

Fostering, Adoption and Kincares Annual Report 2022



East Lothian
Council

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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Help us to Improve

We welcome your ideas to help make our Adoption and Fostering Services even better., so whether you're an adoptive parent (or hope to be soon), a foster carer or prospective carer, panel member or other stakeholder please feel free to email us with your ideas on:

fostering@eastlothian.gov.uk or adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk

if you would prefer to phone, please contact

Paul Lawley, Team Leader, Fostering Services

01620 827613 (direct line) or email: plawley@eastlothian.gov.uk

Welcome to the 2022 edition of this Annual Report about East Lothian Council's Fostering, Adoption and Kinship teams. This is the first report after the review of Children's Services, which saw the creation of two separate teams – Fostering, with Paul Lawley continuing as team leader, and the Adoption and Kinship team, with myself, Robyn Elliot as team leader. As with previous years, this report will focus on the work being carried out in each team and the development of each service. Each area of our work will be explored and highlight the impact of the pandemic, how we have tried to get back to how things were 'before', and most importantly, coming back together after a difficult couple of years.

There are a few changes to note. Firstly, the transformation of Children's Services is well underway. While our goal remains the same, to work to ensure we provide a service that produces better outcomes for children and families and enables us to meet our commitments to The Promise, it has not been without its challenges. For example, a national shortage of social work staff impacted our recruitment drive and has meant many of our practice teams have been running with fewer staff.

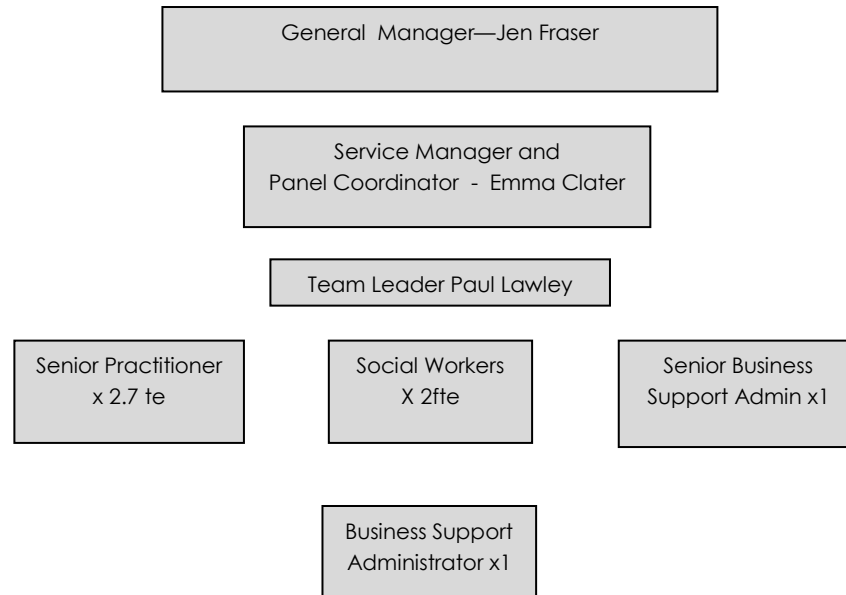
As well as a transformational review, another significant change for Children's Services is moving to work with strength-based practice models. This encourages practitioners to consider their value base, approach, and how they communicate and write about the people they work with. We hope that these improvements will strengthen our communities.

In Children's Services, we have used the Signs of Safety approach for many years in child protection, but over this past year, we have embedded it further into our whole service and particularly our practice and paperwork. You may have already noticed these changes and had the opportunity to attend information sessions about Signs of Safety. When applied to family placement, rather than looking at safety from a child protection perspective, we are considering more widely the issues of well-being and healing, how the child can be supported to heal from their past trauma, and how they can achieve their full potential.

The family placement team has been working in its new form this year as two teams: The Fostering team and The Adoption and Kinship Team. We hope this has not significantly impacted you and things are working well. We continue to be united as a family placement team, but having the split has helped us manage each service's priorities and helped us to develop and grow. We are managing the national shortage of foster carers as best we can with regular recruitment campaigns, which we hope will be a common feature over the next few years. We believe having a consistent and constant message will help us grow our fostering family. Our aim remains the same: to provide children in foster care with a strong foundation, with ready and responsive support when needed, for as long as it's needed. We know that providing this standard of care can be challenging and exhausting, so our fostering team continues offering a high level of support and training to assist our foster carers in managing the daily challenges they face.

