

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2019

ANNUAL REPORT – FOSTERING SERVICE

Report from: Ian Sutherland, Director of People - Children and Adults Services

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Summary

The Annual Report for the Fostering Service sets out the work completed over the last year, how in-house fostering services have met the needs of Medway's looked after children and establishes the work which should be undertaken in the coming year.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Fostering Regulations 25.7 states that the executive side of the Local Authority or the independent foster service's provider/trustees, board members or management committee members receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service.
- 1.2 They should also satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with conditions of registration and that they monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children.
- 1.3 This report is consistent with national policy, legislation and guidance. It is linked to key local planning documents, in particular the Medway Council Looked After Children Strategy and the Council Plan priority that 'Children and Young People have the best start in life in Medway Council'.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report gathers performance data on the service, its development in the preceding year and sets goals and targets for the coming year.
- 2.2 The report will consider recruitment activity, direction and advertising for the coming year and what other work is being undertaken to increase the number of Medway Council foster carers.

3. Advice and analysis

3.1 This report should be read as a standalone document. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to scrutinise the annual report, attached at Appendix 1 and forward any comment to the Cabinet. The Cabinet will consider the report at its meeting on 5 February 2019

3.2 The report covers the service and its development in 2017/18, however listed below are key highlights:

- A new fostering website has been introduced, with associated branding and materials and recruitment remains a top priority;
- Training and development has been a key focus, with consultation with carers and significant development of the existing programme;
- As a result of the payment review, a new payment structure has been fully implemented to ensure parity between carers;
- Support services have increased to carers, with the consolidation of the work of the family support worker and fostering mentors; and
- The Service continues to deliver projects alongside key partners such as CAMHS, NSPCC and the University of Oxford and the Service continues to grow links with other partner agencies.

4. Risk Management

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk Rating |
|--|---|---|--------------------|
| Insufficient in-house fostering placements available | There is a risk that there is insufficient accommodation to ensure that placements are right for the child and that this could lead to utilising more expensive external foster placements. | There is a recruitment strategy in place to recruit more Medway foster carers. Development of a recruitment service to ensure assessments are timely and applicants are well supported | C2 |
| Insufficient resources available to support placements | There is a risk that if not enough support and resources are available to children and carers, placements may break down leading to more moves for children and young people | Placement stability meetings are now called as soon as any issues arise Family support worker and fostering mentors are in place to support vulnerable placements | C2 |

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The annual report attached at Appendix 1 details consultation work undertaken with foster carers throughout the year in developing and improving the Fostering Service.
- 5.2 The Fostering Mentors are developing the services consultation framework with children and young people, and establishing relationships with the Children in Care Council.

6. Implications for Looked After Children

- 6.1 This report considers all Medway Council foster carers, and the support and care they provide to Looked After Children.
- 6.2 The development and growth of the service is designed to better meet the needs of this population now and in the coming year.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Financial agreement was sought previously through the Medway Fostering Service Transformation Programme. The report describes the progress of this work but does not seek any further financial support.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications of this report being presented to Cabinet.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to consider the Fostering Service Annual Report 2017-18 as set out at Appendix 1 of the report and forward any comments to the Cabinet for consideration

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Medway Council Fostering Service Annual Report 2017 – 18.

Background papers

This report takes into consideration and cites Medway Fostering Service Transformation Programme 2017 – 2021