

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive,
Department for People

to

Cabinet

on

10th January 2016

Report prepared by: Diane Keens, Group Manager,
Placements Resources and John O'Loughlin, Director of
Children's Services

Fostering Service Annual Report and updated Statement of Purpose

People Scrutiny Committee

Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay

A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To report on the last year's activities in the Fostering Service and agree the updated Statement of Purpose in line with Standard 16 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Annual Report (Appendix 1) and Statement of Purpose (Appendix 2) be agreed.

3. Background

3.1 The provision, standard and operations of the Fostering service is governed by:

- The Local Authority Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (updated 2013)
- Fostering minimum Standards 2011 and the
- Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 4, 2011

3.2 National Minimum Standard 25.7 states that the Executive side of the Local Authority

- a) receive written reports on the management and financial state of the fostering service every 3 months

- b) monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users
 - c) satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.
- 3.3 The Statement of Purpose has been included as Appendix 2 in this report to provide a context for the content of the Annual Report, and includes the details of all support for foster carers. It has been updated to reflect changes in 2016.
- 3.4 A consultation was sent out to all carers in early November 2016 to ascertain improvements in the service and support that they receive. The outcome of this consultation will continue to inform service developments for 2017.
- 3.5 The children's service inspection which took place in May 2016, did not give an individual judgement for the fostering service but were positive in respects of the work of the service. They reported that "there is a good choice of places for children and young people in care, so social workers can make sure that children have a carer who is the right one for them to live with."
- 3.6 Standard 25.7 of the Fostering Minimum Standards stipulates that quarterly reports are presented to the portfolio holder. The service has been compliant with this requirement and the annual report covers the accumulation of this information
- 3.7 The Looked after Children & Care Leavers accommodation sufficiency strategy has recently been updated to ensure that sufficient resources are identified to meet the needs of our Looked after Children with respect to placements and move on accommodation for the next five years.
- 3.8 The sufficiency strategy has begun to address the issue of an expected increase in the number of UASC due to membership agreed of the National Transfer Scheme.

4. Other Options

None

5. Reasons for Recommendations

The Fostering Statement of Purpose outlines the Fostering Service core services and the annual report outlines the activities undertaken by Southend Fostering Service during 2016 and the outcomes and impact of the service.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

The Annual report sets out the framework for the work of the fostering Service. It directly supports the delivery of the Corporate Priority to 'Improve Outcomes for Vulnerable children'.

6.2 Financial Implications

If the service does not work efficiently in the recruitment and matching of children and young people this would have the impact of the Local Authority needing to purchase more external placements at a higher cost to the Local Authority. During 2016 over there has been a rise in the number and percentage of young people placed in house, however due to the increase in care numbers the service is currently stretched with respect to placements.

6.3 Legal Implications

None, however the Local Authority does have statutory requirement to provide reports to the executive.

6.4 People Implications

None

6.5 Property Implications

The fostering service moved to the Civic Centre on 10th November 2012. The service has now been co-located with the other child care teams for over 4 years and no longer has the additional costs of maintaining a sub office. This has continued to prove very positive and is fully embedded within children's services.

6.6 Consultation

Consultation with foster and birth families and with children and young people fostered about the work and delivery of the service takes place on a regular basis.

Specific consultations took place during 2016 including the annual consultation for Children's services. A further consultation was undertaken in early November 2016 to look at foster carers feelings and further consultation has been sent out to carers in early November 2016 which will be reported on in the next annual report.

Quarterly meetings take place directly between the Head of Children's Services and the chair of the Southend Foster Families Community.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

The recruitment of a diverse range of families enables us to better meet the needs of children Looked After in Southend. Local placements ensure that where appropriate, children and young people maintain links with their families, schools and communities. The outcome of the 2011 census indicated a changing demography in Southend and our Sufficiency Strategy takes into account the need to recruit more carers who can meet the needs of children and young people from Eastern European communities. This strategy has recently been updated. In addition we also have to prioritise carers who can support those children with challenging behaviour and those with complex additional needs.

An additional pressure for 2016/17 will be an expected increase in UASC placed in the Borough through the UASC National transfer scheme. Southend will need to ensure that capacity enables us to provide local and appropriate placements to meet the needs of this group of young people both pre and post 18 years.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The Annual reports explains the function and activity of the fostering service and does not pose a risk to the council

6.9 Value for Money

The provision of an internal supply of foster carers and families ensures value for money. High cost external placements are negated.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

None

6.11 Environmental Impact

None

7. Background Papers

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Fostering Service Annual report 2016

Appendix 2 Statement of Purpose December 2016