

Summary Sheet

Council Report Corporate Parenting Panel on the 6th December 2016

Title: Rotherham Fostering Service Performance Report 2015-2016

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report: Ian Thomas, Strategic Director
CYPS

Report Author(s)

Ian Walker – Interim Head of Service, Children in Care

Ward(s) Affected

All

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report is an annual report intended to brief Corporate Parenting Panel on the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2015/16.
- 1.2 As well as providing data about activity in the service, this report will also detail service developments and improvements that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2016/17.
- 1.3 The report concludes by indicating action to be taken to address gaps in provision in 2016/17.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel receives this report and considers and comments on any issues arising.

List of Appendices Included:

Rotherham Fostering Service Annual Report
Rotherham Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

Background Papers:

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Corporate Parenting Panel

Council Approval Required:
No

Exempt from the Press and Public:
No

Title (Main Report)

Rotherham Fostering Service Annual Report 2015/16

1. Background

- 1.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2015/16.
- 1.2 The report provides performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Fostering Panel, and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2016/17.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The Fostering Service

Rotherham Borough Council Fostering Service operates within the Fostering National Minimum Standards, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (the "2011 Regulations"), and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, which form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services.

- 2.2 Prior to September 2013, local authority fostering services were inspected separately by Ofsted. Since then, inspection of local authority fostering services work is incorporated into the Single Inspection Framework which takes into account the role of fostering in the wider Children's Services Department.
- 2.3 In 2015 – 2016, the Fostering Service in Rotherham comprised two teams; the 'Recruitment Team' and the 'Support and Supervision Team'. At the time of writing this report, the service has recruited a third team manager in order to provide additional management oversight, and the team have now been separated into three teams, 'Recruitment'; which focuses on the recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers, 'Mainstream Support'; which focuses on the support and supervision of foster carers and 'Specialist Support'; who support, supervise Foster Plus carers, Staying Put arrangements, carers providing short break care for disabled children and Connected Carers.
- 2.4 In line with the Regulations, the service has a Fostering Panel chaired by a skilled and experienced independent social work professional. The Panel considers and makes 'recommendations' about the suitability of foster carer applicants and on the matching of children requiring long term placements.
- 2.5 The Head of Service for Looked After Children performs the role of Agency Decision Maker for the fostering service. The Agency Decision Maker considers and makes decisions (qualifying determinations) on Panel recommendations. The Agency Decision Maker also has responsibility to agree the continued suitability to foster following a foster carer's annual fostering review.

3. Panel Functions

- 3.1 Regulation 23(1) of the 2011 Regulations states that "the fostering service must maintain a list of persons who are considered by them to be suitable to be members of a fostering Panel ("the central list"), including one or more social workers who have at least three years' relevant post-qualifying experience'.

- 3.2 Regulation 23(4) states that *“...the fostering service must constitute one or more fostering Panels, as necessary, to perform the functions of a fostering Panel under these Regulations, and must appoint Panel members including:*
- (i) A person to chair the Panel who, in the case of any appointment made after 1st October 2011, must be independent of the fostering service provider, and;*
 - (ii) One or two persons who may act as chair if the person appointed to chair the Panel is absent or that office is vacant (“the vice chairs”) from the persons on the central list.*
- 3.3 Rotherham Foster Panel has the following primary functions (under Regulation 25(1) of the Fostering Regulations 2011:
- 3.3.1 It is to consider each application for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster parent (including “connected persons” under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010).
 - 3.3.2 Where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend any terms on which the approval is to be given.
 - 3.3.3 It is to recommend whether or not a person remains suitable to be a foster parent, and whether or not the terms of their approval (if any) remain appropriate
 - (i) on the first review and
 - (ii) on the occasion of any other review,
 if requested to do so by the fostering service (e.g. following allegations or complaints against foster carers).
 - 3.3.4 It matches children who have a plan for long-term fostering with suitable foster carers.
 - 3.3.5 For 2017 it is planned that the Panel will take a more rigorous quality assurance and safeguarding role of the care provided by our foster carers by formally considering the Foster Carer Review for every Rotherham carer at least every other year.

