



**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
7 MARCH 2018**

SUBJECT: MORAY FOSTERING AND ADOPTION PANEL REVIEW 2017

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 2017.
- 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 2017.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 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. Initially those were to be February, May and November however to enable the processes that follow panel and support the specific timing needs, those additional days will be in March and October.
- 3.2 The functions of the Panel were revised and approved by Committee on 23 August 2017 (paragraph 12 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 2017 can be found at **APPENDIX 1**. Within the year there have been no changes to membership, however rather than refer to professional and lay members, all are now members.

- 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 4 families awaiting adoptive placements.
 - (ii) Recommendation and approval for 5 children in need of permanence through adoption, this is a reduction from 13 in year 2016.
 - (iii) Matching of 8 children with prospective adoptive families, this is an increase from 6 in 2016.
 - (iv) In addition to 8 children having been matched direct processes are underway for 2 children.
- 3.5 In relation to fostering, the Panel considered the following during the year: -
- (i) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 7 foster families, an increase from 5 in 2016.
 - (ii) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 1 child in need of permanence through foster care, this is a reduction from 7 in 2016.
 - (iii) Recommendation and subsequent approval of 3 children for matching with a permanent foster family, a reduction from 4 in 2016. 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 10 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) In addition to the above this year the panel has recommended for approval 2 families who now offer continuing care for Young People for whom they have fostered.
 - (vi) De-registration – there were 10 fostering families who were deregistered because they retired, moved away or specific reason to themselves, this is an increase from 6 in 2016.
- 3.6 The detail of the past 7 years is contained in the table at **APPENDIX 2**.
- 3.7 A report to Committee on 25 January 2017 (para 13 of the minute refers) reflected fluctuating numbers and that remains this year. From a total of 20 children being matched with their future care givers (fostering or adoption) in 2015; the number in 2016 was 10, this year that number is 11 with 2 additional children having their care needs considered through alternative processes.
- 3.8 Previous reports suggested there was progress being made in securing children's futures and that this report would evidence drift and delay. To ensure consistency in methodology in evidencing drift and delay, Moray is going to engage with the Permanence and Care Excellence programme (PACE). The PACE programme is run jointly with the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and the Scottish Government.

It applies an improvement methodology from the basis that delay is not the responsibility of any one agency, multiagency partners are actively included in PACE. Data analysis of early run charts will identify areas for improvement.

- 3.9 Analysis is progressed at panel business meetings which are held twice each year, at 6 monthly intervals. The business meeting held in September 2017 considered not only the business recorded above but also the children whose futures have been secured or which were in the process of being secured in 2017. There are 10 children who had their case heard in court, some of whom still need to have their permanent care placement identified. There are 11 children whose care needs have been considered at panel but for whom their needs have yet to be concluded or considered at court.
- 3.10 The report to Committee on 2 March 2016 (para 15 of the minute refers) noted a rise in foster and adoption placements breaking down. The work for panel arising from this was the need to more closely scrutinise matching considerations and the report format was reworked. Organisationally we have been undertaking an audit into the unplanned endings and a report will be considered within Integrated Children Services in terms of implications for practice.
- 3.11 As noted, the Foster and Adoption Panel continue to have business meetings not less than every 6 months. The key issues identified this year have considered: -
- Improved induction processes;
 - Improved appraisals;
 - Training needs. The plan remains that there should be a cycle of input concerned with: -
 - (a) ancillary provision/ court processes;
 - (b) preparation for adoption;
 - (c) the issues that impact on placement services;
 - (d) kinship care;
 - (e) needs that arise through appraisal or national issue.This input is dependent on how full the agenda is;
 - Self-evaluation. We review the feedback on the forms and make adjustment to process.
 - The option of Young People becoming involved in the recruitment of foster carers. To be consistent with practice for adoption, young people will be asked to support the work of the preparation group. From there a young person may emerge who might become a panel member. Panel was keen to ensure this is not tokenistic: it has been an area of consideration for a number of business meetings. The option of a Care Experienced Young Person becoming involved in the recruitment of foster carers was one of the "asks" of our Care Experienced Young People, through the Champions Board.

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

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. There are implications for the out of area budget where there is matching with independent providers and there are costs associated with taking forward court cases in geographically distant areas as legal work 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 required 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

The Education and Social Care Senior Management Team, Katrina McGillivray Senior Human Resources Advisor; Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant; Payments Manager; Legal Services Manager, (Litigation and Licensing); Continuing Support Services Manager; Children's Wellbeing Manager; Equal Opportunities Officer; Placement Services Manager and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement as regards to their respective responsibilities.

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.**

Author of Report: Jennifer Gordon

Background Papers:

Ref:

APPENDIX 1

MORAY FOSTERING & ADOPTION PANEL

Membership – January 2018

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS

20 Professional Members including:

Chair – Adult approval and reviews

Chair – Children permanence and matching process

Depute Chairperson

Medical Adviser

Legal Adviser

Panel Secretary

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

Activity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Seven year totals
Prospective adopters (adoptive households) recommended for approval	5	5	7	5	6	7	7	41
Children recommended for adoption	8	9	2	14	6	13	5	56
Matching of children into adoption placements	7	7	4	6	9	6	8	47

Table 2 – Fostering Panel Activity

Activity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Seven year totals
Prospective foster carers (fostering households) recommended for approval	9	5	4	6	4	5	7	40
Children recommended for permanent foster care	13	9	10	15	7	7	1	59
Matching of children with placements	5	6	7	8	11	4	3	44