

REPORT NO 1007/97

ANGUS COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE7 OCTOBER 1997

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

RELATIVE FOSTER CARER SCHEME

ABSTRACT

This report advises Committee of proposals to establish a Relative Foster Carer Scheme.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:

- (i) notes the contents of this report;
- (ii) approves the proposed scheme for a specific Relative Foster Carer Scheme

2. INTRODUCTION

Angus Council currently operates four specific fostering schemes.

- (i) The Temporary Foster Carer Scheme provides placements for children in the birth to twelve years age range. Children who are looked after by temporary foster carers will either return home to their own parents, or move to a permanent substitute family either through adoption or permanent fostering. Temporary foster carers are approved by the Authority after a rigorous assessment and receive a fostering allowance for each child.
- (ii) The Permanent Foster Carer Scheme provides a more permanent placement. Children are carefully matched with their permanent carers and remain looked after by these carers until they become independent. In many cases children and permanent carers retain life long links.

Permanent foster carers are approved by the Authority after a rigorous assessment and receive a fostering allowance for the child until he/she is eighteen.

- (iii) The Mainstay Carer Scheme provides placements for young people in the age range of 11 to 18 years. Carers are approved by the Authority after a rigorous assessment. In addition to an allowance for the child carers receive a fee. This is the only fee paying scheme the department operates.
- (iv) The ARCH scheme is operated by the social work department in partnership with ARCH (Angus Respite Care Helpers), a voluntary organisation. Under this scheme children with disabilities can receive respite from approved carers to whom they have been matched. An allowance is paid to carers for each child

Foster carers who are related to the child they wish to foster currently require to be assessed and approved as either a temporary foster carer or a permanent foster carer. This may not always be appropriate as there may be differing expectations and demands in respect of the type of care provided by relative foster carers. It is therefore proposed to operate a fifth scheme the Relative Foster Carer Scheme where relatives can become approved as foster carers for a related child/children.

3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The payment of allowances to foster carers is underpinned by the legislative framework laid out in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1995.

Section 26 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 states that a local authority may provide accommodation for a child looked after by them by placing him with a family, a relative of his, or any other suitable person on such terms as to payment, by the authority or otherwise, as the authority may determine.

Regulation 2 of The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 defines fostering as arranging for a child to live as a member of the family of a person who is not a parent; does not have parental responsibility; and does not ordinarily have charge of or control over the child. Therefore under this definition a child who is looked after and accommodated is a foster child.

Regulation 9 of The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 allows the local authority to pay fostering allowances as they see fit. The allowance paid may be a fixed allowance; a rate applicable to

certain categories or circumstances of care; or an amount relevant to the individual needs of the child. It may also take into account the needs and circumstances of the foster carer with whom the child is placed.

Fostering allowances can only be paid to foster carers who are approved under Regulation 7 of The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996.

The Children's Hearing can also place a child with relatives or friends under Regulation 15 (The Fostering of Children Regulations 1996). This is an immediate placement and does not necessitate the relative or friend having to be approved as foster carers, however no allowance is applicable in this instance.

4. RELATIVE FOSTER CARER SCHEME

The scheme will enable payments to be made to relatives/friends who are able to support children within their own community. It is a full relative carer scheme which would also encompass friends who are willing to accept responsibility for a child.

Prior to any allowance being paid and the continuation of an allowance payment there will be:-

- (i) An Assessment of the relative and approval by the fostering Panel and Agency decision maker as relative carers for a named child under the Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996.
- (ii) Annual reviews of the relative carer and the continued appropriateness of the placement.

Recognising the basic differences between care offered by the department's pool of approved foster carers, and the responsibilities that relatives/friends may already hold towards children in their extended family, the Relative Foster Carer Scheme will differ from the current temporary, permanent and mainstay carer schemes and operate on a smaller fostering allowance.

Foster carers providing temporary, permanent, mainstay and ARCH fostering receive an allowance for each child they provide with accommodation and support. Currently the agreed allowance rates are:-

Ages	0 - 4	-	£53 per week
	5 - 10	-	£65.80 per week

11 - 15	-	£81.94 per week
16 - 18	-	£106.10 per week

In addition Mainstay carers are paid a fee of £95.60 per week.

In recognition of their responsibilities towards related children it is proposed that relative carers approved after 5 August 1997 will receive a fostering allowance equivalent to 50% of the fostering allowance. Relative carers approved as foster carers prior to this date are approved as full foster carers and will continue to receive the full allowance.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of this scheme cannot be quantified with any degree of accuracy, since the number of relative foster carers is unpredictable. However, it should be noted that the introduction of this scheme would result in reduced expenditure for the social work department, as the proposed allowances are 50% of the full allowances. Any expenditure arising during 1997/98 will be contained within the social work department's revenue budget.

6. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

The development of a Relative Foster Carer Scheme would allow the Authority to consider a wider range of options in respect of placing children within their own extended family and maintaining them within their own community.

The scheme incorporates the payment of allowances and thereby ensures that the children so placed, and the relatives caring for them are not financially disadvantaged.

The scheme recognises the differences between a departmental fostering scheme and the care relatives are able to offer as foster carers, as well as recognising that there is an added responsibility towards children who are related.

This report recommends that the Social Work Committee approves this proposed Relative Foster Carer Scheme.

W B Robertson
Director of Social Work

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.

