



**ANGUS ADOPTION AGENCY AND FOSTERING PANEL**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016**

Report prepared by: Eunice McLennan, Area Manager, People Directorate

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides information on the operation of Angus Adoption Agency from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

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 Chief Social Work Officer who is the Head of Children and Young People in the Children and Learning Directorate. This authority is currently delegated to the Head of Community Health and Care Services who acts as the Agency Decision Maker.

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.

## **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 with authority to adopt' application should be made
- (b) To consider whether a prospective adopter is suitable or continues to be suitable to be an adoptive parent
- (c) To consider whether prospective adopters would be suitable adoptive parents for a particular child.
- (d) To make recommendations on any other matter referred to it which is relevant to the adoption agencies function under the Act

Supplementary functions of the panel include:

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

The Adoption and Permanence Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.

### **1.2 ANGUS FOSTERING PANEL**

The main functions of the Fostering Panel are to:

- (a) Make recommendations on the suitability or continued suitability of persons as foster carers.
- (b) To make recommendations as to whether a foster carer would be suitable as a foster carer for:
  - a particular child or children
  - any child
  - Certain categories of child.
- (c) Make recommendations on the maximum number of children a particular foster carer may have in their care at any one time, subject to the placement limit set out in legislation.

The Fostering Panel also makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.

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 Osborne, Principal Educational Psychologist and Margaret Wells Independent Chair and 12 panel members. These members attend alternate panels with approximately six members in attendance at each meeting. Panel members include a medical adviser, legal adviser, social work staff, independent members and a representative from schools and learning.

Each panel should have a depute chair, who will cover in the chair's absence. One panel requires to identify a new depute.

For details of the current panel membership, refer to Appendix 1. Panels meet twice per month.

Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, 47 panels were arranged. This included 23 Adoption and Permanence Panels, 23 Fostering Panels and one Finance Panel. This is a slight increase in last year due to a 15% increase in business.

### **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 supported in the administration of the Adoption Agency and the panels, by two senior clerical officers.

### **1.5 CONSULTATION ON FUNCTIONING OF THE PANELS**

There is a system in place for consulting with people who attend the panel. Every foster carer, applicant, social worker and team manager who attends the Panel is given a questionnaire to complete regarding their attendance at Panel.

In an effort to make the consultation process more effective and to increase response rates, the questionnaires were sent to people electronically since February 2014 via Survey-Monkey. Unfortunately this has not been overly successful. Attempts have been made to encourage participants to engage in this process with limited success. This needs to be revisited. The response to the consultation questionnaires are summarised in Appendix 2. However, the feedback from the panel

reflects mixed experiences of staff and carers/parents. This will be taken forward at a panel development day in June 2016.

## **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. Panel members attended one development day which focused on disruption in adoption and permanent foster care and explored some of the risk factors associated with disruption and placement stability. The Panel Chairs used to attend BAAF's Panel Chairs Meetings which ceased at the time of BAAF going into liquidation. The Panel Chairs, medical advisers and legal advisers have had regular meetings with the Area Manager responsible for Adoption and Fostering, the Panel Co-ordinator and Team Manager, Fostering Services.

## **1.7 APPEALS**

There were two review panels which were not upheld and no advice hearings held during 2015-2016.

## **Part 2 - ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS OF THE AGENCY**

### **2.1 ADMINISTRATION OF SECTION 18 NOTIFICATIONS**

Section 29/30 of Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 deals with adoption by a person or couples 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 2015 and 31 March 2016 the Adoption Agency received 4 notifications that people intended to apply to be adoptive parents of relatives/step children. Although the Adoption Agency has received two confirmations of an Adoption Order being granted, it is likely that this figure does not represent the number of Adoption Orders granted as intimation of concluded proceedings is not required to be made on the local authority.

**Fig 1 - Section 18 Adoption**

	<b>12/13</b>	<b>13/14</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>
S.29\30 Notifications	1	4	7	4
S.29\30 Adoptions Granted	1	0	1	2
S.29\30 Withdrawn	0	0	0	0

### **2.2 ADOPTIONS WITH AN INTERCOUNTRY ELEMENT**

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 Government.

