



Report to CYP & FS Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 14 March 2016

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 2014/15
- Fostering Service Business Case 2010
- Fostering Service Key Campaign 2014/15
- 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 Corporate Plan 2015 - 2018 highlights the importance of the right permanent placement for children, including foster care. The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015 - 2017 outlines the need to progress the fostering recruitment and retention business case to maximise the range of in house foster placements with a focus on developing/supporting existing foster carers for older children/young people. The Communications Plan supports the Business Case 2010 and continues to support the Fostering Service in the recruitment of 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 focused on the recruitment of foster carers for teenagers and sibling groups. 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 4 years and continue. These being:
 - Priority housing initiatives
 - Increase in 'refer a friend' fee
 - Skill Level progression
 - 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. A robust training and development package enables foster carers to develop their understanding and skills in supporting children and young people and promote positive outcomes for them.

The core training programme is in the process of being reviewed and updated. The main areas of focus of the Learning and development core training include:

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

The training and development officer post is currently vacant and the recruitment process is being undertaken. This has impacted on the in house delivery of training service and there are plans in place to address this. Other training outside the core training is available to foster carers and this includes training on managing difficult behaviour, introduction to safeguarding, introduction to child development and attachment, further CAMHS training. Support from the Multi-Agency Psychological Service (MAPS) is also available for foster carers who provide advice in relation to regarding individual children to enable the foster carers in their caring role and training packages, for example transition to adoption. Foster carers are also given support to complete the Training and Development Standards portfolio

2.4 The service has two established fostering panels which aim to meet monthly. There is a single Panel Chair 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 answering 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 2015	1
May 2015	2
June 2015	1
July 2015	2
August 2015	2
September 2015	2
October 2015	0
November 2015	2
December 2015	1

2.7 From April 2015 – February 2016 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 The Fostering Service continues to have an experienced staff group however there has been a small number of new staff recruited due to vacancies through retirement and staff securing opportunities elsewhere. The new staff within the service have been recruited primarily from fieldwork social work teams and they have brought with them a wealth of experience. The management team is an experienced team and has provided stability and consistency within the Service 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
2014/2015	32	49	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		
2014/2015	272		

- 2.10 It is anticipated that at the end of 2015/16 the number of new approvals will be 24 foster carers providing 29 new placements. There are currently 17 approved foster carers, providing 22 placements with 2 further approvals recommended by fostering panel and currently awaiting ADM approval.
- 2.11 As at the 29th February 2016, 268 registered foster families provided 275 placements. The number of children in care in placements includes 126 with permanence (long term permanent placements) foster carers, 127 task (shorter term placements) placements, 6 family and friends carer placements, 3 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. 13 young people aged 18 years older remain in placement with their foster carer.
- 2.13 At present the area of highest demand for placements is for older children and we are currently reviewing the package of support available for foster carers in this area as this is also the most challenging area of recruitment of foster carers. We are working closely with the communications team to inform the recruitment strategy.
- 2.13 During 2014/2015 14 foster carers either withdrew from fostering or were deregistered.

Number of Foster Carers	Type	Reason for withdrawal or resignations or deregistration
3	Deregistration	Concerns regarding care
2	Withdrawal	Health
1	Withdrawal	Work commitments
1	Withdrawal	Moved to other fostering agency
2	Withdrawal	Change in family circumstances
1	Withdrawal	Allegation
1	Withdrawal	Carer deceased
3	Withdrawal	Adopted

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. In

circumstances where there were concerns or an allegation in respect of a foster carer where this may have led to deregistration, this is reported to panel and information retained on file. This may prevent the carer being registered as foster carer in the future.

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 Increasing and retaining the number of foster carers within the city ensure that outcomes for children in care are enhanced and it ensures that the local authority is complying with its statutory duties. It is essential that the continued recruitment strategy reflects the changing needs of placement requirements for children and young people.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee are being asked to note the content of the report and provide challenge to the service in respect of service activity to ensure the needs of children and being best met.