

# PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

13th November 2014

## Rutland County Council Annual Fostering Report

Report of the Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	<b>Creating a Brighter Future for all and ensuring health and wellbeing needs of community are met.</b>
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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This is an update report outlining the annual activity of the fostering service during 2013/14. The report outlines some key challenges and actions for 2014/15.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Panel note the contents of the report

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Children Act 1989 is the primary legislation governing fostering services. National Minimum Standards are issued by the Secretary of State under the Care Standards Act 2000, and these are applicable to the provision of fostering services and provide guidance on what is required by a fostering service. The National Minimum Standards are underpinned by the 2011 Fostering Regulations, and together with these Regulations, provide the basis of the regulatory framework for the conduct of fostering services, which include

This includes;

- i. Recruiting and assessing foster carers
  - ii. Matching the child to a placement that meets their assessed needs
  - iii. Annual review of all foster cares
  - iv. Learning and development of carers
  - v. Supervision and support of carers
  - vi. Provision of a fostering panel
  - vii. Connected person carers- previously referred to as family or kinship carer which also falls within the fostering regulations.
- 3.2 The fostering service was last inspected in 2011 when it was judged to be an outstanding provider of fostering services.
- 3.3 There are currently 20 foster carers: 6 Connected Persons (friends and family) carers and 14 mainstream foster carers.

- 3.4 Rutland has recruited 2 sets of mainstream carers and 6 sets of connected people/friends and family carers over the period April 2013 to March 2014, however 4 have now changed status i.e. 1 moved on to adoption, 1 to SGO and 2 had temporary approval but did not complete assessments. This has met our stated objective of recruiting 2 mainstream carers in the period.
- 3.5 There has been on-going advertising campaign using internet, local radio and mail drops and posters to recruit new carers. In addition we are using the carers themselves to talk about the positive impact of fostering on their families and the children they care for.
- 3.6 Further recruitment has led to 2 mainstream carers and 1 connected person carer also being recruited in recent months. In addition there have been 7 de-registrations over the period 2013/14. These have been for a variety of reasons:
- i. Carers moved to live out of the area and there was no child in placement.
  - ii. 3 Carers resigned for personal reasons.
  - iii. 1 Connected person resigned following the placement breakdown, young person now in an IFA placement with a view to permanency.
  - iv. 1 Connected person resigned following making of a SGO
  - v. 1 Connected person resigned following being approved as prospective adopters

### 3.7 FOSTERING PANEL

An independently chaired fostering panel which consists of a small group of suitably skilled and experienced people. Membership meets the requirements of the Fostering Regulations 2011 and consists of an Independent Chair, an Independent Panel Manager, the Manager of the Fostering Team and a pool of suitably experienced people including an ex elected member. We also have access to a Medical Advisor and Legal Advice.

- 3.8 The Panel has a number of functions:-
- i. To consider new applications
  - ii. To review the progress and terms of approval of new carers within a year subject to their fostering experience
  - iii. To consider complaints about foster carers
  - iv. To consider de-registrations
  - v. To act in an advisory capacity for all aspects of fostering
  - vi. To consider matching for permanency
  - vii. Quality Assurance
- 3.9 The Panel makes a recommendation, which is then ratified by the Agency's Decision Maker (the Head of service, People Directorate).

### 3.10 CONNECTED PEOPLE CARERS

The term “connected persons” (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services -Misc Amendments, Regulations 2013) refers to foster carers who have been approved to care for specific children who are friends and relatives of the child. The numbers of connected person arrangements has continued to increase in line with the national trends. This is a result of recent regulation which said that local authorities needed to treat family and friends carers as they would foster carers.

3.11 There are also 8 Special Guardianship Orders open with financial support packages. They have access to practical support if necessary and are also reviewed on an annual basis by a social worker in the team.

3.12 Family Group Meeting Service - there have been 15 referrals made to the Rutland Family Group Meeting Service between April 2013 and March 2014. The referrals to the family group meeting service have increased due to the changes in legislation.

