social security costs	342,653	334,853
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	169,892	162,091
	<b>4,157,014</b>	4,039,060

The redundancy and termination costs above were all paid in the year - there was no accrual at the year end.

The following number of employees received employee benefits during the year (including all pay types, but excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) :

	<b>2025</b>	2024
	<b>No.</b>	No.
£60,000 - £69,999	2	3
£70,000 - £79,999	2	-
£90,000 - £99,999	1	1

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £355,051 (2024: £417,253).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year £nil (2024: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity £nil (2024: £nil).

Indemnity insurance is provided for trustees at a premium of £1,526 (2024: £1,453).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel costs totalling £970 (2024: £1,437) incurred by 2 (2024:5) members relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**9 Staff numbers**

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 100 FTE 91 (2024: 100 FTE 96).

Staff are split across the activities of the charitable company as follows (full time equivalent basis):

	<b>2025 No.</b>	2024 No.
Cost of raising funds	2	1
Membership services	22	34
Projects	35	29
Training & events	4	5
Advice services	6	8
Consultancy	22	19
	<b>91</b>	96

**10 Related party transactions**

There are no donations from related parties which are outside the normal course of business and no restricted donations from related parties.

The Fostering Network received no donations from trustees (2024: £nil). The trustees receive no benefit from the donations made to the charity.

During the year, The Fostering Network procured professional services from Bates Wells, for the sum of £13,255. One of the Trustees, Paul Seath, is a partner at Bates Wells, but is not involved in their work for The Fostering Network, and is prevented from knowing about it by an information barrier. He has included this in his declaration of interest. At the end of the year, £3,688 was owed to Bates Wells.

**11 Taxation**

The charitable company is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

**12 Tangible fixed assets**

	Freehold property £	Leasehold improvements £	Office Equipment £	Computer equipment £	<b>Total £</b>
<b>Cost or valuation</b>					
At the start of the year	3,100,000	25,427	75,543	738,828	<b>3,939,798</b>
Additions in year	-	-	-	6,080	<b>6,080</b>
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-
At the end of the year	3,100,000	25,427	75,543	744,908	<b>3,945,878</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>					
At the start of the year	-	9,057	70,856	341,030	<b>420,943</b>
Charge for the year	-	3,402	1,059	74,702	<b>79,163</b>
At the end of the year	-	12,459	71,915	415,732	<b>500,106</b>
<b>Net book value</b>					
<b>At the end of the year</b>	3,100,000	12,968	3,628	329,176	<b>3,445,772</b>
At the start of the year	3,100,000	16,370	4,687	397,798	<b>3,518,855</b>

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**12 Tangible fixed assets (continued)**

Land with a value of £952,817 (2024: £952,817) is included within freehold property and not depreciated. The carrying amount on the cost model would be £1,322,221 (2024: £1,322,221). The purchase price of the freehold building was £450,000 in 1999. The freehold property is not depreciated because the Charity believes that the residual value of the property is in line with the carrying value.

In order to reduce the long term cost to the company of the London office, 30% (2024: 23%) of the total space is leased to tenants. The property is shown in the accounts at Market Valuation.

The Charity follows the revaluation model for freehold premises. Land and Buildings were revalued as at 31 March 2024 by Frederick Holt and Company Limited on an existing use open market basis in accordance with Guidance Notes of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Lamberts are not connected with the charity. The Charity assessed market conditions and there are no indications of a material change in the valuation of the property in 2024-25. The Charity will revalue the premises for 2025-26.

**13 Intangible fixed assets**

	Website £	Total £
<b>Cost or valuation</b>		
At the start of the year	442,197	<b>442,197</b>
Additions in year	168,520	<b>168,520</b>
Disposals in year	-	-
Revaluation	-	-
At the end of the year	<b>610,717</b>	<b>610,717</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>		
At the start of the year	-	-
Charge for the year	-	-
Eliminated on disposal	-	-
Revaluation	-	-
At the end of the year	-	-
<b>Net book value</b>		
<b>At the end of the year</b>	<b>610,717</b>	<b>610,717</b>
At the start of the year	442,197	442,197

Intangible fixed assets represents the costs of the new Fostering Network website, which was created through the Digital Engagement project. The website went live on 13 March 2025, hence no amortisation in this financial year.

**14 Investments**

The Fostering Network owns the whole of the issued ordinary share capital of National Foster Care Association Services Ltd, a company registered in England. The subsidiary was dormant in the year.

	<b>2025</b> £	2024 £
Trading subsidiary (cost)	<b>2</b>	2

**The Fostering Network**  
**Notes to the financial statements**

**For the year ended 31 March 2025**

**15 Debtors**

	<b>2025</b>	2024
	£	£
Trade debtors	<b>951,968</b>	302,856
Other debtors	<b>760,503</b>	735,675
Prepayments	<b>213,449</b>	192,142
	<b>1,925,920</b>	1,230,673

All of the charity's financial instruments, both assets and liabilities, are measured at amortised cost. The carrying values of these are shown above and in note 16.

