

Title of report: Introduction to Fostering

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 7 May 2024

Report by: Service Director (Corporate Parenting)

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To provide the scrutiny committee with an introduction to fostering.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The introduction to Herefordshire's Fostering Service is considered;**
- b) **The committee determine any further information it wishes to receive; and**
- c) **The committee determine any recommendations it wishes to make in respect of Fostering Service developments and improvements.**

Alternative options

1. The committee could not consider the introduction to fostering. This is not recommended as the Fostering Service is a key improvement and development priority for the Council.

Key considerations

2. The Herefordshire Fostering Service is part of the Corporate Parenting Service located within Children's Services. In accordance with Ofsted (July 2022) inspection for Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) and the 'inadequate' judgement, Children's Services is

on a journey of improvement. The Children's Service Improvement Plan includes specific actions in relation to improving and developing Herefordshire's Fostering Service, including;

- The capacity of the Fostering Service Workforce
 - The retention of existing Foster Carers
 - The recruitment of new Foster Carers
 - The overall sufficiency (number, type and choice) of provision to meet the needs and circumstances of local children in our care
3. Starting from a very low base, progress has been made to address the above priority actions, although further improvements are still needed.
 4. In October/November 2022, stakeholder reference group meetings with key stakeholders, including Foster Carers, which were undertaken to consult about the details of the proposed Children's Improvement Plan. Consultation with Foster Carers in reference groups revealed a significant loss of trust and confidence in the service and repairing this relationship has necessarily been a continuing priority that continues to be addressed in collaboration with Foster Carers.
 5. Our Foster Carers are a valuable resource who provide care and make a significant difference to the lives of children in our care. It is important that our Foster Carers feel, and are, well supported in the roles they provide. We are a lot of our Foster Carers and they deserve every support we can provide so that our children in care receive the best care possible to ensure their safety and wellbeing so that they achieve improved outcomes and achieve their full potential in their childhood and in life in general.

Community impact

6. The County plan has an ambition to "strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together" and this includes the following ambitions to;
 - Promote the safety and wellbeing of local children and young people, including Herefordshire's children in our care
 - Promote the recruitment and retention of Herefordshire's Foster Carers who care for our children in care

Environmental Impact

7. There are no environmental impacts as a result of this report which is for information purposes.

Equality duty

8. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
9. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. The Fostering Service welcomes applications from all members of the community and is ambitious in seeking placements to meet the needs of all children in our care

Resource implications

10. There are no resource implications as a result of this report which is for information purposes

Legal implications

11. There are no legal implications as a result of this report which is for information purposes.

Risk management

12. There are no specific risks directly associated with this report which is for information purposes only.

Consultees

13. None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Introduction to Fostering Presentation

Background papers

None identified.

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

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Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.