



SUPPORT CARE SCHEME

ANNUAL REPORT 2012- 2013

**Jill Haigh
Co-ordinator
Support Care Scheme
Hough Lane Centre
Hough Lane
Bramley
Leeds
LS13 3RD
Tel 0113 2478741**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE SUPPORT CARE SCHEME JAN 2013 - DEC 2013

The planned short break scheme was renamed in July as the Support Care Scheme.

Overview

The scheme is a city wide community based provision in that the children and young people referred to the scheme generally live at home with family members. All the children referred to the scheme are deemed as 'Children in Need' many of whom are subject to Child Protection plans, and have an allocated social worker.

The scheme is open to Kinship Carers and Adoptive families. It has become evident that longer term support may need to be considered for kinship care placements to maintain the stability of these placements. This would mean additional carers would need to be recruited to offer placements to children on the 'edge of care'. Again some children within the community ie those living with grandparents, parents with chronic mental health issues, parents with limited parenting skills, often need on-going support. Consideration needs to be given to the availability of these placements and the increase in number of support carers required to deliver this service.

The service involves specifically approved foster carers (support carers) for the scheme, who look after children/young people in their own homes for planned periods of time ranging from day or evening care, to overnight stays of up to 72hrs. The breaks can last from 6 – 18mths. The time scales are in conjunction with those of the Child Protection process i.e. it is expected that a family should, within the Child Protection process, have made significant changes within this period to reduce concerns and increase protective factors to allow the plan to be discharged.

Any exceptions to the time scales would require agreement at managerial level. Often those children placed with family Network carers required longer term involvement and it has been agreed that placements can be extended by a 6mth period. As mentioned earlier, consideration needs to be given to longer term support care placements.

Children referred to the scheme by Social workers are carefully matched to support carers. The process takes into account the young person's behaviour, hobbies and interests, family composition of the carers, the carers' abilities and skills to meet the needs of the child, and the religious and cultural needs of the child.

The Scheme has carers from different ethnic backgrounds. Any potential match is discussed with the parents and young person. The parents meet with the support carer before a joint decision is made about offering/accepting a placement.

Aims and objectives

Support Care is part of a package of support identified through the Child and Family Assessment, Child in Need Plan or the Child Protection Plan, and seeks to support in maintaining children living safely within their own families. The provision of Support Care, alongside other family support services, aims to prevent family breakdown and reduce the number of children needing to be looked after on a full time basis.

The provision of the service is based on the evidence that most children do best when cared for in their family of origin.

The scheme is available to those young people in adoptive placements if a social worker has been allocated to the case, to prevent adoption breakdown.

Placements are also offered to Kinship carers to maintain the child's placement with extended family or connected persons.

Management of the scheme

The scheme has been developed and operated by the Co-ordinator who was appointed in April 2000, and subsequently her replacement that was appointed in Nov 04. The co-ordinator is full time and currently based in at Hough Lane Centre Bramley.

A second part time fostering officer was allocated to the scheme in 2010 for a period of 6 months. When the worker left the fostering officer position was moved to the recruitment and assessment team.

It was therefore decided in 2011 that the scheme would be 'capped' at 20 carers and the co-ordinators role would no longer be able to sustain any further development work.

The oversight of the Support Care Scheme is undertaken by the Fostering Team Manager.

Initially an advisory group offered ongoing advice on the progress and development of the scheme. In 2007 this was disbanded as the Scheme was clear about its developmental direction and procedures and service specification were clear.

Operation of the scheme

Through involvement with the fostering Network Support Care Pilot project, in 2005, and in close liaison with other support care projects nationally, alongside consultation with the department's legal section and in line with the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the draft procedures were rewritten to

incorporate operating the Scheme under Section 17(6) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The procedures were submitted to the Chief Executive, Children's Services, and Divisional Management Team and approved in Jan 06.

Following the Care Planning Regulations 2010 The Scheme offers placements under S17 and S20 of the Children Act. The referring Social Worker and their team manager will determine at point of referral the legal status of the placement. The 'assessing' criteria are listed within the procedures.

Information packs have been devised and are available to Area Social Work Teams outlining the aims of the Scheme, the eligibility criteria and the referral process.

Information leaflets are available to families and children accessing the scheme and for applicants who may be interested in becoming Support Carers.

Recruitment of Carers

In June 2011 recruitment of short break carers was halted due to the scheme being at full capacity. It was decided that recruitment would only take place when a carer left the scheme. The Scheme is currently capped at 20 carers. Currently no specific recruitment for Support Carers takes place.

Prior to this recruitment of carers generally came from the general foster carers recruitment fortnight, word of mouth from other carers, and through the Councils web site. There has always been an interest in support care and recruitment of carers has never been an issue.

The Scheme often generates interest from young professional couples who may work with children within a school or nursery setting, or volunteer within scout groups or youth clubs, and single women who may have adult children and want to use their parenting experience to assist and promote another child's development and welfare. Both these groups of people are usually very skilled in caring for children and have the experiences and competencies needed to care as part of the scheme.

Fees and Allowances

Support Carer's are generally approved as level 2 carers and only receive payment when they have a placement. Two carers are full time and are currently level 4 carers – providing placements for up to 15 children over a monthly period.

Training

Support Carers attend the Skills to Foster course which covers all aspects of the foster caring tasks but is mainly directed at carers who will foster on a full-time basis, however, support carers find this training particularly useful and informative. Support carers are expected to attend mandatory foster carers training as part of their payment for skills requirements. This can prove

difficult as many carers work full time. Weekend and evening training has been delivered in the past and has been requested thought organisation development. Home based training packs and e-learning is also an option for support carers.

The co-ordinator has produced home training packs specifically for support carers on a variety of issues relating to their role – such as behaviour management, attachment and attachment disorder, ADHD, safer caring and health and safety. Leaflets have also been provided to assist carers in understanding the strengthening families' child protection process.

Support Carers are expected to undertake their Children's Workforce Development Council standards in the first two years of caring.

Support Group

A support group specifically for support carers takes place twice per year and is very well attended. Support Carers are able to attend mainstream support groups in their area in addition to this. Level 4 short break carers must attend both as part of their payment for skills expectations.

Carers

Many of the existing support carers work full time and therefore only offer the minimum commitment of one weekend in four to the scheme. Their contribution to the scheme is of great value. Several of the carers have provided additional support to the family at times of crisis.

In 2006 the scheme secured a full time level 4 carer who is able to offer up to 12 placements per month. In 2011 the Family Resource Centre level 4 carer was transferred to the scheme following a change in their role. This has been a great addition to the scheme and consideration needs to be given to recruiting other level 4 carers who will have full time availability.

The current carer levels are as follows:-

2 Level 4 Full time fee-paid Support carers offering up to 15 placements per month

1 Level 2 support carer offering a shared care placement

15 Level 2 Support carers offering one weekend in four (some of these carers will offer one weekend in two if this is required to meet the needs of the family situation) **2** of these carers offer additional support during school holidays

2 carers de-registered recently

1 carer changed their approval and took a child on a full time basis in Sept this year

Recording information

A format of recording information about the young person in placement has been introduced to carers so relevant information can be recorded at the time of their stay. This can then be used for reference during Child In Need meetings and Child protection meetings, they also enable the co-ordinator to formulate Child Protection reports. The carer and co-ordinator liaise regularly with regard to placement issues.

Current Developments

Since July 2013 the co-ordinator of the scheme has been involved with a pilot project working with the childcare consultancy service, early help services and childminders offering day care to 0 – 3yr olds who have an allocated social worker and are subject to Child in Need or Child Protection plans. Again the aim of this project is to prevent family breakdown and the young person being received into care. A part time worker was allocated to the support care scheme to enable the co-ordinator to do this.

The childminding_pilot was based in the North West area of the city and only available to those families with S/W's in the Hough Lane office. A small, but very successful, pilot which provided excellent day care for the children and effective parenting support for parents. The evaluation of the pilot has concluded that the project should be expanded into the East and South of the city targeting those clusters where it has been identified that most children of this age group are received into local authority care. It expected that the childminding scheme will then expand city wide. A business case plan is to be submitted to seek a full time member of staff to work alongside the co-ordinator of the support care scheme to develop the service under the umbrella of 'support care'.

It is apparent that some referrals that have been received through the support care scheme could be met by the childminding service. Many families need support and a break from caring for their children and day care than overnight stays would better suit so parents can access appointments/services for themselves. Although support carers can and do offer day care, the childminders are often better equipped to provide this service for 0 – 3yr olds.

Families accessing the support carer and childminding service feel that the level of care received by both parties is of high standard and that any sharing of parenting techniques and/or strategies for managing behaviour is well received, taken on board and implemented within the home situation. The childminders are also able to offer advice and support around feeding, healthy eating, weaning, toilet training etc.

With regard to the childminding service S/W's have commented that their concerns with regard to the children have lessened since the childminder became involved. They have commented that many of the childminders go above and beyond what they would have expected – helping out with

transport, providing toys, push-chairs and other items to assist families, collecting child from parent early morning to allow parent to attend hospital, offering play sessions within the family home (teaching young parents to play and interact with their children in a positive way).

Support carers too have very positive relationships with S/W's in that they are flexible in their approach and adapt to the needs of the children in placement. One support carer is providing outreach work with an adoptive family whose child has severe attachment disorder in the hope that one day she will be able to provide some respite to the family.

Both schemes – support care and childminding service – aim to support families, prevent family breakdown and reduce the number of children and young people coming into care. Many of the families referred to both schemes are also referred to the family group conferencing team. Although as a worker or carer, we have not been invited to the family group conference itself – we may have been identified as a service who can offer support to the families where other family members cannot. We may be involved with a family who move into family group conferencing when our service is on-going to identify others who can offer support.

The support care and childminding schemes often work in tandem with Children's Centres and the Family Intervention service as part of the package of support provided to the family. Direct contact and on-going communication with parents is encouraged and fundamental to the success of both types of placement. A childminder was recently described by one parent as a 2nd mum – whilst a support carer was described as a grandma figure for her children who had come to the UK from Slovakia with no extended family for support. In both cases the working relationship between carer/childminder and parent was one of trust and respect. Both parents were able to 'learn' from the skills and expertise of the carer/childminder in order to parent and safeguard their children.

The childminding and support care scheme are hoping to make links with further education and access to work schemes to assist families to improve their long term situation. We have had some links with 'connexions' helping young parents get back into further education and vocational courses.

Many of the children and young people referred to the support care and childminding service are subject to child protection plans. It is with the ethos of the strengthening families approach that both schemes look to build upon the strengths and capabilities of the parents whilst ensuring that the child is the focus of our work and any potential risks or concerns are highlighted with the parents and the professionals involved. The emphasis is on working restoratively in that both schemes are voluntary and parents must be in agreement with the initial referral and the sharing of information. Any placement made is with the agreement and cooperation of those with parental responsibility.

YEAR END STATISTICS 2013 SUOPRT CARE SCHEME

CARERS

Number of Support Carers at Dec 2013

2 Level 4 Full time fee-paid Support carers carer offering up to 15 placements per month

15 Level 2 Support carers offering one weekend in four (some of these carer will offer one weekend in two or three if this is required to meet the needs of the family situation) 2 of these carers offer addition support during school holidays

1 Level 2 support carer offering a shared care placement

1 carer taken long term placement (still allocated to co-ordinator)

2 carers de-registered in Nov 13

Availability

2 carers can offer up to 15 placements per month

1 carer can offer 2 placements per month

15 carers are available one w/end per month.

1 carer offering a shared care placement

Total No. of enquiries regarding possible placement for children/young people.

73

Enquiries where referral was not received

27

Reasons- Social worker only seeking initial information on the scheme, child not eligible, Social worker left - case unallocated, change in family circumstances, alternative placement found

Total referrals received (no of children)

47

Referrals leading to placements (no of children)

37

Referrals not leading to placements (no of children)

10

*Parents decided did not want the service, child not eligible, Social worker withdrew application because family circumstances changed, case closed by S/W, child received into care,
No suitable match found, no carer availability
Children referred to mainstream carers for respite due to no carer match*

No. of children already in placement with support carers Jan 13

29

Emergency placements accepted by support carers

4

Total Number of children accessing the scheme in 2013

70

Ethnicity of children placed

2 children Black Caribbean
2 children Slovakian
8 children Dual Heritage
57 children White British
1 child Iranian

Ages of children placed

0 – 4 yrs - 13
5 – 9 yrs - 28
10 – 16yrs – 28
16+ - 1
Gender – male 43 female 27

Legal Status of child at point of referral

Some children are counted twice

Care Order Kinship care – 10
Child Protection Plan– 22
Care Order placed with parents – 5
CiN – 27
Adoption Breakdown – 1
Care order in foster placement – 3

Reasons for referral

- Mental Health Issues (parent)
- Drug/Alcohol related issues (parent)
- Domestic violence
- Attachment difficulties
- Adoption Breakdown
- Neglect issues
- ADHD
- Attachment issues
- Learning disability (parent)
- Parent/child conflict
- Abandonment
- Other –

(Other includes support for grandparents, single parents with no family support, children returning home to live with parents from residential or alternative care arrangements).

Many children placed through the scheme have a number of the above issues within their family situation

Status of child's home based carer/s

Mother	Father	Both parents	Parent/ Step-parent	Grand parent	Kinship	Child in foster placement
34	3	4 1-adoptive parents	5	10	6 – g/parent 4-other	3

Frequency of Placements

Short Break Placements range from:-

- 1 weekend in 4**
- 1 weekend in 2**
- 1 weekend in four**
- 1 night per week**
- 1 night per fortnight**
- Evening care**
- Day care**

Overall total of placements offered

Outcomes of the 70 children receiving support care placement in 2013

Placements ended according to plan child remains at home	Placements in progress	Placement ended – carer withdrew	Children looked after full time	Placement ended child/family withdrew child remains at home	Emergency placements
16	31	1	5	13	1 child rec'd into care 3 already in care

Of the 6 children who came into full time foster care

- 1 - 16yr old abandoned by adoptive family and extended family
- 3 - breakdown of extended family placement
- 2 – breakdown of home situation –

Evaluation

From the 70 children and young people accessing the support care scheme 6 have been received into local authority care. 64 children remain at home, with extended family or in their kinship placement.

Of the 13 children accessing the childminding pilot 2 were received into local authority care. One returned home to live with a family member 1 was placed for adoption.

It appears evident that offering families whose children are deemed as at risk of significant harm without intervention from social care and other agencies, benefit from the support offered through the support care and childminding schemes. The support allows parents to access much needed services for themselves, provide them with a break from caring, whilst developing a trusting relationship with the carer/childminder who will offer parenting advice in a non-threatening manner. As both schemes are family based (children and parents visit the homes of the carer/childminder) there is a more personal approach to offering advice, which the parents seem to appreciate and accept.

Feedback suggests that parent's who have accessed the support care scheme, feel that the service is valuable and the planned nature and initial introductions are particularly valued by parents, carers and children. Social workers, of those children placed, report that the scheme is more accessible and is supportive of families and their individual circumstances. Some S/w's see the offer of support as more creative and flexible e.g support to allow parents to attend alcohol awareness course as part of the CP plan, support to

allow parent to visit another child in hospital out of the area, and less stigmatising than traditional respite. S/W's have been appreciative of receiving support in emergency/unplanned situations.

The appraisal and monitoring of foster carers is undertaken through the annual foster carer review. The Review will incorporate the views of Social Workers who have had children placed with carers. Consultation forms sent to Social workers are not always returned but comments on the care offered and the contribution of support care to families has been very positive. Families often appreciate the nature of the relationship the carer develops with the parents – offering 'informal' parenting advice and support.

Case scenario – support care

Single parent with chronic mental health issues who has had two children removed from her care. When her third child was born apposite parenting and psychological assessment recommended that the child should remain in her care with support. A support care placement was found – the child is nearing her 4th birthday and remains in mothers care. Mum has had a fourth child and a support care placement with the same carer whom she has built a positive relationship with, is being sought for the child. The support carer has been able to offer additional support in situations where mother's mental health has deteriorated.

Case scenario – childminding project

Couple with history of drug use and domestic violence incidents with 1yr old child. Mum is a recovering drug addict and both parents suffer with mental ill health. Mother has had a previous child removed due to her negative and chaotic lifestyle. Mother also has serious health condition for which she requires regular hospital appointments. Childminder provides flexible day care to allow parents to attend appointments and address issues that were of concern to social care and placed child at risk.

Some comments from S/W and families with regard to support care

J and D have been absolute stars with R and it's been lovely to see him enjoying his time with them. Please thank them from me.

That's brilliant. Thank you. I've spoken to A and she is grateful.

Can you pass on thanks to L for all she's done.

Friendly, yet firm.

Child focused.

Carers are understanding of concerns and able to alert professionals when necessary.

Very good at building a positive but professional relationship with parents.

Child friendly, and a welcoming home.

None judgemental

L is an excellent carer and we discuss things if any problems arise and work together

Some comments from S/W and families with regard to childminding scheme

Mum has been able to access medical appointments for herself

She has taken advice from childminder

Case has de-escalated from CP to CiN

Childminder has provided play session in family home

Childminder has provided toys and other equipment

parents/carers are listening to, and taking advice from the child minder and this is translating into the parents improving their care of their children.

Childminder has been flexible with time/dates to meet the needs of the family

Developments for 2014

Childminding project –day care support – on-going links with the child care consultancy service, early help service. Open childminding service city wide, initially in the South and East of the city.. Promotion of service to area based social work teams. Further funding requested for 30 part time placements city wide

Support Care – promotion of service to area based social work teams due to change of structure in areas, new managers and high turnover of s/w staff.

Recruitment of additional support carers to allow some carers to take longer term placements.

Recruitment of full time worker to enable expansion of childminding and support care schemes. This will enable further recruitment of childminders and support carers offering more placements and placement choice.

Crisis Care - Possible recruitment of emergency carer/s who can assist placement desk in emergency situations to enable them to locate appropriate full time placement for child/young person being received into care for the first time and/or working with family to assist speedy return home.

Develop links with Cramner Bank who have an emergency bed for children being received into care for the first time. Support Care could be offered as part of the plan to return a young person home to the care of their family.