

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Panel April 2017

Title: Rotherham Fostering Service Performance Report 2016 – 2017

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Mel Meggs (Deputy Strategic Director, CYPS)

Report Author(s)

Anne-Marie Banks, Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption

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 2016/17.

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 2017/18.

2 Recommendations

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

List of Appendices Included:

None.

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 2016 – 2017

1. Background

- 1.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2016 – 2017.
- 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 2017/18.

Key Issues

2. The Fostering Service

- 2.1 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'. In 2016 the service successfully 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, Private Fostering 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 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)

- Where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend any terms on which the approval is to be given
- 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)
- It matches children who have a plan for long-term fostering with suitable foster carers

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 2016-2017. The panel membership includes members with a range of professional backgrounds and interests including elected members 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

Name of Panel Member	Type of Member
Fred Lillie	Independent Chair
Jenny Hosker	Social Work Member (Locality Team Manager) and Vice Chair
Sue Pickering	Social Work Member (fostering team)
Roberta Lyne	Social Work Member (fostering team)
June Watson	Independent Member (foster carers for Sheffield City

	Council)
Betty Brothers	Independent Member (foster carer for Sheffield City Council
Karen Holgate	Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Lorraine Dale	Virtual Head (education) for Looked After Children
Tina Hohn	Virtual School (education) for Looked After Children
Jane Sandland	Social Work Member (adoption service).
Katie Duffield	Social Work Member (fostering team)
Andrew Bosmans	Independent Member
David Pickering	Independent Member
Cllr Victoria Cusworth	Elected Member
Sara Thomson	Social Work Member (adoption service).

4.2 Recent recruitment to Panel in 2015 - 2016 has been Cllr Victoria Cusworth and Andrew Bosmans who joined the panel earlier this year. At the time of writing this report, a further Elected Member has expressed an interest in joining panel, and this is being progressed by business support. The panel would still benefit from:

- A young person with “care” experience (e.g. care leaver)
- A representative of the BME community

4.3 Last year a decision was taken to share the role of Panel Advisor role across the fostering management team to ensure that each manager had the opportunity to develop their skills and experience around panel matters and decision making processes. However, it quickly became apparent that this impacted on consistency around decision making and so it was decided to separate this role and delegate to the Recruitment Team Manager.

5. Panel Business 2015/16

5.1 There were 21 Foster Panels convened in 2016 – 2017, with 104 agenda items discussed, an average of 5 items per Panel. The table below categories these items:

Agenda Item	Statistics
Skills to Foster Assessment	23
Re-assessment as a single foster carer	1
Regulation 24 (connected carer) including extension, assessment update and assessment.	9
Foster carer First review	10
Review following practice issues	2
Annual Review (Biannual presentation to panel)	13
Deregistration (including resignations/retirements and end of connected carer placements. <i>*a number of presentations to panel pertained to registrations from the previous reporting year</i>	21*
Long Term Matching (In House)	6
Long Term Matching (IFA)	5
Allegations / Investigations/ Disruption Reports	12
Change of category	2

5.2 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.

5.3 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 2016 – 2017

5.4 The feedback from Panel Chair indicates that the quality of reports presented to panel is generally good, with good compliance with statutory requirements, detailed information and reasonable level of analysis of information. For new approvals, all of the statutory checks are completed before presentation to panel and the practice of asking prospective foster carers to nominate more than the minimum number of personal references demonstrates good safeguarding practice. Foster carer reviews are invariably held within timescales and have detailed reports from the supervising social workers and detailed summaries and record of discussion on the part of the Fostering Reviewing Officer. Where carers are jointly approved it is normal practice for both carers to attend their review and it is rare for this not to happen. Most foster carers make a written contribution to their annual review and a good proportion of foster children and birth children also contribute. A Key focus of development in 2017 – 2018 will be to support more children's social workers to actively contribute to foster care reviews by providing written contributions to the foster care review process.

5.5 Most primary foster carers maintain a satisfactory training record and the fostering 'offer' to carers in 2016 – 2017 was extended to increase training opportunities to all foster carers which will be rolled out in 2017 – 2018.

5.7 The decision was taken earlier this year to present foster carer reviews at panel on a biannual basis. This is in-line with best practice as it enables more transparency, oversight and scrutiny of the service.

5.8 Training events for the Foster Panel scheduled in 2017 includes:

22nd May 2017: Private Fostering Arrangements

3rd July 2017: Reg 24 Connected Carers Training

Panel Member Training (Roles and Responsibilities) (Date to be confirmed)

Safeguarding Training (Date to be confirmed)

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:

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

Task Centred Placements which are placements for children entering care

Long term permanence placements are for children and young people who cannot return to birth family and where adoption is not the plan. Children in permanent placements remain with their foster carers up to the age of 18 years and beyond under 'Staying Put' arrangements.

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

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 4 Foster Plus carers, with 5 children in placement and 2 additional emergency foster carers within the scheme who provide emergency out of hours support for children entering carer in an emergency.

South Yorkshire Empower and Protect was a fostering scheme established through an innovation funding bid then co-produced by the four neighbouring authorities, Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield. The project provided placements for children at risk of, or subject to child sexual exploitation. Rotherham successfully recruited 4 foster carers to this scheme, providing placements for 6 of Rotherham's children in care. The local authority decided to end this arrangement in March 2017 as it is confident that Rotherham can provide this service with a high level of support and supervision from the fostering service, the therapeutic team and wider social care services. From 2017, this scheme will sit within Rotherham's Foster Plus Scheme. Intensive therapeutic provision will be provided by Rotherham's Therapeutic Team, and as Foster Plus carers, they will a higher level of supervision and a higher remuneration rate.

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 2016 – 2017, Rotherham had 14 Families Together carers.

7. Approvals, Deregistration and resignations

- 7.1 The negative media attention following the publication of the Jay Report and child sexual exploitation continued to impact on the recruitment of foster carers during 2015 – 2016, despite the Local Hero campaign. 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 conversion rate of 7%.
- 7.2 The Fostering Service are pleased to report that in 2016 – 2017 there were 191 enquires into fostering culminating in 23 foster carer approvals, with potential placement capacity for 30 children (placements - excluding respite and short break care for disabled children); a conversion rate of 12%, putting the Fostering Service in line with the National Average.
- 7.3 There were 13 resignations during the year 2016 – 2017, which equates to 7.6 % of the in-house population; the national average being 13%. The reasons for deregistration are outlined below:

Reason for Resignation/Deregistration	Number
Child in care turned 18 years and remained under 'Staying Put' arrangements '	1
Carer secured SGO for child/ren in placement This involved 3 children; a sibling group of two and a child with complicated health needs	2
Changes in circumstances, including: Moving to a smaller property without bedroom space Began working full time, (carer approved for baby placements) Retired after a long career of fostering Looked after a child under Short Break Care for Disabled Children from being a child into adulthood Respite foster carers no longer able to provide a service	5 4

Of foster carers who left the service:

Placement Type	Number
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Family and Friends	1
Fostering mainstream	8
Respite/ day care	4

- 7.4 In reference back to approvals and resignations, in 2016 – 2017; 23 new foster carers were recruited by Rotherham Fostering Service, but the service 'lost' 13, which is a net gain of 10 foster carers. In terms of placement capacity, provision increased by 31 additional potential placements, (excluding short break care for disabled children and respite only carers) and lost 9 placements, (excluding short break care for disabled children and respite foster carers); a net gain of 21 potential placement opportunities.
- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 In reviewing the resignations from 2016 – 2017; 3 children had their permanency secured through Special Guardianship arrangements, (SGO), whilst this was at a loss to the fostering service, it was the best outcome for these children. In particular this permanency included a young sibling group of two children and a child with significant health needs. Another fostering family resigned as the child they were looking after had reached 18 years of age and was remaining with the family, which again is a good outcome for this young person who remains committed to him, and whilst a loss to the service is in this child's best interests. One foster carer decided to resign after committing to over 20 years of fostering for the authority. This equates to five of the nine mainstream foster carers who left the agency in 2016 -2017. In addition 4 respite only foster carers left the agency due to their family circumstance; they were not able to commit to the agency. These carers had not been able to offer a service to the agency in 2016 – 2017 but still required the statutory visits and reviews expected as foster carers. 1 'families together' carer retired after the child they had offered short breaks to turned 18 years.

