

Covering statement

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Covid-19 Restrictions

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Council staff have been unable to access Council buildings and records. This led to the premature ending of a comprehensive file audit and has limited the research opportunities and materials available to staff in compiling the responses listed below.

(i) Foster carers	
Past	
a)	<p><u>How were foster carers identified and approved/registered?</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>Evidence within Committee minutes has shown that foster carers were predominantly identified through recruitment drives and recommendations from churches and approved carers for the majority of the 1930 – 1975 period. The recruitment of foster carers was discussed by the Public Assistance Committee (SL61), the Children's Committee (SL116) and the Social Work Committee (SL118) in terms of there being a constant requirement for potential carers to be identified due to the demand for placements across the city. In 1945,</p>

the City Social Services Officer reported to the Public Assistance Committee that he had placed an advertisement in the press in an attempt to identify and recruit suitable foster carers, however further comment from the City Social Services Officer states that this recruitment drive had been unsuccessful. It is further noted in the Public Assistance Committee minutes of the same year that, due to the limited success of this recruitment drive, the City Social Services Officer reported to Committee that he would seek assistance from the church and the Education Institute of Scotland in an attempt to identify suitable foster carers (SL61/1/17).

Further evidence from the Social Work Committee minutes from 1970 suggests that the Local Authority became involved in national campaigns to help identify potential foster carers. The minutes show that Committee considered and agreed with a proposal by the Counties of Cities Association to, 'mount a national publicity campaign to attract potential foster parents. (SL118/1/2). There has been no follow up report to this found, however it does provide evidence of the willingness of the Local Authority to become involved in national campaigns to identify and recruit foster carers during this period.

In terms of approval and registration of new foster carers, very little evidence has been found in the Committee minutes. Within the child client files, there is evidence of a 'Notification to the Scottish Home Department' form providing basic particulars of foster carers, which appears to be part of the registration and approval process. This information includes dates of birth, occupation and the number of people in the household. Within the same record series there is also evidence of a 'Form C.1' issues by the Children's Department for the particulars of boarded out children. Within this form, there is a section for basic information for the foster carer the child was due to be placed with, and this matches the information requested on the 'Notification to the Scottish Home Department.' While the information relating to foster carers is limited within these forms, their existence alludes to an approval and registration process at this time.

While there is evidence of an approval process with the Full Council Minutes from 1960-1961, we are unable to provide any further details due to the current Covid-19 restrictions.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

From evidence within Committee minutes it can be assumed that foster carers were identified through advertisement campaigns by the Local Authority and national bodies. In 1975 the Director of Social Work reported to the Social Work Committee that the Division participated in a foster carer recruitment campaign as part of National Foster Care Week.

The Director notes that the publicity in local media, posters, leaflets and mobile information centres received a total of 26 definite enquiries from prospective foster carers (LRC3/8/3/31).

A Social Work Department publication from November 1976 further highlights the challenges faced by the Local Authority in recruiting foster carers provides suggestions for how potential carers could be identified:

...the department's capacity to recruit foster parents is variable in different parts of the region. Attention should be given to the problem of foster parent recruitment, both where there are disparities and more generally. A number of things could be done. First, more concentrated campaigns may be needed and the use of media needs consideration. Second, allowances to foster parents and their method of payment need to be examined, and all possible improvements. Third, attention must be given to the level of support given to foster parents. Breakdown in placements might be avoided and fewer foster parents drop out if more social work support were available. Fourth, the possibility of developing a 'professional' foster parent scheme, where experienced foster parents are paid a salary in return for caring for difficult children is worth further examination. (LRC3/8/1/1)

The Director of Social Work then reported to the Social Work Committee in 1976 on proposed methods for publicising the need to recruit more foster carers. As with above, these suggestions included placing adverts in the local press, as well as adverts on local radio and television adverts (LRC3/8/3/2).

In terms of approval and registration of new carers, evidence is limited for the 1975 – 1995 period. The *Quality in Caring Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services*, which was introduced by the Local Authority in 1995 states that, once identified, all prospective foster carers must undergo medical and police checks, have the safety of their home reviewed and provide the department with two personal referees.

Whilst evidence is fairly limited, it appears that the Local Authority continued the use of publicity campaigns and advertisements as their main way of identifying potential foster carers. Prospective carers then had to go through various statutory checks before being approved. This process is discussed further later in the response.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Anecdotal evidence indicates that during the 1990's and 2000s, the social work department aimed to identify prospective foster carers through advertising, publicity and information

sessions run by the Local Authority's Family Based Care Team. From c.2005 a dedicated recruitment team was formed along with a Recruitment Strategy Group made up of social work professionals, senior managers, foster carers and communications professionals in order to identify potential carers and co-ordinate the recruitment process.

Between 2007 – 2014, the Education, Children and Families Committee continued to discuss the identification and recruitment of foster carers. For example, committee minutes from 3 October 2007 show that a Social Work Improvement Plan was considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee in which there was a proposal to increase the number and availability of foster placements through recruitment. Further minutes from 8 September 2009 show that the same Committee considered a Service Strategy and Improvement Plan for looked after children and young people who were accommodated by the Local Authority. This outlined the intention of the Social Work Department to again increase the number of foster carers by using feedback from both retired and newly appointed carers to inform improvements around the recruitment process. The Improvement Plan also proposed to explore opportunities for incentive-based strategies to boost recruitment and the retention of carers, as well as improve the average time between prospective foster carers submitting their application and receiving registration approval.

Since around 2012 the local authority has made use of independent assessors to assess prospective foster carers when the in-house fostering team has not had the capacity to undertake foster care assessments.

A further Annual Review of Service Strategy for Children and Young People was considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee on 9 October 2012. This report included a suggestion of making the identification and recruitment of foster carers a priority across the whole of the Children and Families department and proposed that the Recruitment Team be supported by dedicated communications officers to ensure that recruitment campaigns were delivered to the highest possible number of potential carers. The Education, Children and Families Committee further discussed the identification and recruitment of foster carers on 8 October 2013. Committee considered the Children and Families Standards and Quality report, which stated that the Family Based Care department should aim to increase the number of foster carers available within the Local Authority as this would improve the outcomes for children as well as provide best value to the Local Authority.

In terms of approval and registration of newly identified foster carers, the file audit of foster carer records provided evidence of pre-approval and registration checks taking place. Correspondence, meeting and panel minutes held within foster carer files show that police checks were carried out for 95.2% of all prospective and approved foster carers. The file

audit of foster carer case files also included evidence within carer review panel minutes and Home Study reports of additional pre-approval checks being carried out:

- Police checks of adults over 16 years in the household – 54%
- Medical checks of foster carers – 96.8%
- Local Authority checks of foster carers – 73%

As well as panel minutes and Home Study reports, copies of requests for checks sent by the Local Authority to the police are also held within foster carer files, and so further evidences that pre-approval checks were carried out.

As well as statutory police checks, the foster carer file audit also provided evidence of other pre-approval checks, such as checks on prospective foster carers' previous partners, checks with the armed forces where required and checks with the current employer of any foster carer applicants. Evidence of these checks being carried out by social work professionals prior to approval are held in foster carer files through correspondence with the appropriate parties, as well as within carer panel review meeting minutes as having been carried out.

As part of the approval process, social work professionals carry out a Home Study with the applicants and their families. This allows the professional responsible to get to know the applicants; assess their suitability as carers and highlight; and resolve any potential challenges around the process. The Home Study includes personal histories of the applicants, including their own childhood experience; relationships with their parents and siblings; and the relationship with their spouse or partner. These checks are held within the foster carer file, and of the carer files scoped as part of the audit, 100% of them included the Home Study report.

From the examples and statistics provided above, it is accurate to argue that foster carers were identified through recruitment campaigns run by the Local Authority, and that appropriate checks as part of the registration and approval process.

b) What experience and/or qualifications, if any, did a foster carer require to have?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Committee minutes and child client case files researched in order to answer this question; however, no evidence of the experience or qualification requirements of foster carers was found for this period,

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The Committee minutes, foster carers files and surviving policies from 1975 – 1995 showed no evidence of specific experience or qualification requirements for foster carers. Application forms held within foster carers files did however provide evidence of any experience or qualifications held by prospective carers that were deemed to be useful for the fostering role, either by social work professionals or the applicants themselves. There were a number of pre-existing qualifications and experience that social work professionals noted in Home Study reports that would be beneficial to the carers during their fostering career, including:

- Certificate in Fostering completed at local college
- Teaching qualifications for nursery, primary and secondary aged pupils
- Nursing and medical qualifications
- Trained and experience of working as a nanny
- Childminder experience

While there is no evidence to suggest that any of the above qualifications or experience were mandatory for foster carer approval, social work professionals do highlight them as useful for the role within their reports and the Home Study reports.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The Committee minutes, foster carers files and surviving policies from 1995 - 2014 showed no evidence of specific experience or qualification requirements for foster carers. Application forms held within foster carers files did however provide evidence of any experience or qualifications held by prospective carers that were deemed to be useful for the fostering role either by social work professionals or the applicants themselves. There were a number of pre-existing qualifications and experience that social work professionals noted in Home Study reports that would be beneficial to the carers during their fostering career, including:

- Qualifications in childcare
- Teaching qualifications for nursery, primary and secondary aged pupils
- Counselling qualifications
- Fluent in British Sign Language
- Experience of raising their own large family
- Experience of working in a school for children with additional needs

	<p>While there is no evidence to suggest that any of the above qualifications or experience were mandatory for foster carer approval, social work professionals do highlight them as useful for the role within their reports and the Home Study reports.</p>
<p>c)</p>	<p><u>What checks were carried out in relation to a prospective foster carer, including criminal record checks, references and interviews?</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>The <i>Regulations and Rules in regards to Boarded Out Boys and Girls</i>, produced by the Lord Provost, Magistrates and the Education Committee within the Local Authority in 1933 sets out the checks that the Local Authority must carry out in relation to a prospective carer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A register must be kept of all persons who are willing and deemed fit to act as foster carers • Before a child is placed with a carer, a representative from the Local Authority must visit the foster home to ensure the home and the carer can meet the needs of any child placed with them (SL164/1/7). <p>For the period 1950 – 1960, the child client files show evidence of a 'Notification to the Scottish Home Department' form providing basic particulars of foster carers. This information includes dates of birth, occupation and the number of people in the household. Within the same record series there is also evidence of a 'Form C.1' issues by the Children's Department for the particulars of boarded out children. There is a section for basic information for the foster carer the child was due to be placed with, and this matches the information requested on the 'Notification to the Scottish Home Department.' While the information relating to foster carers is limited within these forms, their existence alludes to a practice of basic checks being carried out by social work professionals.</p> <p>While there is evidence of an approval process with the Full Council Minutes from 1960-1961, we are unable to provide any further details due to the current Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>While there is no evidence of police record checks or discussions with personal referees within the client files or Committee minutes, the above provides evidence of some basic checks being carried out for prospective foster carers by social work professionals.</p> <p>Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)</p> <p>Records within child client files and foster carer files have provided evidence of checks being carried out for prospective foster carers in practice in line with the agreed policies and procedures of the time. For the late 1970's and early 1980's, evidence of checks is limited</p>

due to the availability of foster carer records for that period, as these will have been confidentially destroyed as per an agreed retention period. However, within child client files, correspondence and review meeting minutes often state that foster carers have been 'approved' or 'assessed' as being fit for foster care, and so this alludes to a process being adhered to in practice, despite there being no concrete evidence of police record or other checks being carried out.

