

**Notice of a public meeting of
Corporate Parenting Board**

- To:** Councillors Looker (Chair), Runciman (Vice-Chair), Brooks, Cuthbertson, Fitzpatrick, Funnell, Gunnell and Wiseman
- Date:** Monday, 30 June 2014
- Time:** 5.30 pm
- Venue:** The Thornton Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G039)

AGENDA

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests,
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2014.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Board's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is 5pm the working day before the meeting, in this case **5pm on Friday 27 June 2014.**

To register to speak please contact the Democracy Officers for the meeting, using the details at the foot of the agenda.

Filming or Recording Meetings

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officer's (whose contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at

http://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/3130/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_of_council_meetings

**4. Good and Safe placements - Reports (Pages 9 - 46)
regarding the adoption and fostering
service**

The focus in this report will be upon the Looked After Children's Strategy with specific reference to the achievement of good and safe placements for looked after children.

5. Work Plan for 2014-15

To consider the Board's work plan for the current municipal year.

6. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officers

Name: Catherine Clarke and Louise Cook (job-share)

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Email: catherine.clarke@york.gov.uk and louise.cook@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim (Polish)
własnym języku.

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 **(01904) 551550**

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

Meeting	Corporate Parenting Board
Date	7 May 2014
Present	Councillors Looker (Chair), Runciman (Vice-Chair), Cuthbertson, Funnell, Scott and Wiseman
Apologies	Councillors Brooks and Potter

25. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that they might have had in relation to the business on the agenda or other general interests they might have had within the remit of the Board. No interests were declared.

26. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 5 March 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

27. Public Participation

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

28. Show Me That I Matter Annual Report and U Matter Survey Findings

Members considered a report relating to feedback from York's looked after children and young people, the Show Me That I Matter Annual Report and the U Matter survey.

Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) Annual Report

Officers presented the report to the Board and commented that;

- A lot of children and young people did not know who to talk to at the Council.
- That the move to West Offices had been positive and the SMTIM panel had a Chair and Vice Chair on a more stable basis.
- It was hoped that an update to the SMTIM website would be complete by and relaunched in June.

Members asked the following questions in relation to the report;

- That the membership of the SMTIM panel comprised of ten members and two Councillors. How were the panel selected and how were people able to join?
- How was the agenda set for each meeting?
- Was there any communication between the Schools Councils and SMTIM, did their objectives overlap?

In response to the questions it was reported that;

- Officers were unsure if there was a cap of numbers on the SMTIM panel but any prospective members were encouraged to get in touch with the Council's Children's Rights Officer.
- Generally the agenda was set by young people, who would ask questions to Officers and if they had not received answers these would then go on as items for the agenda for the next meeting of the panel.

Some Members spoke about how they wished to see how Looked After Children were active in all organisations which involved Children and Young People's voices. They questioned why professional language continued to be used around these organisations and why language which was more likely to be understood more clearly by young people could not be used.

They hoped that the Annual Report was sent out to all Members so that they had the chance to see at least the front page.

U Matter Survey

Members commented on the figures presented in the survey. Comments included;

- In the opinion of Officers, how representative were the responses?

- That they wanted to see the actual figures rather than percentages to see how representative the survey group was.
- That they were worried about the high turnover of social workers and what this would mean for the continuity of support for children and young people in the city.

In response, it was stated that the results of the survey were compared with the overall population of children and young people in York. Members were also informed that social worker recruitment had been examined, as there had been a significant turnover during 2013 but the vacancy rate in the city was now low. However, it was pointed out that the city was always vulnerable to social workers moving to jobs elsewhere.

A representative from the SMTIM panel was in attendance at the meeting and he told Members that lots of young people did not like filling out surveys. The Chair added that this could be because young people questioned why they should be involved.

Officers hoped that the “Speak Up” engagement event in June would help to overcome this issue.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: The views, wishes and feelings of looked after children and young people are central to the strategic planning for current and future services for this group of young people.

29. Verbal Update Regarding Inspections Arrangements for Children's Services

Members received a verbal update regarding the preparations being undertaken for the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in York.

It was noted that the inspection regime had changed from previous arrangements such as the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection for which York was graded 'good'. The previous Inspection had previously been focus group and case file audit centred, with the Local Authority given notification to enable some preparation. The inspection was also shorter.

The new inspection framework, the Single Inspection Framework, would last for four weeks and there would be no notice period to enable preparation. The Inspection would look at Child in Need, Children in Need of Protection, Looked After Children, Leaving Care and Adoption Services. The framework did incorporate some inspection of the Early Help offer but this was not its main focus.

As has been widely reported in the media, the previous category of 'adequate' had now been replaced with 'requires improvement'.

Members were told about the various stages of the process these were;

1. That the Local Authority would receive a call from the Lead Ofsted Inspector at approximately 0930 on the Tuesday morning of Week One. The Inspectors would arrive later the same day.
2. That the inspectors would initially focus on the Referral and Assessment Team (the Front Door arrangements). For contacts, referrals and assessments. The inspectors were very interested in front-line practice and would accompany social workers on their visits.
3. Within Week One a dataset would need to be produced (known as Annex A) to reflect the range of children and young people at different stages of the child's journey through the safeguarding processes within York.
4. This data set would form key lines of enquiry for Ofsted inspectors in Week Three of the inspection.
5. In Week Two the Inspectors were 'off site' but would request that 18 cases selected by them be audited by Officers. The audits would evidence whether Officers knew the strengths and deficits of the Service.
6. Week Three is the fieldwork week when Inspectors are on site. Other Local Authorities note this to be an intense process with excess of 100 cases reviewed. Inspectors may well visit Looked After Children in foster care, sit in on Fostering Panel, attend Child Protection conferences in York and observe direct Social Work with service users.

7. Week Four allows for two days evidence gathering and then, on the Wednesday, initial feedback. The formal Report is moderated and published approximately six weeks later.

It was pointed out that there would be more scrutiny of the outcomes of the processes for children and young people rather than processes, and that the stated aim of the inspection would be to look at whether Children's Services were making a difference to children and young people and their families in York.

It was not clear as to when York would receive its Ofsted Inspection. A list of possible 'Tuesdays' had been circulated by Ofsted.

Further discussion took place regarding areas that the Ofsted inspectors might look at during their visit.

It was suggested that in their focus on Looked After Children the inspectors might look at education outcomes. Therefore it was suggested that a session for Members of the Corporate Parenting Board be arranged with the city's Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children, Tricia Head and Maxine Squire, the Interim Director for Education and Skills.

