

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 5
10 SEPTEMBER 2012	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of Children’s Services

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FOSTERING ACTION PLAN

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee with information about the Fostering Service through the presentation of the Fostering Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee members are requested to comment on the action plan, note the contents and to consider if there are any matters they may wish to scrutinise in the future.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Fostering Service is the regulated service for the recruitment and supervision of foster carers for looked after children from the age of 0-18 years. The aim is to have sufficient numbers of foster carers to ensure that there is placement choice to meet the needs of each child, that all looked after children are given the opportunity to be placed in a safe and nurturing family to support them through childhood and beyond so that they can reach their full potential and we reduce the number of children placed with agency foster carers.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Peterborough has a number of children who are unable to live with their birth family and who require foster carers to care for them whilst they are looked after.

The Peterborough Fostering Service was part of an OFSTED pilot inspection in December when the service was considered to be satisfactory.

The Fostering Service is inspected by Ofsted on a three yearly cycle.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 The Fostering Action Plan highlights the key actions to ensure the fostering service is able to meet the needs of looked after children in Peterborough and that they reach their full potential.

The action plan details the involvement of children and young people in ensuring their views about the care they receive is heard and where appropriate acted upon.

The Fostering Service priority is to ensure that carers are supported in their role and to provide a range of training opportunities to enhance and develop their skills.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The report is city wide and has no implications for an individual ward.

The Fostering Service is part of Children's Services and reports to Malcolm Newsam, Director.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 A group of foster carers have been consulted in terms of the recruitment strategy.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 The Fostering Service is responsible for the implementation of the action plan.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 Children Act 1989 and 2004
Fostering Service Regulations 2011.
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010
The Munro review of Child Protection

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Fostering Action Plan.

Report on the Fostering Action Plan

Annex A

The fostering action plan was developed in April 2012 to ensure that we recruit and retain skilled and experienced carers for children who are looked after. The plan has a range of actions to ensure that the views, wishes and feelings of children are taken into account, and that we provide a high quality service to both carers and children

Permanency Planning:

We are committed to ensure that looked after children are given the opportunity to be placed in a safe and nurturing family setting permanently. A permanency policy and procedure were implemented in July 2012 which ensures that by the time a child has been looked after for four months they have a permanency plan. This permanency plan is agreed at the child's statutory child care review and is then presented to the permanency panel for ratification. The plan is then agreed by the Agency Decision Maker and reviewed at every child care review.

The options to secure permanency include returning home to their family, living with connected persons, Special Guardianship Order, Residence Order, long term fostering, living independently, residential care or adoption. Plans are based on the assessed needs of the child taking into account the views of the child, parents and any significant others. 20 children will be presented to the Permanency Panel in the coming months to secure their permanent placement.

Reconfiguration of the Service:

The Fostering Team was reconfigured in July 2012 into three parts, the recruitment and assessment of new carers, the assessment of connected persons (formerly family and friends carers) and thirdly the support and supervision of approved foster carers.

Recruitment:

We have three dedicated workers leading on the recruitment strategy with colleagues from corporate marketing. This has resulted in focused and successful activity programmed throughout the year. Promotional materials have been developed, the information pack for potential new carers has been updated, banners have been placed across the city including the "Fabulous Forty" lamp post banners. There has been a leaflet drop in the north of the City with a further drop planned for October. There has been local media coverage in the press and other publications and specific recruitment activity at various festivals and fetes and other venues across the city.

We are currently working with colleagues in Community Cohesion to hold a conference in January with faith groups to raise the awareness of both fostering and adoption in the City. This is part of our aim to recruit sufficient carers from diverse backgrounds to meet the needs of looked after children.

There has been a staff incentive programme to recruit carers and there are ongoing discussions about involving foster carers in the recruitment campaign.

