

**Inspection of Midlothian Council Fostering Service**

Report by Mary Smith, Director, Education, Communities and Economy

**1 Purpose of Report**

This report outlines the outcome of the above announced inspection as carried out by the Care Inspectorate in May 2013.

**2 Background**

2.1 Midlothian Council Fostering Service is based in Lawfield Primary School and provides an Fostering service for children and young people aged 0-18 years, and their families, who are assessed as in need of this service.

2.2 The Care Inspectorate is the independent scrutiny and improvement body for care and children's services and they inspect every registered care service, local authority social work departments and child protection teams on a regular basis to make sure that providers are meeting standards required and are working to improve the quality of care for everyone. Every time they inspect these services they produce an inspection report.

2.3 Based on the findings of this inspection the Care Inspectorate awarded the following grades:

Quality of care and support	Grade 5 – Very good
Quality of staffing	Grade 5 – Very good
Quality of Management and Leadership	Grade 4 – Good

The report and grades represent the Care Inspectorate assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during the inspection.

2.4 The Inspection Team noted the following strengths:

- The agency continues to be committed and motivated to provide a quality fostering service.
- The health and wellbeing needs of children and young people were evaluated and monitored.
- Foster carers were well supported by the fostering service to make sure children's needs were being met.
- Foster carers were strong advocates for the children they looked after and encouraged and supported children to reach their potential.

2.5 The Inspection Team reported that the authority could do better in the following areas:

- The Foster Service should continue to develop and improve the Fostering Panel including completing the appraisal of all panel members, making sure individual training needs are identified and training provided as a result.
- The service should continue to improve the panel membership so that it represented the community it serves.
- The service should make sure that placing social workers provide a report to the Fostering Panel when foster carers' are being reviewed.
- The service should make sure that all written records are full and consistent.

2.6 The Care Inspectorate concluded that Midlothian Council Fostering Service were committed to improving and developing on an ongoing basis.

### **3 Summary**

Midlothian Council have invested in the Fostering Service since the last inspection with a new manager who is supported by 2 Assistant Team Leaders. The inspection team saw improvements in the recruitment of foster carers which means that there is more effective matching of children's needs with a foster family. It has also resulted in more children being placed within their local community.

The Family Placement Team have introduced an induction/training and support group for newly appointed foster carers in recognition that they develop bonds and links with others on the preparation course and their learning needs are ongoing.

## **4 Report Implications**

### **4.1 Resource**

There are no resource issues arising from this report.

### **4.2 Risk**

The Care Inspectorate regulate all care services in Scotland using the [National Care Standards](#), set out by the Scottish Government, as a benchmark for how each type of service should perform. These standards are the minimum that children and young people should expect when using care services.

If the standards are not being fully met, the Care Inspectorate would note this in the inspection report and require the service manager to address these. The Care Inspectorate could impose an additional condition on the service's registration if the provider persistently,

substantially or seriously fails to meet the standards or breaches a regulation. They also have the power to issue an improvement notice detailing the required improvement to be made and the timescale for this.

Monitoring, review and evaluation of progress by officers in Children and Families is the control measure in place to reduce the risk of failure of the care services and to demonstrate their capacity to improve.

#### **4.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation**

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

#### **4.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes**

Performance and outcomes will continue to be measured through the monitoring, review and evaluation process.

#### **4.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach**

The Service will continue to improve its work in line with its improvement plan and the Education, Communities and Economy Directorate will continue to challenge and support the Service in relation to developing and implementing a range of quality improvement strategies.

#### **4.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders**

As part of their inspection process the Care Inspectorate sent out questionnaires to the Fostering Panel members. Seven completed questionnaires were returned prior to the inspection. The contents of the questionnaires were used to inform the Care Inspectorate findings and are referred to in the Inspection Report.

The Inspectors also met with foster carers and young people in foster care during the course of the inspection.

Copies of the report have been made available to Elected Members, staff and other interested parties.

#### **4.7 Ensuring Equalities**

An action plan has been prepared to address the areas for improvement recommended in the report. The action plan will be screened for equalities implications.

#### **4.8 Supporting Sustainable Development**

The Service Improvement Plan allows for sustainable development and improvement.

#### **4.9 IT Issues**

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

### **5 Recommendations**

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) note the content of the inspection report;
- (ii) pass this report to the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee for its consideration;
- (iii) acknowledge the positive and ongoing work by management and staff connected with the Midlothian Council Fostering Service;
- (iv) note that the Council will continue to challenge, support and monitor the service in relation to achieving excellence through further improving performance.

**3 January 2014**

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**Background Papers:**

Care Services Inspection Report dated 27 May 2013

### **Declaration Box**

**Instructions:** *This box must be completed by the author of the report. The box will be copied and saved by the Council Secretariat who will delete it from the report prior to photocopying the agenda.*

**Title of Report:** *Inspection of Midlothian Council Fostering Services*

**Meeting Presented to:** *Cabinet 14 January 2014*

**Author of Report:** *Mary Smith*

*I confirm that I have undertaken the following actions before submitting this report to the Council Secretariat (Check boxes to confirm):-*

- ☒ *All resource implications have been addressed. Any financial and HR implications have been approved by the Head of Finance and Human Resources.*
- ☒ *All risk implications have been addressed.*
- ☒ *All other report implications have been addressed.*
- ☒ *My Director has endorsed the report for submission to the Council Secretariat.*

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*Likewise, please advise the Council Secretariat if any report for Midlothian Council has an education interest. The Religious Representatives are currently entitled to attend meetings of the Council in a non-voting observer capacity, but with the right to speak (but not vote) on any education matter under consideration, subject always to observing the authority of the Chair.*