

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

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