

# Wolverhampton

## City Council



## **ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT APRIL 2013 – MARCH 2014**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a description of the structure, aims and duties of the Wolverhampton fostering service and details the performance of the service over the last 12 months.
- 1.2 The fostering service is located within the Children, Young People & Families Service of Wolverhampton City Council. The service provides a variety of foster placements for children in care. The fostering team recruits, assesses and support a range of fostering arrangements including Relatives and Friends (Connected Persons) foster carers where children and young people are placed by the local authority within their family network. The fostering service also assesses and monitors private fostering arrangements.
- 1.3 The activities of the service are governed by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, National Minimum Standards 2011 and are regularly inspected by Ofsted. The last Ofsted inspection of the service in 2012 found the service to be 'Good', with no requirements to improve.

## 2. **The Fostering Service comprises of the following:**

- **Recruitment, Initial Assessments, Training, and Assessment of Foster Carers –** The service have responsibility for marketing, recruitment, training and assessing activities. The service undertakes the assessments of mainstream foster carers.
- **Support and Development –** The service has responsibility for providing supervision support and post approval training to all temporary, family and friends and permanent carers. The assessments of existing foster carers who wish to consider permanent placements for children who are in their care are also undertaken within the service.
- One unqualified worker within the service undertakes the role of Family Finding for Permanency – working closely with social workers in identifying permanent situations for children who are requiring permanent placements with foster families.
- The senior practitioner post within the service takes the lead responsibilities for supporting shared care-short term breaks foster carer arrangements.
- Fostering Support workers - provide focused support to children and foster carers, to promote placement stability by offering various programmes of supportive intervention.
- **Family and Friends (Connected Persons) –** The service is responsible for the Viability and Form C assessment, training, and support of Family and Friends (Connected Persons), foster carers. This is a much pressurised area of work as most of the work undertaken is governed by the 26 weeks care planning process.
- **Private Fostering –** This is a regulated area of work and is inspected by OSFTED. The last Inspection was in 2010. The service assess, train and support Private Foster carers.
- **Post Approval Training of Foster Carers -** Approximately 90 different courses are provided 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.

- **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 managed within the Safeguarding Service.
- **Social work staffing** - The Fostering Service enjoys a full complement of 12.3 full time 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 and Looked After Children conferences. All staff are subject to individual Appraisal meetings.

### **3. The aims of Wolverhampton Fostering Service are to:**

- Provide a quality foster care service to all children looked after by Wolverhampton City Council.
- Provide looked after children in foster care with a positive experience of family life, which promotes their physical, emotional, developmental well-being, and happiness in an environment in or close to their community.
- Work in partnership with partners across The Children and Young People's Service as well as with health and education to achieve best outcomes for children and young people in foster placements.
- To work in partnership with our carers to enable them to provide warm safe and caring family environment, so that children emotional health and development is promoted.
- To work in partnership with foster carers so that they understand the importance of working and co-operating with schools to ensure access to available opportunities to promote children's attendance and academic achievements.

### **4. Advertising and Media Coverage**

4.1 The Recruitment and Assessment of foster carers returned to Wolverhampton Fostering service in 2013, following the de-commissioning of arrangements with Five Rivers. Through good partnership working with marketing and communications colleagues we have engaged in a programme of advertising in order to recruit foster cares, which has focused on three priority areas.

- Maintaining market /brand presence within the area of Wolverhampton
- Obtaining quality rather than quantity enquiries
- Recruitment of foster carers for children and young people of all ages.

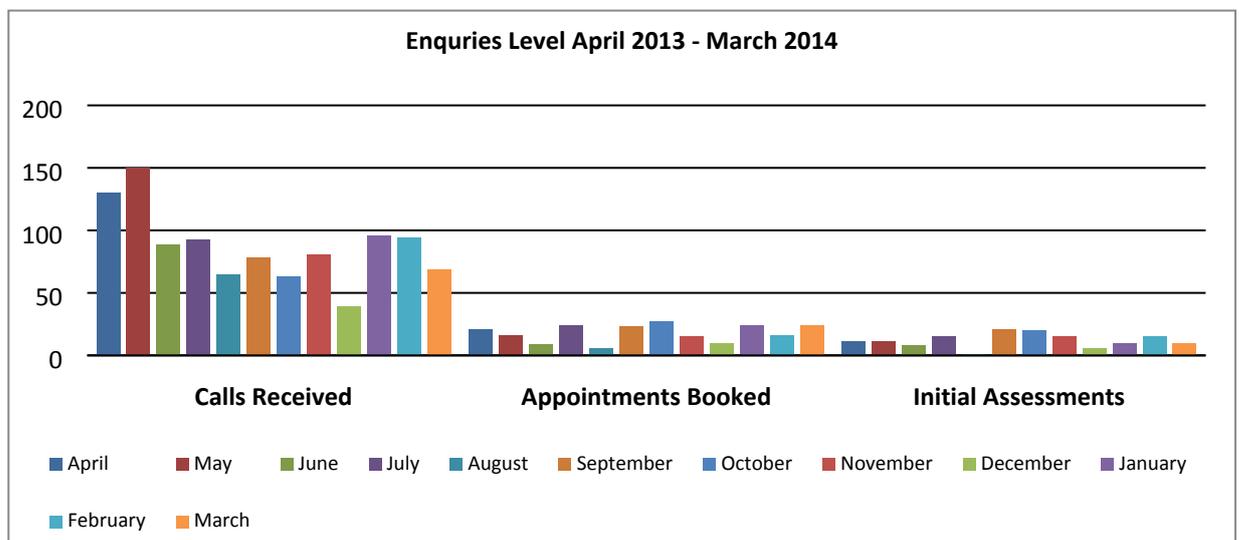
4.2 Our target was to provide 25 new foster carers within this review period. The marketing recruitment activity included updating of the key messages about fostering for Wolverhampton, stalls at various locations within the city, talking to the public, leafleting public venues, open information sessions, articles and adverts in the press, radio interviews, posters at prominent location's within the city centre, fostering logos and posters at council buildings including the railway station and Wolverhampton fostering messages logo on all signature pages throughout the council for all council employees. Information about recruitment of foster carers for Wolverhampton was also sent out to all Wolverhampton council tax payers in their yearly council tax notice.

4.3 FM Radio or Free Radio advertising has taken place from April 2013. This has consisted of a generic advert on a rolling basis, specific on- going adverts prior to each recruitment event and some additional short ‘filler’ adverts. Advertisements have been placed in local papers. In addition on several occasions there were articles featuring stories relating to foster carers living in the area. Foster carers have also given interviews on radio and to specialist magazines, and they have uploaded their videos on U-tube, Facebook and the council web page.

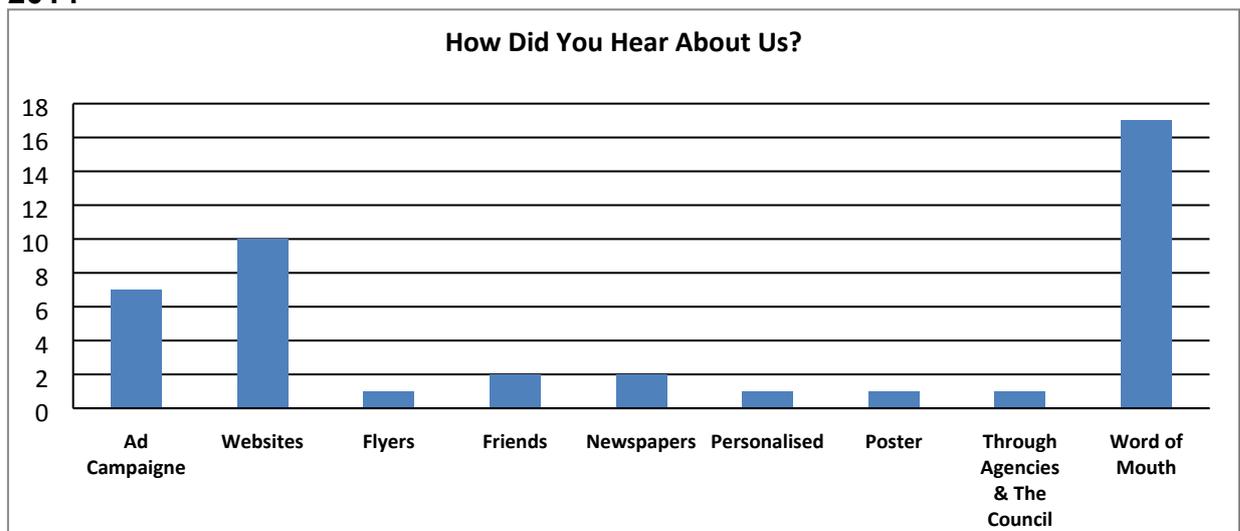
**5. Recruitment Performance 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014**

