



## CORPORATE PARENTING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT SUB COMMISSION 26 JULY 2005

Report of the Director of Social Services

### Fostering Service Report

#### RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Fostering Service continues to provide an annual report for period from 1 April to 31 March and reviews the Statement of Purpose as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. (See Appendix 1)
- 1.2 A monthly highlights report is produced to track key indicators of performance.
- 1.3 To note the work and developments of the Fostering Service as outlined in this report.

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 **Background**  
This report informs the Corporate Parenting Joint Overview & Scrutiny sub-commission, acting as the Social Services Committee, of the activity of Derby City Fostering Service. A report is required annually and this document covers the period from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005. It is in the National Minimum Standards that the report will be placed before Members at least annually.
- 2.2 The Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards published under S23(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 outlines the duties and responsibilities of a Fostering Service.
- 2.3 The Fostering Panel met a total of 24 times between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005. There have been a number of changes to the Panel since the last report.
- 2.4 **The Panel Membership is as Follows**

Pat Hill	Retired Senior Social Services Manager	Chair
Mohammed Daullah	Magistrate & Retired Senior Probation Officer	Vice Chair
Joan Webster	Former Chair of Community Health Council	Independent Member
Neil Gorse	Derby Social Services	Deputy Unit Manager – Children's Home
Diane Hidson	Foster Carer for another Authority	Independent Member

Fiona Cairney	Former Service User	Independent Member
Jane Cupitt/Jan Grundy	Derby City Council	Children's Social Worker
Mary Pitt	Derby City Council	Fostering Social Worker
Evonne Berry	Derby City Council	Councillor

The Fostering Panel Adviser is Katie Harris – Head of Service, Adoption and Fostering

The Decision Maker is Keith Woodthorpe – Assistant Director, Children's Services.

## 2.5 **Placements made April 2004 to March 2005**

- During the period the service responded to 206 requests for new foster placements. The monthly referral rate ranged from 10 requests in August to 27 in July
- Of the children referred  
111 were placed with Derby City Carers foster carers  
14 children were placed with independent fostering agencies
- Of the remainder 69 requests were withdrawn and the other requests remain outstanding.
- In addition there were 246 requests for respite foster placements. These are usually offering respite as support to other foster carers though a few are supporting children at home.

## 2.6 **Recruitment**

- 284 enquiries were received from people interested in finding out about fostering.
- This was a slight reduction on the target of 288 and shows a reduction on previous years.
- 94 people requested a follow up initial visit from a social worker. (Response rate of 33.4%).
- From these 52 applications were accepted and assessments begun.

## 2.7 **Approvals**

- 26 carers were approved (10 were family or friends approved under Regulation 38)
- The business target was 25, this was well short of the identified shortfall in numbers - 58.
- None the less there has been a net increase in carers of 3 over the year. This is in contrast to previous years where there had been a steady reduction in carer numbers.

## 2.8 **Loss of Carers**

- 23 carers ceased to foster during the year. Reason for resignations were as follows:-
  - Work commitments/personal. 4
  - Transfer to independent fostering agency (IFA). 5
  - Adopted foster child. 4
  - Residence order granted. 1
  - Regulation 38 registration no longer required. 4
  - Foster child reached 18. 5
- Whilst 5 carers moved to an IFA, one has moved to Derby from an IFA and 2 others are discussing moving to Derby because they are being under used.

## 2.9 **Assessments and Trends**

- 32 carers are currently being assessed and trained. 6 of these are Regulation 38 assessments of family and friends.
- Over the year whilst we have maintained a steady rate of approval of respite carers and carers for younger children we have approved only 2 carers for teenagers of children with more complex and challenging needs.
- This trend is continuing in our current assessments and remains a significant risk in our ability to reduce the numbers of young people in independent fostering agencies.

## 2.10 **Current Position as at April 2005**

- 161 carers provide 284 placements.
- 90 carers provide 179 long term or time limited placements.
- 54 carers live outside Derby City, they are in London, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent and Immingham, as well as the surrounding area.
- 16 are “Children First” carers and provide 23 placements for children with disabilities.
- 44 carers offer “Link”, short term or general respite placements at any time. (some carers care for up to 8 children on a periodic basis).
- 23 are Regulation 38 “family and friends” carers offering 27 placements.
- 8 carers are caring for children over the normal fostering limit of 3 children. (from a peak of 19)

## 2.11 Development of the Service

- Inspection of the service in October 2004 identified significant improvements in the service over the 12 months.

### CSCI Inspection

Scale	1	2	3
Oct 2003	2	17	11
Oct 2004	0	5	28

Where 3 = Standard met  
2 = Standard almost met  
1 = Standard not met

- Improvements to fostering payments achieved through introduction of £1000 bonus payment, and 12% increase in allowances.
- Formulation of new approach to fostering payments and research completed on new proposed rates of allowances.
- New marketing image for fostering in place.
- Fostering information packs now highlight the advantage of working with local authority, as compared to an independent fostering agency.
- Post approval training is being developed in partnership with stakeholders and other agencies. The recent appointment of a training officer for the fostering and adoption service will strengthen this further.
- Additional school nurse hours have been agreed via Teenage Pregnancy Strategy money, to improve training and consultation with foster carers to improve health outcome for CLA.
- Computers are now installed in over 80 foster homes, to improve CLA's access to Information Technology.
- Foster carers manual and policy and procedures for the fostering service have now been produced, to provide information and transparency in the service.
- Changes to fostering panel and procedures have taken place to improve compliance with standards and regulations.
- A new Head of Service was appointed in June 2004.
- After a period of significant difficulty vacancies within the fostering service have been filled, so that the service is now fully staffed at current establishment level.
- Increase in psychology time provided to the fostering service and foster carers on a consultation basis.
- Significant improvement in the availability of computers to staff in the fostering service.

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<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Statement of Purpose



## **Social Services Department**

### **FOSTERING SERVICE**

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

**May 2005**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, issued by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, govern the work of fostering service providers throughout England. These standards will be used in the inspection of fostering agencies and fostering services provided by local authorities.

Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering services regulations 2002 require a fostering agency to produce a Statement of Purpose, which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 1(4).

This statement of purpose has been prepared in accordance with these requirements. It will provide a source of information to all areas of the Social Services department, partner agencies, fostering team staff, foster carers and prospective carers.

The statement will be reviewed no less than annually and amended accordingly.

# **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE**

## **1 Mission Statement**

In line with the department's overall objectives, Derby City Council Social services aims to provide a fostering service for young people which is safe and transparent; a service which meets the needs of children and young people who need to be looked after away from their family, for whatever reason and for whatever length of time is required.

We aim to make the operation of the fostering service clear and understandable to carers, young people and staff, and we welcome consultation and suggestions regarding the continuous improvement of the service to children who are looked after.

We aim to recruit carers within and around Derby City who can meet a range of needs, and to recruit carers who will provide placements which reflect or respect the foster child's ethnicity, culture, religion and language.

We aim to provide a service that will support foster carers in their caring role. This will be provided through appropriate preparation and training, and by the support of a specified, qualified fostering support social worker. Foster carers will also have access to additional support in their task, as detailed under Section 5 of this statement.

We aim to provide:-

- A good quality foster care service to the children of Derby City
- A commitment to a child-centred approach
- The maximum stability possible in the lives of young people, to enable them to fulfil their potential in life
- Consideration for the gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, culture, abilities and disabilities of fostered children, when making placement decisions
- 24 hour support and advice for foster carers
- An inclusive, partnership approach which embraces the child or young person, their family, the foster family and any 'professional' person involved in the foster placement.

## **2 Status and constitution**

Derby City Fostering service is an integral part of the Derby City Council Social Services department. As such it is governed by and follows all policies and procedures that apply to the City Council as a whole.

