

## **RESPIRE CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS AND THOSE IN KINSHIP CARE**

**Report by Stuart Easingwood, Chief Social Work Officer**

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**Scottish Borders Council**

**17 June 2021**

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### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Officers have been tasked with taking a report to Council which establishes a pilot project to provide respite care for children in foster care and kinship care. The proposal is we would provide other carers an enhanced rate to offer a short stay respite service during weekend and holiday periods.**
- 1.2 The proposal was brought forward by Councillor Robson as part of the budget debate, and whilst his proposal was not accepted by the Administration, they did agree to call for a report on the issue. The budget identified for the pilot is £27k.
- 1.3 This report proposes a Test of Change to increase the recruitment and support of Short Breaks and other respite carers and provide enhanced support to carers of children with complex needs and those in kinship care. The duration of the Test of Change will be initially for one year.
- 1.4 Respite care is a key service designed to both provide parents and carers with a break from their often extensive parental care responsibilities and to help prevent family breakdown due to the stressors involved in caring for a child with disability.
- 1.5 Kinship care, formal care provided by family or extended family members, is similar to foster care in that the children are legally looked after children and have many of the presenting histories and needs of children in foster care. Support is key in ensuring kinship care placements are as robust as possible and not subject to unnecessary breakdown or disruption.

- 1.6 Respite services for children with complex needs and kinship care are relatively limited.
- 1.7 The proposal will result in better outcomes for children, young people and their families and financial savings which would otherwise be spent on external resources.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 I recommend that Council agree to:**

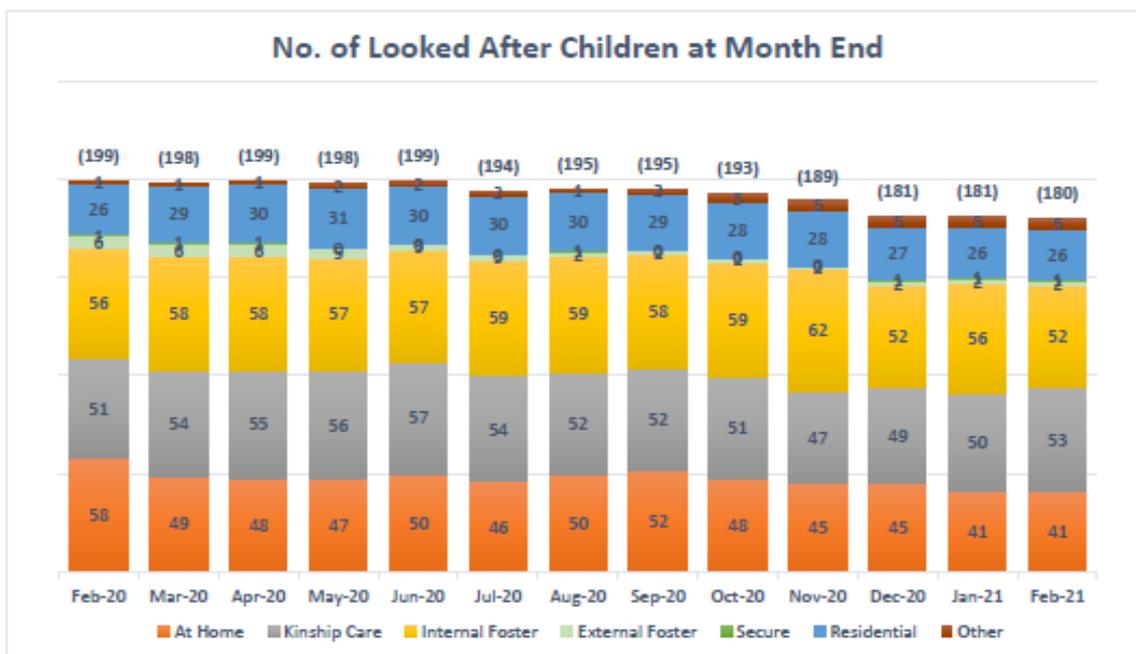
- (a) Improve the outcomes for both children with complex needs and children in kinship care by expanding the opportunity of respite care; increase the recruitment and support of Short Breaks and other respite carers; and, provide enhanced support to carers of children with complex needs and those in kinship care by supporting a Test of Change for the duration of one year.**
- (b) The Test of Change would require the enhancement of existing remuneration payments to Short Breaks carers, recruitment a 0.5fte Social Worker (Grade 9a) and a small recruitment budget.**

