

ECYE10. Alternative Family Placement – Kinship Care Developments

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on national developments in relation to kinship care. The report sought approval to progress changes to Falkirk's processes to support kinship carers and improve outcomes for looked after children and young people.

The Council's procedures for kinship care were originally agreed in 2010 and had been updated and amended in light of various legislative changes. A review had been undertaken over the past year, which included feedback from carers and staff, analysis of complaints and reference to national developments.

A flat rate was paid to carers approved on an emergency/interim basis along with set up costs and any other assistance a carer may require e.g. transport or nursery costs. The fostering equivalent allowance was then paid once the carer was approved, with a financial assessment included as part of the process.

Nationally there were differing interpretations of the regulations and, while some other local authorities followed a similar process to Falkirk, distinguishing between payments for interim and approved carers, the majority of Councils provided fostering equivalent allowances from point of placement. It was therefore proposed that full allowances were paid from the point of placement.

Kinship carers of children who were previously looked after and who had obtained a Kinship Care Order were deemed eligible in terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and were provided with an allowance equivalent to that paid to foster carers. Regulations covering this indicated that payments must be made until a child reaches the age of 16 years, following which the legislation determining their residence was no longer applicable. The Council made payments until the age of 16. It had, however, become clear that many of those young people remained at school beyond the age of 16 and that, while they could apply for EMA, the loss of a regular allowance where care costs remained significant was detrimental to their wellbeing. As such, it was proposed to continue payments until a young person left school and was able to either claim benefits in their own right, obtain employment, or access the care experienced bursary if progressing to further study.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive:-

- (1) noted the role of the national Kinship Care Collaborative, and that local support to kinship carers was aligned to developments arising from the Collaborative;**
- (2) agreed amendments to interim Kinship Care Payments for looked after children to maximise support to carers, and**

(3) agreed that payment to eligible carers with a Kinship Care Order were paid until a child left school.

Michael Rollo left the meeting during consideration of the previous item.
Councillor Alexander, Holly Anderson and John Chalmers left the meeting during consideration of the following item.