

## Wolverhampton City Council

**OPEN DECISION ITEM**Corporate Parenting Board

Date 26 JUNE 2013

Originating Service Group(s) **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**Contact Officer(s)/  
Telephone Number(s) **DAPHNE ATKINSON  
01902 553070**Title **FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT - APRIL 2012 - MARCH 2013****SUMMARY**

The report describes the work of Wolverhampton Fostering Service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. The Fostering Service is part of the wider Looked After Children Services

**1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To enable the Corporate Parenting Board to have a clear understanding of the work undertaken by the Fostering Service over the past year.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That the report be noted and referred to Cabinet.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The total budget allocation for 2012/2013 for the fostering service was £ 5.240 million.
- 3.2 Any cost that may arise as a result of implementing the improvement plan will be met from existing resources. (JB/17062013/M)

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Fostering Service, in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, delivers the Council's statutory functions under the Children Act 1989, particularly with regard to the duty to ensure there is sufficient accommodation for looked after children. (Children Act 1989, Section 22G)  
[FD/12062013/Y]

**5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The work of the Fostering Service helps to support the outcomes of some of Wolverhampton city's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. There is a clear duty placed upon Wolverhampton City Council to contribute towards improving and enhancing the lives of looked after children.

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no known environmental implications.

## FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2012 – 2013

### 1. Introduction

This report describes the work of Wolverhampton City Council's Fostering Service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 31 March 2013. The Fostering Service is part of the wider Looked After Children Service.

The Fostering Service structure is as follows:

- **Team Manager** - is responsible for all the service planning and operational management of the Fostering Service.
- **Practice Managers** – There are two practice managers who work in conjunction with the team manager to ensure the operational management of the service.
- The fostering team operates a generic structure whereby the entire work of the service is carried out by all members of the wider social work team. We have a complement of 12.5 qualified social workers, and 5 unqualified social care post.

#### **The work of the service includes:**

- **Recruitment, Initial Assessments, Training, and Assessment of Foster Carers** - utilising high profile recruitment campaigns, as well as locally targeted recruitment for example, short breaks, siblings group, long term foster carers and foster carers for teenagers.
- **Support and Development** - providing supervision, post approval training and support to temporary, permanent, and family and friends foster carers. Assessing existing foster carers who wish to consider permanent placements for children who are in their care.
- **Family Finding for Permanency** – identifying permanent families and assessing them for children who are requiring permanent placements with foster families.
- **Family and Friends** – Training, assessing, development and supporting Family and Friends (Connected Persons ) foster carers
- **Private Fostering** – This is a regulated area of work and is inspected by OSFTED. The last Inspection was in 2010. We assess, train and support Private Foster carers.

## **Training of Foster Carers**

- We provide approximately 90 different courses to our foster carers each year. The Fostering Training co-ordinator sources and supports the training programme for foster carers. The training Co-ordinator and Workforce Development Officer (The workforce development officer, although not directly sitting in the Fostering Team is part of our training group) works closely with the Fostering training co-ordinator in supporting, planning, and commissioning of training and development, both for the team and foster carers.
- **Fostering Support** - provides focused support to children and foster carers, to enhance placement stability by offering various programmes of supportive intervention.
- **Independent Reviewing Officers** - There are two Independent Reviewing officers who undertake all reviews of foster carers and are involved in aspects of service development. They are within the Safeguarding Service.
- **Social work staffing** - The Fostering Service enjoys a full complement of 12.30 equivalent qualified social worker posts, and 4 full time equivalent unqualified posts.
- **Staff training** - There is a wide range of training and development offered to staff throughout the year. This includes staff briefings, Locality conference, Looked after Children conferences. All staff are subject to individual Employee Development Review meetings.

## **2. Development and changes within the Service**

### **2.1 Recruitment, Training and Assessment of Foster Carers.**

The current aim is to increase in-house fostering provision and address the imbalance between this and externally purchased placements by increasing the former.

Our strategy is based on developing a mixed economy of provision, combining directly managed with commissioned resources. The recruitment, training and assessment of the department own foster carers are central to the success of this strategy.

Resulting from the termination of the relationship between Wolverhampton City Council and Five Rivers in March 2013, the Fostering Service has reverted to undertake its own Recruitment, Initial Assessment and Training processes. This is supported by the City Council's call centre, City Direct, who handle all the initial screening of fostering enquiries.

