

Agenda Item	6
Report No	HCW/06/23

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Date: 18 May 2023

Report Title: Fostering and Adoption Service – Family Based Care

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the work of the Council's Fostering and Adoption Services for the period 2022/23. The broader term 'Family Based Care' is also used to capture the range of care arrangements for emergency care, interim care, short-breaks (respite) long-term care, including what is termed permanence, defined as physical, psychological, and legal security throughout childhood, securing children with e.g., foster carers, continuing carers, adoptive carers, and kinship carers.

Kinship care is not a regulated service by the Care Inspectorate and is not the focus of this specific report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. **Note** and scrutinise the content of the report which aims to offer transparency and accountability for Highland Council's Fostering and Adoption Service.
 - ii. **Agree** an annual report be presented to committee from the Fostering and Adoption Service to enable continuous scrutiny and assurance of improvements to the service.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – There are no resource implications from this specific report. Separately, it is important to acknowledge that as of April 2023, Highland Council approved just over £1.3 million in increased allowances for fostering, kinship, and eligible adoptive carers.

- 3.2 **Legal** – Fostering and Adoption Services are specialist family-based care services that operate within a complex landscape of legislation, statutory duties, and statutory regulations. **The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009** is an important operational piece of legislation in the Scottish looked after system. **The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007** modernised adoption, introducing Scotland's Adoption Register to help match children placed for adoption with families. It also gives local authorities the ability to apply to court for 'Permanence Orders', vesting parental responsibilities and rights in the authority. **The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** introduced a range of significant reforms across children's services. These include corporate parenting duties to meet the needs of care experienced people. The Act also sets out and extends the age of eligibility for aftercare support for young people leaving care to 26; and introduces 'continuing care', providing care leavers up to the age of 21 with the opportunity to continue with accommodation and support they were provided with immediately before they ceased to be looked after.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – Family based carers and those children in their care, are often vulnerable groups given the demographic challenges of poverty, rights and equalities and sufficiency of local carers in rural and island communities.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - Sufficiency of local Highland Family Based Carers can reduce the travel and costs associated with having to travel out with the Highland area.
- 3.5 **Risk** – A lack of recruitment, growth and retention of Family Based Carers can result in Highland children having to be placed out with the Highland area at a considerable human and economic cost. Fostering and Adoption and Continuing Care Services are regulated for quality and standards by the Care Inspectorate. Recent inspection findings, as detailed in section 5 of this report, highlight that the service is on a considerable improvement journey as inspection has graded 3 areas of service delivery as weak. Findings indicate a risk to quality and standards as well as reputational risk in trying to recruit and retain sufficiency of Family Based Carers for children who require care and protection. A comprehensive improvement plan has been put in place and is included at Appendix 1.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – Sufficiency of local Highland Family Based Carers often supports children's cultural, linguistic, identity and belonging needs within their local communities.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Highland Fostering, Adoption and Adult Placement Service (Continuing Care) comprises of **18.4** (FTE) staff, and is managed by a specialist Resource Manager, who is also the Registered Manager for the service with the Care Inspectorate. The Resource Manager reports through a designated Head of Service to the Executive Chief Officer of Health and Social Care. It is a specialist service requiring experienced social workers with backgrounds in children's services. Staffing in the service had been relatively stable for several years. However, in the past year, four experienced members of staff retired, and it has taken some considerable time to fill these vacancies.
- 4.2 The Fostering and Adoption Service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, supervision, support, review and training of Foster Carers, Adult Placement Providers (Continuing Care) and Prospective Adopters. In addition, the Service continues to

work with, and support adopters post adoption, when children are no longer “Looked After”. Additionally, the service provides a search and counselling service to adults affected by adoption.

5. The Care Inspectorate and Inspection

- 5.1 The Care Inspectorate inspects all Fostering, Adoption and Adult Placement Services usually every two years. This contributes to the on-going registration of agencies to provide these services. Although Fostering, Adoption and Adult Placement Services are managed as a single service, the Care Inspectorate treat and inspect the three functions as separate entities. The Highland Council is registered with the Care Inspectorate as a Fostering Agency, Adoption Agency and as an Adult Placement Provider. The most recent inspection of all three functions of the service took place between 11 July and 12 September 2022.

