

**Fostering Rotherham In-house Fostering
Plan
2023-2028**

1. Introduction

One of the key priorities for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), and key ambition as a corporate parent, is to recruit, retain and grow the best in-house foster carers locally. The needs of children and young people are met effectively if they live in an environment that provides high quality of care and support. Generally, this is achieved within a family home setting. Foster placements also provide the best value to the Council and its residents.

The foundation for being able to achieve this is to provide placement stability and high-quality enduring placements, which are, wherever possible local to children's own school, communities and people who are important to them. This is fundamental in providing our Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People with a strong sense of self and connectivity, to ensure they are resilient, successful, and safe. Rotherham Council foster carers are key in helping us deliver this priority.

The Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028 aspires to reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies by recruiting more in-house foster carers. This includes a significant programme of work to focus on the retention and recruitment of foster carers that ensures we can compete with Independent Fostering Agencies and regional Local Authorities.

2. Our Vision

We have a strong and clear vision for Rotherham's Fostering Service – to have enough high-quality fostering families so that "Rotherham's children and young people are enabled to be resilient, successful and safe" (Council Plan 2022-25 RMBC).

Our vision is to improve the care experience for children in Rotherham by ensuring that wherever possible they are looked after in a foster family environment.

This means children can be cared for and stay connected, be closer to their families, schools, communities, and services that know them best.

3. Aims and Objectives

We will:

- Recruit more foster carers, creating 20 new placements each year.
- Increase the number of foster carers with the skills to care for teenagers.
- Increase the number of foster carers with the skills to care for sibling groups.
- Increase the number of foster carers with the skills to care for children who have disabilities.
- Increase the number of foster carers with the skills to care for children who are ready to step-down from residential care.
- Increase the diversity of our cohort of foster carers to meet the diverse needs of Rotherham children and young people who are looked after.
- Reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies by the council.
- Reduce reliance on residential placements for children and young people in favour of placements with foster families.
- Remain competitive in the marketplace.
- Continue to strengthen our offer of support to foster carers so they have excellent support based on the feedback they provide so that we continue to improve.
- Improve the resilience of our foster carers through our support to them, reducing the number of placements which break down and providing placement stability.
- To be innovative and try new ways of working to improve the foster carer offer.
- Continue to improve our quality of practice.

4. Our Approach

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's in-house Fostering Service want to be a service that is diverse and representative of the communities, groups, and individuals who we support.

We are striving for excellence in everything that we do, using research and best practice alongside innovative fostering programmes to achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people.

We are a service that is focused on improving outcomes for children who are unable to live with their families by supporting foster carers to help them reach their full potential.

We have four key drivers to assist with the delivery of this Plan:

- **Strong Leadership**

Our senior leadership team are passionate about fostering and committed to developing Fostering Rotherham to be a brand leader.

- **Skilled Workforce**

Our staff strive for excellence, providing high quality support and supervision based on best practice models to our foster carers.

- **A Diverse Fostering Community**

We aspire to have a Fostering Service reflective of the diverse community in Rotherham. We want placement choice for our children and to be able to provide strong placement matches.

- **Exceptional Journey Through Fostering**

We want everyone to have a positive fostering journey at all stages of their experience so that we successfully recruit and retain foster carers leading to an in-house Fostering Service made up of happy foster carers able to offer placement choice.

5. National Context

The following statistics give the context of fostering in 2022 into 2023.

Demand for foster carers is rising due to increasing numbers of children in care. However, the number of approved fostering places have decreased by 5% since 2018 to 74,660 in England as of March 2022.

The demand nationally for foster carers has increased by 11% whilst fostering households have only increased by 2%. (Source DfE).

The number of children in care reached just over 82,000 in the UK as of March 2022 – up 2% on the previous year and continuing the increase seen in recent years.

The rate of children in care increased from 67 per 10,000 children as of March 2021 to 70 per 10,000 children as of March 2022 (Source: DfE).

In England, as of 31 March 2022, there were a total of

- 43,905 fostering households.
- 36,050 were mainstream fostering households and
- 7,855 were family and friends' households.
- 61,360 foster carers.

This represents a slight decrease compared with last year. If the last 2 years are excluded as potential anomalies due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the local authority sector, the number of carers has decreased by 8% since 2017 to 2018.

Local Authorities are facing problems in recruiting and retaining enough foster carers, particularly for those who require specialist placements.

The children and young people entering care often have more complex needs.

Local authority agencies continue to account for about 6 in 10 of all carers (58%).

The Independent Fostering Agencies has increased slightly, by 2%, in the same period. (Source: DofE).

There continues to be a significant use of Independent Fostering Agencies as demand for Local Authority Foster Carers is outstripping supply.

