



Report for:	Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel – 3 November 2014	Item Number:	
Title:	Progress on the recruitment of new in house foster carers and actions being taken to address Ofsted's recommendations for improvement of the fostering service		
Report Authorised by:	Jon Abbey, Acting Director of Children's Services		
Lead Officer:	Paul McCarthy Interim Head of Service (Children Looked After Resources and Placements)		
Ward(s) affected:	All	Report Non Key Decisions:	To keep the committee informed of progress and developments in this service area.

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 As at 8th September 2014 Haringey had 505 looked after children and young people aged 0 – 17. Haringey is successful in being able to place most (80%) of our looked after children in foster families. The remaining 20% are accounted for by

- Children with special health and educational needs placed in specialist residential care homes (approximately 20),
- Children placed for adoption,
- Children placed in residential schools (usually children with complex and severe learning difficulties),
- Young people aged 16/17 placed in semi-independent accommodation, and
- A very small number placed back at home with parents.

1.2 Haringey has for many years been highly dependent on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) in order to find suitable foster placements for looked after children and young people. The balance is gradually improving, however at the present time 51% of children who are in foster care are in placements with IFA foster carers. This compares with 60% of fostered children placed with IFA foster carers in September 2013. "Good" and "Outstanding" local authorities would typically have between 0% - 20% of their looked after children placed with IFA carers as they would have a better supply and choice of local in-house foster carers.



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1.3 The IFA foster carers we work with are all fully approved and trained foster carers, mostly living in Haringey or in one of the immediately adjacent boroughs. Care quality standard expectations are exactly the same as those required at an in-house foster carer. The unit cost of these placements is significantly higher than an in-house foster placement (median weekly cost approximately £700 per week as compared with a median cost of £480 per week for a foster placement with one of Haringey's own foster carers). In addition, it can be more difficult to establish a positive working relationship and sense of partnership with a foster carer who is approved by an IFA and this can affect our ability to secure the very best outcomes for the child.

1.4 During the year 2012/13 a major review was carried out of the fostering service and of our strategy for ensuring that Haringey has sufficient numbers and range of foster carers and other provision to meet the assessed needs of the borough's looked after children. This work was supported by our strategic partner iMPower and led to detailed proposals for reorganising the fostering service and the publication of our Looked After Children and Young People's Sufficiency Strategy (attached).

1.5 During the period 20 May 2014 – 11 June 2014 Ofsted carried out an in depth inspection of Haringey's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Ofsted's Report was published on 18 July 2014. Ofsted's graded judgement of Haringey's service to Children Looked After was "Requires Improvement", whilst noting many positive areas. The section of the report on the fostering service contained a number of criticisms and recommendations for improvement. The actions put in place to address these recommendations are summarised below in section 5.12.

1.6 This report is intended to provide CPAC with information about progress in the recruitment of new foster carers as well as information on progress in regard to Ofsted's recommendations for improving the fostering service.

2. Background information

2.1 As at 8th September 2014, Haringey's register of foster carers showed that Haringey has:

- 136 task centred fostering households (the purpose of task centred fostering is to provide a temporary placement to a child until the child can either return home to birth parents or wider family network or to a permanent placement which is usually adoption or special guardianship. The task centred carer is part of the professional network involved in the child's life and is expected to undertake task associated with the care plan for the child);
- 31 connected person foster carers (sometimes referred to as "kinship foster carers (connected persons fostering, or kinship care, is where children are fostered by a member of their wider family or friendship network. The connected persons foster carer is approved to foster specific children only and can be either short term or permanent).
- 33 short break foster carers (specialist respite carers for disabled children); and



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- 292 registered individual foster carers.

2.2 During the year 2013/14, there were 21 new task centred fostering households recruited and approved. During the same year 30 fostering households were deregistered for various reasons, mainly due to retirement or the circumstances of the carers having changed (for example in full time employment) meaning they were no longer available to take placements. This was an unusually high number of fostering de-registrations during 2013/14, representing a “tidying up” exercise and getting to grips with situations that had been over-looked for some time. The net result in 2013/14 was that the in house fostering service lost 3 fostering places.

2.3 To date, during 2014/15 there have been 2 fostering households deregistered and 5 new task centred foster carers have been approved. We anticipate that 5 – 10 task centred fostering households are likely to be deregistered in total during the current year.

2.4 Since April 2014 Haringey has been working in close partnership through a formal contract with a private company called Network Recruitment Solutions (NRS) which specialises in the recruitment and placing of agency social care staff, running contact centres for looked after children and also the recruitment and assessment of professional foster carers using self employed independent social workers to carry out the assessments and present these to the fostering panel. Haringey followed the Corporate Procurement Processes in appointing NRS for a limited period of time with a detailed contract and specific targets in regard to quality of service and quantity of new enquiries to be generated and new prospective foster carers to be presented to the Fostering Panel. NRS has worked successfully with four other London boroughs in the recruitment and assessment of foster carers. The major advantages of using NRS are,

- (a) Their experience in marketing and awareness raising in local communities;
- (b) Agility in providing a quick, friendly and professional response to all initial enquiries;
- (c) A supply of experienced self-employed social worker associates who can focus on the assessment, aiming to complete and present to panel within eight weeks; and
- (d) Experience in providing high quality “Skills to Foster Training”.

2.5 The Fostering Panel’s capacity has been increased to two panels per month from July 2014 – March 2015 to accommodate the increased flow of assessments to be considered. We aim for four NRS fostering assessments to be presented to each fostering panel. Our agreed stretch target is to approve 45 new task centred fostering households (not including kinship foster carers) during 2014/5, as compared with 21 new foster carers approved the previous year, giving us an additional fostering capacity of 60 fostering beds (less any that may be lost through foster carers resigning or being deregistered for other reasons).



2.6 At this stage (beginning of month 6) the Haringey contract managers and NRS feel confident about achieving the target of 45 new fostering households to be approved in 2014/15. We would need to maintain this rate of growth for a further two years to reach the required position of no more than 20% of foster children and young people being placed with IFA carers. This is at the heart of the CYPS Sufficiency Plan for looked after children, ensuring a good supply of local foster carers from all sections of the community and allowing social workers a degree of choice when placing children to give the best possible chance of the children’s needs being fully met.

2.7 Table 1: New foster carers currently in approval pipeline

Type of contact	April 2014 – August 2014
Initial enquiries	125
Initial telephone interviews conducted	37
Home visits conducted	30
Under Assessment	17
Approved	5
Completed Skills to Foster Training	24 people (16 foster Carer Households)

2.8 Table 2: Tabulated summary of criticisms and recommendations made by Ofsted and actions / progress that have been put in place.

1	The sufficiency and quality of the in-house fostering service provision are under - developed	<p>(a) Detailed sufficiency strategy and planning now in place.</p> <p>(b) Ambitious but realistic targets in place to grow the in-house foster carer pool by 45 new fostering households in 2014/15 and maintain this growth in 2015/17.</p> <p>(c) Restructure of fostering teams and externalisation of fostering recruitment and assessment has released a considerable amount of extra social work resource for the training and support of foster carers, with reduced caseloads.</p>
2	Foster carers are not adequately supported by their supervising social workers	<p>(a) A new “Fostering Pledge” has been agreed between the department and Haringey Foster Care Association. This contains a commitment to an enhanced level of visiting, availability and support to foster carers (Fostering Pledge is to be found in Appendix A)</p> <p>(b) fostering support groups are being reviewed and a wider range of groups will be provided in the future</p>



		(c) A foster carer "satisfaction survey" is being designed and will be carried out by the end of the calendar year. This will assist in providing a benchmark of satisfaction. It will be repeated each year and will give an indication of whether support systems are improving steadily over time
3	Ensure that sufficient in-house and local foster carers are recruited, so that more looked after children and young people can live nearer to their communities, if appropriate	(a) our partner NRS has led on the marketing and promotion of fostering, concentrating on reaching families living in or very close to Haringey. A summary of marketing activities for the period April 2014 – November 2014 is provided in the following section.
4	Foster carers do not feel sufficiently engaged with the improvement process	(a) Monthly meetings are now taking place with the Committee of the Haringey Fostering Association. The Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director (Safeguarding) have recently attended these meetings and will attend every quarter. (b) A sufficiency development strategy board and work streams have been put in place. Foster carers are represented on all these groups. (c) A new termly newsletter is now being produced (first edition September 2014) as a means of keeping foster carers informed and feeling involved (d) A Haringey Fostering Conference is being planned for November 2014 at which we are aiming for a high proportion of foster carers to attend
5	Foster carers report receiving varying levels of support and supervision from their supervising social worker	(a) A Fostering Pledge has been agreed that sets new enhanced service standards and expectations. (b) fostering records are routinely audited by fostering managers to check for compliance with improved service standards (c) duty fostering officer service has been reviewed and improved
6	Some foster carers had not been allocated a supervising social worker to support them for long periods of time, or they had experienced a succession of agency social	(a) all foster carers now have an allocated supervising social worker (b) There has been significant progress in recruiting permanent staff to



	workers who did not give them consistent advice	vacancies in the fostering service. The one remaining agency member of staff will leave at the end of September 2014 and will be replaced with a permanent member of staff. All managers are permanent employees, with the one exception of the Interim Head of Service who has been in post since May 2013 and whose contract ends in March 2015.
7	There are no systems in place in the local authority to celebrate the achievements of existing foster carers or recognise their contribution to services for looked after children	(a) A major Fostering Conference will take place annually, the first being in November 2014. A key aspect of this conference is to promote the engagement of foster carers and to make them feel valued and their achievements celebrated (b) it has been agreed that an end of year party / celebratory event will take place every December from this year. (c) consultation is taking place with children and young people about how best to nominate foster carers for special awards
8	Although a scheme for delegated responsibility for foster carers is in place so that they can make some decisions about the lives of the children who live with them, children, young people and foster carers seen by inspectors were not clear about the decisions that they could make	(a) Additional training is being arranged to help foster carers to understand the "delegated responsibility" scheme (b) this is now being addressed in initial "Skills to Foster" Training for all new foster carers (c) Foster carer support groups will be used to improve understanding (d) the new "Fostering Newsletter" will contain easy to understand guidance to the delegated responsibility scheme.

2.9 Outline of fostering marketing activity during period April – November 2014

- May – June 2014. Leaflets delivered by hand to every house in the borough
- Fostering pages on website redesigned and micro-site created
- Redirect put in place so that all initial fostering enquiries by email or phone go direct to NRS for instant response
- Increased range of fostering information sessions advertised at varying times in Tottenham, Wood Green and Hornsey
- Pop – Up posters designed and placed in all Haringey libraries and other public buildings along with information leaflets



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- Newspaper adverts in Enfield and Haringey Advertiser
- Large vinyl banners promoting fostering to be positioned on external railings /walls of Haringey schools (subject to permission of Heads, and on all Children's Centres
- Fostering leaflets to be sent out to all primary school parents through children's book bags (by end of September 2014)
- Fostering Newsletter (first edition September 2014) will ask existing foster carers to talk with family and friends who may be interested in fostering
- Presentations to local churches during Autumn 2014
- Discussions taking place with Tottenham Hotspur about possibility of an advert promoting fostering at home fixtures and in match programme.
- Further vinyl banners to be placed in prominent positions on Haringey parks and recreation grounds, subject to obtaining agreement of relevant department and Central Comms.
- Presentations being arranged to children's social workers to assist them in being more effective as champions for recruiting foster carers when they are in contact with IFA foster carers
- Chief Executive to be asked to promote fostering though weekly newsletter to all Council staff

3. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

4. Comments of the Assistant Director Corporate Governance and legal implications

The Assistant Director Corporate Governance has been consulted about this report. There are no legal implications arising from the report.

5. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

6. Head of Procurement Comments

7. Policy Implication

8. Use of Appendices

Appendix1: Fostering Pledge agreed between CYPS and Haringey Foster Carer Association.

9. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985



Haringey's Pledge to our foster carers

- We acknowledge the central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer
- We will always work with the foster carer as a core member of the team around the child
- We will always provide foster carers with full information about children who are to be placed with them
- We will ensure that foster carers always receive relevant support services
- We will make sure foster carers are offered training and development opportunities in order to develop their knowledge and skills in meeting the needs of looked after children and young people
- We will strive to constantly improve the quality of the support we provide to foster carers and we will actively involve foster carers in the review and development of the service
- We will allocate a supervising social worker to every foster carer
- The supervising social worker will keep in close contact with the foster carer, visiting at least once every four weeks and with a telephone contact at least weekly
- We will provide an out of hours support and advice service to foster carers
- We will provide support groups for foster carers
- We will do all we can to enable foster carers to have an active and effective Foster Carer Association, able to represent foster carers and contribute to the development and improvement of the service to children
- Whenever foster carers are subject to allegations or complaints, we will always investigate with an open mind and showing care and respect for the foster carer. We will let the foster carer know the outcome of the investigation as soon as possible. We will make sure foster carers are provided with support during this process
- We greatly value the role played by "Family and Friends" foster carers and we will ensure that these carers receive high quality support and training in accordance with the Council's Family and Friends Policy.
- We recognise the impact of fostering on the birth children of foster carers and we will improve our support services to "children who foster"
- We will provide foster carers with clear guidance and support in regard to their delegated authority

Lisa Redfern
Director of Children's Services
July 2014