We hope you will enjoy reading this annual report of our achievements and successes over 2022. We know that there is always work to be done and improvements that can be made, but when we get it right - with stability, enduring, loving relationships, and providing services and support to address early trauma - our service can be the foundation the children in our care need to thrive.

Fostering Services



Meet the team

Paul Lawley —Team Leader

Gillian Warren—Senior Practitioner (Carer Training lead)

Clare Tarnawska —Senior Practitioner (Continuing Care lead)

Jackie McIlroy—Senior Practitioner (Duty and referrals lead)

Tanya Gray— Senior Practitioner (Foster carer recruitment)

Alec Robertson—Social Worker

Gilliam Malcolm—Social Worker

Caroline McCorkindale—Senior Business Support Administrator

Lynsey Fletcher—Business Support Administrator

Fostering 2022

2022 has been another busy year on duty. In some areas we can see a return to pre-pandemic norms - the increase in demand for respite breaks for instance, as foster carers have been able to return to taking much needed breaks. The number of breaks arranged in the last year (74) equals the 2018 figure and is only slightly lower than the number of breaks arranged in 2019.

In other areas, there are notable 'differences' in the figures for the past year. For the second year in a row we have made a very low number of 'new' foster placements. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. Could it be that workers are seeking to support families (including wider family members) to keep children within the family, in keeping with the aims of 'The Promise'?

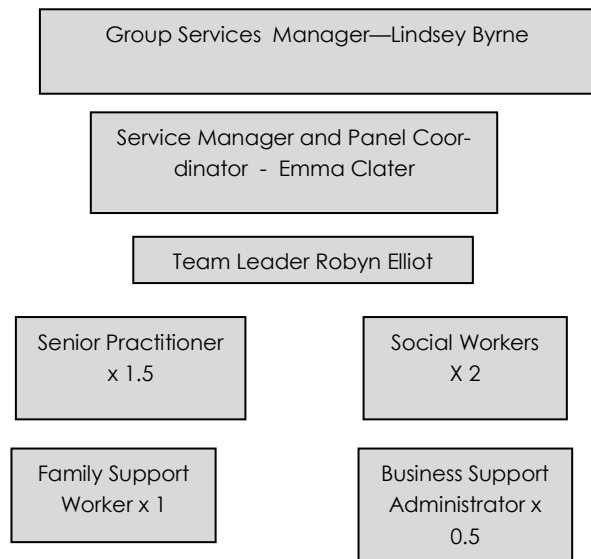
The low number of 'new' foster placements arranged has not resulted in a decrease in activity for the team as the figure for foster placement moves (many of which will be down to placement breakdowns) has continued to increase. A project is underway to analyse the reasons for placement breakdowns to see if there are any areas of learning for us as a local authority. Ultimately we all want to work to minimise unnecessary placement moves for children because we know this leads to poorer outcomes for them.

As per 2021, the number of requests that are withdrawn has remained high. We track this figure because all of these requests are ones into which time and effort are put to locate suitable resources. We encourage practitioners to give us early notice of placements that may be required, and often family members are then identified, or the situation at home is able to be improved, meaning a placement is no longer required.

One of the other continuing areas of work of the team is the time spent on searching for residential resources for children. We have now compiled a database of residential resources in Scotland so that we could expand our searches. We are still finding that pressure on places is acute and it is sometimes extremely difficult to find suitable resources. This is a UK-wide problem.

Jackie McIlroy, duty and referrals lead senior practitioner.

Adoption and Kinicare Services



Meet the team

Robyn Elliot —Team Leader

Ian Burdett—Senior Practitioner (Adoption lead)

Ros McClements—Senior Practitioner (Post adoption lead)

Patricia Tulley—Social Worker

Felicity Houghton—Social Worker

Andrea Armstrong—Social Worker

Jude Hallewell—Family Support Worker

Stacey Cross —Business Support Administrator

East Lothian Council is committed to keeping families together, and we work to improve the long-term outcomes for all children. Therefore, kinship care is considered the first option when parents cannot provide the care that a child requires. We work as a Council in partnership with other agencies to support kinship carers because we want to keep children safely together with their families wherever possible. We know that providing care can be challenging and exhausting and that we must scaffold our kinship families with support as much as possible.

