

# Fostering Service Quarter 1 Report

1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018

## Executive Report



Quarterly reports to the Executive Board are a requirement of the Fostering Service to meet Standard 25.7 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. They are a key part of the documentation considered by OFSTED when conducting a Service inspection.



## **Introduction**

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service aims to ensure that:

- The best foster carers are recruited for our children;
- All placements receive high quality support, effectively targeted according to need;
- Children are found permanent families without delay; and
- Children and young people in foster care achieve the best possible outcomes.

## **Children in our Care in Foster Care**

The number of children in our care decreased significantly in Quarter 1. This is likely to be the effect of an increase in the number of Family Group Meetings, the introduction of Caring Dads, the very close management of PLO (Public Law Outline) and the use of the Adolescent Support Unit to provide outreach support and short breaks to adolescents at risk of entering the care system.

	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2018</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> June 2018</b>
<b>Number of Children in our Car</b>	377	343
<b>Number of CioC in Foster Care</b>	215 (57%)	209 (61%)
<b>Number of children in in-house foster care placements</b>	118 (31%)	120 (35%)
<b>Number of children in family and friends foster care</b>	48 (13%)	45 (13%)
<b>Number of children in independent fostering agency placements</b>	49 (13%)	44 (13%)
<b>Children in other placement types</b>	65(17%)	45(13%)

The availability of foster placements both in-house and through independent agencies remains challenging, particularly for older children and sibling groups. However, the percentage of children in foster care, particularly in in-house placements has increased though there has been a small decrease in the actual number. There was a small decrease in the number of children in independent agency fostering placements in Quarter 1 compared to Quarter 4 of 2017-18.

## **In-House and Agency Placements**

	<b>In-house</b>	<b>Family and Friends</b>	<b>Independent Fostering Agency</b>
<b>Male</b>	79	18	30
<b>Female</b>	41	27	14

## **Age break down of children in foster placements**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Mainstream</b>	<b>Family and Friends</b>	<b>Independent Fostering Agency</b>
<b>0 to 2</b>	14	10	4
<b>3 to 6 years</b>	10	17	3
<b>7 to 10 years</b>	27	4	10
<b>11 to 15 years</b>	50	11	23
<b>16 and 17 years</b>	19	3	4
<b>Total</b>	120	45	44

## **New Referrals in Quarter 4**

There were 47 new referrals in Quarter 1, the largest number falling in the 12 plus age group. 28 children actually came into care in Quarter 1 with the majority (21) being placed with in-house foster carers.

	No of children	Sibling Groups	Age 0 - 5	Age 6 - 11	Age 12+	Children placed in-house	Fostering Agency	Residential placements	Children didn't come in
<b>April</b>	15	1	5	2	8	3	0	1	11
<b>May</b>	13	2	4	2	7	7	0	2	4
<b>June</b>	19	3	5	8	6	11	2	2	4
<b>Quarter 1 total</b>	47	6	14	12	21	21	2	5	19

### **Feedback from children in Foster Care**

The feedback received from children in foster care is generally positive. Their views are obtained from:

- Participation in the VOICE and Junior VOICE groups;
- The work of the Participation Champions in the service;
- The Investing in Children assessment process;
- Participation in staff recruitment (interviews) and foster carer training;
- Contributing to the Annual Review report of the foster carers looking after them;
- A support group for birth children and grandchildren; and
- Social worker feedback for foster carer reviews.

Children, young people and their social workers made the following comments about placements when contributing to foster carer reviews in Quarter 1:

#### **Some comments from children and young people include:**

'I really, really, really want to stay. Please don't let me go'.

'It was bad being grounded. I was telling lies'

'It has been difficult moving but now I am in the perfect place'

'I love this family because they are kind, helpful and caring'.

Some children and young people prefer not to comment but are happy to tick the boxes indicating that they are happy with their foster carers.

#### **Social Workers said:**

'Both boys are able to articulate their wishes and feelings. They speak fondly of the carers and are able to discuss any areas that they are unsure of. Both boys state that they are happy and are both looking forward to going abroad for the first time. Both boys were excited to receive their passports.'

'C had 20% school attendance in the academic year 2016-2017 at home with her mother. C has had 100% attendance since living with her foster carer and appears pro-active and encouraged. C has been observed completing homework. Very positive and massive improvements made!'

