

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 4 July 2017

Agency Report Quarter 4 – Fostering 1 January – 31 March 2017 CPP

Report of (Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing (carole.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Advising Officers: Sue Harris, Director of Children's Services, and Annie Craig, Practice Manager, Fostering (annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Consider and note the Fostering Agency Quarter 4 Report

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. This report has not been to or is planned to go to Overview and Scrutiny as no recommendations/decisions are required. Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to consider and note the Fostering Agency Quarter 4 report.

Executive Summary

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. This report, therefore, focuses on the work

- articles were placed on the Beds on Sunday website, Luton Today and various newsletters such as Central Essentials (sent to all head teachers in all schools/academies in the CBC area), Governors Essential (sent to all Governors of schools/academies in the CBC area), Connect (sent to all staff within Social Care, Health, Housing and relevant portfolio holders). A local news webpage takeover (fostering advert) was also placed in Biggleswadedetoday.co.uk.
- In terms of social media various posts were made on Central Bedfordshire Council's Twitter account and Facebook page. A Net Native campaign started with Facebook adverts regarding the Intensive Support fostering scheme and a Google search campaign which focused on general fostering.
- During this quarter 2 number of carers chose to transfer from their agency to CBC as a result of the 'Golden Handshake' initiative that was introduced in September 2016.
- As a result of the recruitment that took place during this period we received a total of 34 enquiries, 16 in January, 10 in February and 8 in March (this is 13 more than in the last quarter). There were 24 Initial Visits during this period: 6 in January, 8 in February and 10 in March (this is 6 more than in the previous quarter). There were 7 application forms received during this period: 4 in January, 2 in February and 1 in March (this is 5 less than in the previous quarter). The best form of recruitment during this period was via the net native campaign (7 enquiries) and the CBC website (5 enquiries).

Assessments

- During this period 17 new assessments were started: 5 career carer, 2 Regulation 24 (temporary approval), 8 Family and Friends/Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and 2 Supported Lodgings assessments. As of the 31st March 2017 there were a total of 16 assessments in progress: 6 career carers, 2 Regulation 24's, 6 Family and Friends/SGO's and 2 Supported Lodgings assessments.
- 6 Fostering households were approved, all as career carers, during this quarter (2 of which were IFA transfers). This brings the number of approval for the year to 11 which exceeds the recruitment target set for 2016/17 which was to recruit 10 career carers.

During this quarter there were 2 de-registrations of foster carers, 1 carer resigned following concerns being raised with her regarding the care provided to the child in placement, The second resignation was from a carer where a planned review of her approval was going to

recommend she was no longer suitable to be approved as an Intensive Support foster carer.

- As of the 31st March 2017 the Fostering Agency had a total of 107 fostering households (compared to 103 in the previous quarter), 85 of these were career carers.
- 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.

Ethnicity		
<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Foster Carers</i>	<i>Looked After Children</i>
White	90%	76%
Dual Heritage	1%	6%
Black or Black British	6%	5%
Asian	3%	3%
White Gypsy/Traveller	/	1%
Other	/	9%
Not known	/	1%
	100%	100%

- As of the 31st March 2017 there were a total of 134 children placed with in house foster carers compared to 74 with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). The number of children placed with in house carers is increasing year on year. At the end of March 2014 the percentage of children placed in house was 46%, by the end of March 2015 this had increased to 54%, by the end of March 2016 it was 59%, and at the end of March 2017 this had further increased to 65%. This increase has been achieved by the Service reviewing all existing foster carers to ensure we maximise their fostering offer, by having a robust recruitment strategy in place including supporting IFA carers to transfer to CBC when they have chosen to do so, by work being progressed regarding our step down initiative to move children from residential care into a fostering placements where they have the opportunity to experience family life. It has also been achieved by ensuring foster carers are well supported to care for the children placed with them. Our aspiration is to increase the percentage of in house placements further to 70%. We can never achieve 100% in house as there will always be children that need to be placed out of the area or in IFA/residential placements. Increasing our pool of in house carers will not only improve services to children in care and help improve placement stability but children will have local placements to better meet their

needs and the Council will decrease its reliance on more expensive IFA placements

- As of the 31st March 2017 there were 135 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 140 at the end of the last quarter). Each year the number of SGO's granted has increased year on year, this is the first time that the SGO numbers have actually decreased. 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.

Private Fostering

- This report does not cover Private Fostering as the Fostering Service is not responsible for managing or reporting on this area of work.

Referrals/Placements

- During January, February and March 2017 there were 33 new fostering placements made: 12 in January, 5 in February and 16 in March. This is an increase of 16 new placements compared to the last quarter.

Training

- During this quarter foster carers accessed a wide range of training opportunities to help them develop their knowledge and skills. The Fostering Service provided 14 specialist in house training courses which included: Children who go missing; the risk of sexual exploitation, Looking after yourself and others by promoting resilience with attachment in mind, Help for carers with troubled teenagers, Moving on to adoption, Childcare emergency aid, Foster to Adopt, Safer Caring; a new approach, Supporting the Health needs of LAC, Life Story workshop, Contact and working with birth parents, Supporting educational achievement, Preparing LAC for Independence and Allegations Awareness for foster carers. In total 213 candidates booked on training and 192 attended.
- Foster carers also accessed training from the Early Years programme, these included; Early Help and support for mental health in children and young people, Paediatric first aid, Protective behaviours, Tip of the

Iceberg, Crisis Intervention, Learning through play and Prevent training.

