

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children and Young People's Service	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Brian Relph, Assistant Director, Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist Young People's Services	Tel. 07885 717462

JOINT FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 23

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Despina Kaoura and Sue King, Service Managers Fostering	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of this report 2. Raises any queries they have with the lead officers 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Corporate Parenting Committee as a regular work programme item from the Fostering Service.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to keep the Corporate Parenting Committee informed of activity undertaken by the Fostering Service and to update on Fostering Service developments.
- 2.2 This report is for the Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.6 This report is to support the Corporate Parenting Committee to monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care, (d) Hold meetings with children and young people in care, frontline staff and Foster Carers to inform the committee of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for looked after children.
- 2.3 *How does this report link to the Children in care Promise?*

This report links to the Children in Care Promise by focussing on respect for Children in Care and Care Leavers

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 **Executive Summary**

The reporting period of 2022-2023 represents the second full year of operations for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service, which launched on 1 December 2020.

There is a combined recruitment and assessment function, supervision and support function and a combined dedicated team that undertakes independent household reviews and monitors practice to ensure quality and compliance with the Fostering National Minimum Standards. There are two supervision and support teams which oversee Cambridgeshire Foster Carers and one supervision and support team which oversees Peterborough Foster Carers.

The report outlines the development of the key areas of the service and the progress made in each.

Cambridgeshire County Council

In this reporting period, the service recruited 11 new fostering households.

22 fostering households resigned from fostering, giving an overall net loss of 11 households.

On 31 March 2023, 51% of children in foster care were living in in-house foster homes.

There was a total of 112 referrals for Special Guardianship assessments.

There were 14 assessed private fostering arrangements in place.

Peterborough City Council

In this reporting period, the service recruited four new fostering households.

12 fostering households resigned from fostering leaving an overall net loss of six households.

On 31 March 2023, 58% of children in foster care were living in in-house foster homes.

There was a total of 54 referrals for Special Guardianship assessments in the reporting period.

There were three assessed private fostering arrangements in place.

4.2 **Audit and Inspections**

Fostering Service Self- Assessment 2023

What's working well

- Investment in a dedicated Fostering Resource Team has improved the sufficiency of use of in-house carers increasing the number of fostered children living with in-house carers
- Focussed retention activity which has led to the service seeing a reduction overall in resignations of foster carers. There have been 31 mainstream/link households leave fostering across both Councils in 2022-23 compared to 47 in 2021-2022.
- A dedicated and bespoke Foster Carer training offer and opportunities for Foster Carers to become Ambassadors and to take roles as Mentors through our dedicated Ambassador and Mentoring Schemes operated and developed alongside the Foster Carer Community.

What needs to improve

- Increased number of enquiries to foster with high conversion rates through to approval to meet demand and in recognition of an aging population of current foster carers. The conversion rate from enquiry to application in CCC in this reporting period was 14.5%, and in PCC the conversion rate from enquiry to application in this reporting period was 10%
- Placing more young people with complex needs locally with carers and placement providers who are equipped and well supported to work with them
- Embedding a practice of learning and action through the findings of audits, improved collection of the child's voice and ensuring annual review actions are progressed and monitored
- Improving the quality of assessments and support plans for Special Guardians and Connected Person's Foster Carers which are co-written with colleagues to ensure continuity

Priority actions

- To further develop our care arrangement offer to Foster Carers including the adoption of a practice model and further development of an in-house clinical offer and placement stability interventions. To develop a model of practice that supports the Family Safeguarding Model within operational social work teams that enhances our offer to Foster Carers that includes the support and integration of our clinical offer that supports placement stability and delivers direct interventions to children, young people and fostering households.
- Continue to improve and refine our fostering marketing and recruitment activity
- To ensure that the child's voice is evident in all our practice, alongside that of the carer
- To improve the critical analysis within Special Guardianship assessments and write child centred support plans in consultation with stakeholders as applicable.

4.3 Ofsted Inspections

Peterborough received a focused visit from Ofsted on 1 March 2023 when inspectors looked at arrangements for the front door services. Areas for priority actions were identified in respect of improving the timeliness of response to contacts, referrals and multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) enquiries about children and subsequent visits from Social Workers, and additionally in respect of the multi-agency arrangements and responses to children and young people at risk of extra-familial harm. There were no comments relating directly to the Fostering Service.