3.13 Staying Put Policy. (Guidance on the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers and Fostering regulations were issued in 2013 by DfE, DWP and HMRC). It is a requirement that all Local Authorities have a Staying Put Policy in place. In Rutland **the Staying Put Scheme** in Rutland is open to all current foster carers including friends and family carers. It enables young people in a placement where a familiar/pre-existing relationship exists to continue in this placement from them being 18-21 years old. The local authority funds these placements and practically supports them as required.

### 3.14 Conclusion

A total of 51 children have been looked after in our in-house provision during 2013/14 in comparison to 32 for the previous year. As a result of our successful recruitment of carers other local authorities have spot purchased placements from us. Further work needs to take place to develop the business model to ensure that we are getting best value from these arrangements. It is clear from initial analysis that we are not fully recouping costs for Rutland beds sold on the external market.

We currently have 10 vacant beds. Furthermore recent successful recruitment has resulted in four sets of new carers.

The looked after children numbers at time of writing are 34 however 11 either have or will shortly have adoption plans and 2 other children are subject to SGO processes. As a result looked after numbers are predicted to reduce to the mid 20's in early 2015- there is therefore ample opportunity to develop our business model over 2014/15.

### 3.15 PRIORITIES FOR 2014/15

- i. To increase local placement choice in respect of mainstream foster care.
- ii. To embed the Staying Put arrangements within our current cohort of foster carers and looked after children.
- iii. To continue to work on a robust training plan for the foster carers and fostering team which is available and easily accessible and ensures continuous professional development.
- iv. To develop a Foster Carer database to provide performance reports that support the work we do in recruitment matching, training, review and including payments to carers.
- v. To develop a more robust business model to enable the commercialisation of our service.
- vi. To review our payments to carers to ensure they are equitable with our comparators in line with the Peoplefirst review.
- vii. Further consultation with carers and other key stakeholders in respect of changes to our operating model.

3.16 Appendix A is the annual report for 2013/14 and the report for Scrutiny in respect of developments within the Service.

## 4. RISK MANAGEMENT

<b>RISK</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Time	L	Developments can be managed within existing timescales
Viability	L	Developments can be managed within existing Service
Finance	L	There may be some implications for staying put arrangements and increases in looked after numbers however it is not anticipated that there will be any significant impact on budgets. Proposals to commercialise the service should generate income.
Profile	M	The fostering service will be inspected as part of OFSTEDs new inspection framework.
Equality and Diversity	M	Needs of diverse population must be met.

**Background Papers**

Appendix A – Fostering Service Activity Report  
April 2013 – March 2014

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# Rutland County Council

## *Fostering Service*

Activity Report

April 2013 – March 2014



## 1. STAFFING

1.1 The team consists of two full-time, one part-time and one sessional staff members, there is also one part time Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator who are all overseen by the Team Manager Team 10 (see Appendix 1).

- **1 full-time, permanent Principal Supervising Social Worker (PSSW)** – the PSSW is responsible for the day-to-day management of the service, including the recruitment, training, and supervising of foster carers (carrying a restricted caseload); service developments and the supervision of other team members (see below).
- **1 full-time, permanent Supervising Social Worker** – responsible for the supervision and development of the fostering service, supervising foster carers, placement finding and completing small projects such as researching supported lodgings and 18+ sufficiency package and developing and delivering training.
- **1 part-time, (3 days per week) Social Worker Family Support** – who is currently responsible for assessing and supervising all Connected People Carers. This includes assessments for permanency related to Connected People foster carers, Residence Orders and Special Guardianship Orders. This member of staff will continue to raise the awareness of Private Fostering and ensure that the Local Authority meets the requirements of the National Standards for all Private Fostering arrangements and will assess and provide statutory visits to carers and children in placement.
- **1 sessional Social Worker** – who provides us with up to eight hours per week and can work more hours to meet the needs of the service. Mainly concentrating on the recruitment process to increase the current pool of available carers and placements. Crucially he provides us with a speedy and efficient service at the point of enquiry, by visiting people in their homes if requested. This ensures that people receive appropriate information, on a one-to-one basis where they feel able to ask any questions that are specific to their circumstances. In addition this worker undertakes Form F assessments on our behalf and supplements any training requirements for prospective foster carers who have to miss a session of *The Skills to Foster*.
- **1 part-time, (15 hours per week) Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator** – providing an in house family group meeting service for Rutland, arranging and facilitating family group meetings to help family decision making and avoid the need for children being accommodated.
- **1 full-time, team assistant** – providing a wide range of administrative support including foster carer finance, budgetary support and general office duties.

