

Fostering Agency Report

Purpose

- 1.1 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services require that the executive side of the local authority:
- a. 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.
 - b. Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every three months.
 - c. Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration and National Minimum Standards for fostering.

(Standard 25.7)

The Fostering Agency is required to produce a Statement of Purpose updated on an annual basis. The current Statement of Purpose was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in September 2021. The Statement of Purpose has been updated in July for 2022 and is attached as appendix 1.

This report covers the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

1.2 Summary for Children and Young People

This is the annual report of work undertaken by the Fostering Service.

Fostering is a Council priority, and this means all departments support the recruitment and retention of foster carers in Derby. We have recruited and approved 26 new fostering families this year, an increase of 14.4%, and we continue to reduce the need to use private sector foster carers.

During the next year, we will be developing an online foster carers handbook.

This report explains the role of the Fostering Panel and provides data about the key functions of the fostering team e.g. the number of foster carers approved and the number of carers who have chosen to leave the service. Complaints received about Foster Carers from a range of different people are also included, particularly if this has led to de-registration of a Foster Carers approval.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To approve the annual Fostering Agency report and Statement of Purpose.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 To comply with guidance and fostering regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.
- 3.2 To increase recruitment and retention of Derby City Foster Carers.

Supporting information

- 4.1 Fostering Panels have a crucial role to play in the provision and monitoring of Foster Carers and placements for Looked After Children. The membership of Derby City's Fostering Panel complies with Guidance and Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 for Fostering Services. The central list (regulation 23) consists of an independent chair and 2 vice-chairs, all of whom have professional experience of children placed away from their birth family and are competent at chairing complex meetings. Panels meet twice monthly or as required to ensure there is no delay in applications being presented for approval.
- 4.2 Other members of the panel include a former foster carer from a different local authority, a Derby City Fostering Social Worker representing the service with at least three years post qualifying experience, two care-experienced young adults have been recruited via the Rees project and are due to start in the summer of 2022. Other independent members have relevant experience related to children in care and safeguarding. Derby City's Fostering Panel has a new chair-person in post since January 2022. New recruitment to the Central list has achieved appointments of a more diverse representation.
- 4.3 The panel is currently supported by a professional Panel Advisor and also has access to a Specialist Adult Medical Advisor and legal advice as required. The Agency Decision Maker is also Deputy Head of Fostering Service.
- 4.4 Panels provide a quality assurance role to the fostering service provider, on the quality of reports and practice and development to ensure good outcomes for Looked After Children. The foster panel chair, vice chairs, professional advisor, Agency Decision Maker (ADM) and Fostering Managers meet twice a year to consider quality assurance and performance issues relating to the service and training needs of the panel members. Panel members receive an annual appraisal undertaken by the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. Panel function receives full administration support in terms of minuting and organising the panel agenda.

4.5 Overall experience and ability of panel members and contribution to decision making. The Independent Chair of the Fostering Panel is required to contribute to the annual report and David Keeping has provided the following summary:

The fostering panel has continued to meet approximately twice a month throughout the past year. Each panel session considers a mixture of new applications alongside the annual reviews of existing, approved foster carers.

Panel's role is to provide independent scrutiny and quality assurance of the reports and recommendations provided by the social workers and managers from the fostering service. Panel are also required to make clear and evidenced based recommendation to the agency decision maker about the suitability of applicants to foster and/or the suitability of existing foster carers to continue to foster. We also give advice about any terms of approval, such as the number and ages of children to be fostered and the types of fostering that a household can provide (e.g. emergency, respite, short or long term care).

Panel members continue to draw on a wide range of professional and personal experience to do this. We have slightly increased the number of people available to us on the central list for panel. We are also in the final stages of recruiting a least one care-experienced panel member. This will bring an additional level of insight to panel discussions, from the vantage point of a person who had previously been in foster care as a child.

In addition to these new appointments, several other changes have occurred since the last report to corporate parenting board. In December 2021, the long-standing chair retired and replaced by the existing vice chair.. This transition provided some continuity for the fostering service as panel members.

In March 2022 two new vice chairpersons were recruited to panel. Both have significant relevant experience. Finally, panel members reconvened in person meetings of the fostering panel in April 2022. Since the Covid-19 restrictions were first imposed in March 2020, all panel business had been conducted virtually online. There were frequent technical challenges which often extended the length of panel sessions. The free flow of discussion and reflection was also inhibited. Panel members find it far easier to engage in relevant dialogue together. Unspoken communication like body language is far easier to pick up on. All of these things enable panel to make better recommendations and improve decision making.

Children's services were inspected by Ofsted in March 2022 which included the fostering service. The overall judgement was outstanding. In relation to fostering, Ofsted commented "Foster carer assessments are of a good standard and the fostering panel is providing good scrutiny of the assessment and recommendation of carers"

4.6 Approach of panel members to ensuring that fostering placements are appropriate and meeting the child's needs

Panel is aware of its responsibilities in its quality assurance role and safeguarding role and always places the welfare of the child at the forefront of discussions. There is a mechanism within the service for panel's concerns to be addressed at regular meetings with Managers and if specific issues arise during discussion the Panel Adviser will address this with the relevant service. The Foster Panel has an explicit role in obtaining the voice of a child to reassure themselves that the placement continues to meet the child's individual needs. The new appointments of two care experienced adults will reinforce the importance of the child voice. The role of the Panel Advisor supports the panel's recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.

4.7 Commitments and awareness to safeguarding and confidentiality

Safeguarding is considered at all stages of the fostering process and fostering assessments are thorough and robust to ensure looked after children are placed in a safe and caring home environment. (NMS 4)

Safeguarding is very much at the centre of panel discussions and in questions asked of Social Workers and Foster Carers attending. All applicants are expected to attend the panel to participate in the discussion regarding their application and recommendation of approval. Foster Carers are expected to attend panel for their first annual review and are invited to subsequent reviews but must attend every three years. During this last year, applicants and Foster Carers have had to attend virtually, but have continued to participate well, and we will be looking to resume face to face panels from May 2022.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, four referrals were made by the Fostering Service to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The first referral was made to the Nottingham City LADO, as this is where the foster carer lived. The outcome of this LADO is still pending, and the foster carer is on hold and a review will be made by the Derby City Council Fostering Panel in August 2022.

The other three LADO referrals were all made to the Derby City Council Children's Services LADO. The outcome of these LADO's was that the concerns did not meet the threshold for their involvement and should be dealt with as practice concerns by the Fostering Service.

All cases dealt with under Local Authority Designated Officer procedures require a full report to Foster Panel to consider de-registration and/or and any changes to approval status. In these situations, support and training needs are addressed.

4.8 Ability of panel members to address diversity issues

Panel members consider diversity issues in relation to each assessment report or annual review. The quality of care provided is measured against the requirement to meet the National Minimum Standards (NMS 2) Standard 2 – promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care – ensures that children have a positive self-view, knowledge and understanding of their background. Panel members will confidently challenge where they feel there is a lack of information or detail evidencing how Foster Carers are meeting the child's identity and cultural needs. Panel members are proactive in advocating for Foster Carers where they feel services for Looked after Children are not in place and recognise the importance of partnership working to ensure the holistic needs of Children in Care are met.

4.9 Areas of practice that influence how effectively panel can function

The central role in hearing the Voice of the Child can be difficult to achieve if this is not provided by the child's Social Worker. The Supervising Social Worker for the Foster Carer will include information in their report regarding the Foster Carers ability to continue to meet National Minimum Standards. These Standards are child focussed and should address the child's progress and suitability of the Foster Carers to facilitate the child's care plan. The Supervising Social Worker's views are not independent of the Fostering Service and therefore child's Social Workers summary of the placement ensures a degree of independent monitoring.

An improvement has been seen in receiving placement feedback (CA22) and social worker feedback (CA21) for annual reviews. We will continue to closely monitor this area of performance and Supervising Social Workers will continue to take a more proactive approach in ensuring that Panel and the Agency Decision Maker have some feedback from the child's Social Worker, even if this is verbal.

- 4.10 An area that panel intend to develop is the more transparent and open process with applicants and approved carers remaining in the panel meeting with their supervising social worker throughout. This allows them to be fully involved in the discussion and hear the views of panel members regarding their terms of approval and ongoing recommendations for ADM. This process will be implemented when panels return to being face to face from May 2022.

To support development, social workers, applicants and foster carers are encouraged to complete feedback forms on their experience of attending panel. All feedback is considered at the Quality Assurance meetings held with the service.

At the last quality assurance meeting it was agreed that changes of approval could be made by the ADM, in line with regulations outside of the panel process as long as the foster carers were in agreement with their new terms of approval and the waver of the 28 days' notice. De-registrations are reported to the quality assurance meeting every six months.

- 4.11 During Covid the fostering service held 'Team Manager Only' panels to meet the demand for annual reviews and to ensure timescales were met. Regulations do not stipulate that annual reviews have to be held at the main panel although this is regarded as good practice. The first annual review will always be considered at the main panel, and every third review. In addition, if there have been any safeguarding or concerns around standards of care, or if approval is to be changed, these cases would remain considered at main panel. However, we have found that the managers panels have been effective and have relieved the pressure of capacity at the main panel and so will continue for straightforward and positive annual reviews of carers.

4.11 Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service

- 4.12 The Head of Service post was replaced by a full time Deputy Head of Service post on 1st January 2021. This post became permanent on 1st April 2022. The management of the service has been fully staffed during the last year by three full time team managers and a professional advisor to the panel, who is part time.
- 4.13 From 1st June 2021, the service was restructured to provide three teams, each with a different purpose. The restructure created a new Family and Friends team, a Foster Carer Support team and finally a Recruitment and Assessment team. This has been fully imbedded during the year and the Family and Friends team have been able to evidence the benefits of the same social worker assessing and supporting carers after approval. See further information in 4.35, Areas for future development:

- 4.14 A new marketing strategy was developed for 2022-2023 and will be revised on an annual basis to ensure that the marketing activity reflects the demand for foster placements. (See appendix 2).

Derby City Council need to significantly reduce its current reliance on using Independent Fostering Agencies as this offers greater value for money and would result in more children being placed within a 20-mile radius of Derby City.

The Fostering marketing budget for 2021/2022 was £27,000. Key activity areas in the marketing plan for 2022/2023 are:

- Four targeted events held in May, September and November 2022 and February 2023.
- Continuing to use the “I am, I can’ launched early 2021 and used in branding across Derby.
- Working in partnership with the Derbion Shopping Centre for use of their community space once a month, allowing us to promote fostering within a busy central location.
- Providing specialist online events to encourage supported lodgings and respite carers to apply.
- To actively promote and raise the profile of Derby City Council’s Fostering Friendly accreditation
- Advertising on Google Ads and Facebook to raise the profile of the service above external agencies.
- External promotions in Derby City and surrounding areas targeting the major routes in and out of the City.
- Marketing toolkits developed and distributed to all major employers and Corporate Partners in the City.
- Supporting events that celebrate our foster carers to encourage retention.

4.15 Our marketing objectives are to:

- Increase enquiries by 25% achieving a total of 225 by March 2023
- Increase our conversion rate from enquiry to a completed initial visit to 25%, by generating high quality marketing qualified leads (event booking/visit bookings)
- Attract 10% of total enquiries specifically for children and young people with complex needs, by targeting healthcare/police professionals
- Attract 20% of total enquiries for children ages 10-15
- To increase awareness of Fostering Friendly Status, encouraging 10 Derby city-based companies to achieve status by April 2023

Our marketing activity will focus around four 'peaks' or campaigns to recruit more Foster Carers. These peaks will be centred on recruitment events and other major activities which will require full participation by all Fostering colleagues with support from the Corporate Fostering Board.

The focus will be on the quality-of-service delivery and recruitment and retention of Foster Carers for older children and sibling groups. Derby's marketing strategy aims to reflect the demographics and diversity of the City.

4.16 The Payment for Skills scheme has been reviewed this year and a policy written to clarify expectations from us as an agency and the carers. The scheme continues to be well received and foster carers commitment to learning and training is evident across the service. The generous financial package recognises the skill base and experience that Foster Carers develop and has allowed us to provide a package of remuneration that competes with the private sector. As a result of this we have seen a growing number of enquiries from Independent Fostering Agency Foster Carers, and over the last year, six carers have transferred to us from IFA's.

4.17 Fostering allowances are required to be reviewed annually in line with the rate of inflation. Derby City's allowance payment rates are one of the highest across the region. DMT agreed the recommendation to implement Payment for Skills during 2019/20, and these figures have not been increased during the last year. The basic weekly allowance rates for 2022/23 were increased by 2.4%.

Age of child	Weekly allowance per child 2019/20	Weekly allowance per child 2021/22
0-4	£153.57	£157.26
5-10	£174.94	£179.14
11-15	£217.78	£223.01
16-18	£264.94	£271.30

4.18 Recruitment activity between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022

Initial Enquiries	Information Packs Sent	Initial Visits	Number of households invited to apply	Returned Applications	Approvals
199	64	45	34	18	16 Mainstream Family and Friends 10

Mainstream approvals – these are carried out under The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and allows the Fostering Service provider to assess any person who applies to become a Foster Parent and whom they consider may be suitable and meet the National Minimum Standards for fostering (NMS 13).

Friends & Family – Regulation 24 of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations sets out arrangements for the temporary approval of a connected person as a Foster Carer in exceptional circumstances for up to 16 weeks to allow an immediate placement and sufficient time for a Foster Carer approval process to be undertaken. National Minimum Standards 30 allows for family and friends Foster Carers to receive the support they require to meet the needs of children placed with them.

- 4.19 Of the 199 fostering enquiries, 43 were from applicants under the age of 30, and 104 were aged between 30 and 49, and the average age was 41. This is a positive change to our age profile of carers. Of the 199 enquiries received in 2021-22, 144 of these were from people within the Derby City boundary (72%)
- 4.20 Due to the Covid pandemic the Service was unable to carry out physical face to face recruitment events and drop-in sessions between April 2021 and Feb 2022. During this period, we continued to offer virtual events with limited success. Since February 2022, events have progressed to a hybrid model with alternating face to face and virtual events to capture a wider audience. Our foster carers remain an excellent source of new enquiries through word of mouth and they receive a £1,000 bonus if these enquiries become approved carers. There was also a notable increase in enquiries from Foster Carers wishing to transfer from their existing agency.
- 4.21 There were five targeted fostering events during 2021/2022., which were a mixture of in person and virtual. Analysis of these events provided a total of 81 prospective fostering households taking the first step to find out more information on becoming a foster carer. This resulted in ten initial visits taking place and seven of those were supplied with an application pack. The service subsequently received five applications.

- 4.22 From the 199 initial enquiries 64 information packs were sent out either by email or by post. Information packs are not always sent out and this is often due to telephone consultations with the applicant being ruled out early (i.e. call back from Fostering Social Worker reveal family circumstances that would prevent them from proceeding

Reasons why enquiries have been closed at initial contact include:

- Recent relationship break-up.
 - Recent bereavement.
 - Safeguarding concerns.
 - Smoker and wants to care for under 5's.
 - No spare bedroom and wants older children.
 - Financial reasons.
 - Not the right time.
 - No response to follow ups.
- 4.23 45 initial visits were conducted within this period and 34 application forms (76%) were left with the prospective applicant(s). Application forms are left with all potential households that demonstrate the capacity and willingness to commence the assessment and meet statutory regulations.
- 4.24 The Recruitment Officer tracks all enquiries and applications to the point of allocation. Of the 33 households invited to apply 16 applications were received (48%). Tracking activity was undertaken on the 17 households who did not return a completed application form. 8 households did not respond ending in the enquiry being closed down. 2 households felt it was not the right time to foster and did not apply. 2 households decided to remain with their existing Independent Fostering Agency whilst one household decided to apply with an IFA rather than DCC. 2 applications were received after 31 March 2022 so they will be counted in the 2022-23 data and 2 households still have their enquiry pending.
- 4.25 During 2021/2022 a total of 26 households were presented at Fostering Panel for a recommendation of approval. 16 approvals were mainstream Foster Carers and ten were family and friends carers.

