



CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 6 JULY 2017

Subject Heading:

Report on Fostering

SLT Lead:

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Policy context:

Statutory responsibility to ensure vulnerable looked after children are offered an opportunity to be cared for where possible within a family environment.

SUMMARY

This report is looking at the fostering arrangements in Havering pre and post the Ofsted inspection (Published 9th December 2016) detailing the developments, on-going performance and challenges within the Fostering Service. There has been significant work in maintaining foster carer recruitment. This is being expanded to include recruitment of specialist foster carers.

The number of looked after children is increasing; and the in-house foster carers are not able to accommodate the volume of children requiring placements. This has resulted in the use of Independent Fostering Agencies, with some children being placed outside of the Local Authority. With the current arrangements to match children in long term foster care arrangements, every effort is being made to promote stability and consistency for children who are looked after. This has required commitment from the foster carers.

Proposal is to sustain and build upon Foster carer recruitment and retention. Aim to support children with complex needs within specialist foster carers and build a system that can support challenging placements and make provide value for money.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase pool of foster carers able to manage complex needs and take on sibling groups – Fostering Team
- September 2017 put into effect specialist foster carer recruitment (Innovation Team/ Fostering Team)
- Aim to place with in-house foster carers who would promote children to remain in a familiar area, sustain contact with family members and reduce disruption to education and friendships. (Fostering Team)

- Support the Havering Foster Carers Association to actively support the recruitment campaign and become Fostering Ambassadors. (HFCA/ Fostering Team).
- Consider the aging population of our current foster carers and impact on numbers of future available foster placements

REPORT DETAIL

Background

Havering like many other Local Authorities is aiming to recruit foster carers to support the increase in the number of children requiring care giving environments away from the family home. There is a need to continue to raise the profile of the foster carer recruitment. Havering has seen an increase in the number of children and young people moving into the area from other Local Authorities. This has had some impact on the demand for suitable placements for children coming into care.

In response the Fostering team is working to increase the pool of diverse foster carers to support this development. This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Panel with updated information in relation to developments, on-going performance and challenges within the work of the Fostering Service post Ofsted Inspection 2016/2017.

Statement of Value

The London Borough of Havering's Fostering Service has centred its values on the Children in Care and Care Leavers pledge.

The Pledge states that:

- We will support you to succeed and achieve in all areas of your life.
- You will always have a voice and we will listen to you.
- We promise to accept you for who you are and treat you as an individual.
- When we can and cannot make the changes you want, we will explain this to you.
- We promise to be responsible parents and will keep this in our minds when making decisions about you.

The Fostering Service supports and contributes to this pledge by ensuring looked after children receive effective care which enables all children to fulfil their potential by making them feel safe and valued. Havering's Fostering Service helps maximise children's health and educational opportunities through the assessment, support and annual review of carers, who provide a wide range of alternative placements for children in care.

Statement of Purpose

The key aims of the statement of purpose:

- To provide the best possible foster placements for children and young people to enable them to reach their full potential.
- To recruit, assess, train and support all prospective and approved foster carers and family and friends carers, so they can provide a wide range of local placements, which meet the diverse needs of children and young people in a safe and nurturing environment.
- To support and advise all those affected by the fostering process.
- To actively promote fostering and family and friends care as the framework to secure alternative placements for children, unless there is clear evidence to suggest that this is not appropriate.
- To ensure there are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the Fostering Service thereby ensuring quality services.
- To ensure that cost effective services are provided and commissioned which maximises efficient use of resources and provides sufficient placements.
- To provide wherever possible local placements, to promote continuity and maintain family networks.
- To ensure that prospective foster carers from all the backgrounds have equality of access to the Fostering Service and are welcomed without prejudice, regardless of ethnic origin, faith, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, background, marital or employment status and considered on their individual merits.
- To ensure that the recruitment process is timely, respectful and fair and delays are avoided.
- To ensure monitoring systems are in place so that data can be gathered and used to inform service planning, strategy and procedures.
- To adhere to the principles of Data Protection and Freedom of Information and to continue the sound practice in managing confidential information.
- To ensure detailed placement plans are completed, including arrangements for Delegated Authority.
- To raise the profile of the Fostering Service in Havering through a robust recruitment campaign, accessible information and advice.
- To ensure the effective matching of the child to the carer's skills and experience to enable the full range of the child's needs to be met.
- To minimise the number of placements experienced by individual children and ensure that placement stability procedures are followed.

- For children to move on from foster care in a planned and positive way and with regards to those leaving care, to contribute towards a smooth, transitional service for young people moving into adulthood.
- To consider with foster carers Staying Put arrangements for children and young people.

Service role and function

Havering Fostering Service consists of a number of key functions which cover Recruitment and Assessment (including Private Fostering), Support and Development.

An operational review of the service was completed in the second quarter of 2016/17 and the terms of the above noted teams were specified, and capacity issues addressed. At that point the teams were brought together with a Deputy Team Manager for each area in order to align the processes more effectively and maintain a frequent review mechanism to drive improvement and performance.

The teams discuss recruitment, new approvals, quality and understanding of newly approved carers, changes or adjustments to information and Skills to Foster sessions, training, sufficiency and pressures on placements, allegations and de-registrations (*please refer to Appendix 1 for the work undertaken within the team*).

Havering Fostering Profile/Inspection Outcome

As at 27th June 2017, 257 children were being looked after by the local authority. 79 children being placed in-house compared to 85 placed with IFA (Independent Fostering Agency) placements; 33 within semi-independent and 26 within residential placements (*see Appendix 3*). There is an increased demand as a result of higher requests for placements for the 11 plus age category and as a result of focused work in relation to care standard issues with a small minority of foster carers.

Children's Services and commissioners in Havering have identified the need for increased fostering provision for children over the age of eleven years to reflect the cohort of young people requiring care away from the home environment. The identification of this requirement is reflected in the Borough's sufficiency analysis and planning, and self-assessment. The Ofsted SIF inspection of Havering Children's Service (published on the 9th December 2016) identified the same deficit and challenges, and states that the Authority must "Improve the sufficiency and availability of placements for care leavers and children looked after".

The Ofsted report noted that "children and young people are placed within their localities and local authority data indicates that at the time of the inspection 74% of all children looked after were placed within Havering or neighbouring authorities...Fostering services meet the needs of children well. Foster carers benefit from a wide range of training courses and support groups. Foster carers

spoken to by inspectors were positive about the support they received, particularly the easy accessibility of support and dedicated help and advice out of hours. Foster carers exercise delegated authority on an individual basis, making day-to-day decisions for children in their care, and this helps to normalise children's experiences."

Furthermore, the Service's own self-assessment and Ofsted's view was that the service has an approach which carefully matches children and carers and makes every attempt to maintain sibling groups within the same foster placements. Finally, it was observed that the "the large majority of children benefit from stable and positive placements. Short-term placement stability is good, with 88% of children looked after having only one or two placements in the 12 months prior to the inspection. However, an increase in the number of foster placement breakdowns, particularly those for older young people, is having an adverse impact on the figures for longer term stability for children looked after."

Foster Care Recruitment and Assessment

Between April 2016 and March 2017 the fostering service received 181 enquiries from members of the public interested in foster caring. From April 2017 to date 28 enquires have been received.

The Service recruited 15 carers for 2016/2017, three carers below the set target of 18. This was in part impacted by delays with DBS checks. It takes five to six months to fully recruit a foster carer and present to Panel for approval. Since March to June 27th 2017 there have been a further 11 fostering households approved, 7 approved for 0-18 and 4 for 0-12 years; 9 of these are available for sibling groups of at least 2.

Enquiries come via a multitude of advertising channels, yet online yield the highest number of results. The Service's information and "meet and greet" events continue to prove popular and are a great opportunity to start an informal conversation with prospective foster carers. The recruitment team can offer advice and guidance, and with the continued support of our foster carers enable prospective applicants to receive a full over-arching view of fostering. *(Please see Appendix 1 for table of lines of Enquiry)*

Alongside recruitment, the Service monitors the reasons foster carers leave Havering as this also gives an indication of potential areas for attention/improvement. There have been a number of de-registrations in regard to quality standards. Over the year April 2016-17 seventeen foster carers have resigned with the reasons identified below.

- 2 shared carers (Short Breaks carer's children with disabilities living at home) for whom Direct Payments are now used.
- 3 carers who have moved out of the area and transferred to their new local authority.

- 6 carers who were not prepared to work to the Local Authority's standards and child centred approach.
- 5 retired/family circumstances
- 1 following an unsubstantiated allegation made by children previously placed.

The Service has sustained its drive and focus via the implementation of a Christmas fostering campaign which continues with a strategic focused approach on the needs of children aged between 11 to 18 years of age. The marketing plan is being spread to target potential carers from within the caring professions, i.e. nurses, teachers, social workers etc. including liaison with faith communities in order to enhance the diversity of foster carers.

The message on all advertising material and multimedia communications informs audiences of the following:

- Having foster carers receive a good level of reward, support, and training and development opportunities
- IFA carers can easily transfer
- Dates of our Information Events
- We specifically require foster carers to care for 11+ age range.

The Innovation Programme is being used to target specialist foster carers in recognition of the range of multiple and complex needs of some the children coming to care. This is explained as follows:

Face to Face Pathways is a programme of innovation lasting two years, to implement a new and different approach to respond to the issues facing young people in care aged 11-17 and those leaving care aged 14-24. This requires the Local Authority to develop, test and redesign provision to support care leavers and looked after children. The ambition is to be a regional centre of excellence for successful transitions to adulthood.

Within the Face to Face Pathways programme is an enhanced foster care offer. This is made up of a practitioner working group that offers a multi-disciplinary, all-encompassing support network to LAC children aged 11-17 years old with complex needs. The programme requires a prerequisite to recruit 3-5 enhanced foster carers from the internal in-house foster carer pool. Identified Carers will partake in a three-day advanced training programme to manage complex behaviours, access increased clinical support and dedicated supervising systemic social worker. This will include short stay cover to enhance quality and level of support and minimise burn out.

To support the enhanced fostering offer, an additional remuneration category will need to be added for those carers who are willing to offer placement to children with multiple complex emotional/behavioural difficulties.

Action Planning/Next Steps

- Care Resources Service to continue to ensure fostering offer responds effectively to current challenges for children and recruitment drive is further developed. This work is addressing Ofsted's recommendations and findings from practice week/auditing.
- Continue with recruitment campaign to expand the number of in-house carers (with a particular focus upon over 11's) and ensuring our foster carers are committed to working to keep sibling groups together wherever possible. Campaign to be evaluated in autumn 2017.
- Strengthen in-house offer and build a proposal in relation to an enhanced fostering model based upon the existing/projected profile of service demand. By first quarter 2017/18.
- Explore a range of joint commissioning options which includes fostering capacity with an East London sub regional. Further information to be provided in quarter one of 2017/18.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

IFA spend April 16 to March 2017:	£3,183,065
IFA spend April 17 to date:	£553,723 (Please note that this does not include June invoices as these will not be processed until after 30/06/2017)
In House spend April 16 to March 2017:	£1,620,796
IFA spend April 16 to March 2017:	£3,183,065
IFA spend April 17 to date:	£553,723 (Please note that this does not include June invoices as these will not be processed until after 30/06/2017)
In House spend April 16 to March 2017:	£1,620,796
In House spend April 2017 to date:	£361,518
Residential spend April 16 to March 2017:	£2,376,115
Residential spend April 17 to date:	£290,197 (Please note that this does not include June invoices as these will not be processed until after 30/06/2017)
Semi-Ind spend April 16 to March 2017:	£704,774

Semi-Ind spend April 17 to date:	£183,452 (Please note that this does not include June invoices as these will not be processed until after 30/06/2017)
Secure spend April 16 to March 2017:	£182, 828
Secure spend April 17 to date:	£56,302 (Please note that this does not include June invoices as these will not be processed until after 30/06/2017)

The financial implication for use IFAs is huge; which is why every effort is being made to increase the pool of in-house carers with skills to support the more complex children.

Legal implications and risks:

None

Human Resources implications and risks:

The human resources implication is being considered within the Innovation project and a dedicated worker will be recruited specifically to support the recruitment, support and monitoring of specialist foster carers.

Equalities implications and risks:

The current position of the Local Authority is one that promotes the recruitment of foster carers from diverse backgrounds to support the changing demographics of the children coming into care.

Appendix 1

The work of the teams consists of:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family finding role for short/long term placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and supervision to individual foster carers (supervising social workers hold an average caseload of 15 carers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statutory annual reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning related to any child focused meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group training, briefing and workshops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24 hour telephone rota support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment of prospective foster carers and operational implementation of the marketing event planner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment of carers and presentation to panel (typically each assessor will usually hold approximately 4/5 assessments at different stages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing responses to allegations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting children and young people to develop and implement care plans.

Appendix 2:

Table below – Source of fostering enquiry 1st April 2016-28th February 2017

	Total Number of Enquires
	168
Website	65
Info Event @Town Hall	23
The Liberty shopping centre	18
Posters	6
Yellow Advertiser	2
Romford Recorder	2
JC boards	2
Word of mouth	17
Living in Havering magazine	3
Leaflets -Distributed at events etc.	2
Havering Email signature	2
South Street Promotional stand	2
Google	3
Queens Hospital	1
Bus tour – Fostering branded	4
Radio –Time FM x 2	2
Brentwood craft Fair	1
Telephone enquiry	4
Bus advert	2
TV	1
Foster with other LA	1
IFA	1
Other	4

Appendix: 3

Placement Type	Total
Type: Agency F.C	84
Type: Agency F.C - L.T	1
Type: Family and Friends	25
Type: In-house F.C	68
Type: In-house F.C - L.T	10
Type: P.W.A	5
Type: P.W.P	1
Type: Res	17
Type: Res CWD	11
Type: Secure unit	3
Type: Semi-independent	32
Grand Total	257

Ethnicity	Total
Any other Asian background	12
Any other mixed background	4
Any other White background	10
Black African	25
Black Caribbean	19
Pakistani	1
White and Black African	4
White and Black Caribbean	12
White British	165
White and Asian	1
Any other Black background	1
White Traveller of Irish Heritage	1
Bangladeshi	1
Gypsy/Roma	1
Grand Total	257

As evidenced within the current cohort of LAC, there is a steady increase in the number of Black African and Caribbean.

Appendix 4:

Completed Fostering Schedule

Monday 8th May	10.00am – Photo Opportunity outside the town hall with as many members of staff to open the fortnight Hornchurch Sports Centre 11am-3pm
Wednesday 10th May	9am-4pm The Liberty Shopping Centre
Thursday 11th May	11am-3pm Upminster Library
Friday 12th May	9.00am-4pm Basildon Shopping Centre
Saturday 13th May	Parent & Child Empowerment conference Barking and Dagenham College 2-4pm
Monday 15th May	9.00am-4.00pm The Exchange Ilford
Wednesday 17th May	10.00am-3pm Fostering Bus – Romford Market
Thursday 18th May	11.00am-1.00pm Leaflet Drop in Hornchurch
Friday 19th May	10.00am-4.00pm South Street Promotional Marquee