



## FOSTERING INFORMATION

### WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in fostering. West Dunbartonshire HSCP is committed to finding local foster families for local children who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their own family. This pack will provide you with some of the information on what is involved in looking after foster children, as well as how you can apply to become a foster carer.

West Dunbartonshire HSCP needs families for children of all ages, sometimes children on their own or with their brothers and sisters, with a wide range of needs. All of these children need a secure, nurturing family who can care for them until they can return to their own family, or move onto a permanent family and sometimes until they move onto Independence as young adults.

There are all sorts of ways to support children, from offering respite for a few days per month, to supporting a child until they can care for themselves independently.

Foster carers don't need to have qualifications — they need to be genuinely interested in supporting vulnerable, distressed children, and to provide them with a safe family experience. Foster carers will also be required to work as part of the team in supporting the children and their family.

I hope this pack will help you decide what kind of help you feel you could offer. Your interest in fostering is appreciated and the Fostering and Adoption Team look forward to hearing from you.

Updated/Reviewed April 2016



## **FOSTERING**

Foster families are urgently needed for children of all ages, including those with physical and learning disabilities.

You may have what it takes to be a foster carer. Some people want to help children through a difficult period in their lives. They feel that their own family is complete and whilst they enjoy caring for vulnerable children they may not want children to be a permanent part of their lives.

Fostering can be a short term way of offering a child a home until they can return to their parents. However some children cannot return home but still feel part of their own families and wish to continue to have contact with them.

If a child is placed with a family on a long term fostering basis it is anticipated that the child will grow up with these foster carers and remain there until the time is right to move on to independence.

Foster carers come from all walks of life although age, health and criminal records will all be taken into consideration. You must be over twenty one, sufficiently healthy to cope with the emotional, psychological and physical demands of caring for other people's children and be without a criminal record for certain offences, such as offences against children,

Children who need a foster home come from a wide variety of backgrounds. You'll need a real commitment to caring for children, plus plenty of energy, understanding and patience. A sense of humour can be a lifesaver.

It doesn't matter if you are married, divorced, living with a partner or single: own or rent your home: have a job or not. Applicants are welcome from all sections of the community. The one thing that everyone must have is a commitment to children and young people and preferably a spare room.



## **WHAT WE OFFER FOSTER CARERS**

Every Foster Carer will have their own specialist fostering Social Worker, usually their assessing Social Worker. This person is different from the child's Social Worker.

Foster Carer's are offered post approval training in child protection, separation and loss, safe caring and departmental procedures. The Fostering and Adoption Training Social Worker will prepare an individual programme of training to meet your needs.

All West Dunbartonshire HSCP Foster Carer's will be provided with relevant equipment required to undertake the task of caring for accommodated child, including, cots, highchairs and bedroom furniture you may need to make a child feel comfortable and secure in your home.

Generous allowances are paid to all Foster Carers in line with the Fostering Networks recommendations. In addition fees are paid to Foster Carers in West Dunbartonshire HSCP.

New and existing Foster Carers are invited to attend quarterly meetings with the Fostering and Adoption Team, which give you the opportunity to meet with other Carers, discuss any issues and learning about future events that may be of relevance to you.



## **RESPITE CARE**

Respite carers offer children and young people, short stays in their homes, usually on a planned basis.

Respite carers will offer existing short term and long term carer's regular breaks on a planned and occasionally emergency basis.

Respite carers may also offer planned breaks to children still living at home but where there are difficulties and offering respite is part of the child care plan to prevent the child from being accommodated.

Respite carers must be over 21, but can be single, married, widowed, divorced or cohabiting in a stable relationship. You may or may not be in employment, but if working you need to have sufficient time and flexibility to meet the needs of a child. Children coming into care show their distress in a variety of ways and to be effective in helping them you need to have patience, understanding and resourcefulness.

Respite carers may either own or rent their homes. They may live in a flat or a house, it is preferable for the child you foster to have a room of their own though younger children may share where appropriate.



## **SHORT TERM FOSTER CARERS**

Temporary (sometimes known as short term) foster carers look after children of all ages who can no longer stay with their own families. As a short term/temporary foster carer you may be asked to look after children for a few days or a few weeks. In some instances, children can remain in short term care for a year or two years depending upon their individual circumstances.