Cambridgeshire County Council received no Ofsted inspections during 2022 – 2023. Cambridgeshire County Council is awaiting an anticipated ILAC inspection which is imminently due. As part of that ILAC inspection, the Fostering Service will be considered in the overall findings for Inspectors.

4.4 Summary Fostering Households Year End – 31 March 2023

Cambridgeshire

The Fostering Service was supporting 169 Fostering Households which included:

- 138 Mainstream households (Professional Foster Carers)
- 9 Link households (short breaks for children with disabilities)
- 20 Connected Carer households (fully approved Kinship Carers)
- 2 Supported Lodgings households

Peterborough

The Fostering Service was supporting 84 Fostering Households which included:

- 73 Mainstream households (Professional Foster Carers)
- 1 Link household (short breaks for children with disabilities)
- 9 Connected Carer households (fully approved Kinship Carers)
- 1 Supported Lodging household

4.5 **Core functions of the Fostering Service**

The Fostering Service's aim is to provide a high-quality responsive child-centred service in relation to its core functions and to recruit and support new local Foster Carers to therapeutically parent the children in their care.

The service prepares applicants throughout the assessment and training process. The service recruits foster carer applicants for the following types of fostering: mainstream / short term Foster Carers, Connected Persons Carers, LINK Carers, emergency, parent and child, respite, Supported Lodgings Carers, those who offer Private Fostering and PACE. [The Local Authority has duty to provide accommodation to children and young people under the age of 18 years who have been arrested and charged in relation to a criminal offence. PACE stands for Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 which placed this duty. PACE transfers take place to limit the amount of time children and young people are required to spend in police custody with the young person being transferred to Local Authority accommodation overnight before being presented to court the following morning.]

The service undertakes comprehensive assessments and checks to ensure that prospective carers are suitable to foster and able to carry out their role.

We supervise, support and develop the skills and knowledge of Foster Carers so that they can provide the highest standards of safe, therapeutically minded family-based care to our children and young people in care so that their outcomes are improved.

The service also supports young people to stay with their Foster Carers beyond the age of 18 years in a 'Staying Put' arrangement if this is considered the best plan for the young person. This is not a regulated fostering activity, and the young person, having left care, no longer has a Social Worker and the Foster Carer no longer has a Supervising Social Worker, but the young person continues to receive support, advice and guidance from their Personal Advisor who is employed by the Local Authority.

4.6 **Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention**

The 2022-23 Recruitment, Marketing and Communication strategy outlined the key aims and priorities for the Fostering Service in respect of increasing the number of Foster Carers, their diversity, skills and experience. The key priority was to recruit carers to look after teenagers and to look after children and young people with disabilities.

Since November 2022, the Fostering Recruitment Team have had a key focus on promoting fostering by having a physical presence in various community venues in the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire areas. These include information and drop in stands at eight libraries (Histon, Huntingdon, Peterborough Central, Yaxley, Orton, Chatteris, March, and Werrington) and a market stall in St Ives. Additionally, the team have had an in-person presence at three supermarkets (two Tesco stores and one Waitrose store) and one church hub (Bretton).

Alongside in person attendance in community venues, there has also been a significant amount of fostering promotional material distributed in poster and leaflet form in shops, cafes, gyms, public houses, beauty, hair salons and other venues where appropriate. In total the team have covered 32 towns and villages in the Cambridgeshire area and 16 in and around Peterborough.

Following the John Lewis 2022 Christmas campaign advert, which had a fostering focus, members of the recruitment team have attended the Partners Lounge at the Cambridge Grafton Centre John Lewis store to speak with Waitrose and John Lewis staff.

The following campaigns took place during the year:

DATE	CAMPAIGN
April 2022	LGBTQ+ Week
May 2022	Foster Care Fortnight
July / August 2022	Children at the Heart Campaign
September 2022	UASC mini appeal and Private Fostering Week
October 2022	Kinship Care Week
November / December 2022	All Hearts need a home and Sons & Daughters month
February/March 2023	LGBTQ+ History month and LGBTQ+ Week

The team has also hosted virtual information sessions monthly and have trialed an in-person information session at the Peterborough Weston Homes Stadium.

Over the next few months, the Fostering Recruitment Team will be attending further library and supermarket sessions, having a stand in John Lewis entrance, progressing the development of Foster Carer picnics in the park, and planning opportunities to talk about the difference between Local Authority & Independent Fostering Agency's unique selling points (USP) and the Refer a Friend scheme with Local Authority employees and Foster Carers.

Monthly Information Sessions for prospective enquirers have been held virtually either in the early evening or at lunch times. Virtual Information Sessions proved to be more successful in terms of attendance than the in-person events which the service previously held.

The Recruitment Team (Front Door to the Fostering Service) has three full time Recruitment Officer posts, which includes a Senior Recruitment Officer post whose role it is to support the consistency and the development of the team.

4.7

Fostering Recruitment Activity

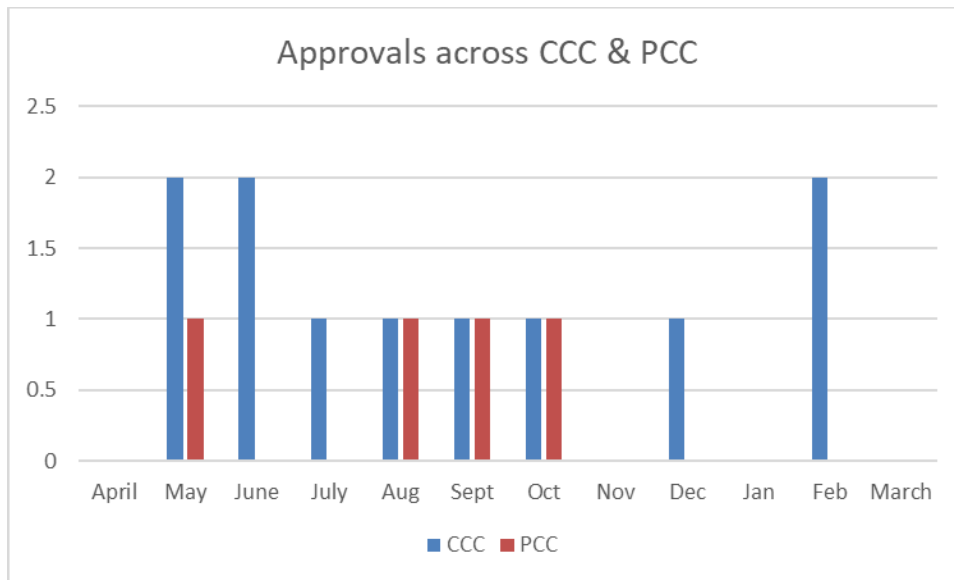
Activity	Annual figure CCC 2020/21	Annual figure CCC 2021/22	Annual figure CCC 2022/23	Annual figure PCC 2020/21	Annual figure PCC 2021/22	Annual figure PCC 2022/23
Enquiries	329	239	179	161	78	104
Initial Visits	101	68	62	60	24	32
Application forms received	79	26	27	26	11	10
Attended Skills to Foster/ Journey to Foster	47	22	20	16	14	9
End of year assessments in progress (Form F commenced)	10	13	11	10	6	4
Approved	25	12	11	6	15	4
Number of resignations and de-registrations	19	35	22	6	12	9
Net gain	6	-23	-21	0	+3	-6

Cambridgeshire The conversion rate from enquiry to application in this reporting period was 14.5%

Peterborough The conversion rate from enquiry to application in this reporting period was 10%. During the assessment process a total of 15 applicants did not progress in Cambridgeshire which included the service closing six applications and nine where the applicant withdrew.

In Peterborough there was a total of 10 applications not progressing, four closed by the service and 6 who withdrew.

The total number of newly approved fostering households across the combined Councils for 2022-2023 is 15 (11 CCC/4 PCC). This is down by 45% compared to 2021-22 (when there were 27 approvals). There are currently 15 applicants in assessments across both Councils however this is down 29% compared to 2021-2022 in the same period.

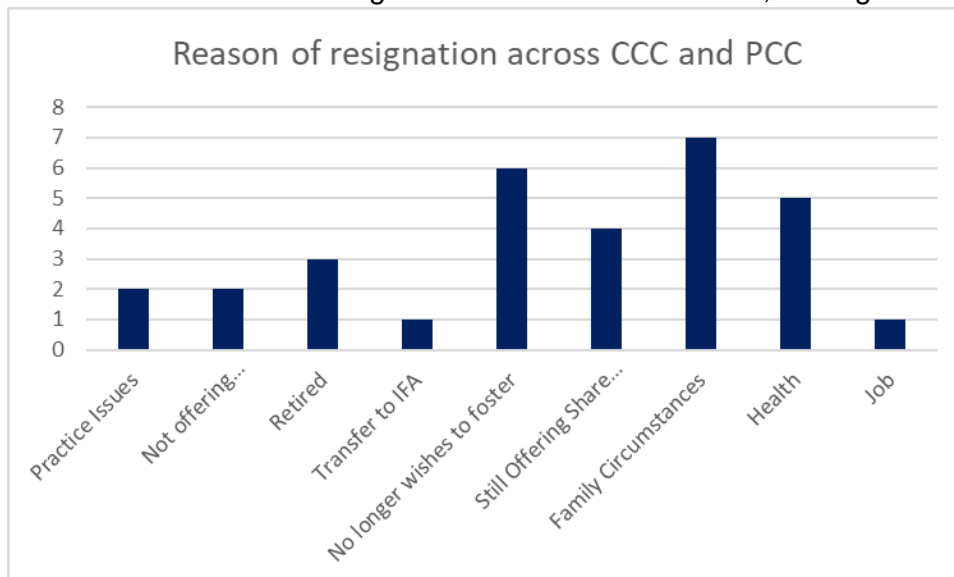


It is of note that the 11 new fostering households in CCC provided 12 beds plus four sibling beds. two of the Carers recruited were Link Carers and seven out of the 11 were within our target age range of offering care to young people aged 11+.

In PCC the four new fostering households have provided seven beds plus two sibling beds. Two of the four fostering households were in our target age range of being able to offer care to young people aged 11+.

Resignations

There have been 31 mainstream/link households (22 CCC/9 PCC) leave fostering across both Councils in 2022-23 compared to 47 (CCC 35/PCC 12) in 2021-2022. This highlights a decline overall in the number of resignations across both Councils, although an increase in PCC.



The main reason Foster Carers are leaving is due to family issues, no longer wishing to foster or ill health. Of note, only one carer has moved to an Independent Fostering Agency, two have chosen to leave following standards of care concerns and three have left but continue to care for young people either through Shared Lives, Staying Put or Adoption.

Both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are reporting a net loss of Fostering households and beds at the end of 2022-2023. Cambridgeshire has a net loss of 11 households with a net loss of 21 beds and Peterborough has a net loss of six households and a net loss of nine beds.

Occupancy rates

Neither Cambridgeshire nor Peterborough is reaching the target of 60% of children in care living in in-house fostering households. As of 31 March 2023, the split is 51% in in-house beds in Cambridgeshire and 58% in Peterborough. Additionally, there are currently 15 Cambridgeshire children living with Peterborough Foster Carers and 23 Peterborough children living with Cambridgeshire Foster Carers.

National Picture

Other Local Authorities are reporting a similar picture in terms of the challenges in recruiting new fostering households and an increase in the reporting of net losses. The reasons for this are not fully understood however the cost-of-living crisis is believed to be having a detrimental impact, as well as people reviewing their life chances post the pandemic, a competitive marketplace and foster care being a vocation and not a job.

Our priorities remain for the need to recruit more carers for children aged 11 years and older, carers who can look after brothers and sisters together and children with more complex needs and disabilities.

Foster Carer Retention

In this reporting period the Fostering Service has continued to focus on the retention of Foster Carers:

- The Retention Working Party involving staff and Foster Carers has explored how Foster Carers can be actively supported to stay with the Fostering Service and to understand the barriers that they experience in fostering. This is a very productive and positive group which has contributed to developments within the service. These have included specific support groups for Foster Carers of teenagers, a 'Question and Answer' support group for people in assessment and newly approved carers, to provide a safe space to check out the realities of fostering. The importance of allowances being paid in a timely way was raised by the group, which led to weekly meetings taking place involving finance teams and senior managers. In addition, we made suggestions to simplify the accreditation matrix paperwork which were adopted, which enables Foster Carers to progress through the Skills levels. The group includes the two chairs from the Foster Carer committees. Their membership enables the service to understand the issues that are important for Foster Carers and develop a joint action plan to resolve the issues raised.
- Identified all Foster Carers who have indicated that they were considering leaving the service. Retention visits are carried out to discuss the Foster Carer's specific concerns and to seek a resolution where possible. In this financial year, a total of 15 retention meetings were held, resulting in 12 of the foster carers remaining with the service.
- Exit interviews were carried out to give Foster Carers leaving the service, the opportunity to give feedback on their experience of fostering. Most of the carers who decided to leave did so, due to a change in their own circumstances or ill health. There has been a very positive shift in Foster Carers no longer leaving the service, due to dissatisfaction with support offered by the fostering service. When the feedback has involved partner agencies, the fostering service ensures that the information is passed on to enable changes to be made where needed.