Wolverhampton City Council call centre, City Direct, manages all the initial enquiries about fostering for Wolverhampton. The service received a large volume of fostering enquiries some were then converted into Initial assessments.

The table below illustrates the level of enquiry, appointments and initial assessments from April 2013- March 2014



The table below illustrates the enquiries by source of marketing methods 2013 – 2014



5.1 The most effective marketing methods in terms of generation of enquiries continue by a significant margin to be the internet and word of mouth through family and friends.

5.2 We have experienced a higher than usual cancel out ratio at the enquiry stage. Between the enquiry and the initial visit - 85 % drop out. At this stage the applicants would have received more detailed information about fostering and have an opportunity to hear from existing foster carer and possibly an informal discussion with staff, providing further clarity about the fostering task and criteria.

## 6. Preparation and assessment Courses

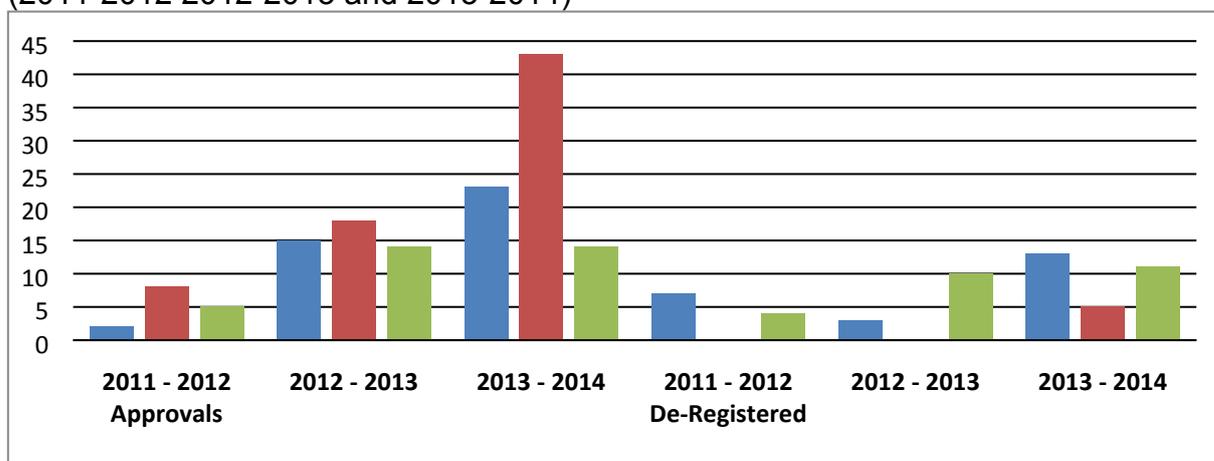
6.1 The preparation and assessment course follows the “Skills to Foster” programme, devised by the Fostering Network. Wolverhampton continues to be part of the Black Country Consortium, along with Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall. These authorities work in partnership to jointly facilitate preparation courses for fostering at a minimum of 12 times per year. Each Local Authority is committed to hosting a minimum of 3 courses. The training is evenly spread over the course of the year, and held at different times i.e. evenings, weekends or during the day. This offers maximum flexibility to enable applicants to attend at a time most convenient to themselves.

6.2 We have facilitated 5 ‘Skills to Foster’ pre-assessment preparation courses whereby a total of 43 households have attended with 23 progressing to full assessments. However between the initial visit and preparation training course, 62% drop out. In the main the fostering team will rule applicants out at this stage. There are a range of reasons for ruling applicants out at this stage. these may be related to their living conditions, the needs of their own children, or lack of initial understanding of the challenges fostering may present or, for example, the realisation that they will not be able to work full time and foster, or, they may have been advised by the social workers to delay their application, having visited their home and gathered personal information that may indicate that they are unsuitable or it is not the right time for them to foster.

