

# **The Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers Topic Review Report**

## **Inspiring Young People Overview and Scrutiny Board**

**October 2016**



Derby City Council





## **Contents**

<b>Foreword by the Chair</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Background Information</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Scope of the Review</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Evidence Received by the Board</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>15</b>

## **Foreword by the Chair**

This topic review has allowed the Inspiring Young People Overview and Scrutiny Board to look into a subject that is very close to my heart; the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

I have been aware that for the last few years the Council has not been able to recruit the numbers of foster carers that it would like. This has had the result of increased usage of independent fostering agencies. Through the topic review the Board has found that this is a situation that is mirrored nationally.

The aim of the Topic Review was to make a series of recommendations on how to help improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers. It is anticipated that the recruitment of more in-house foster carers for Derby City Council would have a positive impact on the Council's budget, specifically the spend for external independent sector fostering placements. An increase in in-house foster carers would also allow more children in care to be placed locally to Derby.

Finally, I would like to thank all those that took part in the evidence gathering sessions. Members of the Board found all of the sessions extremely useful in helping them to put together the recommendations contained within this report.

**Councillor John Whitby**

Chair of the Inspiring Young People Board 2016/17  
October 2016

## **Background Information**

On 4 August 2015, the Corporate Scrutiny and Governance Board received an item updating the Board on Revenue Budget Monitoring. This report highlighted that the Children and Young People directorate was forecasting a pressure of £2.1m for the financial year 2015/16. This was mainly due to pressures on looked after children agency costs. Members discussed the increasing number of Looked After Children in the city and the issues around paying more for private foster carers and the high number of these placements which was showing an upward trend.

As a result, members referred the recruitment of in-house foster carers to the Inspiring Young People Board for a detailed Topic Review. It was anticipated that the aim of the review would be to look into current recruitment activities and what more could be done to increase the levels of in-house foster carers.

In August and September 2015, members of the Inspiring Young People Board met with senior officers to discuss the possible scope of the topic review. The scope of the topic review was then agreed by the Board at its meeting on 21 September 2015.

Members of the Board carried out evidence gathering sessions with the following:

- a) Derby City Council senior officers, Foster Care Social Workers and officers from the Fostering and Adoption Team and Derby City Council foster carers.
- b) Barnardos
- c) Derby City Council's Policy and Improvement Manager
- d) The Derby Foster Care Association

At its meeting on 11 July 2016, the Board agreed the draft recommendations and agreed that the Chair would meet with Councillors Care, Hezelgrave and Williams to finalise the wording.

Background information on the Fostering Service can be found at Appendix 1 of this report. This Fostering Service report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee on 20 September 2016 and covers the period from January to September 2016.

## **Scope of the Review**

The scope of the topic review was agreed by the Board at its meeting on 21 September 2015 and a number of possible lines of enquiry were identified, namely:

- Why have foster carers left the service and is there a theme?
- Review the results of the iMPower foster carer consultation?
- In terms of recruitment, why do initial enquires not proceed to conversion?
- Review of the process of the setting of fees.
- Carry out a visit to an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).
- Review corporate buy-in to fostering across the authority.

These lines of enquiry helped to inform all of the evidence gathering sessions.

The main aim of the review was to put together a number of draft recommendations to help improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

## **Evidence Received by the Board**

Members of the Board carried out evidence gathering sessions with the following:

Derby City Council senior officers, Foster Care Social Workers and officers from the Fostering and Adoption Team and Derby City Council Foster Carers

This was a sensible starting point for the review. The senior officers provided an up-to-date overview of the fostering service. The Foster Care Social Workers and officers from the Fostering and Adoption Team provided information on the day-to-day running of the service. The Derby City Council Foster Carers provided useful information in relation to their experiences of being a foster carer for the authority.

### Barnardos

This invaluable session provided lots of useful information from the perspective of being an independent fostering agency. Lots of interesting similarities and differences were identified between the Council's fostering service and the service provided by Barnardos.

### Derby City Council's Policy and Improvement Manager

This session provided members of the Board with current available data around the recruitment and retention of foster carers. This allowed them to identify strengths and weaknesses around the type of data collected and what it showed.

### The Derby Foster Care Association

This final session supplemented the first and furnished the members of the Board with further insight into being a foster carer for the Council and, crucially, with what the foster carers saw as the strengths and weaknesses of the service.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of the Topic Review was to make a series of recommendations on how to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers. From the evidence gathered the Inspiring Young People Board finally put together 27 recommendations to be put before Council Cabinet.

It is hoped that these recommendation can help to boost the recruitment and retention of Derby City Council foster carers. This would have the crucial effect of decreasing the Council's spend on It is anticipated that the recruitment of more in-house foster carers for Derby City Council would have a positive impact on independent sector fostering placements, at a time when the Council is facing unprecedented budget pressures.



## Recommendations

### Care of looked after children

Recommendation 1	Timescale
Care of looked after children is a corporate responsibility. All employees in all services have a role in supporting the Council's foster care service. This message should be included in corporate training.	Within 1 month

Evidence suggested that some employees were not aware of their responsibilities in this area.

### Marketing

Recommendation 2	Timescale
Start with a presumption that any individual or couple could be foster carers.	Immediate

The Board were concerned that the criteria applied at 'first contact' and onwards may be too restrictive, thereby not maximising on potential recruitment.

Recommendation 3	Timescale
Review the marketing strategy, increase the marketing budget put under the control of the fostering team.	3 months

The Board felt that the marketing budget was too small and were concerned that it was not under the control of the fostering team.

Recommendation 4	Timescale
Use social media sponsored advertising.	1 month

The Board were concerned that the fostering service did not have a high enough online presence and felt that sponsored advertising would help to improve this.

Recommendation 5	Timescale
Adopt marketing that targets specific groups, such as Council employees, schools, the NHS, faith groups and those facing redundancy. Be proactive in approaching these groups.	3 months

Evidence suggested that marketing was too generic and was not targeted at specific groups.

Recommendation 6	Timescale
Use enthusiastic advocates, not just service employees and foster carers, in marketing. Follow up contacts with Derby Homes and volunteers already working with our children in care.	1 month

The Board felt that experienced and enthusiastic advocates would add value to marketing exercises.

Recommendation 7	Timescale
Be up front with what the fees are for different categories of children in all marketing. For example, 'you will receive a minimum of X pounds per week, per child as a foster carer.'	Immediate roll out

Members agreed that information about fees was not clear enough and needed to be immediately accessible.

### **Recruitment Pathway**

Recommendation 8	Timescale
Have a dedicated officer to work on recruitment.	6 months

The Board felt that rather than this work being rotated between officers, it should sit with an officer dedicated to it.

Recommendation 9	Timescale
Use existing contacts across the city in the recruitment process, including at first contact. Start by contacting neighbourhood and other community based employees and volunteers already working with our children in care.	1 month

The Board felt it was crucial to increase the numbers of those involved in the recruitment process.

Recommendation 10	Timescale
Increase the specific data captured throughout the recruitment pathway, such as non-conversion, and use it to drive forward improvements.	3 months.

Evidence was received to show that some data was not captured and that some could be broken down into further categories.

Recommendation 11	Timescale
Seek to obtain permission to retain the contact details of those people who, for whatever reason, do not progress further than first contact. Ensure they are contacted again after a suitable period of time has elapsed.	Immediate

The Board felt that future recruitment opportunities were being missed by not doing this.

Recommendation 12	Timescale
Ensure that the length of time from first contact to conversion is not more than six months.	9 months

Evidence was received to show that the length of time from first contact to conversion could often be over six months and the Board felt that this was too long.

Recommendation 13	Timescale
Use a mix of big information events and smaller events. Be available to meet people in their own homes earlier in the recruitment process.	3 months

Evidence was received to show that sometimes the big information events could appear too impersonal and the Board felt that this could be balanced by the use of smaller events. The Board also felt that home visits should take place earlier, if required.

Recommendation 14	Timescale
Explore the possibility of asking independent fostering agencies to ask permission to pass on, to the Council, contact details of enquirers who are wishing to foster categories of children that they do not have.	Immediate

The Board felt that this was a recruitment opportunity being missed.

### **Retention of Foster Carers**

Recommendation 15	Timescale
Treat foster carers as valuable professionals who provide an essential service to children, Derby and the Council.	Immediate

Speaking to foster carers, the Board felt that they did not always feel valued in this way. The Board felt it was essential to the retention of foster carers that they should.

Recommendation 16	Timescale
Social workers should be proactive about offering additional fees, rather than requiring a foster carer to evidence just the challenges a child presents. Additional fees should be seen as an entitlement.	2 months

The Board felt that invaluable assistance could be provided to foster carers in this way.

Recommendation 17	Timescale
Make counselling easily available for all children in care, removing the requirement for foster carers having to seek approval through social workers.	6 months

The Board felt that this should be an automatic right and would also lift the responsibility from foster carers.

Recommendation 18	Timescale
Ensure that the therapeutic unit at Leopold Street remains open.	Ongoing

Evidence was received to show that this was a valued and crucial service.

Recommendation 19	Timescale
Give foster carers more responsibility for routine permissions, as far as allowed nationally, such as school trips and GP appointments	2 months

Evidence was received from foster carers to show that this was an area of concern and one that could easily be rectified.

Recommendation 20	Timescale
Upskill the Council's foster carers to take on children with higher levels of needs.	6 months

The Board felt that there were existing Council foster carers would be able and willing to take this on, thereby reducing the use of costly outside placements.

Recommendation 21	Timescale
Ensure that representatives of the fostering team and representatives of the Foster Care Association meet at least quarterly and as equals.	Immediate

Evidence was received that this was not always happening and the Board felt strongly that it should.

Recommendation 22	Timescale
Formalise mentoring by experienced foster carers to new foster carers, with an honorarium.	6 months

Evidence was received to suggest that this service would contribute greatly to the retention of foster carers and also treatment of experienced foster carers as professionals.

Recommendation 23	Timescale
Ensure that foster carers are being offered placements in a timely manner.	Immediate

The Board felt that this was critical to the retention of foster carers.

Recommendation 24	Timescale
Explore other ways of remunerating foster carers, including paying retainers or salaries, as well as fees. See what other authorities are doing.	18 months

The Board felt that this could provide an opportunity to both increase the recruitment of foster carers and contribute towards their retention.

Recommendation 25	Timescale
Involve foster carers in the selection of placements, giving foster carers more choice as to the most suitable child for them.	3 months

Evidence was received to suggest that some foster carers would appreciate having more involvement in the selection process.

Recommendation 26	Timescale
Use foster carers to deliver training, thereby increasing their self-respect and showing that they are valued as professionals.	6 months

The Board saw this as another way to treat foster carers as valuable professional and thereby contribute to the retention of foster carers.

Recommendation 27	Timescale
Consult foster carers about reducing bureaucracy by incorporating local travel expenses into the general fees, as foster carers do not generally make claims for this.	6 months

The Board felt that this should be explored to see if the current system could be made simpler for foster carers in relation to short distance, local travel.



Derby City Council

**CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE**  
**20 September 2016**

**Appendix 1**

Report of the Strategic Director for People Services

## **Fostering Service Report**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services require that the executive side of the local authority:
- a. Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every three months;
  - b. Monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children;
  - c. Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

(Standard 25.7)

The Fostering Agency is required to produce a Statement of Purpose which is updated once a year. The current Statement of Purpose was presented to Corporate Parenting Committee on the 01.12.15 this has been updated and is attached as appendix 3.

- 1.2 The last annual report, covering the period January 2015 to December 2015 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2016. This report covers the period January to September 2016.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To approve the Fostering Agency report.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 To comply with guidance and regulations and National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.

<b>SUPPORTING INFORMATION</b>
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- 4.1 The membership of the fostering panel complies with Guidance and Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. It consists of an independent chair and vice-chair, a health service representative, a foster carer from a different local authority, a fostering social worker, a care-experienced young person and other independent members with relevant experience related to children in care and safeguarding. The panel is supported by an independent professional advisor and also has access to medical and legal advice as required. The Agency Decision Maker is the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption.
- 4.2 The panel chair, professional advisor and team managers meet twice a year to consider quality and performance issues relating to the service and training needs of the panel members. Panel members receive an annual appraisal.
- 4.3 The Family Values end of project report dated August 2016 is attached as appendix 2 and is summarised in the presentation.
- 4.4 A temporary fostering and adoption marketing officer has been in post since July and is working closely with the fostering and adoption service to establish key areas of recruitment initiatives and a more targeted marketing approach.
- 4.5 Between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 the fostering service received 186 fostering enquires and sent out 169 information packs. 52 initial visits were undertaken (compared to 46 initial visits undertaken between January and December 2015) and 28 households were invited to make an application. So far 15 applications have been received and commenced the assessment process.
- 4.6 Fostering enquiries converting to assessments is under target and assessments converting to approvals over this period are low. Four households have been approved as mainstream foster carers and five households have been approved as Friends and Family Carers. Figures at the end of August 2016 showed there were a total of 124 approved fostering households of which 107 provide a range of time limited, permanent and respite/short-break placements. The service also supports 17 approved Friends and Family carers.
- 4.7 At the end of August 2016 14 assessments were in progress, which is under the target of 20. Four are mainstream assessments in Stage 2 with anticipated approval dates in September and October 2016.



### Historical Enquiries Comparison 2014 - 2016

	2016	2015	2014
January	21	14	30
February	17	8	16
March	34	20	11
April	16	5	13
May	30	20	27
June	30	33	24
July	19	28	28
August	19	11	11
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>150</i>
September		23	9
October		19	10
November		25	8
December		18	14
Total		224	201

4.8 The Fostering Teams have undergone significant staffing changes during the period January – September 2016.. This has been due to a natural turnover of staff retirements across the service and a high turnover of team managers in the first six months of the year. A permanent team manager was appointed to the recruitment and assessment team on the 20.6.16 and a new permanent team manager for one of the support teams will commence her post on the 26.9.16. Recruitment to 2 full time social work vacancies is underway.

4.9 The new post of a Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer funded through the Adoption Reform Grant in 2014 has been confirmed as permanent. This appointment assists our initial response to enquiries; monitors recruitment targets and provides performance information reports. It was highlighted by the fostering service as an essential post to support management oversight and monitoring of assessment processes. The post was developed further during the Demand Management project to improve data collection and facilitate marketing analysis.

A Topic Review was held in November 2015 to provide an overview of the Family Value project work completed with iMPower and consider the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Recommendations from this will go to full Council Cabinet in October 2016.

- 4.10 Between April 2015 and March 2016 there were 8 referrals made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) four of which met the threshold for further investigation. All referrals came under the category of physical abuse resulting in five cases being unsubstantiated and three requiring reports to foster panel. The outcome of these being one deregistration by the fostering agency and one resignation received from the foster carer. There have been no appeals in 2016 to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.
- 4.11 Fostering allowances have been reviewed for 2016-17 with an agreed uplift of 0.5%.
- 4.12 The Derby Foster Carers Association has continued to develop since it launched three years ago. The AGM took place on the 27.02.16 with the proposal that the existing committee members retain their posts. Social activities are organised and the service supports these events for carers and children. Key committee members periodically meet with fostering team managers to share social work practice issues and changes taking place in the service. The association will be invited to participate in reviewing the Foster Carers Charter.

#### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Not applicable

**This report has been approved by the following officers:**

<b>Legal officer</b> <b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Estates/Property officer</b> <b>Service Director(s)</b>  <b>Other(s)</b>	Suanne.lim Director of Specialist Services 01332 642669 Suanne.lim@derby.gov.uk
<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Sally Penrose 01332 6438817 sally.penrose@derby.gov.uk  Fostering Service Statement of Purpose Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Family Values End of Project Report Appendix 3 - Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

## IMPLICATIONS

### Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of providing the Fostering Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets. A budget increase in 2015-16 allowed fostering allowances to be up-rated to keep pace with the recommended national minimum rate.

Any increase in the shortfall of in-house placements has a direct financial effect due to the much higher placement costs in the independent sector. It is therefore essential increase the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

In the event of an appeal to the IRM the cost falls on the fostering service provider. The fee is around £2500 for each case.

### Legal

- 2.1 The fostering function of the Council is regulated by the 1989 Children Act and the Associated Fostering Regulations, guidance and the minimum standards published in 2011.

### Personnel

- 3.1 The service became managed by a Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption in July 2015 when the Deputy Head of Service post was deleted. There are three full time Fostering team managers and 16.6 FTE social workers who carry out the full range of fostering activities. One full time Adoption team manager with a team of 7.5 FTE social workers and a full time manager for the Therapeutic Service for LAC and Adopted children who manages the Adoption support team (3.5 FTE) and Leopold Street. The service recruited and appointed two full time casework support officer posts in December 2015 which adds further capacity to the business support requirements related to the service.

### Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The service continues to give due consideration to race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, religion, and disability in relation to children being placed and for adults who apply to become foster carers. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and further efforts will be made this year to recruit carers from ethnic minority communities and carers for children with disabilities.