- There were 22 foster carers also accessed e-learning training on the following subjects: Safer caring, E-safety, Equality and Diversity, Sexualised behaviour, Child Development, Foetal exposure to alcohol, Attachment and brain development, An introduction to Safeguarding Children and Awareness of child abuse and neglect.
- As of the 31st March 2017 there were 80 fostering households that had completed their mandatory Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD's); 8 households were yet to complete their portfolios but still had time to address within the required timescales. 11 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

- 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 no notifications were necessary.

Allegations

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

Complaints

- During this period there was 1 complaint made by a foster carer in relation to the Local Authority's decision to move children prematurely to their adoptive placement. There were 11 points to the carers complaint of which 4 were partially upheld and 1 was upheld. The 4 partially upheld points related to the clarification of raising concerns and communication regarding the carers being placed on hold. This has been rectified through the introduction of a concerns/complaints against foster carers procedure. The upheld point relates to a process issue in relation to the foster carers payment which has been rectified.

Compliments

- During this period no compliments were received.

Annual Budget

- Year 2016/2017 the Fostering Service within Children's Services had an annual budget of £1,179,630.

Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements

- 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

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

Staffing

- The Fostering Agency comes under the umbrella of the Corporate Parenting Service and the Head of Service has overall management responsibility for Fostering. Under the Head of Service is the Practice Manager who is also the Registered Manager for Fostering. This person monitors and manages the activities of the Fostering Agency. She supervises 2 team managers who have day to day responsibility for management of 2 fostering teams. During this period there were no new starters or leavers. As at the 31st March 2017 there were vacancies for a business support officer and a Supervising Social Worker.

Council Priorities

- 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

- 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

- The report is an update on the service and does not have financial implications.

Equalities Implications

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 of Work Programming

- The 4 quarter Fostering reports feed into an annual report which is then presented to Overview and Scrutiny along with the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

Conclusion and next Steps

- During this quarter the service has worked hard to ensure that assessments in progress were completed and approved at fostering panel in order for the Service to meet its recruitment target. The target set for 2016/17 was to recruit 10 new fostering households and the Service actually approved 11.
- As of 31st March 2017 65% of children were placed with in house foster carers compared to 35% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). The % of children placed in house has now stabilised at 65%, however the Service is striving to increase the number of children placed with in house carers further. Our aspiration is to be able to place 70% of our children in house. If the Service continues with its robust recruitment strategy and continues to provide good support to carers it is expected that the 70% target can be met within this financial year.
- Long term placement stability of children is good as evidenced in our performance indicator exNI63 which look at the percentage of looked after children aged under 16 who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption. Our target in this area was 70% (high is good) and at the end of March 2017 we had exceeded this target at 78.4%
- Short term stability of children is also good as evidenced in our performance indicator exNI62 which looks at the percentage of children looked after with three or more placements during the previous 12 months. Our target in this area was 11% (low is good) and as at the end of March 2017 we exceeded this target at 9.2%.

- Good progress has been achieved in both performance indicators due to a number of initiatives and work being undertaken which has focused on placement stability issues. This has included in various way.
 - Having a robust recruitment strategy in place.
 - Creating profiles of carers strengths and vulnerability which are utilised during the matching process.
 - Ensuring foster carers are accessing appropriate training to meet their learning and development needs.
 - Having CAMHS clinicians based in the Corporate Parenting Service who can work with children and carers when required.
 - Ensuring meetings take place when placements are fragile or disrupt so that additional support can be provided where required and any learning can be shared to help plan for future placements.
 - Constantly reviewing the quality of referrals and challenging when they do not meet the required standard.
 - Ensuring foster carers have resource packs and appropriate training when they care for UASC.
 - Updating the foster carers supervision checklist to ensure consistency of supervision with all foster carers.
- Other indicators of placement stability include the fact there have been no notifications made to Ofsted regarding any events/significant incidents, there have been no allegations made against foster carers and only 1 complaint made during this period. Foster carers core training needs have been reviewed, gaps identified and action taken to ensure all foster carers complete core training. Foster carers are accessing more training and developing their skills and knowledge which means they are in a better position to support the children in their care. When placements become fragile or disrupt the service is quick to respond in order to resolve issues and support carers appropriately.
- In conclusion this has been a very positive quarter for the Service, exceeding its targets in relation to recruitment and short and long term placement stability. The performance and available data for the service give a good indication that foster carers providing a high standard of care to the children placed with them, that children are well matched and supported in local resources and that outcomes for them have improved considerable during this quarter, particularly in relation to placement stability.

Appendices

- None.

Background Papers

- None.

Report Author:

Annie Craig – Practice Manager – Fostering Service

Annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk