



## **FOSTERING AND ADOPTION REPORT UPDATE**

Report by Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services

### **PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to advise and update the Comhairle of progress in addressing the issues identified in the Care Inspectorate inspection of the Fostering and Adoption and Continued Care Services in 2023/2024.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Care Inspectorate inspection of the Fostering and Adoption and Continued Care Services identified a number of requirements and areas of improvement. The inspection came at a time of significant disruption to these services; staff sickness and absence that reduced service capacity and a cyber-attack on the Comhairle that diminished evidential capture that would validate practice intervention. Consequently, the service was graded as weak in several areas.
- 2.2 Remedial actions to address the deficits identified by the Care Inspectorate have made progress, but not at the pace desired. This is due to a service redesign which has taken time to progress and implement and significant alterations to Children's Service Management in this time. Significant work has now been undertaken over the last three months to advance the requirements and actions arising from the inspection.
- 2.3 In recent weeks there has been approval to appoint a Team Leader (Resources) and to increase the capacity of Social Work support in the Fostering, Adoption and Continued Care Service. Service redesign will amalgamate various services under one banner, that of Children's Services Resources which will include Foster Care, Adoption, Kinship Care and Continued Care as well as the Extended Learning Resource and its satellite services in supported housing.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the Report and progress in addressing the various issues identified by the Care Inspectorate.**

**Contact Officer:** Max Smart – (Interim) Chief Officer for Children's Services

**Appendix:**

**Background Papers:** None



## IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications - none
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	<b>Strategic Risk Register:</b> None
Equalities/Child Rights	None
Corporate Strategy	Support Children, Families and Young People. Support Resilient Communities and Quality of Life.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

## BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Care Inspectorate inspection of the Fostering and Adoption and Continued Care Services identified a number of service deficits in support and procedure. The Care Inspectorate noted that care practices were of a high standard, but that staffing was inadequate, policy support was limited, and evidence gathering problematic.
- 5.2 The inspection process was conducted amidst the cyber-attack on the Comhairle and a time of significant sickness absence of staff practicing in this service, which reduced operational capacity by 50%. These factors contributed to a poorer pace of change within the Fostering and Adoption services, than expected.
- 5.3 Despite these difficulties, there is a thorough and detailed remediation plan in place that is ongoing, and progress is being made. A temporary support appointment has been made to strengthen facilitation of the changes required, as well as wider business support via the services of an officer from another section of the Education and Children's Services Department.

## DETAIL

- 6.1 Service redesign has been undertaken over this period, with a view to reshaping the structure of the service to create a dedicated resources section, encompassing Fostering, Adoption, Kinship Care, Continued Care and wider resourcing. Recruitment is currently ongoing for a Team Leader for this new section and it is anticipated that an appointment will be made imminently.
- 6.2 Practitioner capacity, a major concern identified by the Care Inspectorate, has been increased to two Social Workers to allow for specialist work to be undertaken regarding adoption and fostering. Continued Care and After Care supports will fall under the operational remit of this new Team, allowing for the Comhairle to support vulnerable young people into early adulthood.



- 6.3 The aims and functions of the service have been revamped, and policies have been rewritten and will be presented to the Comhairle for approval as they are completed. The Fostering and Adoption Handbook is being redesigned, improvement questionnaires drafted, and the voice of our stakeholders has been sought, bringing practices in line with fulfilling the Promise. A Continued Care Policy has been drafted, and is the subject of a concurrent Report, as well as information sheets on rights and duties of our services.
- 6.4 The Service has produced written guidance documentation on mandatory training, minimum expectations of visits to care households, created a mandatory training calendar with training schedules. Tracking systems have been created to ensure the Comhairle meets review and reporting standards. Carer support and supervision is now clearly recorded, and carer learning needs are tracked.
- 6.5 The Comhairle was involved with the national campaign to recruit foster carers. However, there continues to be very little capacity within the fostering service, despite significant efforts to recruit additional foster carers. There is currently only one child in foster care, compared to eight children in kinship care. The plans for a national fostering recruitment campaign, funded by the Scottish Government did not yield further carers.

## CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Operational challenges over time led to delays in progress in addressing the Care Inspectorate reports. There has been significant effort to address any delays and there is forward momentum in resolving previously identified shortfalls in our service provision and support.
- 7.2 It is hoped that the anticipated appointment of a Team Leader for the new resource service will assist and support progress from this juncture and a further Report will be presented to the Committee updating Elected Members on progress.

