


PRESERVATION

# **FOSTER CARE**

**A Report to the Minister of  
Social Welfare**

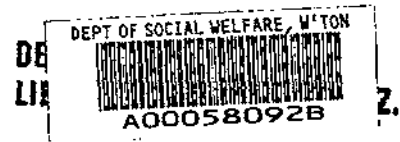
**Advisory Committee on Foster Care**

**AUGUST 1984**



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Advisory Committee  
on Foster Care



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A REPORT TO THE MINISTER OF  
SOCIAL WELFARE

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FOSTER CARE

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## FOREWORD

In August 1983 the Minister of Social Welfare established the Advisory Committee on Foster Care with the following terms of reference:

1. To enquire into and report on the present provisions and practices relating to:
  - (a) recruitment
  - (b) training, and
  - (c) social work supportof foster parents and recommend any necessary or desirable changes.
2. To examine the bases for compensating or remunerating foster parents for the service of care and the form of such compensation taking into account:
  - (a) the developmental, educational, social and recreational needs of the child or young person, and
  - (b) the numbers of children or young persons being cared for within the same home.
3. To consider whether present statutory provisions sufficiently provide for the fostering situation and whether any amendment to present law appears necessary in order to encourage permanent care for the child or young person.
4. To report on any other matters considered to be conducive to the provision of quality foster care.

The membership of the Committee is set out in Appendix I of the report.

Early in its deliberations the Committee called for submissions. Thirty-nine individuals and groups responded (see Appendix II). The submissions were of a high standard and many points were adopted by the Committee and included in the report.

As the Committee's task was to report on foster care in general, we did not give specific consideration to programmes such as Maatua Whangai and Intensive Foster Care, nor to family home fostering or informal fostering situations. As the report provides a general platform for foster care, much of its content and many of its recommendations may be applied to such specific programmes.

The Committee was aware that any changes in reimbursements and allowances would require budgetary provision and if these were to be implemented in 1984 an interim report including recommendations would be necessary before the end of 1983. The Committee therefore concentrated on the preparation of an interim report which was presented to the Minister in December 1983, and is pleased to note that two of the major recommendations which are set out in Chapter 4, Allowances and Reimbursements, have been accepted and announced by the Minister.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L.W. Gandar".

Hon. L.W. Gandar  
Chairman

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is desirable that the range of child care services should be a continuum so that the needs of children and young persons may best be met by the most appropriate service. These services should include supportive, preventive and ongoing work with the natural family as well as provision for the child living away from home where necessary. Foster care is one such provision.
- 1.2 For the past one hundred years foster care has been formally provided in New Zealand as an alternative for children and young persons who, for various reasons, cannot remain with their own parents or families. Webster's Dictionary defines 'foster' as 'to be nourished or trained up'. 'Foster Care' has been defined as 'a child welfare service which provides substitute family care for a planned period for a child when his own family cannot care for him for a temporary or extended period, and when adoption is neither desirable nor possible'.\* Foster parents are those people who provide this care and are considered to be suitable to provide for the 'care, control and upbringing'\*\* of the children placed in their care. Foster care may be for short or long periods of time either with the aim of reuniting the children with their natural families once their situation improves, or to provide permanent alternative care where they are unlikely to return. The objective of child care is the development of a healthy and well adjusted child or young person, and at its best, foster care can offer a child the individual comfort and support of a substitute family at a stressful time of life.
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\* Success and Failure in Foster Care in Auckland, New Zealand. Prasad, R. 1975, p.1

\*\* Children and Young Persons Act, 1974, Section 67(i).

- 1.3 Up until the early 1900's children who could not remain in their own homes were largely cared for in institutions. Some children were boarded out from these institutions to private homes. From the 1920's social policy in New Zealand has favoured the placement of children in foster homes rather than institutions, and in recent years approximately 40 percent of all children and young persons in the care of the Department of Social Welfare have been provided for in foster homes.\* A number of voluntary agencies are also involved in placing children in foster care, and an unknown number of children are informally fostered outside the auspices of any agency.
- 1.4 There has been a gradual awareness that fostering is a vital service that needs to be delivered effectively if the children for whom it caters are to gain maximum benefit. Thus, in recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the foster care service. The awareness of changes in practice reported in overseas literature, the emergence of the New Zealand Foster Care Federation, rising standards of some foster care agencies, and increasing attention being paid to foster care by the Department of Social Welfare have all provided a challenge to current practices. A much greater awareness of the need for a higher standard of foster care practice has now emerged.
- 1.5 In its 1983 Annual Report, the Department of Social Welfare states that the  
"successful provision of foster care is not easy. Children and young persons in need of such care often become disturbed in their living circumstances before being placed in the care of the department... This demands a great deal of both foster parents and other members of the foster family. Increasingly it is recognised that in offering this kind of help to a child or young person foster parents themselves require some training and continuing support if placements are to succeed".

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\* Report of the Department of Social Welfare for the Year Ended 31 March 1983.

- 1.6 Foster care needs to be seen both by social work agencies and the general community as a positive option of alternative care. Too frequently the specialized task of foster parenting is misunderstood, underestimated and undervalued, possibly because the system is invisible and the homes inconspicuous. To be successful, foster care practice must have a sound base in legislation which recognises the respective rights and needs of
- . the child
  - . the foster parents
  - . the natural parents.

Wide recruitment, careful selection, appropriate preparation and ongoing social work and community support services are essential to ensure effectiveness of foster care, and the importance of an adequate foster care allowance and reimbursement system for expenses must not be overlooked.



## 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR FOSTER CARE

"The ideal for the individual child is to be raised in his own loving, healthy and competent family devoted to securing for its children satisfaction and status in all desirable spheres of life. To have to seek anything approaching the ideal in another family too easily becomes a reproach to the family of origin, a reproach to the child because special arrangements call for a special effort on his behalf and also a reproach to the alternative family whose motivation may not be understood and who may be relieving parents of their obligations or denying them certain fulfilments\*\*

- 2.1 The Committee believed that its first responsibility was to identify a set of principles to which a code of practice for foster care should conform. We first identified those principles which relate to all children (2.3). The second group of principles (2.4) relate to all children in care of whatever kind. Finally we identified those additional principles which apply particularly to children in foster care (2.5). It should be noted that the principles which apply to all children and children in care apply also to children in foster care.
- 2.2 Throughout its deliberations, the Committee endeavoured to keep these principles foremost in mind.
- 2.3 Principles Applying to all Children
  - . All children have a right to a secure place in a caring, nurturing situation, preferably within a family unit.
  - . All children need to feel secure and to belong, to have an acknowledged past as well as a reasonably predictable future in order to develop and preserve a sense of identity both as an individual and as part of a wider cultural group.

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\* Cooper, J.D. Patterns of Family Placement National Children's Bureau, London, 1978.

2.4 Principles Applying to Children in Care including Children in Foster Care

- . The first consideration in the placement or continuing placement of a child in care whether by the placement agency, or where applicable, the court, shall be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
- . Any agency having children and young persons in its care must give them highest priority in their allocation of services and other resources.
- . Every child in care shall have a plan which is to be reviewed regularly.
- . The natural relationship between the child and his or her natural family should be actively maintained unless a decision is made in the process of planning that this is inadvisable.
- . Children in care form new relationships and have relationships with previous care-givers (including siblings and natural parents) which are important to them. When any move takes place, whether planned or not, due care must be given to preserving their relationships.
- . Children in care are entitled to have kept for, and available to them, a record of important personal events in their lives.
- . A complete health record shall be compiled and maintained for the child in care and be available to the care-giver.
- . The caregivers, the natural parents and where appropriate, the child, should be consulted when any change to the child's situation is considered.

2.5 Additional Principles Applying to Children in Foster Care

- . New Zealand is a multicultural society and in recognising this the maintenance of a child's cultural, ethnic and/or tribal background should be carefully considered in fostering practice.
- . Pre-placement preparation and ongoing training opportunities shall be available for all foster parents.
- . Foster parents are entitled to support in caring for a child.
- . Foster parents are entitled to comprehensive information about their foster child.
- . When any decision about permanency, be it fostering or adoption, is made, the relationship between the foster parents, the child and the natural parents must be carefully evaluated.
- . Caring for a child for a significant period of time establishes the right for foster parents to be heard in legal proceedings affecting that foster child.
- . The relationship between the agency and foster parent is to be one of partnership.
- . Children in foster care are entitled to have social workers who are adequately prepared and will receive ongoing training.
- . The importance and complexity of the social work involved in foster care must be recognised in the caseload levels carried by social workers.
- . The interests of the children are best served by the continuity of their relationship with the same social workers on a long-term basis.

3. THE NATURAL PARENT, FOSTER PARENT AND THE SOCIAL WORKER

- 3.1 The areas involved in the foster care process in this report have been presented in chronological order rather than in order of priority. For example, recruitment has been discussed before pre-placement preparation and social work support as there can be neither preparation nor support until foster parents have been recruited.
- 3.2 The Committee maintains that for foster care to be successful for a child, and for placement breakdown to be minimised, the placement must be well supported by adequately trained social workers and there must be a range of resources available to foster parents that would meet their emotional and physical needs and enable them to understand and cope with the needs of the foster child and his or her natural family.
- 3.3 A prerequisite, therefore, for an effective programme of recruitment of and pre-placement preparation for foster parents is to have well trained and well supervised social workers. In this sense social work training chronologically precedes recruitment of and pre-placement preparation for foster parents.

Natural Parents

- 3.4 In the majority of cases the goal for the child in foster care is to ultimately return to his or her parents. It is therefore important that, despite any tensions involved, children keep in contact with their own parents and that the natural parents receive the help they need to achieve the return home of their children.
- 3.5 The fostering situation therefore involves at least three major parties in addition to the child - the natural parents, the foster parents and the social work agency which has made the placement. Each of these parties will have its own view about what is in the best interests of the child and a successful foster placement is most likely to occur when these differing views are reconciled in a common plan which has the agreement of all parties.

