



REPORT OF THE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD (2) TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON FOSTERING



March 2015

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Forward by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group – Councillor Jayne Innes	2
1 Introduction	3
2 Local Context and Background.....	3
3 Feedback from Foster Carers.....	4
4 Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	4
5 Improving the “Offer” to Foster Carers – Skills Fee Per Child	6
6 Council Tax rebate/reduction.....	7
7 Non-financial support offer including professional development	7
8 Foster Friendly Employer Policy	7
9 Recommendations.....	8
Appendix A Fostering Fees Briefing Note – SB2 12 February 2015	10
Appendix B Members of the Task and Finish Group.....	16
Appendix C Scoping Document.....	17

Forward by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group – Councillor Jayne Innes

When the Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Board were considering their work programme for the year, we were very keen to look in more detail at fostering services and what was being done to improve the offer to our own foster carers.

Foster carers are an important asset to our city and are vital in ensuring the well-being of some of our most vulnerable children and young people. As Corporate Parents, elected members have a duty to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children, and by having good in-house fostering services we can support this.

My thanks go to the Council officers who have contributed to this work and to the elected members on the task and finish group. A word of special thanks must be made to the foster carers, who gave up their time to come and share their experiences which were a valuable insight into the day to day life of being a Council foster carer.

Councillor Jayne Innes

Chair – Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Board



1 Introduction

- 1.1 Following a decision at their meeting on 22 October 2014 the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board agreed to establish a task and finish group to look in more detail at the "offer" made to foster carers to support the on-going recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers.
- 1.2 It was recognised by the Board that not only was the recruitment of more in-house foster carers important, but to improve the "offer" to existing foster carers, both financial and support to retain those foster carers once recruited.

2 Local Context and Background

- 2.1 At the end of September 2014 there were 617 looked after children (LAC).
 - 428 were in foster care – representing 69% - (excludes 35 children with Connected Persons)
 - 150 of these children were placed with an in-house foster carer. This represents 24% of the LAC population.
 - As of 20/10/14 there were 150 fostering households. They had a total 194 placements available. Some placements were approved for a 2nd place but only if it is a sibling group. There was an additional 62 2nd place sibling group placements.
 - When calculating vacancies these extra places should not be counted as they can only be filled in certain circumstances. 18 of our children in placement are in these 2nd place sibling group placements, so for the purpose of calculating a vacancy rate these are excluded from the 150 children in placement.
 - There are therefore 62 placement vacancies. These include carers who are on hold; 2nd (non-sibling) placements that cannot be used as a result of the needs of the child in placement; and staying put children (i.e. those over the age of 18).
- 2.2 A detailed benchmarking exercise with a number of Local Authorities (LAs) to look at LAC placements has been undertaken. The table below details the analysis of this information as at March 2014.

Local Authority [^]	LAC per 10,000 (March 14)	% of LAC Fostering Placements	% of LAC Internal Fostering (includes connected persons)	% of LAC External Fostering
Coventry	87	70.8%	30.5%	40.3%
Nottingham	92	71.4%	34.1%	37.2%
Peterborough*	80	86.2%	52.2%	34.0%
Staffordshire	56	74.9%	48.6%	26.3%
Nottinghamshire	51	75.9%	46.1%	29.8%
Derby*	77	74.2%	40.4%	33.7%
Stoke	98	55.8%	35.2%	20.6%
Leicestershire	34	83.3%	60.7%	23.0%
Warwickshire+	62	71.2%	53.3%	17.8%

[^] Information has been provided by each Local Authority, so we are unable to verify the accuracy

* Statistical neighbours with Coventry

+ Warwickshire information is as @ January 2014

- 2.3 This comparison shows that Coventry has low provision of internal foster care and high provision of external foster care compared to other LA's – particularly statistical neighbours. In addition, it demonstrates that Coventry has a higher usage of external residential placements.

- 2.4 For the financial year 2013/14 it was calculated that internal foster placements had a unit cost of £19,000 compared to an external placement cost of £40,000.
- 2.5 Therefore Coventry's reliance on external placements (40.3% of LAC in external placements) puts the authority under financial pressure, not only to reduce the total number of looked after children, but also the number of those placed externally.

3 Feedback from Foster Carers

- 3.1 A Foster Carers survey was undertaken during 2014. A total of 57 responses were received from foster carers. This represents 39% of the 147 foster carers registered at that point.
- 3.2 The key areas explored were whether they felt that they would consider extending their provision and what aspect of the support offered was important to them. They were also asked whether they wished to become more involved with the service improvement plans
- 3.3 When asked whether Foster Carers would "consider extending their approval category to increase the number and age range of the children they care for": 21 foster carer households (37%) of those surveyed said yes they would, 15 said they would not (26%) and 15 responded 'not now' (26%). In order to enable carers to extend their category of approval a range of practical support would be required such as extending their homes or bigger car or support in developing their skills or an improved financial package. There is a review of each of the identified foster carer households underway to maximise the potential of this growth in placements.
- 3.4 The survey also asked foster carers to consider what the key elements of support they considered to be important. The responses outlined the following key areas:
 - An improved training offer.
 - Better communication and support from the child's social worker.
 - More robust supervision from the supervising social worker and foster home reviews.
 - Resolution of the finance issues
 - Mileage
 - Discretionary payments
 - Reducing delays in payments
 - Allowance in line with fostering network rates
 - Fostering fee per child
- 3.5 The recommendation of the task and finish group should go some way to addressing these areas.

4 Marketing and Recruitment Strategy

- 4.1 Members of the task and finish group received information about the current recruitment campaign for foster carers.
- 4.2 Members heard that everyone has experienced a childhood and most people are able to think about particular positive recollections of 'what childhood should mean'. These thoughts are often simple moments which are more about empathy and linked to our senses and invoke a strong emotional reaction.
- 4.3 From initial research often these memories have common themes, such as den building, the seaside, gran's house, riding bikes and feeling free. For people for whom childhood was challenging they may also have a strong reaction to think

about what childhood should be about and how they could make a difference for a child to have positive experiences.

- 4.4 The theme appeals to both inward and outward (altruistic) motivations as it simply demonstrates the fun children should have, and how potential carers can help achieve positive experiences for children. Conversations with foster carers show this is a key reason for fostering, and continuing to foster. It also shows what fun you can have 'reliving' these moments with children, that childhood is fun!
- 4.5 The campaign also overcomes potential barriers to fostering as it demonstrates that childhood, and providing for children, is fundamentally something we can all do, and we all know what is like to be a child - and it is simple things that actually make a difference and stay in our memories. Seasonal variations of themes (seaside, snowballs etc.) allow images and messages which are more likely to engage people at different points of the year.

Image 1 – promotional postcards



- 4.6 There is also a Facebook campaign which Members were encouraged to sign up to, as well as information distributed through different media outlets.
- 4.7 Detailed Mosaic analysis has been used to inform direct marketing to those households that fit the profile of the types of families that are more likely to foster with the local authority.
- 4.8 Councillor Taylor also spoke to the task and finish group about his role as Fostering and Adoption Champion, particularly in involving employers to support their employees and promoting fostering and adoption through the work place. Severn Trent has joined with the Council in a bid to get more people to consider fostering within the city.



Image 2 – Cllr Ruane, Rachel Brown, Cllr Lucas and Rob Salmon from Severn Trent

5 Improving the “Offer” to Foster Carers – Skills Fee Per Child

- 5.1 Members received a report containing details of a revised fee structure for Foster Carers, based on a skills fee per child.
- 5.2 Coventry currently pays a fee per household and this is out of line with other Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies whose fee structure is based on the number of children. The purpose of the proposed change is to make fostering with Coventry a more attractive prospect and comparable to independent agencies and neighbouring authorities.
- 5.3 The additional cost of achieving this is £647,000, which is accounted for in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.4 Foster Carers were consulted on the proposed changes and the feedback was positive. The single fee per child has been universally applauded by foster carers as a really positive move forward, bringing Coventry more in line with other agencies and authorities. A number of foster carers commented about how this would encourage them or other carers to consider additional placements.
- 5.5 Members at the Task and Finish group were concerned about the tax implications of the proposed changes and requested that information was clear for any consultation events about the proposed changes. The end of year statement for fostering income to each foster carer should be clear as to what amounts received are taxable and therefore shown on the foster carers annual tax return.
- 5.6 The Members of the task and finish group supported the proposed changes in fees following consideration of feedback from foster carers which was considered by the Cabinet Member at his meeting on 3 March 2015. The briefing note that went to the Education and Children’s Service Scrutiny Board on 12 February 2015 can be found at Appendix A
- 5.7 There was also discussion by the group about the change in income associated with staying put places, as foster carers officially become young people’s landlords,

if young people stay on beyond their 18th birthday, and can collect housing benefit as rent. There are several implications for foster carers of this, mainly the reduction in income between the fees and what can be claimed for with staying put places.

6 Council Tax rebate/reduction

6.1 Members considered the approach that had been taken in Camden where foster carers receive a Council Tax rebate. Camden had reported an increase in enquiries about fostering since the rebate was introduced, however Members were not confident that this could be attributed solely to the rebate rather than any other aspect of a recruitment campaign. Also there was no evidence to suggest that enquiries translated into increased recruitment. Considering the costs of a Council Tax rebate it was not recommended that this was a policy that the Council consider at this moment in time.

7 Non-financial support offer including professional development

- 7.1 Members heard that the offer to support Foster Carers would be based upon the “team around the child” model. It would incorporate the Foster Carers voice and go hand in hand with the fee per child offer (see section 5 above). There will be a formal process for consultation on the document with foster carers through supervising social workers.
- 7.2 The “team around the child” model recognises the professional status of the foster carer in the support for the child or young person, alongside the children’s social worker and the supervising social worker.
- 7.3 This model needs to be replicated at all levels of the organisation including senior management. There will also be a roadshow which will take the new model of working out to different services such as the Looked After Children’s Education Service.
- 7.4 The Fostering Operational Group will now also have representation from both foster carers and looked after children through the Voices of Care. This also replicates that “team around the child” model
- 7.5 The Foster Care Support Offer document is currently in the final stages of being developed, but it covers the following areas:
- i) Training and Development
 - ii) Therapeutic Support
 - iii) Delegation of Authority
 - iv) Support from Health and Education partners
- 7.6 Members heard that clarification on delegation of authority would be most welcomed by foster carers, as this can often be an area that can affect positive relationships between carers, children and social workers.
- 7.7 Members also heard that there is a requirement for a formal delegations policy statement which has to be signed up to by the Lead Member for Children’s Services and the Director.
- 7.8 Members requested further input into this policy statement.

8 Foster Friendly Employer Policy

8.1 Members of the group heard information about the scheme in Cumbria to be a Foster Friendly Employer.

8.2 Fostering Friendly Employers (FFE) is a project which local authorities can lead on involving businesses and media partners in raising awareness for foster carers in their area. It is an opportunity for employers (starting in-house) to offer additional benefits to their employees if they are approved as foster carers within a geographical boundary.

8.3 Fostering Friendly Employers may provide an opportunity for employees to get involved in fostering as it increases leave and absence opportunities so that employees may be able to work alongside fostering more easily. Cumbria's policy reads:

“Up to 5 days (pro-rata for part-time staff) additional paid leave of absence per year can be granted to any member of staff undertaking training related to their role as a foster carer (or applicant foster carer). It is a non-contractual benefit that can be awarded or withdrawn at any time, and is awarded according to the circumstances of each case.”

