



Haringey Council

Report for:	CYPS Scrutiny Panel 27 February 2014	Item Number:	
Title:	Fostering Service Review & Implementation		
Report Authorised by:	<i>LISA REDFERN</i> Lisa Redfern Director, Children's Services		
Lead Officer:	Charlotte Pomery Joint Adult and Children's Interim Assistant Director Commissioning		
Ward(s) affected: All	Report for: Non Key Decision		

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This paper provides an update on Haringey's Fostering Review and Implementation Programme which ran between May 2013 and January 2014.

There has been much progress in this time. We have talked to Haringey foster carers to better understand their motivations and needs. We have looked at alternative ways of delivering the service. We have developed an innovative new partnership to accelerate its growth. And we have completed a strategic review of our wider approach to providing the right placements at the right time.

The new Placements Sufficiency Strategy (please see attached appendix) highlights a number of successes over recent years, including a safe and persistent reduction in the number of looked after children, a positive move from residential to family placements, improving placement stability and a strong level cost control. It also points to further opportunities for improvement and savings and sets out what more can be done to realise them. The fostering project is now focused on delivering these further changes.

2. Cabinet Member introduction

I fully support the Fostering Review and Implementation. Outstanding foster care is vital to giving every Looked After Child (LAC) in Haringey their best possible life chances. Ensuring we have sufficient foster carers who offer high quality care is



Haringey Council

the only way of achieving this. This work will mean Haringey has more high quality foster carers.

3. Recommendations

The Fostering Service Review (May to August 2013) recommended that:

1. a refreshed Placements Needs Analysis and Sufficiency Strategy be completed;
2. the in-house fostering recruitment and assessment function be externalised at pace; and
3. plans be formulated for the continuous improvement of the in-house fostering service.

The Fostering Implementation Project was mobilised in October 2013 to deliver these recommendations. This project concluded on 31 January 2014 and made further proposals to support the growth and success of the in-house fostering service. Specifically, the creation of a 'Continuous Improvement Plan' ('CIP') was agreed which will bring the staff teams together with Haringey foster carers to re-design the service and jointly implement the changes needed. This work will respond directly to the 'customer insight' from local foster carers in the Fostering Service Review, including points of direct feedback, and will run until March 2015.

It is an important feature of the work that it is designed and delivered jointly through the staff teams and foster carers (to maximise engagement and ownership and improve relationships). There is capacity to carry out this work although a requirement for change management resource has been identified and this has been sourced through the Strategic Partnership. Additional detail as to this work is set out in Section 5.

4. Alternative options considered

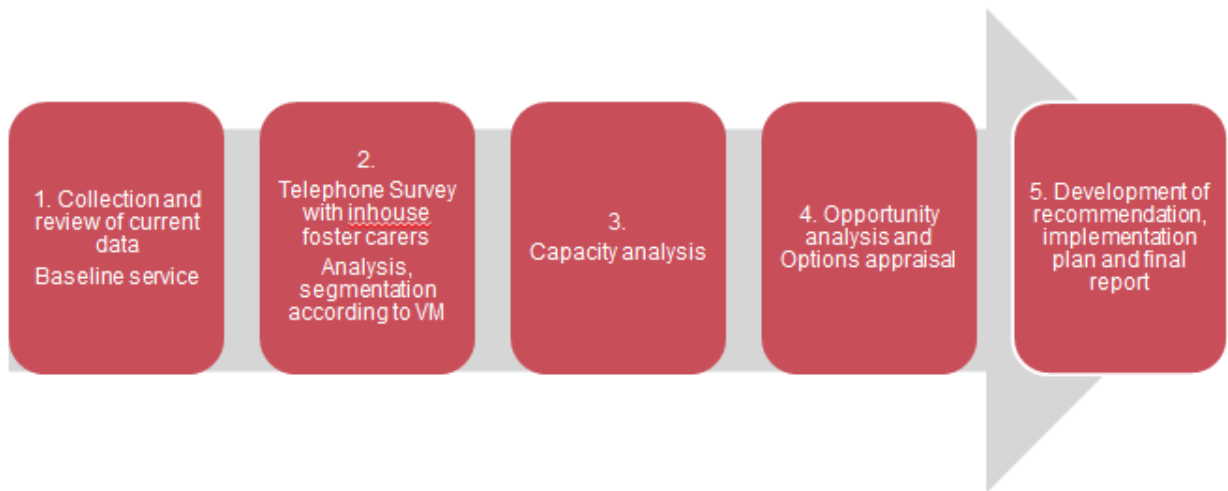
In addition to the externalisation of the recruitment and assessment function – the option recommended and approved - a range of alternative options were considered and appraised regarding the future delivery model for the in-house fostering service. These are set out in previous reports.

5. Background information

The Council is committed to maximising the number of local family placements available to Haringey's looked after children to deliver improved outcomes and to offer value for money. In support of this, the Council engaged iMPower in May 2013 to carry out a review of the in-house fostering service, encompassing both in-house improvement opportunities and alternative delivery options.

This work confirmed that the service has a low, and reducing, level of local fostering placements and that an immediate strategic and tactical response was required.

5.1 Work carried out



In addition to identifying and appraising options for how the in-house service could be delivered in the future, the Fostering Review also conducted in-depth engagement work – through telephone surveys and focus groups - to enable a better understanding of the needs of foster carers and prospective foster carers. This work canvassed direct feedback on service experience and also applied a psychographic system called ‘Values Modes’ to understand the values and motivations of foster carers. This work revealed a common values set amongst foster carers – a finding since validated by national DfE research – which can be used to target service development, as well as specific and immediate improvement opportunities.

Fostering Implementation Project (October 2013 to January 2014)

The Fostering Implementation Project was subsequently commissioned through iMPower to advance the recommendations of the Review. This work concluded on 31 January 2014 and delivered the following:

- Placements Sufficiency Strategy, including Needs Analysis
- New model for assessment and recruitment of foster carers
- Service performance framework, and
- Continuous Improvement Plan (including pledges from staff and foster carers)

5.2 Placements Sufficiency Strategy

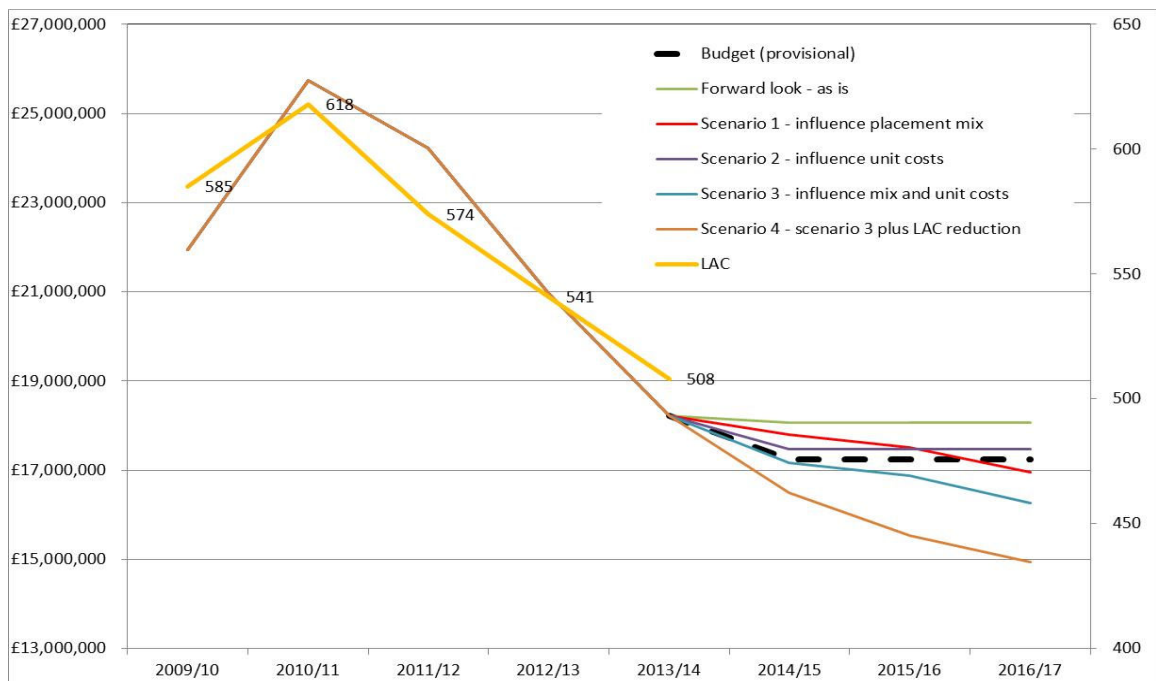
A new Sufficiency Strategy has been developed which sets out the ambition, direction and required actions for placements sufficiency. This includes:



- Investment in the growth and development of the in-house fostering service to provide greater local family placement sufficiency (across all Children’s Services cohorts);
- Transition from 32% in-house fostering placement share to 60% over three years;
- Specific foster carer recruitment targets based around the needs of looked after children;
- Development of a clear specialist foster care offer and foster carer development pathway;
- A general rationalisation of commissioning routes and reinforcement of practice; and
- More active market management, particularly in relation to local residential provision.

