

**Inspection of Midlothian Council Fostering Service  
Report by Joan Tranent, Head of Children's Services****1 Purpose of Report**

This Report outlines the outcome of the above announced inspection as carried out by the Care Inspectorate on 18 November 2015.

**2 Background**

2.1 Midlothian Council Fostering Service is based in Lawfield Primary School and provides a 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 and local authority social work departments 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 4 – Good
Quality of Staffing	Grade 5 – Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	Grade 4 – Good

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

2.5 The Care Inspectorate noted that since the last inspection the service has further developed:

- The service continued to offer a good quality of service to foster carers and those wanting to become foster carers: The past year has been a period of rapid development with the appointment of a new manager.

2.6 The Inspection Team noted the following strengths:

- Foster Carers told us they currently received a very good service which supported them and their families.
- The service has made a concerted effort to develop and improve group support opportunities.
- The management and leadership of the service was highlighted as a positive for those providing feedback to the inspectors.

- 2.7 The Inspection Team reported that following areas for improvements:
- Where the service has identified delay issues, they should target resources to improve assessment and planning.
  - There have been some missed opportunities for the involvement of service users.
  - The service would benefit from a clear, outcomes focussed, service development plan.
- 2.8 The Inspection Team concluded that changes in management have had a positive impact on the staff morale and has empowered what is a knowledgeable and experienced group of practitioners to continue to improve the service. The provider is committed to further improvement but specific planning for this service must be improved to build upon what has been achieved.

### **3. Current Context**

- 3.1 Midlothian Council's Fostering Service is committed to providing foster placements where each child will have stability, security and a warm, safe and caring environment. The importance of having local carers caring for local children and young people reinforces the ethos that where possible all Midlothian children and young people live within their own communities and attend their local school whilst having to reside with a foster family. The service are committed to ensuring that young people and carers views are adequately represented in developing and shaping the service. Moreover, the report reinforces and legitimises the direction of travel undertaken by Midlothian Council.
- 3.2 Since the inspection report Midlothian Council is working on a number of actions to improve the service. Namely;
- Developing an outcome focussed service development plan.
  - Ensuring that better information is passed to the foster carer when a child is accommodated.

### **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**

In addition to obtaining our own feedback, as part of their inspection process the Care Inspectorate had discussions with foster carers, staff members, management, panel members and other professionals including allocated social workers.

Feedback in writing was provided by a range of stakeholders.

Review of documentation included some children's files, carers' files, policies and procedures, team meeting minutes and other quality assurance information.

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 requested to:

- (i) note the content of the inspection report;
- (ii) pass this report to the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee for its consideration;
- (iii) congratulate the Management and staff connected with the Midlothian Council Fostering Service on the strengths identified in the report.
- (iv) note that the Council will continue to challenge, support and monitor the service in relation to the delivering excellence framework.

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**Background Papers:**

Care Services Inspection Report dated 18 November 2015