

Report by Director of Community Health and Care Partnership

Committee: 15 December 2010

Subject: Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Care Policy Review

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report proposes the development of an integrated family placement strategy for Looked After Children in West Dunbartonshire Council; sets out in some detail the legislative and policy context; and seeks approval for the funding associated with the development.
- 1.2 A section is included for each of the components of family placement including Kinship Care, Fostering and Adoption. Each section outlines the ethos of the service, the internal and external drivers for change, trends, current activity, planned changes and the funding associated with them.

2. Background

- 2.1 For the purposes of the report the definition of a Looked After Child is a child who is formally looked after under Part 2 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and who, for whatever reason, cannot remain living in their birth family.
- 2.2 Family placement is defined as alternative family based care that has been arranged by the Local Authority for Looked After Children who cannot continue to live with their birth family. The nature of the placement may be short term or permanent. The type of placement may be kinship care, fostering or adoption.
- 2.3 Vision, Values and Principles
- 2.3.1 The aim of social work intervention in the life of a child is to ensure that they can grow up in their family of origin where it is safe for them to do so. This, indeed, is the outcome for the majority of children that social work services are involved with.
- 2.3.2 For some children, their needs go unmet to such an extent that their health, wellbeing and development are affected. In these situations, social work services offer alternative care. The care offered will either be of a temporary nature until the issues in the birth family can be resolved or, in extreme circumstances, a child may be at such a level of risk that they require permanent substitute care.

- 2.3.3** In all cases where the Local Authority has intervened to remove a child from their birth family, the authority should be in a position to offer alternative family care. This is because all children have a fundamental right to family life. This basic right is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention of Human Rights.
- 2.3.4** Research evidence would overwhelmingly support the value of family life with the weight of evidence indicating that where a child requires alternative care, outcomes for that child are maximised where this care takes place in a family setting. It would be our aspiration to provide family based care to all children whose assessed need identifies that this is what they require. This may be kinship care, foster care or adoption.
- 2.3.5** There are some children whose assessed needs are such that family based care is not appropriate. Some children may display such strong loyalty to their own family that they are unable to cope with life in an alternative family. Conversely, some children's experiences of family life may have been so damaging that they are unable to form meaningful attachments with adults within the confines of close family relationships.
- 2.3.6** For these children, good quality residential care, with skilled residential staff, can be the best alternative to help the child develop to the best of their potential. For some children in this category they may be helped to a point where, following a period of residential care, they can successfully move on to live within a family. However, there are children for whom the best outcome is, and will remain, residential care and for whom residential care is a positive choice.
- 2.3.7** For all children, whatever the type of care provided, it is the ability of that care setting to provide a safe, nurturing, secure, stable and predictable environment that is the essential factor in achieving a positive outcome.
- 2.3.8** There are five key principles underpinning a child-centred approach to family placement:
- That the needs of the child must be paramount;
 - That families should be supported to stay together;
 - That where a child needs to be away from their birth parents, care by family or friends should be the first option, unless it is not in the best interests of the child;
 - That all placements should be designed to achieve stability; and
 - That all placements should be provided with appropriate support.

2.3.9 Where a child cannot live with their birth family the local authority will always look next to the child's kinship network and, where it is safe to do so, would look to place the child in such a placement. This recognises that these placements are in the main valued by birth parents; represent minimum intervention in the child's life and assist in the development of the child's identity and heritage. Where kinship care is not available or possible, foster care or adoption will be explored.

2.4 Legislative and Policy Context

2.4.1 The provision of family placement services is a particularly complex area of social work practice. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is the overarching legislation that governs children and families social work provision. However, there are a number of specific legislative considerations that remain in place in respect of family placement. These include the Children Act 1975, the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978 and the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

2.4.2 Adoption and fostering are also subject to specific regulation. In addition to specifying the type of services to be provided, regulation makes provision for the manner in which services are to be provided. These include Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009, the Adoption Support Services and Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2009. These services are subject to annual inspection by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.

2.4.3 The removal of a child from their birth family is amongst the most powerful interventions open to Local Authorities. Such interventions are known to have a lasting impact on children not only throughout their childhood but throughout their adult lives. It is appropriate, therefore, that issues involved in family placement are subject to a greater level of scrutiny and volume of research than many other areas of social work practice. Practitioners in this area require not only to be skilled and knowledgeable but to ensure they remain abreast of current research and thinking in this complex field.

2.4.4 Historically, family placement services have been considered to be mainly fostering and adoption. This is reflected in the legislation outlined above. Whilst the placement of children with family or friends, whether formally or informally has always occurred, in the main this was not considered to be within the scope of local authority responsibility.

2.4.5 Over the past decade this position has changed. The 1995 Act made provision for a child to be placed with Kinship Carers and become a Looked After Child. At the same time the emerging drug problem in Scotland and the associated impact on parents' ability to offer adequate care saw a substantial rise in the number of children who were unable to

remain at home. The care of many of these children was assumed by family members, mainly grandparents.

- 2.4.6** Local authorities have, by and large, responded to these issues at a local level and this has resulted in variations in services to Looked After Children across the country. In response to the dilemmas and contradictions across Scotland relating to family placement, the Scottish Government set up the Adoption Law Reform Review Group and National Fostering and Kinship Care Reference Group. The purpose of these groups was to establish a national strategy for family placement in Scotland.
- 2.4.8** The output from these groups is the new Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 which was enacted on the 28th of September 2009, the publication of a National Strategy (Getting It Right for Every Child in Kinship and Foster Care) and Looked After Children Regulations. These latter regulations give legislative force to the key areas outlined in the National Strategy.
- 2.4.8** These policies provide the key external drivers to the strategy proposed for West Dunbartonshire Council, as they provide the legislative context to an integrated approach to family placement for Looked After Children. This will provide clear pathways to the most appropriate resource to meet a child's assessed need and should strengthen and develop the authority's own resources, reducing any potential recourse to the independent sector.

3. Main Issues in Relation to Foster Care

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1** The National Strategy for Kinship and Foster Care, published by the Scottish Government in December 2007, stressed the need for Local Authorities to promote and encourage family based care. The strategy highlighted the need to develop robust fostering services to meet the needs of a growing number of Looked After Children in Scotland and the need for sustained activity to recruit and retain foster carers.
- 3.1.2** The National Strategy outlined the need to improve the support available to foster carers as essential to recruitment and retention. In addition, as a key aspect of the strategy, the Scottish Government also stated their support for the introduction of a minimum allowance for Foster Carers based on The Fostering Network's recommended rates of allowance.
- 3.1.3** In West Dunbartonshire the Fostering Allowance Scheme has not been reviewed since the Council was created and has come under increasing competition from other schemes in both the private and public sector.

