



Report to CYP & FS Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 6th February 2014

Report of: Jayne Ludlam, Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families

Subject: Fostering Service

Author of Report: Liz Spaven, Adoption & Fostering Service Manager,
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Summary:

- Update on Fostering Service in line with fostering services statutory regulations and guidance
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Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	x
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Note the report and its contents

Background Papers:

List any background documents (e.g. research studies, reports) used to write the report. Remember that by listing documents people could request a copy.

- Fostering Service Dataset 2012/13
- Fostering Service Business Case 2010
- Fostering Service Key Campaign 2013/14
- Fostering Capital Investment Report

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Director of Jayne Ludlam, Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families

Sheffield City Council Fostering Service

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In line with statutory guidance and regulation, all Fostering Services have to report to the executive side of the local authority in regard to the outcomes of the service. The Senior Leadership Team and other Boards within Children, Young Peoples and Families Service have received regular updates in relation to fostering performance.
- 1.2. Sheffield Fostering Service was subject to an Ofsted inspection in October 2011. The overall judgement was 'good' with 2 of the 6 outcomes being inspected and rated as outstanding.
- 1.3. In light of the new Ofsted Inspection Framework for 'the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers', fostering services are now incorporated in to the single framework inspection process.

2. Sheffield Fostering Service

- 2.1. The recruitment and retention of foster carers is a corporate priority, and is recognised as such in the Corporate Plan. The Communications Plan supports the Business Case 2010 and continues to support the Fostering Service in the recruitment of additional foster carers and the retention of its current foster carers. The Fostering Recruitment Campaign was launched in January 2011 and continues to date. This has included TV and radio advertising, web activity, bus and train station, JCD sites and attendance at community events across the city. Information Evenings continue to be scheduled every 6 weeks.
- 2.2. The retention of foster carers is crucial for the Business Case to continue to be successful. Various retention initiatives have been in place over the last 3 years and continue. These being:
 - Priority housing initiatives
 - Increase in 'refer a friend' fee
 - Skill Level progression
 - Increased learning & developments opportunities for foster carers
 - Events for children in care, foster carers and birth children
 - Increased Support Groups
 - Foster Forum web based communication tool
 - Voices Of Foster Carers Group
 - Foster Carers Open Forums
 - Kids of Foster Carers 'R' Us Group
 - Involvement of foster carers in strategic initiatives
 - Foster carers involvement in recruitment to staff to SCC

- Foster carers involvement in training for staff and prospective foster carers
- Experienced foster carers are mentors to newly approved foster carers.

2.3 The Fostering Service and its foster carers continue to provide a high level of care and promotes the health, welfare and safety of children and young people. Foster carers receive a good level of support from qualified workers in line with statutory regulations and guidance. Foster carers have access to a wide range of learning and development opportunities. This enables them to develop their understanding and skills in supporting children and young people and promote positive outcomes for them.

2.4 The service has two established fostering panels which aim to meet monthly. Both panels have a separate chair, with both having significant knowledge and experience of fostering issues. All panels have been quorate which reflects the excellent commitment of the panel members. The fostering panel has had one panel advisor for this 6 month period.

2.5 In February 2013 a dedicated Agency Advisor was appointed to the Adoption Service Panel. This has provided consistency across adoption panels as well as the independence of the post. The aim for 2014/15, is for this post to take on the responsibility of Agency Advisor to the Fostering Panel.

2.6 Fostering Panels held each month

April 2013	2
May 2013	1
June 2013	2
July 2013	1
August 2013	1
September 2013	2

2.7 From April – September 2013 the Agency Decision Makers (ADM) have been Jon Banwell, Assistant Director, Provider Services, and Matthew Sampson, Interim Director, Children, Young People and Families. From October 2013, Matthew Sampson has no longer been the ADM and this role is now undertaken by Debbie Mercer, Assistant Director, Fieldwork Services. The ADM's role is to consider the fostering panel's recommendation to make the final decision. The ADM is a nominated person within the fostering agency who has the legal responsibility to make an approval decision. In most circumstances this ADM accepts the fostering panel's recommendation.

2.9 **Statistics**

As at 31 st March of each year	Number of newly approved foster carers	Number of new placements	Total number of approved foster carers
2009/10	27	35	223
2010/11	37	45	250
2011/12	39	47	272
2012/13	37	48	282
01/04/13 - 30/09/13	9	14	284
As at 31 st March of each year	Number of LAC in placement		
2009/10	233		
2010/11	256		
2011/12	271		
2012/13	280		
30/09/13	281		

As at the 30th September the service had 30 vacancies. This includes the 4 specialist remand beds. The number of Looked After Children (LAC) in placement includes 8 family and friends carer placements and 12 young people aged 18 years and over.

- 2.10 The number of fostering assessment approved in this reporting period was 9. This number will hopefully increase to 34 newly approved foster carers by the end of March 2014. The increase in regard to the number of placements in relation to these 34 new foster carers will be 51.
- 2.10 Where appropriate young people remain living with their foster carers after the age of 18 years. This is known as 'Staying Put', and seeks to extend the young person's placement in a way that allows them to progress to more independent living at a time, and pace, that is based both on their assessed needs, as detailed within their Pathway Plan, and in accordance with their wishes and feelings. 12 young people aged 18 years older remain in placement with their foster carer.

3 **What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

- 3.1 It is important that Looked After Children are cared for within the city. Sufficiency: Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people by providing guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This section requires local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area, 'the sufficiency duty'.

- 3.2 The sufficiency duty requires local authorities to do more than simply ensure that accommodation be 'sufficient' in terms of the number of beds provided. They must have regard to the benefits of securing a range of accommodation through a number of providers. The accommodation must also meet the needs of children.
- 3.3 By continuing to increase and retain the number of foster carers within the city outcomes for children in care are enhanced and it ensures that the local authority is complying with its statutory duties. 84% of Sheffield's children in care are placed within the city.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee are being asked to note the report and its contents.

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