

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 19th November 2014

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Fostering Service Annual Report

Purpose of Report

1. To present the annual report on the Fostering Service in Dudley for 2013/14 to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

Background

2. Local Authorities are required under the Children Act 1989 Section 17 (6) as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to provide accommodation for children in need who require it as a result of:
 - there being no person with parental responsibility for them
 - their being lost or abandoned
 - their carers being prevented (for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation
3. The Fostering Service in Dudley provides a comprehensive range of fostering provision working closely with the Social Work Teams to secure appropriate placements for looked after children. The Service also provides family finding for children who require permanent foster placements, recruits, train and supervises mainstream foster carers and Family and Friends foster carers and facilitates carers support groups and groups for young people in care and birth children of families who provide fostering.
4. The service delivers a specialist foster care therapeutic treatment programme known as Flipside. Flipside is an intensive placement option for a small number of children. It provides an evidence based intervention which has been nationally evaluated.
5. The fostering service is subject to inspection by OfSTED under the **Single Inspection Framework for the inspection of children in need of help, protection; children looked after and care leavers**. The fostering service is included within the key

judgement that OfSTED makes in relation to the experiences of children looked after and achieving permanence. Specific criteria that we are judged against is:

- Children live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family and friends where this remains in their best interest.
- Permanent homes are found for children and young people with out unnecessary delay.
- Their needs are met and they live with their brothers and sisters if that is assessed as being in their best interests.
- They do not experience placement moves unless they are part of a return home or in accordance with their plans for their future.
- They develop safe and secure relationships with adults that persist over time.
- When support is needed children, young people and families are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.

The fostering service was last inspected in October 2012 this was a stand alone inspection and it was judged to be adequate.

6. The Government has maintained its focus on improving services for looked after children with a focus on ensuring that all looked after children receive high quality care, particularly in relation to stability and quality of long term foster placements. In order to achieve this they are promoting and supporting Local Authorities in providing foster carers with appropriate training and support and active monitoring of the stability of foster placements provided by Local Authorities. To support children and young people who have left care they have required Local Authorities to implement the so called 'staying put' arrangements that will enable young people 18 and over, up until the age of 21 to have the possibility of staying with their foster carers.
7. Attached at Appendix 1 is the annual report of the Fostering Service which details levels of service, placement activity, key achievements and future developments for the service.

Finance

8. The total funding for 2013/14 for the Fostering Service is as follows:

		<u>Revised</u> <u>Revenue Budget</u>	<u>Other Income</u>	<u>Grant Income</u>	<u>Total Funding</u>
Internal Fostering Service (including Price Street)		899,600	0	0	899,600

Fostering Allowances	4,901,400	0	0	4,901,400
Treatment Foster Care	738,700	121,400	0	860,100
Intensive Evidence Based Programme Grant (KEEP/MTFC/Sector Advisor). Figure is based on actual funding spent during 2013/14.	0	0	155,785	155,785
Independent Fostering Agencies	9,565,3000	0	0	9,565,300
TOTAL	16,105,000	121,400	155,785	16,382,185

Budgets reflected above do not include departmental administrative recharges.

Law

9. The law relating the Local Authority's duty to provide foster care services is governed by the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

Equality Impact

10. The provision of a fostering service contributes to the provision of stable, secure and safe care for children looked after in order that they can achieve good life chance outcomes. It assists the Council in discharging its corporate parenting responsibilities to ensure that looked after children are not disadvantaged by being in care and that they receive the support, care and security that we would wish for our own children.

Recommendations

11. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee receive and make comments where appropriate to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services on the annual report of the Fostering Service.



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