The full report is available here:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=313432>

The findings of the Inspection resulted in the following grades for each function of the service being awarded. (In evaluating quality, the Care Inspectorate use a six-point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent)

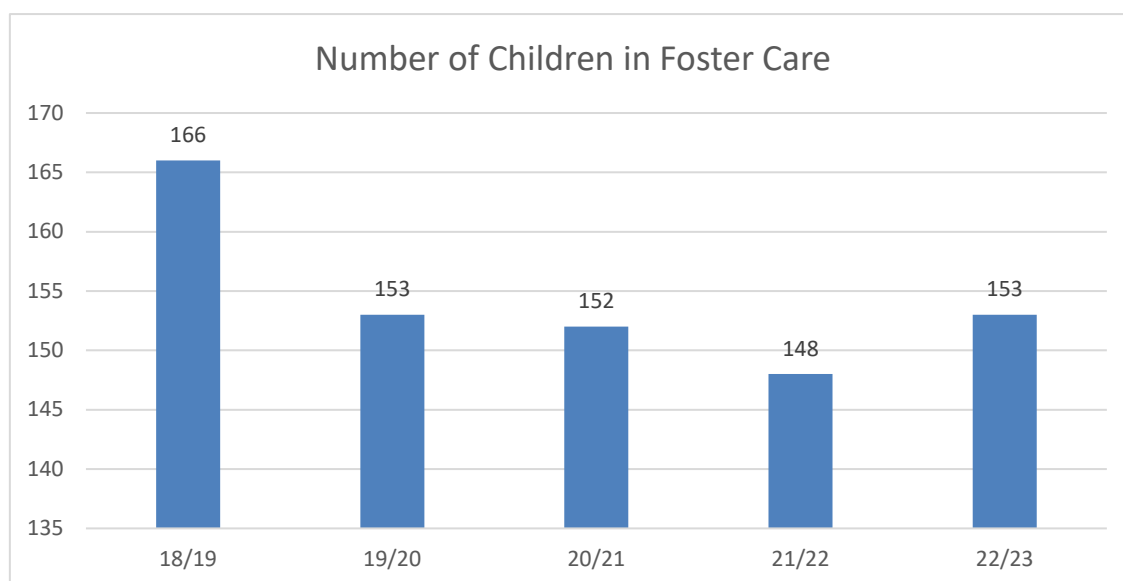
Fostering, Adoption and Adult Placement Services	
How well do we support people's wellbeing?	2 – Weak
How good is our leadership?	2 – Weak
How good is our staff team?	4 – Good
How well is our care and support planned?	2 - Weak

- 5.2 The Head of Service and Registered Manager (Resource Manager) acknowledge that weak grades are not acceptable. Improvement is now overseen directly by the Head of Service. Greater transparency and accountability are in place, including clear expectations that an annual report will be submitted to Committee for scrutiny. A comprehensive **Improvement and Action Plan** has been implemented with significant progress being made in the first six months following the inspection report being finalised. Feedback from the discussions held recently in relation to the Improvement Plan with the Care Inspectorate, about the progress made by the service, has been positive. **(Appendix 1 – Improvement and Action Plan)**

6. Fostering

- 6.1 In 2022/23, there were **57** new children (admissions) accommodated in foster care with **46** children placed with Highland Council foster carers and **11** children placed with independent fostering providers. This is a reduction from 2021/22, when there were **74** new admissions to foster care, which is a notable **43%** reduction in new fostering admissions.
- 6.2 The total cumulative number of children (new and existing) placed in all categories of Foster Care during 2022/23 increased from **148** children in foster placements as 31st March 2022 to **153** on 31 March 2023. However, the number of children in Foster Care has reduced in the past 4 years.

Number of Children in Foster Care Provided and Purchased as at 31/03/23



7. Children Placed

- 7.1 There continues to be a shift in the age groups requiring foster care, with a marked increase in the number of very young children who are accommodated, who often have serious health and developmental needs generally associated with parental substance misuse.
- 7.2 The number of brothers and sisters who need foster care continues to present challenges to the service, and we endeavour to keep brothers and sisters together where possible and where it is appropriate to do so in line with The Promise. During 2022/23 we placed **15** sibling groups together in their foster placement, and where this is not practically possible, we support maintaining contact between the children as a priority. These sibling groups range from 2 to 5 children, and are often characterised by profound neglect, with the eldest often having been a carer for younger siblings.

8. Recruitment of Foster Carers

- 8.1 Children's Health and Social Care Family First Strategy is about supporting children to remain at home with their parents, where this is safe to do so, and by providing additional support and scaffolding to families who might need this at different times, to ensure their children's wellbeing and safety is supported. Fostering is an integral part of the Family First strategy and for this to be a success the service needs to retain the current cohort of carers and recruit many more for children and young people of all ages so that we increase the number of local foster placements available for alternative Family-Based Care.
- 8.2 Foster carers are in receipt of a fee per child and an age-related allowance for the children in their care. It is the personal dedication of carers to make a difference to children's lives that remains the core motivation of carers. Recently the Council agreed to increase allowances paid to Kinship, Foster Carers and to a small number of families who adopt from 1st April 2023. By investing in Family Based Care the Council has acknowledged the commitment and valuable contribution made by carers, who are often 'ordinary' people doing the extraordinary to ensure children are loved, happy and have safety and security, including a family to transition positively into adult life.