### 6.3 Approved Foster Carers Activity as at the 31/3/14

Mainstream or Short term foster carers, care for children and young people on a short term basis, until permanent plans are made for them. Therefore children and young people could be in placement for a few days, a few months or 2 / 3 years depending on the circumstances of their individual situations. The recruitment of carers as outlined above is in the main to recruit foster carers to care for this group of children

The table below illustrates the number of foster carers Approval for the last three years (2011-2012 2012-2013 and 2013-2014)

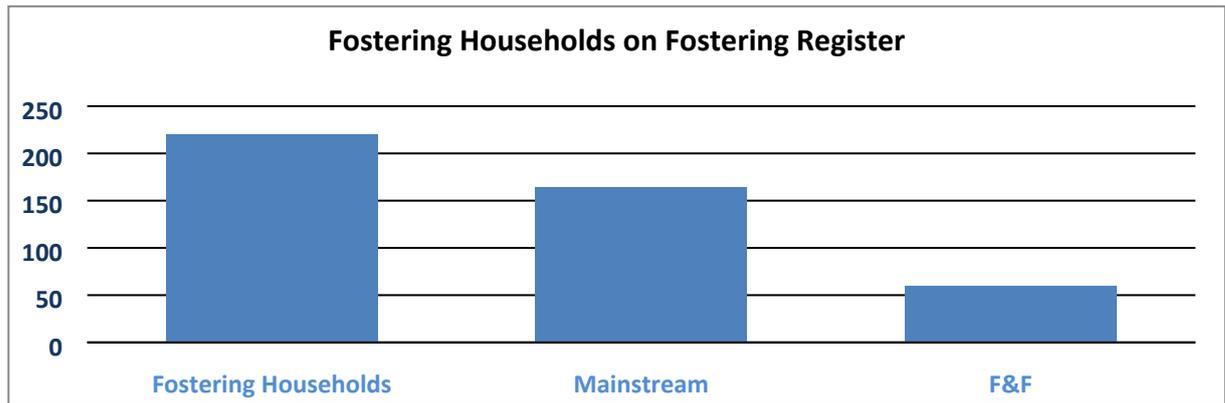


6.4 The most significant figure is the continued net increase of 10 Mainstream households, providing capacity for an additional 15 placements. In the last two years there has been a net gain of 22 mainstream fostering households, providing an additional 37 placements. There also continued to be a net gain of family and friends’ carers

although we expect this to decrease, due in part to the conversion of some of the households to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). The majority of the new foster carers live in Wolverhampton, or within 6- 10 miles radius of the city. Amongst these there were two foster carers transferring from independent fostering agencies.

