

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 23 OCTOBER 2009**

**KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN ADOPTION AND FOSTERING SERVICES**

**Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To advise Governance and Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of the inspection of adoption and fostering services, which took place in March 2009.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Adoption and fostering services are subject to inspection by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (the Care Commission) on an annual basis. The inspection took place in East Ayrshire in March 2009, and the report and action plans were finalised in June 2009.
- 2.2 For each service, the inspection process involves the completion of an annual return, evidence of self evaluation, file sampling and engagement with foster carers, adoptive parents, children and young people, managers, staff and stakeholders.
- 2.3 The nature of each inspection is decided following a regulation support assessment (RSA), based on the information provided. Both services received a low RSA score, and therefore the inspection was considered to be of low intensity. The inspection is based on areas of focus and associated national standards. This inspection focused on the:
- quality of care and support
  - quality of staffing
  - quality of management and leadership
- 2.4 The Care Commission grading system consists of an overall grade for each specific area of focus e.g. quality of staffing. Within each of these areas, a number of elements are covered, each receiving a score. The lowest scoring element determines the overall score in the area of focus. The grading system consists of: excellent (6); very good (5); good (4); adequate (3); weak (2) and unsatisfactory (1).

**3. INSPECTION FINDINGS**

- 3.1 The overall scores for this inspection are set out at Appendix 1 and 2.
- 3.2 The adoption service was graded as good (4) across each of the three areas of focus. The strengths included: public information; support to adoptive parents; the participation of adoptive parents in training and information days; the emphasis placed on ensuring the good health and well being of children; the expertise of the staff team;

robust arrangements for supervising staff and good systems for ensuring effective performance.

- 3.3 For adoption services, the areas for improvement included: the need for a written participation strategy; evidence of consistent recording of the views of children and young people; the need for improved recording of staff supervision, covering learning and development in addition to workload management; and the need to develop methods of engagement with adoptive parents who no longer have regular contact with the service.
- 3.4 In summary, for adoption services, the overall grading was good. No enforcement action or requirements were made during the inspection. Four recommendations were made, and the detail is set out at appendix 3.
- 3.5 The fostering service was graded as good (4) across two of the three areas of focus (quality of care and support and quality of staffing). It was graded as adequate in respect of quality of management and leadership.
- 3.6 The strengths of the fostering service included: good feedback arrangements for foster carers, children and young people to feedback their views about the service; good working relationships between foster carers and their supervising social workers; a range of systems to support the health and well being of children and young people; a consistent, experienced and well respected staff team; and evidence of chief officer and senior manager engagement with foster carers and in understanding the needs of children and young people via corporate parenting events.
- 3.7 For the fostering service, the areas for improvement included: the need for a written participation strategy; the need for clarity about the role of the looked after and accommodated (LAC) nurse by foster carers; the need for clear systems in respect of how the feedback from foster carers, children and young people leads to improved service delivery; and the need for an independent chairing arrangement for the fostering and resources panel, separate to the line management structure.
- 3.8 In summary, for fostering services, the overall grading was adequate. There is no enforcement action and two requirements were made during the inspection. These relate to the need for written risk assessments to be in each child's file, and the need to advertise the local authority's responsibility in respect of private fostering. Ten recommendations were made, and the detail is set out at appendix 4. Action has since been taken to progress the requirements, and the recommendations are addressed in the action plan.

#### **4. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no specific legal or policy implications arising from the inspection findings.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The appointment of an independent chair will cost approximately £40 per hour (£280 per panel), which is equivalent to the sessional rate paid by national agencies e.g. the Social Work Inspection Agency. This would equate to approximately £6160 per annum. These costs will be met within existing resources.

## **6. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are risks associated with not appointing an independent chair to the adoption and permanency panel and to the fostering and resources panel. In particular, this relates to the challenge which may arise in the current chair also having responsibility as line manager of the family placement team.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no specific equality implications arising from the inspection findings.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Governance and Scrutiny Committee: -

- (i) note the contents of this report;
- (ii) note that the inspection findings were reported to Cabinet on 2 September 2009.

**Graham Short**  
**Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**  
**7 October 2009**

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER:** Susan Taylor, Head of Service: Children, Families and Criminal Justice

- LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:**
- 1. Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978
  - 2. Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007
  - 3. Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (SSI2009/210)
  - 4. Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care: Inspection report for the East Ayrshire Fostering Service (2009)
  - 5. Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care: Inspection report for the East Ayrshire Adoption Service (2009)

If you require any further information please contact Susan Taylor, Head of Service: Children & Families and Criminal Justice on 01563 576920.

## Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care

## Summary of Inspection Findings

## ADOPTION SERVICE

AREA OF FOCUS	GRADING
<p><b>QUALITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT</b></p> <p><b>Elements: Standard 1.1 and 1.3</b></p> <p>1.1 – We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.</p> <p>1.3 – We ensure that service user’s health and wellbeing needs are met.</p>	<p><b>OVERALL GRADING - 4 (Good)</b></p> <p>4 (Good)</p> <p>4 (Good)</p>
<p><b>QUALITY OF STAFFING</b></p> <p><b>Elements: Standard 3.1 and 3.3</b></p> <p>3.1 – We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.</p> <p>3.3 – We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.</p>	<p><b>OVERALL GRADING - 4 (Good)</b></p> <p>4 (Good)</p> <p>4 (Good)</p>
<p><b>QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP</b></p> <p><b>Elements: Standard 4.1 and 4.4</b></p> <p>4.1 – We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.</p> <p>4.4 – We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide.</p>	<p><b>OVERALL GRADING – 4 (Good)</b></p> <p>4 (Good)</p> <p>4 (Good)</p>

## Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care

## Summary of Inspection Findings: Adoption &amp; Fostering Service

## FOSTERING SERVICE

AREA OF FOCUS	GRADING
<p><b>QUALITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT</b></p> <p><b>Elements: Standard 1.1 and 1.3</b></p> <p>1.1 – We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.</p> <p>1.3 – We ensure that service user’s health and wellbeing needs are met.</p>	<p><b>OVERALL GRADING - 4 (Good)</b></p> <p>4 (Good)</p> <p>4 (Good)</p>
<p><b>QUALITY OF STAFFING</b></p> <p><b>Elements: Standard 3.1</b></p> <p>3.1 – We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.</p> <p>3.3 – We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.</p>	<p><b>OVERALL GRADING - 4 (Good)</b></p> <p>4 (Good)</p> <p>4 (Good)</p>
<p><b>QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP</b></p> <p><b>Elements: Standard 4.1</b></p> <p>4.1 – We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.</p> <p>4.4 – We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide.</p>	<p><b>OVERALL GRADING – 3 (Adequate)</b></p> <p>4 (Good)</p> <p>3 (Adequate)</p>

## Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care

## Summary of Inspection Recommendations

## ADOPTION SERVICE

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. The service should develop and implement a Participation Strategy. The service should ensure that feedback obtained from children, young people and adoptive parents is used to improve the quality of the service provided.
2. The service should ensure that children and young people's views are consistently sought and recorded.
3. The service should develop the format of the supervision record so that it accurately reflects the supervision of adoptive parent's guidance and discussion regarding staff development.
4. The service should continue to consider methods of engaging with adoptive parents who no longer have regular contact with the service.

**Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care**

**Summary of Inspection Recommendations**

**FOSTERING SERVICE**

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>
1. The service must ensure that written risk assessments are undertaken for each child. They must also ensure that written risk assessments are in each child's file to ensure appropriate measures are taken to safeguard each child's welfare.
2. East Ayrshire Council must ensure that it develops and implements systems for advertising widely its responsibilities in relation to private fostering.
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
1. The service should develop and implement a participation strategy. The service should ensure that feedback obtained from all children, young people and foster carers is used to improve the quality of the service provided.
2. The service provider should ensure that there is a consistency in the recording of foster care supervision.
3. The service provider should ensure that all foster carers are fully aware of the role of the LAC Health team in supporting them in the care of children and young people.
4. The service provider should ensure that all foster carers children and young people are fully aware of the Framework Standards for Child Protection and the Children's Charter.
5. The service should ensure that an annual training plan is in place for Fostering Panel members.
6. The service provider should ensure the independence of the fostering panel chair person.
7. The service should ensure that quality assurance systems to monitor the work of the service were applied consistently.
8. The service should ensure that systems are in place to obtain feedback from children's social workers on the quality of the fostering service. The quality of the feedback should be sufficient to inform the service in order that improvements could be made.
9. The service should ensure that all stakeholders are provided with opportunities to feedback their views on the quality of the service.
10. The service should ensure that foster carers are provided with clear information regarding recording information of children in placement and why this is necessary. The service should ensure that information for each child is recorded separately. There should be evidence that supervising social workers are auditing foster carer records of children in placement.