

ITEM 8

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

22 JANUARY 2019

FOSTERING SERVICE REGULATION 35 - 6 MONTHLY REPORT

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel: Councillor Miles

Report Author(s): Joanne Rabbitte Head of Delivery,
Corporate Parenting Service

Recommendation(s)

That the attached report be considered and comments noted.



Fostering Service

Children and Families

**Six Monthly Report to the Corporate Parenting Panel
1 April 2018 – 30 September 2018**

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Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting Service**

Data Produced by Paige Osborne and Maxine Edwards

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1. Introduction

Purpose:

This report details the activity of the Fostering Service during the period: 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018. It provides a brief summary of the work delivered and undertaken by the service and the Fostering work undertaken by the Fostering and Adoption Panel.

Background:

This is a report required under The Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011, Review of Quality of Care Regulation 35 and in accordance with National Minimum Standards for Fostering Service 2011 25.7 a-c. The registered person is required to provide a three monthly report to the Local Authority's executive.

Corporate Priorities:

The Council Plan for 2016-2020 sets out our commitment to protecting vulnerable children from harm and neglect and provides support so every child has the opportunity to succeed. As part of our Council Plan commitments we have pledged to increase the number of high quality local placements, meaning children who come into care are well matched with a local foster family that can really meet their needs.

As part of the improvement plan the current staffing structure has been reviewed. A new staffing structure was proposed creating two Fostering Teams instead of the current single team – one team will concentrate on the recruitment assessment and preparation of carers and the other will be concerned with the supervision of carers post approval by the Fostering and Adoption Panel. Two new roles have also been created – Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer and Independent Panel Adviser. The intention is to bring greater focus on quality and adherence to regulations and National Minimum Standards.

Equality and Diversity Impact:

The Fostering Service is provided for children from across the Milton Keynes community. It therefore needs to provide Foster Carers who can meet the diverse needs of the children and young people in the Council's care.

Recruitment Update:

Jenny Stewart Cox was appointed as Team Manager for the Recruitment and Assessment Team and Carol Murray was appointed as Team Manager for the Supervision and Support Team. The both came into post on the 1st of May 2018.

Amanda Pannell (*external*) has been appointed to the role of Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer and Kudzi Mugwagwa (*internal*) who has been appointed to the role of Senior Practitioner in the Fostering Supervision and Support Team. Both are due to commence in post in November 2018. Recruitment for Social Workers in both teams is focused to be at full capacity by December 2018.

2. Fostering Service Scorecard

Section One – Foster Carer Register:	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	August 2018	September 2018
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers	130	126	127	123	121	121
Number of Supported Lodgings Carers	14	13	13	13	12	12
Number of Connected Persons Carers	31	30	30	37	39	39
Number of Regulation 24 Carers	27	27	30	21	26	24
Total Number of Carers	201	196	200	194	198	196
% of Carers that are Mainstream	72%	71%	70%	70%	67%	68%

Section Two – Recruitment Activity:	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	August 2018	September 2018
Number of Mainstream Enquiries	34	30	16	10	10	14
Number of Mainstream Applications	9	4	1	4	1	1
Number of Form F Assessments	19	19	19	19	14	9
Number of Connected Persons Enquiries	5	10	4	4	28	11
Number of Viability Assessments	0	2	0	2	20	10
Number of Form C Assessments	1	8	4	1	20	8
Number of SGO Assessments	0	2	0	0	4	20

Section Three – Fostering Panel Activity:	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	August 2018	September 2018
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers Approved:	0	0	1	0	0	2
Number of Supported Lodgings Carers Approved:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Connected Persons Carers Approved:	0	1	4	1	3	2
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers De-Registered:	0	2	2	0	2	5
Number of Supported Lodgings Carers De-Registered:	0	1	0	0	1	0
Number of Connected Persons Carers De-Registered:	1	0	0	2	0	2
Number of Household Reviews Completed:	4	7	4	4	5	2

Section Four – Placement Sufficiency:	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	August 2018	September 2018
Number of Placement Referrals for Foster Care	29	10	19	27	24	21
Number of Children Placed*	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	12	13	13
Number of Children Placed In-House	11	4	10	9	6	6
Number of Children Placed in IFAs	7	2	1	3	7	7
% of New Referrals Placed In-House	61%	67%	91%	75%	46%	46%
Number of Looked After Children	392	384	380	385	389	387
% of Looked After Children in Foster Care	76%	77%	77%	79%	78%	77%
Number of Children in Mainstream In-House Placements	134	128	131	143	138	130
Number of Children in Kinship Placements	85	85	81	81	82	76
Number of Children in IFA Placements	73	75	75	73	80	88
Number of Children in Residential Placements	2	3	4	10	13	14
Number of Children in Secure Establishments	2	2	1	2	1	2
Number of Children Placed with Parents	24	25	23	25	22	23
Number of Children in Parent and Child Placements	1	1	1	1	1	1
Number of Children in Foster For Adopt Placements/Awaiting Adoption Order	11	9	7	6	5	3
Number of Young People in Independent Living Accommodation	10	8	8	12	13	16
Number of Young People in Homes/Hostels	32	32	37	30	31	33
Number of Young People in Young Offenders Institution/Prison	1	0	0	1	2	1
Number of Children in Establishment Providing Medical Care	1	1	1	1	0	0
Number of Episodes of Day Care	13	18	14	11	14	12
Number of Episodes of Respite	14	21	28	17	27	14
Total Number of In-House Placements Offered*	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	163	168
Number of In-House Mainstream Vacancies*	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	5	5
Number of In-House Supported Lodgings Vacancies*	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	1	1
In-House Vacancy Level (%)*	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	4%	3.5%

Section Five – Permanence:	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	August 2018	September 2018
Number of Looked After Children	392	384	380	385	389	387
Number of Children in Permanently Matched Placements	109	109	109	108	106	104
% of Children in Permanently Matched In-House Placements	81%	80%	80%	70%	71%	70%
Number of SGOs Granted (cumulative)	2	5	8	10	15	17

** This data was not previously captured accurately, however measures have been put in place to rectify this issues so that data is accurately recorded going forward.*

3. Fostering: Recruitment and Assessment

3a. Recruitment Activity:

- Advertising in the MK Jobs Newspaper, Connected Magazine and Pulse Magazine
- Heart Radio Campaign with three adverts per day
- MK FM Radio Campaign with four adverts per day
- Development of MKC’s Facebook and Twitter to promote Fostering
- Continuation of promoting the new advertising material in line with the new branding of ‘*Help them write their future*’, including a promotional a video.
- A number of schools are now displaying the advertising posters following an advert posted with the ‘MK Educate Weekly’ briefing for Head Teachers
- Foster Care Fortnight was held in May with increased radio advertising including a ‘live interview’ with the Lead member and the Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting; a promotional display in MKC Library
- Recruitment Event at Network Rail in May 2018.
- Foster Children’s Fun Event on 5th July 2018.
- Recruitment Event at Santander Bank on 12th July 2018.
- Milton Keynes Job Show on 14th and 15th September 2018.

3b. Enquiries and Applications:

Mainstream:

Mainstream	April 2018:	May 2018:	June 2018:	July 2018:	August 2018:	September 2018:
Enquiries:	34	30	16	10	10	14
Initial Visits:	11	7	9	9	6	6
Applications Received:	9	4	1	4	1	1
Withdrawn/Declined:	15	13	5	5	9	6

Enquiries for Mainstream Fostering were strongest in April but we recognise that they have decreased during the summer months, which is consistent with expected seasonal variations. There was similar pattern with Initial Visits and the number of applications received.

Kinship:

	April 2018:	May 2018:	June 2018:	July 2018:	August 2018:	September 2018:
Enquiries:	5	10	4	4	28	11
Initial Visits:	5	10	4	0	1	4
Applications Received:	5	10	4	7	17	18
Withdrawn/Declined:	1	2	0	2	9	0

The enquiries for Kinship Placements increased dramatically in August 2018; however the number of Viability Assessments has not been accurately captured. A meeting took place with the Fostering Assessment Team Manager and recording on the Tracking Spreadsheet has improved. The majority of the applications received during this period were for Kinship Assessments. It should be noted that the majority of these applications end in SGO's

3c. Conversion Rates:

Mainstream:

Percentage of Enquiries where Applications were Received:	Milton Keynes	National Average (Local Authorities only)	National Average (including IFAs)
	17.5%	18%	11%

Kinship:

Percentage of Enquiries where Applications were Received:	Milton Keynes
	98%

3d. Ongoing Assessments:

	Number of Ongoing Assessments at End of Period:
Mainstream (Including Supported Lodgings):	9
Kinship (Form C Assessments):	8
Viability Assessments:	16
SGO Assessments:	20
Private Fostering:	7

3e. Assessments Awaiting Allocation:

	Number of Assessments Awaiting Allocation at End of Period:
Mainstream (Including Supported Lodgings):	1
Kinship (Form C Assessments):	9

There has been a high attrition rate from applicants undergoing Form F Assessment. These are mainly assessments started before April 2016 and allocated to Independent Social Workers. The issues appear to be poor early screening, delay in progressing the assessment, and failure to adhere to the timescales in completing the assessment.