The Kinship Support contract with Children 1st works exceptionally well, and it has been an invaluable part of the support we have offered kinship carers over the past two years. This has allowed the in-house kinship team to undertake formal kinship assessments, as well as working in partnership with Children 1st, providing some additional support. The Children 1st team have two support workers who support around 63 kinship carers at any one time for as long as it is needed. They facilitate three support groups across the county where they do activities in the holidays, as well as individual work and group work and support to address early trauma.

I know from speaking directly to the kinship carers who use these groups that they are valued and that having this ready and responsive support when needed has assisted them in managing their daily challenges. This contract works well for our service and offers a foundation that our children in kinship care need to thrive.

Kinship Care in Partnership with Children 1st

Adoption and Kincare 2022

Kinship Care continues to grow locally, along with our partnership with Children 1st. We continue to provide a high standard of Post Adoption Support to our adoption community. We have been enjoying returning to face-to-face adopter support groups and finding imaginative ways to support our community, which is managing a range of complex needs.

Children 1st – East Lothian Kinship Service

We offer a range of supports to kincare families throughout East Lothian. This includes 1-1 support, and the provision of groups and activities within the community.

At present, we support over 100 families across the local authority.

In 2022 we ran the following groups:

- ◆ Under 5's – Fisherrow, Musselburgh (Twice monthly)
- ◆ Kinship Coffee Morning - Fisherrow, Musselburgh (Twice monthly)
- ◆ Kinship Coffee Morning - Bleaching Fields, Dunbar (Twice Monthly)

Some of the activities we facilitated during 2022 included:

- ◆ February Break – Trips to Jump-In and Dunbar Swimming Pool
- ◆ Kinship Care Week Event (March) – Carers were invited to participate in wellbeing activities including yoga, hand massage, art therapy, and Mindfulness.
- ◆ A survival session with the Green Team (April)
- ◆ Summer Holidays – Trips to Newhills, Musselburgh Beach, Vogrie Park, Dunbar Swimming Pool, and Blair Drummond Safari Park.
- ◆ October Break – Tickets provided for East Links Family Farm, and Jump-In.
- ◆ Christmas Party – Carers and their families were invited to Fisherrow for food, party games, and to meet Santa!

Welcomes and Goodbyes

In 2022 we gave a warm welcome to....

Felicity Houghton—Kincare and Adoption Team

I qualified in 2017 after completing my Master's at Edinburgh University. Before this, I studied sociology and criminology at York and worked in a care home. I began work as a social worker in the north west of Edinburgh in the children and families practice team and worked there for 5 years. I had lots of different experiences here including child protection work, life story work and permanence. I jumped at the chance to work in the Kinship and Adoption Team as I was ready for a new challenge in a different area of social work and I am really enjoying it so far.



Patricia Tulley—Kincare and Adoption Team

I recently joined the Adoption and Kincare team as a Senior Practitioner. I have previously worked in the East Lothian Children and Families Practice Team where I have had varied experience of supporting children through foster care and on to adoption as well as working with many kincare families. I am also an adoptive parent and have over nine year experience of caring for my adopted daughter. I have many contacts in the adoption world, both professionally and personally and am able to bring all of these experiences to my work within the Adoption and Kincare team.



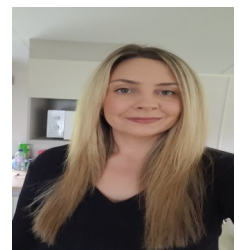
Gillian Malcolm—Fostering Team

I enjoy visiting different countries, family holidays, meeting new people and shoes and handbags. I would describe myself as loud, trustworthy and a people person. I joined the fostering team in late July 2022. I was previously a social worker in the children and families team within East Lothian Council for 4 years. During the restructure of the council I got the opportunity to work within the fostering team. It has always been a goal of mine to work in this area of social work. I am really enjoying my new job and team. I understand the challenges foster carers face when caring for a child that has experienced trauma in their life's. This role has allowed me to gain invaluable experience working with foster carers and potential foster carers.



Stacey Cross—Business Support Administrator (welcome back)

I returned to work in the Adoption & Kinship team after returning from maternity leave in 2022, my role focuses on helping facilitate post adoption support, finances for children's services and supporting my admin colleagues with panels etc.

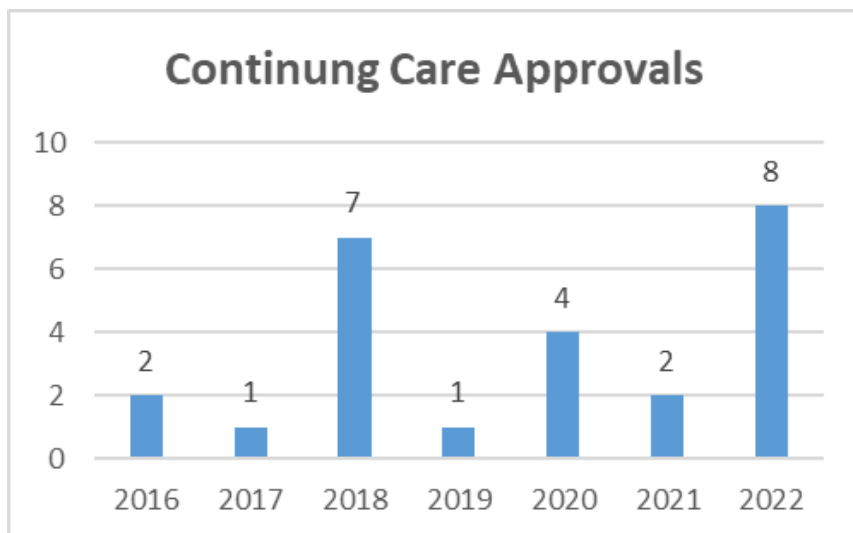


And said goodbye to: Kirsty Coulson and we wish her all the best in her new endeavours.

Continuing Care

Continuing Care Placement Approvals

During 2022 the placements of 4 young people were converted to continuing care placements with their East Lothian foster carers. The reviewing officer is now conducting regular audits to ensure planning is clear especially in relation to moving on from foster care and the planning for this. We have been developing a training presentation, including a video interview of one of our young people, and we are now planning to roll this out to foster carers and to fostering panel members in 2023.



The Adoption Panel

The Adoption Panel 2021

Panel 1

Charlie Egan, Panel Chair, St. Andrew's Children's Society

Stewart Meikle, Retired Children's Hearing

Sarah Leighton, Social Worker, (Midlothian Council)

Penny Racket, Educational Psychologist

Rachel Hill, Educational Psychologist

Sam Mitchell, Senior Practitioner (Children's Services)

Panel 2

Diane Watt, Panel Chair, Retired Children's Hearing Chair

Mike Lloyd, Adoptive Parent

Patricia Tulley, Senior Practitioner, Children's Services

Liz Ritchie, Sheltered Housing Team Leader, ELC

Scott Rintoul, Senior Practitioner, Children's Services

Panel Advisors

Jillian Dawson, Panel Medical Advisor – children

Jane Gilchrist – Panel Medical Advisor – adults

Keren Conway, Legal Advisor to the Panel

Panel Coordinator

Emma Clater, Service Manager, Long Term Care & Support

Agency Decision Maker

Judith Tait, Chief Operating Officer, Children's Services

Membership is made up of practitioners from the Practice Team, Family Placement Team, service provision units, the voluntary sector, health, education, adopters, adopted people, service users and foster carers.

The Adoption Panel: must consider the case of every child, every prospective adopter and every proposed placement referred to it by the adoption agency and then make recommendations.

