

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 21 May 2001**

**REPORT ON: WORKING TOGETHER FOR DUNDEE'S CHILDREN IN NEED  
ADOPTION SERVICES**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

**REPORT NO: 320 - 2001**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

This progress report informs members of the Adoption and Permanence Panel business between April 2000 and March 2001, and of Dundee City Council's performance in achieving permanence for Dundee's children in need. It also provides information on proposed national developments.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that The Social Work Committee:-

2.1.1 Note and approve the contents of the report.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

The work of the Adoption and Permanence Panel is in line with the principles of Agenda 21 in that efforts are made whenever possible to meet the needs of children locally, and for their social, education and health needs to be promoted.

### **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The work undertaken by the Adoption Panel and Permanence panel recognises and values diversity and promotes the principle of equal opportunities.

### **6.0 MAIN TEXT**

6.1 For the details of the function and duties of the Adoption and Permanence Panel. Please refer to Social Work Committee Report (No 659–2000).

6.2 Since report No 659–2000 was submitted, the panel membership has changed. Two panel members left, one due to a change of employment and the other due to work commitments. Both have now been replaced. Panel membership will be reviewed again in May 2002. It is the intention that panel members are appointed on a rotational basis so that opportunities are given to other personnel within the social work department and other agencies to become a panel member.

6.3 It is crucial that panel members are given the opportunity for ongoing training specifically in their role as panel members. Training has been undertaken to familiarise the new panel members with the roles and functions of the panel. The training also covered the European Convention of Human Rights, the issues from this which may have an impact on the functioning of the panel. In addition the panel had the opportunity to hear about and to

learn from other adoption cases through out Scotland where there have been appeals and delays. Panel members are also given the opportunity to attend other relevant training.

6.4 The statistical information provided in Appendix 1 and 2 details the business of the panel in respect of both children and applicants. In the year April 2000 to March 2001 17 children were presented to panel as being in need of permanent substitute care, either by way of adoption or permanent fostering.

6.5 The following table profiles performance in adoptions in Dundee over the past three years:

	1998	1999	2000
Number of adoptions granted	15	8	15
Average age at adoption for voluntary relinquished infants	14mths	None	15mths
Mean length of time between admission and adoption	3yrs 7mths	3yrs	1yr 10mths
Average time in care prior to placement with adopters	26mths	15mths	14mths
Mean length of time spent with adopters prior to adoption	17mths	20mths	9mths

6.6 This year there have been three adoptions granted so far, which will be shown in next year's report. Prior to a number of adoptions being granted, there have been delays in the Freeing for Adoption applications being dealt with in court. This is mainly due to court timescales and complicated adoption cases where advocates and expert witnesses are being called by the birth parents' legal representatives. Details of these delays are forwarded to the Legal Adviser of British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering in Scotland. Therefore a collated picture of delays can be used as evidence that delays in adoption are not solely the responsibility of Adoption Agencies.

6.7 During the latter part of 2000 work has been taken forward under the auspices of the Department of Health in England on the development of national standards for adoption. Scotland has been actively participating in that work. The Scottish Executive issued the draft standards in Scotland inviting all local authorities and other agencies to consider the proposals and submit comments.

6.8 Dundee City Council's comments were submitted on 17 April 2001. In principle these standards are welcomed, some are challenging and thought provoking, but most importantly they focus on what is best for the child. When introduced it would be the intention that the Scottish Executive will be putting in place a number of mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the standards.

6.9 It is anticipated that a further draft adoption standards document relating to the Regulation of Care Bill will be distributed for consultation in the near future.

6.10 The Minister, Jack McConnell has announced in March 2001 that an adoption review is to take place in Scotland over the next year. The Review Body consists of representatives from the Association of Directors of Social Work, the Scottish Executive, independent adoption consultants, independent adoption agencies and British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. This review will address the whole spectrum of adoption services, including legislation.

6.11 An Adoption Register is to be in place to facilitate the exchange of information regarding adopters and children waiting for adoption placements. This will mean some changes to the existing resource sharing mechanisms. The outcome of the tendering is that the Department of Health has recently awarded Norwood Ravenswood, a leading Child and Family Services Charity which operates a voluntary adoption agency, is to be the preferred bidder to run the new Adoption Register for England and Wales. The Adoption Policy Review Group are looking at whether or not Scotland wishes to be part of the register.

6.12 The planned review and demands for improved performance mean a challenging time ahead for adoption services. This should be seen as a positive way forward for all concerned in the adoption process, especially the children who need placements. Dundee City Council's performance is gradually improving and it is the Social Work Department's intention to achieve successful adoption and permanence for all children who need it.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Director of Support Services and the Director of Education 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

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Date

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11 May 2001



**PANEL REGISTRATION INFORMATION FOR CARERS**

**APRIL 2000 - MARCH 2001**

Adopters	10
Permanent Foster Carers	1
Application for Adoption Allowances	3