

The Council's Role in Fostering, Adoption and Supported Lodgings

Perth & Kinross Council has a duty under national legislation to provide fostering, adoption and throughcare/aftercare services which meet the needs of children and young people in the local area.

Following the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 and the subsequent Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, there is now a requirement for fostering and adoption services to be inspected by the Care Inspectorate. This means that the Council is subject to regular inspection, to make sure the Health and Social Care Standards are being met.

These services also meet the requirements of the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights. In addition we have a duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 as Corporate Parents to support looked after children and young people.

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 also look to place children and young people within the Perth and Kinross area, so that this reduces the amount of change they have to go through, and keeps them close to what is familiar to them.



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Family Based Carer Recruitment

Call 01738 477806

Email ECSFPDuty@pkc.gov.uk

Visit www.pkc.gov.uk/fosteringadoption

Why do we Need Foster Carers/Adoptive Parents?

Children and young people of all ages, backgrounds and needs require to be looked after away from their families from time to time. There can be 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 family circumstances may mean their parents find it too hard to manage. Carers can offer a home to a child or young person, for as long as is required - from just a few days or weeks, to months, years or, for adoptive parents, the rest of their life up to adulthood.

All kinds of people become carers or adoptive parents - married, living in civil partnerships, divorced or single, male or female, from all ethnic and religious backgrounds, homeowners or tenants. You must be a minimum of 21 years old, but there are no restrictions on the basis of sexual orientation or disability. Some carers/adoptive parents are already parents, some are not.

Personal qualities, and experience with children and/or young people, are more important than age or qualifications. Carers need to have experience of, and enjoy spending time with children and young people, and have a good sense of humour, lots of compassion, tolerance and bags of energy.

Becoming a foster carer or adoptive parent can be both extremely rewarding and very challenging. Children and young people may be affected by moving to a new home as well as what has happened to them in the past. Some may express this through anger, anxiety or sadness. Some children may be constantly active, and children with disabilities can provide additional challenges. As a foster carer, you may also need to help children, who you have grown attached to, with moving on from your care, as well as often working with children's parents.

Family based carers become part of a committed and skilled team around the child or young person. You would receive professional support from social workers and social care officers, who will also ensure that the care plan for the child you are responsible for is taken forward.



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Short Breaks Care

Short Breaks carers provide respite care for children and young people, both in birth and fostering families.

Short Breaks care is needed for a range of reasons:

- *To give families a break.*
- *To enable parents/carers of children with disabilities to spend some one-on-one time with their other child(ren).*
- *Where there are other family difficulties.*
- *To provide the opportunity to interim foster carers for a break from caring.*
- *To provide the child the opportunity for individual attention.*

When a child spends time away from their family, it is important they enjoy this time with their Short Breaks carer and look forward to future stays. The respite care is pre-arranged to suit both the family concerned and the Short Breaks carer. Our Short Breaks carers look to develop a good relationship with families receiving support. Carers and children often build close and rewarding links with each other, and in our experience carers gain a great deal of satisfaction and enjoyment from providing Short Breaks support. Short breaks fostering also provides vital, regular support to foster carers and families in the community by allowing them some breathing space and time to 'recharge their batteries'. This can range from two or three days to two weeks, and can be a very good way of supporting both foster carers and children who live with their own families, where a planned break is necessary to maintain the family unit.

Support, training and fees for short breaks foster care is provided in the same way as emergency, interim, long-term and permanent fostering.



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Emergency Foster Care

Emergency foster carers provide a supportive family atmosphere for children and young people when circumstances mean they cannot stay with their own families, whether that is for a few days or a few weeks up to three months. Children and young people will maintain contact with their birth families which foster carers will be involved in supporting. Foster carers will also take part in meetings relating to the planning for children.



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Interim Foster Care

Interim foster carers provide a supportive family atmosphere for children and young people when circumstances mean they cannot stay with their own families. This can last for a few months, and up to 2 years. Children will continue to have contact with their birth family, and their carers will, alongside the social worker, be involved in helping the family live together again, or where this is not possible, helping the child or young person to move on to long-term or permanent fostering, or an adoptive family.

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.

Carers need to be able to report to meetings and Children's Hearings. You will develop expertise, skills and experience in dealing with difficult and challenging behaviour, as well as helping the child or young person to return to their birth parents wherever possible.