<b>Social Worker (Grade 9a)</b>	<b>17.5 hours pw</b>	<b>£22,233.18</b>
<b>Recruitment budget</b>		<b>£1000</b>
<b>Enhanced Short Breaks payments</b>		<b>£3,766.82</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>£27,000</b>

- (c) Any additional funding required for the enhancement of Short Breaks carer payments would be met within the existing Family Placement Team Budget – RY629.**

### 3 BACKGROUND

3.1 There are currently 180\* looked after children in Scottish Borders Council. In addition there are 16 young people in continuing care, a different legal status for young people aged 16-21 who were looked after and continue to be cared for by Scottish Borders Council but whose legal status is no longer 'looked after'.



3.2 Of the total number of looked after children, Scottish Borders Council's registered Fostering Service looks after 65\* children and young people. 52\* of these are looked after children and 13\* have a continuing care legal status.

\* 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

3.3 The Independent Care Review (published in February 2020) is the primary policy driver for services for looked after and care experienced children and young people in Scotland. It takes a broad ranging, holistic view of the care system and the care experience of children and young people. Its findings and proposed changes are detailed in 'The Promise'. Driven by an unwavering focus on the voice of care experience, the Independent Care Review demands the following changes:

- a) The balance of power must be upended so that listening to children and young people is always the basis of all decisions made about their lives.
- b) There must be a focus on building and maintaining life-long relationships – that includes a broader understanding of the risk of not having long term, loving relationships.
- c) Scotland must parent, not process, children so there is no difference between the lives of children in care and their peers. Care experienced

children must not miss out on the kind of childhood that many take for granted and the future that all our young people deserve.

- d) Families must be kept together wherever it is safe to do so. Families must get the support that is right for them at the earliest opportunity and it must be flexible, consistent, patient and free from stigma. This will mean that more children can live a safe, happy life at home with their families.

3.4 Scottish Borders Council's Fostering Service is registered with the Care Commission and both operates and is regulated within a statutory context. In terms of the percentage of the total looked after population, the Scottish Borders Council Fostering Service is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in Scotland caring for 34% our looked after children. There are nationally designated categories for the types of foster carers within a service. The category identifies the task of the particular carer. These categories are:

- a) Short Term carers – care for children not subject to Permanence Orders;
- b) Permanent carers – care for children subject to a Permanence Order;
- c) Respite Carers – provide respite care (predominantly for other foster carers);
- d) Short Breaks carers – provide respite care for children with severe and complex needs (predominantly children with learning disabilities);
- e) Continuing Carers – provide care for young people subject to continuing care up until the age of 21.

3.5 The Scottish Borders Fostering Service also has 2 foster care households who are designated as 'Contract Carers'. These carers also provide respite care for children with severe and complex needs. It is a historic service which is remunerated at a significantly different rate to other foster carer types. The service is not cost effective and is no longer required. Work is ongoing with Human Resources to end this category of foster carer in the near future.

3.6 It is of note that there has been a significant shift in the overall care of looked after children both nationally and in the Scottish Borders over the last 10 years. Both in terms of numbers and as a percentage of the overall looked after population there has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people in kinship care (formal care arrangements made with family members and relations) with foster care remaining relatively stable.

	LAC and Continuing Care in Foster Care	Percentage of overall LAC	LAC in Kinship Care	Percentage of overall LAC	Total number of Looked After Children
February 2011	74	36.0%	25	12.1%	205
February 2021	65	36.1%	53	29.4%	180

3.7 Kinship care is a formal care status and regulated under the Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014. Kinship carers are paid an allowance for the children they care for which equates to the allowance paid to foster carers (though foster carers also receive a fee for the task of foster caring).

