

SCRUTINY PANEL

19 November 2015

FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT

Report of the Director for People

Strategic Aim:	Creating a safer community for all	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:		
Contact Officer(s):	Steve Tanner, Head of Children's Safeguarding and Improvement (Interim)	01572 758493 stanner@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel:

1. Note the good performance of fostering service in meeting statutory timescales for the assessment, supervisory visiting, and review of in-house foster carers.
2. Note the recruitment priorities for the fostering service in relation to adolescents, children with challenging needs/behaviours, and the development of a range of placements to support care leavers to achieve a successful transition to independent adult hood. This may necessitate corporate support in relation to media, marketing, advertising, and general publicity and, cross working between people and places directorate in relation to social housing for care leavers, and the possibility to some "invest to save" funding to support a short term recruitment campaign.
3. Note the need to develop an overall sufficiency duty in relation to placements for looked after children, which details needs, demands, and commissioning priorities.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report relates to the Council strategic objective two: "protecting vulnerable communities". The local authority fostering service provides a family based care for children who are looked after by the Council as a corporate parent.
- 1.2 Approved and regulated foster care providers are required under statutory guidance (national minimum standards for fostering) to produce an annual report on its activities.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The local authority fostering service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, support and training of all approved foster carers who foster for the local authority. This includes “connected persons” (family and friends) who foster children looked after by Rutland County Council. This annual report details activity of the service and describes how well it meets statutory regulation and guidance.
- 2.2 It shows that the authority has a relatively small number of foster carers which have remained relatively stable. Recruitment activity is low and there are challenges in relation to recruiting carers able to take adolescents and sibling groups. This is in line with national experience. Statutory timescales for the assessment and review of foster carers are largely met and there is a programme of training for carers according to their experience and skills.

3 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 A successful in-house fostering service, able to meet the needs of all children in the care of Rutland County Council, is the best option for children and young people and is cheaper for the Council than other placement options such as independent fostering agencies or residential care. It is critical, therefore, that the fostering service is closely monitored and evaluated to ensure those able to respond to local placement demands and the changing needs of children in care.
- 3.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from the annual report. The fostering service, including fees and allowances, costs £1.1m per annum to run.
- 3.3 Some additional funding maybe necessary in due course to support the recruitment of foster carers for children who might otherwise be placed in more expensive placement options and for whom there is a shortage of placements for, notably adolescents, children with disabilities, and sibling groups.

4 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 4.1 Fostering National Minimum Standards:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf

5 APPENDICES

- 5.1 Fostering Annual report 2014/15

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