

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Social Care and Wellbeing DATE 3 June 2010

CORPORATE DIRECTOR: Fred McBride

TITLE OF REPORT: Kinship Care Strategy

REPORT NUMBER: SCW/10/014

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This paper outlines the proposed Kinship Care Strategy for Aberdeen City Council. It should be read in conjunction with the paper presented to the Policy and Strategy Committee in March 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended Committee agree

- 2.1 The establishment of a Kinship Team to:
- Assess and review kinship carers
 - Provide continuing support and guidance in accordance with the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and National Care Standards.
 - Agree the new staffing implications as outlined in para 6.2.6.
- 2.2 That a Kinship Panel be established to consider the approval of kinship carers.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 To establish a Kinship Team to ensure a quality of service delivery that meets legislative and National Care Standards will have annual staffing costs of £189,764.
- 3.2 To help deliver on these expectations the Scottish Government, as part of the Concordat, allocated additional and recurring monies in the grant settlement to Local Authorities. This amounted to £12 million over 3 years.
- 3.3 While welcomed this money, on its own, will not cover the costs of delivering on the costs of an increased allowance to Kinship Carers. Anticipated costs of such an allowance would exceed £900,000 based on current figures. Given the current financial circumstances faced by local authorities delivering this commitment is a significant challenge.

- 3.4 The Kinship team will review and assess all existing carers to determine the suitability of them being approved as Kinship Carers. This exercise will allow an accurate calculation of the costs associated with delivering an allowance to kinship carers equivalent to that paid to foster carers.
- 3.5 The outcome of this review will be reported to a subsequent committee along with an options appraisal to discharge duties in this regard.
- 3.6 In response to these challenges discussions have been initiated with CoSLA and the Scottish Government on this issue.
- 3.7 These highlight that the current rate paid to kinship carers is 40% of the level of allowance paid to foster carers.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 4.1 This report promotes the caring of children within their families and takes full account of the Council's policies, procedures and functions on the diverse groups within Aberdeen City.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Appropriate accommodation needs to be identified for the Kinship Team along with the necessary ICT equipment. Accommodation will be identified within an existing establishment. The team will be part of the 'Alternative Family Care' theme of Children's Services.

6. REPORT

6.1 Background

- 6.1.1 The need to develop a Kinship Carer Strategy was agreed by the Policy and Strategy Committee in March 2009. This agreement came in recognition of the commitment contained within the concordat signed between the Scottish Government and local authorities in 2007, to pay kinship carers an "equivalent allowance" to those paid to foster carers.
- 6.1.2 There was recognition that the payment of an allowance was in itself insufficient and that alongside this a Kinship Care Strategy should be developed to set out systems for assessment, approval and support of Kinship carers to care for extended family members as an alternative to other care settings.
- 6.1.3 The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, imposed new and additional statutory duties on local authorities in respect of children placed in kinship placements and towards Kinship carers.
- 6.1.4 It is proposed a Kinship Team be established. This team will
 - Implement the statutory duties.
 - Undertake all new assessments of Kinship carers in accordance with the statutory requirements.

- Re-assess all existing relative carers in accordance with the new regulations and National Standards
- Provide support to Kinship Carers both on an individual basis and by developing and building community networks for Kinship Carers.

6.1.5 The development of this frontline service will enable Aberdeen City Council to better able support children to remain within their families and communities. Outcomes for children placed in these type of arrangements are generally better than for children living in other care settings. These outcomes include:

- Increased stability
- Better educational attainment and achievement
- Strong sense of identity
- Better family relationships
- Increased social supports

6.1.6 Aberdeen City Council agreed an investment of £300,000 in February 2010 to progress arrangements for Kinship Care.

6.1.7 At present it is not known how many of our existing kinship carers would want to be formally approved as such. While it is expected that increased financial support may be an attraction, for some people the expectation that they comply with the Statutory Regulations and National Care Standards may be off putting. As an alternative they may chose to continue to care for the child and access benefits through the Benefits Agency. (Citizens Advice Scotland is well placed to assist families who opt to pursue this option.)

6.2 Kinship Care Team

6.2.1 As above the Kinship team will in the first instance, re-assess all existing carers to determine their suitability to be formally approved, including willingness to comply with the National Care Standards as well as Aberdeen City Council's practice expectations.

6.2.2 This exercise will enable a more accurate calculation of the financial implications of implementing this government's expectations. Establishing a Kinship Team is in acknowledgement of both the professional and statutory duties associated with the assessment, as well as the support needs of Kinship Carers.

6.2.3 The numbers of children living in Kinship arrangements continue to increase along with other groups of looked after children. There has been an 8% rise in this figure over the months February 2009 (139), August 2009 (141).

6.2.4 The team establishment proposed is

Team Manager	1 FTE
Qualified Social Workers	3
Family Resource Workers	3
Administrative Assistant	1.5 FTE

The above establishment is based on caseload numbers recommended nationally by ADSW.

6.2.5 In view of the fact that some of the work the team will undertake is already being carried out by staff across the service it is anticipated that some staff will be recruited to the team from existing resources.

6.2.6 Many of the duties, however, are new and to enable service delivery in line with National Standards and statutory requirements additional resources are required.

6.2.7 The additional resources required are

Post Title	Number of Posts	Cost
Qualified Social Workers	2	£85,853
Family Resource Workers	2	£65,661
Administrative Assistant	1.5	£38,250
	Total Staff Costs	£189,764

We will realign the funding of the Team Manager (1FTE), 1 QSW (1FTE) and Family Resource Worker (1FTE) from existing resources.

6.3 Kinship Panel

6.3.1 The Scottish Government guidance highlights the need for local authorities to identify a process for approving Kinship Carers. While comparisons could be drawn with the approval process for foster carers, it is important to acknowledge there are distinct differences between foster carers and kinship carers.

6.3.2 It is proposed to establish a Kinship care panel to consider the assessments of prospective Kinship Carers.

6.3.3 Recommendations from the Panel will be sent to a Senior Manager in Social Care and Wellbeing Service.

6.3.4 This process allows for a robust and independent approval process. It will provide scrutiny of assessments as well as openness and transparency to the decision making process.

6.3.5 Part of the duties of the Support Assistant post will be to minute the Kinship Panel. This task is also governed by statutory regulations and has strict timescales.

7 REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS
Graeme Simpson - Children's Services Manager
gsimpson@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 523496

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009

Appendix 1

2010/11 **LINK CARERS ALLOWANCE - PER WEEK**

0 – 4	£48.32
5 – 10	£59.97
11 – 15	£74.65
16 – 18	£96.65

2010/11 **FOSTER ALLOWANCE RATES - PER WEEK**

0 - 4	£ 125.09
5 - 10	£ 142.49
11 - 15	£ 177.38
16 - 18	£ 215.74