

Analysis of Questionnaire

A New Scheme Moray Fostering



Responses to the Questionnaire

The following details the questions and the responses to the questionnaire which was issued to 52 fostering households.

16 questionnaires were returned, and limited comment from 2 additional carers is included in the detail that follows. This equates to a 35% return.

As part of the process of consultation there have been group and individual sessions available for foster carers. 3 further foster carers were engaged with those sessions. The total number of foster carers who have engaged with the process of consultation has been 22: this represents 42% of current fostering households.

1. <i>To what extent do you agree with the thinking behind the need to revisit the existing foster scheme?</i> Please use the following ratings.				
1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree
			10	6
<p>Comments –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Things have moved and developed in the past 14 years and the fostering and adoption service must move with it. 2. The existing system needs to be revised to be more flexible. 3. (No that) I am fully aware that we have a need to both sustain and obtain committed foster carers. I feel a new scheme will definitely benefit the fostering families within Moray. 4. All systems need regular review to ensure they are operating in the most efficient way however any changes made need to improve the outcomes for the children we look after as well as ensuring that the carers have adequate support to facilitate this. 5. There has been some confusion around rates/requirements, so clarity is welcome. 6. Fostering can be a demanding, challenging, pushed to the limit, role. I think the new scheme is encouraging for those who want to learn and push themselves to achieve. 7. Change and improvement to the fostering scheme will enhance the provision of fostering – children and carers will benefit. 8. The fostering scheme needs to be supported better by the other professionals. The larger team around the child needs changing too. The system fails children in our area. 9. Change is needed to recruit and retain foster carers and recognise the commitment they make to permanence. 				

10. The scheme needs to move and grow and allow the carers who want to progress/ achieve more, to do so.
11. Things, times, people change to progress we all need to move forward.

5 returned questionnaires had no comment.

Summary / points for clarification

- 100 % of those who responded to the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed with the thinking behind the need for the development of a new scheme.

Comments focussed on

- The need to progress as a service and move forward.
- There is the need to acknowledge the role of fostering and the impact this has on the lives of carers offering the care, together with the outcomes for children being cared for.
- There is recognition that the team around the child in terms of whole system is significant: foster care matters.
- The developed new scheme will need to be clear: clarity will be welcome.

Skills

2. The scheme sets out the basic **outline of the skill levels. *Are these clear and understandable?***

15 fostering households responded YES

1 returned questionnaire did not respond to this question

Comments

1. I like the fact that it is optional, those that wish to learn and develop more will get the opportunity to do so if they wish.
2. Levels will reflect commitment to carer's choice of fostering.
3. The basic outline of the skills levels are clear. The challenges that we face are sometimes unknown. It is assumed that the levels will cross over.
4. As basic outlines, there is space to change, grow and define more.
5. Being new to fostering, this subject comes up often.
6. Skill levels are clear. All will be achievable. Any time set to achieve each

stage/ level?

10 returned questionnaires had no comment.

Summary / points for clarification

- 94 % of those who responded to the questionnaire said that the outline of the skill levels is clear and understandable.

There is one request for information about timing for achieving each stage and level.

- It is proposed that there will be a working group comprising staff from within placement services, members of the training team and carers who may be keen to be involved in the process. The working group will be active in agreeing the nature of evidence and will also consider the route for approval of progression to the next level. For example, it may be that the working group recommend that the fostering panel has a key role in agreeing progression, as part of the process of formal carer review.

