

## **Fostering Service Quarter 1 Report**

1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019

### **Executive Report**



Image of 'Charlie' for Fostering Recruitment Campaign

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 Placements**

There are 128 foster carers in Quarter 1, with 91 of those being mainstream and 37 are Family and Friends carers.

At the end of Quarter 4 for 2018/19 the total number of Children in our Care overall was 407, with a similar figure of 408 for Quarter 1 of this year. The number of children entering the care system has been counterbalanced by the number of young people becoming care leavers, or having Care Orders discharged which results in a similar figure for this Quarter. There is an increase however in the number of children and young people in foster placements at 264, in comparison to Quarter 4 which saw 262 placements. The table below shows last Quarter 4 with Quarter 1, which is largely comparable.

	<b>Q4 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019</b>	<b>Q1 June 2019</b>
<b>Number of Children in our Care</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>408</b>
<b>Number of CioC in Foster Care</b>	262 (64%)	264 (64.7%)
<b>Number of children in in-house foster care placements</b>	151 (37%)	148 (36%)
<b>Number of children in family and friends foster care</b>	43 (10%)	50 (12%)
<b>Number of children in independent fostering agency placements</b>	68 (16.7%)	66 (16.2%)

## **Gender of Children in Foster Care**

The female to male ratio of children in foster care placements remains higher for males at 148 in comparison to females at 116. This is a consistent trend noted in Quarterly Report data historically. There has been a particular challenge this Quarter when identifying placements for males within a much younger age group 8-10 years in both foster placements and residential provision.

## **Children with Disabilities:**

The number of children with disabilities placed in foster placements remains low with only 8 children in Quarter 1, again a consistent trend when placing children with additional and complex needs in foster care. Specialist residential placements are the more typical option for children with disabilities largely due to their care needs, physical living environment and equipment needs. The Fostering

Service have worked closely with the Children with Disabilities Team to identify potential foster placements, with an agreement to complete adaptation works to foster carer properties where required. This has been agreed to be funded via the Disabled Facilities Grant, to assist with the child's moving and handling and environmental needs and allowing the option of placing children with physical disabilities in foster care as a practical possibility.

### **Age of Children entering Care and in Foster Placements:**

The younger age group of babies up to 6 years of age is the highest in terms of looked after children entering the care system. Quarter 1 saw 240 children on Care Orders and a further 107 on Interim Care Orders. It is a particular trend within the court arena for parent and child placements to be recommended and commissioned to evidence parenting skills and abilities. The Fostering Service have been successful in identifying 3 such placements in-house, with one IFA placement. Bespoke training has been delivered for parent and child foster carers to enhance their skills and knowledge given the complexity of referrals coming through.

The table below demonstrates the age group and numbers of children in specific foster placements in Quarter 1; with the 11-15 year-old age group being consistently the highest cohort, primarily males who are more challenging for the Local Authority to place.

Age	All children in foster care	In-house	Family and Friends	Independent Fostering Agency
<b>0 to 2</b>	57	32	12	13
<b>3 to 6 years</b>	40	17	14	9
<b>7 to 10 years</b>	51	25	10	16
<b>11 to 15 years</b>	89	58	10	21
<b>16 years plus</b>	27	16	4	7
<b>Total</b>	264	148	50	66

### **Ethnicity of Children in our Care in Foster Placements:**

Of the 408 children and young people in our care, 328 were from a white, British ethnic origin. There were 51 from the Asian ethnic group, 1 from black ethnic origin, 17 identified as mixed ethnic origin and 11 recorded as 'other'.

### **New Referrals to the Fostering Service in Quarter 1:**

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
<b>Q1 2019/20</b>	50	11	20	10	20	17	16	4	4	9

The above data shows that the number of referrals that have been received into the Fostering Service at the end of this quarter for sibling groups, the birth to five age group, and teenagers remain consistently high, and the most challenging to place both in-house and in Agency placements.

This Quarter has seen increasing challenges with placing younger children, on average aged 8-10 years and male. The general consensus appears to be that there is such a high volume of placement

requests being sent on a daily basis to Independent Fostering Agencies, that those children with more complex behavioural needs are more challenging to place overall.

### **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 seen a decline. This is not an issue specific to the Fostering Service but reflects instability for all types of placements. In June of Quarter 1 2019 there were 5 placements disrupted, and 3 in May 2019.

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. In Quarter 1 a review of the process of disruption meetings took place to ensure that the Local Authority is fully capturing and learning from foster placement disruptions.

### **Matching and Ethnicity**

In Quarter 1 there was one non-cultural foster placement match with an in-house white, male foster carer and a 15 year old boy of Asian heritage who is a non-practising Muslim. This commenced as a short break but the match was so successful that this progressed to a full time, short term placement until the young person can return home to family.

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

Quarter 1 saw the new part-time Participation Officer take up his role. One aspect of his role it is to re-launch the Voice Group, to commence in September 2019. 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:

- 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 1;

Children have commented about their Foster Carers;

‘I enjoy going on holiday with my foster family and going for coffee and cake’

When asked ‘is there anything else you would like to tell us?’ a young child commented ‘This family is the greatest. You can never make them stop looking after me’

‘I would like to watch more television and go to the cinema more often’

### Social Workers and Foster Carers said;

'He (Foster Carer) has provided excellent care for A and been very observant in recognising a change in behaviour which resulted in an emergency call to the ambulance service and A was admitted to hospital.'

A social worker commented as part of a carer's review: 'The young person would often destroy clothing and personal items, the foster carers ensured the child had everything they needed. The child was also excluded from school for a month and the carers made significant efforts to support this young person during this period'

'I know that my Social Worker has been off sick which is unfortunate, but the manager came out to see me and I could call the team'

A foster carer commented 'R's social worker has been first class over the last eight years and C's social worker has a very good relationship with her. We find her easy to talk to and she listens and acts if needed'.

### **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 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 8 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. There have been 38 referrals to Revive in Quarter 1.

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 has continued this quarter for all Looked After Children from Reception to Year 6, with the aim of encouraging reading at home. Books and games are sent out on a monthly basis which are age appropriate for the child or young person to enjoy. Again feedback has been very encouraging from the children, who have stated that they enjoy receiving their parcels and carers have stated that they are definitely encouraging their children to read at home.

Extra tuition has been made available after school hours for all Year 6 pupils who are Looked After Children in preparation for SATs. This took place at the Kip McGrath Centre in Blackburn, however only one pupil regularly attended. Extra tuition for Year 11 pupils in English and Maths had much better attendance. In previous years there has been clear evidence that the extra tuition improved results. This Quarter saw 28 young people who were eligible to take GCSEs and other public examinations, with 17 eligible to take SATs.

Following the Foster Carer Association (FCA) meeting held in May, the Virtual School offered to fund a summer event for children in our care, and asked the FCA for suggestions about how the funding could be used. The FCA contacted Blackburn Rovers Community Trust and the Virtual School agreed to fund the following:

- The Anderton Centre for activities on 17th and 18th August which will be solely for 20 young people aged 11-16 from FCA.

- A barge residential on 26th and 27th or the 27th and 28th August with a maximum of 10 young people aged 8-11 years.

### **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 rated as 'Good' by Ofsted from the last inspection. The Service is also working hard to encourage and support care leavers into apprenticeships. The Leaving Care Service has achieved Staying Put placements this Quarter, and also continues 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. The Leaving Care Service has eight advisors. 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 18 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 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018. The team complete all assessments of family members/connected persons from Child Protection to PLO pre-proceedings 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 are currently 37 family and friends foster carers approved, with 11 approvals during this Quarter. There have been 4 resignations, 3 of these are due to achieving permanence through Special Guardianship Orders and due to one young person moving on to a supported lodgings placement.