7.7 Comments by carers who have left the agency have included:

"We have enjoyed fostering for Rotherham since 1994 and the decision has not been taken lightly... Thank you to everyone in fostering for giving us your support over the years".

"It has been an honour to provide foster care for Rotherham children"

"I can only sing the praises of Rotherham's fostering team...I hope to return to fostering for Rotherham at some point in the future"

"We would like to place on record our sincere thanks for the support offered by the department over the past sixteen years"

"We would like to thank RMBC for their support over the last 5 years ... for both providing us the opportunity to help and for the support you have provided us over the years".

"Due to (child) needs we are not sure when we will be able to return to fostering, but be assured ... we will definitely be back in touch... Our overall experience with Rotherham fostering has been really amazing".

"We have thoroughly enjoyed being foster carers for RMBC and we would recommend it to friends and family"

"We would very much like to return to fostering for RMBC in the not too distant future".

"We have enjoyed the experience ... We would like to thank RMBC Fostering Services for their support and encouragement and wish everybody well"

"It has been a pleasure knowing you and working with you, thank you"

7.8 At year end 2015 – 2016, the number of children placed in RMBC foster placements was 180 children. This has increased to 201 in 2016 – 2017 with

an increase in fostering households to 169. In addition to this, there are a further 8 Regulation 24 (temporary approved foster carers) looking after 10 connected children, and 1 child in the fostering stage of a fostering to adopt (early permanence placement) equating to 213 children in RMBC foster care, (44% of total number of children in care). Many of the temporary approved foster carers will go on to secure alternative permanency arrangements for the children that they are caring for, such as Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangement Orders, whilst the child in the early permanent placement is likely to be adopted meaning that these children will be no longer looked after children.

7.9 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 180 children (45% of all looked after children). At the time of writing this report there are 201 children placed in RMBC foster placements, (42% of all looked after children), with additional children being placed in other types of fostering provision including temporary approved foster carers and early permanency, when this is factored in, the % of children in Rotherham placements increases to 44% of the looked after population. As can be demonstrated above the numbers of children being placed with RMBC foster carers has increased year on year. However, it should also 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 foster placements.

7.10 Rotherham's Sufficiency Strategy 2016 – 2020 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

- 7.11 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. The foster carer enhanced payment was introduced at the end of 2016. Additional training and support will be rolled out through 2017 – 2018 whilst edge of care developments will be established in 2017. Whilst these initiatives were agreed in October 2017, the full impact has not yet been embedded.

8. Children Placed in Foster Care - Information 2016 – 2017

- 8.1 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 time of writing this report there were around 480 children in care compared with 442 at year end 2015 – 2016.
- 8.2 As of March 31st 2017 there were around 176 children in IFA placement which equates to 37% of the children in care population. Rotherham fostering service, however are on the right trajectory to redress this placing more Rotherham children with more Rotherham fostering families as Rotherham's in-house fostering population either live in/on the fringes of the borough which is not necessarily the case with independent fostering placements. Of those 176 children in IFA placements, despite 115 (65%) being within a 20 mile radius of their home postcode, only 39 children (22%) lived within borough. 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 identity 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 Community Adolescent Mental Health Service, (CAMHS).

8.4 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. As a result of this, Rotherham Borough Council has significantly invested in the support and allowances offered to foster carers to attract and retain carers as noted above, and whilst in its early stages, the fostering service are already benefitting from this 'offer', which is evidenced in the significant increase of approvals and placements 2016 – 2017.

8.5 With the increased 'offer', the commitment of the fostering service, fostering families and Rotherham's communications team, it is envisaged that the service will continue on its upward trajectory, recruiting more new carers and losing less in 2017/18.

