

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE - 25TH AUGUST 2008**

**REPORT ON: ADOPTION SERVICE REVIEW**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

**REPORT NO: 414 - 2008**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides Committee with details of the Review of Dundee's Adoption Service and proposals for service development arising from this Review. Copies of the Review Report have been passed to each of the group leaders and Bailie Borthwick.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Social Work and Health Committee:

- 2.1 Approve the contents of Dundee City Council - Review of Adoption Service 2007.
- 2.2 Note the proposals for service development, having regard to those which can be achieved within existing budget provision and those that will be progressed when future funding is available.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

### **4.0 MAIN TEXT**

- 4.1 The review was established to consider and report on key areas in Dundee's adoption service, notably recruitment, assessment and training for prospective adopters and post-placement support for all those affected by adoption. The review was based on information from various sources including research findings, statistical information, policy documents, consultation with adoptive families and family placement staff and benchmarking with other local authority adoption services.
- 4.2 The review was mindful of the context of increasing demand for placements and a shortage of permanent carers in which the adoption service was operating. The pressures on the adoption and fostering services are detailed in reports 29-2007 and 324-2007 and remain acute.
- 4.3 The achievements of the adoption service were acknowledged. These included the successful ongoing recruitment of adopters for pre-school children without complex needs, the high standard of preparation training and assessment of permanent carers and the functioning of the approval process.
- 4.4 A number of challenges were highlighted. The most significant were:
  - The increasing numbers of young children being accommodated, many as a result of parental substance misuse.
  - Dundee consistently has a higher number of children requiring permanent placement than there are placements available. There are some adverse demographic factors which affect the supply of suitable placements, particularly the declining population in

the 30-49 year age range. It is unlikely that Dundee could be self-sufficient in adoptive or fostering placements in the foreseeable future.

- The mismatch between the complex needs of children requiring permanence and the capacities of those coming forward to offer such placements.
- New legislative requirements to provide a wider range of post-adoption support services.
- The need for skilled, experienced staff who can progress permanence plans within timescales that meet the children's needs.

4.5 The main recommendations of the review have been incorporated into action plans for the adoption service and for improving outcomes for children in permanence planning. The following are key proposals.

4.6 Dundee will need to build capacity to ensure a greater supply of adoptive and permanent fostering families. This will mean taking steps to maximise recruitment and timely assessment of Dundee's own carers as well as establishing further purchasing and commissioning arrangements with external placement providers to ensure best value. This will be the subject of a future report to Committee.

4.7 A range of strategies will be required to increase the scope of families who are able to offer adoptive and permanent fostering placements, particularly for harder to place children. Amongst the measures being considered are targeted recruitment of families for larger sibling groups or children with complex needs or significant behavioural difficulties, recruitment for specific children and greater use of multi-media profiling. These will be met within the existing family placement budget provision.

4.8 Detailed statistical and qualitative data will be analysed to ensure that recruitment activities are more closely aligned to the identified needs of children requiring placement.

4.9 Additional training, support and monitoring will be put into place to assist workers in making robust assessments of children's needs and to ensure that plans for children requiring permanent substitute care are progressed without delay. A Permanence Planning Group will also be established to monitor the needs of all children requiring permanence and to facilitate the effective linking and matching of children with potential adopters or permanent foster carers.

4.10 The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 comes into force in early 2009. A key element of this legislation is the expanded duty for local authorities to provide adoption support services to a wider range of people affected by adoption. Post adoption services currently being provided by Dundee will be inadequate to meet the requirements of the new legislation and there is limited scope for developing a more comprehensive post-adoption support service within existing resources. Provisional discussions have taken place with a voluntary agency to deliver such a service on behalf of Dundee, Angus and Perth & Kinross Councils. However this cannot be implemented until additional funding becomes available.

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

The major issues identified.

## **6.0 CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

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Director of Social Work

DATE: 6th August 2008