

To: Education and Children Policy Board

On: 17 January 2019

Report by: Director of Children's Services

**Heading: Annual Report of the Adoption and Fostering Panel 2017/18
Update on developments for Looked After Children and
Fostering Service**

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report refers to the 11th annual report of Renfrewshire's Fostering and Adoption Service.
 - 1.2 The Annual report sets out the work undertaken by the Fostering and Adoption Panel and the Fostering and Adoption Service in the year 2017/2018 and is set in the context of the broader issues pertaining to Looked After and Accommodated Children.
 - 1.3 The report also refers to the progress being made with the recruitment of Renfrewshire's foster carers and adopters.
 - 1.4 The report also considers the future work of the panel, the continued work of the fostering and adoption service and the start of the BeST Services Trial.
 - 1.5 This report also refers to the updated Partnership agreement, which is the agreement between foster carers and Renfrewshire Council.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Policy Board is asked to
 - a) note the contents of the Fostering and Adoption Annual Report 2017/18
 - b) note the continuing effort to secure foster carers and adoptive parents for Renfrewshire's children who require to an alternative family placement
 - c) note the continued progress of the BeST Services Trial in Renfrewshire
 - d) Approve the implementation of a new partnership agreement between Renfrewshire Council and its foster carers.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Regulations supporting the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 require Social Work in its role as a Fostering and Adoption agency to operate a Fostering Panel and an Adoption Panel. These panels have the responsibility for putting forward recommendations to the agency decision maker (Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice Services) regarding the suitability of people to adopt or foster children. Furthermore, the Adoption Panel considers and approves plans for children to be adopted or for the Council to apply for Permanence Orders. The Panel also considers and approves the matching of a particular child with a particular family where the plan is for the child to live there permanently.
- 3.2 Renfrewshire operates a Fostering Panel and an Adoption Panel; each with separate constitutions. The panels will often meet on the same day however each meeting separates out the Fostering panel business from the Adoption panel business to ensure that the appropriate regulations are met regarding a quorum, and for the attendance of the legal and medical adviser. From August 2016 we have had separate Social Work managers to chair the panel and manage the Service. This separation of roles allows for more arms length scrutiny by the panel chair.
- 3.3 There are currently 18 panel members comprising elected members, social work and education staff, a legal adviser, a medical adviser, carers, independent panel members, and an independent member from the Adoption and Fostering Alliance Scotland. The panel is chaired by either a Social Work Manager or the independent representative from Adoption and Fostering Alliance Scotland. It meets twice monthly. There are typically 3 panel members at each meeting along with appropriate advisors. The Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel considered 54 agenda items over the course of the year.
- 3.4 The panel has a unique overview of the work being undertaken to assess and approve foster carers and adopters alongside the work being undertaken by social workers to progress plans for children who cannot be cared for within their own family. The annual report has been produced as a means of sharing this work with a wider audience and to assist in the process of service planning.
- 3.5 Between 1/10/17 and 30/9/18 8 households attended preparation groups and 5 household subsequently applied to be assessed as foster carers. 2 households have since withdrawn. Renfrewshire had 84 active households of foster carers at 30th September 2018. In the period 1/10/17 and 30/9/18, an additional 3 households were registered as foster carers, and 4 foster care households left the service.
- 3.6 The report notes the ongoing need to recruit Renfrewshire foster carers and adopters because of children being accommodated and in need of permanent care, and our commitment to reducing the number of children being placed externally. This year we had a high profile recruitment campaign during fostering fortnight which resulted in a significantly higher number of initial enquiries from other years (35). Notwithstanding this high level of initial interest, this has resulted in a similar number of assessments of potential foster carers as in previous years.
- 3.7 In the period 1/10/17 and 30/9/18 a total of 6 Renfrewshire households were approved as adopters at the Renfrewshire panel.

- 3.8 The Fostering and Adoption services are subject to regulation and were inspected by the Care Inspectorate in May 2017. The Care Inspectorate reports were positive with gradings of 5 (very good) being applied to all domains inspected. The next Inspection will take place before May 2019.
- 3.9 The Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014 increases the responsibility/ duty of Local Authorities to provide continuing care placements for young adults up to the age of 21. This means that more young people are remaining in the same placement after they are 18. The service continues to assess foster carers to be supported carers wherever this is appropriate.
- 3.10 A report was presented to Board on the 1st November detailing the BeST service trial. This is about to commence. The aim of the trial is to learn how to best support the development and wellbeing of young children (under 60 months) who come into local authority care. The trial will compare two approaches: service as usual (i.e. usual parenting capacity assessment undertaken by our social work teams); and an evidence-based infant mental health intervention called 'GIFT'. The GIFT approach originated at the University of Tullane in New Orleans USA and uses a multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and social workers to assess and treat infants and their birth families. GIFT is delivered by the NSPCC.
- 3.11 Foster carers of children (who are selected at random for the GIFT assessment) will require to be heavily involved in this assessment and treatment programme. As such we have identified foster carers who are registered to take children of his age and briefed them on the trial and the GIFT model. It is hoped that this will start in January 2019.

4. Partnership agreement

- 4.1 When a new foster carer is approved by our Agency Decision maker as a foster carer for Renfrewshire Council, we ask them to sign a partnership agreement with us. This agreement describes the respective responsibilities and obligations placed upon the Council and upon its registered foster carers for children. Carers enter into this Partnership Agreement on a self-employed basis as is required by law.
- 4.2 We have updated the partnership agreement in response to new legislation and an updated complaints process.
- 4.3 Foster carers who have signed the previous agreement will have the choice to sign a new agreement with us or to remain under their previous partnership agreement.
- 4.4 Foster carers can request a short break without the child they are caring for. They will still receive a payment for this. For a single week break they receive full payment in respect of each child, and 50% for the second week, however there is no limit on the number of single weeks each carer can take.
- 4.5 We wish to change this so that when the carers take short breaks without the children they are caring for, full payment will be made in respect of each child, up to a maximum of fourteen days in any calendar year. Where carers take breaks without the children they are caring for, over and above fourteen days in any calendar year, NO payment will be made to the foster carers. This change means that when a carer takes a short break of a single week at two separate times or 2 weeks together they will receive the same payment. This will mean that when any carers take a short break without their foster child, they will be treated equally whether they take the weeks together or separately.

- 4.6 Where there is a Child Protection Investigation, and as a result any child has been removed from a foster carers care, a retainer of 50% of the weekly rate in respect of each child, will be paid for a period not exceeding three months. This is the current practice however has not previously been stated in the partnership agreement.
- 4.7 The partnership agreement has also been updated to reflect the complaints process as it applies to foster carers.

Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

None

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

None.

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

Children and Young
People

- The work of the adoption and fostering Service means our most vulnerable children and young people who require to be looked after away from home or permanent care are protected and safe

4. Legal Implications

None.

5. Property/Assets Implications

None.

6. Information Technology Implications

None.

7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.

8. Health and Safety Implications

None.

9. Procurement Implications

None.

10. Risk Implications

None.

11. Privacy Impact

None.

List of Background Papers

Children's Services

17 Jan 2019

Author: Clare Cuning Social Work Manager, clare.cuning@renfrewshire.gov.uk



THE FOSTERING PANEL

AND

THE ADOPTION PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

Foreword

Introduction

Context

- Accommodated and Looked After Children/Young People
- Cases Considered by the Fostering and Adoption Panels
- Panel membership
- Staffing
- Commitment to permanency planning
- Children Social Work statistics in Scotland 2017 – 2018

Report on the Fostering Service

- Development within the Fostering Service 2017 - 2018
- Inspection
- Recruitment activity
- Preparation Groups
- New foster carers and carers deregistration
- Foster carers reviews
- Foster carers training
- Foster carers support group
- Consultation group
- Break Through group
- Newsletter
- The BeST Services Trial
- Future development of fostering service 2017 -2018

Report of Supported Carers

Report on the Adoption and Permanence Service

- Development within the adoption service 2017 – 2018
- Inspection
- Recruitment of adoptive parents
- Adopters/Permanent foster carers
- Family finding
- Adoption Support Groups
- Adoption support
- Future development of the adoption service 2018 – 2019

Conclusion

Foreword

Welcome to the annual report of The Fostering and Adoption Service. This report has been jointly compiled by the Chair of the Fostering and Adoption Panel and the Social Work Manager for the Fostering and Adoption Service and takes both a retrospective look at the previous year as well as looking to the future.

As at the 30th September 2018 Renfrewshire Council had 645 'Looked After' Children. Of these 227 were looked after at home, 178 were looked after by friends/relatives and 240 were accommodated with foster carers or within different residential placements.

A significant number of the 240 children looked after in foster care/residential care will be unable to return home to with birth parents or to live with relatives. The work of the Fostering and Adoption service is vital in ensuring that children are placed appropriately and safely and that children who require permanent placements out with their families are moved to an appropriate household at the earliest opportunity.

The Panel provides an important quality assurance role in ensuring that the work undertaken to assess children's long term care needs and the assessment of their potential carers is carried out to the highest standards. Their role is to make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who ultimately approves children's permanence plans or confirms that a household can adopt or become foster carers.

The Panel continues to be busy. From the 1st October 2017 to the 30th September 2018, 19 children's permanence plans were approved by the Agency Decision Maker. This is a slight decrease from the same period in 2016/ 2017 when 22 children's permanence plans were approved

In recent years the fostering service has made progress in recruiting foster carers and we have successfully shifted the balance of placements from external to internal foster placements. On 30.09.18 there were 121 children with Renfrewshire foster carers as opposed to 132 in year 2016/2017 and 61 children in external fostering agency placements as opposed to 76 in 2016/2017. These figures demonstrate the continuing upward trend of children living with Renfrewshire foster carers.

Peter Macleod
Director of Children's Services

Introduction

This is the annual report of Renfrewshire Council's Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel.

The purpose of the Panels is to consider applicants who wish to be foster carers, adopters or supported carers and to consider individual children's needs for alternative permanent carers (i.e. where the care plan for the child is that they do not return home to their birth family), this includes considering the most appropriate legal action to secure this. The Panel also consider the matching of a child with specific foster carers or adoptive carers to ensure that these are of a consistently high standard. The Panel will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.

With increasing numbers of children unable to return to their birth families activity within the fostering and adoption team continues to be high and the recruitment of foster carers and adopters continues to be a prime objective. The number of children unable to return home to live with birth families continues to increase and this is reflected in the amount of permanence planning work within the social work area teams. For many of the children involved in the permanency planning process their journey will have started with child protection procedures which resulted in them becoming accommodated.

The Fostering service and the Adoption service continue to be inspected by the regulatory body, the Care Inspectorate. Their most recent Inspection took place in May 2017 where all aspects of service delivery in both the Fostering and Adoption Service remained assessed as Grade 5 which is 'very good' across all domains inspected.

Included in the annual report are some of the business aspects of the panel and the types of cases considered by the Panel. It is intended that by producing an Annual report the work of the Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel will be transparent and that this accountability will lead to improved services.

Context

The work of the Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel needs to be viewed in the context of the numbers of Looked After and Accommodated children.

Accommodated and Looked After Children/Young People

As of 30th September 2018, Renfrewshire Council had 645 Looked After Children/Young People, compared to 666 as at 30th September 2017.

	30.9.17	30.9.18
Independent Sector-Children - Foster Care	76	61
Local Authority-Children - Foster Care	132	121
Local Authority-Children – Houses	26	28
Independent Sector-Children - Residential Schools	6	11
Independent Sector-Children - Residential Special Needs	4	2
Pre-adoption	13	10
Independent Sector-Children - Secure School	1	1
Independent Sector-Children - Residential Unit	5	6
Children looked after by kinship carers/friends/relatives	173	178
Children looked after at home	230	227
Total	666	645

Cases Considered by the Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel

Below is a breakdown of the items considered by the Panels between 1.10.17 – 30.9.18

Business Item	Number	Comments
Child adoption plans and links	16	This figure included 2 sibling groups of 2
Approval of Renfrewshire adopters (households)	6	6 domestic adopters
Review of Registration (adoption)	2	
Permanent fostering plan- Legal routes	3	
Approval of Renfrewshire foster carers (households)	3	3 interim fostering households
Deregistration of foster carer	4	1 fostering household retired 1 fostering household resigned due to personal circumstances 2 fostering households resigned with the recommendation to deregister
Approval of supported carers (households)	8	
Initial review of foster carer after their 1 st year	1	
Review of foster carers registration – due to change in registration/circumstances	6	
3 rd year review of foster carers registration	5	

Panel Membership

We are fortunate to have a consistent and committed panel membership over the past year; we have recruited 5 new panel members, 3 of whom are new elected members. Panel membership continues to reflect a good range of experience and expertise, from social work, education, health and voluntary sector. The Panel continues to be well supported by adopters, foster carers and elected members. The Adoption and Fostering Alliance Scotland also continue to provide an independent panel member. AFA Scotland continues to offer vital support, training and consultancy to practitioners.

Our medical advisers continue to offer a valuable service and support to the panel in respect of provision of information in relation to the children and adults being presented to panel.

We also have ongoing representation from Renfrewshire Council Legal Service who provide written legal advice to the Panel in relation to adoption and permanence work, as well as attending the Panel to provide legal advice as required.

Renfrewshire Council Fostering and Adoption Panel held their AGM on 07.08.18. Panel members were given an update on panel activity, panel members were asked for feedback on the quality of reports presented to the panel and there was an input on adoption support work with birth families.

Panel members are invited to attend annual appraisal meetings with the panel chair and panel advisor. Feedback from panel members is gathered from this meeting and ideas generated are incorporated into the business meeting agenda for consideration.

Staffing

The structure of the Fostering and Adoption Service is: -

Social Work Manager (Operations) (also has responsibility for the kinship care service and the pre and post birth team).

Service Manager (responsible for operational management of the fostering and adoption service).

1 senior social worker (responsible for adoption and permanence service, and management of staff)

1 senior social worker (responsible for the fostering service and management of staff)

8 full time social workers (1 post about to be filled following a staff retirement)

2 job-share social workers

1 part-time social work assistant.

The fostering and adoption Service was restructured in 2016. The Service now has a separate fostering team and an adoption and permanence team. This was in order to develop more specialist skills regarding fostering and adoption.

Commitment to permanence planning

Between 01.10.17 and 30.09.18 Renfrewshire has progressed adoption and permanence plans for 19 children. Renfrewshire Council recognises the importance in progressing plans for children within appropriate time scales. There are a number of initiatives being implemented by senior management to support and enable social work staff involved in permanence work to undertake both the direct work with the child and family and the necessary reports. These initiatives include training for social workers and carers on issues specifically relevant to permanence and working closely with social work staff with regards to the needs of the child and planning for adoption or permanency.

Making the decision to place a child permanently out with their birth family involves a high level of assessment and scrutiny. Throughout the process checks and balances are in place to ensure the best possible outcome for the child. Permanence planning work is complex, however it is also highly rewarding when children find new families to care for them throughout their childhood and into young adulthood.

Children Social Work statistics in Scotland 2016/2017

The following is taken from the most up to date Children's Social Work statistics in Scotland 2016/2017:

The following data is on children looked after during the period from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017. This will be referred to as 2017 for ease of reporting (with 2015-16 referred to as 2016 and so on).

At 31 July 2017, there were 14,897 looked after children in Scotland- a decrease of 420 (around 3%) from 2016. This is the fifth consecutive year the numbers have decreased following a peak of 16,248 in 2012. The number of children ceasing to be looked after each year has been consistently more than the numbers becoming looked after, although both numbers have also been declining - see main tables 1.3 and 1.4.

There are several types of care setting in which looked after children or young people could be looked after, including at home (where a child is subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order and continues to live in their normal place of residence), foster care, residential unit or school, a secure unit, with prospective adopters, or in kinship care (where they are placed with friends or relatives).

Table 1.1 and Chart 1 show there is a continued decreasing trend in children being looked after at home with this group accounting for only 25% of the total in 2017 compared to 43% in 2007. Increasing numbers of children are being looked after away from home in community settings, with foster carers (36% of the total). The growing trend is in children living in kinship care. Children living in residential care settings have been static over recent years at around 10% of the overall total.

Table 1.1: Number of children looked after by type of accommodation ⁽¹⁾

	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
In the community	12,399	13,840	13,388	88	90	90	
At home with parents	5,986	3,870	3,766	43	25	25	
With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	2,094	4,279	4,138	15	28	28	
With Foster Carers provided by LA	3,629	3,826	3,509	26	25	24	
With Foster Carers purchased by LA	426	1,566	1,743	3	10	12	
With prospective adopters	220	251	197	2	2	1	
In other community ⁽²⁾	44	48	35	0	0	0	
Residential Accommodation	1,661	1,477	1,509	12	10	10	
In local authority home	756	581	619	5	4	4	
In voluntary home	112	136	127	1	1	1	
In residential school	628	376	375	4	2	3	
In secure accommodation	113	60	56	1	0	0	
Crisis care	-	7	0	-	0	0	
In other residential ⁽³⁾	52	317	332	0	2	2	
Total looked after children	14,060	15,317	14,897	100	100	100	

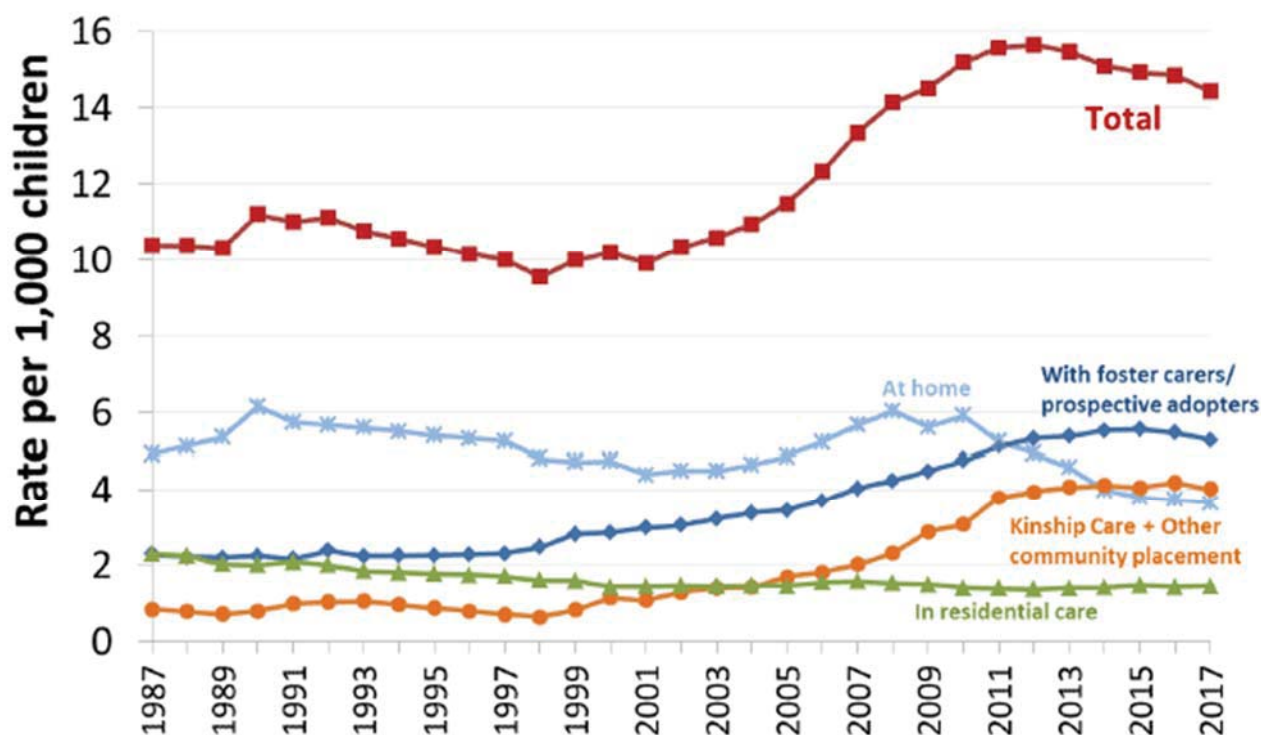
(1) Information on the number of children looked after by accommodation type is available back to 1971 in main table 1.1a of the spreadsheet version of the associated downloadable publication tables:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

(2) 'In other community' is a category that captures those people in community placements outside those listed, such as supported accommodation.

(3) The bulk of the 'other residential' placements are private/independent residential placements for young people with complex needs.

Chart 1: Children looked after per 1,000 children under 18 by type of accommodation, 1987-2017









Children starting and ceasing to be looked after

The reduction in total numbers being looked after is because more children are ending being looked after than starting. A child will be counted more than once in each set of figures if they have started being looked after and/or ceased being looked after more than once during the reporting year.

As shown in table 1.3, 4,186 episodes of care began between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017. Table 1.3 shows a 2% increase from 2016 and a 20% decrease from 2007.

Table 1.3: Number of children starting to be looked after by age ⁽¹⁾

	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Under 1	412	658	647	8	16	15	
1-4	1,157	916	972	22	22	23	
5-11	1,513	1,321	1,287	29	32	31	
12-15	1,878	1,175	1,191	36	29	28	
16-17	274	41	85	5	1	2	
18-21 ⁽²⁾	11	5	4	0	0	0	
Total	5,245	4,116	4,186	100	100	100	

(1) Table excludes planned series of short term placements.

(2) The 18-21 category in this table may include a small number of looked after young people who were over 21 years.







Table 1.3 also shows that over the last 10 years children have started episodes of care at younger ages. In 2007, 30% of children starting episodes of care were under five years of age. By 2017 this had risen to 39%, although this is a decline from a peak of 41% in 2014. A large proportion of the under-five group are the under-one year olds, and the numbers in this youngest group have increased by 57% since 2007, but have declined slightly since 2014. There has also been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of children aged 12-17 starting episodes of care since 2006.

There were slightly more boys than girls starting episodes of care in 2017 - 54% boys compared to 46% girls (Scotland's Census 2011 showed that the general population was 51% boys aged under 18). The number of boys starting episodes of care has been steady in recent years while the number of girls has been falling until this year, as shown in the spreadsheet version of main table 1.3. The trend reflects a long-term gender split where boys make up around 54% of children starting episodes of care.

Table 1.4 shows the number of children who ceased episodes of care by length of time looked after. There were 4,274 children who ceased episodes of care between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017, an increase of 1% from 2016.

The total length of time children were looked after remained similar between 2016 and 2017. However, in the longer-term, there are more children being looked after for more than five years, and fewer looked after for only a period of weeks. This is in line with the policy that children should remain looked after until a permanent placement is found.








Table 1.4: Number of children ceasing to be looked after, by length of time looked after
(1)

	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Under 6 weeks	398	292	235	10	7	5	
6 weeks to under 6 months	471	355	337	11	8	8	
6 months to under 1 year	805	581	594	19	14	14	
1 year to under 3 years	1,515	1,582	1,521	37	37	36	
3 years to under 5 years	569	661	658	14	16	15	
5 years and over	386	752	929	9	18	22	
Total	4,144	4,223	4,274	100	100	100	

(1) Excludes children who are on a planned series of short term placements. If a child ceases to be looked after more than once during the year they will be counted more than once.

Just as children are starting to be looked after at a younger age over the longer-term, children are also ceasing to be looked after at younger ages. The number of children ceasing to be looked after who were under the age of 12 was 42% in 2007 and is now 50%. However, most of the change occurred around 2010 and has seen little variation since. Fuller information can be found in the additional tables in AT1.12.

Table 1.5: Number of children ceasing to be looked after by destination (1)(3)

Destination after leaving care	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Home with (biological) parents	2,155	2,573	2,326	52%	61%	54%	
Friends / relatives	362	656	877	9%	16%	21%	
Former foster carers	17	104	123	0%	2%	3%	
Adoption	133	341	367	3%	8%	9%	
Supported accommodation / own tenancy	206	270	283	5%	6%	7%	
Other ⁽²⁾	532	204	285	13%	5%	7%	
Not known	739	75	13	18%	2%	0%	
Total	4,144	4,223	4,274	100	100	100	

(1) Table excludes planned series of short term placements. A child may cease to be looked after more than once during the year and will be counted once for each episode of care ending. Some totals do not exactly equal the sum of their component parts due to the effects of rounding.

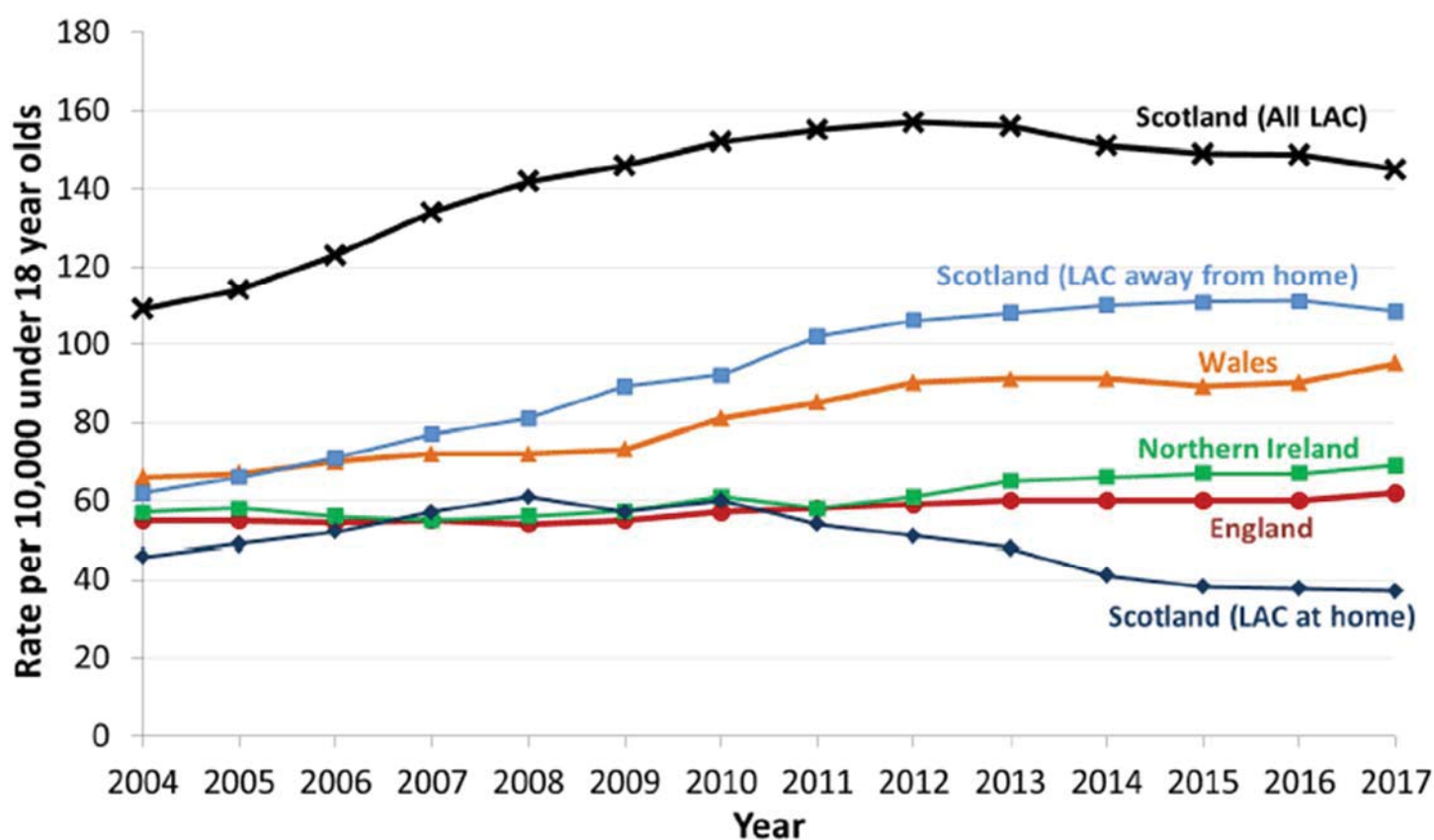
(2) "Other" includes residential care, homeless, in custody and other destination.

(3) Numbers from 2007 are not directly comparable to 2017 due to the large number of not

known cases in that year. Not known cases in 2007 were from local authorities who did not provide data.

When a child ceases being looked after, a destination category is recorded (Table 1.5). Most children (54% in 2017) go home to their biological parents and 21% go to live in kinship care with friends or relatives. The percentage leaving care that go home has fallen consistently over the last five years. There is a long term increase in the number of children leaving care due to being adopted, and although the proportion of adoptions decreased slightly between 2014 and 2015, they increased to their highest level of 9% in 2017. Most of adoptions (72%) are of children aged under five years old. There is a much more even spread of ages of young people leaving care to go home or to live with friends and relatives. There has been an improvement in data quality over the past five years, as shown by the large decrease of the 'Not known' category in Table 1.5.

Chart 2: Cross- UK comparison of rate of looked after children per 10,000 children, 2004-2017



REPORT ON THE FOSTERING SERVICE

As of the 30.9.18 we had 84 fostering households, this included permanent foster carers, interim foster carers and short break foster carers.

Developments within the Fostering Service 2017 – 2018

- A recruitment campaign was developed for Fostering Fortnight in May 2018, where the use of local media, social media and articles from our foster carers.
- We have continued to encourage participation with foster carers on their training needs
- We have developed evening training programmes so that both carers in a household can attend, given some carers work.
- We have continued to develop foster children's participation in foster carers reviews by encouraging the use of "my view" to represent their views.
- Service manager continues to audit the forms used to assessment foster carers (Form F) and the forms used to match the children (Form E).
- Children in foster care continue to be involved in participation strategies through our own Break Through group, Who Cares? Scotland and the Champions Board.
- The Managers within the Fostering Service continue to attend Social Work Scotland meetings and liaise with neighbouring authorities.
- We have raise the profile of the fostering team to ensure locality teams have a clear and understanding of the work undertaken to develop the service and to ensure better outcomes for the children referred and placed in foster care.
- We have made use of questions from young people in foster care when interviewing for a social worker for the fostering team.

Inspection

The Fostering and Adoption Service has not been inspected since the last Board Report. The grades were 5's (very good) across all domains. The service is due to be inspected before May 2019.

Recruitment activity 1.10.17 – 30.9.18

During Fostering Fortnight, May 2018, our service was visible through Renfo, social media and the local media. The fostering service had an information table within the atrium at Renfrewshire Council HQ and the Lagoon leisure centre.

The fostering information pack was updated

From 1.10.17 to 30.9.18 we received 35 initial enquiries in relation to fostering, however, many the enquiries could not proceed due to lack of a spare bedroom, health issues, police involvement or other issues.

Should the enquiry go further an initial visit is completed by a social worker from the fostering team. After the initial visit a discussion takes place between the visiting social worker and the senior social worker to consider whether the enquirers should be invited to preparation groups. Enquirers would then be advised of the date for next preparation group. (see appendix 1 for fostering criteria). Applications to be assessed as a foster carer are not completed by applicants until after they have completed the preparation groups.

Preparation groups

Between 1.10.17 – 30.9.18 we held 2 sets of preparation groups for fostering, one in February and the second one in July. 8 households attended and this resulted in 5 fostering applications. Two applicants have since withdrawn from the assessment process due to personal circumstances.

Preparation groups run for two day sessions, plus one 2 hour session. The facilitators from the fostering team make use of the Fostering Network 'Skills to Foster' materials, as well as up to date research and our own recently developed training materials. Our social workers are skilled at leading these groups and current foster carers provide input regarding their experiences. There is also input by the senior social worker/service manager at the final session.

The groups are the start of the assessment process and an opportunity for the participants to receive more in depth information and discussion about the implications of fostering; as such it is important that all enquirers attend. Experienced foster carers come along to talk to the group about their different experiences of caring for foster children.

The preparation groups cover a range of topics including managing challenging behaviour, brain development, attachment issues, safer care and working with birth parents. Participants are asked to give written feedback on each of the sessions and on any issues that the discussions may have raised for them. At the end of the preparation groups the workers leading the group will also complete written reports on each of the participants and their contributions over the previous weeks. They will also highlight areas of concern or where further consideration may be necessary regarding the participants suitability to proceed to the formal application and assessment stage.

New foster carers and carer de-registrations

In the period 1.10.17 – 30.9.18 an additional 3 interim fostering households were approved.

4 fostering households were deregistered between 1.10.17 – 30.9.18. One fostering household was deregistered due to retirement; 2 fostering household resigned with the recommendation to deregister due to issues which raised concerns; 1 fostering household resigned due to a change in their personal circumstances.

Research completed by The Fostering Network stated that within Scotland on 31.12.17

- 5,252 children were living with foster families on 31 December 2017.
- This is three-quarters (75%) of 6,993 children in care looked after away from home and family.
- There are approximately 4,000 foster families in Scotland.
- The Fostering Network estimates that fostering services need to recruit a further 550 foster families nationally in the next 12 months.

The recruitment of foster carers within Renfrewshire has continued to increase gradually, however due to retirement and other issues resulting in deregistration the number of foster carers at any time has remained fairly static.

Within Renfrewshire we have become less dependent on the independent and voluntary fostering agencies. On 30.9.18 there were 121 children/young people with Renfrewshire foster carers and 61 children/young people in external fostering agency placements compared to 30.9.17 when we had 132 children/young people with Renfrewshire foster carers and 76 children/young people in external fostering agency placements. These figures demonstrate the continuing commitment of placing children with Renfrewshire Council foster carers and the continual commitment of the locality teams, Paisley, Johnstone and Renfrew, to keep families together.

The Fostering Network have indicated that without more foster families coming forward during 2018, and especially those who could foster teenagers and sibling groups, some children will find themselves living a long way from their family, school and friends, and being split up from brothers and sisters, or being placed with a foster carer who might not have the skills and experience to meet their specific needs. More fostering families means that a fostering service can match the needs of each child more closely with the skills and experience that each foster carer brings, allowing local authorities to find the right home for each child, first time, and to improve the stability for foster children

As of 30.9.18 we had 12 sets of sibling groups living apart. This is to do with the availability of foster carers, the needs of the different children and the size of the sibling groups. Of the 12 sibling groups living apart 6 of the sibling groups are sibling groups of 3 plus.

In December 2014 the Scottish Parliament passed an amendment to the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 to introduce placement limits to foster carer households. The limit described was for a maximum of three unrelated children in a fostering household. Birth and adopted children in the household are not included.

Foster carer reviews

New Foster carers are reviewed by the Fostering Panel at the end of their first year and every three years thereafter. Foster carers will also return to Panel if their registration is to be reviewed with regards to a change in registration. Between 1.10.17 and 30.9.18 the Fostering and Adoption Panel reviewed 1 fostering household after their first year and 5 after their fourth year. This is an opportunity for foster carers to talk about their experience, training and support etc. The majority of Renfrewshire Council's foster carers expressed satisfaction with their experiences of fostering and their learning, with most remaining enthusiastic and committed. They have found the support provided by their social worker to be beneficial and available as required, as well as finding the training offered informative and beneficial to the fostering task.

Foster carers are also internally reviewed on an annual basis, by Social Work Managers. The foster carers provide written as well as verbal contribution to the review process, as well as written reports by their birth children. Reports by their supervising social worker and child's social worker are all part of the review process. Foster children are encouraged to contribute to the review process. We are continuing to address the use of my view, electronic review form, for foster children to complete for foster carers reviews.

Social Workers from the fostering team visit carers on a regular basis to carry out supervision as well as performing a range of duties including ensuring health and safety checks are carried out annually, annual medical information is received and PVG checks are up to date.

Safer caring policies are in place for each fostering household which ensure a minimum of two unannounced visits are carried out annually. Supervising Social Workers will also attend Looked After Children review meetings and Children's Hearings with the carers. Joint visits by the child's social worker and the social worker from the fostering team takes places when a new placement is established and routinely thereafter.

Foster carer training

The National Foster Care Review (2013) highlighted the importance of ensuring foster carers receive opportunities to learn about different ways to support children and young people and to develop their awareness, knowledge and understanding about the foster carer role. In response, the Scottish Government asked the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to develop a framework for learning, the Standard for Foster Carers (April 2017), which applies to all foster carers and foster care organisations in Scotland. The Standard describes learning expectations for foster carers at different learning stages. The Standard has been developed to establish a framework for the learning foster carers need to undertake for the foster carer role, and to support a realistic level of standardisation and consistency in the ways learning is provided and used.

The foundation for the Standard is a parallel vision of learning designed to ensure foster carers are receiving appropriate learning opportunities to help them cope with the increasingly complex needs of the children and young people in their care.

The post of training and development officer for the Fostering and Adoption Service has continued to be very beneficial in the development of our foster carers learning while acknowledging foster carers individual learning needs and experience. This includes a programme of training approved foster carers which is directed at developing foster carers skills and appropriate to their age range of approval. This includes child protection, children affected by parental substance misuse, attachment and trauma, safer caring, theraplay, internet safety transitions etc. The core programme for training is divided into 3 different pathways depending on the foster carers experience and learning from previous pathways, as well as standalone modules. There are also stand alone modules which can change according to specific learning needs of foster carers. (see appendix 2).

We also provide mandatory training on fire safety, first aid and safer caring. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service provides training on fire safety and the West of Scotland College, Paisley campus, provides first aid training. Mandatory training has to be updated every three years.

Foster carers are encouraged to discuss with their supervising social worker any specific training needs, as well as the supervising social worker identifying gaps in the carers development. Over the past year the Fostering Team has developed evening training for the support carers of foster carers and foster carers who find it difficult to attend training during the day.

Social workers and foster carers also have the opportunity to attend external training courses. The Fostering Network and AFA has provided training to new social workers within the Fostering and Adoption Team including such training as Skills to Foster, the Role of the Supervising Social Worker and assessment of foster carers and adopters. Foster carers, adopters and supervising social workers have also attended external conferences such as the role of men in Fostering, and workshops provided by AFA on relevant topics.

Foster Carers Support Group

Our foster carers continue to organise a support group which meets fortnightly. This has now been up and running for over five years. The group is an informal support group where foster carers can drop in as they wish; issues raised within the group are fed back to the fostering team via the carers supervising social worker or the foster carers consultation group.

Consultation Group

The service consults regularly with foster carers on a range of issues. All Foster Carers are invited to attend the Carers Consultation Group which now meets every four months. This provides an opportunity for foster carers to be kept updated with any changes within the service and discuss any issue that has arisen for them or other carers. A development from the consultation group was for the senior social worker for fostering to meet with a member of the support group on a monthly basis in order to have contact regarding any issues on a regular basis.

The Registered Manager and Service Manager invite foster carers to meet with them twice a year, through the consultation group. This is forum for foster carers to raise issues and for the Registered Manager and Service Manager to consult with foster carers.

Breakthrough Group

The Breakthrough Newsletter group is now in its 3rd year. This is a participation group for children and young people in foster care. This is a co-facilitated group, run in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland. The attendees of this group create a newsletter written by children and young people in foster care for children and young people in foster care. They have 10 children and young people who attend the group, whose ages range from 9 years to 15 years.

They meet monthly at St. James Centre in Paisley. The newsletters are completed on the whole by the children and young people themselves. They decide upon the content of the newsletter and are responsible for writing their own stories, jokes and research into the subject topics. Some are also developing computer skills and are responsible for collating the stories and arranging them in a newsletter format

This year our topics have included Children's Hearings, children's rights, advocacy and internet safety. Their current edition is concentrating more on sports and hobbies in the Renfrewshire area.

As part of the research into each subject area, some of the young people have interviewed a local Reporter, a Panel member and a local Police Officer. They are hoping to set up an interview with Mark Tokeley the Leisure Operations and Development Officer in relation to their current sports edition.

After the completion of each newsletter they incorporate an activity or outing for the children and young people. They have been trampolining, visited the Safari Park and had a Christmas meal at Frankie and Benny's. Their Christmas outing is still under discussion and given the current topic of sports and hobbies they are hoping to come up with something indoor sports related.

Newsletter

The quarterly newsletter continues to go out to all fostering households. Foster carers are encouraged to contribute to the newsletter in relation to their learning or experiences.

The Best Services Trial

Renfrewshire Children's Services have joined the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Infancy and Family Team (GIFT) in their Best Services Trial. Preparations are well under way with a proposed start date in December 2018.

Best services trial is a randomised controlled trial comparing an infant mental health service (GIFT) based on the New Orleans Intervention Model (NIM), with social work services as usual. It aims to find out what is the best service for young abused or neglected pre-school children coming into foster care and which approach is the most cost-effective. The trial is being led by Glasgow University and the principal investigator is Professor Helen Minnis, a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

All children selected for either group will be assessed, to recommend whether being at home safely with their family can be supported or whether alternative permanence options require to be considered. Parental consent will be sought for every child considered for the trial. The trial will start in December 2018 and run until 2021.

In the service we have identified foster carers who are registered to take children of this age and those that are likely to have a child in the trial and Professor Helen Minnis has briefed these carers.

Future developments of the fostering service 2017 -2018

1. To continue to recruitment foster carers for children aged 10 – 18 years and children with disabilities.
2. Ensure that foster carers have the capacity to care for children 10 – 18 and children with disabilities through training and development.
3. To continue to develop participation of young people in foster carers reviews – to encourage and support young people with the use of my view in relation to foster carers reviews.
4. To continue to work with neighboring authorities regarding shared services.
5. To review participation policy for foster carers
6. To support the Breakthrough Group in relation to increasing their membership.
7. To consult with children/young people of foster carers in relation to future support, groups etc.
8. To review the partnership agreement which is the agreement signed by Renfrewshire Council and the foster carers once they have been approved as Renfrewshire Council Foster Carers.

9. To take part in the Best Trial.

REPORT ON SUPPORTED CARERS SERVICE

Supported carers

Support carers are carers who look after young adults who have left care. Frequently they are the previous foster carer of the child. Supported carer assessments are completed by Renfrewshire's Throughcare Service and are presented to Renfrewshire Council's Fostering Panel. Within the period 1.10.17 to 30.9.18 the Fostering Panel has approved 8 supported carers, 6 of whom were foster carers from independent agencies and 2 were foster carers for Renfrewshire Council.

All young adults whose plan is presented at the Fostering Panel have Pathway Plans completed and a Throughcare Worker allocated to them. The outcome for young adults involved in the Supported Carers Service is reported to the Scottish Government twice a year. The following information highlights that this is a successful service for young people.

There are 22 young adults in supported carer placements at present. 19 of these young adults are in positive destinations: 4 are at university, 6 are at college, 9 are working. The remaining 3 young adults are unemployed/being supported to look for education/training or employment.

REPORT ON THE ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE SERVICE

Developments within the adoption service 2017- 2018

1. Ongoing development of training for adopters, and consultation with adopters regarding appropriate training.
2. Ongoing development of the adoption support group.
3. Development of support to birth parents with regards to understanding the plan for their child, and supporting a birth parent with letter box contact.
4. Development of a training programme regarding adoption support plans.
5. Continued referrals to Scottish Adoption Support Services (SAAS - Barnardos) for young people, birth parents and adopters requiring additional support, were appropriate
6. Developed feedback from Panel Members in relation quality of reports and presentation of social workers as part of the quality assurance process.
7. Continued work with Scottish Adoption Register/Link maker. This has included involvement with research programmes such as Moving Images (the use of DVD presentation on children where plans have been agreed for adoption).
8. Continued partnership work with our neighboring authorities, including practice forums.

9. Continued recruitment of new Fostering and Adoption Panel members.

Inspection

The Adoption Service has not been inspected since the last Board Report. The last inspection report graded us at 5's (very good) across all domains. The service is due to be inspected before May 2019.

Recruitment of Adoptive Parents

There continues to be a need for both adoptive carers and permanent foster carers for children of all ages who meet our adoption criteria (appendix 3). Nationally there is recognition that more adopters are also required for sibling groups and older children.

From 1.10.17 to 30.9.18 there had been 24 initial enquiries with regards to adoption, initial enquires do not always result in attendance at preparation groups, and some are counselled out due to health reasons, or no spare bedroom or other reasons. There have been 2 adoption preparation groups within Renfrewshire, a total of 9 households attended from which we received 7 applications for adoption. Of the 7 applications 3 were received from our current foster carers who wish to adopt the child in their care. Also of the 7 applications 1 household started the assessment and after a short period decided adoption was not for them due to personal circumstances, we are still awaiting 1 application to be returned.

Renfrewshire Council's adoption service has made good use of the Scottish Adoption Register/Link maker. Between 1.10.17 and 30.9.18 we referred 6 adopter households to the adoption register/link maker, while several our adopters also attended adoption exchange and activity days.

Statistics from the Adoption Register Annual Report indicated that 178 adopters were referred to the Register in 2017-18, a slight increase from 175 the previous year. This figure was made of 56% from 28 local authorities within Scotland, 44% from 4 Scottish Voluntary Agencies. There were no referrals for adopter's out-with Scotland via the inter-register protocol.

95% of the 178 adopters referred in 2017/2018 were of Caucasian ethnicity with 6 adopters (individuals) from an Asian background; 5 from a mixed or multi ethnic background and 2 from Black African background. 1 adopter was of Chinese ethnicity.

The adoption service were involved in different recruitment activities during Adoption Week, 20.11.17 to 26.11.17, an information table at the atrium within Renfrewshire House, Renfrewshire Council's HQ and an information session for adopters being facilitated by Adoption UK and AFA in Glasgow on 22.11.17. We had a celebration of adoption on 25.11.17 in Johnstone Town Hall which was very well attended by adopters and their children. This year Adoption week takes place between 19.11.18 to 25.11.18 and plans are progressing around Renfrewshire's involvement Adoption Week.

Recruitment of permanent foster carers has over the years evolved from interim foster carers claiming the child in their care.

Adopters/Permanent Foster Carers

In the period between 1.10.17 to 30.9.18 6 households were recommended for approval as adopters.

We had no permanent fostering households approved in the period between 1.10.17 to 30.9.18.

Family Finding

During the period 1.10.17– 30.9.18 16 children were presented to the Adoption Panel for consideration of their adoption plans and links. In all cases the Agency Decision Maker accepted the panel's recommendations to approve the adoption plan and links.

Also during this period 3 plans for Permanence Orders were presented to the Adoption Panel, this was for 3 siblings, all in different foster placements with different needs.

Renfrewshire Council make good use of the Scottish Adoption Register by way of Linkmaker, Adoption Exchange days and Adoption Activity Days. The Scottish Government's GIRFEC strategy for Looked After Children and Young People (November 2015) identifies the achievement of 'early permanence' as one of its key strategic priorities. Legislation and guidance introduced in 2016 support that goal, and reinforced the role of the Adoption Register for the relatively small number of children who are unable to stay with their own family and require an adoptive placement.

9 children were also referred to the Scottish Adoption Register /Link maker.

A number of children's profiles were at presented adoption exchange days, and through Link maker and the exchange days a number of positive links were made for both the children and the adopters.

Statistics from the Adoption Register Annual Report indicated that 190 children were referred to Scotland's Adoption Register/Link maker 2017/2018. Of the 190 children referred this year 64% were boys continuing the pattern established in the previous years of more boys than girls being referred – 58% were boys in 2016-2017.

Of the 190 children referred 95% were of White Scottish ethnicity. 4% were of multi ethnic origin and 1% were of Black African ethnicity background.

Last year 59 of the 96 children matched by the Adoption Register were found adoptive families via Link maker. 7 of these 59 children had waited a year or more for a placement. A number of issues appear to correlate with a longer wait for a match, including:

- a. Over a quarter of this group had direct contact with parents or other relatives
- b. 57% of the children made up two sibling groups who were older – 1 sibling group comprised of an 11 and 10 year old.

44% of referrals to the Adoption Register were for sibling groups, which was 10% higher than the previous year. Within Renfrewshire we approved adoption plans and linked two sets of sibling groups with prospective adopters through the Scottish Adoption Register.

We have participated in two Adoption Exchange days between 1.10.16 to 30.9.17 and have presented 9 children which included 3 sibling groups. From both these days we have had 5 possible links, including 2 of the sibling groups of 2. There is a further exchange day in November.

Renfrewshire Council Adoption service continues to work closely with Inverclyde Council, East Renfrewshire Council, West Dunbartonshire and East Dunbartonshire. Meetings are held every three months to look at working together in sharing resources such as planning adoption

preparation groups together, linking children with each other's adopters, recruitment and training. We have jointly provided 1 practice forum to our staff groups this year this was on the Adoption Register. This session was well attended. There is another practice forum planned for November 2018.

Adoption Support Group

The adoption support group has continued to develop over the past year. The group varies between a drop in facility which the children can also attend with play activities available to the children, while their parents talk with other adopters and staff, to a training event for adopters only.

For the majority of adopters who attend the group the main benefits are meeting other adopters in similar situations and hearing about strategies and tips for managing different situations. The group has also been the starting point for the development of friendships and informal supports.

There are approx 20 adoptive families who have attended the Support Group regularly over the past year and their feedback has been very positive.

Adoption Support

Throughout the year the adoption team have provided adoption support on an individual basis to adoptive families who have approached the service for support. The service has worked with 11 families.

Over the past year we have provided training to adopters, including theraplay, sexual health and relationships and a "telling a child about their adoption" workshop. All 3 training events were well attended with very positive feedback.

Throughout this year we have developed work with birth parents of children where the plan has been agreed that adoption should be pursued. As of 30.9.18 we had offered/provided support to 4 birth parents with regards to supporting them to write a letter to their child, putting photographs together for the child and assisting the parent to understand the adoption process. This will be a key area of development over the next year.

Future developments of the adoption service – 2018 -2019

Over the next year we intend to strengthen our adoption service by looking at;

1. Continuing the recruitment of new adopters
2. Continue to recruit new Fostering and Adoption Panel Members
3. To continue to develop our adoption support provided to adoptive families, our adoption support group and work with birth families.
4. Develop family member's participation in the adoption assessment process.
5. Continue to develop our Adoption Support plans and ensure all adopted children have a support plan in place and a later life letter.
6. Continued development work with our linking process using the Adoption register

7. Support Adoption Exchange days and Adoption Activity Days as appropriate
8. To continue our development of joint work with neighboring local authorities.

Conclusion

This report has highlighted the work of the Fostering, Adoption and Supported Carers Services and the work of the Fostering panel and the Adoption panel. It is evident from the activity of the Fostering and Adoption Panels that the number of children unable to return to live with their birth families remains high within Renfrewshire.

This report forms part of the quality control system that monitors the practice of the Panel and the quality of the work being undertaken on behalf of Renfrewshire's most vulnerable children.

The Fostering, Adoption and Supported Carers Services are all committed to safeguarding children's lives in Renfrewshire and there is a real drive from these services in continuing to develop further.

As Chair of the Adoption and Fostering Panel and the Social Work Manager responsible for the Service we would both like to take this opportunity to thank Panel members for their hard work and commitment to Renfrewshire's most vulnerable children. Also our Foster Carers dedication to children means that we can provide the best outcomes for them both now and in the future. We look forward to the coming year and to continuing our work with all agencies to improve the outcomes and secure the future of Renfrewshire's children who require both temporary and permanent care.

Joyce Gartshore
Chairperson of the Adoption Panel and the Fostering Panel

Clare Cunning
Social Work Manager (Registered Manager of both services).

Fostering Criteria

Who Can Foster?

Renfrewshire Council accepts applications from different backgrounds as everyone has their own individual experience to offer.

Requirements to foster:

1. Are over 21 years
2. Have a spare bedroom
3. Are currently in good health

You can be:

1. Single, married, cohabiting or in a civil partnership
2. Own or rent the property you live in
3. Be employed or unemployed
4. Be of any religious background or sexual orientation

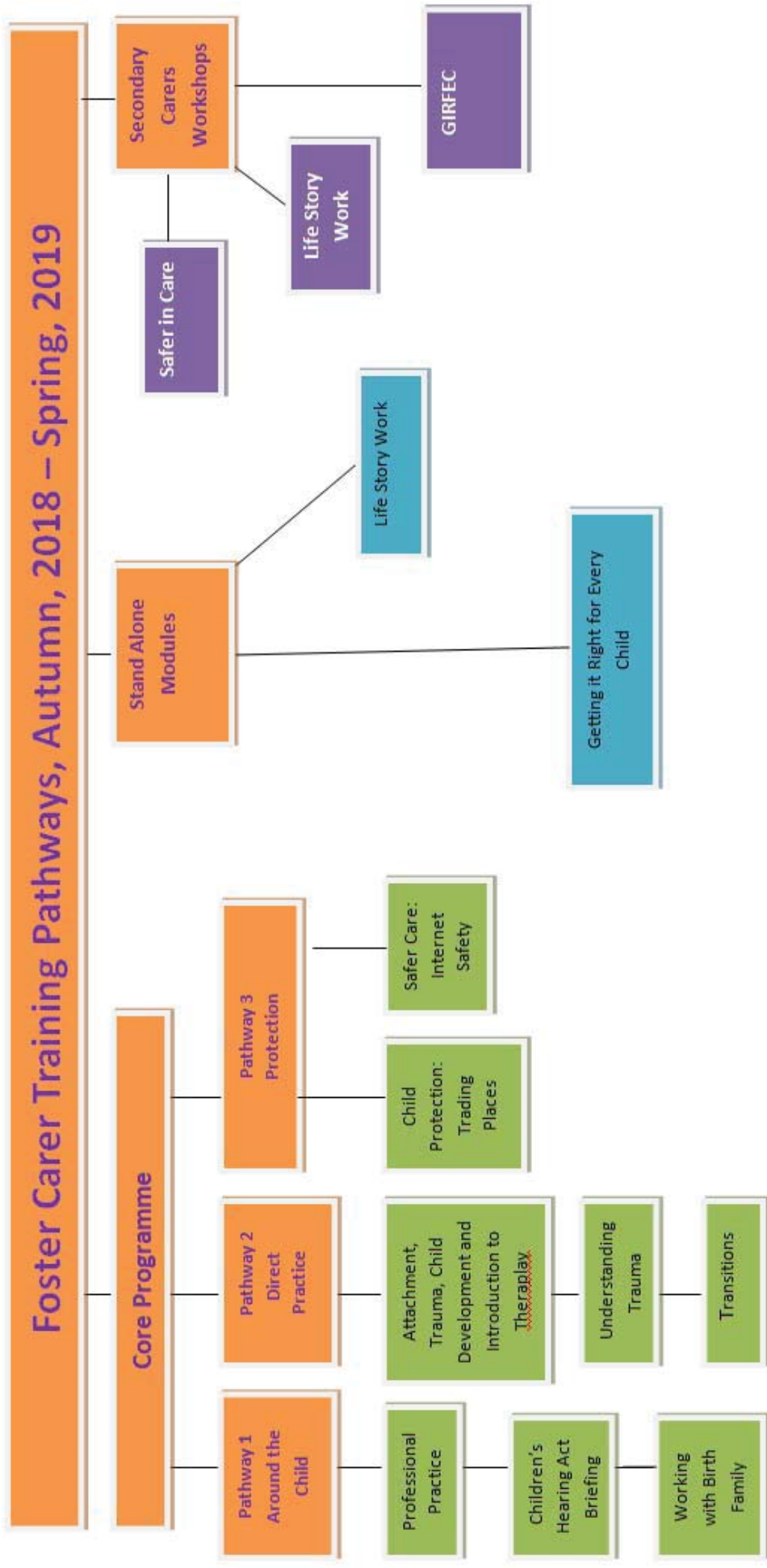
Preparation Groups

Enquirers will be required to attend preparation groups before making a formal application. The purpose of these groups is to provide the opportunity to learn more about fostering, and the children who require to be in a foster placement.

If preparation groups are not available other means will be considered to provide and share information with enquirers.

Local Authority, Health and Police Checks

All applicants will be subject to stringent local authority, health and police checks. These will extend to any other resident in the household over 16 years of age and to anyone who will have care of the child.



Renfrewshire Council

Adoption Criteria

Age

All applicants must be over 21 years of age.

Status

Enquires will be considered from couples or single applicants irrespective of their sexuality.

A couple may be the same sex or unmarried. Same sex couples are not required to be in a Civil Partnership.

Joint applicants must be in an enduring family relationship.

Preparation Groups

Enquirers will be required to attend preparation groups, if groups are available, prior to making a formal application. The purpose of these groups is to provide enquiries with the opportunity to learn more about the children available for adoption, their backgrounds and the genetic factors adopters may have to consider when parenting adopted children.

If preparation groups are not available other means will be considered to provide and share information with enquiries.

Infertility

Prospective adopters should have completed infertility investigations at least 6 months prior to application.

Local Authority Health and Police Checks

All applicants will be subject to stringent local authority health and police checks. These will extend to any other resident in the household over 16 years of age and to anyone who will have care of the child.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

**Renfrewshire Council
Children's Services
Renfrewshire House
Cotton Street
Paisley**

(HEREINAFTER KNOWN AS "THE COUNCIL")

AND

..... (NAME OF FOSTER CARER)

..... (NAME OF FOSTER CARER)

..... (FOSTER CARER'S ADDRESS)

.....

.....

.....

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This agreement describes the respective responsibilities and obligations placed upon the Council and upon its registered foster carers for children. This agreement is in respect of foster carers for children aged under eighteen years of age

The sharing of responsibility between Renfrewshire Council and foster carers aims to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. It is a serious undertaking and involves certain essential responsibilities some of which are prescribed by law.

Renfrewshire Council supports partnership with carers in sharing the care of children.

Carers enter into this Partnership Agreement on a self-employed basis as is required by law.

1.1 This agreement has been produced in line with the requirements of:

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011

- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- UK National Standards for Foster Care
- National Care Standards – foster care and family placement services

2.0 AGREEMENT

- 2.1 In signing this Agreement the foster carers and the Council agree to abide by the conditions as outlined in this document; and foster carers agree to adhere to the fostering task as contained in the foster carers handbook and to comply with Renfrewshire Council policies and procedures as they relate to the fostering task.

3.0 AIMS OF RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council is committed to best value quality and professional standards of care for all people receiving services from it whether provided directly or indirectly. Renfrewshire Council aims to ensure that every child and young person in Renfrewshire is safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Renfrewshire Council has corporate parenting responsibilities for children who require to be looked after in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and related legislation. In line with these statutory duties Renfrewshire Council aims to provide and develop services which will safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. The welfare of looked after children shall be the paramount concern.

4.0 FOSTER CARER'S DUTIES

- 4.1 Foster carers have a responsibility to provide foster care for children incorporating the core skills, tasks and abilities as set out in the Foster Carers Handbook. At all times foster carers are expected to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. Foster carers are expected to work in partnership with the Council in progressing the child's care plan and implementing the Foster Placement Agreement.
- 4.2 Foster carers must be members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme in connection with working with children, in terms of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007. They will not be approved as foster carers until they have become members of the scheme. A scheme record update will be sought periodically in respect of each foster carer but no less frequently than every three years.
- 4.3 Foster carers must have a full medical examination every two years and the details of this examination must be recorded by their General Practitioner on Form AH1. In the intervening years foster carers must have a further medical examination and the details of this examination must be recorded by their General Practitioner on Form AH2.
- 4.4 Foster carers must attend training. It is a condition of this agreement that foster carers attend training in First Aid; Safer Care and Fire Safety, every 3

years. In addition, further training must be undertaken as detailed in section 8. The Foster Carers Training Record will be considered at their Foster Care review

5.0 CONTACT BETWEEN THE FOSTER CARER AND THE COUNCIL

- 5.1 For the purpose of this Agreement your contact with the Council will be your supervising social worker.

