

**To:** Education and Children's Services Policy Board

**On:** 19 January 2023

---

**Report by:** Director of Children's Services

---

**Heading:** Annual report of the Fostering and Adoption Service 2021/22  
Update on developments for Fostering Service

---

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report provides elected members with the opportunity to review the 15th annual report of Renfrewshire's Fostering and Adoption Service (appendix1).
  - 1.2. The annual report sets out the work undertaken by the Fostering and Adoption Panel and the Fostering and Adoption Service in the period 1 August year 2021 to 31 July 2022. The annual report notes that on 31 July 2022 there were 73 fostering households approved by Renfrewshire. During the period covered by this report, 15 children and young people had a permanency plan considered by the panel and approved.
  - 1.3. The annual report refers to how the service managed and developed in the recovery period of the COVID pandemic. The report considers the future work of the panel and the continued work of the fostering and adoption service.
  - 1.4. The service has reviewed the Fostering and Adoption Constitution and made some minor changes to it. The changes are highlighted in appendix 2. During the current year the head of child care and criminal justice under delegated powers made some changes to the partnership agreement with foster carers. The changes are highlighted in appendix 3.
- 

## **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 2021/22 attached as appendix 1;
  - b) agree the updated Constitution attached at appendix 2; and

- c) agree the updated partnership agreement attached at appendix 3.
- 

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. The Looked After (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009 require Social Work in its role as a Fostering and Adoption agency to operate a Fostering Panel and an Adoption Panel. This panel has the responsibility for putting forward recommendations to the agency decision makers John Trainer (Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice Services) and Michelle McCargo, (Children's Services Manager) regarding the suitability of people to adopt or foster children. Furthermore, the Panel considers and approves plans for children to be adopted or for the Council to apply for Permanence Orders on a child. 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 Adoption Panel with one constitution. The panel separates out the Fostering business from the Adoption business to ensure that the appropriate regulations are met regarding a quorum, and for the attendance of the legal and medical adviser. The panel has two chairpersons who are independent from the work of the service: One is a Social Work manager, and the other is from the Association for Fostering Adoption and Kinship Scotland (AFKA).
- 3.3. There are currently 11 members of the panel comprising elected members, social work staff, a legal adviser, a medical adviser, carers, independent panel members, and an independent member from AFKA. The panel sits at least monthly. There are typically 3 panel members at each meeting along with appropriate advisors. The panel considered 82 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 1/08/21 and 31/07/2022 the fostering and adoption team held 1 set of preparation groups and 8 households subsequently applied to be assessed as foster carers. Renfrewshire had 73 active households of foster carers on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022. In the period 1/08/21 and 31/7/2022 an additional 2 households were registered as foster carers, and 9 foster care households left the service. 5 foster care households left the service due to changes in their circumstances, 3 retired after a lengthy career in fostering and 1 retired and offered a continuing care option for an individual young person.
- 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. In the past we have had high-profile recruitment activity which only

produced 1 or 2 more applications to foster. Most of our fostering application come from people who already have foster carers as friends or family. There is a national difficulty in recruitment of foster carers. The service will work with communication and marketing to consider how best to promote fostering recruitment.

- 3.7. In the period 1/08/21 and 31/07/2022 a total of 2 Renfrewshire households were approved as adopters at the Renfrewshire panel.
- 3.8. The Fostering and Adoption services are subject to regulation and were last 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 was due to take place in 2020 however has been postponed due to the pandemic. The service has been advised the next inspection will be undertaken in January 2023.
- 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 become supported carers wherever this is appropriate.
- 3.10. We currently have 11 young adults living with supported carers. Many of these carers were previously the young adults' foster carers.
- 3.11. The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 became law in 2021 and places new duties on local authorities to place brothers and sisters together in placements and place a new duty on local authorities to promote contact between brothers and sisters who are looked after. This is in keeping with the independent care review report, The Promise.
- 3.12. Renfrewshire approved the "Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together Policy" in May 2021. The policy contains the following pledge "When children come into care Renfrewshire will place brothers and sisters together". The policy recognises that there will be times that brothers, and sisters can't be placed together but requires us to report on this.

---

#### **4. Constitution**

- 4.1. The Fostering and Adoption Panel requires to have a constitution. The current constitution was approved in January 2021. The constitution has been reviewed and updated to take account of developing practices particularly in relation to Adoption and birth parents views being considered.

---

#### **5. Partnership Agreement**

- 5.1. The partnership agreement is signed by foster carers and Renfrewshire Council at the point that new foster carers are approved.

- 5.2. The partnership agreement was last updated in 2019. Following discussion with foster carers it was agreed that there was a need to make some minor changes to the agreement. The Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice exercised his delegated authority to make changes to the agreement to address some financial pressures experienced by foster carers. The change to the agreement allows for flexibility in relation to financial arrangements.
- 5.3. Under delegated authority it was agreed on 24 October 2022, to increase the amount of clothing allowance when a child is placed in foster care from £100 per child to £350 per child plus £100 for a school age child. This increase has been due to the fact that it hadn't been increased since 2009 and also due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 5.4. The second area of change was in relation to arrangements for foster carers claiming mileage for a range of journeys to ensure the needs of children in their care are met.
- 

### **Implications of this report**

**1. Financial**

The changes to the clothing grant and mileage will have minor impact on the overall budget for fostering and adoption services.

**2. HR and Organisational Development**

None.

**3. Community/Council Planning**

Our Renfrewshire is safe - *The provision of foster care provides Renfrewshire's children with safety and care.*

**4. Legal**

None.

**5. Property/Assets**

None.

**6. Information Technology**

None.

**7. Equality and Human Rights**

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**

None.

- 9.     **Procurement**  
None.
- 10.    **Risk**  
None.
- 11.    **Privacy Impact**  
None.
- 12.    **Cosla Policy Position**  
None.
- 13.    **Climate Risk**  
None.

---

### **List of Background Papers**

- (a) Background Paper 1: Fostering and Adoption Annual Report.
- (b) Panel Constitution
- (c) Partnership Agreement.

The foregoing background papers will be retained within children's services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Clare Cuning 0141 618 6650

---

***Children's Services***  
*CC 6/12/22*

**Author:** Clare Cuning 0141 618 6650 [clare.cuning@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:clare.cuning@renfrewshire.gov.uk)



# **THE FOSTERING AND ADOPTION PANEL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022**

## **Foreword**

## **Introduction**

## **Context**

- Accommodated and Looked After Children/Young People
- Overview of the work presented to the Fostering and Adoption Panel 1.08.21 – 31.07.22
- Panel membership
- Staffing
- Commitment to permanency planning
- Inspection

## **Report on the Fostering Service**

- Development of the Fostering Service 2021 – 2022
- Recruitment Activity
- Preparation Groups
- New foster carers and carers deregistration
- Foster carers reviews
- Permanent Foster Carers
- Foster carers training
- Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) Intervention
- Foster carers support group
- Consultation group
- Break Through group
- Newsletter
- Future development of fostering service 2022 -2023

## **Report of Supported Carers Service**

- Overview of Supported Carers Service

## **Report on the Adoption and Permanence Service**

- Development within the adoption service 2021 – 2022
- The Adoption Register Scotland
- Recruitment of adoptive parents
- Family finding
- The Adoption Register Scotland
- Adoption Plans and Links
- Adoption Support Groups / Individual families
- Adoption Newsletter
- Birth Relative Support
- Letterbox Contact
- Future development of the adoption service 2022 – 2023

## **Conclusion**

## Foreword

Welcome to the annual report of Renfrewshire's Fostering and Adoption Service. This report reviews the previous year and looks future developments.

