

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	21 March 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Inspection Reporting – Inspection of Regulatory Care Services
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/23/083
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Graeme Simpson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.1.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide assurance to Elected Members on the quality of care provided by Aberdeen City Council's regulatory care services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee -

- 2.1 note the findings of the most recent inspections of Aberdeen City's Fostering Service, Adoption Service, Kingsfield Children's Home, Marchburn Road Children's Home and Gilbert Road Children's Home; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Officer Children & Family Services to bring an updated report to committee in March 2024.

3.1 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1.1 Aberdeen City Council Children's Social Work delivers a number of services that require to be registered with the Care Inspectorate. As such these services are routinely inspected by the Care Inspectorate to ensure that they are delivering high quality care and support to the children and young people who require these services. In addition, the inspections examine the quality of the professional support and development opportunities provided to staff and carers who provide the care.
- 3.1.2 The Care Inspectorate use a six-point scale when evaluating the quality of performance across quality indicators:

6 - Excellent	Outstanding or sector leading
5 - Very Good	Major strengths
4 - Good	Important strengths, with some areas for improvement
3 - Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
2 - Weak	Important weaknesses – priority action required

1 - Unsatisfactory Major weaknesses – urgent remedial action required

3.1.3 The framework is designed to support care services in self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is a core part of assuring quality and supporting improvement. The process of self-evaluation, as part of a wider quality assurance approach, requires a cycle of activity based around three questions:



3.1.4 The framework ensures the voice of children and young people who use the services are central to our self-evaluation. In addition, it focuses on the support and needs of the staff/ carers who deliver care. The nature of inspections undertaken by the Care Inspectorate on our regulated care services are either “Unannounced” or “Short Notice”. In effect this means that all of these services require to be inspection ready at all times.

3.2 Residential Children’s Homes

3.2.1 Aberdeen City Council has four registered Children’s Homes, although one of these, Kincorth Children’s Home, due to the sustained challenge of attracting suitably qualified staff to work in children’s residential care is currently mothballed.

3.2.2 Evidence from the most recent inspections (two being undertaken in 2022) highlights that the quality of care and support provided was evaluated as **Very Good**. This very positive outcome was reinforced with no noted ‘Requirements’ and only a few minor ‘Recommendations’, where it was felt improvement could be made. These recommendations will be appropriately actioned within the services improvement planning.

3.2.3 Our residential children’s homes demonstrate occupancy rates averaging 90%. In 2021/22 placement demand exceeded availability with periods of occupancy

at 100%. Data supports that young people stay in local residential children's homes for longer and until they are older.

- 3.2.4 As well as promoting the principles reflected in "Staying Put Scotland", placement duration reflects the core values and ethos of care for our residential homes. This includes a robust and systemic matching process. Our ethos is based on a therapeutic approach based on Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP). Using this approach with young people helps and supports them to recover from trauma and prevent further harm.
- 3.2.5 There has been a very low level of placement breakdown - under 3% between 2020/2022. The benefits of this approach and matching process is evidenced by the number of long term placements and as young people move on, the increasingly successful sustaining of accommodation/tenancies as well as the increased number in further and higher education.
- 3.2.6 The service provides a residential aftercare dimension. This provides care leavers with ongoing connectedness and belonging. The residential aftercare service supports 15 young people who have moved on to their own accommodation from a local children's home. This support strand is integral to the care provided and supports enduring relationships. Outcomes suggest the model works well for the majority of moving on young people, with only one instance of a tenancy breakdown.
- 3.2.7 As noted in 3.2.1 the recruitment of staff to residential child care is a local and national challenge. Staff report that caring for young people in a residential setting is often hugely rewarding, they also recognise the complexity and challenges associated with the role. In collaboration with Robert Gordon's University and colleagues in People and Organisational Development attempts to grow the residential workforce are actively being pursued. However responses to recent activity highlights this will not be quickly or easily resolved.

