

## Central Bedfordshire Council

### CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 13 November 2017

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### Agency Report Quarter 2 - Fostering 1 July - 30 September 2017

Report of (Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  
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#### Purpose of this report

1. Fostering Services Regulations 2000 requires the Fostering Agency to monitor and control the activities of the Fostering Service and ensure quality performance. Quarterly reports are presented to elected Members in order to outline the activities in the Fostering Service so that Members can monitor and feedback on the quality and performance of the Service.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Schedule 6 of the Fostering Regulations 2012 requires the Fostering Service to monitor and report on specific areas of the work it undertakes. This report, therefore, reports on these regulatory activities The Executive or Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and note the Fostering Agency Quarter 2 Report

#### Issues

2. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require the Local Authority Fostering Service to report to Members regularly on the activities of the Service.
3. This is the second quarter report for the financial year 2017/2018.

## **Recruitment of Foster Carers**

4. During July, August and September 2017, a variety of recruitment activities and events took place in line with the Fostering Services recruitment strategy.
5. In terms of outreach work this is not now actively undertaken as it is resource intensive and has not in the past resulted in any increase of enquires being made. This change is reflected in the recruitment strategy for 2017/18, however, is under regular review.
6. In relation to advertising, throughout this quarter we had 4 signs placed on a busy roundabout outside Tesco's in Flitwick. Extra-large posters were displayed at Tesco's in Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable. 10 x rear bus adverts were booked, some of which were in July. A general fostering article was placed in the Early Years newsletter, an article re. Supported Lodgings was emailed to all staff at Brook, an article re PACE (Police and Criminal evidence) scheme was sent to subscribers of CBC email alerts and also placed in Ezine newsletter (key players in partnership e.g. town and parish councils, councillors, Citizens Advice etc.). An editorial re. the Intensive Support scheme was placed on NARPO (National Association of retired police officers) website. An on-line advert re. fostering was placed in the Bedford Times and Citizen. Leaflets re fostering were distributed to all visitors to Woburn Safari Park on the day of the Celebration of Fostering event which was held there.
7. Press coverage took place in various ways. In July, a radio interview took place with the Practice Manager, Fostering and with the 'Penny Appeal' (Muslim Fostering) which highlighted the need to recruit Muslim foster carers. In August, there was no press coverage due to it being the holiday period. In September, a press release was sent to all contacts e.g. newspapers, town and parish councils, radio stations etc. regarding the Celebration of Fostering event. An overview of the event was also mentioned in the Chief Executive's regular blog.
8. Online posts have continued to be promoted during this quarter. An on-line advert was placed on the homepage of Heart radio website. A web takeover re. the Intensive Support scheme took place on 'Luton Today' website. Regular Tweets and Posts, particularly in relation to the PACE fostering scheme on CBC/Fostering Twitter/Facebook page as well as on the Penny Appeal/Muslim Fostering Facebook page. A radio advert re. fostering was played on Heart Radio. Articles were placed, on line, in the Early Years Newsletter and Bedford Hospital Staff Newsletter re. Supported Lodgings.
9. As a result of the recruitment that took place during this period we received a total of 32 enquiries, 8 in July; 13 in August and 11 in September (this is 1 less than in the last quarter). There were 18 Initial Visits during this period: 3 in July; 6 in August and 9 in September (this

is the same as in the previous quarter). There were 6 application forms received during this period: 2 in July; 3 in August and 1 in September (this was 5 less than in the previous quarter). The best forms of recruitment during this period were an advert on Facebook for PACE fostering (47 responses) the CBC website (27 responses) and Net Natives (21 responses).

10. In September, the Service held its Celebration of Fostering event at Woburn Safari Park. Over 130 carers and children attended. Long service awards were presented to 15 foster carers and their families who had clocked up an amazing 120 years' service between them. Individual awards also went to a host of different carers and their children in recognition of the contribution they make to fostering. Chief Executive Richard Carr and Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing, were there to support the event and present the awards. The families that attended had the opportunity to see the animals, enjoy a barbecue as well as get involved in the games and entertainment provided.

### **Assessments**

11. 24 new assessments were started: 7 career carers, 5 Regulation 24 (temporary approval) and 9 Family and Friends/Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments (this is 5 more than in the previous quarter). As of the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 there were a total of 22 assessments in progress: 8 career carers which included 2 Independent Fostering Agency transfers), 1 Regulation 24, 11 Family and Friends/SGO assessments and 2 Supported Lodgings assessments.
12. 8 fostering households were approved, 5 as career carers (3 of which were IFA transfers with a total of 6 children in placement) and 3 as family and friends carers for a total of 5 children.
13. There were 3 resignations from foster carers, all of which were career carers. 1 carer resigned because the carers son struggled with fostering, another as they were returning to teaching and the third one when it became clear he could not commit to fostering with his unavailability to take identified placements, frequent trips abroad and uncertainty about his current/future housing situation.
14. As of the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 the Fostering Agency had a total of 110 fostering households (compared to 109 at the end of the previous quarter), 86 of these were career carers.
15. In relation to the ethnicity of foster carers and children placed, there is a fair match of ethnicity with foster carers broadly reflecting the ethnicity of our children in care. There is, however, still a need to recruit more ethnic minority carers and this is reflected in the current fostering recruitment strategy.