- 3.6 There is in effect a fourth party to the fostering situation, and that is the community in general. This can be expressed in two ways. First, through the co-operation and understanding of individuals, community groups and professionals in understanding the situation of a fostered child and secondly, in the extent to which those involved in fostering are accountable to the community as a whole.

### Training of Social Workers

- 3.7 "There is a strange ethos which surrounds social work regarding the use of unqualified personnel. Parents wouldn't be happy to place their child in a school with unqualified teachers or a hospital with unqualified nurses and yet we expect them to be happy with unqualified social workers, residential workers and foster parents."\*
- 3.8 While better selection and training of foster parents is of vital importance in order to provide them with the necessary skills, knowledge and support, it is first essential to start with social workers who have adequate skills, knowledge and professional support.
- 3.9 It is crucial to the foster care task that the standard of training for social workers be raised and that the social work involved in foster care be performed by skilled and knowledgeable social workers and overseen by adequately prepared supervisors.
- 3.10 Social workers have the responsibility of enhancing the lives of the foster child, foster family and the natural family and therefore need to undertake their role in a highly skilled professional manner. Training for social workers in all aspects of foster care appears to be given a low priority. In many Social Welfare District Offices where social workers have responsibilities for foster care, along with other responsibilities, the lack of training in foster care work is a serious omission.

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\* A Future for Foster Care A Report Prepared as a Memorandum to the Social Services Committee submitted by the National Foster Care Association. London, December 1982, p24.

3.11 At present, training for social workers in foster care work is by way of supervision through senior social workers. There are occasional courses held at major institutions at a regional level on specific aspects of foster care, but in general there are no specific induction courses into the work involved in the foster care field.

#### Recommendations

3.12 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that all social workers have a recognised social work qualification;
- (ii) that all social workers and social work supervisors involved in the field of foster care receive specific training in foster care;
- (iii) that the Social Work Training Council be asked to promote appropriate training programmes in foster care; and
- (iv) that urgency be given to the above recommendations.

#### Recruitment of Foster Parents

3.13 Recruitment methods are important but their effectiveness depends in the first instance on the level of public awareness of the circumstances and needs of children and young persons in care. There is a general lack of knowledge in the community about the needs of children who are separated from their parents and of the various reasons for which a child may be brought into care. Some people do not appreciate the distinction between adoption and fostering and are confused about the rights and responsibilities of foster parents and foster children, of natural parents and of organisations that act in "loco parentis". Steps must be taken to educate the public so that recruitment campaigns may be presented against an informed and sympathetic background.

- 3.14 The social status of the role of foster parenting is another aspect allied to recruitment. Once the true value of fostering is recognised by agencies and the community and fostering is considered to be a worthwhile service, it is likely that it would appeal to more people. It is hoped that the recommendations in this report would improve the acceptance of the nature and quality of the service that foster parents provide.
- 3.15 The submissions emphasised the continuing need for foster homes, particularly for the older child or young person. A variety of different methods are used to recruit foster parents and these range from direct presentations by social workers and foster parents to select individuals or groups, to personalised newspaper advertisements and "word of mouth" recruitment. Although various recruitment means are used in New Zealand, there is little information on their effectiveness.
- 3.16 There is some evidence in foster care literature and in practice experience that recruitment of foster parents should be an ongoing process. On-going recruitment related to the personal needs of the child for whom placement is sought would appear to be the most appropriate method of recruitment. The development of the Maatua Whangai programme is a good example of a specific needs-related scheme. The important additional placement resources of the Maori family and community are used in a culturally appropriate way in the best interests of Maori children who have come to notice in some way. The Intensive Foster Care Scheme which caters for severely disturbed children who could not settle in normal fostering situations and would normally be placed in institutions is another example. The clearer identification of the particular needs of specific groups such as adolescents, abused children, and disabled children, makes needs - related recruitment essential.
- 3.17 The basic aim of recruitment and training must first be to encourage a commitment to continuity of care. Emphasis should be placed on this aspect to ensure that the child receives stability of care, thus recognising that the needs of the child are of paramount importance. If recruitment and training are based on this commitment, the agency for its part could concentrate on social work support and remuneration.

- 3.18 At present, recruitment campaigns tend to be more successful in attracting applicants from the skilled and semi-skilled socio-economic groups and have little impact on those in other groups. Additional methods of recruitment must be devised to make fostering a more attractive proposition to those in all socio-economic and cultural groups, so that the best possible substitute care placement option is available to an individual child or young person.
- 3.19 A number of submissions have emphasised the need for professional fostering for specific groups, particularly for handicapped children and young persons and ethnic minorities in view of the special difficulties of recruitment. For example, there is a noticeable absence of services for difficult adolescents other than in an institutional or family home (see 4.1) setting. The Committee is aware of alternative overseas programmes in this area, such as those prepared by the Child Welfare League of America, the British Association of Adoption and Fostering Agencies and the State College of Pennsylvania, and maintains that urgent consideration should be given to investigating their appropriateness for the New Zealand situation.

#### Recommendations

3.20 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that more attention be given by agencies to recruitment of foster parents particularly suited to the needs of specific groups of children and young persons;
- (ii) that the feasibility of a professional salaried foster care scheme to meet the needs of children and young persons in care be examined;
- (iii) that research be commissioned urgently into:
  - (a) steps that should be taken to educate the public so that recruitment campaigns may be presented against an informed and sympathetic background;
  - (b) methods of recruitment and their effectiveness; and
  - (c) effectiveness of incentives for recruitment.



### Pre-Placement Preparation for Foster Parents

- 3.21 There has been a growing awareness over the last ten years that the foster care task is more complex than had previously been recognised and that there are crucial differences between parenting one's natural children and parenting someone else's children. With this awareness it has become increasingly obvious that preparation for foster parenting is necessary. Christine Reeves, Director of the National Foster Care Association of Great Britain, puts it well:

"If we accept the premise that foster care has changed and is continuing to change in its demands and its very nature, then we must look at the people involved in the task with a more enquiring and skilled eye. It can no longer be considered that all foster parents need is a large heart and matching sized house. Much more is needed, including more understanding of the circumstances surrounding admission to care and of the consequent traumas and behaviour problems which might ensue. A greater knowledge is required about how other agencies can be used and how foster parents can obtain advice and support from them in the interests of children. Above all, the foster parents are the full-time partners of this caring team: as such they must know what goals other partners are working towards, so that the best can be given to any child in care."\*

- 3.22 Research has shown that pre-placement preparation and on-going training for foster parents have a decisive impact on all placement outcomes. A study conducted by Boyd and Remy concludes that "training before placement appeared to prepare parents to better handle environmental stress and high risk foster children. It also appeared to compensate for a lack of foster care experience. The results of the analysis also suggest that foster-parent

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\* "Foster care : a partnership of skill" C. Reeves in New Developments in Foster Care and Adoption J. Tresiolitis (Ed) England 1980.

experience was indeed a significant factor in the determination of placement outcomes. To the extent that training helps foster parents stay in the system long enough to gain experience, the role of training becomes even more important.\* \*

- 3.23 Preparation and on-going training are very much related to the priority the agency gives to its fostering service in relation to the staffing resources and available finance.
- 3.24 There have been a considerable number of studies on pre-placement preparation courses and on-going training schemes, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. These have included mandatory, initial sessions for foster parent applicants which were given by the agency, intensive university courses and informal discussion groups for current foster parents held over a long period of time. It appears that many foster parents are willing to participate and that programmes aimed particularly at clarifying the role of foster parent in relation to foster child, agency and natural parent have been beneficial to both social workers and foster parents.\*\*
- 3.25 The Committee's attention has been drawn to the recent production of a training pack, 'A Journey into Foster Care' which was prepared by R. Prasad for the New Zealand Foster Care Federation. The pack, which has modules for foster-care workers and foster parents, presents a New Zealand perspective for the training of social workers and foster parents in the foster care field.
- 3.26 Preparation for foster care sets the tone for the relationship between the foster family, natural family and agency and each has an active and important role in the planning and presentation of preparation and training sessions.

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\* "Is Foster-Parent Training Worthwhile?"  
L.H. Boyd, Jr. and L.L. Remy in Social Service Review, June 1978, No. 2, p290.

\*\* Prosser, H. Perspectives in Foster Care NFER Publishing Company, England, 1978.

- 3.27 If we are to expect foster parents to fulfil their role and involve themselves objectively and continuously in planned foster care, there should be opportunities for preparation and continuing education. Training of foster parents is essential in order to upgrade the quality of foster care and to prepare foster parents for the types of problems they will encounter.

#### Recommendations

- 3.28 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that a small representative working party be established to set standards for training and pre-placement preparation for foster parents; and
- (ii) that agencies recruiting foster parents be encouraged to adhere to the standards set.

#### Social Work Support

- 3.29 The Committee defines social work support as the amount, manner and nature of the services provided by social workers to foster children, foster parents, natural families and other significant parties.
- 3.30 "Most (foster home) breakdowns are caused by inadequate preparation or lack of support after placement or a combination of both."\* The researched experiences of children in care indicates that adequate social work support is often missing. The Committee believes that there must be strong social work support for foster parents, foster children and the natural parents, and this support should continue to be available after termination of the placement. A number of submissions received reflected the difficult nature of social work in foster care and the feeling of social workers that their agencies have insufficient resources to provide good social work support.

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\* "No such thing as instant fostering" in Community Care, 2 July 1981. In Submission to Advisory Committee on Foster Care, D. Burrows, October 1983.

3.31 In its submission, the New Zealand Foster Care Federation stated:

"We find little consistency, in this country, within or outside the DSW, in social workers' perception of their role in foster care. There is still a wide variation in practice from one area to another and from one social worker to another. In view of the high turnover of social workers in foster care, this lack of professional consensus as to how a social worker should support and service foster placements is, we suspect, an important factor in placement breakdown".

Other submissions commented that some foster parents are dissatisfied with their relationship with social workers. Social workers are sometimes accused of regarding foster parents more as clients than as colleagues and as a result foster parents feel they are not as involved as they would like to be. In other instances social workers may be perceived as being solely child-centred, and resentment can arise if the foster family and/or natural family feel that the social workers are uncaring about their needs.

