



Appendix A

# **Fostering Agency**

**Annual Report**

**For the period  
2015 - 2016**

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## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

- 1.0.1 This report describes the activity of Central Bedfordshire Councils Fostering Service during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, noting their achievements, clarifying the remit and focus of their work and identifying recommendations for the development of the service.
- 1.0.2 This report is provided as part of the monitoring of the fostering agency required under the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards 2011.
- 1.0.3 This report will be presented to the Central Bedfordshire Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a quarterly update will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

## SECTION 2 – Staffing/Service Structure

- 2.1.1 The Fostering Service was made up of the following full-time equivalent staff:-

- 1 x Practice Manager
- 2 x Team Managers
- 3 x Senior Social Workers (2.5 full time equivalent)
- 9 x Social Workers (8 full time equivalent)
- 1 x Family Support worker
- 1 x Marketing, recruitment and training officer (works across the adoption and fostering service area)
- 1 x Marketing, recruitment and training support officer (works across the adoption and fostering service area)
- 1 x Fostering Panel Adviser (0.71 (25/37 hours) full time equivalent)
- 1 x Panel Secretary
- 2 x Business Support Officers

The Fostering Service has also had access to a clinical psychologist (2 days a week) for 6 months of this financial year.

- 2.1.2 The service has remained largely fully staffed this year, apart from the last quarter when some long standing senior/social workers moved on to take up new opportunities. This has enabled the service to creatively develop staffing roles i.e. changing some roles from seniors to social workers and expanding the total number of available hours the service can provide. This has enabled the service to provide supervision/support to the number of new carers who have been approved during the year as well as make saving in relation to the overall staffing budget. During this quarter the service also operated with 1 vacant manager's post placing additional responsibilities/work on the remaining manager and practice manager. By the end of the financial year all vacant posts had been recruited to although not all staff were in post.
- 2.1.3 The workforce is diverse and the majority of staff has extensive post qualifying experience. A programme of induction and additional support is in place for those newly-qualified or in the early years of their social work career.
- 2.1.4 All staff has access to the Council's extensive Learning and Development Programme and can apply to attend external courses and conferences where appropriate. The Council's Learning and Development Programme also provides diversity training for staff in order to ensure they understand and address issues of diversity when working with foster carers

and children in care. Staff are encouraged to embrace and celebrate the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

- 2.1.5 The team carries out the full functions of the fostering agency with social workers completing a range of fostering work, including foster carer assessments, supervision/support, reviews etc. In addition the fostering service is involved in the assessment and support of Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers.
- 2.1.6 The fostering service is supported by specialist staff across the Corporate Parenting Service and works particularly closely with the Placement and Resource Team whose staff are responsible for making placements and foster carer payments.

## **SECTION 3 – The Fostering Permanence Panel**

- 3.1.1 The Fostering and Permanence Panel usually meet twice a month depending on demand. During the period 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 the panel met on 21 occasions.
- 3.1.2 The Fostering and Permanence Panel considers applications from prospective foster carers and makes recommendations as to their approval. First Annual Reviews and those where there has been a change in carers' approval or where there have been a complaint or allegation are presented to Panel for consideration. The Panel also make recommendations in relation to children being matched to their permanent foster carers.
- 3.1.3 The attached Fostering Panel Chairs Report (Appendix B) includes valuable information and feedback on the function of panel business, statistical information as well as panel business.

## **SECTION 4 – SPECIALISED FOSTERING**

### **4.1 THE FAMILY LINK SCHEME**

- 4.1.1 The Family Link Scheme offers short breaks to children of all ages who have a physical or functional disability. Family Link carers are foster carers who are recruited, approved and trained in the same way as other foster carers. They receive regular support and guidance from a supervising social worker.
- 4.1.2 Family Link foster carers can care for a child in their own home, the child's home or by taking the child to an activity. Period of short breaks will be carefully planned and can be for a few hours occasionally or whole weekends on a regular basis.
- 4.1.3 Once agreement has been given for the care package from the Resource Panel, a careful process of matching takes place taking into account the individual needs of the child and their family and the carer's abilities.
- 4.1.4 On the 31 March 2016 there were 6 Family Link carers approved. These carers were supporting 5 children by providing regular short breaks. There was also a salaried family link fee-based carer who was linked to 4 children and 1 adult who had complex medical needs.