Name:

Designation: Supervising Social Worker

Address: Renfrewshire Council Social Work

.....

.....

.....

.....

Tel. No.

- 5.2 The Council will inform you should your supervising social worker change.

6.0 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 The Council will provide the foster carers with a copy of the Council's Foster Carers Handbook, UK National Standards for Foster Care and National Care Standards Foster Care and Family Placement Services. The handbook will be updated periodically, and foster carers should read the handbook and familiarise themselves with its contents and procedures.

- 6.2 The Council will ensure that all relevant information it has concerning the child will be made available to the foster carers.

- 6.3 Each placement of a child made with foster carers will be negotiated by your supervising social worker or, if unavailable, a representative of the Fostering Service. Where a child is placed with foster carers on a planned basis, or where the child is already accommodated by the Council, foster carers will be provided with a copy of the child's plan and the placement alert form.

These documents will provide details of the child's personal history, religious, cultural and linguistic background and racial origin, details of the child's health needs, name of doctor, educational needs, any arrangements re delegation of parental consent in relation to medical treatment, and contact arrangements.

All children will be provided with a health assessment according to the Looked After Children protocols. The fostering service will advise foster carers of any known health risks at or prior to placement.

- 6.4 Where a child is placed with foster carers on an emergency basis, these documents will be provided as soon as reasonably practicable. Foster carers will be provided with such information as is known to the Council by the Fostering Team at the point of placement.
- 6.5 The foster carers must contact the child's social worker and their own supervising social worker to seek advice, guidance and permission in relation to any matter relating to the child's health and wellbeing. This can include, but is not limited to; -
- the matters referred to in paragraph 11.1 of this agreement
 - any intended planned absence of the child from the foster carers' home that involves an overnight stay with any person not already vetted by the Council;
 - any person they intend to use to babysit or childmind;
 - any intention for the child to travel out with the United Kingdom;
 - any intended holiday within the United Kingdom.
 - any plans to undertake any activity that requires to be carried out with a properly licensed organisation with trained staff and adequate levels of supervision.

The handbook will provide further guidance in this area and on all other matters that require advice and guidance.

- 6.6 The foster carers must notify the Council of any changes in their circumstances as soon as they become aware of them. This can include, but is not limited to; -
- change of address;
 - changes in the composition of the household;
 - change or loss of employment;
 - changes in the health of any member of the foster carers' household;
 - the foster carer or any member of the foster carer's household being charged with or convicted of a criminal offence;
 - a referral has been made to the Reporter to the Children's Hearing, or grounds have been established in respect of such a referral, in connection with actions or omissions by the foster carer or any member of the foster carers' household;
 - the outcome of any previous application by the foster carers or any other member of the household to foster or adopt children under the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007; the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 or any equivalent legislation in any other part of the United Kingdom;
 - the foster carer or any member of the foster carers' household becoming disqualified from working with children in terms of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.

- any other significant change in circumstances which would affect the placement;
- 6.7. Children should not be taken out of school to go on holiday with foster carers except in exceptional family circumstances and this must be approved by a Senior Social Work Manager in advance.
 - 6.8 Foster carers must discuss any request for children in their care to have short breaks in advance of booking a holiday.
 - 6.9 Carers are expected to keep individual records on the progress of each child they care for, and may be asked to provide a written summary of the child's progress for the child's social worker
 - 6.10 Carers are expected to keep a record of activities and events in the child's life including photographs which can move with the child, and which will provide a history for the child of their time with the carer.
 - 6.11 The foster carers must seek the written agreement of the Council if they intend to offer accommodation to a third party / non-family member in the foster home, whether for rent or reward.
 - 6.12 The foster carers shall not also operate as registered child minders.
 - 6.13 Renfrewshire Council's 'Smoke Free Care Placements, Policy for Renfrewshire Council's Looked After and Accommodated Children and Young People' sets out the position as regards to foster carers who smoke. The Council will not place children under five with foster carers who smoke. Renfrewshire Council expects that at no time will foster carers smoke in front of the children they are caring for. Foster carers are expected to refrain from smoking within their own homes and cars at all times. The fostering team can arrange the appropriate support for carers who wish to stop smoking and sign post them to agencies who can support this. A copy of the policy is available on request.

Renfrewshire Council have a non-smoking policy for all its employees. We would therefore ask carers to refrain from smoking during visits by social work staff.

7.0 SUPPORT

- 7.1 Each carer will have a supervising social worker appointed at the time of approval as foster carer. This worker will meet the foster carers once a month to provide supervision. A written record of these meetings will be provided to the foster carers. In addition, the supervising social worker or alternative worker from the fostering service may have further meetings with the foster carers to discuss support for the carers in respect of individual children for whom they are caring. The statutory requirements for each individual child's care and protection will be met by the locality team.

- 7.2 The support from the fostering service will be on an individual basis. In addition, the team will consult with carers about what other types of support may be of benefit to them and their families.
- 7.3 Foster carers will be asked to nominate an appropriate friend or relative, to be approved as a support carer, to care for the child for short periods. The support carer will receive the fostering payment in respect of the period they are caring for the child, as detailed in appendix 1
- 7.4 In exceptional circumstances, where the placement requires support, additional breaks may be afforded to the carers. This will be discussed between the carers and their supporting social worker.
- 7.5 The Council will pay an individual subscription for Fostering Network for all foster carers.
- 7.6 Out of hours support will be provided by Glasgow and Partners Emergency Social Work Service who have access to the senior management team in Renfrewshire Council. The Emergency Service can be accessed by contacting: 0300 343 1505.
- 7.7 A foster carers handbook containing information on other resources and supports will be provided, and foster carers are expected to familiarise themselves with its contents. Foster carers should discuss with their supervising social worker anything they do not understand, or about which they are unclear.

8.0 TRAINING

- 8.1 The supervising social worker will discuss with the foster carers their training and development needs. These will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting as detailed in 7.1. Each foster carer will have a training record noted on the SWIFT system.

9.0 FOSTER CARE REVIEW

- 9.1 In terms of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, foster carers will have their approval reviewed by the fostering panel within twelve months of their original approval and every three years thereafter. The fostering panel will make a recommendation to the agency decision maker, as to whether the foster carer continues to be a suitable person, and on the terms of their approval as foster carers. The agency decision maker will decide on these matters.
- 9.2 In addition, foster carers will undergo periodic internal reviews. These reviews will be chaired by a senior social work manager. If foster carers disagree with the decision of the internal review, they may request that the matter be considered by the fostering panel.

- 9.3 The fostering service may seek an early review at any time of the foster carers approval at the fostering panel if the service deems it appropriate.

10.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 10.1 The foster carers shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that all information concerning looked after children is treated as confidential and kept in a secure place. When a child moves on, any documents relating to the child should be returned to the Council.
- 10.2 The foster carers shall under no circumstances give any information concerning a child they are looking after or have previously looked after to the press or any media organisation or their representative. The foster carers must take all reasonable steps to prevent children being photographed by journalists or other such third parties or being featured in a publication without the permission of the parents or, where the Council holds parental responsibility, the Director of Children's Services.
- 10.3 The foster carers must immediately refer any enquiries from the media or other third parties to the Director of Children's Services via the child 's social worker or their supervising social worker.
- 10.4 Foster carers will not post on social media any information relating to any child they are caring for including photographs or any other information.

11.0 MEDICAL OR OTHER EMERGENCIES

- 11.1 The foster carers must inform the social worker for the child and the fostering service or, if after regular office hours, the Glasgow and Partners Emergency Service in cases of emergency: this can include, but is not limited to; -
- where the child is missing, is seriously ill, or other injury, or serious occurrence affects them;
 - where the police are involved;
 - should any situation arise which threatens the child's wellbeing;
 - upon the death of any child in their care.

Glasgow Partners Emergency Service can be contacted by telephoning: 0300 343 1505.

12.0 INSURANCE

- 12.1 The foster carers will carry adequate household building and contents insurance and will inform their insurance company of their intention to seek approval to foster and request a written acknowledgment from the company to that effect. The contents insurance will be set at a sufficient level to cover the belongings of all children / young people in their care at any given time.
- 12.2 The foster carers must ensure that all health and safety requirements and standards in their home and garden and transport arrangements are met. This includes provision of working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detector. A health and safety check will be completed annually.

- 12.3 Foster carers must have comprehensive car insurance and be insured for business purposes. They should advise their motor insurers that they are foster carers. Appropriate properly fitted restraints / child car seats must be provided for children, and the family car must not be used over capacity at any time.

13. RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINTS BY FOSTER CARERS

- 13.1 This section deals with the resolution of complaints by foster carers about matters which cannot be dealt with by the fostering panel and agency decision maker, in terms of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.
- 13.2 Complaints by foster carers relating to the support services they receive from the council should be made within six months of the event they wish to complain about, or within six months of their becoming aware of their reason to complain. In exceptional circumstances a complaint may be considered after that time limit.
- 13.3 Complaints by foster carers relating to the support services they receive from the council will be handled through a two-stage process in line with the process for any other complaints against the council, as outlined below.

13.4 STAGE ONE - FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

If the foster carer is not satisfied with any aspect of the fostering service, they should discuss with their Supervising Social Worker who will try and resolve the issue with the foster carer. If the foster carer has a complaint about their Supervising Social Worker, the foster carer should raise this issue with the senior social worker in the fostering service. If the foster carer's complaint is about the fostering service as a whole, the foster carer should raise the issue with the Service Manager of the fostering service.

The council aims to resolve complaints at the first point of contact within five working days. In exceptional circumstances, where there are clear and justifiable reasons for doing so, an extension of no more than ten working days may be agreed. This will only happen when an extension will make it more likely that the complaint will be resolved at the frontline resolution stage.