The PSSW, FGMC and Team Assistant are supervised by the Team Manager. The PSSW supervises the other staff members.

The service is overseen by the Head of Service.

## 2. FOSTER CARERS

- 2.1 There are currently 20 foster carers: 6 Connected Persons (friends and family) carers, and 14 mainstream foster carers.
- 2.2 Rutland has recruited 2 sets of mainstream carers and 6 sets of connected people/friends and family carers over the period April 2013 to March 2014, however 4 have now changed status i.e. 1 moved on to adoption, 1 to SGO and 2 had temporary approval but did not complete assessments. This has met our stated objective of recruiting 2 mainstream carers in the period.
- 2.3 We have advertised throughout the year mainly using the local radio, the Internet and mail drops to public venues. During Fostering Fortnight we ran a campaign on the local radio which involved one of our foster carers talking about the positive impact fostering has had on their family and alongside this we also ran our own recruitment infomercial. We had an information stall at Rutland Day in September which helped raise our profile in the Local Community. Currently we have an advert in a local community magazine delivered to all households in the Rutland area.
- 2.4 We completed the *Skills to Foster* training course in November – 3 couples attended this course and it was felt that all 3 couples could progress to the assessment. However 1 couple decided to withdraw for personal reasons. The other 2 couples are currently being assessed. We had planned to run another Skills to Foster course in April but at present we only have 1 couple. We offered to provide this couple with individual training to complete the Skills to Foster Course, but they declined stating they would wish to attend the course with other people. To maintain their interest they will receive telephone contact once per month to provide an update.
- 2.5 We have utilised and incorporated the skills and knowledge of an existing foster carer to co-deliver our Skills to Foster course. This carer gained a lot from the experience and the feedback from the attendees was very positive. The Skills to Foster was delivered over 3 consecutive days which appeared to suit all participants.
- 2.6 Table 1

<b>Recruitment (excluding Connected Persons)</b>	<b>April 2011/ March 2012</b>	<b>April 2012/March 2013</b>	<b>April 2013/March 2014</b>
Enquiries	40	20	32
Applications	10	5	6
Assessments	5	2	3
Approvals	4	2	2
% Enquiry to Approval	10%	10%	6.25%

Of the 32 applications 7 carers have or will attend the skills to foster course and the remainder either changed their minds having been provided with more information or would have been unsuitable due to the size of home or health issues.



2.7 As previously stated in 2.4 we are currently assessing 2 couples as mainstream carers. It is anticipated that these will be presented to the Panel in April and May. We are also assessing 1 couple as Connected Person Carers who will be presented to Panel in May.

2.8 We have had seven de-registrations over the period 2013/14. These have been for a variety of reasons:

- Carers moved to live out of the area and there was no child in placement.
- 3 Carers resigned for personal reasons.
- 1 Connected person resigned following the placement breakdown, young person now in an IFA placement with a view to permanency.
- 1 Connected person resigned following making of a SGO
- 1 Connected person resigned following being approved as prospective adopters

### 3. Fostering Allowances

Age Group	Weekly Basic Allowance	Festivity Allowance	Birthday Allowance
0-4 years	£140	£140	£140
5-10 years	£159	£159	£159
11-15 years	£199	£199	£199
16+ years	£242	£242	£242

#### Carer Fee

- *Level 1*  
New foster carer £122 per week, pro rata plus the age related foster allowance for the child/ren.
- *Level 2*  
Foster carer with one year's experience, a minimum of 20 overnight stays and completion of the appropriate standards £169 per week pro rata, plus age related fostering allowance for the child/ren.
- *Level 3*  
Foster carer with at least two year experience and holding a relevant Vocational Qualifications Level 3 or equivalent qualification and a minimum of 20 overnight stays. £214 per week pro rata plus age related fostering allowance for the child/ren.