### **4.2 THE YOUTH CARE SCHEME**

- 4.2.1 The Youth Care Scheme is a comprehensive and enhanced fee paid scheme which provides specialist care to young people over the age of 10 years who have needs which are particularly challenging or complex.
- 4.2.2 As of 31 March 2016 there were 6 approved Youth Care Households, caring for 6 children.

## **SECTION 5 – CHILDREN AND FOSTERING**

### **5.1 CHILDREN ACCOMMODATED**

- 5.1.1 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 108 children were accommodated (compared to 107 in the previous year) 53 of these children were placed with in house foster carers. 19 were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). 3 were placed in parent/child units, 7 were placed in residential care, 2 were placed in secure and 24 were placed in semi-independent living.
- 5.1.2 29 of the young people placed either with in house foster carers, Independent Fostering Agencies or in semi-independent living were unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- 5.1.3 The referral for the child/young person which includes essential and preferable matching criteria, which are crucial to identifying which carers may be able to support a child. Where a placement does not meet the essential criteria or where any identified risks cannot be managed an alternative placement is sought.
- 5.1.4 Respite placements were provided as and when needed on 52 occasions. In addition 5 children had regular monthly respite as part of their care plan. Youth carers were provided with 16 periods of respite as part of the Youth Care agreement.
- 5.1.5 Of the referrals for foster placement 12 came through the Emergency Duty Desk Service, this compares to 16 in the previous year.
- 5.1.6 As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 there were a total of 117 children living with in-house foster carers (compared to 105 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015) and 82 living in Independent Fostering Agencies (compared to 90 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015). This represents 59% of children placed with in-house carers (compared to 54% as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015). This increase of in-house placements has been achieved not only by the increase in number of career carers being approved, but also in supporting existing foster carers to consider changes in their approval so as to enable them to care for a wider variety of children and increase the number of children they can care for. This has enabled Central Bedfordshire Council to make significant savings in terms of placement costs as more children have been accommodated in homes which is more cost effective than placing children in IFA's . When children do need to be placed in IFA's there is a regional Framework Agreement in place to commission these placements. The agreement sets out quality and cost standards for placements with 18 preferred providers. This agreement has enabled the council to reduce the average cost of placements and there are clearer expectations in respect of quality and outcomes for children.
- 5.1.7 As a result of their success in meeting the recruitment target the Fostering Service needed an additional supervising social worker to supervise/support the additional foster carers approved during the year. A number of long standing senior social workers were leaving the service and a review of the staffing compliment took place with the senior

posts transferring into social work posts. This enabled the service to recruit an additional supervising social worker without incurring any additional cost to the service.

## 5.2 AGE, GENDER AND ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR FOSTERING

5.2.1 Over half the children accommodated between the 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 were aged 0-5 years, the age distribution was as follows:

0-4 years	40 children	(37%)
5-10 years	10 children	(9%)
11-15years	29 children	(27%)
16+ years	29 children	(27%)

From the age profile of children accommodated compared to last years cohort it is clear that more older children were accommodated this year.

Of the 108 children accommodated between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 73 (68%) were male and 35 (32 %) were female. This evidences a significant increase from the previous year in terms of the number of males being accommodated compared to females. In 2014/2015 there were 52 males (49%) compared to 55 females (51%).

5.2.2 In terms of recording of ethnicity of the 108 children accommodated between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016; 59 were White/British; 11 were Eritrean, 7 were dual heritage, 6 were Iraqi, 6 were Vietnamese, 4 were black/African, 4 were Afghani, 2 were White/European; 2 were Black/British, 2 were Syrian, 1 was Kurdish, 1 was Black/Asian, 1 was Turkish, and 1 was Iranian.

## 5.3 SIBLING GROUPS OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR FOSTERING

5.3.1 There were 7 sibling groups within the children accommodated during the year, 2 groups of 2, 1 group of 3, 2 groups of 4, 1 group of 5 and 1 group of 6. One of the significant criteria for matching children with carers is enabling them to be placed with siblings, wherever possible. Out of these sibling groups 4 groups were assessed as needing to be placed together and were (2 x sibling group of 2 and 2 x sibling group of 4. 3 sibling groups were assessed as needing to be placed together but had to be placed separately (1 sibling group of 3, 1 of 5 and 1 of 6). Large sibling groups are more difficult to match with suitable carers as many fostering households do not have lots of bedroom vacant for fostering.

## SECTION 6 – FOSTER CARERS

### 6.1 RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

6.1.1 The Fostering Service's recruitment target for 2015/2016 was to recruit 15 new fostering households and this was achieved. In order to ensure a range of foster carers are recruited for Central Bedfordshire children a range of marketing and recruitment activities have taken place during the year. These have included outreach work; advertising; press coverage; online posts/websites/Facebook and twitter pages.

- 6.1.2 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 there were 105 enquiries by people who were interested in becoming foster carers, 64 of these enquiries then progressed to an Initial Visit where they are provided with more in depth information about fostering. Out of these 64 Initial Visits, 30 prospective foster carers then sent in an application form to foster. 15 of these applications then progressed into career carer assessments and were subsequently approved as foster carers.
- 6.1.3 The best months for enquiries were July (14) June (12) and September (13). The worst 3 months were December (3) and August (3).

## **6.2 THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FOSTER CARERS: ENQUIRIES, ASSESSMENTS AND APPROVALS**

- 6.2.1 All assessments are carried out in accordance with the National Minimum Standards and Statutory and Practice Guidance. All prospective foster carers are required to attend in-depth 'Skills to Foster' training as part of the preparation and assessment process.
- 6.2.2 In terms of assessments completed between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 there were 59. These assessments would have been a mixture of Regulation 24, temporary approval (18); full Family and Friends, (12); Career Carers (15) and Specialist Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments (14).
- 6.2.3 During the year there were 18 requests for Regulation 24 placements (temporary approval) to allow immediate placement to take place. 11 of these carers were given temporary approval.

## **6.3 SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS (SGO'S)**

- 6.3.1 The Fostering Service are also involved in the assessment of SGO carers and in providing additional support when universal service do not meet the specific needs of SGO carers.
- 6.3.2 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 the Fostering Service completed 14 SGO reports and recommended 9 for agreement at Court. Court, however, agreed to recommend 10 out of the 14 SGO's. In addition court agreed 9 SGO's that were completed by Family Support Team.
- 6.3.3 As at 31 March 2016 there were 130 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 114 at the end of March 2015). The Fostering Service work with a small cohort of families during the year, who contact the service sporadically for support and advice. On average the service works with about 5 families a month and will undertake visits, attend meetings or provide telephone support in order to meet the needs of individual carers/children. The main areas in which Specialist Guardianship Order (SGO) carers seek support are in relation to contact, children's behaviour or support in financing, respite or holiday activities.

## **6.4 ETHNICITY OF CARERS**

- 6.4.1 As at 31 March 2016 there were a total of 189 foster carers living within 104 households. The breakdown of ethnicity regarding these carers was described as follows:

White 173 (91%)  
Dual Heritage 2 (1%)  
Black or Black British 9 (5%)  
Asian 5 (3%)

## **SECTION 7 – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR FOSTER CARERS**

7.0 All foster carers are expected to attend relevant training recommended by their supervising social worker. The service has a full and comprehensive training programme for carers, from preparation training, through induction and core training to more complex/specialist post-approval training.

### **7.1 SKILLS TO FOSTER**

7.1.1 New fostering applicants have many questions prior to and during the assessment process. As an essential part of the fostering assessment preparation to become a foster carer the 'Skills to Foster' training examines issues that are relevant, such as what it will be like to have children placed with them, or working in tandem with the ideal authority in order to reach positive outcomes for children.

7.1.2 Spread over several dates, this course provides an opportunity for prospective foster carers to reflect on their values and attitude to caring and learn more about the skills and attributes needed to become a foster carer. During 2015/2016, the Fostering Service ran 4 'Skills to Foster' courses with 38 delegates attending.

7.1.3 As part of the application and assessment process, all applicants must complete Emergency First Aid training. 7 courses were held during 2015/2016 and these were attended by 77 delegates.

### **7.2 SONS AND DAUGHTERS**

7.2.1 The Fostering Service run holiday activities for sons and daughters of foster carers which are activity based and aimed to support them with the impact of fostering on their family. This year 3 events took place, one event was held at Caldecott (10 attendees) which is an outdoor activity centre, another event was at Nerf Zone (9 attendees) which was a foam dart activity and the third event was a visit to a pantomime (22 attendees).

### **7.3 INDUCTION**

7.3.1 Following approval, foster carers enter their 12 month induction phase into the service and are required to complete Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards.

### **7.4 THE FOSTERING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

7.4.1 Each year the Fostering Service produces a comprehensive training programme covering a wide range of topics to help foster carers develop their skills and knowledge. During this

financial year a total of 39 specialist in-house training courses were provided (compared to 43 in the previous year) on 14 subjects (compared to 24 in the previous year).

- 7.4.2 In April 2015, the range of training that the Fostering Service could access was extended to enable foster carers to access training provided by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), Social Care, Virtual Schools, Domestic Violence and Early Years Teams. Foster Carers are now able to book these courses on line and are able to access various e-learning as well as more traditional classroom based training. Twenty six different training courses were accessed by foster carers from this shared training programme. Having access to many specialist courses enables foster carers to tailor their training to suit their specific requirements based on the needs of the children they have in placement, at well as ensuring they attend the core training required by the National Minimum Standards for the Fostering Service.

## **SECTION 8 – SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS**

### **8.0 THE FOSTERING SOCIAL WORKER**

- 8.0.1 The fostering social worker is responsible for the foster carers ongoing assessment and support and must provide regular supervision that addresses their learning and development needs. It is the key role of the fostering social worker to support foster carers in meeting the National Minimum Standards required in the care they provide to children and young people.

### **8.1 ADVISE AND MEDIATION SERVICE**

- 8.1.1 Independent advice and mediation is provided to foster carers via Fostering Network (a national organisation supporting foster carers). This service is primarily used for foster carers during an allegation as it helps to have independent support and advice during these times. In previous years a contract has been agreed with Fostering Network to provide this service. As this service has historically been under utilised the service took the decision in April 2015 not to continue with the contract but to spot purchase this service as and when it is required. During this financial year there have been no requests to purchase this service.

### **8.2 FOSTER CARER SUPPORT GROUPS**

- 8.2.1 Local monthly support groups are held for foster carers across the county. These groups are held in Dunstable, Millbrook and Cardington and have been well attended throughout the year.
- 8.2.2 Monthly support groups are also held for youth carers. For part of the year a clinical psychologist attended this group in order to provide clinical supervision/support and help and aid placement stability.
- 8.2.3 Two evening social events for foster carers also took place over this financial year and included a fish and chip supper (32 adults and 13 children attended), and a Buffet Bake Off (19 adults and 22 children attended).

### **8.3 CELEBRATION OF FOSTERING EVENT**

- 8.3.1 A Celebration of Fostering event is held every year to recognise the commitment, loyalty, hard work and achievements of our foster carers and their families. This year the event was

held at Woburn Safari Park and was extremely well received with 79 adults and 80 children attending. Staff from the Corporate Parenting Service attended as well as the Chief Executive, Assistant Director, Operations and the Portfolio holder. 13 foster carers received awards this year; 8 for 5 years' service, 2 for 10 years' service, 1 for 15 years' service and 2 for 25 years' service. Special awards were also presented for carers in the following categories:

- Outstanding contribution to caring for children with disabilities
- Brilliant family and friends foster carer
- Fabulous foster carer
- Outstanding contribution to fostering
- Special sons and daughters

#### **8.4 FOSTER CARERS TALK TIME**

8.4.1 This event is held quarterly and gives foster carers the opportunity to meet with Fostering Managers and other senior managers to discuss fostering issues. It also allows the Corporate Parenting Service to update foster carers on developments within the service. Four Talk Times were held in this financial year with a total of 52 carers attending. Following the Talk Time meeting a newsletter is sent out to all foster carers updating them of areas discussed at Talk Time as well as providing information on a whole host of other topics relevant to fostering.

#### **8.5 THE MENTORING SCHEME**

8.5.1 The mentoring scheme currently has five foster carer mentors who specialise in their own areas such as care of teenagers, short term care for younger children, long term care and one mentor with vast experience of the different schemes. All newly approved foster carers are allocated a mentor at the time of approval and existing foster carers are able to access the scheme during challenging times or if they require additional support. During this financial year 21 mentees were supported by this scheme.