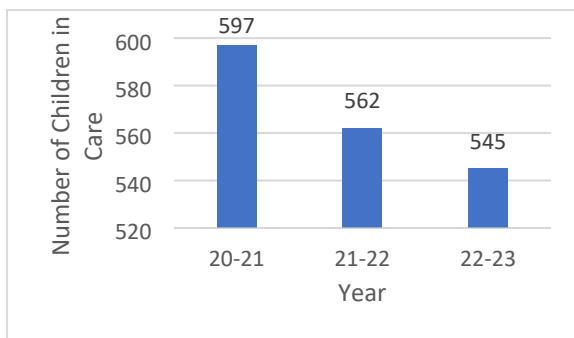
The national age demographic presents a picture that the current foster carer workforce is aging, and with retirement presented as a key reason as to why foster carers are leaving the workforce (Source: DofE).

The impact of the above is that currently matching is often based on available carers and not needs led – and based on a thorough matching process. This results in social workers often having little choice of carer and can result in placement instability.

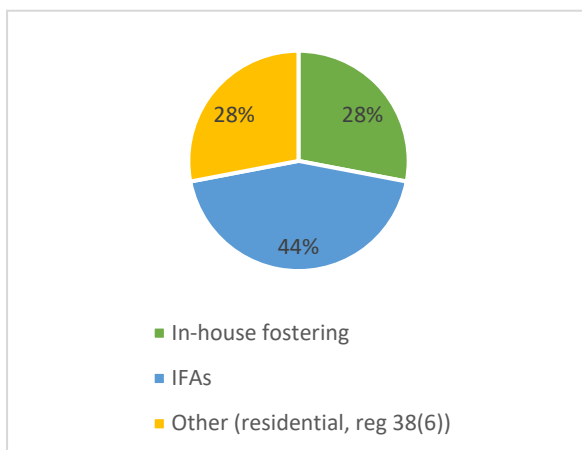
6. Local Context

In Rotherham the rate of children in care (per 10,000 children under 18) as of the end of March 2022 was 99, a reduction from 2020/21's local rate of 104. It is higher than the average rate in Yorkshire and The Humber of 81 (which increased from 78 in 2020/21). (Source: LG Inform).

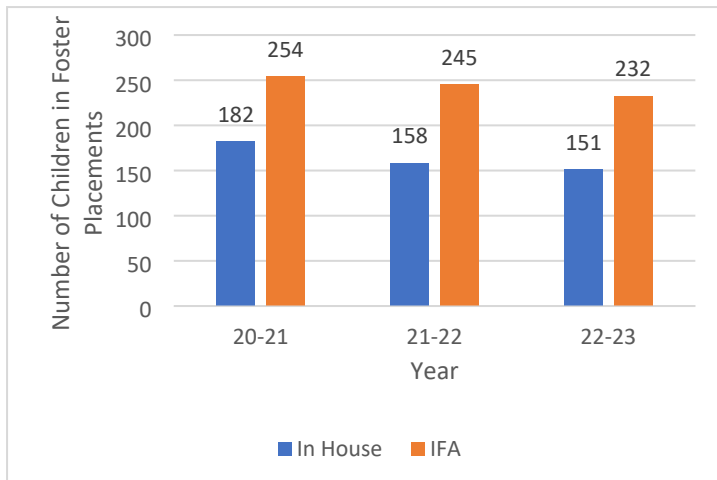
The graph below provides a snapshot of the number of children in care over recent years and highlights how as of 31 March 2023 this has decreased to 545 children in care.



Proportion of children in care in in-house foster placements, independent fostering agencies, and residential provision on 31 March 2023.



Number of children in foster placements (in-house and independent fostering agencies)



The above graph shows that from 2020-2023 in-house fostering households declined, which impacted upon RMBC not having sufficient placements available.

RMBC place a significant number of children with Independent Fostering Agency carers. Independent Fostering Agency placements cost more than a RMBC Foster Carer and may also be out of area.

Some children and young people are placed in a Children’s Residential Home could be placed with skilled Foster Carers were such carers available.

It is clear that Rotherham needs to increase its placement sufficiency for children in care to meet increasing and predicted demand.

7. Placement stability, disruption, and unplanned placement endings

Placement stability continues to be a factor in offering an effective fostering service. A stable placement is crucial to ensuring that the council delivers good outcomes to each looked after child.

Rotherham Fostering’s Service robust offer of support includes support groups and access to the Rotherham Therapeutic Team.

In 2022/23 4 pre-disruption meetings were held in situations where a placement was identified to be at risk of breakdown to determine what immediate support can be offered to support the continuation of the placement.

In the table below it shows that RMBC are very close to the most up to date national average figures regarding children who have experienced 3+ placements in the last 12 months.

However, there has been a reduction this year in the percentage of children in placements that have been stable for at least 2 years, and we are below the national average in this area.

It should be noted that this data covers children in care in all types of placements, both in-house and IFA foster care and residential, so this figure is not necessarily a reflection of the stability of our in-house foster placements this year.

Looked After Children Placement Stability	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	National Average (March 22 – latest data)
%LAC who have experienced 3+ placements within the last 12 months	11.1%	8.9%	9.3%	9.8%	10%
% LAC who have been looked after for two and half years and more in the same placement 2+ years	62.1%	69.2%	70.2%	64.7%	71%

Unplanned Endings & Disruptions

In 2022/23 there were 9 disruption meetings held following the unplanned ending of the placements of 10 children in care. Key themes included:

- Difficulty in obtaining respite when needed.
- Increasing challenging/ risky behaviour beyond what was manageable for the carers, particularly in the case of sibling groups.
- Foster carer's own emotional wellbeing.
- Matching considerations and impact on other fostered children in the home.
- Emergency placement when new into care so information not known / Not enough information provided in initial referral preplacement – changes in the Children's Social Worker also impacting on information available and case management in general.
- Pressure of school being far from placement in terms of transport, time and social impact on child and local authority not supporting a school move.
- Impact of covid 19 pandemic and resulting effect on access to support from other carers as well as additional pressures placed on carers.
- The need to make more use of pre-disruption meetings to put in more support at an earlier stage.

What have the Fostering Service achieved since the start of 2023?

Over the last year a lot of work has taken place to obtain feedback from foster carers and members of the fostering service. This includes surveys and feedback from foster carers at support groups and fostering events.

Below are examples of some of the changes that the fostering service have put in place in 2023 based on this feedback:

- ✓ Uplifted fostering skills and allowances 2023/24 in line with the national increase of 12.43% including holiday, birthday, and celebration allowances.
- ✓ Day care payment changed to fixed daily rate to encourage foster carers to support with day care.
- ✓ Implemented the Enhanced and Complex Carer payments (£100 and £200) respectively paid per week per child dependent upon assessment of the child's needs.
- ✓ Provide 14 days paid respite.
- ✓ Foster carers now receive birthday payments in advance and on time.
- ✓ Fast Track Independent Fostering Agency transfers and where appropriate matching fees.
- ✓ Established an Elected Member Fostering Working group to support with plans to recruit and retain Rotherham Foster Carers.
- ✓ Established a new Strategic and Operational Fostering Working Group to drive forward our recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- ✓ Developed a recruitment and retention strategy 2023-2025 and campaign plan and progress is reported to the Strategic and Operational Fostering Working Group.
- ✓ Secured a fostering recruitment Pledge from each Directorate. The action plan and progress is reported into the Strategic Fostering Working Group. Examples of things we have achieved include:
 - Council Tax leaflet mailout.
 - Finance webpage link to fostering.
 - Access to attendance at community events
 - Publishing in the Home Matters Magazine
 - Secured additional funding for recruitment activity from the Rotherham Partnership Fund.
 - Have Library fostering ambassadors.
 - Secured a regular feature across 10 months of the year in the Rotherham Advertiser.
- ✓ Achieved Fostering Friendly Status.

- ✓ Revamped all the Fostering Rotherham branding.
- ✓ Updated videos and messages and are including foster carers and young people in care as part of our communication and recruitment campaign.
- ✓ High profile billboards at Meadowbank and Templeborough.
- ✓ AdSmart campaign in July and September.
- ✓ Established a Fostering Partnership with Rotherham United Football Club
- ✓ Completed a review of assessment processes and continue to make improvements from the first point of contact through to approval to maximise each fostering enquiry received.
- ✓ Improved the conversion rate of people who enquire about fostering who then go on to become approved carers.
- ✓ Reviewed all Foster Carers to progress Pathway to Care adaptations to properties to increase the number of placements available.
- ✓ Created a fostering buddy scheme for all newly approved carers.
- ✓ Refreshed and added to the excellent and highly valued foster carer training package.
- ✓ Increased the number of support groups.
- ✓ Annual reviews with supervising social worker and PDP developed within the first year of fostering.
- ✓ Implemented a foster carer well-being offer.
- ✓ Advertised for additional Mockingbird Hub carers.
- ✓ Expanding the Mockingbird family model to create an additional two constellations.
- ✓ Refreshed and streamlined the variations and exemptions process.
- ✓ Implementation of a Long-Term Matching Panel.
- ✓ Updated the foster carer handbook so it is more accessible and has up to date information about our offer to Rotherham foster carers.

