

# Caring for our Children

Quarterly newsletter for family based carers in Edinburgh

Make someone's day... Make someone's life

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**WIN!**  
Two family tickets  
to see  
'Lazytown Live!'  
see back cover

## Kirstie's column



I'd like to thank you all for the tremendous service that you provided to children in 2008. I hope that you have all had a very enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

Family Based Care has recently undergone our annual inspection from the Care Commission – the feedback was generally positive but there are some areas where we can do better and we will try to do so in 2009. One of the aspects that the inspectors were very positive about was the carer training programme. However, we are finding that attendances are quite low. You need to know that once you have booked on, you don't get further confirmation, so please make sure you note the dates, times and venues in your diary.

Some of you may have picked up that the Department is yet again being re-organised. Practice teams were re-organised first. This has led to a reduction in management posts and some managers moving to different offices. Social workers have not been moved but staff are inevitably feeling somewhat unsettled. The re-organisation will also affect Family Based Care and staff are currently being consulted about proposals. Whilst the change is unlikely to be as significant as in practice teams, staff are feeling a bit uncertain about what 2009 will hold. I hope that this will not impact on the support you receive and that we can continue to collaborate successfully to meet the very wide range of needs of children in our care.

  
**Kirstie Maclean**  
Service Manager, Family Based Care Services



## Alton Towers Competition



In May 2009, Fostering Network will be running Foster Care Fortnight – its annual campaign to recruit more foster carers. The theme will be fostering: a career that changes lives, and will highlight how fostering is changing and the vital role that foster carers play as child care experts alongside a team of other professionals.

Last year the campaign was very successful. There were over 10,000 hits to the campaign website and media coverage reached over 28 million people. This year Fostering Network want to step up coverage of the campaign so are on the hunt for more great stories. We know that carers with the City of Edinburgh Council think fostering is a really rewarding career so they're keen to hear from you why it's a job like no other.

- **Has fostering changed your life?**
- **Have you changed the lives of children?**
- **Did you give up another job or go part-time to start fostering?**
- **Do you enjoy working as part of a team?**
- **Do you think you are a child care expert?**
- **Can you talk about how fostering has changed over the years?**

If you can answer yes to any of these questions and are happy to tell your story to a journalist, Fostering Network would love to hear from you.

What's more, you'll be entered into a free prize draw to win a trip to Alton Towers for your foster family. This includes an overnight stay at a themed onsite hotel, dinner, breakfast and two day entrance to the theme park and waterpark. The prize also includes the cost of travel (up to £500).

If you're interested, use the online form at [www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net) to outline your story in no more than 150 words and don't forget to include your contact details (they won't be passed on to any third parties).

**The competition will close at 5pm on Friday 20 March 2009 and the winner will be announced on the Fostering Network's website. For more info, call 020 7620 6416 or e-mail: [media@fostering.net](mailto:media@fostering.net)**

## Carer ID Cards

To avoid encountering difficulties in proving identity and gaining access to children in certain situations e.g. in hospital wards where you may be picking up a baby you're looking after, a decision was taken recently that carers be issued with ID Cards.

Letters will soon be sent out to carers inviting you to get your ID card at the Hub in Council's

Waverley Court building in East Market Street. Your Liaison Social Worker will give you a form which needs to be completed by you and signed off by your worker and it's important that when given an appointment, it is kept. The process will take some months for all carers to get their ID Cards but in the meantime, if you'd like more information, speak to your Liaison Social Worker.

# Being a Carer's child

**W**e recently received a letter from Jodi Herron, whose parents are foster carers in Bonnyrigg. Jodi wanted to share some of the poetry that she has written about her experiences of being the child of a carer.

Jodi started to write poetry a few months ago to help express her feelings about caring, and the children her family cares for. In this poem, some of the words she has used are actual quotes from parents of the children that her family have cared for. Putting her feelings and experiences down on paper can't have been easy, but what she's written is fantastic, and no doubt many of you will be able to relate to Jodi after reading it.

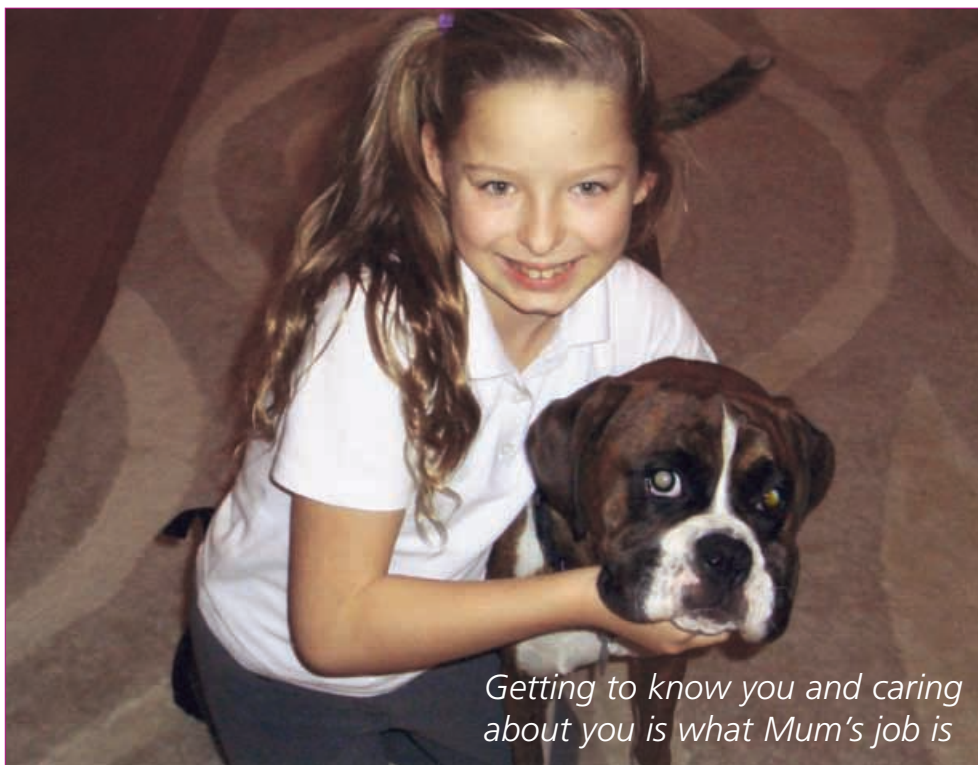
*"My name is Jodi. I am ten years old. My family foster. I try hard to understand how scary and painful being taken from your family is. I don't think I ever will know. Whether my parents were good or bad, I would want to be with them, and I would love them and be loyal to them no matter what.*

*I miss out on many things because of social work meetings, and lots of visits. The things that make fostering hard is when I see children say and do hurtful things to my Mum. I have even had a pup removed because he didn't fit the guidelines. What are these guidelines? I don't understand, maybe I would not fit in either. I wrote this for the children we have cared for, and the two children who are now a huge part of my life – all of us were strangers once. Not now.*

I once shared my bedroom with a stranger. Watching my mum face the danger, the kicking, screaming, the tantrums. At times seen my mum worn down. Only doing what she does best; caring, sharing, loving, and well ... all the rest. And no, she is not your mum, she's mine, and second to none. Being patient and kind, facing anger and rage most of the time. She never gives up at any time. We know you have pain, I know we are not the same, but we want to help and my Mum's not to blame. Getting to know you and caring about you is what Mum's job is about, never filling the shoes of anyone you left behind. **AFTER ALL THIS IS MY MUM LOVING YOU ALL OF THE TIME.**

*My Mum is the best.*

**Jodi Herron, ten year old Foster Carer**



*Getting to know you and caring about you is what Mum's job is*

## FACe goes live

FACe is the Council's brand new electronic newsletter, set up in response to requests for more direct communications between parents/carers and the Children and Families department.