### Health and Safety

- 5.1 This is considered at all stages of the recruitment, assessment, training and supervision of foster carers. All the managers in the service have completed mandatory Health and Safety training.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

6.1 None arising from this report

## **Property and Asset Management**

7.1 None arising from this report

## **Risk Management**

8.1 Risk is managed at all stages of the fostering process.

## **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 9.1 Corporate and departmental objectives are pursued through business plans and individual performance plans throughout the service. The Fostering and Adoption Service supports the Council priorities of :
- Inspiring start in life
  - Inspiring start in life by improving educational outcomes
  - Inspiring working life by improving skills and creating jobs

# **FAMILY VALUES PROJECT END OF PROJECT REPORT**

**AUGUST 2016**

## **1) INTRODUCTION**

The Family Values Project was set up in 2014 as part of the Council's Demand Management Programme. iMPower Consulting Limited were contracted to work with the management and staff of the Fostering and Adoption Service to deliver the project.

While the project was primarily set up to work with the Fostering Service, it was acknowledged that the Adoption Service could also benefit from support and hence both services took part in the initial stages of the project. The Adoption Service ceased to be part of the project at the end of Phase 3, when the Department for Education's adoption regionalisation policy was introduced and the service's work to become part of an East Midlands-wide adoption agency became the driver for future improvements and changes.

The project was set up to help the service tackle a number of issues it was facing including:

- Finance – over time the proportion of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements compared with in house foster carers registered with Derby City Council had increased. At the time the project was being set up nearly half of Derby's foster children were placed with IFA carers, a proportion that had significantly increased since 2012. It costs the Council far more to place a child with an IFA carer than one of its own in house carers. In common with all Council services, Fostering and Adoption needed to seek ways of making savings. Increasing the proportion of in house carers would be a very effective way of doing this.
- Performance – it was agreed that the service could benefit from a review of performance in terms of speed of recruitment, assessment and approval of carers and adopters.
- Permanence – the service acknowledged the need to recruit more carers to meet the needs of children that are waiting and improve the support available to carers throughout the process and once they have a child placed.
- Staff culture – the need to embed a strong culture of performance monitoring, improvement and joint working and a positive approach to change.
- Engagement with carers – the need to better understand carer motivations and experience of the service and reflect these in service improvements.

**The objectives of the project were to:**

- Increase the capacity and efficiency of the fostering and adoption service
- Improve timescales for the fostering and adoption processes
- Reduce spend on independent fostering agencies
- Improve the experience of prospective and existing foster carers and adopters
- Develop a more targeted approach to marketing and recruitment initiatives

**Phasing:**

The project took place in four phases:

**Phase 1** (August to November 2014) – introduce staff to the Values Modes model of understanding what motivates people and how this impacts on the best way of engaging with them; undertake carer, adopter and staff surveys; undertake business analysis of Fostering and Adoption Service performance.

**Phase 2** (December 2014 to January 2015) – use Phase 1 findings to design initiatives and develop implementation plans.

**Phase 3** (February to October 2015) – implement initiatives with support from iMPOWER.

**Phase 4** (November 2015 to July 2016) – implement further improvements in house.

iMPOWER Consulting Ltd worked with the Council to deliver phases 1 to 3 of the project. They prepared reports for the Council at the end of each phase, plus other resources including staff presentations and draft plans. This report does not seek to repeat the contents of those reports, but covers Phase 4 and overall project performance.

## **2) PHASE 4**

At the end of Phase 3, iMPower Consulting Ltd withdrew from the project leaving the Council to implement further changes and improvements to its Fostering Service via an in house team. As set out above, the Adoption Service did not take part in Phase 4 as its emphasis had switched to working with external partners to set up an East Midlands-wide adoption agency.

As part of the end of Phase 3 handover, iMPower worked with the Fostering Service to develop two action plans to be delivered during Phase 4. The first action plan focused on the recruitment and assessment of potential new foster carers and the second on support for existing in house foster carers.

The key themes covered in the action plans were:

### **i) Recruitment & Assessment:**

**Recruitment** – further develop:

- capacity of staff and carers to undertake word of mouth campaigns
- rolling programme of marketing events
- marketing materials and communications
- review initial enquiry in service call handling pilot

**Assessment** - review:

- assessment process
- communication with applicants
- training offered during assessment
- consider methods of influencing carer choices

**ii) Support** - to set up and run 3 support groups tailored for foster carers who provide:

- Long Term/Permanent placements
- Time Limited placements
- Family & Friends placements

Overall good progress was made in delivering the action plans. Highlights include:

- Successful call handling pilot – initial call handling now taken back within the service on a permanent basis



- Recruitment Officer post made permanent
- New pages and functions added to fostering section of Council's website
- 16 carer volunteers trained to take part in word of mouth campaigns
- Over 20 word of mouth and other recruitment events held
- Several improvements made to Stage 1 of the assessment process
- Long Term/Permanent and Time Limited support groups launched

A full list of Phase 4 achievements is attached at Annex A.

### 3) OVERALL PROJECT PERFORMANCE

#### **i) Project Achievements**

During Phases 3 (fostering and adoption) and 4 (fostering only) the project acted as a catalyst for introducing change and making numerous improvements to the services. A full list of outputs and achievements is attached at Annex B.

Headlines include:

- Initial enquiry handling for both fostering and adoption taken back from Derby Direct (the Council's generic call handling service) to allow people interested in fostering or adoption to talk to an expert from first contact.
- Introduction of a Recruitment Officer supporting both fostering and adoption to help improve the service provided to enquirers and potential applicants and support the marketing function.
- Successful embedding of the recruitment approach recommended by iMPower which enables the service to identify and target potential foster carers and adopters using the Values Mode approach and tailor recruitment activities to suit their preferences.
- Improvements made to fostering assessment process
- Improvements to the training offer made as a result of a survey of foster carers and adopters
- Establishment of two support groups for foster carers.
- Introduction of a newsletter for foster carers.

#### **ii) Fostering Performance Targets**

In July 2015 fostering performance targets were agreed for the project. Performance against these targets has been monitored and reviewed by the Family Values Core Group on a monthly basis since then. The service will continue to monitor and analyse performance against these targets now the project has ended.

The table below sets out the targets and performance against them over the period July 2015 to June 2016.

Target	Annual Target	Baseline Performance July 2014 – June 2015	Project Performance July 2015 – June 2016	Analysis
Number of enquiries	250	179	272	<b>Target exceeded</b> – over the project year, 272 enquiries were generated. This represents an increase of over 50% against baseline.
Number of initial visits	108	47	69	<b>Target not achieved</b> – over the project year, 69 initial visits took place. This represents an increase of just under 50% against the baseline. In terms of conversion rate, it represents a small drop from 26% to 25% in the number of enquiries resulting in visits. This is significantly below the 43% conversion rate needed to meet the project target. Over the period March to June 2016, the initial visit monthly target of 9 visits per month was achieved – if this level of performance is sustained, the target will be achieved in the future.
Number of approvals	25	11	5	<b>Target not achieved</b> – over the project year there were 5 approvals. This is only 20% of the target and a decrease of 54% against the baseline year.
Number of de-registrations	12	14	16	<b>Target not achieved</b> – over the project year there were 16 de-registrations. This is 4 over target and 2 more than the baseline year. Though over target, all de-registrations were either for routine reasons eg retirement or change of personal circumstances or in some cases, carers resigned when they adopted the children who had been placed with them.  In Phase 1 of the project iMPower found that Derby's de-registration rate was 11.8%, compared with the national average of 12.3%. Using the average number of foster carer households over the year (110), this represents an increase to

				<p>14.5%.</p> <p>Due to the low number of approvals and the higher rate of de-registrations, the number of fostering households has fallen from 119 to 107 over the last year. The ratio of IFA to in-house placements is now around 60:40. It may be that this situation reflects the low number of initial enquiries etc in the baseline year and once the new higher level of enquiries and initial visits feed through into applications, the situation may improve. The service are committed to undertaking a thorough analysis of the results and implementing improvements where there are further lessons to learn.</p>
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### **iii) Performance Against Objectives**

Performance against the project's five objectives is analysed in the table below.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>To increase the capacity and efficiency of the Fostering and Adoption Service</b>	<p><b>Partially Achieved</b></p> <p>The project enabled the Fostering and Adoption Service to make all of the improvements set out in Annex B, however, there is still much to do and future improvements to the Adoption Service are now dependent on move to set up a regional agency.</p> <p>Performance against this objective was negatively impacted upon by the loss of momentum caused by 3 changes of manager within 6 months on Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team and the move to Council House.</p>
<b>To improve the timescales for fostering and adoption process</b>	<p><b>Partially Achieved</b></p> <p>It was agreed fairly early in the project that the emphasis should be on improving the effectiveness and quality of the processes rather than speed, especially on fostering where timescales were less of an issue than for adoption. Several improvements have been made in line with this.</p>