- 8.3 A major recruitment campaign throughout 2023 will include regular advertising in local radio and publications, featuring fostering on the Council website and on social media, as well as messages about fostering featuring on Council employee's pay slips. This should contribute to raising the profile of fostering across Highland and during National Foster Care Fortnight, which is running from 15-28th May 2023, supported by the Fostering Network.
- 8.4 A small recruitment pilot is also being planned in Sutherland during May and June to recruit short break foster carers for children with a disability, whose family have expressed a wish for overnight respite. The intention is to ask local communities to help the service to recruit locally and information sessions will be held throughout Sutherland with a preparation course to be held in Lairg, which is the most central location for people to travel to from that county.
- 8.5 We currently have **105** fostering households and with the increase in demand for permanent foster and respite placements for children affected by disability, the service must advertise and recruit continuously.
- 8.6 Although the number of approved carers has remained relatively static, it is an ongoing challenge to replace those who stop caring, mainly due to retirement, employment, and changes in health and family circumstances. Many enquirers do not satisfactorily complete the assessment and preparation phases, often because having learned about the challenges involved in fostering, they decide for themselves that fostering is not for them.
- 8.7 Advertising will continue throughout the year mainly targeting communities within Highland with an emphasis on communities helping us to recruit carers who live locally.

9. Preparation, Training and Support

- 9.1 There were **5** preparation courses for fostering delivered by the service during 2022/23. In addition, a wide range of training continues to be delivered to staff and carers, both in person and online by experienced colleagues, and through 'specialists' from other agencies which provides opportunities for learning, sharing experiences and networking. This is viewed as both valuable and worthwhile. Though online training is not replacing face to face training, this is seen as complementing the training opportunities for carers who have childcare commitments, to reduce travel time, particularly during the winter months and to make training opportunities more accessible for those who live in rural areas.

10. The Fostering Panel

- 10.1 The Fostering Panel has a total of **8** members who have experience of working in social work, including children and families, fostering and adoption and health, a lay member who is a retired foster carer and a care experienced adult as well as a medical and legal advisor. The panel is currently seeking lay person membership from Education.
- 10.2 The Fostering Panel functions are defined by Regulation and makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker about:
- The suitability of applicants wishing to foster
 - The type of placements foster carers can provide – temporary (interim), long term, permanent or short break carers for children affected by disability

- The number of children that can be placed in a fostering household
- Reviewing approval status following the carer's annual review and whether this approval is continued, changed, or withdrawn.

10.3 During 2022/23 the Fostering Panel met monthly and approved 2 applications for fostering, including temporary and long-term carers, and considered an increased number of carer's reviews. A further 5 assessments are currently being carried out. This is a considerable decrease in the number of assessments being progressed to the approval stage compared to previous years, with several assessments having been started and not progressing due to a variety of circumstances, including applicants being counselled out of the process.

10.4 There has been a marked decrease in the number of people coming forward who are interested in fostering across Scotland and this was evidenced during and since the covid pandemic. The cost-of-living crisis and remuneration for carers also contributes to this reduction in interest. By increasing the allowances that Highland Council pay this should go a long way in encouraging people to come forward.

11. Adoption

11.1 There is recognition that children who are adopted are not a distinct population but are primarily younger children who cannot safely return home to the care of their parents. There continues to be small numbers of children accommodated at birth because of serious parental drug or alcohol misuse, resulting in some children being placed for adoption who are born with neo-natal abstinence or foetal alcohol syndrome. Adoption gives this group of children the chance to be claimed for lifelong security, stability, and emotional recovery. Proactive processes, including permanency planning, and recruiting, and approving adopters continuously, have meant that most Highland children are placed within Highland. In contrast to Fostering, since 2020 the number of applications for assessment for adoption has increased and this is the experience of other Local Authorities across Scotland.

11.2 Sufficiency of highly skilled adoptive carers is essential to meet a small proportion of need in Highland. Fostering and Adoption Social Workers recruit and prepare adopters for all children identified by the Adoption and Permanence Panel. Our strategy is to recruit prospective adopters to meet the needs of Highland children, including prioritising applications for those interested in adopting older children, brothers and sisters and children with additional health or medical needs.

11.3 If prospective adopters have not been matched with a child within a year of approval, they can, at their request, be referred to Link Maker and Scotland's Adoption Register for consideration for matching by other Agencies. Scotland's Adoption Register is a nationwide linking service to improve the opportunity of finding an adoptive family and to reduce the time children wait to be placed.

11.4 Preparation groups for prospective adopters are planned in advance, and are normally very well attended, with three adoption preparation groups being held during 2022/23. Experienced adoptive parents joined the groups to share their personal experiences of the assessment and adoption process and offer support and advice to new applicants.