There remains a vast amount of viability and combined assessments being completed, with 33 combined assessments referred this Quarter with an additional 47 viability assessments being requested and completed.

There are two mainstream Fostering Teams in the Service who focus upon family finding, assessment and supervisions of Foster Carers, and also recruitment.

One member of the mainstream team remains on long term sickness absence; this is being managed through the Council's Formal improving Attendance and Management procedure. There is an Agency Social Worker in post for three months taking them into Quarter 2. A member of the team remains on maternity leave and will be returning in October.

Three members of the team have reduced their hours permanently which has resulted in a full time position being recruited to and this is currently going through the recruitment process. It is hoped that this post will be filled in Quarter 2.

#### Fostering Support Officer Roles:

There are two Fostering Support Officers undertaking very different roles.

One Fostering Support Worker remains 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 moved to Earcroft Children's Centre in this Quarter.

Another Fostering Support Officer provides direct practical and emotional support to our Family and Friends Foster Carers, while also supporting our Fostering Panel process. The Fostering Support role is invaluable to the service and is hugely beneficial for those foster carers who have complex placements and require an enhanced level of fostering support.

#### **Foster Carer Recruitment**

The target for 2019/20 is to achieve an additional 30 fostering households in the Borough.

'Fostering Fortnight' in May delivered a promotional recruitment campaign with 'Charlie' as the face of our Fostering Service (the image on the front of this report). Canvas bags with the image of 'Charlie' were distributed to the public and a photoshoot took place with media coverage in the town centre of Blackburn. The campaign was visible on town centre and Larkhill digital advertising boards and on Facebook. The Service saw 12 enquiries for the month of May. At the end of Quarter 1, there were 7 assessments at Stage 1 with a recommendation to approve at fostering panels in the next Quarter.



During the fortnight we held recruitment stands, and completed 'door drops' across Fernhurst Estate and Beardwood Estate due to the generally larger properties in these areas.



Enquiries for Quarter 1 mostly came from Google Ads through our own Let's Foster website, followed by Social Media. Radio advertising was also positive in bringing forward registrations of interest.

Monthly Recruitment meetings are continuing to be held to focus upon new and creative ideas. Comparisons were made with other Local Authorities and the financial and support offer to our foster carers was not thought to be competitive.

### **Foster Carer Retention**

There have been seven resignations over the Quarter; two being mainstream and 5 Family and friends foster carers. We have had two fostering households over this Quarter, where the foster carers have separated and in both situations the male carer has resigned, with the female carer continuing to be a foster carer.

One mainstream short break carer resigned due to personal circumstances changing and another mainstream foster carer made a decision to transfer to an Independent Fostering Agency.

Three family and friends households have been successful in their application for a Special Guardianship Order, and one family and friends carer resigned to provide supported accommodation for the young person in their care. Another family and friends carer could no longer manage the care of the child and resigned, resulting in the child being moved.

### **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. We have committed to this campaign for a further twelve months along with other Local Authorities.

Fostering Managers and the Recruitment and Marketing Officer have been involved in the development of this campaign to ensure that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council attracts 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 currently 15 approved short break carers. Following the last Quarter, one short break carer made the decision to resign. Short break carers are providing placements alongside short break support. Short break carers continue to buddy up and provide day care and emergency support to other short break carers and they are invaluable.

'Meet and Greet' meetings take place prior to short breaks commencing except when this is an emergency placement.

Short break carers attended a support group which was held on 17 July 2019. Carers enjoy attending and are able to explore and share experiences about their role as short break foster carers and this is a positive form of support.

Short break carers continue to access training and it is envisaged that in Quarter 2 they will be invited to attend cultural diversity training which is also going to be rolled out to mainstream foster carers.

Recruitment of short breaks carers continues and during initial visits it is evident that potential applicants are expressing an interest in offering short breaks to give them an insight about the fostering role before they progress to take on short term placements. Within this Quarter, 6 short break arrangements were supported for a total of 9 young people; these were support arrangements for other carers, emergency short breaks and new short break requests.

