

Information Pack for Prospective Carers



Perth & Kinross Council's Education & Children's Services has an urgent need to recruit more carers. Different types of carers are needed to support children and young people who, through a range of circumstances, may not be able to lead a normal family life with their own parents or relatives.

This pack contains useful information for anyone who is interested in caring for children and young people in Perth and Kinross. Fostering, adoption, respite care and other schemes are outlined in the pack. Information is also included on the process of becoming a carer; ongoing support and training that the Council will offer to carers, including fees and allowances; our contact details and those of other fostering and adoption organisations, and details of further reading and websites related to foster and adoptive care.

If you feel you could give a child or young person a safe, secure family environment, whether for a few days, a few months, or more permanently, please take a look through this pack and get in touch with us. We would be delighted to hear from you.



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1 Introduction to Fostering and Adoption



Children and young people of all ages, backgrounds and needs require to be looked after away from their families from time to time. There are many different reasons why they need carers: illness, drug and alcohol problems or relationship difficulties in their own families. They may have suffered neglect or abuse, or sometimes their behaviour becomes too hard for their parents to manage. Carers can offer a home to a child, or children, for just a few days or for years, playing a vital part in helping them enjoy childhood and succeed in adult life.

All kinds of people become carers. Carers can be married, divorced or single, male or female. Some carers are already parents, some not. Carers can come from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Your personal qualities are more important than age, qualifications or experience. You'll need to really like children or teenagers, and be tolerant, patient, resilient and have bags of energy. We especially value people who have coped with their own personal difficulties and shown that they have staying power, maturity and a tolerant approach to people from different backgrounds to their own.

Caring can be extremely rewarding but also very challenging. Children may be affected by moving to a new home as well as what has happened to them in the past. Young people can be moody, angry or withdrawn. Some children may be constantly active, and children with disabilities can provide extra challenges. Carers may need to help children they have grown attached to move on from their care. Carers will often be working with children's parents as well.

As a carer, you would become part of a committed and skilled group within the community, supported by a professional team of social workers and social care officers, who will also ensure that the care plan for the child you are responsible for is taken forward.



2 The Council's Role in Fostering and Adoption

Perth & Kinross Council has a duty under national legislation to provide fostering and adoption services which meet the needs of children in the local area. These services also meet the requirements of the UN Convention on Children's Rights.

We believe that wherever possible a child's interests are best met when they are cared for in a suitable alternative family setting, if it is impossible for them to remain with their birth family. We have, over the years, been very successful in doing this and have significantly reduced the number of children locally who are placed in residential care.

Following the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, there is now a requirement for fostering services to be inspected by the Care Commission. This means that the Council will be subject to annual inspection, to make sure National Care Standards are being met.

These standards monitor the following areas:

- *Recruiting, selecting, approving, training and supporting of foster carers.*
- *Matching children and young people with foster carers.*
- *Supporting and monitoring foster carers.*
- *The work of agency fostering panels and other approval panels.*

3 Temporary Foster Care



Temporary* foster carers provide a supportive family atmosphere to children and young people when circumstances mean they cannot stay with their own families, whether that be for a few days, a few weeks or a number of months. Contact is kept with the children's birth family and along with the social worker, carers are involved in helping the family live together again.

The Council needs to add to its supply of foster carers all the time, so that children and young people can be placed with families most capable of meeting their specific needs. In particular, Education & Children's Services are urgently seeking foster carers who can look after family groups of two or more children, usually 5 years or over in age. Keeping siblings together helps maintain family bonds and provides reassurance to children who might otherwise have to be separated from their brothers or sisters.

We also require to recruit foster carers who are willing to care for young people aged 12 and upwards. Often this group of young people may otherwise have to be 'looked after' in residential schools far from their home, family and friends. Increasingly children in foster care are older in age and can be more troubled and traumatised. They may have experienced severe problems in their lives which can lead to difficult behaviour. Foster carers can improve young people's self-confidence and self-esteem by providing positive role models and good experiences.

Carers need to be able to report to meetings and Children's Hearings. You will develop expertise in dealing with difficult behaviour, as well as helping the child or children return to their natural parents whenever possible.

