

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.

Question 4.4	Foster Carers
(i)	<u>Policy</u>
Past	

a)	<p><u>Did the local authority adhere in practice to its policy/procedures in relation to the provision of foster care?</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>There is very little surviving information from this period relating to adherence in practice to policies and procedures in relation to foster care, however, from the limited information available it appears that the authority did adhere to its policies and procedures in general terms. An expansion and examples, where possible, will be provided in our answer to question (d).</p>
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Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

From the limited information available due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, it is possible to ascertain that, for the most part, policies and procedures were adhered to in practice in relation to the provision of foster care by the authority during this period. A file audit of foster carer files from this period also provides evidence of regular reviews for those approved as foster carers by senior social work professionals in the form of meetings from case conferences and statutory carer reviews. Evidence of accommodation checks, interviews with personal referees, training and induction of prospective and approved foster carers and statutory checks within foster carer case files show that these activities and processes were carried out for the majority of foster carers during this period. These records, held within the carer files, demonstrates the authority's adherence in practice to its policies and procedures.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 –2014)

Both the child client file sample audit and the foster carer file audit have shown that policies and procedures were followed in practice in relation to the provision of foster care during this period, particularly in relation to pre-approval checks, training of prospective and approved foster carers and follow up correspondence with personal referees. The records for these activities held within the foster carer case files show that the authority adhered in practice to the policies and procedures set out relating to the recruitment, management, handling and deregistration of foster carers.

Where possible, an in-depth expansion of the statements made above and further examples of adherence in practice to policies and procedures are provided below in question (d).

b) Was there a particular policy and/or procedural aim/intention?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

The evidence shows that any policy and procedural aims and intentions were to ensure that children within the care of the authority received the best possible care whilst in foster placements. In 1930, the function of the authority was to continue the policy carried out by the Parish Council by 'not keeping children in the Poorhouse.' The policy aim within the authority was to place children either in a Children's Home or Craigmyle Hospital, then board them out with 'suitable guardians' (SL61/1/1). It is highly plausible that any policy or

procedural aims and intentions were underpinned by the *Regulations and Rules in regards to Boarded Out Boys and Girls* 1933 and the *Boarding Out of Children (Scotland) Regulations* 1959.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Discussions at committee level within the authority suggest that policy and procedural aims and intentions were underpinned by national guidance and legislation. In a 1979 report by the Director of Social Work examining the adoption and fostering section of the Social Work department, the Director notes that any policy change would be guided by the changes implemented by the Children's Act 1975. Of policy and procedural aims and intentions, the Director stated in his report:

Another principle held by the department is that no child should grow up without people whom he can regard as his parents, whether he be at home, in residential care or with a substitute family. This is in accord with the needs of children for emotional security, a sense of identity and some understanding of the setting in which they live." (LRC3/8/3/5)

In 1992 anecdotal evidence shows that the authority adopted the *Quality in Caring of Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services*, which outlines the policy and procedural aims and intentions within the social work department. Examples from this document will be provided in response to question (d) below where relevant.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The policy and procedural aims and intentions are set out within a suite of documents produced by the Children and Families department around 1996. The *Policies, Procedures and Practice Guidance* states:

The Departmental Manual of Policies, Procedures and Practice is the main source of information relating to the work of the Department. The Manual contains policies, procedures and guidelines which enable staff to effectively undertake the tasks/functions for which they have been employed within the Social Work Department.

Further detailed policy and procedural aims and intentions are set out in the Foster Carers Agreement, and so ensures that foster carers are aware of the relevant policies

	<p>and procedures. The policy and procedural aims and intentions set out the Foster Carer Agreement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Council is committed to best value quality care and a professional service for all people receiving services from it, whether provided directly or indirectly. The foster care service has an important contribution to make to this</i> • <i>The Council, mostly through its Social Work Department, has duties and powers to provide advice, guidance and assistance for vulnerable children and young people and their families when they are in need, including, where appropriate, accommodation, care and support</i> • <i>The Council wishes to develop and maintain services which have the following fundamental values:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To safeguard the rights of children and young people and their families, and to help them exercise these rights where necessary</i> - <i>To promote the welfare of children and for that to be paramount in all decisions</i> - <i>To seek and have regard to the views of children and young people and their parents</i> - <i>To treat each child, young person and their family with dignity and respect and in a manner that effects a non-discriminatory practice</i> - <i>To assess and respond to the changing needs of children, young people and their families</i> - <i>To provide for the social and emotional needs of individuals</i> - <i>To maximise the range of services and care arrangements which can be offered to each child or young person so as to maintain and enhance the possibility of normal development towards adulthood and independence and provide continuity of care arrangements wherever possible</i>
<p>c)</p>	<p><u>Where were such policies and/or procedures recorded?</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>The policies and procedures in use by the authority during this period were compiled by the Children’s Officer, noted and approved at times by the Education, Public Assistance, Children’s and Social Work committees, and were subsequently held by the department.</p>

	<p>Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)</p> <p>The policies and procedures in use by the authority during this period were compiled by the Director of Social Work and agreed and approved by the Social Work Committee. They were subsequently recorded in respective Social Work Policies and Procedure Manuals held by units and centres.</p> <p>City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)</p> <p>The policies and procedures in use by the authority during this period have been compiled by senior management within the Social Work department, Heads of Service and the Chief Social Work Officer, and received approval from the relevant Committee. They were subsequently recorded in respective Social Work, Children and Families Policies and Procedure Manuals and Looked After Children Policies and Procedures Manuals, as well as being made available online both internally via the staff intranet and on the internet for public access.</p>
<p>d)</p>	<p><u>What did the policies and/or procedures set out in terms of the following?</u></p> <p>i. <u>Recruitment</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>Policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to the recruitment of foster carers were included in the <i>Regulations and Rules in Regards to Boarded Out Boys and Girls</i>, which was produced in 1933 by the Lord Provost, Magistrates and the Council of the City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh (SL164/1/7). This policy set out the terms by which foster cares could be recruited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A register was to be kept of all persons who were willing and fit to act as foster carers • The register must contain the particulars of the foster carer and documentation of any children boarded out with them • Applicants must be between 25 and 55 years old and must live in Scotland • When selecting foster carers, the authority may have a say as to the number of approved foster carers in a particular area • Before a child is boarded out, the foster carer will have undergone all the necessary and appropriate training. A foster carer of the same religious practice as the child should be selected to allow the child to be brought up in accordance with their religious persuasion

The recruitment of foster carers was discussed further by the Town Clerk department in 1950, in which the department discussed proposals for the development of social work services over a six year plan. This plan estimated that a further 50 foster carers would be required to cope with the demand for foster placements, and that the authority were worried that boarding out regulations were not being met because of shortages in professional social work staff and foster carers. The proposals aimed to increase the number of foster carers and staff, as all prospective foster carers were required to be assessed by senior social work staff, who also had to consider references from both the police and public health departments as to the fitness of prospective carers (TC File 16).

Further to this, it is probable to assume that policy and procedural aims and intentions were underpinned by the *Memorandum on the Boarding Out of Children*, produced by the Scottish Home Department in 1959. On the recruitment of foster carers, this memorandum noted:

There are a number of methods of finding suitable foster homes, but all of them involve eventually a decision as to the suitability of the foster parents to take a child into their care. Whatever the method, the fullest information should be given at the beginning as to what is involved in caring for a deprived child so that applications from clearly unsuitable persons may be avoided. Advertisements in the press, in church magazines and in the magazines of societies and woman's organisations interested in social work usually, but not invariably, produce a fair number of enquiries, but unless the notice is carefully phrased many replies may come from people with inadequate appreciation of what is involved.

Both the content of the policy relating to the recruitment of foster carers and the policy aims and intentions noted in the Town Clerk social work department improvement proposals clearly highlight the aims of the authority when recruiting and training prospective foster carers.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

While no definitive policy on the recruitment of foster carers has survived from this period, the Social Work Committee and the Director of Social Work were in constant communication over the issue. The committee minutes and reports by the Director of Social Work give us an insight into the policy aims and intentions of the authority in terms of the recruitment of foster carers. 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). This suggests the contents of a policy by which the authority would attract and recruit potential foster carers.

A Social Work Department publication from November 1976 further highlights the challenges faced by the authority in recruiting foster carers and provides policy suggestions for how this could be overcome:

...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).

A further report by the Director of Social Work during this period focussed on setting up a Family Care Project as a specialised extension of foster care for children between 14 - 18 for whom suitable foster placements can't be found. The proposal was that a new group of foster carers would be recruited specifically on a freelance basis to provide a home for such young people. It was proposed that these carers would be known as "Community Carers" so as to distinguish them from foster parents. Furthermore, the Director of Social Work reported to the Social Work Committee that there would be an awareness week in November for the department to publicise the urgent need for foster parents throughout Lothian region (LRC/8/3/2).

Recruitment for all categories of foster carers was discussed by the Director of Social Work in a report to the Social Work Committee in 1978. In the report, the Director comments on

the pilot of a Family Care Scheme in which Community Carers would provide foster placements for young people. He notes that carers must receive training before their approval, and so this suggests the content of policies relating to the recruitment and training of foster carers (LRC3/3/8/4)

The policy content relating to the recruitment of foster carers can further be assumed by a report to the Social Work Committee in 1994. Within this report, the Director of Social Work notes that a Children and Families Resource Team had been set up within social work districts to co-ordinate the recruitment, training and development of foster carers. It can be surmised that policy at the time dictated that this team was responsible for ensuring all foster carers had been appropriately recruited and had undergone the necessary training before they were able to care for children or young people (LRC3/8/3/1/14).

In June 1995, the Quality of Caring Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services provided the authority with an updated policy on the recruitment of foster carers and outlined the eligibility requirements for fostering. The Standards also noted that procedures relating to the recruitment of carers ensured a very high quality of carer would be recruited for the authority. The recruitment policy outlined:

- Subject to legal and professional requirements, carers should be recruited from a wide range of family and household structures, socio-economic groups and cultural groups from all races and religions
- Carers must be primarily committed to caring positively for a child in need, and to a child centred approach to caring
- Legal requirements about the nature and standard of carers must be met, and no one who has been convicted of an offence under Schedule 1 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 can foster or care for children
- Only applicants between the ages of 21-60 can be considered for foster care. Carers who reach 60 years old will normally be expected to retire from full-time caring with consideration given to the needs of the child already in placement
- Carers must be reviewed annually
- Police and medical checks must be carried out and their results considered. Caution should be exercised where an applicant has been convicted of a criminal offence in the past, particularly in relation to any violent or anti-social behaviour outwith a youthful phase which has been outgrown
- Applicants who are undergoing fertility treatment will normally be expected to cease this before they can be approved as foster carers

- Any applicants who hold racist or other discriminatory views will not be approved as foster carers

The policy further outlines that those who wished to become foster carers should be in stable circumstances, and during the application process, social work professionals would have to investigate a number of areas within the private lives of prospective carers:

- Prospective carers should have insight into the effects of their own life experiences, strengths and limitations
- Carers should be able to ask for advice and support when needed
- Carers should have sufficient time as well as enough physical and emotional energy to offer children
- Carers should be open and willing to develop new skills and knowledge as well as undertake any training required
- Carers must recognise the importance of physical safety, both within and outwith the home
- Carers must recognise the importance of emotional warmth and stability

It is evident that the authority had many robust policies in place between 1975 – 1995, and where these policies have not survived, we can assume their content through reports and committee minutes relating to the recruitment of foster carers.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Part of a suite of policies and procedures produced by the Children and Families Department, the *Looked After Children Regulations 1996* outlines the policy intentions and the responsibilities of the authority in terms of foster carer recruitment. It states that the authority must:

- Provide carers with general preparation and training to prepare them for becoming authority carers. This should include an ongoing programme of training and training for special and specific circumstances
- Provide training groups
- Provide carers with departmental policies and procedures

Anecdotal evidence indicates that during the 1990's and 2000s, there was a policy aim to recruit carers through advertising, publicity and information sessions run by the 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 co-ordinate the recruitment effort.