Children may need to be looked after in foster homes for a variety of reasons such as:

- Parental abuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Parental physical or mental health problems
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Physical or emotional neglect family relationship difficulties
- Bereavement

Foster carers need to be welcoming, warm and confident people who will help children to feel safe and bring some stability into their lives.

Caring for the child is just one aspect of the role of the foster carer. Of equal importance is their ability to work with parents and with professional staff in order to further a plan for the child. When a child comes into short term /temporary foster care the priority is to work in partnership with the family to enable the child to return home. Children who see their parents regularly are those most likely to have better outcomes. Foster carers should have an understanding of the difficulties that parents face and be non-judgemental. Carers will assist the child to maintain contact with their birth family.

Despite all efforts, some children may not be able to return to live with their parents and another family will be sought for them who can provide either long-term care or adoption. The role of the short-term carer will be to help to prepare the child to move on to their alternative family.

Foster carers must be over 21, can be single, married, widowed, divorced or cohabiting in a stable relationship. You may or may not be in employment, but if working you need to have sufficient time and flexibility to meet the needs of a child. Children coming into care show their distress in a variety of ways and to be effective in helping them you need to have patience, understanding and resourcefulness.



Foster carers may either own or rent their homes. They may live in a flat or a house. It is preferable for the child you foster to have a room of their own though younger children may share where appropriate.

## **PERMANENT FOSTERING**

Permanent (sometimes referred to as long term) foster carers are required where it has not been possible to return a child to their birth family. These children tend to be older. They understand they cannot live with their own family but will still have a sense of identity with them and may maintain some limited contact.

When a child is placed with a family on a long term fostering basis it is anticipated the child will grow up with the foster carers and remain there until the time is right to move on to independence. While the day to day decisions which affect the child will be made by you as the foster carer, some decisions, such as a trip abroad, will require consultation with the Social Work Officers.

One of the main objectives of long term fostering would be to provide care for the child throughout their childhood and to provide a safe and stable environment to enable him or her to grow both physically and emotionally and to reach their full potential. Long term foster carers, like other foster carers, require to work alongside other professional staff in order to further the plan for the child.

In many situations long term foster carers will also be required to facilitate and support some form of contact between the child and the birth family, if this is deemed to be in the child's best interest.

Foster carers must be over 21, can be single, married, widowed, divorced or cohabiting in a stable relationship. You may or may not be in employment, but if working you need to have sufficient time and flexibility to meet the needs of a child. Children who are accommodated are likely to have some emotional and behavioural difficulties due to their early experiences. Long term carers need to have patience; understanding and resourcefulness in the process of helping the child overcome them.

Foster carers may either own or rent their homes. They may live in a flat or a house. It is preferable for the child you foster to have a room of their own though younger children may share where appropriate.



## **THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

### **Initial Interview**

Following receipt of this pack, a Social Work from the Fostering and Adoption Team will undertake a home visit to discuss your application further and to explore with you your reasons for applying to foster and any child care experience you may have. The worker will compile a short report following this visit and will include a recommendation to the Assistant Principal Officer of whether you wish to proceed to the next stage of assessment, the Preparatory Group.

### **Preparatory Groups**

Preparatory Groups are held over two Saturdays and two evenings and cover a wide range of issues about being a carer for an accommodated child. The Preparatory Groups will begin to consider include issues surrounding Fostering and the Law, Separation and Loss, and begin to look at issues surrounding abuse and neglect for the accommodated child.

These Preparatory Groups are an important part of the assessment process and it is expected that all applicants attend.

### **Home Study**

This is the longest part of the procedure as it can take up to six months from the signing of the application form to presentation at the Fostering Panel. The Home Study Report is very detailed as we must be sure that you can offer a safe and caring home to a child or young person. It is also an opportunity for you to think about whether you really want to become a carer — and if so, what type of fostering would suit you best.



The assessing social worker will visit you a number of times to talk in detail about the qualities you will need and for you to demonstrate your skills and experiences. He or she may also want to talk to your wider family and any other people who are important to your support network. Together you will work out how many children you could foster and what ages. Your Assessing Social Worker will also undertake a variety of detailed checks, including Police and Health Checks.

In doing this Home Study Report your assessing social worker will build up a detailed picture of your strengths and abilities, your home life, your relationship (if you are applying as a couple) and the commitment you could give a child. You will have the opportunity to find out more about the rewards and reality of fostering.

