

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 26 February 2001

**REPORT ON: PUBLICITY OF CHILDREN WHO ARE IN NEED OF PERMANENT
SUBSTITUTE FAMILIES**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 125-2001

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The attached report informs members of the various methods of recruiting families for children who are looked after away from home and for whom the local authority has particular responsibilities as a corporate parent. It also seeks their approval for advertising in respect of specific children.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that The Social Work Committee:-

2.1.1 Approves the methods of recruitment described in the report.

2.1.2 Delegates responsibility to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Children's Services Manager, to give consent for publicity in respect of specific children.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposals in this report will have no implications for additional finance, as the cost of referral to other agencies will be met from existing revenue.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The proposals in this report will result in the promotion of the health and well being of children, in line with the principles of Agenda 21, by allowing steps to be taken to secure family life.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposals in the report will result in the promotion of family life for children in need of permanent substitute care and increase the chances of some children being adopted.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 As stated in its Children's Services Plan 1998 – 2001 "*Dundee City Council believes that the best place for children to be brought up is within their own families.*" However, in some cases children and young people may not be able to be looked after safely at home and for a variety of reasons they may have to be looked after away from home. These children are 'children in need' and the local authority has particular duties, in respect of them, in its role as a corporate parent. For a small number of these children, this includes the duty to secure permanent substitute families.

6.2 Acting in its role as an adoption agency, the Council identifies children as being in need of permanent substitute care, either by way of adoption or permanent/long term fostering. The Social Work Department then investigates current available resources of families who have been approved by the Fostering and Permanence Panel. In the majority of situations there are sufficient local resources to match the needs of children awaiting families.

6.3 However, television programmes have highlighted that finding appropriate resources for some children is not always easy. Dundee City is similar to other areas of the country in that difficulties are experienced in finding families for sibling groups, children with disabilities and older children who have experienced very damaging early years.

If local resources do not meet the needs of the children who are waiting, referrals are made to the Scottish Resource Network offered by the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. The child is then featured in a newsletter called 'Scottish Children'. This newsletter goes to all Scottish local authorities family finding teams whose remit is to recruit potential adopters and long term foster carers. Despite being featured in this newsletter some children may still not be able to be placed. On occasions a referral is, therefore, made to Be My Parent, which although also operated by the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, covers the whole of the United Kingdom.

The British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering receives information from other local authorities on approved adopters or long term foster carers who have not been matched with a child. This information is also used in efforts to achieve links for children with prospective permanent families.

6.4 Referrals can also be made to Barnardo's who recruit and assess families for Adoption and Fostering within a 50 mile radius of Edinburgh.

6.5 In respect of children, for whom the local authority cannot find a placement, consideration needs to be given to the use of additional recruitment strategies. This may include advertising for specific children.

6.6 The legal status of a child will influence who gives the permission for publicity. If a child has been freed for adoption or if the local authority has obtained parental rights and responsibilities from the court, the local authority will be required to give consent. It is suggested that this be done, on behalf of the Council, by delegating responsibility to the Agency Decision Maker.

6.7 If parents have parental responsibilities and their consent is not forthcoming, the local authority may still be able to give consent if this is in the child's best interests.

6.8 In individual cases, a decision is taken, as to whether identifying or non-identifying information is used.

6.9 The following types of 'advertising' are recommended, dependent on the child's circumstances:

- Poster with a photo to be displayed in an open meeting.
- Video to be shown in an open meeting.
- Specific child/children interviewed or described in a newspaper or magazine feature, with or without a photo.
- Specific child/children interviewed or described in a radio or television programme.
- Child featuring the newsletters published by British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Directors of Education and Support Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

9.0 SIGNATURE

Director of Social Work

Date
