

Fostering Service Quarter 4 Report

1st January 2019 to 31st March 2019



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;
- Children and young people in foster care achieve the best possible outcomes.

Children in Our Care in Foster Care

The period from Quarter 3 to Quarter 4 2018/19 saw a slight decrease in referrals from 69 to 67 children, 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%. Identifying in-house Foster Placements remains a challenge for the Service, and figures show a 38.7% increase in children and young people entering Independent Fostering Agency Placements from the previous year overall. There has also been a 27.9% increase in children and young people being placed with in-house Foster Carers within this same period. Challenges remain over this twelve month period for the Service to meet demand for Foster Placements, both in house and Agency. From Quarter 3 to Quarter 4 2019 there are the same number of children in Foster Care (262) but a 22% annual increase in children in Foster Care overall.

	30th June 2018	30th Sept 2018	31st Dec 2018	31st March 2019
Children in our Care	343	360	388	407
Children in Foster Care	209	225	262	262

Comparison of Figures from 2016-2019

	31st March 2016	31st March 2017	31st March 2018	31st March 2019
Number of Children in our Care	346	375	377	407
Number of CioC in Foster Care	243 (70%)	248 (66%)	215 (57%)	262 (64%)
Number of children in in-house foster care placements	147 (42%)	153 (41%)	118 (31%)	151 (37%)
Number of children in family and friends foster care	41 (12%)	49 (13%)	48 (13%)	43 (10%)
Number of children in independent fostering agency placements	55 (16%)	46 (12%)	49 (13%)	68 (16%)

Gender and Age Comparison as of 31st March 2019

	All children in foster care	In-house	Family and Friends	Independent Fostering Agency
Male	147	91	18	38
Female	115	60	25	30

Age	All children in foster care	In-house	Family and Friends	Independent Fostering Agency
0 to 2 years	57	34	11	12
3 to 6 years	38	18	8	12
7 to 10 years	52	28	10	14
11 to 15 years	85	54	10	21
16 years plus	30	17	4	9
Total	262	151	43	68

The largest group of young people in Foster Care at the end of Quarter 4 is amongst males aged 11-15 years, and this age group is a challenge to the Service when identifying in-house and Independent Foster Care placements. The newborn to 2 year old age group has increased from 35 to 57 over the year from March 2018 to March 2019, an increase of 62%.

Ethnicity of Children in our Care:

Of the 407 children and young people in our care, 321 were from a white, British ethnic origin. There were 36 from the Asian ethnic group, 2 from a black ethnic origin, 19 mixed and 29 recorded as 'other' in terms of their ethnic origin.

Children with disabilities in Foster Care 2018/19:

In-House Foster Placements	Family and Friends	Independent Fostering Agency
5% with a disability	0% with a disability	4.5% with a disability
95% without a disability	100% without a disability	95.5% without a disability

It remains a continual challenge for the Service to identify in-house or Independent Fostering Agency placements for children with disabilities specifically; largely due to the more complex needs of young people being referred for placements but also the practical and environmental factors impacting upon potential Foster Carers, where adaptations to accommodate the young person may be required. Young people with disabilities primarily are placed in residential placements out of Borough.

Over Quarter 4, out of the 67 new referrals, 17 children were placed within in-house Foster Placements and 9 did not require a placement following Court decision making. The highest number of children being referred in Quarter 4 is in the 0-5 years age group which is consistent with the previous Quarter.

New Referrals in Quarter 4 2019:

Quarter	No of children	Sibling Groups	Age 0-5	Age 6-11	Age 12+	Children placed in-house	Children placed in IFA's	Residential Placements	Children not yet placed	Children didn't come in
Q1	47	6	14	12	21	21	2	5	6	19
Q2	42	10	18	15	9	28	0	0	7	7
Q3	69	14	38	16	15	37	19	0	2	12
Q4	67	11	33	11	23	17	22	12	7	9

The data shows that the number of referrals that have been received into the Service have increased from Quarter 1 to Quarter 4 by 42%, with 22 children and young people being placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements in Quarter 4 which is a significant increase which cannot be met with in-house provision due to demand.

Placement Stability

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%. Since August 2017, placement stability has been deteriorating. This is not an issue specific to the Fostering Service but reflects instability for all types of placements. When comparing the period of 2017/18 to 2018/19 figures, there has however been an increase in the instability of LAC placements from 8.8% to 11.5% having 3 or more placements. This is above the comparable average overall.