'C has demonstrated excellent insight and understanding of K's needs. K can display very demanding and draining behaviours. C and A have shown commitment to K's long term needs and managing her outbursts while remaining emotionally available to her.'

#### **Birth Children said:**

'L has been displaying challenging behaviour but we have worked through it as a family using the PACE model.'

'Everything fine, no issues'.

### **Promoting Children's Health, Emotional Development, Education & Leisure**

Foster families are provided with pre and post-approval preparation and training on the importance and availability of health, education and leisure services to enable them to help children achieve their potential and enhance their emotional wellbeing.

Looked After Children and young people are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities in which they can succeed and are supported in achieving better outcomes. All local Looked After Children and care leavers are provided with a Be Active card, which enables them to access free sport and leisure activities within the Borough. Foster carers are also provided with a MAX Card, which offers heavily discounted access to a range of leisure parks and facilities around the North West. This is funded by the Fostering Service in partnership with the Foster Carer Association.

Children in foster care have regular medicals at the statutory frequency appropriate for their age. There is a Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, who takes an active role in following up health issues and assisting with health promotion work. Foster carers have a Health Passport for each child they care for in which they or the child records all of the child's health details. Public Health funding for 18 months has enabled the appointment of a specialist nurse to work with 'hard to reach' Looked After Children and care leavers.

There are currently 12 Looked After Children registered as having a disability in foster care. Foster carers are provided with the relevant training and support to meet the specific needs of the child they have in placement.

In relation to emotional wellbeing, Looked After Children have access to Clinical Psychology and related services through the East Lancashire Child and Adolescent Service (ELCAS) also known as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The REVIVE Service is a partnership between Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Children's Services and East Lancashire Hospital Trust to provide emotional health support for children known to the Local Authority and is based at Duke Street. REVIVE delivers consultation to foster carers, training and direct intervention on emotional health and well-being. Feedback from foster carers following consultation is very positive. The Revive Service has delivered training to foster carers on self-harm and on attachments.

12 new referrals were accepted by REVIVE regarding children in foster care in Quarter 1 and 8 of these were subject to full Care Orders, 1 to Section 20 Accommodation and 3 to Interim Care Orders. All but one referral was made by the child's social worker. There are 58 children in our care open to the Revive Team who also support a small number of children and young people going through adoption and special guardianship, children in need and children subject to child protection plans. The team also provide consultation to the residential homes, Engage and the Limes.

The Fostering Support Officer worked with 5 young people and 8 sets of foster carers in Quarter 1 and ran two groups including the Saturday Morning Club for children in the 7 to 11 age group.

As well as mandatory First Aid training, foster carers also receive training on a variety of health-related issues including 'Infectious Diseases in Childhood' and 'Managing Medicine.' Phase 1 of a 'Healthy Homes' training package for carers has been developed.

In line with Standard 8 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, the Department implements a written education policy prepared in partnership with the Education Manager for Children in Our Care. The Virtual Head's role is to ensure that the educational needs of all Children in our Care are being met and that levels of achievement and aspiration among our children and young people are raised. Termly briefings are held with a group of social workers, managers and Designated Teachers and Head Teachers to consider ways to improve achievement and attainment.

The Pupil Premium allowance, previously paid to schools to support Children in our Care to achieve in school, is now managed by the Virtual Head who has a system in place to administer and ensure the money is spent appropriately to further their educational achievements. The Virtual Head quality assures all Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

The Education Manager sits within the Children in our Care Social Work Service and, where necessary, actively intervenes with schools to promote the needs of children in foster care. As part of the preparation and assessment process and through the Foster Carer Agreement, foster carers are set a clear expectation that they will promote and support children's educational attainment. The ways in which foster carers meet children's educational needs are monitored through the foster carer review process and supervisory visits. Foster carers

regularly receive training 'Promoting Educational Achievement for Children in Our Care' and this course was delivered in January 2018.

During Quarter 1 the Letterbox Club started again for all CIOC from Reception to Y6 to encourage reading at home. Books, games etc. which are age appropriate are sent out on a monthly basis. Feedback has been very encouraging from the children who have stated that they enjoy receiving their parcels and carers have stated they are definitely encouraging their children to read.

Extra tuition was offered on a Tuesday after school to all Y6 CIOC to prepare for SATs. This took place at the Kip McGrath Centre in Blackburn, however there was not a good take up of the offer with only one regular attendee. However, extra tuition for Year 11's in English and Maths had a better turnout and their GCSE results are awaited. In previous years there was clear evidence that the extra tuition improved results.

