

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 7 November 2011
Subject: Quarter One Report on the Fostering Service – April–June 2011
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children’s Services.
Summary: The report outlines the activity in the fostering service during Quarter One (April to June 2011).

Contact Officer: Fiona Mackirdy, Head of Adoption and Fostering
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The report supports priority 2 of the Central Bedfordshire’s Strategic Plan 2009-11: Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people. The report also supports Priority 2 of the Children and Young People’s Plan 2011-2014: Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Fostering is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

Financial:

1. Adoption and Fostering within Children’s Services has an annual budget of £5.015 million, including income from Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Service arrangement. There are no new financial considerations arising from the Annual Reports.

Legal:

2. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outlines the requirement to report to Members on the management and outcomes of the services, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the services are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

Risk Management:

3. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Fostering and services provided to Looked after Children affects all sectors of communities.

Community Safety:

6. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

7. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

8. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes and comments on the content of the report.**

Background

9. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Fostering Services to report to Members at three monthly intervals. This will be achieved by presentation of quarterly updates to the Corporate Parenting Panel and a full year Annual Report to this Panel and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June each year.
10. The Adoption and Fostering service is a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council. Annual reports contain information activity in respect of both Councils. This report will be provided to Bedford Borough.
11. This report covers activity in the period April to June 2011. As the year goes on, comparative data to the previous quarter will be included

Recruitment of Foster carers

12. During the period 53 enquiries were received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers.
13. 17 assessments of new foster carers commenced, including 9 assessments of households caring for a child within their own family.
14. 9 new fostering households were approved by the Fostering and Permanence panels.

Placements for Children

15. In these 3 months there were 78 requests for new or change of fostering placements. 22 of these requests did not result in placements as children did not become looked after or did not move placement.
16. 39 children were placed with in-house foster carers of whom 24 were Central Bedfordshire children. 5 CBC children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency provision.
17. At 30 June 2011, there were 117 children living with in-house foster carers or which 61 were Central Bedfordshire children.

Training for Foster Carers

18. 12 training courses took place involving 103 delegates. This included preparation training for prospective foster carers as well as short courses and workshops for approved foster carers.

Key Events

19. Marketing and recruitment events took place at Leighton Buzzard Market and the Young Farmers rally in Gravenhurst.
20. Advertising and press releases were placed in the local newspapers and publications, as well as on the outside and inside of two Stagecoach buses.
21. The Annual Foster Care awards and social event took place at Harlington Upper School, celebrating long-service awards and completion of qualifications of foster carers.

Focus for next quarter

22. Further consideration will be given to how to develop more specialist in-house foster care provision for adolescents.

Appendices: None

Background Papers: (open to public inspection) - None