

SECTION 1

Welcome to fostering



Thank you for expressing an interest in fostering children and young people in Angus.

This 'Information Pack' provides information for people who are interested in finding out more about fostering a child or young person. It includes information about the different types of fostering that exist, as well as letting you know what we would expect from you as a prospective carer. The pack also includes information on how to take an application forward and what will happen next.

Why Do We Need Foster Carers?

Angus Council provides a range of services and resources to support parents to look after their own children. While our goal is to help families stay together, there are times when children and young people cannot live in their own home. Illness, unemployment and changing family circumstances can all lead to tension and stress. Sometimes parents feel unable to cope, sometimes children are neglected or abused. When families are struggling sometimes they need a break from each other. In most such cases where children need to be in care, they are placed with foster carers.

Children and young people of all ages need the care and support of foster carers - from babies to 17 years old. Foster carers can provide care, stability and support. This helps children and young people to grow and develop in a positive environment. Parents remain significant and important people in most children's lives and foster carers often work alongside social workers to improve the relationship between parents and their children through regular and positive contact.

Some of these children and young people will return home, some will move on to a new permanent family and some will leave care to live independently in their own flat or other suitable accommodation in the community.

What Do Carers Do?

Foster carers have the day to day responsibility for the care and control of children and young people placed with them. This includes the care of a child within their own home, as well as a responsibility to work with all services involved in helping the child reach their potential.

In particular foster carers have a responsibility:

- To take part in implementing the child's care plan, which includes specific tasks such as maintaining contact with parents and others who are important to the child
- To promote the healthy growth and development of the child, with particular emphasis on health and educational achievement
- To ensure children being looked after are encouraged to develop a positive understanding of their origins, religion and culture
- To assist and support parents and other people who are significant in the child's life
- To enable children and young people who are moving on to do so in a positive manner
- To ensure that children are kept safe from harm and abuse and support them to get help should anything untoward occur
- To promote the secure attachment of children to adults by providing safe and effective care
- To act as an advocate for each child.

What We Look For From You!

Just as children who need foster families come in all shapes and sizes, with different backgrounds and

experiences, so do the people that care for them. We need families from all walks of life. We need both single people and couples, families with children and without. All of them need to value the children and young people for who and what they are, avoiding discrimination based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

Foster carers are never permitted to use corporal punishment to physically chastise children.

To become a foster carer you must be at least 21 years old., be in reasonably good health and be medically fit to undertake the parenting task. If you drink alcohol, we need to know that you drink moderately and responsibly. You can not be a foster carer if you use illegal drugs or have a record of offences against children. You must also declare if you have any firearms or hold a Firearms Certificate.

Angus Council does not accept applications to foster from people who keep dangerous pets such as rottweillers or pit bull terriers. We may need to seek further advice if you own a pet that we think might pose a risk to children.

If you are pregnant or have recently had a child, we will ask you to wait until the child is at least 12 months old. We also ask that applicants undergoing fertility treatment have completed this before the application is taken up.

There is increasingly strong evidence that passive smoking can damage the health of children. We therefore do not place children under the age of 2 with carers who smoke and we ask all carers to abide by a voluntary code of conduct to minimise the exposure of children to tobacco smoke.

Fostering is often a demanding job, so we are looking for people who are in a relatively stable situation. We accept applications from single people and from couples who are married or have been living together for over two years. We would generally ask people to wait for a time before making an application if they recently entered a new relationship, experienced the break-up of a relationship or lost a loved one.

If you want to be a full-time foster carer we expect that you to be responsible fulltime, as the child or young person may become ill, or be excluded from school. If you work it would be your responsibility to provide alternative child care at these times. Carers should also be able to attend all necessary meetings relating to the child.

If you are applying as a couple you need to be aware that fostering is very much a commitment for both partners. It is important that both of you attend the preparation training and are actively involved in the assessment process. Once accepted as a carer there are ongoing monthly 'Post-Approval Training and Support Meetings'. If possible both partners should attend these.