The councils Communication and Marketing Department lead officer, Mel Potter, supports this process and we have devised a Recruitment Strategy and an Action

Plan which we are currently implementing. This culminated in a Fostering campaign during Fostering Fortnight (13-28 May)

## **The Recruitment process:**

### **Enquiries**

- Prospective foster carers are sent information about fostering within one working day of enquiring.
- Prospective carers are offered an Initial home visit from a fostering social worker within 5 days of their contact.
- Applicants must attend preparation training, which is run over 4 days, every two months
- Full statutory checks and references are undertaken on all applicants and DBS checks are made on any other adults or young persons in the household over the age of 18 years.

### **Assessments**

Due to the decommissioning arrangements between Wolverhampton City Council and Five Rivers, Wolverhampton City Council has tendered for a new multi supplier framework agreement to carry out and ensure timely completion of comprehensive and high quality form F assessments of prospective foster carers, to assist in increasing the available pool of high quality internal foster carers. The tender was successful in securing three service providers. They are Core Assets, Children Services, Sanctuary Personnel Ltd, and Minster Social Work, all are Independent Fostering Agencies, and will be responsible for assessing prospective foster carers who are able to provide a non-stigmatised, safe, stable, caring, homely environment for looked after children and young people.

## **3. Keep Foster Carers and Adopters supported and Trained (KEEP)**

**3.1** Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall are currently collaborating in this partnership arrangement to deliver evidence based specialist services for looked after children, with Dudley as the lead authority. The funding was agreed by the Department of Education (DfE) and the project started in December 2011. The focus of the intervention is primarily on strengthening foster carer's parenting skills and confidence. It is a 90 minute weekly group program led by a trained facilitator plus a co-facilitator which runs over 16 weeks. The program has a specific 13 week curriculum, and extra sessions. There is now a support group in place, which is supported by a clinical psychologist.

## **Aims of KEEP**

- Increase the parenting skills of carers
- Decrease the number of placement disruptions
- Improve outcomes for children
- Maintain placement stability.

Total numbers of Foster Carers trained to date = 21

Total number of Foster carers on current training programme = 06

Total number of placement disruption within this group of carers = 1

### **4. Family Finding for Permanency**

There are currently 74 children awaiting permanent placements with foster carers. This comprises of children placed within internal and external resources. The length of time children wait for their permanency plans to be secured is variable.

In 2012/13 we secured 13 children with permanent foster parents, with other linkings planned and scheduled throughout the year. This area of work is subject to monitoring under the LAC Performance monitoring framework on a monthly basis

### **5. Family and Friends Carers**

#### **5.1 Viability Assessments**

The introduction of the 1989 Children Act, Care Planning and Case Review (2010) Family and Friends Guidance 2011, Fostering Regulations 2011, and the 26 weeks Care Planning court process which sets out the requirements and arrangements for placing children in care of the local authority, with parents, Family and Friends or other Connected persons has led to a significant increase in the work relating to Children placed with Family and Friends (Connected persons). Viability assessments are completed by the Fostering team as part of the Family and Friends Connected person's process and are usually dictated by the court process.

We continue to see marked increase in referrals for these assessments and the work undertaken between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 includes 14 Schedule 4 reports, 106 completed Viability assessment reports, and 13 Family and Friends foster carers presented to the foster panel.

Numbers of approved Family & Friends in Fostering Service	57
Numbers of Family & Friends Approvals	13
Numbers of Family & Family assessments allocated	13
Numbers of outstanding Viability Assessments	11
Numbers of completed Viability Assessments recommended	32
Numbers of Viability Assessment not recommended	74

## **6. Short Break Scheme**

This work provides support to disabled children and young people and their families by offering short term breaks. There are currently 2 carers, providing 3 placements for children. Over this period, we have seen families choose to use the direct payment option to support their need. We continue to work with our colleagues in the Disabled Children and Young People's Team whereby we explore other opportunities for families.

## **7. Private Fostering Arrangements**

Over the last year we have concentrated our awareness and publicity campaign on child care and health professionals, so that they are aware of the Private Fostering arrangements and the need to refer children who may be privately fostered.

- October 2012, information leaflet went into pay packet of all city council employees. At the same time leaflets were enlarged and used in a display at the Central Library.
- The Parenting Institute ran a 'Parents 'week called 'Make a moment, encouraging parents to give their children quality time throughout their childhood. . This ran for a week, and Library staff afforded time for us to network and leave literature with the parenting groups in operation at the time.
- We have undertaken a series of Information sessions to Health Visitors, Midwives and Community Mental Health Teams in the city.
- The Health sector has been most proactive as Champions for Private Fostering and in disseminating information.
- We have worked with Wolverhampton Football Club who had two privately fostered children within their intensive training programme.
- Information and briefings sessions have also been delivered to various teams within the city; for example, Multi Agency Support teams (MAST), Children's Centres, Disabled Children and Young People's Team and Locality teams.
- The Engage site which is managed by the Private Fostering social worker is a dedicated and interactive site for Private Fostering in the education sector is in place.

### **Private Fostering Arrangements details as at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013**

- There were 14 cases of Private fostering arrangements which comprises of the following:
  - 11 were in assessments and from those 11 the following occurred :
  - 2 were disqualified
  - 1 child returned to their parents within a week of the process.

- 1 child returned home after 9 weeks with the carer.
- 2 assessments are currently in process.
- 3 families obtained Special Guardianships Orders
- 2 young person's no longer met the requirement due to becoming 16
- 3 were closed

Plans are in place to include Private Fostering as part of the Induction training programme for new workers to the city.

## **8. Recruitment of Foster Carers as undertaken by Five Rivers**

### **8.1 Recruitment, Initial Training and Assessment.**

The contractual arrangement which started with Five Rivers on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 was for the whole of the recruitment service and was contracted to provide 70 mainstream placements over a three year period. However in September 2012 Wolverhampton City Council became concerned that Five Rivers were not meeting the contractual agreement of the contract, in that they failed to deliver the quota of assessments agreed. Therefore a formal notice of non-compliance was issued.

Unfortunately, due to staffing difficulties experienced by Five Rivers the situation did not improve. Consequently, Wolverhampton City terminated its formal contractual arrangement with Five Rivers in March 2013. This means that Five Rivers involvement in actively recruiting foster carers for Wolverhampton stopped on the 1st March 2013, with calls now been screened locally by City Direct. However Five Rivers continues to process those enquiries which came through before that date.

### **8.2 Enquiry levels 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 13**

April	14
May	16
June	23
July	08
August	10
September	00
October	02
November	21
December	08
January	20
February	03
March	29
Total	154
Initial Assessments	37
Conversions	24%
Skills to Foster	06

Approvals	2
Conversion	33%

### 8.3 Systems for processing Initial Enquiries

The process for initial enquiries from prospective foster carers changed in April 2011 when Five Rivers became the preferred provider for Referral, Initial Training and Assessments (RITA). Prior to this, the full responsibility rested with Wolverhampton Fostering Service.

Since February 2013, Wolverhampton City Fostering service through City Direct, contact centre has managed the contact and enquiry from prospective fostering applicants

Initial Assessments take the form of a home visit and are completed within five days of the initial enquiry by Fostering Social Workers.

### 8.4 Enquiries by source of marketing methods

The information recorded by Five Rivers appears to indicate that by far the greatest rate of enquiries throughout 2012-2013 has been received from Wolverhampton City Council. This is via direct telephone contact or from the Wolverhampton website.

Since the return of the Contact and Enquiry process to Wolverhampton City, we have seen a steady flow of enquiries, and this has been further supported by the National Fostering Fortnight 13<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, which has helped to raise fostering profile. The work of the Marketing team also supported this, and Wolverhampton City had several articles in the press and on its website. This culminated in an Information event, which generated encouraging interest in fostering for Wolverhampton

#### **Illustration of Interest Re: Enquiries since contract returned to Wolverhampton City Council**

Fostering calls	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	TOTAL
W/C 29.04.13	5	5	5	5	5	17
W/C 06.05.13	0	5	0	4	9	18
W/C 13.05.13	7	4	2	5	14	32
W/C 25.05.13	16	8	9	13	9	55

### 8.5 Preparation and Assessment Courses.

The Skills to Foster preparatory training returned to the responsibility of Wolverhampton Fostering in February 2013, and we have skilled facilitators who will undertake the training throughout the year.



## **9. Approved Foster Carers**

### **9.1 How many applications were received for the year?**

It was expected that the commissioning arrangements with Five Rivers would have provided 30 placements between this review period. Unfortunately, the contract expectation has not delivered the target agreed.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, 05 new temporary fostering households were approved by Fostering Panel.

There were also 13 Family and Friends carers approved as foster carers.

On the 31st March 2013 there were 650 Looked After Children, of these, 260 children were in Internal Foster placements (excluding Friends and Family), 57 were in Friends and Family Placements, making a total internal foster placements (including Friends and Family) of 320. There are over 300 Looked After Children in Independent Fostering Agency placements (IFA).

Within the Looked After Children population the number of children continues to rise which has resulted in the use of increased IFA placements. We have tried to mitigate against this by applying thorough pragmatic strategic focus and direction. There are co-ordinated multi agency strategies to carefully manage the child's pathway into care. We have also been able to provide an increase in our internal Residential placements to support placement planning.

Amongst other things, we have transformed the quality of our in house placements as well as improving the experience for children and young people by the range of support provided, which has helped to prevent placement disruption and the need to place externally.

We continue to adopt practical approaches by extending and changing foster carer's approval category, therefore helping to assist in flexible placements options and choices for looked after children. The new in house recruitment strategy is seeking to have a wider approval category, thus providing a greater range of placement options and choices.

This will further be enhanced as we see more take up of Family and Friends assessments and applications for conversion into Special Guardianship and Residence Orders. Carers who want to, and express a wish to offer looked after children a permanent home are actively encouraged to do so. This is an area of work which is attracting a more focused rigor under Performance Management.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> March there were 334 approved placements as follows:-

Temporary	246
Permanent	26
Short breaks	02
Family and Friends	57
Private Fostering	03

Ethnic breakdown of carers is as follows (this includes the main carers and their partners):-

Asian / Brit - Indian	16
Asian / Brit - Pakistani	3
Asian / Brit -Other Asian	2
Black / Brit - Caribbean	28
Black / Brit - Other black	7
Mixed - White/Black Carib	3
Other ethnic group	1
White - Other	1
White British	272
White Irish	1
Grand Total	334

#### **10. Number of De –Registration**

There were 4 households lost in 2012/13 This is an improvement upon 2011-12 figures when 7 households were lost .

The reasons for de-registration were :

- Young person now 18 years 2
- Retired 1
- Child care concerns 1

## **11. Supervision, Support and Reviewing**

All Foster carers are required to meet the Children's Workforce Development Council [CWDC] Training, Support and Development Standards. These standards set out the framework for the development of carers over the first 2 years of approval and for Continuing Professional Development. All carers complete Pre Approval training (Skills to Foster) in order to help them meet the initial challenges of Fostering.

### **11.1 Post Approval**

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Training Support and Development Standards for Foster carers is firmly in situ and now managed through yearly reviews of foster carers Personal Development Plans which are carried out by their Supervising Social Workers. Foster Carers have given valuable support in acting as mentors to less confident and experienced foster carers. To date we have over 230 carers who have successfully completed their workbooks.

Upon approval all Wolverhampton foster carers have access to the following support:-

- A written foster care agreement, between Wolverhampton City Council and the carer.
- An allocated Supervising Social worker who visits weekly for up to six weeks and then every 6 weeks to assist with their training and development needs, to monitor the placement and to provide practical day-to-day advice on caring issues, behaviour management, or difficult situations in the placement contact is maintained between planned visits.
- A foster carer handbook summarising policies, procedures, and practical information relevant to the fostering task.
- Information on the Wolverhampton payment scheme.
- A recording folder to maintain records and documents pertaining to the children placed
- Wolverhampton's Foster Care Support Centre provides a monthly newsletter (Fostering News) which goes out to all foster carers. The department also pays the annual subscription fee to Fostering Network, which is the national representative body for fostering.
- A Safe Caring policy, which is intended to safeguard both the looked after child and the foster carer household.
- Access to fostering duty social worker 5 days each week to help in resolving matters in the absence of their social worker.
- Access to Placement Care Support to support children in placements.
- Access to Practice Managers to help resolve more complex matters or in the absence of their supervising worker
- Wolverhampton Fostering service also provides 24 hour support via Wolverhampton Foster Care Support Centre and the departmental evening and weekend Emergency Duty Team, which aims to compliment the Service provided by the fostering team.
- Support groups held at the centre and social events.

