

2. Organisational Structure and Oversight

2.1 Culture

Past

- a) What was the nature of the culture within the local authority in relation to the provision of foster care?

We have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which detail the nature of the culture.

- b) Was that culture reflected in the local authority's policies, procedures and/or practice in relation the provision of foster care?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

- c) How can that be demonstrated?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

- d) Did the provision of care by foster carers reflect the local authority's culture, policies and procedures?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

- e) If not, please provide a representative range of examples and explain, by reference to those examples, why particular foster carers did not, in material ways, work in accordance with the local authority's then culture, policies and procedures and what, if anything, was done to change that?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

- f) When and why did any changes in the culture of the local authority in relation to the provision of foster care come about?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

- g) Were any changes in culture driven by internal influences, incidents, experiences or events within the local authority, or any of the foster care placements?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

- h) Were there any changes in culture that were driven by abuse, or alleged abuse, of children in foster care?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

i) If so, when did they occur and how did they manifest themselves?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

j) Were any changes in culture driven by any external influences or factors and if so what were those influences or factors?

In relation to council minutes, see response to question 2.1 a).

Present

a) What was the nature of the culture within the local authority in relation to the provision of foster care?

The Moray Council provides a formal fostering scheme with four levels of provision.

An outline of the skills levels are as follows:

Level 1

- Will apply to all newly approved foster carers (excluding specific recruitment)
- Must participate in mandatory post approval training which will include child protection and safer caring
- Linked to learning in pre-approval or induction stage of Standard for Foster Care
- Evidence of knowledge gathered and presented to first annual panel review
- To participate in regular planned supervision with allocated placement services social worker
- With support, carers will contribute to looked after child reviews/ children's hearings/ child protection case conferences
- To show an understanding of the importance of birth family links
- To evidence that carers are aware of the impact of decisions which may challenge their views and be able, with support to accept and promote the care plan for the child

Level 2

- Carers have completed all Level 1 development tasks and have evidenced learning
- Completed post approval training and learning linked to post-approval stage of Standard for Foster Care
- Skills development continues by attending training and by reflective practice with Placement Services Social Worker
- Regularly have children /young people in placement
- Develop and build on skills learned including carrying out tasks appropriately from the Child's Care Plan.
- To be able to manage personal/professional dilemmas constructively
- Can advocate constructively for a child without close support.
- At this level you may provide long term or permanent care for children whose needs present as being less complex subject to review.

Level 3

- Carers have completed all Level 2 development tasks and have evidenced learning

- Carers are willing to care for children with more complex needs/behaviours including older children/ sibling groups
- Carers demonstrate resilience in dealing with potentially challenging situations
- Carers actively contribute to the development of less experienced carers
- High level of flexibility to meet the needs of children placed
- Show active engagement in learning and development and can demonstrate this in their practice
- Demonstrate understanding of complex behaviours in children and young people
- Be able to evidence their practice as outlined in the Standard for Foster Care
- Willing to attend meetings of Level 3 and 4 carers as required

Level 4

- Carers have completed all Level 3 development tasks and have evidenced their learning
- Carers will care for the children and young people who display the most complex behaviours/needs including older children
- There must be justifiable reason if carers refuse to care for a child when a match is considered appropriate
- Carers must be committed to maintaining placements through the most challenging periods
- One carer should not have work outside the home, to meet the needs of the placement and to have the availability to attend meetings
- Carers will evidence commitment to sharing and developing their skills with other carers including mentoring/buddying roles
- Must be available to attend meeting of Level 4 carers on a monthly basis

There is an expectation of carers to provide an elevated level of care to children and to work within the remit of the foster carer handbook and as part of the team around the child.

Support to foster carers is expected to be at a professional and accountable level and is outlined in (1.8 (k) – the role of the supervising social worker).

High quality support and supervision is provided to all staff supporting foster carers and lines of responsibility are clear. Staff are committed to continuous improvement in relation to their work within fostering services.

The culture of the organisation has improved over a period of time, evidenced by procedures and policies that safeguard children in care as well as by the use of language and expectations of carers and those working within the fostering arena.

b) Was that culture reflected in the local authority's policies, procedures and/or practice in relation the provision of foster care?