For the late 1980's – 1995 period, there is much more evidence available of pre-approval and registration checks being carried out. The review of foster carer files show that the Local Authority were carrying out pre-approval checks in line with agreed policies and procedures. The carers files hold correspondence between the Local Authority and the police requesting enhanced checks to be carried out for prospective foster carers. As well as correspondence, there are 'Form F' records held within carer records that show both police and Local Authority checks being carried out in practice, including the date the checks were completed and if any notifications were found. Of the foster carer files that were scoped during the foster carer file audit, the following pre-registration checks were carried out:

- Police checks of foster carers – 88.7%
- Medical checks of foster carers – 88.7%
- Local Authority checks of foster carers – 54.7%
- Correspondence or interviews with personal references supplied by the prospective carer – 82.1%
- Checks with armed forces where the carer was a previous or current employee – 1.9%

Both the evidence and statistics provided above show that, for the most part, policies and procedures relating to pre-approval checks were carried out by the Local Authority during this period.

The evidence gathered from the audit of foster carer files further suggests that personal references provided by the prospective carer were followed up by social work professionals as part of checks carried out prior to carer approval. Within the foster carer case files were copies of correspondence from the Local Authority to the referees named in the application form and Form F by prospective foster carers asking if they would provide references as part of the application process. From responses given by referees in their return correspondence, we can surmise that the Local Authority asked for the following information:

- For how long and in what capacity they know the prospective foster carer?
- What do they know of the prospective carers' experience with children other than their own?
- Suitability of the prospective carer to foster children or young people?

The majority of foster carer files looked at include written replies from the nominated referee with their thoughts on the applicant. This suggests that the opinions of the referees were taken into consideration by social work professionals during the application process.

As well as receiving written responses from referees, there is evidence within the foster carer files of social work professionals making home visits to interview nominated referees. Notes of the meeting and discussions between the responsible social work professional and the referee are held within foster carer files, and from these we can see that the social work professional asked the same questions as above, requested an expansion on the answers given if required, and aimed to get a sense of the personality and suitability of the prospective foster carer. While there is evidence of these interviews being carried out, only 27% of the foster carer case files looked at provided any evidence of referee interviews. Policies and procedures relating to checks on prospective carers are discussed in further detail in Part 4 of this response.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The foster carer records looked at as part of the file audit provided a large amount of evidence of checks that were carried out in relation to prospective foster carers. Correspondence, meeting and panel minutes held within foster carer files show that police checks were carried out for 95.2% of all prospective and approved foster carers. The file audit of foster carer case files also included evidence within carer review panel minutes and Home Study reports of additional checks being carried out:

- Medical checks – 96/8%
- Local Authority checks – 73%
- Correspondence or interviews with personal references supplied by the prospective carer – 96.8%
- Checks on ex-partners of the prospective carer – 4.8%
- Checks with the current employer of the prospective carer – 36.5%
- Additional employer checks for prospective carers who were care sector employees – 9.5%

- Checks with the nursery, school or Health Visitor involved with the children of the prospective carer – 12.7%

As well as panel minutes and Home Study reports, copies of requests for checks sent by the Local Authority to the police are also held within foster carer files, and so further evidence that pre-approval checks were carried for prospective foster carers.

As well as statutory police checks, the foster carer file audit also provided evidence of other pre-approval checks, such as checks on prospective foster carers' previous partners, checks with the armed forces where required and checks with the current employer of any foster carer applicants. This was to ensure the safety of any child or young person placed with the carer. Evidence of these checks being carried out by social work professionals prior to approval are held in foster carer files through correspondence with the appropriate parties, as well as within carer panel review meeting minutes as having been carried out.

Prior to approval of foster carers being complete, social work professionals carry out a Home Study with the applicants and their families. This allows the professional responsible to get to know the applicants, assess their suitability as carers and highlight and resolve any potential challenges to the process. The Home Study includes personal histories of the applicants, including their own childhood experiences, relationship with their parents and siblings, and the relationship with their spouse or partner. These checks are held within the foster carer file, and of the carer files scoped as part of the audit, 100% of them included the Home Study report.

The evidence gathered from the audit of foster carer files suggests that the Local Authority regarded interviews with personal referees as critical checks before approval could be given to a foster carer. Of the foster carer case files that were looked at as part of the audit, 97% of them had evidence of reference requests. Within the foster carer case files were copies of correspondence and generic forms sent out to the nominated referees asking if they would provide a personal reference for prospective foster carers. Copies of the Personal Reference Form sent out to referees asked the below questions:

- How much contact do you have with them?
- What do you know of the care of their own children?
- What do you know of their care of other people's children?
- How do they get on with the parents and families of other people's children?
- What have you seen of their management of child behaviour and use of discipline?

- Have you experience of how they listen or try to understand children?
- Have you a view on their ability to keep a child safe from harm or abuse?
- Can they help children learn to look after themselves safely?
- What knowledge do you have of their working closely with other professionals?
- How would you describe their ability to communicate?
- Do you have experience of how they hold confidential information?
- Do you have experience of their attitude towards or appreciation of differences in others (for instance in terms of race, culture, belief or sexual preference)?
- Do you know if they are considering the impact of fostering on all involved in their family?
- How do they gain support for themselves under stress?
- What do you know of their attitude to preparation and training?
- Have you had concerns about their mental health, or about use of drugs or alcohol?
- How would you describe the applicant's relationship with each other?
- Do you have any concerns about this application?