- Currently foster carers are involved in the delivery of training for other carers, and we involve young people who have been looked after and birth children of foster carers in training.

The birth children of foster carers are recognised as playing a crucial role in the success of Wolverhampton's fostering service.

## **12. Fostering payments**

The Fostering Service has a comprehensive payments structure in place for foster carers. Foster carers are paid fostering allowances for the child in placement and Recruitment, and Retention (R&R). Recruitment and Retention payments is a fee which is based on the length of time carers have been an approved carer for Wolverhampton City Council, and the fostering allowances are based on the age of child/children in the particular placement at the time.

The fostering allowances are reviewed annually in April and are increased in line with the allowances recommended by the Fostering Network.

## **13. Fostering Allowances 2012-13**

Age of Child	Weekly Allowances
0-4	137.18
5-10	156.26
11-15	194.53
16+	236.64

## **14. Recruitment and Retention 2012 - 13**

Years as a Wolverhampton Foster Carer	Weekly payment
0-2 YEARS	£170.57
2+	£181.23
3+	£191.89
4+	£202.55
5+	£213.21
6+	£223.88
7+	£234.53

8+	£245.19
9+	£255.88

## **15. Annual Review of Foster Carers**

Foster carers are reviewed on an annual basis by Independent Reviewing Officers. Social workers and children are given the opportunity to have an input into this process. This will involve the carer meeting with the independent reviewing officer. The reviewing officer will discuss the activity of a foster carer to ensure the carer continues to be suitable to act as a foster carer, and the household is a suitable premise. The reviewing officer will seek the views of the foster carer, the foster child (subject to the child's age and understanding) the child's social worker, the Supervising Social Worker, the Workforce Development Officer and any other relevant and appropriate person. The review is also an opportunity for the carer to review the service and support given to them. The reviewing officer, on conclusion of the review will provide a written report. The report sets out whether the carer continues to be suitable to act as a foster carer and the household continues to be suitable, and that the terms of the carer's approval continue to be appropriate. A foster home review may be more frequent if, for example, carers have moved home or there is some significant change in their household. The Foster Home Review takes into account the foster carers training and development needs. The fostering panel receives a written report from the first review and makes recommendations which are sent to the decision maker. Written confirmation of the discussion and decision of the fostering panel is then forwarded to the carer.

All carers are expected to commit to working to continuous development. This involves a training and development plan which is reviewed and updated each year. Carers undertake any development training identified under their Individual Development Plan, this might comprise of both mandatory, optional and refresher modules. The Service provides in house NVQ Level 2 - 3 training via the fostering services designated training officer.

## **16. Fostering Panel**

### **16.1 Current Panel membership:**

Chair - Independent	Di Brady
Vice Chair – Independent	Gloria Saunders
Panel Adviser	Daphne Atkinson
Legal Adviser	Tracey Christie
Panel Administrator	Sarbjit Singh
Education Representative	Anne Foster
Independent Member	Sue Partoon (Independent Foster Carer)
Multi Agency Support Team	Ros Simpson
Social Work representative	Jo Roberts
Independent Member	Annette Richards

Council Member - Under the new fostering regulations there is not a requirement for an Elected Member to be a panel member. However it is recognised that as part of their role as corporate parents, they may make a valuable contribution as panel members.

## **16.2 Panel Member vacancies**

The new Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 dictate that panel is now quorate with 5 members which we currently have. However, it states that the Fostering Service should operate a central list of members in order to fulfil its role and responsibilities, and to prevent disruption to the care planning process. Fostering Panel now operates a central list of members which fulfils the requirements under these regulations. Recently we have received 15 referrals from workers expressing an interest in becoming panel members. These will be processed over the next few weeks.

## **16.3 Panel workload**

Business Activity from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 – March 2013

The work of the Panel included:

New mainstream foster carers approval	05
New Family and Friends approval	13
Foster home Reviews	16
Approval of long term foster care plans for children	45
Request for changes to the foster care approval	09
Matches of permanency for children with foster carers.	13
Allegations, complaints and issues of serious concerns relating to foster carers	01
Deregistration	04
Assessments not approved	05

The Fostering Panel continues to meet twice monthly and heard a total 110 cases.