We've decided to go with an e-newsletter as it's a very cost effective way of reaching a large audience and we know that many schools already communicate with their own parents by e-mail on a regular basis. Around 70% of the households in Edinburgh have access to broadband and those who don't can access the newsletter via computers in Council venues such as libraries and community centres. We'll also be asking schools to print off copies or individual articles, for parents' rooms and notice boards in schools.

FACe has eight sections covering things such as latest news stories, achievements and even spotlights individual departments that don't always get the recognition that they deserve (the first one being specialist disability foster care!)

See the first edition at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/face](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/face)



## Ball Pit for sale

You can keep your tots busy for hours in this ball pit with hundreds of multicoloured balls!

It's been used by Day Carers in South Edinburgh to keep the children entertained, but is still in great condition. Dimensions are approximately 5ft long x 3ft wide x 1.5ft deep; and 7ft tall. It comes with a detachable roof.

It originally cost around £500 but the group are happy to accept £100 or the nearest offer.

It's available for collection only in Gilmerton (EH17). Contact Sheila Woods on 0131 664 7569 for more details.

# Acknowledging Carers



In October 2008, Councillor MacLaren, (third from left, main picture) presented awards to more than 40 carers with a combined experience of over 900 years caring for Edinburgh's children.

More than 100 foster carers, day carers, share the carers, respite carers, befrienders, and adopters attended the main evening event at the City Chambers, which included a buffet, drinks and music from Broughton Music School student Murdo Macrae. Director of Children and Families, Gillian Tee, opened the celebration by thanking carers for their ongoing work and stressing the importance of their commitment. Councillor Marilyne MacLaren, Convenor for Children and Families, then presented certificates and awards, recognising those with more than 20 years' service with the Council, as well as those who had undertaken a qualification as part of their professional development.

Unfortunately, our administrative records weren't as up to date as they should have been, so some carers, who've dedicated many years' service to the Council, missed out on their awards on the night. So we held a second, more intimate, lunchtime event shortly afterwards, with Councillor Marilyne MacLaren able to personally thank each carer for their contribution to caring for Edinburgh's children.

Feedback from carers about both events has been extremely positive and we hope to hold this sort of celebration every two years as a thank you to you for your continued dedication to caring for some of the city's most vulnerable children.

## Comments from carers...

### Vanessa Smith:

"I've looked after under-fives for more than 30 years and been a Day Carer with the Council for 22 years. It's a very rewarding job and it's not just about the children – you help the families too. That little bit of extra support can make the difference to a family unit staying together, and knowing you've helped achieve this is a great feeling. And although you don't do it for the recognition, it was nice that our long service was acknowledged. The number of carers who've worked for the Council for more than 20 years is testament to how much we love what we do."



### Katie McKenzie:

"I've been working as a disability foster carer for seven years. I really enjoy working with the kids and caring for the kids, and seeing them grow and develop in the time that you have them. Getting the award for studying an HNC in Social Care was a pat on the back, which you don't get often enough. It really gives you a lift and lets you know that you're doing a deserving job. I think these awards need to happen more often because a lot of people don't realise the amount of work that goes in to caring for children!"



## Staff news

### GOODBYE

We've recently said farewell to the following staff:

**Matt Harrison**, Senior Social Worker (New Opportunities), left at end of September to work in the private sector.

**Andy Gloege**, Permanence Panel Admin, left us in December for pastures new in Holland.

**Kirsty MacArthur**, Social Worker, has taken a year out to work in Rwanda.

### HELLO

We've recently welcomed the following member of staff to Family Based Care:

### Sarah Somerville

Social Worker, Permanence Team  
Sarah recently joined the permanence team as maternity cover for Sally and Shara. Sarah's on secondment from Viewforth Children and Families Centre where she was Depute and as a qualified social worker for eight years, she has also worked in the Royal Infirmary.