High Level Action Plan:

We now plan to undertake the following actions between 2023-2028 so we can achieve our aims and continue to improve our offer to foster carers:

RAG
Action has exceeded or will exceed target end date or is at high risk of the expected outcome not being achieved.
Action at risk of exceeding the target end date or at risk of the expected outcome not being met, but this is being managed within the project
Action on track to meet target end date and the expected outcome
Action awaiting start
Action Complete

ROTHERHAM FOSTERING ACTION PLAN 2023-2028

	What Do we Want to Achieve?	Action	Lead Action Owner	By when	Outcome	Update and evidence	RAG
1. General							
1.1	A Fostering Service Action Plan.	Action plan in place identifying key areas of service development. Dates to review progress in diaries.	Fostering Service Manager	November 2023	Clarity about focus of work and priorities.	Action plan completed and lead officers allocated, and timescales set. Updates will be shared at the Fostering Service Meeting	Action Completed

1.2	Annual Reports.	<p>Annual Report draft completed by September 2023.</p> <p>Plan in place for the preparation and completion of the next Annual Report 2024 and 2025.</p>	Fostering Service Manager/Panel Advisor	January 2024	<p>Annual Report in place, signed off and publicised.</p> <p>System in place to ensure Annual Report completed in a timely way.</p> <p>Evidences the work of the fostering service.</p>	<p>Annual Report completed, signed off and shared at Corporate Parenting Panel.</p> <p>March 24 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2023-2024 Annual Report currently being drafted. - Draft ready by the end of April 	Green
1.3	A Foster Carer Handbook/Policies and procedures	<p>Foster carer handbook to be regularly updated.</p> <p>Policies and Procedures to be reviewed and updates and published in Tri-X</p>	Panel Advisor	April 2023	<p>Handbook kept up to date.</p> <p>All policies and procedures up to date.</p>	<p>Handbook updated and will be updated again in April 2024</p> <p>System in place to keep Policies and Procedures updated.</p> <p>March 24 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process in place for the Panel Advisor to send updated Policies and Procedures to the Principle Social Worker 	Green

				Revised date July 2024.		<p>to update Tri-X for Foster carers and staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster Carer Handbook was updated in December 2023 and a further refresh will take place in June/July 2024. 	
1.4	A Service that can deliver an excellent fostering service	Continue to implement the organisational changes to the fostering service establishment	Head of Service / Fostering Service Manager	Review by the end of February 2024	The fostering service have the skills, capacity, and expertise to deliver a high-quality fostering offer.	<p>Business cases approved for Temporary AP posts.</p> <p>Further review of the structure to take place in February 2024 to inform final structure.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reconfiguration of the Fostering Service progressing with an implementation date of July 2024. 	Green
1.5	A Statement of Purpose	The statement of purpose is refreshed annually.	Panel Advisor	February 2024	Foster carers, team members, and children are clear how the service will meet outcomes for children	<p>Drafted and with Comms for image input.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow up with Communications Team to establish if the 	Green

						document can have some logos added once completed can then be shared with Foster Carers, staff, workforce and included in Tri-x for Staff and foster carers.	
1.6	A Children's Guide	The children's guide is refreshed and available in various communication methods.	Panel Advisor	March 2024	Children and young people know what the fostering service will do for them and how they can find out their rights.	March 2024 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current children's guide in the process of being reviewed and refreshed for April 2024 	Green
2. Marketing and Recruitment							
2.1	The Elected Members Group will inform future recruitment and retention activities	<p>Review recruitment and retention work and benchmark against other Fostering Agencies.</p> <p>Develop the role of Elected Members as champions of Fostering and to support the recruitment and retention activities.</p> <p>Support with plans to grow community and business</p>	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People/ Head of Service /Fostering Service	April 2024	A fostering recruitment and retention offer that is ambitious and ensures we have more in-house foster carers resulting in more placement choice.	<p>Working Group taking place and action plan will be completed by April 2024</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working Group concluded and recommendations included as part of the Cabinet Report which will be signed off in March 2024. 	Green

		partnerships to support recruitment and retention work.	Manager				
2.2	A regular review of the recruitment and retention strategy/action plan and foster carer offer at the Strategic and Operational Fostering Working Group.	<p>Ensure the recruitment and retention strategy is updated and remains dynamic and competitive.</p> <p>Carry out 6 monthly competitor analysis work to inform the recruitment and retention action plan.</p> <p>Identify service developments including taking innovative ideas from other organisations.</p> <p>Use the above the update the fostering offer on a regular basis.</p> <p>RMBC are responsive and can adapt and change recruitment and retention offers.</p>	Senior Communications Officer	January 2024	<p>We will have a foster carer offer that makes sure we remain competitive and the fostering agency of choice.</p> <p>Performance will be monitored at the Fostering Strategic Working Group.</p>	<p>Current strategies with the Communications Team for refresh.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communications Officer leading on the final recruitment and retention plan for 2024 – 25 to include all activity. 	Green
2.3	Continue to implement and review DLT and	Directorate Partnership Pledges are updated so we remain ambitious in the	Fostering Marketi	March-2024	We will have a Council and Partnership	New Marketing Manager will link with Directorate and	Green

