

## Foster Care- Section 21 notice A-D report- follow up queries

1. Firstly, there are some questions within the response where we would be grateful if you could provide further clarification:
  - i. In 1.8(ii)(g) on page 33 of your response regarding checks of accommodation, it is noted that the answer here is lacking in sufficient detail. The question seeks information about the nature and frequency of checks on accommodation, whether these were repeated and if not, why not. We note that you only refer to the prospective carer's assessment as being a time when checks were carried out by the local authority – is that correct? If so, please could you advise why no further checks were carried out? If other checks were carried out, could you please confirm their nature and frequency?

### Response to 1i re 1.8 (ii) g p33

g) What checks were carried out by the local authority of the available accommodation? How frequently were these carried out? Were they repeated? If so, how frequently? If not, why not?

It was part of the prospective carer's assessment to check accommodation as suitable to meet the needs of a child.

However there is evidence of some checks being carried out by the local authority. Our research of the Burgh Minutes shows that visits by children's officers/ social workers and elected members appear to have visited on an at least an annual basis and there is some evidence of further visits being carried out.

Our research team read all of the relevant Committee minutes noted in the volumes of local Greenock and Port Glasgow Burgh minutes from 1930 to 1970. The earliest note of visits found was September 1932 in the minute of the Public Assistance Committee showing that boarded out children were visited and the homes they lived in were checked in order to satisfy themselves that the accommodation was suitable.

*B A report was submitted from Councillors Watson and Paterson on the visit paid by them to the 39 children boarded out in the Beaully district. The report stated that they were thoroughly satisfied with the homes in which the children are housed and that the guardians showed a real interest in the welfare of the children.*

A further minute in May 1933 indicates visiting rotas were established with a view to adhering to regulations in place as at that date.

*E recommend that the Corporation ...  
A ballot having been taken, it was agreed that the following Councillors should make the visitation to the boarded-out children, viz :—Arran District—Councillors Porter and Morrison; Arisaig and Fort William Districts—Councillors Minto and Alston; Beaully and Conon Bridge Districts—Treasurer Templeton and Bailie Lemmon; Strachur and Whitehouse Districts—Councillors McDonald and Bates; Lanark and Rosewell Districts—Councillors Barr and McGeachan; and Larbert and Dundee Districts—Councillors Bell and Adams.*

The latest note of visitations in the Burgh minutes was found by our research team to be in June 1965

In connection with the annual visitation of boarded out children it was agreed to recommend that the following members should undertake these visitations in company with the Children's Officer and that it be left to him, with powers, to arrange mutual dates for the visitations, viz:—Inverness and Banff Area—Councillor Martin and Councillor Young; Ayrshire, Dumfriesshire and Wigtown Areas—Dean of Guild Mulholland and Councillor Thomson; Fife, Edinburgh, Galashiels and Lanark Areas — Provost Miller, Treasurer Wolfe and Councillor Rogan.

Evidence in the Greenock Corporation Burgh minutes of the Children's Committee, notes that elected members and officers were on a rota to visit children in foster care in line with regulations/legislation in place as at that date.

Below is an example from the Children's Committee minute of January 28 1955

With reference to minute of last meeting of this Committee (P569A), there was submitted a letter of date 31st December from the Children's Officer suggesting that the Dumfries area should no longer be considered a special district for visitation purposes since there was now only one child boarded out in that area and that this case could be included in the local visitations. He further suggested that the Arisaig area should be extended to include certain districts formerly included in the Beaully area thus reducing the time taken for the visitation to Beaully; that the Aberdeen and Aberlour district should remain as formerly; and that a new district should be recognised covering the Edinburgh area. The Committee approved and after discussion it was agreed to recommend that the winter visitation of children in care should be undertaken by the Convener and Vice-Convener and that the children in the Edinburgh area should, on this occasion, be visited.

The Children's Officer referred to...

Later in the minute of the same committee in June 1955 the record below shows that children were visited in March 1955

There was submitted a report by the Convener, the Vice-Convener and the Assistant Children's Officer on the visitation of children boarded-out in the Edinburgh area which they undertook from 21st to 23rd March. The terms of this report were noted with interest by the Committee.

The Children's Committee minute of June 1956 remarks on visitations made.

visitations. ... and these were disposed of conform to the markings on the list. (c) the case of a girl ...  
A report on the visitations made to boarded-out children in various districts was submitted and noted.  
Under reference to minute of ... ultimo (p.201) ...

The image below is from the Children's Committee minute of 13 May 1957 recording children being visited in April 1957.

