

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
9 JUNE 2010**

SUBJECT: INSPECTION OF MORAY FOSTERING SERVICE

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite the Children and Young People's Services Committee to scrutinise and note the inspection of Moray's Fostering Service by the Care Commission which was completed on 9 February 2010. A summary of the inspection report is provided at **APPENDIX 1** to this report.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D(8) the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the exercising of functions of the Council under the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Children and Young People's Services Committee note and scrutinise the content of the inspection report into the Moray Fostering Service.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Moray Fostering Service provides a fostering and family placement service for children and young people aged 0-18 years. The service has been registered by the Care Commission since 21 December 2005.
- 3.2 The Council recruits and supports carers to provide a fostering service to a range of children throughout Moray.
- 3.3 The overall intention of foster care is to provide family based alternative accommodation for children and young people who are not able to live at home.
- 3.4 Inspectors reported on two quality indicators and the evaluation for the Moray Fostering Service are as follows: -
- Quality of Care and Support – 5 – Very Good
 - Quality of Staffing – 5 – Very Good

3.5 Inspectors report on these quality indicators using the six point scale: -

6- Excellent	Outstanding, sector leading
5- Very Good	Major Strengths
4- Good	Important strengths, some areas for improvement
3- Satisfactory	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
2- Weak	Important weaknesses
1- Unsatisfactory	Major weaknesses

3.6 The full inspection report is available in the Members' Library and Elected Members' Information Site (Portal).

3.7 The Moray Fostering Service will address the recommendations identified within the Inspection report.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan

Recommendations within this report will be addressed within the Moray Fostering Service Performance Improvement Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no direct policy or legal implications associated with this report.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

There are no specific resources implications associated with this report.

(d) Consultations

Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant, Rhona Gunn, Acting Principal Solicitor (Litigation and Licensing) and Katrina McGillivray, Senior Personnel Advisor 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 That the Committee scrutinises and notes the contents of this report.

Author of Report: Jennifer Gordon, Placement Services Manager

Background Papers: available from Members' library and portal

Ref: HB776658

Moray Fostering Service

There were no requirements in the last Inspection report.

There were two recommendations in the previous Inspection which remain unmet. Those recommendations, explanation for delay and the action plans to meet those recommendations within 2010/2011 are as follows: -

1. The service should further develop the information/ welcome booklet for children and young people at the earliest opportunity and include elements in Standard 1.1.

The delay in the further development of an information/ welcome booklet for children and young people from 2009-2010 was due to staffing difficulties and the complexity of establishing a consultation process that would encourage a high level of participation on the part of young people. This was finally achieved through individual guided interviews undertaken by the Children 1st worker and based on the National Care Standards. The consultation process is now complete.

The action plan is for a Working Group to be formed which will consider the outcome of a Children 1st consultation process and which will make recommendations following further consultation with the participating young people. A specific focus will be the information provided to children and young people and the production of an appropriate information / welcome booklet for children and young people entering a foster placement.

2. The initial information pack sent to prospective foster carers should be developed to include information on how to make a complaint. It should include the details and role of the Care Commission.

People making enquiries about either fostering or adoption have in addition to being sent an information pack also received a copy of the Moray Council leaflet – “How to Complain about Social work Services” which includes contact details for the Care Commission. The intention to include such information into fostering or adoption packs has been delayed awaiting publication, initially of Regulations, and now guidance for the implementation of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 2007 and The Looked After Children (Scotland) regulations 2009. It is not expected that the guidance will inform this process but our intention is to avoid duplication and increased costs by issuing one new pack containing all current information.

The action plan is to review the information packs currently sent to prospective foster carers once the Looked After Children (LAC) guidance is issued. Updated packs will include information on: (i) how to make complaint; (ii) appeals process; (iii) the role of the Care Commission; and (iv) how to contact the Care Commission.

The Inspection report advises of the following: -

What the service does well

- The manager and staff had put in place different ways for people using the service to get involved, give their views and make suggestions.

- Management and staff continually strive to make improvements to their service provision.
- Management and staff are dedicated to their work.
- Staff work well as a team and support each other.
- Senior staff and management support staff.
- Staff have appropriate qualifications and have received relevant training.

What the service could do better

- The service provider to take account of the consultation report and action the points identified.
- Policies and procedures to be reviewed in line with the forthcoming new Scottish Government Legislation.
- The service provider to continue to gain the views of people who use the fostering service.
- A welcome/information pack to be developed for children and young people who are fostered.
- The information pack for people who are enquiring about fostering needs to be updated and include the appeals process and details of the Care Commission.

What the service has done since the last inspection

- There had been a consultation/evaluation of the service which involved children/young people who are fostered. Children 1st carried out the consultation on behalf of the Moray Council.
- Foster carers had been invited to attend consultation groups and specific areas for development/improvement had been identified.
- Additional funding had been secured to confirm a full time social work post and to fund two full time respite carers used primarily in support of mainstream placement. Additional administration support had been allocated to the service in recognition of the considerable expansion.
- Four members of the team had completed advanced training in family placement. One member of the team had completed the Social Work Practice Teachers Award.
- As a result of this commitment there were additional pressures on other team members. All staff and senior social worker are to be commended for their dedication to ensure continuity of service provision.
- There had been recognition of foster carers that had been fostering for 30 years and the provider had organised a specific event to celebrate their commitment and contribution.

