



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Children & Education (DCS)
DATE:	Thursday, 7 December 2023

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

SUBJECT: EB Q2 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 1st May 2023 until the 30th September 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 2, 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 remains the case 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, continues to remain an ongoing challenge. The current trends for the largest cohort of placements are the same as in previous reports.

- Males aged 11 – 16 years – this also includes Children and Young People who are seeking unaccompanied asylum.
- Large sibling groups.

- Children with a Disability
- PACE/Remand Beds.

4.2 In relation to digital transformation. The foster carer application form is now digital meaning swifter progress through the system for applications. Expenditure and mileage forms for foster carers are now digital meaning that foster carers are able to receive payments easier with a more timely process for them. The plans are nearing completion for a separate Kinship Care Website, which will enable all Kinship Carers to access information and contact the Kinship Care Team when they require support. There are currently plans to incorporate multiple referral forms for children and young people into one form through the ICT systems to reduce time and workload. The systems team are currently scoping the workflow within Liquidlogic to develop and strengthen the case management system and enable analytical data to be produced and scrutinised to inform practice.

4.3 Placement stability remains a positive picture in the main. However, there are no changes for the demand for placements for teenagers as well as large sibling groups.

4.4 It continues to remain the case that children with disabilities primarily are placed in residential settings as opposed to fostering. As such, there remains an ongoing campaign to try to recruit foster carers for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) but this remains a local and national challenge.

4.5 The fostering service has now approved five fostering households against the target of twelve in this financial year. There are three households currently in assessment, with a further 3 enquiries moving onto initial visits. The ambition of the service is to supersede the target.

4.6 There is currently development around the process for Disruption Meetings with a view to develop these to be more collaborative and to follow the Systemic Model. This piece of work is being jointly undertaken through the Fostering Service, the Independent Review Service and through the Children in Our Care Service. With the plan to provide detailed analysis on placement disruptions across the service to inform future learning to prevent further placement disruptions. Disruption Meetings are planned to take place across all placements including short and long-term foster placements, Kinship Care placements including Special Guardianship Order (SGO) placements.

4.7 There is a Designated Nurse, who takes an active role in following up health issues and assisting with health promotion work. Figures for Quarter 2 show that 88% of all Children in our Care have an up-to-date health assessment. 85% of children who are looked after having had a dental check up in the last 12 months, which is a significant improvement on the previous quarter which was 69%, is demonstrating the work that has been undertaken across the service to improve in this area.

4.8 The most recent weekly data from 18th September 2023, tells us we have 338 care leavers who are open to the Leaving Care Team either as an allocated Personal Advisor, under 18 years or as the Allocated Worker post 18 years. This number changes on a daily/weekly basis due to closures/step away's and new young people opening to the service at 15 ¾.

In August 2023, Care Leavers in suitable accommodation for 17–18 year olds was recorded at 88%, this decreased by 3% since January 2023. This has been explored and relates to 3 young people; we are satisfied that appropriate plans are in place to support these young people with securing a permanent home. Care Leavers in suitable accommodation for 19–21 year olds decreased by 1% at 88% since May 2023. In Staying Put placements, we currently have 22 young people with 4 more placements predicated next year.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications have been identified

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The latest projections at quarter 2 predict an overspend on in-house foster care of £46,000. The projections for externally commissioned placements show a forecasted overspend of £1,130,000 at quarter 2, however there remains a level of uncertainty around the expenditure on this budget due to the receipt from certain providers of requests for inflationary uplifts to their weekly rates for existing placements. Negotiations are ongoing with providers in order to arrive at satisfactory outcomes for all parties. Once the outcomes are known, any new rates will be applied to the budget monitoring forecasts.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications

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

NA

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
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DATE:	09-11-2023
BACKGROUND PAPER:	