



ANGUS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON THE ANGUS ADOPTION AGENCY
AND THE FOSTERING PANEL**

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Part 1 Panels

- 1.1 Angus Adoption and Permanence Panel
- 1.2 Angus Fostering Panel
- 1.3 Operation of Panels
- 1.4 Management and Co-ordination of Panels
- 1.5 Consultation on Functioning of the Panels
- 1.6 Training of Panel Members
- 1.7 Appeals

Part 2 Additional Functions of the Agency

- 2.1 Administration of Section 18 Notifications
- 2.2 Inter Country Adoption
- 2.3 Adoption Allowance Scheme
- 2.4 Custody and Residence Allowance Schemes
- 2.5 Adoption Counselling
- 2.6 Post Adoption Contact
- 2.7 Adoption Register

Part 3 Fees and Other Expenditure

- 3.1 Administration and Monitoring of Fees and Accounts
- 3.2 Adoption Agency Expenditure

Part 4 Overview of Adoption Agency Business

- 4.1 Volume and Breakdown of Panel Business
- 4.2 Meeting Children's Needs for Permanency
- 4.3 Recruitment and Approval of Prospective Carers
- 4.4 North East Consortium
- 4.5 Placement Elsewhere in Scotland / UK
- 4.6 Adoption Agency support

Part 5 Key Issues and Developments 2009-2010

- 5.1 Registration and inspection by the Care Commission
- 5.2 Adoption & Children (Scotland) Act 2007
- 5.3 Restructuring of the Family Placement Services
- 5.4 Additional Funds to Improve Fostering Services

Part 6 Conclusions

- Appendix 1** Adoption and Permanence and Fostering Panel Members
- Appendix 2** Summary of adoption and fostering panel feedback forms
- Appendix 3** Adoption Agency Expenditure

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared to provide information on the operation of Angus Adoption Agency from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

Angus Council has a statutory duty to provide an adoption service and meets this duty through the Adoption Agency that became operational on 1 April 1996. All functions and decisions of the Adoption Agency rest with the Director of Social Work and Health. This authority is delegated to a Senior Manager who acts as the Agency Decision Maker on behalf of the Director.

Angus Adoption Agency is responsible for decisions and tasks in relation to adoption and the operation of two panels; the Adoption & Permanence Panel and the Fostering Panel. The administration, management and co-ordination of all Adoption Agency functions, is the responsibility of the Permanence Team Manager, Family Placement Services, who performs these duties on behalf of the Director of Social Work and Health.

Part 1 - PANELS

1.1 ANGUS ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE PANEL

The Adoption Panel is appointed to consider and make recommendations to the Adoption Agency. The principal functions of the panel are to:

- (a) To consider whether adoption is in the best interests of a particular child and if so, whether a 'Permanence Order' application should be made
- (b) To consider whether a prospective adopter is suitable to be an adoptive parent
- (c) To consider whether prospective adopters would be suitable adoptive parents for a particular child.

Supplementary functions of the panel include:

- (a) Consideration of permanence plans for children other than adoption (including permanence orders)
- (b) To consider applications for adoption and residence allowances and to review the payment of these allowances
- (c) Any other matter relating to permanency.

The Adoption and Permanence Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who is currently the Senior Manager, Community Care Services.

1.2 ANGUS FOSTERING PANEL

The main functions of the Fostering Panel are to:

- (a) Advise on the suitability of persons who apply to be foster carers.
- (b) To state whether their recommendation is in respect of:
 - a particular child or children
 - any child
 - certain categories of child.
- (c) Consider the continuing approval of foster carers' following their annual carer's review.

The Fostering Panel also makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who is currently the Senior Manager, Community Care Services.

To conform to regulations the Fostering panel must be distinct from the Adoption and Permanence panel. Both panels meet on the same day and with the same members, but the business of the two panels is kept separate.

1.3 OPERATION OF THE PANELS

The Adoption and Permanence Panel and the Fostering Panel have two chairpersons, Audrey Jenkins, Principal Educational Psychologist and Mark Hodgkinson, Adult Protection Review Officer and 12 panel members. These members attend alternate panels with up to six members in attendance at each meeting. Panel members include a medical adviser, legal adviser, social work staff, independent members and representatives from the education department. There are 2 Panel Depute Chairs, one is a Team Leader in Older People's Services, and the other is a Reviewing Officer within Children's Services. Mark Hodgkinson has recently resigned and his replacement will be named shortly. For details of the current panel membership, refer to Appendix 1.