The Fabulous Forty campaign launched in April of this year has resulting in 33 households currently being assessed. The processes around assessment have been streamlined, Skills to Foster training

runs alongside the assessment to avoid delay, and timescales put in place with the expectation that from expression of interest to approval will take 6 months. All of the 33 households currently being assessed are booked into the Fostering Panels between August and February 2013 for final approval. The Fabulous Forty campaign has focussed on recruiting mainstream foster carers for children of all ages. The households currently being assessed should provide a minimum of 33 placements. This will enable us to reduce the number of children placed with external agency foster carers. Our target is 79 new carers (households) over the next 2 years, we are well on our way to achieving this.

The Room to Spare campaign which will run from September to December will again focus on recruiting mainstream foster carers for children of all ages. Our targeted recruitment campaign in January 2013 will focus on carers for 10 – 15 year olds with health and additional needs.

Connected Person's Assessments:

There are a number of children who are unable to live with their immediate family but can be cared for by members of their extended family (connected persons). The Fostering Service is responsible for the assessment and support of these carers, many of whom go on to become their permanent carers through the making of a Special Guardianship or Residence Order, thereby securing the Child's permanent care. We are currently assessing 10 such households.

Retention of Foster Carers:

We currently have 115 approved fostering households providing homes for 167 looked after children. There is a range of support services to those carers to assist them in their role of caring for a looked after child. All foster carers have a supervising social worker who visits regularly. A comprehensive training programme has been developed, a series of support groups have been organised and carers have access to specialist advice.

An out of hour's telephone helpline is available to all carers.

Support may also be provided to the young person by the Psychologist for looked after children, additional training for the foster carer, additional activities for the young person.

Ensuring the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are acted upon:

A questionnaire has recently been sent out to looked after children to find out their views about their placement. This information will be used in foster carer recruitment and training. Children and young people are also asked to provide their opinion about their foster carers for the foster carer's annual review. Young people meet with the Independent Reviewing Officer as part of their statutory review and they also have the opportunity to complete the consultation document Your View.

Future Plans:

- Implementation of the fostering action plan.
- Build upon successful recruitment and retention to date.

Recommendations:

The Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of the fostering action plan and consider if there are any matters they may wish to scrutinise in the future.

Action Plan – FOSTERING

Issue	Action Required	Owner and target date of completion	Progress	Evidence Action Completed
1. An up to date Statement of Purpose of the Fostering Service	Statement of Purpose to be reviewed and updated.	Ann Garratt 27.09.12	Review has started	Statement of Purpose to be presented to DLT and Corporate Parenting in November 2012.
2. Evidence that the views, wishes and feelings of looked after children are acted upon unless this is contrary to their interests and in those circumstances they are helped to understand why	<p>Questionnaire to be sent to all looked after children to ascertain their views about their care and placement</p> <p>As part of the review process children should be asked their views about their placement</p> <p>Ensure the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's social worker, takes into account child's wishes and each child has own area in bedroom</p> <p>Develop a Children's Guide in a range of formats appropriate to the needs of children in placement</p> <p>Strengthening the Children in Care Council</p>	<p>TJ Trambadia July/August</p> <p>John Scott August 2012</p> <p>Deborah Glassbrook February 2012</p> <p>TJ Trambadia October 2012</p> <p>Sue Westcott and TJ Trambadia October 2012</p>	<p>Questionnaire sent out in July and August</p> <p>IRO's to send information to supervising social worker</p> <p>Audit undertaken</p> <p>Children's guides available to looked after children</p>	<p>Information used to inform recruitment and training from October 2012</p> <p>To be included in foster carers annual review from September 2012</p> <p>Children's Guide to be given to all looked after children November 2012</p> <p>Report to CMT by Sue Westcott 24/08/12 and Legal. Drawing up proposals for change with Committee structure. Children in Care Council will play key role in developing foster carer service and in the Corporate Parenting Panel</p>

