



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## CORPORATE PARENTING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

### JOINT SUB COMMISSION

4<sup>th</sup> September 2007

# ITEM 8

Report of the Director for Children and Young People's  
Service

## FOSTERING SERVICE REPORT

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Fostering Service continues to provide an annual report for period from 1 April to 31 March 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 for managers 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

#### 2.1 Background

This report informs the Corporate Parenting Joint Overview & Scrutiny sub-Commission, of the activity of Derby City Fostering Service. A report is required annually and this document covers the full year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. Data given in brackets is for 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2007/08. It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that the report will be placed before Members at least annually. Any changes to the Statement of Purpose 2006 are highlighted.

2.2 The Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards published under S23 (1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 outlines the duties and responsibilities of a Fostering Service.

2.3 The Fostering Panel met a total of 22 times between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2006.

There have been no changes to the Panel since the last report other than social worker members, who service panel in rotation. The panel meets fortnightly.

## 2.4 The Panel Membership is as Follows

Pat Hill	Retired Senior Social Services Manager	Chair
Mohammed Daullah	Magistrate & Retired Senior Probation Officer	Vice Chair
Joan Webster	Former Chair of Community Health Council	Independent Member
Neil Gorse	Derby Social Services	Deputy Unit Manager – Children’s Home
Diane Hidson	Foster Carer for another Authority	Independent Member
Angela Jenner	Former Senior Education Officer	Independent Member
Jane Cupitt/Yvonne Jones	Derby City Council	Children’s Social Worker
Judy Ponsford + Aneeta Hulait	Derby City Council	Fostering Social Worker
Sara Bolton	Derby City Council	Councillor and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services

The Fostering Panel Adviser is Katie Harris – Head of Service, Adoption and Fostering

The Decision Maker is Keith Woodthorpe – Assistant Director, Children & Young People’s Services.

## 2.5 Placements made April 2006 to March 2007

- During the period the service responded to 295 requests for new foster placements (an increase of 51). There have been 103 requests to July 2007. The monthly referral rate ranged from 14 requests in September to 42 in July 2006 (51 in July 2007)
- Of the children referred  
80 were placed with Derby City foster carers (39 from April to July 2007)  
13 children were placed with independent fostering agencies (7 to July 2007)  
1 child was placed with another local authority
- Of the remainder 131 requests were withdrawn. Some of these children were placed with extended family; other requests remain outstanding.

## 2.6 Recruitment

- 302 enquiries were received from people interested in finding out about fostering.(101 April – end July)
- This was an increase on the target of 284.
- 114 (30 to July) people requested a follow up visit from a social worker. (Response rate of 34.4% - a slight increase over 06 - 07).
- From these 49 (7) applications were accepted and assessments begun.

## 2.7 Approvals

- 32 (10) carers were approved (an increase of 5) 12 (3) were family and friends approved under Regulation 38 (an increase of 2)
- None the less there has been a net increase in carers of 10 over the year because fewer carers left the service.
- To July 2007 – 10 approvals, 6 de-registrations or retirements.

## 2.8 Loss of Carers

- 22 carers ceased to foster during the year. Reason for resignations were as follows:-

	<u>2004/5</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>2006/07</u>
• Work commitments/personal.	4	7	13
• Transfer to independent fostering agency (IFA).	5	0	0

• Adopted foster child.	4	2	0
• Deregistered	1	2	1
• Retired	0	5	2
• Moved to be adult carers	0	2	0
• Residence order granted.	1	6	2
• Special Guardianship Order granted	-	-	1
• Regulation 38 registration no longer required.	4	5	
• Regulation 38 specific placement disrupted	0	1	2
• Foster child reached 18.	5	3	0
• Deceased	0	1	0
• One carer resigned but then moved to an IFA			

## 2.9 Assessments and Trends

- In March 2007 32 carers were being assessed and trained, an increase of 6 on March 2006.
- We continue to struggle to attract carers to take older children and large sibling groups. That remains a significant risk in our ability to impact on the numbers of children requiring placements in independent fostering agencies.
- Though apparently stable in April 2007 there has been a significant increase in children looked after and whilst many of those children have been placed in our own resources the recent demand for sibling groups of older children have not always been able to be resourced within our own service.
- The increase of 10 carers in April 2007 is spread across general carers, family carers and those offering 'link' or respite placements only.

## 2.10 Position as at March 2007 (July 2007)

- 175 carers provide 228 full time placements. (179 carers providing 293 placements)
- 97 carers provide 233 long term or time limited placements.
- 54 carers live outside Derby City, including in Widnes, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent and Immingham.

- 15 are “Children First” carers and provide 18 placements for children with substantial disabilities.
- 38 carers offer “Link”, short term or general respite placements at any time. (some carers care for up to 4 children on a periodic basis). (40 in July 2007)
- 27 (25) are Regulation 38 “family and friends” carers offering 34 (31) placements. Four relatives have been granted special guardianship orders in the last few months, representing greater permanence for children but, initially additional work for the fostering team
- 6 carers are caring for children over the normal fostering limit of 3 children. (8 in July 2007)
- 57 children and their carers qualify for payments under the ‘fee paid’ scheme.

## 2.11 Development of the Service

- Inspection of the service in November 2006 identified continued improvements in the service over the 12 months.

### CSCI Inspection

Scale	1	2	3	4
Oct 2003	2	17	11	
Oct 2004	0	5	28	
Oct 2005	0	1	21	2
Nov 2006	0	4	14	4

Where

- 4 = Standard exceeded
- 3 = Standard met
- 2 = Standard almost met
- 1 = Standard not met

- There were no statutory requirements and only 4 ‘good practice’ recommendations.
- Formulation of new approach to fee payments and contracts was implemented in April 2006.
- We now offer 3 levels of fee of £75, £125 and £175 per week.
- 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 increased the take up of training. Attendance has increased by 90% since April 2006.
- During the period one 0.6 FTE members of staff has retired and the post has been filled as 1 FTE by using unallocated hours. This opportunity was taken as a

response to increasing demands on the service by the increased number of carers.

- There has been an increase in psychology time provided to the fostering service and foster carers on a consultation basis.
- 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
- The opening of the refurbished Fostering and Adoption Centre in May 2006 has given a focus for recruitment and been well received by carers and staff alike.

2.12 The fostering statement of purpose is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

<b>For more information contact:</b>	Keith Woodthorpe 01332 256704 e-mail <a href="mailto:keith.woodthorpe@derby.gov.uk">keith.woodthorpe@derby.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1: Implications Appendix 2: Statement of Purpose

### IMPLICATIONS

#### Financial

- 1.1 This report in itself has no financial implications. However our ability to place those children who require fostering placements within our own resources has a significant cost benefit for the Department and the Council. The cost of agency family 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.

#### Legal

- 2.1 The fostering function of the Council is regulated by the 1989 Children Act and the associated regulations and guidance and the minimum standards published in 2002.

#### Personnel

- 3.1 The Fostering service consists of 2 full time Service Managers and 13.0 Social Workers who carry out the full range of fostering activities. There has been no increase in these resources since 1997 despite the introduction of the new standards and requirements. The increased activity in recruitment and placements will bring a budget pressure to be considered in the next budget round.

#### Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The service continues to give due consideration to race, gender, culture, religious and disability issues in relation to children being placed and for adults who apply to become foster carers.

The Fostering Panel must reflect in its membership, a gender balance as well as racial and cultural diversity.

#### Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 5.1 This furthers the Council's Objectives of **healthy, safe and independent communities** and supports the priorities of **modernising social care**.