Currently foster carers are expected to work by the terms of their agreement and under the remit of the Foster Care handbook which forms the main policy spine of the fostering scheme. This handbook provides key performance indicators for foster

carers. The practice is quality assured by senior social worker, the team manager and the fostering panel. Foster carers are supervised monthly. Staff are also formally supervised on a monthly basis and it is also incumbent on staff to follow their operations manual in relation to policy and procedures. This produces an accountable framework for practice.

c) How can that be demonstrated?

This can be demonstrated by supervision minutes of staff and foster carers, child's records and the quality and quantity of visits both to foster carers and children in their care. Foster carers are reviewed independently and annually. There is a clear unplanned ending process and where there are concerns about the quality of care, there is a clear and robust process by which this is addressed. Where a child discloses abuse or harm by a foster carer there is a clear process that ensures any enquiry into that allegation is undertaken by social work in the Access Team, moving the responsibility for the enquiry from the child care social worker and link worker affording independent scrutiny to any said allegations. Should the enquiry move to a joint police and social work investigation this remains out with the childcare/fostering team until conclusion.

d) Did the provision of care by foster carers reflect the local authority's culture, policies and procedures?

The provision of care by foster carers reflects the local authority's culture, policies and procedures. This has improved by the introduction of a rights based fostering scheme which is underpinned by national policy and best practice frameworks. The culture is actively changing in response to this and through a more transparent and evidence based process, high quality care for children can be demonstrated.

e) If not, please provide a representative range of examples and explain, by reference to those examples, why particular foster carers did not, in material ways, work in accordance with the local authority's then culture, policies and procedures and what, if anything, was done to change that?

Not applicable.

f) When and why did any changes in the culture of the local authority in relation to the provision of foster care come about?

The changes mentioned above have happened over a period of time as new learning happens in relation to practice. The most significant changes in practice happened in 2014 with the Foster Carer Review and from this the Scottish Government amended the Looked After Children Regulations 2009 which changed current practice. The FAI surrounding the tragic death of Dawn McKenzie in 2013 led to significant changes in practice on a national scale. More recent changes to practice in terms of national policy have been driven by the GIRFEC agenda. The emergence of the National Health and Social Care Standards and the Scottish Social Services Council Learning and Development standards for foster care have driven national

and more specifically, local policy and given a clear framework for how we approach policy and practice within Moray.

g) Were any changes in culture driven by internal influences, incidents, experiences or events within the local authority, or any of the foster care placements?

Culture has changed within The Moray Council as a result of an inspection by the Care Inspectorate in 2016. Furthermore a shift in leadership personnel is significant in defining the present day culture of The Moray Council. The staff are committed to continuous improvement and practice development and these happen, sometimes organically, but at times has been the result of changes in national policy and legislation or on the learning of Serious Case Reviews.

Locally where there have been incidents within fostering services, changes to policy have been implemented and acted upon with immediacy and learning has been ongoing around these experiences. A foster carer within Moray went to prison in 2008 convicted with rape and the abuse of children. This, we believe, led to a significant change in policy and practice in particular around allegations made by children about carers.

h) Were there any changes in culture that were driven by abuse, or alleged abuse, of children in foster care?

The Moray Council has had experience of foster carers that have abused children. In response to this the above processes for investigations of abuse has been implemented and all allegations/disclosure of abuse against a foster carer are dealt with as described above in (c). Implementing changes in procedure highlight influence the culture of listening to children and believing them as our first position as opposed to closed enquiries within the childcare/placement services teams.

i) If so, when did they occur and how did they manifest themselves?

Specific changes to practice and policy happened in Moray – there is an updated version of policy change in managing allegations against foster carers locally in 2012 and as such we can assume this was based on changes as mentioned above. This happened as a result of a foster carer being imprisoned for the abuse of children in his care.

j) Were any changes in culture driven by any external influences or factors and if so what were those influences or factors?

Many of the changes in policy across The Moray Council are as a result of external SCR's changes in national guidance and policies and legislation. There was a national change in policy in 2013 – 'Managing Allegations against foster carers and approved kinship carers – how agencies should respond'. This standardised the approach across the country in these situations and updated the local policy developed as a result of the imprisonment of the Moray Council foster carer.

k) To what extent, if any, has abuse or alleged abuse of children cared for in foster care caused, or contributed to, the adoption of the current policies, procedures and/ or practices of the local authority, in relation to the provision of foster care services for children including the safeguarding and child protection arrangements applying to its current foster care placements?