4.8 **Safeguarding – allegations and standards of care**

Allegations against Foster Carers, outcomes and timescales

Allegations against foster carers	CCC	PCC
The number of allegations against foster carers made by fostered children	2	0
The number of allegations against foster carers made by other sources	9	2
The number of children who have made allegations against their foster carers	2	0
The number of foster carers who have been subject to allegations	11	2
Information about the categories of alleged abuse		
Physical abuse	7	0
Sexual abuse	0	0
Neglect	4	1
Emotional abuse	0	1
Information about the outcome of investigations of allegations		
Concern(s) resolved - no further action	4	1
Continued monitoring for an agreed period	1	0
Concern remained, referred to fostering panel to review foster carer approval	6	2
Timescale for investigations		
less than 21 working days	6	1
22-30 working days (4 - 6 weeks)	0	0
31-50 working days (6 - 10 weeks)	4	0
More than 50 working days (> 10 weeks)	1	1

11 fostering households were subject to allegations during this reporting year, which is in line with the previous year where there were 10 fostering households subject to allegations.

Most investigations are carried out by Fostering Reviewing Officers who are independent of the Supervision Teams, providing objectivity to the process, although some are carried out by the Fostering Social Worker when appropriate. Following an allegation, a Foster Carer’s suitability to continue to foster will be considered by the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker.

Being subject to an allegation or concern process can be very distressing for a Fostering Household and in recognising this, free and confidential emotional health and well-being advice has been available to Foster Carers through the Councils’ Employee Assistance Programmes throughout the past year in addition to independent advice and advocacy.

4.9 **Compliments and complaints**

The following are a selection of the compliments received by the service.

Source	Summary of compliments about foster carers
IRO	Children have made excellent progress, (Foster Carers are) outstanding at meeting their cultural needs and advocating for them.

Child's Social Worker	The Foster Carer was very attuned to the young person's needs and ensured that their holistic needs were met consistently and appropriately
Young Person	My Foster Carer is an awesome superhero, she's my idol. We have rough times, but we make it through. She's kind, she's bright.
Child's relative	She is the best thing that has happened for (child) she is like a friend, sister, mother, all in one and I am very happy to see them together (she) is very kind and a perfect person for (child).
Concerning staff type	Summary of compliments about our staff from foster carers
Fostering Social Worker	I'd just like to say how supportive the conversations with (my Social Worker) were. I felt listened to and valued. Her carers are lucky to have her as their Social Worker.
Fostering Social Worker and Service	I received excellent support from both Social Worker and Service Manager, who have offered exceptional support throughout - extremely pleased with the fostering service who have genuinely cared through a difficult time.
Fostering Team	They felt 'blessed' to be so well supported and they could not foster without the backup of the fantastic team around them.
Training	The training offer is more flexible, has a far greater menu, is more efficiently packaged/managed in the interactive brochure/booking process and accesses higher quality trainers than we have experienced previously.

Summary of complaints and outcome

COMPLAINANT TYPE	SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT	OUTCOME
CCC		
Prospective Foster Carer	Dissatisfied with the way that their enquiry to foster was handled and the outcome.	Not Upheld
Prospective Foster Carer	Poor service during assessment period.	Partially Upheld
PCC		
Foster Carers	Unhappy with decision about fostering allowance for a child with additional needs.	Partially upheld

Of the three complaints made, none were upheld, two were partially upheld and one was not upheld.

The service always seeks to speak to the complainant directly to understand the complaint fully, and to seek early resolution of any concerns. Learning from complaints is taken back to the service to improve practice.

4.10 **Foster Carer training and development opportunities**

There has continued to be a mixture of face to face and online training courses for Foster Carers in the last year. Practical courses such as First Aid and Positive Behaviour Support are now delivered face to face in several venues around Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. A

recent Foster Carer Training Survey has indicated that there is an equal preference between face-to-face courses, e-learning courses and courses delivered online via Teams or Zoom. Carers report liking virtual training as it is more time efficient, although at times miss the opportunity to network directly with other Foster Carers.