#### **8.6 OUT OF HOURS SERVICE**

8.6.1 Fostering managers and social workers from the Fostering Service provide an 'out of hours' telephone support service for foster carers. A mobile phone is dedicated to this service and all carers have access to the number. The service is available from 5.20pm – 11pm weekdays and from 9am – 11pm during weekends and bank holidays. This service ensures that foster carers can readily access telephone support from an experienced fostering worker.

8.6.2 Feedback from foster carers indicates that this service is highly valued. Outside of these hours foster carers will contact the Emergency Duty Team.

#### **8.7 THE FOSTER CARERS ASSOCIATION**

8.7.1 The Bedfordshire Foster Carers Association is run by foster carers and provides local support and social activities for foster carers. The council actively encourages and supports the Association and provides financial support and services in kind to assist with producing

and circulating a quarterly newsletter. During this financial year events that the Foster Carers Association provided included a Halloween Party, a Christmas Party, Picnics, Crafting Sessions and a trip to Wicksteed Park.

## 8.5 FOSTERING NETWORK AND BAAF MEMBERSHIP

- 8.5.1 The Fostering Service is a corporate member of Fostering Network that works to promote fostering in the UK. All approved foster carers are also provided with individual membership, funded by the Fostering Service.
- 8.5.2 Central Bedfordshire Council remained a full member of BAAF until closure in August 2015 – BAAF was a leading organisation representing fostering and adoption agencies and provided training courses, practice, guidance, research material, and a consultation and advice service to all its members. In August 2015 a new organisation, Coram/BAAF was established and continued to provide policy, research, professional advice and training.

## SECTION 9 – SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS

- 9.1.1 The Fostering Service is involved in the assessment and support of Special Guardianship Order carers (SGO's). The number of Special Guardianship Order carers in Central Bedfordshire has been increasing year on year. As at 31 March 2016 there were 130 SGO's in place compared to 114 as at 31 March 2015.
- 9.1.2 The majority of SGO Carers receive a financial allowance and access universal services; however a small number contact the service for advice, support and guidance. Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 the Fostering Service worked with 36 families (compared to 29 for the previous year). The areas of support requested from families were as follows:

Contact	9
Behavioural management issues	8
Risk assessment needed	4
Financial support	3
Respite	3
Support re SGO breakdown	3
Allegation/concerns	2
Play therapy/CAMH support	2
Complaint	1
Transfer to another local authority	1
Support regarding house move	1
Support filling out forms	1
Update	1

## SECTION 10 – NOTIFICATIONS

- 10.1.1 The Fostering Service has to notify Ofsted (Schedule 7) of any significant events, accidents or incidents that occur for children whilst placed in foster care.
- 10.1.2 Between 1 April 2015 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 there were no notifications sent to Ofsted (compared to 19 for the previous year). The high numbers last year were mainly to do with children missing from placement and the Fostering Service were notifying Ofsted when children were absent but not missing. The service is now only notifying Ofsted if children are missing and there whereabouts are unknown.

## SECTION 11 – ALLEGATIONS

- 11.1.1 Allegations against foster carers are dealt with in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), procedures for managing allegations/concerns about foster carers. All foster carers who are, subject to any allegation are offered independent support from the Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service.
- 11.1.2 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 there were 4 allegations of misconduct made against foster carers and (this is the same number as last year). All allegations made were referred to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) but none reached the threshold for investigations. The allegations made as outlined:
- A child stated that their prospective family and friends' carer pushed them. The assessing social worker dealt with this issue with the foster carer.
  - Issues were raised regarding the behavioural management strategies used by a foster carer. This was dealt with by the Fostering Service as a Practice Issue.
  - An allegation was received from a neighbour of a foster carer who stated that the child in placement was refused food and was spoken to inappropriately. This was dealt with as a concern and the fostering social worker addressed the concerns with the foster carer.
  - An allegation was made against a foster carer in relation to their adopted child. This was referred to the access and referral team but no further action was taken. It later transpired that this had been a malicious allegation.