It can be assumed that policy and procedural aims and intentions were based on the *National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services*, which were produced by the Scottish Executive in March 2005. On recruitment of foster carers, the Standards recommend that authority policies and procedures encapsulate the need to recruit carers who were best able to meet a wide variety of cultural and faith needs, as this would be a benefit to children and young people requiring foster placements in the future. The Standard further recommends that recruitment strategies be assessed by fostering panels to ensure Local Authorities were working fully with external agencies.

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

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 policy intention of making the 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. In the same report a further policy aim is noted the department was to increase the number of foster placements available by 25 within the year, and by 125 within 5 years and increase foster care recruitment activity.

The Education, Children and Families Committee further discussed policy aims in relation to the 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 had a policy aim to increase the number of foster carers available within the

authority as this would improve the outcomes for children as well as provide best value to the authority.

Since around 2012 the local authority has made use of independent assessors to assess prospective foster carers. These social workers have been employed by the local authority on a temporary basis when the in-house fostering team has not had the capacity to undertake these assessments

Inspection reports by the Care Commission and the Care Inspectorate between 2006 and 2014 show that inspectors scrutinised the authority's foster carer recruitment policies and processes, and these were consistently identified as areas of strength by inspectors. This, along with the extensive examples provide show the existence of clear policies relating to recruitment and training of foster carers within the authority.

ii. Standard and size of accommodation

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

While no policy or procedure relating to the standard and size of accommodation has survived from this period, it can be assumed that any policy aims and intentions were founded on the *Regulations and Rules in regard to Boarded Out Boys and Girls* that were produced by the Lord Provost, Magistrates and the Education Authority (SL164/1/7). These regulations state:

- *No more persons shall be allowed to occupy a bedroom in which a boy or girl sleeps than may be approved by the Education Authority. The bedroom shall have a window opening to the outside air and not into another apartment*
- *The bedding for each boy or girl shall be adequate and comfortable and shall be kept clean and well aired*
- *No boy or girl shall occupy the same bed or bedroom as an invalid or an old infirm person.*
- *Boys and girls over eight years of age shall not occupy the same bedroom; and not more than two shall sleep in one bed.*

In 1959 the Scottish Home Department produced the *Memorandum on the Boarding Out of Children*, and it can be assumed that the authority updated their policy and procedural aims and intentions to reflect the Memorandum. Of the standard and size of accommodation available to children and young people in foster placements, they recommend that a child

should be placed with a married couple whose home is of a reasonably good material standard. It further recommends:

It may be unwise to place a child who may return later to his parents in a foster home where there is a significantly higher standard of living than that to which he is accustomed. Where, however, such a home is offered, the boarding-out officer should decide after careful consideration whether there is in care a child whose individual capabilities would have the best chance of development in such a home.

The Memorandum further recommends procedures in relation to the monitoring of the standard of accommodation and notes that social work professionals should regularly visit foster carers to speak to the child in placement and ensure clothing and sleeping arrangements are up to the standards set out in the Memorandum. During these visits, the Memorandum also recommends that the standard and condition of the home, as well as sleeping arrangements and bedclothes be assessed. A report of the visit should be placed with the child's personal papers kept in the Children's Department and should be made available at any time to members of the Children's Committee.

It can be suggested that the authority had robust policies and procedures in place to monitor and ensure the standard and size of the accommodation was in line with the policy aims and intentions set out in the *Regulations and Rules in regard to Boarded Out Boys and Girls* from 1933, and the *Memorandum on the Boarding Out of Children* from 1959.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

In June 1995, the authority adopted the *Quality in Caring Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services*, which included all the policy and procedural aims and intentions for the department. The policy on the standard and size of accommodation offered by carers to children and young people stated:

- The home must have a warm and welcoming atmosphere
- Repairs attended to quickly, and the property being well maintained
- Sufficient space for play and other activities
- Outside space should be safely enclosed
- Outdoor play equipment must be safe, clean and regularly checked for defects
- Rooms must be an adequate size
- There should be enough rooms for family living, which should also be well maintained

- There should be space for homework and other quiet activities
- The home must be adequately and safely heated and well ventilated
- Garden chemicals and tools must be stored safely
- The Standard also outlines the policy content relating to sleeping arrangements for children and young people in foster placements and states:
- No child over 10 years old can share a bedroom with a child of a different gender
- Each child must have their own bed
- A bedroom can be shared by more than 2 children at a time
- Where possible, there should be space to allow sibling groups to share a bedroom
- Bedroom sharing should only take place with children of comparable age and gender
- Each child must have adequate storage for their clothes and personal belongings
- Views of children are taken into account before a decision is made in relation to children in placement sharing bedrooms with the birth children of foster carers

Policies relating to the size of households are contained within the Standards, and state that children and young people in placements must have enough space to meet their needs for privacy and where they can engage in appropriate activities for their age and stage of development.

The policies and procedures described above show evidence of robust policy content and intentions aimed at ensuring children and young people who required to be placed in foster care were placed in homes that were safe and nurturing.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 - 2014)

It can be assumed that a large number of the policies and procedures used within the social work department were founded on the recommendations of the Edinburgh Inquiry from 1999. Recommendation 115 of the Inquiry stated that social work professionals should make unannounced visits to foster carers. This would allow them to assess the placement, and as part of the safeguarding process, provide an opportunity to assess and monitor the standard of the carers home. This is further reflected in the recording template for social work professionals to record the findings of their unannounced visits, as questions include:

- What was the standard and condition of the shared areas available to the child?
- In what condition was the child's bedroom?
- If there are pets in the household, are the agreed feeding and sleeping arrangements adhered to and hygienic?

This form is still in use by the authority.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that, in the mid-2000s, the Home Study Assessments included a review of the standard and size of accommodation provided by prospective foster carers, as well as a safety check of the home and any garden space. In addition, one of the competencies that carers were assessed on was their ability to provide a safe and caring environment.

From the policy and procedural content provided above, it is evident that the policies and procedures in place ensured a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people who were placed in foster placements.

iii. Number, age and gender of children accommodated/in household

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no evidence of surviving policies and procedures relating to the number, age and gender of children accommodated in a single foster placement from this period, and so we cannot comment on their content, aims or intentions. Children's client files and committee minutes were scoped in order to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

There is very little surviving evidence from this period relating to policies or procedures surrounding the number, age and gender of children accommodated in a single foster placement. The only surviving policy is the *Quality in Caring Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services* from June 1995, and recommends, 'a child will not normally be placed with any family where there is a child of the same age and/or stage of development.'

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Policies and procedures relating to the number, age and gender of children accommodated in a single foster placement are outlined in the *Looked After Children's Manual* from April 1997. Policy aims relating to this are outlined within the processes for pre-approval checks of prospective foster carers, and state that information relating to the birth children of

prospective foster carers must be taken into consideration before any fostering category of approval is given.

Surviving copies of Home Study Reports carried out in the early 2000's show that pre-approval assessments of prospective foster carers included an assessment of any children within the carers household, as well as being explicit about the foster carers approval in relation to age, gender and number of placements that they would be able to care for.

Further policy content can be found in the foster carer assessment form, *Form F*, which is produced by the British Association of Adoption and Fostering. This form has been in use by the authority since 2012.

It is clear that, while there are very few policies and procedures relating to the number, age and gender of children in placements and carers households, the evidence presented above shows that policy aims were in existence and procedures were carried out in line with these aims.

iv. Pre-Approval/Registration Checks

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to pre-approval and registration checks for prospective foster carers were contained within the *Regulations and Rules in regards to Boarded Out Boys and Girls*, produced by the Lord Provost, Magistrates and the Education Committee within the authority in 1933 (SL164/1/7). This policy states that the authority must adhere to the following when carrying out pre-approval checks:

- 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 authority must visit the foster home to ensure the home and the carer can meet the needs of any child placed with them

This policy was updated in 1959 when the Scottish Home Department produced the *Memorandum on the Boarding Out of Children*, which is highly likely to have underpinned the vast majority of policies and procedures used by the authority in relation to foster care.

This Memorandum expanded on the 1933 Regulations, and suggested:

Where an application is from a married woman, the Children's Officer should see all the members of the family. It is important to make sure that both the husband and the wife desire to take a child into their home and that there is no apparent

unwillingness on the part of any children of the family. Such an interview helps the Boarding Out Officer to satisfy himself, in accordance with the Boarding Out Regulations, that the applicant can safely be entrusted with the care of a boarded-out child.

It can be evidenced from the policy content provided above that there were procedures and policy intentions in place to ensure pre-approval and registration checks of prospective foster carers were carried out.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to pre-approval and registration checks for prospective foster carers were set out in the *Quality in Caring Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services* that were introduced by the authority in June 1995. The Standards stated that police and medical checks had to be carried out for all prospective carers before their registration was approved. As well as police and medical checks, the policy stated that personal referees, who were nominated by the prospective carer, must be approached by social work professionals when carrying out pre-approval checks. This additional check further ensured that the applicants were fit to care for looked after children on behalf of the authority.

While evidence is limited in relation to policies and procedures for pre-approval and registration checks, it is clear that the policy aims ensured only people who were fit and proper to become foster carers for the department were approved.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The *Looked After and Accommodated Children's Manual* from April 1997 outlined the policy and procedural aims in terms of pre-approval and registration checks for foster carers. The policy stated that the following checks must be carried out by social work professionals when holding approval meetings:

- Health checks with doctors and other relevant medical professionals for both prospective carers and anyone over the age of 16 in the household
- Checks of any previous criminal convictions subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 for both carers and anyone over the age of 16 in their household

- Checks on previous partners, if applicable
- The degree of religious observance of prospective foster carers and their capacity to care for a child of any particular origin or cultural and linguistical background
- Checks on past and present employment, including obtaining references from any current employers
- Assessments of leisure activities and hobbies
- Reference checks from third parties as to the applicant's character and suitability to be a foster carer

These policy aims and intentions were updated with the introduction of the *National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services* in March 2005, which helped to underpin the updated policies and procedures in use by the department. The procedure made all prospective foster carers aware that they would be subject to rigorous statutory checks during the application and registration process, and that *'the agency will make all necessary checks including criminal record checks, to determine your suitability. These checks will be repeated at least every two years.'*

These checks are also outlined on the British Association of Adoption and Fostering *Form F* application form, which has been used by the authority since 2012. The guidance notes attached to the form state that checks will be made of all foster carer applicants:

This is a comprehensive list of references and statutory checks that can be used in any family assessment, and the information which is required to obtain and carry them out. Schedule 3 of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 merely states that the information gathered should include references from third parties about an applicant's character and suitability to be a foster carer.

Further guidance included with the form states that the following additional checks would be carried out prior to approval if necessary:

- Any court judgements made against the prospective carer
- Bankruptcy checks
- Checks if the applicant had been involved in any Court of Session, Sheriff Court or Children's Hearings relating to their own children or other close family

It is evident that the policy aims and intentions of the authority were to ensure all foster carers approved by the department were fit and suitable to be carers. It appears that the

policies and procedures used by the department were founded on national guidance and legislation.

v. References

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence of policies or procedures from this period relating to social work professionals interviewing references of prospective foster carers as part of the application process. Foster carer files and committee minutes were scoped to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found for this period.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The *Standards in Caring for Fostering and Adoption Services* were produced by the authority in June 1995 and contain the policy aims and intentions relating to references for prospective foster carers. The Standard outlines the assessment and preparation process prior to approval for applicants

In June 1995, Lothian Regional Council adopted the Standards for Fostering and Adoption services. Standard 4:3 (pg. 49) outlines the assessment and preparation process for carers and notes that, 'a minimum of two personal references must be supplied by the applicants, and those providing the references will be visited and interviewed by the social worker responsible for the assessment.'

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Policies and procedures relating to reference checks during the foster care application process are outlined within the *Looked After and Accommodated Children's Manual*, implemented in April 1997. The policy notes that social work professionals should ensure that personal references are interviewed to assist in determining the character of prospective carers as well as their suitability to care on behalf of the authority.

Anecdotal evidence shows that the authority incorporated the recommendations of the Wakefield Inquiry in 2007. While conducted in England, the Wakefield Inquiry was set up after two foster carers were convicted of the sexual abuse of children in their care and made a number of recommendations that the authority used to update their own policies and

procedures. The recommendations used by the authority in relation to personal references for prospective foster carers were:

- Consistent format for referees written response about applicants
- References from current or previous employers should be sought
- Different roles of foster carers should not be changed without explicit assessment

Further policy content relating to personal references is evident within the British Association of Adoption and Fostering *Form F* application form, which has been used by the authority since 2012. It recommends a procedure for gathering personal references, and examples of this happening in practice - see 4.4(ii) – show that the authority adopted it into their own procedures:

Schedule 3 of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 merely states that the information gathered should include references from third parties about an applicant's character and suitability to be a foster carer. In the past, the practice was that an agency obtains two personal references, at least one of whom was not a relative. However, agency practice now frequently expects both a wider range of referees and also that most, if not all, are interviewed. Agencies can choose which of the extra non-statutory references they might decide to require of prospective foster carers and provision is made for this in Section D. The circumstances as described by the applicants may be supplemented by information from other referees or family and friends. Where there are two applicants, attention may need to be paid to the balance of references between those who have long-term knowledge of one or other applicant as an individual and those who know them as partners. While friends who have many years' knowledge of the applicants may be especially valuable, if the applicants have moved recently it will also be important to ascertain if they have established new social networks.

It is plausible to suggest that the policy and procedural content in use by the authority with regards to seeking personal references during the foster carer application and assessment process was mostly underpinned by legislation, national guidance and Inquiry recommendations.

vi. Foster Care Agreements
Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Very little evidence of Foster Care Agreements being in use have survived from this period, and the evidence available suggests that such agreements may not have been in use. The *Regulations and Rules in regards to Boarded Out Boys and Girls*, which were produced in 1933 by the Lord Provost and the Education Authority of the authority, show that there were some attempts at creating agreements between the social work department and foster carers in relation to the placement of children in their care (SL161/1/7). These Regulations lay out, in similar terms, the content of current day Foster Care Agreements outlining the responsibilities of the authority and foster carers, such as:

- The authority will ensure all children will be medically examined before being placed with foster carers
- The authority will conduct half yearly visits and reports to children in foster placements
- Foster carers must seek medical attention for children placed with them when required, and notify the City Education Officer of any accident, injury, disease or death of a child placed with them
- Carers must provide children with regular healthy meals
- Carers must ensure the child's clothing and shoes are in good condition and kept clean
- Carers shall teach each child good habits, such as punctuality, good manners, thrift, self-respect and truthfulness
- Carers must not administer harsh punishments, and failure to comply with this will be reported to the City Education Officer
- Carers must ensure children attend school regularly

While no evidence of formal Foster Care Agreements has survived from this period, their content can be evidenced within the Regulations above.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

While no specific policy or procedure has been found relating to Foster Carer Agreements, a Partnership Agreement form from 1991, which was held in foster carers case files, outlines their policy content:

- 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 authority

In addition to the above, the Partnership Agreement 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 outlined the support and training available to foster carers, as well as their responsibilities in terms of supervision.

The foster carer file audit, undertaken for this response, provides evidence of approved foster carers being very much aware of the Foster Carer Agreements. These had to be read and signed by the carer as part of the approval and registration process and then countersigned by the responsible social work professional. It would be fair to assume that the authority had policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to Foster Carer Agreements as set out within the Partnership Agreement described above.

While we are unable to demonstrate policy development relating to Foster Carer Agreements, we are able to demonstrate their extensive use. Please see our response to section 4.4(ii) for further details.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Policy content relating to Foster Care Agreements is outlined within the *Looked After and Accommodated Children's Manual* from April 1997. This notes that all carers must read and sign the written Foster Care Agreement, as this outlines for them their responsibilities as carers, as well as the responsibilities of the authority towards carers and children in placement.

In 1999, the authority introduced the Foster Care Agreement, which outlined the basis by which carers would provide care for children and young people placed with them, as well as how they would be remunerated. The Carer Agreement detailed the expectation of the authority of carers and what responsibilities carers had when caring for children. These include:

- 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

The same Foster Care Agreement also sets out the responsibilities of the authority to both carers and children. These include:

- Preparation, training, support and reviews
- Representations, complaints and allegations
- Placements of children and young people
- Financial and material provision
- Insurance

In March 2005, the *National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services* were published by the Scottish Executive and intended to be used by Local Authorities to underpin policy and procedure in relation to foster care. On the use of Foster Care Agreements, the Standards note that there must be an official agreement

in place between the authority and the carer that sets out care approval category, roles and responsibilities of foster carers, and the roles and responsibilities of the authority.

From the evidence provided, it is clear that for the most part, there was policy content around the use of Foster Care Agreements, whether this was part of an existing policy, or founded on national guidance.

vii. Induction

While evidence of policy on inductions is scant, there is some evidence of the authority having procedures and processes in place relating to inductions for prospective foster carers throughout the period 1930 – 2014 as evidenced below.

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

It can be presumed that policy content relating to inductions for newly approved foster carers was based on the Scottish Home Department's *Memorandum on the Boarding Out of Children*, published in 1959. While policy content is minimal within the Memorandum, it notes:

When applications suggest that good foster homes could be provided the boarding-out officer should always arrange to have a friendly talk with the applicants so that they may be fully advised of what is involved and have an opportunity to ask for further information and guidance.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Policy and procedural aims relating to the induction of newly approved foster carers were encapsulated into the *Quality in Caring Standard for Fostering and Adoption Services*, which was introduced by the authority in June 1995. While minimal, the Standard outlines the length of time that the assessment and preparation stage of a foster carer application should take, and that all prospective carers must take part in fostering preparation groups run by the authority as part of their approval and induction process.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Anecdotal evidence indicates that, from the mid 1990's onwards, preparation groups for foster carers were provided for all applicants as part of their induction to fostering. These preparation groups are still in use by the authority today and act as an introduction to fostering.

The groups are designed to help prospective foster carers to prepare and think about their role within the caring system, the needs of children and changes they may need to make to their lives in order to prepare the whole family for fostering. Prospective carers cannot be fully registered until these induction groups are attended and completed.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the content of these preparation groups have been based on *Skills to Foster*, material produced by the Fostering Network since 1999, which is still in use today. They have been delivered by Family Based Care social work professionals since this time, along with input from an experienced carer. Preparation groups consist of 6 sessions and run over 6 weeks and cover the following topics:

- Session 1 – What do foster carers do?
- Session 2 – Working with others
- Session 3 – Identity and life chances
- Session 4 – Understanding children in foster care
- Session 5 – Safe caring
- Session 6 – Transitions

During these sessions the applicants are engaged in a series of subjects through experiential learning, reflection and presentations. They are also asked to complete feedback and takeaway tasks in relation to their learning after each session.

The sessions, as well as being informative, offer a setting where the applicants are observed and assessed on their ability to engage with others and with the learning provided. Concerns about any participants are shared with Family Based Care Team Leaders and they are counselled out if appropriate. Careful advice and a visit by at least one facilitator and Team Leader is offered to manage this process.

Following the completion of the preparation group, prospective applicants have a chance to give feedback on their experience and demonstrate their learning as well as reflect on their own development.

viii. Transfer of foster carers to or from other organisations or local authorities
Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence of policies or procedures relating to the transfer of foster carers from one organisation or authority to another from this period. Foster carers files and children's client files were scoped in order to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found for this period.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

There is no surviving evidence of policies or procedures relating to the transfer of foster carers from one organisation or authority to another from this period. Foster carers files and children's client files were scoped in order to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found for this period.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to the transfer of foster carers to or from another organisation or authority are noted within the *Looked After and Accommodated Children Manual*, which was produced by the department in April 1997 as part of a suite of policies and procedures relevant to the entire Children and Families department. The policy outlines the derivative approval process for those carers who transferred to or from another authority or organisation states:

A authority can approve a person as a foster carer where they are currently approved by another authority without a full assessment by themselves and discussion by a fostering panel. The second authority can only approve the person for the same categories of children as the first authority. If the second local authority wish to use the foster carers for a different age range of children, then they would have to go through the full assessment, interviews and presentation to a fostering panel.

Anecdotal evidence shows that, from around 2011, the process for derivative transfers from one authority to another has involved carers moving into the Edinburgh area with their existing approval and remit, with placements being made on that basis. Over a subsequent three-month period, carers would then be reassessed by the authority and a panel would be held for additional approval. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this was the policy and procedural intention in use within the department.

Further anecdotal evidence suggests that there was an increase in the number of foster carers transferring to the authority from independent fostering agencies. In response, the department developed the *Independent Agency Transfer* policy, which states:

- Standard processes must be followed for completing the initial screening call
- The call handler must advise the enquirer of the next steps
- Following a successful screening of the transfer request, the enquiry form is passed to the Recruitment Team Leader
- The Team Leader makes contact with the carers to arrange a visit, explore expectations and discuss options
- Once the carer has advised their current agency of their intention to transfer, the Team Leader will contact the agency to discuss the applicant's suitability for transfer
- If transfer is deemed appropriate, a meeting will be held involving the carer, their current agency, a authority assessor and social work professionals of any children in the placement
- The transfer assessment will then be allocated to a social work professional, and home study assessments will be carried out, as well as any required updates on statutory checks or family circumstances

The evidence, both written and anecdotal provided above show that there were clear policies and procedures in place to facilitate the transfer of carers to or from another authority or independent agency. This would ensure all the necessary checks had been carried out and the carers were suitable to provide care for the authority.

ix. Review/supervision

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

The authority policies and procedures relating to foster care during this period were set out in the *Regulations and Rules in regard to Boarded Out Boys and Girls*, which was produced by the Lord Provost and the Education Authority in 1933. These regulations set out the expectations of the authority in relation to review and supervision of foster placements:

- The Education Authority should supply a visit book to the foster carer for the purpose of recording all official visits to their home
- The Education Authority have the right to remove any boy or girl for a foster carer at any time without assigning a reason for this (SL164/1/7)

From 1930 onwards, there is evidence of reports within the Public Assistance Committee from Councillors about their visits to boarded out children and they are noted to have visited

children at the same time as 'lunatics and mental defectives.' It is highly plausible that these visits acted as supervision of foster placements to ensure the placement was successful for both the child and the carer (Ref. SL61).

The discussion of the Poor Relief (Scotland) Regulation Act 1934 by the Public Assistance Committee in 1934 suggests that policy and procedural aims and intentions were underpinned by the existing national legislation at the time. Committee noted the content of the legislation and recommended that Councillors continue to provide supervisory visits to foster care placements per the legislation:

Each house in which a child is boarded out shall be visited by the City Public Assistance Officer at least twice per year, and a report of the visits shall be recorded in a visiting book which shall remain in the possession of the guardian.

(SL61/1/11)

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the Public Assistance Committee decided that these supervisory visits should continue, despite some difficulties being created by the war. In 1942 to 1943, the Public Assistance Committee noted a letter from the Department of Health for Scotland instructed committee that visits to boarded out children should be reduced to a minimum. The committee resolved that they should continue as they were but to keep in mind fuel and manpower taken to carry out these visits (SL61/1/14). This evidence shows a very unique policy intention created by external circumstances to ensure that children in foster placements were still being visited and properly cared for, even during the outbreak of war.

The supervision and review of foster placements was further discussed by the Social Work Committee in 1950, when it is noted that the policy aim of the authority was to continue the supervision of children. This supervision was to be continued by the social work department and a regular review system was to be established for all children and young people in foster placements (TC File 16).

Policy and procedure content was further influenced by the *Memorandum on the Boarding Out of Children*, which was produced by the Scottish Home Department in 1959. The Memorandum was encapsulated into departmental policies, and stated that foster parents must be aware that they are subject to visits from the Children's Department and other persons authorised by the Secretary of State, and the purpose of these visits were to review the placement to ensure it was successful and to allow social work professionals to examine the child's clothing and sleeping arrangements to ensure they conformed to departmental policy.

The Memorandum further notes that a report of the supervision visits should be placed with the child's file and kept in the Children's Department and should be made available at any time to members of the Children's Committee. The supervision report should note:

- The general condition of the home visited and in particular the adequacy of the sleeping arrangements and state of the bed clothes
- The health of both foster parents and child
- The child's appearance and his progress at school
- His general behaviour and the scope of leisure time activities
- Any particular difficulties discussed in the course of the visit with the child or the foster parents or any other local person such as the doctor or head teacher

Under the Boarding Out of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1959, Councillors were not obliged to make visits to boarded out children, but the Children's Officer had to make visits four times per year. However, the Children's Committee agreed that Councillors should still make visits once a year, presumably with the Children's Officer. This further suggests that policy and procedural content was based on national legislation and guidance.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The policy aims and intentions relating to the review and supervision of foster placements were outlined in a report by the Director of Social Work to the Social Work Committee in 1977. The Director notes that once a foster carer has been approved, they are allocated a liaison worker who will form a relationship with the carer and maintain contact, even during times when there is no child placed with them. This would help when deciding on suitable placements for children. The report also highlights that ongoing support, assessment and proper matching reduces the risk of placement breakdowns. In addition to this, one member of staff co-ordinates the 6 monthly reviews of all foster children (LRC3/8/3/3).

In June 1995, the authority implemented the *Quality in Caring Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services*, which set out the policy aims and intentions relating to the review and supervision of foster placements. The Standard states:

Support, training and supervision are provided by a variety of means, including contact with appropriate social work staff, topic-based training, peer group support, consultation with specialist professionals, personal counselling, outside consultancy and discussion with other carers. Practical support such as respite care and time out from caring is also offered.

The evidence presented above shows that the authority ensured their policy and procedures were updated in relation to the review and supervision of foster placements to ensure that they were relevant for the service provided.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to the review and supervision of foster placements are laid out in the *Looked After Children's Manual*, which were implemented in April 1997, and formed a suit of policy and procedural documents for the Children and Families department. Of review and supervision of foster placements, the manual notes:

Foster carers must be reviewed at intervals of not more than a year. In reviewing foster care, the authority must seek and take into account the views of the foster carer and of any authority who has placed a child with the foster carer within the preceding year or anyone who still has a placement with the foster carer. We will wish to extend that to take into consideration the views of parents and children themselves.

Updates to policy and procedural aims and intentions were drive by the recommendations of the 1999 Edinburgh Inquiry. In their report, *Edinburgh's Children*, the Inquiry made a number of recommendations relating to the improvement of foster care services by the authority. Recommendation 115 within the report notes that the authority should strongly consider implementing a policy of unannounced visits by social work professionals to foster placements. This policy recommendation was accepted by the authority, as part of the safeguarding process, these visits also provided an opportunity to assess and monitor the standard of the carers' home. In response, the social work department created an Unannounced Visit form for social work professionals to complete and place copies in the foster carers file and the child's client file.

Further policy and procedural content was updated in 2008 and formed part of the Carers Handbook. This ensured that all carers were aware of supervision and reviews, as well as their responsibilities to the authority:

The regulations require that each carer is reviewed within one year following approval and then at the very least, three years. The review meeting is an opportunity of the carer, worker and the panel to look back at the carer's work. It is an opportunity for recording and valuing the carer's contribution and for raising any concerns. It also allows carers to give feedback to the department...Early reviews can take place at the fostering panel. They occur when:

- *There has been a significant change in the carer's circumstances*
- *There is any request or recommendations regarding change or variation of approval status*
- *Any significant complaint, allegation or child protection investigation has occurred*

If an early review has taken place, the next review will be scheduled three years later unless you, the panel or your liaison worker thinks an earlier review would be helpful. The panel will consider reports prepared by the carer, liaison worker and the child's social worker...Included in these reports and discussion will be the:

- *Carers main achievements, strengths and skills*
- *Support carers have received*
- *Contributions carers have made*
- *Skills and training needs*

Within the Education, Children and Families Committee minutes from 13 September 2011, there is reference to Report 16 *Annual Review of Service Strategy and Improvement plan for Children and Young People who are Looked After and Accommodated by the authority*. It is noted that staff had to ensure that carer reviews are carried out within a statutory timescale, and a system was established to schedule this.

From the evidence and examples provided above, it can be assumed that the policy and procedural content and aims in relation to reviews and supervision of foster placements were based on legislation and national guidance. Their content also ensures the best level of care was being provided to looked after and accommodated children and young people, with a high standard of support being provided to carers by social work professionals.

x. Training

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

No policies or procedures relating to training of foster carers has survived from this period, however it is plausible to suggest that any policy content was based on the *Memorandum on the Boarding Out of Children* from 1959. This Memorandum was produced by the Scottish Home Department, and as evidenced in responses above, was used by the authority to inform policy and procedures. Of training, the Memorandum states that Boarding Out Officers should discuss the process of fostering with foster parents to ensure there are no problems in relation to the child in placement or their progress. This would ensure that the Boarding Out Officer was aware of any training needs and would be able to advise the foster carers directly.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Policy and procedural aims relating to training for foster carers was discussed by the Director of Social Work in a report to the Social Work Committee in 1978. In the report, the Director comments on the pilot of a Family Care Scheme in which Community Carers would provide foster placements for young people. He notes that carers must receive training before their approval, and so this suggests the content of policies relating to the recruitment and training of foster carers (LRC3/3/8/4)

The policy content relating to the training of foster carers can further be assumed by a report by to the Social Work Committee in 1994. Within this report, the Director of Social Work notes that a Children and Families Resource Team had been set up within social work districts to co-ordinate the recruitment, training and development of foster carers. It can be surmised that policy at the time dictated that this team was responsible for ensuring all foster carers had been appropriately recruited and had undergone the necessary training before they were able to care for children or young people (LRC3/8/3/1/14).

Policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to training for foster carers were outlined within the *Quality in Caring Standards for Fostering and Adoption Services*, which were introduced by the authority in June 1995. The Standard sets out the training expectations of both social work staff and foster carers, and states that individual and group support training is provided to carers to 'enable them to carry out their tasks with confidence and skill.' The Standard then expands on this policy intention:

- Support, training and supervision are provided by a variety of means, including contact with appropriate social work staff, topic-based training, peer group support, consultation with specialist professionals and discussions with other carers
- Staff and carers should be kept up to date with advancements in knowledge of childcare
- Social worker training and knowledge bases should be developed
- Training is available in specific areas such as safe caring, child protection, child development, health.
- There is a minimum training programme which is developed as part of a strategy in caring for children.
- Training is well structured, and a reliable programme of events is produced.
- Gaps in training are identified and filled. Experienced carers contribute to the design of the programme and the delivery of training to new carers.

It is evident, from the policy content provided above, that the aims of the authority's policies and procedures was to ensure that both social work professionals and carers had all the training necessary to allow them to provide excellent care for children placed with them. The policy discussed above also highlights the encouragement of carers to seek and attend training for caring in specialist areas.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Part of a suite of policies and procedures produced by the Children and Families Department, the *Looked After Children Regulations 1996* outlines the policy intentions and the responsibilities of the authority in terms of foster carer recruitment and training. It states that the authority must:

- Provide carers with general preparation and training to prepare them for becoming authority carers. This should include an ongoing programme of training and training for special and specific circumstances
- Provide training groups
- Provide carers with departmental policies and procedures

The *Looked After Children Regulations 1996* policy document further outlines the responsibilities of foster carers in relation to their training, and states that carers must participate in all training opportunities and events as well as carer support groups. This policy of training was further encapsulated within the authority Carer Agreement from 1999.

Anecdotal evidence from staff working within the department from c.1996 onwards suggests that there was a policy commitment to providing training for foster carers. This training was wide ranging and included training sessions on safer caring, HIV, Curriculum for Excellence and caring for vulnerable babies. Further to this, anecdotal evidence suggests that membership of the Fostering Network, which was previously reserved for social work professionals, was made available to foster carers. This membership allowed carers to source any training provided by the professional body.

The Education, Children and Families Committee considered the training of foster carers, and discussed the policy aims and intentions that were outlined in the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report from 2007-2008. This report outlines the development of a policy for joint training opportunities for foster carers, including additional support for foster carers during training. Further to this, minutes from the Education, Children and Families Committee from 9 October 2012 states that the department was set to publish an annual

training programme for foster carers, and that options for health care training were being explored.

It is possible to suggest that the policy content and procedural aims relating to training of foster carers were founded on *The National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services*, which were produced in March 2005 by the Scottish Executive. These standards set out the responsibilities of the authority in terms of training their foster carers, and states:

- *You can be confident that the agency is committed to developing, preparing and training foster carers and makes sure that they work within its standards, policies and guidance.*
- *You can be confident that the agency has the necessary review system in place to make sure that you are able to continue to provide good quality care.*
- *You know that the agency reviews your access to the facilities you need to meet the needs of children placed with you including their ethnic, cultural, language and faith needs.*
- *You know that the review report includes an action plan to meet your training and support needs and those of your family*
- *You can be confident that the review report includes recommendations about your continued approval and the numbers and ages of children you are approved to look after*

From the policy content and procedural aims provided above, it is clear that the authority had robust policies and procedures in place for the training of foster carers that was underpinned by legislation and national guidance.

xi. Personal development

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence from this period relating to the personal development of foster carers. 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)

While no direct evidence of policies and procedures relating to the personal development of foster carers has been found, the issue was discussed by the Director of Social Work in a report to the Social Work Committee in 1978. The report states that local foster parents groups had been set up with the aim of developing the skills of members and supporting each other. The report recommended that the Social Work Department should continue to encourage local foster parent groups, hold formal meetings with such groups twice a year and that the Regional Council become a member of the National Foster Care Association. While no policy or procedure has survived, it is highly plausible that the policy content would be based on these recommendations (LRC3/8/3/4).

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

While no official policies or procedures relating to the personal development of foster carers has been located, anecdotal evidence suggests the existence of a policy intention. Anecdotal evidence indicates that there has been an ongoing commitment since c.2000 of the authority to facilitate groups for foster carers. These allow carers to develop their skills and form support with other foster carers in Edinburgh. Further anecdotal evidence suggests that, within the competency Home Study assessments in use in the mid-2000s, one of the competencies that carers were assessed on was around their own development, and thus prompting prospective and newly approved carers to think about their own personal development and what they could do to improve this.

While there is very limited evidence of the personal development of foster carers, reports and anecdotal evidence shows that there was a policy intention within the authority for the period 1975 – 2014.

xii. Disciplinary actions

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

Foster carers were not employees of the authority and as such were not subject to disciplinary action. Therefore, there are no policy or procedural aims or intentions relating to disciplinary actions for foster carers.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Foster carers were not employees of the authority and as such were not subject to disciplinary action. Therefore, there are no policy or procedural aims or intentions relating to disciplinary actions for foster carers.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Foster carers were not employees of the authority and as such were not subject to disciplinary action. Therefore, there are no policy or procedural aims or intentions relating to disciplinary actions for foster carers.

xiii. Removal of approval/registration

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

The policy and procedural aims and intentions for the removal of registration of foster carers was outlined in the *Regulations and Rules in regard to Boarded Out Boys and Girls*, produced by the Lord Provost and the Education Authority in 1933 (SL164/1/7). The Regulations also set out the expectations of the authority in relation to the conduct of approved foster carers, and thus alluding to the potential reasons as to why registration may be revoked:

- Foster carers must continue to observe and comply with the rules, as failure to do this will result in their names being removed from the Register of Foster Parents
- Foster carers must return a child in placement to the City Education Officer or any person authorised by the authority upon completion or termination of the placement (SL164/1/7)

While there is very little evidence of policies and procedures relation to the removal of registration during this period, the Regulations noted above outlines a very clear policy stance of the authority.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

While there are no surviving policies or procedures relating to the removal of approval for foster carers, evidence within foster carer case files suggests there may have been a policy aim within the authority.

The audit of carers files shows that there were a number of reasons as to why a carers approval or registration would be removed, and it can be surmised that the authority had policies and procedures surrounding this.

Of the files that were audited, it appears that a carer could either have their approval/registration removed by the authority or could decide themselves to resign, with:

- 39.6% of carers resigned their registration over their personal circumstances, retiring, a change in employment status or dissatisfaction with the fostering service provided by the authority
- 18.2% of carers decided not to continue with fostering when their current child in placement reached 18 years old
- 13.2% of carers had their registration/approval removed by the authority due to issues with the level of care they provided, or issues arising from complaints
- 3.8% of carers resigned their registration because of health reasons
- 1.9% of carers resigned their registration due to their moving to another authority area
- 1.9% of carers had their approval/registration removed by the authority because of new or historical police offences

Panel review meeting minutes held within foster carer case files also showed evidence of registration/approval being removed by the authority because of carers consistent failure to share vital information with the department both in terms of vital information relating to the carer and children or young people in placement. For the remaining 36.8% of files, the information surrounding the reason for deregistration was not recorded within the foster carer file or within any carer review meeting minutes.

The carer files show that if either party intimated that they wished to cease carer registration/approval, a panel review meeting would be held to discuss all arising issues and reasons for this. The panel review minutes held in foster carer files show that a number of social work professionals would be involved in making deregistration decisions, and the reasons behind such would be discussed in-depth at review meetings with all involved. Copies of correspondence sent by the authority to carers confirming the end of their carers registration were also present within the foster carer case files that were audited.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Policy and procedural aims and intentions relating to the removal of registration for foster carers are held within the *Looked After and Accommodated Children's Manual*, which was produced by the Children and Families department in 1997. The manual sets out the procedure for suspension, review and removal, if deemed necessary, of foster carer registration after an allegation or complaint is made:

The Incident Manager may, in consultation, wherever practicable, with the Fostering Panel Chairperson, decide to temporarily suspend the carer's approval. Such a suspension is precautionary only at this stage and without prejudice to the findings of any investigation. It will not be used if the carers' arrangements could be changed and unless there are reasonable grounds to believe that:

- *Children may be at risk should the carer continue their duties*
- *The continuing presence of an alleged abuser, in their current role, might impede enquiries, and/or*
- *the allegations are so serious that approval would normally be withdrawn or that a criminal offence may have been committed that may lead to prosecution.*

The manual then sets out the policy intentions and procedure for social work professionals to follow upon completion of any investigation in relation to the approval or registration of foster carers:

Allegations that are inconclusive or do not lead to prosecution will be discussed by the Fostering Panel and the carers' approval will be reviewed...It may be desirable in some circumstances to seek an assessment of the care circumstances from another professional not linked to the local management...Once any further investigations have been completed, the Operations Manager will ask the Fostering Panel to arrange a review of the approval, consider all the circumstances and make a recommendation.

While the Manual effectively sets out the policy and procedural aims for handling registration removal in the case of complaints or allegations, the *National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services*, produced by the Scottish Executive in March 2005,

updated the existing policy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the recommendations made in these Standards were used to underpin policy and procedure within the Children and Families department. On the removal of approval or registration, the Standards note:

- Carers will be able to put their views across at a fostering panel or review meeting if there are changes in circumstances or if the review recommends changing or cancelling approval
- A review of approval will be held as soon as possible after any significant incident, complaint or allegation of abuse or neglect

The policy and procedures were further updated in 2008 and noted in the Carers Handbook. This ensured foster carers were aware of the process and the policy aims in relation to their removal of approval or registration following a Fostering Panel or review meeting:

The carer and liaison worker will attend and contribute to the discussion. A copy of the Panel agenda will be available. The Panel will ask questions to gain further information and to hear views. Generally, the carer and liaison worker will remain in the room while a recommendation is reached but on occasions the panel will choose to discuss on their own. The Panel may recommend:

- *The end of the carers' work with the department, if the carer has decided that they want to retire or do not wish to continue for another reason*
- *That a carer should be de-registered because the department has not been satisfied with their performance. This is a very unusual occurrence and the carer will be advised well in advance that this is likely to be the recommendation and the reasons for it.*

The discussions and recommendations from the Panel will be recorded and sent to the Agency Decision Maker who reaches a final decision. The carers will be notified in writing of the Agency Decision Maker's decision and reasoning. This will include information on how to ask for re-consideration if not satisfied.

Anecdotal evidence notes that Carer Conclusion of Approval/Deregistration Reports were completed alongside Carer Review Reports by liaison social work professionals. In the most recent deregistration report, from c.mid-2000's, social work professionals include:

- The number and a brief description of placements since the carers last review
- The carers stated reasons for withdrawing or the reasons of termination of approval
- If the family is providing another resource, such as day care or child minding
- Assessment and recommendation as to the family's suitability to return to caring for

	<p>the department in the future</p> <p>This form is still in use today.</p> <p>It is evident that there were robust policies and procedures in place to ensure staff and carers were aware of the process of de-registration, as well as the malpractice that may result in de-registration.</p>
<p>e)</p>	<p><u>Who compiled the policies and/or procedures?</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>Between 1930 and 1948, the Public Assistance Committee, along with the Education Committee, Education Officer and the Public City Assistance Officer, took decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care at a local authority level. (Ref. SL61 & SL164). Between 1948 and 1969, the Children’s Committee, along with the Children’s Officer took decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care at a local authority level (SL116).</p> <p>Between 1969 and 1975, the Social Work Committee, along with the Director of Social Work took decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care at a local authority level. (SL118).</p> <p>Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)</p> <p>From 1975 to 1994, the Social Work Committee of the Lothian Regional Council, along with the Director of Social Work took decisions on matters of policy, procedure and/or practice in relation to foster care at a local authority level. (LRC2)</p> <p>There is evidence from the minutes from all of the above-mentioned committees that any new policies, procedures or practices would be discussed at committee level, as would any changes required in line with emerging legislation. The Secretary of State was in contact with the committees with matters relating to any national changes in policy and procedures.</p> <p>City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)</p> <p>In 1996, the leadership structure, which had responsibilities for foster care services and therefore the implementation and compliance of related policies, procedures and practices</p>