Officers gave Members a selection of comments and questions that might arise during an Ofsted inspection and were the subject of preparation work. These were;

- (1) What makes York's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Local Safeguarding Children Board anything other than inadequate?
- (2) What has happened in York since the last SLAC Inspection?
- (3) Are services in York self-aware – are there inconsistencies of understanding between professionals and/or between partner agencies about the Services being delivered and outcomes being achieved?

- (4) Are caseloads simply too high to provide a safe and effective service?
- (5) Is Quality Assurance systemic – is it part of the day-to-day business involving everyone at every level?
- (6) Do York know what ‘good’ looks like?
- (7) What is happening at the 'threshold points'? ie. such as a decision to escalate from CAF to Contact, Contact to Referral, Referral to Strategy Discussion, Decision to convene Conference, Decision to List, Decision to accommodate, Decision to enter into care proceedings.
- (8) What is the culture in York? Is there effective organisational support? Is there a clear and coherent narrative about the support being provided?
- (9) Does the Local Safeguarding Children Board hold partners to account? Are there clear and understood governance arrangements (do partners know who reports to who and who should know what?)
- (10) Are lessons learnt in York (from national and local Serious Case Reviews)?

The Chair felt that it was useful for the Board to have a ‘watching brief’ over inspection arrangements.

She asked how young people would be involved with the inspection. It was anticipated that inspectors would attend meetings with young people and also query how the child’s ‘voice’ was established and informed services.

Resolved: (i) That the update be noted.

- (ii) That a briefing session be arranged for Members with Tricia Head and Maxine Squire, ahead of an inspection.

Reason: So that Members are kept informed of the arrangements for the inspection.

30. Draft Work Plan for 2014-15

Consideration was given to the Board's draft work plan for the 2014-15 municipal year.

It was suggested that if Officers that an inspection for Looked After Children was imminent that the Board receive a briefing note from Tricia Head, the Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children and Maxine Squire, the Interim Director for Education and Skills. Other Members suggested that in advance of an inspection that the Board could review its effectiveness as a body.

Resolved: (i) That the work plan be approved.

(ii) That Members receive a briefing note if notified of an upcoming Ofsted inspection.

Reason: To ensure that the Board has a planned programme of work in place.

Councillor Looker , Chair

[The meeting started at 5.40 pm and finished at 7.05 pm].

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Corporate Parenting Board**30 June 2014**

Report of the Director of Children's Services , Education and Skills

Good and Safe Placements - Reports regarding the adoption and fostering service**Summary**

1. The focus in this report will be upon the Looked After Children's Strategy with specific reference to the achievement of good and safe placements for looked after children.

Background

2. The council's placement strategy focuses upon children being placed with local foster families, where practicable. For children, who can not return to the care of their parents or extended family, there is an explicit commitment to seeking adoption families, in which they will have the opportunity to grow up in a new permanent, loving family.

The fostering and adoption services are registered with Ofsted as the regulatory authority. There is an extensive legislative base underpinned by regulation, national minimum standards and an inspection framework.

The adoption and fostering regulations require that each service report on a regular basis to the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children's Services. The reports for the annual review of the adoption service and the quarterly report of the fostering service for period January to March 2014 are submitted for consideration (appendices A and C). In addition, the annual report of the Adoption Panel chair has been forwarded for consideration (appendix B)

Consultation

3. The work of each of the officers reporting to the board is undertaken with consultation with service users e.g. foster carers, adopters, looked after children and care leavers. Feedback from York Area Foster Carers Association, Show Me That I Matter and I Matter Too (representatives of all looked after children) is regularly sought and incorporated into the service development.

Options

4. There are no options for decision, as the information provided is intended to develop the knowledge for the Board of the experience of looked after children.

Analysis

5. Adoption progress during 2013-14
 - 5.1 Improvement to the performance of adoption services nationally remains a high priority for Government. The Adoption Reform agenda is focused on increasing the number of families available for children with adoption plans and decreasing the time taken to place these children.
 - 5.2 In York, the restructure of Children's Social Care services in 2013, the designated role of Adoption Service Manager became operational in July 2013. Two additional social worker posts were added to the Adoption team in Autumn 2013, so that the team now consists of 6 full time equivalent posts, including an Advanced Practitioner.
 - 5.3 Key performance information is included in the Annual Adoption Report (Annex A)
 - 5.4 Percentage of children who wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.

66% in York compared with a national average of 55 %. This ranks York 14th out of 152 local authorities in England.

5.5 Percentage of children leaving care with adoptions orders

York achieved adoption for 19% of children in the care system, compared with a national average of 13%. This ranks York 16th out of 152 local authorities in England.

5.6 Percentage of adopters approved within 6 months:

In 2012-13, none were within 6 months (the 6 month timescale was only introduced, along with the new two stage process, on 1st July 2013). All were approved within 9 months.

For those approved in year from April 2013 to March 2014, 61% were approved within 6 months. Out of these, 100% of those who applied after 1st July 2013 (when the timescale became 6 months) were approved within 6 months.

5.7 Percentage of adopters matched with a child within 3 months

In 2012-13 none were within 3 months, though 100% of matches for adopters were within 3-12 months of approval.

York's adopters are mainly matched with children from other local authorities, therefore matching is an inter agency process, requiring the identification of a potential child and exploratory meetings before a matching report is progressed to panel. This is a challenge to achieve within a 3 month timescale.

In the year April 2013 to March 2014,

29% of matches were within 3 months of approval;
64 % within 3-6 months; and
7% within 7 months.

6. Fostering Progress during 2013-14

6.1 The New Deal for foster carers commenced in April 2013, following extensive consultation with foster carers. It represented a commitment to a new relationship between the council and foster carers in which the valued work of foster

carers in the team of professionals supporting looked after children and young people is recognised and developed.