Key Stage 2 SAT's results are in the process being validated, but early indications are that we have 6 children (37.5%) who passed their SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar), Reading and Maths.

Overall attendance for the Virtual School is 93%; this is higher for our children/young people in foster care.

### **Engagement with Children & Young People and the VOICE Group**

The VOICE group meets every month at Knott Street Community Centre and the majority of children who attend are in foster care. This venue was chosen as the facilities allow part of each session to be activity-based. The members of the group have been involved in a number of consultation activities to inform and shape services. They have recently consulted with the Virtual School regarding the format of the 'Celebration of Achievement' event and spoke with a web designer who is designing the new looked after children website. Voice members also asked for access to residential summer activities and in response 7 places have been reserved specifically for Voice members.

As part of Fostering Fortnight young people and carers were supported on May (Bank Holiday) to attend 2BR radio. Feedback from carers and young people was they enjoyed it but 'didn't get any freebies'.

The Voice Group took part in PEPS feedback which the Education Manager and Virtual Head had organised. The young people used the KETSO board and liked giving their opinion on PEPS and how they would like their reviews to be conducted. This included feedback on what PEP money can be used for in school.

A young person in foster care had disengaged with education and was permanently excluded and sent to an alternative school. He was unhappy with this decision and promised to try harder if given another chance back at mainstream school so he was reinstated at his mainstream school and has since made significant changes in his behaviour and attitude to his education, resulting in him recently being awarded prefect status.

VOICE members and care leavers continue to attend Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group, when appropriate. Two care leavers recently presented feedback from the NW Game Changer conference, attended by around 200 looked after children from across the North West of England. They informed the Corporate Parenting group of the top four issues identified by the conference and requested a response to how these could be addressed in Blackburn with Darwen. The top four issues are:

1. Contact with your birth brothers or sisters;
2. Having a key trusted adult to talk to;
3. Feeling safe and free from bullying;
4. Being trusted and valued by the adults that are caring for you.

There is a Care Leavers Forum that is well attended. A number of young people have undertaken Peer Mentoring training and will be offered opportunities to mentor younger children in foster care over the summer. Care Leavers and a young person in foster care took part in a young people's interview panel, to recruit the new Director of Children's Services.

### **Transitions**

Young people are allocated a Leaving Care Worker at the age of 15½ years.

Children and young people in foster care are supported to make a positive transition to adult life so foster carers attend training on 'Transitions' which focuses on their role in developing young people's skills to live

independently as they progress towards adulthood. The Children in Our Care Team and the Fostering Team encourage carers and young people to consider 'staying put' and the Leaving Care Service also delivers courses for foster carers to develop their understanding of this. The training has been positively evaluated by carers and most indicate a willingness to work with 'staying put'. Although finance causes carers the most concern, some are willing to receive housing benefit as part of their financial package and will consider changing their status to landlord. The Leaving Care Service attend Reviews to discuss Staying Put with foster carers for young people aged 17 years, who will turn 18 in 2018. The Service has also started some work to develop a 'staying close' option, which may be more suitable for a number of care leavers.

The Leaving Care Service is currently in the process of being reassessed for the Investing in Children award. The service is also working hard to encourage and support care leavers into apprenticeships. A recent session at the library about apprenticeships was attended by 15 young people who all expressed an interest. The service is also working in partnership with the Blackburn Rovers Community Trust to develop a 'Get Ready for Work' course aimed specifically at care leavers.

The Leaving Care Service has achieved an increase in the number of supported lodgings providers this year, which increases choice for young people leaving foster care and residential placements in favour of semi-independence. Participation levels continue to be good with young people delivering the Total Respect training and training for foster carers.

The Leaving Care Service has 8 advisors who have now moved to Duke Street. 3 advisors are working with the 16 to 18 age group resolving issues with accommodation, education, training and employment and staying put. 5 advisors are providing advice and guidance to the 21 to 25 age group and in addition all advisers have a caseload of at least 20 18 to 21 year olds for whom they provide general support.

### **Care Planning**

The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 provide a revised definition of 'permanence' for Children Looked After, including for the first time the definition of a long term foster placement. The responsibilities of the Local Authority in assessing the ability of the foster carer to meet the needs of the child now and in the future, and identifying any support services needed to achieve this are also set out. Local Authorities are required to achieve long term matching within reasonable timescales. The Regulations introduce new duties for ceasing to look after a child.

### **The Fostering Service**

The Fostering Service has restructured into two mainstream teams and a permanence team which is currently being developed and due to be launched. Two new social workers will be taking up their positions and the team has been prepared in order to complete viability assessment work, something previously completed by the Assessment and Safeguarding teams. The team will also undertake all SGO assessments, the rationale behind this being that assessing carers fits much better with the skills and expertise of the Fostering Service so the work can be completed more efficiently and effectively.

Three supervising social workers are currently on maternity leave and one on long term sickness which is being managed in line with HR procedures.

### **Foster Carer Resource**

	<b>Total number of foster carers</b>	<b>Mainstream</b>	<b>Short breaks carers</b>	<b>Family and Friends carers</b>
<b>Quarter 4</b>	123	82	12	29
<b>Quarter 1</b>	123	82	14	27

There has been very little change in the number of foster carers from Quarter 4.

### **Matching and Ethnicity**

There have been no transracial placements made this quarter. There is a planned transracial long term placement which has been agreed and all involved have agreed this is a good match.

## Foster Carer Recruitment

During Quarter 1 there were 35 enquires, 10 registrations of interest (ROI's) and 5 approvals.

2018/19				
Month	Enquiries	ROI	Approvals	Conversion
Apr-18	15	4	3	27%
May-18	8	2	1	25%
Jun-18	12	4	1	33%
	35		5	28% average

In Quarter 1, the website was rebuilt and has now gone live. There has been a significant uplift in the enquiries now coming through this channel.

The service placed a number adverts aimed at attracting existing foster carers over from other agencies which led to 3 additional enquiries for the quarter. Of the 12 enquiries for June, 5 came from You Can Foster. Activity on Facebook was well received and the service had good responses from radio advertising. The service has commissioned 12 months of radio advertising which is starting to resonate with the public, who are voicing this as a reason for enquiring.

Facebook saw over 2000 interactions for the month and the number of followers is continuing to grow. Social media has been rebranded so that it matches the website and will allow the service to maintain the same message. Some bespoke, targeted advertising was placed in June for individual children who have proved hard to place. This has led to 4 placements so far.

Post Details

**Fostering in Blackburn with Darwen Council**  
Published by Mike Dixon (P) · 14 June · G

Meet Thomas, one of our children who needs a loving home right now. Thomas is an 9 year old boy with blond hair and blue eyes. Thomas has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy, epilepsy, learning disabilities and visual impairment. He does not communicate verbally, however he can communicate through facial gestures and he can vocalise some sound. Thomas is reliant on his carers to meet all of his personal care needs....  
[See more](#)

4,173 people reached

Boost Post

Rose Roberts, Carrie Carrie and 26 others · 1 Comment · 35 Shares

Like Comment Share Hootlet

**Performance for your post**

4,173 People Reached

93 Reactions, comments & shares

40 Like	21 On post	19 On shares
14 Love	8 On post	6 On shares
1 Sad	0 On post	1 On shares
3 Comments	1 On Post	2 On Shares
35 Shares	35 On Post	0 On Shares

741 Post Clicks

94 Photo views	0 Link clicks	647 Other Clicks
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NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post      0 Hide All Posts  
0 Report as Spam      0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

In June, a Fostering Information Event had a good turnout and led to 2 expressions of interest. One attendee had attended another agency's information event the evening before and was planning to apply to an independent agency IFA but said that the facilitators had spoken so passionately and explained all his questions so well that he would be looking to apply to Blackburn with Darwen instead.



Foster Care Fortnight was in May and advertised fostering widely on social media. Recruitment activity during the two weeks included radio and social media advertising and a publicity stunt for the service that involved Councillor Bateson and the Youth MP Ellie Walsh being duck taped to cupboard doors in aid of the 'Give a Child a Christmas Charity'. This provided good social media opportunities.



In June, the Marketing and Recruitment Officer and a social worker went live on a community radio station pushing the need for more BME foster carers.

### **Assessments and Approvals**

At the end of Quarter 1, there were 13 sets of prospective carers in assessment:

- 8 at Initial Visit
- 2 at Stage 1
- 3 at Stage 2

5 new mainstream foster carer households and 2 family and friends carer households were approved in Quarter 1.

### **Regional Campaign**

The regional 'You Can Foster' recruitment campaign has been live since September 2016 and has helped generate enquiries via the You Can Foster website.

