

# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



**REPORT OF:** Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

**LEAD OFFICERS:** Director of Children's Services & Education

**DATE:** Thursday, 13 June 2019

**PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED:** Children's Services, Young People & Education

**WARD/S AFFECTED:** (All Wards);

**KEY DECISION:** N

## **SUBJECT:**

Quarter 4 Fostering Service Report from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides information on the management and performance of the Local Authority's Fostering Service and is revised each quarter. Quarter 4 provides analysis of the year and reflects upon data and any patterns within the Service to determine development and progress.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Executive Board:

Notes the Quarter 4 Fostering Service 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 areas identified above. It will be taken into account by OFSTED when inspecting the service.

The report is for the fourth quarter of 2018 – 19, covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and provides a comprehensive overview of the service.

#### 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

1. The period from Quarter 3 to Quarter 4 2018/19 saw a slight decrease in referrals from 69 to 67 children into the Fostering Service, however the annual figures show an increase in children in our care overall in the Borough from 377 in March 2018 to 407 by March 2019 which is an increase of 7.9%.
2. The Service has seen an increase in the number of children and young people entering Independent Fostering Agency placements; with 49 placements at the end of Quarter 4 in 2018, to 68 placements at the end of this Quarter 4 2019. This is a considerable increase and reflects the demand upon the Fostering Service to identify placements for the most difficult to place groups which is the 0-2 years and 11-15 year old age group. Sibling groups remain challenging to identify placements in-house. The number of children in the age group 0-2 years has seen a significant increase in referrals over the past year, rising from 35 to 57 infants.
3. The number of children and young people in foster care placements (in house) has risen from 118 in March 2018 to 151 at the end of this Quarter in 2019. The Service aims to drive forward recruitment and has set a target to approve an additional 20 fostering households by the end of this year. Quarter 3 reported 121 Foster Carers within the Service; Quarter 4 has seen two family and friends and two short breaks households resign. There are 5 households at Stage 1 of the approval process.
4. The Service engages well with foster carers and children in foster care. Feedback from carers has been positive and feedback from children and young people was also positive. The service has not received any complaints over the year, and has received 9 compliments from April 2018-March 2019. Recruitment has taken place for a Participation Officer to work part time hours and it is expected that this role will commence no later than July 2019. Reviving the VOICE Group will be one of the key objectives.
5. There have been 278 referrals made to the Family and Friends Team from 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. There have been 228 Viability Assessment referrals received. This is a hugely significant number reflecting the Court's current trend for family members to be assessed as a means of achieving permanence, and has resulted in one Social Worker from the mainstream team assisting with Family and Friends Assessments. The number of Assessments has resulted in more children achieving permanence within their own family and an increase in SGO applications.
6. The main Fostering Panel has been challenged when meeting the demands of the increased volume of family and friend's assessments needing to be approved. Due to workload and capacity in Social Work Teams, the Panel's central list has seen a decrease in panel members and there remains a need to recruit additional panel members with priority, particularly independent and social work members. Both the main and review panels are performing well despite dealing with increased volumes of business.
7. At the end of Quarter 4 there were 25 commissioned, independent residential placements, and 68 independent fostering agency placements which is the most significant increase over the year.

#### 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications identified

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The fostering budgets are closely monitored as part of the regular portfolio budget review. The financial implications of the increased pressures outlined above lie within the commissioned placements budget, which resulted in a final overspend against this budget in 2018/2019 of £965,000.

## 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.

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.

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.

## 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.

<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Pamela Price, Service Lead – Placement Services
<b>DATE:</b>	13/05/2019
<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	Quarter 4 Fostering Service Report 1 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019