Role of family support workers in Fostering Positive Family Relationships

A family support worker within the scheme will work with the young person for 3 - 4 hours every week. They will provide direct work with the young person focusing on their social, emotional, educational and physical needs and providing diversionary activities for the young person.

A second family support worker will offer support to the parent providing practical support such as transportation to appointments and assistance with managing the home.

Referral process

A referral will be made directly to the Fostering Positive Family Relationships scheme.

The essential referral criteria is as follows:-

• Young person aged between 12 - 16 years of age
• Concerns regarding parental capacity (i.e. limited appropriate supports)
• Young person displaying challenging behaviours
• At risk of family breakdown
• Young person has not had a care experience.
• The family must be in agreement to referral and motivated to engage with the scheme and the young person needs to be in agreement to a fostering placement.

Linking process

If the young person meets the criteria for Fostering Positive Family Relationships scheme and a potential placement is available, a linking process will commence and a placement planning meeting will occur between all parties to agree the family support plan and the required level of fostering respite.

Review meetings

A review of the service will occur:-

• 6 weeks after the placement occurs
• 3 months thereafter (The young person will be Looked after in accordance to 3.16 respite care (EHSSB Handbook of Policy and Procedures, Children Looked after, Volume 2).

The requirement to have an initial statutory medical applies to respite care situations and this will be reviewed annually. Generally the placement will be for a limited time approximately 12 months but this may be extended where there is an opportunity to effect change for the family and young person.

For further information contact Shauna Garvin
(028) 9041 3678 or shauna.garvin@setrust.hscni.net
Fostering Positive Family Relationships is a new initiative within South Eastern HSC Trust’s Fostering Service. It is a needs led focused service which combines elements of foster care and family support.

This scheme involves families being matched with a foster carer, who will mentor and support the parents and provide regular respite for young people aged between 12 - 16 years. The service aims to provide support that is responsive to families’ individual needs. Although flexible, the service will be regularly reviewed on an ongoing basis as it is anticipated that the overall timescale for intervention is approximately twelve months.

The scheme offers the support of two family support workers, one with the parent and the other working with the young person. The family support worker will work with the young person every week providing diversionary activities. Their role is to support the child living at home with the parent during this scheme. The second family support worker will work with the parent to provide practical assistance based on their specific needs. The service will be focused on specific areas of work and regularly reviewed.

Aim of the scheme
The aim of the scheme is to support families in need and prevent family breakdown. Emphasis is placed on voluntary engagement, partnership working, and flexible, non-judgemental support (Fostering network, 2008).

What’s the difference?
This preventative model of foster care is based on the support care model where Foster carers are helping both the parents and the children at the same time whereas in mainstream fostering, ‘Foster carers look after the child on behalf of the parents’ (BAAF, 2005).

Fostering Positive Family Relationships
It is hoped this scheme will prevent children entering the fostering and residential care systems. It is envisaged that families referred to the service would benefit from a positive support network to enable the child to continue living at home.

Regular respite can include, day, evenings and weekend breaks. This will be established between foster carer, parents and the young person in conjunction with Trust Staff. Such arrangements attempt to be flexible to the family’s needs, although it is envisaged that the scheme will offer one or two overnight stays per month to each young person. The foster carer will also offer emergency respite for the family when required.

Role of foster carers in ‘Fostering Positive Family Relationships’
Foster carers will undertake specialist training to enable them to be a source of support for parents and to improve their parenting skills. The placements will have specific objectives and will help address behavioural issues and/or engage children and young people in a range of activities.

These may include home based activities, such as creative tasks or cooking, or more community based activities, which we hope will continue to be pursued following the conclusion of the service.

The foster carer’s role will be to mediate and help improve the relationship between the young person and their parent. They will have telephone contact and provide face to face advice on parenting issues with the parent. They will play the role of advocate for the family and will monitor any progress made. They will befriend and mentor the parent and help them access local services in the community.