Finally, the assessing social worker brings all this information together into a report on your potential as a foster carer. Once the assessing social worker has completed the report, you will receive a visit from the manager responsible for Fostering and Adoption Services who will complete a further brief report on you for the Fostering Panel. You will have the opportunity to read these reports and add your own comments.



## **Fostering Panel**

The last stage in the approval process is for the assessing social worker to present his/her assessment to the Fostering Panel along with any other relevant information that may assist the Panel in making a decision. You will be invited to attend the Panel. Although your assessing Social Worker will be with you, you may also bring along a family member or friend for support.

The Panel chairperson has a background in childcare and fostering. The panel members all have a great deal of relevant experience. They include current foster carers, an adoptive carer, educational staff, a medical advisor and senior social work staff with experience in child care.

It is their task to consider all the information, to talk with you and your assessing social worker, then to decide whether to recommend you for approval to the Head of Children's Health, Care and Criminal Justice Services Chief Social Work Officer who then has 14 days in which to make the final decision. You will be advised of this final decision.



## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Allowances**

Allowances and Fees change therefore details of these will be provided by a Social Worker from the Fostering and Adoption Team.

### **Equipment**

West Dunbartonshire HSCP ensures that carer's are provided with the equipment they require to undertake the task, for example, cots, beds, bedding, bedroom furniture, baby equipment.

The allowance, although left to the carers discretion as to how they are spent to meet the needs of the child should also cover the cost of replacing furniture because of general wear and tear.

### **Clothing**

Allowances cover the cost of clothing.

At the point of placement an additional allowance can be paid to enable the carer to purchase any clothing a child may require. This should be discussed with your Link Social Worker.

### **Travel Expenses**

Car mileage or the cost of public transport is paid for any meeting a carer must attend with or in respect of a child.

Travel costs to training are also covered.

### **Child Care**

There are occasion's carers looking after pre-school children are required to attend training or meetings where the children cannot accompany them. The carer is asked to discuss possible alternative care arrangement with their Link Social Worker.



## THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A FOSTER CARER

Phone/E-mail

Info Pack Sent Out

Home Visit/Initial interview

Attend Preparatory Groups

Assessment & Medicals

Panel

Decision/Outcome

Placement



## **SUGGESTIONS, COMMENTS OR COMPLAINTS**

If you would like to make a suggestion, comment or complaint about West Dunbartonshire HSCP Services, please do so, in writing to:

West Dunbartonshire HSCP  
Fostering and Adoption Team  
6-14 Bridge Street  
Dumbarton  
G82 INT

Or phone 01389 772165 or 01389 772166

Alternatively, you can make a complaint to the Care Commission about the quality of service provided by a registered care service or about the Care Commission, Please refer the matter to:

The Care Commission  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DDI 4NY

Or phone 01382 207100

If we are unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you will then have the right to refer the matter to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman by writing to:

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman  
4 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7NS

Or phone 0870 011 5378

You must do this within 12 months of first being notified of the matter you are complaining about.



## **ADOPTION INFORMATION**

### **WELCOME**

Thank you for your interest in Adopting. West Dunbartonshire HSCP is committed to finding adoptive families for children who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their own birth families. This pack will provide you with some of the information on what is involved in caring for a baby/child who has been removed from or relinquished by their birth parent(s).

West Dunbartonshire HSCP needs families for children of all ages, sometimes children on their own or with their brothers and sisters, with a wide range of needs but with a great deal to offer their new family.

Adopters don't need qualifications — they need to be genuinely committed to offering a permanent stable, loving and nurturing home to children who have experienced loss in their lives.

I hope this pack will help you decide if you want to take the next step in the adoption process. Your interest in Adoption is appreciated and the Fostering and Adoption Team looks forward to hearing from you.



## **CRITERIA FOR ADOPTING**

**AGE:** All applicants must be over 21 years old

- Applicants should be able to parent a child until they reach the age of independence

**STATUS:** Applications will be accepted from

- Single applicants
- Married couples
- Non married couples/same sex couples/L.B.G.T

### **FERTILITY:**

- Applications will be accepted from enquirers both, with or without children.
- Applications will not be accepted from enquirers currently undergoing any form of infertility treatment or who are on a waiting list for treatment

### **RESIDENCE:**

Enquiries will be considered from residents within West Dunbartonshire and surrounding areas, providing that applicants are willing to travel to West Dumbarton for preparation groups and other meetings.