3.1.4 The particular drivers underpinning the need to develop the fostering service include:

- The National Strategy for Kinship and Foster Care makes recommendations regarding foster care and stresses the need to promote and encourage Foster Carers; to extend their role specifically in relation to early intervention and in providing direct support to birth families; and to develop a professional service.
- Locally, the Fostering Service is under considerable pressure as a result of the number of children and young people who are becoming Looked After and Accommodated, particularly those children requiring permanent placements. These pressures have resulted in us now having to make use of placements within the private/independent sector; a situation which has been the case for other local authorities for longer. This has resulted in some children being placed outwith the authority area, away from their family and friends, which is not viewed as good child care practice. Also, the costs of such placements are extremely high compared to our own placements. Costs can be between £900 and £1,800 per week.
- The residential school sector is increasingly moving into the fostering sector. Kibble School has developed a fostering scheme where the cost per child per week is currently £2,712.
- The Care Commission requires that there should be choice about placements and some matching undertaken to try to ensure the best outcomes for children. We are not presently in a position to provide this.
- The growth of the private/independent sector paying carers considerably more than local authorities is impacting on our ability to recruit carers. We have now seen a pattern of our neighbouring authorities reviewing their foster payment schemes, looking to match the private/independent sector. This has meant even greater competition for scarce resources.
- Foster Carers are now required to care for children with increasingly complex needs.
- Many people are now looking to make a career in fostering and we need to provide a career path for them if we are going to recruit and retain successfully.
- West Dunbartonshire Council and other authorities have been wrestling with the difficulties of recruiting and retaining Foster

Carers over the last few years, and the National Kinship Care and Fostering Strategy arose partly from this challenge.

- 3.1.5** At present, there are 30 Foster Carer households registered in West Dunbartonshire Council who can provide a capacity of 76 registered placements for children. The registration numbers vary from 1 to 5 for each household, the majority being registered for 2 or 3 children.
- 3.1.6** The age profile of our carers is increasing which is beginning to restrict their capacity to take their registered numbers. This means that there have been a significant number of occasions when we have asked other carers to go over their registered numbers. This puts added strain on them, and usually results in them asking for a break when children leave, or reducing their number for a period of time. Unfortunately, it also increases the risk of placement breakdowns.
- 3.1.7** Lack of availability or placement choice has meant that during both 2008 and again in 2009 we had to place 13 children with private/independent agencies.
- 3.1.8** Over the past few years the service has not been able to offer placement choice and has been very limited in offering periods of respite for carers. This is now causing the service to be vulnerable and there is an urgent need to increase the number of Foster Carers available and reduce the number of children in placements.
- 3.1.9** In addition, we require to offer Foster Carers the appropriate level of training and support to ensure they are equipped to carry out the task.
- 3.1.10** Due to age and health difficulties there are a number of carers who over the next few years will probably retire from the service.
- 3.1.11** It is against this complex background that we require to modernise the Foster Care Service, with proposals which include a more robust recruitment strategy, improved training and support arrangements and a revised scheme of payments.
- 3.2** The Present Position in Relation to Allowances
- 3.2.1** At present **foster** payments within West Dunbartonshire are made up of an allowance, which can be enhanced by up to 100%; and discretionary allowances covering a whole range of possible extra expenditure e.g. clothing, furniture, school outings, activities for children, etc. A discretionary payment has to be claimed individually for each occasion it is necessary.

3.2.2 The allowances for year 2010/2011 are:

Age	Allowance (per week)
0 - 4	£72.50
5 - 10	£89.96
11 -15	£111.99
16 - 18	£145.12

The vast majority of children in placement attract an enhanced allowance, usually 100%.

3.2.3 These allowances are paid per week, with an extra week's allowance being paid at Christmas, a child's birthday and two extra weeks in the summer holidays (a total of 4 weeks per year, per child).

3.2.4 The budget for allowances in 2009/2010 was £1,202,827. The year end spend was £1,547,031 – mainly due to ongoing need for Independent Agency placements. The budget for 2010/11 is £1,425,922.

3.2.5 We have been successful during 2010/11 in minimising the use of fostering agencies and the probable out turn is estimated as being £1,368,224. The draft budget for 2011/12 is £1,318,918 based on current care provision.

3.3 Options for Payment Scheme

3.3.1 As part of the review of foster care a literature review was undertaken to determine the various types of payment schemes in use in the UK and their advantages and disadvantages.

3.3.2 There are three types of scheme for the payment of Foster Carers in use across the UK.

(A) An allowance scheme

This pays carers an age banded allowance at a rate set each year by the local authority. An enhancement to the basic allowance can be paid in recognition of the extra cost involved or skill required to care for a specific child or young person.

Advantages

- It is child centred in that it is tied to the needs of the child.

- Carers like the element that recognises and rewards the fact that a child is particularly difficult to care for. They say that when they feel discouraged it encourages them to persevere.
- Some of our present carers are comfortable with this scheme.

Disadvantages

- There is potentially a temptation for carers to exaggerate the difficulties that a child or young person is presenting in order to maximise the level of enhancement.
- There is a disincentive to acknowledge the improvement in a child's behaviour as a result of the work that the carer has put in as this could mean that the enhancement would be reduced. It could be argued that carers are penalised financially for achieving success.
- It is difficult to ensure standardisation in terms of recognising the level of enhancement that should be paid.
- A carer's income can change if the level of difficulty of the children who are placed fluctuates. This will not attract the type of people we are hoping to target as potential carers i.e. people who would otherwise be working full time.
- It is hard to budget for this type of service as it depends on the perceived level of difficulty of the children and young people who are Looked After.
- It is cumbersome to administer with individual claims having to be put in for every item of expenditure.

(B) A fee based payment for skills scheme

With this type of scheme carers generally receive an allowance based on the age of the child and a fee in addition to this which is related to the level of skill of the carer.

Advantages

- It would potentially attract a different group of people to consider fostering which would widen the pool of placements available for children and would enable more matching to be done thereby better meeting the needs of children.
- Basing payments on skills reflects the development and learning

of carers which should have the consequential effect of raising the standards in the service and providing a better experience for children.

- It would potentially offer a career structure for Foster Carers which should encourage carers to make a long term commitment to fostering.
- Carers receive the same fee for each placement which means that they know what their income from fostering will be.
- Research shows that paying a fee appears to help recruitment and retention of carers (Triseliotis, 1999 and Sinclair, 2004)

Disadvantages

- If the number of carers cannot be increased then, at times, skilled carers will be caring for more straightforward children.
- Some carers are not in favour of being paid a fee believing that it may attract people who are motivated by money rather than by a desire to help children.
- Payment for skills schemes can be very complex and difficult to understand.