4. Panel Composition

- 4.1 The Panel maintains a comfortable number of Panel members on a central list. Each Panel member who served for a year had an annual appraisal within the year 2015-2016. The Panel membership includes members with a range of professional backgrounds and interests including social workers, foster carers, and adopter and virtual school members. Each member has many years of experience of public service and fostering in particular. The table below provides the details of the Central List as at 31st March 2016.

4.2

Type of Member

Independent Chair

Social Work Member (Locality Team Manager) and Vice Chair

Social Work Member (fostering team) and Vice Chair

Independent Member (Foster carers for Sheffield City Council)

Independent Member (Foster carer for Sheffield City Council)

Designated Nurse for Looked After Children

Virtual Head (Education) for Looked After Children

Social Work Member (Adoption Service).

Social Work Member (Fostering Team)

Social Work Member (Manager of the Children's Right Service)

Independent Member

- 4.3 Recent recruitment to Panel in 2015 - 2016 has been to the social work member and Vice Chair position. At the time of writing this report, a further independent member, is also being recruited. However, further work needs to be done around recruitment. In particular, it is clear that the composition of the central list would benefit from:

- A young person with "care" experience (e.g. care leaver)
- A representative of the BME community
- At least one elected member to attend each Panel. At the time of writing this report, one elected member is being recruited and will observe panel in December 2016 in order that she can make an informed decision about this.

- 4.4 In addition, with the increase of management oversight within the Fostering Service, the role of Panel Advisor has been extended across the fostering management team, which ensures that each manager has the opportunity to develop their skills and experience around Panel matters and decision making processes.

5. Panel Business 2015/16

- 5.1 There were twenty-one Foster Panels convened in 2015 – 2016, with eighty-six agenda items being discussed, an average of 4 items per Panel. The table below categorises these items.

5.2

Agenda Item	Statistics
Skills to Foster Assessment	13
Regulation 24 (connected carer) including extension, assessment update and assessment)	7
Foster carer First review	14
Deregistration (including resignations/retirements and end of connected carer placements	18
Long Term Matching (In House)	13
Long Term Matching (IFA)	13
Allegations Report	6
Change of Category	2

5.3 The Panel Advisor receives the draft reports to Panel and gives written feedback on the quality of the reports, where appropriate, as well as practise advice. The paperwork submitted to Panel is always shared seven days before Panel meets to comply with National Minimum Standards. Panel minutes are completed on a weekly basis and available for the Agency Decision Maker in a timely manner.

5.4 The Panel are highly motivated to check and challenge by appropriately maintaining the role of 'critical friend' to the Department with equal emphasis on both aspects. Where appropriate, the Panel will offer flexibility without compromising standards. In 2015 - 2016 a review of comments from Panel indicated that the quality of work was 'good' or 'required improvement', although there were areas to be improved upon, with a theme of documents being unsigned, missing summary sheets, and grammatical errors. It was clear that in presentations to Panel by social workers, that they knew the foster carers and were professional, confident and knowledgeable in their presentation to Panel. The views of the birth children and looked after children are not always documented clearly and the child's voice is sometimes lost in reports and this is an area that needs to be improved upon. In 2015 -2016, two training events were held for supervising social workers around the role of the supervising social worker and undertaking fostering reviews, the aim of which was to improve practice.

5.5 Training events for the Foster Panel are held annually and in 2015 this included:

20th April 2015	Education issues for children in care delivered by Lorraine Dale, Virtual School Head
9th November 2015	Fostering for Permanence – Yvonne Howe
21st December 2015	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council permanence and long term matching for children in foster carer

*Training planned for 2016 includes:-
'The Role of The Panel' (Coram Baaf)

5.6 Attending fostering panel for foster carers can be a daunting experience. The Fostering Service is mindful of this. Social Workers do prepare foster carers for this experience, and there is a welcome booklet available for foster carers prior to panel, which includes photographs of panel members and their role within it. Feedback from foster carers regarding their experience through assessment and panel has been positive in the year 2015 – 2016. Comments include:

- “ Our allocated social worker was professional at all times, easy to speak to and gave us the confidence to complete the work to be assessed”
- “ Our experience at panel was very good and we wouldn’t change anything”
- “ We were very nervous but the panel members made us feel very relaxed and they were very friendly”
- “We were both anxious about the panel. The photographs and information on all panel members helped. We had support from our social worker

6. Fostering Families – Placements

6.1 The Fostering Service is an integral section of Children and Young People’s Services, providing fostering opportunities to children in care through a range of fostering placements, which include:

6.2 Day care for foster carers who need to attend meetings or training events

6.3 Task Centred Placements which are placements for children entering care.

6.4 Long term permanence placements for children and young people who cannot return to birth family and where adoption is not the plan.

6.5 Family and friends foster care (Connected Carers) enabling children and young people who are unable to live with their parents, to be cared for by extended family members, friends or other people who are connected with them.

6.6 Fostering Plus is a Rotherham Borough initiative to accommodate Rotherham’s most vulnerable children, typically teenagers. Fostering Plus carers receive a weekly fee and high levels of support and therapeutic intervention in managing and sustaining placement, and in developing meaningful relationships to enable children in their care to achieve better outcomes. Within this reporting year, Rotherham had recruited four Foster Plus carers, with five children in placement and two additional emergency foster carers within the scheme who provide emergency out of hours support for children entering care in an emergency.

6.7 South Yorkshire Empower and Protect project is a project funded by the four neighbouring authorities, Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield. The project provides placements for children at risk or/or subject to CSE. Rotherham has successfully recruited four foster carers to this scheme, providing placements for six children. At the end of this reporting year, there were four children within these placements. Foster carers and children in care benefit from additional intensive support and therapeutic provision from the project, and as with Foster Plus are remunerated at a higher rate.

6.8 Aiming High for Disabled Children Families Together Scheme provides short break care for children with disabilities. The aim of this fostering provision is to provide respite for children with a disability to give a break to a family in order to enable the child to live at home. In 2015 – 2016, Rotherham had eleven Families Together carers.

- 6.9 At the end of year, Rotherham had a total of 162 Foster Carers providing care for 182 children. At the time of writing this report, the number of foster carers has increased to 166 with 199 children currently in placement. Thus in addition to increasing the numbers of foster carers (net) Rotherham Fostering has also increased the number of placements per fostering household and this will remain a focus of work for the Fostering Service in 2017.
- 6.10 Feedback from newly recruited foster carers has been positive, for example, one carer reported in this fostering year, "We are so happy and proud that we made the call to the fostering department as we know we will open our arms and our hearts to every child we will look after. We are waiting to invite them into our loving home. The service you have provided has been 100%".

7. Approvals, Deregistration and Resignations

- 7.1 In 2015 Rotherham Fostering Service implemented a recruitment strategy, the Local Hero campaign, which had a positive impact on recruitment. In the year 2014 – 2015, there were 147 enquires culminating in 18 foster carers being approved, a conversion rate of 11%. The National Average is 12%. In 2015 -2016, there were 195 initial enquiries into the service, but this culminated in only 13 foster carers being approved a conversation rate of 7%.
- 7.2 There were seventeen resignations during the year April 2015 – March 2016 which equates to 9.5 % of the in-house population; the national average being 13%. The reasons for deregistration are outlined below:

7.3

Reason for Resignation/Deregistration	Number
Deregistered. resigned following safeguarding/practice concern	3
Child in care turned 18 years and remained under 'Staying Put' arrangements	1
Adopted/SGO child placed	2
Changed in circumstances, including: Moved out of area Husband wanted a break from fostering Two had never taken a placement from approval due to work commitments. (approved for babies only) Five had been on hold for extensive period of time by choice of the foster carer	11

