

ABERLOUR RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S 'FUTURE OF FOSTER CARE' CONSULTATION

February 2025

Aberlour is the largest Scottish only children's charity. Delivering more than fifty services across Scotland, we work with disadvantaged, marginalised and discriminated against children, young people and families, providing services and support in communities around the country. We help to overcome significant challenges families face, such as the impact of drugs and alcohol, growing up in and leaving care, poor mental health, living with a disability, or the impact of poverty and disadvantage.

We aim to provide help and support at the earliest opportunity to prevent problems becoming intractable or spiralling out of control. We are committed to Keeping the Promise and to realising the human rights of all children and young people. This means working every day to make rights real for the children, young people, and families we support and being unwavering in our ambition to ensure all of Scotland's children have an equal chance regardless of their start in life.

Introduction

"There needs to be a culture change in the Fostering sector between local authorities and charities with foster care services. Working together, we can make a significant difference for the children and young people we support." Head of Fostering, Aberlour

At Aberlour we have a deep commitment to making sure Scotland Keeps the Promise by 2030. We provide safe, loving and supportive services across Scotland for children and young people who often face complex challenges. These include residential children's houses, mother and child recovery houses and many other services, working right across the spectrum from early intervention and prevention to supporting children and young people in and on the edges of care. Applying a rights-based approach, we are committed to raising awareness of the needs of those within the care-experience community who often face intersecting challenges in their lives, ensuring they can get the help and support they need and can access their rights.

We work together with other partners to beat poverty, disadvantage and discrimination. Giving children an equal chance and the best possible start in life is at the heart of everything we do. This is all a part of our defining mission: "to be brave for our children and young people." To that end, we urge the Scottish Government to do the same.

Throughout our consultation response, we have reflected the voices and highlighted the views of our children, young people and families from what they have told us. It is important to say that children and young people in our fostering services in the main did not engage with this consultation directly as many of them do not identify as being 'care experienced'.

Our vision

What are your views on our vision for Foster Care?

The recruitment and retention of foster carers is crucial to meet the demand of children who require care, and we support a commitment to achieve that. However, as a fostering provider we are not given the same support as local authorities to recruit foster carers, despite a dependency on our services from local authorities.

Some aspects of the vision for foster care are ambitious and admirable, but we feel it does not reflect the reality of the starting point the system is operating in now. Right now, foster carer recruitment and retention is in crisis. Ageing populations, a lack of modernised approaches and regulations, a cost-of-living crisis, the continuing impact of COVID and so many other factors have influenced the current climate and, in turn, impact the numbers of foster carers available. We need to be honest about the situation we find ourselves right now and while having an ambitious vision is one to strive towards, we also need a vision appropriate to tackle the challenges the system faces right now before we can make the overarching vision a reality. More needs to be done to tackle the challenges that are faced by the sector, notably the relationships between local authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies so that they can work effectively together for the benefit of the children, young people and families we support.

Flexible fostering approaches are what we adopt as we strive to be creative and flexible, adapting to the needs of every child and young person who depends on our fostering services. Our Foster Carers are highly valued, experienced and knowledgeable and a new vision for Foster Care needs to recognise this. Flexible fostering approaches are enabled by being a part of an organisation delivering a range of services and supports for children, young people and families, and being able to offer the extra support that helps our Foster Carers develop and thrive. However local authorities' offer for fostering right now may struggle to implement the flexible fostering approach, and there must be care and consideration in how this is implemented.

Expectations of Foster Carers must not be generalised but instead suitably matched with their skills. We want to work collaboratively with other providers to make this work in the future.

Flexible Fostering Approach

What are your views on the proposed flexible fostering approach?

Our children, young people and families are best supported in our services when we are adaptable to the family circumstances that arise and work holistically with families to respond to their needs and the range of challenges they may face in their lives. The proposed flexible fostering approach is not new. Aberlour Fostering services already incorporate the flexible fostering approaches that have been suggested within the consultation's proposals and our Foster Carers thrive with our support. The skills and experience of our Foster Carers allows for us to offer a more flexible approach to Foster Care that works for the children and young people we support. Our Foster Carers are highly valued and if there are ever any extra support that is needed we

have a range of different services, specialisms and expertise across Scotland that we can refer to; whether that be with our family support services, residential services, disability services or any of the more than fifty services across Scotland we deliver. Uniquely, as a children's charity, we can offer wrap-around care, be creative and adopt flexible fostering approaches.