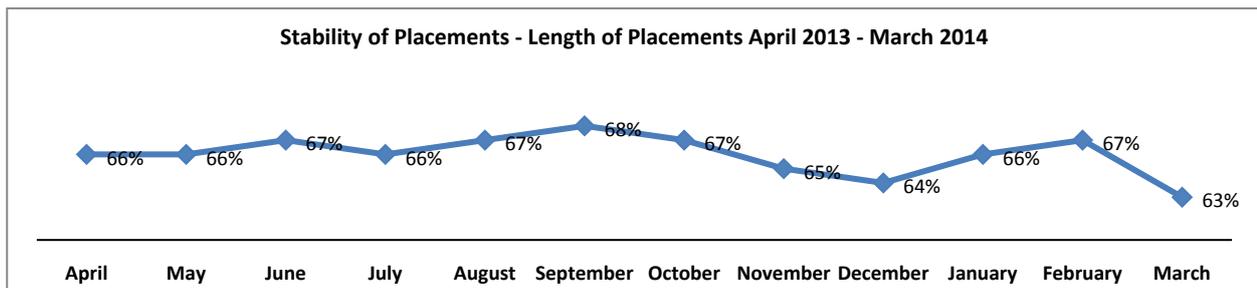
- 6.5 The challenges faced in terms of achieving the target for approval this year have in part been due to issues out of the service control. For example, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks were taking an average of three months to be returned. The DBS process and procedures sets out an expectation that checks will be returned within 60 days and it is not possible to chase or follow up enquires until after this time. Similar issues have arisen in respect of Agency Medical Adviser reports which have also been delayed due to an overall increase across all the services. These two issues resulted in a delay of foster care applications otherwise ready to be presented to Panel, but had to be put back.
- 6.6 The most recent 'Department of Education Recruitment and Retention of carers survey' (2012-2013), shows that rather than a national shortage, the problem appears to be local shortages of foster carers in particular parts of the country where there are particularly difficulties in carers being able to accommodate more than one and siblings groups of children. The survey also states that nationally, in the same period there were 7,400 foster carers recruited but 4,800 were lost. Further, nationally 13% of foster carers resign or their approvals are terminated each year. The survey noted that although pay is not generally stated as a motivator, Independent Fostering agencies with higher payments tended to have fewer recruitment problems.
- 6.7 The number of children requiring fostering placements has continued to rise. This significant increase puts a lot of pressure on placement availability and this puts additional pressure on current placements. In order to match the needs of children it has been necessary to place some children with Independent Fostering Agencies. During the review period there were 730 Looked After Children, of these, 260 children were in Internal Foster placements (including Friends and Family), 60 were in Friends and Family Placements, making total internal foster placements (including Friends and Family) of 320. There are over 300 Looked After Children in Independent Fostering Agency placements. The target is to reduce this number of IFA placements.
- 6.8 This is partly to be achieved by preventing further external placements through the use of local placements and to implement exit plans for a cohort of children whose care plans are either return home or permanence away from the birth family.
- 6.9 Of the children placed in IFA'S during this period, the reasons for having to utilize an external resource were for sibling groups of 2 + children who needed to be placed together or children aged 12 years and over with complex needs and children who were deemed to be at risk if placed locally and placements for parent and child assessments.

The table below illustrates the number of fostering household in 2013-2014



6.10 The above households numbers (164) are not the maximum number of Placements available, although some fostering households are approved and registered for one child as they only have one bedroom, on occasion if it is considered to be appropriate they are able to provide placements for two children from a sibling group, if it is appropriate for the children to share a bedroom. We do not allow children who are unrelated to share a bedroom.

6.11 The table below illustrates the stability of placements for this review period



6.12 Interestingly, a recent survey showed that Wolverhampton is in the top 10 of fostering services for high occupancy rate at 78%. It also highlighted that the West Midlands had the most static foster carer numbers with 3% mainstream foster carer gain. Sufficiency.org.uk (2013).

## 7 Permanency through long term fostering

7.1 Within the quorate group mentioned above, there are internal fostering households who provide foster care for looked after children on a permanent basis. These carers make a commitment to care for a particular child offering permanency until the child reaches the age of independence. These carers often go onto choose to provide supported lodgings in order for young people to remain in the household post 18 years. If young people do move on, long term carers are matched to another child or young person.

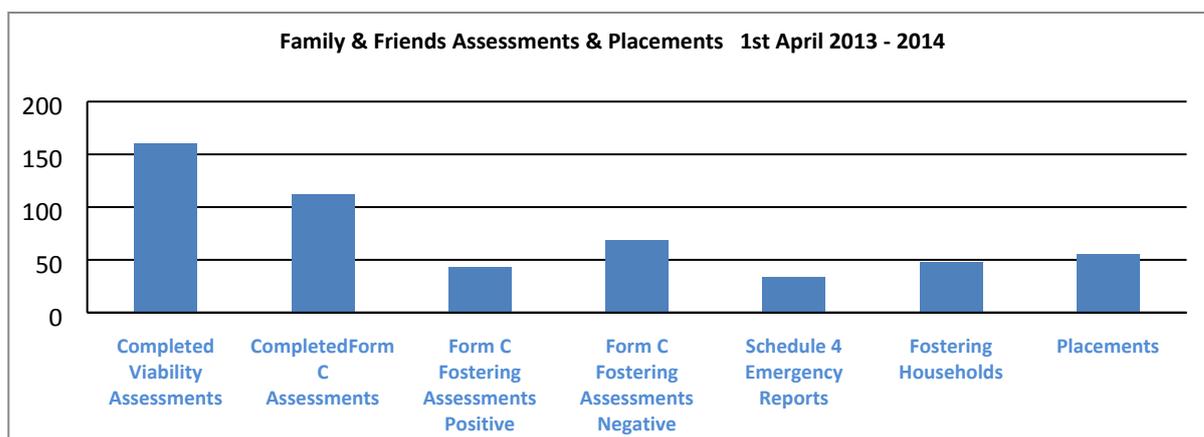
7.2 The fostering service secured 37 matches, a total of 52 permanent placements for children for whom the care plan is permanency, some of whom may not have been able to continue into permanency within their current placement arrangements, or who are in an external provision and wished to remain with their foster placements.