The Committee  
taken into care (b) a girl discharged from care  
(d) the transfer of a girl to other foster parents.  
A report on the visitations made to boarded out children during the month  
of April was noted.  
Members were appointed to carry out visitations as follows:-Dundee, Aber-  
deen and the North - Bailie O'Donoghue and Police Judge Lucas; Fife County and  
Edinburgh area - Provost Blair and Bailie Wilson; Dumfries area - Provost Blair and  
Councillor Miller; Glasgow area and Lanark County - Bailie O'Donoghue and Police  
Judge Lucas; Port Glasgow and adjacent - Bailies O'Donoghue and Wilson.

The note below is from 5 October 1959 and records a report on visits made in September 1959.

Children already in care and those discharged during the month  
Reports were given on visits made last month to boarded out children  
in Lanarkshire and Dumfries.  
Meeting of this Committee held on 7th  
Reception Ho  
fire equipme

The note below is from the Children's Committee held in November 1959 and records a report on visits made in October 1959

as a Christmas gift and these  
Reports were given on visits made last month to boarded-out children  
in Dundee.  
Visits.

The note below is from the Children's Committee held in December 1959 and records a report on visits made in November 1959

Reports were given on visits made last month to boarded out children in  
Aberlour and in the north.  
Visitations.

The specific reports referred to in the above minutes have not been located within Inverclyde archives. Notes describing visits to boarded out children are also available from the 1940's (within Public Assistance Committee Minutes) should they be of assistance.

Case files prior to 1996 are not in our possession but may be archived at the Glasgow Records Management Department at the Mitchell library in Glasgow. If further detail can be provided of specific childrens' names/dates of birth, then further checks can be undertaken of that archive. Without such further, detailed information, it would be hugely onerous/nigh on impossible task for a search of that archive to be undertaken by staff of each and every file held.

Inverclyde electronic social care record (ESCR) shows, in children's case records - which were sample read - that Care Plan Part 1 documents note social work visits

between 1996 and present day were timely and of the frequency required by the relevant legislation in place.

Such visits were in addition to the Foster care support social workers, annual health and safety risk assessments or Family placement workers' Annual reports which are evident in Foster Carers files which were sample read from those stored in the Inverclyde ESCR from 2007 to the present day.

- ii. As regards 4.6(ii) on page 81 which concerns policy/procedures in relation to the placement of children with foster carers approved/registered by other local authorities or organisations, we note that some of the answers within this section suggest the question may have been misinterpreted. The question seeks information about the policy/procedures for the placement of children, rather than policy/procedures for foster carers transferring from/to different local authorities. We would be grateful if you could revise the position here to check that the answer provided focuses on the placement of children in foster care placements rather than to the transfer of carers.

**Response to 1ii**

4.6(ii) p81 (ii) Practice Past

- a) Did the local authority adhere in practice to its policy/procedures in relation to placement of children with foster carers approved/registered by other local authorities or organisations?

From research it would appear that the local authority did adhere in practice in this area.

- b) How was adherence demonstrated?

By the maintenance of Case records which included rigorous assessments of carers. Those transferring were subjected to screening interviews and assessments.

Inverclyde council children's case files, from 1996 to the present day which were randomly selected and sample read contain records which demonstrate adherence. Collaborative planning for children considered to be on the edge of care is evident in child protection conferences and reviews. Case notes show that social workers were discussing risk with line and then service managers prior to children being taken into care. Foster care placement matching is evident. Use of s25 of Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is evident when children entered care and initial placement planning meetings were in operation. Looked after children forms such as Review of the Care Plan Part 1 and Part 2 were evident and showed a team around the child approach was in use as required by policy/procedure at the time.

Burgh minutes from 1930 to 1970 describe Children's officers reporting efforts taken to adhere to policy when placing children with carers approved in other areas. One such example is shown below in an extract from Greenock Corporation Children's Committee Minutes December 1965

TUESDAY, 7th DECEMBER, 1965.

3 The Children's Officer made reference to the case of a coloured boy who was four years of age and explained that this child had been adopted by his grandparents on his being abandoned by his mother; that both adopted parents were now dead; and that great difficulty was being experienced in placing this child in a suitable Home. He further explained that as the result of an advertisement placed in various magazines and newspapers, he had received an offer of accommodation for the child from a family living near Wick; that investigation had shown that this was a most suitable home where there already was a child who had been adopted from Glasgow; that the husband was a school teacher in the area and that the Children's Officer for the Wick area had indicated that he would undertake supervision of the child on this Corporation's behalf. He concluded by asking authority to place this child with this family, whose residence was outwith the area normally utilised by the Corporation, on a fostering basis initially with the prospect of adoption later and suggesting if the child were placed there that, at least during the first year, the Corporation representatives should visit this family during the annual tour of visitations to the North of Scotland. After consideration it was agreed to recommend approval of the Children's Officer's suggestions in this case.

