

Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

20 December 2018

Agency Report Quarter 2 Fostering 1 June – 30 September 2018

Report of: Cllr Steven Dixon, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Member for Children's Services (steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Responsible Director(s): Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services (Sue.Harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This report relates to a decision that is Non-Key

Purpose of this report

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 2 Report

Executive Summary

1. 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 second quarter of the financial year 2018/2019 (1 June – 30 September 2018). It focuses on the recruitment, assessment, approval and training of Central Bedfordshire foster carers. It also reports on any Ofsted notifications, allegations, complaints and compliments received regarding foster carers or the Service as a whole.

Recruitment of Foster Carers

2. During this quarter a variety of recruitment activities and events took place in line with the Fostering Services Recruitment Strategy which included ongoing adverts in 'First Hand', Central Bedfordshire's Trust website job vacancy pages, Sponsorship of Westoning girls Netball Team and a TV slot on BBC Look East regarding the BBC Three Counties Awards which one of our foster carers won.
3. As a result of the recruitment that took place during this period, we received a total of 27 enquiries; 7 in July; 9 in August and 11 in September (this is a similar number as the first quarter of the year). There were 16 Initial Visits during this period; 7 in June; 5 in July and 4 in September (this is 2 less than in the previous quarter). There were 7 application forms received during this period; 1 in June; 2 in July and 4 in September (this is 5 less than in the previous quarter). The best form of recruitment during this period was through a Net Native campaign (51 enquiries) followed by the CBC website (28 enquiries) followed by various Facebook adverts (12 enquiries).

Assessments

4. As at the 30 September 2018 there were a total of 16 assessments in progress; 8 career carers (which included 1 PACE carer); 4 Regulation 24's (emergency family and friends) and 4 Special Guardianship Order assessments (SGO's).
5. In addition to the 16 ongoing assessments, 1 Independent Fostering Agency carer (IFA) transferred to become CBC foster carers during this quarter.

Resignations/Termination of Approvals

6. During this quarter, 3 foster carers resigned, 2 because of personal issues and 1 because they moved out of the area.

Carer/LAC data

7. As at the 30 September 2018 the Fostering Agency had a total of 102 fostering households (compared to 101 in the previous quarter), 83 of these were career carers.
8. 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. As part of its targeted recruitment strategy, the Service is, however, aiming to recruit more carers from ethnic minority groups in order to meet the specific needs of children in care i.e. UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children).

Ethnicity		
<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Foster Carers</i>	<i>Looked After Children</i>
White	89%	87%
Dual Heritage	1%	6%
Black or Black British	6%	3%
Asian	4%	3%
Gypsy/Roma/Traveller	/	1%
	100%	100%

9. As at the 30 September 2018 there were a total of 137 children (59%) placed with in house foster carers compared to 136 (62%) in the previous quarter.
10. 96 children (41%) were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (I.F.A.'s) compared to 85 (38%) in the previous quarter.

Referrals/Placements

11. During this quarter there were 37 new fostering placements made. This is an increase of 12 new placements compared to the last quarter.
12. Short term placement stability continues to remain good. This is defined as children looked after with three or more placement moves during the previous twelve months (national performance indicator). During this quarter we exceeded our annual target of 8% having achieved 6.7%. This compares favourably with statistical neighbours at 11.2% and national average of 10%.
13. Long term placement stability also remains strong. This is defined by the percentage of children looked after aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2 ½ years and in the same placement for at least 2 years. During this quarter we exceeded our annual target of 77% having achieved 81%. This is well above statistical neighbours (67.9%) and national average (70%).

Special Guardianship Orders

14. As at 30 September 2018 there were 155 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 148 at the end of the previous quarter). Although Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers are, generally, expected to access universal

services, they are entitled to seek support from the Local Authority as and when required.

15. 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 and provide telephone support in order to meet the needs of individual carers.

Private Fostering

16. At the end of September 2018, the fostering service were supporting 2 private foster carers who were looking after 2 children.

Training

17. 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 including:

- How to support children who have experienced significant childhood trauma;
- Mindfulness and stress management and
- Skills to Foster

18. 24 carers accessed various e-learning modules which including:

- Attachment and brain development
- Self-Harming and
- E-safety

19. As at 30 September there were only 2 fostering households that were overdue in completing their mandatory Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD's) in the required timescale. The relevant supervising social workers and Marketing and Recruitment Support Officer were providing additional support to help the carers achieve the standards.

Ofsted Notifications

20. Whenever a significant event happens i.e. a child goes missing from placement or a serious accident/incident occurs the agency have to report these to Ofsted.

21. During this period there were no required notifications.

Allegations

22. During this period 1 allegation was made against a CBC foster carer by a sibling group regarding rough handling and shouting. A professionals meeting was held where it was agreed the threshold had not been made to inform the police or L.A.D.O. (Local Authority Designated Officer). The professionals meeting made a number of recommendations to support the children and foster carers and no further action was taken.

Complaints

23. During this period no complaints were made regarding the service or foster carers.

Compliments

24. During this period the fostering service received 5 compliments from foster carers either about the support they had received, or services provided.

Staffing

25. 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.

Annual Budget

26. For the year 2018/2019 the Fostering Service within Children's Services has an annual budget of £1,092,557 (this does not include allowances/fees paid to foster carers).

Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements

27. 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

28. Regulatory Risks; Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standards.

Implications of Work Programming

29. The 4 quarter reports for fostering feed into an annual report which is then presented to Corporate Parenting Panel with the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

Council Priorities

Enhancing Central Bedfordshire

Great resident services

Improving education and skills

Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
Creating stronger communities
A more efficient and responsive Council.

Corporate Implications

30. Not applicable

Legal Implications

31. 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

32. The report is an update on the fostering service's activity and operational deliverables. This report does not have financial implications.

Equalities Implications

33. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization 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.

Conclusion and next Steps

34. The Fostering Service has an ambitious target to recruit 15 new foster carers. At the end of September 2018, the Service had approved 3 new career carer households and there are there were 11 prospective carers in assessment. If all of these assessments are positive, we would only require 1 further fostering household to be approved before the 31st March 2019 in order to meet this target, this is achievable.

35. As at 30 September 2018, 59% of children living with Foster Carers were placed with in-house foster carers compared to 41% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). This is slightly down on the previous quarter of 62% v 38% but it is hoped with the 11 assessments in progress re career carers the % of in-house carers will rise before the end of this financial year.

36. Our children continue to live in stable placements and both short term and long-term placement stability figures remain strong.

37. The stability and quality of placements our foster carers offer is also evidenced by the fact that during this period there has only been 1 allegation, no complaints, no Ofsted notifications and no fragile placement/disruption meetings required.
38. Our foster carers are consistently attending core training in order to develop their skills and knowledge which means they are in a better position to support the children in their care.
39. In conclusion this has been another positive quarter for the Service. Whilst a relatively low number of carers have been approved in this financial year, thus far, there are a high number in assessment which should support the service in meeting its recruitment target in this area. Other performance data for the service is good and provides 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

40. None

Background Papers

41. None

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