

**Fostering Service Monitoring Report Form (England) for NMS 2
and Regulation 35 reports**

Item No. 9

1. Introduction

Name of fostering service	Together for Children Fostering Sunderland
Period covered by the report	1 st April 2017 – 31 st March 2018
Name of person completing the form	Kathryn McCabe
Position in the fostering service	Registered Manager
Date form was completed	22 nd April 2018

Date of last Ofsted inspection	Awaiting first inspection as an IFA
Overall judgement	N/A
Statutory requirements for improvement (with dates)	
N/A	
Action undertaken to meet those requirements	
N/A	
Recommendations for improvement (with dates)	
N/A	
Action undertaken to meet those recommendations	
N/A	

2. Summary data

Foster carers	
Expressions of interest	21
Assessments completed	There have been a total of 44 assessments completed within the reporting period.
Assessments ongoing	5
Approvals	Temporary Foster Carers (Reg 24) – 146 Connected Carers – 33 Temporary Carers – 6 Permanent Carers – 1
Reviews completed	There have been 214 foster carer reviews completed within the reporting period.
Foster carer training	First Aid – 70 attendees Virtual school – 36 attendees Youth Voice – 15 attendees Substance Misuse – 15 attendees Theraplay – 18 attendees Managing Allegations – 53 attendees Sexual Health – 19 attendees Moving Children onto Permanence – 12 attendees Life Story Work - 13 attendees Impact of Abuse – 17 attendees Emergency Duty Team & CSE – 31 attendees
Foster carer support groups	Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 there were no support groups being facilitated by the agency. Our first support group ran this month (April 2018) and a programme is being delivered for a monthly support group. Two informal support events have been held for carers and children in February and April 2018.
Terminations of approval	We have had 27 foster carers resign over the reporting period, 5 of these resignations were as a result of the agency raising standards of care concerns, the other 22 were for a range of personal reason. We have had 27 foster carers temporarily approved under regulation 24 whose approval has ceased within the 16 week period.
Number of foster carers	86 Connected Carers 170 Mainstream 11 Short Breaks Carers 267 in total
Comment, analysis, and any action taken	

In line with the national picture recruitment of mainstream foster carers continues to be difficult. During this period significant work has taken place with the recruitment strategy and more specifically reviewing the current fee structure. The fees currently offered by Together for Children Fostering Sunderland are not in line with statistical neighbouring Local Authorities and fall well below those offered by IFA's. Together for Children Fostering Sunderland are currently working with Sunderland City Council to establish agreement with moving forward with a new fee structure. It has been agreed by senior management that whilst the fee offer remains uncompetitive a measured approach needs to be taken with the expenditure on recruitment campaigns.

That said, during the reporting period advertising has taken place via the internet and a campaign on local buses, metros and bill boards was ran throughout November and December 2017.

A marketing and recruitment intern (part time) has been appointed and the website is currently being further developed and the recruitment strategy will be updated.

Children and young people

Referrals	
New placements	
Placements ended	
Unplanned endings	
Number of children	

Comment, analysis, and any action taken

Prior to 31st March 2017 we were operating as a Local Authority and as such we did not record this level of data. We have now begun to record this and will be able to provide data within the NMS 25 report which will be submitted in early July 2018.

3. Detailed data

Compliance with care plan

Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 an audit was undertaken of all mainstream foster carers, this helped us to identify trends for areas of development. Within this piece of work we were able to identify those carers who did not have a copy of the Care Plan for the child(ren) they were providing a home. The FSW that liaised with the CSW to rectify this, if appropriate this was escalated for managerial

support.

In addition the Foster Carer Supervision template has been updated to allow reflection between FSW and FC that the FC is clear about the care plan for each child, and that the child is aware, subject to their age/understanding? It also considers if the FC is supporting each child to contribute their views, and know their plan as well as identifying if the FC contributes to the care planning process via attendance at meeting's etc.

The Fostering Service works closely with the IRO service to ensure compliance with care plans, the IRO manager and Fostering Registered Manager are in regular contact and any issues/concerns are raised and addressed.

The Fostering Service currently does not collate data on unplanned endings, however, this information is monitored via Foster Carer Reviews with a report by the FSW having managerial oversight and signature before the review is held.

Within this period we have developed a policy and procedure in relation to disruption meeting's and these are now considered for any child/young person within a permanent placement who has an unplanned ending and also for any child/young person who has experienced multiple unplanned endings. This helps us to identify areas for improvement.