	Partner Pledges as part of the recruitment and Retention action plan	wider Councils' commitment and support in the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Work with the wider Partnership (RTP) to identify their Pledges to support the recruitment and retention of foster carers	ng Manager/ Senior Communications Officer Directorate and Partner leads		Pledge that it is ambitious and ensures we have more in-house foster carers resulting in more placement choice. Progress against the Pledges will be reviewed every quarter at Fostering Strategic Group.	Partners to refresh the Pledges March 2024 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing Manager and Service Manager attending DLT meetings throughout March and April to update and refresh Pledges. - Marketing Manager linking with RTP to develop new pledges. - Service Manager attended the RTP in March to provide an update. - Marketing Manager will keep the tracker up to date to capture progress against updated Pledges. 	
2.4	Recruit more foster carers from diverse backgrounds	The Elected Member working group will look at plans to recruit carers from diverse backgrounds.	Elected Member Working Group/	March 2024	We have carers from different backgrounds providing more placement choice that	Session planned to complete this work. March 2024 Update:	Green

		Establish a task and finish group to include foster carers to support the targeted recruitment of foster carers from diverse backgrounds.	Fostering Marketing Manager		reflect the diverse needs of our children in care and create better placement matching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Session with Elected Members has taken place and informed future strategies. - UASC targeted recruitment campaign being planned with Bright Sparks and Place Based Marketing. - LGBTQ focus took place in March. - Pool of Foster carers currently being recruited to support recruitment activities. By May the Marketing Manager will work with a cohort of Foster carers to develop more targeted recruitment campaigns. 	
2.5	Implement targeted/bespoke recruitment for teenagers, sibling groups, children with disabilities, UASC and step-down carers.	Create a targeted and bespoke recruitment campaign throughout the year.	Fostering Marketing Manager/Bright Sparks and	January 2024	Increased number of foster carers	<p>Plan in place to finalise the bespoke and targeted plan for 2024-25. Meeting in January to sign off.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting with Brightsparks taken place 	Green

			Senior Communications Officer	Updated timescales for next Steps May 2024		and bespoke recruitment plan in place. - Next steps include maximising campaigns including placed based marketing at the same time.	
2.6	Develop a Supported Lodgings Scheme	Review the current procedure. Advertise for Supported Lodgings Carers	LAC Service Manager. Fostering Service/Marketing Manager/Bright Sparks	March 2024	Increased placement offer for young people post 16 years.	Service Manager drafting the updated procedure and payment. Once completed and approved Fostering Recruitment to take place. March 2024 Update: - Recruitment for SL carers part of the targeted recruitment plan 2024.	Green
2.7	Create a pool of foster carers who will support recruitment events	To support and encourage foster carers to be part of the foster carer recruitment campaign.	Marketing Manager	March 2024	Carers will feel valued	Approved at Cabinet December 2023. Procedure being drafted. Completed	Green

			Senior Comm unicatio ns Officer			<p>Recruitment to take place.</p> <p>Publicity and launch of scheme planned. Completed</p> <p>March 2024 Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. - Launch in place for March 2024. - Recruitment taking place in March 2024. 	Green
2.8	Mentor/Shadow Payment Scheme to Support existing foster carers to talk to and support potential new foster carers at the start of their fostering journey.	Produce a scheme with a cohort of foster carers that helps RMBC recruit more carers.	Marketi ng Manag er/ Senior Comm unicatio ns Officer	March 2024	<p>Enables new carers to feel part of a fostering community from the first point of contact.</p> <p>Approved at Cabinet December 2023.</p> <p>Procedure being drafted.</p> <p>Recruitment to take place.</p> <p>Publicity and launch of scheme planned.</p> <p>March 2024 Update:</p>		

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. - Launch in place for March 2024. - Recruitment taking place in March 2024. 	
2.9	Update the existing Refer a Friend Scheme.	Current scheme updated and expanded	Marketing Manager/Senior Communications Officer	January 2024	<p>Increase the number of foster carers recruited.</p> <p>Foster carers and RMBC workforce feel valued by receiving a financial incentive.</p>	<p>Approved at Cabinet December 2023.</p> <p>Procedure being drafted.</p> <p>Recruitment to take place.</p> <p>Publicity and launch of scheme planned.</p> <p>March 2024 Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. - Launch in place for March 2024. - Communications team exploring promoting the 	Green

						scheme as a Council Screensaver.	
2.10	Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People to support recruitment activity.	To encourage the support of children in care and care experienced young people to support with the recruitment of foster carers.	Marketing Manager/Senior Communications Officer	March 2024	Children in care and care experienced young people share their fostering experience in advertising campaigns.	<p>Approved at Cabinet December 2023.</p> <p>Procedure being drafted.</p> <p>Recruitment to take place.</p> <p>Publicity and launch of scheme planned.</p> <p>March 2024 Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. - Launch in place for March 2024. - Recruitment taking place in April 2024. 	Green
3. Valuing our foster carers.							
3.1	Consultation and Engagement activity with foster carers	We will undertake a foster carer health check every 6 months.	Bright Sparks, Marketing	March 2024	The feedback from the health check will inform further service	Feedback from the last Health Check informed the December Fees and Allowances updates approved at Cabinet.	Green

		<p>Work with the RMBC Foster carer Association.</p> <p>Hold Foster Care Forums and Foster Carer Conference to consult with carers.</p>	<p>Manager and Panel Advisor</p>		<p>developments/ improvement work.</p> <p>Foster carers shape our service and foster carer offer based on feedback.</p>	<p>Bright Sparks to run the health check every 6 months.</p> <p>Foster carer Forums and conference to be planned for 2024.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster carer survey send out in March. Findings collated in April to be shared at the Operational and Strategic Fostering Board to agree next steps. - Foster Carer forums planned throughout 2024. Next event in March 2024. - Annual conference in September currently being planned. 	
3.2	<p>Finances –</p> <p>Ensure fostering fees, allowances and</p>	<p>As part of the ongoing recruitment drive the skills payments have an annual inflationary uplift from</p>	<p>Finance and Fostering</p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>We have a financial offer that remains competitive.</p>	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Fees and Allowances to be 	<p>Green</p>

	<p>financial incentives remain competitive.</p> <p>Ensure payments are not delayed.</p>	<p>2023/24 financial year, aligned to the percentage annual increases already in place for the national fostering maintenance allowances.</p> <p>Review the payments system and ensure that foster carers receive payments on time.</p>	<p>Service Manager</p> <p>Fostering Team Managers/Service Manager, Business Support and Digital Services.</p>	<p>New date (subject to system change sign off June 2024)</p>	<p>Foster carers receive their payments on time.</p>	<p>signed off at Cabinet in March 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finance progressing uplift in Fees and Allowances in April 2024 and awaiting update. <p>Task and finish group to work with IT and finance/Business Support to set up an easier and more timely payment scheme for carers.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - System set up for the payment of newly approved carers. - February 2024 meeting with key departments to explore delay in payments and agree how to resolve. <p>Plan to explore setting up a Foster carer hub/portal with IT colleagues so carers</p>	
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						<p>can upload expensed and daily logs.</p> <p>System change request submitted and awaiting allocation. Once allocated then the task and finish group can start.</p>	
3.3	Produce a Foster Carer Charter.	<p>Foster carers and social workers from across Children’s Services develop a charter.</p> <p>Agreement of the charter at Corporate Parenting Committee</p>	Panel Advisor /Fostering Team Manager	March 2024	<p>There are clear expectations about how foster carers are treated, trained, and supported.</p> <p>Cohesive working arrangements with foster carers as a team around the carer and child/young person.</p> <p>Foster carers report feeling included and more supported by RMBC.</p>	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster Carer Charter completed and with the Communications team for logos to be added and then signed off by April 2024. 	Green

3.4	Foster carers to be provided with information that explains the different teams in CYPS, and their contact details.	Contact details of teams provided to carers.	Panel Advisor	April 2024 Revised date June/July 2024.	Foster carers understand all the different teams and know which team to contact if they require support.	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information in the Foster Carer Welcome pack and will be included in Tri-X - Handbook to be refreshed to include this information. 	Green
3.5	To expand the Foster Carer well-being offer	Enhance and embed the Well-being clinics – clinics to be evaluated to inform further developments.	Panel Advisor and Fostering Team Managers	April 2024 Revised date July 2024	Foster carers are aware of and able to access the offer.	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-being sessions taking place but to be refreshed based on the new task and finish group. - Task and Finish Group established to draft a well-being offer. This work will include the Support for Change Team, IRO representative, CiC representative, Fostering Service and Foster carers. 	Green

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete proposal for the end of March for sign off and to test out. - Final Well-being and placement stability offer to be in place by July 2024. 	
3.6	To refresh the and publish the support for foster carers and the fostering Service from the Therapeutic Team	To work with Rotherham Therapeutic Team to enhance the offer to foster carers.	RTT service and Fostering Team Managers.	July 2024	<p>To have a trauma informed and therapeutic fostering service.</p> <p>Enhancing the skills of the workforce and foster carers which will ensure high quality interventions and excellent outcomes for children in care and young people.</p>	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task and Finish Group established to draft a well-being offer. This work will include the Support for Change Team, IRO representative, CiC representative, Fostering Service and Foster carers. - Complete proposal for the end of March for sign off and to test out. - Final Well-being and placement stability offer to be in place by July 2024. 	Green
3.7	Implement Long Service Awards	Long Service awards to be in place to celebrate significant milestones of 1-,	Team Manager and	February 2024	Foster carers feel valued.	Approved at Cabinet December 2023.	Action completed

		3- and 5-years post approval and five yearly thereafter.	Panel Advisor			Awards will be presented at the Foster Carers Conference March 2024 Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. - Launch in place for March 2024. 	
3.8	Retainer Fee for Carers when a placement/bed is placed on 'hold'	To implement a retainer fee for foster carers when a decision is made 'block' a placement due to the needs of the young person.	Service Manager	March 2024	Recognition of foster carers and prevents financial disadvantage. Ability to place children with additional needs with in-house foster carers.	Approved at Cabinet December 2023. Procedure being drafted. Publicity and launch of scheme planned. March 2024 Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. - Launch in place for March 2024. 	Action Completed

3.9	Holiday Scheme	Update the current holiday payment scheme.	Service Manager	March 2024	Recognition of foster carers by updating the scheme.	<p>Approved at Cabinet December 2023.</p> <p>Procedure being drafted. Publicity and launch of scheme planned.</p> <p>March 2024 Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. - Launch in place for March 2024. 	Action Completed
3.10	Increase Payments to Mockingbird Hub Carers	Uplift the Mockingbird activity budget and payment for any second home carer that takes them beyond 16 overnight stays per month	Service Manager	March 2024	Recognition of foster carers by updating the scheme.	<p>Approved at Cabinet December 2023.</p> <p>Procedure being drafted.</p> <p>Publicity and launch of scheme planned.</p> <p>March 2024 Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure drafted and signed off on the 1st March 2024. 	Action Completed

							- Launch in place for March 2024.	
4. Service Developments/ We will be innovative and try new ways of working.								
4.1	Improve the fostering duty system and placement search process to include placement forecasting and matching processes	<p>Update the current fostering duty system so we have accurate information about carer availability.</p> <p>Improve the placement search process and reporting system.</p> <p>Develop a forecasting and predictions system so we can identify future potential carers for children requiring a foster placement.</p>	Fostering Service Manager, Team Managers and Advance Practitioners	March 2024	<p>We will be able to respond to placement search requests quickly.</p> <p>We will have a system to help identify future placements for children who require a placement.</p>	<p>Duty worker in post.</p> <p>Placement searches and matching in place and being refreshed and updated.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matching Matrix developed and signed off. - To be added to Tri-x and included in the new placement stability offer. 	Action Completed	
4.2	Improve Placement Planning.	Review and update the current pre-placement and post placement planning process.	Debbie Willis/ Rebecca Green/ Avid Wade.	March 2024	Foster carers report that they are fully involved, informed, and supported throughout pre-	Matching and placement planning to be drafted, tested out and then procedure in place by March 2024	Green	

	placements are made so they are provided with full information about the child/young person.			New date July 2024.	<p>placement and post placement planning.</p> <p>Appropriate plans in place to ensure the foster carer and child/young person is well supported.</p> <p>Reduction in placement breakdowns due to good placement planning and support to carers.</p>	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duty Officer in post and supporting placement planning and matching. - Matching matrix in place. - Task and Finish Group established to draft a well-being offer. This work will include the Support for Change Team, IRO representative, CiC representative, Fostering Service and Foster carers. - Complete proposal for the end of March for sign off and to test out. - Final Well-being and placement stability offer to be in place by July 2024. 	
4.3	Develop a placement stability offer to foster carers to avoid	Establish a task and finish group to develop a placement stability offer.	Service Manager, Team	July 2024	Foster carers and the child/young person feel more	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task and Finish Group established to draft a 	Green

	placement breakdowns		Managers and Advanced Practitioners		supported at an earlier stage to stabilise placements. Reduction in the number of placement breakdowns.	well-being offer. This work will include the Support for Change Team, IRO representative, CiC representative, Fostering Service and Foster carers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete proposal for the end of March for sign off and to test out. - Final Well-being and placement stability offer to be in place by July 2024. 	
4.4	Expand the criteria of Pathway to Care Requests	Review and update the eligibility for pathway to care to include additional safe space for children with complex needs	Drafted and to be considered if this will be implemented	March 2024 New date, May 2024	More flexibility to creatively support children to remain with their carer.	March 2024 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New criteria drafted and to be approved for implementation 	Green
4.5	Develop an out of hours help line service with foster carers.	Establish a task and finish group with foster carers to scope out an out of hours placement offer would look like and operate.	Fostering Team Manager and	May 2024	We will have a strong out of hours offer of support for foster carers.	March 2024 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scoping paper being drafted ready for review in April 2024. 	Green

