

Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 17 July 2025

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Fostering Annual Report

Purpose: To provide an update on the performance of the ESCC Fostering Service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to note the update on the performance of the East Sussex County Council Fostering Service.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Annual Fostering Report provides information relating to the activity, performance and forward plans of East Sussex County Council's Fostering Service. This report is required under [Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations \(2011\)](#) and [National Minimum Standards \(2011\)](#) and is intended to support elected members and senior leaders to scrutinise the quality of care provided to children and the support provided by the service to our carers.

2. Supporting information

- 2.1 The report sets out the vision for the Fostering Service, alongside data relating to recruitment and retention of carers, our approach to supervision and support, our training and development offer and key priorities for the coming year.
- 2.2 Successes in 2024-25 highlighted in the report include:
- Highest number of enquiries in five years has led to a strong conversion rate of 33% from home visit to approval
 - Net increase of 17 households & 25 places (compared to 23/24 net of 8 households but -1 place)
 - Maintained strength of in-house carer utilisation at 76% on 31/3/25 against national average of 60% for 23/24
 - Payments uplift for ESCC foster carers in line with National Minimum Allowance (NMA) in April 2024- supporting recruitment and retention, improved focus on fostering and wellbeing, increased transfer enquiries
 - Implemented new placements and commissioning structure to continue to improve our home-finding processes for children in our care
 - Launched new digital foster carer handbook and Learning Pool training platform
 - Rebranded promotional collateral and website
 - Continued development of Buddy scheme
 - Launched first Mockingbird Constellation
 - Management and recruitment collaborative events with neighbouring LA's
 - Launched 'Replenish' boxes and workshops to improve our corporate parenting to black and mixed heritage children in care
- 2.3 The priorities for the Fostering Service for 2025/26 included in the report are outlined below:
- Focus recruitment and development of foster carer resource to deliver more flexible, substantive placement options

- Focus on how the Fostering Service can work with Placements & Commissioning to achieve effective step down
- Embed 1st Mockingbird constellation with ambition to open two more constellations by end of 2026/27
- Ensure smooth transition of Placement Support Service to Placement and Commissioning Service and embed flexible, needs led provision
- Work with WSCC and B&H to enhance Regional Fostering Recruitment, Development and Support
- Work to respond to unique needs of Connected Carers
- Launch Fostering Dashboard to improve performance management and analysis
- Audit implementation of the new Supervision Form and digitise this to enhance oversight
- Ensure that Training and Development offer remains relevant for experienced carers and addresses contemporary issues
- Further develop a culture of professional responsibility, improvement and innovation across all staff levels
- Work with ESFCA to ensure appropriate representation of all ESCC foster carers

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to note the update on the performance of the East Sussex County Council Fostering Service.

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Director of Children's Services

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Fostering Service Annual Report