Fostering Service Managers and the new Recruitment and Marketing Officer have been involved in the development of this campaign to ensure that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council derives full benefit from it. The campaign is prioritising recruitment at a local level through the targeting of P.R, digital marketing and additional local activity.

### **Foster Carer Retention**

There were 5 mainstream approvals in Quarter 1, two offering short breaks and 3 short term placements. There were however 3 mainstream resignations.

### **Assessment**

Statutory guidance for fostering assessments is that they should be completed within 8 months, a timescale that is generally achieved. The quality of assessments remains good and is monitored by the Fostering Panel.

### **Foster Carer Training**

During Quarter 1 April – June 2018, the Fostering Service delivered Conference 6 which included sessions on child sexual exploitation, working with young people who self-harm and working together to safeguard children. 52 foster carers attended this conference and feedback was very positive.

Conference 1 was repeated in Quarter 1 to ensure that all carers have had the opportunity to attend. Sessions included one on staying put and moving to independence and one on equality and diversity. 39 foster carers attended and fed back that the staying put information gave them a lot to think about.

There was also a support group which focussed on early years including feeding attachment and early bonding. 12 foster carers attended and fed back that they found this support group to be very informative and well run.

### **Fostering Panel**

Fostering Panel annual training was held in Quarter 1. Panel members and the Fostering Team came together to reflect on their roles and the functioning of the Panel, and to look at any issues arising as well as considering new developments. The training consisted of presentations and discussions about new legislation relating to family and friends foster care and common themes in the court arena.

Panel members and the Panel Chair have had their annual appraisal and review of their membership for the central list. This was undertaken as a group, which has been a good tool for team building and an effective way in discussing issues arising from Panel that helped to form the content of the Fostering Panel training day.

Quality assurance reports are completed for each agenda item on the Panel. These are completed jointly with the Chair and Panel members. The quality of reports has on the whole has been to a high standard and where there were concerns these have been raised with the assessor and their manager. We have seen some new members of the fostering team really develop their skills in assessments as well as their skills in presenting to the Panel. There are however a number of new supervising social workers on the Fostering Team, and to ensure there continues to be a consistently high standard of assessment presented to the Fostering Panel, a two-day assessment training has been arranged to take place over the next quarter.

Over this quarter, Fostering Panels have been held monthly with one further emergency Fostering Panel being held in April; this was for a family and friends assessment to be heard in order to meet court timescales. There have been six mainstream assessments presented to the Panels which have all been approved except for one being approved in principle until the ADM received a report about the safety of wiring in the property. Three allegations have been presented with two further updates on complex allegations previously presented. There have also been two 1st reviews in this quarter and two family and friends assessments. SGO assessments have also been presented to the Fostering Panel, however, these will all be presented to the Permanence Panel in future.

### **Review Panel**

During Quarter 1, there were 23 foster carer reviews presented to the Annual Review Panel and 12 sets of foster carers attended. 3 evaluation forms were returned which indicated that the experience of attending Panel was positive.

One foster carer commented:

“She goes above and beyond to support the children in my care. She is definitely a 5\* social worker, she listens to the children, and meets their needs.”

Other carers commended the support in place from their supervising social worker as being;

“Excellent support; always available when needed.”

### **Complaints**

There were no complaints in Quarter 1.

### **Compliments**

There were 3 compliments received during this Quarter period.

The first was received from a Team Manager complimenting the Fostering Duty Officer on the timeliness of identifying a short breaks foster placement for a young person. A further compliment was received from approved Friends and Family foster carers on the support received from the Fostering Support Officer during their application for a Special Guardianship Order in respect of their grandchildren.

A Child Support Officer provided a compliment about a foster carer and how they supported a young person's identity and sexuality in the placement, providing the young person the opportunity to express themselves without prejudice within the fostering environment.

### **Allegations**

During Quarter 1, there were two allegations. The two allegations were fully investigated and the correct procedures followed involving full strategy meetings led by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

### **Specific Incidents and Restraints (including Bullying, Serious Illnesses and Accidents)**

There were 2 serious illnesses and accident reported during Quarter 1.

There was a minor incident whereby the young person had fallen at school; following A&E attendance it was confirmed the young person had broken their wrist which resulted in surgery.