The legislation affecting intercountry adoption requires local authorities to provide a very specific service to people who are interested in adopting a child from abroad or wishing to take a child out of the UK for adoption. 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 to cover the costs of the assessment.

Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 there was one inter-country application which did not proceed due to the wishes of the child involved.

### **2.3 ADOPTION ALLOWANCE SCHEME**

Angus Council currently operates an adoption allowance scheme. The most recent scheme was set up following the implementation, of the Adoption Allowance (Scotland) Regulations 1996 and was approved by the Social Work Committee on 21 April 1998 (Committee Report 400/98).

During the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 Angus Council continued to pay adoption allowances for 18 children. No new adoption allowance applications were presented during the year as there were no children who were eligible for the adoption allowance placed for adoption.

### **2.4 RESIDENCE ALLOWANCE SCHEME**

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 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 Angus Council continued to pay residence allowances for 52 children. Three new residence allowance applications were considered during the year. Three residence allowances ceased during this time. In October 2015 changes have been made to the level of payments received to Kinship carers and those subject to Residence allowances which were introduced by the Scottish Government Those carers are now entitled to allowances equivalent of those paid to foster carers minus child related benefits

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

**Fig 2 - Allowances Paid**

	<b>12/13</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>
Adoption Allowances	23	24	18
Residence Allowances	53	61	52

## **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 who 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 are allocated to social workers. In 2015/16 29 people were in receipt of post adoption counseling.

## **2.6 POST ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES**

In addition to the counseling described above, additional duties were 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 this 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. 15 people have engaged in birth record counselling, 14 birth parents have been offered counselling which is a significant increase from last year and 45 families have been offered direct post adoption support which is a growing area of business.

## **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 family will continue to share information. There are currently 35 children for whom a mail box agreement is in place. Three families receive direct support from Children and Young People Services in the People Directorate in respect of facilitating contact between adopted children and their birth family. This is an area of work which is expanding.

## **2.8 INTERAGENCY PLACEMENTS**

An arrangement exists between local authorities to allow children to be placed with adoptive parents or permanent foster carers in other areas. An interagency fee is charged by the authority, or voluntary agency, that

has assessed and will support the carers.

During 2015/16 there were 3 children placed with prospective adopters in Angus by other authorities and 1 child placed by the Council out with Angus.

## **2.9 ADOPTION REGISTER AND RECORDS STORE**

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 Bruce House, Arbroath. Staff from Angus Council Adoption Agency have access to this archive for adoption counselling purposes. The Permanence Team Manager is the Keeper of the Adoption Index.

## **Part 3 - OVERVIEW OF ADOPTION AGENCY BUSINESS**

### **3.1 VOLUME AND BREAKDOWN OF PANEL BUSINESS**

Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 the 47 panel meetings dealt with 188 items of business.

**Fig 3 Total submissions to the adoption and fostering panels**

	<b>13/14</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>
Number of submissions	267	163	188

	Adoption and Permanence Panel			Fostering Panel		
	13/14	14/15	15/16	13/14	14/15	15/16
Children presented (Form E)	13	12	9	N/A	N/A	N/A
Children presented – earlier decision deferred for reconsideration of legal route	13	12	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Children reviewed (inc children reviewed in need of permanence)	9	5	21	N/A	N/A	N/A
Children de-registered	9	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matching (no of children)	13	12	11	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carer applications	13	13		22	15	7
Family member applications	0	0		2	1	1
Carer reviews (inc update reviews)	4	2		35	36	32
Carer reviews (decision deferred)	1	0		1	0	1
Carers de-registered	1	1		6	10	8
Interim approval	0	0		0	0	0
Adoption allowance applications (no of children)	9	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Adoption allowance reviews (no of children)	16	2	14	N/A	N/A	N/A
Adoption allowance applications deferred (no of children)	0	0		N/A	N/A	N/A
Residence allowance applications (no of children)	5	7	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Residence allowance applications deferred \ unsuccessful	0	0		N/A	N/A	N/A
Residence allowance reviews (no of children)	29	27	35	N/A	N/A	N/A
One-off payment(legal cost) applications (no of children)	2	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Adoption Allowance ceased	3	2	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Residence Allowances ceased	3	5	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Consultancy/ advice	2	N/A	0	N/A	2	N/A
Out with approvals		N/A	2	66	47	31
Private fostering appl	0	0		N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>80</b>