During the reporting period 10 young people have moved on to access 'staying put' arrangements and 55 children have moved on to be placed with prospective adopters.

We are rolling out new and updated portfolios for foster carers which identifies and lists all documentation a foster carer should have for each child in their care – each child will have their own individual portfolio where this information can be stored.

Accidents, injuries and illnesses

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding death of a child, serious illness or accident, or outbreak of infectious disease

Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 I identified a high number of inappropriate schedule 7 notifications had been submitted to Ofsted. Since September 2017 I have ensured I have oversight of all notifications that are made and for the purposes of this report will report on notifications that I have been responsible for as Registered Manager.

There has been one schedule 7 notification regarding a serious illness or accident within the reporting period.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 there was no reporting and limited monitoring mechanism in place for this.

We have since established monthly supervision for all staff, including case supervision, on a monthly basis, this allows for management oversight and review. Monthly management meeting's (between assistant team managers, team manager and business manager) allow for this to be monitored.

Notification's under schedule 7 have been brought into line with expectation and policies and procedures are being reviewed and updated.

The Foster Care Agreement has been updated and is specific in outlining to FC's their responsibility to keep the FSW informed about the child's progress and to notify the Fostering Service without undue delay, but within 1 working day of matters relating to schedule 7 of the Fostering Regulations (detailed within FCA).

Policies and procedures are being updated and as sign off is given these are made available to FC's, we are also working on an online portal which will improve accessibility to all carers to updated documents. This is progressing in line with an enhanced training programme and with engagement with carers via the consultative group.

A pro forma has been developed and shared with FSW who in turn have been asked to share with FC, this allows an effective mechanism to record details of any accidents, injuries, illnesses, incidences and any missing episodes – this pro forma includes prompts for action by the FC and guidance on how to record. This has recently been introduced and as it becomes embedded into practice we will monitor within our monthly manager meeting's. This pro forma is included in the portfolio provided to all carers which are currently being distributed.

Medication, medical treatment and first aid administered

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 there was no reporting and limited monitoring mechanism in place for this.

The Foster Carer Supervision template has been updated and includes prompts for discussion around medication, medical treatment and first aid.

Policies and procedures are being updated and as sign off is given these are made available to FC's, we are also working on an online portal which will improve accessibility to all carers to updated documents. This is progressing in line with an enhanced training programme and with engagement with carers via the consultative group.

Together For Children have recently developed a relationship with Learning Curve (training provider), we are exploring how this opportunity can be accessed for FC.

This training programme includes a Level 2 Certificate in Understanding the Safe Handling of Medication.

Information is currently held within the foster carer's handbook.

Mandatory first Aid training is held and repeated every three years.

Measures of control, restraint or discipline

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 there was no reporting and limited monitoring mechanism in place for this.

The Foster Carer Supervision template has been updated and includes prompts for discussion around this area.

Policies and procedures are being updated and as sign off is given these are made available to FC's, we are also working on an online portal which will improve accessibility to all carers to updated documents. This is progressing in line with an enhanced training programme and with engagement with carers via the consultative group.

The training opportunities being offered by 'Learning Curve' are also being explored in relation to their Level 2 Certificate in Behaviour that Challenges.

We have recently agreed to four members of staff being trained to deliver the Solihull Parenting Programme and they will access this training in July 2018.

Complaints in relation to children/about foster carers, and their outcomes

Summary

There have been five schedule 7 notifications regarding a serious complaint about a foster carer.

Within the reporting period there has been one complaint submitted to Together for Children's Compliment and Complaint department, this complaint remains on-going.

During the reporting period there have been 7 compliments submitted to Together for Children's Compliments and Complaints Department.

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding any serious complaint about a foster carer, or information being provided to the Disclosure and Barring Service

Within the current reporting period we have not provided information to the DBS service regarding any foster carer.

Allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect, and investigation outcomes

Evidence

There have been 37 foster carers referred to the Designated Officer within the reporting period.

- 8 of these cases remain open
- From 29 closed cases the outcomes have been found to be : 4 False / 1 Cancelled / 13 Unsubstantiated / 10 Substantiated / 1 Malicious

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding instigation and outcome of any child protection inquiry, or suspicion/involvement of child in "prostitution"

There have been 3 schedule 7 notifications submitted due to 'instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry.'

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

As a service we are developing relationships with the Designated Officer and are introducing bi-monthly monitoring and information sharing meetings. This will allow us to monitor trends and develop an appropriate action plan.