### **Foster Carer Training**

There have been six training courses delivered this Quarter as follows, showing improved attendance to the last Quarter:

- Life Story Workshop delivered on 4<sup>th</sup> April attended by 10 foster carers
- 0-11s Conference held on 25<sup>th</sup> April attended by 21 foster carers
- 11 plus Conference held on 16<sup>th</sup> May attended by 23 foster carers
- Fostering Support Group – Self Harm on the 18<sup>th</sup> June attended by 11 foster carers
- Play Therapy Session held on 26<sup>th</sup> June attended by 15 foster carers
- Training commissioned with Fostering Network for Parent and Child Placements funded four places

The Journey to Foster training will also be delivered in the next Quarter by Foster Talk as opposed to The Fostering Network.

### **Fostering Panel**

During this Quarter period the Fostering Panel has experienced a change in relation to the panel advisor which is now being fulfilled by another Fostering Team Manager within the Service. The Panel Advisor has also carried out a recruitment drive to appoint new panel members, to ensure that there is a strong cohort and quorate panel attendance.

A Fostering Panel training day is planned at Witton Learning Centre in July; panel members and fostering service staff will be in attendance. The training day will incorporate two members of the Engage team presenting information and further learning surrounding Child Sexual Exploitation, and discussions will take place around current legislation implications for Friends and Family and Connected Carers assessments. The Revive Clinical Psychologist will present the Secure Base model to panel members to underpin why the Fostering Service has developed supervision forms and assessment documents to compliment this model.

### **Review Panel**

There have been 19 Annual Reviews completed this Quarter, two of these were deferred to the main Fostering panel, this was due to either concerns or allegations being made. A total of 17 foster carers attended their annual review.

The quality assurance of the reports presented to the Fostering Panel was good and there has also been an improvement in the social worker comments being provided for the carers reviews overall.

The panel advisor for the Annual Review Panel will be working on increasing end of placement reports being presented to the Panel in the next Quarter. Foster carer payments are also reviewed following the annual review and presented to Payment Panel, primarily in respect of band 3 carers.

### **Complaints**

During Quarter 1 there have been no complaints received.

### **Compliments**

During this Quarter period, one compliment has been received made by two young people who reside in the same placement, providing positive comments about their foster carers to their IRO stating;

'I am loved and cared for' whilst the other young person commented, 'I live in an amazing house with amazing people.'

### **Allegations**

During Quarter 1 there were 2 allegations received. The first allegation was a historical allegation received from a young person who alleged that the foster carer had hit them. All relevant logs and information were documented and reflected in supervisions, with no evidence indicating that any incident had occurred. The allegation was deemed to be unfounded with no further action being taken.

The second allegation was received from another young person who alleged that the foster carers' Granddaughter was being verbally abusive and had thrown a mobile phone at the young person causing bruising to the face. Whilst the allegation was substantiated this was not in respect of the carer and further support was provided to the young person and the carer with issues addressed surrounding behaviour management strategies, and ongoing weekly support to the placement.

### **Specific Incidents and Restraints**

There were 14 specific incident reports received during this Quarter period within the Service.

- 7 of the specific incident reports involved several individual pre-school children whereby minor bumps were reported while they were attending nursery or during play activities.
- 2 incidents involved 2 separate young people who had been reported to abscond within placement, both then returned safely to placement.

A further incident report followed a young person witnessing inappropriate anti-social behaviour in the community. There were 3 incidents reported during this Quarter involving the same young person disclosing historical sexual allegations which have been reported, and ongoing investigations are continuing.

There was a further incident of self-harm which did not require A&E attendance but treatment was prescribed.

### **Serious Illness and Accidents:**

There were three minor incidents reported during Quarter 1.

### **Missing from Home**

Within this Quarter period, there have been a total of 6 missing from home reports involving 5 young people. All were safely returned back into placement with Interviews undertaken by Engage.