Panels meet every two weeks. The average length of a panel meeting is four hours. Papers for the panel are distributed eight days before the meeting, and preparatory reading for the panel requires approximately six hours from each panel member.

Between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, 25 panels were arranged. This included extended panels as well as three additional panels. Attendance at panels remains high, demonstrating a continuing high level of commitment from panel members.

1.4 MANAGEMENT AND CO-ORDINATION OF PANELS

The panels are managed and co-ordinated by the Permanence Team Manager. The panel co-ordination role involves offering consultancy to workers, advising panel members on policy and procedural issues, overseeing the administration of the panel and sitting as a panel member.

The Co-ordinator maintains statistics for all business presented to the panels and maintains and reviews waiting lists for all children registered for permanence, approved adopters and permanent foster carers.

The Co-ordinator is ably supported in the administration of the Adoption Agency and the panels, by two senior clerical assistants each employed for 18½ hours a week. The senior clerical assistants provide all the Adoption Agency administrative support as well as maintaining the review systems, ensuring panel papers are circulated to panel members, minuting the panel and distributing all relevant letters and statutory notifications pre and post panel. Given the increased volume of panel business both have worked extra hours throughout the year in order to maintain their workload.

1.5 CONSULTATION ON FUNCTIONING OF THE PANELS

A system for consulting with people who use the panel was introduced during 2004. Those attending the panel are given a feedback sheet and

asked to return it to the panel co-ordinator. Latterly new feedback forms were introduced, with separate forms for Social Workers and applicants\carers. A review of the forms available to birth parents is currently being undertaken. During the year, fifty-nine forms were completed and returned. The responses are summarised in appendix 2. Essentially the feedback was very positive with the majority of respondents commenting that the panel was welcoming, focused and well organised.

Issues raised by applicants, carers and social workers were in relation to timekeeping and confidentiality given the limited space within the waiting area. Panel members are very mindful of the need to manage time and this will be monitored in an ongoing way. The limited space is acknowledged as problematic however a second waiting area has been created in an attempt to address this. Attempts to find a more suitable location to hold the Panel has met with limited success.

1.6 TRAINING OF PANEL MEMBERS

Training is important for all panel members particularly in view of the complexities of the cases they are required to consider. Training available to panel members have included BAAF's Making Permanence Orders Work and forthcoming trainings will include Fostering Network Assessment and an opportunity for panel members to join Panel training organised by Dundee Family Placement Services. A Development day will be organised in the early summer.

1.7 APPEALS

There were no appeals lodged during 2010-2011.

Part 2 - ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS OF THE AGENCY

2.1 ADMINISTRATION OF SECTION 18 NOTIFICATIONS

Section 29/30 adoptions involve relatives or step parents who wish to petition the court for an adoption order. The adoption agency is not arranging these placements, but Section 18 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 does require the agency to become involved. Applicants in these non-agency placements must notify the local authority within whose area they have their home, of their intention to apply for an adoption order. The Adoption Agency is then required to produce a report for the court providing full information about the circumstances of the petitioners and the proposed adoption.

Between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, the Adoption Agency received 4 notifications. Two Section 29/30 adoptions were granted during this period.

Fig 1 - Section 18 Adoption

	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
S.29\30 Notifications	6	5	7	8	4	12	8	9	7	4
S.29\30 Adoptions Granted	4	3	5	3	4	2	3	2	6	2
S.29\30 Withdrawn	0	0	2	-	-	1	4	2	1	0

2.2 INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

The Adoption Agency may be approached by applicants wishing to adopt a child from overseas. Following any such approach the Adoption Agency has a duty to assess the applicants and provide information to the Scottish Executive.

The legislation affecting intercountry adoption requires local authorities to provide an enhanced service to people who are interested in adopting a child from abroad. Historically there have been very few people in Angus applying to be approved as intercountry adopters; nevertheless the legislation means that we have to be able to provide clear information both on the way we will assess prospective adopters and on the process they must negotiate with other countries.

Angus Council introduced a charging policy in relation to inter-country adoption applications in 1998. Under this policy applicants will be charged a fee relating to the level of input required based on a guide figure of £2,500 for the completion of the assessment.

Between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011 there were no intercountry applications.

2.3 ADOPTION ALLOWANCE SCHEMES

Angus Council currently operates an adoption allowance scheme. The first was approved at the Social Work Committee on 16 April 1996 (Committee Report 208/96) and subsequently received approval by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The second scheme was set up following the implementation, in 1998, of the Adoption Allowance (Scotland) Regulations 1996 and approved by the Social Work Committee on 21 April 1998 (Committee Report 400/98). The existing scheme has been adapted in line with the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007. There has been increasing number of adoption and residence allowances granted over the last 10 years. Following the guidance on the Act becoming available, a review of the allowances schemes are in progress.