A further reported incident related to a disabled young person experiencing salmonella poisoning. It was suspected that it was transmitted from contaminated food and poor hygiene following the handling of reptiles. This resulted in the young person being admitted into hospital for a short period of time. Further training was provided to the foster carers and a professionals meeting was held which led to a requirement that the carers rehome the reptiles and other pets.

During Quarter 1, there were 7 reported specific incidents. One of these involved the young person's parent attending the carers' address when contact was not deemed to be appropriate for the young people in placement. The carers sought appropriate advice and maintained the safety of the young people placed in their care.

One incident involved a young person smashing a window to a neighbouring residential property which resulted in police being contacted and the young person being interviewed in connection with the damage. A further incident was reported involving the same young person where it was reported that the young person had been verbally threatening another pupil within school which resulted in the young person being excluded.

Two separate incidents of verbal aggression were reported. Carers sought appropriate advice and guidance from the Emergency Duty Team.

There was one further specific incident report where the carers reported an incident of self-harm, as the young person had attempted to cut them-self. Medical advice and treatment was sought for the young person with the support of their foster carers.

### **Missing From Home**

4 young people involved with 6 incidences of missing from home were reported during Quarter 1. Two young people experienced 2 missing from home incidents each whilst the remaining 2 incidences involved 2 different young people.

In all cases the correct missing from home procedures were followed and all young people returned to their placements safe and well. Procedures for young people who go missing include 'return home' interviews which

are conducted by the Engage Service. This allows young people to talk to someone independent about why they have been missing and for the service to identify issues of concern.

### **Exemptions**

No exemptions were made in Quarter 1.

### **Engagement with Foster Carers**

Blackburn with Darwen has a Foster Carer Association (FCA), which meets regularly and has an Elected Committee. Members of the Committee meet senior managers and the Executive Member on a quarterly basis. The Chair of the FCA sits on the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. The FCA has its own website, which has been increasingly used to communicate messages and news.

At the request of foster carers, membership of the Fostering Network moved to Foster Talk that provides similar services to support foster carers. Foster carers also have access to independent support commissioned from the Fostering Network to provide support and advocacy services in the event of complaints or allegations.

A small group of foster carers are recruitment champions, who help to drive recruitment forward and are involved with planning events, Skills to Foster preparation training, and manning recruitment stands and events.

The Fostering Service holds a foster carer forum every six months, the most recent in March 2018 when more than 30 carers attended. The event offers carers the opportunity to present their views about a range of issues related to fostering and to be involved in the future development of the Service. The next event will be held in October.

### **Family and Friends Foster Care**

In Quarter 1, there were 2 approvals of family and friends carers and 4 resignations. At the end of the quarter there were 27 family and friends fostering households. Assessment work has increased slightly with 21 assessments being completed during the quarter.

In Quarter 2 the new Permanence Team will begin completing all combined assessments (family and friends fostering and SGO assessments) and will also complete all viability assessments. Development work has been undertaken to develop processes, structure and templates to ensure that the referral process for these assessments as well as court timescales are implemented. The new arrangement will ensure that family and friends/connected person work is undertaken in a more skilled and timely way.

### **Short Break Foster Care**

15 short break carers provided 19 placements during Quarter 1. Short break carers provide support to parents, other placements and emergency placements. Carers are matched to children, who have a wide range of additional and complex needs. A support group is in place for short breaks carers and they met during Quarter 1.

### **Training / Staff**

All staff members have individual training and a development plan, which is linked to their annual appraisal and monitored during monthly supervision.

### **Placement Stability Table**

The Department uses a definition of placement stability based on 3 or more placements in a 12 month period that is calculated on a cumulative basis over the year. The average for England is measured against the figures for 2013/14 when it was 10.7%; the comparable authority percentage for the same year was 10.1%. In Quarter 1 performance was better than during Quarter 1 of the previous year by 1.6%.

	April	May	June
LAC with 3 or more placements	0	0	8
Total number of LAC	361	357	343
% Stability of LAC placements 2018/19	0%	0.3%	0.6%
% Stability of LAC placements 2017/18	0%	0%	2.2%

Disruption meetings are held in order to identify learning and inform future planning for any child whose placement has been disrupted. A number of managers across Children's Services have been trained to chair these meetings.

### **Fostering Support**

There were 5 open cases to Fostering Support at the beginning of the quarter, three males and two females. A further 4 recent referrals for Fostering Support have come through REVIVE and their support packages are in the process of being agreed. 4 foster carers are receiving weekly regular emotional support. The Saturday Club has 8 young people who attend regularly.