**Fig 4 Breakdown of panel business**

### 3.2 MEETING CHILDREN'S NEEDS FOR PERMANENCE

The first consideration 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 is not possible 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 of The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

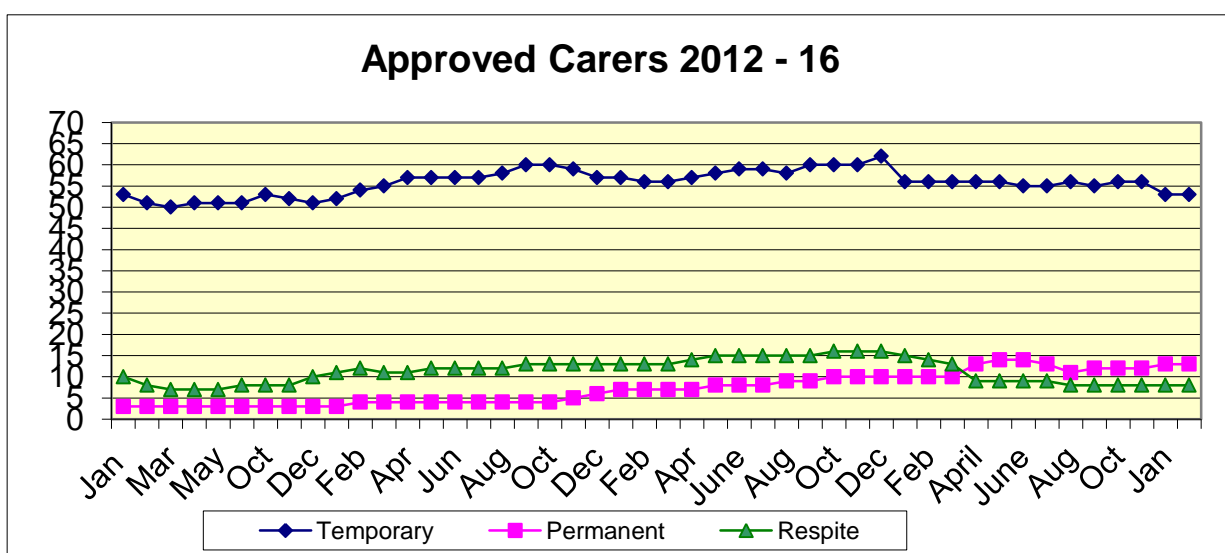
Achieving permanence for children is a complex and time consuming area of work. Although the children may not be exposed to the immediate risks present in child protection cases, there are considerable risks to their long term well being and development if they are not provided with the security of permanent 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 5 Children registered as requiring permanence**

		13/14	14/15	15/16
Legal route established / planned	Adoption (POA)	6	8	4
	PO	3	15	0
	Sec 12	0	0	0
Registered for Permanence - Legal route deferred (No of Children)		13	12	6
<b>Legal route re-established (no of children)</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>N/A</b>
		13/14	14/15	15/16
Matched with permanent carers	Adoption (POA)	9	10	4
	Perm\long term fostering	4	2	3
Pre-adoption disruption		0	1	1
Adoptions granted		4	4	11
PO granted		3	0	0
POA granted		7	7	6

### 3.3 RECRUITMENT OF PROSPECTIVE CARERS

Based on an analysis of the number of foster carers needed, a recruitment target was set for 2015/16 to reach a total of 75 carers. Having an overall target provides a useful aim for recruitment initiatives, although the actual capacity of the service is determined as much by the skills and abilities of individual carers as it is by the overall number. At present 31/3/16 there are 75 foster carers, (53 temporary, 8 permanent plus 14 on time out, 12 of which are to be deregistered)) and 13 respite carers. The reduction towards the end of the chart noted in the graph below followed the deregistration of a number of carers (8) who have retired from fostering for a variety of reasons



Carers in the Angus Skills Based Fostering scheme are approved at one of three levels. We currently have 13 carers approved at level 3. These carers are required to have significant experience of fostering and be able to evidence a wide range of skills. Moving carers to this level takes time.