# Goodbye Shona!



This month we are wishing a fond farewell to Shona Dingwall, who is retiring after 35 years of working with the City of Edinburgh Council. Shona began working with children in 1974 when she worked in a playgroup in Craighentiny. Her career since then has seen her working on Play Buses until the service shut down in 1984, and then becoming the Community Co-ordinator for Under 5s until 1991 when the department regrouped. She then came into her present job and will be retiring as a family support worker with Day Carers, based at Springwell House. Looking back on her career, Shona said:

"I think it's a very rewarding job if people want to come in and look after children. There have been difficult times when the department has been regrouping and changing, but the people I've met with the department have given really good service. I have enjoyed working in the community with the carers and for the children, but it's the carers I'll miss the most, and my colleagues."

Shona is looking forward to starting yoga classes, and taking a lifelong learning course at the university, spending more time with her grandchildren and friends, and going to galleries and talks. Shona's manager Lovat Fraser, who first met her in 1992 while she was a Community Care Organiser, paid tribute to her hard work:

"I am delighted that Shona was part of the team that I manage because of the vast amount of Day Care working experience that she brought. Shona's always been able to represent the needs of the under 5s and has worked consistently and extremely hard to do so. I'm sorry to lose her."

And echoing how much her carers will miss her is Sheila Woods, one of the Day Carers that Shona looks after. Sheila first met Shona while working on the Play Bus service over 25 years ago, and says:

"I want to wish her all the best and I hope she has a happy retirement and finds plenty things to do for herself, and not a lot for children! I've only had her as a worker for a few months, but she's been very helpful and very kind and definitely knows what she's doing. She'll really be missed."

All the best in your retirement Shona!



## Stop Young People Smoking...

The NHS Stop smoking Service for Young People provides confidential help to young people who smoke, but would like to stop. Support is given either in groups or one to one and lasts up to six weeks.

The sessions examine why the young person smokes and what could motivate them to resist temptation and cover basic work around lifestyle issues such as stress, anger, alcohol, peer influences, healthy eating and exercise.

Young people mainly refer themselves to the service but parents and carers can also refer. For more information or to refer a young person, e-mail: [Diana.martin@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Diana.martin@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk) or call 07969530266. For a young person to self refer they can text 'STOP SMOKING' to 07969530266.



## Easy Ways to 5-a-day

We're always trying to promote healthy eating amongst Council staff and pupils and as carers, we would encourage you to ensure your children are eating their 5-a-day! But why is it important and what counts as a portion?

5-a-day is important, as it helps protect you against the Big Three (heart disease, strokes and some cancers, including bowel cancer), can help maintain a healthy weight and is kinder to teeth than sugary snacks.

Here's a few ideas to get you started:

### Breakfast

- 1 = glass of 100% juice
- 1 = banana sliced over cereal or on toast

### Mid Morning Snack

- 1 = apple
- 1 = two satsumas or kiwi fruit
- 1 = handful of grapes

### Lunch

- 1 = vegetable soup
- 2 = wholemeal salad roll or sandwich with tomato, cucumber, lettuce, etc
- 2 = baked potato with baked beans and side salad

### Evening Meal

- 1 = any combination from peas, sweet corn, mushrooms, cauliflower, broccoli, asparagus, tomato-based pasta sauces

For more information on healthy eating, visit: [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)

5  
minute

# interview



In each newsletter we feature someone in a five minute interview and in this edition it's the turn of Nicole Higgs.

Nicole lives in Edinburgh and has been a Day Carer with the City of Edinburgh Council for 23 years now. We asked her how she feels about caring for children and got an insight into her day to day life.

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

A. It's a challenging job and I enjoy the challenge, and working with children. I like the outcome of it. I am a single parent myself, and I love helping out other parents.

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

A. I used to work in a hospital before and I've always loved working with children. When I started caring I thought I would just do it for a year but I carried on and now I'm in my 23rd year of doing it. I hope I don't have to change my job! But if the worst came to the worst I would like to carry on working with kids.

**Q. Day Care – what does it mean to you?**

A. Basically, taking care. We have a lot of help and training from the department, and it means a lot to me the support that we get.

**Q. What was the last film you saw?**

A. Mamma Mia.

**Q. What is your favourite holiday destination?**

A. Mauritius – I love going with my family and all my relatives.

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

## WORDJUMBLE

C A R I N

G F O R O

U R C H I

L D R E N

Test your skills with this word jumble. Use the 20 letters in the grid to make as many words as you can with three letters or more in them.

Good luck!

How many did you find?

10 – OK

20 – Good

30 – Great

40 – Wow!

50 – Genius!!



# Kid's Corner

**Fun for Under 5s ...** [www.underfives.co.uk](http://www.underfives.co.uk)

**Need help with spelling ...**

[www.spellzone.com](http://www.spellzone.com) or [www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/spelling](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/spelling)

**Who Am I?** For young deaf people aged 13 to 19 and their parents:

[www.ndcs.org.uk/family\\_support](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support)

**Young people and disability:** [www.bbc.co.uk/ouch](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch)

**Into nature?** [www.naturedetectives.org.uk](http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk) or [www.nhm.ac.uk/kids-only](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/kids-only)

**Want to be more environmentally friendly?** [www.ypte.org.uk](http://www.ypte.org.uk)

**Like making music?** [www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/blast](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/blast) or [www.jamstudio.com](http://www.jamstudio.com)  
(put this in different font/colour to separate from website stuff)

## Safenet computers ...

Safenet offer a service to help keep you and your family extra safe online. For those of you who have a Safenet computer this year, remember that if anything goes a bit wobbly with it, to call the Safenet helpdesk on 08701 1298522.

Engineers can connect remotely to your PC and sort most problems you may experience. And if they can't fix it over the phone they'll advise you on how to package it up and send it away to be fixed and returned at no cost to you.

## Handson Scotland toolkit ...

This is for anybody working with children. It's a one stop shop for practical information and techniques on how to respond helpfully to children and young people's troubling behaviour, build up their self esteem and promote their positive mental wellbeing. [www.handsonscotland.co.uk](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk)

**Marion Boyle**

IT Development Officer

[marion.boyle@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:marion.boyle@edinburgh.gov.uk)

## Panel Members needed

Contact Grace Lyons on 556 6787

or e-mail: [grace.lyons@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:grace.lyons@edinburgh.gov.uk)

We need carers who would be interested in becoming Fostering or Permanence Panel Members, helping make recommendations to the service about the suitability of applicants to offer foster care, respite, day care, or adoption. Could you spare one morning or afternoon plus time for reading reports?

Fostering Panels are every three weeks on a Tuesday, Wednesday afternoon or Friday morning. Permanence Panels are on a Tuesday or Thursday morning, or a Thursday afternoon.



# Specialist Foster Care Campaign

**Caring for our Children**  
Care for a challenge?

**We urgently need specialist foster carers for the following schemes...**

**Disability**  
Caring full or part-time for disabled children with complex needs.

**New Opportunities**  
Caring full or part-time for children with challenging behaviour and complex needs.

Both schemes offer preparation, training, support, fees and allowances. As a full-time specialist foster carer, you could even earn the equivalent of a full-time wage. It could be the career change you've been looking for!

And you don't have to be available full-time as there are children needing short breaks too. We need carers to provide:

**Share the Care**  
Caring for disabled children for short, regular periods e.g. one weekend per month.

**Befriending (Disability)**  
Spending time with a disabled child for a few hours regularly.

If you're up to the challenge, get in touch today and make a difference:

**0800 174 833**  
[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/fostering)

EDINBURGH  
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

**T**here are already hundreds of you caring for some of Edinburgh's most vulnerable children but we urgently need more – especially for our specialist schemes, caring for children with disabilities and those with challenging behaviour and complex needs.