12. The Adoption and Permanence Panel

12.1 The Adoption and Permanence Panel's statutory functions are defined by regulations. The Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker about:

- The suitability of applicants wishing to adopt
- Reviewing approval status following the annual review and whether this approval is continued, changed or withdrawn.
- Whether permanence away from home is in a child's best interest and the most appropriate legal route
- Matching children with Prospective Adopters or their Permanent Foster Carers

12.2 The Adoption and Permanence Panel has a total of **10** members who have experience of working in Social Work, including children and families, fostering and adoption, an Education Psychologist as well as a lay member with an education background and a lay member who has experience in disability, as well as an Independent Chair and Vice Chair. The panel also has a medical and legal advisor.

12.3 The increasing number of children needing permanent foster care, as well as adoption and the increasing number of prospective adopters approved, has kept the Adoption and Permanence Panel busy throughout 2022/23. The panel meets twice a month, with additional panel meetings being held, if necessary, for matching children with prospective adopters, to reduce the time they wait for a suitable family and to reduce delay in planning for their future.

12.4 During 2022/23 the Adoption and Permanence Panel has approved **8** new adoptive families, matched **13** children with their prospective adoptive parents and considered **22** children who were presented to the Panel and were registered for permanence away from home during this period (e.g., permanent fostering).

However, there are a further **13** children who are waiting to be matched with adoptive parents and a sibling group of **4** waiting for a match with permanent foster carers. In addition, there are **32** children where the permanence decision has been made but have yet to come to the Adoption and Permanence Panel to be formally registered for permanence away from home. Service Managers have responsibility to scrutinise drift and delay in planning. This is predominantly linked to recruitment and retention challenges of experienced qualified Social Workers in the Family Teams. A Permanence Champion Model is currently being developed to try to address the pressures and challenges.

12.5 During 2022/23 there were a total of **40** Orders granted in Court - **22** Adoption Orders, **10** Permanence Orders and **8** Permanence Orders with Authority to Adopt.

12.6 Some children still wait too long to be matched with a permanent family. We therefore actively encourage people in the early stages of the recruitment process to consider those children whose complex needs require highly experienced and skilled carers, making it clear that support is available to them before and after adoption. A small number of children have also remained with their foster carers, with whom they have lived for a considerable period, where attachments and relationships have been established, and it is deemed to be in the best interests of the child to remain with the family and be adopted by them.

13. Preparation and Matching

13.1 Information about the children who need new families is given to those who enquire about adoption. This information highlights the need for family groups, and in the last year we have successfully placed **4** sets of brothers and sisters with their prospective adoptive parents. We have also been able to place children under five who have

differing degrees of developmental delay and disability. Our approach is to be honest and positive; nevertheless, the number of prospective adopters who, after careful thought and contact with the medical advisor, conclude they are not able to proceed, has increased significantly over the years. As a result, it takes longer to match some groups of children.

14. Post Adoption Support

- 14.1 The Service has, in acknowledgment of the greater needs of the children being placed for adoption, continued to develop services after adoption. Adoption support planning meetings with health and education colleagues, have been established for several years and a positive working relationship with colleagues from CAMHS has made a very positive contribution to the understanding of the challenges that adopted children bring with them. Adopters are integrated within the fostering system, before the adoption order is granted, and have opportunities to attend training. Adopters are also supported to provide short carer breaks, which can help enhance their confidence and develop their experience. Adopters are primarily childless couples, and this hands-on experience helps them to become more aware of the needs of care experienced children.
- 14.2 The Service supports an online Adopters Forum which meets regularly in the evenings and on occasions at weekends. This is a learning and peer support group, facilitated by the service and is well supported by adopters, who benefit from peer support and gain further knowledge and understanding of their children.
- 14.3 The Service also manages indirect contact through the post box system between adoptive families and birth relatives with more than **130** post box arrangements currently in place. Adoption allowance is paid to **34** families and **17** families have an allocated social worker to undertake direct therapeutic work through the most challenging times. In addition, there is one social worker who is specially trained to undertake Therapeutic Life Story Work with children and young people. Training for all staff in Children's Services, Foster and Kinship Carers and Adopters about the importance of Life Story work is planned in the Autumn 2023.
- 14.4 The specialist consultation service to adopters continues to be delivered by a Psychological Therapist from the Care Experienced Young People Team in CAMHS who has a particular interest and background in attachment and the lifelong implications of adoption, and this is invaluable in helping and supporting adoptive families.

15. Services to Adults Affected by Adoption

- 15.1 This skilled and painstaking area of work involves file finding, searches, liaison with other jurisdictions, counselling, and mediation. The demand for this support has increased in the last ten years, due to more openness in adoption, greater media interest in family history, and Scotland's Historical Child Abuse Enquiry. Traditionally this service focussed on adult adoptees finding their birth parents, whereas there are now more requests to find brothers and sisters, and birth parents requesting information about their children who were placed for adoption.

