

**Inspection of Midlothian Council Adoption 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 Adoption Service is based in Lawfield Primary School and provides an adoption 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 4 – 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 the significant improvements in relation to the following:

- The service had significantly improved the way they tracked the planning for children in their area.
- This tracking system has reduced the amount of delay in decision making for children.
- Greater partnership working across teams has supported flexible working aimed at promoting positive outcomes for children in need of adoption.

2.6 The Inspection Team noted the following strengths:

- Adopters told us about the good quality of support they received from their Supervising Social Worker.
- Staff were skilled and experienced in their work and had good access to training.
- Staff worked effectively together to identify children in need of permanent care.

- 2.7 The Inspection Team reported that the following areas for improvements are:
- We could do more to provide life history information for children and adoptive families in a more child friendly way.
 - The agency should adopt a more comprehensive approach to planning how the service will develop and share this with people who use the service and stakeholders.
 - The adoption agency gave appropriate attention to detail when linking and matching children. This meant that adopters were better able to meet adopters needs.
- 2.8 The Inspection Team concluded that there was a continued commitment from Midlothian Council to improve adoption services for children in their area. Staff and adoptive families were committed to providing good quality care to children and young people.

3. Current Context

- 3.1 Midlothian Council's Adoption Service is now a well established team whose aim and objectives are: to provide for the recruitment, assessment, training and ongoing support of carers and adoptive parents to meet the identified needs of looked after children and adopters.

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 sent out questionnaires to Adopters and the Adoption Panel members. 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 adoptive families and informal discussions with some children. They also attended a Fostering Panel and met with the manager of the adoption service.

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 Adoption 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 our delivering excellence framework.

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Background Papers:

Care Services Inspection Report dated 18 November 2015