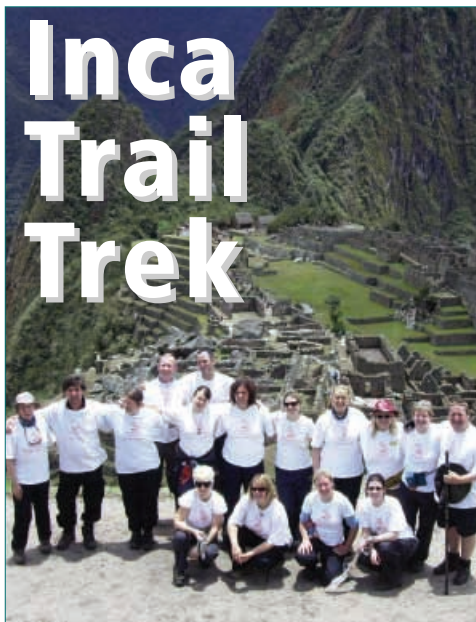
So before the end of 2008, we had a campaign on the radio and in the press to encourage more carers to come forward. We were successful in attracting more enquiries and a 300% increase in visits to our website and we'd like to thank carers Mike Perry and Arlene and Stevie Cull for allowing the Evening News to do a feature on them to raise the profile of our service.

We also want to remind you that the New Opportunities scheme would still benefit from experienced carers getting involved. New Opportunities Foster Care means looking after children with challenging behaviour on a full-time or part-time basis. There are currently 10 children aged between seven and thirteen years old, mainly boys, who are in need of this type of care. They've had troubled and disrupted family lives, with experiences of separation, loss or abuse. They may have been looked after by several other carers, or be in a residential home. They have a high level of need, will at times have challenging and difficult behaviour and they might find it hard to show affection, stick to house rules or do well in school.

What these children need is carers who are skilled in communicating with them, able to give sound advice and guidance, and to set clear boundaries within a safe and secure environment. It's a demanding task but these children have a lot to give and looking after them can be a uniquely rewarding experience.

If you have experience of managing complex behaviour, a spare bedroom in your home, and there are no other children under 14 living with you, you could foster a child with the New Opportunities scheme. As a specialist foster carer you would receive up to £361 per child per week.

If you, or anyone you know is interested, please call 0131 556 6787 and ask to speak to a worker in the New Opportunities team, or leave your details and a team member will ring you back.



**I**t seems a long time since I read the Fostering Network article inviting Foster Carers to trek across the Andes in South America to a hitherto thought mythical city called Machu Picchu.

At the turn of the year I thought to myself "Jings whit a wheeze!" when I read about people walking for charity on holiday. So I signed up and set about raising money for The Fostering Network. Simple – you sign up for a trip to Peru – then you help raise 50 grand! The following nine month period proved to be the longest and most frustrating in living memory. Have you any idea how many of your

friends and family are raising money for charity events? I have – now!

Before I knew it, I was packing my rucksack for what seemed to be endless airport transfers and thousands of airmiles. Edinburgh to Heathrow to JFK New York to Lima to Cusco – higher than Ben Nevis and I hadn't put a foot on the ground yet! I hadn't put a foot on the ground due to the fact that I was still trying to breathe. It was about now that I began to regret making the decision that I was fitter than all these people who said that you had to train hard to walk at altitude.

Over the next seven days we would walk over 80 kilometres (50 miles), twice climbing heights in excess of 4000 metres (three times the height of Ben Nevis), always in sight of the Urubamba River which of course flowed to our final destination of Machu Picchu (the hidden city of the Incas, who were blasted almost out of existence by the Spanish Conquistadors in the 15th Century). We traced the Inca Trail in the land of the Qeshuans through the Forest Microclimate, High Jungles (way above the Amazon Basin and Rainforest), Sacred Valley and Dead Woman's Pass, scaling the peaks of Warmiwanuska (4200 metres) and Runnquracay (4000 metres) until we finally reached The Sun Gate, which signalled the entrance to Machu Picchu!

Cusco is extremely impoverished, yet spiritually charged and these, combined with heightened emotions due to altitude, provided me with a poignant and memorable experience. I seemed to give away copious sums of money to the same child begging on every corner of every street and down

every alley within the town! Before I left for this trip I hiked up to the top of Arthur's Seat and I lifted a small stone from the top of Edinburgh – I placed this stone at the top of Machu Picchu and when I returned, I hiked back up Arthur's Seat and replaced it with a small stone from the top of Peru. No bad eh! My sincere thanks to all contributed to my task and a special thank you to Sharon without whom ... well ....

