

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE– 13 JUNE 2017

**REPORT ON THE ANGUS ADOPTION AGENCY AND THE FOSTERING PANEL – ANNUAL
REPORT 2016-2017**

REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report informs members of the production of the Annual Report on the Angus Adoption Agency and the Fostering Panel. The report highlights Angus Council's success over several years in providing an effective service for children, foster carers and adoptive parents and notes demand on resources as well as services provided. A copy of the annual report is appended.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Endorse the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report and support the future plans;
- (ii) Notes that the Report will be made publically available on the Council Website

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/ SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/
CORPORATE PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement:

- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
- Individuals and families are involved in decisions which affect them
- We have improved the health and well being of our people and inequalities are reduced.

3. BACKGROUND

Angus Council has a statutory duty, under Section 1 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007, to provide an adoption service. The service required under this provision is for all those affected by adoption, including child, birth parent, siblings, natural grandparents, guardian and adoptive parents. It must make suitable arrangements for the assessment of prospective adopters, of children who may be adopted, and for placing children for adoption. The Act and subsidiary legislation requires the Council to establish an Adoption Panel. Regulation 17 of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 imposes an equivalent duty on the Local Authority to establish a Fostering Panel. Local authorities are also required to report on the operation of their adoption agency on an annual basis. Angus Council has panels for both.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Annual Report on the Angus Adoption Agency and the Fostering Panel provides information for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. To help illustrate trends over time, the previous three years of available data are provided. Key issues from the report include:

4.2 Review of Permanence Processes

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. The wider children and families service is in the process of reviewing the local

approach to managing permanence. The scope of the review includes both procedures and practice in relation to children requiring permanent placements and engagement with key stakeholders is underway.

4.3 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. We invested in our social media campaign and launched a new strategy in November 2016 with the catch phrase “Change lives for the better. Adopt or foster an Angus child today”. Whilst the campaign has generated significant interest, it is still challenging to identify suitable carers in sufficient numbers. Our consultation work in this area during the last year led to approval for the revised skills based scheme (4.6 below).

4.4 Care Inspectorate Inspection

Angus Council’s Adoption Service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in April 2016. The service continues to be graded at level 5 (Very Good) across all areas and received positive feedback. A recommendation relating to how we review and monitor external fostering agencies to address quality and practice issues promptly is being progressed.

4.6 Review of Angus Skills Based Fostering Scheme

The revised skills based scheme was agreed at Children and Learning Committee in January 2017(Report 8/17) for implementation in July 2017. The scheme was reviewed to better meet the needs of our looked after children. The main changes to the scheme focused on eligibility criteria, training requirements, the introduction of a skills level forum and specific additional fees.

4.7 Smoking Policy for Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents

A smoking policy for foster carers and adoptive parents was approved at the Children and Learning Committee in November 2016. (Report 389/16) This makes clear that we will not place children under the age of 11 in a household where any adult smokes. This is a significant demonstration of our commitment to promote the health and wellbeing of looked after children. The policy came into effect immediately but only applies to new placements and has therefore not impacted on any children who were already in settled placements where carers smoked.

4.8 Review of Respite Provision for Children in Foster Care

This was considered by Children and Learning Committee in January 2017 (Report 9/17) when it was agreed that paid respite for foster cares would reduce from 28 days per year to 14 days. This was in response to feedback from our children and young people that respite is disruptive and does not promote their sense of wellbeing and belonging. In order to encourage carers to take children on holiday with them, we have also introduced an additional daily allowance to help cover the costs.

5. PROPOSALS

It is proposed that Committee endorse the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report and support the future plans.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices: Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016/17