**Respite fostering and Permanent fostering are detailed in the following two pages of this Information Pack.*



4 Short Breaks



Short Break carers provide respite care for children and young people with disabilities for one or two overnights a month in their own home. We also need carers for during the school holidays and for daytime care.

Why is respite care needed?

Many of our children need respite care for a variety of reasons, which range from some who may require a high level of support at home and their family needs a break, or perhaps the parent(s) need the time to spend one-on-one with their other child(ren). For others, there may be difficulties within their family and respite provides the opportunity for parent(s) to have a rest from their caring role.

Your role as a Short Break carer

When a child spends time away from their family it is important they receive a positive experience and look forward to their time with their Short Break carer. The respite care is pre-arranged to suit the family and Short Breaks carer. Our carers tend to have a good relationship with families who appreciate that someone is caring for their child to give them a break. Carers and children often build a close rewarding relationship with each other. Our carers talk of receiving a great deal of satisfaction and enjoyment from being Short Break carers.



5 Respite Fostering



The majority of adults who care for children benefit from a break from their daily responsibilities. Foster carers also need this break from their normal routine. Children can also benefit from short breaks, and enjoy the opportunity for more individual attention.

Respite fostering provides vital, regular support to foster carers and families in the community by allowing them some breathing space. This can range from a couple of days to up to a fortnight, to 'recharge their batteries'. It can be a very good way of supporting both foster carers and also children who live with their own families, where a planned break is necessary to maintain the family unit.

Support, training and payment for respite and temporary fostering is included within the Fostering Strategy payment for skills scheme.

6 Permanent Fostering and Adoption



Adopting a Child

Adoption: Becoming the legal parent and offering a lifetime commitment.

At present the law allows adopters to be:

- *single people over the age of 21; or*
- *married couples where both individuals are over the age of 21.*

However, the law is about to change and as of 28 September 2009* the law will allow adopters to be:

- *single people over the age of 21;*
- *married couples where both persons are over the age of 21;*
- *civil partners where both persons are over the age of 21;*
- *persons over the age of 21 living together as if a married couple in an enduring family relationship; or*
- *persons over the age of 21 living together as if civil partners in an enduring family relationship*

** This date may be subject to change.*

Whilst each local authority differs in how post adoption support is provided, there is a commitment to adopted children that help and support will be provided to their parents if they require it. Adoption allowances are available if the child/children and the adoptive family meet the requirements (details on this are available).



6 Permanent Fostering and Adoption *(continued)*



Becoming a Permanent Foster Carer

Permanent Fostering: Where adoption may not be possible or desirable for some children, permanent carers will care for children throughout their childhood and into adulthood. A full genuine commitment is needed from carers until the child or young person reaches independence. Permanent fostering is one option for such situations, and it can be the best approach for older children who need or want to keep links with a member of their birth family, eg a parent, grandparent, brother or sister. Support and ongoing training will be provided.

Carers can come from all backgrounds:

- *married, co-habiting, single or divorced;*
- *homeowners or tenants;*
- *from any ethnic background;*
- *employed or unemployed.*

There are no restrictions on the basis of age, sexual orientation, race, religion or disability. Suitability is determined through assessment of how well a child's needs can be met by the skills and qualities of the carers.

No particular qualification is required but you will need to have an understanding of children's needs and have the energy and patience to support the child.



7 Supported Accommodation



Supported accommodation is for young people aged between 16 and 24, who may be leaving residential school, children's homes or foster placements. Some may also have become homeless for a variety of reasons. The service provides accommodation, support and assistance with developing the skills and knowledge to prepare them for independence.

Carers can provide a safe environment where young people can learn new skills, test them out, make mistakes and work through issues and problems to help them cope better in the future. Supported accommodation carers are expected to help the young person lodging with them to gain skills such as budgeting, cooking, cleaning, keeping appointments and maintaining social links - the things they will need to take greater responsibility for themselves in their own future accommodation.

It is expected that the young person will have a room of their own in the carer's home. As the young person is a lodger, the carer does not have parental responsibility for them. The young person will continue to receive guidance from their support worker.

