



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 12 JULY 2012

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 2010 – December 2010.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Fostering Service continues to provide an annual report for period from January – December 2010 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

This report informs the Children and Young People Commission, of the activity of Derby City Fostering Service. A report is required annually and this document covers the period 1st January 2010 – December 2010. 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 are due to come 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 23 times between 1 January 2010 and December 2010. The panel meets fortnightly.

The foster panel is legally constituted to meet the current Fostering Regulations. It is noted that the composition of Derby City's panel will meet 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 2010 - December 2010

- During the above period the fostering service responded to 240 new placement referrals:

Month	No. of children referred
January	16
February	18
March	25
April	28
May	17
June	10
July	29
August	10
September	29
October	19
November	23
December	16

Placement Breakdown

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Placed with DCC	5	7	10	11	5	2	11	5	17	7	10	3
Placed with IFA	1	2	4	6	8	1	1	0	1	4	4	6
NFA/withdrawn	5	6	7	7	4	6	13	2	9	7	4	5
Respite from home	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Placed with family	3	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Residential	1	1	2	2	0	1	3	2	1	0	2	0
Ongoing Referrals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
	16	18	25	28	17	10	29	10	29	19	23	16

2.6 Recruitment January to December 2010

- 366 enquiries were received from people interested in finding out about fostering.
- 29 applications have been received. In addition 13 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 - December 2010

Family and Friends	6	11	
Time Limited	7	7	
Respite	5	5	
Link	1	1	
Support	11	11	
Applications to Panel		35	35
Approval not recommended 4 (all family and Friends carers assessments)			

2.8 Loss of Carers January - December 2010

De-registration	4	Carers no longer meeting regulatory requirements
Retirements	8	2 due to carers emigrating 1 due to a child returning to parents 5 due to length of service
Resignations	14	3 due to foster carers obtaining special guardianship order

		11 due to changes in personal home circumstances
Total	26	

Overall there was a net increase of 9 carers in a 12 month period.

2.9 Ongoing Assessments and Trends as at December 2010

- Since the establishment of a small dedicated recruitment team in June 2010 there has been a review of recruitment material and processes.
- We have updated our fostering information, are in the process of updating the Skills to Foster training to link to the standards, have introduced the BAAF form F, an evidence based assessment format, and we have increased the fee level to remain competitive.
- 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.
- The number of prospective carers coming forward remains fairly consistent with previous years but the numbers in a position to progress has reduced. The reasons for this are not entirely clear but it is noted that the majority of applicants who wish to foster children under the age of 10 also work, often full time, which means that they are unfortunately not available to meet the children's considerable needs.
- The BAAF form F assessment report is now used by the service as this fits more appropriately with the requirement for carers to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care. These standards were introduced in April 2008 and there is an expectation that approved foster carers complete the standards within the first twelve months of approval.
- There is a now a clear requirement that Friends and Family carers must complete the CWDC Foster Care Standards.
- The numbers 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.
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2.10 Position as at March 2011

183 households provide a range of placements:

- **90** households provide long term or time limited placements.
- **23** households are approved as support carers (providing respite to main carer).
- **9** households provide placements for children with disabilities.
- **38** households offer “Short break” or respite placements. Short Break carers offer respite to children with disabilities living in the community.
- **23** are “family and friends” specific carers offering 28 placements to named children.

8 households are caring for children over the normal fostering limit of 3 children.

98 children and their carers qualify for payments under the ‘fee paid’ scheme.

47 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 and £180 per week. The Local Authority has also introduced a fee level of £300 per week in addition to the allowance making the level of financial support competitive within the foster care market.
- Post approval training has been developed in partnership with stakeholders and other agencies. The appointment of a training officer for the fostering and adoption service has strengthened this focus 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.
- 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.

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

Not applicable

Asset management

Not applicable

Risk Management

Risk is managed at all stages of the fostering process.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- To comply with the new statutory regulations, guidance and standards
- To link to central government priorities on fostering particularly focussing on positive outcomes for children in care
- Placing the needs and welfare of the child at the centre of the fostering service