For additional children £8.00 per day will be paid to foster carers who are already in receipt of a fee.

Connected person carers are paid equal to foster carers but no additional payment that mainstream carers receive.

## **Out of County Placements**

There are currently 2 children from Leicestershire placed with our carers. The carers receive the appropriate allowance based on the child's age and fee based on the carer's level. We charge Leicestershire a £150 per week administration fee.

## **Maintenance**

We do not pay maintenance to inactive carers.

## **Recruitment**

A total of £2541.00 has been spent on advertising so far this year. £1856 has been for advertising including Radio as this has been the most successful method of advertising. We no longer use newspapers advertisements as this is a less successful.

There will be an East Midlands regional campaign to recruit foster carers during 2014/15.

Skills to foster training provided by RCC staff - cost around £2000 to approve an applicant to foster. This includes DBS check, health check, writing to referees, 30-50 hours of visits, Skills to foster training, assessment and panel. On-going supervision, monitoring and review have not yet been calculated but relative costings will form part of the Peoplefirst review.

## **IFA**

RCC currently have 2 children in care with Independent fostering agencies. The average weekly cost is £743.50. In the past year (1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2013 – 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2014) we have spent £99,381.07 on independent placements.

## **4. FOSTERING PANEL**

4.1.1 The Fostering Panel consists of a small group of suitably skilled and experienced people. Membership meets the requirements of the Fostering Regulations 2011 and consists of an Independent Chair, an Independent Panel Manager, the Manager of the Fostering Team and a pool of suitably experienced people; we also have access to a Medical Advisor and Legal Advice.

4.1.2 The Panel has a number of functions:-

- To consider new applications and recommend appropriate approval limits
- To review the progress and terms of approval of new carers within a year subject to their fostering experience
- To make recommendations regarding residence orders and allowances
- To make recommendations regarding the approval of Independent Visitors for Looked After children
- To consider complaints about foster carers

- To consider de-registrations
- To act in an advisory capacity for all aspects of fostering
- To consider matching for permanency
- Quality Assurance

4.1.3 The Panel makes a recommendation, which is then ratified by the Agency's Decision Maker (the Assistant Director, People Services).

4.1.4

The table below shows the level of activity of the Panel:

Table 2

<b><u>Rutland Fostering Panel</u></b>	<b><u>April 2011/March 2012</u></b>	<b><u>April 2012/March 2013</u></b>	<b><u>April 2013/March 2014</u></b>
Registrations	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Reviews (initial)	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
Independent Visitor	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
De-registration	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>
Permanency	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Change of approval			<u>2</u>

## **5. CONNECTED PEOPLE CARERS**

- 5.1 'Connected People' refers to foster carers who have been approved to care for specific children who are friends and relatives of the child.
- 5.2 In 2013/14 we have had 3 families approved in Rutland looking after 3 young people. We also had 2 couples who were temporarily approved but did not proceed to Panel due to change in situation. We currently have 1 Connected Person assessment ongoing due to be presented at presented to panel in May.
- 5.3 The number of children being cared for by connected people has continued to increase, specifically with an increase in referrals for temporary approvals.
- 5.4 Connected Persons carers in Rutland are subject to the same assessment and approval process and receive the same training opportunities and support as mainstream carers. They receive the same fostering allowances and fostering fees as other Rutland carers and are expected to attend the same training.
- 5.5 There are currently 2 Residence Orders open to the Fostering Service. These placements receive financial support, are reviewed annually by a Social Worker in the team and have access to practical support if needed.