**16 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year**

	<b>2025</b>	2024
	£	£
Trade creditors	<b>324,885</b>	463,249
Taxation and social security	<b>502,571</b>	644,344
Other creditors and accruals	<b>290,628</b>	449,888
Deferred income	<b>1,601,263</b>	2,615,006
	<b>2,719,347</b>	4,172,487

**17 Deferred income**

Deferred income comprises of income relating to services to be provided in 2025/26, but have been invoiced prior to 31 March 2025.

	<b>At 31 March 2024</b>	Released	Deferred	<b>At 31 March 2025</b>
	£	£	£	£
Training and events	-	-	-	-
Advice services	269,238	(269,238)	69,420	<b>69,420</b>
Membership services	228,400	(228,400)	207,327	<b>207,327</b>
Consultancy	2,117,368	(2,117,368)	1,305,061	<b>1,305,061</b>
Rental Income	-	-	19,455	<b>19,455</b>
Restricted Project Income	-	-	-	-
Balance at the end of the year	2,615,006	(2,615,006)	1,601,263	<b>1,601,263</b>

For the year ended 31 March 2025

18 Analysis of net assets between funds (current year)

	General unrestricted £	Designated £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Tangible and intangible fixed assets	4,056,489	-	-	4,056,489
Investments	2	-	-	2
Net current assets	277,351	-	794,405	1,071,756
<b>Net assets at 31 March 2025</b>	<b>4,333,842</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>794,405</b>	<b>5,128,247</b>

Analysis of net assets between funds (prior year)

	General unrestricted £	Designated £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Tangible and intangible fixed assets	3,443,931	517,121	-	3,961,052
Investments	2	-	-	2
Net current (liabilities)/assets	(566,961)	-	343,143	(223,818)
<b>Net assets at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>2,876,972</b>	<b>517,121</b>	<b>343,143</b>	<b>3,737,236</b>

19 Movements in funds (current year)

	At 31 March 2024 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2025 £
<b>General reserve</b>	1,279,463	7,545,012	(6,525,858)	437,716	2,736,333
<b>Designated Funds</b>	517,121	-	-	(517,121)	-
<b>Revaluation reserve</b>	1,597,509	-	-	-	1,597,509
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>	<b>3,394,093</b>	<b>7,545,012</b>	<b>(6,525,858)</b>	<b>(79,405)</b>	<b>4,333,842</b>

Movements in funds (prior year)

	At 1 April 2023 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2024 £
<b>General reserve</b>	1,235,013	6,312,112	(5,908,157)	(359,505)	1,279,463
<b>Designated Funds</b>	-	-	-	517,121	517,121
<b>Revaluation reserve</b>	1,733,509	-	(136,000)	-	1,597,509
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>	<b>2,968,522</b>	<b>6,312,112</b>	<b>(6,044,157)</b>	<b>157,616</b>	<b>3,394,093</b>

Designated Funds in the prior year relate to capital investment in the Digital Transformation programme, which resulted in a new website for The Fostering Network. This website went live in March 2025, and the costs were fully capitalised as intangible assets by that point. The balance on the Designated Reserve has therefore been transferred back to Unrestricted Funds.

For the year ended 31 March 2025

**20a Operating lease commitments**

The charity's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods.

	<b>Property</b>		<b>Other</b>	
	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Less than one year	<b>39,001</b>	28,834	<b>855</b>	896
One to five years	-	24,702	<b>2,872</b>	-
	<b>39,001</b>	53,536	<b>3,727</b>	896

**20b Operating lease commitments receivable as a lessor**

Amounts receivable under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows for each of the following periods

	<b>Property</b>	
	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Less than one year	<b>63,000</b>	109,537
One to five years	<b>81,375</b>	-
	<b>144,375</b>	109,537

**21 Legal status of the charity**

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £1.

## **The Fostering Network Trustees, Management and Advisors**

The following served as members of the board of directors and trustees and as the senior leadership team in 2024-25.

### **Chair**

Mervyn Erskine

### **Treasurer**

Lyssa Elster

### **Trustees**

Mervyn Erskine  
Stuart Lewis  
Christopher Pope  
Ishara Tewary  
Jonathan Walsh  
Frank Harasiwka  
Matthew Page  
Lyssa Elster  
Paul Seath  
Kate Brash  
Caroline Malcolm

### **Senior Leadership Team**

Sarah Thomas  
(Chief Executive)

Corrie Biddle (from May 2024 until June 2025)  
(Director of Practice & Innovation)

Kathleen Toner  
(Director of Engagement & Influence)

Martha Adam-Bushell  
(Director of Finance & Resources)

### **Company Secretary**

Martha Adam-Bushell

### **Registered Office**

87 Blackfriars Road  
London  
SE1 8HA

### **Auditor**

Sayer Vincent LLP  
110 Golden Lane  
EC1Y 0TG

### **Bankers**

Barclays Bank Plc  
1 Churchill Place London  
E14 5KP