

**Agenda Item No. 6**

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **20 May 2011**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service  
1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011**

Purpose of report: **To outline the performance of the Fostering Service between  
1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011**

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**RECOMMENDATION: The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report**

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**1. Financial appraisal**

1.1 There are no increased costs arising from this report.

**2. Supporting information**

2.1 The Annual Progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service is attached as **Appendix 1**

**3. Recommendation**

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Steve Hunt, Operations Manager, Fostering. Tel: 01323 747191

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: none

**Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service  
1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011****1. Staying Safe**

1.1 This outcome is fundamental to the delivery of fostering services across East Sussex and is embedded in each of the core functions: recruitment and retention; assessment, supervision and review; foster carer training; the matching and placing of children and young people with foster carers. These areas are addressed in more detail below.

**Recruitment and Retention of Carers**

1.2 From 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011, 471 new enquiries were received. This compares to 405 for the same period 2009 – 2010 and 453 for the period 2008 – 2009. The recruitment strategy has focused on the recruitment of foster carers for sibling groups, adolescents and parent and baby foster carers.

1.3 During this period the service has facilitated seven 'Skills to Foster' pre-assessment preparation courses. 35 households have attended these courses.

1.4 The number of foster carer households approved in 2010 – 2011 was 30 households for general fostering which have the potential to offer 59 placements. Three of these were transfers from independent fostering agencies. The number of foster carer approvals have increased by 17 from 2009-2010. There were also 16 temporary approvals of kinship foster carers and 3 full approvals of kinship foster carers. In addition to this 1 Special Guardianship Order (SGO) was granted.

1.5 The number of assessments in progress at 31 March 2011 is nine general fostering. Four of these are transfers from independent fostering agencies. There are also 5 SGO assessments in progress.

1.6 In September 2010 a recruitment and assessment team was established with a brief to fast track recruitment of foster carers to respond to the increased numbers of LAC. The team consists of one part time Senior Practitioner, 1.5 Social Workers and one children's services caseworker. The Team is proving most effective in fast tracking assessments particularly transfers from independent fostering providers. The plan is to speed up the process for applicants to foster so that from initial inquiry to approval should now take a maximum of 4 to 6 months depending on the complexity of the assessment.

1.7 During 2010 – 2011 the service delivered a number of recruitment and retention events and these have included:

**Recruitment Events**

- In September an information day was held in the Arndale Shopping Centre, Eastbourne.
- In October an information day was held in the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre, Hastings.
- In February 2011 the service had a stall at a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people event in St Leonard's on Sea.
- In March 2011 an information day was held at Bannatynes Hotel, Hastings.

**Retention Events**

- An evening event at the Azur Marina Pavilion, St Leonards was held in April and was attended by 125 carers and staff.
- In July over 200 carers, staff and children attended the picnic at Herstmonceux Observatory and Science Centre.

- The Big Breakfast event in August 2010 in conjunction with the RAF at Eastbourne Airbourne was attended by over 320 carers and children who had access to the exhibits before the members of the public and they enjoyed a breakfast cooked by an RAF Mobile Catering Support Unit.
- In September an event barbecue was held at Barnsgate Manor Vineyard and was attended by 122 carers and staff.
- A Fostering Service newsletter was distributed to foster carers and staff in March 2011.

### **Advertising and Media Coverage**

- Sovereign FM Radio advertising from April 2010 to March 2011 .
- Arrow FM Radio advertising from April to June 2010 and September to November 2010.
- Articles in Eastbourne Gazette and Hastings Observer to coincide with Foster Care Fortnight in May 2010.
- New posters distributed to all East Sussex County Council buildings in May 2010.
- Article in Eastbourne Herald in August about the Big Breakfast event at Airbourne.
- In September 2010 business style type information cards were distributed to all foster carers to give to people interested in fostering. Posters also sent to carers to distribute.
- Advert was placed in 'The Scene' magazine in September/October 2010 edition.
- Lamp post banners were placed in Eastbourne during September and October 2010.
- In November 2010 a postcard with information about fostering was included in all ESCC employees pay envelopes.
- Information afternoon was held at the ESCCAPE café, County Hall in November.
- The 'Reach Out' internal newsletter for Children's Services featured an article in the December 2010 edition of the new images the Fostering Service have been using for their posters and other advertising.
- In March 2011 the service was featured in 'Your County' magazine which was distributed to every household in East Sussex.
- A press release went out on 16 March to coincide with the recruitment event on 23 March 2011.
- Radio advert on Arrow FM was held between 16 –22 March 2011 to advertise the recruitment event on 23 March.