(C) Flat rate scheme

In this type of scheme carers are paid a sum which includes a fee for their work and an allowance for the child's maintenance but does not distinguish the individual amounts of each.

Advantages

- Carers are paid a flat rate with no extras and therefore they know exactly what their income will be.
- Decision making about how to use the allowance is delegated to the carers thus giving them the responsibility for how they allocate the money.
- Generally these schemes are generous with the level of allowance being set at a high level e.g. Renfrewshire pay a flat rate of £370.88 per week.

Disadvantages

- There is a blurring of the line between the amount being paid for maintenance of the child and reward to the carer which is potentially open to abuse.

- It does not recognise the different costs involved in caring for children of different ages.
- It can be complicated for carers in terms of determining what their fee is for the purpose of private pension arrangements, applying for mortgages and for tax liability.

3.4 Aims of a Restructured Payment Scheme for West Dunbartonshire

3.4.1 By changing the payment scheme we hope to:

- provide West Dunbartonshire's children with a high quality service where they will be offered an opportunity to be "safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included;
- have a transparent, easily understood scheme of payments that appropriately recompenses and rewards Foster Carers;
- encourage carers to develop skills through learning and experience;
- meet the challenges of competition from other fostering services;
- have a scheme that is less cumbersome in its administration;
- encourage new carers who are hesitant to apply because of their own financial circumstances; and
- have a scheme based on the most recent research and which meets the latest policy and regulatory requirements.

3.5 Proposed Restructuring

3.5.1 After considering the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of payment schemes and taking into account the reasons as outlined for restructuring the current scheme, the proposed model is a fee based payment for skills scheme.

3.5.2 This type of scheme aims to reward training and development in order to raise standards and improve the care that Looked After Children receive.

3.5.3 Increasing the number of carers and raising the level of skill of the fostering service will cut down on the number of moves that children experience and will decrease the use of external placements.

3.5.4 Although there will be an increased cost to the fostering budget it will compare favourably with the cost of using a placement from the independent sector where the average charge to the local authority is £900 per week.

3.5.5 As well as introducing a payment for skills scheme, it is also proposed to increase the age banded allowances to the rate recommended by The

Fostering Network. These rates are reviewed annually and are based on a wide ranging assessment of the real cost of fostering.

3.5.6 In reviewing the current and proposed scheme in West Dunbartonshire Council a benchmarking exercise was undertaken and the outcome of this is outlined in the table at Appendix 1.

3.5.7 Following analysis of the benchmarking exercise the proposals for the revised Foster Carers allowances and fees scheme are:

(A) Fees and Allowances

- Level 1 Carers.
This relates to Foster Carers in their first year following approval. Payments of the basic fostering allowance and a fee of £100 per week as shown in the table below.

Age	Allowances
0 – 4 years	£125.09
5-10 years	£142.49
11-15 years	£177.38
16+ years	£215.74
Plus a fee of £100 per week	

Example: Carer with 2 children in placement aged 4 and 7 will receive £367.58 per week.

- Level 2 Carers
This group will be paid the basic fostering allowance plus a fee of £150 if they have 1 or 2 children in placement and £175 if they have 3 or more children in placement. Carers can progress to this level on the completion of core training subject to the recommendation of the Fostering Resources Panel.

Age	Allowances
0 – 4 years	£125.09
5-10 years	£142.49
11-15 years	£177.38
16+ years	£215.74
Plus a fee of £150 for 1 or 2 children and £175 for 3 or more children	

Example: Carer with 2 children in placement aged 4 and 7 will receive £417.58 per week.

(B) Other Payments

- Supplementary to the levels of allowances and fees, some other set payments to carers will be in place. An additional four weeks allowance will be paid in a year. These will be:
 - at a child's birthday;
 - in December for religious festivals; and
 - two weeks' extra allowance in June to cover additional expenditure incurred during the summer school holidays
- The payments described should cover mileage costs for daily journeys up to 100 miles per week. Any additional mileage will require to be authorised and will be paid at the Inland Revenue rate.
- An amount will be paid to purchase basic equipment when applicants are approved as Foster Carers. This will be paid on a sliding scale depending on the age and number of children for whom carers are approved. It is expected that the increase in allowances and fees will cover wear, tear and replacement costs.

3.5.8 The majority of circumstances where children become accommodated are of an emergency nature. Children often do not have the basic necessities such as school uniform, nightwear, underwear etc. A grant of up to £150 will be paid at the start of each placement to take account of the extra costs involved in ensuring basic needs are met at the initial stages of each placement.

3.5.9 It is intended that the increased allowances will avoid the need for discretionary payments and enhancement of allowances apart from very exceptional circumstances such as the placement of a child with very complex needs. There would be clear criteria, out with the normal process, where granting of any enhancement or supplement would be subject to rigorous scrutiny. The new system for allowances will enable carers to make choices for the children in their care without having to request extra finance thus more realistically reflecting the situation of other children living in the community. It also allows carers to take responsibility for budgeting without continual recourse to social work staff.

3.5.10 One of the issues that has caused considerable national debate is that of paying an amount to retain carers when they do not have children in placement. If one of the aims of restructuring the way carers are reimbursed and rewarded is to attract people who might otherwise be working then their income requires to be predictable. Therefore they need to know that they will still receive some payment when they do not have a

placement. It is proposed that a figure of half the fee should be paid for a period of six weeks when carers do not have a child in placement with the situation being reviewed at the end of that period. While carers do have a child in placement they will be entitled to up to 14 days respite per annum without their fee or allowance being affected.

3.5.11 Whilst the majority of carers will benefit from the proposed restructuring, an individual assessment of each carer will be undertaken and transitional arrangements will be put in place to protect them and ensure the children in their care are not adversely affected.

3.6 Summary of Proposals in Relation to Foster Care

3.6.1 It is proposed that a revised scheme of allowances and fees be introduced for Foster Carers in West Dunbartonshire. Initially the scheme will consist of 2 levels. Carers would progress from Level 1 to 2 as a result of experience, attending training and acquiring skills and qualifications.

3.6.2 Each newly approved Foster Carer will receive a set up grant which will cover the cost of purchasing the equipment necessary to enable them to foster e.g. cot, pram, baby equipment.

3.6.3 A start up grant will be awarded for each child placed. This recognises that when children are accommodated, they almost always lack basic necessities such as clothes, school uniform, shoes, nightwear and underwear.