The list of records archived is catalogued alphabetically with cross referencing from children to adopters, and there is a procedure and system for releasing and returning files. Work continues moving the archived files from their current locations across

Highland to the Highland Council Archive Centre, which will help with locating, storage, and security of records.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

Date: 26 April 2023

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IMPROVEMENT & ACTION PLAN

FOSTERING, ADOPTION & ADULT PLACEMENT CONTINUING CARE SERVICES

Following the Inspection by the Care Inspectorate during July to September 2022 the following grades were awarded and 7 requirements and 5 areas of improvement were made by the Inspectors. Therefore, an improvement and Action Plan has been created to identify what needs to be done, how these requirements & improvements will be implemented and reviewed and who is the Lead and participants responsible for implementing this plan. Requirements must be in place by 31.12.22 as stated in the final Inspection report issued in December 2022. Improvements are ongoing and will be reviewed and monitored. The Service must evidence that steps have been taken to address these requirements and improvements in the next Inspection.

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	2 - Weak
1.1 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect	4 - Good
1.2 Children, young people and adults get the most out of life	2 - Weak
1.3 Children, young people and adults' health and wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience	3 - Adequate
1.4 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families get the service that is right for them	2 - Weak
How good is our leadership?	2 - Weak
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	2 - Weak
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
3.2 Staff have the right knowledge, competence and development to support children, young people, adults and their caregiver families	4 - Good
How well is our care and support planned?	2 - Weak
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults	2 - Weak

FOSTERING & ADOPTION

How well do we support people's wellbeing?						
1.1 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect						
1.2 Children, young people, adults get most out of life						
1.3 Children, young people, adults health & wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience						
1.4 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families get the service that is right for them						
Requirement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	BRAG
1. To introduce safer caring policies individualised for each child and young person which would formalise how each care giver household supported safe and nurturing care.	Review implementation of safer caring plans for each foster family & their placements	Introduce new documentation that will capture Safer Caring Plans (SCP) for each child placed in Foster Care	Resource Manager, Team Managers & F & A team	Safer Caring Plans must be completed for all fostering households by 31.12.22	Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011/210). This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am as involved as I can be in agreeing and reviewing any restrictions to my independence, control and choice.' (HSCS 2.6)	Green
	Ensure children and fostering families are included in discussions related to safer caring	A Safer Caring Plan (SCP) will be completed for every placement & each time there is a change in the residents within a carer household. A copy of the SCP will be given to the foster carer, a copy kept in the carers records & a copy saved on the shared duty drive. These will be monitored centrally by the Service Manager.	Team Managers F & A team	Ongoing and as part of the SCP process		Green
	Review formats of documentation and improve guidance to staff on how to engage children and	Safer Caring Plans will be completed in consultation with Foster Carers, children & young people,	Team Managers & F & A team	Discussed at staff meeting 01.12.22		Green

	fostering families in Safer Caring Plans.	Supervising Social Workers & any other relevant persons. For EA's and OAR's, a new Safer Caring Plan should be completed				
	Review all safer caring plans as per the procedures	For permanent placements these Safer Caring Plans will be reviewed annually. For interim placements Safer Caring Plans will be reviewed every six months. For carer break/respice & short break placements these Safer Caring Plans should be reviewed regularly.	F & A Supervising Social Worker			Green
	Review Safer Caring training for foster carers & overview	Review Safer Caring training available for fostering households. Update FC Handbook	Team Managers & F & A team Resource Manager	Review completed by 31.12.22		Green
Requirement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	
2.Ensure there are robust considerations of a caregiver's ability to meet the needs of a child in advance of a caregiving arrangement being agreed.	Ensure that there is a clear identification of a fostering family's ability to meet the needs of a child before the child joins this family & that this is recorded for each placement. Identify carer strengths & vulnerabilities in	Introduce a new recording document that captures the child's needs, the carers skills & experience & identifies how the Foster Carer can meet the child's needs. Record the matching information in the	Resource Manager, Team Managers & F & A team F & A/Supervising Social Worker	New form for recording to be in place by 31.12.22 New form introduced from 07.12.22	Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011/210). This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me.' (HSCS 1.19)	Green

	relation to meeting the needs of a specific child & outlining any additional support required to ensure that children's needs are fully met.	child's folder on the duty drive. A copy of the matching should be kept in the carers records. Audit files	F & A/Supervising Social Worker			
	Ensure there is a clear referral process which outlines the needs of children needing alternative care from fostering families	Review the referral process currently in place & make any amendments	Resource Manager & Team Managers	Reviewed by 20/12/22		Green
	Ensure placement planning meetings take place when children join fostering families & these are recorded. Review placement matching information & any additional support required.	Ensure that placement planning meetings are taking place by tracking and auditing files.	Team Managers & F & A/Supervising Social Worker	Reviewed & discussed at Staff meeting 01.12.22 Audit to take place		Amber
Requirement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	
3.The service should make significant improvements in achieving positive outcomes for children in need of permanent care.	Improve the quality of permanence planning for children to promote stability in children's lives.	Continue to offer Permanence Consultations to the LP & PL's Introduce/establish "Permanence Champions" weighted to permanence work in Family teams in each area & in the F & A service	Resource Manager & Principal Officer/other Senior Managers Strategic Lead Registered Services, Resource Manager, Team Managers	To be completed by 31.12.22 Ongoing In place by April 2023	Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011/210). This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'As a child or young person needing permanent alternative care, I	Amber