- 6.2 The new accreditation and grading structure for foster carers with a revised remuneration structure has been operational for one year.
- 6.3 York Area Foster Carers Association (YAFCA) continues to work closely with the Fostering Team to review progress. A survey is being developed jointly between YAFCA and the local authority to review the scheme of allowances and fees for future years. The results of this consultation will be considered in October 2014.
- 6.4 The sufficiency of local foster carers and placements remains a major priority for Children's Social Care Services. This is within the context of recognition that York's fostering demographic composition reflects the national picture. It is noted locally and nationally and locally that the largest group of foster carers are aged 50 and over. It is noted that the retirement of a proportion of these foster carers must be predicted for each year. Accordingly, the fostering team is working on addressing the issues related to publicity, targeted recruitment and both replacement of retiring foster carers and a commitment to growing the local fostering community.
- 6.5 Local placements will always be sought for York's looked after children and the data indicates that the majority of placements are with York approved foster carers and in placements which can maintain key factors in a child's life such as schools, health services and ongoing contact with parents and close family.
- 6.6 Independent Fostering Agency placements have been required in recent years due to the lack of capacity for certain children and young people. The number of placements reduced from 16 to 8 during March 2014, but this welcome reduction has been reversed in the early part of 2014-15, due to placement disruptions and increased demand for individual foster placements.
- 6.7 The recruitment strategy for York foster carers will be in conjunction with neighbouring authorities and the Fostering Network, the national representative body for foster carers.

Through succession planning, there is a commitment to increasing the overall numbers at a rate greater than simply replacement of retirees. Both the fostering and adoption service managers are attending events in York which are intended to harness the commitment of faith groups in the city and region in promoting fostering and adoption.

- 6.8 A crucial factor in any new recruitment of foster carers is responding to feedback from newly engaged recruits. It was heartening to receive particular feedback from a foster carer, who joined York's fostering community having formerly employed by a local independent fostering agency. The foster carer commented particularly on the engagement and involvement in the team of people working with the looked after child, led by the child's social worker.
- 6.9 The fostering team continues the work with all foster carers to establish a working forum at the quarterly gateway events at which several invited speakers have described the broader work of the looked after children's workforce of looked after children's support team, links with higher education at York St John University, care leavers etc. This is balanced with designated time for foster carers to meet for networking, sharing of information and ideas among themselves and to enable consultation for their feedback to the fostering team and social workers for service improvement.
- 6.10 Through valuable feedback from YAFCA on behalf of foster carers regarding the experience of the management of allegations against foster carers, it was possible for these views and experiences to be reflected both in the review of the procedures for City of York Safeguarding Children's Board and subsequent practice.

Council Plan

7. The Corporate Parenting Board will be ensuring that the work of partners for looked after children contributes to the aims of
 - The Children and Young People's Plan
 - Building strong communities
 - Protecting vulnerable people

Through the positive outcomes for looked after children, the aim is for them to be able to benefit from and contribute to

- Get York moving
- Create jobs and grow the economy
- Protect the environment

Implications

- **Financial**

Not applicable

- **Human Resources**

Not applicable

- **Equalities**

Not applicable

- **Legal**

Not applicable

- **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

- **Information Technology**

Not applicable

- **Property**

Not applicable

- **Other**

Not applicable

Risk Management

8. Not applicable

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that the Board receives the reports regarding the adoption and fostering services from the Director of Adults, Children and Education relating to the progress of the department and its key partners in progressing the actions to achieve York's vision for looked after children.

Reasons

10. The Corporate Parenting Board undertakes an overview of the work with looked after children. Consideration of the annual reports will enable to scope for discussion about progress and future plans.

Contact Details

Author:

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Howard Lovelady, Head of Service (Resources)
Children's Social Care,
ACE

Eoin Rush, Assistant Director

Tel No. 555357

Tel no 554212

**Report
Approved**



Date 19June 2014

Eoin Rush, Assistant Director

Specialist Implications Officer(s): Not applicable

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A - Adoption Service Report 2014

Annex B - Adoption Panel Chair Annual Report 2014

Annex C - Fostering Service Report January to March 2014

Abbreviations

YAFCA York Area Foster Carers Association



Children's Services, Education and Skills

Annual report on the Adoption Service in York: April 2013 - March 2014

1. Background

The Adoption National Minimum Standard 25.6 requires that the Executive of the local authority receives written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every 6 months. This report sets out a summary of the work of the Adoption Service for the period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014, and supplements the report previously submitted covering the period April-September 2013. The attached Appendix provides data on activity over the year. The Adoption Service was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2010 and was rated as Good overall with Outstanding for 'Helping children make a positive contribution'

2. Summary of main issues

Improvement to the performance of adoption services nationally remains a high priority for Government. The Adoption Reform agenda is focused on increasing the number of families available for children with adoption plans and decreasing the time taken to place these children. Regulatory changes have been introduced to speed up court processes for children and the recruitment process for adopters.

3. Purpose of this report

The purpose of the report is to consider the activity of York's adoption service in relation to the National Minimum Standards; the progression of children's care plans; the provision of adoption support to those seeking to adopt and to those affected by adoption. It identifies any significant trends in adoption practice and ways in which York continues to meet the changing requirements of an adoption service.

4. National Picture

4.1 The work of City of York Council as an adoption agency is governed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002. A full revision of the statutory adoption guidance was issued by the Department for Education in February 2011; part of the Statutory Guidance relating to prospective adopters was revised and implemented on 31st July 2013, and further revisions are expected in 2014.

4.2 Statutory guidance does not have the full force of statute but should be complied with unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons which justify a variation. Revised Adoption National Minimum Standards were published in March 2011 and, together with the Adoption Regulations, form the basis of the regulatory framework which governs the conduct of adoption

4.3 Steps have also been taken to reduce delay for children. Courts have introduced a new care monitoring system to speed up care proceedings and since the Children And Families Act 2014 was implemented in April 2014 it is mandatory for all proceedings to be completed within 26 weeks (unless an extension of 8 weeks is agreed by the court) Local authorities are encouraged to consider the use of 'Fostering for Adoption' placements, whereby approved adopters are also approved as temporary foster carers, so that a child can be placed prior to the court granting a Placement Order, to restrict the number of placement moves for a child.

4.4 A new, shorter two-stage training and assessment approval process for prospective adopters was introduced on 1st July 2013. The process comprise a two month initial training and preparation stage (stage one) and a four month assessment stage (stage two). Stage one commences when a prospective adopter registers his/her interest with an adoption agency, and ends with the agency informing the prospective adopter whether or not they can proceed to stage two; the timescale for this is 2 months. Stage two commences when the prospective adopter lets the agency know they want to proceed to stage two (the prospective adopter can take a break of up to 6 months between the stages); the timescale

for stage two is 4 months from start to the Agency Decision Maker deciding that applicants be approved as prospective adopters. There is fast-track procedure for approved foster carers and previously approved adopters, who receive a tailored assessment and any necessary additional training.

4.5 In January 2013 the DfE published 'Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes' which stated the intention to devise legislation that would give the Secretary of State the power to require local authorities to outsource the recruitment and approval of adopters. This power has been included in The Children and Families Act 2014, which came into force on 1st April 2014.