- 5.6 There are 8 Special Guardianship Orders open with financial support packages. They have access to practical support if necessary and are also reviewed on an annual basis by a Social Worker in the team.
- 5.7 Family Group Meeting Service – there has been 15 referrals made to the Rutland Family Group Meeting Service between April 2013 and March 2014. The referrals to the family group meeting service have increased due to the changes in legislation. Following the recruitment of a Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator the service is now provided in house which is proving a more positive experience for those involved.

## 6. REFERRALS TO THE FOSTERING SERVICE

Table 3

	<b>2011/2012</b>	<b>2012/2013</b>	<b>2013/2014</b>
Connected People	5	3	6
SGOs	3	1	5
Private Fostering	3	1	0
Residence Orders	0	0	0
Family Group Meetings	8	5	15
Foster Care	9	12	12
Foster Care (Respite)	3	2	2
Foster Day Care	1	0	6
Residential (Respite)	0	2	4
Residential Long Term	1	2	1
Outreach Foster Care	0	0	13
Parent & Baby assessment centre		1	1
<b>Total *</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>61</b>

\* This denotes number of children referred to each service area.

## 7. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Table 4 (below includes Looked After Children for whom the fostering team do not provide a service e.g. children placed with parents, and independent living (making a total of 54 children).

## 7.1 Rutland Placements

Table 4

	<b>April 2011/March 2012</b>	<b>April 2012/March 2013</b>	<b>April 2013/March 2014</b>
Foster Care	21	18	17
Friends & Family Care	10	10	9
Respite (Special Needs)	4	2	0
Respite (foster care)	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>

## 7.2 Out-of-County Placements

Table 5

	<b>April 2011/ March 2012</b>	<b>April 2012/March 2013</b>	<b>April 2013/March 2014</b>
Foster Care	9	4	15
Family & Friends Care			6
Residential	3	2	3
Residential (Respite)	0	4	0
Foster Care (Respite)	0	1	0
<u>Hostel</u>			4
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>28</b>

Unmet need - we were unable to accommodate four young people for whom there were specific matching requirements and risks (mainly around risk taking behaviours and verbal aggression) and who needed a more specialised, intensively supported placement. We have used a combination of Independent Fostering Agency placements and Residential placements for these 4 young people.

## 8. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 All prospective foster carers attend a 3 day course "The Skills to Foster" prior to approval. They have an opportunity to meet with existing foster carers and children with similar family circumstances.
- 8.2 There is an induction programme following approval and carers also undertake basic core training; this being Paediatric First Aid, Safeguarding, Record Keeping and Safer Caring. Individual training needs are considered separately.
- 8.3 Foster carers continue to have the opportunity to train with social workers and other disciplines where appropriate. There have been opportunities for foster carers in this area this year, i.e. attachment training. We have

identified a training plan for the Fostering Team which we are in the process of developing and this will be completed by the end of May 201, this training is being provided in house through a mixture of current staff and independent workers. We recognise the importance of training for the workforce and intend this to be an on-going priority.

- 8.4 We have been able to access more in house training for our foster carers which has included Drugs and Alcohol Awareness, HIV, Speech and Language Development and Surviving Teenagers. We have also been provided with free training by CAMHS i.e. a 2 day Attachment Course and have delivered a sexual abuse awareness training.
- 8.5 Some foster carers have been keen to develop further skills in outreach work and this has also involved supervising contacts for children in care. A training day was provided in December and a further is arranged for May 2014. Other outreach work such as family support work over weekends and bank holidays has supported parents to have their children at home and help manage the risks around this.
- 8.6 All foster carers have a laptop and broadband connection. Looked after children from 10 years onwards and in care for a period over 6 months are also provided with a laptop. We use electronic mail to communicate with some of the carers, including sending information (e.g. minutes of meetings and new referrals) where a secure site is available. Carers record information about the children they look after, either long hand or on their computer using a template. This information is checked on a monthly basis during supervision.
- 8.7 The majority of our carers have completed the fostering induction standards. The only exceptions are newly approved carers and they will have completed these standards within their first year of approval.