Particular strengths of the service identified within Inspection process

In July 2009, Children 1st carried out an evaluation of the fostering service provision with children/young people who were fostered. The inspectors were impressed with the content and noted that Children 1st should be commended for the detailed and comprehensive evaluation.

Inspectors heard from foster carers that: -

- Staff listen and take suggestions on board
- They are active partners in the service
- They see their link workers regularly
- Their views are recorded during supervision sessions.

- Arrangements have been made for consultation topic groups. The current group is working on processes relating to allegations against foster carers.

Newsletters issued bi-monthly include information on the children/young people who foster group, training events, updates, changes to the service and any specific events.

There has been restructuring the aim of which is to improve services to both children and their carers, as well as seeking to make the ever increasing workload more specific and manageable. Impact of this restructuring will be monitored and foster carers will be asked for feedback as part of the process.

In relation to knowledge, understanding and risk procedures the service promotes use of literature, articles and access to useful websites. Foster carers state that there has been an improvement in the level of information that they receive about children when they were placed. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken and one foster carer said 'we feel valued and the recognition from the service has improved significantly'. Fostering and adoption panel members report that they receive a good level of training and information to keep them up to date with changes in legislation and best practice guidance

The service had an active group for the children/young people who foster. The group was put in place after asking for the views of children/young people of foster carers.

A handbook produced for approved foster carers gives information about the agency and includes matters such as record keeping, support for foster carers, foster carer reviews, health and safety and the out of hours number for emergencies. This has been updated but remains in draft format so that it might incorporate the new legislation and guidance when available.

Areas for Improvement

Strengths were identified within the recent consultation that was carried out with children and young people, so too were areas for action. The inspection report confirms that it is important that the service provider takes account of the content of the consultation which showed that children felt that they did not have enough information about fostering and what it meant for them. A recommendation was made at the last inspection that an information/ welcome booklet for children and young people should be developed. This remains a recommendation and an area for service development, one in which looked after children and young people might wish to be involved.

Inspectors confirmed the need of the service to continue to consult with foster carers and provide feedback.

Staff and management had indicated that consideration was being given to how best to involve children and young people in service delivery and improvement, the inspection report suggests that where possible, children and young people could give their own views about the placement as part of the foster carer review.

While the recent restructuring was reported in positive terms Inspectors confirmed our need to monitor the impact on service delivery and staff and they recommended change where necessary, based on analysis and feedback.

Inspectors confirmed an issue identified within the self assessment form, that the information pack for people enquiring about fostering for the Moray Council needed to be reviewed and updated to reflect changing legislation/guidance. A continued recommendation from Inspection is that the initial information pack sent to prospective foster carers should include information regarding making a complaint, the appeals process, contact details and the role of the Care Commission.

The service provider to continue to maintain the current excellent practice with regards to the induction of staff.

Conclusion

The Inspectors concluded that Moray Council's fostering service was delivering a very good service. They noted that the Staff work well together and are well supported by management. They refer to the relevant training this is provided to staff and foster carers and they confirm that thorough foster carer assessments are being carried out within timescales.

As part of their conclusion the Inspectors noted that people who used the service said that they were very happy with the way in which the team manager and staff delivered the service: foster carers consider that they are valuable members of the team.

Enforcements

There has been no enforcement action against this service since the last inspection.

Requirements

None identified at this inspection.

Recommendations

1. The service should further develop the information/welcome booklet for children and young people, at the earliest opportunity and include National Care Standard 1.1. Consideration should be given to consulting people who use the service as part of the process. National Care Standards Foster Care and Family Placement Services, Standard 1: Informing and deciding.
2. The initial information pack sent to prospective foster carers should include information regarding making a complaint and the appeals process. Also the contact details and role of the Care Commission. National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services, Standard 5: Assessing and approving Carers.

Evaluations

Current Grades February 2010

Quality of Care and Support	5	Very Good
Statement 1	5	Very Good
Statement 5	5	Very Good
Quality of Staffing	5	Very Good

Statement 1	4	Good
Statement 2	6	Excellent

Quality of Management and Leadership **Not Assessed**

Evaluations at 25 February 2009

Quality of Care and Support	4	Good
Quality of Staffing	4	Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	4	Good

Authority Commentary

This is an extremely positive report which acknowledges a number of developments made in regard to design and delivery of the service, consultation and liaison with service users and commitment of team members. The recommendations, repeated from the previous inspection have been detailed within the action plan submitted to the Care Commission. Recommendation 1 will be progressed no later than October 2010. Recommendation 2 would benefit from the guidance yet to be issued from the Scottish Government: it is anticipated that this too will be progressed no later than October 2010.