

Meeting:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 26 November 2013
Report title:	Fostering Inspection Progress Report (Ofsted Inspection date 21-24 January 2013)
Service Area:	Children’s Safeguarding – Fostering
Report Author:	Angela Yapp, Service Delivery Manager

1. Purpose of this Report

To provide a progress update in relation to the Fostering Action Plan arising out of the Ofsted Inspection which took place in January 2013.

2. Recommendations

To note progress made and to receive a further update in July 2014, after the next submission of the Ofsted annual fostering data set.

3 The Inspection Process

The Ofsted Inspection Framework for Fostering took account of the National Minimum Standards for the provision of Fostering Services and Regulations (both 2011). There are 31 Standards and 45 regulations with 7 accompanying schedules. The inspection activity covered a review of key fostering service documents and performance information, casework analysis, interviews with foster carers, children and young people, children’s case managers, independent reviewing officers, health and educational professionals. The gradings that can be awarded by Inspectors for specific aspects of provision were outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate. (N.b as from November 2013 future inspections of the fostering service will be included in “Inspections of children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers”)

4 Ofsted findings and gradings in 2013

4.1 Ofsted inspectors commended a number of areas of current service provision:

- Foster carers act as good role models and advocate as a good parent would
- Children and young people led busy lives outside their school day and at weekends.
- Children and young people’s health outcomes were good.
- Educational support for children and young people in care is good.
- Young people have established good relationships with their foster carers and are given the opportunity to remain with their foster carers post 18.
- The Fostering Panel was acknowledged as well established, experienced representative professionals and that foster carers are fully conversant with the panel process.

- The management team of the fostering service learn from listening to what foster carers, children and young people and social workers tell them and welcome the feedback received to improve practice.
- Children and Young people missing from fostering homes is rare as a consequence of effective partnership working between the child's social worker, the foster carers, the police and fostering team. A senior police officer commented to the inspectors '*They like to get it right*'
- The recruitment and vetting of adults who wish to become foster carers or existing foster carers was considered to be sound.
- The fostering service knows the key achievements in the past year and it has made improvements to: capacity; placement stability, recruitment; developing staff skills; matching and reduction in placement disruptions.
- The fostering service works effectively with other agencies

4.2 However, a period of turnover within the management of the service (which has now been resolved) prevented us making the progress we were aiming for quickly enough to meet the more stringent inspection criteria to retain our previous good rating. The overall gradings are as follows

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| • Overall effectiveness: | Adequate |
| • Outcomes for children and Young people: | Adequate |
| • Quality of Service: | Adequate |
| • Safeguarding children: | Adequate |
| • Leadership and management: | Adequate |

5 Recommendations made for Service Improvement and Development

Maintain progress on recruitment of Foster carers

11 New fostering households were approved in 2012/13 providing a maximum of 26 placements. This should be exceeded this financial year: In the current year to date 8 households have been approved, providing a maximum of 17 potential placements. Since the 1st April 2013 we have received 133 enquiries. 8 Form F assessments are being progressed and 6 applicants are attending the skills to foster care training commencing next week. At the end of September numbers placed with T&W mainstream carers reached a peak of 130, 15 more than at 31/03/13. This is on target to achieve 20 more by year end, although numbers have reduced since then mostly through adoption or returning home/leaving care coupled with fewer admissions

Delegated Authority

The pilot of the British Association and Adoption and Fostering tool resulted in a more streamlined approach and a decision to prioritise the children that would benefit most, ie those of school age and in long term matched placements. 71 effective delegated authority agreements have been completed for mainstream and kinship foster carers and plans are in place for the remainder. At the recent provider conference 3 agencies volunteered to assist us in developing consistent arrangements for those children in external agencies.

Supervision of foster carers

We provided training to our fostering social workers in April 2013 and revised our supervision forms. Our Advanced SW Practitioner for fostering is auditing the quality

of supervision with foster carers regarding meeting the needs of children placed, in particular to take account of child's wishes and feelings and that carers develop their competencies. Early findings suggest that SW practice has improved although it is still not consistently good, and a key area for developing competencies for foster carers is managing difficult behaviour.

Training of Foster carers

The training policy for foster carers has been revised, increasing the number of training sessions per annum required and ensuring that both carers attend. 100% of new foster carers have achieved the Children's Workforce Development accreditation within timescale. We have reviewed the training policy to make clearer the pre and post approval training requirements and the consequences of not achieving them. We have reviewed the training programme and are considering how best to deliver it to maximise take-up, eg use of e learning.

Unannounced visits to foster carer's homes

Robust monitoring is in place to ensure that unannounced visits are taking place. The service has met the standard by ensuring than all carers have had one unannounced visit since the inspection and we are working towards achieving 2 per year.

National Children's Rights Director

All children in placement at the time of the fostering inspection were sent a letter with this information and for new admissions since then – the details are contained in the admissions pack.

Performance Management and Service Improvement

Monthly meetings are in place to review the progress of foster children and the service has developed a RAG rating to make sure those with the most complex needs are kept under close scrutiny. We continue to have regular consultation meetings with foster carers association and with the family and friends carer support group. The opportunity of the annual conference was used to publicise a survey of all carers. (The findings will be available by early in the new year). A visit to VOICE (care council) has given us 4 priorities for improvement;

- Make sure use of the flex card doesn't make children in care stand out as different
- What children call their foster carers in front of friends
- Some children wanted to be clear about when they could be left in the foster home without the foster carer being present.
- Ensuring foster carers are always sensitive about what they say about birth parents

6 Conclusion

The service has made good progress in delivering the recommendations although there is more to do particularly in the area of delegated authority.