## 4 SUBJECT MATTER

### 4.1 Respite Service provision for children with Complex Needs and for those in Kinship Care

- (a) Service delivery for children with complex needs is significant and there is evidence of increasing need over time. Information on emerging and increasing need is generally anecdotal, however the capacity of the pre-school visiting service has had to be increased over the past year due to the significant increase in young children with complex needs requiring assessment and support. Advances in medical provision for this group are having an effect as well as a greater awareness and expectation of support.
- (b) Respite care is a key service designed to both provide parents and carers with a break from their often extensive parental care responsibilities and, to help prevent family breakdown due to the stressors involved in caring for a child with disability.
- (c) Respite services for children with complex needs are relatively limited. There are 3 services which provide the bulk of respite care:
- i. SBC Fostering Service - Short Breaks carers - a small service with only 6 carers (4 households); and, Contract Carers – provide similar care to Short Breaks carers but with a different rate of remuneration. This is a small service with 4 carers (2 households).
  - ii. Aberlour Options Service – a commissioned service providing residential day and overnight respite for children with severe and complex needs (based in St. Boswells). The service general provides a level of care which requires increased staffing numbers, elements of medical care, etc., but there is some overlap with

clients who also receive respite care from SBC Short Breaks and Contract Carers.

- iii. Sleepy Heads – a small independent organisation (2 staff) providing respite services on a spot purchase basis.
- (d) A very small number of children access respite through their existing care resources where there is already a residential element of care in their overall support.
- (e) There is an increasing demand for services for children with complex needs. The family based respite care provided by the SBC Short Breaks Scheme is an important part of the respite care options for families, but requires development both in terms of recruiting additional carers and improving the financial remuneration of carers. It is of note that the service compliments other forms of respite care, providing broader opportunity, rather than replacing them.
- (f) Any developments in improving Short Breaks and respite care provision will also benefit children and young people in kinship care. Due to resource constraints very little respite care is provided to kinship carers despite there being a statutory requirement for equivalency in support with foster carers. Kinship care, formal care provided by family or extended family members is similar to foster care in that the children are legally looked after children and, have many of the presenting histories and needs of children in foster care. However, kinship carers differ significantly from foster carers. They are predominantly grandparents or close family members who have, in many circumstances, been directly involved in the circumstances and trauma surrounding the care of the child they look after. As such, support is key in ensuring kinship care placements are as robust as possible and not subject to unnecessary breakdown or disruption.

## 4.2 Finance

- (a) Currently the cost of service delivery for children with complex needs is significant. The approximate spend on children and young people with complex needs was £1,874,403, approximately 12% of the Children and Families Social Work total budget.

Total CHAD costs (excluding staffing) (Direct Payments – 50 cases)	<b>£609,023</b> (£248,116)
Aberlour Options Service (residential respite)	<b>£435,097</b>
Out of Authority Budget (Complex Needs) (Day placements – 11 cases) (Residential placements – 6 cases)	<b>£830,283</b> (£253,573) (£576,710)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,874,403</b>

- (b) The costs itemised above do not include the cost of respite care provided by Scottish Borders Council's Fostering Service.

(c) Relevant financial information relating to the provision of foster care and respite services in the Scottish Borders is listed below:

<b>Family Placement Carer and Associated Costs</b>				
	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Foster carers (Allowance + Fee)	£1,549,081	£1,503,469	£1,460,613	£1,399,023
Respite carers (Allowance + Fee)	£74,831	£53,801	£52,033	£20,302*
Short Breaks carers	**	**	£2,213	£175*
<b>Total (includes additional costs)</b>	<b>£1,777,785</b>	<b>£1,682,736</b>	<b>£1,657,700</b>	<b>£1,543,522</b>

\* Both respite and Short Breaks care was severely limited by the Covid pandemic.

\*\* Short Breaks care not differentiated from general respite care costs.

<b>Kinship Care Allowances</b>				
	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£585,238</b>	<b>£585,186</b>	<b>£750,133</b>	<b>£813,760</b>

(d) The remuneration / payment structure for foster carers differs depending on both the type and experience of the foster carer.

- i. Foster carers are paid an Allowance (for the cost of the care of the child) and a Fee (for the task of foster caring). Foster carers are self-employed.
- ii. Short Breaks carers are paid an allowance (which differs from the Allowance paid to foster carers and kinship carers).
- iii. Kinship carers are paid an Allowance which is equal to that paid to foster carers (a legal requirement) but do not receive a Fee.