The majority of foster carer files looked at include completed copies of the above form, and this suggests that the opinions of personal referees were taken into consideration by social work professionals during the application process.

As well as receiving written responses from referees, there is limited evidence within the foster carer files of social work professionals making home visits to interview nominated referees. Notes of the meeting and discussions between the responsible social work professional and the referee are held within foster carer files, and from these we can see that the social work professional asked the same questions as above, requested an expansion on the answers given if required, and aimed to get a sense of the personality and suitability of the prospective foster carer. While there is evidence of these interviews being carried out, only 14% of the foster carer case files scoped provided any evidence of referee interviews.

From the examples and statistics provided above, it is accurate to argue that a number of checks were carried out for prospective foster carers prior to their approval by the Local Authority. Policies and procedures relating to checks on prospective foster carers prior to approval are discussed further in Part 4 of this response.

d) What checks were carried out in relation to other persons residing with the prospective foster carer, including criminal record checks, references and interviews?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Committee minutes and child client case files were looked at in order to answer this question; however, no evidence of checks being carried out in relation to other persons residing in the prospective foster carers' household was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Foster carer records that were looked at as part of the file audit show that various checks were carried out in relation to other persons residing with the prospective foster carer prior to their approval being granted. Application forms, Carer Approval Panel minutes and correspondence held within the foster carer case files show that the following checks were carried out in relation to other members of the carers' household:

- Police checks – 34.9%
- Medical checks – 20.8%
- Local Authority checks – 10.4%

Form F and Home Study Reports held within the carers files show that anyone residing with the prospective carer who was over the age of 16 must have a police record check carried out to ensure the safety of any child placed in the home. The Form F also included the dates that the police records checks, medical checks and Local Authority checks were carried out. If these checks highlighted anything of concern, a social work professional would meet with the family to discuss their options and next steps. One foster carer file provided an example of this happening in practice, when a police records check highlighted previous offences committed by a lodger in the carer's household. These offences were discussed between the responsible social work professional and the carer. The outcomes of this meeting are unclear, but the carer did receive approval to foster. This same carer file also shows evidence of police and medical checks being carried out in relation to additional lodgers who entered the home after approval to foster was granted to the carer, thus showing due diligence on the part of the social work professionals involved. There is no evidence within the foster carer files of other members of the household having to provide personal references as part of the checks process.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

	<p>Foster carer records that were looked as part of the file audit show that various checks were carried out in relation to other persons residing with the prospective foster carer prior to their approval being granted. Application forms, Carer Approval Panel minutes and correspondence held within the foster carer case files show that the following checks were carried out in relation to other members of the carers' household:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police checks – 54% • Medical checks – 20.6% • Local Authority checks – 19.1% <p>Form F and Home Study Reports held within the carer's case file show that police and medical checks were carried out on anyone over the age of 16 who resided in the home, such as birth children over 16 years old and lodgers. This was to ensure the safety of a child or young person placed in the home by the Local Authority. One foster carer file shows evidence of medical and police checks being carried out for the carer's birth children when they turned 16 years old, despite the carer being approved a number of years earlier. This shows that social work professionals displayed due diligence when ensuring the carer's checks and those of their households were up to date. There is also evidence from correspondence held in foster carer files of medical checks highlighting certain ailments of other members of the carers household to the responsible social work professional. In one instance of this, the medical professional carrying out the check informed the department of a mental health condition had by another adult in the carers household. They highlighted that an additional medical review was to take place but stated that the condition should not have a negative impact on the approval of the carer.</p> <p>From the evidence and statistics given above, it is clear that these checks were carried out on other adult members of the carers household to ensure the safety of the child and the success of placements. There is no evidence (to date) within the foster carer files of other members of the carers household having to provide personal references as part of the checks process. However, as highlighted Covid-19 restrictions have limited research opportunities and the file audit was not completed.</p>
<p>e)</p>	<p><u>What checks were carried out in relation to other family members and friends of a prospective foster carer including criminal record checks, references and interviews?</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p>

Committee minutes and child client case files were at in order to answer this question; however, no evidence of checks being carried out in relation to other family members or friends of a prospective foster carer was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Foster carer records that were scoped as part of the file audit show that various checks were carried out in relation to other significant members of the foster carer's family prior to their approval being granted. Application forms, Carer Approval Panel minutes and correspondence held within the foster carer case files show that the following checks were carried out in relation to other significant family members:

- Police checks – 34.9%
- Medical checks – 20.8%
- Local Authority checks – 10.4%

Form F application forms and Home Study reports suggest that these checks were carried out on other significant adults such as close friends and family of the carers to allow them to babysit and have a significant level of contact with any children or young people in placement. One foster carer file showed evidence of significant checks being carried out on a significant adult known to the carer. The police check carried out revealed the adult had a conviction of Lewd and Libidinous Practice and a further charge of indecent behaviour. The outcome of this is unclear from the carer's file, but the carer was approved as a carer for the Local Authority. There is no evidence within the foster carer file of significant adults having to provide personal references as part of the checks process.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Foster carer records that were scoped as part of the file audit show that various checks were carried out in relation to other significant adults known to the foster carer prior to their approval being granted. Application forms, Carer Approval Panel minutes and correspondence held within the foster carer case files show that the following checks were carried out in relation to other significant adults:

- Police checks – 54%
- Medical checks – 20.6%
- Local Authority checks – 19.1%

The Form F application form and Home Study Reports held within carers files show that these significant adults were identified by prospective foster carers as possibly having significant contact with children or young people placed with them, such as babysitting.

Having police and medical checks carried out in relation to these adults meant that the department could ensure the health and safety of children or young people placed with foster carers. Correspondence and Carer Approval Panel minutes in the foster carer files show that, upon completion of the checks, the police, medical professional or Local Authority would respond to the department's request to make them aware if the checks were clear, or if there was anything that required further investigation. There is no evidence within the foster carer files of significant adults having to provide personal references as part of the checks process.

The evidence and statistics provided above highlight that significant adults who were likely to have close contact with any child or young person in placement were carried out, and any concerns addressed by the responsible social work professional.

f) To what extent, if any, were the checks referred to at paras (c) to (e) above reviewed? If so, how frequently and what checks were done? If not, why not?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Committee minutes and child client case files were looked at in order to answer this question; however, no evidence of checks being carried out in relation to the carer, other adult members of their household or other significant adults was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

From the file audit of foster carer records, there is very little evidence of the checks mentioned in c), d) and e) above being reviewed. The majority of the files scoped only show that the checks above for carers, adults in their households and other significant adults likely to have prolonged contact with a child in placement only happened initially for the application process and the review Panel. This may be because the carers ceased caring before the reviews were due to take place under statutory legislation, however the evidence shows that the majority did not have follow up checks.

Where there is evidence of follow up checks within the carer file of correspondence and social work reports, it appears that these checks were updated either every two or three years. Despite this, the evidence from the foster carer file audit and the accompanying correspondence and Panel Review minutes show that the only checks updated were police record checks and medical checks for the carers themselves, and not for any adults within their household or other significant adults.

In relation to what checks were done, please see the above answers to c), d) and e).

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

From the file audit of foster carer records, there is very little evidence of the checks mentioned in c), d) and e) above being reviewed. The majority of the files scoped only show that the checks above for carers, adults in their households and other significant adults likely to have prolonged contact with a child in placement only happened initially for the application process and the review Panel. This may be because the carers ceased caring before the reviews were due to take place under statutory legislation, however the evidence shows that the majority did not have follow up checks.

Where there is evidence of follow up checks within the carer file of correspondence and social work reports, it appears that these checks were updated either every two or three years. Despite this, the evidence from the foster carer file audit and the accompanying correspondence and Panel Review minutes show that the only checks updated were police record checks and medical checks for the carers themselves, and not for any adults within their household or other significant adults.

In relation to what checks were done, please see the above answers to c), d), and e).

- g) What checks were carried out by the local authority of the available accommodation? How frequently were these carried out? Were they repeated? If so, how frequently? If not, why not?**

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

From the surviving records, there is very little evidence relating to checks on accommodation that foster carers provided for children placed with them. We have only been able to locate one suggestion of checks being carried out by social work professionals on accommodation. The Children's Separate Registers for the 1930's noted that children were removed from a foster placement by social work professionals because the accommodation provided by the carer was in very poor condition and very dirty, thus suggesting a check on the standard of accommodation (SL611).

The surviving child client records were scrutinised to help inform the response to this question, however there was no evidence of frequency of checks on accommodation provided by foster carers for this period.

Lothian Regional Council 1975 – 1996)

The audit of foster carer files has provided evidence of checks being carried out on the accommodation provided by foster carers. Application forms and Home Study reports held within carers files show that the accommodation offered by prospective and approved foster carers was assessed and noted by social work professionals. These records show that these assessments were, for the most part, carried out before prospective foster carers received full approval. Foster carer review panel minutes within carer case files also noted evidence of further home assessments being carried out if carers moved home, and consideration was also given to the possibility of additional placements if the home move provided additional space. These assessments included note of sleeping arrangements for children or young people, such as the possibility of them sharing a bedroom with either the birth children of their carer or with other children in foster placements. The availability of space for children to play was also considered, including any shared spaces and outdoor provisions such as the size and security of any garden space. Home Study reports within foster carer case files also provide evidence of discussion between prospective carers and social work professionals as to any potential challenges presented by the standard and size of their accommodation. One example of this found within the foster carer case files was the potential challenges a carer might face as they lived on the 10th floor of a high-rise building. The Home Study report details discussion between the carer and the responsible social work professional as to how this challenge would be managed, as well as the potential for limited placements for the carer as many birth families signal that they would prefer their children to not be placed in high-rise buildings.

Of the foster carer files scoped as part of the file audit, 55.7% of carers had housing checks carried out at the beginning of the fostering application process, and 100% of prospective and approved carers had accommodation checks completed as part of the Home Study report. There was no evidence found as to the frequency of recurring checks of accommodation, and 31.1% of the files we looked at showed no evidence of accommodation checks being carried out.

City of Edinburgh (1996 – 2014)

On the whole it appears that social work professionals completed checks on the accommodation offered by prospective and approved foster carers. The Home Study reports held within individual foster carer files show evidence of home checks being carried out by social work professionals during the assessment phase, noting the size of the house, the number of bedrooms available, the location of the home and if any outdoor space was available. Home Study reports also note the size of bedrooms available for children and young people, including how many children will share a room, and if there is enough room for play to occur in the bedroom. The safety of any garden space is noted within the Home