**Stewart Duncan, Foster Carer**

**ps. I've so far raised over £2600 and am still on [www.justgiving.com/stewartduncan](http://www.justgiving.com/stewartduncan) for anyone who didn't get the opportunity to help and feels left out!**





## Lazy town giveaway

We have two family tickets (each for two adults and two children) to giveaway for the upcoming Lazytown Live! Show at the Festival Theatre. The tickets are for a performance on Wednesday 25 February 2009. All your favourite characters from the CBBC series will be in the new show and you can look forward to a fun day out with the family with sing-alongs and dancing in the aisles!

**All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is get in touch with your name and contact details by Wednesday 4 February 2009.**

**You can e-mail [joanne.macdougall@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.macdougall@edinburgh.gov.uk) or write to us at the address below. The first two names drawn at random after this date will win!**

## HAVE YOUR SAY

Let us know what you think about *Caring for our Children* and any ideas you have about what you'd like to see in the next edition. If you want to contribute, please contact the editor with your story, review or idea by February 2009.

**Joanne MacDougall  
Communications Officer  
Communication Service  
329 High Street  
Edinburgh EH1 1PN  
e-mail: [joanne.macdougall@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.macdougall@edinburgh.gov.uk)  
tel: 0131 529 7210**

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# Upcoming Events

## Midlothian Snowsports Centre, Ongoing

Call 0131 445 4433 or visit: [www.midlothian.gov.uk](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk) and click on 'Sport & Leisure'

Why not embrace the weather this winter and take to the slopes at Midlothian Snowsports Centre. As well as the usual skiing and snowboarding for people of all ages and abilities, there are also some fun things on for the kids including the Super Sliders club for 7-12 year olds, and Tubing Parties where you slide down the slope on inflatable doughnuts!

## Costumed Performances, Edinburgh Castle

Now until 31 March, Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday

Call 0131 225 9846 or visit: [www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk](http://www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk)

Costumed characters bring the history of the castle to life. Find out about the extraordinary lives of the people that lived there hundreds of years ago, from Kings and Queens to soldiers and prisoners. The events are included in the price of admission to the castle, and take place at 11am, 12pm, 1.30pm and 2.30pm.

## Burns for Bairns, Scottish Storytelling Centre

24 January and 31 January, 2.30pm to 3.30pm

Call 0131 556 9579 or visit: [www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk](http://www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk)

Family fun as storyteller Robbie Fotheringham spins some Scots yarns, rhymes and songs to celebrate the season of Robert Burns. Plus make your own timorous beastie finger puppet to take home! Call to book tickets. Suitable for age five years and above.



## Lazytown Live! The Pirate Adventure, Festival Theatre

25 February to 1 March

Call 0131 529 6000 or visit: [www.festivaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.festivaltheatre.org.uk)

Get ready for sing-alongs and dancing in the aisles when the Lazytown Live ship sails into Edinburgh. All your favourite characters from the CBBC series will be in the new show ...but who will walk the plank of laziness? And don't forget – you can win a free family ticket for this show simply by getting in touch. See the giveaway section to the left!

## High School Musical Dance Workshop, Dance Base

8 March, 10.30am to 12.30pm

Call 0131 225 5525 or [www.dancebase.co.uk](http://www.dancebase.co.uk)

Do you know some kids who are crazy about Disney's High School Musical? Silly question! Well here's a chance for kids aged 9 to 12 to learn some of the cool moves from the movies and bring out their inner Troy or Gabriella. Booking is essential for this one-off class.

## Edinburgh International Science Festival

6 to 18 April

Call 0131 558 7666 or visit: [www.sciencefestival.co.uk](http://www.sciencefestival.co.uk)

Edinburgh's annual science festival is back this year to entertain and expand the minds of young and old during the Easter holidays. The programme is yet to be announced, but expect the usual mix of fun and facts, blood and guts, and experiments!