<b>To reduce spend on independent foster agencies</b>	<b>Not Achieved</b>  Unfortunately the proportion of in house carers has continued to fall over the period of the project and therefore spending on IFA placements has increased. The ratio of IFA to in house carers has risen from about 45:55 to around 60:40 over the life of the project.  Though the project has not yet yielded results, the rise in the number of enquiries generated through the project may ultimately lead to a reversal of the continuing increase in IFA places if the service can continue to generate an increased number of enquiries and successfully convert these into new foster carer households.
<b>To improve the experience of prospective and existing foster carers and adopters</b>	<b>Achieved - but more work to do.</b>  Over the life of the project many improvements have been made that should make for a better experience for service users. These include service taking back initial calls from Derby Direct, changes to website, establishment of Recruitment Officer post and support groups, plus improvements to the Skills to Foster training and awareness raising with Children's Social Workers around the role of foster carers.
<b>To develop a more targeted approach to marketing recruitment initiatives</b>	<b>Achieved</b>  This has been the most successful aspect of the project with the word of mouth concept now embedded, numerous marketing events held, a pool of 16 carers established to take part in events, new marketing materials developed, website improved, wide ranging leafleting campaign ongoing and rolling marketing plan in place. Going forward, the next major piece of work will be for the Fostering Service to update its 2013/16 Marketing and Recruitment Strategy.

#### **iv) Lessons Learned**

Attached at Annex D

#### **4) NEXT STEPS**

Fostering Service management is committed to building on the achievements of the project and will continue to monitor performance and introduce further service improvements on an ongoing basis. Members of the former Family Values Core Group will continue to meet on a fortnightly basis under the remit of the Recruitment Strategy Group to oversee this work.

As part of the end of project preparations, it has been agreed how each achievement made during Phase 4 of the project will be embedded in Fostering Service work and how further improvements will be made. Full details are set out in Annex C.

Annex C covers the commitments made by the Fostering Service itself. In addition, the Service considers it essential that the Council continues to fund a full time Fostering and Adoption Marketing Officer within the Communications Team whose involvement in the service is key to delivering a robust marketing plan, making full use of lessons learned from iMPower and broadening the use of IT and social media.

#### **Communication:**

In order to communicate the outcome of the project this report will:

- Be circulated to the Director - Delivering Differently, Acting Director of Specialist Services, all managers within the Fostering and Adoption Service, Head of Performance, Head of Communications and the Director of Strategic Services and Organisational Development.
- Form part of the Council's Annual Fostering Agency Report which will be submitted to People Services Directorate Management Team and Corporate Parenting.
- Be shared with members of the Fostering Panel.

In addition:

- An article outlining Phase 4 achievements and next steps will be included in the Foster Carers' Newsletter. This follows up on the letters sent to all foster carers and adopters at the end of Phase 3 updating them on the service improvements introduced up to that point.
- A display will be put together in the Fostering Team area to inform staff of project outcomes and next steps.

## ANNEX A – PHASE 4 ACHIEVEMENTS

### RECRUITMENT

- **Initial call handling** - confirmation that calls will be taken back by the service from Derby Direct on a permanent basis following successful pilot. This will ensure that callers can speak to someone with fostering knowledge and expertise from first contact.
- **Recruitment Officer** – dedicated Recruitment Officer post made permanent. The role of the Recruitment Officer is to:
  - monitor the progress of enquiries from receipt of the enquiry to completion
  - Follow up contact at initial stage of enquiry to ensure enquirer has received an information pack
  - Ensuring quick response by service to arrange initial visits
  - 'Keeping in touch'/point of contact for applicants to keep them up to date with progress of their assessment
  - Responsibility for updating performance scorecard for monthly fostering recruitment activity
  - Working with Recruitment Lead to develop word of mouth campaigns opportunities
  - support recruitment events and work closely with the Marketing Officer/Communications Team
- **DCC website** updated & enhanced:
  - Request to call back facility added to make it easier for people wanting to make an initial enquiry to get in touch with the service.
  - Request to transfer page added to provide information for existing foster carers interested in transferring to the Council.
- **Word of mouth:**
- Further briefing sessions held to train foster carers to take part in word of mouth campaigns. Pool of 16 foster carers now in place to take part in future campaigns. Carers taking part in events receive £10 voucher as a thank you.
- Around 20 word of mouth and other recruitment events held including:
  - 19<sup>th</sup> Nov Derby Night Market – very successful event leading to 15 enquiries
  - Regular sessions held at Derby Royal Hospital every 6 to 8 weeks
  - Links established with Home for Good – successful events held at Allestree Woodlands and Riverside Churches

- **Marketing materials** updated and amended - roadside banners and posters purchased, plus gazebo for use at events.
- Further **fostering information sessions** held – 8th December and 8<sup>th</sup> March.
- Sustained **leaflet campaign** – flyers regularly placed in an increasing number of venues in and around Derby. Also every 2016/17 Council Tax letter contained a flyer.
- **Performance Monitoring** – introduced monthly scorecard report to monitor performance against recruitment, assessment and foster household targets, discuss ways of making further improvements and issues.

#### ASSESSMENT

- **Initial Visits** – improvements made to speed and process for booking initial visits.
- **Stage 1** changes introduced:
  - Now make an initial visit plus 3 further visits to discuss the fostering role, gather initial assessment information, start chronology, create eco map, undertake dog assessment (where needed), Health & Safety checks, collect referee details and DBS information.
  - Revised initial visit form introduced.
  - Introduced guidance notes to help applicants complete various forms and questionnaires.
  - Skills to Foster training now taking place during Stage 1.
  - New risk assessment introduced where DBS reveals offences that do not automatically debar applicants from fostering. This addresses the applicant's attitude to offences and the effects they may have on placed children.
  - Monthly reviews of Stage 1 applicants introduced to help keep track of applicants and reduce any delays.
  - Formal decision now made at end of Stage 1 on whether applicant is suitable to progress to Stage 2.
- Form requesting **feedback on assessment process** being developed.



**SUPPORT**

- Three **support groups** set up themed around:
  - Long Term/Permanency – sessions held 24<sup>th</sup> February & 17<sup>th</sup> May
  - Time Limited Placements – sessions held 27<sup>th</sup> January, 27<sup>th</sup> April & 6<sup>th</sup> July.
  - Family & Friends – in planning - first session not yet held.
- **Fostering News** – new newsletter aimed at all approved foster carers established. Two editions published so far. Newsletter contains information on forthcoming training, practice features, recruitment updates, news features and manager profiles.
- **Induction course** for newly approved foster carers developed. Will include opportunity to meet all key people will work with including Fostering Managers, Head of Service, Finance and Training. Will also cover standards.

ANNEX B - OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS – PHASES 3 & 4

RECRUITMENT

Fostering

- **Initial call handling** - calls taken back by service from Derby Direct on a permanent basis following successful pilot. This will ensure that callers can speak to someone with fostering knowledge and expertise from first contact.
- **Recruitment Officer** – a dedicated Recruitment Officer post introduced and made permanent. The role of the Recruitment Officer is to:
  - monitor the progress of enquiries from receipt of the enquiry to completion
  - Follow up contact at initial stage of enquiry to ensure enquirer has received an information pack
  - Ensuring quick response by service to arrange initial visits
  - 'Keeping in touch'/point of contact for applicants to keep them up to date with progress of their assessment
  - Responsibility for updating performance scorecard for monthly fostering recruitment activity
  - Working with Recruitment Lead to develop word of mouth campaign opportunities
  - support recruitment events and work closely with the Marketing Officer/Communications Team
- **Word of mouth:**
  - 5 key target groups and areas identified – churches, schools, NHS, Duffield and Darley Abbey.
  - Series of briefing sessions held to train foster carers to take part in word of mouth campaigns. Pool of 16 foster carer volunteers in place to take part in future campaigns. Carers taking part in events receive £10 voucher as a thank you.
  - Over 30 word of mouth and other recruitment events held.
- **Marketing materials** - updated and amended – new postcards, posters, flyers, roadside banners and posters, plus gazebo for use at events.
- **DCC website** - updated & enhanced including:
  - Request to call back facility added to make it easier for people wanting to make an initial enquiry to get in touch with the service.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Request to transfer page added to provide information for existing foster carers interested in transferring to the Council.</li><li>• <b>Fostering information sessions</b> introduced – 4 events held.</li><li>• <b>Home for Good</b> – working relationship established with faith based voluntary organisation to promote fostering. Home for Good have agreed a target of recruiting 12 new fostering families, though not all of these families will necessarily be with the Council.</li><li>• <b>Performance Monitoring</b> – introduced monthly scorecard report to monitor performance against recruitment, assessment and foster household targets, discuss ways of making further improvements and issues.</li></ul>
<b>Adoption</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Initial call handling</b> - taken back by service from Derby Direct to ensure that callers can speak to someone with adoption knowledge and expertise from first contact.</li><li>• <b>Recruitment Officer</b> – dedicated Recruitment Officer post covers adoption as well as fostering – see above for details.</li><li>• <b>Word of mouth</b> – see above – several joint events.</li><li>• <b>Marketing materials</b> - updated and amended – new postcards, posters and flyers produced.</li><li>• <b>DCC website</b> - updated &amp; amended.</li><li>• <b>Home for Good</b> – working with the faith-based voluntary organisation Home for Good to promote adoption.</li></ul>
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>
<b>Fostering</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Initial Visits</b> – improvements made to speed and process for booking initial visits.</li><li>• <b>Stage 1</b> changes introduced:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Now make an initial visit plus 3 further visits to discuss the fostering role, gather initial assessment information, start chronology, create</li></ul></li></ul>

eco map, undertake dog assessment (where needed), Health & Safety checks, collect referee details and DBS information.