We will continue to work towards the projected target of 15 carers at this level. One of the long term objectives of the service is to reduce the average number of children in placement with each foster carer, on the basis of evidence that in general, outcomes are improved where there are fewer children in placement. Over the period 1/4/15 to 31/3/16 the average number of children in placement has dropped from 1.6 to 1.45. The number of level 2 and level 3 carers approved to take only one or two children is 32.

The use of externally commissioned placements has reduced and is well below the national average. In Scotland as a whole local authorities purchase on average 27% of their placements from independent providers. The current figure in Angus is 3.25% (1 temporary, 3 permanent). Placements with external agencies are relatively expensive, but the introduction of a national commissioning framework has slightly reduced these costs as well as clarifying expectations about the service provided.

We continue to make efforts to recruit permanent foster carers for children unable to return to their families but where their age or circumstances means that adoption is not an appropriate option. There are 8 permanent carers providing placements for 13 children.

### 3.4 APPROVAL OF PROSPECTIVE CARERS

Recommendations to approve prospective foster carers and adoptive carers are made by the Fostering and Adoption panels. The panels also review carer's approval minimally every three years after the initial twelve month review post approval 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 and Permanence Teams, 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 6 (below).

**Fig 6 Carers registered by the adoption and fostering panels**

		13/14	14/15	15/16
<b>Permanent Carers</b>	Adopters	10	8	7
	Perm Fost Carers	3	3	0
<b>Temp Carers</b>	Temp	19	7	5
	Respite	1	5	4
<b>Support Carers</b>		2	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>19</b>

### 3.5 NORTH EAST CONSORTIUM<sup>1</sup> (NEC) and SCOTTISH ADOPTION REGISTER (SAR)

The search for appropriate families for children requiring permanence extends to other areas if there are no suitable families approved by Angus Council. In 2005 the North East consortium became a formalised family placement consortium, administered by BAAF. (British Association of Adoption and Fostering) Unfortunately this ceased to be in practice following the administration of BAAF in July 2015. The Adoption Fostering Alliance was established in September 2015 and plans are underway to establish a similar forum moving forward.

<sup>1</sup> The Consortium has representatives from various Councils: Fife, Perth & Kinross, Dundee, Angus, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannan, Stirling, Falkirk, Moray and Highland.

The Scottish Adoption Register (SAR) is also working with adoption agencies across Scotland to increase opportunities for family finding.

One child has been matched through the consortia/SAR.

**Fig 7 Children placed through the North East consortium/SAR**

	<b>12/13</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>
Angus children placed in other authorities	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Children from other authorities placed in Angus	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

### **3.6 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. There have been no notifications in respect of private fostering arrangement in 2015/2016.

## Part 4 CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Key Issues, Developments and Priorities

While the workload of the Adoption and Fostering panels continues to remain consistently busy, feedback from those who attend panels suggests they have continued to fulfill the statutory obligations in an effective and professional manner. The difficulty of sustaining a sufficient number of foster carers and of identifying permanent carers for all children who require such placements continues to be a central issue in Angus and across Scotland. This will remain the broad priority for the service in the coming year.

The key issues noted in the report, and the identified service development priorities are:

#### 4.1.1 Progressing permanence plans for children

The need to speed up the process of moving children into placement where they have been identified as requiring adoption or permanent fostering is identified as both a national and local priority. In order to ensure that the service is managing permanence in the most efficient way a review of Permanence is to be undertaken and preparatory work has started. The aim of the Review is to ascertain if current procedures and practice in relation children requiring permanent placements are achieving best possible outcomes for these children.

#### 4.1.2 Recruitment of prospective adoptive parents and foster carers

Increasing the number of approved carers remains a key factor for us to achieve better outcomes for Looked After Children. This year our campaign focus has been on "Making Memories" but unfortunately we have struggled to recruit permanent carers and those who will offer foster placements to teenagers and children with disabilities which is where our demand lies. . A recruitment group meets regularly to explore ways of enhancing the recruitment of prospective carers and ideas and methods of working are reviewed and initiated. A Facebook page has also been developed and is being used to highlight recruitment and areas of interest in relation to adopting and fostering.