8.4 The Cumbria case study demonstrated that the main advantages of Fostering Friendly Employers project were:

- High levels of media (for Cumbria this was the local newspaper group) coverage of fostering (circa £60,000 value at zero cost)
- A good way to engage with businesses regarding fostering and have access to their internal communications
- Raise awareness and 'myth bust' regarding fostering and employment
- Companies enjoyed increased media presence, reputation enhancement and use of FFE 'logo' on letters etc.

8.5 Members considered that this was something that the Council should pursue; particularly encouraging larger employers in the city such as Jaguar Land Rover, the Universities and Severn Trent, initially. Members also felt that this should be additional to, rather than run alongside any other family-friendly policies.

9 Recommendations

9.1 The task and finish group recommend to the Cabinet Member Children and Young People:

- 1) That the proposed fee structure for a skills fee per child is implemented following consideration of feedback from foster carers. *(This has already been agreed further to the Cabinet Member Children and Young People minute 27/14)*
- 2) Review the end of year statement and advice provided to foster carers for fostering income and tax implications, to ensure foster carers can easily extract the relevant information for their annual tax returns.
- 3) That additional research and monitoring is done on:
 - a. the affect that any potential drop in income has on the number of staying put places offered to young people over 18,
 - b. the number of young people who would like to stay put and aren't able to as their carers don't offer staying put places,
 - c. the statutory requirements and associated funding implications of staying put places.
- 4) That a council tax rebate for Foster Carers in Coventry is not considered at this time

- 5) That the Council pursue becoming a Fostering Friendly Employer, ensuring that this is additional to any other family friendly policy the Council may have
 - 6) That crèche availability whilst training for Foster Carers should be investigated. Existing childcare provision should be the preferred option and 2 year old entitlement should also be considered.
 - 7) To support the Foster Care Support Offer focussed on a “team around the child” approach
 - 8) To strengthen the team around the child ethos and ensure everybody understands the value and responsibilities of each other’s roles.
 - 9) To explore opportunities to influence national social work training programmes to support this culture shift.
 - 10) That the “team around the child” approach is used to appraise social workers.
- 9.2 The task and finish group also recommend to the Education and Children’s Service Scrutiny Board that they consider the policy statement on delegations before it goes to the Cabinet Member, at their first meeting of the Municipal Year 2015/16



Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Education and Children's Service Scrutiny Board

Date: 12 February 2015

Subject: Interim Recommendations from the Fostering Task and Finish Group

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To feedback interim recommendations from the Fostering Task and Finish group in support of a proposed skills fee per child for Foster Carers.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
 - 1) Support the proposed changes in the skills fee and allowances. More specifically, moving from a skills fee per household to a skills fee per child, for Foster Carers, as recommended by the Task and Finish Group.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 At their meeting on 14th January 2015, the Fostering Task and Finish group received a report (Appendix 1) containing details and a revised fee structure for Foster Carers, based on a skills fee per child.
- 3.2 Coventry currently pays a fee per household and this is out of line with other Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies whose fee structure is based on the number of children. The purpose of the change is to make fostering with Coventry a more attractive prospect and comparable to independent agencies and neighbouring authorities.
- 3.3 The additional cost of achieving this is £647k, which is accounted for in the Medium term Financial Strategy.
- 3.4 Foster Carers have been consulted on the proposed changes and the feedback can be found at Appendix 2. The single fee per child has been universally applauded by foster carers as a really positive move forward, bringing Coventry more in line with other agencies and authorities. A number of foster carers commented about how this would encourage them or other carers to consider additional placements.
- 3.5 Members at the Task and Finish group requested officers to be mindful of the tax implications of the proposed changes and to ensure the information is clear for any consultation events.
- 3.6 The Members of the task and finish group supported the proposed changes in fees following consideration of feedback from foster carers.

Gennie Holmes

Scrutiny Co-ordinator gennie.holmes@coventry.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Report to Task and Finish Group - Revised Fee Structure

1) Background

In the last 3 years, the number of internal foster placements has reduced from 198 in 2011/12 to expected 153 in 2013/14. Over the same time, children placed in external foster placements have risen from 172 to 274. Savings that had been expected from the FSR undertaken in 2012 have not materialised.

