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**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 4 February 2012  
**Subject:** Quarter Three Report on the Fostering Service – October to December 2012  
**Report of:** Sue Tyler, Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations  
**Summary:** The report outlines the activity in the fostering service during Quarter Three, with comparison to previous quarters.

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

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

Central Bedfordshire Council's Medium Term Plan Priority C Promote Health and Well-being.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 Priority 2 – 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:**

**that the Corporate Parenting Panel note and comment 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 October to December 2012. Comparative data with previous quarters is summarised in the tables in Appendix A.

**Recruitment of Foster carers**

12. During the period 43 enquiries were received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. This is similar to the comparable quarter for last year. Traditionally fewer enquiries are received in the autumn/winter months. For the year so far numbers of enquiries are on par with last year.
13. 24 assessments of new foster carers commenced, of which 18 were assessments of households caring for a child within their own family. This is a similar level of activity as the last two quarters with the number of new assessments started for mainstream carers being 8 on average per quarter.

14. 14 new fostering households were approved by the Fostering and Permanence panels. Taken with changes to carers' approval and resignations, there was a net increase of 9 fostering placements in Quarter 2, taking the total for the year so far to 35.

### **Placements for Children**

15. In these 3 months there were 102 requests for new or change of fostering placements. This is a similar level to the previous quarter.
16. 17 newly looked after children were placed with in-house foster carers of whom 10 were Central Bedfordshire children. 15 CBC children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency provision when becoming looked after.
17. At 30 December 2012, there were a total of 164 children living with in-house foster carers of which 85 were Central Bedfordshire children. This number has remained relatively consistent for the last three quarters.
18. The absolute number of looked after children from Central Bedfordshire living in Independent Fostering Agency provision was 87 at 31 December 2012, an increase of 3 since the last quarter and reflective of the continued increase in the number of looked after children over the period.

### **Training for Foster Carers**

19. 19 training courses took place involving 192 delegates. This included preparation training for prospective foster carers as well as short courses and workshops for approved foster carers.

### **Key Events**

20. Specific and general fostering recruitment campaigns took place in this period. Specific adverts for carers for younger children and babies were placed in local press and some parish magazines. Separate adverts and press releases were made to coincide with 'Sons and Daughters' week which celebrates the contribution the children of foster carers make. Our joint first aid course and drama activities for sons and daughters and looked after children which took place in October half-term received a national write up in the Fostering Network's magazine for foster carers and professionals. This event was very well received by the young people and they have asked for more similar opportunities.
21. A planned lunch for foster carers to promote the work of the Foster Care Forum and the local Foster Care Association with the aim of seeking new recruits to both these bodies, and the Corporate Parenting Panel had to be cancelled due to very poor response from foster carers. We intend to schedule an evening event with light snacks/drinks to see if this is more convenient for carers to attend.

## **Ofsted Inspection**

22. Inspection of the Fostering Service by Ofsted took place from 14 to 18 December. The service was judged to be good overall. More detailed feedback about the inspection outcomes is the subject of a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which is also to be presented to this Panel.

## **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Comparative Data

## **Background Papers:**

None