



Foster
Do something incredible today!

Appendix A



Annual report

Fostering Team, Central Bedfordshire Council

For the period: 2016 - 2017

A great place to live and work.



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Introduction

The annual Fostering Service Report provides information about the management and outcomes of the Fostering Service and meets the requirements of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Regulation 35) and Fostering Services: National Minimum Standard 25.7.

The report will inform Elected Members, Senior Managers and decision makers about key outcomes in service provision, identify any issues of concern and outline plans for improvement to the quality of service provision. The report may also be of interest to service users, staff and colleagues from other agencies. The report provides information about the activities and outcomes achieved between 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 and identifies developments for the Service for the year ahead.

Section 1

1.1. Service Overview

- 1.1.1 The Fostering Agency is co-located within the Corporate Parenting Service of Children's Services. This supports the close working relationship between the operational childcare teams and the Fostering Service.
- 1.1.2 The Fostering Agency has remained conveniently located to support the provision for providing a range of fostering services as specified within the current legislation. The Statutory Guidance underpinning fostering legislation prescribes the services and processes to be followed by a Fostering Agency and the qualifications required by Managers and Social Workers.
- 1.1.3 The Fostering Agency has experienced a number of staff changes during this year mainly due to staff moving on to further their career, retirement or staff moving out of or living out of area.
- 1.1.4 As at the 31st March 2017 the Fostering Service was made up of the following full time equivalent staff:-
 - 1 x Practice Manager
 - 2 x Team Managers
 - 2 x Senior Social Workers
 - 10 x Social Workers
 - 1 x Family Support worker.
 - 1 x Panel Secretary
 - 2 x Business Support Officers



- 1.1.5 All employed staff are permanent (apart from a small number of Independent Form F assessors) and have a number of years post-qualifying experience.
- 1.1.6 All fostering social workers are qualified and registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). They have 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.
- 1.1.7 The teams carry out the full functions of the fostering agency with social workers completing a range of fostering work, including foster carer assessments (Family and Friends and career carers), supervision/support, reviews etc. In addition the fostering service is involved in the assessment of Supported Lodgings carers and the assessment and support of Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers.
- 1.1.8 The fostering service is also supported by specialist staff across the Fostering and Adoption Service. These include a Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer, a Marketing, Recruitment and Training Support Officer, a Professional Panel Adviser and Panel Secretaries who support and manage the Fostering and Permanence Panel. The Fostering Service has access to CAMHS clinicians who provide support to Social Workers, Children in Care and Foster Carers. The Fostering Service also works particularly closely with the Placement and Resource Team whose staff are responsible for making placements and foster carer payments.

1.2 The Fostering and Permanence Panel

- 1.2.1 The Fostering and Permanence Panel usually meet twice a month depending on demand. These panels have primarily been full day panels considering a maximum of 6 cases per panel.
- 1.2.2 During the period 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 the panel met on 17 occasions.
- 1.2.3 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. Panel also make recommendations in relation to children being matched to their permanent foster carers.

- 1.2.4 The attached Fostering Panel Chairs Report (Appendix B) includes valuable information and feedback on the function of panel business.

1.3 Provision of information on fostering

- 1.3.1 Central Bedfordshire Council has a single point of contact to the service through a local rate telephone line. Enquiries can be made via the council website where information on fostering is readily available and directly to a fostering email address. Enquirers are provided with information about fostering and the assessment process and are invited to attend information events during the year. In addition they are offered Initial Visits where enquirers are provided with more information about fostering and an initial assessment of their home is undertaken to ensure it meets health and safety requirements to foster.

2 Section 2

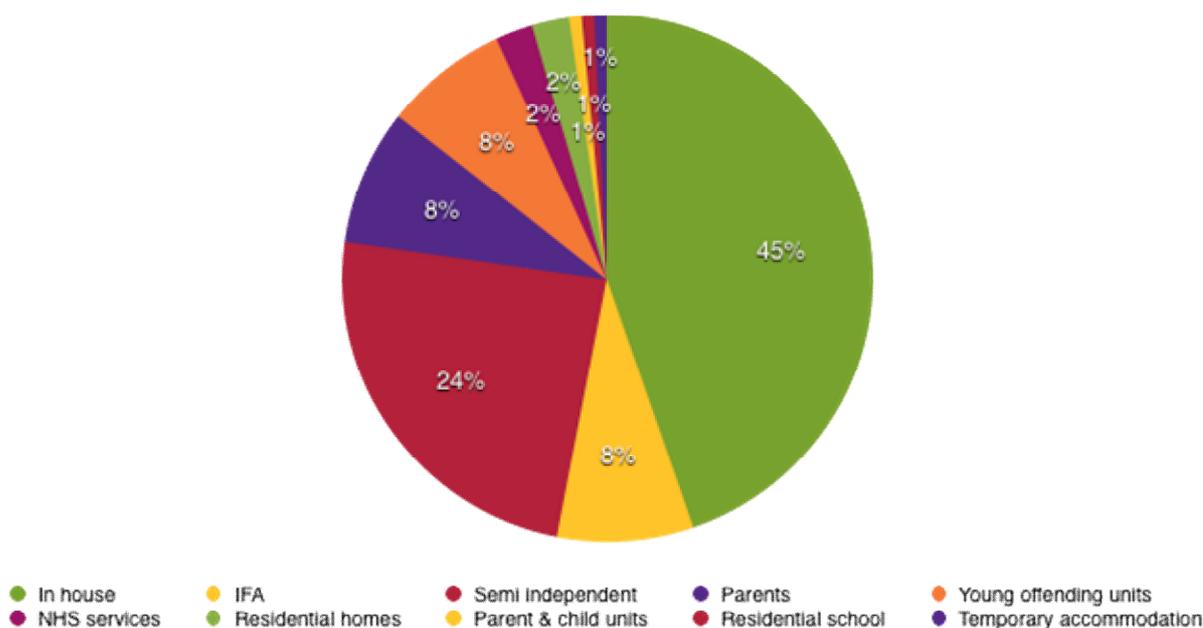
Children and Fostering

2.1 Children accommodated

- 2.1.1 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 132 children were accommodated (compared to 108 in the previous year) 59 (45%) of these children were placed with in house foster carers (compared to 53 in the previous year). 11 (8%) were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (compared to 19 in the previous year). 32 (24%) were placed in semi-independent accommodation (compared to 24 in the previous year), 11 (8%) were placed with parents, 10 (8%) were placed in Young Offending Units, 3 (2%) were placed within NHS services, 3 (2%) were placed in residential homes (compared to 7 in the previous year), 1 (1%) was placed in a Parent and Child Unit, 1 (1%) was placed at a residential school and 1 (1%) was placed in temporary accommodation.



Children accommodated between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017



2.1.2 44 of the young people placed either with in house foster carers, Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) or in semi-independent living were unaccompanied asylum seekers (compared to 29 in the previous year). The main countries of origin for these young people were Iran (14), Vietnam (8), Iraq (6), Syria (4) and Eritrea (3).

2.1.3 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.

2.1.4 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.

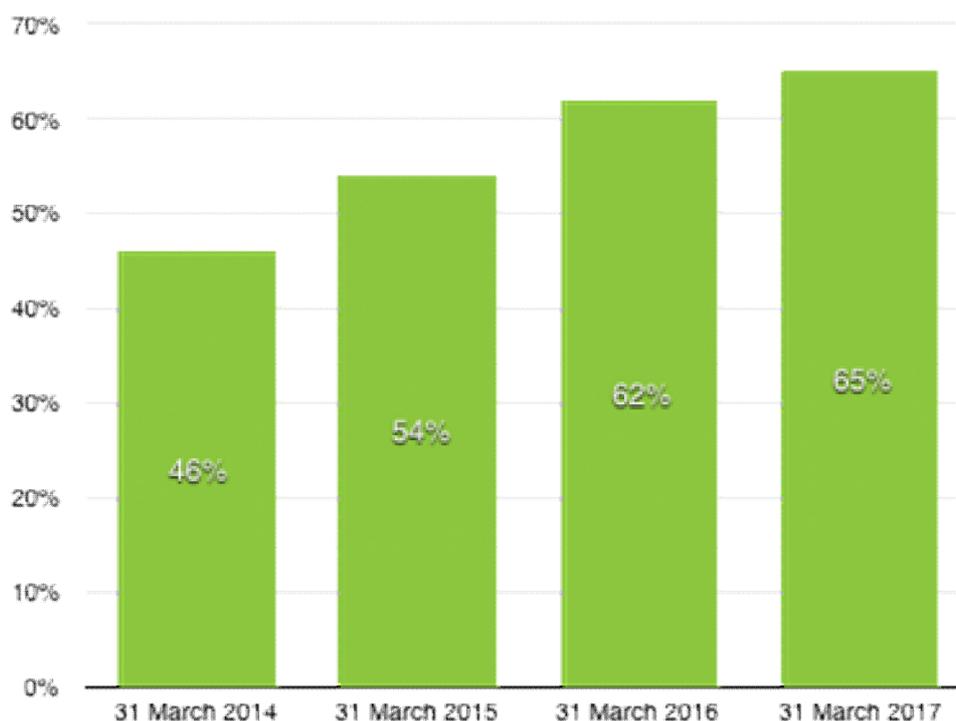
2.1.5 Of the referrals for foster placement 15 came through the Emergency Duty Desk Service (compared to 12 in the previous year).

2.1.6 As at 31st March 2017 there were a total of 131 children living with in-house

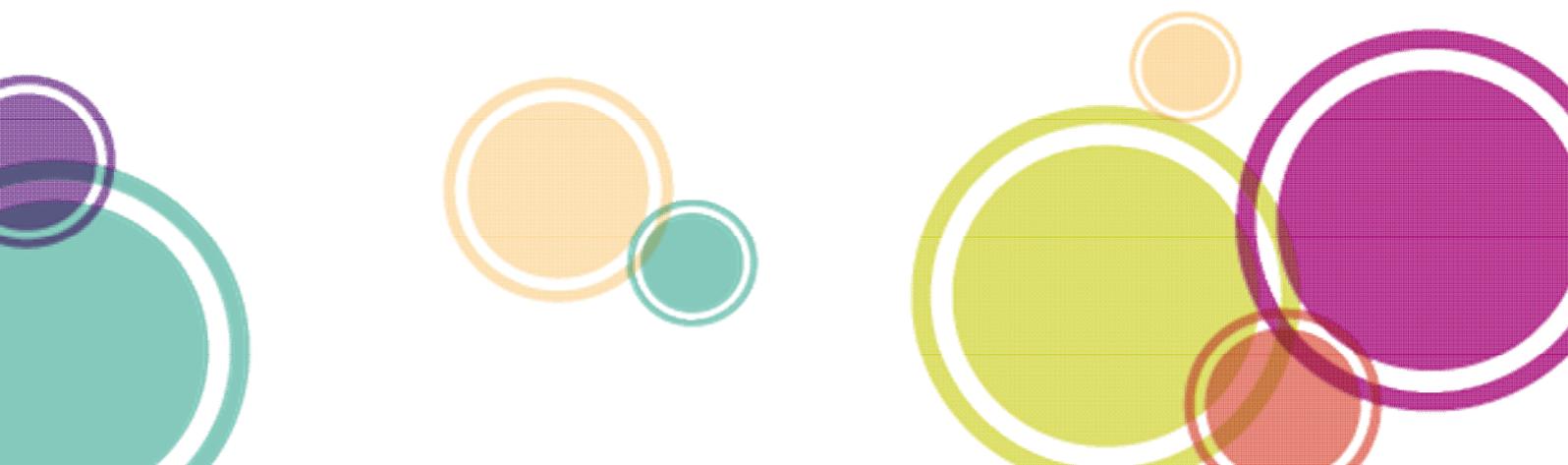


foster carers (compared to 117 as at 31st March 2016) and 74 living in Independent Fostering Agencies (compared to 82 as at 31st March 2016). This represents 65% of children placed with in-house carers (compared to 62% as at 31st March 2016, 54% as at 31 March 2015 and 46% as at 31 March 2014). This 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 CBC 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 (Independent Fostering Agencies). When children do need to be placed in IFA's (Independent Fostering Agencies) 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.

Percentage of children living with in-house foster carers



- 2.1.7 Research indicates that placement stability for children and young people in care is an important factor for them having more positive outcomes during their lives. Changes of placement and primary carers causes instability in terms of attachment and sometimes disruption in education/friendships etc.
- 2.1.8 Changes of placement primary carers. The increase in number of available in house placements has also supported placement stability as there is now more choice of foster carers available so better matching can be achieved.
- 2.1.9 The Service has 2 targets set in relation to placement stability, one for short term and one for long term stability. Short term placement stability is measured by the performance indicator exN162 which looks at the percentage of children looked after with 3 or more placement moves over the previous 12 months. The target set was 11% (low is good) and at the end of March 2017 this target was exceeded at 9.2%. Long term placement stability is measured by the performance indicator exN163 which looks 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. The target in this area was 70% (high is good) and at the end of March 2017 this target had been exceeded at 78.4%. Good progress has been achieved in both performance indicators due to a number of initiatives and various work being undertaken which has focused on placement stability issues, this has included;
- Having a robust recruitment strategy in place which has delivered on what it set out to achieve
 - Reviewing foster carers approval range to ensure the fostering service is utilising what foster carers can offer in terms of placements
 - Creating profiles of foster carers strengths and vulnerabilities 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 when required and any learning can be shared to help plan 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 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)



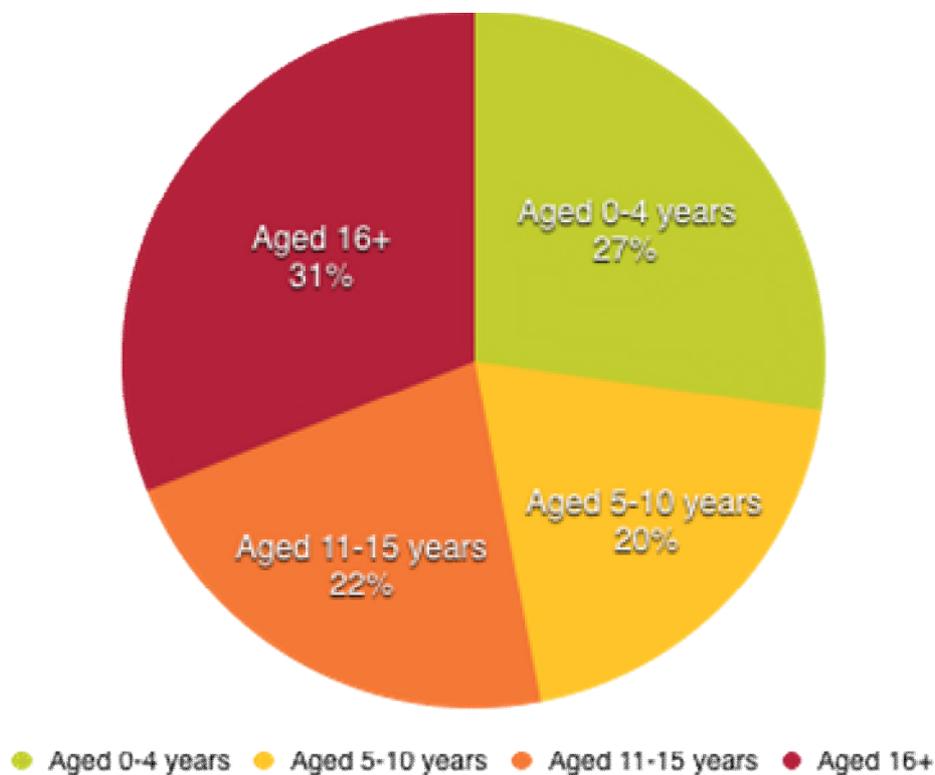
- Updating the foster carers supervision checklist to ensure consistency of supervision with all foster carers
- Having a stable and permanent workforce in place to provide consistency to children and foster carers.

2.2 Age gender and ethnicity of children referred for fostering

2.2.1 The majority of children accommodated between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 were aged 16 plus and were mostly unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, the full age distribution was as follows:

- 0-4 years - 36 children (27% compared to 37% in the previous year)
- 5-10 years - 26 children (20% compared to 9% in the previous year)
- 11-15 years - 29 children (22% compared to 27% in the previous year)
- 16+ years - 41 children (31% compared to 27% in the previous year)

Age of children accommodated

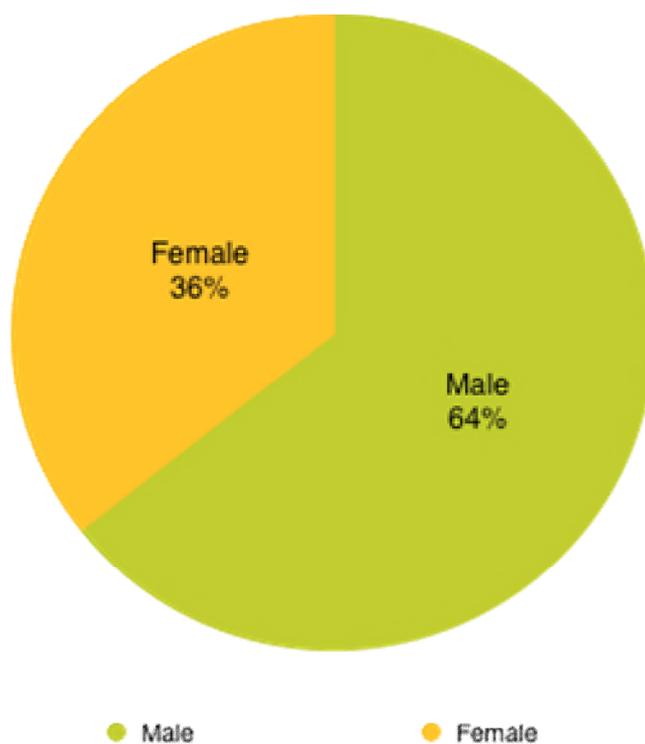


2.2.2 Last year the highest percentage of children accommodated were in the 0-4 age category, this year the highest percentage were in the 16+ category.

70% of all children placed in care were aged 11 and over.

- 2.2.3 Of the 132 children accommodated between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 85 (64%) were male and 47 (36 %) were female. This evidences a slight increase of males accommodated during this period compared to last year when there were 73 (68%) of males accommodated compared to 35 (32%) females.

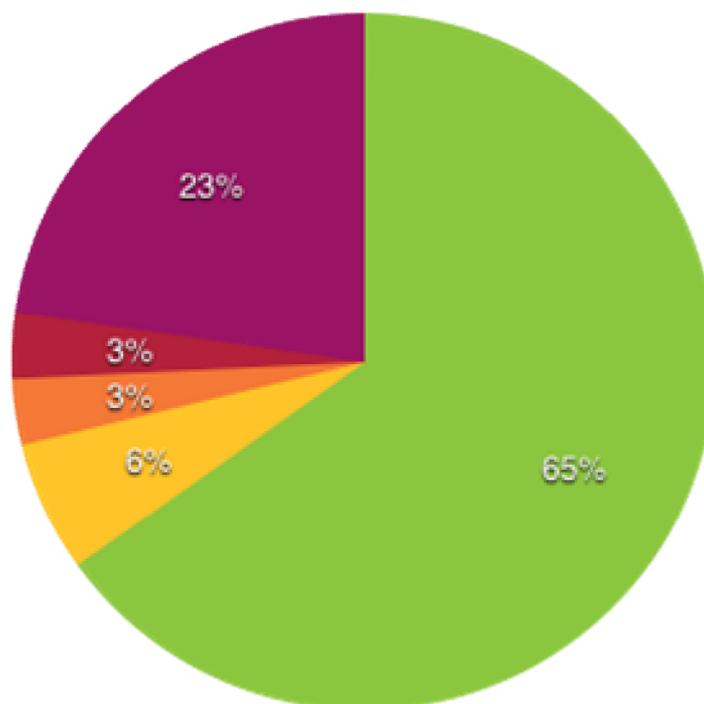
Gender on children accommodated



- 2.2.4 In terms of recording of ethnicity of the 132 children accommodated between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017; 86 (65%) were White/British; 8 (6%) were Asian or Asian/British, 4 (3%) were Black or Black British, 4 (3%) were Dual Heritage and 30 (23%) were classed as Other Ethnic Groups (many of these would have been the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People). This means that 35% of placements were for children from ethnic minority groups and therefore, strategically services provided may need to be reviewed in order to ensure the specific needs of this group of children are appropriately met.

Ethnicity of children accommodated

● White/ British
 ● Asian or Asian/British
 ● Black or Black/British
● Dual Heritage
 ● Other ethnic groups



2.3 Sibling groups of children referred for fostering

2.3.1 There were 11 sibling groups within the children accommodated during the year (compared to 7 in the previous year), 6 groups of 2, 4 groups of 3 and 1 group of 4. 9 of these sibling groups per placed in house with only 2 needing to be placed in I.F.A placements. 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 all sibling groups were assessed as needing to be placed together apart from 1 young sibling group where the baby had a different father and it was decided to place separately. All sibling groups assessed as needing to be placed together were placed together. This is a significant achievement as sibling groups are more difficult to match with suitable carers as many fostering households do not have spare bedroom capacity to accommodate sibling groups.



3 Section 3 Foster carers

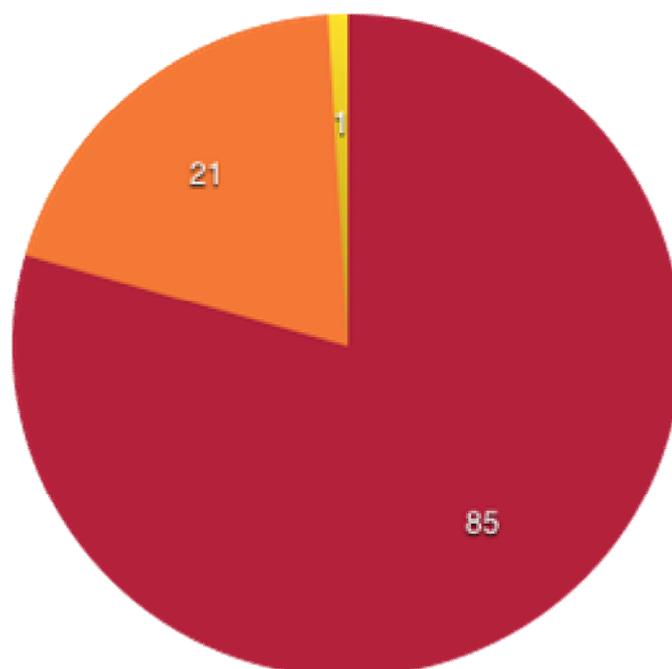
3.1 Recruitment of foster carers – enquiries through to approval

- 3.1.1 The Fostering Service's recruitment target for 2016/2017 was to recruit 10 new career carers 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.
- 3.1.2 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 there were 92 enquiries (compared to 90 in the previous year) by people who were interested in becoming career foster carers.
- 3.1.3 The best months for enquiries were January (16); May (10) and February (10). The worst 3 months were August (2); September (3) and December (5).
- 3.1.4 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.
- 3.1.5 In terms of assessments completed between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 there were 67 (compared to 61 in the previous year) These assessments would have been a mixture of Regulation 24, temporary approval (11); Family and Friends/SGO,(38); Career Carers (24) and Supported Lodgings assessments (2).
- 3.1.6 As at 31 March 2017 the Fostering Service had a total of 107 fostering households (compared to 104 in the previous year). 85 of these were career carers (compared to 82 in the previous year) which included 7 intensive support carers and 1 specialist family link carer, 1 foster for adoption carer and 21 family and friends carers, 6 of which were Regulation 24 (temporary approved) carers.



Foster carer approval categories

● Careers carers ● Family & friends carers ● Foster to adopt carer



3.2 De-registrations/terminations of approvals

3.2.1 Foster carers cease to foster either because their approval has been terminated by the Service or because they wish to resign. Termination of approvals occur usually because there has been an allegation/concern against a foster carer that has been upheld or because foster carers no longer meet the standards required. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 there were no terminations of approvals. During this period, however, there were 14 de-registrations, 5 of which were family and friends carers, the remaining 9 were career carers.

3.2.2 Reasons for de-registrations/resignations as follows;

Family and Friends:

- 1 x Child reached 18 years of age
- 1 x SGO (Special Guardianship Order) granted
- 1 x sibling group returned to birth parents
- 1 x Adoption Order granted
- 1 x Full care Order granted to the LA and carer unable to care for the child.

Career Carers:

- 1 x Carer's birth children did not wish to continue fostering
- 1 x Carer decided it was the right time to end their fostering career
- 1 x Carer moved from tier 3 to tier 2, couldn't then afford to foster
- 1 x Carer moving a significant distance from the Bedfordshire area
- 2 x Carers had personal issues and a change in circumstances
- 3 x Carers were dissatisfied with the Service

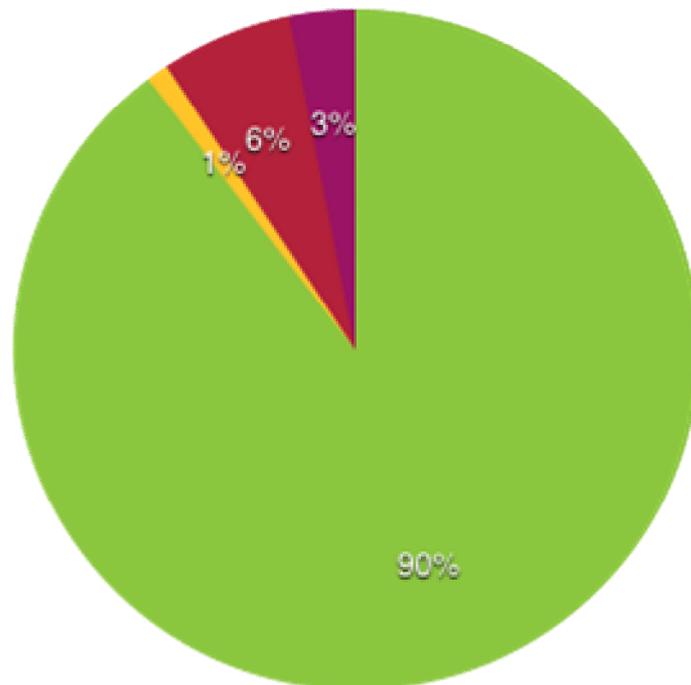
3.3 Ethnicity of foster carers

3.3.1 As at 31 March 2017 the breakdown of ethnicity of foster carers was as follows:

- White - 174 (90%)
- Dual Heritage - 2 (1%)
- Black or Black British - 12 (6%)
- Asian - 6 (3%)

Ethnicity of foster carers

● White ● Dual heritage ● Black or Black British ● Asian



3.4 The Intensive Support Fostering Scheme (previously known as Youth Care)

- 3.4.1 The Youth Care Scheme was reviewed in 2016 and renamed as the Intensive Support Fostering Scheme. This is a comprehensive and enhanced fee paid scheme which provides specialist care to children and young people mainly over the age of 10 years (although younger children can be placed) who have needs which are particularly challenging or complex.
- 3.4.2 As of 31 March 2017 there were 7 approved Youth Care Households, caring for 4 children.

3.5 The Family Link Scheme

- 3.5.1 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.
- 3.5.2 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.
- 3.5.3 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.
- 3.5.4 On the 31 March 2017 there were 5 Family Link carers approved (2 of whom were on hold). These carers were supporting 2 children by providing regular short breaks. There was also a salaried family link fee-based carer who was linked to 2 children.

3.6 The Supported Lodgings Scheme

- 3.6.1 The Supported Lodgings Scheme was introduced at the beginning of 2017 and was put in place to support young people aged 16-17 years of age who are preparing to leave care. The aim of the scheme is to give young people the support and guidance required to support them into independence. It also provides the opportunity to support some young people who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum. There was 1 in house 1 Supported Lodgings carer approved as at 31 March 2017.



4 Section 4 Special Guardianship Orders

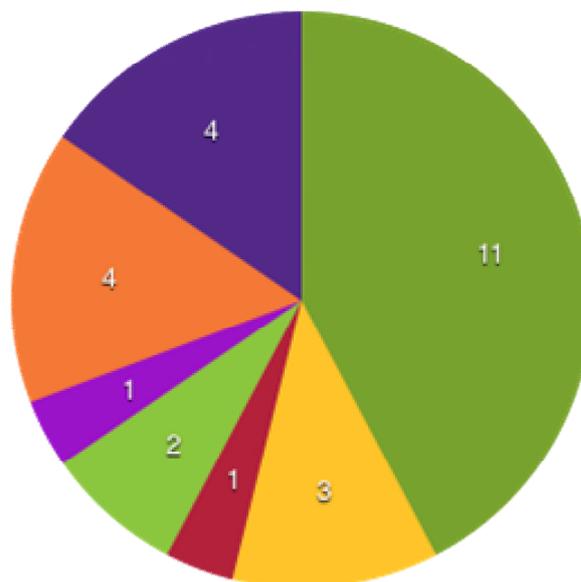
4.1.1 The Fostering Service is involved in the assessment and support of Special Guardianship Order carers (SGO's). The number of Special Guardianship Order carers in Central Bedfordshire has been increasing year on year. As at 31 March 2017 there were 135 SGO's in place compared to 130 as at 31 March 2016.

4.1.2 Once assessed and the SGO is granted the majority of SGO Carers do not receive ongoing support (apart from a financial allowance) as they access universal services. There are, however, a small number of families who contact the service for specific support when issues arise. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 the Fostering Service worked with 27 families (compared to 36 for the previous year). The areas of support requested from families were as follows:

- Contact - 11
- Financial support - 3
- Financial advise - 1
- Respite - 2
- Allegation/concerns - 1
- Play therapy - 4
- Support to SGO carer during court case - 4

Type of SGO support provided

● Contact
 ● Financial support
 ● Financial advise
 ● Respite
● Allegation/ Concern
 ● Play therapy
 ● Support to SGO carer during court case



5 Section 5 Training and development for foster carers

5.0.1 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.

5.1 Skills to foster

5.1.1 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 Local authority in order to reach positive outcomes for children.

5.1.2 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.

5.1.3 As part of the application and assessment process, all applicants must complete Emergency First Aid training. 6 courses were held during 2016/2017 and these were attended by 88 delegates.

5.2 Induction

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

5.3 The Fostering training and development programme

5.3.1 This year saw the introduction of a Training Policy which linked the foster carers tier fee to attendance at training and the core training modules. This appears to have had a positive impact of raising the standards of foster carers practice alongside their continued professional development. Evidence of this is shown in the noticeable increase in foster carers attendance at training. 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 40 specialist in-



house training courses were provided (compared to 39 in the previous year) on 26 subjects (compared to 14 in the previous year) with 614 foster carers attending courses. The training available was diverse to meet the differing needs of carers and included the following courses:

Self harm, first aid, de-escalation/restraint, MISP, troubled teenagers, eating disorders, contact, radicalisation, tax talk, allegations, introduction to therapy, caring for UASC, attachment disorders, depression, supporting the health needs of LAC, understanding ADHD/ASC, internet safety, safer caring, permanent fostering, sexual exploitation, resilience and attachment, moving on to adoption, foster to adopt, life story, supporting the education of LAC and preparing LAC for independence.

- 5.3.2 The Fostering Service also accesses training for foster carers from the LSCB, Social Care, Virtual Schools, Domestic Violence and Early Years teams. Foster carers are able to book these courses on line and access various e-learning as well as more traditional classroom based training. 33 different training courses were accessed by foster carers from the shared training programme. Training accessed included: working with troubled teenagers, working together, Makaton, understanding the impact of sexual trauma, attachment and brain development, sexual exploitation, introduction to safeguarding, child accident prevention, paediatric first aid, protective behaviours, introduction to mentoring, parental substance misuse, child abuse and neglect, early child development, equality and diversity, sexualised behaviour, risk assessments in safeguarding, e-safety, CSE, behaviour and the physical environment, adolescence, safer caring, foetal alcohol, contact, early help and support for mental health of children and young people, crisis intervention and learning through play.
- 5.3.3 Having access to many specialist training courses in different formats enables foster carers to tailor their training to suit their specific requirements/style of learning based on the needs of the children they have in placement as well as ensuring they attend the core training required by the National Minimum Standards for the Fostering Service.

6 Section 6

Support for foster carers

6.0 The Fostering Social Worker

- 6.0.1 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.

- 6.0.2 A key strength of the fostering service is the ability of the staff group to remain child focused while providing a high level of support to foster carers.

6.1 Advise and Mediation Service

- 6.1.1 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. The Fostering Service spot purchases this service as and when it is required. During this financial year there was only 1 request for this service which the Fostering Service supported.

6.2 Foster carer support groups

- 6.2.1 Local monthly support groups are held for foster carers across the country. These are held in Dunstable, Millbrook and Cardington and have been well attended throughout the year.
- 6.2.2 Monthly support groups are also held for Intensive Support carers. As part of the support offered to Intensive Support carers a clinician from CAMHS attends these to provide group supervision and offer advice and support to help aid placement stability.
- 6.2.3 Two evening social events for foster carers took place over this financial year and included a Pizza night (22 adults and 23 children attended), and a Chinese night (18 adults and 20 children attended).

6.3 Celebration of Fostering event

- 6.3.1 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 97 adults and 95 children attending. Staff from the Corporate Parenting Service attended as well as the Chief Executive, Deputy Director for Children's Services and Councillor for portfolio for Looked After Children. 14 foster carers received awards this year; 3 for 5 years service, 1 for 10 years, 3 for 15 years, 1 for 25 and 1 for 30 years. 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

6.4 Foster carers Talk Time

6.4.1 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 51 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.

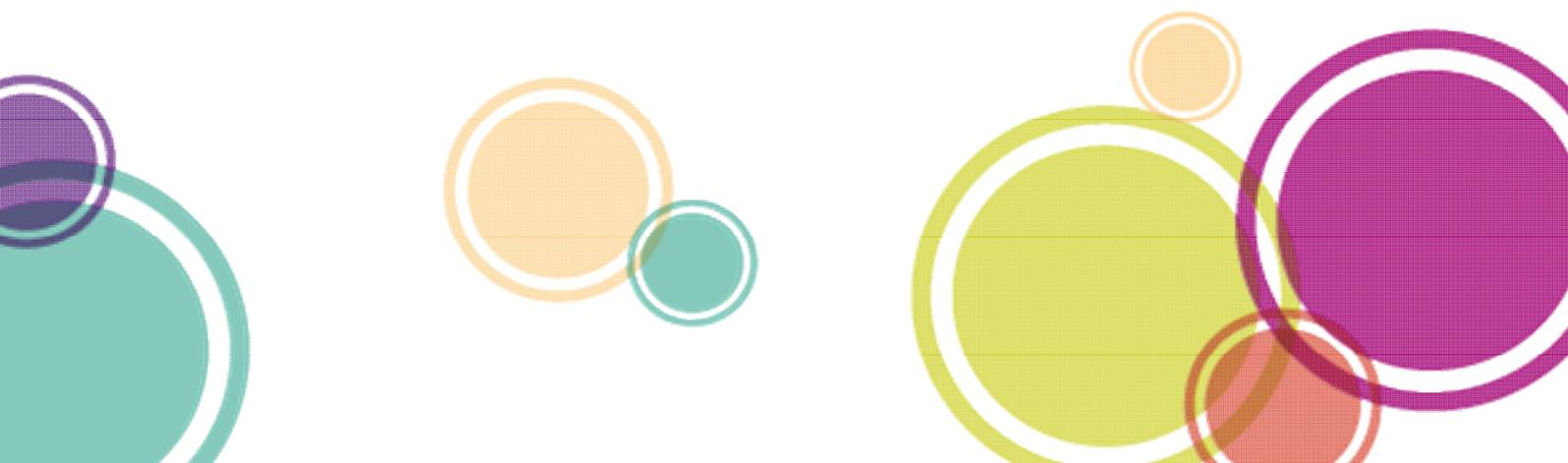
6.5 The Mentoring Scheme

6.5.1 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 10 mentees were supported by this scheme.

6.6 Out of hours service

6.6.1 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.

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



6.7 The Foster Carers Association

6.7.1 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 an Arts and Crafts Day, Picnic in the Park, a Halloween Party, a Christmas Party and a trip to Wickstead Park.

6.8 Fostering Network and BAAF membership

6.8.1 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. The Fostering Service also spot purchases Fostering Networks advice and mediation service for foster carers, as and when required.

6.9 Sons and daughters

6.9.1 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 4 events took place, these included NerfZone, Milton Keynes (10 attendees), a Pony Day (9 attendees), Bounce, Milton Keynes (13 attendees) and the Pantomime (14 attendees).

7 Section 7 Notifications

7.1.1 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.

7.1.2 Between 1 April 2016 and 31st March 2017 there was 1 notification sent to Ofsted (compared to none in the previous year). The notification was in relation to a young person who became aggressive towards one of his foster carers. The police were called and due to concerns about the young persons mental health he was taken to hospital. He was assessed and later returned to the foster carers. He was already known to CAMHS as they were already working with him and they were contacted in order to provide additional support.

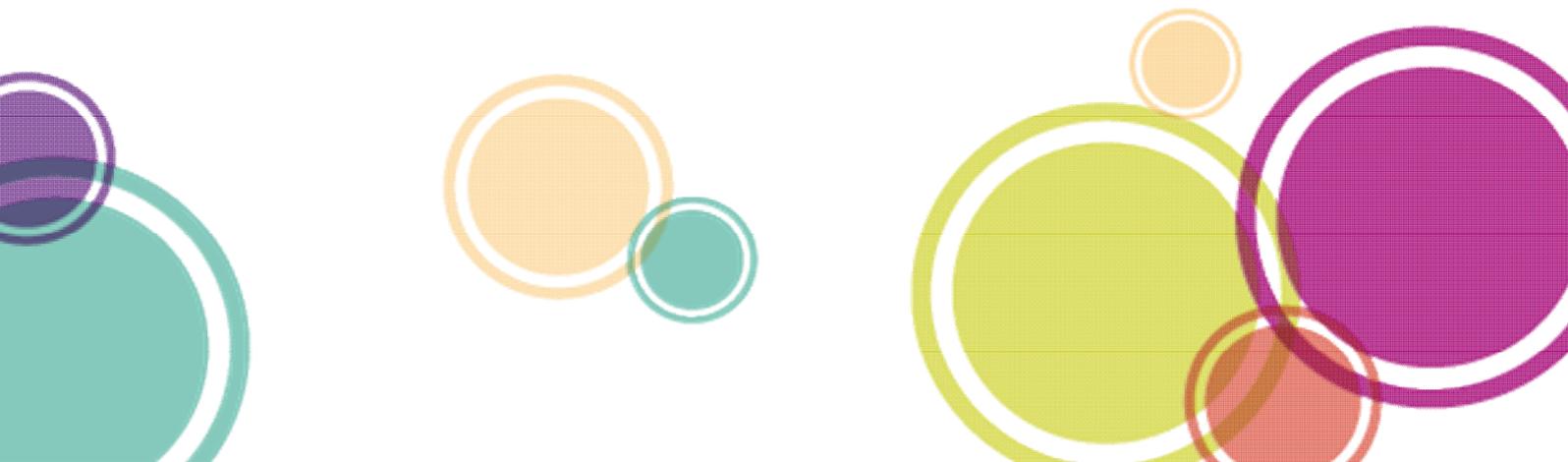


8 Section 8 Allegations

- 8.1.1 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, subject to any allegation are offered independent support from the Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service.
- 8.1.2 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 there were no allegations of misconduct made against foster carers (compared to 4 in the previous year). The Service dealt with concerns with foster carers during the year none of which reached the threshold for investigation but were dealt with in a variety of ways i.e. through discussion/supervision with the carers, through training or by reviewing the carers approval.

9 Section 9 Complaints

- 9.1.1 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.
- 9.1.2 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 there were 8 complaints made (compared to none in the previous year). 2 of these complaints were not accepted into the complaints process as there was an alternative process available to consider the issues raised; 1 complaint was withdrawn by the complainant; 1 complaint was considered under the non-statutory children's complaints process and 1 complaint is pending conclusion under the non-statutory children's complaints process as the complaint issues have not been clarified so the complaint is on hold. The other 3 complaints were considered under the statutory children's complaints process and are outlined below;
- Complaint in relation to the social worker not turning up for visits; unprofessional comments and a lack of support during a placement breakdown – this was not upheld
 - Complaint about the decision to move a foster child earlier than expected without allowing the family to say goodbye and concerns over the well being of the carers own child not being listened to – this was partially upheld
 - Complaint about the quality and content of a social workers report for the foster carers review – this was not upheld



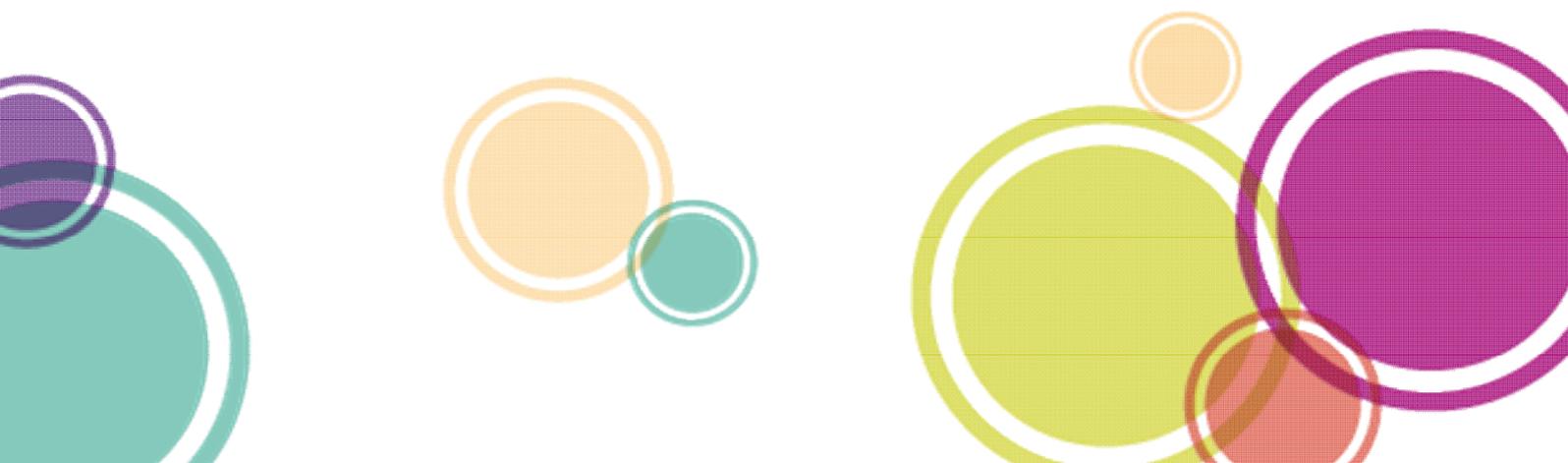
9.1.3 There have been no referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) during this period. The IRM is a mechanism for appeal open to the foster carer/s when disagreeing with the fostering service provider which considers a prospective or existing foster carer not to be suitable to foster a child, or feels an alteration is needed to an existing foster carers terms of approvals

10 Section 10 Compliments

10.1.1 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.

10.1.2 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 the Fostering Service received 16 compliments (compared to 37 in the previous year). Many of these compliments were made in relation to the excellent work foster carers are doing. For example an IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) praised a foster carer for her child focused care of a new child in placement which helped him settle, a childcare social worker complimented a foster carer for her excellent 'life story' work and another social worker praised a foster carer for going 'above and beyond' in her role as a foster carer.

10.1.3 Fostering staff have also received several compliments from foster carers, child care social Workers, IRO's and the Fostering Panel, regarding the support/training foster carers had received and in relation to the quality of the work produced. For example, 4 foster carers complimented their supervising social workers on the support received, 1 for their support and trust, another for their patience and support, another thanked their S/S/W for all their help and support and the 4th for being a 'shining star' where they felt their S/S/W had been reliable, consistent and responsive to their communication and had generally been a great support. An IRO and a Child Care Manager also complimented the Fostering Team and Child Care Team for their 'excellent joint working'. The Service often received positive feedback regarding training, however, it is worth noting, for example, the feedback received for 1 course which focused on looking after UASC. Foster carers really appreciated the stories the young people brought with them and the invaluable knowledge of the staff who facilitated the training.



11 Section 11 Conclusion

- 11.1.1 This has been another successful year for the Fostering Service. For three years in a row the Fostering Service has met its recruitment target for foster carers. Not only has the service increased its number of foster carers but it has also decreased its usage of more expensive IFA's (Independent Fostering Agencies) placements.
- 11.1.2 At the end of March 2014 only 46% of our looked after children were placed with in house foster carers. This number has increased year on year and as at 31 March 2017 stood at 65%. Our aspiration is to increase this further during this financial year where we hope to achieve 70%. This target will never reach 100% as there will always be a need to place some children out of area e.g. in specialist placements.
- 11.1.3 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 now in local placements that better meet their needs and where support is more readily available. It has also enabled the service to exceed its targets in relation to placement stability.
- 11.1.4 This year has seen some significant developments within the Service including the introduction of a new in house scheme within fostering. The Youth Care Scheme was reviewed in 2016 and became the 'Intensive Support Fostering' Scheme. The age range of children who may be classed as Intensive Support placements is now broader and based on the child and young person's need rather than their age. It now includes younger children who have challenging behaviour or additional needs. The support package was also reviewed as was the carers tier payment which continues to be linked to the training policy as well as expectations to attend further training and a monthly support group.
- 11.1.5 The Supported Lodgings Scheme was introduced at the beginning of 2017 and was put in place to support young people aged 16-17 years of age who are preparing to leave care. The aim of the scheme is to give young people the support and guidance required to support them onto independence. The scheme also includes the opportunity to support some young people who are unaccompanied and are seeking asylum.
- 11.1.6 In 2016 the Service also started to pay an introductory fee to IFA



(Independent Fostering Agency) carers (with CBC children in placement) who choose to transfer to CBC. Once approved they receive an introductory fee in recognition of the additional work required of them during the transfer process.

11.1.7 Apart from these changes 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 complaints, lack of allegations and the regular flow of compliments and positive feedback received by the service this year.

11.1.8 In terms of the forthcoming year the service will continue to concentrate on increasing the number of in house foster carers so that more and more children can be placed with carers who can appropriately meet their needs locally. The recruitment target for 2017/18 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.

11.1.6 During 2017/2018 the Fostering Service also plans to develop a Parent and Child Fostering Scheme, recruit some specific Intensive Support respite carers and introduce a PACE fostering scheme which will provide overnight stays and support to children and young people who have been arrested and are due to attend court the following day.

11.1.6 In terms of developing the Service plans are in place to work with Bedfordshire University in 2017/18 to pilot a relationship based model for effective work in foster care.



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

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