During the year 2010 to 2011 Angus Council continued to pay adoption allowances for 28 children. Six new adoption allowance applications were presented during the year. Two were declined as they did not meet the criteria; two were deferred, one has already commenced and the other one will commence when the adoption is granted.

2.4 CUSTODY AND RESIDENCE ALLOWANCE SCHEMES

The Scheme for the Payment of Custody Allowances was approved at the Social Work Committee on 16 April 1996. (Committee Report 209/96). At that time Angus Council was responsible for custody allowances for nine children. All custody allowances have now come to an end; custody orders were replaced by residence orders some years ago and the children subject to historical custody orders are all now adults.

In line with the change in the legislation, the Scheme for the Payment of Residence Allowances was approved by the Social Work Committee on 7 October 1997 (Committee Report 1008/97).

During the year 2010 to 2011 Angus Council continued to pay residence allowances for 52 children, of which 3 new residence allowance applications were agreed. Three also came to an end.

The number of adoption, custody and residence allowances paid is summarised below.

Fig 2 - Allowances Paid

	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Adoption Allowances	17	17	15	16	19	20	19	21	27	28
Custody Allowances	6	5	5	5	3	2	1	1	0	0
Residence Allowances	2	4	6	12	15	18	25	41	44	52

Over the last 10 years there has been a steady increase in the number of adoption allowances granted: a rise of 65% over the 10 year period. There has also been a significant increase in the number of residence allowances granted: this has doubled in the previous 4 years.

2.5 ADOPTION COUNSELLING

The Local Authority as an Adoption Agency has a duty to provide a service to children who have been or may be adopted, the parents or guardians of such children and to persons who have adopted or may adopt a child. This includes a duty to provide counselling to adopted children and adults, adoptive families, and to other people who have a problem relating to adoption such as birth parents or relatives. In Scotland any adoptee that has attained the age of 16 years is entitled to receive information from the agency in relation to his or her adoption. Where the adoption was granted in England but the adopted person is now living in Angus, the adoptee may approach the agency for the counselling that is mandatory under English legislation.

The adoption counselling service is coordinated by the Permanence Team Manager. Referrals are passed to the Permanence Team Manager and where appropriate are then allocated to one of the workers on the list of Adoption Counsellors.

The number of people on the list of adoption counsellors has dropped in the last few years and the recruitment and training of new and existing adoption counselors will be taken forward.

Between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, an adoption counselling service was provided to 13 people wishing to trace family members. Social workers from within the Permanence Team dealt with the majority of the cases with the exception of one case which was dealt with by an adoption counsellor outwith the Permanence Team.

The number of referrals over the last 9 years is summarised in figure 3, overleaf.

Fig 3 - Adoption Counselling Referrals

	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Number of referrals	23	25	19	15	9	11	11	20	13	13

Fig 4 - Adoption Counselling - Referral categories – 2010 to 2011

Adoptees	Birth parents	Birth siblings	Adopters	Other
8	2	1	2	0

2.6 POST ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

In addition to the counseling described in section 3.5 above, additional duties have been placed on local authorities by the Adoption Support Service Regulations in 2009 with regard to assessment of need for individuals affected by adoption. The purpose of the new legislation is to increase the support available to adoptive families and to clarify the arrangements where placements are made which cross agency borders. The additional demand for services is likely to grow incrementally as adoptions are granted under the terms of the new regulations.

2.7 POST ADOPTION CONTACT

A post adoption contact service is provided by the Adoption Agency where an adoption has been made which includes an agreement that the adoptive parents and birth parents will continue to share information. There are currently 15 mail box agreements actively being maintained.

2.8 ADOPTION REGISTER

All adoption files relating to adoptions granted by Tayside Regional Council prior to 31 March 1996 are stored in the Adoption Archive in Dundee. Since 1 April 1996, all adoption files relating to adoptions arranged by Angus Council are stored in secure conditions at Carseview, Forfar. The cost of the lease is shared between the three councils that previously comprised Tayside Region with Angus Council paying 25% of the costs involved. Staff from Angus Council Adoption Agency have access to this archive for adoption counselling purposes.

The Team Manager, (Permanence Team), assisted by the senior clerical officers who provide administrative support to the Adoption Agency, is the Keeper of the Adoption Index.

