

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2019

CARE INSPECTORATE INSPECTION OF ANGUS COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICES

BACKGROUND

As a minimum, the Care Inspectorate conduct annual unannounced inspections for registered services, that is care homes for older people; care homes for adults; care homes for children and young people; support services - care at home and secure accommodation. All other services such as pre-school centres receive a minimum frequency of inspection based on an intelligence-led risk assessment and previous performance.

The inspector evaluates registered services using a framework of quality themes linked to the National Care Standards:

- Quality of care and support
- Quality of environment
- Quality of staffing
- Quality of management and leadership

Angus Council Adoption Services had its inspection concluded on 7 June 2018. The inspection report was published in December 2018 and can be found at [Inspection Report](#)

It is important to note that a draft edition of this report was published in error and before we had an opportunity to consider and discuss it. We requested that several reasonable changes be made to the report. The final report reflects changes made as a result of discussions held between Angus Council and the Care Inspectorate.

Angus Council Adoption Services agency is based in Arbroath. The agency services are delivered by a small staff team who recruit, train and assess adopters and some staff who assess children who require this service. The manager of the service supports various different aspects of services in Angus for children who require permanent alternative care.

During 2017, the service approved nine adoptive families and seven children were approved for adoption, of these five children moved to their adopters. Two children were legally adopted. The service aims to provide an adoption service to children and their families in Angus who are in need of this service.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION OUTCOME

What the service does well

- Children were experiencing a high quality of relationships with their adoptive parents. Adopters were highly attuned to their child's need for safety, nurture and responsive care. Adopters felt well supported and that they were confident in accessing the agency supports when required.
- Children were being well prepared and supported to develop a good sense of identity. The service placed an importance on memory boxes, later life letters, life story books and work. This was supported by a very considered approach to working with birth parents. Sensitive work was being undertaken with a view to supporting parents where children were identified as needing permanent alternative care.

- Adopters told us about the high quality of their assessment and training which was delivered in a responsive way and which supported them to understand the complex needs of children in need of adoption. Staff were highly skilled in facilitating training and delivered complex information well and in a way that was easy to understand and retain. A comprehensive training plan was very accessible for adopters and, where required, the service would seek out appropriate external supports and training to support adopters.
- The agency ensured that the health of adopters was appropriately assessed to support their capacity to meet the needs of children. Children's health needs were identified and well communicated to prospective adopters so that they could make informed decisions about their capacity to meet children's needs.
- Adopters reported a respectful and very inclusive process during home assessment and they understood and were informed of why information was being gathered and how it was being used. This was an ongoing part of the process and allowed them to feel included and directive in their assessment. Panel minutes were thorough and transparent in the clarity of decision making. It was clear that the needs of the children were at the centre of the panel discussions. Adopters reported that the process was inclusive, respectful and fully explained to them. Matching reports were very detailed and thorough and demonstrated clear reasoning as to why people were being matched.
- Inclusive, respectful and trusting relationships were developed by staff which provided a strong basis for ongoing post adoption support where needed. Post adoption support work was of a high standard and families were understood and supported well. Overall, staff were well trained and experienced in all areas of permanence work.
- Adopters spoke highly of the team. We received complimentary feedback about the work of individuals within the teams. Staff were all registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and were supported to meet the training and development requirements of the SSSC. External training was accessed and the content was fed back to the team in an effort to continue to keep the full team up skilled. Staff were knowledgeable and skilled in their work. Furthermore, they took on various roles within the team which supported their learning and development and leadership skills.

What the service could do better

- Children in need of adoption should not experience delays in planning. There were significant delays in timescales in progressing care plans for children in need of adoption. The introduction of the Angus Permanence Forum was still at the very early stages and there was no measurable impact on reducing the timescales for children within this process.

The Permanence Forum was established in May 2018 and has met monthly since. A review of the effectiveness of this is scheduled for January 2019.

- The service is planning to make changes to manage the cases of children under age 5 within the permanence team at an earlier stage. Based on our knowledge of effective practice we suggested the service further consider a range of opportunities for when legal support should be accessed or provided in an attempt to avoid drift in some cases. The service advised us that legal colleagues were consulted at the point a decision was made that rehabilitation to parental care was not achievable and that it would not be appropriate or effective use of their resources to seek legal advice prior to the completion of rehabilitation.
- Children need stability and consistency from care givers. Children in need of adoption had not experienced a significant number of moves in care; they had experienced a number of respite care situations on initial accommodation. Evidence suggested that this was due to a lack of available carers. Despite this, the service was working hard to recruit carers and had a comprehensive recruitment strategy. The service was aware of this and was working hard to ensure that babies and very young children reached their permanent destination with as little moves as possible.

Every effort is made to ensure that children are placed with their temporary foster carers at time of accommodation but this is not always possible. We continue to work hard to recruit foster carers to meet the needs of children in Angus.

- Two adopters reported that their assessment timescales were long and protracted and that there were seemingly unnecessary and significant delays in paperwork being submitted or completed. The manager of the service reported that she was aware of the small number of these instances and had been working with adopters and workers to resolve these circumstances.
- At the time of the inspection, staff reported that morale was low. The service was in a time of change and uncertainty, and the team were unsure about what the structures would look like in the future. The management was aware of this and working towards a collaborative approach that would bring the team together and support the best underpinning professional approach to practice for Angus.

A member of staff was unsure about the provision of child protection training by the service. There was evidence that regular child protection update training was provided by the council and was available online to both staff and carers across family placement services. This was discussed with the management team and it was noted that the service ensure all staff are aware of and feel confident in the expectations of the service in relation to child protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no recommendations.

REQUIREMENTS

There were no requirements.

INSPECTION GRADES

Quality of care and support	4 – Good
Quality of environment	not assessed
Quality of staffing	4 - Good
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

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