As at 31.07.22, Renfrewshire Council had 581 Looked After Children. Of these, 143 children and young people were looked after at home, 220 were looked after by Kinship carers/friends/relatives, and 214 were accommodated with foster carers, in pre-adoption arrangements or within residential placements. Renfrewshire Council had 73 Fostering households at this time.

The balance of Looked After children continues to shift towards our own internal foster care, rather than purchased external placements. On 31.07.22 there were 39 children/young people living with foster carers from external fostering agencies compared to 48 in 2021 and 60 in 2020. This is a substantial decrease over this period and is in line with Renfrewshire's strategy to ensure children are cared for by their own family, in kinship or with Renfrewshire's internal services.

The work of the Fostering and Adoption Service continues to ensure that children are living in the best and safest environments to meet their individual needs, and that children who require to live permanently in foster care are matched with an appropriate foster family at the earliest opportunity.

The Fostering and Adoption service remains committed to ensuring that the principles of Renfrewshire's 'Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together' policy are embedded in all aspects of its practice. Where we cannot place brothers and sisters together, the service supports natural family time between brothers and sisters outwith formal arrangements wherever possible.

The Fostering and Adoption 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. The Panel's role is to make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who ultimately approves children's permanence plans or confirms that a household can adopt or become foster carers.

The Panels continue to be busy. Between 01.08.21 to 31.07.22, 15 children's permanence plans were approved by the Agency Decision Maker.

We hope that you enjoy reading this year's annual report.

John Trainer  
Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice  
Chief Social Work Officer

Michelle McCargo  
Social Work Children's Services Manager



## Introduction

This is the 15<sup>th</sup> annual report of Renfrewshire Council's Fostering and the Adoption Panel and Service.

Renfrewshire Council has a statutory duty to operate fostering and adoption panels. In Renfrewshire we have one panel which carries out both functions.

The Adoption and Fostering Panel operates within the statutory framework of the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (Part II) (AAS Regulations) and the Looked After (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (Part VI) (the LACS Regulations).

These regulations set the basis for the membership of the panel, the frequency of meetings, the appointment of advisors and the different functions of the panel.

The Renfrewshire panel has at least one business meeting with panel members, advisors, and the Agency Decision Makers in attendance on an annual basis. It is good practice for all panels to have regular planned business meetings to review their overall functioning. The quorum for individual meetings of the panel is three members, and we ensure this number includes people with relevant experience and a range of backgrounds to provide robust and independent scrutiny of the business presented.

Responsibility for the functions and decisions of the panel rests with the Chief Social Work Officer. Authority is delegated to a Senior Manager in Children's services to chair the panel. The Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice and the Social Work Children's Services Manager act as Agency Decision Makers for the panel.

The purpose of the Panel is to consider prospective foster carers, prospective adopters, and supported carers. In addition, the Panel considers individual children's needs for alternative permanent carers (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 route to secure this outcome. The Panel also considers the matching of a child with specific foster carers or adoptive parents.

The fostering and adoption team is responsible for the recruitment, training, supervision and support of suitable foster carers and prospective adopters. Ensuring we have sufficient carers with the skills and experience necessary to meet the needs of the diverse range of babies, children and young people who need care away from their birth families is the over-arching objective of the team.

## Context

The work of the Fostering and Adoption Panel should be viewed in the context of the overall numbers of Renfrewshire Council's Looked After and Accommodated children.

### Accommodated and Looked After Children/Young People

As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022, Renfrewshire Council had 581 Looked After Children/Young People. The number of children living in Kinship arrangements increased slightly from the previous year. The number of children living with Renfrewshire Council's foster carers remained the same whilst those residing with independent sector foster carers reduced. The number of children residing in independent sector foster carers decreased again in the reporting year continuing a trend of steadily decreasing each year over the past 10 years.

31.07.21                      31.07.22

	31.07.21	31.07.22
<b>Independent Sector-Children - Foster Care</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Local Authority-Children - Foster Care</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Local Authority-Children – Houses</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Independent Sector-Children - Residential Schools</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Independent Sector-Children - Residential Special Needs</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Pre-adoption</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Independent Sector-Children - Secure School</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Children looked after by kinship carers/friends/relatives</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Children looked after at home</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>581</b>

## Cases presented to the Fostering and Adoption Panel 1.08.21 – 31.07.22

Business Item	Previous Year	Aug 21 – July 22
Child adoption plans and links	13	6
Approval of Renfrewshire adopters (households)	2	2
Approval of adopters to increase Household	1	1
Conversion of Foster carers to Adopters	0	1
Approval of Adopters with a foreign element	1	0
De registration of adopters	1	1
Review of Registration (adoption)	1	1
Request/review of adoption allowance	4	3
Children's Permanence Order plans	3	9
Links with permanent foster carers	3	6
Approval of new foster carers	3	2
Approval of Renfrewshire interim foster carers as permanent foster carers (households)	3	6
Deregistration of foster carer	5	9
Approval of supported carers (households)	6	8
Initial review of foster carer after their 1 <sup>st</sup> year	5	3
Foster care reviews out with 1 <sup>st</sup> year	5	20
Review of foster carers registration – due to change in registration/circumstances	4	1
Total number of agenda items	60	79

## **Panel Membership**

The service has continued to have a consistent and committed panel membership over the past year. However, because of natural attrition, the number of panel members has reduced to 11 including 2 chairpersons – one of whom is commissioned from the Association of Fostering, Kinship and Adoption (AFKA). During the coming year there will be active recruitment of panel members to ensure that the panel membership continues to reflect a wide range of experience from a range of areas including social work, education, health, independent sector, and those with lived experience of fostering and adoption.

The medical advisers continue to offer a valuable service and support to the panel in respect of provision and interpretation of medical information in relation to the children and adults being presented to panel. The medical adviser provides up-to-date written information regarding any health issues in relation to a child or a prospective foster carer or adopter.

The panel has a representative from the council's legal services who acts as legal advisor and provides written legal advice to the Panel in relation to adoption and permanence work. The legal advisor attends the Panel whenever permanence is being considered, and on other occasions where the chairperson feels their advice is required.

The Fostering and Adoption Service Manager acts as the panel professional advisor.

Panel members attend appraisal meetings with the panel chair and panel professional adviser. Feedback from panel members is gathered from this meeting and ideas generated are incorporated into the business meeting agenda for consideration on how to improve the functioning and participation at panel.

## **Staffing**

The structure of the Fostering and Adoption Service is: -

Social Work Manager (Operations) Registered manager of the service.

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 (one vacancy as worker on year secondment)

2 part time social workers (one current vacancy)

1 social work assistant.

The fostering and adoption service now has a separate fostering team and an adoption and permanence team. This has separation allowed the development of more specialist skills regarding fostering and adoption. Both teams work closely together and share expertise and learning.

## **Commitment to permanence planning 1.08.21 to 31.07.22**

Between 01.08.21 and 31.7.22, Renfrewshire has progressed adoption and permanence plans for 15 children. This is one fewer than last year with more Permanence Order Plans being approved than Adoption Plans. Renfrewshire Council recognises the importance in progressing plans for children within appropriate timescales. There are different 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 to complete the necessary reports. These initiatives include training for social workers and carers on issues specifically relevant to permanence, working closely with social work staff with regards to the needs of the child and planning for adoption or permanency.

The decision to place a child permanently outwith their birth family rightly involves a high level of assessment to ensure the plan is in the best interests of the child and will meet their needs throughout their childhood. During the permanency 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 'forever' families and have the opportunity to thrive into adulthood.

## **Inspection**

The Fostering Service and Adoption Service is a regulated service, is registered with and subject to inspection by the Care Inspectorate. The last inspection took place in May 2017 where all aspects of service delivered remained Grade 5 which is 'very good'. While there has not been a full inspection since 2017, meetings have taken place between the link inspector and both the Registered Manager and Service Manager of the Fostering and Adoption Service to discuss practice developments and reflect upon performance. The Care Inspectorate has announced it intends conducting an inspection of the Renfrewshire Fostering and Adoption Services in January 2023.

## **Report on Fostering Service**

The fostering service continues to offer a high standard of care to children in our care. All supervision and unannounced visits have continued face to face. The Fostering and Adoption Panel and Foster Carer Reviews continued online while training and other related meetings have continued to be hybrid.

## **Developments within the Fostering Service 2021 – 2022**

- During Fostering Fortnight in May 2022, the service made use of social media, offering virtual drop in and articles from our foster carers.
- The Service continued to work with neighbouring authorities regarding shared services.
- We Introduced a "Letter to the Child" which foster carers write.
- We continued with Covid recovery.
- Children in foster care continued to be involved in participation strategies through the Breakthrough group with Who Cares? Scotland.
- Managers within the Fostering Service continued to attend Social Work Scotland meetings and liaise with neighbouring authorities.
- We have encouraged birth families to contribute to foster care reviews.
- We have continued to offer Non-Violent Resistance training to carers.
- We have continued to try to increase the number of support carers
- Evening training was re-introduced.
- The service began embedding Egress which is an electronic communication system to allow us to communicate electronically and securely with our foster carers.

## **Recruitment activity**

The Service Manager and the fostering Senior Social Worker work with Renfrewshire Council's Communication team to continue to develop and refine our recruitment strategy. It is recognised nationally that there is a shortage of foster carers. We know that fear of the unknown and concerns about managing complex behaviours often get in the way of people coming forward to foster. For these reasons, our recruitment strategy will focus on the excellent wraparound support we provide to our carers.

If the person who has enquired wishes to take the next step, 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. (See appendix 1 for fostering criteria). The usual process is that applications to be assessed as a foster carer are not submitted by applicants until after they have completed the preparation groups.

During the period 1 August 2021- 31 July 2022 the service assessed eight households to become foster carers. Of these, four are being assessed as short break carers, one as an interim carer and one as interim and permanent. Two households decided not to continue with the process.

## **Preparation groups**

The Fostering Service ran only one set of preparation groups in the reporting period due to low numbers. The group ran over April and May 2022 and included two households from Renfrewshire and one household from a neighbouring authority.

The preparation groups are the start of the assessment process and an opportunity for the participants to receive more in-depth information and to discuss the implications of fostering and 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.

Preparation groups run for five evening sessions. 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 training materials.

## **New foster carers and carers deregistered**

In the period 01.08.21 – 31.07.22, an additional two fostering households were approved as new foster carers. One household was approved as interim and one household as a short break foster carer.

Between 01.08.21 – 31.07.22, nine fostering households were deregistered for the following reasons:

- Five fostering household resigned due to a change in their personal circumstances.
- Three fostering households retired after many years and coming to the end of their fostering career.
- One fostering household retired to become a supported carer for the young person in their care.

## **Foster Carer Reviews**

Foster Carers have a review by the Fostering Panel at the end of their first year of fostering and every three years thereafter. Outwith this timescale, foster carers will also return to Panel if their registration requires a review due to a change in registration, consideration of a complaint or allegation, breakdown, or a significant change in circumstances.

Between 1.08.21 and 31.07.22 the Fostering and Adoption Panel reviewed 20 foster care households in addition to the two first year reviews (total 22).

Foster carer reviews are an opportunity for foster carers to talk about their experience, training, and support etc. Renfrewshire Council's foster carers, in the main expressed satisfaction with their experiences of fostering and their learning and remain enthusiastic and committed. They have found the support provided by their social worker to be beneficial and available as required. Foster carers have attended less training during this period as many do not find the virtual method conducive to their learning. (We have since reverted to face-to-face training).

Foster carers are internally reviewed on an annual basis, by Social Work Managers. The foster carers provide written and verbal contribution to the review process, as well as written reports from 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 and this year there has been a development with regards to birth parents being encouraged to submit a report for the Foster Carer Review regarding the care their child/children is receiving.

Within the reporting period, 55 Foster Carer Reviews took place in total including those at panel.

The duties of the supervising social workers from the fostering team are to keep regular contact with the foster carers, this includes home visits and telephone contact. Between January and May 2021 home visits were again suspended and all communication was virtual. Visits would generally take place on a four to six-weekly basis, depending on the issues arising. Contact and support was much more frequent during the pandemic. Home visits consist of supervision, training, and development, 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 include a minimum of two unannounced visits 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 child first moves to live with a foster carer and routinely thereafter.

## **Permanent Foster Carers**

Nine children's plans for Permanence Orders were approved between 1.08.21 - 31.07.22. Six of the children were liked to their current foster carers for the purpose of permanent fostering. These children remained with their carers who were re-assessed as permanent carers by the fostering team.

## **Foster carer training**

Changes to training provided to Renfrewshire Council foster carers had to be addressed due to the pandemic. The support provided to foster carers by their supervising social worker continued to address training needs and the development of skills etc.

The fostering service also provided mandatory training on fire safety, first aid and safer caring. Some of this training was disrupted by the pandemic. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service resumed fire safety training in June 2022 which will be offered on an ongoing basis and all carers will be expected to attend. West of Scotland College is to restart first aid training. Mandatory training should be updated every three years.

Social workers and foster carers can also attend external training courses. The Fostering Network and AFKA have provided training to new social workers within the Fostering and Adoption Team including Skills to Foster, the Role of the Supervising Social Worker and Assessment of foster carers and adopters. Staff have also attended other training relevant to their role.

### **Non-Violent Resistance Intervention**

Non-Violent Resistance (NVR), is an intervention to address children and young people's violent or controlling behaviours. It was developed by Haim Omer, a psychotherapist, academic researcher, and tenured professor of Psychology at Tel Aviv University. NVR is grounded in attachment theory and an understanding of the impact of early trauma. Within NVR, the target for change is the carer rather than the child.

### **Foster carers' NVR group April to June 2022**

Four households participated in this training. The children ranged between five and nine years with behaviour issues including violence at home, violence in school and difficulty with relationships.

The course input was tailored to the needs of foster carers and covered NVR principles, attachment theory, the impact of trauma on brain development and emotional regulation and the risk of Blocked Care (secondary trauma experienced by carers). NVR tools explored included encouraging self-awareness and self-care, understanding of the child's perspective in situations of control, de-escalatory techniques, techniques to maintain the connection between carer and child and the importance of actively using supports.

Numerous positive comments were received from carers who have used this intervention all of which felt it helped their situation with the child they were caring for.

NVR will remain a feature in the fostering service's role in supporting young people and their carers sustain stable family life and, in many cases, prevent breakdown.

### **Foster Carers' Support Group**

The foster carers have their own informal support group where they can share information/experiences and any issues raised within the group are fed back to the fostering team via the carers supervising social worker or the foster carers consultation group. This group had become a "What's App" group during the pandemic with active and ongoing communication. Some carers were keen to get back to a face-to-face group and this has taken place monthly over the past few months.

On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May the fostering service hosted a Foster Carer Day out. The location was Finlaystone House Country Park, and the event had a great response from our carers. 21 fostering households took part. It was fantastic to see a mix of foster children, carer's children and grandchildren, and the families of some of the fostering team mixing and enjoying the woodland, play equipment, den building and display of birds of prey. This was attended by the Head of Child Care and Justice and the Children's Service Manager. The feedback received



following the event from carers and workers alike has been hugely positive, making this an event we will be keen to repeat.

### **Consultation Group**

The Carers Consultation Group met four times between 01.08.21 and 31.07.22. These have all taken place virtually. All Foster Carers are invited to this group, and it is attended by the Senior Social Worker Fostering, the Service Manager and on two occasions the Registered Manager. This provides an opportunity for foster carers to be kept updated with any changes within the service and discuss any issues that have arisen for them or other carers. It is also the opportunity for more informal discussion. Feedback to carers who do not attend is through the newsletter, minutes, or discussion with their own Supervising Social Worker.

### **Breakthrough Group (group for children who live in foster care who create a newsletter, taking up issues and campaigns on matters that affect them)**

This group was originally set up in November 2015 as a participation group for children and young people in foster care. The group is run and facilitated by Renfrewshire Fostering Team and Who Cares? Scotland. This group meets monthly. The group produce a newsletter which is then sent out to all Renfrewshire children over eight years of age who are in foster care.

The group currently have and always maintained a group membership of around eight to 12 young people.

During the pandemic, the group continued virtually but in consultation with the young people and when allowed it gradually moved to face to face catch ups. Over the past year the group has had various local outings and activities including bowling, Christmas meal and local hikes up Glengiffer Braes and an Easter Egg Hunt.

Since March 2022 monthly meet ups have recommenced in local premises face to face.

In consultation with the young people, old and new members, the group have decided to develop their newsletter to online, interactive, communication which is more easily accessible to other young people.

### **Newsletter for Foster Carers**

The fostering newsletter is produced in Spring, Summer and Winter editions and distributed to all foster carers by e-mail. The focus of the newsletter is about providing the carers with updates on legal or practice changes that affect them or the children they care for, providing some thought provoking articles about issues that affect fostered children, keeping them informed of changes within the child care team, and advertising training opportunities. Topics covered in the last year include updates on the implications of 'The Promise', protocols for children who go missing from placement, preparing children for children's hearings, therapeutic life story work, the importance of play in child development and the meaning of care records for young people. Much of the inspiration for the topic choice comes from the Carers' Consultation Group, the CELCIS website and Council's Children's Services 'Learning gone viral' newsletter. The fostering quarterly newsletter continues to go out to all fostering households. Foster carers are encouraged to contribute to the newsletter in relation to their learning and experiences.

## **Future developments of the fostering service 2022 – 2023**

1. Book Group for foster carers.
2. Buddy system for foster carers.
3. Continuing professional development plan for carers training needs analysis.
4. Group for foster carers of teenagers.
5. Digitalisation of records/communication.
6. Links with LGBTQi.
7. Recruitment campaign with Fostering and disability team to develop focussed recruitment for children with disability.
8. All fostering and adoption staff team to become "Promise Keepers".
9. Develop therapeutic based transitions for children moving to permanence similar to adoption transitions.
10. Introduce support network meetings for applicants.
11. Calendar of events for foster carers and families.
12. Improve carer consultation both with fostering service and wider services.
13. Introduce Assessment Agreement with new applicants.
14. Continue to recruit foster carers on an annual basis.
15. Continue to develop specific training for foster carers and peer led workshops.
16. Continue to develop participation of young people in foster carers reviews.
17. Continue to work with neighbouring authorities regarding shared services and development days.
18. To support the Breakthrough Group in relation to increasing their membership.
19. To consult with children/young people of foster carers in relation to future support groups.
20. To improve the quality of information to children and their families about foster care.
21. Move towards electronic communication with carers by introduction of egress.
22. To involve carers in induction process for new social workers.
23. NVR groups to be offered more frequently.
24. Increase the number of support carers to reduce need for formal short breaks.
25. Offer evening training again which also includes support carers.

## **Report on the Supported Carer and Continuing Care Service**

Supported carers are carers who look after young adults (aged 18-21) who have remained in a foster placement on a continuing care basis. Most of our supported carers were previously the fosters carers for the child and transitioned to Supported Carers when the young person reached the age of 18.

The Service has one full time social worker and is managed by the Senior Social Worker in the fostering service and the registered manager is the Service Manager. Supported carer assessments are completed in advance of the young person turning 18 and are presented to Renfrewshire Council's Fostering Panel. Within the period 01.08.21 to 31.07.22 the Fostering Panel has approved 8 supported carers, 5 of whom were previously foster carers for Renfrewshire Council and 3 from Independent Fostering Agencies.

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 outcomes for young people who are in these placements remain overwhelmingly positive and are evidenced below.

The Service currently have 11 supported carers supporting 11 young people. Of the 11 young people in supported care, 8 attend college placements fulltime, 2 are attending university and 1 is in the final year of their secondary education.

4 placements were extended until the end of the academic year 2022 to minimise disruption and allow young people to complete their further education without disruption. This included a young person completing their degree at university and another completed the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of their nursing degree.

The Supported Carers Service now produces newsletters as an opportunity to promote the service, discuss legislative and operational changes and provide reading materials, relevant to their role.

5 of the carers attended a sexual health awareness training day delivered by an NHS sexual health specialist. The aims of the training to enhance carers knowledge of sexual health matters to allow them to support our young people to develop good sexual health.

The social worker in the Supported Care and Continuing Care service attends the quarterly STAF (Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum) which is a national gathering of equivalent services, where service delivery and development is shared and discussed.

### **Future Development of the Service**

Recruitment campaign, using the skills of some of our care experienced young people who will complete some photography work to help in the advertising campaign to recruit new carers.

### **Report on the Adoption Service**

#### **Developments within the adoption service in Renfrewshire 2021- 2022**

1. Distribution and development of a quarterly newsletter.
2. Continued development of the adoption support group and training opportunities for adoptive parents.
3. Developed extended family members' participation in the adoption assessment process.
4. Development of support to birth parents with regards to understanding the plan for their child and supporting a birth parent with letter box contact.
5. Developing further the skillset within the fostering and adoption service to work with foster carers and adopters using Thera play strategies to assist a child with the transition from foster carer to an adoptive family.
6. Continued work with Scottish Adoption Support Services (SAAS - Barnardo's) for young people, birth parents and adopters requiring additional support, where appropriate.
7. Continued work with Scottish Adoption Register/Link maker.
8. Continued work with colleagues in locality teams to raise the profile of the adoption service and to provide a clear understanding of the work being undertaken to ensure positive outcomes for children.

9. Developed specialist practice in the adoption service by working with our neighbouring authorities and social work services.

### **Recruitment, Preparation & Assessment of Adoptive Parents**

Within the reporting period the Adoption Service received 28 initial enquiries which is a significant increase from previous years. Of these 7 did not progress due to a range of issues. There have been 2 preparation groups held, in March/April 2022 and 6 households attended, and in May/June 2022 7 households attended. The feedback received was extremely positive, particularly in relation to guest speakers with lived experience and the interactive and visual experiences. As a service we will be reviewing our preparation group materials with a focus on co-facilitation with adoptive parents and the introduction of handouts and process flowcharts. We started preparation groups in November 2022 and 5 households attended these. We will follow up with a home visit in January 2023 when we will give them applications forms to them to apply to be assessed as adopters.

The Adoption service has received seven adoption applications and at the time of reporting three applications were pending. Three further applications withdrew. Two new adoptive applications were considered and approved at the Adoption panel. Feedback received about the adoption assessment has highlighted that although the process is lengthy there was recognition that the content and discussions although at time difficult are necessary in preparing for the next stages of the adoption journey. Over the course of the reporting period, assessment sessions have returned to face to face which has been welcomed by adoption applicants. The service has also created a new initial enquiry report template which is being piloted. There has been improvement work done on the support network meetings. For every assessment there will be a direct observation of adoption applicant's interactions with children.

Renfrewshire Council's Adoption service has continued to use Scotland's Adoption Register. Once applicants are approved as adopters their information and what age of child they have been approved for is added to the Register. Adoption social workers across Scotland are able to access this information should they be trying to place a child for adoption.

### **Family Finding**

There continues to be a need for adoptive parents for children of all ages particularly for brother and sister groups and older children. Nationally, there has been a reduction in the number of children being placed for adoption which has seen the average wait for a child identified for adoptive families' significantly increase. Consequently, there are a large number of adoptive parents on Scotland's Adoption Register.

Scotland's Adoption Register has reintroduced face to face Adoption Exchange days and Adoption Activity Days. The Register has continued to support practitioners in achieving permanence for children Scotland.

During the recording period, there has been active family finding for 4 children in Renfrewshire. Each has an adoptive family link identified, 3 of these children have been placed with their adoptive family.

### **The Adoption Register (Scotland)**

Scotland's Adoption Register continues to be a statutory service fully funded by the Scottish Government which provides a free service to support local authorities and voluntary agencies with family finding activity. The Adoption Register is where Adoptive families once approved

have their approval details registered. The Adoption Register is committed to facilitating social workers' overall goal of securing children's futures through moves to permanent families.

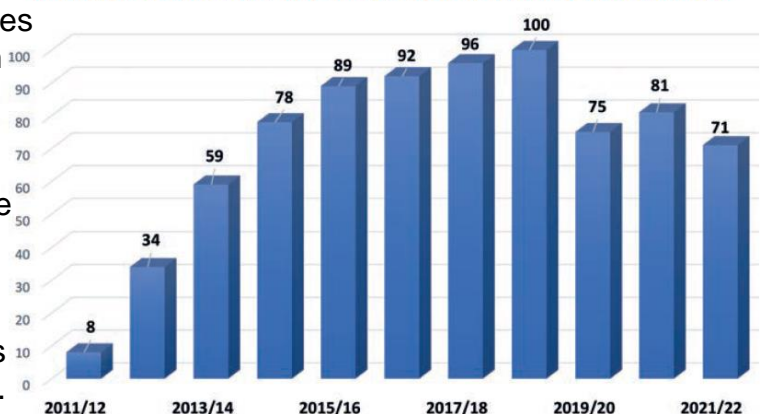
A total of 71 children were matched with adoptive families through the Scottish Adoption Register in 21/22.

The Register played an active role alongside AFKA Scotland and Adoption UK in the delivery of Adoption Week Scotland 2021 which explored the current face of adoption. Throughout the week there was a focus on recent developments that have had a positive impact on the adoption community, from a better understanding of early years trauma to new legislation around the rights of brothers and sisters. The Adoption Register is committed to The Promise Scotland in its encouragement and support for the recruitment of adoptive families for sibling groups, to keep brothers and sister together alongside promoting the importance of informing and preparing adoptive families to maintain relationships between brothers and sisters when they are living apart in addition to maintaining connections with their family of origin.

The Adoption Register also plays an active role in both the National Implementation Group and Short Life Working Group which the Senior Social Worker for Adoption in Renfrewshire is a part of. This group is addressing the requirements for a national response to ensuring that brothers and sisters benefit from the Staying Together and Connected programme arising from both the Promise and the positive changes to the Children (Scotland) Act 2020.

The Adoption Register continues to improve the process and to support adoption agencies in reducing delays in matching children with adoptive families.

**MATCHES MADE VIA THE REGISTER 2011-31ST MARCH 2022**



In the year 2020/21, matches rose again despite Covid-19, perhaps indicating a more confident approach to seeking permanence for children through adoption. The longer term impact of Covid-19 is being debated as having a major influence on the numbers of children coming to the Adoption Register.

It has impacted upon the ability of practitioners to carry out and complete assessments required to inform decision making for children's plans. However, there is a greater emphasis on keeping children within their wider families and communities resulting a large increase in the number of Kinship families across Scotland. This is likely to be correlated with the decrease in children's permanence plans involving adoption.

The trend for fewer adoptions in Scotland reflects the UK wide experience of lower numbers of children moving to adoptive families. Despite this, there continues to be a vital role played by the Adoption Registers in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. England is also returning to having a central service with its current focus on setting up their Adoption Register.

## GENDER

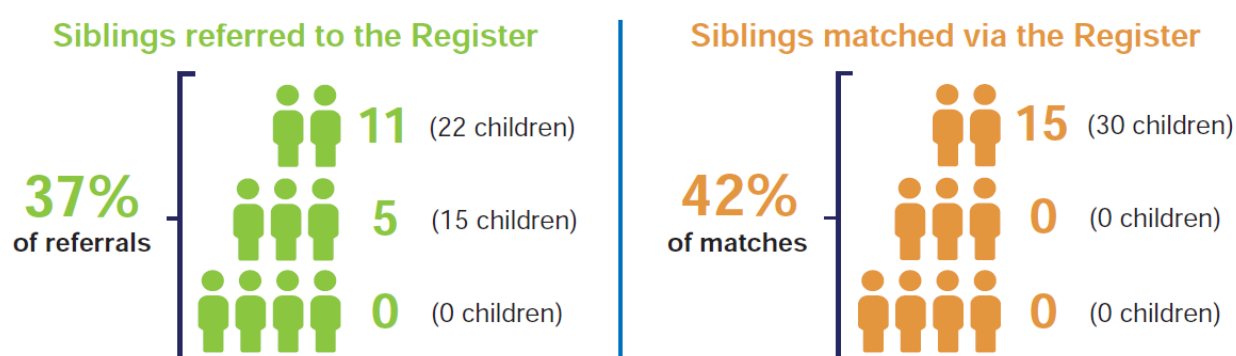
Of the 100 children referred to the Register in 21/22, 56 were girls and 44 were boys. This is the first time that more girls than boys have been referred to the Register since its inception in 2011. However, in a similar trend to last year's figures where 46% of referrals were girls, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of girls referred over the last two years. In 2018/19, only 35% of referrals were girls.

## ETHNICITY

92 (92%) were white (87 White Scottish) and (5 White English). 0 (0%) were from an Asian background. 6 (6%) were from a multi-ethnic background. 2 (2%) were from Black African background.

## SIBLINGS

**37%** of the children referred to the register in 2021/22 were part of a sibling group. This is a slight decrease from the **41%** last year. **42%** of the matches made in 2020/21 were sibling groups. This is a slightly lower percentage than the **48%** of matches made in the previous year (2019/20) but in line with an increasing trend of siblings being matched via the Register.



## Renfrewshire Adoption Plans and Links

During the period 01.08.2021 to 31.07.22, 6 children were presented to the Adoption Panel for consideration of their adoption plans and links. This is almost half of the number of adoption plans considered in the previous year. The 6 children presented included 2 children from a sibling group. In all cases the Agency Decision Maker accepted the panel's recommendations to approve the adoption plan and links between the child and their prospective adopters.

Renfrewshire Council make good use of the Scottish Adoption Register by way of Link maker and Adoption Exchange 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.

