

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

25 OCTOBER 2018

Agency Report Quarter 1 Fostering 1 April - 30 June 2018

Report of: (Cllr Steven Dixon, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing (steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Advising Officer(s): Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, (Sue.Harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) and Annie Craig, Practice Manager, Fostering Team (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 to outline the activities in the Fostering Service in order for members to 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 1 Report

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

2. This report has not been to nor 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 1 report.

Executive Summary

3. 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 the first quarter of the financial year 2018/2019 (1 April – 30 June 2018). 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.

Recruitment of Foster Carers

4. During this quarter a variety of recruitment activities and events took place in line with the Fostering Services Recruitment Strategy which included adverts on the back of buses, roundabout signs, a Net Native campaign on Facebook, lamppost adverts and various press releases and tweets and posts on CBC Twitter and Facebook.
5. As a result of the recruitment that took place during this period we received a total of 27 enquiries; 7 in April; 14 in May and 6 in June (this is 6 less than in the last quarter). There were 18 Initial Visits during this period: 4 in April; 10 in May and 4 in June (this is the same as in the last quarter). There were 12 application forms received during this period: 3 in April; 5 in May and 4 in June (this is 1 more than in the previous quarter). The best form of recruitment during this period was through a Net Native advert (66 enquiries) followed by a Facebook advert re PACE fostering (34 enquiries) followed by the CBC website (28 enquiries).

Assessments

6. As of the 30 June 2018 there were a total of 16 assessments in progress:
 - 12 career carers (which included 2 PACE carers and 1 IFA transfer),
 - 2 Regulation 24s (emergency family and friends)
 - 2 Supported Lodgings assessments.
7. In addition to the 12 ongoing assessments, 2 new career were approved during this quarter
8. The recruitment targets set for 2018/19 is to recruit 15 new career carers and we are on track to be meeting this target depending on the outcomes of the current assessments

Resignations/Termination of Approvals

9. During this quarter, 1 foster carer's approval was terminated by CBC due to standards of care and 3 foster carers resigned, 2 because they re-located and 1 because the carer was granted a Special Guardianship Order for the child in their care.

Carer/LAC Data

10. As of the 30 June 2018 the Fostering Agency had a total of 101 fostering households (compared to 102 in the previous quarter), 82 of these were career carers.
11. In relation to the ethnicity of foster carers, 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	89% (156)	75.6% (235)
Dual Heritage	1% (1)	6.8% (21)
Black or Black British	6% (11)	4.5% (14)
Asian	4% (7)	3.5% (11)
White Gypsy/Traveller	/	1.9% (6)
Other	/	7.4% (23)
Not known	/	0.3% (1)
	100% (175)	100% (311)

12. On 30 June 2018 there were a total of 136 children (62%) placed with in-house foster carers compared to 131 in the previous quarter.

13. 85 children (38%) were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) which is the same at the end of the previous quarter.

Referrals/Placements

14. During this quarter there were 25 new fostering placements made. This is an increase of 8 new placements compared to the last quarter.

15. The short term placement stability continues to remain good. This is defined as children looked after with three or more placements during the previous twelve months (national performance indicator). In central Bedfordshire our children are stable in their placements and only 8% had 3 or more moves in the last 12 months. This compares favourably with statistical neighbours at 11.2% and national average at 10% and national figures

16. Long term placement stability also remains strong. This is defined by the percentage of children looked after aged under 16 who have been in the same placement for at least 2 years. During the first quarter of the year we exceeded our target of 77% and 81% of our children were stable in their placement for at least 2 years. This is well above statistical neighbours (67.9%) and national average (70%)

Special Guardianship Orders

17. As of the 30 June 2018 there were 148 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 143 at the end of the last quarter). 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.

18. The Fostering Service continues to work with a small cohort of families who contact the service 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.

Private Fostering

19. At the end of June 2018, the fostering service was supporting 2 private fostering households who were looking after 2 children.

Training

20. 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,
- Sexual exploitation, including Internet Safety and digital safeguarding;
- Cultural Competence

21. 1 carer attended training from the Early Years and multi-agency programme, this was on the Vulnerabilities of mental health when safeguarding children.

22. 54 foster carers also accessed e-learning, which included:

- Equality and Diversity;
- Self harm and suicidal thoughts in children;
- Understanding pathways to extremism and the prevent programme.

23. As of the 30 June 2018 there was only 1 fostering household that was overdue in completing their mandatory Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD's) in the required timescale. The supervising social worker and the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Support Officer were providing additional support to help the carers achieve the standards.

Ofsted Notifications

24. 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.

25. During this period there were no required notifications.

Allegations

26. During this period there was 1 allegation made, against a CBC foster carer, of inappropriate parenting which did not warrant a formal investigation but was dealt with by the fostering service as a concern.

Complaints

27. During this period, there was 1 complaint made by a foster carer on behalf of a child in their care regarding her stay in respite care. This was partially upheld and remedial action was taken to address the areas of the complaint that were upheld.

Compliments

28. During this period the fostering service received 7 compliments from foster carers either about the support they had received or on services provided.

Annual Budget

29. For the year 2018/2019 the Fostering Service within Children's Services had an annual budget of £1,092,557 for the running of the service, this excludes fees/allowances paid to foster carers.

Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements

30. 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

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

Staffing

32. 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 2 new social workers joined the service and a first year social work student joined the service for a 70 day placement.

Council Priorities

33. Children and Families First.

34. Working as One Team close to our community.

35. Being great Corporate Parents to children in care and care leavers – much more than care.

36. Being a well-managed service and providing great public care.

Corporate Implications

37. Not applicable.

Legal Implications

38. 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

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

Equalities Implications

40. 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

41. The 4 quarter reports for fostering 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

42. The Fostering Service has met its recruitment targets for the past 4 years and it is on track to be meeting the ambitious target of recruiting 15 career carers during the current year.

43. As of 30 June 2018, 62% of children were placed with in house foster carers compared to 38% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's).

44. Our children continue to live in stable placements and both short and long-term placement stability is strong.

45. The stability and quality of placements our foster carers offer is evidenced also by the fact that during this period there has only been one complaint and one allegation, no OFSTED notifications and no fragile placements/disruption meetings were required

46. Our Foster Carers are consistently attending core training to develop their skills and knowledge which means they are in a better position to support the children in their care.

47. In conclusion this has been a positive first quarter for the Service. Although this is only the first quarter the service is either meeting its current targets or on course to meet them by the end of the financial year. The performance and available data for the service give a good indication that foster carers are 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 are good.

Appendices

48. None.

Background Papers

49. None.

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