Numbers attending

In the reporting year we have run 97 training courses with 911 places being taken up. Additionally, we have provided specialist courses for our Link carers and Foster Carers of disabled children. The Assisting People to Move course ran on two occasions, where eight participants attended. We also ran a Foundations for Attachment six-week course, led by Nicola Ellis from the clinician team, which had 14 attendees. A further two courses were commissioned through AC Education with eight attendees on the first of the courses and 18 on the second.

E-Learning

We have continued to offer e-learning modules with 251 Me learning courses being completed and 560 e-learning modules from the Foster Carer Training Hub have also been completed. There have been some benefits to the e-learning offer such as being able to offer material around recording and reporting whilst the recording policy was being updated and First Aid modules if there is not a first aid course running for a few weeks or carers are struggling to attend.

Special Guardianship Training

Our special guardian training has continued with 82 attendees over six courses. It is hosted by a member of the training team, an experienced special guardian contributing as well as a Social Worker from the special guardian support team from the Regional Adoption Agency.

Developments

Following the development of the Next Steps training we have, along with the Reunification and Placement Stability Service (RAPSS), evaluated the modules. We have noted that the content of some of the workshops is beneficial to a wider cohort of Foster Carers than those in the first year and so we will continue these workshops, widening the offer to other carers who would benefit.

We are currently setting up a new booking system for our training that should give Foster Carers an improved experience in managing their course bookings, there are options for carers to express an interest in a course if the date does not work for them or has already run, which can inform our planning. In addition, the ME learning e-learning modules that we have been using for the previous seven years can also be self-allocated via this booking system.

A highlight of our year was to run a day-conference called 'From Chaos to Cake' at the Weston Homes Stadium in Peterborough with 108 attendees, equally split between staff and Foster Carers. The speakers were Sarah Naish and Sarah Dillon, and the focus was on Foster Carers taking care of themselves to therapeutically parent the children in their care. This was a very enjoyable event and received excellent feedback.

4.11 Carer consultation, engagement and support

Support Groups have operated for both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foster Carers throughout the year with face-to-face groups taking place four times a month in Cambridgeshire and once a month in Peterborough. Additionally, there are dedicated groups for some carers – the support group for teenage carers is held virtually and the support group for Foster Carers looking after children aged 0 – 5 years meeting monthly face to face.

Foster Carers have established their own informal support groups which take place in two locations, both of which meet monthly.

All new Foster Carers continue to be linked with a Mentor who is an approved Foster Carer prior to their approval to offer peer support in the early stages of their fostering career. They maintain contact throughout their career to offer advice as needed.

Events have taken place throughout the year for fostering households to meet with each other and staff including day trips to Wicksteed Park, a summer picnic and Christmas parties all of which were well attended. In addition, the New Carer event was held for the first time since the pandemic to welcome all new Foster Carers to the service along with the Foster Carer Award ceremony which also took place in person.

The Assistant Director has continued to hold virtual 'Coffee and Cake' sessions following on from the success of these informal events which began during lockdown and has also attended the support group in Peterborough in person. It provides an opportunity for all Foster Carers to ask questions and hear about developments in the service and wider children's services.

The Service Manager for Supervision and Support meets monthly with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association and Peterborough Foster Carer Community. Mandy Nicholson is the chair for Peterborough Foster Carer Community and Tracey Stephenson is the chair for Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association. The Head of Service joins these meetings on a bi-monthly basis.

Managers from the service also attend the committee and community meetings to hear about what is working well for Foster Carers and areas that need to be addressed or developed.

There have been no consultations with Foster Carers during the period, however the feedback given in the previous consultation about allowances identified the rise in the cost of living as a concern for Foster Carers. Consequently, two further payments were made to Foster Carers during the year in recognition of this.

Foster Carers attend the formal Corporate Parenting Committee in Peterborough and the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee in Cambridgeshire to represent Foster Carers and ensure their views are heard by Elected Members.

Foster Carer Newsletters from the Service provide updates to fostering households about changes and developments in the service.

4.12 **Fostering Panel**

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Panels have continued to operate separately and virtually during this reporting year. The business of the Fostering Panel is to consider Foster Carer's suitability to continue to foster or to be approved as Foster Carers (both as Mainstream Carers and as Connected Persons Carers), post allegation reviews, noting resignations, extensions of temporary approval and changes to Foster Carer terms of approval.

