



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children's Services
LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Children's Services
DATE: 13th December 2018

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Children's Services

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

KEY DECISION: YES NO

SUBJECT:
Fostering Service Quarter 2 Report 1st July to 30th September 2018

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information on the management and performance of the Local Authority's Fostering Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

Notes the Quarterly Report which is available on the Council's website.

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 every 3 months;
- b) 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;
- c) Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

The report has been written to address the issues identified above. It will be taken into account by OFSTED in inspecting the service.

The report is for the second quarter of 2018 – 19, covering the period from 1st July to 30th September 2018 and provides an overview of the service.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

1. The number of children in care increased in Quarter 2 with 17 additional children compared to the previous Quarter. The pressure on placements was significant particularly during the school holidays when many carers were away and a number of children unable to go on holiday with carers also needed short term placements.

2. In spite of the challenge, the Service managed to place 28 children new to the care system with in-house carers by asking carers to stretch their numbers and consider children outside of their normal range. The overall number of independent agency foster placements reduced in Quarter 2.

2. The new Permanence Team was launched in July. This Team now undertakes all assessment work relating to family and friends including regulation 24, viability and combined fostering /SGO assessments. The number of referrals in Quarter 2 stretched capacity in the Service to the absolute limit. As this type of court-ordered work has to be prioritised to enable court timescales to be met, the completion of mainstream assessments was compromised, delaying the approval of much needed new carer households.

3. Whilst the Service is on track to meet a target of approving 15 new foster carer households for the year, the demand for foster placements requires the Service to recruit, assess and approve as many new fostering households as possible. The Service is currently researching payment levels across the North West to determine whether Blackburn with Darwen is keeping pace and can compete in the recruitment marketplace.

4. Whilst the number of children in commissioned placements fell in Quarter 2, the commissioned placements budget is under great pressure. In Quarter 2, the Fostering Service was proactive in identifying foster placements for young people who are ready for family placements to move from their agency residential placements. At the time of writing, 5 young people have either returned to or are soon to be placed back in foster care.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications identified

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications have been identified from the report. The fostering budgets are closely monitored as part of the regular portfolio budget review.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report is required to meet statutory requirements as set out in the 'National Minimum Standards for Fostering.'

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

No resource implications have been identified.

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

None.

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:	1.0
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Alyson Hanson - Service Leader, Placement Services
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DATE:	23 rd October 2018
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	Fostering Service Quarterly Report 1 st July to 30 th September 2018 - Quarter 2
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