1.8 These campaigns and events are always of high quality and continue to be worked in partnership by staff, carers and the East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA).

## **2. Foster Care Training**

2.1 The total number of training places taken by carers within the academic year September 2009 - July 2010 was 454. So far, the number of places taken on training from October 2010 - February 2011 is 177 carers, identifying a 15% increase to the previous year's attendance at the same point in the year. This increase is largely due to more stringent administration procedures and the implementation of the Children's Workforce Development Council Training, Support and Development Standards (CWDC TSD). 76% of carers evaluated the training they received as excellent and 24% evaluated it as good. 11 carers have completed their NVQ Level 3 Health and Social Care. The new qualification framework that has taken over from the NVQ has been implemented with 6 carers commencing the new Qualification Credit Framework Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce. In addition a new Qualification Credit Framework level 2 Certificate for the Children and Young People's Workforce will be available to carers as of September 2011. 70 households have completed their CWDC TSD standards with a high number of carers currently working on them. Alongside workshops, individual support has been provided by the foster carer Training and Development Officer.

## **3. Placement Activity**

3.1 The Fostering Duty Team received 710 referrals up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. This is 105 more than for the same period for 2009-2010. At the end of March 2011 there were 585 children in care with 496 of these in foster placements (350 in-house; 83 agency; 63 kinship placements).

Of the 708 referrals received 43 were for Parent & Baby placements, 174 for respite (from home and foster care), 328 requesting short term foster placements, 2 requesting permanence, 5 requesting residential placements, 125 requesting emergency placements and 33 to request a move to another placement. A significant proportion of the respite referrals continue to be for ongoing respite which will prevent children coming into care full time and also to prevent placement breakdown. Many of the referrals requesting short term placements reflect the increase in care proceedings. Of the 708 referrals received 496 resulted in placements being made. 71 referrals are in the process of being matched. 141 were not needed due to other forms of support being found or courts not agreeing to removal. The Fostering duty team continue to meet the daily challenges of finding appropriate matches for vulnerable children within our current in house resources and has been very successful in limiting the need to use costly agency placements.

#### **4. Being Healthy**

4.1 The OFSTED Fostering Inspection Report of December 2007 was clear that foster carers prioritise the health of children in care and that there were a range of initiatives in place to support this. The Looked After Children, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (LAC CAMHS) has continued to increase in staffing and now includes, as a response to demand, an additional play-therapist. The Fostering Service has yet to receive the CAMHS report for 2010-2011 but analysis of the demand since 2007-2008 shows a steady increase in the request for consultations from foster carers. The number of discharges following consultations remains fairly steady and averages 32% with the remaining 68% of foster carers or children either receiving an ongoing service from the clinicians or being signposted elsewhere. The number of looked after children receiving direct therapeutic intervention over the last 3 years has averaged 82 per year. The therapeutic parenting groups provided by the clinicians continue to be oversubscribed and therefore now run on a continuous rolling programme.

#### **5. Enjoying and Achieving**

5.1 The placement support service continues to evolve and is currently working with 65 young people in an ongoing capacity, 14 of which are receiving life story work. This is provided by 11 trained placement support workers. This provision has proved to be very successful and as expected is oversubscribed. Providing this service in house saves approximately two thirds of the cost that otherwise would have been incurred if this work had been commissioned externally. Currently support is being offered to 10 parent and baby placements. 44 young people are receiving support through our activities. We have reviewed 57 ongoing packages and set up 21 new packages. The service also continues to provide holiday activities with 328 children take part in healthy outdoor activities. 6 of these activities were financed by bids to the Youth Bank. Placement support workers continue to facilitate the Children in Care Council.

#### **6. Making a Positive Contribution**

6.1 The young users group which was formed in March 2010 provided the majority of the membership of the current Children in Care Council (CICC). There have been 10 CICC meetings since April 2010. An activities day in April 2010 for the new CICC was held to help the members to begin to form as a new group. In June 2010 The Children's Guide to Being in Care was published, which the CICC had an important role in putting together. There were also 4 national meetings of the Children's Workforce Development Council where ex CICC members were able to discuss their experiences of being looked after. This helped to develop national policy in regard to services for LAC. The CICC also met with high court judges to inform them of their experiences and what they would like the judiciary to take in to consideration when the judiciary make decisions that have an impact on their lives. The CICC have had input to the design of the new Personal Education Plan documentation. During the recent OFSTED Inspection of Safeguarding and LAC Services the inspectors met with members of the current and previous CICC. The lead inspector stated after viewing the DVD made by the CICC that, "It really is an example of what I think is best about councils such as yours. It is informative, fun, appealing and imaginative and packs a lot in to a relatively short time". The Lead inspector was very clear that he thought that the CICC was having a positive impact on looked after children in East Sussex.

## **7. Economic Well Being**

7.1 As was noted in the 2009 – 2010 report, the development of the policy of allowing LAC to remain with their foster carers post 18 (Staying Put) will have a significant effect on the ability of care leavers to achieve economic wellbeing. In 2010 – 2011 it has enabled some young people to remain with their carers while they attain further or higher educational qualifications or take their first steps into the world of work. This takes “corporate parenting” one step further in giving a positive commitment to supporting care leavers at a crucial time in their lives.

## **8. Partnership work with foster carers**

8.1 The Integrated Looked After Children's Service (ILAC) has again worked in partnership with the East Sussex Foster Carer Association to staff residential weekends for looked after children. Two such events took place in July and August 2010 for children: the first for children aged 7 – 11 years with 27 children attending, and the second for children aged 11 plus years with 28 children attending. Both the Fostering Service and Looked After Children's Team staff helped to facilitate these. The Fostering Service also helped staff a residential weekend for children who foster where almost 60 children were thanked for the role they play in fostering.

8.2 The Operations Manager, Fostering continues to attend the bi-monthly meetings of the East Sussex Foster Carers Association (ESFCA) management group to report on developments in the Fostering Service and Children's Services. The Operations Managers for LAC and The Fostering Service continue to host monthly “surgeries” for foster carers to bring issues and problems straight to key managers. Feedback continues to show that 100% of the carers who have attended these surgeries believe that they have been listened to and their concerns and issues dealt with in a timely manner.

## **9. Supported Lodgings**

9.1 Supported Lodgings providers are the backbone of placement provision for care leavers and homeless young people in the East Sussex area. There are currently 36 households providing 58 placements to these user groups. 8 new households were approved in 2010 – 2011 providing 10 placements and currently there are 9 assessments being carried out which should provide a further 9 new placements. Between 2010 -2011 the Service received 165 referrals for placements. 64 of these were for care leavers with 44 of them placed and 101 were for homeless young people of whom 51 were placed. For most young people placed the aim is to work with them to achieve the stability necessary for them to move on to their own independent accommodation.

## **10. OFSTED**

9.1 The last fostering inspection took place in December 2007. An inspection is due to take place in Spring 2011 for which a date is yet to be announced.

## **11. Summary**

11.1 The Panel is asked to note the performance and achievement of the East Sussex Fostering Service for this period and endorse the key management priorities outlined in the fostering service improvement plan for 2011/2012:

- To focus on recruitment and assessment via the specialised assessment & recruitment team to maximise enquiries from prospective applicants to foster and reduce timescales from initial enquiries to approval of new foster carers
- If, following the end of the current consultation process, the decision is taken to integrate the Children's Disability & Short Breaks Fostering Service into The Fostering Service then a priority will be to increase the number of respite and general foster carers to increase placement choices for children and lessen the dependence on expensive agency placements. Transfer of staff who are confident and knowledgeable about disabled children will also broaden the experience of the existing staff team.
- To embed the new Fostering Services Regulations (England) 2011, National Minimum Standards (NMS) 2011, Children Act Guidance : Volume 4 : 2011, and Volume 2 : Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and ensure all changes are embedded in practice, operational instructions and policies and procedures.

- To achieve a positive outcome in the forthcoming OFSTED inspection of the service
- To prioritise the provision of placement support in order to maintain placement stability, prevent disruptions and sustain adequate levels of user participation.
- To recruit and retain sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the support and supervision needs of carers.
- To continue to improve partnership working with locality social work and family assessment service and LAC colleagues to contain the need for agency placements.
- To develop partnership working for children in care in transition to adulthood.
- To facilitate a proactive CICC to enable active feedback and involvement from our children in care.
- To continue to promote special guardianship orders with foster carers.
- To enhance partnership work with East Sussex Foster Care Association, particularly in relation to the new launch of the Foster Carers' Charter.
- To ensure that issues of diversity and equality are fully integrated into service planning and delivery.
- To maximise best value and manage the service by reconciling policy and resources.

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