



# 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>	8 February 2024

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

**SUBJECT: Quarter 3 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> October 2023 until the 31<sup>st</sup> December 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 3, alongside Appendix 1 which provides a service progress overview and summary of service development.

## 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 both locally and nationally, continues to remain an ongoing challenge. The Recruitment Hub is in the implementation stage, the hub will be focussed on the issues around foster carer recruitment with the aim of increasing recruitment activity across the cluster local authorities in the Northwest with a dedicated team who will offer a targeted marketing campaign and a timely response to fostering enquiries. It is hoped that that the hub will increase our overall recruitment activity in Blackburn with

Darwen, with an increase in assessment and approval of foster carers. 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 focus has been on developing all forms for foster carers to be digital to provide a swift response and less delay for our foster carers. The Kinship Care Website is near completion and there is now a focus on developing the digital system and website for the Fostering Recruitment Hub. Carer assessment pathways through Liquid Logic are now being introduced which will create a more seamless assessment process for fostering applicants and will strengthen the case management system enabling analytical data to be produced and scrutinised to inform practice. Foster carer training will be a focus over the next quarter with the aim of reviewing and developing the training offer by co-producing this with our foster carers and our kinship carers.

4.3 Placement stability remains largely positive with less placement disruptions. The review of the disruption procedure will further strengthen the learning and support to our placements further increasing placement stability. 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 seven fostering households against the target of twelve in this financial year. There are 6 households currently in assessment, with a further 3 enquiries moving onto initial visits. The service remains focussed on meeting the target of 12 households, though it is recognised that this will be a challenge over the next quarter.

4.6 A new transitions process has been implemented for young people transitioning from the Children in Our Care service to the Leaving Care Service with the aim of proving a seamless transition for our young people with support identified and in place when they turn 18.

4.7 There has been several vacant posts recruited to across the fostering service demonstrating increasing stability across the workforce.

4.8 There has been an increase in the number of kinship placements and kinship assessments which reflects the number of children coming into care or at risk of coming into care. This has placed additional pressure on the Kinship Team, however, this is currently being managed across the service.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

No policy implications have been identified

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The latest projections at quarter 3 predict an underspend on in-house foster care of £141,800. The projections for externally commissioned placements show a forecasted overspend of £1,500,000 at quarter 3.

**7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications

**8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The resource implications continue to be in regards 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.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
-----------------	----------

<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Louise Helm</b>
-------------------------	--------------------

<b>DATE:</b>	<b>31-01-2024</b>
--------------	-------------------

<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	
--------------------------	--