Alongside this we continue to significantly improve the training and support that is available to our foster carers and we will monitor the impact that this has upon the referral rate.

Children missing without permission

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a child missing from placement

Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 there was over reporting regarding missing episodes. We were able to bring this in line with guidance and appropriate notifications have been submitted since this time.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Our monitoring capabilities were limited and unreliable, we have introduced a new social care system as of the end of January 2018 which will enable us to more effectively monitor and ultimately report on this date.

We are currently working with our colleagues across Together for Children to

implement a strategy and plan to ensure effective monitoring, reporting and consistency. This will enable us, within Together for Children Fostering Sunderland to identify trends and themes.

A pro forma has been developed and shared with FSW who in turn have been asked to share with FC, this allows an effective mechanism to record details of any accidents, injuries, illnesses, incidences and any missing episodes – this pro forma includes prompts for action by the FC and guidance on how to record. This has recently been introduced and as it becomes embedded into practice we will monitor within our monthly manager meeting's. This pro forma is included in the portfolio provided to all carers which are currently being distributed.

Allegations that a child has committed a serious offence

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding allegations that a child has committed a serious offence

There have been no incidences within the reporting year whereby a child has committed a serious offence and as such no notifications of this regard have been made to Ofsted.

Serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home

Contact was made with the service by the neighbour of a FC on a number of occasions, the neighbours had a difficult relationship and the FC felt that the manner and approach of the neighbour towards them and their family necessitated contact with the police.

There was one notification under schedule 7 submitted to this regard.

4. Staffing

Summary of staffing position

Registered Manager – Full time
Assistant Team Managers – 3 FT
Fostering Social Workers – 10.5 FTE
Fostering Support Worker – 1 FT
Panel Advisor – 1 0.5 FTE
Marketing and Recruitment Officer – 1 0.5 FTE

There are currently three members of staff absent from work due to long term sickness, this sickness is currently reviewed, in line with HR processes within formal

sickness reviews.

Two of these positions are currently filled using agency social workers and one position is covered via a social worker employed by Together for Children within the Out of Hours service. This worker provides support to carers in line with her days off arising from her shift pattern.

During the reporting period there has been a change in Registered Manager, the RM in post at the registration of Together for Children Fostering Sunderland resigned from their position and left at the end of August 2017. A replacement was identified prior to their leaving and was able to commence in September 2017, appropriate notifications were made the RM interview has taken place and appointment agreed.

Significant changes have taken place across the staff team within the reporting period, this is being closely monitored and vacancies are quickly filled using external advertising.

Recruitment of new staff

Recruitment of new staff is undertaken with the support and guidance of the Human Resources Department within Together for Children. HR ensures that appropriate checks are in place and saved on file prior to appointment.

Staff supervision

All staff, including the 5 independent practitioners have a named supervisor and receive monthly personal and case supervision. SW supervision is undertaken by an Assistant Team Manager and the TM supervises the ATM's. The TM undertakes ad hoc dip sampling of the supervision records for all staff. The monthly management meeting has a standing agenda item of 'staffing' and key points relating to individual staff members are explored within this.

Staff training

The training programme for foster carers has been significantly enhanced and all staff have been asked to link with their supervisor and attend this training as is appropriate. It is important that staff have an awareness of the training that is on offer to carers and it is also an opportunity for them to enhance their own knowledge base.

The team plan was developed in January 2018 and reviewed in March 2018, it incorporates a section on staff training and allows team members to influence training that is identified. Given the number of recent changes across the team in terms of expectations it is been agreed (within the team plan) that formal training will be kept to a minimum whilst staff familiarise themselves with the new policy, procedures and pro forma's they are working within.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy training is currently being sourced for staff within together for Children Adoption Sunderland and it is likely that some places will be available for staff from the Fostering Service.

Four places have been reserved on the Solihull Parenting Programme (to skill staff in the delivery of this course) and attendance will be agreed in line with appraisals.

Staff appraisals

Upon commencement in my post in September 2017 I identified that most staff had not had an appraisal within the recommended timeframe of one year. As most staff members had been appointed a new supervisor I advised staff that no appraisals would be completed until 2018 to allow relationships to be built and make the process more meaningful.

In January 2018 I was advised that Together for Children would be releasing 'new' appraisal guidance and as such these were put on hold until April 2018, this process has now commenced and it is expected that all staff will have a current appraisal within a 6 month period.