	<p>Study report, including proximity to main roads and the type of enclosure to ensure maximum safety for any child or young person placed.</p> <p>As well as Home Study reports, there is also evidence from the carer file audit of accommodation being discussed at carer review meeting. Carer review meeting minutes show discussions between foster carers and social work professionals regarding further safety checks being carried out on their property. Within carer files, evidence of these checks having been carried out include gas safety certificates and smoke detector safety certificates after checks were carried out by the local fire brigade.</p> <p>Of the foster carer files that were investigated as part of the file audit, 69.8% showed evidence of such home checks being carried out during the Home Study phase. On the contrary, 22.2% of foster carer files scrutinised did not provide any evidence of official housing checks being carried out, but 100% of files included accommodation standard and size information within Home Study and other social work reports.</p> <p>From the above examples and the statistics provided show that, while there appears to have been slight gaps in home checks being carried out, for the most part, these checks were carried out, mainly in relation to standard, size and safety. However, as highlighted Covid-19 restrictions have limited research opportunities and the file audit was not completed.</p>
h)	<p><u>Was the gender of the foster carer of any relevance to approval as a foster carer or in relation to the placement of a child with a particular carer? If so, why?</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>The foster carer file audit, the children’s client records audit and Committee minutes were examined in order to provide an answer for this question, however no evidence was located. It appears that there is no evidence of the gender of a foster carer being of relevance to the approval of foster carers or placement of a child with a particular carer for the 1930 – 1975 period.</p> <p>Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)</p> <p>Of the foster carer files that were examined, there was very little evidence located to suggest that the gender of a foster carer was of relevance to their approval as a carer during the 1975 – 1995 period, and only a small number of examples were found during the audit. Carer Approval Panel minutes held within foster carers case files show that, during the approval process, two carers had requested that only boys be placed with them. This was their indicated preference as any children placed with them would have to share a bedroom. The</p>

Approval Panel minutes show that this was considered and accepted by social work professionals as their initial category of approval was for boys.

Further to this, Carer Panel minutes also show changes to approval categories for carers over time. For one particular carer, these minutes show a change in her approval registration, from being approved to care for girls to approval for boys only. The Panel minutes suggest that the carer was able to handle the care of boys better than girls, and her registration was amended to reflect this. This enabled the carer to provide the best possible care for children who were placed with her.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Of the foster care files that were examined, there was very little evidence found showing the gender of a foster carer being relevant to their approval as a carer. Panel minutes from a Carer Approval Panel meeting show that the initial category of approval for a foster carer was for female children or young people only. The minutes state that the carer had already brought up two girls of her own, and so felt more comfortable caring for girls as she already had experience for this. The Panel agreed this would be the best course of action for the carer and thus approved her for care of females only.

Carer Review Panel minutes held within foster carer case files also provide evidence of a carer's approval and remit being altered because of their gender. Review Panel minutes from 1992 show that, when a female child in foster placement made an allegation of sexual abuse against her male carer, the carers' remit was changed to allow them to only care for males. While this specific complaint will be discussed in much more detail later in the response, it is clear that after investigation by social work professionals and the appropriate authorities, that the decision was made to alter approval based on the gender of the carer.

While the evidence available is limited, it does suggest that the gender of a foster carer or child was relevant to some placement decisions, and that this was taken into consideration by social work professionals when making approval decisions.

- i) Was the gender of other persons (including children) residing in the same house of any relevance to the approval of a foster carer or to the placement of a child with a carer? If so, why?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

The foster carer file audit, the children's client records audit and Committee minutes were examined in order to provide an answer for this question, however no evidence was located. It appears that there is no evidence of the gender of other persons residing in the carers

house being of relevance to the approval of foster carers or placement of a child with a particular carer for the 1930 – 1975 period.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The file audit of foster carer files showed very little evidence of the gender of other persons residing in the carers home being relevant to their approval as foster carers. Of the files that were reviewed, only 9/5% of them included evidence of this. The evidence from Approval Panel minutes and social work reports implies that the most common reason for gender of other people in the carers household being relevant to the placement of children was the issue of bedroom sharing. Approval Panel minutes from the 1975 – 1995 period show that the gender of other people in the carers household would be taken into consideration when the Panel would decide on the category of approval for the carer, and when placing children in the placement. This particular example shows carers being approved initially to care for girls, as any child in placement would have to share a bedroom with the carers' daughter.

While evidence is limited for the 1975 – 1995 period, there are examples of the gender of other people in the carers' household being of relevance to their approval category.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

There is very limited evidence of the gender of other people in the carers household being relevant to the approval of a care or placement of a child with a carer for the 1995 – 2014 period. Of the foster carers case files that were scoped, only 6.4% showed evidence of gender of others within the carers household being a factor in approval or placement. All of the evidence available for this period shows that the reason for gender of others within the carers house being a factor was because children in placement would have to share a bedroom with the carers' own children. This is noted within the Carer Approval Panel minutes that are held in the carers' files, with social work professionals and Panel members granting approval on that basis, with carers being approved to care for children of their preferred gender to allow them to share bedrooms with their own children.

The evidence provided within the response to this specific question is limited, however it does show that such practicalities were taken into consideration by social work professionals when deciding approval. This would allow carers to provide safe care for the children placed with them, as well as suiting their own personal circumstances.

j)

Were foster carers required to provide any services for children in their care beyond accommodating them? If so, what were they?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Evidence within the children's client files and the Committee minutes suggests that foster parents did provide additional services to children placed in their care. Case notes and detail records written by social work professionals show that carers often provided additional medical care to children in their care, including operation aftercare, additional care if a child had a stay in hospital, and facilitating required appointments with medical specialists. Committee minutes from the Public Assistance (SL61) and Children's Committees (SL116), also provide evidence of foster carers facilitating children's attendance at after school clubs such as dancing classes, music lessons and Guiding groups.

The earliest example we have been able to find of a foster carer providing services for children beyond accommodating them comes from 1932. The Public Assistance Committee minutes show a discussion by the Committee when a request was received from foster carers for financial assistance to allow the children in their care to attend Girl Guiding clubs (SL61/1/4). This request was for financial assistance with the associated uniforms for the club, which Committee agreed to fund. This suggests an active facilitation by the foster carer to ensure the children in their care were able to attend after school clubs.