Your Home

A child or young person coming to live with you needs to feel that you have the time and energy to care for them and that there is space that they can use as their own. Ideally, any children you are fostering should have their own room. Where this is not possible it is important that they have space that they can clearly see as their own.

You need to be able to travel to attend meetings, to help the child participate in activities and where appropriate to maintain links in their own home area. You therefore need to have your own transport or have readily available access to public transport.

Angus Council does not set precise household standards for carers but we do expect carer's homes to be safe, reasonably clean and to meet basic health and safety standards. Foster carer's must have a telephone.

If you enjoy looking after children and/or young people, and feel that you have both the time and space in your home to offer support to someone that really needs it, please get in touch with us.

Further information about the different types of Foster Care that are available are described in the next section.

SECTION 2

Options in foster care



So what does fostering involve and are there different types of foster carer?

While 'Section 1: Welcome to Fostering' explores what the essential qualities of foster carers are, this section aims to explore the different types of foster care that are available.

Essentially the choice is between 'respite fostering', 'temporary fostering' and 'long term or permanent fostering'. Each of these is considered in more detail below.

The fostering scheme in Angus is a skills based scheme – that is to say that Foster carers are approved at one of three 'skills' levels determined by the experience knowledge and qualifications they bring to the role. Almost all new carers will initially be approved at level 1. Further information about the skills based scheme is provided below.

Respite Fostering

Sometimes parents or carers need a short break from looking after a child or young person. There may have been extraordinary difficulties at home or a parent may have been ill or have mental health problems and need some time to recover. These children need a family who can look after them during a short period away from home. In some cases the child and their family need regular short breaks to help them manage the difficulties at home. Respite carers also provide breaks for children placed with other foster carers.

Children in respite care need reassurance and understanding to help them cope with the changes in their family life. This time may well be stressful for them as they may be concerned for a parent's health, or angry at having to leave their usual foster family. All children may need to know they will be staying only for short period and then going home.

Respite carers are also needed for children with physical or learning disabilities. Sometimes families caring for a disabled child need a break to help them cope with the particular pressures involved or to recharge their batteries. Respite carers for these children need to be able to

offer regular short breaks and to work closely with the child's own family. Some of the children will need a lot of physical care, for example feeding, bathing, dressing and help with walking. Some may have challenging behaviour which can be difficult to manage. Carers do not need specialist qualifications but they do need to be patient, have a caring approach, commitment, a sense of humour, to enjoy a challenge and have a positive view of disability. Carers need to remember that the family is the main carer and that they all work together. Carers providing respite to children with disabilities will be linked with one or more specific children and families depending on the time they have available.

Temporary Fostering

In general, when people talk about foster carers, they are referring to carers who offer a temporary place in their home to a child or young person. As mentioned earlier, the children will be in foster care because of a family crisis that cannot be resolved by the usual services available to keep the child at home. In some cases, the child may have been abused or harmed. The length of the placement will depend on how quickly the family can be helped

to resume the care of the child. This can range from a day or two, through to placements lasting several months. In some cases persisting problems at home mean that children remain in foster placements for even longer, possibly a number of years, before they go home, move to another permanent family or reach the age where they can go to live in their own accommodation. Whatever the circumstances foster carers will be kept fully informed about the plan and be expected to be part of the discussions about the future of the child or young person they are caring for.

Permanent Fostering

Although the first aim for children in care is to help them return to their own families, for a small number, the family problems are so serious that this is not possible. In these circumstances it is important for the child that arrangements are made so that they have the chance to grow up in a secure, stable family and do not have to live with continuing uncertainty about what is going to happen next. For some children, particularly those who

are younger, this may be achieved by placing them with an adoptive family. For others adoption may not be the best option. Many older children who are unable to return home still want to maintain contact with their birth families and do not want to make the legal break with the past that comes with adoption. In these circumstances a permanent fostering placement will give the child long term security as part of a foster family without the legal finality of adoption.

