



**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
4 MARCH 2020**

SUBJECT: MORAY FOSTERING AND ADOPTION PANEL REVIEW 2019

BY: CHIEF OFFICER, MORAY INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the work undertaken by the Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel during the period January to December 2019.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising the functions of the Council as Social Work Authority within the terms of relevant legislation with regard to Fostering and Adoption.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee scrutinises and notes the work of the Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel in the period January to December 2019.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The fostering panel and the adoption panel in Moray are set up by statute and operate as one joint panel in Moray. Their role is to scrutinise recommendations for the adoption and permanent fostering of children who are looked after by Moray Council, approval and review foster carers and prospective adopters and make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker,
- 3.2 Consistent with previous reporting, Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel meetings are scheduled monthly, with agreement for additional meetings to be arranged to respond to increased workload.
- 3.3 The revised functions of the Panel were approved by Committee on 23 August 2017 (paragraph 12 of the minute refers).
- 3.4 The composition of the Panel provides a wide range of knowledge and experience in relation to children separated from their families, allowing different perspectives on these matters to be obtained. Of note and

significance, is the fact that 2 young people, who have experience of being cared for, have expressed interest in becoming panel members. Responding to their expressed interest is consistent with one of the asks of the young people who were members of the Champions board and who supported the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

3.5 The work of the Panel in 2018 is was reduced compared with other years: for 2019 business has returned to more expected numbers and the range of activities.

3.5 Business panel meetings continue to be held every 6 months. The focus of which is:-

- (i) the work of the panel
- (ii) training needs and development. Panel members have been working on an induction manual. There is agreement that training on kinship, adoption, placements services, child protection and legal processes and ancillary provisions would be delivered on a rolling programme. Other relevant areas include particularly really hearing what children are saying about what is important to them. This is in line with the key messages from the Independent Care Review. A separate report will be presented to Committee on the Independent Care Review at a later date.

4. ADOPTION

The panel considered the following during 2019:

- Recommendation and subsequent approval of 6 new prospective adoptive families. This is an increase from 2 in 2018.
- There are 2 families awaiting adoptive placements.
- Recommendation and approval for 5 children in need of permanence through adoption. This is a decrease of 1 child based on the year 2018. Matching 6 children with prospective adoptive families; while this is an increase of 2 from 2018, this is 2 fewer than had been matched in 2017.

5. FOSTERING

The panel considered the following during 2019

- Recommendation and subsequent approval of 7 foster families, which is consistent with 2017 approvals and an increase of 5 from 2018.
- Recommendation and subsequent approval of 9 children in need of permanence through foster care. Numbers of children recommended for permanent foster care were low in 2017 (1) and 2018 (3).
- Recommendation and subsequent approval of 11 children for matching with a permanent foster family. In 2018 there were no matches made.
- An update and/ or review of 18 fostering families. The nature of review and change is concerned with foster carers who: -
 - apply to adopt;

- change approval from offering temporary care to offering permanent care;
- increase or decrease their approval in relation to the numbers of children for whom they foster.
- De-registration – there were 10 fostering families who were deregistered because they retired, moved away or specific reason to themselves, this is an increase of 1 from 9 in 2018.

6. DEVELOPMENTS AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

- 6.1 In order to continue to improve outcomes for children, and to assure the Committee that there are good decisions being made for children to ensure their future. The council are working with the Permanence Care Excellence (PACE) programme. This work focuses on the time taken to make decisions and recommendations on where children will live during their childhood.
- 6.2 Over the years the number of children matched (foster care or adoption) has fluctuated widely: in 2019, 17 children were matched to families.
- 6.3 The report to Committee on 7 March 2017 (paragraph 16 of the minute refers) noted actions associated with having identified a rise in foster and adoption placements breaking down. The audit into the unplanned endings concluded. It was identified that working relationships and focus on planning for children need greater attention. Key to delivering on improvements identified within unplanned endings meetings is the role of the consultant practitioner who will lead on this area moving forward, to improve the overall experience of adopted children and foster families.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

There continues to be coherence with the work of the Fostering and Adoption Panel and the priorities within Moray 2026: - ambitious and confident young people - improving the life chances of children by supporting them, and their families, at the earliest possible stages and as required thereafter, to give all children in Moray the best possible opportunities to achieve their potential.

It is also linked to the Corporate Priority – More of our children have a better start to life and are ready to succeed.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel have procedural guidelines in accordance with Scottish Government guidance and regulations. The Panel make recommendations to the Education and Social Care Department for the payment of adoption allowances under the Adoption Support and Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no specific risks associated with this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no specific staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

The report has no property implications.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equality implications associated with this report.

(h) Consultations

The Chief Executive, Head of Integrated Children's Services (SW), Senior Human Resources Adviser, Paul Connor, Principal Accountant, Morag Smith, Senior Solicitor, Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Consistent with previous reporting, Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel continue to play a key role in the scrutiny of prospective adopters and foster carers who wish to be approved by Moray Council. The Panel also scrutinises care plans for children and young people in need of permanent care away from home either through adoption or permanent foster care. The statistics recorded within this report will continue to be presented annually. The detail that will present from engaging with the PACE programme will help to identify areas for improvement which should positively impact on drift and delay in care planning for children.

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Background Papers:
Ref: