

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held in the Civic Centre (Committee Room 2) on
Monday 9 October 2017 at 5.30pm**

Part I

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Information contained within this agenda can be made available in other languages and formats.

ELAINE WAUGH
Head of Law and Governance

Civic Centre
SUNDERLAND

29 September 2017

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 3 July 2017 in Committee Room 2,
Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.30pm**

Part I

Present:

Members of the Board

Councillor L Farthing (in the Chair)	Washington South Ward
Councillor R Davison	Redhill Ward
Councillor B Francis	Fulwell Ward
Councillor I Kay	Millfield Ward
Councillor L Lauchlan	Washington Central Ward
Councillor W Turton	Houghton Ward

Young People

Kirk Hirst
Billy Hardy

Also in Attendance

Councillor P Gibson	Silksworth Ward
Councillor M Beck	Fulwell Ward
Councillor D MacKnight	Castle Ward
Councillor B McClennan	Hendon Ward

All Supporting Officers

Alex Hopkins	Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive, Together for Children
Sharon Willis	Service Manager, Together for Children
Sheila Lough	Service Manager, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager
Loren Nergaard	Participation Support Worker
Trish Stoker	Virtual Headteacher
Maurice Davis	Foster Carer
Kay Dixon	Foster Carer
Anne Brock	Safeguarding Children Lead Nurse and Designated Nurse LAC
Rebecca Campbell	NTW CYPS Service Manager
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service Manager
Kim Roberts	IRO Team Manager

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atkinson, Marshall and Smith.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2017 be agreed as a correct record subject to an amendment to the penultimate paragraph on page 7 to show that Review Health Assessments were sent out three months in advance.

Sunderland Looked After Children's Pledge

The Chair advised that there was a meeting the following week to discuss the pledges.

Annual Report of the Fostering Panel

The Chair highlighted that there were now two elected Members sitting on the fostering panels and both Councillor Kay and Councillor Beck were in attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board meeting.

Change Council Update

Billy Hardy presented the report of the Change Council and advised that four members of the Change Council had taken part in a residential at Kielder with young people from every local authority in the North East. Each local authority had circulated ballot papers to all looked after young people and care leavers to find out what their main areas of concern were. The topics raised included: -

- Transport (free or reduced cost)
- Finance (more ways to help care leavers manage their money)
- Employment (more apprenticeships with councils and local businesses)
- Mental health
- Stability and why it's important for young people
- Being in care (younger children).

Young people had chosen the topics which they wanted to work on and were creating work shops around the themes for the conference. The Chair commented that she was greatly looking forward to the conference in December.

The Change Council had been working with the LAC Nurse regarding health passports and had decided on a new design for the document and agreed that it should be A5 size and have a plastic cover. The Chair asked when the health passport was likely to be completed and Jane Wheeler stated that this should be in the next few weeks for a health open event.

Billy advised that Sheila Lough had asked members of the Change Council to be involved in the training of foster carers and six young people had put their names forward. The group had met with Sheila and her team to look at training and what they could bring to this and also worked on how they could get more involved in the recruitment evenings.

The Chair supported young people being involved in foster carer recruitment and suggested that it would be useful to get feedback from couples who attended the training and get their views on whether it was positive to have young people and foster carers at the sessions.

Councillor Farthing and Councillor Kelly had come to the Change Council to discuss leisure activities. Currently Sunderland's looked after children received free swim passes up to the age of 18 but the group had discussed that passes should also be for gym and other activities and for young people leaving care up to the age of 21 if they were in some form of education, employment or training. Jane Wheeler was pulling a paper together for Councillor Kelly on other activities which could be accessed by looked after children and care leavers.

It was planned to review and revamp the current pledges and look at meaningful ways of holding pledge buddies to account to ensure that change and impact continued to be shown for looked after children and care leavers. The Change Council would also be discussing items which it would like the Corporate Parenting Board to look at and the Chair highlighted that this would inform the development of the Board work programme.

Jane Wheeler advised that there were two councillor vacancies for pledges, one was in relation to accommodation and the other around health issues. It was suggested that Councillor Kay be the pledge buddy for accommodation and Councillor Peter Gibson volunteer fulfil the other vacancy.

2. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Health of Looked After Children

The Safeguarding Children Lead and the Designated Doctor for Looked After Children submitted a joint report providing an update on health activity for looked after children.

Anne Brock directed Board Members to the compliance data for health assessments which had fluctuated during the March to May 2017 period. Compliance for Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) taking place within 20 workings of a child becoming looked after had decreased to 89% in March due to two mothers not signing consent forms. Compliance was 100% in April but dropped to 76% in May as one young person was missing and three children were unable to attend. Review Health Assessments (RHAs) had to take place at least every six months before a child's fifth birthday and at least once every twelve months afterwards. The figures for review health assessments were improving, however compliance in March 2017 was at 80% due to a child placed out of the area not being brought for an assessment despite four appointments being offered. Compliance was 94% in April and had further improved to 95% in May.

The Looked After Children health team had also experienced difficulty in April as the transfer to the new company had meant that notifications of looked after or changes in status were delayed. Similar delays were also caused by the cyber-attack within the NHS and all staff had worked hard to ensure that these difficulties were minimised.

The Board were informed that a new Looked After Children and Young People's nurse had been appointed and taken up her position in April. Having this additional resource would allow for increased flexibility with appointments and she would also be doing some work to set up a young persons' user group to help capture the 'voice of the child'.

Joint training for foster carers about 'Allegations against foster carers' continued between Together for Children Sunderland and the health team. This had been re-vamped in response to an increased number of allegations against carers which had produced some lessons to be learned.

Councillor Kay commented that allegations against foster carers had also been discussed at the Fostering Panel and he felt that this was likely to become an ongoing theme.

Rebecca Campbell from NTW was in attendance to present the information which had been requested about the mental health of looked after children. The Board were informed that NTW passed data to the CCG and this had been formulated into a dashboard which showed that 116 out of 500 looked after children were accessing Children and Young People's Services (CYPS).

Councillor Kay highlighted that, as a member of the governing body of the Pupil Referral Unit, the length of time for referrals to be made was often raised as an issue with this being 12 weeks as a minimum, 18 weeks not being uncommon and one young person waiting 24 weeks. At the present time the average waiting time for CAMHS was six to seven weeks and Councillor Kay suggested that it would be useful to see something on the length of time for CYPS referrals as part of the dashboard.

Rebecca stated that the issues with waiting times were well known and these were a national problem which were being dealt with at that level. The waiting times were

indicative of the number of referrals being received and it was highlighted that there were three types of response: urgent cases were seen within 72 hours based on an assessment of clinical need and risk; priority cases were seen within four weeks; and there could be a wait of up to 18 weeks for other cases. The Board were advised that there were five looked after children waiting to be seen at the end of March but at the current time there was only one young person who had not yet had an appointment with CYPS.

Councillor MacKnight acknowledged that there was a national problem with waiting times but also that these had been as low as 12 weeks in Sunderland in the past and this had to be achieved again.

The Chair added that the Change Council had been concerned about waiting times and she commented that preventing crisis was better than having to respond to urgent referrals. The Chair went on to say that child mental health had been discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board and just less than 30% of all children with problems actually received treatment and she highlighted that if this was the case with physical health problems then it would be a scandal. With regard to the statistics being presented, she supported the inclusion of data on waiting times.

It was noted that the Director of Children's Social Care had asked about the reasons for some cases not being accepted and Rebecca advised that it had been agreed to meet with Debra Patterson on a monthly basis to review the cases which were not accepted by CYPS. Sessional time was to be identified for where a young person did not necessarily need to be seen but scaffolding was required for the family.

NTW and Together for Children had agreed for CYPS to hold half day weekly sessions to offer scaffolding, support and guidance for Together for Children practitioners working with children and young people who: -

- were on the waiting list to be seen by CYPS
- who did not have a Mental Health Care Coordinator in CYPS
- who were not suitable for tier 3 mental health services but advice and support was required to manage behaviours

Councillor MacKnight commented that someone being referred to the service might find that their problems were considered low priority when to the individual concerned they were extremely significant. Rebecca advised that the duty team, who were clinicians, would discuss the matter on the phone and then make a decision between them what would happen.

Councillor Kay said that, anecdotally, he was aware that teachers and social workers had a dilemma when making a referral as they knew that a child may have a long wait if they said that it was a routine issue. As a collective partners needed to work together to ensure that waiting times were reduced and it needed to be identified what was an acceptable time and how this could be worked towards.