- 7.3 There were (9) foster carers who returned to fostering following a period of dormancy (taking a break) during this review period.
- 7.4 There were (13) fostering households who were de-registered this period, the reasons for de-registration are varied, carers retiring some of whom have been dormant for two years or more (7), no space /family commitments (5), moved away (1).
- 7.5 There were (9) fostering households who have adopted or acquired Special Guardianship Orders during the review period.
- 7.6 There are (7) carers who remain on our dormancy list who may return to fostering at some time in the future. Of this number there are 3 carers who have chosen to provide supported lodgings to the young people in their care in order that they are able to continue to live in the fostering household post 18. All of these carers will return to fostering at some stage. 4 carers simply have no space but may in the future; they wish to remain registered foster carers for Wolverhampton.
- 7.7 The service strives to maintain the highest standards of care to children and will challenge poor child care practice. This action has an impact on the foster placement resources reducing the number of placements available for varying period of time. There were 14 fostering households that have been subject to investigations due to concerns about safeguarding or, standards of care provided to children formerly in placement. This ranges from carer's management of behaviour, health and safety in the fostering household, failure to comply with the requirements of the fostering regulations, through to child protection concerns. Some of these carers have returned to our active list and 3 were de- registered.

## **8.0 Family and Friends Carers (Connected Persons)**

- 8.1 2013-2014 has been a challenging year for a number of reasons. The increase in instructions from Court for Connected Person's assessments has placed pressure on allocation of work. Unlike most other assessments it is not possible to predict the demand and as assessments have to be completed within the time demands of the Court this work can be very challenging to resource. The introduction of the two stage assessment process for applications to foster has also been demanding but is now embedded in practice and the service is working hard to ensure that the required timescales are met.
- 8.2 This group of foster carers are not recruited as described above; they put themselves forward to care for children from within their family network. They are assessed by the service as to their suitability to provide a placement for a particular child or children in care. Family and Friends care is also governed by the fostering regulations 2011. They account for 60 fostering households providing 65 placements. We continue to see a marked increase in referrals for these assessments and the work undertaken between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 is illustrated in the graph below.

### 8.3 The graph below illustrate the work of Family and Friends for 2013-2014



8.4 This group of carers can present challenges for the service in that they do not always willingly comply with the fostering requirements i.e. training or keeping records. They see their role differently to that of our recruited carers, some of our Family and Friends carers are the grand-parents of the children placed. These aspects continue to be a challenge which is being addressed by providing clearer information at the point of placement about expectations and that they sign up to this at an earlier stage of the process.

### 9.0 Short Breaks (Shared Care) Respite Foster Carers

9.1 There are now 3 approved short break foster carers providing respite placements for disabled children. These are foster carers who due to work commitments or family commitments are unable to provide a full time fostering resource. They will only provide care to children or young people, usually disabled children who need a temporary placement for a week end or a week during school holidays. The respite carers are teachers, or social workers who work full time. They offer a regular break to parents and carers who have children who may have challenging behaviours or a disability so that they can have a break.