For Foster Carers across Scotland who are supported by local authorities, an investment in intensive family support services can help a flexible fostering approach be realised as it then can be offered to support foster carers who feel they would benefit from this support. The Independent Care Review found that support needs to be more flexible and tailored to supporting families' specific needs, nurturing family-workforce relationships is the key to success.¹ At Aberlour, we are committed to making rights real for the children, young people, and families to ensure all of Scotland's children have an equal chance. Investment in holistic, whole family services is one way to ensure foster carers across Scotland can be supported throughout their fostering journey, particularly when working with a flexible approach. Whole family support services can support families not just at times of crisis when successful intervention that mends relationships is more difficult, particularly when the system is struggling to recruit and retain Foster Carers.

At Aberlour, we already know about many models of flexible fostering such as the 'Step Up, Step Down' programme and 'Mockingbird' which we do reflect on and adopt aspects of into our service approach. What our services feel we would benefit from is from models of the flexible fostering approach that look to enrich and strengthen what we already do.

What are your views on the seven different elements in the flexible fostering approach?

The seven different elements in the flexible fostering approach are as follows:

High quality alternative family-based care

To build the potential and capacity of existing foster carers to support and facilitate family time where appropriate, in line with the child's care plan, so that children, including infants, can keep in touch with people that are important to them"

Foster carers may, in some situations, have a role in supporting birth families whose children are in foster care, to facilitate reunification of the child or young person with their birth family.

Foster carers may be well placed to have a role supporting families on the edge of care.

Building on existing short break provision, regular breaks, which are also child centred, provided to foster carers or other families who need a break.

Using more experienced foster carers who no longer wish to foster full-time, to mentor new foster carers, deliver foster carers' training.

Potentially, the facility, where it is appropriate, for a foster carer to stay in a family home, for a short time, to provide immediate support and care at times of family crisis.

As highlighted above, our Fostering service already incorporates a flexible fostering approach that includes many of these elements. We have many examples of Foster Carers already supporting family time, supporting reunification of the child or young person with their birth family and other approaches and high-quality alternative family-based care. Our Foster Carers' commitment to the children and young people they provide care ensures that we can provide these services. We have Foster Carers that have birth families in their home,

¹¹ https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Promise_v7.pdf

including overnight stays, and providing travel to support family time. Foster Carers from Aberlour have also supported mothers with their babies and other families on the edge of care. We also have examples of Foster Carers supporting transitions from residential houses and supporting reunification with their birth families. There is so much more that our Fostering services do to support children, young people and families adaptively and holistically to suit their needs. Our Foster Carers' work tirelessly to meet the needs of the children and young people they support in so many ways.

We do have a concern about the proposal that Foster Carers may be able to support families on the edge of care by staying in families' homes to support them. We worry that the necessary facilities to accommodate this will not be available. We are also not sure this is within the remit of a Foster Carer and if an expectation on a Foster Carer to facilitate this type of support can worsen the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers. We should ensure that recruitment and retention is not negatively impacted by flexible fostering approaches and so there should not be a generalised assumption that every Foster Carer will be able to have the same time and facility to support every potential situation for every child or young person. It is vital to use matchmaking effectively to match the child and young person with a Foster Carer that has the complimentary skills, experience and capacity to support their situation. Many Foster Carers are open to matching with children and young people with many different backgrounds and are keen to learn throughout the placement and should be encouraged and supported to do so.

Although many of our approaches can be described as a 'Step Up Step Down' scheme, we do not wholly adopt the name of the model and explicitly call it so. Our fostering service places the views and needs of children, young people and carers at the heart of its care and our approach stems from this. We have young people who we have supported for 20 years, and we are now supporting that transition into adulthood while also supporting lifelong links to their Foster Carers. We have children who are moving into adoption and into kinship care. We meet children and young people where they are at and work creatively to be able to provide them the support and care they need at that time, working flexibly to adapt this when the child or young person needs a change.

What implications does a flexible fostering approach have for how fostering is funded and how foster carers are remunerated?

