

# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



**REPORT OF:** Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

**LEAD OFFICERS:** Director of Children's Services & Education

**DATE:** Thursday, 11 June 2020

**PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED:** Children, Young People and Education

**WARD/S AFFECTED:** (All Wards);

**KEY DECISION:** Y

## **SUBJECT:**

Q3 Fostering Report Oct-Dec 2019 with Appendix 1 paper.

### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Report provides information on the management and performance of the Local Authority's Fostering Service and is revised each Quarter.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Executive Board notes the Quarter 3 Fostering Service Report which is available on the Council's website along with supporting paper, Appendix 1.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

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

- 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;
- c) Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

The Report has been written to address the areas identified above. It will be taken into account by OFSTED when inspecting the Service.

The Report is for the third Quarter of 2019 covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, and provides a comprehensive overview of the Service.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

The Appendix 1 paper provides a comprehensive overview of the Fostering Service, issues and risks with recommendations for Service development. The key areas are as follows:

- Quarter 3 has seen a reduction in the number of children in our care, in comparison to the previous periods as outlined in the table below. There has been an increase in the number of children placed with family and friends carers, and decrease in the number of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements.

- The number of males in our care remains the highest gender group, with a consistent pattern each Quarter of the 11-15 age group being the most significant and more challenging in terms of sufficiency to identify long-term placements. This age group 11-15 years is the most prominent in terms of being in Local Authority foster placements however, with the 3-6 year old age group predominantly placed with family and friends carers. There remains in Quarter 3 a higher proportion of children in the birth to 2 year age group placed in our care.

- The White British ethnic group, at 80% have a significantly higher number of children in our care as opposed to 12% from the Asian population. There are 7 children with disabilities in our care in Quarter 3, with no placement requests for this cohort of children in Quarter 2 or 3 which is positive and demonstrates the supportive Child in Need packages in place to prevent family breakdown.

- Reasons for placement instability includes the disruption of placements for teenagers displaying challenging behaviours and missing from home episodes, and an influx of larger sibling groups. It remains the case that babies and under 2's are placed in parent and Child Assessment Unit's and in foster placements for example for the duration of care proceedings, before settling into their permanent placement and this can impact upon figures.

-The regional 'You Can Foster' recruitment campaign has been live since September 2016 and has helped generate enquiries via the You Can Foster website. During this Quarter, the Service was informed that the 'You Can Foster' service would end in 2020 for all Local Authorities who have currently signed up to this contract. The 'front door' service of accepting enquiries and being the initial point of contact for five North West Authorities, will cease in March 2020.

- The requests for commissioned placements in Quarter 3 has seen some reduction from October to December 2019. The service continues to be as creative as possible and offering short breaks to maintain existing placements and prevent disruption where this is achievable. The number of requests for parent and Child Assessment Unit placements, which saw an increase in Quarter 2, has decreased this Quarter. There is an evident peak in children and young people placed at home on Care Orders or Supervision Orders.

#### **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

No policy implications identified.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Any increase in demand within the Fostering Service has the potential to have a significant impact on the financial position of the portfolio, due to the costs of externally commissioned placements. As a result, both the fostering and commissioned placements budgets are closely monitored throughout the year.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report is required to meet statutory requirements as set out in the 'National Minimum Standards for Fostering.'

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

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.

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.

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

None required.

## 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.

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<b>DATE:</b>	11/05/20
<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	Appendix 1 paper to be considered alongside this report.