9. Placement Stability

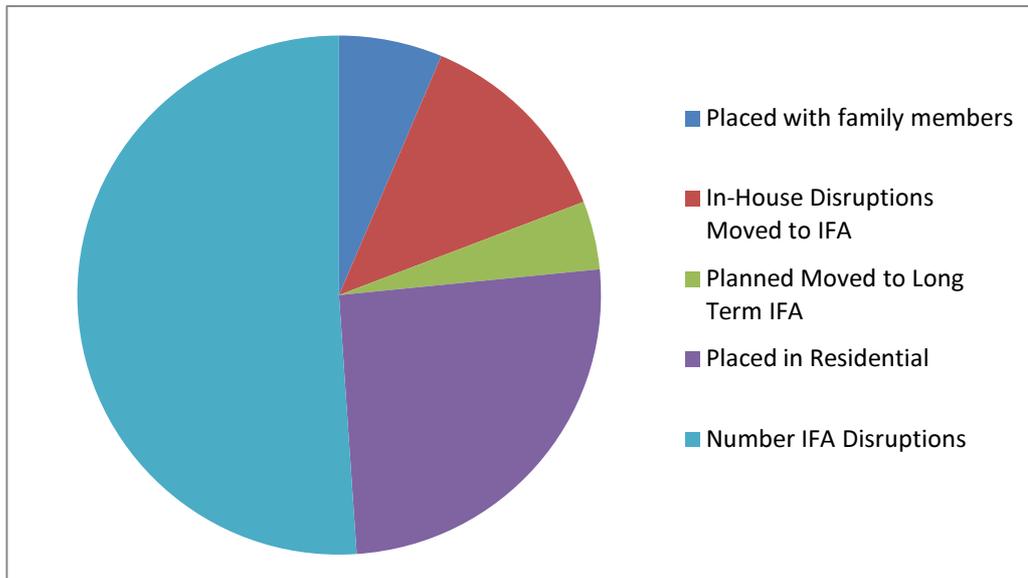
9.1 Placement stability continues to be a factor in offering an effective Fostering Service and crucial to ensuring that the Council delivers good outcomes to each looked after child. Stability is measured by 2 national indicators, NI062 relating to children who experience 3 placement moves within 12 months and NI063 which relates to children looked after for 2.5 years who have been in the same placement for 2 years.

	Roth 2013/14	Roth 2014/15	Roth 2015/16	Roth 2016/17	England 2015/16
No. of long term LAC placements stable for at least 2 years (NI063)	108/157	110/153	109/150	100/147	-
% long term LAC placements stable for at least 2 years (NI063)	68.8%	71.9%	72.7%	68%	67%
No. of LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months (NI062)	44/393	49/409	56/431	55/487	-
% LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months (NI062)	11.2%	12.0%	13.0%	11.29%	11.0%

- 9.2 There has been a decrease in performance around placement stability in 2016 – 2017 as demonstrated above. Last year the NI063 placement stability figure which was 72.7% at year-end, this year the figure is 68%.
- 9.3 Of those 47 children who have not experienced placement stability within the two year timeframe, 3 children moved out of foster placement to live with family members, two were planned moves into permanent placements, 6 were in-house fostering disruptions where the children later moved into IFA foster placements, 12 were residential placement moves, and 24 were IFA foster placement disruptions. The age range of these 47 children is profiled below:

Age Groups	No of Children
0 – 5 years	2
6 – 10 years	11
11 + years	34

Children in care for 2 ½ years who have not been in stable placement for 2 years.



9.4 The national indicator NI062 has evidenced improvement in performance at end of year reporting, but at 11.29% at March 2016 is outside of the target of 10%, higher than the national average, (11%). Whilst higher than Rotherham's target, it does represent improved performance from 13% figure last year, but does need to improve further.

