

Fostering Service 3 monthly Report for Executive and Senior Management Team

Period covered: 1st January to 31st March 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Three monthly reports on the management outcomes and financial state of each fostering agency must be provided to the executive side of the Local Authority (National Minimum Standards 25.7). The executive is expected to monitor the management and outcomes of the service and to be satisfied regarding the effectiveness of the service and the achievement of good outcomes for children. Data on the service is provided in Appendix A.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE LAST 3 MONTHS

- 2.1 The Fostering team continued to be busy training and supporting foster carers and working with colleagues in the Children's Safeguarding teams to identify and maintain good and safe fostering placements for children and young people. After extensive consultation with all foster carers and YAFCA (York Area Foster Carers' Association) over the last year 'A New Deal for York Foster Carers – Recognising and rewarding professional development' was presented to the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People in February 2013. The resulting new system of grades and fees was introduced from 1st April 2013. Work on further professional development of the fostering role will continue over the next year.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLACED WITH CITY OF YORK FOSTER CARERS.

- 3.1 In line with national trends, the number of children and young people looked after by the Council has continued to steadily decline, with 15 fewer young people looked after on 31st March 2013 than twelve months previously (258 reduced to 243) . There has been a concurrent steady decline in the percentage placed with foster carers approved by York. However, apart from a slight decline in the quarter ending 31st December, the number of young people placed with foster carers approved by Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) has remained relatively constant. The

decline in the percentage placed with York approved foster carers is likely to be attributable to the shortening of Care proceedings to 26 weeks, (except in exceptional circumstances) which results in Connected People foster carers being deregistered more quickly, following a child no longer being subject to a Care Order but instead subject to a Residence or Special Guardianship Order to the Connected person, or the child returning home.

4. FOSTER CARERS

- 4.1 There are a range of carers with different experiences, knowledge and skills. Foster carers have been consulted throughout the process of developing the the new system of grades and fees and their feedback incorporated into the new scheme.
- 4.2 There is a robust and comprehensive assessment process, including a preparation period with training and information concerning the standards of care and practice expected. The induction process over the first year of approval includes a ten session core training program which emphasises specific areas of practice, expectations and information required of all foster carers. This process supports the potential for positive outcomes for children and young people in foster care by ensuring that they are cared for by skilled, knowledgeable and well supported foster carers. Professional development of foster carers extends beyond their first year of approval, with access to a range of training course and support groups specifically for foster carers, as well as to the training provided by the Council's Workforce Development Unit (WDU) for all staff. Foster carers also co-facilitate preparation courses and training courses with social workers.
- 4.3 Foster Carers are formally supervised monthly by their linked Supervising social worker. Placement planning is undertaken prior to or within five days of any placement, at which the placement plan is updated to reflect the foster carers details and highlight any gaps in provision. Support plans are undertake to ensure foster carers and the wider service is able to meet the needs of the child or young person
- 4.4 The number of fostering households has dipped over the quarter and a new recruitment campaign is planned for 2013/14, focussing on attracting enquirers who will consider young people with complex needs and behaviour, a feature of many of the young

people in IFA placements, or offer long term placements to children and young people.

5. STAFFING

- 5.1 The Fostering team has been part of the Family Placement Service, with day to day management of the team supervised by the Practice Manager, line managed by the Family Placement Manager. The Family Placement Service Manager also managed the Adoption Service. The need for a separate manager for each service was recognised in the recent restructure within Children's Social Care which split the post of Family Placement Service Manager into two distinct posts: Adoption Service Manager and Fostering Service Manager. For each team there is a new advanced practitioner social worker post. This team member will not have line management responsibility but will mentor new staff and develop practice, alongside carrying a caseload. The team will continue to have the same number of supervising social workers as previously, though one of these posts will be filled by a newly qualified social worker.

6. PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OVER THE NEXT QUARTER

- 6.1 In line with changes to Statutory Guidance and Regulations coming into force on 1st July 2013, the placement planning process will be reviewed with foster carers and social workers to look at improvements that can be made, including revising Placement Plans for children and young people to emphasise the potential for delegated authority to foster carers.
- 6.2 The new Fostering Service Manager commence on 1st July 2013. This increased management capacity in the Fostering Service will enable a review of current procedures, including strengthening the annual foster carer review process.
- 6.3 There will be a six monthly recruitment campaign using the local media, alongside exploration of other recruitment opportunities using social media.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is recommended that this report is received and noted by the Director for Adults, Children and Education and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Mary McKelvey
Service Manager, Family Placement

Appendix A: Data**1. Children and young people placed with City of York Council approved foster carers**

Number of children looked after on 31/03/13	243
Number placed with CYC foster carers	162
% placed with CYC foster carers	67%
% placed with CYC Connected People foster carers*	9%

* Connected People foster carers are those with whom the child/young person had an established relationship prior to being looked after (e.g. aunt, grandparent etc).

In previous quarters:

	Number of children looked after	% placed with CYC foster carers	% placed with CYC Connected People foster carers
31/12/12	250	69%	13%
30/09/12	246	70%	17%
30/06/12	253	72%	18%
31/03/12	258	76%	17%

2. Fostering households approved by City of York Council

Total on 31/03/13	113
Of which foster carers	92
Of which Connected People foster carers	21

In previous quarters:

	Total	Mainstream foster carers	Connected People foster carers
31/12/12	117	93	24
30/09/12	119	95	24
30/06/12	119	96	23
31/03/12	117	94	23

3. Young people placed with foster carers approved by independent fostering agencies (IFA).

On 31/03/13	17
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In previous quarters:

31/12/12	14
30/09/12	18
30/06/12	17
31/03/12	16

4. Number of enquiries received from people interested in finding out more about becoming a foster carer

January - March 2013	20
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In previous quarters:

October- December 2012	16
July-September 2012	18
April- June 2012	19

5. Preparation Course.

January - March 2013	4 households attended
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In previous quarters:

October- December 2012	7 households attended
July-September 2012	4 households attended
April- June 2012	7 households attended

6. Applications received for assessment as prospective foster carers

January - March 2013	4
Of which as mainstream foster carers	2
Of which as Connected People foster carers	2

In previous quarters:

	Total	mainstream	Connected People
October- December 2012	4	3	1
July-September 2012	3	2	1
April- June 2012	3	2	1

7. New foster carers approved in period

Total on 31/03/13	3
Of which as mainstream foster carers	1
Of which as Connected People foster carers	2

In previous quarters:

	Total	Connected People	mainstream
October-December 2012	3	2	1
July-September 2012	4	2	2
April- June 2012	5	1	4

8. Deregistration in period

Total	7
Reason:	
Child no longer Looked After	5
Change in foster care's circumstances	2

In previous quarters:

October- December 2012	5
July-September 2012	4
April- June 2012	3

9. Exemptions

Households granted exemption from the usual fostering limit of 3 looked after children/young people being in placement at one time

January - March 2013	4 households
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The period of exemption agreed ranged from 2 days to 1 week.

In previous quarters:

October- December 2012	5
July-September 2012	1
April- June 2012	3

10. Complaints and allegations against foster carers in period

Total	3
Outcome:	
Unfounded	1
Unsubstantiated	2

In previous quarters:

October- December 2012	0
July-September 2012	3
April- June 2012	4