8.4 Of foster carers who left the service:

Placement Type	Number
Family and Friends	2
Fostering mainstream	8
Respite/ day care	7

8.5 In reference back to approvals and resignations, in 2015 – 2016; thirteen new foster carers were recruited by Rotherham Fostering Service, but the service ‘lost’ seventeen fostering families, a net decrease. However, in terms of placement capacity this is not necessarily the case. All fostering services lose carers during the year to retirement, deciding fostering is no longer for them, or that their family circumstances have changed, so there is a need to continually recruit significantly just to maintain capacity. As the resignations table demonstrated, many of the foster carers who were de-registered in the year were not and had not been taking child placements, so the carers who left the agency were not ‘productive’. In 2014 – 2015; 29 fostering households were resigned or deregistered, with a further 17 leaving the agency in 2015 – 2016. Despite this, the number of children placed within in-house fostering provision has increased. In 2013 – 2014 there were 163 children (41% of all looked after children) in Rotherham in-house foster care, whilst in 2014 – 2015, this had increased to 182 children (45% of all looked after children) and as of the end of this reporting year, this had increased again to 188 children. However, given that the child in care population has increased, the overall percentage of children placed in RMBC fostering provision had dipped to 43.5%. At the time of writing this report, there are currently 199 looked after children placed within in-house fostering provision. It also has to be noted that the number of children entering care continues to increase and so whilst the number of children within in-house provision increases, so too does that of children placed within IFA placements. Rotherham’s Sufficiency Strategy 2017-19 is designed to address this matter, placing more young people within in-house foster placements, increasing placement stability and supporting young people to achieve better outcomes. Within this strategy, there are a number of themes, which include:

- Carer payment and support
- Therapeutic provision
- Edge of care support
- Regionalisation of adoption
- Reunification

8.6 This combined approach aims to reduce the number of children entering care, reuniting children with their families where it is safe to do so, and providing training and therapeutic provision for foster carers for children who do enter care.

9. Children Placed in Foster Care - Information 2015 – 2016

9.1 As stated above one of the significant issues that Rotherham faces is the high number of children and young people that have been placed in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements. At the end of the year 2015 – 2016, there were 442 children in care. 188 of those children were

placed with Rotherham Borough foster carers, with 140 children placed in independent fostering agency placements, (IFA). This is a lower proportion than the majority of local authorities. In addition to this, Rotherham's in-house fostering population either live in/or on the fringes of the borough. This is not necessarily the case with independent fostering placements, and of those 140 children in IFA placements, despite 102 being within a 20 mile radius of their home postcode, only 22 children lived within borough.

- 9.2 This is of concern as it is well understood that the needs of children and young people can only be met effectively if they live in an environment that provides a high quality of care and support, generally within a family home setting and in a geographical location that is familiar. Wherever possible, children and young people should be placed within their own community which enables them to continue to have contact with the people and community of the most importance to them, thus promoting identify and a strong sense of self, fundamental to resilience in later life. In addition, placing children in the RMBC area ensures a better oversight and control over educational provision and other support services such as Health and CAMHS.
- 9.3 The Council has recognised that it will not meet its sufficiency of placement provision for looked after children without attracting additional carers to foster for Rotherham and ensuring existing foster carers are retained and developed. It is worthy of note that despite this matter being outside of this reporting year, that significant work has been undertaken by Rotherham Borough Council, Rotherham Fostering Service and Rotherham fostering families to understand what factors would attract and retain foster carers. This has culminated in substantial investment into a new initiative that incorporates an increase of the foster carer's skills payment to incentivise and attract new foster carers and a support element that includes training and support to retain and develop established foster carers. In addition capacity will be further increased over the course of 2017 by the development of a more fit for purpose emergency foster carer provision and the continued availability of the Pathways to Care scheme whereby foster carers can seek capital investment to extend their properties to enable them to foster more children.
- 9.4 In addition to this, whilst 2015-2016 only saw 13 foster carers being approved as detailed in the previous section; in the first six month period of 2016-2017, there have already been 13 foster carers approved, with a further 16 in mid-assessment. At the time of writing this report, there are currently 198 children placed with in-house foster carers, an increase of 10 placements from year end. With the increased 'offer', the commitment of the fostering service, fostering families and Rotherham's communications team, it is envisaged that with a new full year with our improved payment package and an improving service we will recruit more new carers and lose less in 2016/17, exceeding its target of an increased annual net gain of 15 additional active placements for each year between 2016 – 2018 (45 placements in total). Whilst outside of this reporting year, it should be noted that fostering recruitment, training and assessment has been increasingly busy over the past 6 months with an average of 30 enquiries per month. The skills to foster training is delivered every 6 weeks and is planned for a 12 month period. Feedback about having experienced foster carers at the skills to foster training is always positive. Prospective foster carers love to hear about "real life" experiences from foster carers.