9.5 In terms of permanency for children in care, in 2016 – 2017, 11 fostering permanency matches were recommended by fostering panel and approved by the ADM, this compares with 26 in 2015 – 2016; a reduction in performance. This is an area that needs to be improved upon in 2017 – 2018 to avoid drift in care. Rotherham recognises that there is still work to be done around placement stability and the timeliness of permanency planning for children in care. The high turnover of locality social workers has had a detrimental impact on permanency planning, as workers have not known children well enough to confidentially progress long term matches. The fostering service did recruit a permanency worker in 2015 which improved performance in that year. However, the post is currently being dedicated to developing practice, awareness and assessing private fostering arrangements which has

previously sat outside the fostering service. Once this is embedded, the worker will lead on both areas jointly. 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.

10. Unplanned Endings & Disruptions

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 In 2015 -2016, there were 12 unplanned endings of placement involving 15 children in Rotherham foster care. In 2016 – 2017 there were 11 unplanned endings involving 12 children and 10 Rotherham fostering families. One carer left the agency following a disruption of two children. Five carers had their category of approval amended as a result of the disruption. Two carers were placed on hold until a review of the disruption could be explored and to consider their terms of approval, one carer is providing respite care for the agency.
- 10.3 Of the 11 children, 6 were long term matched, the remaining 5 children were in task centred (short term) placements. Key themes include:
- The necessity for good matching, and information sharing even in emergency placements
 - Child's significant needs and complexity of placement
 - Communication between locality social workers, fostering and foster carers
 - The age of the child. (Of the 11 placement ends since April 2013, 8 children were 11+ years, 2 were under ten years of age, and the placement ended as a result of the carers ill-health, which led her to leave the agency, the other was younger child placed in an emergency placement with a newly approved foster carer)
 - Change of social worker
 - Over-optimistic expectations

- 10.4 This compares with 67 placement disruptions that took place, during the same timeframe from within independent fostering agencies. 8 of these children had been in placement for two years.
- 10.5 Rotherham Fostering Service take permanency for children seriously, and as a result of this the main stream fostering team manager took lead responsibility for chairing all placement disruption meeting, and began presenting these to panel. The findings of which will be presented to Corporate Parenting Panel highlighting any thematic issues and action plans later this year.

11. Staffing in the Fostering Service

- 11.1 It has been a year of change and development within the Fostering Service, which has seen the appointment of a Head of Service for Children in Care and a Service Manager. Rotherham's recruitment team manager also 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 oversight. In terms of social workers, the service has seen the retirement of two long standing members of staff who offered many years of service to the authority. Their departure will invariably resonate with foster carers, but with the recruitment of a new generation of workers into the service, new ways of thinking and practice and the continued high level of support offered to carers, the service will go from strength to strength.

12. Fostering Supervision and Support

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 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.

12.3 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.

12.4 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. There are no foster carers within the fostering service who do not have a Supervising Social Worker.

13. Activities and Events

13.1 The Fostering Service host an annual diary of events to fostering families and this is foster carer led in consultation with the department. In 2016 – 2017, 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
- Pride of Rotherham – achievement celebration for children in care

13.2 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.

13.3 Rotherham host an annual celebration event for foster carers, which is generally hosted by the service in November, and in 2016, this was held at the Consort Suite. As always looked forward to, and well attended.

13.4 **Support Groups:** there are four formal support groups hosted across Rotherham and facilitated by supervising social workers and foster team manager:-

- An induction support group for carer in their first two years of fostering (Unity Centre) (morning)
- Dinnington (evening)
- Rockingham (afternoon)
- Listerdale for carers with children aged 0 – 4 years (morning)

The aim of the four support groups is to provide a greater opportunity for foster carers to participate and gain support.

Peer support: foster carers are routinely buddied up with other carers, who provide coaching and peer support to other foster carers.

Sons and Daughters groups: were run monthly, but due to the low take up of the offer, this has been reviewed to be facilitated on a quarterly basis, and targeted at children aged 11 – 16 years. Each meeting will incorporate an activity and consultation element to listen to the views of birth children involved in fostering.

