

Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 30 January 2025

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Fostering Recruitment

Purpose: To provide an update on recruitment of foster carers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the information provided within the report.

1 Background

1.1 East Sussex in-house Fostering Service provides high quality, cost effective, local care for children who are unable to live within their own family network.

1.2 Placing children with in-house foster carers ensures that we better understand the skills and experience that those carers have to offer and that we can support them to meet the needs of children in their care. Placing children with local carers supports them to maintain relationships with friends and family; it means that they are more likely to maintain their existing school place and we are more likely to be able to do the reparative work needed to enable children to return home.

1.3 There is a national shortage of foster carers, particularly carers able to meet the needs of older children or those with disabilities and complex needs. This means that some children are living in residential care because there isn't a foster home available.

1.4 The East Sussex Fostering Service has performed well against local and national benchmarking. In 2023/24 East Sussex was the second most successful local authority in the Region for converting initial enquiries into applications, and fourth for converting enquiries into approvals. East Sussex has maintained an in-house foster carer rate of 76% compared to 60% national average (against use of Independent Fostering Agencies).

1.5 The DfE recently tasked local authorities to work more closely to drive up the numbers of fostering placements available by sharing resources and good practice. East Sussex have been part of a regional pilot with 19 other authorities. Local Authority Fostering South East (LAFSE) is explored in the attached presentation.

1.6 As part of the regional fostering pilot, East Sussex received funding to deliver the Mockingbird programme in partnership with The Fostering Network. The programme nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community of six to ten satellite families called a constellation. Each constellation is led by a hub home carer and liaison worker; the constellation offers vital peer support and guidance alongside social activities and sleepovers to strengthen relationships and permanence.

2 Supporting information

2.1 CPP are asked to note the verbal presentation which is attached for reference at Appendix A.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note the information provided within the report.

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