

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2019

CARE INSPECTORATE INSPECTION OF ANGUS COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE

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 Fostering Service 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 Fostering Service provides a fostering and family placement service for children and young people from birth to 18 years and their families, who are assessed as in need of this. The service recruits and supports carer families to provide a range of fostering placements to children including, permanent, long term and respite. During 2017, the service recruited eight new fostering families which meant a net increase of 3 fostering households for the service. Demand for the service remains high and, as at 31 December 2017, a total of 66 foster carers were looking after 83 children and young people.

The service aims to recruit, assess, train, support and supervise foster families for children who require an alternative family placement for respite, temporary or permanent care. Angus Council Fostering Service works to ensure that every child placed in an alternative family placement will be valued and helped to realise their potential.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION OUTCOME

What the service does well

- Foster carers reported a high quality service from a skilled staff team. Foster carers felt supported to carry out their role and the staff team spoke confidently about being able to provide the necessary practical and emotional support to foster carers, children and young people. Foster carers worked hard to provide stable, nurturing homes and caring, warm and secure relationships for children. It was noted that supervising social workers and children's workers built trusting relationships with them and the children and young people they cared for.

- Foster carers were supporting children and young people to be, and feel, protected from abuse, neglect or harm where they are staying, at school and in the community. Furthermore, supporting children and young people to recognise and understand risks and keep themselves safe. Effective use of a high level of support to foster carers, from supervising social workers, regular support groups, buddy systems, duty and out of hours services supported this. External supports, such as advocacy services, were available for young people where appropriate.
- Foster carers reported that they felt very well trained and had access to a comprehensive programme of training and had learning and development opportunities which included safer caring. A quarterly service consultative group provided opportunities for stakeholders to comment on service developments. The service noted that this meeting was an opportunity for stakeholders to raise any areas of concern with the family placement leadership team.
- Assessments were evaluative and well written. They provided a clear appraisal of the strengths of the prospective foster carers along with a detailed analysis of their life experience and how this may benefit children matched with them. Relevant checks were carried out to give assurances that applicants were suitable to foster.
- On approval, foster carers worked towards continually improving and developing their skills and practice through evidence based competencies and portfolio work. Regular monthly supervision and annual appraisals reviewed these inputs.
- Children and young people were supported to have good physical and mental health. For children under 12, this was supported by exceptional supports from the community paediatrician. Young people over the age of 12 were linked with looked after child nurse who saw them when required. All children and young people had access to suitable healthcare.
- Regular reviews of children's care plans ensured that they remained central to decision making processes and their needs were being tracked and identified. Cases we tracked evidenced that children were achieving in education and that living in foster families supported good attendance at school and positive academic outcomes. Foster carers advocated well for children where they experienced issues in education and they were skilled in identifying and developing their wider learning needs.
- Staff were motivated and well trained and experienced in all areas of fostering. Foster carers spoke highly of the team and the Inspectors were told consistently about their high level of commitment to foster carers, children and young people. Staff were all registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and were supported with a wide and varied training plan to meet the training and development requirements of the SSSC. When external training was accessed, the content was fed back to the team in an effort to continue to keep the full team up skilled.

What the service could do better

- There was drift and delay in progressing plans for children of a range of ages. There had been some significant drift in the implementation of plans for those children who were over age 10 and whose permanence plans had not yet been legally secured. The introduction of the Permanence Forum was still at the very early stages and there was no measurable impact on reducing the timescales for children within this process as yet.

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 told us they were 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. We found that children in need of adoption had not experienced significant moves in care; however 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, it was noted that the service were working hard to recruit carers and had a comprehensive recruitment strategy. The service was aware of this and was working hard to ensure that on initial accommodation babies and very young children reached their permanent homes 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.

- The development of a workable foster carer chronology would be useful to track significant events and placement activity.
- 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 team were 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.
- Foster carers told us that when children are placed in an emergency, information needed by them was often delayed. The service noted that, at times, foster carers perhaps did not recognise that the information they had been given formed the basis of a care plan for children. Children's information should be shared at a review meeting which should be held within three working days. These meetings were often not held on time and the inspectors were concerned that this had the potential to reflect negatively on the care of children and young people. On discussing this with the service they agreed to take urgent action to address this and bring it in line with the legislation.

This has been raised with the Service Leader responsible for the Quality and Review Team and plans are in place to change practice to improve our performance in this area.

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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