As above

2.2 Structure, leadership and accountability

Past

a) What was the structure of responsibility within the local authority in relation to foster care?

We have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which answer the above or are otherwise directly relevant. While such staff members as the Children's Officer and Director of Social Work may have had relatively senior positions of responsibility, we have not discovered statements of the extent of the responsibilities of their positions, or which other staff might be responsible for them/which staff they might be responsible for in turn.

Norrie notes that certain mental health legislation allowing for adults to be boarded out could also apply to children. While we have not discovered any instances of children being boarded out under this legislation in Moray, the following excerpts appear to discuss responsibility arrangements which may have related to boarding out under mental health legislation:

Moray and Nairn Joint County Council Minutes, 1948

"6th July 1948

Public Assistance Committee

National Health (Scotland) Act 1947 – Boarding out of lunatics in Private Dwellings

8. Reference was made to para. 18 of Minute of the Health Committee dated 6th July 1948, when it was remitted to this committee to consider letters from the North-Eastern and Northern Regional Hospital Boards with regard to future arrangements in connection with the boarding out of lunatics in private dwellings. It was noted that, in terms of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1947, the arrangements in regard to this service were the responsibility of the Regional Hospital Boards but that the Boards had asked that, until they would assume responsibility for the duties involved, Local Authorities should in the meantime continue the present system of visitation and payment as Agents of the Boards who would be responsible for repayment to the Authority of the cost of such services as from 5th July 1948.

It was agreed that the Chief Public Assistance Officer and Mr Smith should submit a report with regard to this matter to the next meeting of the Committee."

Moray and Nairn Joint County Council Minutes, 1949

"15th June 1949

Domiciliary Nursing and Mental Health Sub-Committee

Lunatics Boarded Out in Private Dwellings

15. Lists of changes and cessations in allowances in respect of boarded-out mental defectives and boarded-out lunatics prepared by the Chief Welfare Officer were submitted. The lists were approved and signed by the Chairman to authenticate same."

b) What were the oversight and supervision arrangements by senior management?

We have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which answer the above or are otherwise directly relevant.

c) What were the lines of accountability?

We have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which answer the above or are otherwise directly relevant.

d) Within the local authority, who had senior management/corporate/organisational responsibility for the managers/management teams/leadership teams who had responsibilities in relation to children in foster care?

We have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which provide an overview of the overall staffing structure of the local authority. In the case of Grampian Regional Council it is possible that this was the Director of Social Work, however we have not discovered any confirmation as to whether their organisational responsibility would extend to responsibility for managers/management teams/leadership teams (and indeed we have not discovered entries in the minutes detailing the structure of any such teams, or if any such teams existed that had responsibilities relating to children in foster care.)

e) Who, within the local authority, took decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care?

The council minutes referred to throughout this submission typically originate from a children's committee or social work committee or similar. Committees were primarily composed of elected local councillors. The extent to which these committees took decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care can be seen throughout the excerpts quoted throughout this submission.

While such staff members as the Children's Officer and Director of Social Work may have had taken decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care, the degree to which this is true is clear as we have not discovered a specification of this in the minutes.

f) To whom were foster carers accountable?

While we have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which state to whom foster carers were accountable, we have found examples in case files of the Children's Officer paying visits to children in foster carers. It could be inferred that these visits kept the foster carers accountable to any duties they may have had, and as such the Children's Officer was the person to whom foster carers were accountable.

g) Who, within the local authority, was responsible for the implementation of, and compliance with, the local authority's policies, procedures and/or practices in foster care both by local authority staff and by foster carers?

The following excerpts appears to show that certain duties from the Children (Boarding-out &c.) (Scotland) Rules and Regulations 1947 were delegated to the Chief Public Assistance Officer; note that it isn't stated whether or not the provisions of this act were translated directly to local authority policy, nor is it stated what the actual practices resulting from these actions were (or indeed that action was taken).