3.32 A team approach between social workers and foster parents is important. When foster care is approached in this way social workers are no longer seen as "the experts"; instead there is a mutual recognition of the skills knowledge and abilities of both social workers and foster parents. Thus social workers can learn from foster parents in some areas and foster parents from social workers in other areas. Because of the complex nature of social work support in foster care, all information that is available must be used to minimize disruption and distress to children and families. When all parties are involved in the decision-making processes and intensive services are available, children can be settled back into their own homes. Where this is not possible well-informed decisions can be made about alternative child placement.

3.33 The standard of social work support is related to the amount and quality of training agency personnel have received and the number of staff available versus the number of children and young persons on the caseload. Existing social work staffing levels do not always allow time to provide the necessary support to foster families, foster children and

natural families, and lack of experience in some social workers means that their efforts do not achieve maximum results. The Committee maintains that the total number of children and young persons on any caseload must reflect the complexity of social work support in foster care and recognise that a foster care situation comprises three crucial parties, not simply one child in care. Caseloads should continue to be reviewed and a target figure for total caseloads should be 20 to 25 children or young persons per social worker.

- 3.34 Given the difficult nature of social work in foster care, the difficulties faced by social work agencies in providing adequate resources for social work support and the lack of expertise amongst practitioners, the Committee concludes that there are a number of practitioner's in foster care who are unable to provide adequate social work support.
- 3.35 Social work support provided for all parties in foster care should be aimed at ensuring a prompt decisive action either to maintain children in their own homes, or to place them in foster care until changes in their situations allow them to return home, or if this is not possible, to place them permanently in a substitute home.

#### Recommendations

3.36 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that agencies be encouraged to take a team approach to foster care which mutually recognises the skills knowledge and abilities of both social workers and foster parents; and
- (ii) that caseloads continue to be reviewed and that a target figure for total caseloads be 20 - 25 children or young persons per social worker.

#### 4. ALLOWANCES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

- 4.1 The Committee has adopted, as the basis for this section of the report, a paper prepared by the Working Party on Foster Board Rates and Allowances which was prepared within the Department of Social Welfare during 1981 and 1982. Previous to this, a separate exercise had been completed to look at the financial support for foster care in a "family home" - i.e. where fostering is carried out in a home owned by the Department. This part of the report therefore deals only with the financial support where fostering is carried out in the home of the foster parents. It is expected however, that those parts of the financial arrangements which are applicable to both types of fostering - i.e. the clothing allowances, and the fostercare allowance for older age children, will also apply to family homes.
- 4.2 The Committee maintains that children in foster care should be in an equal position to other children in the community and considers that the board payment should be set at a level that would reimburse foster parents for the actual and total expenditure involved. In recognition of the fact that within the community expenditure on children of the same age varies considerably, assistance to foster parents must contain an element of flexibility.

#### Recommendation

- 4.3 The Committee thus recommends that assistance to foster parents comprise three components:
- (i) fostercare allowance;
  - (ii) clothing allowance and school uniform grant; and
  - (iii) reimbursement for 'actual and reasonable' expenses.

Each of these areas will be discussed in full below.

### Fostercare Allowance

- 4.4 The Committee has moved away from the 'board payment' concept, which is essentially a carry-over from the former 'boarding-out' system, and recommends a comprehensive 'fostercare allowance' which includes the present incidentals allowance and pocket money, and contains elements of the following items:

- food
- consumable goods (soap, toilet paper, tissues, shoe polish, tooth paste, etc.)
- fuel (light, heat, cooking)
- transport
- housing, furniture and fittings
- entertainment, cultural activities

The Committee believes that pocket money should be incorporated in the fostercare allowance for foster parents to allocate at their discretion, as pocket money rates set by the Department for foster children are often not in keeping with the rates foster parents are able or consider appropriate to pay to their own children, and this could give rise to some family contention. In addition, the way parents choose to allocate pocket money and the items it is expected to cover varies considerably between families and it is considered that foster parents should be able to allocate pocket money to foster children on the same basis as to their own children. Foster parents should, however, be provided with some guidelines for its allocation. Pocket money for children in family homes should continue to be paid as in the past and be increased proportionately in line with increases in the fostercare allowance.

### Higher Fostercare Allowance

- 4.5 The Committee examined the existing policy for payment of higher board rates (or higher fostercare allowance) in cases of special difficulty. It estimates that between 10% and 20% of children in foster care fall into this category. The decision for payment of a higher fostercare allowance should be made as close as possible to the foster care situation.

## Recommendations

### 4.6 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that a method of assessment be devised to determine the higher rate of payment;
- (ii) that eligibility for a higher fostercare allowance be considered at the planning meeting when a child or young person comes into care;
- (iii) that the higher fostercare allowance assessment form be considered jointly by the social worker and foster parent; and
- (iv) that, in relation to the Department of Social Welfare, the higher fostercare allowance continue to be determined at Head Office of the Department but in time be delegated to district offices, and that voluntary agencies be encouraged to take a similarly flexible approach to the payment of higher fostercare allowance.

### Cost of Caring for a Foster Child

- 4.7 In line with the principle that children in foster care should be in an equal position to other children in the community, it was decided that, as a starting point, there should be some examination of the costs involved in keeping an average child, at various ages, in the community.
- 4.8 Investigation revealed that there was little data available on the cost of keeping children of different ages in New Zealand.
- 4.9 The Management Services Division of the State Services Commission produced a report in 1975, proposing a strictly budget-based system of board rates. This report attempted to set down and cost every item, including items such as medical fees and educational expenses which are currently reimbursed to foster parents, required to keep children of various ages. The Committee considered this approach both too complex and too inflexible.
- 4.10 The New Zealand Department of Statistics Annual Household Survey Report breaks down average household expenditure by family types (i.e., couple, couple with one child, etc.) but the sample is too small to distinguish between expenditure and families with children of different ages.



- 4.11 Household equivalence scales which were prepared for New Zealand established the relative net income needed so that families of different composition could achieve an equal standard of living, but again did not distinguish between families with children of different ages.
- 4.12 The Committee examined the equivalence scales for children of different ages which were prepared by a United Kingdom economist, L. McClements\* based on United Kingdom household expenditure data. These scales set out expenditure on children of different ages as a proportion of the expenditure of a married couple, which was assigned the value of '1.00'. (A copy of the equivalence scales and an explanation of the way in which they operate are provided in Appendix III (1).) In the absence of adequate New Zealand-based data, the Committee applied McClements' equivalence scales to the 1 April 1982 - 31 March 1983 New Zealand average household expenditure figures (provided in Appendix III(2)) for a couple with two children, which were then updated to 31 June 1983 by applying the appropriate Consumer Price Index figure, (table provided in Appendix III(3)) to produce an estimate of the cost of keeping children of different ages in New Zealand.
- 4.13 The Committee made a "best fit" selection as categories of expenditure recorded by the Household Survey Report and McClements' equivalence scales did not correspond exactly with the elements of the fostercare allowance set out in paragraph 4.4. (A more detailed explanation is provided in Appendix III(4)).
- 4.14 The Committee recommends a formula, derived from McClements' equivalences, based on a percentage of selected items of the Household Expenditure Survey for establishing the cost of caring for a child to be met by the foster care allowance. As the Committee has taken as its base a couple with two children rather than a couple without children the formula was reduced accordingly. (The creation of commodity equivalences for a base household type comprising two adults and two children is set out in Appendix III(5)). These equivalences were then applied to the Household Survey data.

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\* The Economics of Social Security McClements, L.  
London 1978, p 102.

- 4.15 A comparison of the recommended rates arrived at by this formula and the actual rate currently paid by the Department of Social Welfare are set out in the table below (Appendix III(6) contains further details.)

Comparison of Recommended Fostercare Allowance with Actual Rate for Board/Incidentals Allowance/Pocket Money as at July 1983

Age	Actual Rate Board/Incidentals/ Pocket Money	Recommended Fostercare Allowance (Board/ Incidental/Pocket Money
0-4	\$32.35	\$35.29
5-9	\$33.15 - \$33.75	\$43.00
10-13	\$41.05 - \$41.70	\$49.04
14+	\$44.65	\$54.70

- 4.16 The proposed fostercare allowance would provide increases in the current weekly board rate of \$2.94 for the 0-4 age group, \$9.25 for the 5-9 age group, \$7.34 for the 10-13 age group and \$10.05 for the 14+ age group.

Recommendations

- 4.17 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that the fostercare allowance be established according to the formula prepared by the Committee; and
- (ii) that the current weekly board rates be increased to \$35.29 for the 0-4 age group; \$43.00 for the 5-9 age group; \$49.04 for the 10-13 age group; and \$54.70 for the 14+ age group.

Cost of Proposed Changes

The Committee has calculated the cost of the increases. The additional annual cost of the increases would be \$1.14 million. (Details are provided in Appendix III (7).)

## Review of Fostercare Allowance

### Recommendations

- 4.18 In order to maintain the fostercare allowance at a level which makes reasonable provision for the cost of keeping a child, it is recommended:
- (i) that the basis for the allowance be reviewed every 5 years using the most appropriate data available. (In this regard it is suggested that the Department of Statistics be approached to see whether they can produce any further relevant data from the Household Expenditure Survey, such as a breakdown of average household expenditure for children of different ages.)
  - (ii) that the fostercare allowance be increased annually in accordance with the movements in the Consumers Price Index (all groups).

### Method of Payment

#### Recommendation

- 4.19 As the Committee found problems involved with the Department's current voucher system of payment, it is recommended that payment of the fostercare allowance be made fortnightly by direct credit to the foster parents' bank account and clothing allowance payments quarterly by direct credit, as soon as this can be arranged through the computer.

### Information for Foster Parents

- 4.20 Foster parents are entitled to know the details of the payments they receive.

#### Recommendation

- 4.21 The Committee recommends that foster parents be kept fully informed as to what payments they are receiving and of any changes relating to these payments.