Part 3 - FEES AND OTHER EXPENDITURE

3.1 ADMINISTRATION AND MONITORING OF FEES AND ACCOUNTS

The payment of legal fees in connection with adoption has to be agreed at the Adoption and Permanence panel. Authorisation for payment of the fees is then the responsibility of the service manager. The legal fees include Curator ad Litem and Reporting Officer Fees, the fees charged by solicitors for acting in Adoption and Permanence Order cases, and fees for the linking of children with adopters and permanent carers such as those charged by BAAF's Scottish Resource Network.

3.2 ADOPTION AGENCY EXPENDITURE

In cases where the council is placing a child with a family, it is normal practice for us to pay the legal fees in relation to actions for adoption or permanence orders. The level of these fees is difficult to predict in advance as it depends greatly on whether or not the birth parents contest the case and how long the legal process lasts.. The level of fees charged for Curator ad Litem/ Reporting Officer reports in adoption cases showed a sudden increase two years ago following a decision by COSLA not to set a fixed rate for these reports. Curator fees have reduced by 50% since 2009/2010

Fig 5 - Legal Fees

	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Residence	£0	£1487	£0	£2,207	£700	£2,365	£2,123	£11,309	£5,045	£4,314
Adoption	£0	£0	£1174	£24,816	£1,698	£39,204	£59,374	£69,000	£21,998	£43,857
Permanence Order (+PRO)	£1,032	£1019	£1565	£21,225	£40,973	£1,003	£1,020	0	£1,123	£672
Curators Fees Adoption	£567	£425	£1128	£2,340	£2,225	£4,505	£7,474	£6,339	£8,880	£4,611
Curators Fees (+PO)	£1,556	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£605	£1,175	£574
TOTAL	£3,155	£2,931	£3,867	£50,558	£45,596	£47,077	£69,990	£87,253	£38,223	£53,356

Adoption and residence allowances are paid to facilitate the placement of children with permanent families. These allowances are only paid in respect of those children who might not otherwise achieve permanency (see fig 6 below).

Fig 6 – Allowances paid to permanent carers

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Adoption	128,777	118,598	130,036	147,958	169,546
Custody & Residence	88,562	117,606	148,074	215,881	226,840
TOTAL	£217,339	£236,204	£278,110	£363,839	£396,386

The trend in the number of adoption and residence allowances continues to be upward. Payments are based on the age of the child, so there can be variation from one year to the next as some of the older children, whose carers are receiving the largest allowances, leave the system. It is likely however that the overall amount payable will continue to rise in the coming year. It should be noted that children eligible for an adoption, kinship or residence allowance, will previously have been in receipt of fostering allowances so these allowances do not represent new expenditure for the Council.

Inter agency fees

Where children are placed with adoptive parents or permanent foster carers outwith Angus, there is a charge levied by the authority or voluntary agency that assessed, and will support the new family. Angus, along with the other members of the North East Consortium, and other local authorities have introduced a charging fee when placing children with families assessed by another local authority. Likewise there is a charging fee for children placed with families assessed by the Permanence Team. The rates charged for these placements are based on BAAF interagency fees.

Three children were placed with Angus prospective adopters from other authorities however one placement has subsequently broken down. Three children were placed with prospective adoptive parents from other local authorities.

Part 4 - OVERVIEW OF ADOPTION AGENCY BUSINESS

4.1 VOLUME AND BREAKDOWN OF PANEL BUSINESS

The Angus panels were exceptionally busy during 2010/ 2011. The 25 panel meetings dealt with 183 cases, contrasting with the average over the last nine years of 152 cases per year. This level of business reflects the high number of children in accommodation and the number being placed for permanence. Eleven prospective adopters and three permanent carers were approved and 10 children were matched into permanent placements. At 30 March 2011 family finding was continuing for 35 children registered as requiring permanent care.

One of the senior clerical officers who organises and minutes the panel meeting had a three month sickness absence which stretched further the limited resources of the team. In light of the increasing workloads of the senior clerical officers a scoping exercise is being undertaken with a view to identifying the additional hours required to manage panel business.