As with fostering and adoption, carers offering supported accommodation may be couples, single people, employed or unemployed and may or may not have children of their own. The most essential qualities for this type of care are the abilities to relate to and understand the needs of young people, some of whom can present quite challenging behaviour. Supported accommodation carers should also be willing to accept support and training and work with, and learn, from others.



8 'Care 4'

(Specialist Foster Care Scheme)

'Care 4' has been established specifically to recruit foster carers for teenagers aged 13 to 18 in Perth and Kinross. These young people would otherwise be placed in residential school or a secure unit because of their patterns of behaviour. The aim behind the scheme is to improve their future chances in life by making positive choices and helping them prepare for adulthood.

Carers for this scheme can be a couple, or single; have no other young people normally living at home with them, and willing to care on either a full-time or respite basis. Some experience of working with young people, and suitable qualifications, would be ideal. Full assessment and background checks will be carried out on prospective carers to ensure their safety and suitability to work with this challenging group of young people. Ongoing training will be offered to carers along with professional support and advice.

Full-time carers in the 'Care 4' scheme will be considered self-employed and will receive an annual fee plus expenses. Respite carers will receive a pro-rata sum. The Council will offer 24-hour support and make arrangements to give carers a break from looking after the young people for up to 35 days during each year.

9 Becoming a Carer



Once you have told us you are interested in becoming a carer, what happens next?

- *You will undergo a thorough selection procedure to explore what aspect of caring is right for you and, where appropriate, your family. A social worker will visit you and discuss relevant issues including the support received by carers. You will also be given help to complete a detailed application form. This assessment is designed to identify the relevant caring skills you already have and those that need further development. It also ensures only suitable people, who are safe to care for children, are selected.*
- *You will attend group training sessions to help you learn about the issues involved in caring for children and young people.*
- *Disclosure Scotland checks will be carried out to ensure you are not disqualified by the law from working with children. You will also undergo a medical check and references will be requested.*
- *A social worker will carry out a series of visits to your home to prepare an in-depth assessment report for the Fostering and Permanence Panel; this is a group of people including social workers, and others with an understanding of fostering and adoption issues.*
- *Once you have completed the assessment and training course, and all checks have been satisfactorily completed, your application to become a carer will be put to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for final approval.*

The process from application to final approval as a carer should be completed within six months. Regular feedback will be given to you on the progress of your application.



9 **Becoming a Carer** *(continued)*



Applicants - Your Right to Representation and Appeal

We try to be as fair as possible in our communications with you. However in the event of disagreement, you have certain rights: rights of representation, right of appeal and the right to complain (see section 13).

Representation: Applicants wishing to challenge the agency's decision not to pursue an application, at any stage, may make representation to a senior manager. Advice may then be sought from the Fostering and Permanence Panel which you will be invited to (a friend or other representative can accompany you).

Appeals: You can appeal decisions about approval made if you disagree with the Agency Decision Maker by writing to the Chief Social Work Office who may decide that an Appeals Panel should be set up to consider your appeal.



10 Support and Training for Carers



Once approved as a carer, you will continue to receive ongoing support and training from the Council. The partnership between carers and social workers is vital to ensure fostering and adoption services work well and issues can be addressed together.

Carers receive ongoing support and guidance from their supervising Social Worker, who will be a qualified Social Worker. Your supervising Social Worker will also help you identify areas of training or personal development that will enhance your knowledge and skills. Experienced carers are also willing to act as mentors for newly approved carers.

Foster carer groups actively offer formal and informal support to local carers, promoting their views and partnership working, and considering issues for training. Joint events with Education & Children's Services staff meet most of the training needs for carers. The Fostering Network also provides a vital support resource for foster carers and individual annual membership is purchased for every carer approved by the Council.

Approved carers are reviewed annually. This ensures that carers continue to be capable of looking after children and also that they are receiving adequate support from the Council. Placement agreements will be completed for all children placed with carers.

After an adoption is granted, adoptive carers can receive ongoing support with any of the challenges of parenting their adoptive child if they request it. It is acknowledged that this support may be necessary over the years to help families and children cope with the effect of difficult early experiences.