Derby City Fostering service also follows, in line with National Minimum Standards specific, agreed procedures relating to the provision of and support to foster placements, and procedures relating to the recruitment, training, approval, support, and review of foster carers.



The Fostering Panel has its constitution and membership arrangements in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

### **3 Management structure**

The Fostering service for Derby City is regarded as a Provider service within the Social Services Department.

The structure is as described below:-

Evonne Berry	Derby City Council Cabinet member for Social Care
Keith Woodthorpe	Assistant Director of Social Services Fostering Panel Decision Maker
Katie Harris	Head of service, Fostering and Adoption
Lynda Stone	Service Manager, Fostering
Sally Penrose	Service Manager, Fostering

The Assistant Director is responsible for the interpretation and implementation of the policies of the City Council in relation to the fostering service. Policies are discussed and their implementation agreed via the mechanism of the Social Services Department's Children's Services Management Group.

The Head of Service is responsible for ensuring that policies are interpreted correctly by the fostering service, and is responsible for the supervision of the fostering managers. She produces information and progress reports on the service as required, to inform senior management as to the operation of the service and report on issues of concern or shortfall.

The service managers are responsible for the day to day management of the fostering service, the supervision of fostering social workers, the appropriate matching of children to available carers, and dealing with complaints and suggestions at the first level. The service managers also produce monthly reports on the operation of the service, highlighting changes in the number of children looked after, number of carers approved and de-registered, and any developments or shortfalls in the service.

One Service Manager takes lead responsibility for the duty and recruitment aspects of the service and initial training. The second manager takes lead responsibility for the post-approval training and support of carers and for the provision of a short break service to disabled children, and provision of a fostering service to disabled children.

## **4 Recruitment, approval, review, training and support of foster carers**

The procedures followed in the recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers are as laid out in the foster care procedures manual. In brief, the process is as described below:

### **RECRUITMENT**

- Recruitment activity is co-ordinated by a Service Manager, Fostering, in conjunction with the Marketing Manager. Recruitment will incorporate all available media, as seen to be appropriate, and will respect issues of confidentiality. Recruitment in Derby city is achieved via advertising and articles on a regular basis in local press
- When an enquiry is received from a person interested in fostering, a Registration of Interest form will be completed, and basic details obtained. Initial queries from enquirers will be addressed.
- Enquirers will be sent, within 3 working days, information about the fostering task in the form of an information booklet, and information as to the allowances payable
- An initial home visit will be arranged with all those who express interest in finding out more about fostering.

### **ASSESSMENT**

- Potential carers complete an application form, and consent forms to enable statutory and personal references, including CRB checks, to be obtained on the applicants and any member of their household aged 10 years or over.
- Foster carers are informed about the assessment and approval process and the requirement to attend a preparation/training course. An assessment agreement form is completed with the carers.
- Assessments should be completed within 6 months from the date of receiving a firm application. Reasons for delay will be recorded.
- Applicants to become foster carers for Derby City will be assessed using a competency-based approach, broadly following the Fostering Network competency assessment model. Amendments to this format have been incorporated into this model, following team discussion, and with the agreement of the Fostering Panel.
- During the assessment, prospective carers will be encouraged to compile a family book, providing information about themselves and their family. This will provide information to the panel and to a child whom it is proposed to place with the carers.
- Applications from relatives or friends to become carers under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Regulations will also be completed by social workers in the Fostering Team. These will follow a format agreed within the fostering service. This format meets the requirements of the Regulation, but does not follow the competency-based model and seeks to respect the special situation of family and friends who wish to be considered as foster carers.

- Preparation/assessment training is provided for applicants, and carers are required to complete this training. Training covers the responsibilities of becoming a foster carer and working in partnership with the Social services department and the child's family.
- Completed assessments are shared with the applicant – excluding all references – and applicants are invited to make their own comments on the report.

## **APPROVAL**

- The completed assessment report is presented to the Fostering panel, for approval, and the Fostering social worker and the applicants attend the panel for discussion.
- The panel makes recommendations regarding approval, and the panel decision is passed to the Agency decision maker, the Assistant Director, for the final decision.
- Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision regarding approval.
- Where approval is not given, the applicants will be informed in writing. They will be informed as to their right to make any representations on the matter to the panel within 28 days.
- Where a decision is taken not to continue with an assessment the applicant will be informed as soon as possible. If they are not in agreement with this decision, they will be invited to make representations to the panel in writing or in person within 28 days. The recommendations of the panel will then be communicated to the panel Decision Maker and the applicant informed in writing of the outcome.

## **REVIEW**

- An approved foster carer must be reviewed at least every year.
- Annual Review Reports are prepared according the agreed format for Derby City, and follow the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Vol. 3 - Family Placements.
- The contents of the report are shared with the foster carer before panel. Carers are invited to attend panel and also to contribute their own written comments on their experience of fostering, and on the service they have received from the local authority.
- Reports on foster carers are requested from social workers of children in placement, and any comments from children or their parents regarding the foster placement will be included in the review report.
- In addition to annual reviews, matters reported to the fostering panel include:-
  - any serious concerns raised about the carers
  - any change of approval criteria proposed
  - any placements made outside the normal fostering limit
  - any significant changes in the household circumstances.

## **TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

- Pre-approval foster care training is regarded as an essential part of the assessment and preparation process.
- Applicants are advised that their contribution and response to training will be monitored and that it forms part of the assessment process.

- Training covers the essential elements as outlined in the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Regulations 2002
- Foster carers have access to training provided by the Social Services department for Social Workers and other Social Care staff
- The fostering service now has a training post dedicated to the post approval training and development of foster carers and adopters.
- Derby City provides access to NVQ 111 qualification for foster carers. NVQ courses are supplied by local colleges, by arrangement with the Social Services Training Commissioning Group.
- Specific seminars and workshops are made available to foster carers on particular topics as the need and resource is identified. e.g. attachment, life story work, drug awareness.
- Consultation is available to foster carers, on an appointment system, with a clinical psychologist who has dedicated time for the advice and support of foster children and their carers.
- Additional support is available for carers of sexually abused foster children from the Sexual Abuse unit in Derby. Specialist workers work directly or in a consultation capacity with the problems and behaviours associated with the child who has been sexually abused.
- Derby City fostering social workers provide a 24 hour help and advice service via a dedicated telephone number, to provide consultation and support out of office hours. (This is a separate service to the Social Services out of hours emergency service )

## **5 Fostering services provided**

### **TIME LIMITED PLACEMENTS, INCLUDING EMERGENCY AND BRIDGING PLACEMENTS**

Derby City fostering service provides placements for children from 0-18 years, to meet the need for both emergency or planned admissions arising out of the work of the Family Resource workers based at Ashtree House, Social Care Workers in the Reception team based at Rosehill Street, and the Assessment and Care Planning team based at Stanley Road in Derby city.

Foster carers are fully involved in the decision as to the type of fostering they will be approved for, and some carers will be approved for more than one type of fostering. 'Time-limited placements' is the term used in Derby to refer to placements that may last anything from a few days to placements of up to 2 years. The term covers ANY placement designed to be on-going whilst Care Plans are being devised and implemented, and often where Care proceedings are in process.

### **RESPIRE PLACEMENTS**

Respite foster carers are approved foster carers who choose to offer placements on a very time-limited basis only. This may be through choice, or because of limitations in their availability. Most Respite carers have full-time jobs.

Respite carers offer breaks to parents or carers of children living in the community where their assessed needs indicates a benefit from short breaks away from the family. This may be to relieve family stress, or to do some direct work with a challenging young person.

Respite carers also offer short-term breaks to children cared for by other foster carers.