There can be implications for how foster carers are remunerated if the times that the child is not in the care of Foster Carers that this creates a disparity in income for the carers that cannot be adequately planned for. Retention of Foster Carers under this approach would be significantly difficult. Retainer fees may be a solution to this issue.

How can the Scottish Government, working with you, support the delivery of the flexible fostering approach?

Ensuring that the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is fully delivered can ensure that we can offer our family support services that are critical to keeping families together in the first place, but also able to recognise when a family is struggling and may need support from fostering services. We offer adaptive family support services which support a flexible fostering approach. Investment in whole family support is a way to manage resources and be responsive to a family's needs for Foster Carers across Scotland.

Independent Fostering Agencies

What is the role of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) in the future of fostering?

31% of Fostering services in Scotland are provided by IFAs.² The provision IFAs offer is significant, however, we feel that many local authority providers do not always appear to value the service provided by IFAs. The tensions are monetary but not all who are private providers are profit-making. When we are talking about fostering services, we believe that the voices of our services are sometimes not heard due to conversations being heavily weighted towards local authorities. During this consultation process, we have engaged in sessions where IFAs have been under-represented, and we have heard from others that the role of IFAs in the future of fostering should reduce or not exist at all. The current situation in Fostering is that Scotland does not have enough Foster Carers and within this consultation there are proposals for a recruitment drive acknowledging this. It would be unfeasible if IFAs ceased to exist.

There is clear tension among IFAs and local authorities when it comes to fostering. Monetary tensions dominate the decision-making around placement through the Scotland Excel framework. The issues around money overflows into a culture of tension between local authorities and IFAs who should, and need, to be better able to work together for children and young people in fostering. The position of The Fostering Network, National Association of Fostering Providers, Association of Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Scotland and Social Work Scotland Community Placements Subgroup all play critical role in developing the future of foster care. These organisations can help facilitate constructive partnership working and positive working relationships that reaches across the divide between IFAs and local authorities that exist right now. As a third sector provider, we are committed to doing all we can to improve the situation so that we can best support all children, young people, families and Foster Carers and this is why we want to improve these relationships. During the consultation process, we have offered to local authorities to share our development sessions with their Foster Carers which is an example of how we would like to be working collaboratively with local authorities in the future. This consultation process has had elements of focus on how to create a bigger divide, when we should really be looking at how we can best work together. The Scottish Government, too, should be playing their part to promote partnership working. For example, the third sector were not engaged in the Scottish Recommended Allowance discussions and this would have been welcome. Additionally, within this consultation, the third sector have not been included in the planned national recruitment campaign. These actions further exacerbate the divide.

Should we require all IFAs to have charitable status? Please explain.

IFAs should all have charitable status. We believe there should be no profit made from caring for children and young people by private entities, which is The Promise is clear should be the case. As a third sector provider, we are given the same status as private companies. Some IFAs are highly secretive, and business orientated and are based in other countries such as England, or even Switzerland, which doesn't impact the communities in Scotland as much as it would if money were invested in charities that are based here in Scotland. If there is a surplus that is made from a Fostering placement within Aberlour, this is reinvested in our Fostering services and other services across the country that support children, young people and families.

Should we limit how much local authorities can pay to IFAs? If so, why and how would we do it?

No. It may cost a local authority more to secure a placement within our services, but the quality of their fostering support is improved. We pay foster carers above the SRA while offering counselling, psychological services and training opportunities. We have seen contradictions from Scottish Government and local

authorities that we need more foster carers but don't want to use IFAs which we believe to be incredibly shortsighted and will severely impact the number of fostering placements available across Scotland.

Should IFAs be required to pay their foster carers the Scottish Recommended Allowance (SRA)?

We do pay the SRA and would agree that all other IFAs should. As mentioned above, the third sector was not invited to engage on discussions around the Scottish Recommended Allowance which would have been a welcome approach from the Scottish Government to promote partnership working.

Recruitment of Foster Carers

What are your views on the 'offer' described above?

We welcome the offer of a campaign to recruit more foster carers; it is important to have more foster carers in the system. The offer, however, does not help improve the recruitment of foster carers within third sector providers, which we would also welcome as all providers are facing challenges with foster carer recruitment. The third sector offers potential foster carers an essential choice. We are often known for providing a greater level of support and training, which allows for the development and support of carers who can support Scotland's most vulnerable children where local authorities are looking for additional resource and support. The approach for a national campaign to only include local authorities is shortsighted and does not consider what the third sector bring to the table in an already challenging environment and how we can complement what local authorities are doing.