14. Consultation:

14.1 In 2016 – 2017, there have been 3 foster carer forums around fees and payments, which culminated in a ‘you said – we did’ presentation to foster carers. Changes to the service as a result of this were:

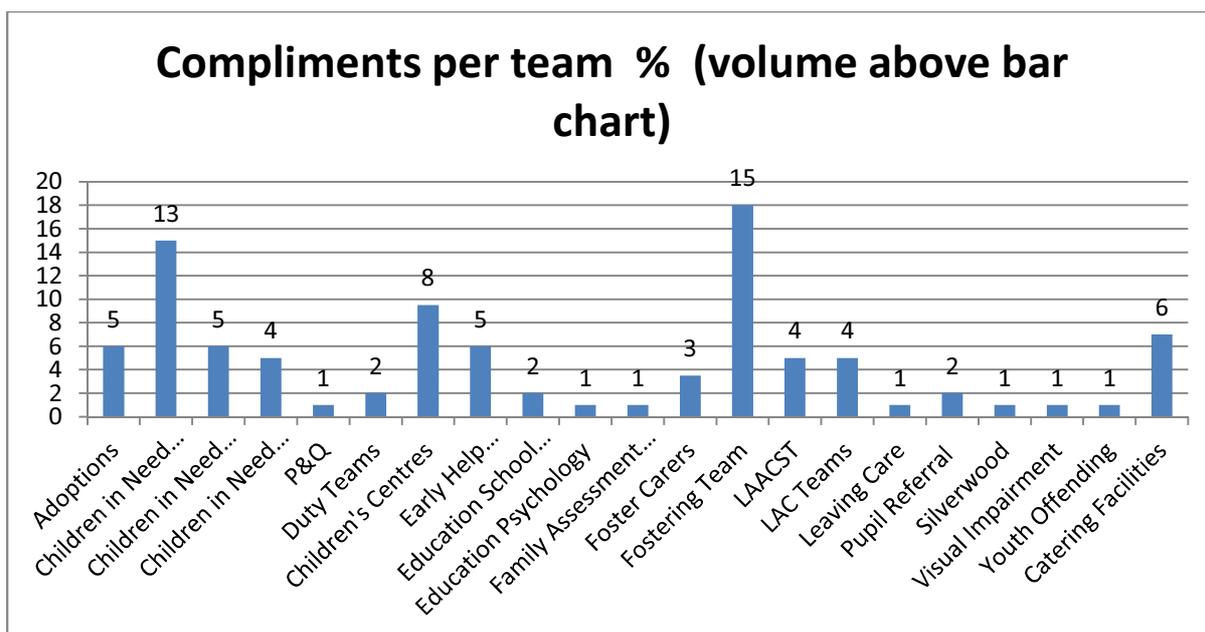
- Revised foster carer payments to attract and retain foster carers
- Introduced better training provision to be rolled out in 2017
- Introduce better support to carers in crisis with the provision of a fostering support worker to be rolled out in 2017

14.2 Rotherham foster carers were also consulted and highly involved in the 2016 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 & daughters in fostering was also acknowledged and celebrated with an award and certificate.

14.3 Foster carers were also consulted on a recent Oxford University research project which Rotherham Fostering were invited to contribute to. The project was entitled 'Perspectives on assessing foster carers: A cross-country comparison of the factors that are associated with successful placements'. A consultation with foster carers was held on 3rd February 2017 where 25 foster carers attended representing 20 fostering households. In addition to this another 6 foster carers were involved in a similar research project in March 2017 with Oxford University surrounding the matching process. Findings from these projects will be shared with foster carers and the Fostering Service and be used to develop the service.

15. Complaints and compliments:

15.1 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 2016 – 2017 as demonstrated below.



15.2 The majority of the compliments are associated with Fostering and Adoption service.

- Adoptions 5
- Foster Carers 3
- Fostering Team 15

15.3 The analysis shows that 27% of all compliments received were associated to the Fostering and Adoption service. Examples of compliments as follows:

Compliment for worker: "...has been extremely supportive and is always available to discuss any issues."

"... is highly motivated and is an inspiration to all who are lucky enough to work alongside her. Thank you for your much needed support."