What is significant is that the number of bedspaces provided by our mainstream Foster Carers in comparison from end of March 2021 to end of March 2022 has continued to increase by 15 mainstream carer, an increase of 14%. The number of bedspaces provided in the same timescale by our Family and Friends carers has remained at 32. In addition, the percentage of children in care in Independent Fostering Agency placements has continued to fall from 52% to 50%.

- 4.26 There were a total of nine withdrawn applications during this 12 month period. Four withdrew on our advice as a result of stage one checks and five withdrew due to a change in their personal circumstances.

4.27 Placements of children:

The creation of a new placements officer who started in July 2021 has had a positive impact on the numbers of placements made. From April 2021 to the end of March 2022 there has been a growth of 20 internal foster placements (from 99 to 119) This equates to an increase of 20%. During this period there was an increase in the actual number of internal fostering households by seven new households (6.66%) .

Therefore, even taking into account the growth in carers, it could be concluded the placements officer role has contributed significantly to the increase in internal foster placements and financial saving since it commenced.

The fostering, finance and commissioning teams have met after each quarter to look at savings created by placements 'stepping down' from IFA or residential placements, or by avoidance of going to an IFA placement due to our carers being able to accept more complex placements.

Creative wrap around support has been offered to carers and children where needed, including therapeutic support or additional practical/financial support to prevent a placement breakdown.

In addition, the fostering team managers have started to instigate Placement Support Meetings, involving carers and all professionals at an early stage where a placement is vulnerable or at risk of breakdowns. This has had a positive impact on the number of unplanned placement breakdowns.

Our new Parent and Child scheme has been developed this year and specialist training was provided to ten of our existing carers, plus one new carer who was recruited specifically to undertake parent and child placements. Eight carers have now been approved to take parent and child placements and two of these have offered placements so far. Our plan is to continue to develop and expand the numbers of carers who can offer this type of placement.

In Jan 2022, approval was given for the fostering service to pilot a new Supported Lodgings scheme. Work was undertaken with Leicestershire and Derbyshire County Council who already had successful schemes. To date, we have had one new supported lodgings carer approved and she has been able to be matched with her first placement. Two carers started an assessment but withdrew as the timing wasn't right for them. Three more carers are now in the process of being assessed.

4.28 Approval activity since April 2021

In the year from April 2021 to March 31st 2022, there were 26 approvals, 16 mainstream and ten Family and Friends Carers. The categories for mainstream approvals were as follows:

Approval categories
Permanent : 1
Short -term, not permanent: 16
Emergency: 5
Short breaks: 2
Family and Friends: 10

- 4.29 As of the end of June 2022 there are 29 fostering and special guardianship assessments being undertaken. Eight assessments are mainstream fostering, and five are regulation 24 family and friends assessments. In addition, the Family and Friends team are undertaking 13 SGO assessments, two private fostering assessments and one inter-country Kafala assessment.

4.30 **De-Registrations of Fostering households:**

There were a total of 17 de-registrations during the year 2021/22, a reduction from 35 de-registrations the previous year.

Only ten mainstream carers resigned and left the fostering service between April 2021 and March 2022. This is a very positive performance when compared to the situation nationally for fostering agencies and when compared to the previous year. The ten foster carers who left between April 2021 and March 2022, equates 9.9% of the cohort of 99 mainstream foster carers approved at the start of April 2021. This is significantly lower than the estimated national average of 16% of foster carers who leave their agencies each year

- 4.31 Out of the ten de-registrations of mainstream carers, three de-registrations were due to retirements, five were due to change of circumstances, one was due to health issues, and one has transferred to an IFA seven Family and Friends carers were de-registered during the year.