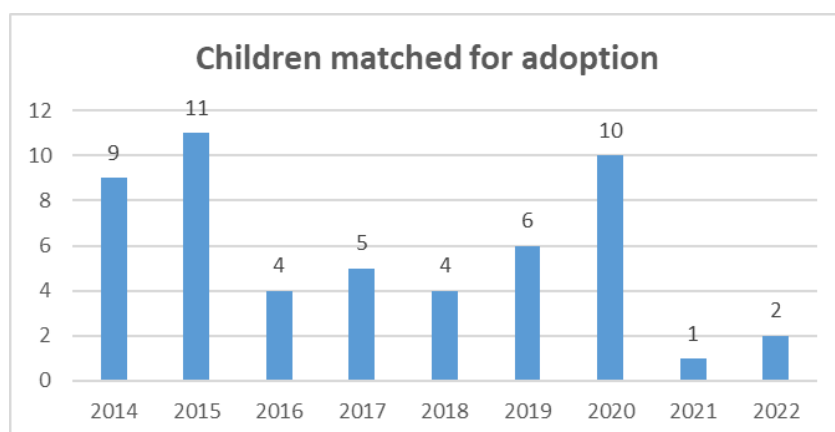
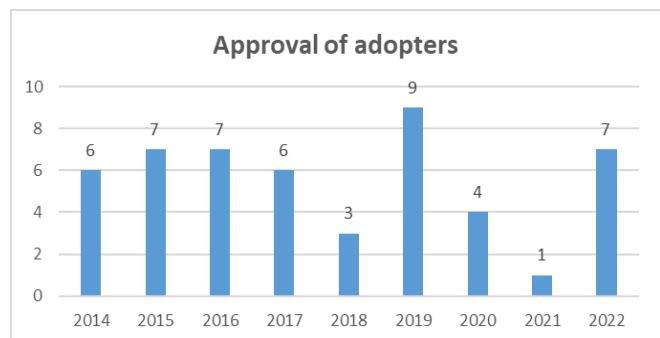
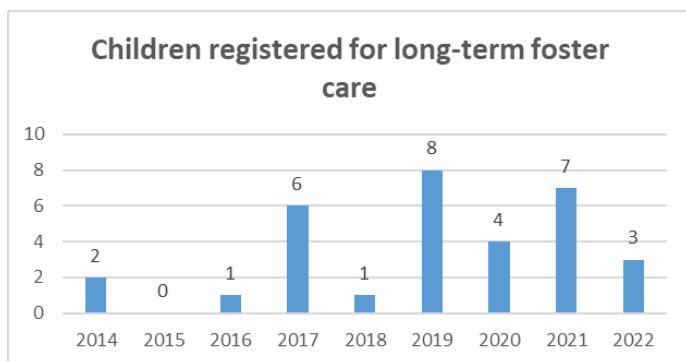
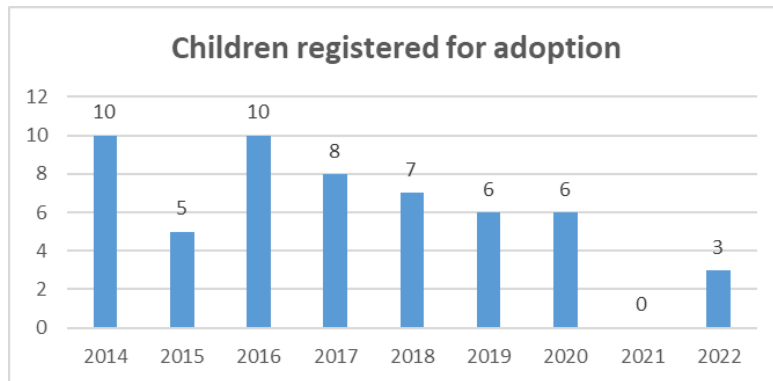
Local authorities and adoption agencies can ask their panels to carry out other duties. For example: whether allowances should be paid; whether an approved carer should have approval continued or terminated; whether plans for a child are appropriate at stages before a recommendation is made for registration for adoption or permanence order with authority to adopt.

Adoption Panel members are also approved to sit as a fostering panel. This enables the panel to approve applicants as both adopters and foster carers.

Carers are encouraged to attend their approval meetings and their reviews, although this is not a requirement.

There is an agreed panel protocol for all foster carer and prospective adopter applications and reviews and for permanency registration panels and leaflets explaining the process are sent to all prospective carers and family members attending the panel.

Adoption Panel Business



Share the Care

Share the Care is East Lothian Council's Short Break Service for young people with disabilities and is managed by the Disability Team in Children's Services.

Meet the Team

Fiona Gemmell, Team Leader

Leann Robinson, full-time Senior Practitioner

Shelley McNaughton, part-time Social Worker Caroline McCorkindale, Senior Business Support

Spring brought the introduction of online Share the Care Drop in Sessions. These were designed primarily to answer questions that potential people interested in becoming a Share the Care may have. Some of the sessions were used by our current population of Share the Carers to answer some queries they had too.

We attended recruitment fairs that were organised by East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership these took place in Haddington and Tranent.