Rebecca stated that 70 to 80 referrals were received each week and there were 3,000 young people on the CYPS caseload at the current time. Priority was given to

each case based on vulnerability and risk and all issues were considered and discussed before a decision was made.

The Chair noted that, from her discussions, it seemed that if a child was in crisis, they could not get good therapy because they could not engage with the therapist. Rebecca agreed that it was always better to get in sooner rather than later with any individual but there were some cases where a young person had undergone recent trauma and it could be a really difficult time to work with them. With complex mental health issues, the earlier these could be managed the better and early work in schools was essential.

Kay Dixon commented that there used to be a surgery for foster carers which gave them tools to help deal with issues whilst waiting for an appointment for a young person. As a carer, sometimes all that was needed was a little bit of support and it was more useful to have that at the beginning of the process.

Rebecca advised that as the service was very busy, it had been decided to concentrate on seeing young people, however it was part of the half day offering to look at scaffolding and what could be done for the family. NTW were working with the CCG on this offer. The Chair stated that her challenge to the Director of Children's Services was what was Together for Children doing to support foster carers in this area.

Maurice Davis noted that, from a carer's point of view, it was reported immediately if children were in a crisis situation but then they were left waiting and it could be difficult for children to have to deal with that process. Rebecca acknowledged that there was a gap between the reporting of the problem and entering into specialist mental health services.

Councillor Kay queried whether it was possible to bring forward any statistics on the range of mental health needs which were being dealt with by CYPS. Rebecca highlighted that it would be expected that any referral had received intervention prior to CYPS, CAMHS was there for issues with anxiety and depression and work would have been done by the GP in relation to conditions such as ADHD. Information was available for six months of referrals and this could be supplied.

3. RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

Independent Reviewing Officer – Looked After Children Annual Report

The Board received the Independent Reviewing Officer's Looked After Children Annual Report for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Gavin Taylor, Independent Reviewing Service Manager, was in attendance to present the report and he advised that this had already been considered by the Change Council and Ofsted. An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be appointed for every child and young person looked after by a local authority. The IRO's role was to ensure that the plans met the needs of the children and young people and that their wishes and feelings were taken into consideration. The IRO

also ensured that children and young people in care had their reviews completed within statutory timescales and has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority as a corporate parent.

Gavin highlighted some of the key elements of the report and the Board were informed that 1,660 looked after children reviews had been undertaken during the period, which was an increase of 101 on the previous year. 95% of the reviews had been held within timescales which was an improvement on 90% in 2015/2016. This was one of the service's seven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and six of these had demonstrated improved performance in 2016/2017 with the exception of the number of looked after children with an up to date PEP which stood at 81% against the previous year's outturn of 86%.

The number of children accommodated under section 20 had reduced to 24% from 38% and this was a healthy indicator. The Ofsted monitoring visit in February 2017 had found that 'the IRO service was more visible, and performance is improved' but the IRO service acknowledged that further work was required to improve outcomes for children and young people who were looked after and to continue to ensure that the child/young person's journey was promoted and strengthened.

There had been some areas of difficulty in relation to systems and the transition to the new Liquid Logic system. The main reason for looked after reviews being out of timescale had been due to human error and miscalculation but this would be managed through Liquid Logic in the future.

Trish Stoker, Virtual School Head, expanded on the performance with regard to Personal Education Plans (PEPs). In the first tranche of the year there had been 90% of looked after children with an update to date PEP but the quality was variable. There were new systems coming in for ePEPs which were expected to deliver higher quality plans and would allow the voice of young people to be heard more clearly.

The Chair noted that she had heard one school saying that they would continue to use their own PEPs and Trish stated that the school would be challenged on that approach.

Councillor Kay commented that many people felt that ePEPs could be a game changer but there was also some anxiety about their introduction. How asked how confident Trish was that everyone would be up to speed when they were fully introduced.

Trish advised that training would be rolled out through the autumn term and that the team would be working with designated teachers and visiting Headteacher groups. Research had been carried out around the country to look at other ePEPs and how these could be adjusted and tweaked for the Sunderland model.

Maurice Davis queried what happened when a child was 18 and did not have a social worker present at a PEP meeting. Trish stated that work was being undertaken to identify how the PEP would translate to the next stage. It was noted that young people at the age of 18 would have a personal advisor and also a pathway review carried out by the IRO.