The Fostering Service is aiming to recruit Independent Social Workers who have the skills, knowledge and ability to provide the local authority with a flexible resource; however there are some challenges and delays in the vetting and compliance process.

3f. Approvals:

	Number of Households Approved during the Period:
Mainstream:	3
Kinship:	12
Supported Lodgings:	0
Total:	15

The approval activity has increased at the end of the period with three new Mainstream households being approved by the end of September 2018. In the same period, 12 Kinship approvals were completed.

3g. Terminations of Approval:

	Number of Households Deregistered during the Period:
Mainstream:	11
Kinship:	4
Supporting Lodgings:	2
Total:	17

The Fostering Service continues to de-register carers who have ceased fostering, this includes Kinship carers where SGOs have been granted or the children have returned home.

3h. Fostering Households:

Fostering Households:	April 2018:	May 2018:	June 2018:	July 2018:	August 2018:	September 2018:
Mainstream:	130	126	127	123	121	121
Kinship:	31	30	30	37	39	39
Regulation 24 (Temporary Approval):	27	27	30	21	26	24
Supported Lodgings:	14	13	13	13	12	12
Total:	202	196	200	194	198	196

The number of Mainstream Foster Carers has decreased by nine households and the number of Supported Lodgings Carers has decreased by two households since the beginning of the year. The Panel Administrator has continued to cleanse the data on the Fostering Register to ensure that it is accurate and reflective of the Panel Activity. The Fostering Register has shown no growth in Mainstream Foster Carers during this period. There has been a slight increase in Kinship and Regulation 24 Carers and Kinship Carers represent 32% of the Total Register as of 30th September 2018.

4. Fostering and Adoption Panel

4a. Frequency:

The Fostering and Adoption Panel was launched on 1 January 2016. It sits on the first and third Thursday of each month. If required, additional Panels are held.

Number of Times the Panel Sat During this Period:	12
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4b. Foster Carer Household Reviews Presented to Panel:

	Number of Households Reviews during the Period:
First/Third HHR with No Change to Original Approval:	5
HHRs with Change of Approval:	2
HHRs following Allegation:	3
Annual HHR	16
Total:	26

There were no Panels cancelled over the past six months and Panel sat for full days. The work completed on Household Reviews is steadily being progressed to Fostering Panel. There continues to be ongoing work regarding completing the backlog of Household Reviews. The tendering process to increase capacity to chair Household Reviews has been completed and the contract has been awarded with the view to this work commencing in November 2018. This increased activity will be represented in the next report.

4c. Disruption Reports:

Number of Disruption Reports Considered by Panel:	0
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4d. Panel Membership

Central List and all appraisals for Panel Members is up to date.

5. Placements, Referrals and Permanence

5a. Number of Referrals:

Number of Referrals:	Number of Children Placed:	Percentage Placed with In-House Carers:
134	83	61.5%

This was a very busy period with 134 referrals for fostering placements being received. Unfortunately, the in-house service was unable to keep pace with the demand and the use of independent fostering placements increased as a result. A significant number of children needing to be placed were very young children and babies who in the main were able to be placed in the in-house service, with Parent and Child Placements mostly being provided by independent fostering agencies.

5b. Number of Episodes:

	Number of Episodes:	Number of Nights/Hours:
Respite:	121	631
Day care Sessions:	82	660.75

The number of respite and day care episodes forms an important part of our support to foster carers, in order to allow them to have planned holidays, attend training or respite from challenging children. The ability to provide respite and day care is an important part of placement stability within the in-house service.