Summer was a very busy time for Share the Care we were asked to film a short story for STV News at Six to celebrate the support Share the Care had provided for over 15 years to a young person and his family. This story was shared in our local newspaper and radio station which did lead to an enquiry. We also planned and successfully provided four Share the Care Family Activity Day's during the summer holidays. We were supported with East Lothian Play Association and also our colleagues in Active Schools to provide inclusive activities for all the family. This was a great opportunity for young people and their families to meet up during the summer holidays with the support of Share the Carer's facilitating play. We had an average of 9 young people and their families attend on each of the days. Our activity days would not be possible without the support of our Share the Carers, a big thank you is extended to everyone involved in supporting them.

Autumn was a difficult season, Carers who provided overnight Share the Care to five young people and their families took time away from Share the Care due to personal circumstances. This required supervising social workers to liaise with children's workers to think creatively about how to support young people and their families in a different way.

This loss also motivated us to continue to publicise the need for Share the Carers. We began attending our local Community Hospital each month and distributed leaflets throughout the departments. Radio was also used as a source of advertisement. We also held an October Family Activity Day, although this was attended in fewer numbers, we received positive feedback from families who did attend. We also facilitated the creation of a WhatsApp group for parents, which is now maintained by them, independently from Share the Care.

Winter involved us providing local specialist provisions with a mail drop to try and encourage recruitment from people already supporting young people with disabilities. We also became approved to advertise on the Queen Margaret University portal in the hope to attract people studying in professions that support young people with disabilities.

We provided each of our young people currently receiving Share the Care with thirty pounds credit on an East Lothian Gift Card for them to enjoy with their carer in a way that they choose. This was funded from our TESCO Community Grant. Some young people and their carers have attended local café's another went to the Seabird Centre.

Our number of enquiries and subsequent approval of Share the Care is almost stagnant however we continue to have a dedicated community of Share the Carers who support seven young people throughout the year but also provide emergency support and holiday support to a number of other young people.

I would like to thank each Share the Carer for their commitment and I look forward to 2023 being another successful year.

Post Adoption Support

Ian Burdett, Senior Practitioner

As a result of recent Covid 19 pandemic, there was increased use of technology to deliver training and support to a wider range of people. This has continued to a large extent in 2022. Training can often be delivered in a more accessible and cost effective way through online methods. Adoption UK have continued to offer a range of online training opportunities such as: Therapeutic Parenting, Helping Sleep Happen and Connective Parenting (NVR). East Lothian Council currently fund 40 places annually for adopters to attend such courses.

The need for post adoption support has continued to grow. Families have continued to benefit from the support of Adoption UK's TESSA service (Therapeutic Education Support Service in Adoption) this is now delivered by Adoption UK's Psychology & Therapy Hub (PATH). Therefore TESSA is now known as Pathways, but is the same service it has been since Adoption UK started delivering it in Scotland in 2020. This has continued to receive very good feedback from families, and it is hoped that this service will be able to continue in the longer term.

Other families have benefitted from the more intensive support provided by ADAPT. Some families have been able to secure adoption allowances to access services such as play therapy. There has been an increase in the use of play therapy as a tool of early intervention over the past year.

Other families have benefitted from direct support by the Adoption Team. This direct work with families has continued to focus around therapeutic parenting, life story work and ongoing relationship based work with adopted young people. We continue to support families at education and health related meetings.

Post adoption contact continues to be a significant part of our work. The team have all been involved in supporting adoptive families to maintain links with birth families, through letterbox exchange and in some instances face to face meetings. The intensity of this work can vary depending on the needs of different families. Some birth families have reached out for emotional support because of the impact that the process of adoption has had on them.

There has been a gradual return to more 'in person' work since the end of the pandemic. We are starting up regular adopters support groups again, and this year's residential weekend at Wiston Lodge was a great success, with several East Lothian families either attending for the whole weekend, or as day guests.

There was a significant decrease in the demand for new adopters in 2022, as numbers of children needing placed for adoption were low. Therefore as we had run two groups late in 2021, we did not run any 'Preparing to Adopt' groups in 2022, but focussed on assessing and approving those adopters who had attended the 2021 groups. We ended 2022 with a healthy number of approved adopters waiting for a match, as a result of these previous groups.

Fostering Recruitment Report



Tanya Gray, pictured left, to this post, continued in her role as fostering recruitment worker.