### **Bullying:**

During Quarter 1, there was one report of bullying which involved a young person in a foster placement who had been staying over at a friend's house. The matter was appropriately addressed and support was provided.

### **Exemptions**

During Quarter 1 there have been a total of 4 exemptions made, with only 2 now remaining to date. This involves an agreement to place more than 3 children in one fostering household and requires management agreement and oversight from Panel.

### **Engagement with Foster Carers**

Blackburn with Darwen has a Foster Carer Association (FCA), and a representative who sits on the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. The FCA has its own website, which has been increasingly used to communicate messages and news. Our Elected Member for Children and Young People also attends the FCA Support Group.

At the request of foster carers, membership of the Fostering Network transferred to Foster Talk, who provide services to support foster carers and training. Foster carers also have access to independent support commissioned from the Fostering Network, to provide 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, fostering preparation training, and assisting with recruitment stands and events.

The Fostering Service holds a Foster Carer Forum every six months, the next Forum will take place in October.

### **Budget**

Current placement pressures in-house and also for independent fostering agencies, continue to place the commissioning budget under significant pressure as increasingly adolescents and children with disabilities are placed in costly residential placements due to the lack of foster placements across the region. The number of young children and sibling groups continue to put additional pressure on the commissioning budget, and the number of children and young people coming into Local Authority care remains high.

### **Commissioned Placements**

The request for commissioned placements in Quarter 1 remains high in respect of both independent fostering agency placements and increasingly costly residential placements required for adolescents but more noticeably this Quarter, boys aged under 12 years who are requiring such placements. The pressure upon independent fostering agencies has shown in that we are sending out placement requests on numerous occasions to identify foster placements which often result in a residential placement being the only available option.

One particular trend this Quarter has been the request for parent and child assessment placements through care proceedings. Such placements are independent, and the weekly costing is significant.

Sibling group placements are also on the increase and places additional pressure on the availability of any in-house placement being available.

There are five young people in commissioned post 16 placements this Quarter.

### **New Service Priorities for 2019/20:**

1. The Service has a target of recruiting 30 new sets of foster carers in 2019/20

**Quarter 1 update** The Service will in addition undertake some innovative recruitment drives and review foster carer payments to ensure that the service remains competitive with neighbouring Authorities and independent fostering agencies. There are 7 new fostering households to be presented at Fostering Panels in Quarter 2. Quarter 1 saw 11 family and friends carers approved. Monthly recruitment meetings are taking place to prioritise this.

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. A team day specifically around recruitment will take place in Quarter 2.
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. **Quarter 1 update: A Business Case is being prepared for executive decision making around workforce issues within the Fostering Service and Children's Services as a whole. The proposal is to request an additional full time, SGO Social Worker.**
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. **Quarter 1 update: A Revive Team Development Day took place in June and staffing, capacity and development was key to discussions on the day. There will be decision making between CSC and CAHMS management to ensure that any currently unfilled posts are addressed and that the Team is fully staffed to be able to respond to demand.**
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.

**Quarter 1 update: Bespoke training was commissioned around Parent and Child Placements due to the increasing demand. This was provided by The Fostering Network. The attendance this Quarter at training sessions saw an improvement. The Fostering Manager will continue to respond to foster carer interest in specific training going forward to keep this interesting and creative. The Play Therapy workshop was particularly popular and well received.**

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 1 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 now a Task and Finish Group to review data and Protocol recording within the Service, and discussions about a Fostering Portal with IT which is in the early stages of discussion.**

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 1 Update – A Panel training and development day is planned for July. Recruitment has already taken place for new panel membership and we now have a larger cohort of members to ensure approvals can be considered without delay.**

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.

**Quarter 1 update: The new Participation Officer is now in post and is looking at relaunching the Voice Groups in Quarter 2.**

**Pamela Price  
Interim Service Lead - Placements**