The Dispute Resolution Process had been revised and reviewed during the year and there had been 81 disputes, the majority of which were dealt with at the informal first stage of the procedure. The main issues raised had been the failure to provide all information, lack of evidence of statutory requirements and care planning.

The IRO had continued to work with a wide range of organisations and was open to being engaging and inclusive to all partners. The report set out how the IRO service had achieved against the priorities which had been set at the beginning of 2015/2016. A number of priorities had been identified for 2017/2018 as follows: -

- Recruitment and Training – ensuring that all IRO posts were in place by June 2017 and business posts were fully recruited to. This involved ensuring that staff were fully trained to carry out their roles.
- Further increase the ‘footprint’ of the IRO on the child’s case file in progressing plans and evidencing formal challenge.
- Continue to strengthen the child’s voice/ participation in looked after reviews and child protection conferences.
- Integrate business support unit into IRO Service
- Continue to build and improve relationships
- Continue to challenge the quality of practice and planning, seeking to improve care plans, PEPs and assessment analysis
- Strengthen the IRO Service Profile in Sunderland with professionals and young people.

The Chair asked if as part of developing IROs, they were encouraged to do any research into their work and Gavin advised that efforts were made to establish the IRO’s area of interest, for example one members of the team had taken a lead on domestic violence and another was particularly interested in the health of looked after children. This would grow as the knowledge and skills base was developed.

Councillor Kay noted that underpinning this report was a story of good, early progress and he was encouraged by the direction of travel. He asked if there were any areas where coverage could be improved. Gavin stated that there was a lot of learning and development work to be done around re-strengthening working relationships in Sunderland. It was planned to move into faith organisations to get the message over about the general spectrum of work. People had been recruited to the IRO service from a wealth of different backgrounds and now was the time to look at the skills mix and how this could be driven forward.

Councillor Francis asked when Liquid Logic would be up and running and Alex Hopkins advised that it was predicted to go live in January 2018. The Chair commented that she had comfort in the fact that the new system was being introduced slowly and all staff would be trained before the go live date.

With regard to the calculation error for looked after reviews, Gavin explained that this was as a result of working in months on occasions rather than days and it not being understood that bank holidays could have an impact on timescales.

Having commended the report, the Board: -

4. RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

Regulation 44 Visits

The Board received a report providing the Board Members with an update on the findings in relation to the Regulation 44 visits to Sunderland Children's Homes conducted from June 2016 – February 2017.

The role of the independent visitor was to carry out the Regulation 44 monthly monitoring visits to Sunderland's five children's homes. The main focus of the visits was to ensure that all children were being appropriately cared for and that their individual needs were being met.

During the period all of the homes had full Ofsted inspections with Monument View being judged to be outstanding, two homes being good with sustained improvement and two which required improvement with the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers rated as inadequate. The homes all had action plans which were closely monitored and there were a number of elected Members who had provided great support for the Regulation 44 visits.

With regard to Revelstoke Road, Councillor Davison asked if a member of staff had had their contract terminated due to the Ofsted report. Dot McGough advised that the member of staff had experienced a period of ill health and had then retired. When Ofsted had visited the home, a compliance notice had been issued and work was done immediately and the notice was lifted within six weeks.

Councillor Kay asked if there were any staffing issues at Sea View Road West because, as a short breaks unit, managers were not able to build up a relationship with young people. Dot advised that there had been two long term managers at the home so this had not been an issue. Sharon Willis added that the staff team had been in place for a long time and had been on a journey as the regulations and standards were as much for them as an ordinary children's home.

The Chair highlighted that Regulation 44 training was available for any interested elected Member and that there had been some discussion about extending this to foster carers. Social workers visited foster carers in the home setting and there had been some conversations about whether Members could accompany IROs. Dot stated that it had not been thought appropriate for an elected Member to sit in on a review but there would be an opportunity for closer working through the consultative committee.

Kay Dixon commented that, as a foster care worker, she had visited children's homes for 12 weeks before taking children into her own home and this had proved an invaluable grounding in the work. As part of this process carers were assigned a mentor and were prepared for what was being taken on.

5. RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

9 October 2017

HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

**Report of the Safeguarding Children Lead and the Designated Doctor for
Looked After Children**

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on health Looked After Children (LAC) activity to Sunderland Corporate Parenting Board.