The cost of external placements, at £39k per placement per year, is more than double the cost of internal placements at £18k. The current expected overspend at quarter three is £1.3m (despite additional corporate resources). The capacity of in house fostering to meet the placement needs of a wide range looked after children, is contributing significantly to this position.

There is a financial savings target of £400k for 2015-16, to be delivered by securing an additional 19.35 placements from 15 households

It is in this context the Task and Finish Group was set up to review all aspects of the in house fostering service. Alongside this, a Fostering Steering Group has been meeting monthly to track progress with promised improvements to the service and the delivery of increase numbers of fostering households.

Set out below are key proposals to ensure Coventry continues to be competitive in respect to our neighbouring authorities and a number of independent fostering agencies who target Coventry households.

2) Changes in fees 2015-16

Skills fee per child

Coventry currently pays a fee per household and this is out of line with other Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies whose fee structure is based on the number of children. The proposal is to move to a fee per child. The additional cost of achieving this is £647k, and this is accounted for in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Benchmarking data about the fees paid by other West Midland authorities is incomplete, open to interpretation, and it is difficult to explain how some of the schemes work.

Foster carers will be consulted during January 2015 about the proposal for moving to a fee per child. For households approved for one child there will be no change – however for those who take more than one child there will be a significant increase. This will mean Coventry will be in a strong position to meet the allowances paid by other providers whilst supporting carers who can take sibling groups

Increase in maintenance fee

All foster carers approved by Coventry City Council receive a 'maintenance allowance' for each of the children and/or young people in their care. This payment is made weekly and is intended to cover all costs associated with caring for a 'Looked After Child'.

Coventry is now in line with the rates recommended by the Fostering Network, as well as our close neighbours Solihull and Warwickshire. The recommended increase for 2015-16 is 1.8%, leading to an additional cost of £35k.

Realignment of 5 weeks additional payments

Coventry pays 5 additional weeks maintenance for holidays, birthdays and festivals. This is one week above the recommendation from the Fostering Network. The proposal, subject to further consultation with carers, is that the 5 week payment is maintained, but that 1 week is redefined as a clothing allowance.

Discretionary Payments

The current payment system provides for a number of discretionary payments to be made to foster carers to cover the exceptional costs of day to day care. These include initial clothing grants, school trips not covered by the pupil premium, furniture and range of enrichment activities. The plan is reduce the number of discretionary payments by confirming what the Local Authority will cover.

In 2013-14, costs for this type of spend through controcc (the fostering contract and payment system) were approximately £13k, however other payments are made by neighbourhood teams and these have been difficult to quantify since moving to Agresso due to changes in the coding of such payments. It is expected that such costs should be either stopped or controlled more effectively in future if the fee per child option is approved.

Children's Savings

There is an expectation that the carer will establish a savings account and encourage the child to save, however, there is no clear guidance about the amount expected. As each child who is looked after for more than 12 months has a Junior ISA opened by Central Government, the proposal is to ensure that once a child is looked after for this period a set fee per week is taken at source from the carers allowance and transferred to the Junior ISA that will be mature when the child turns 18. This will assist in meeting that range of costs facing care leavers.

Transport

The maintenance fee includes an element for transport costs, however in the past, carers have been able to claim additional transport costs for longer journeys and exceptional trips. This led to an inconsistent approach with some carers receiving full reimbursement and others none at all.

In November 2014, a new policy was introduced where carers may only claim for costs over and above 60 miles per week.

Costs for 2014/15 are estimated at £60k, and this is expected to fall to £40k in a full year from 2015/16 – a full year saving of £20k.