<b>Ethnicity</b>		
<b><i>Ethnicity</i></b>	<b><i>Foster Carers</i></b>	<b><i>Looked After Children</i></b>
White	91%	76%
Dual Heritage	1%	5%
Black or Black British	4%	5%
Asian	4%	4%
Gypsy/Roma/Traveller	/	3%
Other	/	7%
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

16. As of the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 there were a total of 128 children placed with in house foster carers compared to 117 at the end of the previous quarter (an increase of 11 children). 78 were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (compared to 74 at the end of the previous quarter). This equates to 62% of children placed in house compared to 38% placed with Independent Fostering Agencies. The number of children placed in house has dipped compared to the end of the last quarter which reached an all-time high of 65% this is in part due to the summer period where a lot of carers were away on holiday therefore placing children was harder and also due to the increase of LAC during this period. It is anticipated that the number of children placed in house will increase over the coming months particularly due to the number of career carers currently in assessment. Our aspiration is to have 70% of children placed in house by the end of March 2018 which is an achievable target.
17. Placement stability remains good. The Service has 2 Performance Indicators, 1 for short term and 1 for long term.
18. The short-term indicator is for the % of LAC with 3 or more placement moves over the previous month. The target set for the last financial year was 11%. At the end of March 2017, the Service had reached an impressive 9.2%. The target for 2017/18 was then set to a more challenging 8% and at the end of September 2017 the Service had exceeded this target at 7%.
19. The long-term indicator is for the % of children under 16 who have been looked after continuously for 2.5 years and been in the same placement for at least 2 years or have been placed for adoption. The target set for the last financial year was 70%. At the end of March 2017, the Service had reached another impressive 78.4%. The target for 2017/18 was then set to 80% and at the end of September 2017 the Service was nearing the target at 77.5%.
20. Placement stability has been achieved because of the various work being undertaken in the Service. More carers have been recruited, foster carers approval has been reviewed to maximise capacity. Foster

carers profiles have been created which includes carers strengths and vulnerabilities, this aids the matching process. Linking the fostering fee to training has meant more carers are attending training and developing their skills and knowledge. A CAMHS clinician is based within the Corporate Parenting Service, there is a quick response in offering additional support to carers when difficulties arise. Fragile placement/disruption meetings are held and learning from these is shared and actions taken to improve practice. In evidence of placement stability there have been no fragile placement/disruption meetings needed in this quarter which is an indication that foster carers are well supported.

21. As of the 30<sup>th</sup> September there were 143 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 139 at the end of the last quarter). Although Special Guardian Order (SGO) carers are generally expected to access universal services, they are entitled to seek support from the Local Authority as and when required. The Fostering Service continues to work with a small cohort of families who contact the service sporadically for support and advice. On average the service works with about 5 families a month and will undertake visits, or provide telephone support in order to meet the needs of individual carers. The main area Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers seek support with is in relation to contact, children's behaviour or support in financing respite or holiday activities.

### **Referrals/Placements**

22. During July, August and September there were 36 new fostering placements made: 14 in July; 9 in August and 13 in September. This is an increase of 20 new placements compared to the last quarter.

### **Training**

23. Foster carers accessed a wide range of training opportunities to help them develop their knowledge and skills. The Fostering Service provided 8 specialist in house training courses which included: Childcare Emergency First Aid, Allegations Awareness, Contact and Working with Birth Parents, An Introduction to Theraplay, Supporting Educational Achievement, Tax Talk for foster carers, Self-Harming Behaviours and Management and training for carers of adolescents (CAMHS).
24. 30 foster carers also accessed e-learning training on the following subjects: Contact in Foster Care, Safer Caring, Adolescence, Equality and Diversity, Impulsive behaviour, An Introduction to Safeguarding, Behaviour and the physical Environment, Awareness of Child Abuse, Early Child Development, Sexualised Behaviour; issues in foster care, Child Abuse and Neglect and Child and Adult Sexual.

25. As of the 30<sup>th</sup> September there were 84 fostering households who had completed their mandatory Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD's); 11 households were yet to complete their portfolios but still had time to address within the required timescales. 3 households were overdue in completing their TSD Standards and were outside the required timescale. Supervising social workers and the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer were providing additional support to help these carers achieve the standards.

### **Ofsted Notifications**

26. Whenever a significant event happens i.e. a child goes missing from placement or a serious incident/accident occurs the agency have to report these to Ofsted. During this period, there were no notifications made to Ofsted.

### **Allegations**

27. During this period, there were no allegations made regarding foster carers.

### **Complaints**

28. During this period, there were no complaints made against the Fostering Service.

### **Compliments**

29. The main compliment received was from Ofsted during tour 'Children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers' Inspection. The following feedback about the Fostering Service was received –

- There are effective recruitment, training and support arrangements in place
- Foster carers valued the stability of their supervising social workers who 'do what they say they will do'
- Assessment of carers are timely and thorough
- Supervising social workers visit carers regularly and work closely with children's social workers to promote placement stability
- A dedicated group of foster carers provides other carers with respite care. This has been effective in promoting the stability of placements in very challenging situations
- Foster carers receive good training to help them understand attachment theory and the impact of trauma
- The number of placement disruptions is low and learning is used to improve practice
- The independently chaired fostering panel is effective. It has a dedicated panel adviser who ensures all reports are of a suitable standard

- The central list of panel members includes experienced individuals from a range of diverse backgrounds
- The panel is consistently curious and used penetrating questions to assure members about the quality of work

### **Annual Budget**

30. For the financial year 2017/2018 the Fostering Service within Children's Services had an annual budget of £1,103,082.

### **Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements**

31. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outline the requirements to report to Members on the management and outcomes of Services provided, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the Services provided are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

### **Risk Management**

32. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standards.

### **Staffing**

33. The Fostering Agency is located in the Corporate Parenting Service with the Head of Service has overall management responsibility for Fostering. The Practice Manager who is also the Registered Manager for Fostering monitors and manages the activities of the Fostering Agency. She supervises 2 team managers who have day to day responsibility for the management of 2 fostering teams. During this period 1 member of staff transferred to work in another childcare team to further their development and 1 member of staff went on maternity leave. There were 4 permanent vacancies in the Service, these posts were advertised externally and a recommendation was made to recruit to one of the vacant posts. Agreement via the VMP (vacancy management process) was made to recruit agency staff to cover the vacant posts and 3 agency social workers started working in the service in September.

### **Developments**

34. Last year the Fostering Service reviewed what was called the Youth Care Scheme and now known as Intensive Support. This scheme provides intensive support and care to children who may display very challenging behaviour or have complex needs. At the time of review the service had 5 Intensive Support carers and the target was to recruit 10 by March 2018. This target is on course with 9 Intensive Support carers approved at the end of September.

In January, the service introduced an in house Supported Lodgings Scheme. This scheme is about providing accommodation and support to young people, aged 16 – 17 years, who are not ready to live independently. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a room to a young person and offer practical and emotional support to help prepare them for independence. The target for this year was to recruit 10 Supported Lodgings carers by March 2018. At the end of September 5 carers had been approved with a further 2 in assessment. Whilst this is positive not all those carers approved have yet been matched and work is needed to review which young people can appropriately move into these placements.

## **Challenges**

35. The Fostering Service introduced a new 'PACE' (Police and Criminal Evidence) fostering scheme in April 17 which is aimed at approving carers who can care for young people who have been arrested and would otherwise remain in custody. Carers provide overnight care to a child or young person before they attend court the following day. Luton initiated the scheme and the plan was for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council to work together with Luton Borough Council to recruit and run the PACE scheme, offering cover on a rota basis. Whilst this scheme has been well marketed and there has been a good response the referrals received have not been viable ones. Luton have successfully recruited 1 carer and Bedford has thus far not started to recruit. The service will continue to promote the scheme and work with Luton to ensure the success of this scheme.

## **Work in progress**

36. Plans are in place to develop a Parent and Child Scheme by March 2018. Whilst some research has been undertaken in this area, work on the scheme hasn't started but plans are in place to develop this scheme in the next quarter.

## **Council Priorities**

37. Children and Families First.  
Working as One Team close to our community.  
Being great Corporate Parents to children in care and care leavers – much more than care.  
Being a well-managed service and providing great public care.

## **Corporate Implications**

Not applicable



## **Legal Implications**

38. This report provides updating information to allow consideration of the activities of the Fostering Agency in the previous quarter as required by legislation. There are no further legal implications.

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

39. This is an update report and has no financial implication.

## **Equalities Implications**

40. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The report highlights ongoing efforts to recruit foster carers from diverse backgrounds and to provide training and development in relation to equality issues.

## **Implications for Work Programming**

41. This is the Quarter 2 report of 4 Quarter reports that feed into an annual report which is then presented to Overview and Scrutiny along with the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the service continues to focus on recruiting and assessing more foster carers. 5 career carers were approved this quarter and another 7 are in assessment which means the Service is on target to meet its recruitment target of 10 new career fostering households for this financial year.

The % of children placed in house compared to IFA's remains good with expectations for this number to rise further in the coming months.

Placement stability remains at an all-time high with carers feeling well supported as evidenced in their feedback during the Ofsted Inspection. The lack of need for fragile placement/disruption meetings during this quarter and the fact there have been no Ofsted notifications, allegations or complaints against foster carers made all help to indicate/support the good placement stability figures.

The Fostering Service continues to provide a 'Good' service where foster carers are well supported and children's needs are appropriately met. Introducing new initiatives/schemes and learning from current practice has

helped the Service grow, develop and improve practice but ultimately it is contributing to good outcomes for looked after children.

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

None