2. Compliance data for health assessments June, July and August 2017

- 2.1 Local Authorities are responsible for making sure a health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs is carried out for every child they look after. Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) must happen within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after. In order for the health team to ensure compliance with statutory timescales it is imperative they are advised of the child becoming looked after and consent for health assessments received in a timely manner.

2.2 Table 1

LAC IHAs	June 2017	July 2017	August 2017
Compliance IHAs	95% (21)	86% (24)	100% (24)

- 2.3 The reason for compliance being at 95% in June was due to a child who was placed out of area not having the health assessment completed within the required timescales.
- 2.4 Compliance was at 86% in July this was due to 1 late notification; 1 delay in receiving consent and 2 out of areas not completed within timescales.
- 2.5 The RHA must happen at least every six months before a child's 5th birthday and at least once every 12 months after the child's 5th birthday. Table 2 depicts the improved compliance rate.

Table 2

LAC RHAs	June 2017	July 2017	August 2017
Compliance RHAs	88%(36)	92% (60)	92% (47)

- 2.6** The 88% compliance data for June was due to an administration error where 3 appointments were sent out late; 1 child unable to attend due to behavioural problems and 1 child placed out of area whose health assessment was not completed within timescales
- 2.7** The 92% compliance data for July was due to 2 non attendances (appointments were sent within timescales); 1 child unable to attend as on holiday and 2 children out of area who did not have assessments completed within timescales.
- 2.8** The compliance data for August was due to 2 children out of area who did not have assessments completed within timescales, and 1 young person refusing to attend appointment.

3.0 Health Passports

- 3.1** The improvement activity around issuing of health passports was described in a previous report. Table 3 demonstrates current compliance.

Table 3

Health passports issued	June 2017	July 2017	August 2017
Compliance Health passports	100% (6)	100% (2)	100% (4)

4.0 CYPS

- 4.1** Due to changes in CYPS reporting to Sunderland CCG the CYPS LAC scorecard is in the process of being redesigned. A member of NTW CYPS team will give a verbal update to Corporate Parents.
- 4.2** Following the agreement which was reached by North Tyne and Wear NHS Trust and Together for Children, a Consultant Child Psychologist is now providing half day weekly sessions for professionals in the residential children's homes to offer scaffolding, support, guidance and supervision for residential looked after children (LAC) :
- on the waiting list to be seen by CYPS
 - who don't have a Mental Health Care Coordinator in CYPS
 - not suitable for tier 3 mental health services but advice and support is required to manage behaviours

5.0 Asylum seekers

- 5.1** In the last year, only four asylum seekers young people have been seen by Sunderland LAC health team. However it is likely that, in the future, this number will rise. The LAC health team, genito urinary- medicine, paediatrics and Together for Children are preparing a clinical pathway for asylum seekers to meet their health needs. This will include protocols to address interpreter needs, TB screening, blood borne virus screening (HIV/hep B/C/syphilis) and screening for trauma. It is anticipated that this will be functional by the New Year.

6.0 LAC Health Team

- 6.1** The LAC health team will continue to support the Local Authority with the Improvement Plan in respect of LAC

7.0 Recommendations

- The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note the content of the report.

Anne M Brock

Anne Brock
Safeguarding Children Lead
Nurse and Designated Nurse LAC

Dr Kim Barrett

Kim Barrett
Designated Doctor LAC



Together for Children Fostering Recruitment Strategy 2017-19

Recruitment initiatives to increase the numbers of foster carers for Together for Children, Sunderland - Fostering

together for
children
SUNDERLAND

September 2017

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Introduction

Together for Children, Sunderland – Fostering became operational as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) on 1 April 2017.

The key priority for the new agency is to recruit more foster carers who have the right qualities and competencies to meet the changing needs of the children we look after in Sunderland.

“In Sunderland we want to provide sufficient high quality placements for children and young people in our care and for care leavers which enables them to achieve their potential. We are committed to delivering excellence in our approach with the intention that the outcome for every child in care and those leaving care are at least as good as their peers who are not in care” (Sufficiency Strategy July 16 – July 18)

This strategy provides a profile of Together for Children’s (TFC) current carers, considers local issues impacting on recruitment of new carers and sets out our approach to recruitment of foster carers over the next 3 years.