Table 1: Financial summary for 2015-16 (using controcc data at 05/01/15)

Summary of estimated expenditure on Internal Fostering Fees 2015-16	
Mainstream & Connected persons	
	£'000
Cost based on 2014-15 Rates	
Current placements at Quarter 3	3,201
Additional Placements & Carers recruited by end 2014-15	0
Total Forecast cost for 2015-16 based on 2014-145Rates	3,201
Estimated additional costs on propose increases	
Cost of 1.8% increase in maintenance allowances - existing placements	35
Cost of fee per child - existing placements	647
Cost of maintenance allowances - 19 new placements expected	211
Cost of fee per child - 19 new placements expected	228
Total Forecast Additional cost for 2015-16	1,121
Total forecast for 2015-16	4,322

Summary of additional costs:

- *The cost of the 1.8% increase in maintenance fee (£35k) may be covered though the inflation budget setting process, still in progress*
- The cost of the fee per child (£647k) is included in the MTFs (including the Connected Person cost of £25k)
- By the end of 2015-16, an additional 19 new internal foster placements are expected. The additional cost of £439k is expected to be offset by an equivalent reduction in external placements achieving a saving of £840k – overall saving of £401k

3) Summary

The financial changes proposed for fees (skills and maintenance) are assumed for 1st April 2015. Alongside this, we need to evidence the wider changes expected enabling an increase in internal foster placements. This work will also clearly define how we will reduce costs where possible, particularly if the financial package for carers increases through moving to a skills fee per child. A Cabinet Member report will be taken after consultations with carers, incorporating the areas outlined above. Service changes approved are expected to be implemented from 1st April 2015.

Eileen West – Finance

Liz Gosling – Family Placement Service

Appendix 2

Consultation – Interim Findings (Consultation closes 5th February 2015)

1) Overall Themes to date (30.1.15)

The Family Placement Service hosted 3 events for consultation with 28 foster carers. The three main items being consulted on were:

- i) Discretionary Payments
- ii) Compulsory Savings for Children
- iii) Fee Per Child Structure (including additional seasonal payments)
- iv) Further phone and paper based responses received before 5th February will complete consultation

i) Discretionary Payments

Foster carers agreed that discretionary payments are problematic and can cause delay, financial difficulties and social workers and managers may be seen to make decisions which are contradictory and confusing for carers. A system which gives a clear outline of what the department will (and won't) pick up was welcomed. A breakdown of what is expected to be paid from the child's allowance was also suggested in assisting the transparency and managing expectations.

It was also clear from conversations that carers claim or don't claim for different items and the thought was that clearer guidelines would increase confidence in our decision making and allow carers to make more informed choices with the children regarding leisure and hobbies or other potential expenditure.

Foster carers were asked about specific items and generally agreed with department suggestions although further support may be required in regard to outlining what is included in the allowance and who to escalate any concerns with schools allocation of pupil premium

ii) Compulsory savings for children

Coventry City Council is introducing compulsory savings for children who have been looked after for over 12 months. The options presented were a flat rate per child (suggested at £10 per week) or a % related to the child's allowance.

The carers had mixed views on this with most preferring the flat rate, but some preferring the % of allowance to therefore increase with the child's age. Some felt that £10 per week was too high and suggested £5 a week more reasonable.

This would be collected at source (from the carer's allowance) with an opportunity for additional amounts to be paid. This was agreed as a good way forward (to minimise administration for carers and to ensure that carers with any birth children in the family did not feel over-pressured to do the same for their children if this was problematic) Concerns were raised related to setting up an ISA, and eligibility for children with ISAs or Child Trust Fund Accounts already. The service will advise further on this.

iii) Fee Per Child Structure

Has been universally applauded by foster carers as a really positive move forward, bringing Coventry more in line with other agencies and authorities. A number of foster carers commented about how this would encourage them or other carers to consider additional placements.

Only concerns were regarding the tax implications for foster carers and the service has made it clear that although we cannot give tax advice we can speak to the fostering network or other suitable tax advisor and we will arrange sessions (potentially at the foster carers conference) before the end of the financial year to work through any issues and concerns.

iv) Festival/ Holiday and other Payments

It was suggested to foster carers that the 5 week payments for holiday, festivals and birthdays were kept, but one of the holiday weeks being changed to being a clothing allowance – this was generally accepted with some people preferring to keep the 3 weeks holiday allowance. Carers were also consulted on changing the payments to be divided by 52 and included in the weekly allowance payments. Foster carers could see the reasoning behind this (to reduce administration) but generally felt that it would be problematic, particularly for time-limited placements as children may move just before or after a payment had been made which would cause problems for carers and potentially animosity within the foster caring community.