## **SUPPORT FOSTER CARERS**

We are currently developing a scheme to link respite carers to named foster carers. These are usually relatives or friends of the foster family and nominated by the carer. They will usually be already known to the foster children.

## **LONG-TERM PLACEMENTS**

Derby operates a policy of trying to achieve permanence through adoption for all children under the age of ten who cannot be rehabilitated home or to a member of their extended family. For older children, where adoption is determined not to be a viable option, long-term fostering may be the Care Plan of choice. The fostering team recruits specifically for children needing long-term care. This could include home-finding for long-term placements for children in time-limited placements, children in residential care and children in agency residential, or fostering placements outside Derby where long-term foster care in the child's home area is indicated. The fostering team also considers requests from existing foster carers who wish to change their approval status to become long-term foster carers.

## **'PROJECT' PLACEMENTS**

Some young people can be identified as having particular emotional and behavioural problems which result in them needing more than average time, effort and skill from their foster carer to manage the challenges they present. A foster carer with the appropriate behaviour management skills and who cares for a child or young person who meets the criteria, may be approved as a Project foster carer.

Project status is conferred via report to Fostering panel by the fostering social worker and the child's social worker, following established guidelines and criteria. Where Project status is confirmed, a fee is paid to the foster carer in addition to fostering allowances, in recognition of the extra work involved in caring for the young person.

## **CHILDREN FIRST PLACEMENTS**

The fostering team recruits foster carers to care for children with significant disabilities. Placements made with Children First carers are generally intended to be long-term placements. Children First carers receive a fee in addition to fostering allowances. The children who fall within this scheme will:-

- Have a disability resulting from substantial and permanent impairment of function (this can include substantial physical illness, communication disorder, sensory impairment, learning of physical disability) Children may have associated emotional and behavioural difficulties but these difficulties alone would not make them eligible for this scheme
- Have a Statement of Special Educational Need (children 4-16 years)
- Have a paediatric consultant (children 0-16 years)
- Qualify for at least middle rate DLA
- Be 17 years of age or under at age of referral

A carer approved for this scheme will be approved as a foster carer in the normal way, but receive additional training and information as relevant to their role, and as required by the needs of the individual child placed with them.

## **LINK CARERS**

Children with a disability are defined as 'children in need' under Section 17(10) of the Children Act 1989. Local authorities have an obligation to assess the needs of disabled children and offer relevant services to maintain them within their families and give them the opportunity to access services relevant to their social, emotional, cultural, physical and developmental needs. Derby City operates a Link Care scheme, as part of its strategy to meet this requirement.

Link carers provide a short-break service to children with disabilities, who are assessed as needing this service. Link carers are approved foster carers. In addition, they receive general and specific information and training regarding their role as a Link carer via one-to-one sessions and occasional workshops. They are provided with specific information about the disability of the child they are 'linked' to. Opportunities to gain experience via visits to other services for disabled children within the Social Services department are offered where appropriate. Guidance from relevant health professionals is offered in relation to specific health needs of the child e.g. specialist nurses, Occupational Therapists.

Link carers are matched to a specific child or children and planning meetings are held with the parents to make all the arrangements for the nature of the link e.g. whether day care or overnight, and to share information about the child's needs.

Link Care may be offered to children living with their family, who are not accommodated. The Link service is also offered to carers within the Children First Scheme, to provide their carers with respite care.

Link care may be offered for up to 90 days per year. Typically the Derby city scheme offers one weekend a month, day care and additional sessions during the long summer holiday.

## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

- ❖ The Fostering service provides a dedicated telephone line for carers out of office hours. This is continuously manned by qualified fostering support social workers, on a rota basis. It provides an advice and consultation service
- ❖ Carers can access the Social Services department's out of hours emergency service (Careline) where necessary, for support and advice e.g. where a child goes missing.
- ❖ The Social Services department funds dedicated time from a qualified clinical psychologist, to offer advice and support to foster carers and their foster children. This service is based at the Derby City Children's hospital. The psychologist also offers information/training sessions to foster carers in relation to identified need.
- ❖ The Social Services offer to carers the services of their Sexual Abuse Unit. This service offers counselling to children and young people who have suffered sexual

abuse, and advice and support to foster carers in managing and supporting the child who has experienced sexual abuse.