We changed the system for reporting these de-registrations and now do not present these to each panel, but give a summary of de-registrations at the quality assurance meeting.

During the last year, the Deputy Head of Service has undertaken two exit interviews with foster carers who have left the service due to dissatisfaction. Learning from these interviews has been disseminated across the teams and actions taken.

4.32 Engagement and support of foster carers:

The Derby Foster Carers Association (FCA) under the strong leadership of their chairperson, have had an active voice in developments in the Service over the last year. Since the Covid restrictions have lifted the FCA have gone back to having face to face meetings, coffee mornings and have also arranged social events which have been well received. The chairperson attends our corporate fostering meetings, and is an excellent advocate for foster carers.

The Fostering Support Team Manager has been invited to and attends monthly Foster Carers Association committee meetings, where a solution focussed, approach has served to overcome challenges and develop practice.

The Foster Carers Association were involved in the reviewing the Foster Care Charter during the last year.

All new foster carers are now offered support from a mentor/buddy, who is an experienced foster carer on a Skills Band C or D. New carers have appreciated this support, and our experienced foster carers have gained from the experience of sharing their knowledge and wisdom.

Foster Carers have also been involved this year with our Workforce Learning and Development Training Officer, in participating in delivering training. This new training pool consists of ten Carers who have been involved in delivering training. They have also developed new courses (e.g. Through the eyes of the carer course) participating in interviews for Social Worker students and helping at recruitment events by talking to members of the public interested in becoming a Foster Carer for Derby City.

4.33 Support groups:

The range of support groups available for carers has expanded significantly over the last year since restrictions have eased due to the pandemic, with new groups being set up to include a black carers support group, a men's group, moving children onto adoption support group, as well as a short breaks, mainstream foster carer and family and friends support group. These sessions have all had a training element and a theme, as well as providing an opportunity for carers to offer social and informal support to each other.

The service have also organised a number of activity based sessions for carers and children together, including a summer and easter activity event, Christmas film night, and fostering Fun Day in May 2022. We have worked alongside other agencies to provide these sessions, including Derby County Community Trust and Plus One theatre group. It is hoped that this increase in support on offer, will continue to have an impact on the number of de-registrations and will positively aid retention.

4.34 **Collaboration with D2N2 Local Authorities.**

In the last year, regular meetings between Heads of Service for Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Nottingham City (D2N2) have taken place to look at areas of collaboration which will encourage more enquiries to local authorities, cost savings, efficiencies, and improved services to our carers.

The main success of the meetings so far, has been to offer a combined Skills to Foster course across the four local authorities, and to develop a specialist and separate course for mainstream and Family and Friends carers in the approval stage. The intention of all D2N2 local authorities is to become Foster Friendly authorities. Derby City successfully gained accreditation as a Foster Friendly Council in March 2022, and this provides our own employees, should they choose to become a foster carer, with additional days of annual leave in order to undertake the fostering assessment and then ongoing additional leave to support the role of foster carer. The next stage is to work with local businesses to encourage them to also become foster friendly.

A new area of development is to explore the potential benefits of a combined website for recruitment and enquiries.

Areas for development in the year 2022/2023:

- 4.35 Following the success of the family and friends team evidencing that having the same allocated worker assess and then support carers, an area of development during this year will be to transform the service again to have two teams offering assessment and support for all mainstream enquires. This will allow greater flexibility in allocating assessments in a timely manner, will mean that caseloads are more equitable so that the support and retention of our carers remains a priority and so that there is better continuity of support for carers from social workers. To begin in May 2022.
- 4.36 The service has been expanded to welcome the permanence team within our structure from June 2022. The service will become known as Fostering and Permanence. This will encourage and facilitate collaborative working in areas where the work is closely aligned, for example in transitions between foster care and adoption, work across the D2N2 local authorities and AEM, and in the area of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) assessments and support post SGO order. During the previous year the post SGO support services based in the Exit (Child's Permanence Team) transferred over to the Family and Friends team. By expanding the service area, the two teams dealing with post SGO support will now be based together and services will be seamless.
- 4.37 We continue to develop ways of improving placement sufficiency through expanding the range of fostering opportunities available. This year we will look at developing a specialist foster carer scheme and will also continue to build on the Supported Lodgings scheme, parent and child fostering and increasing the numbers of short breaks/link carers for children with disabilities. We will also look to use our new Foster Friendly status to encourage Council employees to consider fostering that they could do alongside their work commitments, and we are actively looking to recruit emergency foster carers who could support children removed under Police Protection Orders who need care for up to 72 hours whilst further plans are made.