## SECTION 12 – COMPLAINTS

- 12.1.1 The Fostering Service uses the Children's Services Complaints Procedure for dealing with and monitoring complaints by foster carers, birth parents and relatives, staff and other partners with a relevant interest in the way CBC fostering services are provided.
- 12.1.2 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 there were no complaints made (compared to 6 complaints made in the previous year). Only 2 of the complaints made in the previous year were upheld and the learning from these was then put into practice as a way of improving practice. Although not classed as a complaint, 1 prospective foster carer did write to their MP because she was unhappy that the Fostering Service had decided not to follow through her interest in fostering a specific child. One of the fostering managers and social work assistance undertook a joint visit to explain the decision more fully with her.

## SECTION 13 – COMPLIMENTS

- 13.1.1 Compliments about service delivery from customers and for their representatives are recorded within the service as these alongside complaints and comments can be shared to promote learning and make improvements.
- 13.1.2 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 the Fostering Service received 37 compliments (compared to 15 in the previous year). Many of these compliments were made in relation to the excellent work foster carers are doing. For example at an adoption review the adopter spoke very positively about the foster carers during the children's introduction to them. The adopters stated that 'the foster family were lovely and went beyond what would have been

expected during introduction. They provided a 'full on service' by doing everything so they (the adopters) could concentrate entirely on the girls'.

- 13.1.3 Fostering staff have also received several compliments from foster carers, child care social workers and IRO's (Independent Reviewing Officers), Fostering Panel, regarding the support/training they have provided to foster carers and in relations to the quality of work produced. In court the solicitor for a Child praised the quality of the assessment presented by one of the assessing social workers. The fostering panel also regularly compliment presenting social works on the quality of the work they are presenting to panel. The panel secretaries have received compliments. One of the interim panel advisers who had worked for various Local Authorities in this role stated that the panel secretaries were 'the best she had ever come across'. Birth parents have also sent in compliments, one sent a complimentary letter thanking the foster carer 'for all her work' and another sent a thank you to a social work assistant for all her support during a court hearing.

## SECTION 14 – OFSTED

- 14.1.1 Ofsted last inspected the Fostering Service in December 2012 when the service was judged to be good overall.
- 14.1.2 Ofsted have now changed their format for inspections with the Fostering Service now being inspected as part of the Children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leaver inspection process. Inspections can take place at any time and one is likely to take place in the near future.

## SECTION 15 – CONCLUSION

- 15.1.1 This has been another successful year for the Fostering Service. For two years in a row the Fostering Service has met its recruitment target for foster carers. Not only has the service increased the number of foster carers it now has but it has also decreased its usage of more expensive Independent Fostering Agency placements.
- 15.1.2 At the end of March 2014 only 46% of our looked after children were placed with in house foster carers. By the end of March 2015 this had increased to 54% and by the end of March 2016 it had increased to 62%. Our aspiration is to increase this further to 70% as there will always be children that need to be placed out of area or in IFA/residential placements or in semi-independent living.
- 15.1.3 The increase of in house resources has enabled CBC to make significant savings on placement costs as IFA placements are significantly more expensive than in house foster placements. Placement choice has been improved which has enabled better matching of children. More children are in local placements that better meet their needs and where support is more readily available.
- 15.1.4 There have been very few changes in the way the Fostering Service provides services this year. The primary purpose of the Fostering Service is to provide high quality, safe, secure and caring foster placements for children who are unable to live with their birth families. The service continues to provide placements that meet this requirement. The quality of the work undertaken by the Fostering Service and the support and training offered to foster carers has been excellent. This is evidenced in the low level of allegations, lack of

complaints/notifications and the high level of compliments and positive feedback the service has received this year.

- 15.1.5 In terms of the forthcoming year the service needs to continue to concentrate on increasing the number of in house foster carers so that more children can be placed with carers who can appropriately meet their needs locally. The recruitment target for 2016/17 is to recruit a further 10 foster carers; however this will be targeted recruitment as the service has sufficient foster carers to care for young children but needs to increase the number of foster carers who can care for older children, sibling groups, children with complex needs and asylum seeking young people.
- 15.1.6 During 2016/2017 the Fostering Service also plan to review the Youth Care Scheme, develop the Supportive Lodgings scheme and look at a more therapeutic model of working with foster carers.

This Report has been composed and presented for members to consider and note by:

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This information can be made available in  
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