



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ON 11 AUGUST 2021**

SUBJECT: FOSTER SCHEME REVISION OF LEVEL 4 REQUIREMENTS

BY: CHIEF OFFICER, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for change to the approved foster scheme.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this committee the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Children and Young People Services, Governance, Strategy and Performance, (para 9 of the minute refers).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee approve the recommended change to the approved scheme in relation to Level 4 skilled carers, in certain risk and needs assessed circumstances as detailed within paragraph 3.7.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A series of reports named Fostering in Moray and Moray Fostering Scheme were tabled at Community Services Committee meetings on 3 December 2003 (para 39 of the minute refers); 2 June 2004 (para 37 of the minute refers); 11 August 2004 (para 32 of the minute refers); 9 August 2006 (para 14 of the minute refers) and 4 October 2006 (para 18 of the minute refers). This resulted in approval of the then scheme for fostering in Moray.
- 3.2 The Moray foster scheme was revised following reports to the Children and Young People's Services Committee, 2 May 2018 (paragraph 13 of the minute refers) and 13 February 2019 (paragraph 19 of the minute refers).
- 3.3 The scheme approved in 2019 has 4 skills levels for foster carers which are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

- 3.4 As part of that consultation process in 2018/ 2019 for the new scheme some carers considered that there may be issues with limiting level 4 carers on the basis of at least one carer remaining in non-paid work and therefore available to the child/ren cared for and to the family as a whole.
- 3.5 The basis of need for one carer to be consistently available had been to acknowledge the additional support needs of children who need this level of care, offering specialist support for child/ren with experiences of trauma and to fulfil key duties, such as attending Looked After Child reviews; supporting contact; supporting court processes where this may be an issue..
- 3.6 As our carers develop with training and supervision, and learn more about caring for specific children and their needs, they are evidencing skills that are assessed as being at level 4, which is a more enhanced, trauma informed understanding of children and young people's behaviour . However because of the requirement that one carer should not have work out of the home, this is disadvantaging some fostering household and carers and we have been asked to reconsider this in certain circumstances.
- 3.7 The circumstances that have been explored and which form the basis of recommendation for change are as follows: -
- Where Level 4 carers can work shift patterns and can ensure that one or other carer, or their nominated carer, is always available to the child/ren in their care there will be no need to have one carer who is required not to work outside of the home, as long as: -
 - The child/ren in their care have been members of the household for some time and they are settled and secure members in that household. And
 - The carers continue to meet all statutory and service requirements and expectations.
 - More usually the child/ren and carers will have been formally matched at foster panel.
 - Where shift patterns may not entirely support the carers to be available when required, then if an agreed nominated carer, who has had all statutory checks undertaken and who is well known to the children, can form part of a known family plan, then this should not prevent carers from becoming level 4 carers, subject to evidence and assessment of their skills.
 - If a nominated carer is going to be needed to support child care more regularly, for example every second week for an hour after school, then specific planning, based on the risks and the needs of the child, must be detailed, only agreed subject to that assessment of risk and need and must be reviewed on an agreed frequency but at no less than every looked after review.

- The purpose of nominated carers is that they support the family functioning and provide consistency for the child – lessen the need for many different short break carers or another approved carer to take the child when the family need them.

3.8 The recommendation is that subject to the above then based on the needs of the child; the assessment of skill of the carers and their ongoing ability to meet statutory and service requirements, level 4 carers need not have one carer remaining within the home and not in work.

3.9 There will be an increased financial cost in assessing and approving some of our level 3 carers as level 4 carers. However this sum marks the skills of our carers and the enhanced support that they offer to children who need it most. The sum is within existing budget as numbers of carer with placements stand at this time. If there was an increase in use of foster care, then while it is not expected that this will challenge the existing budget, the costs of keeping the child/ren in Moray with Moray foster carers would be preferable to placing children with carers from independent foster agencies or in out of area provision, which would cost more.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Children's Services plan 2020/23 identifies improving outcomes for looked after children as a key priority the Children and Families and Justice Social Work service improvement plan identifies actions to be taken to support these improvements the Corporate plan (2020 update) identifies the following priorities:

Work with families as partners to give their children the kind of lives they want them to lead so that children grow up to be strong and resilient;
 Improve the life chances and outcomes for care experienced children and young people
 Improvement in children and young people's health and well-being

(b) Policy and Legal

The recommended change to the foster scheme is consistent with our duties under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. Listening to what children and their families tell us and responding by making the redesign they suggest, when appropriate to do so, is consistent with the principles of keeping the Promise.

(c) Financial implications

The financial implications associated with this report are within budget.

(d) Risk Implications

The risk associated with this report is that we might lose some of our skilled carers: by making this variation to the scheme we will be evidencing the value that we have for our foster carers.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no direct property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equality implications as the purpose of the report is to inform committee of progress.

(h) Consultations

Chief Executive, Moray Council; Chief Social Work Officer; Head of Service, Children & Families & Criminal Justice Services; Head of HR, ICT, and Organisational Development: Senior Human Resources Adviser; Principal Accountant; Senior Solicitor (Litigation and Social Care); Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 It is recommended that Committee approves the change to the foster scheme as indicated within.

Author of Report: Jennifer Gordon – Corporate Parent & Commissioning Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: