



Derby City Council

Corporate Parenting Sub Board
11 February 2014

ITEM 6

**Report of the Strategic Director for Children and
Young People**

Fostering Services

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 updated once a year.

- 1.2 The last report, covering the period January to March 2013 was provided on 20 August 2013. This report covers the period April to September 2013. The updated Statement of Purpose is also presented with this report.

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 is reviewing the allowances paid to the independent chair and panel members to ensure it retains the necessary expertise and provides value for money.
- 4.3 The number of people expressing an interest in fostering has fallen from 375 in the 12 months to September 2012, to 306 in the 12 months to September 2013. However, the number of mainstream, including respite, carers has not altered significantly, fluctuating between 122 and 119 through the year. The main change to the figures has been caused by the de-registration of carers previously designated 'Support Carers'. The number of children placed has fluctuated between 180 and 190 throughout the year.
- 4.4 The fostering service has benefited from the commissioning of a specialist marketing consultant to review and improve marketing materials and strategy in relation to recruitment of both foster carers and adopters. Since August 2013 she has worked with the fostering, adoption and marketing teams to improve campaigns, update printed and electronic promotional resources and develop a recruitment and marketing strategy. She will continue in post until 31 March 2014, focusing on a campaign in the new year to increase the number of approved foster carers and adopters.
- .5 There have been 11 complaints against foster carers during this period. No foster carers deregistered due to concerns and there have been no appeals to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.
- 4.6 The fostering and commissioning teams are reviewing allowances and fees to ensure the service remains competitive and provides value for money.
- 4.7 In common with other social care services the fostering service has commissioned a tailored set of fostering procedures from an independent provider. It has also issued a Guide to Fostering published by the Fostering Network to all its carers. Further local information for Derby carers is to be published on our new website.
- 4.8 The Derby Foster Carers' Charter which sets out agreed expectations and commitments of both foster carers and the fostering service has been signed off and will be launched in the near future.

- 4.9 The newly formed Foster Carer Association has been launched and has enjoyed a successful first year. Activities included running a Christmas party for foster carers and their families and contributing to a foster carer marketing and recruitment campaign. The chair of the FCA attends Corporate Parenting Board meetings.
- 4.10 157 of our mainstream carers have now completed the required Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers and Friends and Family carers are now being supported to achieve the same.

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
Other(s)	N/A

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Activity Report Appendix 3 – Statement of Purpose Appendix 4 – Charter

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 2012-13 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 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 aspiration:

- Working together to narrow the gap

And the objective:

- More children and young people being safe

Appendix 2

Activity report

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Recruitment												
Expressions of interest	20	22	17	34	32	35	19	39	33	20	16	19
Initial Visits	9	4	1	8	6	12	8	5	6	9	4	0
Mainstream applications received	3	1	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	0	3	2
Friends & family applications received	0	0	1	2	1	2	2	1				
Approvals	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	2	1	1
De-registration	2	2	5	2	0	1	2	0	2	0	1	0
Carers												
Mainstream	100	100	100	100	100	101	101	102	111	112	113	114
Friends & family	27	28	26	23	23	23	23	24	24	25	25	25
Respite	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14				
Support Carers	18	17	14	4	4	4	4	4				
Link only	19	19	19	19	20	19	18	18	21	21	21	21
Total	178	178	173	160	161	161	160	162	156	158	159	160
Placements												
All children	190	189	187	192	182	186	182	187	184	188	181	184