



Derby City Council

Corporate Parenting Sub Board
29 April 2014

ITEM 6

Report of the Strategic Director for Children and
Young People

Fostering Service Report

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services require that the executive side of the local authority:
- a. Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every three months;
 - b. Monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children;
 - c. Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

(Standard 25.7)

The Fostering Agency is required to produce a Statement of Purpose which is updated once a year.

- 1.2 The last report, covering the period April to September 2013 was provided on 11 February 2014. This report covers the period October 2013 to March 2014.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the Fostering Agency report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To comply with Guidance and regulations and National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The membership of the fostering panel complies with Guidance and Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. It consists of an independent chair and vice-chair, an elected member, a qualified social worker, a health service representative, a foster carer and fostering social worker, a care-experienced young person and other independent members with relevant experience. The panel is supported by a professional advisor and also has access to medical and legal advice as required. The Agency Decision Maker is the Head of Children in Care, Specialist Services.
- 4.2 The service has increased allowances paid to the independent chair and panel members to ensure it retains the necessary expertise and provides value for money.
- 4.3 All the information and publicity relating to fostering and adoption has been completely updated. This includes the fostering and adoption pages on the Derby City Council website as well as booklets, leaflets, information packs, banners, posters and promotional merchandise.
- 4.4 A three year Recruitment Strategy has been developed based on a local needs assessment, the make-up of our current group of foster carers, placement patterns and evidence about fostering recruitment.
- 4.5 A three year Recruitment and Marketing Strategy and a one year Marketing Action Plan has been developed and implemented since January 2014. As well as traditional marketing methods we now target local employers and make more use of relational marketing, social media and open-space advertising. The specialist marketing consultant will continue to work alongside the Fostering and Adoption Team and the Marketing and Communications Team until July. A rolling programme of events is planned for the rest of the year, targeting recruitment of both foster carers and adopters wherever possible.
- 4.6 Derby in partnership with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire implemented a remand fostering scheme in February this year. This provides an alternative to custody for young people subject to remand. We have utilised two placements to date, already saving the first six months costs of the scheme which equates to approximately £300 per night saving per placement.
- 4.7 Between 1 October 2013 and 31 March 2014 the Fostering Service registered 120 enquiries and received 13 fostering applications. 17 mainstream fostering assessments are in progress. Applicants who can offer full-time placements are prioritised for assessment and account for 75% of current assessments. The Recruitment and Assessment Team is fully staffed and is able to call on sessional workers to provide additional capacity for initial visits and assessments when required.

- 4.8 We are planning to use the 2014-15 Adoption Reform Grant to recruit a Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer to improve our initial response to enquiries, produce better information reports and support recruitment events.
- 4.9 There have been 15 complaints against foster carers during this period. Two foster carers were deregistered due to concerns and there have been no appeals to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism
- 4.10 Fostering allowances have been reviewed and updated for 2014-15. Our allowances are above the national minimum rate and are slightly below the recommended rate to ensure the service remains competitive and provides value for money.
- 4.11 The Derby Foster Carers' Charter which sets out agreed expectations and commitments of both foster carers and the fostering service has been reviewed and updated.
- 4.12 The annual foster carer awards evening scheduled for 3 April was postponed due to the Assembly Rooms fire and will be rearranged later in the year.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	N/A
Financial officer	N/A
Human Resources officer	N/A
Estates/Property officer	N/A
Service Director(s)	Hazel Lymbery: Director of Specialist services
Other(s)	

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List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of providing the Fostering Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets. A budget increase in 2014-15 allowed fostering allowances to be up-rated to keep pace with the recommended national minimum rate.

Any increase in the shortfall of in-house placements has a direct financial effect due to the much higher placement costs in the independent sector. It is therefore essential to increase the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

In the event of an appeal to the IRM the cost falls on the fostering service provider. The fee is around £2500 for each case.

Legal

- 2.1 The fostering function of the Council is regulated by the 1989 Children Act and the Associated Fostering Regulations, guidance and the minimum standards published in 2011.

Personnel

- 3.1 The service became managed by a Head of Children in Care, Regulated Services in February 2013 which brought the fostering, adoption and children homes services under the management of a single manager. A Deputy Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption, 2.8 whole time equivalent team managers and 16.8 whole time equivalent social workers carry out the full range of fostering activities.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The service continues to give due consideration to race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, religion, and disability in relation to children being placed and for adults who apply to become foster carers. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and further efforts will be made this year to recruit carers from BME communities and carers for disabled children.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 This is considered at all stages of the recruitment, assessment, training and support of foster carers. All the managers in the service have completed mandatory Health and Safety training.

Environmental Sustainability

6.1 None arising from this report

Property and Asset Management

7.1 None arising from this report

Risk Management

8.1 Risk is managed at all stages of the fostering process.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

9.1 Corporate and departmental objectives are pursued through business plans and individual performance plans throughout the service. The report contributes to the Council aspirations

:

- better outcomes for our communities
- improved value for money for our customers
- more efficient and effective processes
- a skilled and motivated workforce