4.6 The DfE provided local authorities with financial support for greater investment in adoption in the form of a one-off £150 million Adoption Reform Grant for 2013/14 (separate funding was made available for the development of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs). The grant was in two parts: Part A which was not ring fenced, for which City of York was awarded £279,193 and Part B, which was ring fenced, for which York received £160,880.

4.7 The Department for Education recently published the latest report on the quarterly survey on adoption activity completed by local authorities. The key findings were that over the period concerned, Jan 2013 – Dec 2013,

- the number of new decisions that a child should have a plan for adoption fell by 21%;
- the number of new Placement Orders fell by 29%; the number of adoption orders rose by 23%;
- the time from entering care to placement with adoptive parents decreased by 16%;
- The number of adopters approved by local authorities increased by 27%;
- the proportion of applications approved by local authorities within 6 months of application increased by 11 % (from 36% to 47%);

- the proportion of approved adopters matched within 6 months of approval increased by 2% (73% to 75%).

York's Adoption Service

5. Overview

5.1 Adoption work in York is located within two main areas; the Safeguarding children's social work teams, who complete the necessary internal and legal processes when adoption is identified as a suitable plan for a child; and the Adoption team, where adoption social workers assess an individual's suitability to be approved as an adopter and help children's social workers identify a suitable adoptive family for a child. Adoption support is provided jointly by the Adoption team and the Referral and Assessment team.

5.2 In the restructure of Children's Social Care services in 2013, the designated role of Adoption Service Manager became operational in July 2013. Two additional social worker posts were added to the Adoption team in Autumn 2013, so that the team now consists of 6 full time equivalent posts, including an Advanced Practitioner.

5.3 Through a service level agreement, After Adoption Yorkshire, an independent voluntary adoption agency provides support to all those living in the city affected by adoption. Alongside direct work with adoptive families, this agency provides support to birth relative, during and after the adoption process, specialist counseling and access to adoption records and intermediary services for adopted adults. There is a high take up of this service, such that part of the Adoption Reform Grant was used to purchase additional hours in 2013/14. There is also a service level agreement with the Yorkshire Adoption Society to provide advice and information for those enquiring about inter-country adoption.

5.4 York continues as an active member of the Yorkshire Adoption consortium . A proportion of the adoption reform grant

has been pooled by all members in the consortium to develop recruitment ; fostering for adoption across the region.

6. Services for children

6.1 Children's social workers and colleagues in the Looked After Children's team work together to help children understand, in an age appropriate way, that an adoptive family is being sought for them, and the reasons for this. All the children will have a health action plan, regularly reviewed and updated and those of nursery or school age have a personal education plan, so that planning keeps pace with a child's changing needs. CAMHS provide input to foster carers to support them in preparing children to move to an adoptive placement. The children all have Life Story books, explaining their past in an age appropriate way that they take with them into their new families.

6.2 Family finding meetings are set up as soon as the plan for adoption has been agreed by the Agency Decision Maker, a senior manager in Children's Social Care, so that there is no delay in seeking an adoptive family for a child. A social worker from the adoption team works with the child's social worker to identify a suitable adoptive family. The child's details are entered on the local Consortium database, and the Adoption Register to ensure access to all available families. The child's needs are carefully considered against identified prospective adopters to ensure the best possible match.

7. Performance for York children

Performance Indicators from National Minimum Standards

7.1 When adoption has been identified as a child's permanence plan at a statutory Child Care Review, within 2 months of this the Agency Decision Maker should decide whether the child should be placed for adoption.

7.2 This happened for 9 out 11 children.

7.3 A match with a suitable prospective adopter should be recommended by the adoption panel within 6 months of this decision.

7.4 For these 11 children, this happened for 4; 4 were not matched within 6 months; and another 3 have had plans for less than 6 months on 31st March.

For the 5 children who had plans for adoption agreed in the previous year and were matched this year, 3 were matched within 6 months

7.5 Where a birth parent has requested that a child aged under 6 months be placed for adoption, a proposed placement with a suitable prospective adopter should be recommended by the panel within 3 months of the agency deciding that the child should be placed for adoption:

7.6 1 child, out the 11 with a plan for adoption agreed this year, was a relinquished child who was placed with adopters within 2 months.

8. Performance Indicators from the 'Adoption Scorecard'

8.1 The DfE collects information on the performance of all 152 local authorities in a national 'Adoption Scorecard' drawn from data about children who have been legally adopted. The Adoption Scorecard was update on 14 January 2014 to include data related to the year from April 2012 to March 2013. The scorecard figure is based on the average over the 3 years 2010-2013.

8.2 The 3 main scorecard indicators are:

8.3 Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. The target for was 20 months (indicator 1).

8.4 York achieved a positive outcome in relation to the threshold for placing children with adopters within 20 months.

8.5 Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a

match to an adoptive family. The target was 6 months (indicator 2)

8.6 York's performance fell just outside the threshold by an average of 10 days, in relation to the matching of children within 6 months of a court's decision about adoption. This was a reflection of the challenge of finding matches for a small group of children, which impacts upon the overall average.

8.7 Percentage of children who wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.

8.8 66% in York , compared with a national average of 55 %. This ranks York 14th out of 152 local authorities in England.

8.9 Only 36 local authorities met thresholds for both of these indicators and 65 authorities failed to meet either thresholds.

8.10 The scorecards timescales become increasingly ambitious each year:

Financial years	Indicator 1 threshold (months)	Indicator 2 threshold (months)
2010 to 2013	20	6
2011 to 2014	18	5
2012 to 2015	16	4
2013 to 2016	14	4

9. Other indicators collected on the scorecard include:

9.1 Percentage of children leaving care with adoptions orders

York achieved adoption for 19% of children in the care system, compared with a national average of 13%. This ranks York 16th out of 152 local authorities in England.

9.2 Average time between becoming looked after and adoption

York's average timescale from looked after date to adoption date of children in the care system was 530 days, compared with a national average of 647 days. This ranks York 17th out of 152 local authorities in England.

9.3 Average time between placement order and matching for adoption

York's average timescale from placement order date to match for adoption was 192 days, compared with a national average of 210 days. This ranks York 65th out of 152 local authorities in England.

