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**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON  
25 JANUARY 2017**

**SUBJECT: MORAY FOSTERING AND ADOPTION PANEL REVIEW 2016**

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE)**

**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 2016.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III C (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 2016.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel have been meeting on a monthly basis, with additional meetings arranged to respond to increased workload. In response to need, discussions have concluded that it is appropriate to plan additional meeting dates in February; May; November.
- 3.2 The functions of the Panel remain as reported to Committee on 4 February 2015 (paragraph 19 of the minute refers).
- 3.3 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. The membership of the Panel at December 2016 can be found at **APPENDIX 1**. Within the year 3 professional members resigned from the panel, because of personal change and having supported the operation of the panel for many years. During this year there have been 2 new lay members and 1 professional is currently in the process of becoming a member.

- 3.4 In relation to adoption, the Panel considered the following during the year: -
- (i) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 7 new prospective adoptive families. There are 2 families awaiting adoptive placements.
  - (ii) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 13 children in need of permanence through adoption.
  - (iii) Matching of 6 children with prospective adoptive families.
- 3.5 In relation to fostering, the Panel considered the following during the year: -
- (i) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 5 foster families.
  - (ii) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 7 children in need of permanence through foster care.
  - (iii) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 4 children for matching with a permanent foster family. Matching continues to include matching with independent foster providers on the basis of the needs of the child coupled with the skill of the carer.
  - (iv) An update and/or review of 21 fostering families. The nature of review and change is concerned with foster carers who: -
    - (a) apply to adopt;
    - (b) change approval from offering temporary care to offering permanent care;
    - (c) increase or decrease their approval in relation to the numbers of children for whom they foster.
  - (v) De-registration – there were 6 fostering families who were deregistered because they retired or moved away or the specifically matched young person has grown up and left their care.
- 3.6 The numbers of children in need of permanence through fostering or adoption, presented for consideration by the fostering and adoption panel, having reduced from 29 in 2014 to 13 in 2015, increased to 20 this year. The detail of the past 7 years is contained in the table at **APPENDIX 2**.
- 3.7 From a total of 20 children being matched with their future care givers (fostering or adoption) in 2015, this year that number is 10. The previous report advised that the number of children matched reflected progress being made in securing children's futures and the report advised that this report would evidence outcome of analysis in drift and delay.
- 3.8 Analysis is progressed at panel business meetings which are held twice each year, at 6 monthly intervals. The business meeting held in September 2016 considered not only the business recorded above but also the children whose futures have been secured legally within this year. There have been 13 children who had their case heard in court, some of whom still need to have their permanent care placement identified. There are 17 children whose care needs have yet to be considered at court.
- 3.9 In terms of drift and delay, the time taken for all processes to conclude for children going through the Panel, ranged between 1 year and 5 years. A number of factors influence the length of time taken: - nature of need of the

child; whether they are siblings; extended length of court processes where parents contest the legal action; internal organisation issues.

3.10 Panel has noted a rise in foster and adoption placements breaking down. The needs of those young people are then reconsidered within that new need and context. Matching considerations are being more closely scrutinised.

3.11 As noted, the Foster and Adoption Panel continue to have business meetings not less than every 6 months. The key issues addressed this year have been consistent with issues recorded in previous reports: -

- Welcoming new members to the Panel;
- Training needs. The plan is that every two months there is an input for panel members concerned with: -
  - (a) ancillary provision/court processes
  - (b) preparation for adoption
  - (c) the issues that impact on placement services
  - (d) kinship care.
 This input is dependent on how full the agenda is;
- Self-evaluation. We review the feedback on the forms and make adjustment to process.
- Rather than change the remit of the panel to consider assessments of kinship carers a select number of panel members have added to the kinship assessment process. This makes that process more robust.

3.12 Panel processes are currently subject of review and a report will be made to Committee, if there would be substantive change.

#### 4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

##### **(a) Moray 2026: A Plan for the Future and Moray Corporate Plan 2015 - 2017**

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**

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. There are implications for the out of area budget where there is matching with independent providers. There are also costs associated with taking forward court cases in geographically distant areas as legal work here requires to be outsourced.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are no specific risks associated with this report.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

The increased work being progressed through the panel places additional demands upon staff particularly in relation to work that requires to be progressed through the courts.

**(f) Property**

The report has no property implications.

**(g) Equalities**

There are no equality implications associated with this report.

**(h) Consultations**

Corporate Director, (Education and Social Care); Head of Integrated Children's Services; Head of Schools and Curriculum Development; Head of Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport; Katrina McGillivray Senior Human Resources Advisor; Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant; Payments Manager; Morag Smith, Senior Solicitor; Continuing Support Services Manager; Children's Wellbeing Manager; Equal Opportunities Officer; Margaret Forrest, Legal Services Manager (Litigation and Licensing), Placement Services Manager and Caroline Howie, Committee Services 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 with analysis of trends that emerge.**

Author of Report: Jennifer Gordon

Background Papers:

Ref:

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**APPENDIX 1**

**MORAY FOSTERING & ADOPTION PANEL**

Membership – December 2016

**CHAIRPERSONS**

**ADULT APPROVAL AND REVIEWS**

Lay Member acting in absence  
Principal Educational Psychologist  
Moray Council  
Headquarters  
High Street Elgin IV30 1BX

**CHILDREN PERMANENCE AND MATCHING PROCESSES**

Corporate Parenting & Commissioning Manager  
Moray Council  
Headquarters  
High Street Elgin IV30 1BX

**DEPUTE CHAIRPERSON**

2 x Lay Member

**LAY MEMBERS**

7 x Lay Members including above

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS**

7 x Professional Members including above

**MEDICAL ADVISER**

Community Child Health Department  
Dr Gray's Hospital Elgin

**LEGAL ADVISER**

Senior Solicitor  
Moray Council  
Headquarters  
High Street Elgin IV30 1BX

**PANEL SECRETARY**

Business Support Team Leader for Placement Services  
Moray Council  
Head Quarters  
High Street Elgin IV30 1BX

**APPENDIX 2****Summary of Key Outcomes of the  
Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel 2010-2016**Table 1 – Adoption Panel Activity

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>Seven year totals</b>
Prospective adopters (adoptive households) recommended for approval	4	5	5	7	5	6	7	39
Children recommended for adoption	11	8	9	2	14	6	13	63
Matching of children into adoption placements	6	7	7	4	6	9	6	45

Table 2 – Fostering Panel Activity

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>Seven year totals</b>
Prospective foster carers (fostering households) recommended for approval	6	9	5	4	6	4	5	39
Children recommended for permanent foster care	3	13	9	10	15	7	7	64
Matching of children with placements	1	5	6	7	8	11	4	42