What more can the Scottish Government and local authorities do to recruit foster carers? Please explain your answer. You may wish to share successes and challenges of recruitment of foster carers in your response

A significant barrier to people becoming foster carers is the need for an annual medical review. One off-putting aspect to this medical review is that BMI is tracked. Looking at the wider picture, the weight of a foster carer is not an essential aspect to consider and removing this requirement may be a small way to make the process easier as we have heard from staff working with foster carers that this is seen as an archaic practice and should not be needed. In addition, the ongoing national challenge around being able to get medicals completed by GP's is a large barrier and causes significant delays in terms of carers coming to Panel. There is also the issue of hugely inflated costs which are inconsistent across surgeries if or when you can get them. Now that the NHS is no longer part of the contractual arrangements, we have no locus for medical checks to be completed, only the ability to encourage to consider that they are. We are aware that the UK Government is reviewing the process to see if there can be a four-nation approach, and a letter has gone to all GPs from Scottish Government but there is currently no locus of control. We either need GPs to prioritise Foster Carers for their medical examinations, and for there to be mechanisms to ensure this happens, or we should not require this as part of the assessment process at all. We have made further comments about the other structural issues within the NHS and its impact on fostering below.

The BAAF Coram assessment, recognised most widely, is outdated and needs updated alongside the overall assessment process. A further issue that puts people off becoming a foster carer is the length of the time taken for recruitment and the requirement for training before coming to Panel. If we want to recruit more foster carers then the system needs quicker ways that assess skills over experience and formal training. The current system

is too invasive and lengthy with the process taking a minimum of three months, but often considerably longer. Training should be offered throughout the fostering journey but flexibly that works for the foster carers, recognising their commitments. Overall, there needs to be rethink in how the assessment process can be more appealing and applicant friendly without compromising on safeguarding which of course is essential.

Retention Of Foster Carers

What more can the Scottish Government do to nationally support the learning and development of foster carers?

We provide a lot of training and development opportunities for those who choose to foster with us including the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences. We believe that a culture change in the fostering system would improve training opportunities for all foster carers, whether they be with a local authority or another agency. We welcome other foster carers to join our training and development sessions and would encourage the multiagency working so that we can work together for the best outcomes for our children and young people across Scotland. Currently, the atmosphere between different agencies and local authorities can be unwelcoming and we would like the Scottish Government to do more to bring the barriers between the partners so we can work together more effectively.

There is already a standard framework for training programmes within the 2016 review of Foster Care which should be reflected on and built on, as it is important to recognise that any national training programmes would not have to be started from scratch. The investment in Pathways that has been proposed is welcome, particularly if it means there can be more learning opportunities given in every local authority area to ensure consistency and make sure no child or family is without support that would greatly benefit them. Training and learning opportunities will need to be as flexible as possible to ensure foster carers can work around their other commitments. It is important for any future training opportunities to respect the time and effort from Foster Carers and should be meaningful and personalised for the foster carer to develop the skills they need.

We believe there is scope to introduce an SVQ level qualification, working with colleagues across the sector. This could be a recognised qualification, 'Foster Care SVQ', that would be weighted towards practice and reflection. This would improve the recognition of a Foster Carer and the skills and knowledge they possess. However, we equally believe it is important to be cautious around learning and development being too academic. The best offer of learning and development is when there is a diversity of different opportunities that respond to different learning types and needs. Learning and development should be varied, unique and promote progression. Instead, we can sometimes see Foster Carers experiencing training fatigue where they are on training programmes that are not engaging them appropriately.

What other practical support would help foster carers?

We offer ongoing support to our foster carers as well as the children and young people they support which we have highlighted throughout this consultation. Currently, local authorities are not consistent in offering the same for their foster carers. We believe that this approach to scaffolding around the families we work with can ensure longevity and prospering family relationships. The third sector is generally known for providing quality support, appreciated by carers. What support looks like is subjective, but key components that carers tell us

they appreciate include a consistent connection and relationship with the team around them built on integrity and respect. The service can respond quickly at times of need with flexible and creative responses when needed and ability to access additional resources. Fair remuneration is also a priority in the current financial climate for carers.