10. Services for adopters

10.1 The adoption team recruits, prepares and assesses prospective adoptive families and seeks suitable children from across the region and country to match with these families. The team, in conjunction with colleagues in North Yorkshire and East Riding, run monthly information sessions providing general information about adoption for all those who enquire about adoption to any of the 3 agencies. Following this enquirers then decide with which (if any) adoption agency they wish to progress their interest.

10.2 Those who wish to take their interest further with York have a home visit to explore their circumstances and what adoption involves. They are then sent a copy of this initial assessment, plus a Registration of Interest form. If the initial assessment has been positive, an adoption social worker is allocated to undertake stage one of the assessment process. If this is successfully completed they then progress to stage two, during which a comprehensive assessment is undertaken and written up as a prospective adopter report (PAR). This report is presented to Adoption Panel, who recommended to the Agency decision Maker whether the applicant would make a good adoptive parent. Supervision and support is provided by the adoption social worker through the matching and placement process, onto adoption order, and beyond as required. The positive working relationships established enable adopters to

seek advice and support from the adoption team in parenting their children throughout their childhood.

10.3 From 1st July 2013, the process for approving prospective adopters was revised to a shorter two stage process. The expectation is that the new application and assessment process will be completed within 6 months. It is expected that stage one will take no longer than 2 months and stage two will take no longer than 4 months.

11 Performance indicators for adopters

11.1 Adoption scorecard

This was updated on 14 January 2014; the data related to the year from April 2012 to March 2013:

11.2 Percentage of adopters approved within 6 months:

None were within 6 months (the 6 month timescale was only introduced, along with the new two stage process, on 1st July 2013). All were approved within 9 months.

For those approved in year from April 2013 to March 2014, 61% were approved within 6 months. Out of these, 100% of those who applied after 1st July 2013 (when the timescale became 6 months) were approved within 6 months.

11.3 Percentage of adopters matched with a child within 3 months

None were within 3 months, though 100% of matches for adopters in year from April 2012 to March 2013 were within 3-12 months of approval.

York's adopters are mainly matched with children from other local authorities, therefore matching is an inter agency process,

requiring the identification of a potential child and exploratory meetings before a matching report is progressed to panel. This is a challenge to achieve within a 3 month timescale.

In the year April 2013 to March 2014,

29% of matches were within 3 months of approval;
64 % within 3-6 months; and
7% within 7 months.

12. Other indicators

12.1 two stage assessment process timescales

This was introduced in July 2013. Stage one should take 2 months and stage two 4 months; those who have previously adopted or fostered do not have to complete stage 1

80% of families applying after 1st July 2013, who had to complete stage one, did so within 2 months; 10% were still in progress at the year end and 10% took longer than 2 months, due to the delay in getting checks back from other countries.

Of those in stage two, 60% completed this within 4 months. 40% were still in progress at year end, but on target for completion within 4 months.

13. Recruitment

13.1 Regulatory requirements include the need for a strategy to recruit and assess prospective adopters who can meet the needs of children waiting. City of York previously approved around 12 prospective adoptive families each year. The recruitment target for the year 2013/14 was to increase this by 50% to 18 prospective adoptive families. This has been achieved.

14. Adoption Support

14.1 The adoption team provides general adoption support to families living in the City. These can be families approved by York, or families approved by other adoption agencies, with children placed by other local authorities. Three years after the making of an adoption order, York becomes responsible for addressing any adoption support needs these families may have. The Advanced Practitioner in the adoption team acts as the Adoption Support Service Adviser, offering general support and advice to adoptive parents and also signposting to other agencies. The adoption social workers run regular 'drop in' events for adoptive parents and children, which provide informal training and advice, alongside offering opportunities for adopters to meet each other and build up support networks.

14.2 Some adoptive families need significant levels of individual support. Often these are families not previously known to the adoption service, who have been approved by other adoption agencies operating in the city, or have moved into the city from other areas. Some of the more complex situations involve older children and young people, some of whom are on the edge of care and who were placed some years ago. These requests for adoption support are assessed by the Referral and Assessment team in collaboration with the Adoption Team's Advanced Practitioner, or another member of the team. If ongoing work is required, the family will be allocated a worker from the Children in Need team, to work alongside a member of the adoption team.

14.3 There is a service level agreement with the charity After Adoption Yorkshire, who provide independent support and advice to all in York affected by adoption.

15. Finance

15.1 As required by Standard 20 of the National Minimum Standards for adoption, a qualified accountant oversees the financial arrangements and management of the service.

15.2 Due to the compact geography of the city, children from York are rarely placed with adopters approved by City Of York. In order

to preserve the anonymity of the placement, York children are usually placed with adoptive families purchased from other adoption agencies. This cost of these placements is partially funded by the fees paid by other local authorities to place children with adopters approved by City of York.

15.3 Between April 2013 and March 2014,

For York's children placed for adoption

- 2 children were placed with adopters approved by City of York;
- York children were placed with families approved by local authorities
- children were placed with adopters approved by a VAA.

City of York adopters offered homes to

- 2 York children;
- 16 children from other local authorities

15.4 In recognition of the increased expectations on the adoption service, part of the Adoption Reform Grant for 2013-14 has been used to increase the adoption team staff compliment by 50%. A separate post of Adoption Service Manager has also been established.

16. Recommendation

16.1 The Executive notes the information about the adoption agency in the financial year 2013-2014

Mary McKelvey
Adoption Service Manager
June 2014

CITY OF YORK ADOPTION PANEL
CHAIR'S REPORT: OCTOBER 2013 –MARCH 2014

1. Introduction

This report summarises the work of City of York Adoption Panel over the 6 month period from 1st October 2013 to 31st March 2014. It is intended to complement the 6 monthly reports provided to the council's executive under National Minimum Standard 25.

2. Composition of the Panels

The Adoption Agencies (Panel and consequential amendments) Regulations 2012 amend the Adoption Regulations 2005 and came into force on 1st September 2012.

The Agency is required to maintain a central list of persons who are considered to be suitable members of an adoption panel. This is essentially a pool of people with different skills, backgrounds and experiences. The central list is designed to reduce delay through postponement of panels due to lack of quoracy, (minimum five members) with at least one member who is social work qualified with a minimum of three years experience). Each panel also requires an independent chair (or vice chair) and three other members, at least one of whom must be independent if the Chair is not present and the Vice chair is not independent. Ideally a Medical Advisor would sit as a Panel member and this has been achieved. Current representatives include an adoptee, an adopter, an elected member, with a range of additional professional experiences including law, education and health.