10. Placement Stability

- 10.1 Placement stability continues to be a factor in offering an effective Fostering Service and crucial to ensuring that the Council delivers good outcomes to each looked after child. Stability is measured by two national indicators, NI062 relating to children who experience three placement moves within 12 months and NI063 which relates to children looked after for two and a half years who have been in the same placement for two years.
- 10.2 There has been a continued performance improvement in NI063 placement stability figure which was 72.7% at year end. This is higher than in 2014/15 (68.8%) and 2014/14 (71.9%). It is also higher than statistical neighbours, (67.6%) and higher than the national top quartile threshold of 71.1%.
- 10.3 The national indicator NI062 has also evidenced improvement in performance at end of year reporting, but at 11.9% at March 2016 is outside of the target of 10%, higher than the national average, (11%) and higher than statistical neighbours, (9.6%). Whilst higher than Rotherham's target, it does represent improved performance from 12% figure last year but does need to improve further.
- 10.4 It has to be acknowledged that IFAs can provide stable long term placements for some young people. There are currently 58 Rotherham young people who have been in the same IFA placement for longer than 2 years (37% of total). However, between February and July 2016 four in-house placements came to an unplanned end where 18 IFA placements were similarly disrupted. It could be argued that this is not surprising given that in general older and more challenging looked after young people are more likely to be placed within the IFAs. The emphasis within Rotherham is that placement stability is the key to good outcomes being achieved by young people as opposed to the source of that stability. As a result, although Rotherham is aiming to grow its internal foster carer provision it is also keen to develop a 'one market' approach to placements with a positive commissioning relationship with the Independent Fostering Agencies remaining a key aspect of the Placement Sufficiency Strategy.
- 10.5 In terms of permanency for children in care, in 2015 -2016, 26 fostering permanency matches were recommended by fostering panel and approved by the ADM, this compares with 22 in 2014 -2015. Rotherham recognises that there is still work to be done around placement stability and the timeliness of permanency planning for children in care and in recognition of this the fostering service are currently recruiting a permanency worker who will sit within the fostering specialist team, along with the connected person's assessor. A foster carer recently commented about the permanency match made with her family, "Our experience of the long term matching process was exceptionally child focused".
- 10.6 The team will also take lead responsibility in assessing private fostering arrangements which has previously sat outside the fostering service. The intention is to build a specialist knowledge in the area of permanence for children in care outside of adoption and work with the locality services and Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that permanency planning is considered when a child enters care to avoid the drift and delay noted by OFSTED in 2014.