What, if any, additional learning and development would be needed for the ‘flexible fostering’ approach?

We have positive examples where Aberlour foster carers have worked closely alongside our children's houses to support a transition from residential to foster care, where we have supported children to return to their family or on to an adoptive family and provide vital contribution to children's planning. We already provide a flexible approach with highly skilled, experienced and supported foster carers. There is recognition that the potential of what fostering services could offer is varied and multi-layered, which in turn would require a review of the role of the Foster Carer, recognising that recruitment, assessment, training, support and matching would need to be reviewed alongside and may look different depending on what the varying roles may be. This would need to be carefully considered in the same way that we assess and make recommendations on approval status for age, gender, numbers and type of fostering for all applicants.

Financial support

Do you think there should be national approach to fees for foster carers? Please explain your answer.

If we want to recruit and retain foster carers then providers should be paying them fairly. If someone has the skills, commitment, time and determination to be a foster carer then income should not be barrier to becoming one. The Fostering Network found that only a quarter of Foster Carers felt their fee was sufficient to cover their essential living costs³. Third sector are often criticised for being more expensive, however, local authorities tend to only approach external providers when they have no options within their own resources. This is not always due to no vacancies, but often because some children and young people are sadly considered as ‘harder’ to place due to multiple moves and placement breakdowns, higher levels of trauma and often complex needs. To support these individuals, carers need to have a much well developed skill set and capacity for support and therefore should be remunerated fairly with a higher fee. So, in essence we would support a national fee framework, but only where there was consistency of recognition of a carer’s skill and experience levels. To reflect these issues, there should be more suitable models of commissioning.

Do you think there should be a national approach to additional payments? Please explain your answer.

No. Every family is unique with variances such as location, child(ren)’s need level and more impacting costs that would require additional payments and should be done on a case-by-case basis. Practices that would see an insufficient amount of funding allocated to foster carers with children or young people with disabilities may cause foster carers deciding not to care for a child or young person with these needs due not being able to

afford the extra costs, such equipment such as wet room installation. A national approach may not be able to properly address all the possible needs of the children and young people.

Should the financial model for foster carers include a retainer fee for when a foster carer does not have a child placed with them? Please explain your answer.

A financial model for Foster Carers to include retainer fees may be welcome and could help retain Foster Carers as they would have an income that is more predictable. We are unable to provide retainer fees due to external funding models at present. We are only able to provide a fee to Foster Carers when they have a child placed with them. However, if there was a 52-week fee in a national fee structure this would mean we are able to budget for retainer fees. If there is a financial model to include a retainer fee, then there needs to be clear structure and guidance of how and when this would be paid. If financial models include retainer fees, there needs to be full guidance to prevent any unwanted ramifications from introducing retainer fees. Solutions may include only being paid a retainer fee when there are no suitable matches, or whether there is a time limit that some organisations currently do such as a 6 or 12 week payment which would cease after that time had passed.

Do you think there should be a national approach for Continuing Care allowances and fees? Please explain your answer.

There needs to be consistency of practice in regards to Continuing Care across all local authorities that supports the needs and protects rights of children and young people as they progress towards adulthood. Only then could a national approach to fees and allowances be considered fairly. At Aberlour, we believe there is still a lot of work to be done on this.

Value, Recognition and Status

What else could national government do to increase the value, status and recognition of foster carers?

There needs to be a recognition that foster carers play a vital role in society that often comes with a lot of sacrifice and learning. Not only is fostering often more suitable for children and young people in terms of development but fostering is more cost-effective than residential houses. Decisions around children and young people should be driven by what is best for them, regardless of cost, but it is significant to note that their service saves the government a lot of money.

A new approach to fostering needs to champion foster carers in their current roles and support them wholeheartedly. We would welcome the Scottish Government adopting a national charter to be codesigned across the sector. The Fostering Network has long campaigned for this and have their own charter that can be reflected on⁴ We need professionals to respect and give equal status to Foster Carers, for example in Looked After Child reviews and Hearings where they should automatically be granted a 'Relevant Person' status and be involved in the Hearings process from the beginning. Respect and dignity for Foster Carers during inspection should be of the highest priority in guidance.

