

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**Lifelong Learning Committee - 29 May 2013****UPDATE ON FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENTS****Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report records the progress to date of Foster Carer recruitment since the introduction of Level 4 fees in April 2012 (Report 12/3 refers). The Committee requested an update on the introduction of Level 4 fees after 1 year. Level 4 fees are paid specifically to carers who are providing placements for young people aged 12 years and over, who are being accommodated in the community. This was introduced to enable the service to respond effectively to the challenges of providing high quality local placements for teenagers by attracting new Foster Carers and reducing demand for external placements.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 In January 2012 (Report 12/3 refers, the Lifelong Learning Committee approved the introduction of Level 4 fees and requested an update after one year.
- 1.2 Children require to be accommodated or placed in a variety of different settings, from secure care to foster care. For most children, skilled carers are available locally, offering secure temporary placements where required and a route to permanent placements away from home for our most vulnerable children. This approach is in line with the principles of 'Getting It Right for Every Child' GIRFEC, to ensure the needs of each child are met. The benefits of placing a child locally is acknowledged as good practice to ensure support and local contacts, which are important to the child or young person, are maintained.
- 1.3 Within Perth & Kinross the number of children and young people becoming looked after has increased year on year for the past several years. At the end of March 2013, there were 181 children and young people looked after in Perth and Kinross. Within Fostering Services there has been an increase in placements of 15.2% between March 2012 and 2013, and a corresponding decrease of external fostering placements of 6.6% (appendix 1).
- 1.4 In total, for all ages, there are 64 sets of registered Foster Carers in Perth and Kinross, providing placements for 76 children and young people. This is the highest number Perth and Kinross have ever had.
- 1.5 Over the past several years there has been an increasing growth in the number of foster carers who were registered with Independent Fostering Providers and were willing to offer placements to teenagers. The cost of

independent fostering placements are significantly higher rates than those previously paid in Perth & Kinross. This has encouraged foster carers to view fostering as an alternative to employment.

- 1.6 Despite previous widespread campaigns, Perth and Kinross was unable to offer the competitive remuneration levels required to attract carers for “harder to place” teenagers. To address this it was agreed by Lifelong Learning Committee in January 2012 (Report 12/3 refers) that an enhanced Level 4 payment would be introduced from April 2012.
- 1.7 This created a Level 4 payment incentive to recruit carers, rather than to rely on more expensive external providers to specifically meet the high level of need identified, for young people over the age of 12 years. These children would be accommodated directly from their family or other local provision.
- 1.8 Ongoing recruitment has resulted in 3 new Level 4 carers being recruited in 2012/13. In total there are now 12 Level 4 Carers who provide a total of 25 Level 4 placements for Perth and Kinross children, and one Level 4 placement for a Fife Council child. Two sets of carers are due to complete their assessment and go to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for approval by mid 2013, and will provide a further 3 placements between them.
- 1.9 During 2012 we were able to bring back 2 young people to local Level 4 carers, and despite the accommodating the 15.2% increased demand on the service as a whole, external placements have reduced from 15 to 14.
- 1.10 As per the original proposal in January 2012, children and young people who have been placed permanently with external foster carers will remain with their carers until independence. This accounts for 11 out of the 14 external placements. Of the remaining 3, one young person is moving on to independence this year; the other two carers will be approached with a view to transferring as permanent carers for these children, to Perth & Kinross Council. Each new placement saves the Council approximately £43,000.
- 1.11 Scotland Excel (the “Lead Commissioning Authority”) is the Centre of Procurement Expertise for Scotland’s local government sector, putting in place national contracts on behalf of local authorities in Scotland. In March 2013, following a procurement exercise, Scotland Excel established a framework agreement for foster care placements in Scotland. Through this framework local authorities (“Purchasers”) are able to purchase fostering placements for children from independent and voluntary fostering providers (“Providers”) for an “Agreed Fee” and under agreed terms and conditions.
- 1.12 Research has shown that ‘looked after’ young people who remain in a stable placement over the age of 16 have better life chances. Of the eleven young people in external permanent placements, 3 are already 16, and one will be 16 this year. To date all four have indicated that they will remain in their placement. This is a positive outcome for the young person. In addition, there are a further 10 young people cared for by Perth and Kinross Carers over the age of 16 years.
- 1.13 Recruitment is an ongoing process throughout the year, at local events, concerts and fairs. However recent national research has indicated that ‘word of mouth’ recruitment by Foster Carers is one of the most successful

approaches. Opportunities already exist for people interested in fostering to meet foster carers, but opportunities for wider use of this approach will be explored - for example 'open days' to meet foster carers.

- 1.14 In addition, a specific recruitment drive was undertaken in November 2012 to coincide with National Fostering and Adoption Week, followed by a feature in the Perth and Kinross News in December 2012. Fostering opportunities in Perth and Kinross are visible on PRI Patient Screens. It is hoped that such activity will continue to encourage more people to come forward and express an interest in fostering.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The challenges of teenage placements continue, and although we have managed to attract applicants for respite and permanent carers for teenagers, we still continue to require full time placements to match the continuing increase in demand.
- 2.2 It is proposed that the regular on going programme of activity to recruit carers continues, utilising local events and partner contacts, with the emphasis on carers for teenagers. This is recognised as a more successful long term strategy as most potential carers consider their decision to apply over a long period before completing their application.
- 2.3 A refreshed Communication and Recruitment strategy is being drawn up by the Family Placement Team to reflect this work which will be monitored by the Children and Families Management Team.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 To date 3 new Level 4 carers have been recruited. These Carers can accommodate 7 young people in total:
- 1 respite
 - 3 permanent placements
 - 3 temporary placements
- 3.2 All of the new placements are in use. These placements would have cost on average £850 per week if an Independent Fostering Agency had been required. Current payments for Perth and Kinross Level 4 Carers are £270 per week.
- 3.3 The new carers were existing carers who have been assessed and accepted as Level 4 carers by Perth and Kinross Permanence Panel.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Foster Care continues to be a competitive market with the growth of Independent Fostering Providers who are able to pay considerably more to their carers than local authorities.

- 4.2 The introduction of the Level 4 scheme with increased rates has improved Perth and Kinross's competitiveness in recruiting carers, as well as rewarding and retaining current carers who are caring for our most complex and challenging group of young people.
- 4.3 Further annual analysis of recruitment will be ongoing to monitor both new carer numbers in general and Level 4 carers in particular. This monitoring also covers retention of current carers.
- 4.4 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (i) Notes the progress in recruiting and retaining Level 4 Carers to date; and
 - (ii) Remits the Executive Director (Education & Children's Services) to oversee the overview of Foster Care Level 4 recruitment to Education & Children's Services Senior Management Team.

Author(s)

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Caroline Mackie	Service Manager, Looked after Children	01738 476319 CLMackie@pkc.gov.uk

Approved

Name	Designation	Signature
John Fyffe	Executive Director	John Fyffe
Date 31 March 2013		

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ANNEX

1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The undernoted table should be completed for all reports. Where the answer is 'yes', the relevant section(s) should also be completed

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	None
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Corporate Plan

1.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service Level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:-

(ii) Healthy, Caring Communities

This report relates to Objective No (ii).

1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area:

- Maximising Resources

2. Resource Implications

2.1 The financial implications of this paper will be met from within the ECS revenue budget.

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Legal and Governance

N/A

4. Risk

4.1 N/A.

5. Consultation

Internal

5.1 Head of Service Children and Families Services; Head of Finance ECS; and across Education and Children's Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

5.2 N/A

6. Communication

6.1 N/A

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Fostering Figures

FOSTERING FIGURES (AS AT 31 MARCH 2013)

	Mar 12	Mar 13	% +/-
With Friends / Relatives (kinship care)	58	66	13.8%
With Foster Carers provided by LA	66	76	15.2%
With Foster Carers purchased by LA	15*	14*	-6.6%
With prospective adopters	4	7	75.0%
In other community	0	1	100%
In local authority home	3	3	0%
In residential school	7	6	- 14.2%
Crisis care	0	0	0%
In other residential	5	8	60.0%
In secure accommodation	2	0	- 100%
TOTAL	160	181	

*please note these figures are a snap shot as at end of March 12/13