The strategy should be read in conjunction with Together for Children’s Sufficiency Strategy, July 2016-18

Aims and Objectives

The key aims and objectives of this strategy are as follows:

1. Provide an effective, high quality fostering service that meets the changing needs and numbers of the looked after population
2. To increase the number and skills of ‘in house’ placements and therefore reduce the number of children placed within IFAs in order to reduce the cost to TFC for the provision of care for Looked After Children
3. To increase the number of foster carers in respect of:
 1. older children and teenagers
 2. complex children and young people
 3. large sibling groups
 4. younger carers who will provide longer term stability for younger children coming into care.
4. To insure that all people who are interested in becoming foster carers are welcomed without prejudice, responded to promptly and given clear information about recruitment, assessment, approval and support.

National Context

The DFE have recently published a research report on 'The Fostering System in England: Evidence Review (July 2017)'¹

Findings of the review:

- According to data collected by DFE over the years the overall population of looked after children has risen by 5% since 2012
- There has been a shift in the profile of children coming into care with a declining number aged less than 5 years which may reflect the escalating number of Special Guardianship Orders many of which are being used for younger children who are placed with family and connected people.
- Children entering care do so with ever more complex difficulties including serious physical and mental health problems and developmental problems.
- Local Authorities have faced increasing problems recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of foster carers, particularly for those who required specialist placements. As a result there has been a significant use of and growth in independent Fostering Agencies.
- Local Authorities are struggling under pressure to improve outcomes for children in the face of budgetary cuts.

In January 2016 the Fostering Network reported that there was a national shortage of 9,000 foster carers. The demand for foster carers outstripped supply and it was recognised that independent fostering agencies were 5 times more successful at recruiting than local authorities.

Sunderland Context

Sunderland has experienced all of the challenges described above in the national picture. The numbers of Looked After Children has risen steadily; those coming into care have more complex needs, we have seen a drop in the numbers of 'in house' foster carers, and have found it much more difficult to recruit new carers. The number of connected carer assessments has increased year on year.

The numbers of children placed in IFAs has decreased since March 17, however is an increase from March 15 figures.

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/629383/The_fostering_system_in_England_Evidence_review.pdf

We have seen a significant increase in the numbers of older young people coming into the care system. However, the most obvious area of need in Sunderland is securing placements for adolescents and for large sibling groups.

Sunderland Looked After Children Data

Current data is based on every foster carer being approved for 3 children regardless of true capacity. This is legacy practice and was to provide greater flexibility should an exemption be required to accommodate a child; however it is recognised that this is poor practice and gives a false impression of the real number of vacancies at a particular time as many of the foster carers approved are unable to accommodate 3 children.

To address this issue, all historically approved foster carers, are having their approval status corrected at their annual review. This will ensure that all new foster carer approvals going forward reflect their true approval status.

As of 31/8/17 TFC Sunderland Fostering has 191 mainstream foster carers who look after 236 children.

		TFC	Connected carers	Short breaks	Staying put	IFA
Number of carers		191	27			
Number of children		236		16	19	73
Age of carers	20-30	0	7%			
	31-40	13%	14%			
	41-50	20%	26%	13%		
	51+	67%	53%	82%		
Age of children	Under 1		Currently under development			
	1-5					
	6-10					
	11-15					
	15+					
Location	Sunderland					
	North East					
	Other					
Ethnicity						

The majority of TFC's foster carers live within Sunderland with a small number living on the outskirts of the city or within the wider regional area. Most are within close travelling distance of Sunderland, many are approved as connected persons for a specific named child or young person.

Recruitment Activity

78 carers were approved between the period 1.7.17 – 1.7.17, 17 were mainstream foster carers and 61 were connected carers.

The Fostering Service has had a significant growth in the assessment of family / friend (connected) carers the majority of which are de-registered as the family members secure a legal order from the Court e.g. Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Orders.

As a rule Independent Fostering Agencies do not undertake Regulation 24 assessments or support connected carers.

In the same period 1.7.16- 1.7.17, 65 carers were deregistered; the main reason for de registration was connected carers being granted a legal order such as a Special Guardianship order or Child arrangement Order (60%) , 15% for change of circumstances and 9% retired and 3% due to standards of care

Number of foster carers recruited 1.07.16 - 1.07.17		Number of foster carers de registered 1.07.16 -1.7.17	
78		65	
Annual net gain		13	

Comparative costs for Sunderland Foster Carers and Independent Fostering carers cost.