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Long-Term Foster Care

When circumstances mean adoption may not be appropriate or possible for some children, long-term foster carers will care for them throughout their childhood, into adolescence and on, ultimately, to independent living.

This can be the best approach for older children who need, or want, to maintain links with a member of their birth family, eg a parent, grandparent, brother or sister. Long-term foster carers will also encourage the child to feel part of their immediate and extended family.

In these circumstances, a full and genuine commitment is needed from carers until the child or young person reaches independence. Support and ongoing training will be provided.



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Permanent Foster Care

When adoption is not appropriate either as a result of age or circumstances, children usually aged under 12 can be legally secured with their carers through a Permanence Order.

This order removes the birth parents' parental rights and responsibilities, and transfers them to the Council. Looking after a child who is subject to a Permanence Order means that you are committing to them until they are independent. The child becomes part of your family, and many of the day to day decisions about their care rest with you.



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Adoption and Concurrent Care

Adoption means you become the legal parent of a child or children, and make a lifetime commitment for their upbringing and care. Adoptive parents take on all legal responsibilities and rights for the child(ren).

The law currently means adoptive parents can be:

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

There is no upper age limit for adoptive parents.

Sometimes children are placed with adoptive families at the request of, or with the agreement of their birth parents. However, it is generally the case that children are placed without the agreement of their birth families, and therefore a court will decide if their parental rights and responsibilities should be removed.

In Perth and Kinross, children needing adoptive families range in age from birth up to around seven years old. Adopters for children with disabilities/additional needs, older children and siblings are more difficult to find.

Training and support is offered to help you prepare for becoming an adoptive parent. Once a child is placed and an adoption order is granted, this support continues to be provided as required by the adoptive family.

In some cases, depending on their identified needs, a child may be eligible for an adoption allowance which is then means tested.



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Adoption and Concurrent Care *(continued)*

Concurrent Carers

What is concurrent planning?

Perth & Kinross Council has introduced concurrent planning as an additional way of providing Looked After and Accommodated Children (LAAC) with a positive care experience from as early an age as possible.

If a child has a concurrent care plan, this means that from birth he/she will be fostered by concurrent carers while birth parents undertake a parenting capacity assessment to determine if the child can return permanently to their care. There are two possible outcomes with a concurrent care plan:

- *the child returns to his/her birth parents and is brought up by them; or*
- *the child cannot return to his/her birth parents and goes on to be adopted by the concurrent carers who fostered the child.*

Who can be a concurrent carer?

We welcome diversity and families, couples or individuals from different backgrounds and religions are welcome to find out more about becoming a concurrent carer. Concurrent carers will be emotionally mature, resilient, resourceful and have a strong informal support network upon which they can rely. They can demonstrate the capacity to care for a newborn baby and have no preference about the child's gender or ability. They also need to be able to accept that the child may be born with health/developmental issues, as well as the potential for the child to be returned to its birth family, while prioritising the best interests of the child above everything else.



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Supported Lodgings and Host Families+

Supported Lodgings

Supported lodgings provide a safe and supportive environment for young people aged 16 and over who have been looked after by the Council and are now looking to progress to independent living.

Providers offer a room in their home and space in their life as a stepping stone for a young person preparing for adult life. This progression can often be a hard process for care leavers, and can lead them into difficult situations.

While a provider does not have parental responsibility for their lodger, the guidance and support they give helps the young person to develop some of the more practical skills they need, eg cooking, cleaning, managing their money and appointments. They also provide support for their physical and emotional wellbeing, for example, supporting them to access health, work, education and training opportunities, as well as helping them with building relationships.

Prospective supported lodgings providers need a spare room in their home, to enjoy the company of young people, to have an understanding of their needs, and want to help them gain the skills they need to care for themselves as an adult. Some experience with young people, either as a parent or professionally, is useful. Prospective providers will go through full assessment and background checks before being approved for a placement.

The Council's Throughcare and Aftercare Team provides training, a support worker and a weekly fee to enable each supported lodgings provider to deliver the accommodation and support required to help the young person reach their potential and be ready for independent living.



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Host Families+

Why do we need host families?