Moray and Nairn Joint County Council Minutes 1948, Vol.2

"27th January 1948

Maternity and Child Welfare &c. sub-committee

The Children (boarding-out &c.) (Scotland) Rules and Regulations 1947

Report of remit to Officials regarding visitation of children &c.

10. With reference to par. 13(b) of last Minute, the clerk submitted a copy of the Children (Boarding-out &c.) (Scotland) Rules and Regulations 1947, copies of which had been circulated to members along with report prepared by the Chief Public Assistance Officer, the Director of Education and the County Health Visitor in regard to visitation of boarded-out children in terms of the rules.

The meeting noted that these Officials recommended inter alia:-

1. That the Chief Public Assistance Officer should be responsible for the visitation of all children boarded-out by the Public Assistance Department and that the present Poor Law Medical Officers should provide reports on such children subject to payment of fees to be agreed with the Doctors concerned;
2. That the existing arrangements regarding the visitation by the County Health Visitor of children boarded-out by other Authorities in this area should be continued and that the School Medical Officer should continue to visit and report on such children;
3. That it was desirable that this authority whether alone or in co-operation with neighbouring authorities should endeavour to arrange for the provision of a home where children would be prepared for boarding out and where difficult children could be accommodated."

The following excerpt from the council minutes appears to suggest that the possibility of using voluntary organisations to help meet obligations required of the local authority by legislation' note that it isn't stated whether or not the provisions of this act were translated directly to local authority policy, nor is it stated what the actual practices resulting from these actions were (or indeed that action was taken).

Moray & Nairn County Council Minutes 1964, p.331

"7th July 1964

Children's Committee (Joint)

The Children and Young Persons Act 1963

5. With reference to para 3. Of Minute of this Committee dated 7th October 1963, and under reference also to the preceding paragraph the Meeting considered the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, and particularly Section I whereof which provides that it shall be the duty of every local authority to make

available such advice, guidance and assistance which may promote the welfare of children by diminishing the need to receive children into, or keep them in care, under the Children Act 1948 &c.; that any provision made by Authority under said section, may, if the authority think fit, include the provision or giving assistance in Kind or, in exceptional circumstances, cash, and that, in carrying out their duties under said section, a local authority may make arrangements with voluntary organisations or other persons for the provision by those organisations or other persons of such advice, guidance or assistance.

After some discussion it was remitted to the Chairman, the Children's Officer and the Clerk, to report on the action which should now be taken by the County Council to implement the provisions of said section. It was also agreed, that if necessary, the Committee should make arrangements to meet representatives of voluntary organisations who might be able to assist the County Council in the discharge of the duties devolving upon them under said Section."

h) To whom were fostering panels accountable?

We have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which answer the above or are otherwise directly relevant.

i) What were the oversight and supervision arrangements in respect of fostering panels?

We have not discovered any entries in the council minutes which answer the above or are otherwise directly relevant.

Present

a) What was the structure of responsibility within the local authority in relation to foster care?

The structure of responsibility in relation to foster care for The Moray Council follows:

For the recruitment, approval, training, supervision and retention of foster carers there is a team which comprises social workers, senior social workers and the team manager: staffing details are submitted annually within the required annual return. There is a service manager who has oversight of the service as a whole.

For children who need foster care placements short breaks, interim, long term and permanent there are area team "placing" social workers; senior social workers; team manager and service manager.

The Head of Service has the role of Agency Decision Maker.

The Chief Social Work Officer has remit for promoting the values and standards of social work practice in the delivery of social work tasks and services. The Chief Social work Officer is the chair of the practice governance board the terms of which is the standards of social work practice.

Recommendations, following due process for foster carers and for children, are presented to the foster panel for recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker makes the decision. Where there is a decision to pursue an order through court, assuming the child is subject of an order through the Children Hearing then there is the "advice to Court" Hearing. Due process includes multiagency looked after child reviews being undertaken by an independent chair, who does not have supervision of any of the social workers who present the needs.

Childs needs and business meeting follow due process and are designed to ensure appropriate match.

b) What were the oversight and supervision arrangements by senior management?

Senior Managers have oversight of the activities within (i) the fostering service for the foster carers and (ii) for the workers in teams who have remit for making recommendation in relation to need for permanence. They supervise the team managers who in turn supervise senior social workers and they provide supervision to social workers.

