

APPENDIX 1

ANGUS COUNCIL SKILLS BASED FOSTERING SCHEME

1. Context

- 1.1 Angus Council Fostering Skills Based Scheme incorporates three tiers of fee, designed to reflect the increasing skills, expertise and experience which carers will gain as they develop their fostering careers. It also sets out the increasing expectations of what carers will bring to the fostering task at each level. The principle aim of the scheme is to increase the skills-base of our in-house fostering resources.
- 1.2 Progression through the scheme is by evidencing the carers' competence to meet the criteria and will be reviewed by the Skills Level Forum. Carers are able to move both up and down the levels within the scheme. Fee payments are made in addition to the basic age-related fostering allowances.

2. Eligibility Criteria

- 2.1 At each level of the scheme, there are criteria and requirements of carers that are a gateway to the more detailed assessment of skills and competences expected at this level. The eligibility criteria details skills to be evidenced by carers at each level; including skills around meeting the needs of children; work with parents and professionals; and supporting children with a range of needs and issues.
- 2.2 The eligibility criteria in relation to experience, attendance at training and support groups can be met by the registered foster carer/s within a household. The focus of the competence assessment will be more concerned with the primary carer, but should cover the skills and competences within the whole fostering household. The carer is expected to evidence the competencies in workbooks and reflective logs which are reviewed by the supervising social worker and an assessment will be presented to the skills level forum for review.

3. Fostering Experience

- 3.1 Eligibility for levels 2 or 3 within the scheme is dependent on direct fostering experience. This will have been gained through fostering, either for Angus Council or another agency or authority. If carers are transferring from another authority or service, a full assessment will be completed which means that carers joining Angus with previous fostering experience and who meet the other eligibility requirements, could commence their fostering career with Angus Council at level 2 or 3.

4. Training

4.1 Foster Carers, both primary and secondary carers, will be expected to complete a programme of mandatory carer training within three years of approval and again every 3 years. There is a foster carer training calendar which outlines the training required and training is delivered in partnership with Barnardos, Dundee City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to maximise the availability of each course. There are seven core courses:

- Attachment;
- Child Protection and safeguarding;
- Managing Behaviour;
- First Aid;
- Internet safety;
- Child Development;
- Men in Foster Care – men only

5. Written Records

5.1 Angus Council has record-keeping guidance relating to foster carers. Carers at all levels are expected to keep written records in accordance with this guidance. Training on record-keeping is provided at pre-approval stage.

6. Skills Levels

6.1 Skills Level 1 Summary

i) Level 1 carers are those carers who have been approved by the Fostering Panel. All level 1 carers are supported to develop the competences appropriate to the basic fostering task.

6.2 Training

i) The three year timescale within which carers must complete the mandatory carer training programme begins on the date of approval. Carers are expected to attend training that has been identified and agreed as relevant to their individual needs and the needs of the child/ren they are caring for. Carers will be encouraged to attend support groups agreed with their supervising social worker as relevant to their development needs. Skills development will be supported by the supervision and annual review process.

ii) Carers will complete a minimum of two reflective logs per year supported by the service.

- iii) Carers will be expected to complete a minimum of 20 hours training within a review year which can consist of reading, online training, research via internet or other agreed methods.
- iv) The skills and requirements at this level are considered 'core' to the fostering task.
- v) Where carers meet the criteria for level 2 within the scheme, they are eligible to be considered for a move to level 2. Progression to another level must be approved by the Skills Level Forum.

6.3 Carer Review

- i) All carers will be reviewed annually. If carers are not meeting the agreed criteria, an action plan with timescales for review and completion will be put in place. If this does not lead to the improvement required to meet the criteria, a report would be submitted to the Fostering Panel for review and consideration as to whether the carers should be deregistered.

6.4 Skills Level 2 Summary

- i) Level 2 carers will have been approved foster carers for at least two years.
- ii) As well as working with the child/young person and their family, level 2 foster carers play an important role in the Family Placement Service through supporting the development of other foster carers where appropriate.
- iii) The criteria for level 2 carers reflect the level of experience and training necessary to develop and demonstrate the competence required at this level.

6.5 Training

- i) Level 2 carers are expected to take an active role in the development of their skills through attendance at training and support groups. Their development is supported through the supervision and annual review process.
- ii) Carers must complete the mandatory carer training programme within three years of becoming a foster carer and repeat within the next three year cycle. Carers will also complete any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently identified jointly through supervision or annual review (with attendance evidenced in their individual training portfolio)
- iii) Carers will be expected to complete a minimum of 25 hours training within each review year.
- iv) Carers will complete a minimum of four reflective logs per year supported by the service.

- v) Carers attend a minimum of two support groups or Foster Carer Consultation Group meetings per year.
- vi) Level 2 Carers are able and willing to contribute to the work of the Family Placement Team e.g. recruitment activity, helping to run training and support groups.
- vii) Level 2 Carers are able and willing to act as buddies to less experienced carers.
- viii) Where they meet the criteria for Level 3 within the scheme, they are eligible to be considered for a move to Level 3. Progression to another level must be approved by the Skills Level Forum.

6.6 Review

- i) The annual review will provide an opportunity for carers, together with their supervising social worker, to identify any particular strength, but also any areas for further development or requiring particular attention. Where carers have not completed the mandatory carer training programme within three years of approval, a recommendation will be made to move the carer to Level 1.