Tanya Gray, Senior Practitioner

In 2022 we started to see a return to normal working practices and we were able to start running our preparation groups in person again. Groups held in person are so much more rewarding for everyone. The supportive environment means groups attendees can get to know each other, as well as staff in preparation for their fostering journey ahead. One of the biggest benefits is for new applicants to have the opportunity to meet a cross section of our existing foster carers. We select carers who have a varied level of experience, with different age groups. The group can get advice and training from those who are doing the job themselves. Coffee breaks are solely for our existing carers and group attendees to have a relaxed chat and hear how it really is 'from the horse's mouth'.

We were lucky to have new staff members with a background in practice team and kinship care work to add their own valued perspective. The team also benefited from two graduate interns who assisted us with our marketing and met with some foster carers to make new recruitment films and devise the recruitment strategy from the coming year. As we are still not permitted to use lamppost wraps as a source of advertising we have had to be increasingly innovative in our approach to marketing. Plans for next year include a radio campaign and also the new fleet of council vehicles will carry advertising for fostering.

Kinship Care Panel

Kincare Panel

The Kincare Panel Membership 2022

Panel 1

Phil Brown, Panel Chair, Team Leader Duty Team

Pat Thomson, Senior Practitioner, Practice Team

Marni Foxton, Social Worker, Practice Team

Shelley McNaughton, Social Worker, Disability Team

Panel Advisors

Jane Gilchrist, Medical Advisor /Adults

Panel 2

Linda Cartwright, Panel Chair, Senior Practitioner, Duty Team

Catriona Dunne, Social Worker, Practice Team

Jillian Peart, Senior Practitioner Practice Team

Alex Jenkinson, Social Worker, Practice Team

Panel Co-ordinator

Jennifer Fraser, Service Manager,

The Panel continued to meet virtually, and were able to approve 7 kincarers at panel.

The panel said goodbye to Lisa George at the beginning of the year and goodbye to Marni Foxton at the end of the year.

A very warm welcome to Shelley McNaughton from the Disability Team who joined the Kincare Panel in February.

The Fostering Panel

FOSTERING PANEL

The Fostering Panel Membership 2021

Panel 1

Ann Hume, Co-ordinator, Children's Services East Lothian Council
Tom Gardner, Assistant Residential Unit Manager, Lothian Villa
Shona Yule, Retired Social Worker
Sinead Watson, 15+ Through Care Team
Carole Lesenger, Retired Reviewing Officer

Panel 2

Gillian Neil, Service Manager Adult Services
Karen Coutts, Olivebank Centre
Gaby Foy, Andy Brack, Arlene Munro
Amanda Knox, Foster Carer, Midlothian Council
Fiona Whitelock, Social Worker
Jennifer Cairns

Panel Advisors

Jane Gilchrist, Medical Advisor /Adults

Panel Co-ordinator

Emma Clater, Service Manager, Long Term Care & Support

Membership is made up of practitioners from the Social workers from across Children's Services, Supervising Social Workers from other agencies, service provision units, the voluntary sector, health, education, and foster carers. A gender balance is desired when the Fostering Panels meet.

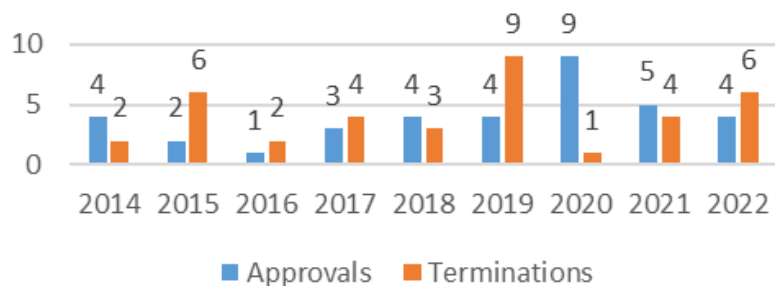
There is presently no representation from ethnic minority groups on the Panel. For cases that have an obvious ethnic issue an appropriate advisor should be co-opted on to the Panel, using the expertise of other agencies, such as BAAF or Barnardos.

Panel members have certain responsibilities which are covered in the Panel Member's Job Description and Person Specification. Panel Members will receive training, and their membership will be reviewed every two years.

