



Derby City Council

Corporate Parenting Board
20 January 2015

ITEM 8

**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 June 2014 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on 7 October 2014. This report covers the period July to September 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 Regulated Services. The independent panel chair has resigned and a new chair has been appointed who will take up her post in January 2015.

The panel chair, professional advisor and managers meet twice a year to consider quality and performance issues.

- 4.2 The first phase of a demand management project led by consultants imPOWER has been completed. It has involved workshops with staff in the fostering and adoption teams as well as foster carers and adopters and prospective adopters; surveys of staff and carers; and a data collection exercise to benchmark our service against those of similar local authorities. imPOWER have introduced the 'Family Values' model as a tool for improving the recruitment and retention of carers.

Improvements plans have been developed as a result of the work done in phase one and implementation of these form phase two of the project which begins in January.

- 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.
- 4.4 Between 1 July and 30 September 2014 the Fostering Service registered 48 enquiries and sent out 33 information packs. 14 initial visits were made and five fostering applications received. Two fostering households were approved. At the end of September 19 assessments were underway. On that date there were a total of 110 time-limited, permanent and respite carers, compared to 114 at the same point in both 2013 and 2012.
- 4.5 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 became vacant on 28 August. A temporary appointment is in place and a permanent replacement will start on 2 March 2015.
- 4.6 A new post of Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer funded through the Adoption Reform Grant has been appointed to and starts on 17 December. This appointment will improve our initial response to enquiries, produce better information reports and support recruitment events.

- 4.7 A full time marketing officer has recently started in the Communications and Marketing team to specialise in recruitment of foster carers and adopters.
- 4.8 There have been 5 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.
- 4.9 Fostering allowances have been reviewed for 2015-16 to bring them into line with the Fostering Network recommended rates and above the national minimum rate. This is to ensure the service remains competitive and provides value for money.
- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 As part of the Council's property rationalisation the Fostering and Adoption Service relocated from its base in Perth Street, Chaddesden, to the third floor of the Council House in December. Offices and meeting rooms in Royal Oak House are being used for panels and other events.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Hazel Lymbery Director of Specialist Services 01332 642669 hazel.lymbery@derby.gov.uk
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Rod Jones 01332 6438815 rod.jones@derby.gov.uk Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 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 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