

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE, 20 SEPTEMBER 2022

ANGUS ADOPTION AGENCY AND FOSTERING PANEL – ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

REPORT BY KATHRYN LINDSAY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE

ABSTRACT

This report informs members of the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel annual report for 2021-22. The report provides an overview of Angus Council's ability to provide an effective service for children, foster carers, kinship carers and adoptive parents and notes demand on resources as well as the range of services provided. A copy of the annual report is appended.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Endorse the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report (Appendix 1)
- (ii) Notes that the Report will be published on the Council website

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COMMUNITY PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within:

The **Angus Community Plan 2017-30**:

- The best start in life for children
- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- More opportunities for people to achieve success
- Children and young people who experience particular inequalities and disadvantage will achieve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes comparable with all other children and young people.

The **Council Plan 2019-2024**:

- We want to maximise inclusion and reduce inequalities

The **Tayside Plan** for Children, Young People and Families 2021-23

- Our children having the best start in life in a nurturing environment
- Our children growing up healthy, confident, and resilient with improving physical and mental health and strengthened emotional wellbeing

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 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, brothers and sisters, 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.

3.2 Local authorities are required to report on the operation of their adoption agency every year. Angus Council has panels for adoption, fostering, kinship and adult resource, in line with best practice. The annual report details key information about all panels and the wider work of the adoption agency.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 This annual report provides information for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. Key issues from the report include:

4.2 Panel Work

This year we have fully established an Adult Resource Panel which is our fourth operational Panel alongside our Adoption and Permanence, Kinship and Fostering Panels. This Panel considers assessments of supported lodgings providers and carers offering continuing care. The Panel recently considered assessments in relation to carers for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and will extend its work in this area. This development is important to ensure we appropriately meet the needs of young adults who require care and support.

The appointment this year of a part time Panel Adviser has provided much needed development support to our panel members. The Adviser will be able to support performance and improvement of assessments, participation opportunities and tracking outcomes as they embed into post.

The number of panels held is broadly in line with the previous year and has been sufficient to meet demand. Each scheduled panel has a high volume of assessments to consider. The commitment of panel members in Angus is excellent with evidence that all members attend fully prepared for panel and engage in the complex and sometimes emotive task. There has been good consistency in panel chairs this year with each chairperson having considerable experience in the role. Panel training and panel development sessions have been helpful in focusing on key themes such as brothers and sisters together, The Promise and interface with the Agency Decision Maker.

There has been one appeal this year which was reviewed and not upheld.

As we move beyond covid, our focus now is on offering greater choice in how panels are held either virtually, hybrid or in person.

The Panel Adviser will lead work in improving participation of birth families and children and young people in panel work.

4.3 Recruitment of Carers

Twelve fostering families were recruited this year together with two supported lodging providers and one adoptive family. There has been a higher number of carers recruited for short breaks and whilst this is positive to support children to stay in Angus, the greatest demand continues to be for interim and permanent foster carers and adopters. Angus have a very active and visible recruitment campaign however the number of enquiries, assessments and approvals remain below the level needed to keep children with local carers. The need to keep brothers and sisters together and the fact that care placements are being needed for longer periods of time, we have used an increased number of external fostering placements during this reporting period. This has enabled some brothers and sisters to stay together but does involve some distance for family time and increases complexities in supporting reunification.

Our priority continues to be to place children in the local area where this is possible and in line with their needs. To achieve this, we continue to promote fostering wherever possible and support carers to a high standard to enable them to care for children.

4.4 Kinship Care

Family care (Kinship) has seen some growth this year in the number of children who are placed on a longer-term basis and where financial support is provided to the family (Kinship Orders). Developments in Kinship support in the coming months include the introduction of a Consultative Group and a full return to face-to-face support groups.

4.5 Achieving Permanence

There has been an increase in the number of legal orders securing children's permanence this year, largely due to covid related delays in court processes in the previous year. This is a welcome development with five adoption orders and eight permanence orders granted providing children with legal security in their families.

4.6 Learning Reviews

The use of support meetings and unplanned ending meetings are now firmly embedded in practice both for internal and external foster placements. Learning reviews allow us to reflect

on key decisions and identify learning and practice improvement. There has been success in stabilising some placements identified as at risk thus avoiding placement breakdowns for some children.

Support to carers has continued with more face-to-face supervisory and support visits taking place. Children returning to school full time after a period of pandemic disruption reduced the need for additional support for many carers.

4.7 Skills Based Fostering Scheme

The consultation in relation to the skills level-based fostering scheme was completed this year and three working groups involving social workers and foster carers are currently reviewing the competencies, training and enhancements with a view to adapting the scheme in line with the consultation outcomes. This approach of directly involving our carers in service developments is invaluable to ensuring we deliver the right support. The commitment of our carers to not only provide excellent care and nurture to children and young people, but to develop and improve the service is commendable and indicative of the compassion and commitment from our carers.