#### 4.1.3 Kinship Care Allowances

In October 2015 Scottish Government announced changes were to be made to the level of payments received to Kinship carers and those subject to Residence allowances. Those carers are now entitled to allowances equivalent of those paid to foster carers minus child related benefits. A review of the Kinship Carers Scheme is to be undertaken and a new post has been created to appoint a kinship social worker dedicated to supporting kinship carers.

#### 4.1.4 Care Inspectorate Inspection

In February 2015 Angus Council's Adoption Service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate. The feedback, provided was very positive and the service continues to be graded at level 5 (Very Good) across all areas. There was one recommendation in relation to the membership and support to panel members. The panel membership needs to reflect better the community the council serves including a gender balance and

people with experience of adoption. Individual panel members need to receive supervision/appraisal in relation to their role. This year three new panel members have been recruited from the community and an action and development plan is due to be implemented. It is likely that a further Care Inspectorate Inspection will be undertaken in April/May 2016.

#### 4.1.5 Review of Angus Skills Based Fostering Scheme

A review of the skills based scheme started in September 2015 with a Stakeholders Event to look at the issues and challenges of the scheme and to consider how we can ensure the scheme meets the needs of the children of Angus. At times it can be difficult to find placements for teenagers and children with more challenging behaviors. Foster carers have been integral in this review which established 3 working groups looking at Level 3 Criteria, the paperwork and Respite. This Review is ongoing and aim is to conclude it by Autumn 2016.

Eunice McLennan  
Area Manager  
2 April 2016

**APPENDIX 1**

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

	<b>Panel 1</b>	<b>Panel 2</b>
Chairperson	Margaret Wells (Independent member)	Audrey Osborne (People)
Depute Chair	Kirsty Lee (Senior Planning Officer, Social Work and Health)	
Co-ordinator	Elizabeth Ross (Children's Services, Social Work and Health)	Elizabeth Ross (Children's Services, Social Work and Health)
Panel member	Lindsey Foreman (Children's Services, Social Work and Health)	Lindsey Foreman (Children's Services, Social Work and Health)
Medical Adviser	Gwendolynn Fagerson (Health)	Gwendolynn Fagerson (Health)
Legal Adviser	Various (Resources Directorate)	Various (Resources Directorate)
Panel Member	Barry Howard (Educational Psychologist)	Anne Martin (Independent member)
Panel Member	Fiona Roberts (Team Manager Children's Services, Social Work and Health)	Linda Riddell (Independent Member)
Panel Member	Sarah Turner (Independent Member)	Paul Donaldson Independent
Panel Member	Ruth Watson (Independent Member)	Barbara Cowan (Community Assessment and Review Officer)
		Graham Malcolm (Independent Member)
Minute Taker	Elaine Allan (Senior Clerical Officer)	Moir Hunter (Senior Clerical Officer)
Welfare Rights Adviser to the panel	Agnes Boath (Senior Welfare Rights Officer, Social Work and Health)	Agnes Boath (Senior Welfare Rights Officer, Social Work and Health)
Agency Decision Maker	George Bowie (Head of Community Health and Care Services)	George Bowie (Senior Manager, Adult Services)
Agency Decision Maker (Depute)	Alan Hope (Area Manager Criminal Justice Services)	Alan Hope (Area Manager Criminal Justice Services)

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **ADOPTION AND FOSTERING PANEL APPLICANTS/CARERS/SOCIAL WORKERS FEEDBACK FORMS**

#### **COLLATED RESPONSES RECEIVED FOR THE YEAR**

**APRIL 2015 -MARCH 2016**

**A total of 32 feedback forms were returned during this period**

#### **Attendees were asked around the practical arrangements at Panel:**

- We were asked to leave the waiting area when other people were given the outcome of their Panel which we could clearly hear and it was obviously negative feedback
- Rooms much better upstairs, they are bigger and brighter
- Room is very small and is not the most appropriate space for waiting to go to Panel
- Practical arrangements were good and felt listened to and treated with respect
- 

#### **Were you clear about what Panel members were asking you and were you given sufficient time to answer?**

- the panel allowed time to answer questions in a nerve racking situation when words can just escape you
- If unclear I was able to ask them to repeat their question
- I was concerned that my answer to a question was disputed in a way that suggested I was being untruthful
- I was not asked any questions by any panel members which I thought was unusual given some of the concerns I had highlighted in the matching report and the foster carer's review report. This was also the foster carer's first review since being approved
- Questions were asked and then re-asked by the chair who appeared confused and all over the place. The SW team manager had to remind the chair that they had already answered those particular questions. As a result this meant the panel went over time and the foster carers were sitting waiting for a long time before the matching panel.
- The panel was running 25 minutes late despite this being the first item on the agenda and therefore I had to leave before the end of the panel.