Fig 7 Total submissions to the adoption and fostering panels

	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Number of submissions	167	107	106	137	139	153	171	204	200	183

Fig 8 Breakdown of panel business

	Adoption and Permanence Panel				Fostering Panel			
	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Children presented (Form E)	23	27	19	23				
Children presented – earlier decision deferred for reconsideration of legal route	8	21	8	6				
Children reviewed	7	7	4	17				
Children de-registered	0	2	1	2				
Matching (no of children)	15	19	19	12				
Carer applications	11	10	15	15	7	6	4	8
Carer applications (decision deferred)	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0
Carer reviews	4	3	3	8	30	17	21	15
Carer reviews (decision deferred)	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	0
Carers de-registered	2	2	2	2	4	11	7	2
Interim approval	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Adoption allowance applications (no of children)	7	7	10	6				
Adoption allowance reviews (no of children)	11	13	18	19				
Adoption allowance applications deferred (no of children)	0	0	2	0				
Residence allowance applications (no of children)	14	15	17	3				
Residence allowance applications deferred/unsuccessful	0	4	1	0				
Residence one-off payment applications (no of children)	15	15	15	7				
Residence allowance reviews (no of children)	8	19	30	33				
Custody allowance reviews (no of children)	2	1	1	1				
Custody allowance withdrawal	1	0	0	1				
Consultancy/ miscellaneous	0	1	0	0		1		
Private fostering applications	0	0	-	1				
Total	129	166	166	158	42	38	34	25

4.2 MEETING CHILDREN'S NEEDS FOR PERMANENCY

The first consideration of the Social Work Department when working with children who become looked after is the ability of the child's birth family to provide safe, permanent care for the child, and for this to be achieved within a reasonable period of time. If this has been or may be ruled out, it is critical that alternative plans are made to provide the child with stability and security as they grow up. Unless members of the child's extended family are in a position to take on this role, the principal alternatives for providing the child with long term security are adoption and permanent fostering. In the latter case the child's position is likely to be secured legally by means of a Permanence Order under section 80 and 83 of The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

Achieving permanence for children is a complex and time consuming area of work. Although the children may not be exposed to the immediate risks present in child protection cases, evidence from research¹ suggests there are considerable risks to their long term well being and development if they are not provided with the security of permanent care or if there are significant delays in achieving this. The adoption agency has an important role in enabling permanence decisions to be made and implemented without undue delay.

Fig 9 Children registered as requiring permanence

		01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Registered for permanence	<i>Adoption</i>	2	6	1	5	18	17	10	18	15	10
	<i>Perm fostering</i>	0	2	1	2	11	2	5	6	4	11
	<i>Sec 12</i>							1	-	-	-
	Legal route deferred										2
	Total	2	8	2	7	29	19	16	24	19	23
Matched with permanent carers	<i>Adoption</i>	4	0	5	6	5	5	13	14	10	8
	<i>Perm fostering</i>	10	4	0	0	8	8	2	5	9	3
	<i>Long term fostering</i>										1
	Total	14	4	5	6	13	13	15	19	19	12
Adoption granted		1	1	5	8	3	6	16	14	4	10
PRO Granted		2	5	0	1	2	0	0	0	4	?

¹ Roy Parker 1999 *Adoption Now: Messages from research*; John Wiley & Sons

4.3 RECRUITMENT AND APPROVAL OF PROSPECTIVE CARERS

Recommendations to approve prospective foster carers and adoptive parents are made by the Fostering and Adoption panels. The panels also review carer's approval on an annual basis and deal with any requests for variation in the category or level of approval. Although the primary responsibility for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers and adoptive parents lies with the Fostering Team, the panel enables the agency to maintain an overview of this work.

The number of prospective foster carers and adoptive parents approved by the panel is summarised in Figure 10 (below).

Fig 10 Carers registered by the adoption and fostering panels

		01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Permanent carers	<i>Adopters</i>	1	3	2	8	4	11	10	9	13	13
	<i>Perm foster carers</i>	2	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	3	2
	<i>Total</i>	3	6	2	8	7	11	10	10	16	15
Temporary carers	<i>Specialist carers scheme</i>	N/A	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
	<i>Foster care</i>	5	3	3	5	10	6	8	6	6	8
	<i>Total</i>	5	4	4	6	11	6	8	6	6	8
Family based respite (previously ARCH)		1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Relatives		0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		9	11	8	15	18	19	18	16	22	23

4.4 NORTH EAST CONSORTIUM¹

The search for appropriate families for children requiring permanence extends to other areas if there are no suitable families approved by Angus Council. The North East consortium operated for eight years on an informal basis but in 2005 became a formalised family placement consortium, administered by BAAF with a part time coordinator based in their Edinburgh office. This has improved the operation of the consortium and considerably reduced the administrative burden on us and other authorities, in addition to identifying matches for children.

Three Angus children were matched and placed outwith Angus this year. Three children from other consortium authorities were placed with Angus carers.