Permanent foster carers are making a long term commitment to a child to be part of their family. They are approved as foster carers in the same way as temporary foster carers and have access to the same range of support, training and financial allowances. In some cases temporary foster carers offer a permanent placement to a child who has been with them on a temporary fostering basis. It is important for the carers and their whole family to think carefully about this change to be sure that they can make the long term commitment that a permanent placement requires.

The Children in Foster Care

Fostered children need to be given care, love, stability and the chance to understand what has happened to them. They need help to understand the plans made for them so that they can look forward to the future with some confidence. All of them need reassurance and consistent routines to help them feel safe. Most don't want new parents, they just need to be with adults who care for them and can help them feel wanted and secure.

Sometimes older children can be very angry at parents and they may need a lot of support to rebuild their relationship and to re-establish regular contact. The level of contact children have with their family is often determined by the Children's Hearing and may have to be supervised by social work staff. In these circumstances you will be expected to support the child to manage the contact with their parent and protect them from unplanned or unsupervised contact.

Many young people have significant emotional and behavioural difficulties as a result of experiences they have had in their lives. For some, the problems are made worse by the use of drugs or alcohol which can lead them into risky and vulnerable situations. Some of these young people find it difficult to build

and maintain positive, trusting relationships with adults. They may have difficult and challenging behaviour or find it hard to show affection, stick to house rules, or to do well in school. These young people need carers who are able to commit to them and manage their challenging behaviour. By providing the child with clear boundaries, consistent support and guidance and a sense that they are wanted and cared for, the carers will gradually help the child to feel safe and secure. Many carers find that sticking with a child through the difficult times and seeing them gradually develop a positive feeling about themselves is one of the most rewarding things about fostering.

What help is provided?

Before you are accepted as a carer you will receive initial preparation and training as part of the assessment process. The next section 'Information on Assessment' will tell you more about this process. Once you have been accepted you will receive 'Induction Training' as a new carer. You will then be expected to take part in ongoing training and support groups to develop both your knowledge and skills in your role as a carer. Experienced carers play an important role on the ongoing training and support of other foster carers.



As a foster carer you will have a named 'Link Worker', who is an experienced social worker whose job it is to support you and your family in the care and support of children who are placed with your family.

Any child in your care will have their own social worker. This person will be responsible for the 'Care Plan' for that child. The social worker will meet regularly with both you and the child. It is a legal requirement that the child and the carer are visited by the social worker. The visits will include at least one unannounced visit each year.

Payments

Foster Carers receive a carer's allowance that is paid every fortnight. The level of the allowance is determined by the number of children they are approved to foster and whether they are approved as a level 1, level 2 or level 3 carers (see payment rates on separate page entitled Fostering Rates).

In addition foster carers also receive a weekly 'Fostering Allowance'. This is paid to meet the costs of looking after the child and is based on a national rate that is reviewed annually. The level of the fostering allowance varies according to the child's age.

Once you have decided what kind of fostering service you are interested in then the next step is to find out what is involved in taking your application forward. This is the content of the section "Information on Assessment".



SECTION 3

Information on assessment



What's involved?

Once you have decided that you are interested in taking forward your application to foster you (and your partner) will be required to attend preparation and training sessions. This training is where you will receive more information about fostering and meet with current foster carers. Sharing your experiences, and hearing more about the needs of children who have been received into accommodation will help you build on your current parenting and communication skills. You will learn how a child's early life experiences may impact upon their longer term development. The training will help you to feel prepared to look after a child who has been received into care, and to understand how this may differ from raising your own child.

Homestudy

Once you have submitted your application form a social worker from the fostering team will work with you to complete an assessment of your family. This assessment is commonly referred to as the homestudy. The social worker will visit you and your family at home to assess both you and your family's suitability to foster. The homestudy will include looking at the skills and experience you already have as well as areas that may need further development and support.

During the assessment social work staff will discuss your application to foster with your own children. It is sometimes said that it is families, not adults who foster. It is certainly true that if you are accepted as a foster carer then children and young people placed with you will have an impact on everyone in your household – including your own children. It is important that you chat with your children at an early stage, and check out how they feel about being part of a family that fosters. Sometimes it may be that following these discussions you decide to put an application on hold for a couple of years. Sometimes it may simply mean that you are careful about the age and gender of any child who you foster in order to minimise their impact upon your own children.