#### **Did the panel listen to you and treat you with courtesy and respect?**

- I was concerned about the questioning of a panel member and have taken this forward with the Chair and Service Manager
- Attendees were asked what were the most positive and difficult aspects of the panel.

**What aspects of the Panel did you find most positive?**

- Kept up to date with time lapses. Given time to answer and ability to ask for clarification if question not understood.
- Panel running on time
- Being able to speak about the practicalities of the case
- Matching the children with the foster carers as the children have had a number of placements over the years
- Panel members friendly and welcoming and the Chairperson put foster carer at ease
- Very child focused. I liked that they asked to speak to the young person first to hear their views
- The panel were sensitive to the foster carer's complex issues
- Questions asked in an open and sensitive way
- Majority of panel members were relaxed but did the job that was required
- Family were able to be open and honest with panel members about their feelings
- Most panel members engaged positively with applicants
- Panel encouraged applicants to expand of their answers in a sensitive manner
- This was a difficult panel, but the panel's clarity in their questions and the information they were requesting made it easier to follow.
- Panel members appreciated the good work the carer had done this year and told her so. It is always good to get good feedback
- Clarification of points being discussed
- Supportive approach of panel members to nervous applicants
- We had lots of support and encouragement from the social workers that attended with us
- 

**What aspects of the Panel did you find most difficult?**

- It was a complex case. I feel written information provided to panel was taken out of context
- Some confusion from the Chair as to who was asking which question. We were sent away but asked to come back as the Chair had forgotten to ask something
- Went over time – carers kept waiting for significant time in waiting room. Panel was rushed, disorganized and appeared “off the hoof”. I felt that some of the panel members had not read their papers.
- Lots of people, quite intimidating
- Lateness. Non verbal communication of some panel members
- Legal advisor was offputting as she stared at me through most of the Panel
- I am not sure applicants were as prepared for panel as they might have been
- I thought that some panel members attitude to alcohol consumption was negative and facial expressions clearly expressed negativity.
- Waiting time for their decision to be shared, although I understood why this took the time it did.
- its just a nerve racking experience, even with the panel training

**Any comments about the way the outcome of the Panel was communicated to you?**

- Communicated well to worker and carer
- Young person was anxious and Chair managed this well
- Clear and efficient
- Seemed to be a bit of confusion about whether the or not the young person needed to be de-registered. This was still not clear after the panel was over, but this was the main thing we went to panel to discuss
- The panel let the carer know the outcome within 15/20 minutes after the panel had ended. I feel this is helpful to the carer.
- I was not present when the chair gave the recommendation, but the applicant's fed back to me that they were unhappy with the vagueness of the outcome
- Chair was excellent, very clear and relayed the reasons for the recommendations
- Very warm sensitive manner shown by the Chair
- Communicated as well as it could be but I feel workers would benefit from the decision being given in written format to support clarity of understanding.
- Prompt and sensitively done
- Clearly and concisely communicated
- the positive outcome was shared very quickly from the panel chairperson

**Any other comments:**

- Panel running late
- Further consideration needs to be given involving Panel when a placement disrupts. This will ensure that Panel have the opportunity to contribute to any disruption
- Panel need to consider ways in which they can work towards addressing lateness. The impact this has on applicants and workers and for any case following it is not helpful
- It would be helpful if there is to be any change to Panel procedure or processes that this is agreed by senior management in the first instance to ensure consistency between panels
- This was my final panel as an employee of Angus Council, some 10 and a half years since I attended my first one here. I have known numerous chairs and Panel members and value the learning experiences gained through presenting cases at Panel. Thank you