		Reduce delay / drift in Permanency Planning processes through the promotion of the learning from the PACE programme across Highland.	Strategic Leads, Resource Manager		experience this without unnecessary delay' (HSCS 1.16)	
	Ensure robust tracking arrangements are in place for children at all stages of their care journey and that drift and delay is addressed at each stage of the process	Review our tracking arrangements & ensure reasons for drift & delay are being recorded & that this is being reported & robustly addressed with the CSM's at the bi-monthly Permanence & Kinship meetings, and with PL's, QARO's & LP's.	Resource Manager, Team Managers & Clerk to the Panel Exceptions are escalated to HoS/ADM	Tracking process reviewed & updated by 31.12.22 Ongoing		Green
	Ensure a robust & timely approach is taken to family finding when children are identified as needing permanent care to ensure that their care needs can met by the right fostering/adoptive family	Record in more detail and record an analysis of the reasons for drift & delay & record any actions taken to address these. Review guidance issued to Lead professionals in relation to Family Finding	Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A Social workers Resource Manager & Team Managers	Access to SAR & LM for F & A Managers & Clerk to PP is resolved by ICT by 31.12.22 Reviewed in Dec 2022		Green
	Ensure there is a record of family finding steps taken & that they are reviewed quarterly by	Review our process for family finding to ensure that potential matches are being	Resource Manager & Team Managers	Confirm monthly meetings are in place with Managers in F & A to review & record		Green

	the Resource Manager.	followed up timeously by F & A & LP's.		family finding progress.		Green
	Ensure that clear systems are in place to monitor outcomes for children in need of permanent substitute care.	Keep a record of the steps taken to identify a suitable permanent family for each child.	Resource Manager, Team Managers	By 28.02.23		

How good is our leadership?						
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well						
Requirement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	BRAG
4.The service should ensure that robust quality assurance processes are in place to monitor key areas of performance within fostering regulations with monitoring and review, to identify areas of continuous improvement.	Develop quality assurance processes & framework to monitor improvement & highlight where continuous improvement is required.	<p>Review quality & standard of assessments, Carer Reviews, Recruitment by a process of a cycle of auditing case files.</p> <p>Self-evaluation & appraisal of panel work by Panel members.</p> <p>Annual Panel Business Development meetings.</p> <p>Annual report to Committee of the Panels functions and work undertaken.</p> <p>Annual report to Committee highlighting strengths & achievements of the</p>	<p>Resource Manager, Team Managers</p> <p>Resource Manager, Panel members (Fostering & Permanence)</p> <p>Resource Manager, Panel Chairs, Panel members, ADM</p> <p>Resource Manager, Panel Chairs</p> <p>Resource Manager</p>	Work in progress & ongoing	Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011/210). This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS).	Amber

		service and taking into consideration Inspection findings.				
The service should improve quality assurance systems for monitoring to ensure that children remain safe within their fostering families.	Review foster care agreements & ensure they are in line with best practice guidance and statutory requirements	Review the wording in FC agreements & update accordingly. Ensure that all Foster Carers & Prospective Adopters have a foster carer agreement in place & that this is renewed annually.	Resource Manager, Team Managers Team Managers, F & A Social Workers Clerk to fostering panel	Review of QA processes in place by 31.12.22 January 2023		Green
	Ensure systems are in place for identification and panel review of foster carers and dual registered prospective adopters	Review the Foster Carer approval spreadsheet & ensure dates of reviews for both FC & PAP's are recorded. Highlight those reviews that are overdue to the RM. RM to highlight the overdue reviews & request a plan from the F & A social worker to undertake the review with timescale.	Resource Manager & Clerk to fostering panel Clerk to fostering panel RM, Team Managers, F & A social worker	In place & reviewed by 31.12.22		Green
	Ensure that the safety of children and young people is improved through more regular unannounced visits to FC's & PAP's & that these are recorded.	Create a document that details the unannounced visits. These visits/documents are to be noted in the Information & Assessment report for	Resource Manager Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A social workers	Complete 12.12.22 Updated Carer Review Form 12.12.22		Green