## **16.4 Panel training**

Panel members receive briefings and trainings. They are due to undertake training in respect to concurrent planning in June 2013, Adoption changes, Care Planning and court process in October 2013.

## **16.5 Fostering Panel appraisals**

All Fostering Panel members received appraisals once each year. The Chair's appraisal is carried out by the Agency Decision Maker.

## **17. Wolverhampton Foster Care Support Services (Heantun Child Care)**

### **Foster Carers Support Contract**

**17.1** The new foster carer support contract Heantun Child Care, began on the 1st June 2012. The project is located at the Children's Centre in Bushbury, Low Hill. Their aim is to provide a range of high quality supportive services to foster carers which include:

- 24/7 Telephone support help line
- A Buddy scheme
- foster carers forum
- initial visits to all new carers
- crèche facilities
- training facilities
- support with recruitment
- Thematic Groups
- Text contact to carers
- participates with the service in developing and reviewing policies and procedures

Total number of training groups held up to March 2013	38
Total number of carers utilising the service up to March 2013	120
Total hours of support offered up to March 2013	100hrs
Total numbers of children utilising the service up to March 2013	25

The Fostering Service manager meets with Heantun manager on a monthly basis and attends the foster carers forums every 3 months, or more often if requested. This is to listen to the voice of carers and to provide updates on new initiatives or changes within the service.

Additionally, the Senior Managers Group meets with the Foster Support Centre management team every quarter. This is primarily to monitor the Foster Care contract to ensure it is working in the interest of foster carers.

## **18. Policies and procedures**

The Fostering Statement of Purpose is currently under review, this is to reflect the changes within revised statutory guidance and regulations and service changes. Policies are regularly updated in line with new guidance.

## **19. Allegations and Complaints**

During this period there were 12 allegations against foster carers which were investigated in line with Safeguarding Procedures.

## **20. Complaints against the Service**

During this period there were 5 complaints against the service which were investigated within timescales. These complaints were largely regarding fostering team processes. Resulting from these complaints we have reviewed and amended fostering handbook and policy and procedures.

## **21. Ofsted Inspection**

The last Fostering Inspection was carried out in February 2012. The service received a rating of good in all areas. There were no actions under the notice of 'Requirement to Improve', there were however three recommendations.

"Continue to implement an effective strategy to ensure sufficient foster carers to be responsive to current and predicated future demands on the service, including short breaks foster carers for disabled children".

Our recruitment strategy and Inspection Improvement plans sets out our proposals for recruiting foster carers over the next year. This will be closely monitored by Children's Senior Management group to ensure targets are met.

"Ensure each foster carer maintain training and development portfolios, which demonstrate how they are meeting the skills required of them, with regards to each foster carer in each in each household".

We provide training for all foster carers and this is now identified on their Personal Development Plan, which is reviewed every six months.

"Undertake at least one unannounced visit a year to each foster carer".

Our unannounced visits rate have greatly improved to a completion rate of 85 per cent. However we continue to strive to increase this even further.

## **22. Regional Developments**

Wolverhampton continues to be a member of the West Midlands Regional Family Placement Consortium (WMRFPC), along with 13 other West Midlands Local Authorities and voluntary agencies. The Consortium meets bi-monthly. The Team Manager for Fostering Service attends. Discussions have centred on development of



policy, procedural and practice issues, for example, the new connected persons assessments, fostering allowances, recruitment, developing a common assessment framework, and more recently, development of a Black Country collaboration for recruitment, similar to the ABC project.

### **23. Future Developments**

- Reduce the reliance on external fostering service providers by increasing internal local capacity, through an effective partnership with the Form F framework providers .
- Continue to support carers to acquire accreditation in relation to the CWDC induction standards.
- Under the corporate parenting initiative we have the opportunity to have an Apprentice in the service .This will be to support and mentor foster children in education and other practical aspect of their lives.
- Continue to develop partnership arrangements with Black Country colleagues to share best practice, and to realise other initiatives.
- Progress the New operating Model when this is implemented within LAC.
- Work in partnership with Adoption colleagues to implement the new Adoption changes in respect to Concurrent Planning, and Foster to Adopt.

**Daphne Atkinson  
Team Manager  
Fostering Service**