

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 3 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

undertaken in the Fostering Service during quarter 4 (1 January – March 2017). It focuses on the recruitment, assessment, approval and training of foster carers. It also reports on any Ofsted notifications, allegations, complaints or compliments received regarding foster carers or the Service as a whole.

- *This quarter is a significant one as it is also the end of the financial year where the Fostering Service is judged as to whether it has met any relevant targets set.*
- *In this report it is important to note that the Fostering Service achieved the target set for 2016/17 in relation to the recruitment of foster carers.*
- *It is also significant to note that at the end of this quarter the number of children placed with in house foster carers was at an all time high.*
- *Other important achievements during the quarter were in relation to placement stability where both the short term and long term placement stability targets were exceeded.*

Recruitment of Foster Carers

- *During January, February and March 2017, a variety of recruitment activities and events took place in line with the Fostering Services Recruitment Strategy.*
- *In terms of outreach work 2 activities took place. An information evening was held in Biggleswade in January and an information drop in took place at Watling House, Dunstable in March.*
- *During this quarter various advertising took place which included 2 radio adverts on Hearts radio, a newspaper advert in Biggleswade advertising a planned Information Evening. Ongoing advertising continued on a roundabout outside Tesco's in Flitwick, in Info Central, a residents guide to Council Service's which is sent with all CBC council tax bills and adverts on the back of Crossing Patrol workers. Leaflets were also distributed to postcode areas around the Fostering Information area event. Posters and leaflets were also distributed to St John's school in Bedford.*
- *In January a press release was sent to local news and contacts regarding the launch of the Supported Lodgings Scheme, this was followed up in February with an article in Beds on Sunday and in Staff Central. Articles were also placed in Biggleswade Chronicle and on the Beds on Sunday website promoting the Supported Lodgings Scheme.*
- *Online posts have continued to be promoted during this quarter and have had particular focus on the Supported Lodgings Scheme and the revised Intensive Support Scheme. These went to CBC, Town and Parish Councils, Schools, Governors and a local hospital. On line*

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.