		the Carer Review papers for Panels & ADM. Update Fostering procedures and Foster Carers Handbook. Include unannounced visits in the FC agreement	Resource Manager	Inform FC/PAP's of the updates to the FC Handbook by 31.12.22 Update sent to all FC/PAP's 20.12.22		
	Ensure individual safer caring plans are developed and reviewed regularly in response to changing need	See Requirement 1	Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A social workers	To be completed by 31.12.22		Green
	Ensure unannounced visits take place within required timescales. Ensure full carers checks are monitored and kept up to date.	Increase the number of unannounced visits to be undertaken per year by the F & A social worker. Create a spreadsheet that monitors unannounced visits & highlights when these are overdue. Review spreadsheet that monitors updates for medicals, PVG's, Disclosures & LA checks	Team Managers, F & A social workers Resource Manager, Clerk to the Fostering Panel AG, Clerk to the Fostering Panel	Discussed with F & A staff 01.12.22 FC/PAP's advised in letter & Handbook update 20.12.22 Completed by 21.12.22 QA process in place by 21.12.22 In place by 31.12.22		Green
Requirement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	
5.Children and young people's welfare and safety was not prioritised.	Ensure that the service can access the up-to-date Care Inspectorate	F & A social workers must notify DR of any accidents, incidents, hospital admissions,	F & A social workers Clerk to the Fostering Panel	Immediately following inspection & by 31.12.22	This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland	Green

<p>An important part of quality assurance relates to the monitoring, reporting and analysis of serious incidents.</p>	<p>guidance on notifications. Notify the CI of all incidents, accidents and allegations of abuse against foster carers in accordance with this guidance.</p> <p>The service should look to ensure that there is a clear record of all disruptions & that there is evidence of disruption meetings for all Highland children including those children placed with Independent Fostering providers or those living in another authority.</p>	<p>allegations etc as soon as is practically possible & complete the correct form for recording such matters.</p> <p>The Resource Manager will review all notifications & ensure they are reported to the CI as per the CI guidance.</p> <p>Review our procedures in relation to Disruptions, our recording of decisions & areas of improvement & the minute taking of these meetings.</p>	<p>Resource Manager</p> <p>Resource Manager</p>	<p>Audit & Review of notifications to take place quarterly by Resource Manager along with Clerk to the Fostering Panel</p> <p>Review with Team Managers.</p>	<p>(Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210). Health and Social Care Standard which states: 'I am protected from harm, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (3.20); and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (4.19)</p>	
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How well is our care and support planned?						
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults						
Requirement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	BRAG
6. The Provider should ensure that care planning documentation for children and young people takes a SMART approach (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).	Assessed needs of each child are accompanied with detailed action points	Review Childs Plans & action records for children in Foster Care & highlight (& record) where the plan for a child is not clearly recorded by the LP/QARO	F & A social workers, Team Managers, Resource Manager	To be completed by 31.12.22	This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011/210). This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: My personal plan (sometimes referred to as my care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15) and 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).	Amber
	Lead Professional & partners to the Childs Plan responsibility to support progression of action points is clearly recorded	Create a document to record the involvement/views of the social workers & Team Managers from the F & A service for CPM's & Core Group meetings	Resource Manager	New recording document in place by 12.12.22 to record the views of the F & A social Workers for Childs Plans.		Green
		Record action taken to progress permanence planning for children where drift & delay has been identified. Create a QA monitoring document to record progress of these permanence cases.	Resource Manager Team Managers, F & A social workers & Clerk to Permanence Panel	Review current monitoring & update by 31.12.22		Amber
	Delay & drift in progressing action points are addressed & recorded	Create a spreadsheet to record involvement of the F & A service for children where drift & delay has been identified.	Resource Manager Clerks to Permanence & Fostering Panel			Amber

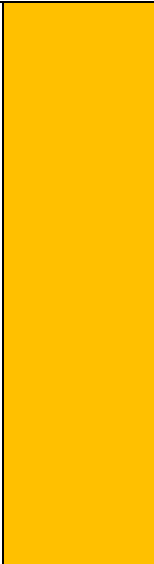
ADULT PLACEMENT CONTINUING CARE

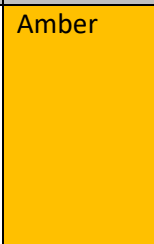
How well is our care and support planned?						
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults						
Requirement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	BRAG
1.The provider must take steps to support young people to experience stable & consistent care beyond 18 years.	At a minimum ensure a Welfare assessment is undertaken for young people to ensure Continuing Care is in their best interest	<p>Ensure the views of the young person are captured in their Childs/Pathway Plan</p> <p>Ensure discussions are held with the young person & the foster carer about Continuing Care as an option & these discussions are recorded</p> <p>Continuing Care Welfare assessments are undertaken timeously for all young people using the service & that any actions are in line with the regulations on Continuing Care</p>	<p>LP, QARO, F & A social worker</p> <p>F & A social worker</p> <p>F & A social worker, LP</p>	Incorporate Welfare Assessments in the Continuing Care procedures by 31.12.22	This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011/210). This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11).	Amber
The provider must decide how best to assess, train & approve foster carers as adult placement carers	Review draft Continuing Care Procedures for the assessment, training, approval & review of Foster Carers as adult placement carers	Ensure that Continuing Care Procedures for the assessment, training, approval & review of Foster Carers as adult placement carers is in place.	Resource Manager & Team Managers	Finalise Draft Continuing Care Procedures by 31.04.23		Amber