		Proposals to be developed and to be considered by Head of Service	Panel Advisor				
4.6	Develop the Step-down offer by developing a residential hub and specialist, skilled foster carers linked to the hub.	<p>Establish a task and finish group to develop the offer.</p> <p>Establish a recruitment campaign for specialist foster carers.</p> <p>Undertake training and development as part of the new offer.</p>	Head of Service and Service Manager Fostering and Residential Services	February 2024	Children in care in external residential, IFA provision and in-house residential are supported to live with foster carers.	<p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task and Finish Group established to draft a well-being offer. This work will include the Support for Change Team, IRO representative, CiC representative, Fostering Service and Foster carers. - Complete proposal for the end of March for sign off and to test out. 	Green
4.7	Embed Exit interview with foster carers	Establish an exit interview procedure and guidance.	Panel Advisor and Advanced Practitioners	April 2024	Exit interviews are embedded in practice and inform further service developments.	<p>March 2024 Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proforma in place - To be in place from April 2024 	Green

4.8	Increase Foster Panel Member pay to retain Panel Members.	Progress the proposal to increase Foster Panel pay so that we are competitive.	Service Manager	December 2024		Approved at December Cabinet 2023. Payments in place from December 2023.	Completed
5. Training							
5.1	Training – Foster carers have a training offer remains dynamic and of high quality and is informed by feedback from carers.	Annual review of fostering training following feedback from carers ➤ Establish a task and finish group with foster carers to review all the activities, establish and fill any gaps. ➤ Ensure system in place to collate learning logs for all carers in line with Ofsted requirements	Fostering Team Manager, Panel Advisor and Training Officer.	April 2024	Foster carers feel supported and more confident and knowledgeable in their role. Maximum take up of training and development which supports continued learning.	March 2024 update: - Training and development plan being refreshed and will be ready for sign off by April 2024	Green
5.2	Training – The Fostering Service has a training and development offer in place.	With the Learning and Development service design a training package for the fostering service so they remain a highly skilled workforce.	As above	June 2024	The fostering training package ensures a service that is highly skilled.	March 2024 update: - Work to take place with the Principle Social Worker to refresh the training offer to the fostering service.	Green

		The training package is informed by the outcome of feedback from audit work, panel QA work and other sources of service feedback.					
6. Quality Assurance and Performance							
6.1	Develop a QA framework for fostering.	<p>Implement an audit and dip sample process for fostering including the Fostering Panel</p> <p>Establish monthly Performance meetings for fostering.</p> <p>Establish 6 weekly audit cycle.</p> <p>Establish thematic Dip Sample audit every month.</p> <p>Establish a QA framework for fostering Panel.</p> <p>Regular reporting of audit findings, action plan and monitoring of actions.</p>	Fostering Service Manager/Team Managers	<p>April 2024</p> <p>Date to be extended as awaiting System Change Team to progress setting audit tool in Liquid Logic and the</p>	<p>Managers in the service have a QA framework and tools in place to ensure they know how the service is performing and can take action if there are areas of concern</p>	<p>Audit template created and currently being tested.</p> <p>Audit framework for Fostering Panel currently being updated.</p> <p>QA report completed for Performance Meetings.</p> <p>March 2024 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audits continue to be tested out. Final test in March. - Change request form submitted to set up the tool on Liquid Logic. Awaiting allocation. - Dip sample programme to be implemented once 	Green

				Insight report.		<p>the 6 weekly audit finalised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request for Insight to pull through actions from the audit and managers to track and update completion – awaiting allocation. - Audit outcomes reported at the monthly performance meeting and feedback to the team at every service meeting. 	
6.2	One place to record recruitment and retention data to show the performance of the service.	Develop one place to keep performance reporting up to date.	Performance Officer, Service Manager.	March 2024	Everyone involved in fostering has the data they need to know how the service is performing	Scorecard Updated	Completed
6.3	Update Insight	Work to review and update as part of 6.2.	As above	March 2024	Accurate information on Insight.	<p>Work taking place to update Insight.</p> <p>March 2024 – update:</p> <p>Completed</p>	Action Completed

7. Family and Friends as Foster Carers								
7.1	Regulation assessment guidance, role and responsibilities updated.	24	Refresh the guidance. Complete training for the workforce	Fostering Team Manager	March 2024 New date May 2024	Reduced number of regulations 25's by working with locality teams to promote better	Procedure being updated. Training in place and about to be delivered. March 2024 – update: - Further work taking place with Service Managers in Localities to review and refresh the Reg 24 process.	Green

Referenced Documents/Reports:

- 1: The Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028
- 2: Fostering Recruitment Strategy 2023-2025
- 3: Fostering Retention Strategy 2023-2025