¹ The Consortium has representatives from eight Council's: Fife, Perth & Kinross, Dundee, Angus, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland.

Fig 11 Children placed through the North East consortium

	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Angus children placed in other authorities	1	0	0	3	0	2	5	4	0	3	3
Children from other authorities placed in Angus	3	1	0	2	0	4	6	2	1	5	3

4.5 PLACEMENTS ELSEWHERE IN THE UK

Where placements cannot be identified locally or through the NE Consortium, it is sometimes appropriate to consider placements further afield. Links have been established with the West of Scotland consortium as well as other voluntary adoption agencies. During 2010\11 three children were placed through St Andrews Children Society, Edinburgh. The others were all placed with Angus Council prospective adoptive parents.

4.6 ADOPTION AGENCY SUPPORT

The Adoption Agency is staffed by the Permanence Team Manager (Family Placement Services) and two part time senior clerical assistants. The Permanence Team Manager is responsible for managing all aspects of the Adoption Agency's functions and ensuring that Angus Council meets its statutory duties in connection with the agency.

The responsibility of the senior clerical assistants is to provide a clerical and administrative service to the agency. The senior clerical assistants minute all the panels. To provide an effective service the senior clerical assistants require to have, or the ability to acquire, a detailed knowledge of the functioning of the Adoption Agency and a basic knowledge of the statutory requirements. Angus Council is in the fortunate position of having the services of two experienced and dedicated senior clerical assistants who provide a skilled service to the agency.

4.7 Private Fostering

Private fostering arrangements exist where parents make arrangements with people who are not close relatives and not approved foster carers, to care for their children for 28 days or longer. Local authorities are required to assess, approve and support such arrangements.

A public information leaflet is available in Council offices and other public venues, outlining parents and carers responsibilities in respect of private fostering. The same information has recently been made available via the Council's website, and there is an entry in the online A-Z of Angus Council services.

In Angus there is currently one approved private fostering arrangement in place. A further application is currently being assessed. It is recognised that there may be other arrangements that are not known to the authority and efforts will continue to maintain a public profile for this issue so that parents and private foster carers are made aware of their responsibilities.

Part 5 - KEY ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS 2010-2011

- The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 was introduced in 2009 and the accompanying guidance finally published late in 2010. The Council's own procedures, previously contained within the permanence manual, are being rewritten in line with this guidance. The opportunity has been taken for an extensive revision of the guidance so that the links between general child care planning and permanence work are more clearly articulated.
- In line with revised regulations and guidance on the payment of adoption allowances, the Council's own guidance in relation to adoption, residence and kinship allowances is also being reviewed and rewritten. Significant areas of uncertainty remain about the payment of welfare benefits alongside these allowances, so these schemes will continue to be kept under review.
- There has been a continuing rise in financial support provided to relatives caring for children who are or have been looked after. Three new residence allowances were agreed during the year. The cost of the residence allowance payments has more than doubled in the past three years and considerably exceeds the money that was originally ring fenced by the government to cover this support.
- This year the annual Care Commission inspection of the Adoption and Fostering services was conducted jointly with HMIE as part of the child protection inspection. The feedback from the inspection in relation to the family placement services was positive with no requirements or recommendations being imposed.
- BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to run the new National Adoption Register for Scotland. This will begin operating imminently. The establishment of a register is a positive development that Angus Council has advocated for some years. It is a welcome addition to the resources available to children requiring adoptive families.
- The charging policy agreed last year by the eight local authorities that participate in the North East Consortium (for sharing resources across authorities) is now in operation. The rates charged for placements are based on BAAF interagency fees, and mirror the arrangements in place with authorities and voluntary agencies.

Priorities for 2011/2012

- The introduction of a new skills based fostering scheme in April 2010 has led to a modest increase in the number of foster carers in Angus. We remain reliant however on the placement of a significant number of children in relatively expensive placements commissioned from private fostering providers, often some distance from Angus. A key priority for 2011/12 will

therefore be to increase the capacity and quality of the fostering scheme in Angus to better meet the needs of these children. A 12 month 'Focus on Fostering' project is being established to ensure this work is given the appropriate emphasis and priority.

- The new permanence and child care procedures will be produced to reflect the recently published guidance on the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and associated regulations. They will also link to the GIRFEC approach currently being developed.
- Work is being undertaken at a national level to develop a commissioning strategy for fostering services. This has the potential to reduce the cost of externally commissioned services and to create a more productive relationship between the statutory and private sectors. At this stage it remains unclear what impact the strategy will have.
- Further consideration will be given to setting up a finance sub panel to deal with allowance applications in order to manage the increasing level of business the panels are conducting.
- Over the past 2/3 years there has been a reduction in availability of Panel members. This coupled with the resignation of one of the Panel chairperson's and the proposed introduction of a Finance sub panel has necessitated the need for recruitment of new panel members. Recruitment and induction will be a key priority over the coming months.