- Revised initial visit form introduced.
- Introduced guidance notes to help applicants complete various forms and questionnaires.
- Skills to Foster training now taking place during Stage 1.
- New risk assessment introduced where DBS reveals offences that do not automatically debar applicants from fostering. This addresses the applicant's attitude to offences and the effects they may have on placed children.
- Monthly reviews of Stage 1 applicants introduced to keep track of applicants and help reduce any delays.
- Formal decision now made at end of Stage 1 on whether applicant is suitable to progress to Stage 2.
- Form requesting **feedback on assessment process** being developed

### Adoption

- Adopter matching information – new written guidance produced to provide advice to adopters going through the matching process.
- Child snapshots – new monthly snapshot reports introduced to provide prospective adopters with information on current children Derby has available for adoption.
- Adoption Link – the Council now subscribes to Adoption Link – this web-based service allows the Council's Family Finders to share the profiles of children placed for adoption on line so that they can be searched across the UK, helping to speed up the adoption process. It also helps Derby City adopters looking for a match to search a wider range of children.

## SUPPORT

### Fostering

- Three **support groups** set up themed around:
  - Long Term/Permanency – sessions held 24<sup>th</sup> February & 17<sup>th</sup> May
  - Time Limited Placements – sessions held 27<sup>th</sup> January, 27<sup>th</sup> April & 6<sup>th</sup> July.
  - Family & Friends – in planning - first session not yet held.

- **Fostering News** – new newsletter aimed at all approved foster carers established. Two editions published so far. Newsletter contains information on forthcoming training, practice features, recruitment updates, news features and manager profiles.
- **Induction course** for newly approved foster carers developed. Will include opportunity to meet all key people will work with including Fostering Managers, Head of Service, Finance and Training. Will also cover standards.

#### **Fostering & Adoption**

- Training provision - survey of approved foster carers and adopters undertaken to gain feedback on training offer. Report and recommendations produced. Working group established to take recommendations forward.

**ANNEX C – EMBEDDING PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS & MAKING FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS**

ACHIEVEMENT	AFTER THE PROJECT HAS ENDED HOW ACHIEVEMENT WILL: i) BE EMBEDDED IN THE FOSTERING SERVICE AND ii) FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS MADE
RECRUITMENT	
<p><b>Initial call handling</b> - calls taken back by service from Derby Direct on a permanent basis following successful pilot, ensuring that callers can speak to someone with fostering knowledge and expertise from first contact.</p>	<p>Now established as part of Recruitment and Assessment Team duties. Systems embedded. Have 2 Child Support Officers who can support call handling where cover is required.</p> <p>Will continue to look at making further improvements to the service.</p>
<p><b>Recruitment Officer</b> – dedicated Recruitment Officer post made permanent. The role of the Recruitment Officer is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitor the progress of enquiries from receipt of the enquiry to completion</li> <li>• Follow up contact at initial stage of enquiry to ensure enquirer has received an information pack</li> <li>• Ensuring quick response by service to arrange initial visits</li> <li>• 'Keeping in touch'/point of contact for applicants to keep them up to date with progress of their assessment</li> <li>• Responsibility for updating performance scorecard for monthly fostering recruitment activity</li> <li>• Working with Recruitment Lead to develop word of mouth campaign opportunities</li> <li>• support recruitment events and work closely with the Marketing Officer/Communications Team</li> </ul>	<p>Post has been made permanent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to ensure quick response to enquiries and close working with team manager to ensure cases are allocated quickly</li> <li>• Continue to monitor and follow up enquiries and act as point of contact for applicants</li> <li>• Continue to work closely with the recruitment lead to consider new opportunities for recruitment and plan events</li> <li>• Continue to take part in marketing events.</li> <li>• Continue to work closely with the Marketing Officer so that marketing activity reflects wishes of the fostering and adoption teams</li> <li>• Monitor marketing plan and take part in Marketing Meetings</li> <li>• Work with Marketing Officer to improve publicity materials</li> <li>• Work with Marketing Officer to improve website and social media presence.</li> <li>• Continue to produce monthly performance reports regarding enquiries, initial visits and assessments</li> </ul>
<p><b>DCC website</b> - updated &amp; enhanced</p>	<p>Website content will be reviewed regularly by HoS and other Fostering Service staff.</p> <p>Will work closely with Marketing Officer and others to put forward and implement updates.</p> <p>Will consider establishing a Facebook page.</p> <p>Will continue to monitor and seek to influence search engine optimization.</p>

<p><b>Word of mouth:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 key target groups identified</li> <li>Briefing sessions held to train foster carers to take part in word of mouth campaigns. Pool of foster carers in place to take part in campaigns.</li> <li>Word of mouth and other recruitment events held.</li> </ul> <p><b>Marketing materials</b> - updated and amended</p>	<p><b>Faith</b> – have wide range of contacts – will seek to maintain and expand where possible  <b>Health</b> – have regular programme of visits to Royal Derby Hospital. These are proving successful – will seek to maintain.  <b>Education</b> – limited progress. Consider that best way forward is to ask carer volunteers with good links to their local schools to engage.  <b>Duffield &amp; Darley Abbey</b> – events held – limited results.  <b>Police</b> – information on police website – will seek other opportunities where possible.  <b>Other</b> – will seek to identify other key target groups where appropriate eg transition groups.</p> <p>Briefing sessions have now been offered to all current carers. Will wait until new carers approved before offering further sessions.</p> <p>WoM campaigns now covered in Skills to Foster training and regular articles in Foster Carer Newsletter.</p> <p>Reward vouchers have been introduced as a thank you to carers taking part in events.</p> <p>Will maintain rolling calendar of events.</p> <p>Current Marketing and Recruitment Strategy covers the period 2013 to 2016. Will produce new Strategy.</p> <p>Marketing Materials to be kept under review and updated as appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Fostering information sessions</b> introduced</p>	<p>Will continue to deliver sessions on a quarterly basis until December 2016 and then review.</p>
<p><b>Sustained leaflet campaign</b> – flyers regularly placed in an increasing number of venues in and around Derby.</p>	<p>Will continue to place flyers in current venues and seek additional locations.</p>
<p><b>Performance Monitoring</b> – now produce monthly scorecard report to monitor performance against recruitment, assessment and foster household targets, discuss ways of making further improvements and issues.</p>	<p>Recruitment Officer will continue to produce monthly scorecard reports.</p> <p>Members of the Family Values Project Core Group will continue to meet monthly to consider the reports for at least the next 6 months.</p> <p>Will undertake more detailed analysis of performance highlighted by the reports.</p>

