

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Thursday 26 July 2018

Fostering Team Annual Report 2017-18

Report of Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services Operations
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Purpose of this report

1. This report introduces the Fostering Agency Annual Report for Members to consider and note.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to:

1. Consider and note the Fostering Agency Annual Report including the Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report and the Foster Carers Charter.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. The annual report for fostering will need to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny to note the contents and provide feedback.

Background

2. The Council has a duty to provide a range of types of placements for looked after children which meet their needs. In most cases a child needs should be met by living in a family setting, either with someone known to them (knowns as friends and family or connected person foster placement) or with foster carers.
3. The Council recruits its own foster carers, known as 'in-house' foster carers and also has the legal responsibility for assessing and approving friends and family foster carers. In order to meet the demand for placements for children in care, foster placements are also sourced from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). Central Bedfordshire Council,

in conjunction with Luton Borough Council and Bedford Borough Council has a Framework Agreement with 18 such agencies to offer suitable and sufficient IFA placements within a tight cost and quality framework.

Council Priorities

- Improved educational attainment and progress
- Protecting vulnerable children and young people
- Early help and improving life chances
- Being healthy and positive

Corporate Implications

4. Legal, Financial and Equalities implications were requested and are included in the report.

Risk Management

5. Regulatory Risks: The provision of sufficient and suitable foster placements is a key activity monitored by Ofsted during inspection, forming part of their judgement about services for Looked after Children.
6. Child Protection Risks: Failure to recruit or retain sufficient foster carers would be a child protection risk.
7. Reputational Risk: Recruitment of foster carers is a competitive market activity and has a high media profile.
8. Financial Risk: Looked after Children placements is a demand led activity. Independent Agency Placements are high cost, and variations in the proportion of independent versus in-house placements can have significant and immediate impact on forecast spend.

Legal Implications

9. This report provides updated information to allow consideration of the performance of the Fostering Agency in the previous year as required by legislation. As the report is provided in accordance with timescales and does not highlight any issues, there are no further legal implications.

Financial and Risk Implications

10. This report provides updating information and does not included any financial decision/implications.

Equalities Implications

11. 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.
12. The Fostering Annual Report highlights the efforts that are made to recruit a diverse range of foster carers and to ensure that they are appropriately trained to meet the diverse needs of the children in their care.
13. The Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report highlights success in terms of securing a diverse mix of panel members and the steps taken to ensure that the processes of the panel reduce the anxiety of carers and enable an open discussion to take place.

Conclusion and next Steps

14. The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to consider and note the Fostering Agency Annual Report (Appendix 1) including the Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report (Appendix 2) and the Foster Carers Charter (Appendix 3).

Appendices

15. Appendix 1 - Fostering Agency Annual Report 2017/18

16. Appendix 2 - Foster Carers Charter

Background Papers

None

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