6.7 Skills Level 3 Summary

- i) Level 3 carers will have a minimum of three years experience of fostering experience.
- ii) Level 3 carers are experienced and skilled foster carers who provide placements to a child or young person who has undergone significant neglect or trauma, and would benefit greatly from experienced and skilled carers who show capacity and willingness to provide placements for children who display challenging behaviour. There is recognition that due to the skills of the carer, children's behaviours may settle over time and it is also recognised that advanced skills are needed to maintain and improve the circumstances of such children. An improvement in children's behaviour will not lead to a change in the skills Level.
- iii) There will be no more than two children/young people placed with a Level 3 foster family at any time (unless siblings) and often singleton placements will be required.
- iv) Carers approved for two children will be compensated for providing these singleton placements by receiving the second fee for the duration of the child's placement or until it is agreed that a singleton placement is no longer required as part of the child's plan.

- v) The main carer will have no other work commitments and will be available to meet the needs of children placed 24 hours a day.
- vi) The main carer is expected not to have other child care commitments that conflict with the fostering task.

6.8 Training

- i) Level 3 carers will have completed the mandatory carer training programme.
- ii) Carers will complete any training jointly identified through supervision or annual review (with attendance evidenced in their individual training portfolio) and demonstrate an active role in their learning and development.
- iii) Carers will complete a minimum of six reflective logs to maintain Level 3 status.
- iv) Carers will be expected to complete a minimum of 30 hours training within a review year.
- v) Carers attend a minimum of four support groups or Foster Carer Consultative Group meetings per year.

6.9 Review

- i) The annual review will provide an opportunity for carers and their supervising social worker to identify any strengths and areas for further development. Where Level 2 and 3 carers have not completed the mandatory carer training programme within three years of approval, a recommendation will be made to move the carer to the appropriate level within the scheme.
- ii) Where carers are not meeting the requirements of Level 3 carers, a recommendation will be made to move the carer to level 2 at their annual review. Any change of level will be approved by the Skills Level Forum.

6.10 Respite Carers Summary

- i) Respite carers play an important role within the family placement team by offering respite to foster carers enabling them to take their annual leave as well as undertaking respite to children coming from home in order to support the family and allow the children to remain in the family home. Respite carers will commence at Level 1 following approval by the Fostering Panel.

- i) **Training**
- ii) Respite carers will be required to complete the mandatory training programme over a three year period and additional training that will be set out in their development plan. Additional training can include reading, online training, research via internet or other agreed methods. Any additional training will be relevant to the carer's agreed needs and the needs of the children they support.
- iii) Skills development will be supported by supervision and annual review process.
- iv) Respite carers will complete a minimum of one respite evidence reporting workbook every four months.
- v) Respite carers will complete a minimum of a minimum of two reflective logs per year.
- vi) Respite carers will be encouraged to attend respite support groups.

6.11 Review

- i) The annual review will provide an opportunity for carers and their supervising social worker to identify any strengths and areas for further development. Respite carers will have the opportunity to progress to Level 2 and 3. The carer will have met the Level 2 and 3 competency requirements (see Level 2 and 3 criteria). Progression to another level must be approved by the Skills Level Forum.

7 Enhancement

- 7.1 Carers who provide a placement for a child being discharged from residential/secure care, or who are prevented from being admitted to such a placement, will receive an additional payment of £250 per week, during the placement. The payment will be at the discretion of the area manager and will be paid on a pro-rata basis to any carer providing respite meeting the criteria. Eligibility for this payment will be reviewed on a three monthly basis by the area manager.

8 Skills Level Forum

- 8.1 The Forum will comprise of an area manager, a team manager and another council representative. The Forum will review any requests presented, minimally on a quarterly basis, but will have the capacity to meet more frequently if the need arises.

- 8.2 The Forum will consider any proposed changes to the carer's skills level. The Forum will be provided with the carer's evidence portfolio and a recommendation report from the supervising social worker. All paperwork must be submitted 14 days before the date of the Forum.
- 8.3 Carers and their supervising social worker will be invited to meet with the members of the Forum to discuss the request to change level.
- 8.4 Carers will be notified of the outcome of the Forum within 14 days. Decisions will be confirmed in writing.
- 8.5 If a carer is dissatisfied with the decision of the Skills Level Forum they can appeal this decision in writing to Service Manager, Children, Families and Criminal Justice Services with 14 days.
- 8.6 The Fostering Panel's role is to determine whether carers are approved and to remain registered as foster carers.

9 Glossary of Terms

- 9.1 **Primary carer** – the carer who provides the majority of the day to day care of the child or young person, and who attends most meetings. Where the care is shared evenly, carers can nominate which of them is the primary carer. The primary carer will receive the payments for fostering.
- 9.2 **Secondary carer** – the partner or spouse of the primary carer
- 9.3 **Significant neglect** – where it has been recognised that the neglect has led to serious impairment of health and development, long-term difficulties with social functioning, relationships and educational progress. This impairment should be recognised by the child's social worker and recorded within the child's plan.
- 9.4 **Challenging Behaviour** - Challenging behaviour is a term used to describe those behaviours that threaten the quality of life and/or physical safety of an individual or others.
- 9.5 **Work Commitments** – Any paid or voluntary work
- 9.6 **Other Childcare Commitments** – Any responsibility to provide care for birth children, other family members or friends which could conflict with the fostering task

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