PKC, along with other Local Authorities, has a responsibility to meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) who have arrived via a number of different routes in Perth. The majority of the young people are 16 or 17 years old and they may benefit from living with a host family, who could offer a safe and supportive environment for these young people.

Who are the young people seeking asylum?

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children may speak little or no English when they arrive, and may have travelled for many months before arriving here. They may have experienced living in refugee camps, physical and sexual assault, being trafficked across Europe, living in war zones, their basic needs not being met (a lack of food, shelter, clothing, warmth) and separation from their families. Many of these young people also face uncertainty about their future life in Britain as their immigration status and right to remain are uncertain.

What are the criteria for becoming a provider?

- *You must live in Perth and Kinross, with good transport links.*
- *You must have a spare room (and permission from your housing provider if in rented accommodation).*
- *It would be helpful to have relevant experience/transferrable skills/in caring for young people.*
- *You can be married, single or in a partnership.*
- *You can be employed/unemployed.*
- *We welcome enquiries from all ethnic groups and cultures.*
- *Be available and flexible to work in partnership with other professionals.*

How do I find out more?

Register your interest by calling 01738 783466 or emailing Supportedlodgings@pkc.gov.uk



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Call 01738 477806

Email ECSFPDuty@pkc.gov.uk

Visit www.pkc.gov.uk/fosteringadoption

Becoming a Foster Carer or Adoptive Parent

What happens once you have contacted us?

- You will receive an initial home visit from a member of the Family Based Care, Adoption or Throughcare and Aftercare Teams, depending on your area of interest, to discuss things further and look at what you might have to offer.
- If this initial visit goes well, we will send you an application pack, and you'll then be allocated an assessing social worker who will visit you at home several times to find out more about you and your family as part of the assessment process.
- This process is designed to:
 - Identify the skills and experience you already have, as well as areas that might need further development.
 - Explore if fostering, adoption or supported lodgings is the right thing for you and if this is the right time for you and your family to be doing it.
 - Ensure that as a Council we can keep vulnerable children and young people safe and well cared for.
- Disclosure Scotland checks will be carried out to ensure you are not disqualified by law from working with children. You will also go through a full medical check and we will request personal references. For fostering and adoption, checks will also be undertaken with regard to previous partners; employment and finance, home health and safety, and pets in your home.
- You will attend group training sessions to help you learn about issues involved in caring for children and young people. For prospective foster carers and adopters, this will comprise a number of sessions, usually held over three days and two evenings.
- If all these requirements are completed satisfactorily, we will then compile a report to go to the Council's Fostering and Permanence Panel for consideration. The Panel will make a recommendation about your approval as a foster carer or adoptive parent before our Agency Decision Maker decides whether to formally approve you. You will attend the Panel, which comprises a range of people with an understanding of fostering/adoption issues, with your assessing social worker. You will receive a decision in writing from the Agency Decision Maker within 14 days.



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Becoming a Foster Carer or Adoptive Parent

Generally, the process from application to final approval should take around six months to complete. We will keep you advised of progress on your application.

Your Right to Representation and Appeal as an Applicant

In the event of disagreement over your application, you have rights of representation; to make an appeal and to complain.

If you wish to challenge the Council's decision not to pursue your application, you can make representation to a senior manager in Education & Children's Services at any stage. Advice may then be sought from the Fostering and Permanence Panel.

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



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Becoming a Supported Lodgings Provider

What's involved in becoming a provider?

- *The young person may live with you until they are able to live independently, anything from 6 months upwards.*
- *Attendance at a group training session will be where you will be given information to assist in looking after these young people.*
- *We will carry out a number of checks with you and any adult members of your household, ie health/PVG(police)/personal references, local authority.*
- *An assessment of you and your family will be undertaken. This assessment will collect evidence of your circumstances and ability to meet the needs of young people. This assessment is presented to a panel made up of professionals interested in the wellbeing of young people.*
- *We will also provide ongoing support to you and the young person.*
- *While the young person is living with you, we will pay an allowance to assist with living expenses.*



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Support, Training and Fees for Carers

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

Carers receive support and guidance from their supervising social worker, who will also help them identify areas of training or personal development that will enhance their knowledge and skills. Experienced carers are also often willing to act as mentors for newly approved carers.

Foster carer groups actively offer both formal and informal support to local carers, promoting their views and partnership working, as well as considering issues for training. There is a range of relevant training offered for foster carers, including child development and other areas such as child protection and the law.

Approved carers are reviewed annually, to ensure they are able to continue to look after children and also that they are receiving enough support from the Council. After an adoption is granted, the adoptive parent(s) can receive ongoing support with any of the challenges of parenting their adoptive child(ren). Such help may be necessary to enable families and children to cope with the impact of difficult experiences early in the child's life.

The Council pays fees/allowances to carers that reflect the specific types of care being offered, and take into account each carer's skills, qualifications, approval level and past experience. This helps to ensure children are placed with carers who have the skills and expertise best suited to their individual needs. Further details of the fees/allowances paid for the different types of care are available on request.



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Useful Contact Details

For Emergency, Interim, Long-Term, Permanent and Short Breaks Fostering, please contact the Family Based Care Team:

Perth & Kinross Council
Education and Children's Services
Almondbank House
Lewis Place
North Muirton
PERTH
PH1 3BD

Tel 01738 477806
Email ECSFPDuty@pkc.gov.uk

For Adoption, please contact the Adoption Team:

Perth & Kinross Council
Education & Children's Services
Almondbank House
Lewis Place
North Muirton
PERTH
PH1 3BD

Tel 01738 472260
Email adoptionenquiries@pkc.gov.uk

For Supported Lodgings/Host Families+, please contact the Throughcare and Aftercare Team:

Perth & Kinross Council
Education & Children's Services
@Scott Street
68-86 Scott Street
PERTH
PH2 8JW

Tel 01738 783466
Email SupportedLodgings@pkc.gov.uk



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For general information about the Council's fostering, adoption and other care services, please visit www.pkc.gov.uk/fosteringadoption

Other fostering and adoption organisations:

The Fostering Network in Scotland
2nd Floor, Ingram House
227 Ingram Street
GLASGOW
G1 1DA

Tel 0141 204 1400
Email scotland@fostering.net
www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

AFA (Adoption and Fostering Alliance) Scotland
Conference House, 152 Morrison Street
The Exchange
EDINBURGH
EH3 8EB

Tel 0131 248 2403
Email info@afascotland.com

CoramBAAF
Coram Campus
41 Brunswick Square
LONDON
WC1N 1AZ

Tel 020 7520 0300
Email advice@corambaaf.org.uk



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Complaints

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

You can initially discuss this with the individual Team Leader or Service Manager. We try and resolve any issues or concerns through the involvement of the appropriate line manager.

If your concern is not resolved to your satisfaction, you may use the Council's Complaints Procedure which will ensure independent investigation. Information on the Complaints Procedure is available on the Council website at www.pkc.gov.uk/complaints

You may also choose to contact the Care Inspectorate with your complaint:

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
Riverside Drive
DUNDEE
DD1 4NY
Tel 0345 600 9527
Email enquiries@careinspectorate.com



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Useful Reading and Websites

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 Ltd, £13.95*
- *Next Steps in Parenting the Child who Hurts: Tykes and Teens; Caroline Archer, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, £15.95*

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*
- *"If you don't stick with me, who will?": The challenges and rewards of foster care; Henrietta Bond (Editor), BAAF, £8.95*

Adoption

- *Adopting a child in Scotland; Robert Swift; BAAF, £8.95*
- *An Adoption Diary; Maria James; BAAF, £8.95*
- *No Matter What: An Adoptive Family's Story of Hope, Love and Healing; Sally Donovan; Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, £9.78*
- *Why Love Matters: how affection shapes a baby's brain; Sue Gerhardt; Routledge, £14.71*
- *Creating Loving Attachments - Parenting with PACE to Nurture Confidence and Security in the Troubled Child; Kim S Goulding and Daniel A Hughes; Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, £12.95*



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Websites

- *Scottish Government* - www.gov.scot
- *The Fostering Network* - www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk
- *Community Care Magazine* - www.communitycare.co.uk
- *AdoptionUK* - www.adoptionuk.org
- *Birthlink* - www.birthlink.org.uk
- *AFA Scotland* - www.afascotland.com
- *Scottish Refugee Council* – www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk
- *Safe Passage UK* – www.safepassage.org.uk



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