



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children's Services

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Children's Services

DATE: 7th June 2018

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Children's Services

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

KEY DECISION: YES NO

SUBJECT: Quarter 4 FOSTERING REPORT - 1st January 2018 - 31st March 2018

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To provide information 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 fourth quarter of 2017 -18 covering the period from 1st January to 31st March 2018 and is also the annual report for the service as well as providing an overview.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

1. The number of children in the care of the local authority reduced slightly in Quarter 4 but numbers remain high leading to pressure being placed on all types of placements including fostering. In the last two years the service has gone from having 70% of children in care in foster placements to 57% at the end of this Quarter and the percentage of those in in house placements has reduced from 42% to 31%. The percentage in agency placements has remained fairly static due to placements being unavailable. As a result of this the number of children in very costly agency residential placements has increased.

2. The overall number of foster carers registered with the service dropped in Quarter 4 due to the fluctuation in the number of family and friends foster carers; however, the number of mainstream carers increased slightly. Recruitment activity and particularly social media campaigns has brought some strong enquiries that are converting to assessment. The number of carers in assessment at the end of Quarter 4 was significantly higher than the total number approved in the whole of the previous 12 months.

3. The Service engages well with foster carers and children in foster care. Feedback from carers at the March Fostering Forum was positive and feedback from children and young people through carer reviews and the Investing in Children process was also positive.

4. The number of viability and family and friends assessments required by the courts has continued to rise and has compromised the capacity of the Service to prioritise mainstream assessments of much needed foster carers. Agreement was reached to transfer some resource from the Assessment and Safeguarding Teams to enable the Fostering Service to take on this work and alleviate some of the pressure for the large numbers of these assessments. The expertise for these assessments lies within fostering and it therefore makes sense to transfer the work and the resource. This is due to happen in July 2018 when new social workers come into post.

5. The main Fostering Panel has struggled to meet the demands of the increased volume of family and friends assessments needing to be approved and will need to begin meeting every three weeks instead of four. This means there will be a need to recruit additional panel members, particularly independent and social work members. Both the main and review panels are performing well despite dealing with increased volumes of business.

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 set out in the 'National Minimum Standards for Fostering.'

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:	4 th May 2018
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	Quarter 4 Fostering Service Report 1 st January 2018 - 31 st March 2018
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