

Cabinet

25 August 2026

Annual Fostering Report 2025–2026 – Addendum Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Report from: Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

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1. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.1. The report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and scrutiny Committee on 12 August 2026, the draft minutes of the discussion are set out below.

1.2. The Committee considered the report which detailed activities of the fostering service during 2025-2026. The report also highlighted the aims and objectives of the service for the 2026/2027 financial year.

1.3. Members raised several comments and questions which included:

1.3.1. The service was praised for its continued work and the quality and dedication of foster carers.

1.3.2. **Barriers to recruitment** - it was asked what the greatest barrier to increase of conversion rate of enquiries to registered foster carers were. The Committee was informed that Medway compared quite well nationally in recruitment of carers, but continued efforts were needed to attract more carers. Work was being undertaken to streamline the process and reduce the time taken for assessments whilst maintaining the robustness of the assessment process to ensure the right people were being supported through the process.

1.3.3. **Recruitment strategies**- in response to a question on what was being done differently to recruit and retain foster carers, the officer said that they continued to actively listen and be accessible to foster carers. There were improvements to the level of support provided for those caring for children with complex needs. There were plans to extend the 'Mocking Bird' programme and increased peer support for foster carers. There was work to be undertaken on establishing a select group of carers to co-produce support activities.

1.3.4. **Kinship** - it was asked how the scheme was progressing and what support was being provided to grandparents, those that live in Medway and outside of Medway and young people, in particular, being mindful to ensure that extra pressures were not created of circumstances where young people go from being cared for to being carers themselves. The Officer said that the Kinship pilot had provided a valuable learning experience for everyone involved. The potential and opportunities for growth were extensive. There had been many benefits to children, young people and families, as well as positive effect on social care practice. Families were being consulted and worked with in partnership to identify suitable packages that were tailored to their individual needs, with wider support packages and financial support provided as needed.

1.3.5. **Support for Kinship carers** – in response to a question on whether Kinship care was more sustainable and if the same level of support was provided to carers, the Committee was informed that all carers received the same level of supervision and access to support. Kinship was a welcomed alternative to traditional foster carers due to the benefit for young people in maintaining their culture, wellbeing and identity.

1.3.6. **Placement costs** – It was noted that there were 10 fewer current active in-house foster placements and at a higher average cost than budgeted. It was asked at what point does stabilising capacity becomes overly optimistic and what is the financial cost to Medway of those 10 placements once the cost of independent placements were included. The Committee was informed that the average cost of placements was made up of the average cost of all fostering placements as the amount paid to providers varied dependant on age of the child with older children costing more. On average, every child placed with an external independent fostering agency costs £600 -£800 per week per child more than an internal agency foster carer. However, this increase amounted to 0.8% overspend on the fostering budget.

1.4. **Decision:**

The Committee noted the Annual Fostering Report 2025–2026 and the Annual Private Fostering Report for 2025–2026