3. To what extent do you agree with the skills levels?

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree
	1	1	12	2

4. Are there amendments you would suggest or points you believe should be clarified?

1. Is it possible that you will be moved down a level if you do not upkeep your skills or are deemed as not keeping to the contract?
2. I agree that the criteria to progress through the levels will increase fostering families understanding of the needs of individual children and enable families to understand where certain behaviours stem from.
3. I am concerned that level 3 carers will be rated as having less experience than level 4 carers when the key difference seems to be that for level 4, carers should not have work outside the home. This does not allow for individual circumstances. For example with careful planning some caring households are able to ensure the presence of either of the foster carers, thereby fulfilling the need to have (one of) the adult carer(s) in the home, to meet the needs of the placement.
4. Written as is within the proposed scheme feels as though we are being penalised and that we will be deemed as having less experience when we believe we provide a realistic family where the parents go out and work. My concern is not related to fees but that we will be regarded as carers with less ability.
5. This is tricky as every child has different needs and therefore every carer may require a variety of training and support. It will always therefore be

subjective. Including this in the annual review is a good thing, so more than one person can be involved in assessing the appropriate levels for each case.

6. Short breaks – The carer providing the short break should receive the level of fee for the skill/ experience they have and not just receive the level one payment. Short breaks are more work/ challenge/ disruption than a placement may be and they can lead to disruption for exiting children in placement.
7. Skills levels are clear – carers preference. Training will need to be continually updated and varied to encourage carers to better their skills. Supervision must be more formal and skills updated to be in line with the learning and development standards for foster care.
8. Level 3 bullet points 3 and 2 and level 4 bullet points 2 and 3 are most important and very similar. A very grey area for £7,000 fee difference.
9. The levels are there for all to see and digest. Carers can decide at which level they would be comfortable. (Not labelling the children) Social workers need to consider their roles, and help and encourage movement within the levels, using new tools to evidence the continual learning and development.
10. There can be what feels like, confused messages in practice. At assessment, our personal circumstances were seen as evidencing our skills; at a later time, those circumstances were viewed differently and blocked our progression to another level.
11. What tool will be used in deciding what level of carer a child requires? What level of carer will be able to study SVQ? What SVQs are required?
12. There needs to be more clarity about what we have to evidence for the levels and will supervision be part of the evidence?

6 returned questionnaires had no comment.

Summary / points for clarification

- 87.5 % of those who responded to the questionnaire agree or strongly agree with the proposed skill levels: 6% (1 person) disagreed with the levels.

Points for clarification

- Might carers move down through levels? –The working group will consider circumstances in which carers have been unable to maintain evidence of their skill set, given continuous learning is a feature for any workforce whether or not in the caring sector.
- Levels 3 and 4 each have significant skills. The difference between the two levels is less related to the complexity of needs of the children and more concerned with the requirements and expectations of Level 4 carers.
- Reflected in the section above, there will be a working group which will drill down into processes for evidence/ approval/ progression.
- Short breaks fees has been an issue for some time, raised in supervision, general working sessions with social workers and at annual review. The paper does not make clear the intention that, as noted in the comment above, carers providing short breaks will receive the fee that reflects their assessed and

approval skills level.

- The training plan will reflect the wider more evidence based skills reflected in the learning and development framework: the standard for foster care.
- Supervision, consistent with the outcome from the most recent fostering inspection, together with the strategic inspection for children services in Moray, has been actively developed and positioned as being a critical element of service delivery.
- The working group will detail the evidence of skills of carers. Existing processing for matching the carers with children will remain in place. It is acknowledged that matching children and carers can be limited because of reduced placement options. It is hoped that this new development will increase carers who can provide foster care to children. If there was more foster carer resource, then active matching skills to needs would be evident.
- SVQs will be optional for any carer. As part of the development plan moving forward, within is likely to be a session with the training team exploring SVQs, the processes, evidence and practice.

Learning & Development

5. *Are you aware of the standard for foster care?*

10 fostering households responded YES
 1 fostering household responded NO
 5 fostering household made no comment.

(If yes) please indicate your awareness.

1-Limited	2-Basic 5	3-Intermediate 5	4-Comprehensive 3	5-Indepth 1
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Summary / points for clarification

- There have been 2 group sessions to date with foster carers on the standard for foster care. Given responses to this question, further sessions will be scheduled within the delivery plan.

6. *The levels outlined in the proposed scheme tie to knowledge, experience and understanding. Do you agree that this is appropriate?*

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree 12	5-Strongly Agree 3
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7. *Do you welcome the opportunity for support to gain (further) SVQs (achieving SVQs is not mandatory)*

14 fostering households responded YES
 2 fostering households responded NO
 1 fostering household asked for clarity

Summary / points for clarification

- It is not mandatory to undertake SVQs. Carers have a diverse range of qualifications.

8. To what extent do you agree that there is clarity in how to progress through the skills levels?

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree
		1	15	

9. To what extent do you agree that supervision will support you in this new scheme?

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree
		1	13	2

10. To what extent do you agree with the plan to develop peer support?

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree
			10	6

11. To what extent do you welcome the opportunities to engage with peer and group support?

1. As long as there is support from link workers then it is ideal as it could easily become negative depending on those involved.
2. I feel that peer group engagement is extremely beneficial and it gives you the possibility to discuss various issues and solutions for problems that you may have come across throughout your placements.
3. I already engage with peer and group support and find this both beneficial and rewarding.
4. This is vital especially for short breaks carers who need to keep up to date with the day to day life of the child. Conversation can bring up small things that can easily be missed in logs but may be essential to the child's routine.
5. I think this will be really useful. Definitely to be encouraged.
6. I always enjoy hearing about other carers' experiences and strategies.
7. Any opportunity - meeting or phone call.
8. Definitely
9. It is always helpful to hear others' experiences
10. Fully support. It will require commitment from carers and maybe something like 75% attendance within the year to events/ talks that have been arranged

for carers.

11. Yes –with all to work together; new and longer serviced foster carers.
12. Strongly agree and would happily attend this vital support.
13. I feel that peer support is valuable to new and existing foster carers. Fellow foster carers can give guidance on support or suggest resources which may be available to improve the lives of the children in our care e.g. activity groups or contacts for different medical practitioner's (paediatricians etc).
14. Other foster carers can supply support when things aren't so good!
15. Being bound by confidentiality, means that there are many things we can't discuss with family and friends, fellow foster carers may have had similar experiences and may be able to help simply by listening and giving guidance.
16. Happy to engage with peer and group support.
17. Think this is a great idea. We can share knowledge and skills and offer and receive support.
18. Very happy to participate.

Summary / points for clarification

- 94% of those who responded to the questionnaire agree that there was clarity in how to progress through the skills levels: there is work to be done in terms of the detail of this via the working group which will be established.
- 94% of those who responded to the questionnaire either agree or strongly agree that supervision will support them in the new scheme.
- 100% of those who responded to the questionnaire either agree or strongly agree with the plan to develop peer support.
- Carers indicate that they welcome the opportunity for peer support, being alert to the need for this to be constructive and questioning how to ensure a wide range as part of this. Options for % attendance being raised as one option.

12. The experience of group support for current Choices carers in the main has been positive. If this method was developed what do you think the strengths would be?

1. It isn't always positive, not all of the Choices carers are involved and it can appear cliquy to others. Peer support is important and some people are better at it than others.
2. It would enable carers to share their experiences and all can learn from them.
3. Being able to talk to people who actually live the lives that we do and understand the adversities this can sometime cause, is vital. The need to not feel alone. Often we can help each other to think outside the box and come up with strategies that may help in particular situations
Further input from placement services may be welcomed by many however this should be individually tailored based upon the needs of the house hold.