## Adoption Support Group

Over recent years it has been more challenging to reach out to adoptive families through the adoption support group due to covid restrictions and therefore we have seen a reduction in the number of adoptive families engaging in this support. Feedback would suggest that the virtual opportunities offered were not as helpful as face-to-face group. As 2022 has progressed the adoption support group has returned to being face to face. The support group met in April and in June and the families who attended enjoyed this. The men's adoption support group also met face to face on two occasions and was well attended. Most adopters who attend the group meet other adopters in similar situations and hear about strategies and tips for managing different situations. The group has also been the starting point for the development of friendships and informal supports.

A survey regarding adoption support was shared with our adoptive parents in January 2022 and the overwhelming message was for an increase in support groups and training opportunities for adoptive parents. We continue to offer all adoptive families access to training through Barnardos and we are keen to further develop the support and training offer through our service.

### **Adoption Support to Individual Families**

Throughout the year the adoption team have provided adoption support on an individual basis to 26 adoptive families who have approached the service for support, an increase on the previous year. Barnardo's Scottish Adoption Advice Service. (SAAS) also continues to offer support to Renfrewshire families. 44 children in 33 families received an adoptive allowance during the reporting period.

Post Adoption Support Planning meetings take place, for all children when an adoption order is granted to consider their support needs. During the last year there has been the introduction of an allocated social worker remaining with the adoptive parents for 1 year following the granting of an adoption order at which point the adoptive family are invited to a review meeting to consider any further adoption supports required.

Within Renfrewshire we have just under 70 adoptive families on our mailing list who receive our quarterly newsletter and notification of all support groups and training events.

### **Adoption Newsletter**

The adoption newsletter is produced 4 times per year. Within this newsletter useful articles for national adoption websites and organisations are included. Stories are encouraged from adopters on any issues they have experienced. The feedback received is that the recipients benefit from reading about other adopter's stories.

Also, as the adoption support service has increased over the years, the service has brought out various new leaflets, have summer activities with the children and support group feedback is usually included to encourage others to join. Each newsletter has an update on training information.

During the pandemic lots of useful articles were shared on adoption/parenting and young people's mental health which were current issues for many families.

### **Birth Relative Support**

The service has continued to support birth family members affected by adoption. The approach to this work is building direct relationships with birth parents over time to work together on maintaining a meaningful role in their child's lives or with their own recovery of losing a child through adoption. The service continues to offer support to birth families once the plan is made for their child/children to be adopted and recognise this support will be required at different stages of the adoption journey and should be available lifelong. Through advice and guidance, support is offered to birth family members to understand the process of their child being placed for adoption and work closely with them in order to gather information for the child's life story.

In January 2022, the adoption service made an application through the Corra Foundation to a fund set up by the Scottish Government to support birth parents who no longer have care of their children. In April 2022, Renfrewshire Council were awarded £50,000. This funding will be

predominantly used to fund a temporary social work assistant post for 1 year. We will have the new person in post in January 2023.

In May 2022, the Adoption team had a development session to consider the views and aims of service, the criteria and referral pathway and the project plan which will form the basis of the service proposal. A birth family members consultation will be undertaken in the coming year regarding the setup of the service which will add to the service proposal.

The service is also actively participating in the learning network set up through the Corra Foundation of all grant holders.

### **Letter Box Contact**

Letterbox contact provides contact between birth families and the adoptive parents or contact between siblings. The letterbox service can provide support in writing and replying to letters. Currently the letterbox service has a caseload of 115 which 71 are operational. Letterbox contact varies on an individual case basis, mostly contacts are annual, however we have some which are twice, three times or quarterly.

The service has now introduced individual support and offered electronic methods of letterbox to support some participants to engage via email. This has encouraged a high uptake of participants.

### **Future developments of the adoption service**

Over the next year the service intends to strengthen the adoption service by developing the following:

1. A focussed recruitment drive for adopters who may consider assessment for brothers and sisters as opposed to one child.
2. Further recruitment of new Fostering and Adoption Panel Members as required.
3. Increase opportunities of support groups to adoptive families and their children.
4. Develop work with birth families by offering direct support to all birth parents and birth family members including birth brothers and sisters who have been affected by the loss of a child through adoption.
5. Develop extended family member's participation in the adoption assessment process.
6. Highlight the importance of maintaining links through adoption during Adoption Week Scotland.
7. Development of joint work and training opportunities with neighbouring local authorities to share expertise.
8. Review and develop the criteria, process and procedures for adoption support needs assessment, adoption support plans and reviews.



## Conclusion

This report has highlighted the work of the Fostering, Adoption and Supported Carers Services and the work of the Fostering and Adoption Panel during August 2021-July 2022. The activity of the Fostering and Adoption Panel reflects the number of children unable to live with their birth families within Renfrewshire.

The Report highlights recovery measures that were in place using a hybrid model of both electronic platforms and direct work with foster carers and adopters, to ensure that children's plans were being progressed by the Fostering and Adoption Panel and that children's needs were been met. The Panel has now returned to being fully face to face.

The Fostering, Adoption and Supported Carers Services are committed to safeguarding children's lives in Renfrewshire and to continual improvement.

As the Registered Manager for the Fostering and Adoption Service, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our panel members for their commitment to Renfrewshire's most vulnerable children.

Foster Carers dedication to the children in their care means that we can ensure the best outcomes for them to a consistently high standard. We look forward to the coming year and to progressing our work with all partner agencies to continue to improve the outcomes and secure the future of Renfrewshire's most vulnerable children.

Clare Cuning  
Social Work Manager  
(Registered Manager of both services)

## **Appendix 1 Renfrewshire Council 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. Are in good health
3. Have a spare bedroom.

#### **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**

Applications 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.



**RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**

**FOSTERING AND ADOPTION PANEL**

**CONSTITUTION**

Updated – November 2022

**1. Title**

The Panel shall be known as the Fostering and Adoption Panel.

**2. Remit**

The Panel is generic and will deal with both fostering and adoption. Whilst both may be dealt with within the same sitting of the Panel, the business will be clearly defined, and separate minutes produced.

**3. Composition**

The panel membership shall consist of no less than six persons and Panel members should have knowledge and experience of the community it serves. The Panel shall include a qualified Medical Practitioner, preferably a paediatrician, who will act as a Medical Adviser; and a Solicitor or Advocate who will act as Legal Adviser. Other members should, where possible, include a foster carer or adopter, a current or previous childcare manager from Children's Services, an education officer such as a head teacher, a psychologist, an independent representative from a relevant childcare agency.

**4. Chair**

The panel shall be chaired by a senior manager from Children's Services, or an identified independent chairperson.

**5. Term of Office**

Apart from the Medical and Legal Advisers and the managers of the Fostering and Adoption team, panel members shall serve for a period of three years with an option of renewing after each three years. The need to ensure continuity and stability is balanced against the need to safeguard against complacency and to provide fresh perspectives. However, if natural wastage does not provide sufficient turnover of membership the membership of the panel will be reviewed in consultation with the Agency Decision Maker.

## **6. Duties of Panel Members.**

Panel members shall be expected to read all reports in advance of panel meetings and prepare questions they wish to have answered, with an indication of the information/evidence necessary to be sought to address this question.

Panel members are expected to give a clear view of their recommendation and their reasons.

Panel members shall have a duty of confidentiality and security towards all panel papers sent to them.

Panel members are required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure check prior to their initial term of office, and any subsequent period in office.

Panel members will be expected to attend at least 5 panel meetings in any one calendar year and to participate in training provided to assist them in carrying out their duties.

