



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children's Services

LEAD OFFICER: Director of Children's Services

DATE: 1st August 2016

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Children's Services

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

KEY DECISION: YES NO

SUBJECT: Fostering Service Quarterly Report April – June 2016

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides 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 first quarter of 2016 - 2017, covering the period from 1st April to 30th June 2016, and provides an overview of the Service.

4. KEY ISSUES

The number of children coming into the care system in Blackburn with Darwen has been steadily increasing over the last 12 months and currently stands at 351 representing 90.34 per 10,000 population. In the first quarter of 2016/17, 10 children were admitted to care all aged 11 to 15 years,

which is a particularly difficult group to accommodate. With the number of cases open to Children's Social Care also increasing by 260 in the last year, this trend seems likely to continue placing the Fostering Service under considerable pressure to recruit foster carers willing to take these children. In addition, the Court continues to make decisions about very young children in care proceedings, which has stimulated an increased demand for mother and baby placements which will be difficult to meet.

Despite high levels of recruitment activity, which has generated interest, the Service is unlikely to recruit a sufficient number of carers to meet the demand and reduce reliance on commissioned placements.

The recruitment budget is limited and under great pressure. The cost of events is significant and targeted recruitment for specific groups creates further expense – publicity materials, advertising on the radio etc.

Foster carer attendance at training has been poor in Quarter 1 and meetings have been held to consider the future of delivery especially given the need for greater efficiency and effectiveness. The conference style model will commence in September and KEEP and Nurturing Attachment courses will run annually.

Placement stability continues to be an issue and whilst there are some dedicated resources to provide additional support to fragile placements, this resource has been reduced to make efficiencies with much of the funding for the 11 years Plus project being short term. As the offer has been extended to the younger age group, it is anticipated that the Service can impact on stability rates further this year.

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:	1.0
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Alyson Hanson – Service Leader, Placement Services
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DATE:	1 st August 2016
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	Fostering Service Quarterly Report April to June 2016
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