4.8 Future focus

The adoption agency will continue to operate effective processes to secure short term, interim and permanent care for children who require it. The Carers Support Service together with wider partners will focus on growing and sustaining good quality care placements for children and supporting carers to meet the needs to children and provide stable and nurturing family environments. Continuing care, supported lodgings and liaison with our external fostering partners will be an area of focus for the service together with promoting choice in face to face or hybrid panels, offering a Consultative Group to kinship carers and embedding the new role of Panel Adviser.

Following the reporting year end, local authorities have started to receive referrals in relation to unaccompanied minors from Ukraine. Our existing assessment and approval process has been adapted to provide support and professional decision-making frameworks to ensure referrals under these emerging schemes are safely and promptly considered.

The work in adoption, fostering and kinship is complex and this report demonstrates the breadth of work involved. The report offers assurance that despite complex demands, the duties in respect of fostering and adoption are being appropriately discharged.

5. PROPOSAL

It is proposed that Committee endorse the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report and note that the report will be published on the Council's website.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional 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: Kirsty Lee, Service Leader (Child Protection and Review/ Carers Support)

EMAIL DETAILS: PEOPLE@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices: Adoption Agency Annual Report 2021-2022



Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

(To be completed with reference to Guidance Notes)

Step 1

Name of Proposal – Report on The Angus Adoption Agency and the Fostering Panel Annual Report 2020-2021

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment Yes
(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| (i) It does not impact on people | No |
| (ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics | No |
| (iii) It is for information only | Yes |
| (iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year | Yes |
| (v) It is technical | No |

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

(B) If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following:

Is this a full Equality Impact Assessment	/No
Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment	/No

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Step 3

(i)Lead Directorate/Service:

(ii)Are there any **relevant** statutory requirements affecting this proposal? If so, please describe.

(iii)What is the aim of the proposal? Please give full details.

This report informs members of the production of the Annual Report on Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel. The report highlights Angus Council's ability to provide an effective service for children, foster carers, kinship carers and adoptive parents and notes demand on resources as well as the range of services provided

(iv)Is it a new proposal? Yes/No Please indicate OR

Is it a review of e.g. an existing budget saving, report, strategy, policy, service review, procedure or function? Yes/No Please indicate

Step 4: Which people does your proposal involve or have consequences for?

Please indicate all which apply:

Employees Yes/No

Job Applicants Yes/No

Service users Yes/No

Members of the public Yes/No

Step 5: List the evidence/data/research that has been used in this assessment (links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance). This could include:

Internal data (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).

Internal consultation (e.g. with staff, trade unions and any other services affected).

External data (e.g. Census, equality reports, equality evidence finder, performance reports, research, available statistics)

External consultation (e.g. partner organisations, national organisations, community groups, other councils.

Other (general information as appropriate).

Step 6: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the equality information you currently hold? Yes/No

If yes, please state what they are, and what measures you will take to obtain the evidence you need.

Step 7: Are there potential differential impacts on protected characteristic groups? Please complete for each group, including details of the potential impact on those affected. Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each group. Please state the reason(s) why.

Age

Impact

Disability

Impact

Gender reassignment

Impact

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact

Pregnancy/Maternity

Impact

Race - (includes Gypsy Travellers)

Impact

Religion or Belief

Impact

Sex

Impact

Sexual orientation

Impact

Step 8: Consultation with any of the groups potentially affected

If you have consulted with any group potentially affected, please give details of how this was done and what the results were.

If you have not consulted with any group potentially affected, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating action of any negative impact (Step 9)?

Step 9: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce potentially negative impacts?

Step 10: If a potentially negative impact has been identified, please state below the justification.

Step 11: In what way does this proposal contribute to any or all of the public sector equality duty to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of

opportunity; and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristics?

Step 12: Is there any action which could be taken to advance equalities in relation to this proposal?

Step 13: FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

This step is only applicable to **strategies** which are key, high level decisions. If your proposal is **not** a strategy, please leave this Step blank, and go to Step 14.

Links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance.

Step 13(A) What evidence do you have about any socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome in relation to this strategic issue?

Step 13(B) Please state if there are any gaps in socio-economic evidence for this strategy and how you will take measures to gather the evidence you need.

Step 13(C) Are there any potential impacts this strategy may have specifically on the undernoted groupings? Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each grouping.

Low and/or No Wealth (e.g. those with enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.

Impact

Material Deprivation (i.e. those unable to access basic goods and services e.g. repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies).

Impact

Area Deprivation (i.e. where people live (e.g. rural areas), or where they work (e.g. accessibility of transport).

Impact

Socio-economic Background i.e. social class including parents' education, people's employment and income.

Impact

Other – please indicate

Step 13(D) Please state below if there are measures which could be taken to reduce socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome.

Step 14: What arrangements will be put in place to monitor and review the Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment?

Step 15: Where will this Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment be published?

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Kirsty Lee, Service Leader, Children, Families and Justice 17/08/21

Reviewed by:

Approved by:

NB. There are several worked examples of separate EIA and FSD Assessments in the Guidance which may be of use to you.