	Reports will be taken to Corporate Parenting, Directorate Management Team meetings and Fostering Team Meetings.
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
<b>Initial Visits</b> – improvements made to speed and process for booking initial visits.	Revised system embedded.  Keep under review and introduce further changes as appropriate.
<b>Stage 1</b> changes introduced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Now make an initial visit plus 3 further visits to discuss the fostering role, gather initial assessment information, start chronology, create eco map, undertake dog assessment (where needed), Health &amp; Safety checks, collect referee details and DBS information.</li> <li>Revised initial visit form introduced.</li> <li>Introduced guidance notes to help applicants complete various forms and questionnaires.</li> <li>Skills to Foster training now taking place during Stage 1.</li> <li>New risk assessment introduced where DBS reveals offences that do not automatically debar applicants from fostering. This addresses the applicant's attitude to offences and the effects they may have on placed children.</li> <li>Monthly reviews of Stage 1 applicants introduced to keep track of applicants and help reduce any delays.</li> <li>Formal decision now made at end of Stage 1 on whether applicant is suitable to progress to Stage 2.</li> </ul>	Revised visits schedule embedded.  Keep system under review and introduce further changes as appropriate  As above.  Recruitment Team Manager to review and introduce further guidance notes as appropriate.  4 StF courses to be delivered per year.  Risk Assessment embedded.  Keep system under review and introduce further changes as appropriate  Embedded. Keep system under review and introduce further changes as appropriate  As above
<b>Feedback form on assessment process</b> being developed.	Introduce feedback form. Review all feedback produced and consider emerging themes as part of Recruitment and Assessment Team development.
<b>SUPPORT</b>	
<b>Three support groups</b> set up themed around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long Term/Permanency</li> </ul>	Will undertake further work to embed support groups.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Time Limited</li><li>• Family &amp; Friends</li></ul>	
<b>Fostering News</b> – new newsletter aimed at all approved foster carers established. Two editions published so far. Newsletter contains information on forthcoming training, practice features, news features and manager profiles.	Team in place to deliver newsletter with support of contributions from other members of the service.
<b>Induction course</b> for newly approved foster carers developed. Includes opportunity to meet all key people will work with including Fostering Managers, HoS, Finance and Training. Will also cover standards.	In development – format will be used for the first time when next set of approvals come through.

## **ANNEX D – LESSONS LEARNED**

### **What went well:**

- Ownership by Director and Head of Service – championed and prioritised project throughout.
- Project successfully re-energised and refocused marketing and recruitment activities.
- Engagement of iMPower to provide external perspective and expertise – iMPower undertook thorough business analysis and surveys. Values Mode and word of mouth provided valuable tool for helping Service to understand its customers and potential customers and how best to engage with them.

### **What did not go well:**

- Combining fostering and adoption in the same project – the issues faced by the fostering and adoption services are different and distinct. The key driver behind the project was to help resolve issues faced by the Fostering Service. While the Adoption Service did benefit from taking part in the project, the key focus throughout was on the Fostering Service.
- Staff engagement – a small core group of managers and staff supported and drove the project forward, but not all staff chose to actively engage in the project after the series of staff workshops had taken place during Phases 1 and 2.
- Carer engagement – though many foster carers and adopters initially came forward to volunteer to take part in the project, it was difficult to maintain their engagement, which led to many volunteers quickly falling away.
- During the period of the project there was a high turnover among Fostering Service managers which led to continuity issues.
- During the early stages of the project, the Fostering & Adoption Service was in the process of moving premises and undergoing a partial restructure. This distracted staff and led to continuity issues.

### **What would be done differently next time:**

- Project set up – establish separate, more tightly focused projects for fostering and adoption.

- Staff engagement – undertake more preparation with staff before the project starts to raise awareness and ensure clarity around expectations.
- Carer engagement – undertake more planning to achieve clarity about the roles carers would be asked to take on to support project delivery.



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Appendix 3

## Derby City Council Fostering Service

**Statement of Purpose:** *why we are here and what we will do.*

September 2016

Andy Smith  
Director of Peoples Services

Classification: OFFICIAL

## CONTENTS

	Page no.
1 Introduction: <b>why do we need this document?</b>	3
2 Aims and objectives: <b>what we want to achieve</b>	3
3 Status and constitution: <b>how we fit into Derby City Council</b>	3
4 Management structure: <b>who are the managers for the fostering social work team?</b>	4
5 Recruitment, approval, review and training of foster carers: <b>how we get more foster carers, what they have to do to become a foster carer and how we help them to look after you.</b>	5
6 Fostering services provided: <b>what types of foster care do we offer?</b>	7
7 Staffing: <b>who works in the fostering social work teams?</b>	10
8 Numbers of foster carers: <b>how many foster carers have we got?</b>	10
9 Numbers of foster children: <b>how many children and young people are in foster care in Derby?</b>	10
10 Complaints and outcomes: <b>numbers of complaints against foster carers and the fostering social work team and what happened.</b>	10

The **purple text** in this document is designed to help Children and Young People to understand what the Statement of Purpose is. This is a requirement of the 2011 Fostering National Minimum Standards, (Standard 16.1) and links to the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011(Part 2, section 3(1)).

## **1. INTRODUCTION** why do we need this document?

**The Government and Derby City Council want to ensure that you; foster carers; and Social Workers are aware of what the Law says about fostering and what the rules are.**

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Regulations 2011, issued by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, govern the work of fostering service providers throughout England. These standards are used in the inspection of fostering agencies and fostering services provided by local authorities.

Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 require a fostering agency to produce a Statement of Purpose, which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 16.1.

This statement of purpose has been prepared in accordance with these requirements. It will provide a source of information to all areas of the Children and Young People's Department, partner agencies, fostering team staff, foster carers and prospective carers **and children/young people.**

The statement will be reviewed no less than annually and amended accordingly. **We will make sure that this document is updated every year.**

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE** what we want to achieve

### **Mission Statement** things we want to make sure happen:

As an integral part of the Children and Young People's Department's commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable children, Derby Fostering Service has the following aims:

- **We always try to help children and young people live within their family where it is safe to do so. If this is not possible then foster carers will look after you.**
- To meet the needs of children and young people who need to be looked after away from their family, for whatever reason and for whatever length of time is required **to make sure you are safe and happy in foster care, whatever the reason why you living away from home and for whatever period of time**
- To put children's safety and welfare first in everything we do **You being happy and safe is the most important thing to us**
- To give children as much stability as possible so they can fulfil their potential in life **we want you to do the very best you can in everything you do**
- To provide placements which meet needs arising from their gender, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, religion, culture, abilities and disabilities. **we want to make sure that we all celebrate the things that make you who you are**

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### Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

- To make our work clear and understandable to foster carers and children and seek their views about how we work and how we can do better **we want you to let us know how we could do our job better**
- To recruit local people with the qualities needed to look after our children, give them thorough preparation and training and support them whenever they need it **we need to make sure that we have enough foster carers in and around Derby to look after the children/young people who need foster care. We also need to make sure that the foster carers are helped to look after you in the best possible way.**
- To work with our partners to ensure foster carers get professional guidance and supervision in all aspects of the task. This includes active support and promotion of the Children in Care Council. **This is where we need to we will ask other people involved in fostering about how we can do things better. The Children in Care Council is something that you can get involved in, they give advice to the Council and let the Council know what it is like being a Child/Young Person in care.**
- To recognise the challenges of looking after children with extra needs by paying a fee on top of fostering allowances **we will make sure that the foster carers are given enough money to look after you properly**
- To provide short breaks for children with disabilities. **Some children with disabilities need to have short periods of time away from their family**

## 3. STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

Derby City Fostering Service is a part of the Children and Young People's Directorate and complies with its policies and procedures. Policies and procedures specific to fostering comply with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 and The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Volume 4: Fostering Services. Procedures cover the recruitment, training, approval, support and review of foster carers and the operation of the Fostering Panel. **The Fostering team is part of the Children and Young People Department in Derby City Council, and has to work within the law. There are lots of rules about fostering; we have to make sure that foster carers and social workers know what these rules say.**

## 4. MANAGEMENT AND STAFF STRUCTURE **who are the managers for the fostering social work team?**

Andy Smith	Strategic Director for Children and Young People
Suanne Lim	Acting Service Director, Specialist Services
Sally Penrose	Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption
Shelley Nicholls	Team Manager
Peter Macauley	Team Manager
Sheila Bartram (in post from the	Team Manager

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R Jones: 14/4/15

S/Perth Street/Rod Jones/Do not delete/CP Board

**Classification: OFFICIAL**

## Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

26.09.2016)	
Lynda Stone	Professional Advisor to the Fostering Panel
Kath Sherwin	Chair of Fostering Panel
Fostering Social Workers	16 full time equivalent posts
Jessica Walker	Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer

The Service Director gives strategic leadership to the Specialist Services Department. **This person makes sure that all the other people who work in the fostering service knows what the law says; what they should do and how this fits into the other parts of the social services teams in Derby City Council.**

The Head of Service co-ordinates the activities of the fostering and adoption service and promotes partnership working across the CYPD and partner agencies. The Head of Service provides operational management, quality assurance, performance and budget management and co-ordinates the work of the three fostering teams. In addition to supervising team managers she reports on to senior managers on service activity. The Head of Service is also the Agency Decision Maker for the purpose of registering and de-registering foster carers. **This person makes the decision on who should be and who should not be a foster carer.**

Team managers are responsible for day to day management of social workers recruiting, approving and supervising foster carers, matching of children to available carers, dealing with complaints and representations and producing activity reports and statistical returns. **These people work with the staff in the fostering social work team, and help the social workers to understand what their job is all about.**

Of the three team managers, one manages the fostering duty system, receiving and responding to referrals for placements. One takes responsibility for support to foster carers, post-approval training and for the provision of a short break service to disabled children. The third leads on recruitment and assessment of foster carers including "Friends and Family carers" and pre-approval training. All the team managers provide regular supervision to their respective team of social workers and liaise with children in care and early intervention teams, the disabled children's team, the leaving care team, the therapeutic unit, training and marketing teams and partner agencies.