- 4.38 A new area of development is to explore the potential benefits of a combined website for recruitment and enquiries. The four marketing teams across D2N2 are delivering proposals on the potential benefits and risks of this so that an informed decision can be made on whether this would be beneficial to our recruitment strategy.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 Derby City Council undertook a Foster Carer Survey in July 2021. An analysis of the results was coordinated by the Communications and Consultation Team and circulated to fostering households. The feedback used from this survey formed part of a 'you said, we did' action plan.

Other options

- 6.1 Not applicable.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 The cost of providing the Fostering Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets. A budget increase in 2021-2022 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 to keep pace with marketplace developments regarding 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 £2500 for each case referred to the IRM. There have been no cases referred to the IRM during 2020/2021.

In addition to placements made to carers through the Fostering Service, our Children in Care are placed in foster placements commissioned through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) linked to the D2N2 Framework for Children in Care, a partnership between Derby City, Derbyshire County, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils. When considering the types of placements needed for our children and young people, in addition to more fostering placements in local to Derby, there is also a need for more Carers who can support children with socially challenging behaviour, emotional/behavioural needs and sibling groups.

Legal implications

- 8.1 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.

Other significant implications

9.1 None

Personnel

- 10.1 The Service is managed by a full time Deputy Head of Service for Fostering. There are three full time Fostering Team Manager posts and 16 FTE Social Workers who carry out the full range of statutory regulations associated with fostering activity. Historically we have many part time workers across the service which does impact on Managers time in providing supervisions, however, over the year through one part time social worker leaving, we have managed to make another full time post.

The Deputy Head of Service and Team Managers maintain a close working relationship with the Workforce Learning and Development Training Commissioning Group. This group coordinates the post approval training programme, e-learning and any specialist training from an external provider for approved Foster Carers. The training programme is reviewed annually and has been developed to meet the training requirements to allow Foster Carers to progress within the payment for skills programme. This year the training has expanded to include a separate pathway of training opportunities for Kinship carers and has become a mix of virtual and face to face training since the restrictions have ended from Covid 19.

The Recruitment and Assessment Team are supported by one full time Recruitment Officer to ensure the early stages of recruitment activity receive a prompt response and data tracking is provided for the Team Manager to monitor assessment timescales.

The Fostering Service is also supported by one full time Casework Support Officer.

Equalities Impact

- 11.1 The service continues to give due consideration to race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, religion and disability in all aspects of service delivery to ensure children's needs are appropriately met. Fostering Panel monitors the quality of care being provided by the Foster Carer and the child focussed standards NMS 1 - 12 underpin the quality of placements being provided.

Health and Safety

- 12.1 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. Fostering Panel have a quality assurance role to ensure all fostering households meet the required National Minimum Standards for Fostering (NMS 6 and 10).

Environmental Sustainability

13.1 None arising from this report.

Property and Asset Management

14.1 None arising from this report.

Risk Management

15.1 Risk is managed at all stages of the fostering process

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

16.1 Corporate and departmental objectives are pursued through Business Plans and individual performance monitoring throughout the Service.

- Continue to review our fostering marketing strategy to achieve an overall increase in fostering households
- Regularly consult with our Foster Carers to improve the Service offer
- To increase approved households for older children and siblings and to develop a new Parent and Child fostering scheme.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu, Head of Legal Services	07.07.2022
Finance	Janice Hadfield, Head of Finance	12.07.2022
Service Director(s)		
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Background papers:	
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Fostering Service Statement of Purpose Appendix 2 – Marketing Strategy 2020/21