

## **About Scottish Adoption & Fostering**

Scottish Adoption & Fostering is a charity dedicated to supporting care-experienced children and their families in Scotland through adoption and fostering. We provide innovative and leading services to ensure children grow up in safe, loving, and nurturing homes. Essential to promoting the well-being of care-experienced children is continuing to hold their families of birth in mind.

## **About the Bluebird Project**

The Bluebird Project supports birth parents who have a child who is permanently fostered, adopted, or in kinship care. Recognising the diversity of parents' needs, we offer a range of services to meet them where they are in their journey. All our interventions focus on nurture and connection. One service user described her experience in a Bluebird group:

*“It was really good, it was like a wee family, all of us... it was really good for building confidence.”*

## **Introduction to the Flock**

Within Bluebird, The Flock was established specifically for parents who have lost permanent care of a child but now have another child in their care. Currently, a group of inspiring parents and their children are meeting each week to share experiences, connect with others in similar situations, and access support.

For parents who have experienced losing care of a child, accessing family resources and support services can be very challenging. Many feel isolated, unable to discuss their previous children, and face anxiety around professional engagement due to past assessments and monitoring. Parents have also shared the stigma they encounter:

*“It’s a taboo subject no one talks about. People feel the need to input, and you get judged. People make assumptions and they don’t know you.”*

*“People say things like you don’t deserve another baby.”*

## **A Supportive Approach to Engagement**

To help parents feel safe and supported, we ensure careful preparation before they join the group. Each participant has a dedicated 1:1 worker who begins building a relationship

before the group starts. These workers continue checking in with families between sessions, offering direct support and overcoming barriers to participation.

*“(My worker) was really understanding and helpful... she’s amazing!”*

### **Circle of Security Parenting Programme (COSP)**

With on-site childcare provided, parents in the Flock can participate in the Circle of Security Parenting Programme (COSP). COSP is an attachment-based intervention that helps parents and caregivers connect more effectively with their children. A facilitator from the programme comments:

*“It has been a privilege to facilitate Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) with parents from the Bluebird Project and to see them grow in confidence. COSP offers parents a framework for understanding infants’ emotional needs, as well as a space to reflect on their own experiences of being parented. COSP takes a compassionate and non-blaming approach which enables parents to reflect and focus on what they can do to strengthen the parent-infant relationship. It has been remarkable to see the parents come together and support each other through the process.”*

### **Additional Opportunities for Connection**

COSP has integrated review elements, which encourage participants to identify examples of their learning in everyday experiences between sessions. This enables parents’ learning journeys to be shared, recognised and celebrated within the group learning environment.

Beyond COSP, Flock includes “stay and play” sessions at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the programme. These sessions help both parents and children build familiarity with the group environment, further developing trust and readiness to engage. Supported by experienced workers, parents can connect with others and play with their children in a supportive space.

*“I wouldn’t do something like this if there weren’t other people like me. It’s good to see that other people have pulled through... I’m not the only person in the world who’s been through this.”*

*“I was very nervous... about the whole lot. Meeting new mums, meeting new babies, the workers – everything. It’s been really good. We really enjoy it and look forward every week to our group.”*

### **Looking to the Future**

As the programme cycle draws to a close, Scottish Adoption & Fostering is looking forward to celebrating the achievements of this group. We aim to recognise the bravery, effort, and learning of each participating parent. Additionally, there are plans to develop further

opportunities for families to continue meeting, sharing experiences, and enjoying the benefits of a safe and supportive community.

### **Message to Others**

When asked what they would say to others in similar circumstances, Flock participants conveyed hope and encouragement. Their words capture the unique, supportive environment of the Flock and the strength they've found together.

*“Just go for it, it does help build confidence.”*

*“If you're thinking of coming along, go along and give it a try, even if you're nervous, go along and give it a try, cos you never know what you're missing – it's really actually amazing! I don't know where I'd be without them.”*

Further information about the Bluebird and Flock projects can be found on Scottish Adoption & Fostering's website <https://www.scottishadoption.org/birth-parents/>.