Compliment for Foster Carers from an adopter: "We were instantly welcomed with open arms which made all of our worries and apprehensions wash away. It felt like we had known them both forever. Straight away they made it clear that they would help us no matter what time of day it was or how far along the process we were, they would be there to support and guide us. The love and affection they have shown our child goes above and beyond what they are asked to do as Foster Carers and it amazes me how they have both put their heart and soul into our child and every child after"

Compliment for Foster Carer from a social worker: "I gave carer time with the parents in which she spoke and reassured them and they are now accepting of her caring for their baby. I am hoping this will make the discharge and handover a more positive experience for the baby and easier for the parents."

Compliment for Fostering Recruitment: "Thank you for all you have done, we are so proud and excited to be part of the Fostering Service."

Quality of service: "Congratulations a sterling piece of work for my young man."

Another good news story: "One of our foster carers received a call last week from a child that she looked after when he was two years of age. The child was rehabilitated to birth Dad, and is still with him. He has just joined the army and wanted to see her before he went away, and so she arranged for him and his Dad to visit her over the weekend. The young person says that he has no recollection of being in care, however, he also said that he felt like he has always known her and her family through the life story work and memory box that she gave to him and his Dad when he went home, so much so he wanted to meet her and see her before he went off to the army and thank her for looking after him."

15.4 Complaints. Of all the complaints into children's social care, 2% were allocated to Fostering and Adoption Team (4 in total) as detailed below:

Stage 1 Complaints Fostering & Adoption		
Team	Volume	%
Fostering Team	2	50
Foster Carer	1	25
Adoption	1	25
Category	Volume	%
Quality of Service	3	75
Delay in Service	1	25

Total	30	100
Outcome	Volume	%
Upheld	2	50
Partial Upheld	2	50

15.5 Lessons learned: You said – we did

You Said	We Did	Impact
Child complained about Foster Carer	Support and reiteration of protocols Supervision provided to Foster Carer. All RMBC Foster Carers have received a reminder about the process of reporting a child missing. Foster Carers training planned for the missing child protocol.	Missing children will be reported following the missing child protocol. Foster Carers will be trained on this protocol
Unhappy that foster carers leaflet has been sent out with council correspondence	Apology was given and an explanation given why we need to advertise as widely as possible for foster carers and apologised for him receiving such information.	Apology accepted and reason understood.
Delay in payments to foster carer	Effective communication between locality social worker and fostering social worker. Everyone understands of the importance of getting finance and equipment right for fostering. Restructuring of fostering service – specialist team manager to manage temporary carer and families together.	The task of finances for Foster Carers is a priority. This delay should not occur in the future.

16. Training

16.1 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.

Qualification	Number
CWDC Training, Support & Development Standards for Foster Care	13
Introduction to The Role of Foster Carer/Record Keeping	19
Emotional Health and Wellbeing	
Attachment of children in care	33
Therapeutic Parenting course	20
Managing Challenging Behaviour	

Life story work	32
	11
Safeguarding: CSE training/ E-safety for Foster Carers/SYEP 4 day course	64
Education: Epep and other courses provided by the Virtual school	93
Health:	
Foetal Alcohol syndrome Disorder	27
First Aid Course & Paediatric First Aid	55
Drugs and Alcohol Awareness	20
Eating Disorders	20
Cultural Awareness /Equality and Diversity	30

17. Fostering Recruitment Activity and Outcomes

- 17.1 The service enjoys an excellent relationship with the Communications Team and employs its own part-time recruitment officer who covers fostering and adoption. As part of the fostering payments and support review, it was agreed to recruit a full time fostering specific marketing officer whose role would be analyse the demographics of Rotherham and build a marketing plan that not only promotes fostering, but zones into the area's most likely to generate more foster carers to Rotherham.
- 17.2 The Service hold a 6 weekly 'Foster Carer's What's On What's New' meeting with a hub of 10 foster carers who help with the recruitment activities by promoting fostering recruitment across Rotherham. They are also highly involved in promoting placement stability and fostering cohesion through a calendar of fostering family activities, parties and events as detailed previously in the report.
- 17.3 Through the year 2016 - 2017 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, on line, social media and posters, postcards in and around Rotherham. Fostering is advertised in Rotherham United Football Club's match programmes, roundabout signs and bus shelter advertising.

