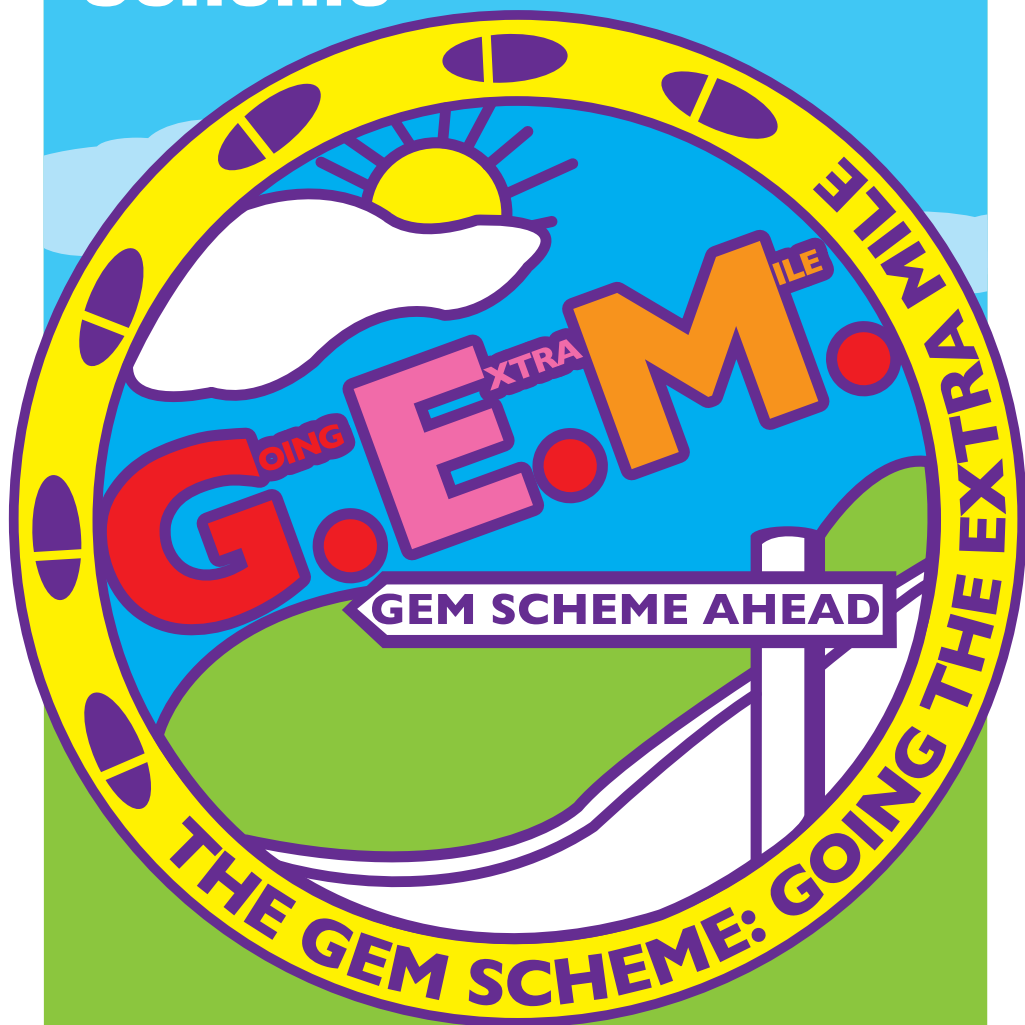


The Gem Scheme



Information for Foster Carers

Introduction

G.E.M stands for “going the extra mile” and reflects the role and contribution of carers who continue to provide care, support and accommodation for young people aged 18-21 years whom they previously fostered. The Scheme started on 1st September 2006.

This Scheme promotes continuity of living arrangements for young people aged 18+ who continue to live with their foster carers/kinship carers by ensuring that appropriate levels of financial support are available to assist them to meet the needs of the young people. Financial support provided is in line with the regional foster care allowances made payable for 16 year olds.

The Scheme recognises and acknowledges the central role of foster carers in providing a supportive context from which young people can achieve positive education, training and employment outcomes and make a successful transition.



Aim of the Scheme

The Scheme seeks to provide continuity and stability of living arrangements for young people coupled with supporting and enabling them to aspire to achieving better outcomes in relation to future training, employment, education and career goals.

How to become part of the scheme?

In order to qualify for the Scheme, the young person who resides with you, must be involved in some aspect of education, training, employment, prevocational and/or volunteering initiatives, which are linked to his/her Pathway Planning career goals. The young person can reside with you on a full time or part time basis depending upon his/her circumstances.

Meeting young people's ongoing needs

The Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) 2002 requires that the needs of each young person leaving care, and how these will be met, will be set out in his/her Needs Assessment and Pathway Plan.



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What is a Needs Assessment?

A Needs Assessment should be undertaken and completed within three months of a young person who is being looked after by a Trust reaching his/her 16th birthday and still requiring to be looked after. The young person's 16 Plus social worker will co-ordinate the assessment and determine who should contribute towards the assessment in consultation with the young person's Personal Adviser.

The Needs Assessment must address the following areas:

- the young person's health and development;
- the young person's education, training or employment;
- the support available to the young person from family, friends, foster carers and other relationships;
- the young person's financial needs;
- the extent to which the young person possesses the practical and other skills necessary for independent living;
- the young person's needs for care, support and accommodation.
- the long-term care/support needs, giving due regard to mental health and disability issues and transitions into adult services.

The Needs Assessment will inform the Pathway Plan.



What is a Pathway Plan?

When a young person reaches the age of 16 years and four months, a Pathway Plan must be in place to address how his/her future needs will be met.

The Pathway Plan sets out the support available to the young person and provides the framework for future work to address the needs identified in the needs assessment. It should remain in place until the young person is at least 21 years of age and beyond if he/she remains in education. Planning for future accommodation and support needs should include a range of options, including continuing to reside with foster carers or remaining within kinship care placements.

Who are the key people involved with young people and what are their roles?

- The 16 Plus social worker has the lead role on behalf of the Trust to ensure that statutory responsibilities to looked after young people and care leavers aged 16 –21+ are carried out. The 16 Plus social worker will coordinate the needs assessment, and Pathway Plan and ensure the regular review of the Pathway Plan/care plan in collaboration with relevant others.



16+

- The Family Placement / Fostering Link worker's main role is to support carers to assist them to continue to meet the needs of those in their care. In addition they should ensure that the foster carer is aware of the Assessment and Pathway planning process prior to the young person reaching the age of 16, and assist the carers to contribute fully to the process so that the resulting Pathway Plan is realistic and achievable. Intensity and frequency of support to carers may vary depending on the needs and circumstances of the carers and the individual young person.

It is important that carers, the social worker and the personal adviser, together with the young person, plan and use the needs assessment, pathway planning and the review process to ensure the best outcomes for the young person.

Financial Support

The needs assessment and Pathway Planning process include a domain to consider any additional costs that might be incurred by virtue of the young person's educational, training and / or employment needs. How such needs will be met and funded should be determined and agreed within this planning and decision making process. It should be noted that the allowance paid to you is a basic allowance to cover the cost of accommodation and living arrangements; it is not intended to be used to cover other costs associated with



education, training or one off costs relating to bedroom refurbishment etc.

The Pathway Plan should state the financial support a young person will receive from the Trust based on his/her individual needs and in keeping with the Trust's financial policy.

Actual payment rates for carers will be determined primarily by the living arrangement of the young person for whom they care, and the young person's personal weekly financial circumstances. It is only where a young person is in receipt of an income of their own that a deduction may be made to the carer's allowance to take account of this.

The Scheme does not provide funding for continued payment of enhanced allowances or contract carer / specialist fees. The needs assessment and Pathway Planning process should identify and determine the basis for continuation of such arrangements. In these circumstances the additional funding must be sought from other Trust funding resources and will be contingent upon resources available.



Support to Carers

The Pathway Plan and review arrangements provide an important forum for involving carers and for ensuring that their support needs are appropriately met. If you are a carer who is continuing to care for looked after children as well as young people aged eighteen and over you will continue to have the support of a Fostering Link worker. If you are a carer who is only caring for young people aged 18 years or over, your support needs will be determined as part of the Pathway Planning process and arrangements will be put in place to ensure that support required is provided to you. Efforts are being made regionally to establish dedicated link worker arrangements for carers who only have young people aged eighteen and over residing with them. Progress on this may take some time to ensure regional coverage. As well as the support that will be provided to you by the Trust you can also access the advice and information service available through Fostering Network as part of your Fostering Network membership.



Contact Details

16 Plus Service

Belfast	South and East Belfast: 02890 912300 North and West Belfast: 02890 325962 02890 301771
Northern	Magherafelt/Cookstown: 02879 301771 Coleraine/Ballymoney: 02870 345210 Antrim/Glengormley: 02894 426102
Southern	Newry/Mourne: 02830 825164 02830 825176 Craigavon/Banbridge: 02838 311450 Armagh/Dungannon: 02887 722234
South Eastern	Down / Lisburn: 02892 627400 Newtownards: 02891 512047 Downpatrick: 02844 513937
Western	Omagh: 028 82243584 Dungiven, Strabane, Londonderry, Limavady: 02871 313381 02866 347625 Enniskillen: 02866 347625

Fostering Link Worker/Family Placement Service

Belfast	02890 655523 / 02890 245000
Northern	Magherafelt: 02879 301700 Ballymena: 02825 635110 Carrickfergus: 02893 315111 Coleraine: 02870 358158
Southern	Newry/Mourne: 02830 832692/3 Craigavon/Banbridge: 02838 337181 Armagh/Dungannon: 02887 752033
South Eastern	Newtownards: 02891 270672 Downpatrick: 02844 613511
Western	Omagh: 02882 835114 Dungiven, Strabane, Londonderry, Limavady: 02871 320951 Enniskillen: 02866 344209



Additional Contacts

Fostering Network

Advice and Information Service
Unit 10
40 Montgomery Road
Belfast
BT6 9HL

T: 02890 705056

EMAIL: ni@fostering.net

VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care)

9-11 Botanic Avenue
Belfast

BT7 1JG

T: 02890 244888

E: info@voypic.org