Part 6 CONCLUSIONS

The Adoption Agency has become well established and provides a high standard of service to Angus Council. The difficulties of sustaining a sufficient number of foster carers and of identifying permanent carers for all children who require such placements remain central issues in Angus and across Scotland. The Adoption and Fostering panels have dealt with an exceptionally high number of cases during the year. Feedback indicates that the panels have continued to fulfill the statutory obligations in an effective and professional manner.

The key areas for development in the coming year will be:

- Increase the capacity and quality of the fostering service by means of a 12 month Focus on Fostering project.
- Development of practice in line with the recent implementation of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.
- Monitor the impact of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 in relation to post adoption support services and further develop our procedures in relation to the new duties.
- Maintain the drive to increase the number of permanent foster carers and adopters in Angus, in the face of the continuing high level of demand for permanent placements.
- Due to the increasing level of Panel business, re-consideration to the introduction of a sub-panel to deal with all the financial matters.
- Review of allowances paid under the adoption, residence and kinship allowance schemes in line with changed regulation and guidance.

APPENDIX 1

**ANGUS COUNCIL ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE AND FOSTERING
PANEL MEMBERS**

	Panel 1	Panel 2
Chairperson	Mark Hodginson (Adult Services)	Audrey Jenkins (Education)
Depute Chair	David Wilson (Community Care)	Barbara Cowan (Children's Services)
Co-ordinator	Elizabeth Ross (Children's Services)	Elizabeth Ross (Children's Services)
Medical Adviser	Gwendolynn Fagerson (Health)	Gwendolynn Fagerson (Health)
Legal Adviser	Jean Sutherland (Legal) Victoria Morrow (Legal)	Stephen Brown (Legal) Wendy Sutherland (Legal)
Panel Member	Frances Wiseman (Mental Health)	John Welsh (Community child care)
Panel Member	Anne Hamilton (Independent member)	Anne Martin (Independent member)
Panel Member	Fiona Roberts Team Manager Children's Services	
Panel Member		
Minute Taker	Christine Russell (Senior Clerical Officer)	Pauline Hartley (Senior Clerical Officer)
Welfare Rights Adviser to the panel	(Welfare Rights Officer)	(Welfare Rights Officer)
Agency Decision Maker	Lorraine Young (Senior Manager, Community Care Services)	Lorraine Young (Senior Manager, Community Care Services)

ADOPTION AND FOSTERING PANEL *APPLICANTS/CARER* FEEDBACK FORMS

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES RECEIVED FOR THE YEAR 2010-2011

A total of 29 feedback forms were returned during this period

Question 1: Were you invited in writing to attend the Panel?

Yes	28
No	1
Total	29

Question 2: Were you clear about what Panel members were asking you?

Yes	29
No	0
Total	30

Question 3: How strongly were you encouraged to attend the Panel?

Very strongly	15
Strongly encouraged	9
Encouraged or discouraged	5
Neither encouraged	0
Discouraged	0
Total	29

Question 4: If you attended were the practical arrangements?

Good	25
Average	4
Total	29

Summary:

Positive responses - Good location; thankful for tea\coffee during waiting time; facilities better than last venue

Negative responses – Late in starting

Question 5: Did you feel you were given sufficient time to answer questions raised?

Yes	28
No	1
Total	29

Summary: Due to a panel member leaving she was unable to ask her questions

Question 6: Did you feel that the Panel listened to you and treated you with courtesy and respect?

Yes	27
No	1
No comment	1
Total	10

Summary:

Negative comment – Delayed start, insufficient chairs

Question 7: What aspects of attending Panel did you find most positive?

- Atmosphere relaxed, panel members friendly and welcoming
- Able to express my views
- Overall a positive and constructive experience
- My point of view being listened to
- Arrangements and timings were all very well organised
- Size of panel less intimidating
- Panel thorough in their questioning
- Support of our social worker made us feel more at ease

Question 8: What would have improved your experience of Panel?

- Better time keeping - this has a knock on effect for everyone
- Not to hear that my children were to be taken from me
- Not start so early as I have to organise childminder

Question 9: Have you any comments about the way that the outcome of the Panel was communicated to you (was it sufficiently clear, communicated sensitively, soon enough, etc)?