Panel members will be expected to attend bi-annual business meetings where issues arising over the previous period will be discussed, the minute of these meetings will be submitted to the Agency Decision Maker for approval.

Where the adoption agency is of the opinion that any member of the adoption and fostering panel is unsuitable or unable to remain as a member, it may terminate membership at any time by giving notice in writing with reasons.

## **7. Frequency of Meetings**

The Panel should meet at least once per month. If necessary extra meetings will be convened as required. At least **twice** per annum the panel shall hold a business meeting to review performance and debate general issues. An annual report will be provided for the Chief Social Work Officer and the appropriate Council Policy Board.

## **8. Reports**

All reports must be sent electronically to panel members at least five working days before the meeting date. All reports must be treated and secured confidentially.

Reports on children or young people where permanence is being considered, will be presented to the panel, providing the information required by statutory regulations. A photograph of the child may also be made available to the panel. Reports on applicants will also be presented, providing the information required by statutory regulations. A Linking Meeting minute will accompany these reports together with the original minute approving the applicants when a proposed placement is to be considered.

## **9. Decision Making**

Every effort will be made to reach a consensus on all recommendations. In the case of unresolved differences, a decision on the recommendation may be reached by a **majority** vote. The medical adviser, legal adviser and panel adviser will not have a vote. In the event of there not being a majority vote the chair will have a casting vote. The recommendation will then be passed to the Agency Decision Maker who has four options:

- a) To accept the recommendation
- b) To reject the recommendation
- c) To vary the recommendation
- d) To defer a decision for further work to be undertaken

## **10. Feedback**

A questionnaire will be issued to all those who attend the Panel. Feedback from questionnaires will be reported at the bi-annual business meetings.

## **Adoption panels**

Where the panel sits as an adoption panel, the following conditions shall apply

### **1. Quorum**

When the panel is sitting as an adoption panel, a quorum shall consist of no less than three persons, excluding the medical, legal and panel advisers.

Where the panel is considering the adoption of a child, the panel must obtain a written assessment of the child's health from the doctor who carried out a medical examination (or from the agency's medical adviser of the child).

Where the panel is considering the adoption of a child, there must be a legal adviser present at the panel when the recommendation is made or written legal advice has been provided to the panel by the legal adviser.

### **2. Functions**

The purpose of the Panel is to carry out the functions set out in the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009. The panel should ensure that the quality of assessment in relation to the case of every child being considered and the case of every prospective adopter being considered is of the highest quality. Panel will have the option to defer a case if they are of the view the paperwork provided is not sufficient to support a recommendation. Panel will provide feedback on the quality of paperwork and presentation through the Panel adviser, **who will then provide constructive feedback to the social worker.**

- (1) The adoption panel must consider–
  - (a) the case of every child.
  - (b) every proposed placement; and
  - (c) the case of each prospective adopter, referred to it by the adoption agency.
- (2) The adoption panel must make recommendations on the following matters: –
  - (a) whether adoption is in the best interests of the child.
  - (b) whether an application for a permanence order granting authority for the child to be adopted should be made.
  - (c) whether a prospective adopter is suitable or continues to be suitable to be an adoptive parent.



- (d) whether a prospective adopter would be a suitable adoptive parent for a particular child.
  - (e) whether adoption allowances or other financial assistance should be made available to adopters **at the time of placement or thereafter**.
  - (f) the circumstances of all children in respect of whom a permanence order with authority to adopt has been granted, but who have not been placed for adoption within 6 months from the making of the order.
  - (g) The review of approved adoptive carers who have not had a child placed with them 12 months after approval; and
  - (h) any other matter referred to the adoption panel which is relevant to the adoption agency's functions under the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.
- (3) Before an adoption panel recommends that adoption is in the best interests of the child, it must consider all alternatives to adoption which will be recorded within the minute of the Panel.
- (4) The adoption panel should always consider current and proposed future **family** contact arrangements and a clear rationale recorded as to why it is or is not in the child's best interests.
- (5) Before making a recommendation whether a prospective adopter would be a suitable adoptive parent for a particular child, the adoption panel must—
- (a) at the meeting of the panel at which the recommendation is to be made, be satisfied that adoption is in the best interests of the child; or
  - (b) be satisfied that an adoption agency decision has been made that adoption is in the best interests of the child; and
  - (c) in either case—
    - (i) at the meeting of the panel at which the recommendation is to be made, recommend that the prospective adopter is suitable to be an adoptive parent; or
    - (ii) be satisfied that an adoption agency decision has been made that the prospective adopter is suitable to be an adoptive parent.
- (6) In carrying out its functions, the adoption panel must have regard to—
- (a) the duties imposed on the adoption agency by section 14 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.
  - (b) all the information and reports passed to it.
  - (c) any other information which may be provided to it on request; and
  - (d) where appropriate, any legal advice in relation to each case.

### **3. Attendance at Panels**

- (1) Where applicants are being considered as adopters or their approval as adopters is being reviewed where no placement has been made within 12 months of being approved, their Social Worker will present their application. The applicants will also be invited to participate in the discussion to provide clarification, answer questions and give their views of the process. An opportunity for applicants to ask questions will also be provided. The Social Worker and the applicants may then be asked to leave the room while panel members discuss the application.
- (2) Where adoption for a child is being considered, the presenting Social Worker for the child will attend the Panel to present the case for permanence. When a proposed adoptive placement is being considered, the Social Worker for the prospective adopter (s) will also attend the discussion. The prospective adopter(s) will also be invited to participate in the discussion to provide clarification, answer members' questions and give their view of the process. An opportunity for the prospective adopters to ask questions will also be provided. Social Workers and the prospective adopters may then be asked to leave the room while panel members discuss the application.
- (3) Children or young people may attend the panel with their social worker if this is considered by the worker and their supervisor to be beneficial to the child / young person. In such cases the child / young person will join the meeting after the initial discussion between panel members and the social worker and will leave while the panel reaches its decision on the final recommendation. In other situations, the child / young person may wish to submit their views in writing or by other means for example, meeting with the panel chair and a panel member out with the panel meeting.
- (4) Birth parents will be given the opportunity to advise the adoption panel of their views regarding the proposed application for adoption of their child. These views may be given in writing or may be given to a panel member, or members, and/ or panel adviser at a meeting before the adoption panel meeting, depending on the individual circumstances of the case.
- (5) Observers may attend the panel subject to prior agreement with the Panel Chair.

### **4. Minutes**

A Minute taker shall be provided to take minutes of the meeting which will be typed and forwarded to the chair within five working days. The chair will return the minutes with any

amendments within four working days in order that the agency decision maker can consider the panel recommendations, decide, and appropriate notifications can be sent out within the required time scales. The Agency Decision Maker must decide within fourteen days of the panel recommendation; and must give notification of that decision within seven days to the individuals specified in the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

## **5. Review**

Where a prospective adopter has, within 28 days of receiving the decision from the Agency Decision Maker, requested a review of the decision, the matter must be referred to the adoption panel for a recommendation.