4. Information sharing
5. Consistency
6. Sharing a holistic view of the child
7. Building relationships in a job that can cause isolation
8. Getting first hand real life experiences from other carers is really helpful and gives confidence to carers that they are on track (or not!)
9. It would enable carers to share their experiences and all can learn from them.
10. Fewer feelings of being alone. As a foster carer there are times when you can feel quite isolated. Particularly if the placement is fragile and there are prolonged periods of challenging or frustrating behaviour.
11. A recognised peer support group would reduce feelings of isolation.
12. Open discussions could be made in an effort to provide support and reduce feelings of isolation/ inadequacy/ confusion or anxiety.
13. Help and advice from carers who live with and manage the same challenges on a daily basis, given years of experience and knowledge, which can be shared with fellow carers.
14. Carers may not feel so isolated, easier to talk to a designated support.
15. Group support will be known to children – make it easier for supporting the children.
16. The group would be able to talk over any issues, problematic or otherwise. I think that the support group should be for all carer and not separated out into the different levels.
17. Help with more challenging behaviours and problem sharing.
18. Talking to others who share and understand fostering. Learning for the experiences of others.
19. Being able to talk to all in the team regularly, and to other carers who know and understand what you are experiencing.
20. Help and knowledge a phone call away – regular support.
21. The team being on hand 24/7.
22. Hearing the experiences of others and the methods they used may help with “the light bulb” moment.
23. I think this support would be greatly welcomed. Giving carers a chance to share their experiences, knowledge and support for others.
24. To be able to speak candidly.
25. Emotional and practical support for carers.

Summary / points for clarification

- A number of strengths of group support are identified.
- The team and service manager, have particularly noted the number of times carers referred to the issue of isolation. This issue that will feature on the delivery plan, acknowledging that issues which have emerged from the questionnaire can be progressed in advance of the implementation of the new scheme.

13. Please outline any concerns you may have?

1. Needs to be constructive and not just “moan” sessions.
2. In general people oppose change and look at it from a narrow point of view. They then speak to each other and influence others negatively before everyone has had the opportunity to speak to senior management.
3. None as yet.
4. Experienced carers will be restricted from progressing through to the 4th level given the requirement that one should not work outside the home.
5. Increase support packages need to be tailored to individual packages based upon individual needs. Support packages need to be in place from the beginning of a placement not 6 years later.
6. The team around the child need to actively consider input from carers given the in-depth knowledge carers have about the children in their care; the lived experience is valuable and significant, “there is a big difference between reading about a behaviour and actually living/understanding it”.
7. Question 8 –In theory I agree however this system only works with short term placements. It is unclear how you progress through the skills levels if you have a young child as a level 1 carer who then is placed with you long term. Unless you were willing to take an additional child with complex needs you would not progress passed level1 even if you obtain qualifications.
8. Question 9 – Supervision is vital in supporting carers as well as providing debriefing time. However it is essential that this is ongoing and at regular intervals.
9. That it may always fall to the same few. Some level of mandatory attendance may be required, but being an excellent foster carer doesn’t necessarily make you an excellent sharer of knowledge or communicator, so discretion will still need to be applied.
10. In general people oppose change and look at it from a narrow point of view. They then speak to each other and influence others negatively before everyone has had the opportunity to speak to senior management.
11. Chance of negativity and bad experiences being shared.
12. I feel that the support should be time limited. I don’t want to feel under pressure for continuous ongoing support.
13. I hope it doesn’t lead to more paperwork.
14. I do not want our fees to drop because of changes.
15. There are carers who engage and participate and others who don’t. If blocks are childcare/ other meetings, support should be in place to enable carers to engage with each other and derive support from one another.
16. For newer foster carers we will know little difference. Longer time foster carers will know difference.
17. Do we need to be reassessed?
18. Some people could become overly negative.
19. There may be just the same people who always go.
20. Should it be mandatory for a period of time?

Summary / points for clarification

- The working group will consider the points reflected above.
- There seems to be need for clarity about what carers want and need from a group: support; information; opportunity for reflection.
- What style of group is needed – whether it should be a facilitated group or simply a carers' support group.
- How best to promote attendance to a wide range of carers.

Finance

14. To what extent do you feel the three options were made clear?

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree
			15	1

Summary / points for clarification

- 100% of those who responded to the questionnaire agree or strongly agree that the three options were made clear.

