



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director of Children & Education (DCS)
<b>DATE:</b>	Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2023

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Children, Young People and Education
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	N

**SUBJECT: EB Q 4 Fostering report**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information on the management and performance of the Local Authority's fostering service which is revised on a quarterly basis. This report, alongside Appendix 1, provides analysis of the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023 and reflects upon data and service development over this period and recommendations for the next three monthly period.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board notes the Fostering three monthly report for Quarter 4, alongside Appendix 1 which provides a service progress overview and summary of service development recommendations.

## 3. BACKGROUND

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

- Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the Fostering Service;
- 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;
- 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

## 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

**4.1** It is positive at the end of quarter 4 that the majority of children placed in foster placements are in our own, Blackburn with Darwen provision. However, the rate at which new foster carer applications are being received and subsequently follow through to approval, remains an ongoing challenge. The current trends for the largest cohort of placements are –

- a) Males aged 11 – 16 years – this also includes Children and Young People who are seeking unaccompanied asylum.
- b) Large sibling groups.
- c) Children with a Disability
- d) PACE/Remand Beds.

As such, the Recruitment Strategy focuses on picking up pace and targeting households who have the ability to become carers for the above children and young people, with the offer of REVIVE Team support and specific training followed by appropriate allowances that match this level of care and support need.

**4.2** The Fostering Transformation Action Plan is picking up pace with support from the digital transformation team with the aim to improve the application process, assessment and approval of fostering households.

**4.3** The staffing review of both the Mainstream and Permanence Team is near completion which will provide greater management oversight and drive priorities and actions necessary on each team to meet the demands of the service.

**4.4** It is positive that most of the children and young people in our care, are in stable placements. However, for the teenage age group as well as large sibling groups, placement stability continues to remain a challenge.

As such, there continues to be specific areas of support for carers in regards to referrals into the REVIVE Service for therapeutic support which includes support and guidance to strengthen carers understanding of trauma and impact. To add to this, the team provide a high level of training including – attachment and trauma training which has had good outcomes.

**4.5** It continues to remain the case that children with disabilities primarily are placed in residential settings as opposed to fostering.

As such, there is an ongoing campaign to try to recruit foster carers for children with SEND but this remains a local and national challenge.

**4.6** Children in our Care have regular medicals at the statutory frequency appropriate for their age. There is a Designated Nurse, who takes an active role in following up health issues and assisting with health promotion work. Figures for Quarter 4 show that 88% of all Children in our Care have an up to date health assessment which is an increase from 2021/22. This figure is lower at 69% for Children in our Care who have had a dental check up in the last 12 months. This is slightly higher than the last 2 quarters which demonstrates that this has been a focus of work undertaken by practitioners and health professionals.

As such, the Children in Our care Team are doing a targeted day to ensure all dates of dental checks are inputted into the protocol system and referrals will be made to the new Lancashire and South Cumbria pathway to ensure a dental check is carried out for those without a dentist.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

No Policy Implications have been identified.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Fostering budgets are closely monitored throughout the financial year. The 2022/23 indicative

outturn position for both the fostering service and externally commissioned placements budgets saw an improvement on the forecasted position reported at quarter 3, although significant cost pressures remain. The fostering service returned an overspend of £220k in 2022/23 whilst the externally commissioned placements budget saw an overspend of £3.164m.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications identified.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The resource implications continue to be in regards to be in relation to the associated pressures of the Commissioning Budget.

## 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

Not applicable.

## 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

<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Suzanne Kinder</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	