### **Commissioned Placements**

The number of fostering and residential commissioned placements decreased overall by 6 placements from the end of the last financial year to the end of Quarter 1. The 42 children and young people in independent agency foster placements include 8 sets of siblings and 2 concurrent placements.

End of Quarter 4 2017/18	End of Quarter 1 2018/19
Independent Agency Residential Placements 24	Independent Agency Residential Placements 28
Independent Agency Fostering Placements 49	Independent Agency Fostering Placements 42

### **Budget**

Current placement pressures in-house and across the independent fostering agency landscape continue to place the commissioning budget under great pressure. The Case Tracking and Commissioning Panel monitors placements and ensure that there are robust plans for those that can be brought back to in-house provision without delay.

### **Service Priorities for 2018/19**

1. The Service has set a target of recruiting 15 new sets of foster carers in 2018/19. The Service will also undertake some targeted recruitment for individual children in need of long term placements. The Service will also undertake some innovative recruitment including some specialist carers to work alongside residential units and some short breaks carers to work alongside ASU in offering emergency placements.  
**Quarter 1 Update – 5 new sets of carers were approved in Quarter 1 and at the end of the quarter there were 13 sets of prospective carers in assessment, albeit 8 of these were still at the initial visit stage. Recent events and social media are generating interest so it is anticipated that the target will be met.**
2. A team development day will be held in July 2018 once the 2 new social workers for viability assessments are in post.

**Quarter 1 Update – the two new social workers take up posts on 30<sup>th</sup> July. The Development Day has been delayed to September though a new team development plan has been completed and the team has been consulted.**

3. The Fostering Service will restructure to take account of increased demand from family and friends, SGO and viability assessments.

**Quarter 1 Update - The service has now restructured into 3 teams; two mainstream and one family and friends. The latter will bring in new work immediately. One of the two mainstream teams will focus on recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers and the other will focus on the training, supervision and support of carers.**

4. The Fostering Support Worker will work more closely with the REVIVE Service in the coming year in order to develop a more cohesive approach to supporting children, young people and foster carers, and to achieve improvements in placement stability rates. Fostering Support will continue to work closely with the Adolescent Support Unit so that young people can access short breaks and a wide range of activities. Fostering Support will continue to develop the Saturday Club for younger children in foster care.

**Quarter 1 Update – The Fostering Support Worker now sits in the REVIVE Team but is maintaining close links with both the Fostering Service and Adolescent Support Unit. The Saturday Club is well attended. Placement stability is closely monitored and there has been a positive start to the year in Quarter 1.**

5. The Service will develop a communication and engagement strategy using the FCA website as a focal point for communication. A focus group will be developed including foster carers to consider the potential for innovation as outlined above.

**Quarter 1 Update - Work is ongoing and needs to develop further in Quarter 2. The service is now communicating with the majority of carers via e mail and the FCA website but further work is needed. The Fostering Forum is held twice a year and will be held in October.**

6. Foster carer training will continue to develop but with less input from the Workforce Development Team. The Service will focus on the development of online training.

**Quarter 1 Update – The new training booklet for the coming year is ready for distribution. Discussions about digitalising some training have been held. This work is ongoing.**

7. The management team will continue to monitor compliance with Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards and will increase the number of case file audits completed each month to support this.

**Quarter 1 Update – A meeting has been held to plot a number of thematic audits against the new team development plan. The plan includes better use of Protocol to record and monitor compliance which will commence with refresher training to be held in Quarter 2.**

8. The Fostering Service will review the foster carer payment package which will be considered by the Senior Leadership Team. The review will consider whether the current level of payment is competitive with that offered by neighbouring authorities and independent agencies based in the locality. The foster carer lease car scheme will form part of this review.

**Quarter 1 Update – Foster carer payments are still under review.**

9. Panel development – The independent Panel Chair contract will go out to tender. This will take account of the need for Panel to sit more frequently (every 3 weeks instead of monthly). The membership list will be developed to address difficulties in sustaining the pool of independent and social work members. A Panel Member training day will be held with a focus on family and friends fostering.

**Quarter 1 Update – A Panel Member training day was held at the end of Quarter 1. The contract has gone out to tender and bids will be evaluated in Quarter 2.**

**Alyson Hanson  
Service Leader, Placement Services  
30<sup>th</sup> July, 2018**