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5. RECRUITMENT, APPROVAL, REVIEW, TRAINING AND SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS

**how we get more foster carers, what they have to do to become a foster carer and how we help them to look after you.**

**Recruitment: how we make sure we have enough foster carers**

Recruitment activity is co-ordinated by the recruitment team manager working with the Marketing Officer in the Communications and Marketing Team. We recruit through advertising and articles in the local press, radio and television, leaflets, posters, publicity events, the internet and word of mouth. All relevant information about becoming a foster carer can be found on the Council website. A link to the fostering pages on the Council website can be found here: <http://www.derby.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/fostering/>

**We have a team of social workers who find new foster carers. Becoming a foster carer is a big decision and we have to make sure that they understand what the job of a foster carer is, and that they know how hard it can be for you meeting them for the first time and getting to know them.**

We welcome inquiries from everyone who is interested in fostering and we prioritise those who appear most able to meet the needs of the children who require foster care. When an inquiry is received from a person interested in fostering, a Registration of Interest form is completed and basic details obtained which is passed to the fostering team from the fostering recruitment officer. The team also operates the fostering enquiry duty system where anyone contacting the council can speak to a social worker from the team

Once an enquiry has been received by the service a dedicated recruitment social worker does initial checks. If these are satisfactory information about the fostering task in the form of an information booklet, and details of fostering allowances are sent to the inquirer within five working days.

An initial home visit is arranged with all those who express interest in finding out more about fostering through the completion and return of the fostering inquiry form or directly by telephone.

If there are reasons for not inviting an application at the end of Stage1 the manager will write to the inquirer setting out the decision not to proceed and the reasons.

**The fostering team work hard to make sure that anyone interested in becoming a foster carer is given the right information about this at all stages of the process of them becoming a foster carer for Derby City Council.**

**Assessment : things we do to find out if they can be a foster carer.**

Prospective foster carers complete an application form, and consent forms to enable statutory and personal references, including DBS checks, to be obtained on the applicants and any member of their household aged 16 years or over. They are informed about the

## Classification: OFFICIAL

### Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

assessment and approval process and the requirement to attend a preparation and training course. **It is very important to us that you are kept safe in foster care. Lots of checks are done on foster carers, including police checks.**

An assessment agreement form is then completed with the carers. Assessments are usually completed within six months of the date the application is accepted. Reasons for any delay are recorded.

**People who want to be foster carers are clear about what Derby City Council expects of them.**

Applicants are assessed using the CoramBAAF Prospective Foster Care Report. This is stage 2 of the assessment process. During the assessment, prospective carers are encouraged to compile a family book, containing information about themselves and their family. This provides information to the panel and to any children who might be placed with the carers.

**People who want to be foster carers are asked lots of questions, which are written down by social workers who have experience of working with foster carers and children in care. The sort of questions we ask them help them to think carefully about what you will need from them, how much experience they have of looking after children, and what sort of support they will get from their families and friends.**

Applications from relatives or friends, known as 'Friends and Family' carers, to become foster carers are carried out following a satisfactory viability assessment completed by the child's social worker. The assessment is the same as for all foster carers but the established relationship with the child, the fact that they are being assessed to consider a specific child, and their ongoing support needs are taken into account. **Some children in foster care are looked after by a family friend or a relative. These foster carers are called friends and family foster carers. These carers are still asked the same questions as foster carers who are not related to you, as well as how you being looked after by them will work for everyone in your family, especially you.**

All applicants are required to attend pre-approval preparation and training groups. Training covers the responsibilities of becoming a foster carer, the impact on the carers' own family and the implications of working in partnership with professionals and birth families.

**Everyone who wants to be a foster carer has to attend meetings before they become foster carers. These meetings are a bit like going to school and learning/talking about things that help them become a good foster carer.**

Completed assessments are shared with the applicants, excluding references, and applicants are invited to make their own comments on the report. Referees are advised that any reference on an applicant may be disclosed to the applicant under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

**We also ask people who want to become foster carers to let us have details of people who we can talk to about them. This may be their boss at work; friends; their doctor; and family members who know them well.**

## Classification: OFFICIAL

R Jones: 14/4/15

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## **Approval how we decide who can and cannot be a foster carer:**

The completed assessment report is presented to the fostering panel and the fostering social worker and the applicants attend the panel for discussion. The Fostering Panel is chaired by an independent social worker, experienced in relation to foster care. The city council also employs a panel advisor who offers advice in regard to fostering regulations and procedures. Foster carers are fully involved in the decision as to the type of fostering they are approved for, and some carers are approved for more than one type of fostering. There is an induction process for all panel members prior to them taking up their role. All panel members have an annual appraisal. These are completed by the panel chair and the panel advisor, who in turn are appraised by the Head of Service.

**All reports on people who want to be foster carers are read by a group of people called the 'Fostering Panel'. These are people with a lot of experience in working with foster carers and children in care. They look at the report very carefully and meet the people who want to be foster carers and the social worker who has written the report.**

The panel makes a recommendation regarding approval, which is sent to the agency decision maker for the final decision. Panel members' views regarding approval are individually minuted in order to record any dissent from the decision to approve or reject the application. Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision regarding approval. **The fostering panel let the person in charge of the fostering department in Derby City Council know what they think about the people who want to become foster carers. This person then writes to them to let them know the decision.**

Where approval is not given, the applicants are informed in writing. They are informed as to their right to make any representations on the matter to the panel within 28 days. They are also informed about their right to appeal to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism: for more information: [www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk](http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk)

When the applicants appear to be unsuitable before the assessment is completed they may be asked to withdraw their application. If they choose not to do so the assessment will be completed.

## **Review: how we check that foster carers can still look after you well**

All approved foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker and must be reviewed at least once a year. The supervising social worker completes the annual review report which covers the issues required by regulations and minimum standards. The report is scrutinised by the team manager. The Fostering Panel considers carers' first annual review after approval. Thereafter the panel also considers any annual review following inquiries into any issues of concern about the carers, such as section 47 inquiries.

**Foster carers have a report written about them every year. You will be able to say what you think about your foster carers, your social worker will talk to you about this. This report looks at things that have gone well and anything that has happened that the fostering team might be worried about.**

## Classification: OFFICIAL

### Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

The contents of the report are shared with the foster carer before panel. Carers are invited to attend panel and also to contribute their own written comments on their experience of fostering, and on the service they have received from the local authority. Reports on foster carers are requested from social workers of children in placement, and any comments from children or their parents regarding the foster placement are included in the review report. Comments from children of foster carers also included.

In addition to annual reviews any serious concerns raised about the carers, proposed changes of approval criteria, any exemptions or placements outside the normal fostering limit, and any significant changes in the household are reported to the fostering panel.

### **Training and Support: how we help foster carers learn the things that help them to look after you**

Pre-approval foster care training (known as Skills to Foster training) is an essential part of the assessment and preparation process. Applicants are advised that their contribution and response to training will be monitored and that it forms part of the assessment process.

Training complies with National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Regulations 2011. All approved Foster Carers are required to complete the Training and Development Standards for Foster Care within twelve months of approval. Connected person and short break carers have an eighteen month timescale in which to complete these standards. Foster carers have access to relevant training provided by the fostering service and are expected to complete seven mandatory training topics within the first 12 months of approval. Post approval training is delivered by the Children and Young People's Department's Workforce Learning and Development Section specialist on line training courses and conferences are purchased by the service.

**Derby City Council provides foster carers with training; there is some training that all foster carers have to do. This includes how to look after you in a safe way; what to write down about you; and first aid. Other training that foster carers can attend includes why children sometimes feel unhappy and angry; and how to make sure that what you think and want is understood by your social worker.**

Foster carers are encouraged to give feedback on training and to highlight any areas of training that they would find useful for inclusion in the annual training booklet. More advanced training qualifications for foster care are available and specific seminars and workshops are provided on topics such as attachment, unconscious processes and dissociation.