3.6.4 All other discretionary and one-off payments to carers will be discontinued. This will include payments for telephones, holidays etc. The enhanced allowances and additional weeks are set at a level which would allow carers to meet the needs of children placed with them. A small budget will be retained to purchase items of an exceptional nature, e.g. aids and adaptations for a child with a physical disability.

3.6.5 Mileage allowances will be paid at Inland Revenue rates but can only be claimed after 100 miles has been completed in any one week.

3.6.6. An annual and recurring recruitment budget of £6,300 is proposed with an annual and recurring training and support budget of £10,200.

3.6.7 The proposals will ensure the availability of good quality fostering resources for Looked After Children who cannot remain at home. The proposals will support recruitment of Foster Carers by paying competitive allowances and fees and assist in the retention of Foster Carers by ensuring they are adequately trained and supported.

- 3.6.8** The steep increase in the numbers of Looked After Children, coupled with increased competition, means that the service is presently vulnerable and it is likely that further use of independent sector resources will be necessary.
- 3.6.9** The proposals outlined here are designed to ensure a long term strategy that will minimise the use of private sector resources. Historically there have always been children whose needs are so highly specialised that resources require to be sought across Scotland or indeed the U.K. This is likely to continue. However the proposals made here address our ability to recruit and retain carers at all levels, with the aim of securing a diverse range of resources capable of meeting a wide spectrum of needs. Failure to modernise and develop the service now would incur significant additional expenditure in the future.

3.7 Respite Care Provision for Foster Carers

- 3.7.1** As the needs of children who are Looked After and Accommodated in foster care become more complex, the support needs of carers increase correspondingly.
- 3.7.2** Research has identified that the opportunity to have respite is a valuable component in helping to sustain alternative family placements. Under normal family circumstances children can spend time with relatives and friends thus affording parents the opportunity to have natural respite from their children. This is not often possible with Looked After Children where there may be legal restrictions on where a child may spend the night and/or where the child's behaviour is such that he/she requires skilled care that cannot easily be provided. Responses gathered in the consultation for Getting it Right for Every Child identified respite as being one of the essentials in providing good support for Foster Carers. Birth children in foster care families indicated that their experience could be improved if they could get some planned time alone with their parents. Carers felt that it would help them to provide improved care if they could be certain that they could receive regular breaks to attend family events such as weddings, funerals and other important occasions as well as "recharge their batteries".
- 3.7.3** As well as the above considerations, the issue of the competition that West Dunbartonshire is experiencing in terms of recruitment from the independent sector and from neighbouring local authorities is also a factor. Although the rate of financial reward is significant in how Foster Carers choose the fostering agency to which they apply the support offered by the agency is often equally important in helping them to decide. The provision of respite is viewed as an integral part of the extended support expected.

- 3.7.4** Respite has usually been provided through the existing pool of Foster Carers. This is not always in the best interests of the child as it is difficult to ensure that the same carers are available for the child each time. The children for whom respite is required are often those with the highest level of need and those who are least able to cope with changes of carers.
- 3.7.5** The proposal is to recruit a pool of respite carers who will provide the majority of respite. There are some carers who already have an arrangement with another carer whereby they provide respite for each other. There is no intention to disrupt these arrangements which are already in place and working well for children and their carers.
- 3.7.6** It is proposed that a respite scheme be implemented that will make available a pool of six respite carers who will be able to provide short breaks and holiday cover for Kinship and Foster Carers who require it.
- 3.7.7** The cost of guaranteeing at least 2 weeks respite per year to our carers is estimated at £21,400.

4. Main Issues for Adoption and Permanency Planning

Background

- 4.1.1** For a minority of children it becomes apparent that their needs cannot be met by their family of origin. In such cases the Local Authority has a statutory duty to assess the child's needs and to progress a plan to meet these needs on a permanent, consistent and stable basis. Where this is the case the aspiration would be for the child to be placed with adoptive parents. Research indicates that adoption provides the best outcome for most children in this situation.
- 4.1.2** It is not possible to place all children who require it in adoptive placements. The number of prospective adopters is less than the number of children who need placements. The number of children with very complex needs requiring placement is also increasing and adopters can be reluctant to assume full parental responsibility for children with such difficulties.
- 4.1.3** There are increasing numbers of children being placed for adoption who have experienced neo-natal abstinence syndrome as a result of parental drug misuse during pregnancy. There is growing concern emerging from research into infant brain development which indicates global developmental impact as a result of this throughout childhood. This is likely to increase the number of children considered to have special needs at the point of placement.

4.1.4 However for all children, the aim of the adoption and permanence service is to identify the optimum resource that will meet a child's assessed needs starting from the premise that this should be an adoptive placement .

4.2 Legislative Change

4.2.1 The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and associated regulation introduces a number of significant changes to adoption legislation. The main changes are as follows.

(A) Permanence Orders

Only a local authority will be able to apply for the new order which will secure children in a long-term placement and be flexible enough to meet the needs of individual cases. This new order will remove the right of the parents to have the child reside with them or to regulate the child's residence, to control, direct and guide, and to act as the child's legal representative.

The Permanence Order (with adoption) provisions will also allow an order to be made authorising the local authority to place the child for adoption where certain conditions are satisfied.

(B) Changes in the Eligibility Criteria for Adoption

The introduction of Section 29 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 has changed the eligibility criteria in respect of couples who can adopt to include the following:

- persons who are civil partners of each other;
- persons who are living together as if husband and wife in an enduring family relationship;
- persons who are living together as if civil partners in an enduring family relationship.

(C) Post Adoption Support Plans

The Act states that people affected by adoption have a right to have their needs assessed and to have the outcome in writing. They will then be able to make representations about the assessment.

Where an adoption support plan is agreed it is specified that it will have to be in written form and be subject to review.

The Local Authority that made the adoption placement will be responsible for undertaking, facilitating and paying for the assessment of need for a

period of three years after the granting of an order wherever the placement has been made. Thereafter, the Local Authority in which the person requesting service resides will be responsible except in the case of payment of an adoption allowance which will remain with the placing authority.

The Act does not specify beyond advice and counselling what might be included in an adoption support plan but there is an assumption that other services will be required if need is assessed across more dimensions.