	<p>was made up of the Director of Social Work, Head of Operations, Operations Manager and Team Manager.</p> <p>A further re-organisation in 2016 produced the current management structure which holds responsibility for the implementation and compliance of policies, procedures and practices relating to foster care service.</p>
f)	<p><u>When were the policies and/or procedures put in place?</u></p> <p>The abovementioned policies and procedures were in use by the authority during the following times:</p> <p>1930 – 1975: Edinburgh Corporation</p> <p>1975 – 1996: Lothian Regional Council</p> <p>1996 – Present: City of Edinburgh Council</p>
g)	<p><u>Were such policies and/or practices reviewed?</u></p> <p>Yes</p>
h)	<p><u>If so, what was the reason for review?</u></p> <p>All policies and procedures were/are reviewed in accordance with changes in legislation, local authority reorganisations, relevant research, changes in local practices.</p>
i)	<p><u>What substantive changes, if any, were made to the policies and/or procedures over time?</u></p> <p>No substantive changes made other than the changes made at review stages, for the reasons noted above.</p>
j)	<p><u>Why were changes made?</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
k)	<p><u>Were changes documented?</u></p> <p>Any changes were reflected in the newly structured policy and/or procedure.</p>
l)	<p><u>Was there an audit trail?</u></p> <p>No</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 2016, the Family Based Care department have introduced three new procedures named:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment to Approval• Approval to Deregistration• Continuing Care <p>These have been developed by social work professionals and received senior management approval and are continually updated and revised to ensure the department is delivering services from a consistent practice base.</p> <p>All Children's Rights activity is now undertaken by Who Cares Scotland? and is completely independent of the Council. Their function remains the same.</p>

Past

a) Did the local authority adhere in practice to its policy/procedures in relation to foster care?

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is very little surviving information from this period relating to adherence in practice to policies and procedures in relation to foster care, however, from the limited information available it appears that the authority did adhere to its policies and procedures in general terms. An expansion and examples, where possible, will be provided in our answer to question (b).

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

From the limited information available due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, it is possible to ascertain that, for the most part, policies and procedures were adhered to in practice in relation to the provision of foster care by the authority during this period. A file audit of foster carer files from this period also provides evidence of regular reviews for those approved as foster carers by senior social work professionals in the form of meetings from case conferences and statutory carer reviews. Evidence of accommodation checks, interviews with personal referees, training and induction of prospective and approved foster carers and statutory checks within foster carer case files show that these activities and processes were carried out for the majority of foster carers during this period. These records held within the carer files demonstrates the authority's adherence in practice to its policies and procedures.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Both the child client file sample audit and the foster carer file audit have shown that policies and procedures were followed in practice in relation to the provision of foster care during this period, particularly in relation to pre-approval checks, training of prospective and approved foster carers and follow up correspondence with personal referees. The records for these activities held within the foster carer case files show that the authority adhered in practice to the policies and procedures set out relating to the recruitment, management, handling and deregistration of foster carers.

	Where possible, an in-depth expansion of the statements made above and further examples of adherence in practice to policies and procedures are provided below in question (b).
b)	<p><u>Did the local authority adhere in practice to its policy/procedures in terms of the following?</u></p> <p>i. <u>Recruitment</u></p> <p>Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)</p> <p>There is very little surviving evidence from this time relating to the practice of the recruitment of foster carers. From the limited information available, 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 to recruit new foster carers to keep up with demand for placements.</p> <p>Within the Public Assistance Committee minutes from 1945 – 1946, it is noted that the City Social Services Officer reported to committee that there was a difficulty in recruiting suitable foster carers, so the churches of Edinburgh had been approached to help identify suitable people as prospective carers (SL61/1/17). There is no surviving evidence within the Children’s Separate Registers (SL611) or child client files showing the adherence in practice to policies and procedures surrounding the recruitment of foster carers. However, the surviving evidence does show that committee were aware of the difficulties around recruitment.</p> <p>Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)</p> <p>From the information available from the foster carer file audit, it can be surmised that policy and procedure was adhered to in practice in relation to the recruitment of foster carers.</p> <p>Initial contact information and original application forms were kept in order to form part of the overall foster carer case file, as well the findings of the statutory Home Study reports. These individual records provide evidence of statutory checks being carried out in practice, including police, medical and home safety checks.</p> <p>There is also evidence within the foster carer files of third party checks being carried out as part of the recruitment process in line with policy and procedure, including police checks on those identified by the prospective foster carers as being potential babysitters for any children placed with them, and any close family and friends with whom any children or young people may come into close contact with.</p>

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

From the information available from the foster carer file audit, it can be surmised that policy and procedure was adhered to in practice in relation to the recruitment of foster carers.

Initial contact information and original application forms were kept in order to form part of the overall foster carer case file, as well the findings of the statutory Home Study reports. These individual records provide evidence of statutory checks being carried out in practice, including police, medical and home safety checks.

There is also evidence within the foster carer files of third party checks being carried out as part of the policies and procedures surrounding the recruitment process, including police checks on those identified by the prospective foster carers as being potential babysitters for any children placed with them, and any close family and friends with whom any children or young people may come into close contact with.

ii. Standard and size of accommodation

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

From the surviving records, there is very little evidence relating to the standard and size of accommodation that foster carers were expected to provide for children placed with them.

We have only been able to find one example within archive records of the standard and size of accommodation provided by foster carers being noted by social work professionals. 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 (SL611). This suggests there was a practice of noting the standard and size of accommodation by the authority, however the evidence is very limited for this period.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The audit of foster carer files has provided evidence of policies and procedures relating to the standard and size of accommodation provided by foster carers being adhered to in practice.

Application forms and Home Study reports held within carers files show that the standard and size of 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 the standard and size of their accommodation noted as part of the Home Study report. From the examples and statistics provided, it is evident that policies and procedures were followed in practice by the authority in relation to checks on the standard and size of accommodation offered by prospective and approved foster carers.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

On the whole it appears that, in practice, social work professionals checked the standard and size of accommodation on offer 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 Study report, including proximity to main roads and the type of enclosure to ensure maximum safety for any child or young person placed in the home.

As well as Home Study reports, there is also evidence from the carer file audit of the size and standard 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.

iii. Number, age and gender of children accommodated/in household

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence to determine if policies and procedures were adhered to in practice in relation to the number, age and gender accommodated in a foster placement. Children's client files and surviving foster carer files were scoped to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, there is currently very little evidence available to allow us to fully determine if policies and procedures relating to the number, age and gender of children in foster placements were adhered to in practice by the authority at during this period. It is likely that this information would be contained within foster carer case files.

However, the small number of examples available from the foster carer file audit show that, in terms of the gender of children in foster placements, policy and procedure appears to have been adhered to in practice. One fostering application form stated that the placement of boys would be preferable, as they would be sharing a bedroom. This was adhered to, as the primary category of approval for this carer was for males only. A further example of gender being relevant to the placement of a child in placement is the changing registration category of a foster carer. These changes over time suggest that the carer found caring for boys particularly difficult, and so the registration category was changed at a carer review to reflect this. While there is very little evidence currently available, initially it can be surmised that, in terms of gender of children placed in foster care, policy and procedure was adhered to in practice.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, there is currently very little evidence available to allow us to fully determine if policies and procedures relating to the number, age and gender of children in

foster placements were adhered to in practice by the authority at during this period. However, the file audit of foster carer case files has provided one example of the gender of a child being placed with a foster carer as being relevant to the process. During the application process, prospective foster carers stated they wished to only take female placements as they had raised two daughters of their own and felt this is where their experience would be best suited. As such, the primary category of approval for this carer was for one female child.

While there is very little evidence currently available, initially it can be surmised that, in terms of gender of children placed in foster care, policy and procedure was adhered to in practice.

iv. Pre-approval/registration checks

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

For the period 1930 – 1940, there is no surviving evidence of pre-approval or registration checks being carried out for prospective foster carers. For the period 1950 – 1960, there is very limited information of these checks being carried out in line with policies and procedures. Within the child client files, there is 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. 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 a practice of basic checks being carried out by social work professionals.

Within the full Council minutes from 1960 – 1961, there is evidence of an approval process for new foster carers, however due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, we are unable to access this record to provide a full answer at this time.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Records within child client files and foster carer files have provided evidence of pre-approval and registration checks being carried out in practice in line with authority policies and procedures of the time. For the late 1970's and early 1980's, evidence of checks is limited 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.

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 authority were carrying out pre-approval checks in line with agreed policies and procedures. The carers files hold correspondence between the authority and the police requesting enhanced checks to be done for prospective foster carers, others in the household over 16 years old and any potential babysitters and significant adults. As well as correspondence, there are 'Form F' records held within carer records that show both police and 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%
- Police checks of adults over 16 years in the household – 34.9%
- Medical checks of foster carers – 88.7%
- authority checks of foster carers – 54.7%

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

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The foster carer records scoped as part of the file audit provided a large amount of evidence that pre-approval and registration checks were happening in practice as per authority policy and procedure. 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%
- authority checks of foster carers – 73%

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

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.

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.

From the examples and statistics provided above, it is accurate to argue that policies and procedures relating to pre-approval and registration checks for prospective foster carers have been carried out in practice in line with authority policy and procedure during this period.

v. References

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence to determine if policies and procedures were adhered to in practice in relation to references for prospective foster carers. Surviving foster carer records were scoped to form our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The evidence gathered from the audit of foster carer files suggests that, for the most part, policies and procedures surrounding references for prospective foster carers were adhered to in practice. Of the foster carer case files that were looked at as part of the audit, 82% of them had evidence of reference requests. Within the foster carer case files were copies of correspondence from the 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 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 scoped include written replies from the nominated referee with their thoughts on the applicant, and 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 scoped provided any evidence of referee interviews. On the whole, it is plausible to suggest that policies and procedures relating to references for prospective foster carers were adhered to in practice, as a large number of foster carer case files shows evidence of this.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

The evidence gathered from the audit of foster carer files suggests that, for the most part, policies and procedures surrounding references for prospective foster carers were adhered to in practice. 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 scoped 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. On the whole, it is plausible to suggest that policies and procedures relating to references for prospective foster carers were adhered to in practice, as a large number of foster carer case files shows evidence of this.

vi. Foster Care agreements

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence of the use of formal Foster Carer Agreements within the authority during this period. 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 is difficult to fully provide an answer in relation to the use of Foster Care Agreements, known as Partnership Agreements during this period, by the authority during this period. 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. A Partnership Agreement from 1991 highlighted by the foster carer file audit outlines what was expected of approved foster carers by the 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 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 authority adhered in practice to the policies and procedures relating to Foster Carer Agreements as these were detailed documents that required signing by carers upon their approval and registration as departmental approved foster carers.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