Further to this, within the Children's Committee minutes of 1950, Committee discussed the case of a child in placement who was admitted to hospital after an accident. Within the minutes, Committee notes that the child in placement required a hospital stay, and that the foster carer was providing additional medical care and support to the child (SL116/1/3).

While the evidence is limited, it can be suggested that foster carers did provide additional services to children in their care, including medical care and facilitating participation in after school clubs.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The foster carer file audit showed some evidence of foster carers providing additional services to children and young people in their care beyond accommodating them. Of the carer files that were scoped, 48.1% of files showed evidence of carers providing additional services to the children or young people in their care. These additional services were noted as:

- Hospital and medical appointments
- Behavioural support
- Mother and baby placement
- Preparation for transfer to 16+ placements
- Physical disability
- Preparation for adoption

- Preparing and supporting children through court cases

Carers Panel minutes within foster carer case files note evidence of carers providing additional services to children in their care. One set of Panel minutes from the 1975 – 1995 period notes that a carer provided additional medical services for a disabled child in their care, as they would ensure the child attended different services throughout each day. The Panel minutes note that this required a great deal of organisation from the foster carer, as the additional needs of the child required alternative transportation to be arranged and required the carer to liaise with additional services to ensure the best care for the child.

Panel minutes and case conference minutes held within foster carer files records from this period also suggest it was common for foster carers to provide behavioural support to children or young people in their care, as well as carers facilitating and ensuring children placed with them attended specialist medical appointments at various locations, often requiring a great deal of organisation on the part of the carer. Further scope of foster carer records from this period during the audit provided evidence of a foster carer providing supervision and educational support for a young person placed with them after their discharge from secure care. Panel minutes and reports by social work professionals show that the carer provided intensive supervision and support to ensure the young person in their care regularly attended school and achieved their potential. This included encouraging the young person to attend, as well as liaising with teachers, education staff and social work professionals.

Additional evidence within foster carer case files show instances of carers providing additional services and supports to young pregnant girls in their care. One instance of this is noted within case conference minutes (identified through the file audit) and shows the carers providing the young teenage mother with parenting advice and how to safely look after baby, as well as ensuring all medical needs were taken care of.

From the figures and examples provided above, it can be assumed that foster carers in the 1975 – 1995 period did provide additional services to children and young people in their care beyond accommodating them.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The foster carer file audit showed some limited evidence of foster carers providing additional services to children and young people in their care beyond accommodating them. Of the carer files that were looked at, 25.4% of files showed evidence of carers providing additional services to the children or young people in their care. These additional services were noted as:

- Medical and hospital appointments
- Behavioural support
- Assistance with educational physical disabilities
- Support to parents and birth families

Carer Panel minutes and reports by social work professionals (identified through the case file audit) record an instance of a carer providing additional education support to a child in their care with dyslexia. The carer liaised with the child's school to ensure the child placed with them received all available resources to assist with his learning. Case conference minutes and Carer Panel minutes within foster carer files have also provided evidence of carers providing total care to a child placed with them who was suffering from cerebral palsy. The carers had to provide total care to the child, including feeding, washing and toileting, and this was required 24 hours a day.

As well as providing additional services and supports to children and young people placed in their care, the foster carers case files also provide evidence of carers providing support to parents and birth families. Social work reports and Panel minutes show an instance of carers providing emotional and practical support to the birth family of a child placed with them who required a stay in hospital. The carer ensured that the family were kept up to date will all developments, as well as supporting them emotionally during the child's stay. These minutes also further note that the carer facilitated hospital visits for the child's birth family.

Further evidence of carers providing additional services to children placed in their care is highlighted in Case Conference and Carer Panel Review minutes (identified through the case file audit), which show a carer providing emotional and practical support to a child in their care when their mother was to appear in court. The minutes show that the carer provided emotional support to the child to help them come to terms with the court case, as well as to come to terms with the separation from their birth family.

The available evidence provided in the examples above clearly show foster carers providing additional services for children placed with them beyond accommodation. The evidence also suggests that carers provided additional services for the birth families of children placed with them.

k) Did children work manually in the placement or externally (e.g. farming work or other labour), or both? If so, did that change at any point? If so, why?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Evidence within the Committee minutes suggests that some older children in foster placements worked while in placement. From 1952 – 1955, the Children's Committee

considered cases of children in foster placements requesting financial assistance to purchase either tools they required to do their jobs, or bikes to allow them to travel to their jobs. The Children's Committee considered such requests from children carrying out the below work while in foster placements:

- Apprentice joiner (SL116/1/5)
- Apprentice motor engineer (SL116/1/5)
- Girl working in a linen factory (SL116/1/5)
- Boy working as a mason (SL116/1/6)
- Girl working in a woollen mill (SL116/1/7)
- Boy working as an apprentice electrician (SL116/1/7)

While it appears that children were taking on jobs and apprenticeships to further their chances of employment, there is no indication within the Committee minutes or the surviving child client files of children in foster placements being made to work by or for their carers. The discussion of these cases by Committee indicates that Committee and social work professionals were aware at the time of children working whilst in foster placements.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The file audit of foster carer files provided very little evidence of children working whilst in foster placements. The only evidence of this happening was found within a case note held in a foster carer file. It stated that the child in placement would help the carers with the custodianship and upkeep of the castle in which they lived, as well as learning how to cut the grass correctly and work specialised machinery associated with this. The existence of this case note suggests that the social work professional responsible for the placement was aware of the child assisting the carers with such work.

There was no evidence of children working in foster placements within the available Committee minutes.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Both Committee minutes and foster carer files were looked to inform an answer to this question; however, no evidence was found showing children or young people working whilst in foster placements.