- 17.4 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://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk>
- 17.5 In 2016 – 2017 there was a refresh recruitment campaign to promote foster carers for older children and sibling groups, which was done in collaboration with Barnsley, Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster Trust). 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, and is now used within the live recruitment campaign on Facebook. Following filming of this a group of Rotherham foster carers were brought together to discuss the effectiveness of the video, which led on to a further filming event involving young adults who had had been looked after children. The video and images will be utilised within part of the next campaign in recruiting foster carers for teenagers/siblings which will be developed in 2017/18. Both events were funded through South Yorkshire Empower and Protect budget.
- 17.6 There is also ongoing consultation around recruiting foster carers to care for children with a disability, and this will be developed through 2017/18.
- 17.7 In order to recruit more foster carers, it is essential to maximise fostering marketing campaigns by capitalising on modern IT resources, such as Facebook, google and other intranet and IT marketing tools to reach out to more people and stimulate interest in fostering for Rotherham along with traditional recruitment events that can be streamlined to keep fostering in Rotherham on the agenda, whilst maximising our resource to recruit and assess foster carers. In this way we will be a more effective and efficient service and the marketing officer will help us to understand our marketing potential and develop a plan that build upon this year's success.

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

18.1 Whilst the service has had a successful recruitment and approval year this year, the ongoing demand will continued in 2017 – 2018, and there is no room for complacency. 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 20 new foster placements by 2018. New schemes planned for 2017/18 include:

- Ongoing development of the STAR parties (start thinking about recruitment)
- The induction of the fostering support worker in April 2017 and ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of this in terms of fostering support and placement stability
- Out of hours – fostering specific
- The development of a better database to follow foster carers on their journey from initial enquiry to approval to be rolled out from April 2017
- The recruitment of a fostering resource worker to help recruit and retain foster carers by developing a plan that reviews
 - The strengths and vulnerabilities of the service
 - 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 3 year period to understand any lessons to be learned by the service to improve practice, and
 - Consultation event with foster carers (May 2017)
- Refer a foster carer to be rolled out across RMBC
- Develop and implement a virtual assessment team
- Introduce the Mockingbird family based model of fostering to Rotherham, which is an exciting innovative way to support carers and children in care, and which will be developed in partnership with the Fostering Network to be implemented in 2017 -2018
- Raising awareness of Private Fostering

19. Summary.

- 19.1 The year 2016 – 2017 has been a successful year for Rotherham Fostering Services, with a high level of recruitment activity, foster carer approvals, and a significant increase in the numbers of Rotherham children in care being placed in Rotherham placements.
- 19.2 As with Rotherham Borough Council, Rotherham Fostering Service is on an improvement journey. There is an acknowledgment 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. The Fostering Service are motivated and up to the challenge. The recent review of the fostering service has enabled the service to better know its strengths and challenges and along with a renewed recruitment and marketing strategy the service is confident that its ambitions will be realised.

20. Options considered and recommended proposal

That the DLT accept and recommend this report.

21. Consultation

Not applicable

22. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Not applicable

23. Financial and Procurement Implications

23.1 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.

24. Legal Implications

24.1 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.

25. Human Resources Implications

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

26. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

26.1 Not applicable.

27. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

27.1 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.

28. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

28.1 Not applicable.

29. Risks and Mitigation

29.1 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.

30. Accountable Officer(s)

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director CYPS

Mel.Meggs@rotherham.gov.uk

Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care

Ian.Walker@rotherham.gov.uk

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:-

Mark Chambers Head of Finance, CYPS

Director of Legal Services:- Neil Concannon, CYPS

HR Business Consultant (if appropriate):-Theresa Caswell

Name and Job Title.

Anne-Marie Banks Service Manager, Adoption, Fostering and Therapeutic Team

Ian Walker Head of Services, Children in Care

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