(e) The current payment levels (2021-22) for all types of foster carer are listed below:

Foster Care Fee Level 1	Weekly	£168.12
Foster Care Fee Level 2	Weekly	£224.20
Contract Carer	Weekly	£462.26
Foster Carer Allowance 0 -10 years	Weekly	£132.54
Foster Carer Allowance 11 years +	Weekly	£198.78
Short-breaks Allowance 0 - 4 years	0 - 12 hours	£29.42
Short-breaks Allowance 5 -10 years	0 - 12 hours	£31.88
Short-breaks Allowance 11 - 15 years	0 - 12 hours	£35.02
Short-breaks Allowance 16 years +	0 - 12 hours	£39.72
Short-breaks Allowance 0 - 4 years	12 - 24 hours	£37.17
Short-breaks Allowance 5 - 10 years	12 - 24 hours	£40.28
Short-breaks Allowance 11 - 15 years	12 - 24 hours	£43.76
Short-breaks Allowance 16 years +	12 - 24 hours	£49.65
Short-breaks Allowance 0 - 4 years	Weekly	£260.17

Short-breaks Allowance 5 - 10 years	Weekly	£281.98
Short-breaks Allowance 11 - 15 years	Weekly	£306.31
Short-breaks Allowance 16 years +	Weekly	£347.64
Kinship Carer 0 - 10 years	Weekly	£132.54
Kinship Carer 11 years +	Weekly	£198.78

### 4.3 Outcomes

- (a) The provision of Short Breaks and general respite care is an important component of the overall care provision offered to parents and carers in the Scottish Borders. Respite care ensures families receive necessary support which alleviates and bolsters complex caring situations. The alternative is often the requirement for other specialist support (Edge of Care support, CAMHS, etc.) or placement breakdown.
- (b) In some circumstances children who receive Short Breaks Care also receive respite care from either the Aberlour Options Service or respite their carers purchase through Self Directed Support. Increasing the overall capacity of respite care services would both allow for more children and young people to receive respite in a family based, community setting and increase the overall respite care options available within the Scottish Borders.
- (c) In-house respite care is cost effective (in relation to alternative respite care options) and allows children and young people to establish consistent, long term relationships while being looked after in a family setting.
- (d) In terms of kinship care, the benefits of providing alternative care for children within their own family and community are clear in terms of positive identity, relationships and sense of community. Kinship care is also the most cost effective form of alternative care for children and young people. The cost of placement breakdown is significant with weekly external care currently costing from £899\* (independent foster care), £2,764\* (residential school) and £4,367\* (residential care for complex needs).

\* Cheapest examples of independent foster care, residential care and residential care for children with complex needs settings – 23/04/2021.

### 4.4 Proposal

- (a) As detailed above, the remuneration of Short Breaks carers is significantly less than other foster carers. It is also complex with over 12 separate potential payment rates. Short Breaks carers generally differ to other carers as they tend to have other jobs and care for children at weekends or provide day-time respite rather than full-time care. They also tend to build long-term links with individual children and their families. Although money is not a motivating factor for Short

Breaks carers, they are required to undertake the same level of training as other carers and assume the same level of responsibility for the care of children, all of whom have some degree of additional or complex need. As such there is a need to enhance and simplify the payment rate for Short Breaks carers.

(b) The proposal is as follows:

Short-breaks Allowance 0 - 10 years	Up to 12 hours	£50.00
Short-breaks Allowance 12 - 18 years	Up to 12 hours	£60.00
Short-breaks Allowance 0 - 10 years	12 - 24 hours	£70.00
Short-breaks Allowance 12 - 18 years	12 - 24 hours	£90.00

- (c) Any additional funding required for the enhancement of Short Breaks carer payments incurred over and above that in the overall proposal would be met within the existing Family Placement Team Budget.
- (d) In terms of increasing the number of both Short Breaks and other respite carers to improve the opportunity of respite care for both children with complex need and children in kinship care there is a requirement for increased staffing within the Family Placement Team.
- (e) Currently the respite care options for families are limited. For children with complex needs there are only 3 respite care providers available and the resources available to those providers is limited. There is no effective respite provision available to kinship carers despite the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 being clear about the need for equivalent support with foster carers.
- (f) In order to increase the recruitment and support of Short Breaks and other respite carers and, provide enhanced support to carers of children with complex needs and those in kinship care it is proposed to undertake a Test of Change for the duration of one year. This will inform the potential need for continuity of this enhanced approach to respite care.
- (g) Outcomes will be measured in the following ways:
- i. The recruitment of 2-3 Short breaks / respite carers during the Test of Change period.
  - ii. An increase in overall respite sessions - both overnight and day time (see below for current rates)
  - iii. Direct consultation, feedback and participation of children, young people and their families in their use of respite provision.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