Children's Committee minutes of 1953 show consideration of out of area foster placement as the Children's Officer reports to Committee seeking permission to progress the placement.

There was submitted a letter of date 27th ultimo from the Children's Officer intimating that tentative arrangements had been made for the placing of two sisters (redacted) at present in Smyllum Orphanage, with foster-parents in Blantyre but, in order that both girls could be accommodated there, it would be necessary to supply the foster-parents with a bed and bedding. After discussion the Committee approved of the placement of these two children and agreed in principle to provide the bed and bedding on loan, it being remitted to the Children's Officer to enquire in the first instance if any of these items were available in the Welfare Department Store.

Placement sisters with foster in Blantyre

c) How can such adherence be demonstrated to the Inquiry?

Foster care files contain records which indicate adherence. Family placement Practitioners carried out additional screening interviews, sought references and disclosure checks and made assessments as necessary. The fostering panel considered carers transferring in based on those assessments and all relevant background checks as required.

The sample of Children's case files which were read and are retained in Inverclyde's Electronic social care record can demonstrate adherence after 1996 to the present day.

Children's case files retained by Glasgow Records Management Department Archive at the Mitchell library may also demonstrate adherence however in order to confirm and carry out a search, further specific information would require to be provided.

Extracts from the Burgh minutes have some examples showing adherence [see (b) above].

d) Were relevant records kept demonstrating adherence?

Please see the answer above at b) and c).

e) Have such records been retained?

From our research it would appear that such records have been retained

f) If policy/procedure was not adhered to in practice, why not?

From our research it would appear that policy/procedure was adhered to in practice

- iii. In answer to question 4.9(a)(iv) on page 92 and 4.9(r)(iv) on page 96 dealing with record keeping policy, we note that reference is made to complaints being recorded in foster carer files and children's case files, and there is no reference to there being any separate complaint log. Is our understanding correct that there was and is no separate complaints log maintained and that complaints were and are only noted in case files?

**Response to 1iii**

Inverclyde council in the Health and social care partnership directorate have, since 01 April 2016, maintained a separate complaints log however prior to that complaints records appear to have been only noted in case files of foster carers and children. Our research team found no evidence of a complaints log being in place in predecessor councils.

2. Please could you explain the case file review methodology which was employed by Inverclyde Council in preparing the A-D response? For example, it would be helpful if you could set out how many files were reviewed? Were both children's files and foster carer files examined and if so how many, or was reading limited to only one category and if so why? If samples were taken, please confirm how files were selected for reading? Broadly what time periods did these files relate to? If you are able to give an indication of how many files were considered relative to specific time periods that would also be helpful.

**Response to 2**

Inverclyde has in its electronic social care record (ESCR) a total of 1524 files which show all foster care placements of children made by Inverclyde council, from 1996 until the present day.

Inverclyde Foster carer files amount to 365 records from the same period.

5% of files were randomly sampled.

A total of 76 children's files were looked at and 18 foster carer files were read.

The files ranged in dates from 1996 to September 2019.

Other paper files from periods before 1996 which may be archived at the Glasgow Records Management Department Archive at the Mitchell library and have not been read.

3. Could you please provide us with a copy of the Strathclyde Regional Council: Social Work Department – Complaint Procedures. Report by Director of Social Work. April 1994 (SR1/2/Box277) referred to at footnote 83 on page 85 of your response.

**Response to 3**

The footnote referred to has been wrongly referenced in Inverclyde's original response and should be April 1991 not April 1994.

Dr Irene O'Brien, Glasgow City Archives, confirms that Glasgow City Council has previously supplied reports (with exception of the fostering-specific documents) listed in Inventory A-D on behalf of GCC and all the other ex-SRC local authorities. She has been informed that the Inquiry team is currently investigating their location. Dr O'Brien has agreed to send the fostering-specific items as a matter of urgency. As before, she does this on behalf of GCC and all the other ex-SRC local authorities.

4. In your email of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020, you advise that Sharon McAlees, Chief Social Work Officer would be best placed to speak to the report - can you please confirm if that remains the position?

**Response to 4**

Sharon McAlees, Chief Social Work Officer, is best placed to speak to the report. Ms McAlees is currently absent from work on sickness leave.