11 Fees Paid to Carers



The Council operates Fee Payment Schemes for carers that reflect the particular types of care being offered and take into account the carer's skills, qualifications, approval level and past experience.

The scheme helps to ensure that children are placed with carers who have the skills and expertise linked to their individual needs, it also means that the Council's expectations of carers are clearly set out and give them the opportunity to progress. Specific details of reward schemes and children's allowances are available. Please ask for further details.

Other schemes may be considered in the future to reflect the changing needs of children.

12 Organisations Contact Details

To find out more about any of Perth & Kinross Council's services as detailed in this pack (*Temporary & Respite Fostering, Permanent Fostering & Adoption, 'Care 4' or Supported Accommodation*), please contact:

*Education & Children's Services
Perth & Kinross Council
Colonsay Resource Centre
37-39 Colonsay Street
PERTH
PH1 3TU*

*Tel 01738 783450
Email ecsfosteringandadoption@pkc.gov.uk
www.pkc.gov.uk*

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion only, a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting FPT on 01738 783450.



Council Text Phone Number
01738 442573

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility

Other Fostering and Adoption Organisations

*The Fostering Network in Scotland
Ingram House (2nd floor)
227 Ingram Street
GLASGOW
G1 1DA*

*Tel 0141 204 1400
Email scotland@fostering.net
www.fostering.net*

*British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF)
BAAF Scottish Centre
40 Shandwick Place
EDINBURGH
EH2 4RT*

*Tel 0131 220 4749
Email scotland@baaf.org.uk
www.baaf.org.uk*

13 Complaints



Perth & Kinross Council are committed to providing a high quality service to the public. If you are unhappy about any of the service you receive, please let us know.

You can initially discuss this with the individual Team Leader or the Improvement Officer.

Complaints: We try and resolve any issues or concerns through the involvement of the appropriate line manager.

If the concern is not resolved to your satisfaction you may use the Perth & Kinross Council Complaints Procedure which will ensure independent investigation. Information on the Complaints Procedure is available in your carer information pack or from Pullar House.

You may also choose to contact the Care Commission for an independent view.

Useful Addresses

- Care Commission, Central East Region, Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive, DUNDEE DD1 4NY
Tel lo-call 0845 6030890
- Chief Social Work Officer, Education & Children's Services, Perth & Kinross Council, Pullar House, 35 Kinoull Street, PERTH PH1 5GD
Tel 01738 476943



14 Further Reading and Websites



Some of these titles may be available through your local library on request.

General Information on Caring

- *A Child's Journey Through Placement; Vera I Fahlberg, BAAF, £22.50*
- *Attachment, Trauma and Resilience: Therapeutic Caring for Children; Kate Cairns, BAAF, £7.50*
- *First Steps in Parenting the Child who Hurts: Tiddlers and Toddlers; Caroline Archer, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £13.95*
- *Next Steps in Parenting the Child who Hurts: Tykes and Teens; Caroline Archer, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £15.95*

Adoption

- *The Adoption Experience: Families who Give Children a Second Chance; Ann Morris, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £11.95*
- *Adopting a Child: A Guide for People Interested in Adoption; Jenifer Lord (Editor), BAAF, £7.50*
- *Adopters on Adoption: Reflections on Parenthood and Children; David Howe, BAAF, £9.95*
- *Real Parents, Real Children: Parenting the Adopted Child; Holly Van Gulden and Lisa M Bartels-Robb, Crossroad Publishing Company, £14.99*

14 Further Reading and Websites *(continued)*



Fostering

- *Safer Caring; The Fostering Network, £16.00*
- *Fostering: What it is and What it Means; Shaila Shah, The Fostering Network, £3.95*
- *Fostering a Child: A Guide for People Interested in Fostering; Henrietta Bond, BAAF, £8.50*

Websites

- *Scottish Executive - www.scotland.gov.uk*
- *The Fostering Network - www.fostering.net*
- *Community Care Magazine - www.communitycare.co.uk*
- *British Association for Adoption & Fostering - www.baaf.org.uk*