Age	Local Authority Weekly cost	Based on the 7 Framework	Difference
0-4	£204.49	£680.00	£475.51
5-10	£223.20	£700.00	£476.80
11-15	£260.72	£730.00	£469.28
16+	£296.70	£736.00	£439.30

Source Sufficiency Strategy

Date	Number of IFA placements
March 2015	69
March 2016	72
March 2017	78
July 2017	72
August 2017	73 = 31% of all placements

These costs are based on mainstream Foster Carers age related allowances plus a Level B Foster Carer Fee.

In recognition that Sunderland has a shortage of foster placements across the board it is planned that review of the Foster Payment Framework is undertaken, in recognition that as an IFA, TFC's foster care payments are below the national average and that if we do not offer parity we are at risk of losing foster carers to neighbouring Local Authorities and neighbouring Independent Fostering Agencies. It is also needed to ensure we give a comparable offer of support to foster carers as part of our recruitment campaign. A working group is currently developing the proposal.

Performance information and data as we move forward

A performance score card is being developed that will can be generated from Liquidlogic, this will be in place post implementation 1st February 2018. This will include a profile of the demographics of carers, placement activity, vacancies and recruitment status. This will be critical to ensure that the new service is operating effectively and efficiently.

Priorities

1. Payment Framework

There is a requirement for Together for Children Fostering Sunderland to revise the current payment framework to bring the payments to foster carers in line with the regional rates.

Some work was completed in early 2017 which compared the foster carer payment rates with near neighbours and an outline payment framework was drafted. This framework needs to be reviewed, taking into account the financial impact a rise in fees will have for current carers and the timescales for recruitment of new carers to start to show budgetary savings.

The draft framework will be used as a starting point, to consult with current carers, fostering officers and officers in finance to arrive at a fair and competitive payment framework that will be attractive to new carers and incentivise current carers to stay with the TFC fostering.

This will be considered by the TFC board and the city council.

2. Marketing

Most recent experience

Towards the end of 2016 CREO Strategic Solutions were approached to assist with the Foster Carer recruitment campaign. The CREO campaign had minimal impact on recruitment.

Between January and June 2017 we have held 7 fostering information evenings, we had an initial expression of interest from 5 couples and 2 single individuals. None of these proceeded to an assessment. Information gained after enquiry as to why people did not proceed with their application included:

- Concerns about fee structure / payments.
- Part A packs sent out. None returned.
- One couple proceeded to the Stage 1 Agreement Meeting but decided not to continue. No specific reason given.

Sunderland is a member of the North East 7 Regional Consortium who has a frame work in place for commissioning placements from Independent Fostering Agencies.

Change in approach

We intend to revise our approach in the marketing of foster carer recruitment campaign. Rather than one short-term but large-scale marketing campaign, utilised in December 2016, we intend to run a longer-term, phased campaign. The campaign will use a variety of marketing methods running in phases rather than in parallel.

A consultation event is being set up to take place at the end of September with current foster carers, this is to take on board their experiences and to generate ideas as to how best we increase the number of foster carers, taking into account that word of mouth is a powerful recruitment tool.

Using a phased approach, spreading our resources over a longer time period creates an on-going presence and a consistent local profile as opposed to one short 'burst' of activity.

A phased approach also allows us to evaluate our success on an on-going basis and refine our approach accordingly, focusing future investment on the areas that bring most returns.

We will reuse CREO creative from the late 2016 campaign as this was well liked, approved by Corporate parenting Board and Change Council, still looks fresh and is cost effective to reuse (cost approx. £200 to update all existing creative).

Ahead of recruitment campaign, TFC will create key messaging to run through all activity in our on-going foster carer recruitment campaign. This messaging will focus on the key motivations / drivers identified in the DFE's "The fostering system in England: review" (p 70), including financial reimbursement and the ongoing training and support offered by TFC – both key factors in recruiting and retaining foster carers. We will use the newly established TFC website, Twitter and press releases, also through the internal newsletter that goes to all staff promoting the concept of becoming a foster carer.