This year, attendance at panel has been carefully monitored to ensure the number of members sitting on panel at any one time, does not exceed 6 or 7. This is to try and ensure that those adopters attending panel are not overwhelmed by the number of people in the room, or by the number of questions asked. Work is undertaken before each panel

to ensure there is sufficient representation and attendance to make the panel viable and functional in terms of independence and representation.

All panel members are CRB checked and reviewed on a regular basis.

They have received induction and annual training opportunities as well as annual appraisals relating to individual attendance and performance as panel member.

Each Adoption Panel has access to a minute taker and to a Panel Advisor. The Advisor has changed this year and is a senior member of staff involved in quality assurance across the service but who does not have direct line management responsibility for adoption social workers.

3. Panel Functions

The City of York Adoption Panel contributes to the running and quality assurance of the local authority's adoption service. In doing so, there is a responsibility to promote good practice, consistency of approach and fairness in all aspects of the adoption service, in accordance with its procedures and values. The Independent Chair ensures that Quality Assurance function is in place. Panel receives reports on the service and its performance at 6 monthly intervals enabling the panels to monitor the number of children with an adoption plan and family finding activity.

From 1st September 2012 the function of Adoption Panels with regard to children's cases (agreement to place for adoption) was removed from the panel's remit, except in cases where there is no court scrutiny of the plan because the child is accommodated and birthparents consent to adoption or there is a Care Order and the birth parents are agreeing to the plan for adoption. In York this represents one case in this period.

The Adoption Panel now has 2 key functions:

To make recommendations to the agency decision maker on the following:

1. The suitability of prospective adoptive applicants to adopt

2. Whether a child should be placed for adoption with particular prospective adopters.

The Adoption Panel also advises on the following issues:

Where prospective adoptive parents are recommended as suitable to adopt, the number of children the adoptive parents may be suitable to adopt, as well as their age range, gender. Likely needs and background may also be noted.

Where it is recommended that a child should be placed with particular prospective adopters, the panel are able to advise the agency on the proposed adoption support, future contact arrangements and whether/how the exercise of parental responsibility by birth parents and/or prospective adopters should be restricted

A Panel can alert the Agency Decision Maker to practice issues which may give concern although this is not part of the decision making process.

Business Support

Administrative tasks include the production of an annual schedule of panels, ensuring attendance, maintaining records and panel booking systems, responding to enquiries, receiving and distribution of reports and minutes, constructing agendas and liaising with the Advisor and the Chair. The agency is currently considering the electronic circulation of papers for some panel members, in the interests of security and efficiency. This may also help to avoid last minute withdrawal of cases and possible delay, due to the late circulation of paperwork as lead in time should reduce.

4. Quality Assurance Functions – Feedback

The following information reflects the overall quality of assessment reports and presentation of reports to adoption panel. Prospective Adopters Reports (PAR's) are written by adoption social workers, and

since January 2014 there have been changes to the timescales for approving adopters. Assessment and approval is now considered in two stages, with the aim of speeding up the overall process for prospective adopters and the Prospective adopters report follows a new and simplified format, which has successfully reduced paperwork. Panel members welcome this change and do not feel that there has been a lack of information as a result of these changes. However, panel members do rely on the analysis of the social worker in terms of information presented. Adoption Placement Reports (matching reports or APR's) are completed jointly with adoption social workers and the child's social workers. At this stage Panel will still see the Child Permanence Report and the Agency Decision maker's comments in respect of the Adoption plan for the child.

A Quality Assurance pro forma is used for each case presented to adoption panel, and completed by panel members, comments being collated by the Chair. The overall quality of the reports presented is given a score of 1-5 with 5 being excellent, 4 Very good, 3 good, 2 satisfactory and 1 poor.

The QA format also registers whether the reports have been prepared by a suitably qualified social worker, and whether appropriate timescales for approval of adopters and matching of children have been achieved. (In line with regulatory requirements.)

In addition the format enables panel members to feedback on any inaccuracies noted, any information missing, and any feedback for the Agency which may relate to practice issues or a concern for example.

5. Prospective Adopters Reports

York is in the unusual position of using voluntary or other local authority adopters for matching all children (due to the small size of the Local Authority.) The panel therefore has the opportunity to consider assessment reports prepared by other agencies (at the point of matching) and is able to make some comparisons in terms of quality.

Social workers presenting prospective adopters have been confident and have been seen to have good working relationships. Social workers have been able to predict possible areas of concern and have addressed issues well. The overall quality of report writing and presentation is very good.

For the purposes of comparison it is noted that In the 6 month period April 2013 to September 2013, 10 adopters were presented for approval. At this stage the timescale for approval was 8 months and this was met in 8 cases

Delay was for the following reasons:

1. A brief report was presented and further work required due to some complex assessment issues. The final outcome was a positive recommendation.
2. In 1 case there was a delay between group preparation work and allocation of an assessing social worker. Once allocated assessments progressed well.

From September 2013, quality assurance reflected a change in timescales for an assessment to be completed. From 1st July 2013, the process for approving prospective adopters was revised to a shorter two stage process, due to a change in regulation. The expectation is that the new application and assessment process will be completed within 6 months in total. In all but exceptional cases, it is expected that Stage 1 will take no longer than 2 months and Stage 2 will take no longer than 4 months. There is also a new fast track process for previous adopters and approved foster carers.

Panel has had the opportunity to consider 5 approvals in the period October 2013 to March 2014. All were recommended for approval and subsequently agreed by the agency decision maker. In one case, one panel member dissented on the basis of emotional capacity to understand the needs of an adopted child. All other cases were unanimously recommended. One case included foster carers who were then considered for a match for a child already in their care.

6. Matching reports

Again for comparison, the period April to September had 4 matches approved and from October to March 3 matches have been considered (7 in total).

Overall the work was assessed as good with positive feedback. Where issues arose in relation to information missing or inaccuracies it related to the child permanence report rather than the Prospective adopters report.

Timescales for matches were met in all cases apart from one where a sibling group required a longer period of time.

At this stage adopters attending panel have usually met the foster carer and have received additional information about the child through a life appreciation day or meeting the medical advisor for example. They come high with anticipation and have often prepared book or transition toys for the child. There is an expectation by panel that the proposed match will have been well prepared as the emotional investment for all concerned is considerable.

7. Other cases considered

Child's plan for adoption

Panel have considered one child's adoption plan in this period due to the child being relinquished for adoption.

Fostering to adopt

The panel have considered one case where a child was placed on a fostering to adopt basis, where the Agency Decision Maker has agreed a couple as temporary foster carers in order for a child to be placed without delay.