- ❖ The Social Services provides assistance to foster carers in meeting the educational needs of their foster children via the 'Gatsby' Project, dedicated to improving the education and life chances of children who are 'looked after'. This includes the funding of an Educational Welfare Officer specifically for Looked After children. Foster carers can get support in matters relating to their child's attendance and support in school.
- ❖ There is a departmental scheme to offer foster carers financial assistance in relation to the purchase of a larger vehicle, or an extension of their home, to help them care for a number of foster children.
- ❖ A designated nurse for Looked After children is available to Looked After Children 27 hours per week. She offers advice and support to foster carers, to enhance their ability to promote the health of the foster children they care for.

## **6 Staffing of the Fostering Service**

The fostering service is led by a Head of Service, who is Katie Harris. Katie has relevant qualifications for this task viz. - LLB, MA in Social Work, D.M.S., and 28 years experience in the Child Care field.

In addition there are two service managers who have relevant social work qualifications, and a fully qualified team of 15 social workers, both full and part-time.

## **7 Numbers of foster carers**

Derby City seeks to recruit carers to meet the placement requirements for its population of Looked After children. At the end of May 2005 Derby City has:-

166 foster carers, of whom

99 are carers offering time-limited or long-term placements. In addition, 26 carers are approved to offer care to a relative or friend

39 are carers identified as offering placements under the Project fostering scheme – a total of 70+ young people have 'Project' status)

A total of 44 carers offer respite placements:

17 carers offer respite placements exclusively

5 carers offer respite alongside other foster placements

22 carers provide care to disabled children under the 'Link' care scheme.

16 carers provide placements for children under the Children First scheme.

During the year 2004-5, 26 new carers were approved (including 10 Regulation 38 placements. 23 carers ceased fostering – a net gain of 3 carers.

Approximately a third of Derby City foster carers live outside the City boundary.

Demand for placement generally exceeds provision, therefore placement choice is very limited. Currently 11 children are placed in foster homes over the Normal Fostering Limit. This number is reducing. Recruitment is an on-going activity to aim to increase the supply of foster carers and to replace the number of carers who leave

the service, whether through retirement, de-registration, or because of recruitment activity by independent fostering agencies.

## **8 Number of Children and Young People in Foster Placement**

There are currently around 212 children and young people placed in foster homes belonging to Derby City and supervised and supported by Derby City Fostering team social workers

In addition, 41 children and young people are currently placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements.

2 young people in placement are asylum seekers

## **9 Number of complaints and their outcome**

There were 2 complaints about the Fostering service in the Year 2004-5.

- A complaint about the service's refusal to undertake an assessment of a potential carer because of concerns about references
- A complaint to the Ombudsman that the service had not acted properly in de-registering a carer

Both these matters are on-going

Complaints by and about foster carers may be dealt with through the department's Complaints procedures. A system for logging concerns specifically about the fostering service has been operating since June 2003.

For the period April 2004-5, there were 22 complaints against foster carers.

8 allegations concerned alleged physical abuse

2 were allegations of emotional abuse

2 were allegations of neglect

10 were miscellaneous complaints

1 complaint led to a strategy meeting under Child Protection procedures, though no further action resulted from this.

4 foster carers were de-registered as a result of concerns about their competence.

Two of these carers were approved as 'family and friends' specific carers under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Services Regulations.

The remainder were dealt with at social worker/service manager level and were brought to the notice of fostering panel at the foster carer's annual review.

Incidents, accidents, and allegations relating to foster carers are recorded separately on foster carer files and included in Foster Carer Annual Reviews.