



Derby City Council

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**07 October 2014**

# **ITEM 11**

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 October 2013 to March 2014 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on 29 April 2014. This report covers the period April to June 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 Updated information and publicity relating to fostering and adoption has now been in use since January 2014. 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.
- 4.3 The three year Recruitment and Marketing Strategy and one year Marketing Action Plan has been implemented since January 2014. A rolling programme of events is taking place, targeting recruitment of both foster carers and adopters wherever possible.

Between 1 April and 30 June 2014 the Fostering Service registered 62 enquiries and sent out 60 information packs. Nine initial visits were made and seven fostering applications received. Two fostering households were approved. The Recruitment and Assessment Team is now fully staffed with social workers and is able to call on sessional workers to provide additional capacity for initial visits and assessments when required. The post of team manager becomes vacant on 28 August. Recruitment of a replacement has begun and a temporary appointment is in place.

- 4.4 Recruitment of a Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer funded through the Adoption Reform Grant is under way. This appointment will improve our initial response to enquiries, produce better information reports and support recruitment events. A full time marketing officer has recently been appointed to the Communications and Marketing team to specialise in recruitment of foster carers and adopters.
- 4.5 There have been six complaints against foster carers during this period. No foster carers were deregistered due to concerns and there have been no appeals to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.
- 4.6 Fostering allowances remain above the national minimum rate. Derby's rates do compare very favourably to our Local Authority neighbours which is important to ensure the service remains competitive and provides value for money.
- 4.7 The Derby Foster Carers Association is active and key members meet quarterly with the Deputy Head of Service to share practice issues and changes taking place in the service.

- 4.8 The annual foster carer awards evening took place in July this year and was well attended by foster carers and children. Councillor Fareed Hussain presented foster careers with certificates.
- 4.9 As part of the Council's property rationalisation programme the Fostering and Adoption Service is expected to relocate from its base in Perth Street, Chaddesden, to the third floor of the Council House in October this year. Offices and meeting rooms in Royal Oak House will be used for panels and other events after the move.

#### OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable

This report has been approved by the following officers:

<b>Legal officer</b> <b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Estates/Property officer</b> <b>Service Director(s)</b> <b>Other(s)</b>	Alison Parkin Liz Moore  Hazel Lymbery; Director of Specialist Services, 01332 642669 hazel.lymbery@derby.gov.uk Andrew Bunyan; Strategic Director for Children and Young People
<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Rod Jones 01332 6438815 rod.jones@derby.gov.uk Fostering Service Statement of Purpose Appendix 1 – Implications

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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### **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 fostering 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 To note the planned office move from Perth Street to the Council House.

## **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 supports the Councils priorities of
- inspiring start in life
  - inspiring start in life by improving educational attainment
  - inspiring working life by improving skills and creating jobs