Checks

The legislation governing fostering and adoption imposes a duty on the Council to undertake a range of checks on people who are approved as foster carers. The checks are completed prior to approval and repeated periodically thereafter. The following checks are undertaken:

Disclosure Scotland Check

With your consent, we will ask Disclosure Scotland to carry out an Enhanced Disclosure Check. This will inform us of any convictions you have had in Scotland or elsewhere. If you have a criminal conviction, it does not necessarily mean that you may not care for other people's children, but it will mean that we will have to discuss your convictions with you. If you have any convictions, it would be best if you mentioned them to us when you begin the application process.

We will also carry out Enhanced Disclosure Checks on anyone else in your household over the age of 16.

Medical Reference

You will have to ask your General Practitioner to give you a medical examination. If you have been seeing a Health Visitor recently, we will also have to get in touch with them. Please let us know at the outset if you have a history of medical problems. Again, these would not necessarily preclude you from fostering but would need to be discussed as part of the assessment process.

Anyone else in your household aged 16 or over will also be asked to agree to a Medical Records check with their GP.

Local Authority Check

We will check if you have had contact with social work agencies in the past, and whether this is relevant to your application.

Employment History and Employer's Reference

We will talk to you about your employment history since you left school. We will also ask for written reference from your employer, if you are working. If you are no longer working we will ask for a reference from a previous employer.

Previous Partners and Older and Adult Children

If you have been married before or were in a long-term relationship, we may wish to contact your former partner and any adult children of the relationship. We understand that this might feel intrusive. If you're worried about this, please talk to the Social Worker when he or she visits you at home to discuss your application.

Personal References

We will need to take several references from people who know you (and your family). We will visit at least two of these referees to discuss your application.

Assessment and Preparation

The Assessment is a two way process, in which we aim to give you information to prepare you for the complex task of fostering, and to help you decide if fostering is for you and your family. Please note that Angus Council Social Work and Health Department will not proceed with an assessment if information or serious concerns arise that cannot be resolved.

The assessment involves both you and all members of your immediate family. You will be expected to demonstrate, or have the potential to develop, the following skills:

- Ability to communicate with children, their families and professionals.
- An awareness of child development, and the particular needs of looked after children
- A willingness to work towards the social work plan for the child, including facilitation of contact and working with families
- Flexibility
- The ability to keep accurate records
- A willingness to attend meetings, support groups and training sessions
- An understanding of anti-discriminatory practice

You are expected to attend a series of Preparation Groups prior to approval which cover a wide range of issues about fostering.

Once the homestudy report is completed it will be presented to the Fostering Panel. You will see the

report and have the opportunity to comment on it before it is submitted to the panel. A final decision about approval will be made after the panel by the "Agency Decision Maker" who is a Senior Manager in the Social Work and Health Department.

Finance

Once you are accepted as a carer, a fee will be paid to you. This fee is paid two weekly in advance and is paid in the form of bank credit transfer. The level of the allowance depends upon the age and number of children or young people you are caring for as well as your skills level.(see separate page entitled Fostering Rates)

In addition to your fee as an approved foster carer you will receive a weekly "Fostering Allowance" for each child in your care (paid only during the placement of a child). The amount of allowance is also dictated by the age of the child. Fuller details of all the financial supports will be outlined in more detail during you assessment. .(see separate page entitled Fostering Rates)

Principals of the New Scheme Approval levels

Carers are approved at one of three levels. The approval level will be agreed by the Agency Decision maker following a recommendation from the fostering panel. In general, new carers will commence at level 1. Prior to approval at level 1, applicants must complete the preparation training course and be assessed as meeting the competencies expected of a level 1 carer. The induction programme, and further core training, will be completed after approval.

Foster carers wishing to progress to a higher level will firstly need to have completed the core-training modules, and met the relevant competencies, for their current approval level. In addition they must be assessed as meeting the competencies for the level they are moving to and have evidenced the capacity to undertake the training required at the higher level. This process will be monitored and supported by the carer's Link Worker and discussed and agreed by the Fostering Team Manager prior to the carer's review.

The carers' approval level will be considered at each review. The review will look at evidence that demonstrates their ability to meet and sustain the standards required for their approval level. Where carers cannot evidence that they have achieved and maintained the relevant standards, it is likely that the Angus Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker will amend their approval accordingly. If Level 1 standards are not sustained, this may lead to the de-registration of the foster carer.



Support, Guidance and Advice

Foster carers are part of a team providing a service to children and their families. Carers work closely with social work staff and with other agencies. It is important that there is clarity about the roles and responsibilities of all those involved. Carers need to be clear about what they can expect from others and about expectations that will be placed on them. As an approved foster carer you will receive a copy of Angus Councils "Foster Care Handbook – Guidance for both Foster Carers and Social Workers". This contains a wealth of detailed information about the things you need to know about being a foster carer.

Once you have been accepted as a carer you will have a written agreement with Angus Council

setting out the terms of your approval and the role and responsibilities of both you as a foster carer as well as those of the agency. This agreement will detail the number, age and sex of the children and young people that may be placed with you as well as the likely duration of any placements.

Angus Council keeps copies of the written agreement between you and themselves as a fostering agency, and these agreements will be subject to regular review.

The next section looks in more detail at how the fostering panel works and how decisions are made about whether or not you are accepted as a foster carer.



SECTION 4

The Fostering Panel



The Purpose of the Fostering Panel

The main functions of the Fostering Panel are to:

- Advise on the suitability of persons who apply to be foster carers.
- To state whether their recommendations are in respect of a particular child or children, and to clarify whether the prospective carers are to be approved for certain ages or categories of children.
- Consider the continuing approval of foster carers' following their annual carer's review or other significant changes in their circumstances.
- To advise on any other matter relating to the fostering service.

The Membership of the Panel

The members of the adoption panel are drawn from different disciplines and are selected on the basis of the contribution they can make to planning for the long term needs of children. Currently there are two chairs and 16 panel members. These members attend alternate panels with up to eight members in attendance at each meeting. Panel members include a medical adviser, legal adviser, representatives from different parts of the social work department, independent members and an educational psychologist. The fostering panel has knowledge and experience of the community it serves and can call on expert advice if necessary. Each panel member goes through relevant police and local authority checks.

Panel members have regular training days and have knowledge of child development and the needs of children in local authority accommodation. Each Panel has a Chair who will lead the discussion in the meeting.

How the Fostering Panel Runs

Angus Adoption and Permanence Panel and Angus Foster Panel are managed and co-ordinated by the Permanence Team Manager who offers consultancy to social workers, advises the panel members on policy and procedural issues and also sits as a panel member.

The panel makes its recommendation on the basis of reports circulated in advance of the meeting and through discussion with those invited to attend. The reports include those written by the social worker and other professionals involved in the case. The placement and post placement reports completed by foster carers will also be referred to by the panel. Panel members place considerable importance on the contribution that foster carers make to the process.

Foster carers will be invited to attend panels considering plans for children in their care and to any review of their own approval as carers. The other people attending the panel will vary depending on the situation under discussion. Where permanence plans for children are being considered the panel will want to speak to child's social worker, team manager, any other professional who has a central role in work with the child, the parent and possibly the child themselves. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the panel may ask to speak to contributors separately rather than have everyone in the meeting at the same time. Panels considering the approval or review of foster carers will generally only involve the carers, their link worker and the team manager from the fostering team.

You will be informed of the recommendation of the Fostering Panel within 24 hours of the Panel. The final decision will be made by the agency decision maker and you will be informed of this decision in writing within 21 days. Carers will generally be contacted by their link worker as soon as the decision of the agency decision maker is known.

Panels Considering the Approval of Prospective Foster Carers

Prospective foster carers will always be invited to attend the panel considering their approval. They will have been fully involved in the assessment process and will have contributed to the assessment report. They will always have seen this report before it is presented to panel. Panel members find it helpful to meet with prospective carers, to put faces to the names in the report and have the opportunity of asking questions directly. It is also hoped that by inviting applicants to the panel, the process becomes as open and transparent as possible.

Panels Reviewing Carers' Approval

The Social Work and Health Department arranges foster carer reviews once a year or more often if there are significant changes in the carer's circumstances. The outcome of these reviews is then considered by the fostering panel if there are changes to the approval or every second year – whichever is sooner. Any changes to the carer's approval must be considered by the panel and agreed by the agency decision-maker. Again, foster carers are always invited to attend panel's reviewing their approval. The carer's report written by the carer will be available to panel members, along with placement reports by the social worker and, where appropriate, the child. Panel members will also have a minute from the departmental review. The panel finds it useful to hear directly from the carer about their experiences, the rewards and difficulties of the task since their last review and the training and support they have had or would like to have in future.

Panels Considering Registering a Child for Permanence

Foster carers will be invited to attend panels where a child is being presented as being in need of permanent substitute family care. It is important for the panel to have as full and clear a picture of the child as possible. As the person living with the child

24 hours a day, the carer is particularly well placed to provide information about the way that the child functions within a family. The sort of questions the panel are likely to ask include; what the child is like to live with; the impact of the child on other members of the family; the child's routines; the child's interests and talents; the child's capacity to make and sustain friendships and the nature of the attachments the child has to significant people in his or her life. The panel may also ask what the carer's views are about the child needs in relation to a future family.

Panels Considering a Match for a Child and a Permanent Family

When a child is being considered for a match with a family the foster carer will again be invited to attend the panel. The carer can help to give panel members an update on the child's situation as it may be some time since the child was registered as requiring permanence. Carers are likely to be asked to speak about how the child is at present, what they have said or appear to be feeling about the possible changes ahead and what the carer feels the child's needs are in a future placement. The child's social worker will have shared basic information about the prospective families but the foster carer will not read the reports prepared on the prospective permanent family and will generally not remain for the part of the panel that is considering the prospective permanent carers.

What happens next is the subject of the next section: Looking After a Child or Young Person



SECTION 5

Looking after a child or young person



Finding the Right Child or Young Person for You

When a decision has been made that a child will be placed with foster carer, the child's social worker will contact the fostering team duty worker. This worker then considers the needs of the child being accommodated alongside the qualities and circumstances of carers who have a vacancy. This process is called 'matching'. If the fostering team identify your family as a possible placement they will discuss this initially with you. Following this, if you agree for the placement to go ahead, they will arrange for the social worker to contact you to further discuss the child or young person. The social worker will share with the carers whatever details are available about the child and the child's situation. Full information must be offered to the carers to ensure an informed decision regarding the placement can be made.

The carers will be given as much warning as possible about an impending placement, although in emergency situations there may only be a very short time to plan. Whenever possible social workers should try to arrange for the carers to meet the child and the parents before the child comes to stay. This kind of meeting is re-assuring to the child, parents and the carers and there is also an opportunity for the foster carers to ask parents about the child's likes, dislikes and characteristics.

Matching children into permanent placements is a more careful process. After a child has been approved for permanence, their name is placed on the waiting list of children registered for permanence. Because it is often difficult to predict how long it will take to identify a suitable family, the foster carer has the difficult task of supporting the child through a period of uncertainty. The carer may be asked to work alongside the social worker to help prepare the child for the changes that lie ahead.

When the prospective carers have heard about the child, and given an initial indication that they wish to be considered, arrangements will be made for them to meet with the child's social worker and to have full written information about the child. It can also be very useful for prospective permanent carers to meet with the child's current foster carer. Speaking directly to those caring for the child on a daily basis can often make the child come alive for the permanent carers more effectively than written reports or professional accounts.

Foster carers will be invited to attend the panel that is considering which family the child should be matched with to discuss the needs and feelings of the child to be placed.

Planning and Review Meetings

Foster carer's personal and family circumstances change over time. Changes in family membership, health, attitudes and sometimes in physical surroundings can affect the placement of foster children. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to review all carers annually.