15. Please indicate any points you would appreciate clarification on.

1. The payment for short breaks - will this stay at level 1 fee or be paid at the skills level of the carer who is providing the short break?
2. All points and questions were put forward at the consultation session.
3. I think it should be a flat rate for all carers. (Extra payments for exceptional cases). We all do the same training, as far as I know, and if we all have to understandably evidence the training in our practice – we should have the same pay.
4. Keeping records of meeting the standards.
5. Who decides when a carer can go up a level?
6. I thought I understood them – probably don't- the discrepancies seem to be putting carers off.
7. Option 3 is the only option which states that out of hours support will continue to be available. Is this an oversight in the paper? Hopefully this support will still be in place for all 3 options.

Summary / points for clarification

- The fee for short break will be payable at the level of the carer – see “summary / points for clarification”, question 4.
- From within the questionnaire (or within focus groups) 3 carers referred to a wish for a flat rate for carer and with the option of extra payment. The scheme prior to the current had a system of enhanced payments. This is not assessed appropriate. When challenging behaviour reduces this would mean the enhanced payment should reduce, when it may be the continual output of skilled care from the foster carer is what is making the positive difference. That continual output should not be diminished by reduction in fee.
- One carer offered suggested rates and these have actively been considered within the excel spreadsheet that was used to provide the information relating to financial gains and losses. The suggestion reflected higher gains and losses across many more carers.
- Record keeping is critical however carers will have the opportunity to engage with a computer system that may tighten recording into simple grouped areas.
- The working group will work through the detail, however it is anticipated that there will be a role for the foster panel.

- Within the current schemes, out of hours support for Choices carers is currently available from the Choices team. Out of hours support to all our main foster care resource is available through the Moray Council out of hour's service.

The out of hours service available to Choices, is accessed at key times more usually when the need for support is anticipated. Support is detailed, planned and agreed. More usually the support is not used.

Moving forward, what is proposed is that all carers would raise issue with the out of hour's service operated by Moray council, when specific support has not been assessed and planned.

When specific response is required for a carer/ child this will be agreed and planned for a time bound period, subject to review. This will extend to all carers/ children – but this will be based on care planning and assessment of need/ risk.

16. Is there clarity re the fee structure? (There will be no change to allowances).

14 fostering households responded YES

1 fostering household responded NO

1 fostering household made no comment

17. Are there concerns you would like to outline? If so please note.

1. Is the lump sum pro rata – what happens if no child is placed for a few weeks after a placement ends?
2. An existing level 2 carer with 2 children receives a fee of £13,037.44. Under option 2 in the proposed new scheme the fee would be £10,000. This carer will feel very undervalued with a pay cut of £3,037.44. I know that they could go up to level 3, but what if they don't want to?
3. If option 1 is not preferred and option 2 is selected this would mean a significant decrease for most level 2 and 3 carers.
4. We would like to offer short breaks as well as foster. How will this affect us since it seems only level 3 can offer short breaks.
5. Core fees should be: -
Level 1 – 5,750; - Level 2 – 11,500; - Level 3 – 17,250; - Level 4 – 23,000
This would eliminate the need to add fees for more children – everyone then the same. Everything else is complicated!
6. There should be no reduction in our fees.
7. We should be recognised as a skilful workforce and feel respected.
8. There should be help with attending the correct training for individual circumstances.
9. I think that the Council are looking for ways to cut costs. Private residential and agency care costs a small fortune. I can see why keeping children in Moray is beneficial to the Council.
10. Possibly for all carers to be given the same fee – many mainstream carers have complex needs and behaviours and maintain placements.

11. As the focus of the structure appears to be to professionalise the foster care system I feel that lowering the fee to below that of other professionals seems at a juxtaposition with the aims. It is disrespectful and feels like it is taking advantage of people who are dedicated to improving the lives of the children in their care who management know would rather take a pay cut than see vulnerable children moved from a stable home.
12. I'm not sure that a 'fee per household' approach works best as a second child inevitably requires additional time whether just in laundry, car journeys to activities, homework assistance etc, so should surely be recognised?