Case file audits are undertaken on a themed basis; governance is through the practice governance board. Cases of risk and concern are discussed within this governance board with decision making focussed on need or otherwise for the need to be entered within the risk register.

c) What were the lines of accountability?

Staff outlined in a) above are registered with Scottish Social Services Council and have responsibilities in line with their role and remit to ensure that the care a child receives in foster care is constant with the duties detailed in s 17 Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Where there may be complaints or allegations these are addressed through child protection processes where applicable: concerns that are not a complaint/ allegation/ child protection issue but a matter that does need attention through either supervision or training, are addressed through practice concern reports.

Child protection concerns and allegations against foster carers are undertaken by staff whose remit is child protection, rather than by those most known to the foster carer. This process ensures objectivity.

There is a standard agenda of reporting outcomes and learning from concerns/ complaints and allegations through the practice governance board which is chaired by the Chief Social Work Officer.

d) Within the local authority, who had senior management/corporate/organisational responsibility for the managers/management teams/leadership teams who had responsibilities in relation to children in foster care?

From 2020 the current Interim Head of Service, Joyce Johnston and Service Managers Jennifer Gordon and Tracy Stephen hold senior management/ corporate and organisational responsibility for the teams and structures outlined above. Directors, Heads of Services, Service Managers, and Team Managers were in post from 1996 onwards until 2014.

e) Who, within the local authority, took decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care?

Changes in policy are recommended to Children and Young People's Services Committee: Committee more usually are asked to scrutinise, consider key issues and then approve what is recommended.

The process of making recommendation for change in policy involves active consultation with stakeholders through a variety of means, consideration of options appraisals and, following analysis of key issues, making recommendation to Committee. An example of which would be the recommendation for the new fostering scheme in Moray - refer Children and young People's Services Committee 13 Feb 2019 (paragraph 16 of the minute refers). The need for a new foster scheme was informed by a number of factors including the new Health and Social Care Standards; the Learning and Development Framework – the standard for foster care and the Care Review.

Changes in procedure and practice are tabled at the practice governance board and they follow a similar outline of activity but are not tabled at Committee, instead changes in procedure and practice must be tabled at a governance board.

f) To whom were foster carers accountable?

Foster carers are technically self-employed but are accountable for the service they provide to children and young people in their care: they are accountable for the day-to-day decisions they take. At approval, a foster carer agreement is put in place. This details expectations which have been explored with them through the process of preparation and assessment. Foster carers have their allocated supervising social worker. Previously supervision sessions were held not less than quarterly this has increased as part of the new scheme to be not less than monthly. Reviews must be held within 12 months of the day of approval, within three years of the previous review and also where the agency considers that a review of the foster carer's approval is necessary or appropriate to safeguard the welfare of any child who has been placed with that carer. Within Moray foster carers are reviewed annually.

g) Who, within the local authority, was responsible for the implementation of, and compliance with, the local authority's policies, procedures and/or practices in foster care both by local authority staff and by foster carers?

All working within the services have a responsibility for adhering to policies, procedures and practices in foster care. All are supervised: all are alert to safer practice and issues: all are subject to annual review/ appraisal.

j) To whom were fostering panels accountable?

AND

k) What were the oversight and supervision arrangements in respect of fostering panels?

Fostering panels are accountable to the Agency Decision Maker. Moray works with the guidance in the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 PART VI FOSTERING PANELS, REGULATIONS 17 TO 20. The most recent protocol which details the functions of the panel was considered at Children and Young People's Services Committee on 23 AUGUST 2017 (Paragraph 12 of the minute refers).

Panel members total 15, in addition there are the legal and medical advisors, and are from a variety of backgrounds. Appraisals are annual. Training is no less than 6 monthly. Business meetings are 6 monthly. As part of the process of engaging with the PACE (Permanence and Care Excellence) programme, Moray has a number of aims which are closely linked with the actions of the panel's operation in terms of timing.

