

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE– 22 MAY 2018

**REPORT ON THE ANGUS ADOPTION AGENCY AND THE FOSTERING PANEL – ANNUAL
REPORT 2017-2018**

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 records updates on 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/COPORATE 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 a number of categories of person affected by adoption, including child, birth parent, siblings, natural grandparents, guardian and adoptive parent. 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 2017 to 31 March 2018. 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 for children

This has concluded with the broad aim of improving consistency for moving children into their final destination once it has been identified they require adoption or permanent fostering. A Permanence Forum has been introduced from April 2018 to provide a more streamlined and consistent approach to progressing plans for children. There have also been changes to the remit of the permanence team in that children under 5 years of age once a decision has been

made to pursue permanence will be transfer to this team in order to help achieve better outcomes for these children.

4.3 Recruitment of prospective adoptive parents and foster carers

Increasing the number of approved carers remains key to achieving better outcomes for Looked After Children. We continue to invest and develop our social media campaign with the catch phrase "Change lives for the better. Adopt or foster an Angus child today". Our campaign continues to generate significant interest from the public and the importance of identifying suitable carers is ongoing. We continue to meet regularly to explore ways of enhancing the recruitment of prospective carers and ideas and methods of working are reviewed and initiated. We also use our carers to help in the recruitment process across the family placement service and this has been well received by potential applicants.

4.4 Kinship Care

A review of the Kinship Carers Scheme has concluded and a change in legislation has seen an increase in children placed in kinship care placements and an increase in kinship carers eligible for kinship allowances and kinship care assistance. There are now 2 social workers supporting kinship carers across Angus based in the permanence team who are involved in supporting kinship carers and undertaking some assessments. There have been a reduction in young children being registered for permanence and this is likely to be as a result of changes in the kinship care legislation.

4.5 Review of Angus Skills Based Fostering Scheme

The revised skills based scheme was implemented in July 2017 following all foster carers being presented to the skills level forum and placed on the level appropriate to their skills and ability. 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 and this appears to be working well.

4.6 Adopters and Permanent Foster Carers

We have seen an increase in the number of adoptive parents engaging in our adoption support service which includes good attendance at our adoption support groups and a group for children who have been adopted. This increase is likely to do with the complex issues that some children experience prior to being placed for adoption and the recognition that it is essential that we can continue to respond and support these children going forward. There is also the recognition that adoptive families require ongoing support and it is important that we continue to respond to meet their growing needs. We are also seeing an increase in the number of permanent foster carers but not equivalent to the rate of demand for such placements so this will be a focus for 2018/19.

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.

REPORT AUTHOR: Kathryn Lindsay, Head of Children and Families and Justice
EMAIL DETAILS: PEOPLE@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices: Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18