Summary / points for clarification

- It is proposed in option 2 and in option 3 that a retainer fee will remain in place for 2 weeks at the end of placement for levels one and two carers, if no other child is in placement and providing the carer remains available for placement.
- It is proposed in option 2 and in option 3 that a retainer fee will remain in place for 4 weeks at the end of placement for levels three and four carers, if no other child is in placement and providing the carer remains available for placement or to support other carers as required.
- The implications for gains and losses are charted as part of the proposal.
- The "rating" for support of options 1 -3 is accurately recorded within.
- Assuming approval carers of any level can offer short break care in addition to fostering, assuming this is consistent with the needs of the child in placement.
- Reflected at point 15 above the figures offered by the carer have been applied to the spreadsheet and these are attached for reference and consideration.
- It is agreed that there should be no reduction in fees, given as a resource foster carers are providing a valuable and skilful service to some of our most vulnerable children and young people. What foster carers offer and do cannot be underestimated since the care given is ongoing, day and night. Subject to committee approval there will be certain specific agreements that require being planned for to support the value noted but within a scheme that has integrity.
- Care with alternative care settings does cost a great deal of money; at times it is not the right form of care for the child being cared for. Keeping children in Moray is beneficial to the Council; it is also more usually beneficial for the child/ren who need to retain connections with the people and places that matter to them.
- When children are in foster care, an allowance is made payable. A % of that allowance is for those additional costs to the foster caring household; electricity, water etc. As the carer who responded notes, there is additional output in terms of attention to support for activities/ learning etc.

18. What do you see as being positives?

1. That in general fostering becomes closer to a realistic career choice. For me, with the needs of my foster child, I am very limited in what additional income I

can generate, so increasing my fees helps greatly to make a long term commitment to the role.

2. It brings the level of knowledge and qualification required in line with those required to work in other childcare organisation such as a children's home.
3. The positives will be more tailored development opportunities.
4. Individual families will be treated as equal and can progress through the levels as they deem appropriate for them.
5. Hopefully it will encourage new carers to come on board.
6. New and existing carers being offered the opportunity to extend their education through SVQ is fantastic as they are gaining qualifications that they could use further down the line should they wish to.
7. The SVQ qualification also gives a further understanding of what is involved in caring for children and young people, especially those who come from difficult/damaging/traumatic back grounds. This will enable carers to understand what we/they do and why and the impact our care can have upon on our children's lives.
8. Understanding the framework behind the SSSC standards and the legislation that underpins it is vital in our practise.
9. Better structure to fees and allowances.
10. The Choices will no longer be seen as elitist. It gives lots of opportunities to everyone and I am looking forward to new learning and experience.
11. Opportunities to achieve SVQs
12. Increased support for children with complex needs.
13. A higher fee which should reflect skills/ experience gained.
14. I don't see many and I think that this proposed scheme may deter potential carers. It will be new to them so perhaps not.
15. If the system works, foster carers being recognised for the hard work and commitment they give.
16. Not sure – I am thinking there must be something. Time will give us the positives I hope.
17. It's across the board, not just foster carers but the fostering team.
18. The levels of pay for fostering, the way this will reflect the work done by carers and all the work involved in GIFREC.
19. Set salary and skill based recognition. The potential to study toward an SVQ.
20. You can work your way up the levels. You can access SVQ.
21. Simplifies the system.

Summary / points for clarification

- It seems that most carers consider a new scheme would offer equity and opportunity for support, training, recognition of skills and a clearer system for fees.
- Taking and applying the strengths of the Choices approach across the service and scheme is seen as being positive.
- One person considers that the scheme may deter potential carers. This will be further explored. It may be that this relates to the evidence required within the standard for foster care. The standard is a development considered to strengthen the position and standard of fostering on a national basis: it is one

of the outcomes from the foster care review.

19. Short breaks retention.

Which of the three proposals do you favour and why? 1 2 3 (please indicate)

1. Option 1 – 1 carer responded. The current choices short break is set at 42 days to reduce to 28 is significant. Short breaks help prevent placement disruption. Carers should be able to have annual leave: they do not usually have sick leave. A reduction in short break for level 4 carers could impact on the health and wellbeing of the carer and then that have impact on the child.
2. Option 2 – 2 carers responded.
3. Option 3 – 4 carers responded. Comment - will draw new carers; I do not use short breaks but feel this is fair.
4. Option 2 or 3 – 3. I can't see a difference for application to short breaks. I don't have a preference.
5. The length of short break within the scheme being set at 28 days, with the option for more, subject to need, feels risky.
6. Happy with options – short breaks are important.
7. Not in favour of short breaks – don't feel I can offer a decision.
8. We go over 28 days.
9. I need further discussion.

Summary / points for clarification

- There have been a number of points for clarification relating to short breaks, within the questionnaire and as part of focus groups. Further exploration of these issues will be required prior to implementation of any change in the scheme, given the lack of sufficient detail in the proposal paper.
- The current financial arrangements within the existing scheme are both complicated and are not fair.
- Changes proposed are that fees will not be stopped when a carer takes a short break.
- It is further proposed that the process of “holiday” fees being repaid will cease. This will have impact on carers who do not use short breaks and is an issue that may have been missed within the process of consultation.
- In terms of fairness, currently fees for short breaks are only paid at level 1: it is proposed that the level of the carer is the level at which the short break will be paid.
- There are differences in the number of day's carers are entitled to depending on whether the carer is a Choices carer or not. Choices carers are entitled to up to 42 days short break; all others are entitled to 28 days short break.
- What is proposed in the paper is that all carers will be entitled to have up to 28 days short break.
- Given comments made and that short breaks are often the support that helps maintain a placement – the working group will reflect on the number days and consider benefits to carers and to the children in their care.

20. What impact do you consider either option 2 or option 3 will have on the numbers of children carers may be willing to care for?

1. I feel that option 3 will encourage people to take more children however this decision may be motivated more by financial gain than the ability to care for the children as in some cases they would have to take 3 children to maintain their current income.
2. It will be different for different families. It will not impact on us since we do not intend offering placement to another child: due to the level of needs of the children we currently have in permanence.
3. I feel that it will have little effect as carers will tend to fill any possible free place in their household.
4. If people are looking only at the financial side of this then they are in the wrong job.
5. I think carers will be encouraged to care for more children. Bigger rewards with more support if needed and with an increased support network from fellow carers.
6. Unsure. This would depend on the complexities of each case, predominately the level of resilience of the carer regardless of fee structure. We don't have staff change at home. Our health and wellbeing are paramount too.
7. It may help carers of sibling groups, especially of 3.
8. The discrepancies will put some off. Obviously there is always incentive with more money. More clarification needed.
9. Under option 2, I feel that fewer carers would be willing to provide care for multiple children if they are not being awarded a fee which recognises the extra work.
10. In option 3 carers would be more likely to care for 1 child and not for 2 or 3, given the increased work with more children. This is a full time job for most carers; 24 hrs a day; 7 days a week. Please recognise this.
11. Option 3 is financially more attractive. We don't think we or anyone else should have a pay cut.
12. It may make carers decide to reduce the number.

Summary / points for clarification

- The aims of the proposal are positioned at the outset of the document which sets out the options for the scheme. One of the intended outcomes is to ensure a competent, confident, committed pool of skilled foster carers another is to increase placement option for our most vulnerable children who present complex needs.
- The comments above reflect a range of views and considerations. Some are cautious about the impact on the numbers of children carers may feel equipped to offer care to and others reflect that carers do as much as they can, and will continue to do so.

- There is need to refresh the scheme given a number of external changes that should result in positive impact on our foster service.

21. Do you consider that change to the scheme may impact on you offering foster care?

4 fostering households responded YES
12 fostering household responded NO

22. Do you have a view on whether this might positively attract skilled foster carers?

7 fostering households responded YES
6 fostering household responded NO
3 fostering households - no comment /wait and see /it's a 24hr job so not sure.