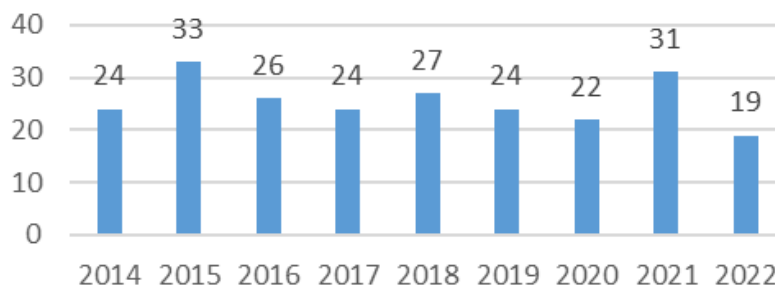
In East Lothian the Agency Decision Maker is the Head of Children's Services. The Agency Decision Maker makes a decision after considering the recommendation of the panel. The Depute Agency Decision Maker is the General Manager for Children's Services

Fostering Panel Business

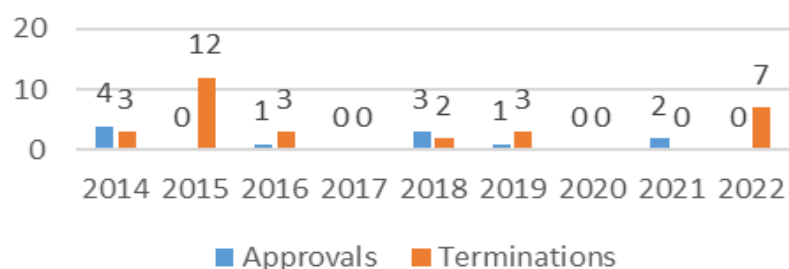
Foster Care approvals and terminations



Foster Care Reviews



Share the Care approvals and terminations



Carer Training Calendar 2022

Online resources and written advice passed on throughout the year:

Training
Link to Beacon House resources for those supporting children with emotional and behavioural problems and mental health difficulties.
Managing the Christmas sensory overload (AUK)
Resources re supporting questions around gender identity (Healthy respect)
Supporting an anxious child/teen (Silvercloud modules)
Childhood trauma and the brain (UK trauma council)

In person or online presentations/workshops provided by ELC or external agencies:

Date	Training
January	Record keeping and report writing
February	Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing for children in Foster care
February	Benefits workshop for foster carers
February	Sensory Integration and Attachment
February	Self Regulation and Behaviour Management, level 2
February	Internet and social media: benefits and challenges
February/March	Staying safe on line and Digital Parenting
March	Moving a child onto Permanence- roles and expectations of foster carers
March	Children's sexually harmful behaviour
May	Aces Aware. Trauma Informed. Attachment Enabling caring
May	Scottish Guardianship Service
June	tax for foster carers
July	Going back to basics: Toileting, sleep and food.
September	Paediatric first aid
September	Drugs and Alcohol- impact on young people, what can carers do
September	Signs of Safety, what does it mean for foster carers
September	The Promise-general information
September	Self regulation and behaviour management , level 1
September/October	Raising Teens with Confidence
October	The role of the children's hearing and expectations of foster carers
October/November	Connective Parenting
November	Mortgages for foster carers
December	Cannabis and Alcohol

To find out more about fostering and adoption, please contact East Lothian Council's **Fostering & Adoption Services Team**:

Call: 01620 827643

Email us at: fostering@eastlothian.gov.uk / adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk

Or visit: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/fostering / www.eastlothian.gov.uk/adoption

East Lothian Council is both an Adoption Agency and a Fostering Agency. You can find out more about our duties and responsibilities in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and related Regulations. The Adoption & Fostering Alliance Scotland website (www.afascotland.com) is a good source of information about fostering and adoption legislation and also the Fostering Network website (www.fostering.net).

Complaints

You can get a Feedback Form from your worker or local council office. This tells you about the Council's complaint procedures. Please note that you should make a complaint within 6 months of the date that you first noticed the problem that you are complaining about.

If you are not satisfied with the Council's response, you can also take your complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. However, you must make a complaint through the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure first.

Please write to: The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS

tel: 0800 377 7330

email: ask@spso.org.uk

The Care Inspectorate

The Council's Fostering and Adoption Services are registered with the Care Inspectorate and different aspects of our services are inspected each year.

You can read these on the Care Inspectorate website www.careinspectorate.com

Or phone- 0345 600 9527