Clothing Allowance and School Uniform Grant

- 4.22 The Department of Social Welfare has the responsibility to outfit a child at or before his or her placement in a foster home, and a standard clothing allowance is paid four times a year to maintain the outfit. A special grant for school uniforms is paid when a child begins at intermediate or secondary school and a new uniform is required. There is provision for further assistance of up to an additional quarter's payment and one quarterly grant may also be paid in advance to cope with a specific problem, e.g. rapid growth of a foster child.
- 4.23 The Committee understands that the school uniform grant is not expected to cover the full cost of the uniform. Part of the clothing allowance is also to be used as the child does not require as much other clothing once a uniform is worn at school.
- 4.24 Where there is good and sufficient reason, the old order system may be used as an alternative to the clothing allowance by agreement between the foster parent, the social worker and the supervising social worker.
- 4.25 Clothing required for cultural and recreational activities, including special footwear, is not included in the standard clothing allowance. Once authority for the purchase is obtained, supplementary payment is made. Other major items not covered in the clothing grant may be obtained by presenting a Government Stores Order to the shopkeeper providing the goods.
- 4.26 The Committee compared the Department's clothing grant with the clothing and footwear item of the updated New Zealand Household Survey Report modified by the appropriate equivalences in a similar manner to that used in calculating the foster care allowance (see Appendix III(8)).
- 4.27 The Department of Social Welfare clothing grant is considerably higher than the comparable updated Household Survey rate as it is more costly for foster parents to clothe their foster children than their natural children. For instance, on coming into care children often grow rapidly and soon grow out of their clothes; disturbed children are often harder on clothes than other children; there seldom are clothes that can be handed down from an older child to a foster child; and foster parents

are not expected to sew and mend to the same extent for foster children as for their own children. For these reasons it is essential that the clothing allowance be considerably higher than the sum parents would be expected to spend on clothing their natural children.

#### Recommendations

4.28 Based on the above evidence, the Committee recommends:

- (i) that the clothing grant and school uniform allowance remain unchanged as they are both adequate and flexible; and
- (ii) that the current practice of updating the rates by the Consumer Price Index (clothing) each year be maintained.

#### Reimbursement for 'actual and reasonable' expenses

4.29 Because the proposed foster care allowance would recognise age as the only factor for varying the rate of payment there must be some flexible component of the assistance 'package' for foster parents which recognises that there are some foster children who incur additional expenditure (e.g., orthodontic treatment, music lessons); that there are occasions when foster children require additional expenditure (e.g., a school excursion) and that there are foster families where the normal family activities incur additional expenditure for the foster child (e.g., tramping equipment).

4.30 The Director-General of the Department of Social Welfare, or under delegated authority, the local Director, can approve the supply of necessary items that are not expected to be met by the foster care allowance and clothing allowance which foster parents receive. Items such as sport, cultural and recreational equipment, fees to attend approved camps, fees for tuition in music and dancing, and school and university examination fees may be approved by the Department for foster children.

### Recommendations

#### 4.31 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that there be an adequate list which sets out those expenses which are to be met from the fostercare allowance and clothing allowance and that the list be constantly reviewed and updated;
- (ii) that the delegation level for authority to approve expenditure on extraordinary items be subject to review.

### Implementation of Recommendations

4.32 As noted earlier in the report this chapter was forwarded to the Minister of Social Welfare as an interim report in December 1983. The Committee is pleased to note that a number of its recommendations have been accepted to date.

#### 4.33 The Minister announced on 18 May 1984:

- (i) that the fostercare allowance will replace the former board rate/pocket money/incidentals payment;
- (ii) that weekly payments for foster children will be increased to \$35 for the 0-4 age group; \$43 for the 5-9 age group; \$49 for the 10-13 age group and \$55 for the 14+ age group.

5. STATUTORY PROVISIONS FOR FOSTER CARE

- 5.1 The Committee is aware that the Children and Young Persons Act 1974 is currently under review, and maintains that to be successful, foster care practice must have a sound base in legislation to provide for the child, the foster parents and the natural parents.

A Mediation Process for Children in Care

- 5.2 There should be a clear and well publicised procedure by which foster parents, children, natural parents and relatives can make representation if they are not satisfied with the plan for a child in care, or disagree with the decisions of an agency relating to a child. The Committee proposes an independent mediation process to investigate complaints and mediate on matters in dispute relating to treatment or care plans for children in the care of both the Department of Social Welfare and voluntary foster care agencies. Only those cases remaining unresolved following mediation would appear before the court.

Recommendation

- 5.3 The Committee recommends that provision be made for an independent mediation process for children and young persons in care.

One Statute

- 5.4 The Committee considers that there should be one statute to provide for:
- (a) children and young persons having severe difficulties in their home situation and for whom the provision of preventive and supportive services should be given highest priority;
  - (b) those children and young persons who need some level of care until they are fully independent, or need to be removed from a position of risk;
  - (c) children and young persons who are abused and need protection and whose parents may need help so that they may be capable of caring for their children; and
  - (d) offending behaviour that requires family, community and judicial responses.

- 5.5 The Committee acknowledges that foster care is a secondary service; the primary service must be to help children stay in their own homes. The Committee urges the Minister not to lose sight of the fact that the primary focus should be ensuring that children do not have to leave home, and if they do have to leave home, that maximum endeavours are made to get children back to their own homes.
- 5.6 Many children could remain in their own homes if supportive services were provided for the family. Emphasis should be placed on the provision of preventive and supportive services with less reliance on entry of children and young persons to care. The aim should be to deal with as many matters as possible away from the courts and to ensure that fewer children need to appear before the courts by promoting preventive and supportive services and family care and control. It is essential that adequate resources be made available to provide these preventive and supportive services. Once a child enters care, however, it is of vital importance that a quality service be provided.

#### Recommendations

5.7 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that there be one statute to provide for children and young persons requiring care, protection and control;
- (ii) that emphasis be placed on the provision of preventive and supportive services; and
- (iii) that adequate resources be made available to provide these services.

#### One Court

- 5.8 At present, children and young persons requiring care, protection and control appear before the Children and Young Persons Court. There are many occasions when parents feel stigmatised and confused by a court system they do not understand. Police involvement in the Children and Young Persons Court affects the layout of the court and the method of hearing and often the hearing is an adversary one.



This can be contrasted with the Family Court system which has a more supportive and conciliatory atmosphere. \*

- 5.9 Some bodies argue that children and young persons in need of care or protection should be dealt with within a family mediation model and those who offend within the criminal justice model which would ultimately involve judicial "due process" in the Children and Young Persons Court. The Committee argues, however, that legislating for differential treatment would allow subjective judgements when categorising the child to determine under which process he or she should be dealt with, as often cases are not clear cut and actions may well be symptomatic of other problems. Children and young persons requiring care, protection and control, should be dealt with by one court with a philosophical approach similar to that of the Family Court with judges specialising in children and young persons work and with a balance of mediation and "due process". Such a court would have an appropriate structure to deal with child care issues with sensitivity and would provide a setting in which children themselves could be heard or better represented. This specialist court could then also be used to hear disputes rather than these being heard in the more formal and expensive High Court setting.
- 5.10 The physical conditions in which children and parents wait for court hearings are viewed with concern. The Committee believes that the facilities and waiting areas of the court should be examined with a view to upgrading existing conditions. Many of the problems of the current court system would be overcome if a system which avoids the calling of all cases for the day at 10 o'clock in the morning was introduced. Overcrowding in foyers and waiting areas and waiting for many hours for a case to be heard would be largely eliminated. The Committee notes with interest an experiment in Otahuhu of evening court appointments and believes that it should be extended to other areas. Evening appointments would avoid working parents losing pay while attending their children's court hearings. The need for some

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\* National Advisory Committee on the Prevention of Child Abuse. Summary of proposals submitted to the Minister of Social Welfare covering the situation of the ill-treated child. 1983, p.3

division of the Court's day and for evening appointments has been brought to the attention of the Courts many times, but the Committee does not accept that changes cannot be made in this direction.

#### Recommendations

##### 5.11 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that there be a single court before which all children and young persons requiring care, protection and control would appear;
- (ii) that such a court adopt a philosophical approach similar to that of the Family Court with judges specialising in children and young persons work and with a balance of mediation and "due process",
- (iii) that in cases where mediation has failed disputes be heard by this court;
- (iv) that the facilities and waiting areas of the court be urgently examined with a view to upgrading existing conditions;
- (v) that a system which avoids the calling of a full day's cases at 10 a.m. be immediately introduced; and
- (vi) that evening appointments be available where necessary.

#### Mandatory Representation for Children

5.12 Frequently neglected and abused children are in a situation where they are on their own and are particularly vulnerable without an independent person to protect their rights. Although children themselves are able to bring a wardship application if dissatisfied with their care, a considerable amount of adult support and assistance would be necessary to do this under the present High Court system.

5.13 The Committee maintains that whenever questions arise about the care or custody of a child or young person which might lead to judicial proceedings, it should be mandatory that competent, independent representation be appointed at public cost for the child concerned. At present this is at the discretion of the Court.

Recommendation

- 5.14 The Committee recommends that whenever questions arise about the care or custody of a child or young person which might lead to judicial proceedings, it should be mandatory that competent, independent representation be appointed at public cost for the child concerned.

Planning for Children in Care

- 5.15 Every child has a right to a family of his or her own. Rowe and Lambert \* state that "Preferably, the family should be the one into which the child is born since it is here that his need for committed affection, as well as for security and understanding, is most likely to be met. If a child's parents are unwilling or unable, even with help, to provide for his basic emotional and material needs, society must try to provide satisfactory alternative care, either as an emergency while his own family is helped back to adequate functioning or as a permanent substitute."
- 5.16 There is potential for drift in foster care. Unless a permanent arrangement is made either to return the child to the natural parents or to establish alternative substitute care, a child may well remain in an unsatisfactory situation because his or her future has not been well-planned. The urgency of sound planning for children in care is such that it should be given absolute priority. The success or failure of any placement depends on plans being formulated, written down and regularly reviewed. The work carried out in the first six to twelve months after admission to care is crucial in determining whether the child will ever return home. Research conducted in the United Kingdom by Rowe and Lambert and documented in Children Who Wait, indicates that if a child is in care for six months there is a one in four chance of return to the child's parents; if a child is in care for two years there is a one in ten chance of return.