Overall, with the exception of some long term carers, foster carers did not want to move to a payment over 52 weeks.

2) Next steps

Full report to be completed by 10th February with full analysis of consultation responses and subsequent proposed decisions

Rachel Brown
30.1.15

Appendix B Members of the Task and Finish Group

Elected Members

Cllr Jayne Innes (Chair)

Cllr Sucha Bains

Cllr Joe Clifford

Cllr Julia Lepoidevin

Cllr Mal Mutton

Cllr Ken Taylor (as Adoption and Fostering Champion)

Coventry Foster Carers Network

Neil Wilkinson

Pauline Sexton

Denise Winford

Council Officers

Carl Bainbridge -

Lynne Bassett -

Rachel Brown –

Liz Gosling –

Gennie Holmes – Scrutiny Co-ordinator

Sara Roach -

Jivan Sembi -

Rachael Sugars -

Appendix C Scoping Document

Title of Review topic	
Foster Carers Review	
Objectives	
What does the Board/Task and Finish Group hope to achieve by considering the topic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised/refreshed vision for the City Council's aspirations for accommodation for LAC • A revised and agreed offer to Council Foster Carers to improve the recruitment and retention rates, which will reduce the need for the Council to use independent agencies and as a consequence reduce costs to the Council. • Better uses of existing Foster placements; to reduce the vacancy rate and to ensure Foster Carers feel valued.
What will be the indicators of success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised and agreed "offer", including clear finance details, clear effective routes of communication and clear Foster Carer journey. This needs to clearly set out what the Local Authority expects from Foster Carers and what they can expect in return. • A more targeted marketing and communication strategy to attract and retain foster carers. • Reduction in the vacancy rate of current foster places. • Improved response rate to Foster Carers questionnaire • Improved satisfaction levels from Foster Carers to the service they receive.
When will the review be evaluated?	A Fostering Score card has been developed which will provide regular information on the various different parts of the foster care process/system. This will inform a report to SB2, 6 months after the initial report has been accepted by the Cabinet Member. (October 2015)
Scope	
What will be included in the scope of the review?	The current offer to Council Foster Carers compared to the current offer to Independent Foster Carers Vacancy rates with existing foster carers Foster carers journey
What will be excluded from the scope?	Other areas of the Fostering Service i.e. social work recruitment, details of recruitment campaigns for Foster Carers.
Methodology	
How will the review be carried out? e.g. surveys, site visits, select committees etc.	Evidence from Council officers, financial information, evidence from foster carers, evidence from foster agencies
Barriers and Risks	
What are the barriers and risks to the review?	Financial implications may restrict what recommendations are affordable
How can these be managed/overcome?	Ensuring an appropriate finance officer is involved with the task and finish group

Equality and Diversity	
Does the review have any potential implications for Equality and Diversity? (race, gender (including transgender), disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, poverty, looked after children)	<p>Foster Carers should reflect the profile of the city. Any “offer” should ensure that protected groups, particularly any already underrepresented groups are not excluded or disproportionately impacted.</p> <p>This review will directly affect LAC; the aim is for them to have more stable placements for the time they are in care, leading to more effective outcomes.</p>
Timescales and reporting procedure	
List any key dates/events which might impact on the timescales of the review	
Anticipated number of meetings	4/5
Scrutiny Board portfolio	Education and Children’s Services
Cabinet Member portfolio	Children and Young People
Anticipated reporting date to Scrutiny Board	26 th March 2015
Anticipated reporting route – Cabinet Member/Cabinet	Cabinet Member (CYP) meeting 7 th April 2015
Report of.....	Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Board
Comms involvement	Yes – Carl Bainbridge