



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children's Services

LEAD OFFICER: Director of Children's Services

DATE: 9 June 2016

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Children's Services

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

KEY DECISION: YES NO

SUBJECT: Fostering Service Quarterly Report - 1 January - 31st March 2016

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to provide information to the Council's Executive Board on the management and performance of the Local Authority's Fostering Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:
Notes the quarterly report which is available on the Council website.

3. BACKGROUND

The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services requires the Council Executive to:

- a) Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the Fostering Service every 3 months;
- b) Monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children; and
- c) Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

The report has been written to address the issues identified above. It will be taken into account by OFSTED in inspecting the service.

This report is for the final quarter of 2015 – 2016, covering the period from 1st January to 31st March 2016 and provides an overview of the Service.

4. KEY ISSUES

1. The most significant issue this Quarter continues to be the lack of foster carers being assessed and approved to offer placements for children aged 8 years plus. However, the overall number of in house

foster carers increased from 113 to 117. This number needs to increase significantly to meet the current demand for placements. The Service has also experienced a shortage of placements for children with disabilities particularly those needing specialist care and equipment.

In March 2016, 22 children came into care and at the end of the Quarter; the number of Looked After Children had risen to 346. Whilst this has resulted in an additional 30 children in foster care over the Quarter, 22 have been accommodated by in house or family and friends placements with the remaining 8 being placed with independent fostering agencies.

2. The number of children who have experienced 3 or more placements during their time in care has increased compared to the same period in 2015. The fostering placement support service is now in place and an improvement plan is being developed to address the factors that contribute to this.

3. Attendance at foster carer training continues to be an issue. Proposals to change to a model of 4 to 5 conferences a year is in the process of being implemented.

4. There continues to be an increase in demand for family and friends assessments generated by the courts. The work has been absorbed by the Service in the short term but the team structure may need to change to accommodate the demand. This issue is being experienced by fostering services regionally and nationally.

5. The Treatment, Fostering Care Oregon Programme closed at the end of the Quarter. The loss of the Programme, which had become unsustainable, means the Service no longer has access to fostering placements for the most challenging children in need of specialist wrap around support. However, a proportion of the budget has been retained to develop a smaller and less specialised support service for foster placements for the younger age group, which will operate from the Limes alongside the Challenge to Care Team. The idea is to develop a model for younger children that replicates what is offered by the Adolescent Support Unit for young people aged 11 years plus. Short breaks will be offered from within the Fostering Service rather than at the Limes.

6. In 2015/16, the Service achieved Investing in Children status, thus demonstrating that participation and the voice of the child is central to the work of the Service. This will be reassessed this year in order to maintain the award.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications identified.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications identified.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report is required to meet statutory requirements as outlined in section 3.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

No resource implications identified.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA link here*)

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

10. CONSULTATIONS

None.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	0.01
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Alyson Hanson, Service Leader
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DATE:	3 May 2016
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	Fostering Service Quarterly Report – 1 st January – 31 st March 2016
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