5c. Children/Young People Achieving Permanence:

	Number of Young People/Children:
Permanently Matched with In-House Carers:	2
Permanently Matched with IFA Carers:	4
Gained Permanence Through SGO:	17

5d. Formal Staying Put Arrangements:

As of 30 June 2018:

	Number of Young People:	Number Placed with In-House Carers:
Staying Put Arrangements:	9	6 (66%)

As of 30 September 2018:

	Number of Young People:	Number Placed with In-House Carers:
Staying Put Arrangements:	16	13 (81%)

The number of Staying Put arrangements has increased since June 2018 and the majority of these arrangements are within the in-house service. It should be noted that this has an impact on placement availability within the in-house service as Foster Carers go on to resign from their role in Fostering and take on the new status of Staying Put Carers.

6. Allegations, Complaints and Significant Events

6a. Number of Allegations:

Number of Allegations:	
Consultations:	15
Advice Notifications:	3
Staff Member – Practice Adjustment/Learning	11
Section 47 Strategy Meetings:	3

The service is robust in dealing with allegations against foster carers and consultation with the LADO is a well understood process. One allegation progressed to a Section 47 Strategy Meeting and the case is being progressed under the Fostering Allegations Procedure.

6b. Total Number of Missing Episodes:

	Missing Less Than 24 Hours:		Missing 1 – 6 Days:		Missing 6+ Days:		Total:
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
April 2018	1	21	0	4	1	0	28
May 2018	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
June 2018	1	3	0	1	0	0	5
July 2018	0	4	1	2	0	0	7
August 2018	0	5	1	5	0	0	11
September 2018	2	4	1	3	0	0	10

These episodes relate to all Looked After Children, not just the children placed within the in-house Fostering Service. The data demonstrates that Milton Keynes Council's Missing Episodes have decreased since the beginning of the year by over half.

6c. Use of Control, Restraint or Discipline:

Number of Restraints Whilst Being Cared For in the Home:	<i>Information not currently being collected in LCS. This information is required for the Ofsted Fostering Data return.</i>
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None were reported during this period, although it is recognised that practice needs to be strengthened in this area and will be taken forward by the Team Manager and the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer once she is in post.

6d. Medication, Medical Treatment and First Aid Administered:

Number of Children/Young People Administered Medication:	Percentage Where Medication is Ongoing:
<i>Information not currently being collected in LCS. This information is required for the Ofsted Fostering Data return.</i>	

Not reported during this period. There is ongoing work with the LCS Team in order for this to be reported in the future.

7. Summary and Conclusion

This has been a busy six months in the Service. The restructure is now complete and the two Team Managers are in post and building permanent teams with the appropriate knowledge, skills and capacity to deliver an outstanding Fostering Services.

The new Team Manager for the Recruitment and Assessment Team is working with the Communications Team to develop the 'Help them write their future' campaign and all recruitment activities are under review as part of the new Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy.

A priority for the service in the next six month is to ensure that foster carers are compliant with the fostering regulations. The principal activity will be ensuring that all household reviews are up to date by the end of the year. We are also reviewing our training offer to carers and will ensure that this is reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel in the future.

In line with the Family Support Model of practice, a growing number of children are being cared for under kinship arrangements. We acknowledge the value of Kinship Carers contribution to providing loving homes for our children in care. As a service we are considering how we can better support and develop this valuable resource.

In line with the regulations the service is required to produce a quarterly report and this will form the basis on the annual report. Extensive work is underway to improve the quality and the accuracy of the management information that underpins these reports.

8. Fostering Team Staffing Matters

7a. Proposed Restructure:

Restructure has been completed and any upcoming posts are currently being recruited to.

7b. Annual Appraisals:

All annual appraisals completed in timescale.

7c. Foster Carer Payments:

A new Foster Carer's Financial Policy has been developed and this is currently awaiting authorisation to be implemented by the Service Director, Children's Services. This will coincide with the implementation of ContrOCC – new financial software that will link to Placement Records on LCS and automatically trigger foster carer payments. This should prevent the risk of over or under payments to foster carers.

7d. Placement Referral Form:

A new Placement Referral Form has been developed by LCS and tested by members of staff in the Fostering Team, Corporate Parenting Team, Family Support Teams and the Community Resources Team. This piece of work is part of the transition process of moving the Independent Fostering Agency placement searches to the Community Resources Team. Both the Placement Referral Form and transition of the IFA searches has scheduled to go live on 1st October 2018.

The Placement Referral Form will also be able to provide statistics regarding referrals, including how many referrals are regarding children/young people where it is not their first episode of care (reoccurring referrals).