The history, from 1996 which was when Moray became a unitary authority, and evidence of reporting on the panel is evident within the following: -
At Social Work Committee, 4 March 1996 (paragraph 4 refers) an Adoption and Fostering Panel was established in Moray to meet the Council's responsibilities as a fostering and adoption agency. The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009 required operational arrangements to be updated and the name was changed to the Moray Permanence Panel. The changes were reported to Committee this Committee on 9 June 2010 (para 9 of the minute refers). Further review was approved at this Committee on 18 January 2012 (para 16 of the minute refers) at which time the name changed to Moray Fostering and Adoption Panel to more accurately reflect the work of the panel and authority was granted for Members of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Panels to be appointed to the Moray Panel to consider cases anew.

The necessity for a protocol with our neighbouring authorities is within the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009, regulation 9 and the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, regulation 27 which requires that there is a "differently constituted panel" for purposes of complaint and appeal.

2.3 External Oversight

Past

a) What were the arrangements for external oversight of the local authority's foster care services?

We have discovered only one entry in the council minutes that potentially relates to arrangements for external oversight:

Moray and Nairn Joint County Council 1946

"Public Assistance Committee

7th January 1946

Boarded-Out Children

8. With reference to para 5 of last Minute, there was submitted a letter from the Department of Health stating that the Committee on Homeless Children had asked that facilities should be afforded to them to visit homes and institutions receiving children and young persons. The Department accordingly asked that Local Authorities should advise the Governor or Matron in charge of such Homes that a visit might be made to the homes by one or more members of the Committee, and the Clerk stated that he had conveyed this information to Mr Cameron at Craigmoray Institution, and Mrs Glennie at Balblair home. The position was noted."

We have not discovered entries in the council minutes that would confirm whether or not such "facilities" were indeed arranged, or if any visits were made, or indeed if the purpose of any of these visits related to reasons of accountability or otherwise for the purpose of oversight.

b) Who visited the local authority's foster care services in an official or statutory capacity and for what purpose?

The minute referred to in the response to question 2.3 a) is the extent of what we have been able to discover in the council minutes that potentially relates to visits made by external individuals made in an official or statutory capacity. While there are examples of national government officials visiting the local authority who discussed issues relating to foster care with committee members (e.g. Moray & Nairn Joint County Council Minutes 1960, 19th February 1962, Children's Committee (Joint), Child Care (c) Address by Mr Corner (Chief Inspector for Child Care, Scottish Education Department)) it is unclear whether or not these individuals visited the foster care services themselves.

c) How often did this occur?

The minute referred to in the response to question 2.3 a) is the extent of what we have been able to discover in the council minutes – as noted, we have not discovered entries in the council minutes that would confirm if any visits were made, as such it is unknown how often any such visits might have occurred.

d) What did these visits involve in practice?

The minute referred to in the response to question 2.3 a) is the extent of what we have been able to discover in the council minutes – as noted, we have not discovered entries in the council minutes that would confirm if any visits were made nor what these visits might have involved in practice.

Present

a) What were the arrangements for external oversight of the local authority's foster care services?

External oversight of Moray Council's fostering service is through a number of strands. Regular inspections by the Care Inspectorate are undertaken not less than every 2 years, for the foster service as a discreet inspection, from which an improvement plan is produced and worked to which is in addition to the development plan for the service. Further, the service formed part of the Strategic Inspection of Children's Services for Moray, undertaken 2016 and follow through progress review was undertaken in 2018.

Inspection reports and actions plans are reported to the Children and Young People's Committee of the Council for scrutiny and noting.

Annually the work of the fostering panel is reported to the Children and Young People's Committee.

b) Who visited the local authority's foster care services in an official or statutory capacity and for what purpose?

The Care Inspectorate visited the Moray Fostering Service as part of the process of inspection. The dates are recorded in section c).

c) How often did this occur?

Inspections since 2014 have taken place as follows - November 2014; November 2015; August 2017 and October 2019.

d) What did these visits involve in practice?

These visits involve inspectors analysing the information that has been sent in advance of the inspection. This more usually includes: - the annual return which details staffing/ qualifications/ training/ safer recruitment; self-evaluation of the service and questionnaires which will have been issued to and returned by key stakeholders. When the inspectors are present they read reports and paper and electronic files: they attend a number of focus groups of distinct groups of people including foster carers; foster service social workers; placing social workers; and they talk to children placed with carers. They also attend the fostering panel and meet panel members.