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\* Extracts from 'Children Who Wait' Association of British Adoption Agencies, 1975.

## Recommendations

### 5.17 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that before the court makes an order to place a child in care it must be satisfied that there is a plan for that child and that the plan is time limited and reviewable;
- (ii) that each foster care agency be requested to set up a review and planning system; and
- (iii) that the Department of Social Welfare be requested to examine the way in which review panels have been set up with a view to ensuring:
  - (a) that members are independent;
  - (b) that members have expertise in child care;
  - (c) that community groups with particular interest in children in care have the right to nominate members; and
  - (d) that the review panels are publicly accountable.

## Permanency of Placement for Children in Care

5.18 The need for permanent homes to provide commitment and continuity in relationships to enable the child to develop a sense of trust and deep attachments is apparent. The significance of such commitment and continuity is well recognised by workers in childcare. "Bryce and Ehlert [1971] put the case strongly. 'It is our conviction that no child can grow emotionally while in limbo; never really belonging to anyone except on a temporary and ill-defined or partial basis. He cannot invest except in a minimal way (just enough to survive) if tomorrow the relationship may be severed. To grow, the child needs at least the promise of permanency in relationships and some continuity of environment.'\*" Where there is no expectation of permanence children often experience doubt, uncertainty and lack of trust.

5.19 Where intensive measures have been taken to help the natural family meet its needs and no significant improvements have resulted, a permanent, stable alternative placement should be made for the child, with the child being legally freed from its parents to provide security to the placement. Where parental consent cannot be obtained, where intensive measures have been taken, and where a permanent placement is essential for the child, the court should be empowered to dispense with parental consent. At present, the court can dispense with parental consent but only in the context of an adoption application.

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\* Extracts from 'Children Who Wait' Association of British Adoption Agencies, 1975, p.2.

- 5.20 The Committee believes that the court should be empowered to dispense with natural parents' consent more expeditiously than at present. (It currently takes 12-18 months to free a child for adoption). Dispensation would occur in situations where the natural parents are unwilling or unable to parent their children and this is proved conclusively to the court by the agency. Once freed from the natural parents, the agency would then be able to place the child in a permanent home, either foster or adoptive, depending on the needs of the child.
- 5.21 The Committee acknowledges that legally freeing a child from his or her parents to provide security to an alternative permanent placement is a serious step to take and maintains therefore that it should be mandatory that the rights of the natural parents be represented at termination proceedings.
- 5.22 Some foster parents who have had a foster child or children in their home for some years may be willing to adopt but do not have the financial resources to maintain the child or children once the foster care allowance has been withdrawn. While subsidised adoption tends to be seen as relating to children with special needs the committee believes that when such a commitment is available and is in the best interests of the child some form of subsidy should be available to the foster parents.
- 5.23 Should the preferred home for a child in care be in a permanent fostering placement with the foster parents assuming guardianship as distinct from that held by the Director-General of Social Welfare, legislation should enable the foster care allowance to continue as of right to the foster parents and not be the subject of a discretionary decision.

#### Recommendations

5.24 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that in meeting the needs of the young child for a stable and secure home serious consideration be given by the court to the termination of parental rights for a child 5 years and under after he or she has been in care for one year, and for a child over 5 years of age after a period of 2 years;
- (ii) that it be mandatory for the natural parents to have legal representation available to them at termination proceedings;

Recommendation 5.24 (contd)

- (iii) that the Department of Social Welfare examine legislation and policy with a view to implementing an adoption subsidisation scheme; and
- (iv) that where guardianship is invested solely in the foster parents, fostercare allowance should continue as of right.

Access Rights for Natural Parents

5.25 When a child enters a care arrangement access to the child by the natural parents is at present at the discretion of the agency. The Committee believes that access rights for the natural parents of children in care should be recognised by legislation. The court must be satisfied that access has been agreed upon between parties, but where a decision on access is in dispute a court order should be sought. The responsibility would thus be taken off the agency for deciding whether or not parents whose children are in care should be granted access to their children.

Recommendations

5.26 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that access rights for the natural parents of children in care be recognised in legislation;
- (ii) that the court be satisfied that access has been agreed upon between parties; and
- (iii) that where cases of access are in dispute they be heard by the court.

Legal Rights for Foster Parents

5.27 Foster parents of standing should have the right to be heard in all legal processes which involve their foster child. The Committee recognises that "of standing" is very difficult to define but maintains that definition should be at the discretion of the court. Such input should be direct and not through another party such as a social worker. At present, it is possible for the primary carers of a child in foster care, i.e. the foster parents, to be excluded when decisions are made affecting the child for whom they have care.

- 5.28 There is no legal provision for foster parents to dispute decisions made about their foster child and reviews of Guardianship orders under the Children and Young Persons Act can only be initiated at twelve-monthly intervals by the natural parents, the guardian or the child him or herself. Foster parents may apply to the High Court for a wardship order but the leave of the court must first be obtained and this may be opposed by other parties.

**Recommendation**

- 5.29 The Committee recommends that foster parents of standing be accorded equivalent status to parents and guardians with the right to be recognised and consulted in decision-making and to bring matters regarding their foster child before the court.

**Licensing**

- 5.30 Part VIII of the Children and Young Persons Act 1974, Placement of Infants in Private Foster Care, states that it is mandatory for all persons fostering children under the age of 6 years to be licensed as foster parents by the Department of Social Welfare unless they are near relatives of the child or the child is in the home for adoption or they are for the time being legally entitled to the custody of the child.

- 5.31 The Committee is concerned, however, that Part VIII of the Act is not fully operated due to lack of resources. A substantial increase in personnel is required if it is to be operated effectively. If there is no further input of resources, it should be accepted that Part VIII will not be actioned to its fullest extent but is available and may be used to discontinue undesirable fostering situations involving children under 6 years of age.

**Recommendations**

- 5.32 The Committee recommends:

- (i) that the current provision, Placement of Infants in Private Foster Care, in Part VIII of the Children and Young Persons Act 1974 be included in the revised Children and Young Persons Act; and
- (ii) that sufficient personnel be provided to operate this provision adequately.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Committee is aware that while some of its recommendations require a change in approach, others involve increased expenditure. An obvious example is that detailed in the section of the report on foster care rates and allowances, several of which have been accepted by the Minister following his receipt of the Committee's interim report (see para 4.32). Other recommendations, however, also require additional financial input. For example, recommendations that research be commissioned into methods and incentives of recruitment, that social workers and social work supervisors involved in foster care receive specific training in foster care, and that the facilities and environment of the court be examined with a view to upgrading where necessary, all require additional funding.
- 6.2 It costs considerably less to support a child in foster care than in any other form of substitute care even with the new rates that were announced by the Minister being included in the calculations. Information gathered by the Committee on forms of care is shown in the following table:

Costs of Keeping a Child in Substitute Care in Department of Social Welfare

Form of care	Approx. Cost per child per week	Comment
Private foster care	\$90	This estimate includes foster care allowance, clothing payment, proportion of average social worker salary, overheads and clerical support.
Family home	\$180	As above and also includes bed allowance.
Boys' or girls' home	\$500	This estimate does not include any costs for social work or clerical support, or related overheads and therefore could be higher.
Long term Institution	\$600	This does not include all social work support costs.



There are no figures available which allow accurate comparison of different forms of substitute care. Figures available may only be compared reliably within a particular form of care, i.e. from family home to family home etc. However, in the absence of other more reliable data, the Committee has used these figures. It should be noted that, if anything, the figures are understated. They include varying degrees of costs of social work and clerical support and provide only a rough comparison of costs of the different forms of substitute care available.

- 6.3 The above figures, although approximate, indicate that foster care is the cheapest form of substitute care and this reflects world wide trends. Relative costs are also comparable to those of voluntary organisations. The Committee maintains, therefore, that some of the savings made by placing the majority of children and young persons in foster care rather than in institutions should be directed to the improvement of the foster care service in the manner recommended in this report.

**Recommendation**

- 6.4 The Committee recommends that a proportion of the savings made by placing the majority of children and young persons in foster care rather than in institutions be directed to the improvement of the foster care service in the manner recommended in this report.

7. TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends:

- 3.12 (i) that all social workers have a recognised social work qualification;
- (ii) that all social workers and social work supervisors involved in the field of foster care receive specific training in foster care;
- (iii) that the Social Work Training Council be asked to promote appropriate training programmes in foster care; and
- (iv) that urgency be given to the above recommendations.
- 3.20 (i) that more attention be given by agencies to recruitment of foster parents particularly suited to the needs of specific groups of children and young persons;
- (ii) that the feasibility of a professional salaried foster care scheme to meet the needs of children and young persons in care be examined; and
- (iii) that research be commissioned urgently into:
- (a) steps that should be taken to educate the public so that recruitment campaigns may be presented against an informed and sympathetic background;
- (b) methods of recruitment and their effectiveness; and
- (c) effectiveness of incentives for recruitment;
- 3.28 (i) that a small representative working party be established to set standards of training for pre-placement preparation for foster parents; and

- (ii) that agencies recruiting foster parents be encouraged to adhere to the standards set.
- 3.34 (i) that agencies be encouraged to take a team approach to foster care which mutually recognises the skills knowledge and abilities of both social workers and foster parents; and
- (ii) that caseloads continue to be reviewed and that a target figure for total caseloads be 20-25 children or young persons per social worker.
- 4.3 (i) that payments to foster parents comprise 3 components -
  - (a) fostercare allowance;
  - (b) clothing allowance;
  - (c) reimbursement for 'actual and reasonable' expenses;
- 4.6 (i) that a method of assessment be devised to determine the higher rate of payment;
- (ii) that eligibility for a higher fostercare allowance be considered at the planning meeting when a child or young person comes into care;
- (iii) that the higher fostercare allowance assessment form be considered jointly by the social worker and foster parent; and
- (iv) that, in relation to the Department of Social Welfare, the higher fostercare allowance continue to be determined at Head Office of the Department but in time be delegated to district offices, and that voluntary agencies be encouraged to take a similarly flexible approach to the payment of higher fostercare allowance.
- 4.17 (i) that the fostercare allowance be established according to the formula prepared by the Committee;
- (ii) that the current weekly board rates be increased to \$35.29 for the 0-4 age group; \$43 for the 5-9 age group; \$49.04 for the 10-13 age group; and \$54.70 for the 14+ age group.