11. Unplanned Endings and Disruptions

- 11.1 Unplanned endings are when a foster placement ends outside of the child's care planning arrangements. A disruption occurs when a child who has been permanently matched long term within that placement moves as a result of the placement breakdown.
- 11.2 In 2015 -2016, there were twelve unplanned endings of placement involving fifteen children in care. Of those children, four were in a permanency placement with three fostering families. One carer left the agency following disruption, one carer had the category of approval reduced to one child only, and the other foster carer went on to provide care to another child where the plan is long term.
- 11.3 Four children were moved from three placements as a result of safeguarding concerns. Of those, three foster carers, one foster carer left fostering, one carer following a recommendation of deregistration appealed to the Independent Review Mechanism, (IRM) and the Agency Decision Maker on consideration, reapproved the fostering status, one foster carers category of approval was changed following a foster carer review.
- 11.4 Of the remaining seven children, these were in task centred (short term) placements. One foster carer left the agency and one foster carer's Category of Approval was changed. Four went on to successfully provide foster placements for children in care.
- 11.5 This compares with forty placement disruptions that took place, during the same timeframe from within independent fostering agencies.
- 11.6 Rotherham Fostering Service take permanency for children seriously, and as a result of this the main stream fostering team manager will take lead responsibility for chairing all placement disruption meetings, and will present findings back to fostering panel for a check and challenge overview. They will also present a quarterly report to the Corporate Parenting Panel highlighting any thematic issues and action plans as per the recommendation arising from the recent OFSTED Monitoring Visit.

12. Staffing in the Fostering Service

- 12.1 It has been a year of change and development within the Fostering Service, which has seen the appointment of a Temporary Head of Service for Children in Care and a newly appointed Service Manager. Recruitment Team Manager, Andy Symcox took the decision to retire from fostering after giving over 30 years to Rotherham Borough Council Children's Service. The foster service has also recruited a third team manager, which will increase management.

13. Fostering Supervision and Support

- 13.1 Foster Care is a demanding task involving significant responsibilities. Support to foster carers begins at the point they make contact to the service, which includes telephone support, training and assessment from the recruiting team.

- 13.2 From the point of approval, foster carers all have a dedicated supervising social worker. Best practice includes formal handover from recruitment worker to supervising social worker with the foster carer. The recruiting social worker will be consulted around matching, and in some circumstances will undertake joint visits with the supervising social worker to support the first placement where it is appropriate to do so.
- 13.3 Foster Carers require a level of support and supervision commensurate with the tasks they perform on behalf of the Local Authority. Foster Carers are visited every six weeks, with newly approved foster carers visited/supported more intensely at the start of their fostering journey.
- 13.4 The supervising social worker continues to support and guide the foster carer through their journey through fostering, by providing guidance, support and development to the foster carer. Learning and development continues from the point of approval through a carers fostering journey. Following a recent educational training event, one foster carer commented, "I will always be a good advocate for a child within the planning for their education and do my best to support his/her education". Another carer commented about her understanding of children in care, "We have learned that each young person differs. To be a sympathetic to each child's development – try to be as open as possible and how things differ from when we were younger", There are no foster carers within the fostering service who do not have a Supervising Social Worker.

14. Activities and Events

- 14.1 The Fostering Service host an annual diary of events to fostering families and this is foster carer led in consultation with the department. In 2014 -2015, this included:
- Fostering family Christmas celebration
 - Local Hero party to mark the end of the fostering fortnight
 - A Halloween Party
 - Easter Party
 - Parties in the park run throughout the summer vacation
- 14.2 These events offer an opportunity for foster carers to network, normalise a child in care's experience by enabling them to spend time with other children in care, and provides informal support to foster carers. Rotherham Fostering also contributed to the Children in Care council's Eid celebration this year.
- 14.3 Celebration Event: there is an annual celebration event for foster carers, which is generally hosted by the service in November, and held at the Carlton Park Hotel. This is always looked forward to, and well attended.
- 14.4 Support Groups: there are four formal support groups hosted across Rotherham and facilitated by supervising social workers:-
- An induction year support group (Unity Centre) (morning)
 - Dinnington (evening)
 - Swinton (afternoon)
 - Listerdale (morning)

- 14.5 The aim of the four support groups is to provide a greater opportunity for foster carers to participate and gain support.
- 14.6 Peer support: foster carers are routinely buddied up with other carers, who provide coaching and peer support to other foster carers.
- 14.7 Sons and Daughters groups: are run monthly and include a calendar of events and opportunities for fostering sons and daughters. Groups are run monthly and facilitated by the fostering supervision team, with activities including a trip to the coast, a 'paint a pot' event, and bowling.

15. Consultation:

15.1 In 2015, there were three Foster Carer Forums, on 11th May 2015, 8th June 2015 and 20th October 2015, when the views of the foster carers were listened to, which culminated in a 'you said – we did' presentation to foster carers. Changes to the service as a result of this consultation included:

- Updating the Rotherham Fostering Website, Twitter and Facebook to be more foster carer friendly
- Held a joint training event with foster carers and the contact team, hosted by the therapeutic team to ensure shared understanding around children's emotional needs and improve communications across the services
- Increased support groups to give more choice and options across fostering
Introduced a recruitment hub comprising of foster carers, marketing lead and fostering

Feedback from the foster carers regarding the Fostering Service, included comments, such as:

- "There are approachable and listening team managers"
- "There is always someone there on the end of the phone"
- "I have a good quality Supervising Social Worker who is brilliant"
- The fostering team are solid"

15.2 In 2016, there were a further three foster carer forums around fees and payments, which again culminated in a 'you said – we did' presentation to foster carers. Changes to the service as a result of this were:

- Revised foster carer payments to attract and retain foster carers
- Introduced better training provision to be rolled out in 2017
- Introduced better support to carers in crisis with the provision of a fostering support worker to be rolled out in 2017

15.3 Foster carers were also consulted about the recruitment campaign which culminated in the Local Hero campaign, with foster carers and birth children taking a leading role in this.

15.4 Whilst outside of this reporting year, Rotherham foster carers, looked after children and birth children were consulted and highly involved in the recent Children in Care 'Pride of Rotherham' event which may in part have led to the success of this. At this event the contributions of sons and daughters in

fostering was also acknowledged and celebrated with an award and certificate.

15.5 Complaints and compliments: There is a higher percentage of compliments about foster carers and the fostering service as compared with the wider council, and a lower percentage of complaints. During the period 2015 – 2016, 0.4% of all complaints made into children's social care were made about the fostering service, whilst 19.5% of compliments were made about the fostering service, with a further 7% compliments being specifically about foster carers.

15.6 Training: Rotherham Fostering has a training coordinator who plans and coordinates training and ensures that mandatory training is in place for foster carers. The table below represents examples of the training and development evidence by foster carers in 2014 -2015.

15.7

Qualification	Number
CWDC Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care	23.00
Introduction to The Role of Foster Carer/Record Keeping	59.00
Emotional Health and Wellbeing	98.00
Attachment of children in care	30.00
Introduction to Separation, Grief and Loss	41.00
Therapeutic Parenting course	22.00
Managing Challenging Behaviour	14.00
Life story work	
Safeguarding: CSE training/ E-safety for Foster Carers	91.00
Education: LAC Education and Personal Education Plan	124.00
Health:	20.00
Introduction to Assessing the Health Needs of children in care	26.00
Talking about Sex and Relationships	89.00
First Aid Course and Paediatric First Aid	
Culture/Equality and Diversity	85.00
Health:	
Leaving Care and Staying Put	18.00

16. Fostering Recruitment Activity and Outcomes

- 16.1 The service enjoys an excellent relationship with the Communications Team and employs its own recruitment officer. In this financial year the recruitment material 'Local Hero' was utilised to great effect. The advertisements calling for members of the public were very visible around Rotherham. This led to an increase of expressions of interest into fostering, and at the time of writing this report, the recruitment strategy for this year is looking promising and the expressions of interest is increasing month by month, with an equally increased rate of approval.
- 16.2 The Fostering Service has monthly meetings with a hub of twelve foster carers who help with the recruitment activities by promoting fostering recruitment across Rotherham. They also promote placement stability and fostering cohesion through a calendar of fostering family activity, parties and events as detailed previously in the report.
- 16.3 Foster carers were central to the Local Hero campaign, including interviews with foster carers and involved birth children. This campaign has yielded dividends but needs developing further.
- 16.4 Through the year 2015 – 2016, there was a calendar of monthly recruitment activity, where the fostering service attended events to promote fostering. There are monthly drop in sessions, adverts in the local press, radio campaigns and posters in and around Rotherham. Fostering is advertised on the back of bus tickets and in Rotherham United Football Club's seasonal fixture cards and in 2015 – 2016 reporting year, fostering information flyers were included in the Council Tax documents that were sent out to every household across Rotherham.
- 16.5 The Fostering Service promotes fostering via the internet, using
Fostering website www.facebook.comhttp://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk/
[Facebook www.facebook.comhttp://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk/](http://www.facebook.comhttp://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk/)
[Twitter https://twitter.com/fosterrotherham](https://twitter.com/fosterrotherham)
<http://rotherhamhero.co.uk/>
- 16.6 At the time of writing this report, there is currently a fostering campaign being introduced with SYEP (Barnsley, Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster Trust) promoting fostering for teenagers and siblings, and the filming for this was completed on 11th October 2016. Three of Rotherham Foster Carers were interviewed as part of this campaign along with foster carers from across South Yorkshire, so this is an exciting time moving forward in fostering.

17. Key Challenges, Developments, Targets and Actions for 2016 – 2017

- 17.1 Rotherham Fostering Service need to continually review practices and consider innovative ways of recruiting and attracting foster carers to Rotherham to meet its target of fifteen new foster placements by 2017. New schemes planned for 2016/17 include:

- STAR parties (start thinking about recruitment) to be rolled out across the fostering community
- Development of a Fostering recruitment hub (foster carer led recruitment)
- South Yorkshire wide initiative
- The recruitment of a support worker and fostering resource worker to help recruit and retain foster carers
- Out of hours – fostering specific
- A clear assessment of the strengths and vulnerabilities of the service and associated action plan, which will include:
 - A targeted review of initial enquires into the service in the previous year to understand barriers to proceeding to assessment for potential applicants, and
 - A targeted review of carers who left the agency in the last three year period to understand any lessons to be learned by the service to improve practice, and
 - Consultation event with foster carers

18. Summary

- 18.1 As with Rotherham Borough Council, Rotherham Fostering Service is on an improvement journey. It is acknowledged that in order to reach the sufficiency plans, Rotherham Fostering need to recruit and retain more foster carers, enabling Rotherham Looked After Children to be placed within the community which they know and where they belong. Whilst this is a challenging time, the Fostering Service are motivated and up to the challenge. The recent review of the support and financial arrangements for foster carers, along with the recruitment and marketing strategy is central in its ambitions being realised.

19. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 19.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel accept and recommend this report.

20. Consultation

- 20.1 Not applicable

21. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 21.1 Not applicable

22. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 22.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The Fostering Team, in conjunction with Service Manager and Head of Service continues to monitor the Fostering Team spend in line with RMBC finance team.

23. Legal Implications

- 23.1 There are no direct legal implications to this report, save to say that the Fostering Team operate within the relevant statutory framework set out earlier in this report together with Statutory Guidance and the Council's policy and procedures.

24. Human Resources Implications

24.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report.

25. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

25.1 Not applicable.

26. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

26.1 There are no direct implications within this report, other than to say that the Fostering Team are compliant with the Human Rights Act and Equal Opportunities Policy.

27. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

27.1 Not applicable.

28. Risks and Mitigation

28.1 Strong managerial oversight by Directorship Leadership Team. along with fortnightly Performance Management Meetings, mitigates risks by holding managers and workers to account for practice and enabling a climate for managers to check and challenge practice across services.

29. Accountable Officer(s)

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director CYPS

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Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care

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Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- N/A

Director of Legal Services:- N/A

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-N/A

Anne-Marie Banks - Service Manager, Adoption, Fostering and Therapeutic Team
Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care

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