Staff meetings

Team meetings are held on a monthly basis, they are chaired by the TM or an ATM in her absence and minutes are taken on a rota basis by members of the team.

Within the reporting period a team day to complete a team plan and a team day to review the team plan have been held (January and March 2018).

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

See above.

5. Fostering panel

Summary of panel

We have two fostering panel each month which are ran via an extensive central list of panel member.

The main activity of the fostering panel is the consideration of approval of Connected Carers.

If a Regulation 25 extension is requested for a Temporary Foster Carer (Reg 24) this is also considered by panel.

We have a dedicated panel advisor (18 .5 hours) who has previous experience as a team manager in the fostering service.

Panel meetings

There has been 24 Fostering Panels held during the reporting period.

Cases considered and recommendations

Connected Carers – 37 Cases Considered, recommendation to approve 36 cases and not approve 1

Temporary Foster Carers – 6 , recommendation to approve all 6 carers

Permanent Foster Carers – 1, recommendation to approve

Regulation 25's – 12, recommendation to approve 11 and 1 not to continue

First Reviews – 15, recommendation on-going approval for all 15 cases

De-Registrations – 27 (including regulation 24 temporary approval)

Resignations – 27

Panel feedback

Applicants found the questions to be very helpful. Some people found the thought of going to fostering panel to be very nervous. However feedback from the applicants advised that supervising social workers and panel members made them feel very at ease

We have recently commenced collating feedback from SW on their attendance at fostering panel and to date this has been largely positive.

Training and appraisals

All panel members have had an appraisal within 2017 –these were completed with The panel chair and panel advisor.

There have been two training events within the reporting year, training presented by an IRO around Foster Carer Reviews and Attachment. There were several Social Workers as well as panel members attending, and this was a great opportunity for discussions with an IRO and the sitting panel members to discuss the reviews that are presented at panel.

The second training event informed panel members on training offered to foster carers, the CORAM/BAAF forms for connected carers, viabilities for connected carers and information sharing on the new training hub that is being developed for workers and foster carers.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

At each Connected Carer assessment that is presented to panel applicants are asked if they have all the necessary paperwork, as lack of paperwork pertaining to the child has previously been raised as a concern. It is pleasing to note that this is improving and it is noticeable that it is very rare for carers not to have this.

Any concerns about safeguarding have been reported to senior managers and ADM.

A question is asked from the young people from the Children in Care Change Council to applicants and it is hoped this this could be further developed.

6. Consultation with children and young people

Evidence	<p>An online survey using 'survey monkey' was rolled out in February 2018, the feedback is being used to inform decisions relating to service development.</p> <p>Two separate children and young people groups have been developed in April 2018, one for children who live with foster carers and the other for children who foster.</p> <p>Two informal support events have been held, one in February 2018 and the other in April 2018, these were for foster carers and children and included a range of activities for the children and the opportunity for foster carers to meet with the staff team.</p>
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
<p>Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 there was little evidence of consultation with children and young people. Through the development of our team plan we have identified specific areas in which we would like to enhance this area, this has led to the development of the groups identified above. Whilst these remain in the early stages the staff team show commitment and enthusiasm in continuing to improve this area of their work.</p> <p>Over the coming year we expect to build upon the groups we have established and continue to develop our involvement with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and the Lead for Participation and Engagement within Together for Children.</p>	

7. Consultation with foster carers

Evidence	<p>An online survey using 'survey monkey' was rolled out in February 2018, the feedback is being used to inform decisions relating to service development.</p>
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	<p>Whilst there have been a number of foster carer ran informal support groups in place for a number of years there has been a gap in social worker ran support groups which reaches out to all carers. There is an established SW supported group held within a FC's home within Whitley Bay.</p> <p>In April 2018 we held out first social worker ran support group within the City, the first group held was an opportunity for those in attendance to outline what they wished for this to look like. In line with the feedback we are considering timing of the group and venue and will be sourcing guest speakers on a range of subjects. This group will be offered on a monthly basis and dates are planned.</p> <p>Two informal support events have been held, one in February 2018 and the other in April 2018, these were for foster carers and children and included a range of activities for the children and the opportunity for foster carers to meet with the staff team.</p> <p>Two foster carers are long standing members of the corporate parenting board.</p> <p>Foster carers are regularly involved in the delivery of training and the new training lead is linking with carers who have expressed an interest to develop this further.</p> <p>A carers consultative group is held on a bi-monthly basis, with the RM attending, terms of reference have recently been written by the group and new members are being recruited.</p> <p>A number of foster carers were nominated for awards within the 'Together for Children Spotlight Awards.'</p> <p>The Fostering Service has links with a local charity, 'more than grandparents' who provides support to family members caring for the children of their relatives.</p>
<p>Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided</p>	
<p>Upon my commencement in post in September 2017 there was limited evidence of meaningful consultation with foster carers. Through the development of our team plan we have identified specific areas in which we would like to enhance this area, this has led to the development of the work outlined above.</p> <p>As the Registered Manager for the service I have written to all carers on two occasions. I have also met with a number of foster carers, both formally and informally within group settings. I have also had email, phone and face to face contact with a number of individual carers.</p> <p>Over the coming year we will review the support group offer and identify if a separate support group is appropriate for connected carers.</p>	