Messaging will also:

- Highlight that we are particularly looking for carers for older children, children with complex needs and sibling groups, but would like to hear from anyone with an interest in fostering.
- Recognise and answer potential anxieties around becoming a foster carer.
- Set out the desired qualities and practical criteria (to minimise unsuitable applications).
- Make clear the support offered to carers during and post recruitment

Phase one overview:

- Social media advertising. Social media marketing is acknowledged to have a 'growing importance' in recruiting foster carers in the DFE's report 'The fostering system in England: review', published July 2017. Social media is cost-effective and allows for targeting a very specific demographic in terms of age, location and interests. £1,000 for 4 week campaign.
- Lightweight advertising on local transport at key travel hotspots in Sunderland and the wider region. Bus and Metro advertising has a high 'dwell time'. Transport campaign on bus / metro network. 4 x week campaign including bus: 22 x bus rears. Sunderland and Washington depots - Total £2,957 plus VAT. Metro: 80 x carriage cards approximately 1 in every other carriage, posters in 6 key stations on network £2,837 plus VAT.
- Internal communication using the hub , the TFC newsletter, payslip, pop-ups, information sessions, production and time cost only.
- Partner communications - Partnership opportunity with Foundation of Light – Together for Children offered a stall at family learning graduations. Foundation of Light is also happy to distribute suitable literature during programme delivery from September when learning programme starts. Cost leaflet production costs only / time at graduate events.
- Digital communications - we will create an online expression of interest form on the TFC website – 38% of all UK enquiries are now reported to come through the web according to the Fostering Network, 2016. We will also develop the foster care section of the website, adding additional information focused on the campaign's key messages.

Phase two overview

- Repeat of any successful activity in Phase one, plus the below.
- City centre advertising boards – target key locations in the city at a time when footfall is at its peak. Cost is low, but exposure is high.
- Partner communications – posters / leaflets to council offices / GPs / partner organisations. Digital partner toolkit around foster care sent to partner organisations for dissemination through intranet / internal channels.
- Creation of foster care videos, sharing the stories of carers and Change Council young people and linking in to the key messages identified below. These videos will be shared on the TFC website, social media channels and used at information evenings.

Evaluation of Phase one and two will inform our approach going into Phase 3. Successful activity will be repeated, while other activity – print radio / digital advertising campaigns for example – will also be considered.

Traditional media advertising, radio / print, will be considered as part of our the campaign, but is unlikely to be the focus as it is expensive and difficult to target our key demographic, a point noted in the DFE’s review of the fostering system (p 70).

3. Training and development

Alongside the recruitment and marketing campaign the parallel plan will be to continue to support and talent spot with in our current mainstream carers and encourage those who are interested in developing their skills to look after more complex young people. This will be underpinned by a reviewed and refreshed training and development offer for foster carers.

According to the DFE’s report ‘The fostering system in England: review’, two-thirds of potential foster carers are lost during training. To minimise this we will review the content of our information sessions and information packs to ensure we’re telling potential foster carers the right messages at the right times, preparing them for what is involved and managing expectations throughout the process.

Work is being undertaken with other areas of TFC and partners to provide additional support to carers looking after the most challenging young people. This has included Children & Young Peoples Service (preventative mental health service), early help, youth offending service, virtual school and a number of third sector organisations.

There is consideration being given to the possibility of remodelling internal services in such a way as to provide an innovative and more integrated response to managing complex young people crisis and support their foster carers.

Evaluation

It is essential that we evaluate the effectiveness of each strand of activity on an on-going basis, using this data to shape future phases of the strategy.

The effectiveness of a revised payment framework will be evaluated against a suite of indicators which will include feedback from applicants, current carers, numbers of applicants etc.

The marketing and recruitment strategy will be evaluated against the number of new enquiries during each phase of the campaign, how respondents heard about our offer and, should they drop out, record at what stage, and why.

To maximise return on marketing investment, it is also vital that we have the resources in place to respond to and manage enquiries that come in as a result of the campaign in a

timely manner. According to the DFE report, a study showed a quarter of respondents to one marketing campaign did not proceed because they had not been contacted following expressing an interest.

The training and development evaluation will be through individual feedback and on-going audit of improved practice alongside feedback from fostering officers through supervision

Next Steps

The next step is to develop an action plan that focuses on the 3 priority areas. This will be completed within a 3 month period, 1st December 2017 and will go through the appropriate governance process.

Alongside the development of the plan, work that is already on-going, as identified above, will continue and will be included in the action plan.

