

**REPORT**

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: LINK CARERS SCHEME
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date 22 February 2005	Ref: FB/TL	

**1. Purpose of Report/Introduction**

To advise Committee of the work being undertaken to review the Departmental policy in respect of Link Care and Kinship Care.

**2. Background**

2.1. The Sub-Committee report of September 2004 laid out the action plan for the review of Departmental policy and procedures in relation to Link Care and Kinship Care (attached for information).

2.2. The report noted specific actions and further reports to Committee.

2.3 The review has commenced and work has included the following actions:

- i) consultation with other local authorities across Scotland has been completed and was presented to Committee in September 2004. This indicated a wide variation of payment arrangements across authorities, including some Local Authorities where a decision has been taken not to provide a link carers scheme eg Glasgow City Council.
- ii) Confirmation by Legal Services that discretionary payments can be made under Section 22 (1) Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to "safeguard and promote the welfare" of a child and that this may include payment in cash in exceptional circumstances. Payments can also be made under Section 50, Children Act 1975, which allows local authorities to "make payments in respect of the maintenance" of a child where custody of a child has been awarded to a person other than the parent.

2.4 Currently the Department provides financial support to 93 children under the existing Link Carer Scheme, at a cost of £172,600 per annum. The current scheme was adopted from the previous Strathclyde Regional Council.

**3. Proposals/Considerations**

3.1 Further work is being undertaken to profile the existing Link Carers and children which will help define the Department's level of intervention and provide a profile of the present carers, children and use of the current scheme.

3.2 The initial review findings indicate that of the 93 children who reside with link carers; 54 are with grandparents, 30 with aunt/uncle, 2 with siblings and 7 with family friends.

- 3.3 Information on the current use of the scheme will be presented to a future Committee.
- 3.4 The Scottish Executive have yet to report on their review of Link Care/Kinship Care. Any further guidance from the Executive will be advised to Committee and will help inform future proposals.
- 3.5 The Executive have in the past asked Local Authorities to be sensitive to kinship care requests but have not provided necessary funding.
- 3.6 A complaints Review Committee will be set up to consider two appeals against the Department's decision to refuse Link Carer payments.

#### **4. Financial/Personnel/Legal/Policy Implications**

- 4.1 The present financial costs are outlined at paragraph 2.4. Each option described at 3.4 will require to be financially assessed and reflect the implications for staffing.
- 4.2 Policy and procedural guidelines would require to be developed for each option. The future report will outline the financial and resource implications of each option.

#### **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to:
  - i) Request the Director of Social Work to provide a future report outlining options and recommendations regarding the future of the Link Care Scheme.
  - ii) Otherwise note the content of this report.



P.P. **Director of Social Work**  
(22<sup>nd</sup> February 2005)

*For further information on this report please contact Fiona Brown on telephone 01698-332185*

**LINK CARE REVIEW - Local Authority Schemes**

AUTHORITY	CONTACT	WHAT IS THE RATE OF PAYMENT?	WHAT CRITERIA IS USED?	COMMENTS
Highlands and Islands	Eileen Bloomfield	*Cosla basic fostering allowance minus child benefit *Annual review.	* Only applicable to looked after children	*Social Worker in Area Team completes assessment. *Basic assessment Police Check Statement from GP Check House * Contract to bring up child safe/secure Will encourage residence order then will pay allowance minus child benefit minus birthday/Christmas
West Dunbartonshire	Ann Firth	1/3 of Cosla fostering rate	Old Strathclyde criteria detail (same as NLC)	
Dumfries & Galloway	Jackie Geatley	No scheme		Some families may be given financial support at the discretion of the area team Social Worker Sect 22.
Stirling	Irene Clark	1/3 of Cosla Fostering Rate	Mostly LAA Children but some discretion for other children in need	*Presented at Fostering Panel *Assessment completed by area team worker *Full BAAF Form F. *Only reviewed if change of circumstances
East Dunbartonshire	Eleanor Hendry	0-4 £22.55 5-10 £27.98 11-15 £34.83 16-18 £45.10	Looked after children. "Voluntary" or Statutory Basis.	* No set criteria and assessment. *Application by Social Worker *Annual Review by letter *Must be suffering financial hardship and in receipt of child benefit. *12 Families in receipt of allowances

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Renfrewshire	Ian Beattie	1/3 of Cosla Fostering Rate minus child benefit	Looked after children mostly on S70(3)	*Allocated Social Worker completes basic assessment *Must be a benefit to child *Must demonstrate financial assistance required.
East Renfrewshire	Mary Deward	No scheme		
East Ayrshire	Shelagh Halliday	1/3 of Cosla minus child benefit	Former Strathclyde Region Policy	
Perth & Kinross	Alan Keep	Approx 50% of Cosla Fostering Rate	Mostly children who are Looked After and placed with a relative. Some not with a relative.	*Social Worker in area team makes basic assessment. (Health check, police, house checks) *Families must be in financial hardship as a result of caring for child.
Falkirk Council	Russ Paterson	Cosla Fostering Rate	*Child lived with relative/friend for more than 6 weeks. *Prevents child from being accomodated.	*In the case of emergency placement (less than 6 weeks). *Basic assessment understaken by area team social worker (health, police, house check). *After 6 weeks must be approved as "Link Carer". *More fuller assessment and presented to Chair of Fostering Panel
Inverclyde	Pam Barr	No specific set amount	Former Strathclyde Region Policy	

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Borders	David Gelder	Cosla Fostering Rate	Department makes the placement	*Assessment undertaken by child's social worker. *Basic assessment, police, house check, health *If a permanent arrangement this will be discussed at permanency panel
Dundee	Gail Aboim	*equivalent of child benefit plus family premium. (D.W.P rate)	*Looked after children	*In the case of immediate placements, basic assessment undertaken by area team social worker. (health, Police, house checked) * After 6 weeks fuller assessment including a written agreement to approve carers as "a link carer" * Presentation to the Fostering Panel
South Lanarkshire	Ann-Marie Stewart	Payment under Sect 22 C (S) Act 1995 initially. Longer term payments under Sect 50 Children Act 1975. Payment made at mid point between age related Child Premium and Fostering Allowance.	* Criteria is that the child would require to be accommodated unless payment made.	* Social worker applies on behalf of carer. * Field Work Manager makes the decision