		Networking with colleagues in other Local Authorities across Scotland in relation to policy and procedures.	Resource Manager	Ongoing		
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**AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
FOSTERING & ADOPTION**

How well do we support people's wellbeing? 1.5 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect 1.6 Children, young people, adults get most out of life 1.7 Children, young people, adults health & wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families get the service that is right for them						
Areas of Improvement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	BRAG
1.The service would benefit from providing training on adult protection for caregivers as a priority.	Ensure that carer families are skilled and supported to care for young adults the service will develop and access Adult Protection training to all carer households who are providing Continuing Care	Ensure all FC who are providing Continuing Care undertake Adult Protection Training Ensure all F & A social workers, Team Managers & RM undertake Adult Protection Training. Develop procedures for assessment, approval & review of foster carers who provide Continuing Care	Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A social workers Resource Manager, Team Managers	December 2022 Adult Protection Training has been sourced; staff & Team Managers have signed up for this. FC have been given the details to register.		Green
2.The provider should improve its approach to life story work so that young people are	This should include but is not limited to, implementing a consistent approach to gathering and	Ensure Foster carers can access training about the importance of gathering information for	F & A social workers	20.12.22 - Discussions taking place to consider training in 2023 for relevant staff across	Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own	Amber

<p>supported to understand their life story & history & have an understanding about the reasons for entering care</p>	<p>storing important life story information</p> <p>Providing specific training to staff and carers about how life story work should be approached</p>	<p>children/young people life story & how they can contribute</p> <p>Ensure social workers in Childrens services have the opportunity to access training about the importance of gathering information for children/young people life story & how they must contribute</p>	<p>Resource Manager, Team Managers, C & P Team Managers</p>	<p>Childrens Services in LSW & to include in the staff training plan</p> <p>Planned implementation September 2023 for the first cohort of staff and carers training</p>	<p>identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma or neglect.' (HSCS, 1.29)</p>	
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<p>How good is our leadership? 2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well</p>						
<p>Areas of Improvement</p>	<p>Actions</p>	<p>Measures/Evaluation</p>	<p>Lead/participants</p>	<p>Timescale</p>	<p>Regulations</p>	<p>BRAG</p>
<p>3.The provider should develop a reflective learning culture when unplanned endings have occurred</p>	<p>Ensure disruption/unplanned ending meetings are recorded & there are clear learning & action points recorded for service improvement</p>	<p>Review the current procedure for reviewing unplanned endings</p>	<p>Resource Manager, Team Managers</p>	<p>Review of current procedures for unplanned endings to take place by 30.04.23</p>		<p>Amber</p> 

How well is our care and support planned?						
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults						
Areas of Improvement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	BRAG
4.Children & young people have opportunities & benefit from participation in decisions that affect them	Evidence the support provided to children & young people to express their views, attend meetings & understand how their needs will be met through care planning processes.	Record where foster carers have supported children/young people to express their views, where they have & supported them to attend meetings & how they have helped them to understand their care planning.	F & A social workers, Lead Professionals	From November 2022		Amber
	Ensure participation, views and voice of Looked after Children in Foster Care, Children who foster, Foster Carers & Prospective Adopters are gained.	Develop a feedback form for Looked after Children in Foster Care to record their views about their care arrangements & planning to be included in the FC Review process	Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A social workers	January – May 2023		
		Voice and views to be gathered through participation, evaluation, surveys & focus groups.	Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A social workers	Work in progress & ongoing		

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

ADULT PLACEMENT CONTINUING CARE

How well is our care and support planned?						
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults						
Areas of Improvement	Actions	Measures/Evaluation	Lead/participants	Timescale	Regulations	BRAG
1.Ensure that carer families are skilled and supported to care for young adults the service should develop and deliver Adult Protection training to all carer households .	To ensure that carer families are skilled and supported to care for young adults the service will develop and access Adult Protection training for all carer households who are providing Continuing Care	Ensure all FC who are providing Continuing Care undertake Adult Protection Training Ensure all F & A social workers, Team Managers & RM undertake Adult Protection Training	Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A social workers, Resource Manager, Team Managers, F & A social workers	December 2022 Adult Protection Training has been sourced; staff & Team Managers & F & A social workers have signed up for this. FC have been given the details in December 2022 to register for the training.	This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14) and 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities'.	Amber