



Derby City Council

**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB BOARD**  
**14 April 2015**

**ITEM 6**

Report of the Strategic Director of 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 July to September 2014 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on 20 January 2015. This report covers the period October to December 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. A new independent panel chair took 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 service is engaged in the second phase of a demand management project led by consultants imPOWER. Project groups made up of managers, social workers, foster carers and adopters and supported by a consultant are developing operational responses to the recommendations and findings generated in Phase one of the project. There are three work streams looking at recruitment, assessment and support.

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. Both the strategy and action plan will be reviewed as part of the demand management project.

4.4 Between 1 October and 30 December 2014 the Fostering Service registered 31 enquiries and sent out 18 information packs. Eight initial visits were made and three fostering applications received. Three fostering households were approved. At the end of December 20 assessments were underway. On that date there were a total of 105 time-limited, permanent and respite carers, compared to 113 in 2013 and 114 in 2012. There were 17 approved specific carers, compared to 27 in 2013 26 in 2012. There were 13 short-break carers.

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. A new team manager started on 2 March 2015. The composition of the recruitment and assessment team is also under review.

4.6 A new post of Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer funded through the Adoption Reform Grant started on 17 December. This appointment will improve our initial response to enquiries, produce better information reports and support recruitment events.

4.7 There have been two 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 are being reviewed for 2015-16 to keep comparable to 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.

<b>OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED</b>
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- 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>	Hazel Lymbery - Director of Specialist Services 01332 642669 hazel.lymbery@derby.gov.uk Andrew Bunyan - Strategic Director for Children and Young People
<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Rod Jones 01332 6438815 rod.jones@derby.gov.uk  Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 - Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

## 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