

## **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. The current Statement of Purpose was presented to Corporate Parenting Committee on the 01.12.15 this has been updated and is attached as appendix 3.

- 1.2 The last annual report, covering the period January 2015 to December 2015 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2016. This report covers the period January to September 2016.

### **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, a health service representative, a foster carer from a different local authority, a fostering social worker, a care-experienced young person and other independent members with relevant experience related to children in care and safeguarding. The panel is supported by an independent professional advisor and also has access to medical and legal advice as required. The Agency Decision Maker is the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption.
- 4.2 The panel chair, professional advisor and team managers meet twice a year to consider quality and performance issues relating to the service and training needs of the panel members. Panel members receive an annual appraisal.
- 4.3 The Family Values end of project report dated August 2016 is attached as appendix 2 and is summarised in the presentation.
- 4.4 A temporary fostering and adoption marketing officer has been in post since July and is working closely with the fostering and adoption service to establish key areas of recruitment initiatives and a more targeted marketing approach.
- 4.5 Between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 the fostering service received 186 fostering enquires and sent out 169 information packs. 52 initial visits were undertaken (compared to 46 initial visits undertaken between January and December 2015) and 28 households were invited to make an application. So far 15 applications have been received and commenced the assessment process.
- 4.6 Fostering enquiries converting to assessments is under target and assessments converting to approvals over this period are low. Four households have been approved as mainstream foster carers and five households have been approved as Friends and Family Carers. Figures at the end of August 2016 showed there were a total of 124 approved fostering households of which 107 provide a range of time limited, permanent and respite/short-break placements. The service also supports 17 approved Friends and Family carers.
- 4.7 At the end of August 2016 14 assessments were in progress, which is under the target of 20. Four are mainstream assessments in Stage 2 with anticipated approval dates in September and October 2016.

## Historical Enquiries Comparison 2014 - 2016

	2016	2015	2014
January	21	14	30
February	17	8	16
March	34	20	11
April	16	5	13
May	30	20	27
June	30	33	24
July	19	28	28
August	19	11	11
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>150</i>
September		23	9
October		19	10
November		25	8
December		18	14
Total		224	201

4.8 The Fostering Teams have undergone significant staffing changes during the period January – September 2016.. This has been due to a natural turnover of staff retirements across the service and a high turnover of team managers in the first six months of the year. A permanent team manager was appointed to the recruitment and assessment team on the 20.6.16 and a new permanent team manager for one of the support teams will commence her post on the 26.9.16. Recruitment to 2 full time social work vacancies is underway.

4.9 The new post of a Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer funded through the Adoption Reform Grant in 2014 has been confirmed as permanent. This appointment assists our initial response to enquiries; monitors recruitment targets and provides performance information reports. It was highlighted by the fostering service as an essential post to support management oversight and monitoring of assessment processes. The post was developed further during the Demand Management project to improve data collection and facilitate marketing analysis.

A Topic Review was held in November 2015 to provide an overview of the Family Value project work completed with iMPower and consider the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Recommendations from this will go to full Council Cabinet in October 2016.

4.10 Between April 2015 and March 2016 there were 8 referrals made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) four of which met the threshold for further investigation. All referrals came under the category of physical abuse resulting in five cases being unsubstantiated and three requiring reports to foster panel. The outcome of these being one deregistration by the fostering agency and one resignation received from the foster carer. There have been no appeals in 2016 to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.

4.11 Fostering allowances have been reviewed for 2016-17 with an agreed uplift of 0.5%.

4.12 The Derby Foster Carers Association has continued to develop since it launched three years ago. The AGM took place on the 27.02.16 with the proposal that the existing committee members retain their posts. Social activities are organised and the service supports these events for carers and children. Key committee members periodically meet with fostering team managers to share social work practice issues and changes taking place in the service. The association will be invited to participate in reviewing the Foster Carers Charter.

## 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>	Suanne.lim Director of Specialist Services 01332 642669 Suanne.lim@derby.gov.uk
<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Sally Penrose 01332 6438817 sally.penrose@derby.gov.uk  Fostering Service Statement of Purpose Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Family Values End of Project Report Appendix 3 - Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

<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 2015-16 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 Service for Fostering and Adoption in July 2015 when the Deputy Head of Service post was deleted. There are three full time Fostering team managers and 16.6 FTE social workers who carry out the full range of fostering activities. One full time Adoption team manager with a team of 7.5 FTE social workers and a full time manager for the Therapeutic Service for LAC and Adopted children who manages the Adoption support team (3.5 FTE) and Leopold Street. The service recruited and appointed two full time casework support officer posts in December 2015 which adds further capacity to the business support requirements related to the service.

**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 ethnic minority communities and carers for children with disabilities.

**Health and Safety**

- 5.1 This is considered at all stages of the recruitment, assessment, training and supervision 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 Fostering and Adoption Service supports the Council priorities of

:

- Inspiring start in life
- Inspiring start in life by improving educational outcomes
- Inspiring working life by improving skills and creating jobs