Disruption meetings are held in order to identify learning and inform future planning for any child whose placement has been disrupted. These meetings are chaired by an Officer from Quality and Assurance.

Matching and Ethnicity

In Quarter 4 one Eastern European Parent and baby were placed non-culturally on two occasions, with one mixed heritage child placed non-culturally with white, British Carers. One mixed heritage child was placed with white British Foster Carers, and a sibling group of five mixed heritage children were placed with white British carers. The Service offered additional support to these placements in the form of buddying support and increased visits.

Engagement with Children & Young People and the VOICE Group

As reported in Quarter 3, the VOICE Group has not met since October 2018 due to the departure of the Participation Officer from Children's Services. There has been very little capacity across the relevant services to lead on this area of work. The recruitment process to replace the Participation Officer (part time post) will take place in Quarter 1 2019, and it is anticipated that the successful applicant will oversee the Voice going forward. VOICE members and care leavers continue to attend the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group, when appropriate.

Feedback from Children in Foster Care:

The views of children and young people are gathered via:

- The Voice Group (however the last Group was Oct 2018)
- Participation in the recruitment of staff/interview process
- Support Groups for Children/Events
- Foster Carer Annual Review Feedback
- Feedback from Social Workers/Supervising Social Workers
- The Investors in Children process

The following comments have been made by children and young people in Foster Care over Quarter 4, with specific reference to the positive involvement of the Fostering Support Officer role:

'She makes me feel like Social Workers/People really do care.....she brightens my day'

'She has always been there with a listening ear to give us direction.'

Children have commented about their Foster Carers;

'I am loved and cared for'

'I am happy about my placement; my foster family are important to me'

'I would like them to take me to the cinema a little more often, I want to do more at weekends'

'I live in an amazing house with amazing people'

Social Workers said;

'The children are really part of the family; they are included in all aspects of family life'

'She has never had a placement like this where she feels so safe'

Birth Children of Foster Carers said:

'I like having babies coming to live with us the best, not so much older kids'

'we play together; she is just like my sister'

'I like him living with us, but sometimes I just want my own space'

Promoting Children's Health, Emotional Development, Education and 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 in their care, which is a record of all of the child's health details. Public Health funding has enabled the appointment of a Specialist Nurse to work with 'hard to reach' Looked After Children and care leavers.

There are currently 10 Looked After Children in foster care, who are registered as having a disability. Foster carers are provided with the relevant training and support to meet the specific needs of the child they have in placement and are able to access support from the Children with Disabilities Team with aids and adaptations, Disability Links registration and information and advice where needed.

In relation to emotional wellbeing, Looked After Children have access to Clinical Psychology and related services through REVIVE and 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 remains positive. The REVIVE Service has delivered training to foster carers on self-harm and is also delivering the very popular Nurturing Attachments course over 12 sessions. Foster Carers have reported that this has been hugely beneficial to their understanding and has changed their mind set.

54 new referrals were made to the REVIVE Service in Quarter 4, with 9 being Looked after Children. Each referral is provided with a full consultation meeting. There has been an increase in the number of referrals in comparison to 12 in Quarter 1, 49 in Quarter 2 and 23 in Quarter 3 and, teamed with capacity issues and staff sickness, it has proven challenging to meet demand.

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 Virtual Head Teacher and 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 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, 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'.

Letterbox Club recommenced that all children in our care from Reception to Year 6 are encouraged to read at home. Books and games are sent out on a monthly basis which are age appropriate. Feedback has been very encouraging from the children who have stated that they enjoy receiving their parcels and carers have stated that they are encouraging their children to read.

Additional tuition has been offered to all Year 6 children in our care to prepare for SATs. This took place at the Kip McGrath Centre in Blackburn, however the attendance was poor with only one regular attendee. Extra tuition for Year 11 pupils in English and Maths had more encouraging and regular attendance. There are 17 children in our care pupils eligible to take SATs in this Quarter.

Overall attendance for the Virtual School is 93%, this is higher for our children/young people in foster care. 39% of the Year 11 cohort had an Education Health and Care Plan. 97% are now currently identified as in Education, Employment or Training.

Transitions

Children and young people in foster care are supported to make a positive transition to adult life and 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'. The Leaving Care Service attends Reviews to discuss Staying Put with foster carers for young people aged 17 years.

The Leaving Care Service has the Investing in Children Award, and the service is 'Good'. The Service is also working hard to encourage and support care leavers into apprenticeships. There are currently several young people on apprenticeships across the workforce.

The Leaving Care Service has achieved an increase in the number of Staying put placements this year, and also continue to offer supported lodgings and supported accommodation 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 being involved in interviewing and various training programmes.

The Service continues to run the Leaving Care Football Team and has an older young person supporting this along with a PA. A couple of young people who are taking part are in Foster Care and this is now becoming a younger team which is looking positive for the future.

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

Children and young people with disabilities who are in our care are also referred at 17 years of age to Adult Social Care for an assessment of need prior to turning 18 years, and there is a period of twelve months for planning to be undertaken around post 18 years provision.

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 is structured into three teams including a Permanence Team, which was launched on 1st July 2018. The Team completes all assessments of family members/connected persons from Child Protection to PLO and Care Proceedings, as highlighted in the Ofsted Action Plan. There are four full time Social Workers and one working four days per week. The Special Guardianship Social Worker is part time and continues to experience capacity issues.

There were 278 referrals made to the Permanence Team from 30th July 2018 to 31st March 2019. 228 Viability Assessment referrals were 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. 135 of the 278 referrals for Viability Assessments for family members were appropriate and progressed to full assessments.

The Permanence Team has been successful in ensuring that family members/connected persons are assessed within PLO and court timescales avoiding delay, but also that the appropriate Social Workers are completing the assessments within the most appropriate skill base, knowledge and experience. Consideration going forward in 2019/20 does need to be given to the structure and capacity of the Team in order to prevent drift and delay and to achieve permanence for our children and young people in the Borough. The Team is working over and above their capacity.

There are two mainstream Fostering Teams in the Service. Within Quarter 4, maternity leave has been covered by an experienced supervising social worker which has been positive for the Service. Quarter 4 saw a Fostering Service development day, with training undertaken by Dr Nicolas Shelly, Clinical Psychologist for the REVIVE Team. There was a presentation on the Secure Base Model which is being implemented via supervision visits with Foster Carers. The Secure Base Model provides a positive framework for therapeutic caregiving which helps infants, children and young people to move towards greater security and building resilience.

Foster Carer Recruitment

In Quarter 4 there has been an increase of 8% in the number of ROIs (Registration of Interest) with 38 enquiries and 10 ROIs which is a conversion of 26% in line with the average for the year which is 28%. There was 1 household approved in Quarter 4.

2018/19	Enquires	ROI	Approval	Conversion
Q1	35	10	5	29%
Q2	47	10	2	21%
Q3	36	11	2	31%
Q4	38	10	1	26%
Total	156	41	10	27%

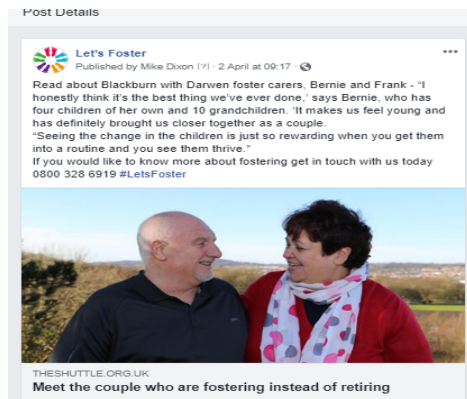
The target for the 2018/19 period for recruitment and approval was 15, and 10 were achieved which is positive. The target for 2019/20 is to achieve an additional 20 fostering households. The reasons for not converting another 4 households towards approval was due to their withdrawal in February 2019 from the process due to reasons such as bereavement and personal family circumstances.

Currently there are 19 households in the process of approval, with 5 at stage 1. Twitter and the 'Let's Foster' website were the main source of information and interest, with information evenings, events, and door to door recruitment being undertaken. With regard to the Fostering Service resources, Quarter 3 reported 121 Foster Carers within the Service; Quarter 4 has seen two family and friends and two short breaks households resign.

The Fostering portal is in place and was explained during the Foster Carer Association meeting and during the Foster Carers Forum in Quarter 4. Overall the trend for enquiries is improving based on last year's figures, and there has been more consistency with the number of ROIs. The current pressures on the connected persons/family and friends team has meant that Supervising Social Workers from the mainstream teams have been assisting with assessments to ensure timeliness of completion. This has impacted upon enquiries being converted into approvals over Quarter 4.

2017/18	Enquires	ROI	Approval	Conversion		2018/19	Enquires	ROI	Approval	Conversion
Q1	72	11	0	15%		Q1	35	10	5	29%
Q2	61	6	1	10%		Q2	47	10	2	21%
Q3	67	14	2	21%		Q3	36	11	2	31%
Q4	30	7	3	23%		Q4	38	10	1	26%
Total	230	38	6	17%		Total	156	41	10	27%

Social media has been extremely positive in terms of engagement, and existing Foster Carers have also received training around internet safety. Over the last Quarter the Service held their 'Make a Noise' event at Darwen Vale High School which was well received. Twitter and Facebook have been popular methods of recruitment and current Foster Carers have been featured to tell their fostering story.



Foster Carer Retention

Over Quarter 4, two Family and Friends households have resigned from being Foster Carers due to being successful in their Special Guardianship Order application for the children in their care. One mainstream Fostering household resigned following the couple making a decision to retire.

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 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.

Short Breaks Fostering

There are 12 approved short break carers in Quarter 4, some of which are providing short term/long-term placements alongside providing short break support. This figure has reduced from 14 short break carers in Quarter 1. Short break placements have provided stability for children and young people who have had a variety of additional needs, and have provided emergency short breaks, support for mainstream placements, unaccompanied asylum seekers and planned short breaks.

A short break support group was held on the 26th March 2019 and during this session training was provided to short break carers with the opportunity to consult with short break carers on the revised emergency short break placement request template.

Fostering Support Worker

A Fostering Support Worker is now located within the REVIVE Service to enable 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. The venue of this Club will need to be determined for the coming year.

Foster Carer Training

The following training has taken place in Quarter 4, with the challenge of ensuring attendance being an issue for the Service:

- Health and Safety Conference – 30 expected and 12 in attendance.
- Essentials of Fostering - to be attended once every three years, with 30 expected and 10 attending.
- Tax and Benefits Support Group – the expected 10 Foster Carers were in attendance.
- Paediatric First Aid and Paediatric First Aid Update – consistently well attended.

It has been acknowledged that enhancing the variety of training could encourage increased attendance and engagement, for example with the addition of Parent and Child training. A review of the training needs and requests of Foster Carers is a continual process; adding variety of training and responding to carer feedback is key.

Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel central list has seen a decrease over Quarter 4 with two experienced Social Workers leaving the Local Authority. An induction process began at the beginning of the Quarter for the newly appointed Vice Chair who will chair a minimum of two panels over the year. Child Action North West have supported Panel membership by providing an experienced Social Worker for the central list who will attend regularly. Two young people who are care leavers have completed Panel induction and will become regular members of the Fostering Panel. Legal representatives as Panel members have seen changes over this Quarter with two new Solicitors undertaking their panel induction. It is a priority for the Service to look to recruit other professionals to the central list over the period of 2019/20.

Review Panel

During Quarter 4 a total of 23 Foster Carer Reviews were presented to the Annual Review Panel and a total of 13 Fostering households attended Panel during that Quarter. A total of 2 evaluation forms were received which gave positive feedback.

Complaints

During Quarter 4 there have been no complaints received which is also the annual figure.

Compliments

Within this Quarter there have been a total of five compliments received about the Service. There were four additional compliments over the year. One of the compliments received this Quarter was made on behalf of a child's parent commending the Foster Carers for the care and support they have shown to their child.

A compliment was given by an Independent Reviewing Officer, praising the Foster Carers following attendance at a child's LAC review and how 'caring, nurturing, thoughtful and positive' the carers were in respect of the child.

Newly approved Foster Carers complimented the support that they received from a Supervising Social Worker within the Fostering Team in the absence of their allocated Supervising social worker and a further compliment was received on behalf of a Head teacher thanking the carers for the support they provided for the young person.

A compliment was received on behalf of a young person commending the support provided by the carer's Supervising Social Worker and the relationship that he has established with her over the past eight years.

Allegations

During Quarter 4 there have been two allegations. The rest of the year saw an additional seven allegations. One carer had an historical allegation which was unfounded and the second was an allegation of assault which is continuing to be investigated. The Foster Carers have been supported by an independent worker from the Fostering Network. The LADO has been consulted in line with safeguarding procedures.

Specific Incidents and Restraints

During Quarter 4, there were thirteen specific incidents reported; twelve of the specific incidents were related to serious illness and accidents which occurred involving young people. The illnesses reported varied in degrees of severity involving reports of constipation, conjunctivitis, chesty cough, high temperature and viral infection. There were an additional seven reports over the year.

Missing from Home

Within this Quarter, there have been nine missing from home reports recorded. There have been an additional forty reports recorded over the year overall, with Quarter 2 seeing the highest figure at 29 reports. Risk Management meetings and plans have been put in place and the necessary procedures adhered to.

Bullying:

During Quarter 4, there has been one incident of bullying reported within the Service. This was following an incident which involved a young person being slapped in the face by another pupil at the school. The incident had been videoed by a fellow pupil and then subsequently shared on social media. The incident was reported to the Police and resulted in the pupil becoming permanently excluded from school. There has been only one other bullying incident reported over the year recorded in Quarter 2.

Exemptions

During Quarter 4 there have been a total of four exemptions with only three remaining in situ at the end of this period. The additional figure for the rest of the year was ten exemptions. The Service ensured additional support visits where necessary for carers with more than three children in placement.

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 the DCS, 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 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.

Budget

Current placement pressures in-house and across the independent fostering agency landscape continue to place the commissioning budget under great pressure as increasingly adolescents and children with disabilities are placed in costly residential placements due to the lack of foster placements across the region. There have

been additional cost pressures impacting upon the commissioned placements budget this year specifically independent fostering agencies and residential provision being at the highest figure over the year 2018/19. These pressures resulted in the commissioning budget overspending during 2018/19 by £965,000.

Commissioned Placements

In Quarter 4 the pressure and challenge upon the Local Authority to identify Foster Placements and in-house residential provision has been significant. The number of Independent Agency Residential placements is the same as last Quarter, however the number of Independent Fostering placements has risen by 30%.

There were two young people in Secure Accommodation at the end of Quarter 4 with one being given 28 days' notice which has placed significant pressure upon the Service and Health to identify an alternative provision.

Requests for parent and child placements, sibling groups and the age group 11-15 years remain the most challenging for the Service to identify, which is also reflected in the figures for the Revive Therapeutic Team referrals for this same age group. In-house Foster Carers are at full capacity with an increasing number being stretched in terms of taking additional placements and responding to emergency requests.

End of Quarter 1 2018/19	End of Quarter 2 2018/19	End of Quarter 3 2018/19	End of Quarter 4 2018/19
Independent Agency Residential Placements 28	Independent Agency Residential Placements 28	Independent Agency Residential Placements 25	Independent Agency Residential Placements 25
Independent Agency Fostering Placements 42	Independent Agency Fostering Placements 33	Independent Agency Fostering Placements 52	Independent Agency Fostering Placements 68

New Service Priorities for 2019/20:

1. The Service has set a new target of recruiting 20 new sets of foster carers in 2019/20. The Service will in addition undertake some innovative recruitment drives and remain competitive with neighbouring Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies.
2. A team development day will be an annual event to value and support the staff team and ensure specific training and development areas are actioned.
3. The Fostering Service will further consider the staffing ratio in the Permanence Team, to ensure the increase in referrals and demand for connected persons and SGO assessments can be met to avoid drift and delay. This will also include a review of the workload and capacity of the SGO Social Worker role in offering post-SGO support to families and carers.
4. The Revive Team will be reviewed in terms of staffing, workload capacity and developing a review process for evidencing that outcomes are being met and the impact of their therapeutic involvement. This will enable the Service to manage the referrals and to identify when their involvement can cease as outcomes have been achieved.
5. Foster Carer training will continue to develop led by a Fostering Team Manager. The Service will focus on the development of online training, and the overall training offer in line with Foster Carer feedback such as the addition of Parent and Child Training, and more specialist courses that will enhance carer skills. The objective is to increase engagement and attendance.

6. 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 4 Update – The monitoring of compliance is ongoing and is central to the Team Manager role. Protocol has been updated to reflect the needs of the Service and all aspects of fostering can now be recorded on the database which will help the completion of the dataset. There is some additional training for staff required around data recording in the next Quarter.

7. Fostering Panel development – 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 4 Update – Maintaining a healthy central list which can meet the demand for additional Panels is a challenge but the list is operating effectively at present but is in need of additional Panel members. A new Vice Chair will need to be identified by July 2019.

8. A new Participation Officer will be recruited and interviews take place in May 2019. It is proposed that this part time position will be in place no later than July 2019. Recommencing The Voice Group will also be part of this specific role and will be re-launched.

Pamela Price
Interim Service Lead - Placements
9th May 2019