



Report to CYP & FS Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 9th March 2015

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

Subject: Fostering Service

Author of Report: Suzanne Whiteley, Adoption & Fostering Service Manager, Tel: 35155

Summary: Update on Fostering Service in line with Fostering Services Statutory Regulations and Guidance

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 2013/14
- 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. Under the 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. Key marketing recruitment campaigns have more recently focused on the recruitment of foster carers for teenagers and sibling groups. Information Evenings continue to be scheduled every six 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 four 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 promote 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. Learning and development opportunities include core training:

- Principles and values
- Roles and responsibilities
- Recording
- Safe caring
- Equality and diversity
- Effective communication

Other training includes, managing difficult behaviour, introduction to safeguarding, introduction to child development and attachment. Foster carers are also giving support for Foster Carers to complete the Training and Development Standards portfolio

2.4 The Service has two established Fostering Panels which aim to meet monthly. Both panels previously had a separate chair, more recently a single Panel Chair has been appointed to ensure a consistent approach in line with a proven way of working with Adoption Panels. All panels have been quorate which reflects the excellent commitment of the panel members.

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. During 2014/15, this post took on the responsibility of Agency Advisor to the Fostering Panel. The post is filled by two part time staff where each has a primary role for each of the Fostering and Adoption Panel's and will allow for appropriate agency advice for all Fostering and Adoption Panel's.

2.6 Fostering Panels held each month

April 2014	1
May 2014	2
June 2014	1
July 2014	2
August 2014	2
September 2014	1

2.7 From April – September 2014 the Agency Decision Makers (ADM) have been Jon Banwell, Assistant Director, Provider Services, and 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; the Panel Advisor offers advice and support to enable this process.

2.8 There have been recent appointments to the roles of Service Manager, Suzanne Whiteley and Assistant Service Manager, Steph Kerr. The Fostering Service has an experienced staff group and management team which has provided stability and consistency within the Service and to foster carers and children and young people.

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
2013/2014	31	46	280
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		
2013/14	280		

As at the 30th September the service had 33 vacancies. This includes three specialist remand beds. The number of children in care in placement includes eight family and friends carer placements and 12 young people aged 18 years and over.

2.10 It is anticipated that at the end of 2014/15 the number of new approvals will be 35 foster carers providing 46 new placements.

2.11 As at the 13th February 2015 the Fostering Service provided 272 placements. The number of children in care in placements includes 112 with permanence (long term permanent placements) foster

carers, 133 task (shorter term placements) placements, eight family and friends carer placements, six out of hours placements and 13 young people aged 18 years and over.

2.12 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. There are 12 young people aged 18 years older remain in placement with their foster carer.

2.13 During 2013/14 41 foster carers either withdrew from fostering or were deregistered as foster carers.

Number of Foster Carers	Reason for withdrawal or resignations
24	Personal circumstances or work commitments
3	Health
3	Retired
2	Deceased
1	Adopted 2 children
1	<i>Dissatisfied with support mechanisms</i>
2	Significant concerns
5	Reason unknown (declined to state)

The Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013 changed practice regarding the resignation of foster carers, meaning where a foster carer gives their resignation in writing this becomes final 28 days later without exception.

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

- 3.1 It is important that Sheffield children in care are cared for within the city, Local Authorities have a legislative requirement to ensure that children are placed locally and there is, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the city which meets the needs of children.
- 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.

4. Recommendation

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