The Sufficiency Strategy was co-produced with Finance in order to ensure the financial context is clear, accurate and understood. To this end the document examines a number of impact scenarios (set out in the graph below) in which the effect of changes in the different ‘cost drivers’ – unit costs, mix of placement types and LAC numbers - can be seen.

In order to achieve short term sustainability, both unit costs and the placement mix must be influenced at pace. A continued reduction in LAC numbers will add further comfort over both the short and long term.





5.3. New model for recruitment and assessment of foster carers

The new model for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers has now been commissioned and implemented. The external recruitment provider, NRS Limited, was appointed following a process of market engagement and a formal tendering exercise. The partnership is founded on an innovative risk and reward arrangement in which the provider is paid by results.

5.4. Service Performance Framework

Provider performance, in terms of the number and quality of foster carer assessments delivered and the forward 'pipeline' of applicants, will be monitored through a new 'service performance framework'. This framework spans the entire fostering service, including support, supervision, utilisation and retention of foster carers and will be operated through the new Continuous Improvement Plan Project Board (see below).

5.5. Continuous Improvement Plan

The Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), which is based on and responds directly to what foster carers recently told us, puts foster carers at the heart of the service. Engagement work tells us that:

- Approved foster carers have very mixed experiences of the service and there are opportunities to make them feel more valued;
- Foster carers want to be involved in the fostering service, and this involvement shouldn't start or end with the placement;
- Equally, prospective foster carers would value greater and earlier contact with approved foster carers, highlighting the power of 'peer advocacy' through word-of-mouth referral campaigns;
- Foster carers are already active in and have a deep reach into our communities and are willing to help, along with the Council's partners, generate word-of-mouth opportunities; and
- This principle also applies to support and the Council has an opportunity to help build a community of mutual support in which foster carers have a greater stake.

The plan comprises four elements (project 'workstreams') and will be delivered over 12 months starting in February 2014:

1. Recruitment and assessment (complementing the work of the external recruitment provider);
2. Support;
3. Utilisation; and
4. Specialist Offer.



6. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

- 6.1** The latest 2013-14 budget for fostering placements is £16.84m comprising £13.821m (82%) independent fostering and £3.019m (18%) in-house. Assuming the numbers of LAC in foster placements and unit costs remain constant, implementation of the transition to 60% in-house foster care would save £3.8m over the 3 year period. Rationalisation of commissioning routes is expected to reduce unit costs from their current levels.
- 6.2** Implementation of the proposed sufficiency strategy, through changing the placement mix and reducing unit costs, is expected to deliver £2.25m savings in order to contribute to the CYPS savings target in 2014-15.
- 6.3** Further analysis will be required to clarify the level of future savings to be delivered through the sufficiency strategy which will be required to contribute to further, challenging Medium Term Financial Planning targets from 2015-16 onwards.

7. Head of Legal Services and legal implications

n/a

8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

n/a

9. Head of Procurement Comments

- 9.1** The External Recruitment Provider was commissioned with the advice and guidance of Procurement and is fully compliant with the Procurement Code of Practice.
- 9.2** A competitive process was undertaken to ensure Value for Money was achieved.
- 9.3** Contract management arrangements for the external recruitment provider are in place, ensuring KPIs are met and allowing early identification of any non-compliance.

10. Policy Implication

- 10.1** The work carried out with regard to fostering supports the Council's wider commitment to accommodating children in family settings, where possible locally, as set out in a number of policies. Those which underpin the Council's approach to the accommodation of children becoming looked after specifically are:
- Placements and Permanency Policy (published 2013), and
 - Family and Friends Policy (published 2013).



Haringey Council

10.2 The Placements Sufficiency Strategy and project activities do not propose to revise these policies but to strengthen their effective delivery whilst securing best value for money.

11. Reasons for Decision

n/a (for information only).

12. Use of Appendices

- Looked After Children Placements Sufficiency Strategy

13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

n/a