

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Social Work Services

Children Services Committee: 18 April 2007

Subject: The Inspection by the Care Commission of West Dunbartonshire Council's Fostering and Adoption Services

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide Committee with information about the outcome of the inspection of fostering and adoption services by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (The Care Commission).

2. Background

2.1 The Care Commission is a national body set up to monitor and inspect services providing care and support services to people of all age ranges.

2.2 The fostering and adoption services were inspected by the Care Commission between 30th October and 16th November 2006.

2.3 Fostering and adoption services are inspected on a set of national standards. The range of standards include the following:

- Information processes.
- Preparation and assessment of carers.
- The Adoption and Fostering Panel.
- Reviews of foster carers.
- Recommended allowances and expenses.
- Providing a good service.

2.4 The Inspectors were based within the authority for 2 weeks and their inspection process included:

- Questionnaires sent to service users. These included carers, social workers and children.
- Examination of policies, procedures, training materials, manuals.
- Examination of carers files.
- Fostering and Adoption Panel papers.
- Minutes of foster carer reviews.
- Interviews with foster carers, adoptive carers, fostering and adoption social workers, attendance at preparatory groups, attendance at Fostering and Adoption Panel, meeting with all fostering and adoption social workers, Assistant Principal Officer (Child Care), Section Head (Child Care), Agency Decision Maker.

3. Main Issues

3.1 In the main verbal and written feedback from the inspection reported on the high quality of the service provided by the Council's Fostering and Adoption Services. Some of their comments included the following:

- All respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the service being provided.
- One child in a foster placement wrote "my (foster) parents are fantastic, please don't take me away from here."
- Carers and prospective carers are well informed of procedures, processes and any issue affecting their application.
- Very good and high level of professional practice was found in: dealing with applications, the preparation of carers, the thoroughness of the assessment process which was found to be open, transparent and encouraged partnership working.
- The fostering and adoption panel conducted business according to legal requirements, and it was obvious that expertise, relevant research and professional opinion were demonstrated during the meeting.
- Procedures were in place to promote the rights of the adopted child to receive financial support commensurate with levels of needs.
- Foster carers confirmed reviews took place annually.
- Foster children's written comments contributed to the discussion. Letters to each child acknowledging their views were sent.
- Management of both services met the Council's policies and responsibilities towards staff's development and learning. Management was described by staff as supportive and accessible.
- The fostering service operated its child protection procedures in line with the Authority's policy.
- There were close working relationships between staff in the service and the social work department's child protection co-ordinator.

3.2 Areas for Development

3.1 Through the teams own self-evaluation and confirmed by the inspectors during their visit, a number of areas for further development were identified. These included:

- Written information about each of the services provided should be expanded and up-dated.
- Web site should be set up.
- Written evaluations by users of services should be introduced.
- Written comments from birth families for carers reviews should be sought.
- Applicants should be made aware of their right to be accompanied by a friend if attending either the adoption or fostering panel.

4. Personnel Issues:

4.1 There are no personnel issues arising from the inspection.

5. Financial Implications:

5.1 There are no particular financial implications arising from the inspection, as any potential costs can be met from current budgets.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The main risks are associated with not meeting the requirements and recommendations prior to the next inspection. At present work is progressing on all the areas for development, most of which have already been implemented.

7. Conclusion

7.1 West Dunbartonshire Fostering and Adoption Team were one of the first in Scotland to be inspected by the Care Commission.

7.2 The inspection report has given very favourable feedback on the team's performance in achieving the National Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is invited to note the contents of the report.

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Appendices: No appendices

Background Papers: www.carecommission.com

Wards Affected: All wards.