⁴ <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/Foster%20Carers%27%20Charter%202022%20-%20single%20page.pdf>

National register

What are your views on a national register for foster carers in Scotland?

We support the Promise and believe there should be a conversation around the consideration of a national register for Foster Carers⁵. For child abuse enquiries and safeguarding, yes, a national register has the potential to improve safety. However, in practice the concept of a national register raises concerns and questions about how it would be accessed and shared which adds anxiety for carers. Decisions around who would keep the information and maintain it, ensuring its reliability would all need to be addressed. The Care Inspectorate already holds all this information already and to introduce a register would add another layer of bureaucracy and perhaps confusion. Further, a register will not stop further abuse of children. We already have robust safeguards in place such as references from previous agencies and local authorities as part of assessment and transfer processes. We would question what an introduction of a national register would do that we are not already doing. Currently we at Aberlour are not convinced that there is a need for the introduction of a national register.

What are your views on the potential to linking continuous professional development to a register?

We see that it may be helpful in terms of being able to recognise the professional development of a foster carer, and for seeking placement matching it can be helpful if a foster carer has the training relevant to looking after a child with specific needs. However, the foster care system is rife with a culture that is competitive and untrusting between local authorities, charities and private entities. These issues need to be addressed, and a national register might not help that situation. There needs to be a significant effort to mend these relationships and ensure the competitive nature of foster caring is disregarded. Otherwise, the style of any register may become like a league table which does not serve the children and young people we need to support.

What are your views on a national approach to foster care placement matching?

We believe there could be potential in having a database with basic approval status and locations being held as many organisations regularly share vacancy lists or receive multiple referrals for children. However, the full matching process is critical in getting it right for children and families for it to be successful match and therefore a database would need to ensure that a database is limited and matching needs to be progressed through the relevant agency or authority.

Allegations

Should the Scottish Government update its guidance on managing allegations against foster carers? If yes, please explain what you'd like to see updated or added.

Guidance on managing allegations should of course ensure that children and young people's safety and welfare is central to all decision-making procedures. However, an allegation against foster carers can sometimes come from a child or young person unable to manage and struggling to communicate this due to experiences of trauma. Guidance should be focused on trauma-informed practice so that when issues arise

⁵ https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Promise_v7.pdf

they are dealt with sensitively and support is given to get to the root cause of the allegation whether it be a genuine safety risk or because of other things going on in a child's life. For example, our fostering services have seen that when some children and young people are unhappy with a move away from a previous placement, then serious allegations have been made falsely. If this happens it is important that the child is not mistrusted in the future, but rather there should be psychological and family support provided to the family throughout the investigative process. Investment in good family support to fostering families can ensure that any issues are brought up at an earlier point and may prevent allegations being made if the child feels secure and happy in their placement with some help. It is also important to note that foster carers should be supported through the investigatory process in any way they need. Some carers are scrutinised heavily in every aspect of their life, and it can have damaging effects on their reputation, career, other relationships and so much more. Guidance should reflect a commitment for providers to support them as much as possible.

What more can the Scottish Government do to ensure that allegations against foster carers are dealt with quickly and fairly?

Sharing details and working collaboratively with the foster carers may be a better approach to the investigation than how it is currently dealt with. Right now, carers are very out of the loop and sometimes do not know the allegation that has been made against them with providers unable to share those details with them until the police are involved in the situation. The length of time the allegations process takes can also have a negative impact on the child, who may be removed pending investigation, and the foster carer or fostering family who know very little whilst investigation is pending. Tighter timescales for decisions from Social Work and Police are required. Often there is no further action, but the effects require significant longer-term support.

Wider Issues

Is there anything not covered in the consultation which impacts on fostering that you would like to tell us about, or take action on? E.g. housing, poverty etc.

Throughout this consultation we have highlighted the structural issues within the NHS and police force that has made investigations and annual check-ups lengthier than it should be. The police and the NHS are in very tough situations which we recognise, and we would ask that the government do all they can to support them to improve this situation. The police and the NHS as organisations both have made a commitment to The Promise as corporate parents and as such, there needs to be more prioritisation of foster carers in how they handle their cases. When a foster carer's annual check-up or allegation is not picked up by professionals, there is a chance a child or young person is not getting the placement they desperately need.

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