We expect our online survey to be an annual survey and hope that engagement will continue to improve.

We are currently planning an event for all foster carers for June 2018 to celebrate the work that they do.

8. Financial information

Comment
Please see attached finance report below.

Signed	
Name	Kathryn McCabe
Position	Lead Manager for Fostering and Adoption
Date	25.04.18

TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN	
DATE:	27 April 2018
REPORT AUTHOR:	Deborah Orr –Finance Manager
SUBJECT:	Independent Fostering Agency Finance Report
PURPOSE:	To report on the financial position of Together for Children Independent Fostering Agency.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the financial information and assurance for Together for Children Sunderland Limited registered as an Independent Fostering Agency.
- 1.2 The financial information contained in the report is based on the latest information available for the 2017/18 financial year and is subject to audit verification.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As reported to the Board in November 2017, Together for Children Sunderland Limited (TfC) was formal establishment as a Council controlled company from April 2017 to deliver children's services functions as part of a new holistic and long term service delivery model. The contract for services from Sunderland City Council includes:

Services for safeguarding and vulnerable groups to include:

- a. Children in need and safeguarding
- b. Independent Reviewing Officers
- c. Services for looked after children including fostering and Adoption
- d. Services for care leavers
- e. Services for children with special education needs and disabilities
- f. Youth Offending

Early Help services to include:

- g. Family support
- h. Youth Offer
- i. Early years and childcare

Education and Schools support services to include:

- j. schools finance
- k. Support to school governing bodies
- l. Education leadership and support for school improvement
- m. Inclusive education and vulnerable learners

- 2.2 As part of the set-up, Together for Children Fostering Sunderland was established as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA). This permits the

statutory agency decision maker functions in respect of fostering to be performed and discharged by TfC on the Council's behalf.

2.3 As part of the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards, there is a requirement to report to the Board on the financial viability and changes affecting business continuity of the Fostering Agency.

3. FINANCE

3.1 Together for Children has a service contract with Sunderland City Council. The contract value paid in 2017/18 was £59m. Agreed reduction plans will decrease the contract sum by 2019/20. However, included in the contract is the requirement for an annual review and appropriate RPI increases.

3.2 The table below provides the draft summary financial information relating to the Fostering Service for 2017/18. These figures are included in the monthly report to the TfC Board.

Table 1: Fostering Service Expenditure: April 2017 to March 2018.

Category	Actual £	Budget £	Variance £
Employees (inc Agency)	873,935	717,313	(156,622)
Premises (Room Hire)	2,277	2,500	223
Car Mileage (Employee)	40,987	40,892	(95)
DBS / Medical Reports	89,667	82,809	(6,858)
Equipment (Foster Carers)	46,701	46,546	(155)
Publicity	20,005	10,000	(10,005)
Other Running Expenses	3,939	4,000	61
Foster Care Payments	5,171,706	5,346,454	174,748
IFAs	2,990,719	3,000,000	9,281
	9,239,936	9,250,514	10,578

3.3 It should be noted that, in the wider context of children looked after, the budget for the Fostering and Adoption service is not fixed and is responsive to increases in demand.

3.4 The key priority for the agency is to recruit more foster carers with a focus on recruiting carers who will care for older children and teenagers, or children with complex needs, or large sibling groups and target younger carers who will provide longer term stability for younger children coming into care.

3.5 To facilitate the recruitment of additional foster carers a review is underway, in relation to the foster payment framework, to bring it in line with regional neighbours and make TfC competitive in terms of recruitment and stable in terms of retention.

4. CONTACT

FOSTERING SERVICE MONITORING REPORT FORM
(ENGLAND)



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