### 10.0 Post Approval supervision, support and reviewing

10.1 All Wolverhampton foster carers have a named supervising social worker who visits them weekly for four weeks upon approval, then monthly, to monitor their care of children and young people and provide support. Our focus is placement stability, reducing placement moves and improving outcomes for children. With this in mind all our foster carers have direct access to local partners in health and education who also provide them with advice and support. Because we know that our foster carers provide foster placements for children and young people who present challenges and, or have a range of complex needs, we support our carers to meet these challenges. We have behaviour management programme in place such as validated parenting programme (KEEP) and Pillars of Parenting (POP) to our carers who have children 7-12 years old in placement

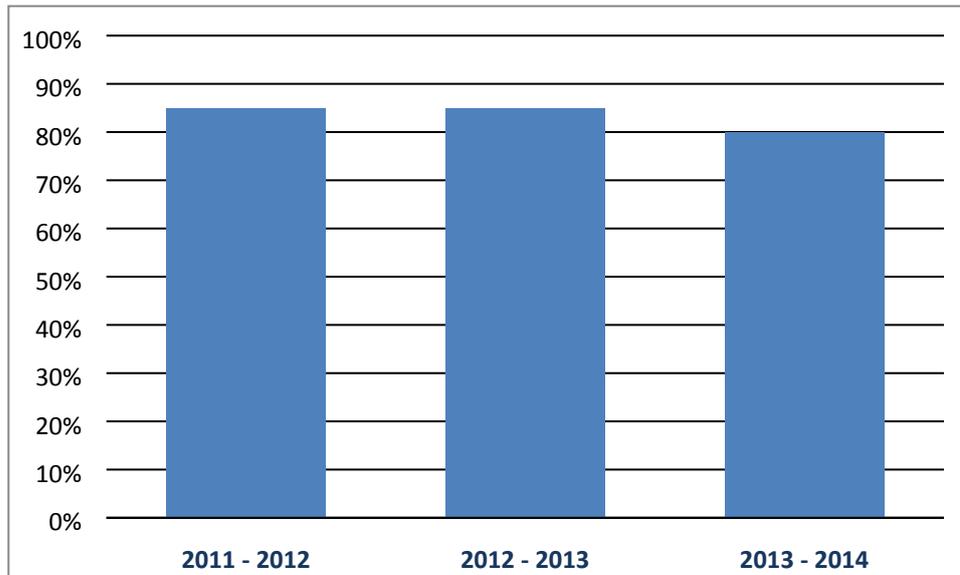
10.2 Wolverhampton has commissioned Heantun Child Care services to provide a range of support services to our foster carers. These include:

- 24/7-365 days advice and guidance outside of office hours,
- dedicated buddy to all newly approved foster carers for a period of six months,
- a variety of activities
- a quarterly newsletter

- assisting in recruitment activity
- participating with the service in developing and reviewing policies and procedures
- facilitating carer training
- running coffee mornings and support groups
- involvement in regular communication meetings with the service
- a range of support groups and forums.

- 10.3 All Wolverhampton carers have access to 7 nights paid respite arrangements each year. As well as the regular fostering arrangements there are also 8 approved temporary foster carers who also provide short term foster carers with regular respite placements. In addition respite carers may offer a regular break to carers who may have challenging placements in order that they can have a break.
- 10.4 Foster carers are reviewed on an annual basis (with the exception of newly approved carers who are reviewed six months following their approval) 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 the children who are placed.
- 10.5 The reviews are considered by the fostering panel (first review or after an allegation, major change in circumstances etc. or change in terms of approval). Over this period, 94% of reviews have been held within the timescales. This rate is an increase from 88% from the previous year. The reviewing officers are timely in chairing the reviews.
- 10.6 The Fostering Service Regulations, 2011, indicate at least one unannounced visit is undertaken to each fostering household each year; this allows the opportunity for the supervising social worker to have an unplanned visit to the foster carer's home and to identify any areas of concerns, especially those of health and safety for the foster carer, the child, and social worker.
- 10.7 The recent Independent Fostering Reviewing Officers report for 2013-14 shows a slight dip in completion rate of these visits for this period. This area is been addressed by the relevant staff and we expect to see improvements during the course of the next review period.