(D) Adoption Allowance Schemes

New Regulations will govern the approved adoption allowance scheme. The categories of children eligible have been simplified. The government is not setting any minimum level for allowances and Local Authorities will be able to set their own levels. However, Regulations may make provision for or specify the following:

- The procedure to be followed by the agency when deciding if a person should be paid an allowance;
- Circumstances in which an allowance may be paid;
- The factors to be taken into account in determining the amount of an allowance;
- Procedure for review, variation and termination of allowances;
- Information about allowances to be given to persons who intend to adopt; and
- The procedure to be followed by an agency in preparing, modifying or revoking an adoption allowance scheme.

The Act came into force on September 2009.

4.3 Activity and Trends

4.3.1 Resources required to progress permanency plans fall into four broad areas:

- establishing the legal grounds that it is in a child's best interest for their birth parents' parental responsibilities to be permanently removed from them by the Court;
- recruiting and approving potential permanent families;
- matching children to available families; and
- post placement support.

All parts of this process are both time consuming and complex. This has put immense strain on the operational capacity of Permanency and Adoption services.

- 4.3.2** There is an emerging trend in this area of children being accommodated with little prospect of a return home to their birth parents. Generally out of the total numbers accommodated in foster care only about 50% of them are returning home during that year. In past years that number was generally 75%-80% returning home. We are seeing a growing pattern of children remaining much longer or permanently in care. This means that there are more of our temporary placements blocking up with children who need permanent placements, or where return home is taking much longer than in the past. It also means that we have had to purchase from the private/independent sector a significant number of permanent placements.
- 4.3.3** The trend identified here is the same for most local authorities in Scotland, and whilst the authorities in the West of Scotland co-operate well with each other through consortium arrangements, all are experiencing difficulties in finding permanent placements. Also the new Adoption legislation, the impact of the extra responsibilities and the associated updating of policy and procedure locally has created capacity problems for Permanency Services.
- 4.3.4** We have benchmarked with a number of authorities all of whom had recently reviewed their payment schemes, up-rating them to enable better competition with the private/independent sector. In order to deal more effectively and efficiently with permanency planning they had all expanded their team with the creation of an extra senior post to better resource the work associated with adoption and permanency planning.
- 4.3.5** In 2008 16 children were registered as requiring a permanent placement. Of the 16; 6 were placed in adoptive placements; 4 were placed in permanent foster placements; 2 have had permanent places identified in their current temporary placements; with 4 for whom permanent placements are still being sought.
- 4.3.6** In 2009, 14 were registered as requiring permanent placements. Of the 14, 6 were placed in adoptive placements; with 8 still awaiting a permanent placement. In both years 5 sets of adoptive carers were registered. This pattern of registration has been consistent in years previous to 2008.
- 4.3.7** Unfortunately, the numbers of children we have been unable to place in permanent substitute family care has risen. Some children will remain with their original temporary carers on a permanent basis. This is good for the children, but creates a capacity problem as it reduces the availability of good experienced carers offering temporary placements. Because of the difficulties the children are bringing into placements, there is also a rise in the number of requests for post placement support.

4.3.8 As well as attempting to recruit permanent carers locally there are three other routes to securing permanent placements for children. Through the West of Scotland Consortium, of which West Dunbartonshire is a member, we can access potential permanent placements in other authorities. No fees for these placements are exchanged between the member authorities. At present, because of an overall high level of demand across the authorities there are very few permanent resources available within the Consortium. It would also appear that there are relatively few adoptive assessments underway, suggesting availability will be low for the foreseeable future.

4.3.9 The second main route is via other Local Authorities across the country. In this arrangement authorities will charge each other a fee for providing a placement. This charge is in the region of £14,000. The demand for these placements is high, with availability low.

4.3.10 The third and most costly route is to secure a placement via a voluntary/independent agency. The cost of these placements is around £21,000 per child, plus an additional post placement fee, per child, of around £4,000 after a year in placement. Again, demand for these places is high.

4.4 Proposal to address issues identified

4.4.1 It has been clear, particularly over the last few years, that there has been a continual rise in the demand for permanency services. This is also reflected in the potential rise in costs to the council in securing placements from other service providers. There are also the emerging issues arising from the impact of the new Adoption legislation.

4.4.2 It is clear that we have to create extra capacity within the Adoption and Fostering Team in order to recruit and approve more potential permanent families. The risk if we do not do this is the possibility of greater reliance on the independent sector, with the consequential budgetary risk of increasing costs.

4.4.3 Initially this increase in the capacity of the team should be in the form of a Senior Social Worker, whose role would be to progress the permanency plans for all identified children. This would include: modernising our policies and procedures as a result of the new legislation to help establish the grounds of permanency for all children; managing the recruitment, preparation, support and training for adoptive parents; co-ordinating post adoption support including counselling in search of origins; co-ordinating the Adoption, Permanence and Fostering Panel; and co-ordinating post placement support. In addition, this increased capacity would allow the Senior Social Worker for Fostering to concentrate on the tasks associated

with recruiting and supporting temporary Foster Carers as outlined at Section 3 above.

- 4.4.6** The cost of creating an additional senior social worker post for permanency work would be £44,640.

5. Main Issues in Relation to Kinship Care

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1** For the purposes of this report, Kinship Care refers to the placement of a child in a full time care arrangement provided by a child's extended family or wider network of friends where this placement has been arranged by the Local Authority. Many arrangements for the care of children are brought about by informal agreements made by the family and do not involve the Local Authority. These arrangements fall outwith the scope of this paper.

- 5.1.2** Within West Dunbartonshire Kinship Carers have, to date, been referred to as "Link Carers" and they receive a Link Carers Allowance for each child subject to this arrangement. The Link Carer scheme was developed in order to better meet the needs of children by placing them with a relative or family friend who was willing and able to care for the child, thereby avoiding placing the child in Foster Care.

- 5.1.3** Where there is a financial difficulty within the family receiving the child then Link Carer payments can be made for each child placed. The existing Link Carer Allowance is the equivalent of a third of the age related Fostering Allowance. The family can also claim the appropriate State Benefits such as Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. Apart from financial support, Kinship Carers can also receive a variety of supports from Social Work depending on the individual needs of the child and family.

5.2 Activity and Trends

- 5.2.1** In September 2005, Link Carer payments were being made to 20 carers in relation to 31 children. By September 2010 payments were being made to 38 carers for 59 children. It can be seen that there has been a steady growth in Kinship Care arrangements over the years. Whilst some of this growth can be linked to an overall increase in the number of children who are Looked After by the Council, the rate of growth is much higher than can wholly be accounted for by that. The demand for such placements has continued to grow in 2010/11 where the probably outturn is £114,335 compared to the original budget of £81,409.

5.3 Policy Context

5.3.1 As noted earlier, in December 2007 the Scottish Government and COSLA published a National Strategy entitled “Getting it Right for Every Child in Kinship and Foster Care”.

5.3.2 The implications for Foster Care services have been referred to earlier in this paper, but with regard to Kinship Care the Strategy stated that the following was to be implemented:

- A minimum allowance to be paid to all approved Foster Carers and Kinship Carers of Looked After Children;
- Approved Kinship Carers of Looked After Children to be paid an equivalent rate to Foster Carers;
- Improved assessment and approval processes as well as better training and support for Foster Carers and Kinship Carers;
- A national protocol for dealing with accusations against Foster Carers and Kinship Carers.

5.3.3 In order to address the issues of equivalency of allowance, the Scottish Government said that an allocation of funding was identified and distributed to local authorities as part of the concordat agreement and subsequent funding.

5.3.4 Following the publication of “Getting it Right for Every Child in Kinship and Foster Care” the Scottish Government updated the regulations for Looked After Children in 2009. Within the updated regulations there are now specific regulations governing Kinship Care. This gives these arrangements a much more formal legal basis. Prior to this many of these arrangements were informal and in West Dunbartonshire more than half of our Kinship placements were on an informal basis.

5.3.5 The new regulations cover:

- Assessment and Approval – this involves a much more rigorous and detailed assessment process than was previously the case;
- Placements – the regulations require much more formal placement agreements between the local authority and carers;
- Notifications – if the local authority places a child outwith their boundary they have a duty to inform the receiving local authority and relevant partners such as health;
- Records – there is a new duty on local authorities in relation to records they should keep regarding Kinship Care placements. The regulations also set much tighter timescales for the assessment and approval of Kinship Carers.

5.3.6 The new regulations bring into sharper focus the distinction between formal Kinship Care and informal kinship arrangements. Formal Kinship Care will mean the child will be “Looked After” either under Section 25 or Section 70 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

5.4 Potential Impact of new Kinship Care Arrangements for West Dunbartonshire

5.4.1 Allowances

As noted earlier in this report, the Government’s desire is that Local Authorities should pay Kinship Carers at the same level as Foster Carers. At present we pay Link Carers a third of the appropriate basic foster care allowance. Implementation of the guidance would have a significant financial impact meaning an increase of £435,000 (i.e. from the current level of spend of £114,335 to £549,468). This calculation is based on the proposed scheme of foster care allowances.

5.4.2 Improved Assessment Arrangements

The direct and indirect costs associated with assessment and support for Kinship Carers are difficult to quantify, but an exercise carried out by the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), suggests that a ratio of one member of staff to support 20 Kinship Carers is a reasonable calculation. Using this ratio and based on our present number of Kinship Carers (38) we would require at least 2 additional Social Workers.

5.4.3 There are a range of options outlined later in this report regarding payment to Kinship Carers but, no matter which option is agreed, all future work with Kinship Carers will require greater input than our current practice in terms of assessment support and recording. Coupled with the increasing numbers of Kinship Carers requiring such assessment and support, it will not be possible to meet this expectation within the current staffing levels.

5.4.4 Impact on Carers

There are a number of potential issues that will impact on carers. The new assessment and support arrangements will lead to much greater scrutiny of their family life. Since the publication of the National Strategy, issues have emerged regarding potential problems with people’s benefits as a result of being paid Kinship Care Allowances. There have been examples in some Local Authority areas of Social Work paying Kinship Care Allowances and the family having their Housing Benefit reduced. The situation is complex and unclear but work continues at both local and national level to try to resolve this but, so far, without clear guidance emerging. One of the particular difficulties in arriving at a clear and consistent position on this is that it involves not only local variation but also

requires negotiation by Scottish Ministers with the DWP, which is a reserved function of the U.K. Government.

5.5 National Situation in Relation to Kinship Care

5.5.1 The target date set by the Scottish Government for the implementation of the new arrangements as laid out in the National Strategy is 1st April 2011. A survey by ADSW has shown that there is very little evidence of uniform implementation of the strategy. All local authorities who took part in the survey confirmed that the funding was inadequate. Some authorities that have identified their funding through the Concordat have channelled their funding into increased fees and allowances for Foster Care to help them compete with the Independent Sector.

5.5.2 The picture at present is that few local authorities are paying their Kinship Carers the same as Foster Carers, with the majority paying a flat rate fee for all children or age related allowances similar to our present system.

5.6 Options for Changes to West Dunbartonshire Link Care Scheme

5.6.1 This report suggests a series of changes to our Link Carer scheme which take account of the desired direction of travel in the National Strategy.

5.6.2 There are four options for us in deciding how to respond to the challenge of the National Strategy in respect of payments to Kinship Carers. These are:

- Implement the expectations in full;
- Introduce a flat rate payment for all children in Kinship Care;
- Maintain Link Carer Allowance at a third of the Fostering Allowance; and
- Keep payments at their present rate.

5.6.3 Full Implementation

There are major financial implications for the Council in implementing the strategy in full, but it is also important to note some of the debate on the point of principle, regarding whether Foster Care and Kinship Care are directly comparable, that has taken place so far.

There is disagreement within ADSW about a strategy that links kinship payments to foster care payments. Whilst there are some similarities, the tasks associated with their respective roles are very different. Looking after a relative's child and looking after a stranger's child are different tasks. It is not the role of Local Government to provide income maintenance as this is the responsibility of Central Government. The Local Authority should focus on personal support and other professional

tasks associated with Kinship Care, and payments should be for identified exceptional needs of the child. Significantly increasing payments to relatives can mitigate against the child returning home as this can be a perverse incentive. The growth in Kinship Care payments has not led to a fall in children being accommodated in Council resources. There is, however, full acceptance that Kinship Carers require support from Local Authorities.

Based on present numbers the existing Link Carer Scheme would have a projected cost in year 2011/2012 of: **£114,335**. This is based on payments at the rate of a third of the existing fostering allowance.

If Link Carer payments were aligned with the proposed new Foster Care allowances, the projected cost in year 2011/2012 would be: **£549,468**.

Therefore we would need a budget increase of: **£435,133**.

If we apply the assessment and support model outlined in the guidance then we would require 2 extra social work posts at a cost of: **£80,000**.

The potential additional cost of fully implementing the National Strategy would be **£515,133**

5.6.4 Flat Rate Scheme

Some Local Authorities operate a flat rate payment scheme to their Kinship Carers. This means that no matter the age of the child from 0 – 16 the carer is paid the same amount every week. Most of the authorities who introduced this scheme were those who had no previous scheme at all. The rates paid by these authorities range from £40 per week per child to £56 per week per child.

These amounts seem to have been arrived at to be at a level which would not impact on the carers' other potential state benefits. The main case against flat rate schemes is that they do not recognise there is a considerable difference in the cost of looking after a 1 year old as compared to a 15 year old. Most benefits recognise the fact that as a child becomes older they become more expensive to look after.

If West Dunbartonshire Council were to choose a flat rate scheme, at a rate of £40 per child per week the annual cost based on our present numbers would be **£135,200**.

If we apply the assessment and support model outlined in the guidance then we would require 2 extra social work posts at a cost of: **£80,000**.

The potential additional cost of implementing a Flat Rate Scheme would be **£100,865**.

5.6.5 Maintain Present Relationship of Allowances

The present Link Carer Allowance Scheme pays carers an age related allowance, which is a third of the equivalent age related Fostering Allowance.

The payments by age group would change as follows:

Age Group	Current Allowance	Uprated Allowance
0-4	£24.17 per week	£41.70 per week
5-10	£29.99 per week	£47.50 per week
11-15	£37.33 per week	£59.13 per week
16-18	£48.37 per week	£71.21 per week

As noted above the probable outturn for 2010/2011 has been calculated at **£114,335**.

If we maintain the present relationship of these payments being a third of the Fostering Allowance and Fostering Allowances are up-rated as suggested earlier in this paper, then that cost would increase to **£183,156**.

If we apply the assessment and support model outlined in the guidance then we would require 2 extra social work posts at a cost of: **£80,000**.

The potential additional cost of maintaining the Kinship Care Payments at a third of the Fostering Allowance would be **£148,821**.

5.6.6 Keep Payments at Present Level

Continuing to pay the present weekly raised as noted in 5.6.5 would maintain spend at current levels and would be cost neutral, but it would break the link of the payment being one third of the fostering allowance rate if we only uprated the fostering allowances. If this was accepted then, under a new scheme, kinship payments would be roughly the equivalent of a fifth of the equivalent fostering rate.

If we apply the assessment and support model outlined in the guidance then we would require 2 extra social work posts at a cost of: **£80,000**.

5.7 Issues to be considered

5.7.1 Our existing Link Carer scheme makes no distinction regarding whether a child is Looked After or not in order to make a payment to a carer. The test is whether the Council would have to accommodate the child and if so, it is our statutory duty to consider whether family or friends can look after the child. If, in order to do this, financial help is needed this is provided through a Link Carer payment. If other forms of support are

needed then this is provided either through our support for Looked After Children or support to Children in Need.

5.7.2 The two major issues in meeting the challenge of the National Strategy are whether it is considered that Kinship Care and Foster Care are comparable and should be paid the same and how we should meet the new regulatory requirements regarding assessment and support to Kinship Carers.

5.7.3 Within West Dunbartonshire, we do not believe that Kinship Care and Foster Care are comparable. Foster Carers are subject to a rigorous, detailed personal assessment process which lasts 8–10 months; they have to care for the children of strangers, many times at very short notice and with very little information about the child; they are expected to take a “professional” approach to working with parents, social workers, children’s hearings etc; they are subject to an annual review of their status; expected to attend mandatory training; they have to deal with a number of different children; work towards supporting children to be re-united with their parents; they do not receive state benefits for looking after children; and they will have higher expectations placed on them regarding the quality of their childcare practice.

5.7.4 These expectations are not placed, to anywhere near the same extent, on Kinship Carers. That is why we have, to date, maintained our Link Carer scheme. The Link Carer Scheme payments being linked to the level of Fostering Allowances therefore reflects the differences between the two types of care, as noted in 5.7.3. The maintenance of the ratio of payment as one third of the Fostering Allowance seems to be fair.

6. People Implications

6.1 The revised scheme as described for support to Adopters and Permanence would require an additional Senior Social Worker post to be created. The additional work relating to the assessment and support model for Kinship Carers outlined in the guidance would require two additional main grade workers.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Fostering

The current 2010/11 revenue budget for fostering allowances is £1,425,922. It is anticipated that under the proposed new scheme with the current numbers of foster placements for 2010/11 this would cost £1,462,000. The draft budget at present for 2011/12 is £1,318,918. Therefore in order to implement the proposed scheme of fostering allowances an increase in the draft budget for 2011/12 will be required of £143,000. As noted above it is anticipated that the new scheme should,

over time, allow the Council to recruit appropriate numbers of Foster Carers and would see the number of children placed with Independent Agencies reduce. It is estimated that if this new scheme allowed the Council to remove any need to use Foster Agencies then the potential saving arising from the introduction of this scheme (based on current numbers of children placed with agencies) is around £325,000 per year. However, any such saving will only accrue once children currently placed with agencies are no longer placed, which could be up to 9 years from now, as these placements are now considered to be continuing. However, there is the potential over future financial years to see these costs reduce significantly as children come out of Foster Care placements.

7.2 Adoption and Permanence

In order to support permanency placements and to seek to recruit more people who want to support children in this way, an extra post of Senior Social Worker is required at a cost of £44,640 per year. This cost is not provided for 2011/12 budget at this stage. It is expected that this new post will result in future potential cost increases being mitigated against through the recruitment of more people who wish to support children through permanent placements.

7.3 Kinship Care

Maintaining the link between the Fostering Scheme and the Kinship Care Scheme as one third of the Foster Allowance reflects the difference in the roles. Maintaining the link will increase costs of Kinship Care payments by £68,821 per year. The two new Social Worker posts, which are required to be recruited to appropriately support Kinship Carers following the Scottish Government's expectations of the support that should be provided, would cost around £80,000 per year. This cost is not currently provided for in the 2011/12 budget.

The Spending Review 2007 which supported the "Concordat" between Scottish Government and Local Authorities included a commitment to "*providing allowances for kinship carers of "looked after children" to treat them on an equivalent basis to foster carers*". The Scottish Government and COSLA would therefore be of the view that the Scottish Government has provided sufficient funding within the revenue funding provided to Councils to allow them to increase the level of financial support available to Kinship Carers to the level of support which is provided to Foster Carers.

8. Risk Analysis

8.1 There are several risks associated with the current and future models of support for Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Care:

8.1.1 Under the current scheme of fostering allowances the department is experiencing difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of Foster Carers to

keep up with demand in terms of numbers of children needing such support. As reported, it is expected that future demand is likely to be at least at the current level and may well increase. The position is likely to become more difficult over the next few years as a number of our existing Foster Carers are reaching an age where it is likely that they will wish to retire from being Foster Carers. Unless more Foster Carers can be recruited then we will need to use placements in the Independent Sector at significantly higher cost. Therefore, the proposed new scheme is expected to mitigate against these risks. There remains a risk that, even under the proposed new scheme for fostering allowances, demand for places outstrips the supply that the Council can recruit in terms of Foster Carers and therefore agency provision will still need to be used. The ongoing supply and demand for Foster Carers will therefore need to be closely monitored over future years.

8.1.2 The report highlights the trend in relation to the reducing numbers of children who are able to return to their birth parents. This also increases pressure on any current or future Foster Carers. In order to support more children into permanent placements the Council needs to be in a position to support the recruitment of and ongoing support to adoptive parents. The proposed recruitment of an additional Senior Social Worker would assist to mitigate this risk through seeking to support further recruitment of people willing to support children through permanent placements. There remains a risk that this post will not be successful in recruiting sufficient new permanent placements and therefore the need for this post will need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

8.1.3 In relation to Kinship Carers the Scottish Government has set an expectation around the level of support provided to Kinship Carers, both financially and in terms of Social Worker support. There is a risk that the proposal to retain our Link Carer allowances at a level which is a linked proportion of the Fostering Allowance will cause our existing Kinship Carers to stop providing the care that they currently provide as this does not fully comply with the Scottish Government guidance. Any such decision by existing Kinship Carers would result in additional financial pressures on the Council to accommodate these children. If the required level of professional support were not available this could lead to people feeling unable to make a commitment to looking after children or to placements breaking down. Under such circumstances a further review of options would be required.

9. Option Appraisal

9.1 There are a range of options available in considering the above and these have been identified in sections 3, 4 and 5 of the above report along with a proposal arising from each of these sections.

10. Equalities Impact

- 10.1** No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of these measures.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

11.1 Foster Carers Issues

As is described in the above report the Council's Fostering resource is under pressure and is likely to continue to be under pressure in future years as a result of trends in relation to demand for fostering placements and due to the age profile of our current Foster Carers. The Council has found it increasingly difficult to avoid using agency foster placements which often cost 3 times as much as Council placements. It is anticipated that as a result of these pressures, unless the scheme of support for Foster Carers is improved, then the Council will come to rely more on agency placements and this will be significantly more expensive than our current budgeted cost. In order to mitigate against this future risk of increased cost it is necessary to introduce a scheme of support for Foster Carers which increases the level of payment through introducing a fee based scheme as described in Section 3. Such a scheme changes the way that financial remuneration is calculated and is expected to make fostering a more attractive proposition for people who at present feel that the current scheme does not give the required security and reward for this work. The cost of the new scheme of allowances is around £143,000 more than the current draft budget for 2011/12; however it is anticipated that this will, over time, be an appropriate change to make as future need is met from Council rather than agency Foster Carers thereby reducing significantly the likely future cost, as noted at 7.1 above.

11.2 Adoption and Permanency Issues

As is described in section 4 of the report, there is a trend which shows that the potential to return fostered children to their birth parents is reducing. This increases pressure on the current pool of Foster Carers as placements become longer. There is, therefore, a need to identify more permanent placements to support the expected increase in demand and to provide children with the best prospect of a stable childhood. In order to facilitate this it is necessary to employ an additional Senior Social Worker at a cost of £44,640 per year. The proposal to create this new post, alongside the proposed changes to the fostering allowances scheme, is expected to allow the Council to maintain fostering and adoption costs at around current levels by avoiding increased numbers of external agency placements.

11.3 Kinship Care Issues

As described in the report the Scottish Government has indicated that Kinship Carers are to be paid at a rate equivalent to Foster Carers and

should be supported in a way that is in line with the support provided to Foster Carers. The conclusion reached above is that, due to the different roles, the payments should not be equivalent and therefore should be retained at the current proportion of the Fostering Allowance paid. In order to improve support to Kinship Carers then two new Social Worker posts are required. The above changes will cost an additional £148,821 per year.

11.4 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions it is recommended that:

- i) The proposed new payment scheme for Foster Carers is approved for implementation from 1 April 2011 at a cost of £143,000 per year;
- ii) The proposed additional Senior Social Worker post (costing £44,640 per year) is created to support enhanced provision of permanent placements, and to improve capacity overall to address the recruitment and support issues for temporary Foster carers, from 1 April 2011
- iii) The allowance for Kinship Carers remains linked to the Fostering Allowance rate, at a cost of £68,821 per year; and the new model of assessment and support for Kinship Carers as identified in Scottish Government regulations is implemented from 1 April 2011 by the creation of two additional social worker posts at a cost of £80,000 per year; and
- iv) Management monitors the ongoing demand and supply issues relating to fostering, adoption and kinship care as the above measures are implemented and report on progress to a future meeting of this Committee.

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Appendix: Appendix 1 – Benchmark table

Wards affected: All wards

BENCHMARK WITH OTHER AGENCIES

	Age 0-4	Age 5-10	Age 11-15	Age 16-18	Fees	Cost to Purchase Placement
West Dunbartonshire Council	£71.78	£89.07	£110.88	£143.68	No Fees	N/A
Inverclyde Rates Levell-3	£125.09	£142.49	£177.38	£215.75	Level 1 - No Fees Level 2 - 1 or 2 children - £150 per week 3 or more children - £175 per week Level 3 - 1 or 2 children - £225 per week 3 or more children - £250 per week	n/a
Inverclyde Proposed Professional Scheme Level 4	£182.32	£213.73	£256.02	£323.61	£300 per child per week.	n/a
Argyll & Bute	£250.00	£250.00	£300.00	£300.00	Incorporated into allowance.	Not available to purchase
Glasgow	£121.68	£138.61	£172.55	£209.86	Level 1 £35 Level 2 £100 Level 3 £300	Not available to purchase
North Ayrshire	£128.69	£159.71	£198.81	£252.45	Level 1 No Fee Level 2 No Fee Level 3 £200 Level 4 £400	Not available to purchase
Renfrewshire	£370.88	£370.88	£370.88	£370.88	Incorporated into allowance	Not available to purchase
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES						
Kibble			£181.12	£220.28	£495.75 per week	£2,712 per week per child
Fosterplus	£356.00	£356.00	£356.00	£356.00	Incorporated into allowance	£943 per week per child
Care Visions	£125.00	£125.00	£145.00	£145.00	Fee1 £300 Fee 2 £550	£945 per child
SWIIS	£223.00	£223.00	£223.00	£223.00	£183 per child	£995 for 1 st child per week £895 for subsequent child
Foster Care Associates	£390.25	£390.25	£390.25	£390.25	Incorporated into allowance	£950 per week per child £1,900 for solo placement