3.3 Fostering and Adoption

- 3.3.1 Aberdeen City Council is a registered Fostering Agency and Adoption Agency. The fostering & adoption services operate taking full account of the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS)
- 3.3.2 The Fostering and Adoption Services are separate registered services although work in collaboration with each other. Due to the COVID pandemic, inspection of Fostering & Adoption Services were put on hold. During this abeyance, the quality framework against which fostering and adoption services are inspected was updated in May 2021. Consequently, the inspection of both services, undertaken over September and October 2022 was the first time they had been evaluated using this framework.
- 3.3.3 Evidence from this inspection reflected very positively on the quality of care and support being provided to children and young people. Foster carers and adopters also reported feeling well supported. Against most indicators the services were evaluated as **very good** and a couple as **good**. This very positive outcome was reinforced with no noted 'Requirements' and only a small number

of minor “Recommendations”. These recommendations will be appropriately actioned within the services improvement planning.

- 3.3.4 As part of the inspection both services were required to provide the Care Inspectorate with an inventory of key documents, procedures and practice guidance. In addition, the Care Inspectorate ‘tracked’ a number of children and young people who have accessed these services. In doing so they looked back at the support that was provided to the children, young people and their families prior to them being placed in either a fostering or an adoptive placement. Additionally, they considered how these placements contributed to improving the outcomes for the children and young people. As such the findings from this inspection have relevancy for the wider Children’s Social Work Service.
- 3.3.5 For a number of years the Fostering and Adoption services has invested time and energy to support the delivery of therapeutic parenting training. Feedback from carers suggests they feel more equipped to support the needs of children placed in their care. As a consequence the number of placement breakdowns has reduced. The Care Inspectorate found that carers “*are attuned to the needs of children and young people, and understand behaviour when language is absent*”.
- 3.3.6 As a whole service we have placed strong emphasis on keeping brothers and sisters together. We recognise this, on occasion, will always be a challenge. The Care Inspectorate however identified the service had developed “*creative and innovative attempts to keep brothers and sisters together and, when this is not possible, plans are in place to meet up and keep in touch.*”
- 3.3.7 In November 2022, it was estimated that Scotland needs an additional 500 foster carers to meet demand. Aberdeen City Council would recognise this national challenge. As a Council we recognise that we have placed more children than we would want with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA’s), often some distance from the city. This dislocation from family, friends and their local community can be detrimental to the child’s/young person’s long term wellbeing. Reducing the number of children we place with IFA’s is a priority within the refreshed Children’s Services Plan. Firstly, and foremostly this is about developing the capacity of community based services to support children within their family, where it is safe to do so. However, it is also about how we continue to grow our internal fostering capacity. This is and remains a priority focus for the fostering service.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising out of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified			
Compliance	No significant risks identified			
Operational	Required improvements and developments in practice are not identified and actioned.	Children, young people, their families and the professional workforce can be assured that regulated care services in Aberdeen City are continually appraised in order to improve the quality of locally delivered services.	L	Yes
Financial	No significant risks identified			
Reputational	Organisational failings in relation to the provision of care services can bring significant media interest and scrutiny i.e. Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.	The public can be assured that: the Council provides those children who cannot be cared for by their family with high quality care experiences in compliance with regulatory standards and identified areas for improvement are addressed.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The delivery of regulated care services is aligned to the Children's Services Board whose aims are aligned collectively to the Council Delivery Plan 22/23 and the Working in Partnership for Aberdeen Policy Statement.

Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Aberdeen City Council's regulatory care services are central to supporting and assuring that the multi-agency Children's Services partners deliver on the LOIP – Prosperous People (Children and Young People) Stretch Outcomes 4 to 9 and to ensure our children are safe from harm. Children, young people and families who are adequately protected from threats to their health, safety and economic wellbeing are more likely to prosper than those who are not.
Regional and City Strategies	The work of Aberdeen City Council's regulatory care services are relevant to Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and the Children's Services Plan.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of The Promise/Plan 21 -24 • Whole Family Wellbeing Support • Introduction of a National Allowance for Foster carers and Kinship Carers.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required for this report.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required for this report.
Other	Not required for this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

a) Gilbert Road Residential Children's Home

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=312293>

b) Marchburn Road Residential Children's Home

c) Kingsfield Residential Children's Home

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/care-services?detail=CS2003015550>

d) Fostering Service October 2022

<file:///C:/Users/gsimpson/Downloads/InspectionReport-313434.pdf>

e) Adoption Service October 2022

<file:///C:/Users/gsimpson/Downloads/InspectionReport-313433.pdf>

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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