



# 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, 11 July 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 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 2024 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2024 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.

## 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.
- b) Monitor the management and outcomes of the services 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. Ofsted will consider it when inspecting the service.

## 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

4.1 It remains the case that most 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 Foster with Us is due to be launched in May 2024. 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 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. This is due for completion in April 2024 and has made a positive impact across the fostering service and for foster carers in reducing delay and improving the foster carer experience.

4.3 Placement stability remains positive with less placement disruptions. The Unplanned Endings and Disruption process is now live with the aim of strengthening learning around disruptions and 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 There is now stability across the fostering service with vacant posts being recruited to.

4.6 There continues to be increased assessment activity across the kinship teams with kinship carers being the priority in considering placements for children who cannot be cared for by their parents.

4.7 The Mockingbird Family Model is well into the implementation stage with the aim of launching the first Mockingbird constellation in October.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

No policy implications have been identified

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The 2023/24 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 in relation to commissioned placements, significant cost pressures remained. The indicative outturn position for the fostering service shows an underspend of £242k in 2023/24, however this must be considered against an indicative overspend of £1.202m on our externally commissioned placements budget. Detailed place planning work has been undertaken as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25 to address these budget pressures.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The resource implications continue to be regarding 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, Suzanne Kinder</b>
-------------------------	------------------------------------

<b>DATE:</b>	16-05-2024
--------------	------------

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