In Cambridgeshire, 27 Fostering Panels sat during the year and in Peterborough 11 Fostering Panels sat. Panel members have continued to receive medical advice and legal advice when required.

The Fostering Panel Adviser role was held by Stuart Stapleton for both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough until September 2022 when the new Fostering Panel Advisors, Claire Baxendale and Liz Devoti came into post.

Additional panels were convened to prevent drift and consider cases in a timely way. No panels were cancelled due to lack of quoracy.

In Cambridgeshire Richard Holland is the Panel Chair and Elaine Barry is Vice Chair.

In Peterborough Mick Cunningham is the Panel Chair and Fernley Copping is Vice Chair.

Panel training days were held for Peterborough on 25 May 2022 and for Cambridgeshire on 19 May 2022. A further Panel Members' event was held on the 31 January 2023.

Appraisals for the chairs and panel members have been carried out during the year in line with requirements.

A new Quality Assurance Feedback Form was introduced in March 2023 and the Advice Tracker updated and shared as part of the ongoing development to strengthen the links between the Service and the Fostering Panels.

Fiona Van Den Hout, Head of Service for Fostering and Supervised Contact acted as Agency Decision Maker for the Fostering Panel. Fiona left the service on the 30 December 2022, and from this point Anita Hewson, Acting Head of Service for Fostering, Supervised Contact, (Family Time), Reunification and Placement Stability Service and Family Group Conferencing has acted as the Agency Decision Maker for the Fostering Panel.

Heads of Service Sam Nour, Samantha Howlett, Fiona Van Den Hout, Myra O'Farrell, Michaela Berry and Mandeep Gill have acted as the Local Authority's Nominated Officers for regulation 24 temporary fostering arrangements.

4.13 **Management arrangements**

The management of the service was carried out by Nicola Curley, Interim Service Director Children's Services across both Local Authorities until December 2022 when Elaine Redding was appointed Interim Service Director for Children's Services.

Ricky Cooper, Assistant Director for Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist Young People's Services has overall responsibility for the Fostering Service.

Fiona Van Den Hout was the operational Head of Service for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service until 30 December 2022 when Anita Hewson became Interim Head of Service. There were three lead Service Manager posts during this reporting year, who in turn were supported by their Team Managers as follows:

Recruitment and Assessment:

Service Manager - Anita Hewson until December 2022

Interim Service Manager - Jo Spender from January 2023

Team Manager – Jo Laur

Team manager – Jenni Woodcock

Team Manager – Tasalla Shaiyen

Supervision and Support:

Service Manager - Despina Kaoura

Team Manager- Amanda Carter (covering maternity leave until July 2022) / Sharyl Acheampong (from July 2022)

Team Manager – Jayne Barrett McGrath

Team Manager – Mariepearl Camfield

Household Review & Practice Standards:

Service Manager - Sue King

Team Manager – Stuart Stapleton)

Interim Resource Team Manager – Amanda Carter (from July 2022)

Operational team meetings for staff and managers have been held monthly and both Councils have virtually provided corporate support opportunities for staff including monthly wellbeing sessions and briefings by senior Council Leaders.

4.14 **Children in Care participation and consultation**

The Service works closely with the Councils' Participation Teams who support children and young people in care to provide their views on specific topics via the Children in Care Councils and Care Leaving Forums.

The annual Children in Care Awards are held by each Local Authority and is an event that the whole fostering household is encouraged to attend. It is supported by staff from the Fostering Service.

The service attends the Participation Group and has collaboratively developed a service Participation Plan.

Young Recruiters have helped to interview applicants for social care roles, and Young Trainers have become an established part of the Journey to Foster training for prospective Foster Carers and continue to receive excellent feedback from prospective Foster Carers.

Feedback is sought from children and young people in care about their experience of living within house Foster Carers as part of the Foster Carer's annual review process which provides rich information about the day-to-day life for foster children.

4.15 **Private Fostering**

The Children Act 1989 and subsequent Private Fostering Regulations 2005 place a statutory duty on the Local Authority to monitor the safety and wellbeing of children and young people living in Private Fostering arrangements.

