

**Name of meeting:** Corporate Parenting Board

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Title of report:** Fostering and Residential Care Performance Highlights

**Purpose of report:** To update the Corporate Parenting Board on the activity of the Councils Fostering Service and Children's Residential Care Homes

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Not Applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u> ?	Key Decision – No Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	NA
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Tom Brailsford for Mel Meggs (19.2.20)
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Not applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Not applicable
Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a>	Cllr Viv Kendrick Childrens Portfolio

**Electoral wards affected:** Fostering Service and Residential Care operate across the District

**Ward councillors consulted:**

**Public or private:** Public

**Has GDPR been considered?** Yes GDPR considered

## 1. Summary

Update for Corporate Parenting Board in relation to Fostering and Residential Care, for Children in Care.

### **Fostering Service**

#### **What difference did we make?**

January 2020 saw two new carer approvals, the same as December 2019. The rolling 12-month total of approved carers to January was 26 approvals. There were two in-house fostering de-registrations in January (including connected carers). The number of children placed with Kirklees foster carers was 232 in January, a slight decrease from the level in December, this is above the 12-month average of 226. The number of connected person's placements increased to 102, from 89 in December 2019 (Note that this figure includes Regulation 24 placements). The January 2020 number of 185 represented a 12-month high in the number of Independent Agency placements, this compares to a 12-month low of 157 in January 2019.

This increase in independent agency placements reflects the use of independent agency foster care to place the increased number of children in our care, because we did not have internal carers available. There are: 9 prospective carers at Stage 1 with Fostering Advisors; 17 at Stage 2 (Concurrent Assessments, this includes 6 x Supported Lodgings, one of which is Connected Persons).

#### **What do we want to improve?**

Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a priority as is reducing the use of fostering agency care. The Service Manager is focussing on these challenges as two separate matters, improving our offer for existing carers and a focus on new carer recruitment. We continue to develop the Recruitment Team to increase the number of Kirklees carers we will have focussed campaigns for respite care that can be a softer introduction to fostering, and teenagers exhibiting troubled and troublesome behaviours. A recruitment and retention focus for our foster carers is a key strand of our improvement work and the Service Manager is working closely with the Recruitment Team to ensure that the message re our need for new carers is communicated, and those interested in fostering choose Kirklees Council, to express their interest.

The numbers of assessments need to increase, and they need to be completed within timescales that are comparable with agency timescales. Capacity has been realigned to improve timelines for applications to foster Form F assessments. All foster carer resignations are scrutinised by the service manager and panel, and expression of interest in fostering that does not progress is peer challenged within the fostering team.

We have recently signed an agreement with the National Fostering Network to work together this year to implement two Foster Carer Mockingbird hubs in Kirklees, with an initial timeline to work towards of November 2020 this model facilitates additional support to specific carers. We will be consulting with Kirklees Fostering Network, and other stakeholders to discuss how we can develop our Kirklees model, and work with the National Fostering Implementation team, who hold responsibility for monitoring the application and "fidelity" of the licensed model. The Challenges re carer recruitment are a both a local and national issue. Latest data from the National Fostering Network show that 8,500 more fostering households are needed across the UK.

The carer supply and demand activity has led to supply constraints, with less choice of carer availability across the UK, we experience this at a local level. We continue to pursue a range of recruitment activity, to improve our internet search presence to prospective carers we have

entered into an agreement with "Google Ads". An advertising campaign highlighting the need for Forever Families, for our children in foster care is currently taking place.

Our current internal foster carer household registration profile is: Short term 97; long term 60 (permanence); short break carers for children with a disability 4; connected persons carers 47; parent & child foster carers 1. We need to improve numbers across all these categories to place more of our children with internal foster carers. We currently also have 20 carers registered to provide placements for connected children under regulation 24 (emergency placement regulations).

The Service Manager is working closely with the Kirklees Fostering Network to continue to develop our fostering service offer and ensure that carers are supported appropriately. Foster carers now have membership of the Corporate Parenting Board. We have launched a new package of carer benefits including access to the employee health scheme, and access to the staff discounted shopping scheme.

## **Childrens Homes**

Three of the Councils five Ofsted Registered Childrens Homes have been inspected individually unannounced over two days by Ofsted between October and December 2019. We are pleased to report that the homes have been graded as "Good" overall. Our two further homes have recently been inspected unannounced by Ofsted, the inspection grades will be published in due course. We will report on those grades at a future Corporate Parenting Board.

### **2. Information required to take a decision**

This a report is to update Corporate Parenting Board, on the activity within our Fostering Service and Children's Residential Homes.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **3.1 Working with People**

Awareness of the need for more local foster carers is being raised with communities, across the District.

#### **3.2 Working with Partners**

Children and Young People in fostering and residential care, and their carers are receiving services from a variety of partners including mainstream and specialist health also education, and leisure services.

#### **3.3 Place Based Working**

Having children placed locally within District creates the opportunity, for place based working with practitioners being able to wrap services around the child in the locality where they are residing.

#### **3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality**

Providing more local placements can reduce social worker travel time, vehicle usage and the environmental impact of that travel.

#### **3.5 Improving outcomes for children**

Recruiting more local foster carers is a key strategic objective of children's services, to ensure our children and young people are placed in District

**3.6 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

Not applicable

**4. Consultees and their opinions**

**5. Next steps and timelines**

**6. Officer recommendations and reasons**

To continue to provide this information to each meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

**7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations**

Not applicable

**8. Contact officer**

Steve Comb Head of Corporate Parenting (Sufficiency)

**9. Background Papers and History of Decisions Reported** at every Corporate Parenting Board

**10. Service Director responsible**

Tom Brailsford, Service Director for Resources Improvement and Partnerships