Disruption report

The panel receives Disruption Reports in relation to any breakdowns in adoptive placements. Lessons learnt from disruption meetings may be shared with panel members and social workers as part of on-going

development and learning. There have been two disruptions this year. One case has been considered in this period

8. Timescale for Agency decision

The revised guidance 1.57 indicates that the Agency Decision Maker must make a decision within 7 working days of receiving the Panel's recommendation and final set of minutes. Final minutes are usually achieved within 4 working days and a system for consulting panel members to see minutes once the Chair and Advisor have made amendments, is working well. York has achieved a quick turnaround for decision making and seems able to adhere to these requirements.

9. Qualified Social workers

Panels are required to feedback on whether the social worker preparing the reports was suitably qualified. 100% of cases presented were by a suitably qualified social worker. Where a worker has little experience of attending or presenting at panel, team managers attended in a supportive role.

10. Agency Feedback

Panels are able to feedback to the Agency any practice issues or areas of concern that might need to be addressed by the Agency rather than by individual social workers or team managers. This is rarely given as practice and process is generally seen to be a good standard.

A summary of issues arising are as follows:

The panel room is very formal and has been very cold. Sometimes members have difficulty gaining access if they arrive early. The waiting area for those visiting panel however is much improved with the new premises.

It is not necessary for a legal advisor to attend panel but York has regularly received written legal advice on all cases. Unfortunately this was arriving on the morning of panel, for reasons beyond the advisors control. This sometime caused delay especially if other papers arrive on the morning. The actual legal advice and views and opinions of the legal advisor in respect of the overall assessment or match have now been more clearly separated for the minutes, following discussion, and this is working well.

A number of panel's have been cancelled due to lack of cases to present. Since September, 6 panels have been held, out of a possible 13, with 7 approvals and 2 matches being considered in this period most of this reduction on cases being presented is due to fewer children coming into care

11. Feedback from adopters

Adopters are invited to Panel at the point of both approval and matching. In all cases Adopters have attended and have been well supported by their social workers. Most adopters find the process daunting but appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process. Their feedback is welcomed and panel members are able to learn from the feedback provided.

Adopters are asked the following questions and 13 Adopters responded.

Preparation for panel

yes no

Did you feel you knew enough about coming to panel?

Did your family placement worker show you the book about attending

Was the booklet helpful in helping you decide whether to attend?

Reasons for choosing to attend

Was attending panel as positive experience

yes no

Comments

Could anything be improved upon?

Other comments

All adopters who responded felt that they had been well prepared for panel, and found the leaflet helpful. The information leaflet about panel has been updated. They found the names of members in the leaflet to be helpful and one said it is important for such a small authority in order to avoid any conflicts of interest. Another felt that a brief profile for each member would also be helpful.

Most adopters make the decision to attend independently and were not influenced so much by the information provided. They all felt that it is important to attend in order to be part of a process, as it is such an important decision.

Overall, all the respondents said that the experience of attending panel had been positive. All those attending felt that panel members had made an effort to put them at ease, they felt welcome, encouraged and supported and prepared for the questions that were asked.

Other comments:

‘It is important to hear the views of all the panel members and to hear the feedback’.

‘The PAR does not give a full sense of our characters and so it is important to attend in person’.

‘It is very emotional but we were out at ease and we enjoyed the discussion about the children’

‘Nothing can stop the nervousness it’s the enormity of the decision that makes it difficult’

‘It’s important to understand how panel works and to respond personally’

‘Panel had a celebratory feeling after all the hard work’

‘I was terrified but being able to answer the questions gave me confidence’

Generally the only thing that people would change was the room which was found to be intimidating, although the location is good and the waiting area was good. Adopters particularly welcomed being shown the room before hand, and members having their names on the table. Fewer panel members and less formality was welcomed.

12. Social work feedback

Social workers have not provided feedback in this period as a routine part of the business.

13. Other Quality Assurance functions

The Adoption Panel should monitor the progress of individual children for whom adoption is the plan up to the making of an Adoption Order, through progress reports as required under the placement for adoption procedure. York Adoption Panels receive this information as ‘Feedback’ at each Panel which is presented by the Panel Advisor and also receive a 6 monthly summary of children waiting to be placed.

Summary and conclusions

During this period adoption panels have continued to operate in a context of considerable government and resultant media interest in adoption. Local Authority adoption performance is under close scrutiny

with particular focus on the time taken to place children in adoptive families and the process by which adopters are prepared and assessed.

With the removal of children's plans from the panel, as a key area of business, York Adoption Panels reduced the frequency from 3 weekly to one panel per month but reverted to 3 weekly dates in order to accommodate reduced timescales for assessment etc. In the last 6 months, a number of panels have been cancelled. However, through using the central list, an additional panel can be held if required in order to avoid any delay.

The overall quality of adoption work has remained good in York and there has been evidence of excellent practice, knowledge and expertise, in a significant number of cases.

Sheila Barton

Independent Panel Chair

20.5.14

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Fostering Service 3 monthly Report: 1 January to 31 March 2014

Progress during 2013-14

1. **The New Deal** for foster carers commenced in April 2013, following extensive consultation with foster carers. It represented a commitment to a new relationship between the council and foster carers in which the valued work of foster carers in the team of professionals supporting looked after children and young people is recognised and developed.
2. The new accreditation and grading structure for foster carers with a revised remuneration structure has been operational for one year.
3. **York Area Foster Carers Association (YAFCA)** continue to work closely with the Fostering Team to review progress. A survey is being developed jointly between YAFCA and the local authority to review the scheme of allowances and fees for future years. The results of this consultation will be considered in October 2014.
4. **The sufficiency of local foster carers** and placements remains a major priority for Children's Social Care Services. This is within the context of recognition that York's fostering demographic composition reflects the national picture. It is noted locally and nationally and locally that the largest group of foster carers are aged 50 and over. It is noted that the retirement of a proportion of these foster carers must be predicted for each year. Accordingly, the fostering team is working on addressing the issues related to publicity, targeted recruitment and both replacement of retiring foster carers and a commitment to growing the local fostering community.
5. **Local placements** will always be sought for York's looked after children and the data indicates that the majority of placements are with York approved foster carers and in placements which can maintain key factors in a child's life such as schools, health services and ongoing contact with parents and close family.
6. **Independent Fostering Agency** placements have been required in recent years due to the lack of capacity for certain children and young people. The number of placements reduced from 16 to 8

during March 2014, but this welcome reduction has been reversed in the early part of 2014-15 , due to placement disruptions and increased demand for individual foster placements.