Issue	Action Required	Owner and target date of completion	Progress	Evidence Action Completed
3. Implement an effective recruitment strategy to ensure there are sufficient carers to be responsive to the current and predicted future demands on the service (NMS 13.1)	<p>Development of Sufficiency Placement Strategy</p> <p>Reconfigure the fostering service to include recruitment team</p> <p>Recruitment team to work with Marketing Team to develop marketing tools</p> <p>Recruitment of an additional 40 fostering households</p>	<p>Wendi Ogle-Welbourne September 2012</p> <p>Deborah Glassbrook June 2012</p> <p>Yvonne Petticrew Karen Gilgan June 2012</p> <p>Ann Garratt Andrea Robertson Yvonne Petticrew March 2013</p>	<p>Presentation to DLT August 2012. To be rolled out September 2012</p> <p>Use of local media, press and radio articles May onwards</p> <p>33 Form F assessments currently being undertaken scheduled for panels for approval August 2012-February 2012</p>	<p>Sufficiency Placement Strategy informs recruitment strategy October 2012</p> <p>Recruitment team in place, responsible for recruitment activity and ensuring potential carers are supported through the assessment process</p> <p>New promotional materials being used as part of the Fabulous Forty and Room to Spare campaigns</p> <p>Increased placement choice for children. Reduction in the use of agency carers</p>
4. Ensure all written references are confirmed by telephone for all people working in or for the fostering service (NMS 19.1)	<p>All Form F assessors to be aware of this requirement</p> <p>Ensure all HR files reflect this</p>	<p>Deborah Glassbrook</p> <p>Simon Batty</p>	<p>Training delivered to staff</p>	<p>Evidenced in completed Form F's</p> <p>Completed as part of Ofsted inspection</p>
5. Ensure carers have access to a choice of relevant training opportunities at different times of the day, evening and weekends to reflect individual needs and the diverse way of learning (NMS 20.8)	<p>Learning and development training manual to be developed</p> <p>Identify senior social work lead for training</p> <p>Programme of support groups for foster carers for the year</p>	<p>Andrea Robertson Elizabeth Virtue September 2012</p> <p>Deborah Glassbrook May 2012</p> <p>Alison Cotterill</p>	<p>In draft form July 2012</p>	<p>Manual available to all carers September 2012</p> <p>Shamena Sadiq identified as training lead</p> <p>Programme in place</p>

Issue	Action Required	Owner and target date of completion	Progress	Evidence Action Completed
6. Ensure all reviews of foster carers are sufficiently thorough to allow the fostering service to properly satisfy their carers ongoing suitability to foster (NMS 13.8)	<p>Training for all social workers who supervise foster carers</p> <p>Practice Workshop held on monthly basis in the team including lessons learnt from complaints and Independent Review Mechanism and Independent Assessors.</p> <p>Annual foster carers reviews completed and agreed by Agency Decision Maker</p> <p>Every three years the annual review is considered by the Fostering Panel unless there are issues requiring consideration at earlier date</p>	<p>Deborah Glassbrook June 2012</p> <p>Andrea Robertson July 2012-March 2013</p> <p>Andrea Robertson</p> <p>Andrea Robertson Sarah Borthwick</p>	<p>3 foster carer reviews currently outstanding of 111 and these are scheduled to be presented to Fostering Panel in September 2012</p> <p>1 extra fostering panel scheduled for September</p>	<p>Practice Workshop Programme in place</p> <p>All foster carers reviews completed in time</p> <p>In place and 3 year review dates given at second annual review and diarised in.</p>
7. Ensure all staff are provided with regular supervision and PDRs are completed annually	<p>Monthly completion of supervision monitoring form</p> <p>PDRs to be completed</p>	<p>Andrea Robertson monthly</p> <p>Andrea Robertson August 2012</p>		All PDRs completed and placed on supervision file
8. Ensure an effective system is in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and taking action when needed (NMS 26.2)	<p>Migration to Liquid Logic</p> <p>Liquid Logic manual for fostering written and implemented</p>	<p>Deborah Glassbrook April 2012</p> <p>Liquid Logic August 2012 Andrea Robertson</p>		<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

Issue	Action Required	Owner and target date of completion	Progress	Evidence Action Completed
	Remedial work on data migration	Andrea Robertson	Training planned	Accurate fostering records October 2012
	Case auditing on monthly basis as part of supervision	Andrea Robertson Ann Garratt	Training planned for team manager audit cases using Liquid Logic tool.	To be evidence on Liquid Logic September 2012