



CORPORATE PARENTING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT SUB COMMISSION September 2011

Report of the Strategic Director Children and Young People's Service

FOSTERING SERVICE REPORT

Summary

Information regarding the work of Derby City Council's Fostering Service is provided for the period January to June 2011 .

Members are advised that new regulations, guidance and minimum standards were implemented in April 2011 having been published in March 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Commission notes the report and statement of purpose (See Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The fostering service provides a further report for the period from April 2011 – March 2012 and an updated statement of purpose as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002)

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This report informs the Corporate Parenting Joint Overview & Scrutiny sub-commission, of the activity of Derby City Fostering Service. A report is required annually and this document covers the period 1st January 2011 – 30 June 2011. It is in the National Minimum Standards that the report will be placed before Members at least annually.

- 2.1 The revised Fostering Service Regulations 2011 came into force in April 2011. The National Minimum Standards 2011 for fostering services issued by the Secretary of State under Section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000 have also been revised and underpin the new legal framework. The National Minimum Standards inform the inspection of fostering services. The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4, Fostering Services, sets out the functions and responsibilities of Local Authorities and their partner agencies in relation to fostering services.

2.2 The Panel

The Fostering Panel met a total of 12 times between 1 January 2011 and 30 June 2011. The panel meets fortnightly.

The fostering panel is legally constituted to meet the current Fostering Regulations. It is noted that the composition of Derby City's panel meets the new fostering regulations in that the council already has in place, as a matter of good practice, an independent chair. The panel is supported by a panel adviser and has access to medical and legal advice as required. The Decision Maker is the Service Director Specialist Services, Children and Young People's Department

2.5 Placements made January to June 2011

- During the above period the fostering service responded to xxx new placement referrals:

Month	No. of children referred
January	16
February	30
March	12
April	16
May	35
June	22

Placement Breakdown

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Placed with DCC	9	6	3	5	10	6
Placed with IFA	0	4	1	2	13	11
NFA/withdrawn	4	5	2	5	5	1
Respite from home	0	1	0	1	0	0
Placed with family	1	5	1	0	1	0
Residential	0	2	0	0	0	0
Ongoing Referrals	1	2	4	3	6	4
Emergency placement returned home	1	5	1	0	0	0

2.6 Recruitment January to June 2011

- 221 initial enquiries were received from people interested in finding out about fostering.
- 22 Initial visits have been completed to potential applicants
- 7 applications have been received. In addition 4 applications have been received for family and friends fostering assessments.
- Recruitment activity has been ongoing and has included stands at the Westfield centre and Derby Pride, radio adverts, newspaper adverts, updating the council's website and streamlining the recruitment service to provide a prompt response to those interested in fostering. We have also continued to develop links with the Customer Service Centre.

2.7 Approval of Foster Carers January - June 2011

Family and Friends	1
Time Limited	2
Respite	1
Link	0
Support	7
Assessments to Panel	12
Approval not recommended (Family & friends application)	1

2.8 Loss of Carers January - June 2011

De-registration	1	Carers no longer meeting regulatory requirements
Retirements	3	due to length of service
Resignations	11	5 due to carers obtaining special guardianship orders 6 due to changes in personal circumstances
Total	15	

Overall there was a net loss of 4 carers in a 6 month period.

2.9 Current issues

- The first half of 2011 saw a decrease in the number of initial inquiries and applications to foster. We have reviewed our recruitment activity and are planning to run more special events during the autumn. We have worked with the Customer Relationship Management team to improve the first response to inquiries and increased the number of initial visits and telephone calls.

- However we continue to struggle to attract carers to take children over ten years of age, sibling groups and children with disabilities.
- We have prioritised applications from those who are offering full time foster care and those offering short break care.
- There is now a clear requirement that Friends and Family carers must complete the CWDC Foster Care Standards. To date 55 carers have completed the standards.
- The number of Family and Friends carer assessments that the service is being asked to undertake continues to increase with no additional resources. The nature of these cases means that they have to be allocated as a priority and this has implications for other recruitment and assessments.

2.10 Position as at 30 June 2011

- 184 households in total provide a range of placements:
- 104 households provide long term or time limited placements.
- 27 households are approved as support carers (providing respite to main carer).
- 18 households offer “Short break” or respite placements. Short Break carers offer respite to children with disabilities living in the community.
- 21 are “family and friends” specific carers offering 28 placements to named children.
- 11 households are caring for children over the normal fostering limit of 3 children. The total number of children in these households is 46.
- 102 children and their carers qualify for payments under the ‘fee paid’ scheme.
- 51 carers live outside Derby City, including in Nottingham, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent and Leicester.

2.11 Development of the Service

- Inspection of the service in January 2008 identified continued improvements in the service over the 12 months. The service is due for an OFSTED inspection in 2011/12.
- We offer 4 levels of fee of £80, £125, £180 and £300 per week. Fee levels and allowances still fall short of those offered by independent fostering agencies which affects our ability to recruit foster carers.

- Post approval training has been developed in partnership with stakeholders and other agencies. We have a dedicated training officer for the fostering and adoption service and the local authority offers a comprehensive training programme for foster carers post approval.
- The development of regular support groups for foster carers has also become an integral part of the service. These have been well received by carers and attendance is increasing as is attendance at wider training programmes.
- Since the implementation of the CWDC standards in 2008 the service has been working towards supporting carers to complete the standards by the required date. The introduction of the BAAF form F and the revised pre approval training programme assists new carers in completing a number of the standards by the time of approval.
- The local authority continues to increase the number of short break carers for children with disabilities living in the community. There is a small cohort of social workers who specialise in work with children with disabilities and their families, known to the Lighthouse.
- There is ongoing access to dedicated psychology time provided to the fostering service and foster carers on a consultation basis.
- The fostering statement of purpose is attached as Appendix 1 to this report

Appendix 1

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 Our ability to place those children who require fostering placements within our resources has a significant cost benefit for the Council. The cost of agency foster placements remains a significant financial threat. Within the budget available the Council is committed to maintaining and improving where possible the allowances paid to our own carers and as stated earlier we have introduced a level 4 fee.
- 1.1.1 The financial implications relating to a number of new regulations, guidance and standards which have to be introduced in April 2011 is as yet unclear but will undoubtedly have an impact on staffing resources as well as direct financial spend.

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 fostering service consists of 3 full time Service Managers and 16.8 social workers who carry out the full range of fostering activities. The increase in demand for Family and Friends fostering assessments is an ongoing staffing pressure. The service has been subject to temporary management arrangements and the management of the recruitment team has been covered on a part-time basis.

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.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 This is considered at all stages of the recruitment, assessment, training and support of foster carers.

Environmental sustainability

- 6.1 Not applicable

Asset management

- 7.1 Not applicable

Risk Management

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

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 9.1 The Fostering Service contributes to the Directorate objectives:
- Achieve positive outcomes for children in care.
 - Ensure budget plans are implemented and on target
 - Implement Action Plan from the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services

And the Corporate Objectives:

- Children achieve their learning potential
- Children have good health and well-being
- Children are safe and feel safe