### **PREPARATORY GROUPS:**

Enquirers must attend preparatory groups prior to making a formal application (accept in some exceptional circumstances). Information will be provided at that stage about the current legal framework with respect to adoption.

### **RESOURCE**

Applications will only be accepted from enquirers who are willing to consider children from a range of backgrounds. The majority of children placed for adoption have suffered emotional damage through neglect or abuse.

### **ETHNIC ORIGIN, CULTURAL BACKGROUND, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION**

Applications are welcome from all sections of the community.



## **BIRTH FAMILY CONTACT**

- Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to sharing appropriate information about the child's birth family and the circumstances of the adoption with the child throughout his/her childhood and thereafter.
- Applicants must be prepared to meet with birth family members if requested to do so.

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY, HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT AND POLICE CHECKS**

- All applicants and other members of their household over the age of 18 will be subject to local authority, health and Disclosure Scotland checks.
- All applicants will be required to give their written permission, to the Agency Medical Adviser, seeking information and reports from any health professional, which has had contact with the applicants.
- All applicants will require to be medically examined by their GP and a confidential report will be submitted to the Medical Advisor to the Adoption Panel.

## **REFERENCES**

- Applicants will require to provide names and addresses of three referees who are known to the applicants. These should be people who have known both applicants and who can testify to their relationship, character and behaviour one should be a family member. Referees will be interviewed as part of the assessment process.

## **CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES**

- If an applicant's circumstances change significantly during the course of the assessment process, advice may be sought at an early stage from the Adoption Panel.
- If the applicant has been accepted but has given false information or knowingly withheld information then this will also be presented to the Adoption Panel.



## THE ADOPTION PANEL

- It will be the aim to complete the assessment process 6 months after signing the application form.
- Applicants will be invited to the adoption panel which considers their assessment or approval.
- Applicants may be accompanied by a family member or friend.
- If an application is refused the applicants have a right to request a review of the decision.
- Applicants will be advised of the Adoption Panel's recommendation within one working day.
- In the event of the decision maker not approving an application, applicants will be informed of the reasons in writing within two weeks of the decision being made.
- Applicants will have the opportunity to have the decision reviewed by a different Adoption Panel and decision maker whose decision will be final.



## **ADOPTON INFORMATION**

There are many children in foster care, between the ages of birth and ten years( and sometimes older) who need a “forever” family.

Adopting children is rewarding but hard work. Families need a range of resources and supports to assist them through the years ahead.

All children who are placed for adoption have to come to terms with the fact that for one reason or another they could not be brought up by their own parents. In general, the younger the child, the more likely they are to be able to form new healthy attachments within their new family, which in later years will help them to cope with feelings of loss or rejection in relation to their birth family.

However, for most children, the route to adoption is neither short nor simple. They will have had difficult experiences such as periods of abuse and neglect and they may also have had a variety of carers. The children are likely to feel insecure and mistrustful of adults and may feel threatened by change.

Learning to live with children who have suffered emotional damage can be very demanding. It is important that prospective adopters think carefully about their work and family commitments and plan ahead to ensure that they have additional time and space to devote to a child or children.



## ADOPTION

Adoption is a service for children who cannot live with their birth families. The legal process releases them from local authority care, and enables them to become a full, permanent member of another family. All parental responsibilities are transferred to the adoptive parent or parents.

People come to adoption for a variety of reasons, but for the majority it is because they are childless and perhaps have spent many emotionally painful years trying to have children of their own. Adoption may seem the obvious next step, but it is important that people take time to come to terms with their infertility. People often find that this process is similar to dealing with bereavement, and may experience varying degrees of grief, loss, guilt and anger. Some may find it helpful to seek counselling at this stage.

It is only when people have come to terms with their infertility that they may be emotionally ready to think about adoption. They then need to consider whether adoption feels right for them as individuals and — if they have a partner — as a couple. Additionally, will their extended family be able to accept an adopted child? Adoption demands complete commitment. If the prospective adopters are a couple, this means that both partners must see adoption as a positive option, rather than something which is second best to having a child of their own. Adoption is not right for everyone and there are some who feel that they could not parent a child who has not been born to them.

Adoption is different from parenting a child of your own. All parents want their children to grow up into well-adjusted adults. This means having a secure sense of identity — which is the understanding all of us need about who we are and where we came from. This is complicated for adopted people, because they have not just one, but two families. For the adopted person, their sense of identity depends upon them knowing, from the earliest possible stage, that they have another set of parents. Their birth family will, in one sense or another, always be part of their lives, and, they have both a need and a right to grow up knowing about them. They also need to know that if they want to search for their birth family at some point, they will have the goodwill and support of their adoptive family.

Many people think of adoption as being about healthy infants being placed voluntarily by their birth mothers for no other reason than that they are not in a position to look after them themselves. However, the days when women felt under this kind of pressure have almost disappeared and the number of young babies available for adoption is now very small. The children being placed for Adoption these days are older; they may have developmental



complications as a result of the lifestyle and health histories of their birth parents. The most common factors are drug and alcohol abuse and mental illness.

Some children will be known to have special needs, and will require continuing support from Education, Health and West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership. In many cases the birth parents may be actively opposed to adoption which may mean that the process will be long and complicated. During this time, the child may have some contact with their parents at least until the point when they are adopted.

Enquiries are welcomed from those who can adopt children whose family, health and legal background are complex. We also want to hear from people who can consider children with disabilities or other special needs and those who are of other ethnicity.

Adoptive families are also needed for older children, some of them pre-school, but many of whom is early primary school age. The needs of older children can be particularly complex because they are likely to have had more exposure to emotionally damaging experiences. Quite often these children are part of a family group and they may need to be placed either together, or in a family who are willing to help them keep in contact with brothers and sisters placed elsewhere.

West Dunbartonshire HSCP welcomes enquiries from people from all areas who are interested in adopting older children, and sibling groups.



## **ADOPTION AND THE LAW**

Adoption is the legal process by which a child becomes a full and permanent member of a new family. The placement of children for adoption can normally only be carried out by approved adoption agencies, such as the local authority.

The birth parents, including an unmarried father, if he has parental rights and responsibilities, must be asked whether or not they agree to adoption. If they do not agree, the court must decide if there are grounds to dispense with their agreement. The court will hold a hearing for this purpose and the birth parents will have the opportunity to contest the adoption petition. Contested court cases can be lengthy and expensive. If the child has been placed by the West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership in the belief that adoption is in the best interests of the child, the Service will undertake to meet reasonable legal costs in such cases.

Few children are placed for adoption with their parent's agreement, though not all parents actively contest the legal action. Most children placed with adoptive families will be subject to compulsory measures of care imposed by the Children's Hearing, to which they will have been referred when their home circumstances were not meeting their needs. The Supervision Order (Section 70 Children (Scotland) Act 1995) imposed by the Children's Hearing will normally be terminated when the adoption order is granted. Until this point the Children's Hearing makes most of the important decisions for children who are subject to Supervision Orders, including where they will live. When the Social Work Service has matched a child with a prospective adoptive family, a Children's Hearing will decide whether the child may move to the new family.

Birth parents have the right to attend Children's Hearings, and also to know where and with whom their child is staying. In certain circumstances these details can be withheld. The Children's Hearing, while a Supervision Order is in force, will decide whether or not a birth parent may have contact with their child.

The granting of an adoption order by the court transfers all parental responsibilities and rights from the birth family to the adoptive parents. It is usual for the child to take the adopter's family name. Once the child has been placed it is the responsibility of the adopter's to petition the court for an adoption order, usually employing the services of a solicitor with experience of adoption law. The timing of this will be the subject of discussion with the social worker who will be aware of the particular circumstances of the case.



## **ADOPTION AND FINANCE**

It is usual for adopters to assume full financial responsibility for their adopted child. It is helpful therefore for prospective adopters to consider what arrangements they will make, once a child or children are placed, to take account need from the new family. Adoptive families are eligible for Child Benefit.

In certain circumstances Adoption Allowances may be available when particular criteria are met. These criteria are under review. Information will be provided by a Social Worker from the Fostering and Adoption Team.

Adoption allowances are set according to the age of the child. The rate is that recommended by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (C.O.S.L.A.) less child benefit. The rate is reviewed and may be increased.

As rates vary, this information will be provided by a Social Worker from the Fostering and Adoption Team.

The eligibility for Adoption Allowances are reviewed quarterly by the Manager Looked After Children and annually by West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership's Adoption Panel.



## **THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AN ADOPTIVE PARENT**

Phone/E-mail

Information Pack sent out

Initial Enquiry Interview

Attend Preparatory Groups

Application completed

Complete Medical Form

Assessment

Panel

Decision/Outcome

Placement



## **HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE ISSUES FOR PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS**

Caring for children is a physically and emotionally demanding task, so applicants need to have a reasonable degree of physical fitness, emotional stability and stamina. It is important that enquirers let us know about any health concerns as soon as possible, so these can be considered by our Medical Advisor, if necessary.

The most frequently occurring issues concern weight, smoking and the use of anti-depressants.

### **WEIGHT**

Obesity is an increasing problem in the UK population, and has serious implications for health. Some women have infertility problems as a result of polycystic ovary syndrome, and some, but not all will have coexisting weight problems. These women may then find it more difficult than others to achieve significant weight loss, but should seek support from their GP and possible referral to specialist clinics (medication and surgery can be offered in some cases). However, sufferers should be aware that obesity itself is linked with infertility and by losing weight they may enhance the possibility of conception and the chance of having a child themselves. Weight loss must be sustained, however, by lifestyle modification as repeated loss and regaining of weight is possibly even more harmful in the long term. West Dunbartonshire HSCP does not operate a policy which would automatically debar an applicant from being approved because of their weight, but prospective applicants should be aware that a BMI in the morbid obesity range (BMI in excess of 40) may preclude adoption. The primary consideration would be about the implications of excess weight for health and life expectancy. Furthermore, where obesity is associated with an unhealthy lifestyle, there would be concerns about the impact of this on any children who might be placed in the family. There has been a very rapid rise in the rates of childhood obesity. This is associated with short and long term health problems, including diabetes, increased blood pressure, the development of cardiac risk factors and orthopaedic disorders. Children who are overweight are more likely to be bullied and to suffer problems of low self-esteem.

We recommend that anyone who wishes to adopt a child, and who is aware that they are in the obesity range, should make it their priority to seek advice about reducing weight. They should contact their GP practice with a view to getting an assessment of their weight problem and help with planning a reduction programme. GPs can suggest a range of interventions, depending on the cause and extent of the obesity. Losing weight is — and should be — a low process but it is worth bearing in mind that even a small loss of 10% of body weight, substantially reduces the risks to health.



## **SMOKING**

West Dunbartonshire HSCP does not operate a policy of refusing prospective applicants who smoke. However, there is a growing awareness of health risks associated with passive smoking, especially for babies and young children, therefore, we would not place a baby under the age of 2 yrs.. Those risks are not significantly reduced by measures such as restricting smoking to one room in the house, and are only reduced by smoking outside. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS, is rare, but smoking within households has been implicated in about 75% of cases).

Smoking also increases the rate of asthma, breathing problems, ear infections and cardiovascular problems. Birth parents, who are involved in choosing a family for their child, may express a preference for non-smokers.

Prospective applicants, who smoke even a minimal amount, should consult their GP or Practice Nurse for advice about stopping. There are a number of anti- smoking measures available, along with supports for people going through the process.

## **DEPRESSION/MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

It is an inevitable part of life that at some point there will be an event, which is experienced as stressful and may lead to the person becoming temporarily depressed. Bereavements, illness and relationship problems are probably the most common reason.

The experience of infertility can also be extremely stressful and is akin to bereavement in the sense of grief and loss which may result. For some people medical intervention may be necessary, and their GP may have prescribed medication for them.

Prospective applicants who are receiving medication, for example anti- depressants, should discuss making any changes with their GP first to avoid any side effects or withdrawal symptoms. If depression has been severe or there have been repeated episodes, then applicants must consider how the stress of adoption or dealing with the emotional/behavioural difficulties that many children have, may aggravate any health problems.



## **SUGGESTIONS, COMMENTS OR COMPLAINTS**

If you would like to make a suggestion, comment or complaint about West Dunbartonshire H.S.C.P, please do so in writing to:

West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership  
Fostering and Adoption Team  
6 -14 Bridge Street  
Dumbarton  
G82 INT

Or telephone 01389 772165 or 01389 772166

Alternatively, you can make a complaint to the Care Commission about the quality of service provided by a registered care service or about the Care Commission. Please refer the matter to:

The Care Commission  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

Or telephone 01382 207100

If we are unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you will then have the right to refer the matter to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman by writing to:

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman  
4 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7NS

Or telephone 0870 011 5378

You must do this within 12 months of first being notified of the matter you are complaining about.



## **SHARED CARE INFORMATION**

### **WELCOME**

Thank you for your interest in the Shared Care Scheme. West Dunbartonshire HSCP is committed to providing family based respite to disabled children and their families we need people who can offer regular breaks to disabled children and young people within the carer's home.

This pack will provide you with some of the information on what is involved in providing family based respite to disabled children and their families, as well as how you can apply to become a shared carer.

Shared carers don't need to have qualifications — they need to be genuinely interested in supporting disabled children and their families. You will also need to work as part of the team in supporting disabled children and their families in meeting the child's individual needs.

Your interest in shared care is appreciated and the Fostering and Adoption Team looks forward to hearing from you.



## SHARED CARE

The Shared Care Scheme offers short breaks for children and young people with a disability where they are looked after in the carer's home. Shared carers offer regular, planned breaks and would be expected to offer up to 28 overnights per year. This usually takes the form of one weekend per month with an additional longer period of care once a year.

Caring for a child or young person with disabilities provides both challenges and rewards to parents, siblings and wider family members. Depending upon the child's disability, they can require additional support and care in many aspects of their lives. This, in turn, can cause additional pressure and stress on their families who often miss out on experiences and opportunities which we take for granted.

Families with children affected by disability can greatly benefit from regular short breaks where their child is going to a carer or family who they know and will be able to look after them. Shared care can offer parents the chance to have a break and spend some time by themselves or with their other children. The children and young people themselves also really enjoy getting to know the carers that they visit.

Being a shared carer is a rewarding and fun experience as you are giving children new opportunities and experiences. While many of the children will need additional help with day today living, many of the care tasks are the same as those required of all children and as a shared carer you need to have the patience and understanding of the child's individual needs.

Caring for a disabled child requires extra energy and commitment and on-going training and support will be provided to you by a specialist worker from the Fostering and Adoption Team.

We are looking for single people, couples or families who are able to offer regular breaks to disabled children within their own home. A commitment to providing positive opportunities for disabled children is essential and shared carers need to have a caring attitude and the patience and understanding required to care for a child or young person with a disability. Experience of caring for or working with disabled children would be helpful but not essential as preparatory groups and training will be provided.



## **THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Following on from receiving your information pack a member of the Fostering and Adoption Team will come out to visit you and discuss in more detail your interest in shared care. You will be asked to consider what you could offer as a shared carer and the level of commitment you could provide.

If a decision is made to proceed with your application you will be required to attend Preparatory Groups where you will have the opportunity to learn more about caring for children. Further to this, an individual assessment will be completed on you and your family alongside the completion of statutory health and police checks and references. On completion of your assessment, you will be invited to the Adoption and Fostering Panel to be approved as a Shared Carer for West Dunbartonshire HSCP.

## **SHARED CARE AND FINANCE**

An allowance, paid to shared carers, is currently under review by Social Work Services.

Travel expenses are also paid as are the costs for any trips or outings. Any equipment which is required will also be provided although adaptations to the shared carer's home would not normally be considered due to the short term nature of the care offered.

## **SUPPORT AND TRAINING**

Once you are approved as a Shared Carer, you will be allocated a link worker, who will offer on-going support and advice in your new role. Training will also be provided which may be of general interest or specific to the child or young person that you are linked to.



## **SUGGESTIONS, COMMENTS OR COMPLAINTS**

If you would like to make a suggestion, comment or complaint about West Dunbartonshire HSCP Services, please do so, in writing to:

West Dunbartonshire HSCP  
Fostering and Adoption Team  
6 -14 Bridge Street  
Dumbarton  
G82 INT

Or phone 01389 772165 or 01389 772166

Alternatively, you can make a complaint to the Care Commission about the quality of service provided by a registered care service or about the Care Commission. Please refer the matter to:

The Care Commission  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

Or phone 01382 207100

If we are unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you will then have the right to refer the matter to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman by writing to;

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman  
4 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7NS

Or phone 0870011 5378

You must do this within 12 months of first being notified of the matter you are complaining about.



## **SUPPORTED LODGINGS INFORMATION**

### **WELCOME**

Thank you for your interest in the Supported Lodgings Scheme in West Dunbartonshire. West Dunbartonshire HSCP is committed to providing young people, leaving care, with the best possible support available and a highly successful option over many years has been the supported lodgings scheme. This involves people in West Dunbartonshire providing good quality accommodation in their home and on-going support in partnership with social work staff.

This pack will provide you with some of the information on what is involved in providing supported lodgings for young people in the 16 to 21 age range, as well as how you can apply to provide Supported Lodgings.

People who provide supported lodgings don't need to have any specific qualifications – they need to be genuinely interested in supporting young people in order to make a successful transition from residential or foster care to their own independent accommodation in the community. They also need to be able to work in partnership with social work staff.

Your interest in providing supported lodgings is appreciated and the Throughcare Team looks forward to hearing from you.



## **SUPPORTED LODGINGS IN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE**

West Dunbartonshire HSCP strives to provide young people leaving care with the best support available and a highly successful method over many years has been the supported lodgings scheme. This involves people in the community providing accommodation and support in partnership with through care staff.

### **What is supported lodgings?**

The supported lodgings scheme has been developed over many years in West Dunbartonshire to meet the needs of those young people who require help on their journey from being looked after and accommodated by West Dunbartonshire HSCP to be independent in their own accommodation with continuing support. These young people will have been looked after and accommodated by the social work department for different periods of time.

### **Who provides supported lodgings?**

Supported lodgings placements are provided by a variety of people in West Dunbartonshire who have been assessed and approved to be supported carers. This enables us to offer a variety of placements to meet the different needs of those young people who require supported lodgings.

### **What is involved in becoming a supported carer?**

West Dunbartonshire HSCP provides you with some basic background information and, if you wish to proceed, you would have to complete an application form, provide two referees, who are not relatives, a G.P. letter of support and be the subject of a Disclosure Scotland enhanced check. You would then be involved in an assessment which is necessary because the social work department is responsible for any young people placed with you. This assessment would be to establish whether you would be suitable to support young people and work in partnership with through care staff in the best interests of those young people placed with you. The completed assessment will be shared with you and then presented to our adoption and fostering panel for consideration.

West Dunbartonshire HSCP requires that young people placed with you have an individual bedroom which offers a reasonable level of comfort and privacy. The assessment also provides you with opportunities to discuss any concerns and ask questions about any relevant issues before you decide that you want your application to be processed.



**What support/training opportunities will be provided?**

You will be allocated an individual support worker and expected to attend the regular meetings between the other supported carers and throughcare staff, usually a minimum of six evening meetings per year. These meetings provide opportunities to share and discuss experiences. There are also other training opportunities which will be offered to you.

For further information please telephone 01389 608172 or 608173.



## THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Phone call/e-mail

Info pack sent out

Home visit/initial interview

Application form completed

Various checks and references requested

Assessment report completed usually over three month period

Report presented to adoption and fostering panel

Decision/outcome

Placement



## **SUPPORTED LODGINGS IN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE – CASE STUDIES**

“We became involved in the supported lodgings scheme after helping a family friend for a few years. After a period of assessment we were approved as supported carers to provide one placement and the support, advice and training provided have been excellent. We can speak to our worker, or the team manager, for advice at any time. The evening support sessions with the other Supported carers and throughcare team staff are very helpful and reassuring.”

“We have gained a great deal of satisfaction being able to provide support, a stable address and a family environment for young people leaving care in West Dunbartonshire. It is both rewarding and Challenging”.

### **Angela and Barry, a working couple living in Clydebank.**

“I had been a foster carer and enjoyed helping young people, particularly teenagers. A friend told me about the supported lodgings scheme in West Dunbartonshire”.

“The throughcare team have provided me with great advice and regular support. They always seem to be there with an answer. The young person also gets a good level of planned support and encouragement from their worker too.”

“Although I have found it challenging providing supported lodgings it is very rewarding and enjoyable being a supported carer. The other supported carers are helpful and supportive at the evening support sessions. I am very glad to be part of the team.”

### **Sally, a woman living in Clydebank.**



## **SUGGESTIONS, COMMENTS OR COMPLAINTS**

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