

<b>FOSTER CARERS COMMITTEE</b>	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
<b>17 JULY 2019</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Executive Director People and Communities Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Councils	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.	
Contact Officer(s):	Sue King Head of Service TACT	Tel. 864391

## FOSTER CARER FORUM REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>FROM:</b> Foster Carer Forum	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the content of the report; and</li> <li>2. Raise any queries they have with the lead officers.</li> </ol>	

### 1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to each formal Corporate Parenting Committee.

### 2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 Corporate Parenting Committee wish to receive an update at formal committee meetings of discussions and actions from the Foster Carers forum.

2.2 This report is being presented under the Corporate Parenting Committee Terms of Reference: 2.4.4.2 To receive statutory reports in relation to the adoption, fostering, commissioning, looked after children services and children's homes with a view to recommending any changes.

2.3 This links into all areas of the children in care pledge.

### 3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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### 4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

#### 4.1 Report from Foster carer committee for corporate parenting

4.1.1 The foster carer committee AGM was held on 8 March 2019. Stephen Greene was elected as chair, Mandy Nicholson as vice chair and Sarah Purvis was elected as secretary. There is no finance officer but the functions of the position are carried out by the secretary on the whole.

4.1.2 There are 15 members on the committee with foster carers that look after children from across the whole age range and who have a range of diverse backgrounds and needs. It feels that it is a group that is reflective of the whole fostering population.

4.1.3 On 17 May 2019 Sarah Purvis resigned her post as secretary. Nominations have been received for the position and the committee will vote to fill her role at the next meeting on 12 July 2019.

#### 4.2 **What is going well?**

4.2.1 The Learning and development programme is excellent. It is put together by TACT administrator, Stef Hinson. It is a very interesting programme which is presented in a clear and attractive format, with something for everyone. Feedback about the programme and the courses is very positive.

4.2.2 The programme will be brought to the next corporate parenting committee for members to have sight of.

4.2.3 Committee has appointed Sue Stepney to be the foster carer learning and development champion. Her role is to represent the foster families, and to be a link with Stef.

#### 4.3 **Challenges and issues discussed in committee:**

4.3.1 Staying Put - Foster families have expressed the view that introducing Staying Put for young people on their 18th birthday in all circumstances means that this can take place at a difficult time as it is an examination year for most of them. Committee members are aware of other LA's where the start of the Staying Put arrangement is 'delayed' until after the exam period and they expressed that they would like to see whether this is an idea that can be considered in Peterborough.

A young person expressed the following:

*'The department have always said that they expect the children in their care to feel like part of the family when placed with carers, then they decide to snatch the security away from them. I want you to understand the impact of what you are doing to the very people you removed from their homes and promised to protect.'*

#### 4.3.2 Foster carer allowances.

Foster carers have raised the following in relation to allowances to committee members:

- There has been no cost of living increase in fostering allowances for 5 years.
- The allowance structure appears inconsistent and doesn't fully take into account the complexity of the child.
- Respite: foster carers have noticed inconsistencies in practice and they have asked for clarity.

Andy Pallas advised that budget discussions are ongoing with PCC senior leaders in relation to whether there can be a rise in allowances and also there are other discussions about how the skills level payments are calculated and whether this needs reviewing.

Committee asked that Andy bring back his findings to the committee.

#### 4.4 **Suggestions / advice from committee to the agencies.**

##### 4.4.1 Young peoples' histories

For PCC: Foster families have heard from young people that they find it difficult to keep telling their life story each time they have a change of social worker.

Committee members spoke about the benefit of social workers meeting with the foster parents first so that they can outline the main considerations and issues for the young person. Some foster carers reported success with this approach. It would be a good idea for social workers to check with foster carers whether they would recommend this, rather than meeting with the young person first.

##### 4.4.2 Exit interviews

For TACT: Committee expressed that an independent person may be of value in carrying out foster carer retention or exit interviews for TACT.

##### 4.4.3 Feedback after having children for respite breaks.

For TACT: It is not routinely asked of foster carers to give feedback about children that they have taken into their home for a short break, or for the children to give feedback about the foster family.

Committee feel that a valuable opportunity to gain a young person's views is potentially missed and vice versa.

#### 4.5 **Events and activities for foster families:**

4.5.1 250 people attended the 2 Easter events on 14 and 15 April, when foster parents, their own children and fostered children went to Snettisham Deer Park, fed the lambs and had a free deer ride. They took picnics and spent the day in the park, and even the weather was beautiful. It was a big success with everyone who attended. Foster families had asked to do something different and the numbers of people who came along showed the appetite for events like this.

#### 4.6 **Forthcoming events:**

4.6.1 30 June 2019 - family BBQ. Again being held at the rugby club and also attended by special guardian and kinship carers' families.

4.6.2 1 December 2019 - Christmas party.

4.6.3 The committee is also considering whether they will be able to support families to go to the pantomime later in the year as they have done in previous years. They are looking into sponsorship opportunities as the YMCA who brought 100 tickets last year is not able to support this year. A couple of companies have advised that they may consider offering support but they do not commit at this stage of the year.

#### 5. **CONSULTATION**

5.1 None

#### 6. **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT**

6.1 None

**7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to be aware of the role of the Foster Carer Forum.

**8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8.1 N/A

**9. IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial Implications**

9.1 There are none.

**Legal Implications**

9.2 There are none.

**Equalities Implications**

9.3 None.

**Other Implications**

9.4 Children in Care and Care Leavers needs are considered by the Foster Carer Forum.

**10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 None

**11. APPENDICES**

11.1 None