If the council cannot resolve the foster carer's complaint at this stage, the council will explain the reasons for this to the foster carer and will advise the foster carer of the next step(s). The Council may suggest that the complaint be taken to Stage Two.

13.5 STAGE TWO - INVESTIGATION

There are two types of Stage Two complaints; those which have not been resolved at Stage One and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

The Council will acknowledge receipt of a stage two complaint within three working days of receiving this. An investigation will be carried out by the appropriate senior social work manager. As part of the investigation, the senior social work manager will discuss the complaint with the foster carer. A written response will be given by the senior social work manager to the foster carer within twenty working days of the complaint being received. If the investigation will take longer than twenty days, the council will advise the foster carer of this and will agree revised time scales with the foster carer.

13.6 SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

After the Council has fully investigated the matter, and if the foster carer remains dissatisfied, the foster carer may refer the matter to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), who may investigate the matter

The SPSO will not normally consider –

- a complaint that has not been through the complaints process as detailed above.
- a complaint surrounding events that occurred, or that the carer became aware of, more than twelve months previously
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

The contact details for the SPSO are as follows;

SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

Their freepost address is:

FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

14.0 COMPLAINT BY A CHILD / YOUNG PERSON

- 14.1 Children should be advised that, if required, the foster carers and / or their social worker will assist them in making a complaint.
- 14.2 Children wishing to make a complaint about the foster home, their supervising social worker or any other aspect of their care should be encouraged to use the Council's Customer Complaints Procedures and given assistance where required by the foster carers or social worker as appropriate. "Who Cares Scotland?" can provide independent advice and support: 0141 226 4441.
- 14.3 Children in foster care will be provided with an opportunity for feedback through the Looked After Children's Review, and the Foster Carer Review systems.

15.0 REVIEW OF THE AGREEMENT

- 15.1 The Council shall monitor and review the Agreement, its operation and effectiveness throughout its duration, but no less frequently than once every three years. The agreement may only be varied with the written consent of both parties.

16.0 TERMINATION OF THIS AGREEMENT

- 16.1 The foster carers will notify the Council immediately if they are temporarily unable to meet the conditions of this agreement. This will not necessarily affect the continuation of this agreement and the Council may be able to assist the foster carers in continuing the service to the children / young people.
- 16.2 The foster carers will give the Council at least 28 days' notice in writing of their intention to resign as foster carers. A fostering panel will be convened to give advice to the Agency Decision Maker on the foster carers wish to resign as such.
- 16.3 Where foster carers intimate their wish to resign as foster carers, payment to the foster carers from the Council will cease in respect of each child in the foster carers household, on the removal of that child from the fostering household.
- 16.4 For the avoidance of doubt, where foster carers ask the Council to remove foster children in their care, no payment will be made in respect of that child or children, and no retainer will be paid.
- 16.5 The Council may terminate this agreement by giving 28 days' notice in writing to the foster carers.

17.0 CHILD PROTECTION MATTERS

- 17.1 Notwithstanding the terms of 16.5, the Council may remove children from the care of the foster carers without notice where there are child protection

concerns. Where there is a Child Protection Investigation, a retainer of 50% of the weekly rate in respect of each child, will be paid for a period not exceeding three months.

- 17.2 At the conclusion of the child protection investigation, a fostering panel will be convened to make a recommendation to the agency decision maker regarding the foster carer's registration. This fostering panel will be convened as soon as reasonably practicable, following the conclusion of the child protection investigation.
- 17.3 When the Council is advised that a foster carer is being considered for listing as barred from working with children by Disclosure Scotland, the Council may remove any looked after children in the care of the foster carers without notice. In these circumstances, a retainer of 50% of the weekly rate in respect of each child will be paid until the investigation is concluded. A fostering panel will be convened as soon as reasonably practicable following the conclusion of the investigation to make a recommendation to the agency decision maker on the carers' future registration.
- 17.4 If the Council is advised by Disclosure Scotland that a foster carer has been listed as barred from working with children, the Council will remove any looked after children in the care of the foster carers without notice. No further payment will be made in respect of these children. A fostering panel will be convened as soon as reasonably practicable to make a recommendation to the agency decision maker on the carer's future registration.
- 17.5 Where the agency decision maker makes the decision to de-register foster carers, the foster carers may seek a review of this decision, in terms of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

Appendix 1

Renfrewshire Council

Financial Arrangement Scheme

Foster Care Service

Implement Date 22nd January 2019

INTRODUCTIONS

All active registered foster carers will receive financial support from the Council based on the scheme set out below. These payments will cease in respect of each child, on that child's eighteenth birthday. The Basic Allowance will be payable to all active carers and will provide both a fee component and a maintenance allowance covering all the child's requirements. The payment is an all-inclusive amount. It is an averaging over the year of typical peaks of expenditure such as festive occasions,

birthdays, holiday periods etc. The foster carer will be expected to manage this sum in such a way that the child's best interests are promoted and that the child experiences a typical family lifestyle. Foster carers are self-employed and must register as such for tax and National Insurance purposes. Foster carers are advised to make provision for a pension.

1. BASIC ALLOWANCE

- 1.1 Carers will receive a weekly payment of £383.95 per week. This payment is made up of two elements, a fee of £261.36 and an allowance per child of £122.59, regardless of the child's age or the carers' level of experience. Payments will be made fortnightly in advance. Where the child is with their carer less than a whole week, payments will be made pro rata per day i.e., £54.85 per day. All payments will be reviewed annually.
- 1.2 Where the carers take breaks without the children they are caring for, full payment will be made in respect of each child, up to a maximum of fourteen days in any calendar year. Where carers take breaks without the children they are caring for, over and above fourteen days in any calendar year, NO payment will be made in respect of those periods to the foster carers.
- 1.3 Where daytime baby-sitting is being provided by a carer, payment will be made at a rate of £5 per hour per child up to 8 hours. Any longer than this would attract the 24-hour payment.
- 1.4 Where interim or permanent carers have had no children in placement for four weeks, a retainer of 50% per registered usable place will be paid for up to of 4 weeks per episode. A "useable place" is where it is agreed that there is an available placement, but the council does not have a child that is a suitable match for the carers. 1.5 For newly registered carers an appropriate start up grant of up to 4 weeks basic allowance per registered placement may be given to buy any equipment etc. required to foster. This may include purchase of essential health and safety equipment as well as baby equipment and essential furnishings. Thereafter carers will be expected to pay for any further equipment required.
- 1.5 For short break carers moving to interim or permanent status, an additional grant for essential equipment may be provided.
- 1.6 A start up clothing grant of £100 per child will be provided for every child being accommodated from the community

2. DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

- 2.1 Foster carers will be expected to provide for all the children's day to day expenses from within their basic allowance. This will include furnishing their room, providing play and learning equipment, leisure activities, family holidays and outings. However, there may be unusual or unexpected costs

involved from time to time and therefore further discretionary payments may be made by exception. These might include, but are not limited to;

- a. Mileage incurred over 25 miles in any one return journey to be paid at the casual users' rate for journeys such as the following:
 - i. Travel to hospitals, clinics, medical and dental appointments,
 - ii. Attendance at reviews, case conferences, children's hearings, and other meetings,
 - iii. Attendance at foster carer training,
 - iv. Travel during the period of introduction to the children, or where carers are involved in moving children to a new home,
 - v. Assisting with contact, travel to and from nursery or school out with the carers area,
 - vi. Travel to take child on specific outings or activities agreed beforehand.
- b. School trips away from home overnight which cost more than £50 and are deemed to be of educational, social or developmental benefit to the child.
- c. Where the Care Plan identifies a need for a therapeutic input for the child. For example, additional activities out with normal leisure activities, counselling support, or short break provision, the Council may fund this.
- d. In exceptional circumstances, special family holidays for the child may attract a supplementary payment where the cost for the child is more than £500. In such circumstances the carer will be expected to pay the first £500. The Council will consider contributing to the cost of the holiday, up to a maximum of £500 in respect of any individual child in any calendar year.
- e. Exceptional payment for specialist items of equipment required.
- f. Where assistance is required to purchase suitable transport to enable carers to safely care for children they are caring for, in addition to their own children, a grant of up to £5000 may be made to a fostering household. To be eligible for this grant, at least one of the undernoted criteria must apply;
 - more than 5 people need transported on a regular basis
 - there are two or more foster children in placement
 - The child cared for by the foster carers, or the foster carer has a disability and requires specialised transport

Carers will sign a contract agreeing to repay this grant if the criteria making them eligible for the grant ceases to apply, or if the carers cease fostering within three years of receiving the grant.

2.2 The list above is not exhaustive and further payments may be made under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the appropriate Head of Service. The scale of payment will be reviewed on a regular basis.

2.3 Additional payments for birthdays, Christmas or after school care will **not** be made.

3. EXPECTATIONS OF CARERS BY RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL:

3.1 Carers are expected to provide for all the physical, social and leisure needs of the child they care for that a parent would normally be expected to provide. This will include the equivalent of an annual holiday, pocket money, provision of a range of activities and interests specific to the needs and wishes of the child, involvement in all the day to day activities of the child including taking the child to school or nursery or contact visits. Where a foster carer has several different children in the household who need to be taken to different schools / nurseries, or to different contact meetings, there may be discussions and negotiations on a case by case basis.

3.2 Carers will be expected to evidence that they are using their allowance in the child's best interests.

4.0 CARERS AVAILABILITY FOR CARING FOR CHILDREN

4.1 It is expected that one carer from each carer household will be available to care for the child e.g. during periods of absence from school due to sickness or suspension or after school / nursery and during school holidays.

4.2 Costs of after school care will not be covered by the Council.

Appendix 2

FOSTER CARERS – DETAILS OF APPROVAL

Name of Foster Carers:

Address:
.....
.....

Approved at Fostering Panel of:

Category(ies) Approved for:.....

Maximum number of children / young persons to be accommodated

At any one time In words

Please specify details of age and gender mix

Child One

Child Two

Child Three

Child Four

Any other relevant information:

Signed:

Name in Block Capitals

Designation:

Date: