



Corporate Parenting Board

25th September 2013

Report Title	Wolverhampton Fostering Service Foster Carer's Training report	
Classification	Public	
Cabinet Member with Lead Responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families	
Wards Affected	All	
Accountable Strategic Director	Sarah Norman, Community	
Originating service	Children & Family Support/Looked After Children	
Accountable officer(s)	Daphne Atkinson	Fostering Team Manager (01902 – 553070) Daphne.atkinson@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Recommendations for noting: The Corporate Parenting Board has been asked to note and receive a Fostering training report.

1. PURPOSE

To enable the Corporate Parenting Board to have a clear understanding of the training and development of Wolverhampton Foster Carers.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The report is in reference to consultation held between Corporate Parenting Board and Wolverhampton Foster Carers on 31st July 2013.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The total approved revenue budget for 2013/14 for the training of foster carer's is £148,000.

- 3.2 Any cost that may arise as a result of implementing the current training plan will be met from within this allocation.

[NM/17092013/D]

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 requirement under Regulation 17 to ensure that Foster Carers are provided with training, development and support. [FD/18092013/N]

5. EQUALITIES 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

7.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no known Human Resources implications

8.0 SCHEDULE OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Wolverhampton's Training and Development Programme for Foster Carers

BACKGROUND

Wolverhampton City Council considers its foster carers as essential to the success of its Fostering Service.

The Children's Act 1989 states that Fostering Services must ensure foster carers have the skill to promote children's well-being and know how to care for them safely, this is embodied in the Fostering National Minimum Standards and Regulations (2011).

Standard 20 – Foster Carers must receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively. Therefore the structure of all training programme is built around the five outcomes of The 'Every Child Matters' agenda, and the Local Authority Corporate Parent role.

Being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;

Staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect;

Enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood

Making a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour;

Achieving economic well-being: not being prevented by economic poverty from achieving their full potential in life.

Additionally, all foster carers must evidence that they meet the relevant Children's Workforce Development, Training and Support Standards within the set timescales.

The standards have been designed to support foster care by providing a framework for foster carer's training and professional development which will mean they receive the best possible training, information and knowledge to truly make a difference to the lives of the children they care for.

The Standards cover the main areas of the foster care role and set out what foster carers should know, understand and be able to do:

Standard 1: understand the principles and values, essential for fostering children and young people.

Standard 2: understand your role as a foster carer

Standard 3: understand health and safety, and healthy caring.

Standard 4: know how to communicate effectively.

Standard 5: understand the development of children and young people.

Standard 6: safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm).

Standard 7: develop yourself.

The Fostering Service in Wolverhampton offers a very varied and comprehensive range of external and internal training and development for all foster carers. There is a rolling programme of training courses and in addition we access training and expertise provided by other teams such as Workforce Development and Safeguarding as well as courses offered via other agencies e.g. Education, Health to ensure that our carers and their support network have the opportunities to develop their skill base and knowledge to enable them to manage difficult behaviours and the development needs of children and young people.

All foster carers have a yearly Personal Development Plan. (PDP). This is a live open document which can be updated and amended to suit the carer's individual training requirements, skill base and developmental needs. Most importantly it identifies training that is needed in specific areas to provide our foster carers with the confidence, skills and knowledge to fully support and manage the individual needs of each child or young person in their care. The courses and types of learning identified are decided upon between the Supervising Social Worker and the carers themselves, dependent upon the challenges that they may face caring for our Looked after children.

Brief overview of the Take up Rate of Training

Since 2010 we have seen a great increase in foster carers participating in training and development.

2010-2011

65%% of all eligible foster carers accessed training and 60% of those completed 100% of all their identified training.

2011-2012

Only 9 of eligible foster carers did not access any training and of those that did 75% of those completed 100% of all their identified training.

2012-2013

90% of eligible carers accessed and completed 100% of their identified training.

The last 2 years has also seen an increase in Friends and Family carers and private foster carers participating in training.

All foster carers are expected to complete all of the pre-approval training and mandatory courses before embarking on further training in more specialised topics.

Skills to Foster (Pre -Approval Training)

The aim of this course is to lay the basic foundations of the skills and knowledge needed as prospective foster carers. The course forms a part of the assessment process. It is run over three days and consists of six sessions. Some of the topics included are “Transitions”, “Identity and Heritage”, “Understanding Behaviours” and “Working in Partnership”..

We run a separate course exclusively for prospective Family and Friends foster carers. It is run based on the same principle and format but catered to meet the needs and differences for those that will be caring for children of their family or friends as often they are faced with different issues especially around the child’s birth family that mainstream foster carers are unlikely to experience.

Mandatory Courses

All approved foster carers are expected to complete all of these in their first 24 months of approval. These include topics such as Safer caring, Child Development, Supporting Looked after Children in Education. First Aid and Values and Diversity.

Additional Specific and Specialised Courses

Over recent years we have offered foster carers access to approximately 60 courses on individual topics these include

Understanding Sexual Abuse

The aim of this course is to help foster carers understand the effects childhood sexual abuse has on a child’s all round development and their emotional well-being. The course looks at ways that foster carers can help the child to heal in a safe environment and to be able to identify behaviours displayed by a child in order to cope with their experiences.

Impact of Neglect

The aim of this course is to explore the notions and definitions and extent of neglect. As well as identifying the factors which contribute to the neglect of children by parents/birth family and its effects on areas of the child’s development. Foster

carers are given an understanding of the effects of neglect and skills to enable them to manage and nurture the young person.

Working with Children and Young People with Disabilities

The aim of this course is to enable foster carers to be able to fully understand the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities within our society and to give carers the skills and knowledge base to ensure safety, minimise risk of harm and understand the important role of communication with these disabled children, both verbal and non-verbal.

Preparation for Adult Life.

The aim of this course is to ensure foster carers are aware of the issues that young people growing up in care face and, give them the appropriate information that is required to support looked after children and care leavers as they make the transition to adulthood. Carers are given ways of equipping young people with the range of skills needed for adult life and living independently.

Gangs and Gang Related activities

The aim of this course is to raise carer's awareness of the issues involving young people and youth violence and gangs in Wolverhampton and to give them the skills to identify if a young person is at risk of or already involved, and to give carers techniques to help these young people.

Attachment Theory and Separation and Loss.

The aim of this course is to give foster carers an understanding of the impact of trauma, due to the separation and loss from their birth family that can affect children's development and ability to form relationships. Carers are given skills to enable them to help a child form positive and healthy attachments and relationships.

Moving On for Adoption.

The aim of the course is to give carers an understanding of the anxieties a child may experience when moving to an adoptive placement and how best to manage this with good preparation, communication. It includes practical ways they can assist in making this transition a positive experience for the child. Carers are given clarity on the importance of their role throughout introductions with the adopters.

Online training

This has proven to be an invaluable resource over the last 3 years. It has enabled carers who have previously found it difficult to attend training courses either due to distance or other various commitments to develop their skills and knowledge.

Some examples of the types of courses available via on-line training modules include

Self-harming behaviours

The aim of this course is to enable foster carers to understand why young people develop maladaptive behaviours such as self-harm, eating disorders and substance misuse and how best as carers they can work effectively and more safely with these children and young people.

Children and Domestic Violence

The aim of this course is to enable foster carers to understand the key issues facing children and young people who have been affected by domestic violence and to provide foster carers with the skills to help these children and young people develop resilience to enable them to grow towards a healthy and positive adult life.

Promoting Positive Contact

The aim of this course is help foster carers understand the complexity of the issues involved in planning and managing contact with looked after children and their birth families.

Men in Foster Care Training and Support Group

For several years we have offered specific training in foster care just for men. It is recognised that our male carers are often seen as the secondary carer and experience different issues, worries and relationships within their role as carers.

Three well – established and experienced male foster carers have just completed an 8 week commissioned course whereby they were assessed by independent practice teachers and trainers. Our aim is for these carers to start their own independent topic based training and support group which will be offered to all male carers. The men have some very positive and innovative ideas of how to carry this forward.

KEEP Programme

This programme was introduced in Wolverhampton 18 months ago. It is one of a series of evidence based intervention model, The national figure indicates that this programme has a proven 99% record of stabilising and maintaining placements. To date we have trained 27 carer's households. There has been 1 reported placement disruptions.

Pillars of Parenting Programme.

This has been a well-established programme in Wolverhampton for over 4 years. It is facilitated by a Senior Educational Physiologist, and offers structured therapeutic support for carers who have children that experience challenges in attachment and trauma.

Care and Control / Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.

This is a 6 day intensive course with an annual 2 day refresher course required. It is based on a holistic approach to challenging behaviours in adolescence. Foster carers who have used this model have recorded a marked improvement in the behaviours and stability of placements.

Accredited courses

10 foster carers have completed the Train the Trainers course which enables foster carers to act as co-trainers and deliver training courses.

National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Childcare.

There has been the opportunity for carers to do National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Childcare. Since 2003, approximately 15 carers have completed and obtained their qualification.

The Fostering Services Regulations (2011) makes it clear that, *'fostering services providers may wish to make full use of talents, skills and experience of foster carers and members of their fostering households for example, in delivering training or mentoring or otherwise supporting other foster carers.'*

Wolverhampton Foster carers are very much an integral part in the support of the fostering services in the following ways:.

- Recruitment of foster carers. They do this by volunteering to support recruitment stands, supporting information days, leaflets drops. There are five core members who are currently working with our Marketing and Communication officer to lead the new marketing and recruitment campaign in Wolverhampton.
- Retention. By acting as trained buddies/ mentors to newly approved foster carers or foster cares who might be experiencing issues or concerns with child care.
- Named foster carers run the 24 hour helpline which is an invaluable service offering support, guidance and advice to foster carers that might be experiencing a difficulty with their placement or just providing information.
- Foster carers facilitate and deliver various training sessions including the pre-approval, Skills to Foster Training, in conjunction with a fostering social worker.
- Foster carers facilitate CWDC support groups to assist new carers complete their standards workbook
- Foster carers facilitate a number of support groups through Heantun support services.

Future Development for Foster Carers

We wish to explore further opportunities for our foster carers to develop their training and development and their individual career pathway

We are in the process of accessing more details of the new partnership arrangement between the Open University and The Fostering Network. The scheme will support foster carers with their professional development by providing access to a range of courses and opportunities to enable carers to attain formal qualifications.

The Open University approach to learning will hopefully remove some of the barriers to professional development that foster carers have previously faced. Therefore it will make it easier for foster carers to access formal academic training and gain

qualifications. This in turn can only help our carers develop their skills and abilities in caring for vulnerable children as well as giving carers the confidence to obtain recognised professional qualifications.

Examples of the types of qualifications being offered via this programme include,

BA/BSc (Hons) in Health and Social Care, Certificate in Higher Education, Certificate in Early Years Practice, BA (Hons) in Social Work

We have recently experienced an increase of carers requesting support and funding to complete either National vocational Qualification in Social Care, access to degree courses and other similar qualifications. Whilst it is acknowledged that this might be part of individual foster carer's career progression, consideration would need to be given to the implication of such an initiative for the future retention of foster carers.

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