23. Please rate your support for each proposed option

Rating 1-5-

1 being not in support of the proposal as outlined and 5 being very much in support

	1	2	3	4	5
Option 1	7	1	1	1	2
Option 2	2	1	3	5	2
Option 3	1		5	2	5

Summary / points for clarification

- 54% of the 13 who responded to Q23 of the questionnaire support equally options 2 and 3 based on pooling together “agree or strongly agree” which is the method that has been applied throughout, however the weight of support is with option 3.
- 3 of the 16 carers chose not to rate their support, noting: -
 - Pros and cons for each.
 - Specific situation of carer.
 - Suggestion for alternative fees – detailed above, questions 17, point 5.
- 1 of the 13 who chose to rate their support did not rate option 1.

24. Transition and implementation

To what extent do you agree that the proposed time frame is reasonable and appropriate?

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-No Opinion	4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree
	1	2	10	2

25. Any comments?

1. Worried that increased short break might be difficult to access, when it's most needed.
2. As everyone knows foster care is the most cost effective form of looking after children. Residential children's homes cost significantly more per child and yet the wages for foster carers are decreasing.
3. On a personal level I feel devalued, when we were advised of the change to holidays it was said flippantly that managers had looked at everyone's annual leave and since no one used it, it would be reduced by 14 days. The reduction of annual leave will have a significant impact on my life as due to the nature of respite caring I have to take Annual leave every time I am invited to a wedding, or have a night out or have to go and visit my aging parents. I have to book all time away as annual leave even if no one is booked in for respite. I always work with the full time carers to make sure that their holidays are accommodated first.
4. I have not submitted a claim for mileage for over a year as I felt this would help, in a small way, to reduce expenditure of the choices team.
5. The time scale which has been proposed seems to be realistic. My only fear would be the extra work load this may create for link workers and the impact this may have on their availability to their foster carers. Having said that all change takes time and effort. My fear would be that if a fostering family is having issues/communication concerns with a child's social worker it is the link worker who ends up picking up the slack. If their work load is increased and they are not as accessible this may impact upon the emotional well-being of your carers.
6. I don't feel that training and qualifying for an SVQ should be mandatory and that carers should have the option to obtain these qualifications where possible if they want to. They should however be recognised for any training completed. Fees could also be amended dependant on whether carers stay current for relevant training at their level. This would push all to take on further training and become even more proficient in their jobs and therefore giving better levels of care to Moray's children.
7. I strongly agree to the need for change – in my first 4/5 month as a level 1 carer I dealt with : -
Complex/ sexualised/ anxious behaviours.
Bed wetting.
I had no additional support or respite.

I was interviewed for / gave evidence in court.
I attended not only LAC reviews but child protection case conferences.
I gained an amazing number of skills and strategies.
I developed as an empathic carer.

At training I am happy to share my experiences.

8. Decisions will be made above my level – hopefully a majority agreement wins!
9. It seems to be a bigger thing and after attending a meeting a few people attended, 10 people filled forms in. Not everyone working together to get this finished – the implication being that this needs more time.
10. Two carers did not complete the questionnaire but said to their link worker that the consultation should not have been over the holiday period.
11. One of the two suggested a more diverse training package should be available, with the ability to choose their own training, with a budget from social work.

Summary/ point for clarification

- The issues raised in the points above have been referred to throughout this document which pulls together the returns from carers.
- All comments have been reflected within this document - some have been adjusted to take the theme rather than the detail of personal specific experiences.
- The survey taking place over the holiday period was an issue expressed specifically by 2 carers and may have been shared by others.

- In total 22 fostering households have been involved in the overall process: -
- Questionnaire – **16/52** returns.
- Supervision – **2** carers who did not complete questionnaires.
- Individual sessions for 2 carers – **1** carer did not complete a questionnaire.
- Feedback group to which 15 carers attended - **3** carers did not complete a questionnaire.
- Focus group - 4 carers attended, each completed a questionnaire.
- Total 22/ 52 households have been active in the process: 42%.

Our thanks to all and we will be seeking interest from carers willing to be part of the working group which will drill into the detail and create the delivery action plan and time line.

Thank you for completing the survey. If you have any questions or would like further information please contact your supervising social worker.