From the limited evidence available due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, it is difficult to fully provide an answer in relation to the use of Foster Care Agreements by the authority during this period. Of the foster carer case file reviewed as part of the file audit, only 31% of files included a copy of a Foster Care Agreement, and so evidence is limited. The Foster Carer Agreements that were available during the file audit were lengthy, legally binding documents setting out the main aims and responsibilities of the authority as a care provider for looked after children and young people. 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 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 authority as care providers:

- Preparation, training, support and reviews
- Representations, complaints and allegations

- Placements of children and young people
- Financial and material provision
- Insurance

The responsibilities of carers and what is expected of them by the authority are also listed in detail to avoid any doubt on the part of either party. This allows both carers and the 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:

- 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

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 and 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 authority adhered in practice to the policies and procedures relating to Foster Carer Agreements as these were detailed documents that required signing by carers upon their approval and registration as departmental approved foster carers.

vii. Induction

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence of adherence in practice to policies and procedures surrounding inductions for foster carers for the authority during this period. Surviving foster carer records were scoped to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

From the records available, there is very little evidence of specific inductions for foster carers taking place. The records scoped as part of the foster carer file audit show that inductions were carried out as part of the initial training and preparation groups. Correspondence between foster carers and social work professionals, as well as Home Study reports, show that carers attended fostering preparation groups as part of the approval process, which suggests that a form of induction was carried out by the authority in this way. In a report from 1979 – 1980, the Director of Social Work alerts the Social Work Committee that 10 new foster carers recruited by the authority were in the process of attending and completing preparation courses, and that these carers would be approved as soon as the courses were completed (LRC3/8/3/5). This suggests the existence of an induction scheme within the existing foster carer preparation courses, so it can be argued that social work professionals adhered in practice to policies and procedures surrounding foster carer inductions during this period.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

From the records available, there is very little evidence of specific inductions for foster carers taking place. The records scoped as part of the foster carer file audit show that inductions were carried out as part of the initial training and preparation groups. Correspondence between foster carers and social work professionals, as well as Home Study reports show that carers attended fostering preparation groups as part of the approval process. This suggests the existence of an induction scheme within the existing foster carer preparation groups, so it can be argued that social work professionals adhered in practice to policies and procedures surrounding foster carer inductions.

viii. Transfer of foster carers to or from other organisations or local authorities

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence relating to the practice of transferring foster carers to or from other organisations or Local Authorities for this period. Surviving foster carer files were scoped in order to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Very little evidence exists of foster carers transferring to or from other organisations or local authorities, however audit of foster carer records has provided some examples of the practice

surrounding this. Correspondence and carer panel review minutes show that, when carers approved by the authority moved to Fife and wished to continue caring, a request was made by the authority in Fife for information held on their time as carers. As such, social work professionals provided authorities in Fife with full assessment reports and a synopsis of their four years as carers. These actions would suggest that this was the practice at the time and would be compliant with the relevant policies and procedures in place.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

From the records scoped as part of the foster carer file audit, it appears that foster carers transferring to or from another authority or organisation was a common practice. Of all the foster carer records reviewed during the foster carer file audit from the 1975 – 2014 period, only 5.8% of files showed evidence of foster carers transferring to or from other Local Authorities or fostering agencies. There are very limited examples available due to this, but carer panel review minutes and Form F's held within the relevant foster carer files show that any transfer to or from another authority or organisation was noted by social work professionals within these records, and so any social work professional involved with carers would be aware of any transfers.

ix. Review/supervision

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

While we were unable to locate any evidence of official reviews or supervision of foster carers by social work professionals during this period, there is extensive evidence within committee minutes of visits and oversight to foster placements taking place, with the earliest dating back to 1930. Within the full Council minutes from 1930 - 1931, it was noted that the Assistant Inspector for the authority would visit all boarded out children to ensure they were receiving the proper care within their placements (SL1/1/381). It is noted within these minutes that this was the policy adopted by the authority at this time, and there is evidence within further committee minutes that show this was happening in practice. There is also an instance noted within the Public Assistance Committee minutes of Councillors visiting a boarded-out boy to discuss his future with his foster carer and other adults involved in his care. In the minutes of 1932 – 1933, it is noted that Councillors met with the child, his carer and the local parish minister, and agreed that he should remain at school until he was old enough to sit a Clerkship exam (SL61/1/4). This visit is evident that policy and procedures were adhered to in practice by the authority.

n addition to the examples provided above, the various committee minutes show that members of the Public Assistance Committee (SL61), Children's Committee (SL116) and Social Work Committee (SL118) were all visiting children who were boarded out in both Edinburgh and the rest of Scotland. Councillors then reported back to committee on their findings, and there is evidence within the Children's Committee minutes from 1949 - 1950 of a Councillor raising concerns about the level of care given in a placement he visited to the wider committee (SL116/1/2). We have been unable to locate any evidence of this concern being followed up by the appropriate authorities, however the concerns were noted at committee level as stated in the minutes (SL116).

The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 got rid of the requirement for Councillors to make visits to boarded out children, however in 1971, the Social Work Committee voted to reinstate those visits, and agreed that all Councillors should be accompanied by a social work professional when carrying out visits (SL118/1/3). This was then adhered to in practice, as the minutes show each Councillor submitted reports of their visits to be considered at committee level (SL118).

As well as committee minutes, there is evidence held within child client files of social work professionals visiting children in foster placements, with these being noted in case notes and social work reports. From these reports, it appears that social work visits would take place for children who were in placements in Edinburgh, as well as those placed further afield in the rest of the UK. Social workers noted in these reports that visits took place to ensure the child or young person was happy and settled in their placement, to ensure they were receiving the appropriate care and to ensure the foster carer was able to cope with the children and young people in their care.

While there is no evidence of official reviews or supervision, it would appear that the visits and oversight described above acted as such, so it is plausible to suggest that policies and procedures in terms of reviews and supervision of foster placements were adhered to in practice during this period.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The file audit of foster carer files has led us to determine that, overall, policies and procedures were followed in practice in relation to reviews and supervision of foster placements. Of the foster carer files examined as part of this, 88.7% showed evidence of reviews taking part, ranging from annual reviews to those taking place every three years, as well as evidence of review panels convening to discuss any significant changes to carers circumstances or the outcome of complaints or allegations against them. Panel review minutes and carer reports

held within foster carer files allowed us to determine that these reviews were taking place, and with what frequency they were occurring. These minutes and reports show that reviews included any changes in remit to the original foster care approval category, if this was deemed appropriate by both the carers and social work professionals involved. The reviews also required the Practice Team Social Worker for the child or young person in placement to submit a report on their care, ensuring that the social work professional had oversight and supervision of the placement. The minutes from these reviews also show that a number of social work professionals were likely to have supervision and oversight of any one placement, as Liaison Social Workers, Children's Rights Officers and the allocated social worker for the child in question all had a duty to provide input into the review meetings.

In terms of supervision of foster placements, there is evidence within the Social Work Committee Papers that visits to children and young people in placements took place. In 1976, the Director of Social Work submitted a report to be considered by the Social Work Committee. He argued that visits to children and young people placed in foster placements outwith Edinburgh should still continue, and evidence gathered during the child client file audit has shown that these visits happened in practice (LRC2/1/1/20/2). From case notes and social work reports held within child client files, it is noted that social work professionals visited those in foster placements in East Lothian, West Lothian and the Borders and so would have ensured supervision of such placements. These supervision visits were to ensure the placement was going well and to discuss any required changes to the placement or the care of the child or young person.

In November 1978, the Social Work Committee also considered a report on the responsibilities of the authority to children in foster placements under the Boarding Out of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1959. From the report, committee noted that supervision visits to children and young people in foster placements, as well as visits to their carers must take place every three months, and the child client files show that visits by social work professionals were happening much more frequently; usually once per month (LRC3/8/1/1). Case notes, internal social work memos and LAAC review minutes held within the child client files all show that social work professionals from the Practice Teams were frequently visiting children and young people in foster placements to review the placement, ensure things were going well and answer any questions or concerns had by either the child or the foster carer.

While it is not possible to determine the reasons for reviews or supervision not taking place for 11.3% of approved carers, it is possible to determine that, for a majority of the time, relevant policies and procedures were adhered to in practice.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

From the records and case files audited, it appears that the above practice of reviews and supervision continued within the authority during this period. The file audit of foster carer files has led us to determine that, overall, policies and procedures were followed in practice in relation to reviews and supervision of foster placements. Of the foster carer files examined as part of this, 82.6% showed evidence of reviews taking part, ranging from annual reviews to those taking place every three years, as well as evidence of review panels convening to discuss any significant changes to carers circumstances or the outcome of complaints or allegations against them. Panel review minutes and carer reports held within foster carer files allowed us to determine that these reviews were taking place, and with what frequency they were occurring. These minutes and reports show that reviews included any changes in remit to the original foster care approval category, if this was deemed appropriate by both the carers and social work professionals involved. The reviews also required the Practice Team Social Worker for the child or young person in placement to submit a report on their care, ensuring that the social work professional had oversight and supervision of the placement. The minutes from these reviews also show that a number of social work professionals were likely to have supervision and oversight of any one placement, as Liaison Social Workers, Children's Rights Officers and the allocated social worker for the child in question all had a duty to provide input into the review meetings.

Case notes and LAAC review meeting minutes held within child client files note evidence of frequent supervision visits by social work professionals to children and young people in foster care placements, as well as to their approved foster carers. From the evidence and examples provided above, it is clear that the authority adhered to the policies and procedures in practice in relation to visiting children and young people in foster care placements.

x. Training

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence showing adherence in practice to policies and procedures in relation to the training of foster carers for this period. Surviving foster carer files and committee minutes were scoped in order to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

Social worker reports and carer panel minutes held within foster carer files have shown that a large quantity of prospective and approved foster carers attended training sessions and information events. These records have evidenced that foster carers attended induction training and fostering preparation training run by the authority. Where approved foster carers have failed to attend training sessions, there is evidence from case notes and correspondence held within carer files of social work professionals contacting them to encourage carers to attend all training and information sessions where possible.

There is also evidence of instances where foster carers took it upon themselves to source and attend additional specialist training, including how to care for children and young people who were HIV positive and those who had additional support needs. In a report to the Education, Children and Families Committee outlining the annual review of Services for Children and Young People from October 2013, the Director of Social Work highlights to committee that training opportunities for foster carers were being increased. This was to provide additional training to carers with teenage placements and who cared for children or young people with additional health needs. The audit of foster carer case files show that 75.5% of carers took part in training that was either made available through the authority or externally sourced. From the evidence discussed here, and the surviving records held within foster carer records, it is possible to surmise that the authority adhered in practice to the policies and procedures in place relating to the training of foster carers.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

Social worker reports and carer panel minutes held within foster carer files have shown that a large quantity of prospective and approved foster carers attended training sessions and information events. These records have evidenced that foster carers attended induction training and fostering preparation training run by the authority. Where approved foster carers have failed to attend training sessions, there is evidence from case notes and correspondence held within carer files of social work professionals contacting them to encourage carers to attend all training and information sessions where possible. 71.4% of audited case files showed evidence of foster carers taking part in either training provided by the authority or externally sourced training. There is also evidence of instances where foster carers took it upon themselves to source and attend additional specialist training, including how to care for children and young people who were HIV positive, and those who had additional support needs.

From the evidence discussed here, and the surviving records held within foster carer records, it is possible to surmise that the policy and procedure in place for training foster carers were followed in practice during this period for the most part.

xi. Personal development

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no surviving evidence relating to the adherence in practice to policies and procedures surrounding the personal development of foster carers within the authority during this time. Surviving foster carer files were scoped in order to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

There are specific examples for this period of the local authority adhering in practice to policies and procedures in relation to complaints by family members of children. These examples can be viewed in section 5.9 of our response. Those examples and responses are varied in nature depending on the individual needs of the persons involved, as well as the specific circumstances of the complaint. These have led to various actions including internal, child protection and inter-agency investigations. Subsequent investigation outcomes have included personal development and training of carers and. Covid-19 restrictions have limited research opportunities for this period.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

There are specific examples for this period of the local authority adhering in practice to policies and procedures in relation to complaints by family members of children. These examples can be viewed in section 5.9 of our response. Those examples and responses are varied in nature depending on the individual needs of the persons involved, as well as the specific circumstances of the complaint. These have led to various actions including internal, child protection and inter-agency investigations. Subsequent investigation outcomes have included personal development and training of carers and staff. Covid-19 restrictions have limited research opportunities for this period.

xii. Disciplinary actions

Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)

There is no evidence relating to the adherence in practice of policies and procedures surrounding disciplinary actions for foster carers. This may be because foster carers were not considered employees of the authority, and so would not be subject to a formal disciplinary process. Surviving foster carer files were scoped but no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

There is no evidence relating to the adherence in practice of policies and procedures surrounding disciplinary actions for foster carers. This may be because foster carers were not considered employees of the authority, and so would not be subject to a formal disciplinary process. Foster carer files and committee minutes were scoped but no evidence was found.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

There is no evidence relating to the adherence in practice of policies and procedures surrounding disciplinary actions for foster carers. This may be because foster carers were not considered employees of the authority, and so would not be subject to a formal disciplinary process. Foster carer files and committee minutes were scoped but no evidence was found.

xiii. Removal or approval/registration**Edinburgh Corporation (1930 – 1975)**

There is no surviving evidence showing adherence in practice to policies and procedures in relation to the removal or approval or registration of foster carers from this time. Surviving foster carer files were scoped in order to inform our response to this question, however, no evidence was found.

Lothian Regional Council (1975 – 1996)

The audit of carers files shows that there were a number of reasons as to why a carers approval or registration would be removed, and it can be surmised that the authority adhered in practice to policies and procedures surrounding this. Of the files that were audited, it appears that a carer could either have their approval/registration removed by the authority or could decide themselves to resign, with:

- 18.2% of carers decided not to continue with fostering when their current child in placement reached 18 years old
- 13.2% of carers had their registration/approval removed by the authority due to issues with the level of care they provided, or issues arising from complaints
- 3.8% of carers resigned their registration because of health reasons
- 1.9% of carers resigned their registration due to their moving to another authority area
- 1.9% of carers had their approval/registration removed by the authority because of new or historical police offences

Panel review meeting minutes held within foster carer case files also showed evidence of registration/approval being removed by the authority because of carers consistent failure to share vital information with the department both in terms of vital information relating to the carer and children or young people in placement. For the remaining 36.8% of files, the information surrounding the reason for deregistration was not recorded within the foster carer file or within any carer review meeting minutes.

The carer files show that if either party intimated they wished to cease carer registration/approval, a panel review meeting would be held to discuss all arising issues and reasons for this. The panel review minutes held in foster carer files show that a number of social work professionals would be involved in making deregistration decisions, and the reasons behind such would be discussed in-depth at review meetings with all involved. Copies of correspondence sent by the authority to carers confirming the end of their carers registration were also present within the foster carer case files that were audited. The above examples, statistics and evidence of panel review meeting being held to discuss the removal of approval/registration show that policy and procedure was adhered to in practice by the authority for the most part.

City of Edinburgh Council (1996 – 2014)

As was evident for the authority during the Lothian Regional Council period, the audit of carers files shows that there were a number of reasons as to why a carers approval or registration would be removed. As a result, it can be surmised that the authority adhered in practice to policies and procedures surrounding this. Of the files that were audited, it appears that a carer could either have their approval/registration removed by the authority or could decide themselves to resign, with:

- 46% of carers chose to surrender their carer registration due to a change in employment status or dissatisfaction with the fostering service offered by the authority

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14.3% of carers had their approval removed by the authority because of concerns around the level of care they provided including difficult placements and inadequate care • 4.8% of carers had their approval removed by the authority because of new or existing police offenses • 4.8% of carers chose to surrender their approval as no children or young people had been placed with them since approval was given • 3.2% of carers chose to surrender their carer registration due to ill health • 3.2% of carers did not wish to renew their carer registration when their current child in placement turned 18 years old • 1.6% of carers surrendered their registration when they moved out of the authority area <p>Panel review meeting minutes held within foster carer case files also showed evidence of registration/approval being removed by the authority because of carers consistent failure to share vital information with the department both in terms of vital information relating to the carer and children or young people in placement. Such panel review meeting minutes also show evidence of the authority removing carer approval/registration because of breakdowns in family relationships that would not be conducive to caring for looked after children and young people. For the remaining 22.2% of files, the information surrounding the reason for deregistration/removal of approval was not recorded within the foster carer file or within any panel review meeting minutes.</p> <p>The carer files show that if either party intimated that they wished to cease carer registration/approval, a panel review meeting would be held to discuss all arising issues and reasons for this. The panel review minutes held in foster carer files show that a number of social work professionals would be involved in making deregistration decisions, and the reasons behind such would be discussed in-depth at review meetings with all involved. Copies of correspondence sent by the authority to carers confirming the end of their carers registration were also present within the foster carer case files that were audited. The above examples, statistics and evidence of panel review meeting being held to discuss the removal of approval/registration show that policy and procedure was adhered to in practice by the authority for the most part.</p>
c)	<p><u>How was adherence demonstrated?</u></p> <p>Adherence to policy and procedure was demonstrated through social work professionals recording their practice and the practice of foster carers within child client files and foster carer files. As noted throughout, adherence in practice can be demonstrated through LAAC review</p>

	meeting minutes, child protection case conference meeting minutes, social work reports and case notes.
d)	<u>How can such adherence be demonstrated to the Inquiry?</u> Adherence in practice to policy and procedure can be demonstrated to the Inquiry through the access of the records and case files mentioned above.
e)	<u>Were relevant records kept demonstrating adherence?</u> Yes. Child client files and foster carer files, including the minutes, reports and case notes included in the files have been kept in line with agreed authority record retention periods. Please see our answer to 4.9 <i>Record Keeping</i> for further details.
f)	<u>Have such records been retained?</u> Some records have been retained, such as children's client records and foster carer files, along with the minutes, reports and case notes included, but retention will vary dependent on the retention rule and record format. Please see our answer to 4.9 <i>Record Keeping</i> for further details.
g)	<u>If policy/procedure was not adhered to in practice, why not?</u> From the evidence and examples provided in the answer above, for the most part, policy and procedure was adhered to in practice. Where it was found that policy and procedure was not adhered to in practice, it is unclear from the records available as to why this was the case.
Present	
h)	<u>With reference to the present position, are the answers to any of the above questions different?</u> Yes
i)	<u>If so, please give details.</u> 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. One target was to reduce the percentage of independent foster placements from 44% at March 2013.

These targets were reviewed in 2017. The transformation programme aimed to increase the proportion of children and young people placed with authority carers and reduce the number placed with independent foster carers. This gives the local authority clearer oversight and influence over placements.

The authority is also reviewing the Scotland Excell framework agreement which covers agreements with independent foster carers throughout Scotland. This is being replaced by *Edinburgh Fostering and Continuing Care Agreement*, which will formalise framework agreements with independent fostering agencies. This will allow the local authority more flexibility in provision of foster care and expectations of the service. It will also allow clearer lines of oversight of placement. As well as representing value for money.

Since 2016, three procedures Family Based Care (FBC) Recruitment to Approval, FBC Approval to De-Registration, and FBC Continuing Care have been developed and continually updated and revised to ensure FBC staff are able to deliver the service from a consistent practice base.

All Children's Rights activity is now undertaken by Who Cares Scotland?, which is completely independent of the Council. Their function remains the same.

The Looked After and Accommodated Children Procedure. This was reviewed in 2017. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure consistent and best practice in planning for children who are looked after and accommodated.

Achieving Permanence for Looked After Children procedure. This was reviewed in June 2018. This procedure sets out the process that must be followed when planning permanent care for looked after and accommodated children who are not able to return to live with their birth parents.

A policy called *End to End Process* outlines the procedures for the recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers, and was introduced in 2016, with amendments in 2018. This document includes sections on the following aspects:

1. Introduction
2. FBC Recruitment Activity
3. FBC Recruitment Line
4. Enquiries Screening
5. Initial Enquiries Visits
6. Information Sharing
7. Checks and References

8. Skills to Foster Prep Group
9. Home Study Assessment
10. Assessment Report
11. Fostering Panel Recommendation
12. Agency Decision
13. Becoming a Care Provider Specifically, on recruitment this guidance provides a comprehensive guide to the process of engaging with prospective carers through the Fosterline system. A phone line and website enquiry system that allows prospective carers easy access to information and discussion in relation to becoming a carer. It also provides detailed information on the different checks that are required to be carried out on prospective carers and when these need to be carried out.

Comprehensive guidance is also provided on independent agency transfers; that is carers who wish to transfer from an independent agency and become a City of Edinburgh Council Foster Carer.

The Foster Carer Agreement continues to be revised in line with best practice, the last revision took place in October 2018. This agreement contains a section on complaints and allegations. This agreement also incorporates changes in General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The procedure entitled *Support and Management of Registered Foster Carers (Approval to De-Registration)* introduced in February 2020. This procedure sets out the range of actions to be taken by Family Based Care social workers to manage and support approved Foster Carers in line with legislative requirements, National Standards and agency expectations.

There is now a Continuing Care agreement between City of Edinburgh Council and foster carers. Continuing care allows young people to stay in placement until the age of 21. This agreement includes disclosure checks if there are other foster children in placement

The local authority introduced a new foster carer training programme in 2019 this training is provided post approval and includes,

- Attachment and Child Development
- Child Protection and the Law
- Black and Minority Ethnic children
- Safer Caring

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report Writing and Record Keeping• Online safety and Child Sexual Exploitation. <p>The training is provided by local authority social workers.</p>