## **9. SUPPORT TO CARERS**

- 9.1 Carers are supervised at least monthly when children are in placement unless agreed otherwise.
- 9.2 Support groups meet every other month at the council offices or at foster carers' homes or alternative venue. Support Groups during the day are usually well supported and attendance has also increased during evening sessions. A letter has been sent out reminding them of their obligation to attend at least 3 Support Groups per year and advising if they fail to do so we will have to consider reviewing their fee.
- 9.3 All carers are provided with membership of The Fostering Network and the Leicestershire Foster Care Association, both of which provide advice, information and support to carers including a Helpline both in office hours and outside of office hours.
- 9.4 Foster carers have a list of other carers' telephone numbers and use this to provide informal support to each other. The foster carers are now an established and cohesive group and they find mutual support invaluable.

- 9.5 Foster carers have access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for Looked After Children through monthly satellite clinics held at RCC offices. Carers are given a time slot to attend supported by their SSW. There has been very positive feedback on this new service. The Fostering service offers advice to carers for specific children when there are management problems and carers are able to access the 24 hour helpline. .
- 9.6 Carers have the Team Manager's, Principal Supervising Social Worker's and Supervising Social Worker's mobile and home telephone numbers and 24 hour access to the Emergency Duty Team shared with Leicestershire Council.

## **10. DEVELOPMENTS TO THE FOSTERING SERVICE**

- 10.1 In line with the National Minimum Standards 2011, Rutland have developed a sufficiency strategy. We have been able to research a number of supported lodgings schemes and staying put schemes and as a result of this have developed a sufficiency model for Rutland.
- 10.2 The Staying Put Scheme in Rutland is open to all current foster carers including friends and family carers. It enables young people in a placement where a familiar/pre-existing relationship exists to continue in this placement from them being 18-21 years old. The local authority funds these placements and practically support them as required. This is generally used by children who have been in placement with a carer for long periods. We have over the last 12 months had 2 carers provided stay and put opportunities for the young people they had looked after.
- 10.3 The Supported Lodgings Scheme is open for former LAC who do not want to remain in foster care post 16 and Southwark children who need support. The requirement is for low to medium support in independent living skills prior to young people moving out. However despite a robust advertising campaign we have not attracted any specific enquiries about joining / providing care.
- 10.4 As a service we are aware that our most difficult to place young people have been adolescents and that this is a gap in our current service. However Rutland are currently involved in providing a Youth Housing Option which will provide accommodation for 5 young people aged 16 – 25 years old with priority given to 16/17 year olds deemed as vulnerable.
- 10.5 The Fostering Service is also aware of the new changes and requirements in respect of remand fostering placements, should this be needed within Rutland we would work closely with Leicestershire County Council in respect of provision of placement.

## **11. COMPLAINTS**

11.1 There have been no complaints made during this period. We hold a record of all complaints and outcomes on the fostering database and a hard copy on the complaints file.

## **12. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES FROM CARE**

12.1 There has been not been any unauthorised absences.

## **13. SCHEDULE 8 NOTIFICATIONS**

13.1 There have been no notifications to Ofsted this year

## **14. OFSTED**

14.1 Rutland Fostering Service was last inspected by Ofsted in August 2011 for the seventh time. This was a full inspection by Ofsted resulting in an OUTSTANDING grading. Rutland Children's Services was subject to an unannounced inspection in January 2013, using the new inspection regime. The outcome for this was an ADEQUATE grading.

## **15. CONCLUSIONS**

15.1 There has been an increase in demand over the last year but which has included 3 teenagers whose placements disrupted during the summer, and a number of new accommodations. The numbers of looked after children peaked during 13/14 but there is evidence that these numbers will reduce over the next year.

15.2 There were 31 Looked After Children in 2011/12, 32 Looked After Children in 2012/13 and 51 Looked After Children in 2013/14. We have managed to place the majority of children within our own fostering service, although have had to use Independent Fostering Agencies for some. During this period there have been a couple of changes within the staff team with a new Team Manager being appointed in June. A new Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator was also appointed in October and in December a new Team Assistant joined the team. The team is now fully staffed and is an established cohesive group.