- (a) The Test of Change would require the recruitment a 0.5fte Social Worker (Grade 9a). Assessment and review of carers is a designated

professional Social Worker role. The specific role of the post would be recruitment and support of Short breaks and respite carers. An additional budget of £1000 is required to complement existing recruitment approaches. Use of social media advertising is increasingly proven to be the best forms of recruitment for foster carers.

(b) The cost of this proposal over one year is as follows:

Social Worker (Grade 9a)	17.5 hours pw	£22,233.18
Recruitment budget		£1000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£23,223.10</b>

(c) In terms of outcomes the post would help increase provision of respite care which would both reduce the number of nights required for children and young people to use more expensive, residential respite (Aberlour Options Service, etc.) and, reduce placement breakdown which would be detrimental to the wellbeing of children and young people and incur significant costs to Scottish Borders Council.

(d) It is difficult to calculate the precise overall outcomes and savings. Short Breaks care was not differentiated from other respite care prior to 2019, and activity was adversely affected by Covid in 2020-21. Figures available for Short Breaks carers suggest they provide between 25 – 40 respite sessions per year.

<b>Carer Households</b>	<b>Carer Type</b>	<b>Links / Placements</b>	<b>2019-20</b>
4	Short Breaks	5 individuals	42 overnight 54 day care
2	Contract Carers	6 individuals	
3	Respite Carers	14 individuals	321 nights

(e) Based on the cost externally provided respite provision and residential care, a saving of between £50,000 and £100,000 is achievable. Importantly the proposal would also result in better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

## **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

(a) Failure to provide a breadth of respite provision and personal choice for children with complex needs and their families is contrary to best practice and parental choice (as stated in the Self-Directed Support (Scotland) Act 2014).

(b) The Independent Care Review's 'The Promise' stresses that care should be relationship based and focus on building and maintaining life-long relationships – that includes a broader understanding of the risk of not

having long term, loving relationships. It further states that 'Families must be kept together wherever it is safe to do so. Families must get the support that is right for them at the earliest opportunity and it must be flexible, consistent, patient and free from stigma. This will mean that more children can live a safe, happy life at home with their families'. There is a clear risk of limiting respite support and the key role it plays in maintaining complex family situations.

- (c) Due to resource constraints very little respite care is currently provided to kinship carers despite there being a statutory requirement for equivalency in support with foster carers. This represents a clear risk for Scottish Borders Council.
- (d) As stated above it is difficult to calculate the precise overall financial cost of not improving respite services for children with complex needs and those who are in kinship care. A saving of between £50,000 and £100,000 is achievable. The financial implication of a placement breakdown resulting in the requirement for external residential care provision is significant.
- (e) The impact of Covid on foster care and respite remains a risk. It is difficult to predict what, if any impact, it will have going forward in terms of both overall numbers of looked after children and young people or the carer population. Support services will need to be flexible and adaptable to meet any emerging issues.

### **5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

An IIA is not required for this proposal as it is an amendment / enhancement to existing services.

### **5.4 Sustainable Development Goals**

There will be no impact on sustainable development goals from this proposal.

### **5.5 Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **5.6 Rural Proofing**

Not applicable.

### **5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement**

All potential risks of non-compliance with Data Protection legislation have been identified, assessed and recorded within a Data Protection Impact Assessment. The controls to mitigate any potentially negative impacted identified within the Assessment have been/will be implemented to ensure

the proposed change to/new data processing complies with Data Protection legislation.

### **5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no proposed changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

6.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications will be consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

### **Approved by**

**Stuart C Easingwood**  
**Chief Social Work Officer**

**Signature .....**

### **Author(s)**

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**Background Papers:** N/A

**Previous Minute Reference:** N/A

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