Additional reviews may be arranged in the following circumstances:

- There is a significant change in the carer's circumstances which may have an effect on the child placed in the foster home.

- The carers express a wish to take extra children.
- A serious complaint is received from the foster carer or about the foster carer's care of the child.

Preparation for Independence

The Local Authority has a legal duty to provide advice and assistance with a view to preparing a child for when he or she is no longer looked after. Throughcare is the process by which the Local Authority plans and prepares young people for

moving on. Aftercare is the provision of advice, guidance and assistance after a young person has moved out of care.

All young people who will be leaving care after their school leaving date must have a Throughcare and Aftercare plan (pathway plan). This plan sets out the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in preparing the young person for the move, including what continuing support will be available. Foster carers play a vital role in this process not least by supporting the child to remain in placement until they are mature and ready to move on to their own independent accommodation.

Throughcare support and preparation will include opportunities for the young person to develop self care skills such as cooking, shopping, laundering their own clothes and managing their money. Equally important is the encouragement and

support the young person receives to ensure they are considering appropriate opportunities for further education, training or employment. Consideration should also be given to the young person's use of their social and leisure time. Carers have an important role to help young people address these issues in preparation for living independently.

All young people leaving care will have an identified support person from the Throughcare and Aftercare team who will co-ordinate the range of support identified in the pathway plan.

The availability of a network of supports to young people once they have left care is a crucial factor affecting the extent to which their transition to independent living will be successful. The continuing advice, support and friendship carers frequently extend to young people after the end of a foster placement is therefore of great importance.

What Next!

Still interested – we would love to hear from you!

Not sure? If there is anything you are not sure about, give us a call to discuss it. There is absolutely no obligation or expectation on you. Even if it turns out that now isn't the time to be starting out on Fostering, it may be that we can help you think about what you want to do and when.

If you are interested please contact:

The Fostering Team
Academy Lane
Arbroath
DD11 1EJ

Alternatively you can telephone us on 01241 435078 or email fosteringandadoption@angus.gov.uk with any further questions that you have.



SECTION 6

What to do if you are unhappy with decisions made about your enquiry/application



If you are unhappy about decisions taken by social work during the course of your application to be approved as a foster carer or adoptive parent, you have a right to request that these decisions are reviewed. The process for reviewing the decision depends on the stage your application has reached.

Decision not to take up an application or not to proceed with an enquiry or assessment

Occasionally social workers will advise applicants that they do not believe their application should proceed. In all cases a decision not to proceed with an application will be confirmed to the applicants in writing with the reasons for the decision clearly set out.

Applicants who disagree with a decision not to proceed have a right to request a reconsideration of this decision. In the first instance they should ask to speak to the fostering team manager or the service manager in order to explain why they consider that the application should proceed.

If the matter cannot be resolved through discussion the applicants can request that the adoption or fostering panel gives advice about whether or not the application should proceed. The applicants will be able to submit information and to attend the 'advice panel' but will need to be aware that the social workers will also be submitting their reasons for not proceeding with the application. The recommendation of the panel will be confirmed by the agency decision maker and the applicants will be informed of the outcome in writing.

Decision made by the fostering or adoption panel

If applicants are unhappy with the decision reached after the fostering and adoption panel they have 28 days in which to lodge an appeal. This should be in

writing and sent to the Director of Social Work and Health. The Director will appoint a panel of suitably qualified people who have not been involved with the application to hear the appeal. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the appeal in writing.

Social Work complaints process

If you have a more general complaint about the service you have received it is possible to have this investigated. The leaflet 'What to do if you are not happy with social work services' gives details of the Social Work's complaints process.

Complaints to the Care Commission

All fostering and family placement services are registered with a national body known as the Care Commission. It is possible for members of the public to make a complaint directly to the Care Commission relating to any of the services they regulate. Complaints should be made to the Commission's office in Dundee (which is the headquarters and the regional office). There is a special complaints line 0845 6030890. It is likely that the commission will ask people to use local complaints procedures before they proceed with a detailed investigation.