

Leeds City Council Fostering Service: Annual Fostering Report, April 2021 to March 2022

Date: 27th July 2022

Report of: The Director of Children and Families

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

This report provides an overview of the work of the Fostering Service during the last year, as a Service we are required to report on and publish our activity on an annual basis.

Operating the service during the last year has been against a context of the global pandemic which has had an impact, we have seen an increase in the number of looked after children, both here in Leeds and other key areas in the United Kingdom. Whilst recruitment has continued, it has not been at the pace of previous years and we have seen a net decrease in the number of carers. Recovery and building back resilience will be critical in the coming year.

The report references some of the key elements which have supported the service over the last year and will support growth and development going forward. There is now a permanent Service Manager in post, and depth and expertise across the staff teams. Four Fostering Panels run each month to ensure timely approval of carers. Blended training programme offered throughout the year, with a full and robust training offer in place for this year. Enrichment activities have now resumed. Support groups have continued throughout the year and now returned to being in person. The ongoing high use of Kinship carers supports children to remain with their birth families where it is safe to do so. Mockingbird Family Model is key to effectively supporting carers and maintaining placement stability, continue to have 10 hubs with a view to establishing an 11th this year.

The Fostering Children with disabilities team continues to provide short- and long-term specialist care for eligible children. Whilst the Support Care Scheme continues to be part of the preventative support that can seek to prevent children becoming looked after.

Placement stability and effective outcomes for children and young people is more likely to be achieved when we place children and young people in their home area with Leeds carers and this is the key driver to building an effective local authority fostering service.

Specifically:-

- The Leeds City Council Fostering Service is registered with OfSTED and regulated under the National Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Regulation, 2011, and National Minimum Standard for Fostering.

- This report provides an overview of the work of the Fostering Service during the 2021/22 financial year.
- Leeds City Council is committed to all children who are looked after living in a family context where ever possible. Where a child's family are unable to offer care for a child, a child maybe placed with a foster family. The Fostering Service is responsible for ensuring that foster families are recruited, supported and enabled to care for children in the care of Leeds City Council.

Recommendations

- a) That Executive Board adopts this year's Fostering Report and service priorities for next year and notes that this recommendation will be implemented during 2022-23.
- b) That Executive Board notes and supports the Fostering Services plans to increase the range of carers and placements available and notes that this recommendation will be implemented during 2022-23.
- c) Note the responsible officer is the Head of Service, Children Looked After & Corporate Parenting.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

This report is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

This report covers the activity of a service that works across the whole city. There are no ward specific impacts.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

The service regularly consults with carers, young people and partners.

What are the resource implications?

The report does not request any new or additional resources.

What are the legal implications?

Under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, given statutory force by the Care Standards Act 2000, the Council is required to produce an annual report on its Fostering Service. This report meets that requirement.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

The Fostering Service is a key part of our strategy to accommodate children who cannot live with their families. If we are unable to provide sufficient placements this will have an adverse effect on outcomes for children and the finances of the Council.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

This report contributes to Children's Social Work Services overall objective to improve the lives of children and families in this City.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

Not Applicable

b) How will success be measured?

Not Applicable

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

Not Applicable

Appendices

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Background papers

None