- (1) The referral must be made to a differently constituted adoption panel.
- (2) Where a referral for a review is made the adoption panel must be provided with—
  - (a) a copy of the original decision and reasons for it;
  - (b) The report provided to the adoption panel who made the initial recommendation
  - (c) any representations received by the adoption agency from the prospective adopter; and
  - (d) any other relevant information.
- (3) The adoption panel must consider the case referred to it and make a fresh recommendation to the adoption agency as to whether the prospective adopter is suitable to be an adoptive parent.
- (4) The adoption agency must—
  - (a) decide (the “reviewed decision”) within 14 days of the date the fresh recommendation was made: and
  - (b) notify the prospective adopter of its reviewed decision within 7 days of making the reviewed decision.
- (5) Where the reviewed decision is that the prospective adopter is not suitable to be an adoptive parent the notification must—
  - (a) state the reasons for the reviewed decision; and
  - (b) where the adoption panel's fresh recommendation was that the prospective adopter was suitable to be an adoptive parent, include a copy of the adoption panel's fresh recommendation.
- (6) for the avoidance of doubt, a review panel may be a panel from another local authority

## **Fostering**

Where the panel sits as a fostering panel, the following conditions will apply; -

### **1. Quorum**

In relation to fostering a quorum shall consist of three people, excluding the legal, medical and panel advisers

Where the panel is considering a permanence order for a child, it is recommended that a legal adviser be present at the meeting where the recommendation is made, or that written legal advice is provided to the fostering panel.

### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of the panel is to carry out the functions set out in the Looked after Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

The fostering panel must make recommendations on the following matters: –

- (a) whether a prospective foster carer is suitable to be a foster carer.
- (b) whether a foster carer continues to be suitable to be a foster carer. Such reviews should be carried out at a frequency no less than that provided for in the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009

On such a review of the approval of the foster carer the local authority may–

- (i) vary the terms of the approval.
- (ii) terminate the approval; or
- (iii) confirm the decision to approve a person as a foster carer.
- (c) whether a prospective foster carer would be a suitable foster carer for–
  - (i) a particular child or children.
  - (ii) any child.
- (d) the maximum number of children a particular foster carer may have in their care at any one time
- (e) whether an application for a permanence order should be made in respect of a particular child
- (f) whether a particular child should be linked with a particular foster carer or carers for the purposes of permanent fostering
- (g) whether a particular person is suitable to be a foster carer providing a continuing care placement
- (h) whether a particular person is suitable to be a supported carer.

- (i) whether a particular person is suitable to be a supported carer for a particular young person or persons.
- (j) any other matter on which it is asked to give a recommendation

In carrying out its functions the fostering panel must have regard to—

- (a) The duties imposed on the local authority by section 17(1) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- (b) all the information and reports passed to it.

### **3. Attendance**

- (a) Where applicants are being considered as foster carers or supported carers, or where the registration of existing foster carers or supported carers is being reviewed, their Social Worker will present their applications. The applicants will also be invited to participate in the discussion to provide clarification, answer questions and give their views of the process. An opportunity for applicants to ask questions will also be provided. The Social Worker and the applicants may then be asked to leave the room while panel members discuss the application.
- (b) Where a permanence order for a child is being considered, the presenting Social Worker for the child shall attend the Panel to present the case for permanence. When it is proposed that a child be linked with foster carers, for the purposes of permanent fostering, the Social Worker for the foster carers will also attend the discussion. The foster carers will also be invited to participate in the discussion to provide clarification, answer members' questions and give their view of the process. An opportunity for the foster carers to ask questions will also be provided. Social Workers and the foster carers may then be asked to leave the room while panel members discuss the application.
- (c) Where the panel is considering de-registering foster carers, the foster carers will receive a copy of the social worker's written report at least two weeks before the hearing. They will have the opportunity to provide their own written submissions, which should be received by the panel chair at least one week before the hearing. The format of the hearing will be agreed beforehand by the chair and panel members. The foster carers will have the opportunity to be present to hear the report of the social worker and will then present their own case to the panel. The procedure will ensure that all parties have a fair hearing and that the process is seen to be transparent and fair to all parties.

- (d) Children or young people may attend the panel with their social worker if this is considered by the worker and their supervisor to be beneficial to the child / young person. In such cases the child / young person will join the meeting after the initial discussion between panel members and the social worker and will leave while the panel reaches its decision on the final recommendation. In other situations, the child / young person may wish to submit their views in writing or by other means for example, meeting with the panel chair and a panel member out with the panel meeting.
- (e) Birth parents will be given the opportunity to advise the fostering panel of their views regarding the proposed application for adoption of their child. These views may be given in writing or may be given to a panel member, or members, and/ or panel adviser at a meeting before the adoption panel meeting, depending on the individual circumstances of the case.
- (f) Observers may attend the panel subject to prior agreement with the Panel Chair.

#### **4. Minutes**

A minute taker shall be provided to take minutes of the meeting which will be typed and forwarded to the chair within five working days. The chair will return the minutes with any amendments within four working days in order that the agency decision maker can consider the panel recommendations, decide, and appropriate notification can be sent out within the required time scales. The agency decision maker must decide within fourteen days of the panel recommendations

#### **5. Review**

- (1) Where a local authority decides–
  - (a) not to approve a person as a foster carer or supported carer.
  - (b) to vary the terms of approval of a foster carer or supported carer; or
  - (c) to terminate the approval of a foster carer or supported carer,that person may request a review of the decision in terms of the Looked after Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- (2) A request for a review must be made within 28 days of receiving the decision of the agency decision maker.
- (3) Where the local authority receives a request for a review, the matter must be referred to a differently constituted panel.

- (4) Where a review is requested, the local authority must provide the differently constituted fostering panel with–
  - (a) a copy of the original decision and reasons made.
  - (b) the information provided to the fostering panel who made the original recommendation.
  - (c) any further representations received by the local authority from the foster carer, supported carer, prospective foster carer, or prospective supported carer; and
  - (d) any other relevant information.
- (5) The fostering panel shall consider the case referred to it and make a fresh recommendation to the local authority.
- (6) In making a recommendation, the panel may recommend that the local authority–
  - (a) vary the terms of the approval.
  - (b) terminate the approval; or
  - (c) approve a person as a foster carer.
  - (d) approve a person as a supported carer

## 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 good health to care for children. A full medical will be undertaken during the assessment process and recorded by their GP on Form AH1. Thereafter year one and four an AH2 should be completed by GP. Year 7 should again be a full medical and AH1 and then the process repeats. In the intervening years carers should complete a medical self-assessment form. If

there are any health concerns a full medical assessment can be undertaken out with the above timescales.

- 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 need, 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](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://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 is the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

## **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 £395.46 per week. This payment is made up of two elements, a fee of £269.60 and an allowance per child of £125.86, 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., £56.49 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.

## **2. Other payments**

2.1 A start up clothing grant will be provided for every child being accommodated from the community. With an additional payment made for children of school age where school uniform is required.

2.2 Mileage incurred in any one return journey to be paid at the casual users' rate for journeys such as the following:

- i. Medical and dental appointments that are above a routine level. I.e., where a child has a medical issue that requires additional medical appointments.
- ii. Attendance at child protection planning meetings, looked after meetings, children's hearings, and other meetings.
- iii. Attendance at foster carer training.
- iv. Travel during the period of introduction to a child, or where carers are involved in moving children to a new home,
- v. Assisting with family time.
- vi. Travel to and from nursery or school if the school is out with the carer's catchment area.

## **3. DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS**

3.1 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;

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- Exceptional payment for specialist items of equipment required.
- 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;
  - I. more than 5 people need transported on a regular basis
  - II. there are two or more foster children in placement
  - III. 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.

3.2 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.

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

3.4 All payments will be routinely reviewed by The Head of Service and changes made if required.

#### **4. EXPECTATIONS OF CARERS BY RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL:**

4.1 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.

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

#### **5.0 CARERS AVAILABILITY FOR CARING FOR CHILDREN**

5.1 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.

5.2 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: .....