Positive response	16
Negative response	3
No comment	10
Total	29

Summary: More relaxed than previous panels. Outcome shared with us swiftly and sensitively. Panel procedure explained clearly. Prompt outcome.

Question 10: Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

- A daunting experience but panel members soon put us at ease
- Second time adopters – service much improved from the first time round
- Found it nerve racking to be in the waiting room when another couple got feed back
- Panel very sympathetic and sensitive
- Good common sense approach by panel members
- Express support for link workers
- Felt supported throughout the process
- Great result for my family

ADOPTION AND FOSTERING PANEL *SOCIAL WORKER* FEEDBACK FORMS

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES RECEIVED FOR THE YEAR 2010-2011

A total of 30 feedback forms were returned during this period

Question 1: Did you attend the Panel as an observer prior to presenting your case?

Yes	7
No	23
N/A	0
Total	30

Question 2: Was the practical arrangement of your attendance at Panel satisfactory?

Yes	27
No	3
N/A	0
Total	30

Summary:

Positive response – efficient as always

Negative responses - Venue difficult to locate, a map would have been helpful to find the room. Panel behind time, next people also in waiting room

Question 3: Were you introduced to the Panel members?

Yes	28
No	2
N/A	0
Total	30

Summary:

Negative responses – already knew panel members.

Question 4: Were you clear about what the panel member were asking you?

Yes	30
No	0
N/A	0
Total	30

Summary: Panel members asked the appropriate questions.

Question 5: Did you feel you were given sufficient time to answer questions raised?

Yes	28
No	2
N/A	0
Total	30

Summary:

Negative response - Panel behind time. Large numbers in attendance – not always opportunity to fully answer questions.

Question 6: Did you feel that the Panel listened to you and treated you with courtesy and respect?

Yes	30
No	0
N/A	0
Total	30

Question 7: What aspects of attending Panel did you find most positive?

- Clearly advised of process
- Open debate, respectful, insightful, thoroughness of panel members
- Positive summary given by chair
- Complex at times – impressed with how it was handled
- Panel members child centered and asked appropriate questions
- Although nervous, couples put at ease
- Genuine interest expressed in children
- Questions asked in a friendly manner
- Focused approach by panel members

Question 8: What aspects of attending Panel did you find most difficult?

- Focus on money and not on child (finance request)

Summary:- on the whole attendees did not find anything difficult

Question 9: Have you any comments about the way that the outcome of the Panel was communicated to you (was it sufficiently clear, communicated sensitively, soon enough etc)?

Positive response	28
Negative response	2
No comment	0
Total	30

Summary:

Negative response – there could have been others in the room

Positive response – outcome clearly communicated. Chair had a genuine and empathic manner. Recommendation fully explained. Very prompt.

Question 10: Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

- Felt it was valuable for applicants to hear information already given by their social worker being reinforced by others, eg legal adviser
- Panel struggling to keep to time schedule
- Panel friendly, clear about objectives

APPENDIX 3

ADOPTION AGENCY EXPENDITURE - 1 APRIL 2010 – 31 MARCH 2011

LEGAL FEES		2010\2011
Residence/Custody	=	£4,314
Adoption	=	£43,857
Parental Responsibilities Orders (PRO)	=	£672
		<u>£48,843</u>
 Curator ad Litem/Reporting Officer Fees		
Adoption		£4,611
Permanence Orders		£574
	=	<u>£5,185</u>
 Subscriptions/Memberships		
BAAF Corporate Membership Fee	=	£2,163
NFCA Corporate Membership Fee	=	£1,252
Family Care (Birthlink) Grant/subscription	=	£1,499
Care Commission	=	£3,126
North East Consortium	=	£4,582
		<u>£12,622</u>
 Scottish Resource Network (BAAF)		
Referral Fees	=	£0
<i>(currently not charged but may be reinstated)</i>		
		<u>£0</u>
 Interagency Fees		
Voluntary Societies	=	£42,039
Local Authorities	=	£17,517
		<u>£59,556</u>
 Allowances		
Adoption Allowances	=	£169,546
Custody & Residence Allowances	=	£226,840
		<u>£396,386</u>
 Panel expenses		
Training	=	£0
Chairperson fees	=	£0
Venue rental	=	£1,350
Panel members expenses	=	£0
Panel hospitality	=	£ 87
		<u>£1,437</u>
 Miscellaneous		
Adoption archive storage	=	£ 826
BAAF license for use of copyright forms	=	£ 601
Forms / publications	=	£0
		<u>£1,427</u>