15.3 We have continued to attract people's interest in fostering and are able to respond quickly due to the systems in place. We have been able to hold one Skills to Foster course over this time period as a result of enquiries. We feel we are attracting a high standard of applicants to these courses although we recognise that we are not interesting high numbers. We currently have 2 ongoing mainstream assessments and 1 Connected Persons (Family and Friends) assessments. On successful completion this will ensure we exceed our target for recruitment for the year 2014/15.



- 15.4 We have been able to recruit 2 sets of new carers, one of whom is able to care for children of a wide age range. Both of these carers had a child in placement within 3 months of approval.
- 15.5 We have had 7 de-registrations during this period 2013/14. These were for a variety of different reasons as stated above.
- 15.6 The Fostering Service is operating under the National Minimum Standards 2011 and Regulations, some of the impact of these are outlined below:
- We are aware that the standards place a greater emphasis upon Connected Persons (Friends and Family) Carers and that they are eligible for the same type of services and support as mainstream carers. In Rutland we have always provided the same level of access to support and training. Rutland has noted a significant increase in Connected Persons assessments and recognises that these assessments are often very complex. There has also been an increase in the request for temporary approvals of Connected Persons which has also had an impact on work within the team.
  - There is a greater duty of sufficiency for the Fostering Service in that we need to have a wide range and choice of foster carers in county to meet the needs of children and young people from Rutland. We now have 16+ sufficiency strategy and are actively recruiting for carers for supported lodgings and have a Staying Put scheme in place for existing carers. This has proved difficult in terms of generating interest and enquiries. We are going to refresh our advertising and recruitment campaign in respect of this.
  - Panel membership has changed and is no longer so prescriptive in respect of its constitution. There have been no difficulties in respect of ensuring attendance at panel. Panel have a need to recruit new members over the coming months and there has been some interest already registered.
  - We support the view that foster carers are given more delegated responsibility and are able to make day to day decisions about children in their care. We have developed a delegated authority form and are in the process of rolling this out within the Social Care Teams.
- 15.7 We are aware of the budgetary constraints on services and understand the need to try to achieve more with less. We are going to have to be flexible in the way that we use our resources and continue to focus on outcomes for the children that we work with and work together with our partner agencies and colleagues to provide the best possible services. We recognise that we need to further develop our own group of foster carers in order that we can have sufficient choice for the children and young people of Rutland. The People's Directorate in Rutland is currently undergoing a full review with the outcome being available in September 2014, this will impact on recruitment of any new staff over the coming months and also means the budgets are being scrutinised much more closely to offer savings.

## **PRIORITIES FOR 2014/15**

- 1) To increase local placement choice in respect of mainstream foster care. To encourage carers to be approved for as wide an age range as possible. To recruit carers specifically for young people with complex and challenging needs. To recruit carers specifically able to meet the needs of disabled children, both respite and longer term placements.
- 2) To embed the Staying Put scheme within our current cohort of foster carers and looked after children.
- 3) The Supported Lodgings scheme has yet to be established and this is proving extremely challenging in the current climate. We would wish to provide Rutland young people with positive and realistic choices over accommodation in Rutland. The Local Authority is currently in the process of using one of its' own houses to accommodate and support 16+ young people. The Team Manager is involved in this project which will aim to provide 5 beds for young people aged 16 – 24 with a clear criteria and priority list. This aims to be up and running by November 2014.
- 4) To ensure the Delegated Authority training and forms is embedded in the organisation and all carers are aware of their responsibilities and actions around this.
- 5) To continue to work on a robust training plan for the foster carers and fostering team which is available and easily accessible and ensures continuous professional development.
- 6) To continue to work on a Foster Carer database that is able to run reports on training, support groups, vacancies and matching criteria to help aid the making of placements and provision of training needed for our carers.
- 7) To develop a more robust business model to enable the commercialisation of our service.
- 8) To review our payments to carers to ensure they are equitable with our comparators in line with the Peoplefirst review.