7. **The recruitment strategy for York foster carers** will be in conjunction with neighbouring authorities and the Fostering Network, the national representative body for foster carers. Through succession planning, there is a commitment to increasing the overall numbers at a rate greater than simply replacement of retirees. Both the fostering and adoption service managers are attending events in York which are intended to harness the commitment of faith groups in the city and region in promoting fostering and adoption.
8. A crucial factor in any new recruitment of foster carers is responding to feedback from newly engaged recruits. It was heartening to receive particular feedback from a foster carer, who joined York's fostering community having formerly employed by a local independent fostering agency. The foster carer commented particularly on the engagement and involvement in the team of people working with the looked after child, led by the child's social worker.
9. The fostering team continues the work with all foster carers to establish a working forum at the quarterly gateway events at which several invited speakers have described the broader work of the looked after children's workforce of looked after children's support team, links with higher education at York St John University, care leavers etc. This is balanced with designated time for foster carers to meet for networking, sharing of information and ideas among themselves and to enable consultation for their feedback to the fostering team and social workers for service improvement. Through valuable feedback from YAFCA on behalf of foster carers regarding the experience of the management of allegations against foster carers, it was possible for these views and experiences to be reflected both in the review of the procedures for City of York Safeguarding Children's Board and subsequent practice.

Data

Period covered: 1 January 2014 – 31 March 2014

1. Number of children and young people placed with City of York Council approved Foster Carers:

There were 222 children and young people looked after on 31 March 2014

Of these:

- 156 children and young people were placed with City of York Foster Carers, 71% of all looked after children.
- 26 of these (17%) children and young people were placed with someone with whom they had an established relationship prior to being looked after (e.g. aunt, grandparent). These Foster Carers are known as Connected People Foster Carers

This compares with:

- 224 Children and young people looked after on 31 December 2015 with 66% placed with Foster Carers Approved by the City of York Council.
- 229 children and young people looked after on 30 September 2013 with 65.5% placed with Foster Carers approved by the City of York Council.
- 236 children and young people looked after on 30 June 2013 with 68% placed with foster Carers approved by the City of York Council.
- 243 children and young people looked after on 31 March 2013 with 68% placed with Foster Carers approved by City of York Council.

2. Fostering households

There were 116 fostering households on 31 March 2014, of these, 90 were mainstream Foster Carers and 26 were Connected People Foster Carers.

This compares with:

- 111 fostering households on 31 December 2013, 90 Mainstream
- 113 fostering households on 30 September 2013, 91 mainstream and 22 connected Person Foster Carers
- 113 fostering households on 30 June 2013, 91 mainstream Foster Carers and 22 Connected Person Foster Carers.

- 113 fostering households as of 31 March 2013, 92 mainstream Foster Carers and 21 Connected People Foster Carers.

3. Placements with Foster Carers approved by independent fostering agencies (IFA)

There were 13 children and young people placed with Foster Carers approved by other agencies on 31 March 2014

This compares with:

- 8 Placed with IFA's on 31 December 2013
- 10 placed with IFA's on 30 September 2013
- 12 placed with IFAs On 30 June 2013
- 17 placed with IFAs on 31 March 2013

4. Recruitment

There were 22 enquirers from members of the public interested in finding out about becoming Foster Carers during this period.

This compares with:

- 11 in the period September 13 – December 13
- 18 in the period July – September 2013
- 18 in the period April – June 2013
- 20 in the period January – March 2013

Preparation Course

There was one preparation course for prospective foster carers during this period.

Applications

Applications were received from 2 households, 2 mainstream fostering applications (1 withdrew)

This compares with:

- 2 households in the period September – March 2013
- 5 households in the period July – September 2013
- 3 households in the period April – June 2013
- 4 households in the period January – March 2013

New Approvals

There were 2 new mainstream household approved during this period.

This compares with:

- 1 new household approved during the period September –March 2013
- 2 new households approved, one was a ‘fostering to adopt’ arrangement and 1 was a Connected Person Foster Carer during the period July – September 2013
- 3 new households approved as Connected Person Foster Carers. No mainstream Foster Carer approvals were made during the period April – June 2013.
- 1 new household approved as mainstream foster carer during the period January - March 2013

5. Exemptions

There were 2 households granted an exemption from the usual fostering limit of 3 placements. One exemption for a period of only one week and one is a longer term placement for 4 specific children.

This compares with:

- 4 households ranging from a few days to two weeks and 1 long term exemption for 4 specific children during September – December 2013
- 3 households ranging between 1 week to 3 months and 1 long term exemption for 4 specific children during July – September 2013
- 1 household with a permanent exemption for 4 specific children during April – June 2013
- 4 households ranging from 1 permanent exemption to three temporary exemptions to cover short break periods during January - March 2013.
- 5 households with exemptions ranging from a week to 6 months during October- December 2012

6. Deregistration

There were 3 deregistrations during this period. 1 deregistration following a safeguarding investigation (the partner continues to foster) and 2 resignations from long term foster carers who wished to retire.

This compares with:

- 2 during the period September – December 2013
- 5 during the period July – September 2013
- 2 during the period April – June 2013
- 9 during the period January – March 2013

7. Complaints and Allegations against Foster Carers

There were 2 allegations against Foster Carers during this period, both await formal outcomes.

This compares with:

- 1 allegation during the period September –December 2013
- 1 allegation during the period July – September 2013 which was found unsubstantiated
- No allegations during the period April – June 2013
- 3 allegations during the period January – March 2013
- No allegations during the period October- December 2012

Report Prepared by:

Debra Lane

Service Manager Fostering

**Corporate Parenting Board
Draft Work Programme for 2014-15**

Meeting Date	Work Programme
30 June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports from the adoption and fostering services
22 Sept 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report (draft considered at meeting in March 2013 – update on issues raised and final report to be presented at future meeting) • Health of Looked After Children (update report due summer 2014)
24 Nov 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The emotional well being of looked after children • The Education of Looked After Children
2 Feb 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update from Service Manager and the elected Member with responsibility for visiting children's homes. • Feedback from the Glen in the wider context of short breaks.
27 April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile of Looked after Children in the City and the proactive steps being taken in reducing numbers • Promoting a positive sense of identity for all children

Forward agenda

- Members of Board to meet with foster carers (outside of formal meeting)
- Members of Board to meet with members of the Show Me That I Matter Panel (outside of formal meeting)

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