

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
26 FEBRUARY 2024	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg, Executive Director for Childrens Services	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Ray Bisby, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Gary Jones, Service Director, Children's Social Care and Targeted Support	Tel: 01733 863624 or 07484076824

FOSTER CARER COMMITTEE REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Gary Jones, Service Director, Children's Social Care and Targeted Support	Deadline date: N/A
It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of this Corporate Parenting Committee Report which updates the committee of service changes further to the decoupling between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. 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 Peterborough City Council Fostering Service.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Corporate Parenting Committee of service changes further to the decoupling between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.
- 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, pledge 5, 6, 9 - We will work to keep you in a supportive and caring environment where you feel safe and happy. We will support you to maintain a healthy lifestyle and help look after your physical and mental health. We will work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life.

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 This report has been prepared to update the Corporate Parenting Committee on participation activity and collaborative working with Peterborough Foster Carers, and to provide an overview of relevant service development activity.

4.2. **Overview of fostering service and priorities post decoupling.**

The ‘decoupling’ of the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire fostering service officially took place on 1.11.23, following which the line management of staff was transferred and was completed by 8.1.24. The training and recruitment functions will remain shared until 31.3.24 as there were existing joint commitments which it was felt would prove detrimental to cease before this.

The decoupling structure identified additional posts, all of which have been progressed through the recruitment processes. Agency staff have been recruited to the assessment posts to ensure that there are no delays in the recruitment of potential foster carers or connected carers. Permanent staff have been appointed to the following posts: business support officer and 2 recruitment social workers. Interviews are planned for the remaining posts in the coming weeks.

There are several projects which have been initiated to improve the recruitment of a wider range of foster carers and to ensure that children are living in better matched local foster homes where possible. This includes the ‘Step-Down’ scheme where children move from residential homes to foster homes, in a planned way.

Additionally, Peterborough is one of 11 councils in the Eastern Region who have come together to build a regional hub. We’ll keep our local fostering recruitment team, but the hub will enhance the work we already do. The Regional Recruitment Hub is due to go live on 1 April 2024 and we are very excited about the potential foster carers it may help us attract.

As part of the same government initiative, funding has been made available for a ‘Mockingbird’ hub. A hub includes a central hub foster home, and 5 – 9 other foster homes which form a ‘constellation.’ The principle behind the scheme is to create a supportive network along the lines of a family group.

Further information about Mockingbird can be found here: [The Mockingbird programme | The Fostering Network](#)

4.3 **Fostering Working Groups – Progress Briefing**

The Fostering Service has continued to collaborate with the Peterborough Foster Carer Committee (PFCC) to ensure their participation in the development of the service.

The Peterborough Foster Carer Committee (PFCC) continues to meet bi-monthly. The AGM was held on 4.12.23 when the elected members stood down from their positions and were thanked for their contributions for the previous year. The election of new officers was held, and new appointments were made as follows: Mandy Nicholson, Chair of the Peterborough Foster Carer Community, Glen Crossland, Vice Chair, Andrea Hughes, Secretary & Events Coordinator and Lisa Callow as Treasurer. Two new positions were created for Mental Health and Wellbeing, to which Cecilia Hammond and Melanie Cato have been appointed. Additionally, the Virtual School Board representative was agreed as Donna Whybrow and the Sharefound Ambassador was agreed as Sue Stepney.

Our four foster carer Peterborough Recruitment Ambassadors have been very busy supporting the foster recruitment activity which has contributed to a steady number of enquiries and applications during the winter.

At the 16.01.24 committee meeting, representatives from the fostering service were present, who provided an update on the decoupling and transformation plans.

A number of issues were discussed, and solutions identified. Foster carers have experienced transport issues such as not knowing how to make contact with taxi firms out of hours, lending car seats to taxis and booked taxis not turning up. Consequently, the Team Manager from the supervision and support team contacted the Passenger Transport Strategy and Policy Manager to find a solution to the queries. As a result, a system has been set up whereby transport issues can be input into a shared spreadsheet by the committee members and the transport team will respond. They have also shared the best contact details which have been passed on to the committee.

Communication was raised in respect of the arrangements over the Christmas shutdown and around the situation when the finance system had a glitch resulting in late payments to carers. Whilst individual carers spoke to staff who were able to ensure emergency payments were made when needed, it was felt that a general message to foster carers would have been helpful. As a result, regular meetings between Fostering Service Managers and the committee chair and secretary will be reinstated to ensure better communication and a clearer feedback loop. Contact details of all managers have been included in the most recent foster carer newsletter from the service.

It has been a busy period for activities over the last few months. The Children's Christmas party was held on 17.12.24 with a disco, face painting, food and Santa's visit. Foster Carers were pleased to see members of the Corporate Parenting Committee at the party. Additionally, the annual pantomime visit took place on two dates between Christmas and New Year.

Tickets for Peterborough United home games were secured by the committee for the end of last season and have continued for this season. All interested foster carers are included in a ballot for the three family tickets for each home game, to make it a fair system.

Three mascot opportunities were also taken up which were again decided on by ballot. The committee was offered a corporate day at the start of season where three families won the opportunity to attend a meal, tour the stadium and meet the players. The committee is grateful for the links with PUFC and the opportunities this presents to them.

There will be a sub-committee meeting to decide on activities to take place in the next couple of months. Suggestions include cinema tickets, Hamerton zoo, Tallington lakes and Inflatabounce. The committee is keen to ensure that the activities can include as many children and family members as possible. This decision will be made shortly.

The male support group had its first face to face meeting on 29.01.2024 having met virtually for some months. This was very positive, and it is hoped it will take place on a regular basis. It was an opportunity to make relationships and chat in an informal setting.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 Consider how the recommendation links to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

In terms of environment impact, this is neutral since we are not proposing any change, but rather informing of PFCC work alongside the fostering service. Overall, the report does not identify any new projects or proposals but is an update on Foster Carer activity as part of the regular work pattern of the Corporate Parenting Committee therefore the carbon impact will remain neutral.

The PFCC continues to ensure that the lives of children and young people are at the centre of its work, through its continued support of the fostering community in Peterborough.

With regard to the 'Prevention, Independence and Resilience', the PFCC continues to promote fostering through meetings and social media platforms, and work alongside the service to ensure that the educational, social, emotional and health needs of children and young people are met to a high standard. This enables us to support the 'Sustainable future' our young children and young people in the city.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 None

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 N/A

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 None: this is an updated from the Fostering Committee only

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None to be considered

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 None

Legal Implications

10.2 None

Equalities Implications

None

Other Implications

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