Foster carers are invited to informal seminar groups, which are held on a half-termly basis. Support groups have topics for discussion and speakers as appropriate, and as identified by fostering social workers or carers. They are also invited to become involved in the Foster Carer Association. The city council also supports formal support groups for foster carers; these are jointly run by foster carers and social workers from the fostering service.

## Classification: OFFICIAL

R Jones: 14/4/15

S/Perth Street/Rod Jones/Do not delete/CP Board

## **6. FOSTERING SERVICES PROVIDED**

### **1. Time Limited Placements**

Derby City Fostering Service provides placements for children from 0-18 years, to meet the need for either emergency or planned admissions following referral from early intervention or children in care teams. Time-limited placements may last from a few days up to 2 years and may be used to work towards children's return home or to complete care proceedings and put in place plans for permanence.

**These are foster placements that may only last a short period of time, or where the Court/Derby City Council is still deciding where looked after children should live.**

### **2. Long-Term Placements**

We aim to achieve permanence for all children in Local Authority care who cannot be rehabilitated home or to a member of their extended family. A permanency plan needs to be in place by the child's second looked after child review. Where adoption, special guardianship or a child arrangement order is determined not to be a viable option, long-term fostering may be the permanency plan of choice. The fostering team recruits specifically for children needing long-term foster care. This includes home-finding for children in time-limited foster placements or in residential care. The fostering team also considers requests from existing foster carers who wish to change their approval status to become long-term foster carers, special guardians or adopters to children in their care. In these circumstances it is expected that the child will have been in placement for a minimum of one year before such a request will be considered. The city council use a permanency planning matrix to ensure that a thorough assessment is completed to assist in the long term matching of children to available long term foster carers.

**Social workers will talk to you about staying in one placement for a long period of time so that you can make friends and go to school in the same place. Some young people who have reached 18 still need support from foster carers, this is called the 'Staying Put Scheme'. This is where you, your social worker and your foster carer all agree that remaining at your foster home after you are 18 is the best thing for you.**

### **3. Respite Placements**

Respite foster carers are approved foster carers who choose to offer placements on a very time-limited basis only. This may be through choice, or because of limitations in their availability. Most respite carers have full or part-time jobs.

Respite carers offer placements to parents or carers of children living in the community where their assessed needs indicate a benefit from short breaks away from the family. This may be to relieve family stress, or to do some direct work with the child/young person, where this is part of an agreed plan.

**These are foster placements where children stay for short periods of time when their foster carer cannot look after them.**

Respite carers also offer short breaks to children cared for by other foster carers.

#### **4. Delegated Authority**

Authority for day to day decision making about a looked after child is delegated to the child's carer, unless there is a valid reason not to do so. The child's placement plan records who has the authority to take particular decisions about a child. This covers periods of respite and takes into account the child's views and wishes.

Delegated authority carers provide planned respite care to named foster carers who are known to them. They are usually relatives or friends of the foster family and nominated by the main carer, exercising delegated authority, so they usually know the children they look after and have developed a relationship with them. Delegated authority reduces the need for children to be placed with people they do not know in order to achieve respite for the main carer. They are not required to be assessed and approved as foster carers and can receive an allowance for the time they look after the child. Those who do wish to become approved foster carers are assessed and approved in the usual way and subject to the same requirements and standards as all carers.

**This means that foster carers can talk to you about decisions which you can make together. This could include you staying with a family friend for a short period, having your hair cut, or going on a school trip.**

#### **5. Fee Paid Placements**

Some young people have additional needs, such as emotional and behavioural problems, or needs arising from a disability, which result in them needing more than average time, effort and skill from their foster carer to manage the challenges they present. A foster carer with the relevant skills and who cares for a child or young person who meets the criteria, may be approved to be part of the service's fee paid scheme.

Fees can be paid at one of four levels: the level of fee to be applied to an individual placement will be decided by a panel of fostering managers chaired by the lead service manager. Reports from the fostering social worker, foster carer and/or child's social worker will be prepared according to agreed guidelines and criteria applicable to the scheme. The carer will be required to sign a contract as to the services they will provide to the young person. Where Fee paid status is confirmed, the relevant fee is paid to the foster carer in addition to fostering allowances.

**Some foster carers look after children who need extra help; support and time.**

#### **Short Break Carers**

Under Section 17 (6) Children Act 1989, short break care may be offered to children living with their family, who are not accommodated and the child does not become looked after.

Children with a disability are defined as children in need under section 17(10) of the Children Act 1989. Local authorities have an obligation to assess the needs of disabled children and offer relevant services to maintain them within their families and give them the opportunity to access services relevant to their social, emotional, cultural, physical and



## Classification: OFFICIAL

### Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

developmental needs. Derby City provides short break care to meet this requirement. Short break care does not include care provided to a child subject to a care order.

Short break carers are approved foster carers. In addition, they receive general and specific information and training regarding their role as a short break carer in one-to-one sessions and workshops. They are provided with specific information about the disability of the child they are linked to. Opportunities to gain experience through visits to other services for disabled children department are offered where appropriate. Guidance from relevant health professionals is offered in relation to specific health needs of the child e.g. specialist nurses and occupational therapists.

Short break carers are matched to a specific child or children and planning meetings are held with the parents to make all the arrangements for the nature of the short break e.g. whether day care or overnight, and to share information about the child's needs.

Short break care may be offered for up to 75 days per year, but the normal maximum does not exceed 48 days. Typically the scheme offers one weekend a month, day care and additional sessions during the long summer holiday.

**These are carers who look after children with disabilities who benefit from time out of the family home.**

### Additional Support Services

- The Fostering service provides a dedicated telephone line for carers out of office hours. This is continuously staffed by qualified fostering social workers, on a rota basis. It provides an advice and consultation service.
- Carers can access the Children and Young People's departments out of hours emergency service (Careline) where necessary, for support and advice, for instance when a child goes missing. New guidance has been issued to all Foster Carers regarding the procedure to follow and forms to complete when a child goes missing from their care.
- The Children and Young People's department funds dedicated time from a qualified clinical psychologist, to offer advice and support to foster carers and their foster children. The psychologist also offers information and training sessions to foster carers in relation to identified need.
- The Leopold Street Therapeutic Unit offers counselling/direct work to children and young people with needs arising from abuse or attachment difficulties, and advice and support to foster carers and adoptive parents. This service is being developed in collaboration with Health and will form the new Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service from the 1.10.2016.
- The Education of Looked After Children team supports carers in matters relating to their child's attendance and support in school.
- Carers can request financial assistance to buy a larger vehicle, or an extension of their home, to help them care for a number of foster children.

## Classification: OFFICIAL

R Jones: 14/4/15

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## **Classification: OFFICIAL**

### Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

- A designated nurse for looked after children provides advice and support to foster carers, to enhance their ability to promote the health of the foster children they care for. All looked after children have a 6 monthly health assessment.
- Any foster carers who are employees of Derby City Council are entitled to additional leave to enable them to attend fostering related meetings etc.

**Derby City Council tries hard to offer lots of support to foster carers and children/young people in foster care.**

## **7. STAFFING OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE**

The fostering service is led by the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption.

In addition there are three team managers who have relevant social work and management qualifications and a staff team of 16 FTE social workers in three fostering teams which cover recruitment, assessment, training/development, supervision and support.

**If you are living in foster carer you will meet your foster carers social worker, they are called 'supervising social workers'.**

## **8. NUMBERS OF FOSTER CARERS**

Derby City seeks to recruit carers to meet the placement requirements for its population of looked after children. At the end of September 2015 Derby City had:

- 105 fostering households offering time-limited or long-term and respite placements;
- 17 approved to offer care as a 'relative or friend';
- 4 approved to provide short break care to disabled children.

**Derby City Council is always looking to get more people interested in becoming foster carers so that we can make sure that children who need to live away from home have somewhere to live in or near Derby, so that you can carry on going to your school and keep the friends you already have.**

## **9. NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER PLACEMENT**

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**Classification: OFFICIAL**

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

There are currently 128 children and young people placed in foster homes belonging to Derby City and supervised and supported by Derby City Fostering Service

## **10. NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOME**

Between 1<sup>ST</sup> April 2015 and 31st March 2016 there were no appeals to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism about a decision of Derby Fostering Service.

In the same period there were seven allegations requiring investigation under child protection procedures received by the service. Four of these were made by foster children and three by other professionals. Five of these were resolved and two required a report to the foster panel none of which resulted in a foster carer being referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service

There was 1 other complaint about the fostering service which followed the council's complaint procedures. The complaint was not upheld.

**Sometimes children/young people; parents; foster carers and other people like teachers or doctors feel that we have not done our job properly. When this happens Derby City Council will always try to learn from what might have gone wrong and try to make sure it doesn't happen again.**

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