

## Appendix 2

### Initial Scoping Board Findings Report

<b>Initial Scoping Board Subject Area</b>	Fostering Service
<b>Responsible Committee</b>	People Scrutiny Committee
<b>Recommendation of the Initial Scoping Board</b>	To recommend to the People Scrutiny Committee that there is not sufficient basis to undertake a review of issues relating to the Fostering Service.  To recommend that the People Scrutiny Committee supports the suggestions of the Initial Scoping Board as set out in Section 3 of this report.
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## 1 Background

1.1 At its meeting on 25 June 2018, the People Scrutiny Committee agreed to appoint Councillors Clark, Ensor, Liddiard and Sheppard to undertake some initial scoping work with regard to the Fostering Service. The Board met on 28 August and discussed the key challenges facing the service and its views on whether there are sufficient grounds to recommend to the People Scrutiny Committee that a formal Scrutiny Review should be initiated.

## 2 Findings of the Initial Scoping Board

2.1 Members of the Initial Scoping Board agreed that there are insufficient grounds at this time to support a recommendation being made to the People Scrutiny Committee that a review of the Fostering Service be undertaken. In reaching this decision, the Initial Scoping Board carefully considered all the evidence presented to them. This included the following written materials circulated ahead of the meeting:

- The Education Select Committee's report into Fostering (December 2017)
- The DfE's report 'Fostering in England' (February 2018)
- The Government's response to the above two reports (July 2018):
- ESCC's 'Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2017 to 2020'
- Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service (01/04/17 to 31/03/18)
- Examples of marketing material used to promote fostering to the public (some additional items were also circulated at the meeting discussed below).

In addition, at the initial scoping meeting on 28 August 2018, Members also considered the detailed responses provided to them by:

- Liz Rugg, Assistant Director (Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care)
- Adrian Sewell (Operations Manager, Fostering Team)

2.2 The evidence provided reassured Members that the Department are taking robust steps to address the major issues facing the Fostering Service. This includes the key issue of the retention and recruitment of carers. Members also noted that Ofsted have recently undertaken an inspection of Looked After Children Services at East Sussex. Whilst the report was still embargoed at the time of the meeting, Liz Rugg confirmed to Members that Ofsted had judged LAC services to be good. To be more specific with regard to the Fostering Service, Ofsted determined that the recruitment and retention processes are a success, that training is a strength and that support for carers is good.

2.3 Given the above and the other detailed evidence provided by the Department regarding the plans it is putting in place to meet future challenges, Members were satisfied that a review was not justified at this time. Not going forward with a review of this service area at this time will also have the benefit of enabling the People Scrutiny Committee to identify other areas for scrutiny (where there are possibly more pressing issues).

### **3 Actions**

3.1 Whilst Members were positive about the Department's strategy and implementation, they did make a number of suggestions. These were welcomed by the Department, with an undertaking being given to look into the suggestions and report back to Members on the following items:

- **3.1a Borough and Districts.** Members noted that more could possibly be done to engage with Borough and District Councils. The Department therefore agreed to provide Members with copies of posters and other promotional material. Members could then approach other relevant local authorities and ask if they could use the facilities they manage to display in prominent places fostering service material.
- **3.1b Focus groups.** With a view to developing a clearer understanding of the experiences of users of the recruitment process (and other matters relating to the role), Members suggested the creation of focus groups. These groups would be made up of both experienced carers and new recruits. This could help the Department develop, for example, more targeted or refined recruitment campaigns.
- **3.1c Engagement with Schools.** Members asked whether more could be done to involve schools in the process of promoting the role of the foster carer. This could include using schools to display banners and posters promoting the role. It could also include possibly circulating literature to parents via schools. The Department undertook to look into the potential for this.

- **3.1d Review of progress made.** Members want to keep this area under review and therefore asked for an update on progress in one year's time. With this in mind, the Department undertook to:
  - Provide more detail regarding recruitment and retention developments in the Annual Looked After Children report to Cabinet and the Annual Progress Report of the East Sussex Fostering Service which is provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel.
  - The Operations Manager for the Fostering Service also undertook to provide updates to the Members on the Fostering Panel.
  
- **3.1e Members Parish magazine/newsletters.** Members suggested including reference to information about the fostering service in local parish magazines/newsletters.
- **3.1f Social Events for interested members of the public.** Members are aware that some charities hold coffee mornings and tea parties to raise funds. Developing this idea, it was suggested that the Department could organise informal social events which interested members of the public could attend. This would provide a non-intimidating, relaxed environment for potential recruits to discuss becoming carers.
- **3.1g Attendance at Fostering Panels.** Members were clear that the process for approving carers needs to be thorough. However, it was the personal experience of one of the Members that potential carers looked very intimidated when attending meetings of the Fostering Panel. A request was therefore made as to whether more could be done to make the process less daunting for lay members of the public when they are seeking approval as carers (who ordinarily would have little experience of dealing with such meetings). The Department agreed to look further into this and to discuss with the Chair of the Fostering Panel whether anything could be done to address this issue.