These arrangements are regulated by Fostering Regulations 2011, private fostering arrangements are made between parents or carers who have parental responsibility for that child and another adult who is not a blood relative, so they can take on the care of the child for a single period longer than twenty-eight days.

These arrangements should be reported to the Local Authority for a safeguarding assessment if necessary and a private fostering assessment and monitoring if approved.

Both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have private fostering procedures and processes in place.

In Cambridgeshire County Council there were 14 assessed private fostering arrangements on 31 March 2023. Of this figure, five were language schools, five were Homes for Ukraine and four were mainstream.

In Peterborough City Council there were three mainstream assessed private fostering arrangements on 31 March 2023.

There is a working group that meets monthly to monitor the implementation of the Private Fostering Strategy this is chaired by the Private Fostering Lead, Jo Laur, Team Manager Fostering Recruitment and Retention. An annual Private Fostering Report is submitted to the relevant safeguarding board for scrutiny of practice.

4.16 **Connected Person**

Connected Persons fostering is regulated by the Care Planning Regulations 2010 and the Fostering Regulations 2011; it is also known as Kinship or Family and Friends Care. These Regulations govern situations when a child is the subject of an interim or full Care Order under section 38/31 Children Act 1989, when it is not safe for them to live with their parents, and they have a connected person who has nominated themselves to care for the child. Most of the connected persons assessments are completed on people who are related to the children they look after, and in most cases, they are grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings or other family members, but some are family friends.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to assess the connected person if a child is not able to live with their parents. The Fostering Service will then make a recommendation about the suitability of the connected person to care for the child throughout their childhood and into adulthood.

A connected person assessment can result in a negative or positive recommendation. If it is positive there can be several outcomes, depending on the risk and who needs to share parental responsibility. The legal options available to support the continuing relationship between the child living with the connected person are no order, child arrangements order, special guardianship order, care order or adoption.

The total number of connected persons' referrals received in Cambridgeshire County Council in 2022-2023 was 112 and in Peterborough City Council the overall number was 54. This equates to an increase in referrals of 22% compared to 2021-2022

During 2022-23 in Cambridgeshire County Council 30% of referrals occurred when the child was in a formal legal process or subject to Child Protection at the time of the referral and 10% of the total referrals were Regulation 24 referrals. Regulation 24 referrals occur when the child goes to live with their family or friend in an emergency and the carers are agreed as temporary foster carers.

In Peterborough City Council 22% of referrals were in formal legal process or subject to Child Protection at the time of the referral and 22% of referrals were Regulation 24 arrangements.

4.17 **Priority Transformation Area 2023 – 2024**

The following areas have been identified as areas of transformation focus for the coming year. A transformation team is supporting the Assistant Director to develop the transformation plan.

- Benchmarking
- Model of practice
- Recruitment
- Marketing
- Review of Internal structure
- Workforce analysis

The four building blocks identified in the previous year also continue to steer the service to ensure that there is greater sufficiency of family-based care available, and to inform the transformation planning. These are:

- Recruitment
- Reputation
- Resilience

- Retention and Reward

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 This work links to the Council's Corporate Priority in relation to the following:

Priority Prevention, Independence & Resilience

The Fostering Service ensures every child gets the best start in life – with more children and young people in care finding permanent, safe and stable homes and support to care leavers to access a good, enhanced local offer that meets their health, education, housing and employment needs.

The Fostering Service ensures that children and young people are safe from harm and lead healthy lives. Children and young people are confident, resilient, thrive in their learning and engage positively and actively in their communities. The Fostering Service supports Care Leavers through the Staying Put Scheme.

Further information on the Council's Priorities can be found here - [Link to Corporate Strategy and Priorities Webpage](#)

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 N/A

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 Corporate Parenting Committee Members are kept updated about performance of the fostering service.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Corporate Parenting Committee Members have a duty to review the performance of Children's Social Care including the Fostering Service.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications associated with the report outside of the agreed budgets.

Legal Implications

10.2 There are no legal implications associated with the report.

Equalities Implications

10.3 There are no equality implications associated with this report.

10.4 Carbon Impact

The report contains no new proposals, and therefore there are no decisions which will have an impact on carbon emissions.

10.5 **Impact on Children in Care**

This report relates to the services provided for Children in Care and Care Leavers and ties into the Pledge and Charter that the Local Authority respects the differing wants and needs for all.

11. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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

11.1 *None*

12. **APPENDICES**

12.1 *None*

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