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| Report title | Fostering Service Annual Report 2022-2023 | |
| Cabinet member with lead responsibility | Councillor Chris Burden Children, Young People and Education | |
| Wards affected | All wards | |
| Accountable director | Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families | |
| Originating service | Children and Young People in Care | |
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| Report has been considered by | Children in Care Council | 21 June 2023 |
| | Children and Young People in Care | 22 June 2023 |
| | Children's Social Care Leadership Team Meeting | 22 June 2023 |

Recommendation for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the Fostering Service Annual Report 2022-2023.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the service delivery, service structure and performance for 2022-2023 whilst setting out key objectives for 2023-2024.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Fostering Service Annual Report is presented each year to the Corporate Parenting Board for information. It is an opportunity to highlight key achievements and provide an overview on performance as a service and how this supports positive outcomes for Children and Young People in Care.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 This report provides an annual review of the structure, duties, and performance of the City of Wolverhampton Fostering Service. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) requires that all Fostering Services provide an annual report to their Executive or Trustees. In the case of Local Authorities, the 'executive' is the Elected Members of the City of Wolverhampton.
- 3.2 The Fostering Service is located within the Children and Young People in Care Service of the City of Wolverhampton Council. The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, supports, and develops foster parents to provide a good standard of care and stability to children and young people aged 0-18 years. In addition, the service works with the Supported Accommodation Team to promote Staying Put arrangements for young people to remain living with their foster parents post 18. Currently we have 36 young people in Staying Put arrangements.
- 3.3 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 imposes a duty on Local Authorities to find sufficient fostering provisions in its local area. The Fostering Service is committed to provide stability, care and security to children in care and ensure that foster parents can meet the individual needs of children. The importance of children remaining within their birth family network, education and within their community remains paramount in securing stability for the child and there is a heavy focus on encouraging fostering applicants to "foster for your local council" for this reason.
- 3.4 The Fostering Service was last inspected by Ofsted as part of a single inspection of Children's Services in March 2022 and was rated 'Good'. Overall feedback was positive, as Ofsted found children were living with foster parents who met their needs, and stability was a real strength.
- 3.5 The Fostering Service seeks to provide comprehensive and excellent quality foster care to all children in the care of the City of Wolverhampton. Foster parents provide children in care a positive experience of family life within an environment that promotes their physical, emotional and health needs. Working in partnership with health, education and other allied professionals enables foster parents to provide a warm, safe and caring family environment ensuring that the children's emotional health and development is promoted. Foster parents ensure children in care have access to available opportunities to promote children's

attendance and their academic achievements, thus maximising all opportunities for children to achieve their full potential.

3.6 Key Achievements 2022 - 2023

- An all-new accurate foster parent register was created.
- Inclusive language is promoted across the whole service.
- Embedded therapeutic parenting in supervision, fostering logs and assessments.
- Internal matching events and matching policy are in place.
- Home stability has been steadily maintained and the year ended with more children in internal foster than within external foster care with the gap continuing to widen.
- A permanent Marketing Executive in post with all new Marketing Strategy is in place.
- Assessment timeliness has improved.
- The new CRM system is in place to track and report on all leads and enquiries.
- A full training review was started with a training portal in process,
- A short break foster parent has been recruited specifically for a child with disabilities.
- A Preference Tool is in place to maximise sufficiency within current foster parents.
- Linking and Matching is now formally celebrated and recorded on the child's file.
- Dormancy Policy is in place with those dormant being reviewed and encouraged to return to fostering.
- An E-bulletin is sent out monthly with key news and foster parent shout-outs.

3.7 Key Objectives 2023-2024

- Key focus on recruiting and supporting foster parents for older age groups.
- Develop services for Special Guardianship Order / Kinship care.
- Achieve a net gain of five mainstream foster parents and continue to achieve the 183 days target.
- All those awaiting link and matching will be progressed.
- Review and finalise Foster Families United model.
- Relaunch Same Day Family Finding policy and ensure in use and promoted.
- Review Fostering Fees and Allowances in line with cost-of-living crisis
- Produce a whole new training offer to foster parents from September 2023 where they can book via the portal, receive reminders, surveys and certificates.
- Develop Short Breaks policy and recruit more short breaks foster parents

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 There has been a year-on-year reduction in the cost for both agency fostering and slight decrease in internal fostering. The figures are detailed within Appendix 1 – Annual Fostering Report.
[JG/03072023/W]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The Fostering Service operates within the following legislation: Children Act 2004, Children & Young Persons Act 2008, Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services: National

Minimum Standards 2011, The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011, The Care Planning, Home, and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (amended 2021), Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

5.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
[TC/04072023]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 The Fostering Service works with foster parents and social workers from a diverse background to meet the needs of children and young people in respect of all nine protected characteristics.

7.0 All other Implications

7.1 No other implications.

8.0 Schedule of background papers

8.1 No background papers noted.

9.0 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Fostering Service Annual Report