- 4.18 (i) that the basis for the allowance be reviewed every 5 years, using the most appropriate data;
- (ii) that the fostercare allowance be increased annually in line with movements in the Consumers Price Index (all groups);
- 4.19 that payment of the fostercare allowance be made fortnightly by direct credit and clothing allowance payments quarterly by direct credit, as soon as this can be arranged through the computer;
- 4.20 that foster parents be kept fully informed as to what payments they are receiving and of any changes relating to these payments.
- 4.28 (i) that the clothing allowance and school uniform allowance remain unchanged.
- (ii) that the current practice of updating the rates by the Consumers Price Index (clothing) each year be maintained.
- 4.31 (i) that there be an adequate list which sets out those expenses which are to be met from the fostercare allowance and clothing allowance and that the list be constantly reviewed and updated;
- (ii) that the delegation level for authority to approve expenditure on extraordinary items be subject to review.
- 5.3 that provision be made for an independent mediation process for children and young persons in care.
- 5.7 (i) that there be one statute to provide for children and young persons requiring care, protection and control;
- (ii) that emphasis be placed on the provision of preventive and supportive services; and
- (iii) that adequate resources be made available to provide these services.

- 5.11 (i) that there be a single court before which all children and young persons requiring care, protection and control would appear;
- (ii) that such a court adopt a philosophical approach similar to that of the Family Court with judges specialising in children and young persons work and with a balance of mediation and "due process",
- (iii) that in cases where mediation has failed disputes be heard by this court;
- (iv) that the facilities and waiting areas of the court be urgently examined with a view to upgrading existing conditions;
- (v) that a system which avoids the calling of a full day's cases at 10 a.m. be immediately introduced; and
- (vi) that evening appointments be available where necessary.
- 5.14 that whenever questions arise about the care or custody of a child or young person which might lead to judicial proceedings, it should be mandatory that competent, independent representation be appointed at public cost for the child concerned.
- 5.17 (i) that before the court makes an order to place a child in care it must be satisfied that there is a plan for that child and that the plan is time limited and reviewable;
- (ii) that each foster care agency be requested to set up a review and planning system; and
- (iii) that the Department of Social Welfare be requested to examine the way in which review panels have been set up with a view to ensuring:
- (a) that members are independent;
- (b) that members have expertise in child care;
- (c) that community groups with particular interest in children in care have the right to nominate members; and
- (d) that the review panels are publicly accountable.

- 5.24 (i) that, in meeting the needs of the young child for a stable and secure home, serious consideration be given by the court to the termination of parental rights for a child 5 years and under after he or she has been in care for one year, and for a child over 5 years of age after a period of 2 years;
- (ii) that it be mandatory for the natural parents to have legal representation available to them at termination proceedings;
- (iii) that the Department of Social Welfare examine legislation and policy with a view to implementing an adoption subsidisation scheme; and
- (iv) that where guardianship is invested solely in the foster parents, fostercare allowance should continue as of right.
- 5.26 (i) that access rights for natural parents of children in care be recognised in legislation;
- (ii) that the court be satisfied that access has been agreed upon between parties; and
- (iii) that where cases of access are in dispute they be heard by the court.
- 5.29 that foster parents of standing be accorded equivalent status to parents and guardians with the right to be recognised and consulted in decision-making and to bring matters regarding their foster child before the court.
- 5.32 (i) that the current provision, Placement of Infants in Private Foster Care, Part VIII of the Children and Young Persons Act 1974 be included in the revised Children and Young Persons Act; and
- (ii) that sufficient personnel be provided to operate this provision adequately.
- 6.4 that a proportion of the savings made by placing the majority of children and young persons in foster care rather than in institutions be directed to the improvement of the foster care service in the manner recommended in this report.

APPENDIX I

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FOSTER CARE

Hon. L.W. Gandar (Chairman)

Miss E.F. Brodie

Mr I.J. Calder

Mrs M.A. Craig

Mr K.I. Hayes

Mr A.L. Mitchell

Mrs V.S. Pou

Mrs M.J. Walsh

Miss A.E. Corcoran (Advisor to the Committee)

Ms G.J. Hogan (Secretariat)

APPENDIX II

SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

The Otago Hospital Board, Dunedin  
New Zealand Committee for Children (IYC) Inc.  
New Zealand Foster Care Federation (Inc)  
6A Incorporated, Christchurch  
Otago Foster Care Association, Dunedin  
Presbyterian Social Services (Christchurch) Inc.  
People in Action Committee, Lower Hutt  
Open Home Foundation, Johnsonville  
Child Care Co-ordinating Committee, Dunedin  
Barnardo's New Zealand  
Waikato Foster Care Association, Hamilton  
D. Burrows, Palmerston North  
R. Prasad, Massey University  
N. Cameron, Fielding  
T. Witt, Invercargill  
L. Read, Palmerston North  
M. Elms, Raumati South  
L. Rudduck, Oamaru  
R. Crump, Christchurch  
R. Ross, Auckland  
Mr and Mrs Rogers and Henderson, Palmerston North  
Mr and Mrs Walker, Papatoetoe  
B. Chapman, DSW, Tauranga  
G. Underwood, DSW, Wanganui  
K. Beattie, DSW, Dunedin  
F. Lavery, DSW, Napier  
E. Gensik, DSW, Auckland Regional Office  
D. Mortensen, Intensive Foster Care Scheme, Christchurch  
M. Katene, DSW, Dunedin  
S. McAuley, DSW, Dunedin  
R. Marshall, DSW, Invercargill  
P. Kennedy, DSW, Wellington  
D. Retter, DSW, Tauranga  
J. Curran, DSW, Dunedin  
G. Caddie, DSW, Tauranga  
K. Baird, DSW, Hastings  
S. Neale, DSW, Tauranga  
H. Cunningham, DSW, Christchurch  
Placement Team, DSW, Wellington



APPENDIX III      ALLOWANCES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

APPENDIX III(1)

McClements' Scale

Estimated equivalence scales by age of child  
(married couple = 1.00)

Commodity	Age of child in years							Budget Share
	0-1	2-4	5-7	8-10	11-12	13-15	16-18	
1. Housing	0.17	0.17	0.22	0.20	0.21	0.18	0.22	0.13
2. Fuel	0.12	0.16	0.17	0.18	0.14	0.19	0.15	0.07
3. Food	0.05	0.18	0.24	0.25	0.28	0.30	0.42	0.30
4. Alcohol	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.01	-0.01	0.07	0.05
5. Tobacco	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.03	-0.02	-0.01	0.09	0.06
6. Clothing and footwear	0.08	0.17	0.26	0.31	0.34	0.42	0.50	0.07
7. Durables	0.24	0.28	0.28	0.34	0.36	0.40	0.40	0.05
8. Other and miscellaneous	0.07	0.22	0.21	0.28	0.32	0.37	0.48	0.08
9. Transport and vehicles	0.15	0.23	0.24	0.29	0.33	0.33	0.50	0.12
10. Services	0.10	0.23	0.23	0.29	0.36	0.41	0.53	0.07
Income	0.09	0.18	0.21	0.23	0.25	0.27	0.36	1.00

from The Economics of Social Security McClements, L.  
London 1978, P 102.

Explanation

McClements' equivalence scales are based on the 1971 and 1972 Family Expenditure Surveys conducted in the United Kingdom.

A married couple is assigned a value of '1.00'. The 'budget share' vertical column shows the composition by commodity of the married couple scale. Housing, for example carries a weighting of 0.13 (or 13 percent) of the total 1.00 (or 100 percent).

The 'income' horizontal line shows the proportion or percentage of the married couple scale required to keep children of different ages at the same standard of living. These are further broken down into commodities. In a family where there is a child aged between 0-1 years, for example, expenditure on housing is 17 percent more than that for a couple without children. Similarly, where there is a child between the ages of 5-7 years, the family's expenditure on food is 24 percent more than that for a married couple.

## APPENDIX III(2)

## Household Survey, 1982-83

Table 3 Household Expenditure, Analysed by Expenditure Group, Household Type, Family Type, Occupation Group and Employment Status of Household Head, and Tenure of Dwelling

Characteristics of Household, Head of Household and of Dwelling	Number of Households	Expenditure Group								All Groups
		Food	Housing	Household Operation	Clothing and Footwear	Transportation	Tobacco and Alcohol	Other Supplies	Other Services	
<b>Household Type -</b>										
One adult (retired)	384	21.11	18.56	25.55	8.47	15.07	3.05	5.29	8.25	105.35
One adult (other)	416	28.16	28.15 <sup>(1)</sup>	28.07	7.38	33.75	8.48	9.92	13.19	155.09
One adult with child(ren)	151	39.19	38.59	32.83	10.97	19.97	5.68	12.19	11.36	170.97
Two adults (retired)	403	38.98	3.18 <sup>(2)</sup>	37.07	12.53	38.50	7.21	10.80	14.49	162.76
Two adults (other)	939	47.79	87.12	52.27	17.02	61.69	16.65	21.61	21.86	308.01
Two adults & 1 child	325	54.43	58.64	50.41	17.82	51.61	14.00	26.27	19.75	292.73
Two adults & 2 children	548	63.79	85.33	52.24	20.40	48.87	13.64	24.53	22.80	331.59
Two adults & 3 or more children	336	70.21	73.85	52.64	23.33	50.77	11.02	22.48	22.36	326.66
Three or more adults	523	76.20	62.58	60.50	32.87	101.69	26.28	32.45	34.96	427.54
Three or more adults with child(ren)	483	90.78	56.11	59.57	34.14	80.97	19.08	30.26	36.67	407.58
<b>Family Type -</b>										
Couple with no children	1088	44.87	47.36	49.13	15.64	53.99	13.04	18.24	19.18	261.26
Couple with one child	505	60.08	57.31	57.29	22.31	66.86	16.91	28.37	25.57	334.70
Couple with two children	778	69.97	81.74	55.52	24.97	63.35	15.62	26.99	28.42	366.57
Couple with 3 or more children	545	80.92	62.21	55.86	29.86	68.11	14.28	29.20	30.76	371.19
Solo-parent with child(ren)	305	46.85	30.98	37.47	13.98	38.82	9.71	15.42	17.02	210.04
Non-family households	987	31.82	33.56	31.58	11.71	38.04	10.73	11.27	14.76	183.46
Extended-family households*	260	80.94	63.21	51.57	26.69	73.80	23.37	24.12	23.46	367.15
<b>Occupational Group of Head of Household -</b>										
Professional & technical	512	65.76	95.00	58.38	25.88	79.53	14.72	29.55	35.01	403.81
Administrative & managerial	209	75.48	90.69 <sup>(1)</sup>	69.07	32.21	74.96	19.47	33.86	33.98	429.72
Clerical	292	57.75	84.78	55.11	24.45	65.24	17.66	22.08	24.92	332.00
Sales workers	308	82.88	85.95	56.51	25.12	52.54	15.52	25.70	26.08	350.28
Service workers	200	57.78	70.72	49.52	18.87	60.71	16.93	24.69	21.73	320.96
Agricultural, animal husbandry & forestry workers, fishermen & hunters	351	54.06	15.68 <sup>(2)</sup>	49.22	22.18	57.21	13.85	21.56	24.07	257.82
Production workers, transport equipment operators & labourers n.e.c.	1140	63.43	55.99	49.84	19.41	64.63	18.42	22.55	21.82	315.88
Occupation not classifiable	2	67.42 <sup>(2)</sup>	300.72 <sup>(2)</sup>	64.68 <sup>(2)</sup>	31.18 <sup>(2)</sup>	69.60 <sup>(2)</sup>	20.41 <sup>(2)</sup>	22.01 <sup>(2)</sup>	44.86 <sup>(2)</sup>	620.84
Not actively engaged	1474	38.81	27.94	34.67	12.66	34.75	8.09	12.78	14.33	184.04
<b>Employment Status of Head of Household -</b>										
Wage or salary earner	2408	62.24	68.63	52.68	22.32	65.09	17.48	24.73	25.14	338.31
Self-employed	604	64.01	52.59	57.90	24.55	67.69	14.43	25.25	28.69	335.10
Retired	926	34.50	17.18 <sup>(1)</sup>	34.39	12.18	32.81	6.66	10.91	13.47	162.09
Domestic duties	395	44.18	35.85	35.14	14.27	34.98	7.80	15.08	14.96	202.27
Other	155	51.04	71.86	35.49	11.47	45.61	17.42	18.12	17.72	268.74
<b>Tenure of Dwelling -</b>										
Rent paid	1128	50.24	36.36	40.66	16.05	46.69	16.76	17.52	16.85	241.13
Rental free	373	50.69	0.28 <sup>(2)</sup>	46.89	22.46	52.14	11.94	24.05	23.98	231.88
Owned with mortgage	1633	66.74	99.50	56.13	23.58	65.26	15.77	25.82	26.73	379.51
Owned without mortgage	1354	45.26	25.73	42.87	16.46	51.85	10.08	16.82	20.24	229.29
All Households	4488	54.78	53.08	47.47	19.45	55.46	13.98	20.87	22.06	287.14
<b>Percentage of All Households*</b>										
Average Weekly Expenditure		19.1	18.5	16.5	6.8	19.3	4.9	7.3	7.7	100.00

(1) This statistic has a maximum possible sampling error in the range 50-99 percent.

(2) This statistic has a maximum possible sampling error of 100 percent or more.

APPENDIX III(3)

UPDATED HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FIGURES FROM 31 MARCH 1983 TO 30 JUNE 1983  
BY APPLYING APPROPRIATE CPI

	Housing	Food	Household Operation	Trans- port	Clothing
Couple with two children April 1982 - March 1983	\$81.74	\$69.97	\$55.52	\$63.35	\$24.97
CPI 1 April - 31 June 1983	1.7%	0.4%	0.4%	1.2%	1.2%
Updated expenditure for Couple with two children	\$83.13	\$70.25	\$55.74	\$64.11	\$25.27

APPENDIX III(4)

'BEST-FIT' SELECTION

The items from the Household Survey Report selected for inclusion in the board rate were housing, food, household operation and transport. While it was intended that an element for entertainment and cultural activities should be included in the board rate, these were difficult to identify in both the Household Survey Report and in McClement's equivalence scales.

Because a number of items included in the 'transport' category of the equivalent scales are recoverable by reimbursement to foster parents it was considered that this would counter-balance the lack of a specific element for entertainment and cultural activities.

APPENDIX III(5)

SUGGESTED FORMULA FOR FIXING FOSTERCARE ALLOWANCE (TO INCLUDE INCIDENTALS, AND POCKET MONEY)

It is suggested that a formula could be based on a percentage of selected items in the married couple column of the Household Expenditure Survey. The percentages would be derived approximately from McClements in so far as categories are the same.

	AGE OF CHILD (YEARS)			
	0-4	5-9	10-13	14+
Commodity				
Housing	.15	.20	.20	.20
Food	.20	.25	.30	.35
Household Operation	.24	.27	.35	.39
Transport	.23	.27	.30	.35

NOTE: Items in the Household Survey excluded from this are apparel (because clothing allowance is paid separately), other goods and services (presumed to equate items foster parents may claim separately), tobacco, alcohol and overseas travel.

As the Committee is taking as its base a couple with two children rather than a couple without children the above percentages must be reduced accordingly. This is done by averaging the percentages for each item across the ages, multiplying by 2 (for 2 children) and adding the base of 1 (as a married couple with 2 children now has the value of 1). This figure is then applied to the percentage in each age group for that item.

CREATION OF COMMODITY EQUIVALENCE FOR BASE  
HOUSEHOLD TYPE COMPRISING TWO ADULTS AND TWO CHILDREN \*

COMMODITY	AGE OF CHILD (YEARS)				
	0-4	5-9	10-13	14+	
Housing	0.15 $0.15 \div 1.375$ =0.11	0.20 $0.20 \div 1.375$ =0.15	+ 0.20 $0.20 \div 1.375$ =0.15	+ 0.20 $0.20 \div 1.375$ =0.15	= 0.75 $(\div 4)(\times 2)(+1)$ =1.375
Food	0.20 $0.20 \div 1.550$ =0.13	0.25 $0.25 \div 1.550$ =0.16	0.30 $0.30 \div 1.550$ =0.19	0.35 $0.35 \div 1.550$ =0.23	1.10 $(\div 4)(\times 2)(+1)$ = 1.550
Household Operation	0.24 $0.24 \div 1.625$ =0.15	0.27 $0.27 \div 1.625$ =0.17	0.35 $0.35 \div 1.625$ =0.22	0.39 $0.39 \div 1.625$ =0.24	1.25 $(\div 4)(\times 2)(+1)$ = 1.625
Transport	0.23 $0.23 \div 1.575$ =0.15	0.27 $0.27 \div 1.575$ 0.17	0.30 $0.30 \div 1.575$ 0.19	0.35 $0.35 \div 1.575$ 0.22	1.15 $(\div 4)(\times 2)(+1)$ = 1.575

APPENDIX III(5 Contd)

\*The calculation assumes that for two-child households (as a group) there are the same number of children in each of the four age groups.

$e_{ij}$  = child commodity equivalence, for commodity type  $i$ , for a child in the  $j$ th age group, where households comprising couples have a base value of 1.

$\bar{e}_{ij}$  = commodity equivalence where households comprising couples with two children have a base value of 1.

$$\bar{e}_{ij} = \frac{e_{ij}}{1 + 2 \left( \frac{1}{4} \sum_{j=1}^4 e_{ij} \right)} = \frac{e_{ij}}{1 + 0.5 \sum_{j=1}^4 e_{ij}}$$

EQUIVALENCES APPLIED TO HOUSEHOLD SURVEY DATA  
(COUPLE WITH TWO CHILDREN)

Commodity	AGE OF CHILD (YEARS)			
	0-4	5-9	10-13	14+
Housing (\$83.13)	9.14	12.47	12.47	12.47
Food (\$70.25)	9.13	11.24	13.35	16.16
Household Operation (\$55.74)	8.36	9.48	12.26	13.38
Transport * (\$57.70)	8.66	9.81	10.96	12.69
TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR CHILD OF SPECIFIED AGE	35.29	43.00	49.04	54.70

\* The amount given by the household survey - \$64.11 has been reduced by 10% to remove estimated expenditure on overseas travel.

APPENDIX III (6)

Comparison of Recommended Fostercare Allowance with Actual Rate for Board/Incidentals Allowance/Pocket Money as at July 1983

Age	Actual Rate Board/Incidentals/ Pocket Money	Recommended Fostercare Allowance (Board/ Incidental/Pocket Money)
0-4	\$32.35	\$35.29
5-9	\$33.15 - \$33.75	\$43.00
10-13	\$41.05 - \$41.70	\$49.04
14+	\$44.65	\$54.70

Age	Actual Rate Board/ Incidentals/Pocket Money	Proposed Increase	Recommended Fostercare Allowance
0-4	\$32.35	\$ 2.94	\$35.29
5-9	\$33.15 - \$33.75	\$ 9.25	\$43.00
* 10-13	\$41.05 - \$41.70	\$ 7.34	\$49.04
14+	\$44.65	\$10.05	\$54.70

\*NOTE: The proposed increase is greater for the 5-9 year olds than for the 10-13 year olds as the current rate for the 5-9 year olds is further away from the rate that it should be than that for the 10-13 year olds.

APPENDIX III(7)

COST OF PROPOSALS

Fostercare Allowance

Age	Proposed Increases in weekly Fostercare Allowance	Nos of Children in Foster Care as at November 1982	Cost
0-4	\$ 2.94	354	\$ 1,040.76
5-9	\$ 9.25	702	\$ 6,493.50
* 10-13	\$ 7.34	867	\$ 6,363.78
14+	\$10.05	793	\$ 7,969.65
Total (per week)			\$ 21,867.69
ANNUAL COST			\$1,137,119.80

Annual Cost of Increases in Foster Care Allowance \$1.14 million.



APPENDIX III(8)

COMPARISON OF DEPARTMENT'S CLOTHING GRANT WITH CLOTHING  
AND FOOTWEAR ITEM OF UPDATED NEW ZEALAND HOUSEHOLD  
SURVEY REPORT

1. Creation of Equivalence Base for Household Type Comprising Two Adults  
and Two Children

	AGE					
	0-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	14-15	16-18
McClement's equivalence scale for clothing	.17	.26	.31	.34	.42	.50
Creation of equivalences for base household comprising 2 adults and 2 children	.10	.16	.19	.20	.25	.30
Equivalence applied to Updated Household Survey clothing figure for 2 adults and 2 children (\$25.27) (weekly cost)	\$2.53	\$4.04	\$4.80	\$5.05	\$6.32	\$7.58
Quarterly cost	\$32.89	\$52.52	\$62.40	\$65.65	\$82.16	\$98.54

2. Comparison of Department's clothing grant with the Clothing and  
Footwear Item of the Household Survey Report to which the Appropriate  
Equivalence has been Applied.

	AGE					
	0-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	14-15	16-18
DSW Quarterly Clothing Grant	\$93.65	\$106.10	\$106.10	\$131.05	\$157.35	\$157.35
Updated Household Survey to which equivalences have been applied.	\$32.89	\$ 52.52	\$ 62.40	\$ 65.65	\$ 82.16	\$ 98.54

APPENDIX IV

REFERENCES

- Prasad, R. Success and Failure in Foster Care in Auckland, New Zealand, 1975.
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Summary of proposals submitted to the Minister of Social Welfare covering the situation of the ill-treated child, 1983.
- Department of Social Welfare and Foster Care Federation.  
Report on Intensive Foster Care Scheme. Dec 1979 - Feb 1982.
- Report of the Department of Social Welfare for the year ended 31 March 1983.
- A Future for Foster Care. A Report Prepared as a Memorandum to the Social Services Committee submitted by the National Foster Care Association. London, December 1982.
- Extracts from 'Children Who Wait' Association of British Adoption Agencies 1975.
- Children and Young Persons Act 1974

APPENDIX V

MINORITY REPORT

The following minority report was received some time after the main report, as unanimously adopted by the Committee, had been prepared for transmission to the Minister of Social Welfare. It has therefore not been considered by the Committee.

L.W. Gandar  
Chairman

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FOSTER CARE

### MINORITY REPORT

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#### Introduction

This minority report is submitted out of concern and personal commitment to the many hundreds of New Zealand children who live away from the care of their natural families, or for whom living away from their families is an ever present possibility.

My perspective has evolved from a background of parenting, foster parenting, adopting a child who was a state ward, extra mural social work studies, voluntary community work, five years on the executive of the N.Z. Foster Care Federation, and one year on the executive of the N.Z. Committee for Children.

I believe that in addressing its terms of reference, the Advisory Committee has produced a comprehensive and well researched section on compensation and remuneration. Parts of the section on statutory provisions have also been thoroughly examined. For example 5.4 One Statute, 5.8 One Court, 5.12 Mandatory Representation. I do not believe however, that item 1. in the terms of reference - "To enquire into and report on the present provisions and practices relating to recruitment, training and social work support", and parts of item 3. - "To consider whether present statutory provisions sufficiently provide for the fostering situation and whether any amendment to present law appears necessary in order to encourage permanent care for the child or young person", have been addressed in a manner that indicates agency responsiveness to community initiatives. Further, I do not believe that the report (as per the terms of reference 1 & 3 above) properly reflects the content of the submissions received by the committee.

#### Explanation

After expressing concern about the committees view of the Social Work Support section of the report, the Chairman agreed that I should rewrite this section for the committees consideration. My rewritten section was submitted as appended. Substantial changes eventuated along with a total rejection of the method of 'permanency planning' outlined in 3.24 of my submission.

2.

The Advisory Committee report refers to:

- the lack of specific foster care training for social workers (3.11)
- the lack of expertise amongst practioners (3.24)
- the potential for 'drift' in foster care (5.16)
- the urgency of sound planning for children in care (5.16)
- the recommendation 5.17 (ii) "that each foster care agency be requested to set up a review and planning system"

The report does not refer to:

- the directive "Enquire into and report on the present provisions and practices relating to (b) training (c) social work support" (item 1. terms of reference)
- the only New Zealand research conducted on placement of children in foster homes, (undertaken by the DSW in the mid 1970's and published in 1981) which showed the drift of children in care resulting in an average of 6.5 placements for every five years spent in care.
- a particular method or model of 'permanency planning' to enable agencies to carry out the recommendations contained in the report

I have concluded that the committee has not reported on present provisions and practices relating to training and social work support because there is neither uniformity in utilising agency training programmes, nor understanding amongst agencies as to what is meant by Social Work Support in foster care. The report identifies some problem areas but has failed to provide solutions.

The method of 'permanency planning' contained in my appended section on Social Work Support, is the crucial component in preventing 'drift' of children in care.

#### Accountability

It is curious that a report containing a principle proposing that - "The first consideration in the placement or continuing placement of children in care..... shall be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child (2.4.) - does not also contain a separate section on accountability.

Submissions made to the Advisory Committee and the response to seminars recently conducted by the N.Z. Committee for Children on proposed changes to Children & Young Persons legislation,

3.

suggest that the practice of agencies reviewing their own child care programmes is ineffective and unacceptable. Intra-agency monitoring can be fraught with self interest in spite of the present practice of the Department of Social Welfare to include a community representative (selected by the Department) on review panels..

It should not be accepted that only in instances of disagreement or serious dispute, parties have access to mediation or a court hearing. All children in care should have the additional safeguard of independent reviews of their plans. In cases of children under the age of five years, independent reviews should be conducted at least every six months.

It is neither appropriate nor just to contemplate termination of parental rights (especially in cases of very young children) when agency procedures are geared for 12 monthly reviews and no mechanism for extra-agency monitoring of services to families exists. What rights would be removed from an agency if it was proven that a family had not received services, support and encouragement to facilitate the return of a child?

Margaret Craig,  
N.Z. Foster Care Federation  
Representative.

## SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT

### Definition

- 3.29 The profession that has historically been delegated the responsibility to co-ordinate foster care services or child welfare services is Social Work. Kadushin (1980) found that in the U.S. this was the one category that contained the most social workers. Hence social work services are a critical component of foster care provisions. Any statement then on foster care must contain guidelines for the comprehensive support of foster care programmes. The Committee sees the definition of Social Work Support meaning the amount, manner and nature of the services provided by social workers to foster children, foster parents, natural families and other significant parties. This comprehensive support should continue to be available after termination of foster care placements.
- 3.30 The committee is concerned about children adrift in foster care. This drift and numerous case studies of the experiences of children in care would indicate that adequate social work support is often a missing variable. The various submissions received reflect -
- (a) the difficult nature of social work in foster care.
  - (b) the feeling of social workers that their agencies are inadequately placed to provide good social work support.

The committee has deduced from the submissions that in a large number of agencies, the provision of social work support to all parties is hampered by inadequate resources and heavy case-loads.

- 3.31 The second area that is likely to account for inadequate social work support would be the lack of expertise amongst practitioners. The N.Z. Foster Care Federation in its submissions stated,
- "We find little consistency, in this country, within or outside the DSW, in social workers' perception of their role in foster care. There is still a wide variation in practice from one area to another and from one social worker to another. In view of the high turnover of social workers in foster care, this lack of professional consensus as to how a social worker should support and service foster placements is, we suspect, an important factor in placement breakdown."

- (d) Such joint activity/discussions will determine further action. This becomes the planning team and ensures regular reviews of services to natural families and monitors the achievement of goals so as to facilitate the decision about the child's future (either return home or more permanent care).

3.35 A team approach between foster parents, social workers and natural parents is vitally important to placement outcomes. Evidence informs us (Maluccio & Fein 1983, Stein, Gambrill & Wiltse 1978) that when all parties are part of decision making processes, and intensive services are available, children can be rehabilitated back into their own homes. Where this is not possible, alternative informed decisions can be made.

3.36 Maluccio & Fein (1983) provide an integrative definition of permanency planning:

"Permanency planning is the systematic process of carrying out, within a brief time-limited period, a set of goal directed activities designed to help children live in families that offer continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime relationships."

They believe that such a definition embodies (1) Values and Theory, (2) Programme, (3) Methods (4) Collaboration.

3.37 Permanency planning in N.Z has been interpreted as meaning 'making permanent plans'. The concept of 'team-work' is also open to various interpretations. The committee believes the method of permanency planning outlined above, will provide a model which gives meaning and method to terms such as 'continuity of care', 'teamwork' and 'social work support'. The method has a primary goal of reducing the drift of children in care by competently supporting all parties. Foster care can then be seen as one part of a comprehensive range of services offered by child welfare agencies to support children and families.

#### Recommendations:-

The committee strongly recommends:

- (i) That to ensure adequate support for all parties in foster care, social workers must be assisted in their task by the provision of adequate clerical services; availability of vehicles; and funding to ensure that appropriate support for families can be introduced where necessary.
- (ii) That the total number of children and young persons on any caseload, must reflect the complexity of social work support in foster care and recognise that three crucial parties make up a foster care situation; not simply one child in care.





Date Due		
-2 SEP. 1989		
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28/05/94		
02 SEP 1994		
27 MAY 1995		
13 July 95		

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