I) Were fostering agreements entered into? If so, were these in a prescribed form or created on an ad hoc basis?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence of the use of Foster Carer Agreements within the Local Authority during this period, either on a formal or ad hoc basis. Surviving foster carer files and Committee minutes were scoped to inform our response to this question, however no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

From the limited evidence available due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, it appears that Foster Carer Agreements, known as Partnership Agreements during this period, were entered into between the Local Authority and foster carers. Of the foster carer case file reviewed as part of the file audit, only 25.5% of files included a copy of a Partnership Agreement, and so evidence is limited, however it is evident that they were in use. A Partnership Agreement from 1991 highlighted by the foster carer file audit outlines what was expected of approved foster carers by the Local Authority social work department. This included:

- Providing a good standard of emotional and physical care to the children in placement
- To bring up the child according to their own religious persuasion
- To ensure children in placement received medical and dental care, and to keep medical records for the child
- Encourage school attendance and be in regular contact with school staff to discuss progress
- To encourage contact between the child and their own family if this is agreed to be appropriate
- To participate in care planning for any children placed
- To discuss with social workers any emotional or behavioural factors that may affect the placement or planning for a child
- To attend and contribute to Child Care Reviews
- To notify the social work department immediately if a child in placement suffers serious accident, illness or dies
- To notify the social work department immediately if the child runs away or is taken away from the foster placement
- To discuss any holidays or extended trips planned either with the child in placement, or babysitting arrangements
- To notify the social work department of any changes in family circumstances
- Participate in training and support offered by the Local Authority

The 1991 Partnership Agreement also outlined the responsibilities of the social work department to both the foster carer and children and young people in placement to ensure they received the highest standard of care possible. It also outlines the support and training available to foster carers, as well as their responsibilities in terms of supervision. The foster carer file audit provided evidence of approved foster carers being very much aware of the Foster Carer Agreements, as these had to be read and signed by the carer as part of the approval and registration process. The Agreement was then countersigned by the responsible social work professional. While the evidence available is limited due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, it would be fair to assume that the Local Authority did use Foster Care Agreements, and from the evidence provided it appears that these were used in a prescribed form. However, it is not possible to determine if Foster Carer agreements were used on an ad hoc basis due to the limited nature of the evidence available.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

From the limited evidence available due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, it appears that Foster Carer Agreements were entered into between the Local Authority and foster carers. The Foster Carer Agreements that were available during the file audit of carers case files were lengthy, legally binding documents setting out the main aims and responsibilities of the Local Authority as a care provider for looked after children and young people, and so were used by the Local Authority on a prescribed basis. These Agreements had to be read and signed by the carer and the responsible social work professional so that both parties were aware of their responsibilities.

A Foster Carer Agreement from 1999 highlighted by the foster carer file audit also included appendices for the benefit of carers. These included information as to when and how carer reviews would be carried out; what information gathering exercises would be carried out by social work professionals prior to the panel reviews taking place; the Local Authority's expectation of carers to attend review panels; and what updates would have to take place for existing police and health checks. Further appendices within the 1999 Foster Carer Agreement also outline the departmental complaints procedure; what happens if carers face allegations of child abuse or complaints against them; and their responsibility for creating, keeping and retaining records relating to the children and young people in their care.

A further Foster Carer Agreement located from 2002 outlined the aims of the Local Authority as care providers. These included:

- Preparation, training, support and reviews

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representations, complaints and allegations • Placements of children and young people • Financial and material provision • Insurance <p>The responsibilities of carers and what is expected of them by the Local Authority are also listed in detail to avoid any doubt on the part of either party. This allows both carers and the Local Authority to ensure that the child or young person in placement receives the highest level of care and support possible. These responsibilities are set out in the Agreement in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifications about changes in the carers' circumstances • Confidentiality and records • Good parenting • Personal identity, contact, health and education • Care planning and reviews • Notification of major events and changes in the child or young person's circumstances • Monitoring and inspections • Ending of placements • Training, support and reviews • Insurance • Any other specific responsibilities <p>While the evidence available is limited due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, it would be fair to assume that the Local Authority entered into Foster Care Agreements with their approved carers, and that these were used on a prescribed basis,.</p>
Present	
m)	<p><u>With reference to the present position, are the answers to any of the above questions different?</u></p> <p>Yes.</p>
n)	<p><u>If so, please give details.</u></p> <p>Since 2014, the authority has continued to develop policies, procedures and practices which demonstrate that issues relating to foster carer recruitment, approval and registration have</p>

been reviewed and revised as appropriate. Key documents and examples are set out and described below.

The authority developed a programme in 2013, the 'Looked After Children: Transformation Programme' to shift the balance of care towards more preventative services that reduce the need for children to come into care. This programme was a five-year programme which commenced in April 2013. A number of targets were set as part of this programme, including reducing the overall number of children placed with independent foster placements, and increasing the number placed with local authority carers. This was designed to give the local authority clearer oversight and influence over placements, including foster carer recruitment.

Since 2016 several procedures have been developed which relate to foster carer recruitment and approval, including: 'Family Based Care (FBC) Recruitment to Approval', 'FBC Approval to De-Registration', 'FBC Continuing Care' and 'Achieving Permanence for Looked After Children'. A key procedural document, however, is a document referred to as the 'End to End Process' which was introduced in 2016 and later amended in 2018. This sets out the procedures around the recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers.

The authority is also reviewing procurement arrangements under the Scotland Excell Framework Agreement which covers agreements with independent foster carers throughout Scotland. This is being replaced by the 'Edinburgh Fostering and Continuing Care Agreement' which will formalise framework agreements directly with independent fostering agencies. This will allow the local authority more flexibility in the provision of foster care, including approval processes.