10.8 The graph below illustrates the completion rate of unannounced visit



## 11.0 Foster carers Learning and Development

11.1 The fostering service learning and development coordinator takes a lead on all learning and development for our carers. Foster carers learning and development is based on the requirements of the fostering standards, and the analysis of foster carers personal development plan and previous training evaluations and outcomes. Training is very important in order for foster carers to manage the challenges being presented by children and young people. Carers usually complete all of the core/ mandatory training within 12 months of their approval. We have recently considered a range of methods through which to support our carers learning. We are promoting a more individualised learning programme, which focuses on further development of their knowledge and experience in areas of their interest and areas specific to the needs of the child or young person in placement. We recognise the diverse range of our carers learning styles and have encouraged a wide range of learning methods i.e. focused reading, observations, opportunities for on line learning and supporting carers to access training together with social worker i.e. Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

11.2 At the end of March 2013 94% of mainstream foster carers, and Family and Friends, Shared Care foster carers have successfully completed the Training Support, and Development Standards (TSDS). Newly approved foster carers are been supported to achieve the completion of the standards within the required twelve months of their approval.

## 12.0 Fostering Panel

12.1 Wolverhampton fostering service has a fostering panel that considers and makes recommendations to the agency decision maker about, the applications of all prospective foster carers, the re-approval of existing foster carers, and the review of the approval of foster carers first reviews and whenever asked to do so by the fostering service. The panel also have a quality assurance role. The work of the panel is governed by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011; it has been a busy period for the fostering panel, with a steady flow of foster carer approvals and the departure of a number of carers. There has been a significant increase in the number of placements made with family and friend foster carers. Foster carer first annual reviews have been

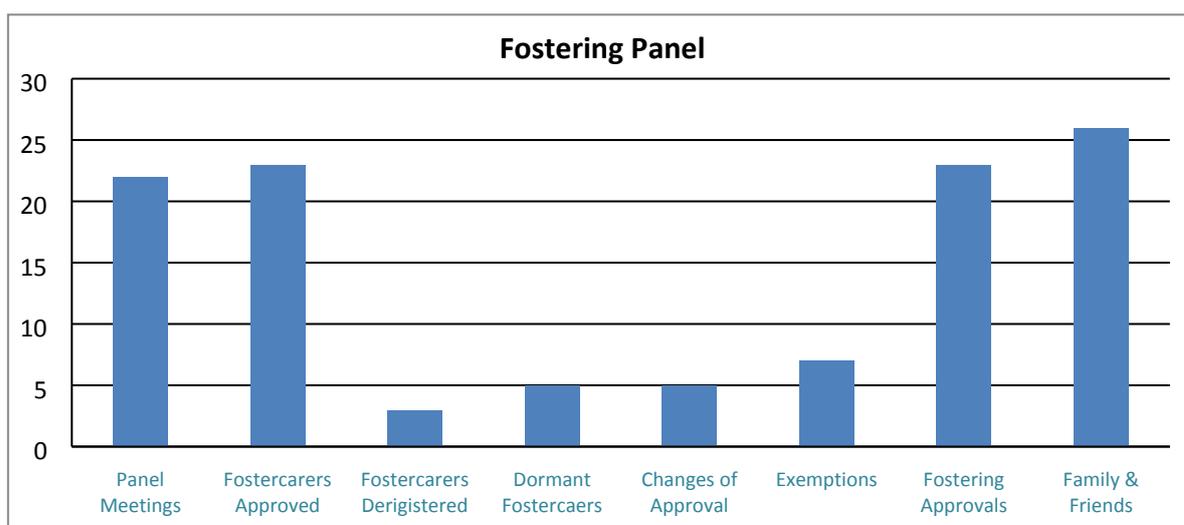
presented to panel, as have reviews requesting change of approval, and reviews following concerns or allegations, and permanency decisions for children.

12.2 In line with good practice, we have an independent chair, three departmental members and three independent panel members, two with fostering experience, one previous foster carer. We are required to maintain a central list of people able to sit at panel when needed to ensure the panel is quorate and to provide professional advice as required. We have a central list that includes suitable independent members, as well as a Wolverhampton councillor, legal and medical advice is available if required. It is not a statutory requirement for a legal advisor to sit on panel, panel have accessed legal advice in relation to applicant foster carers where the recommendation of the Fostering Panel has been to make a Qualifying Determination recommendation.

12.3 Emma Bennett continues to act as the agency decision maker. In Emma’s absence, Steve Cox, Deputy Head of Service, Looked After Children will act in this role.

12.4 The fostering panel meets twice each month, and over the review period have had 22 meetings in order to meet the demands of the service. There were 151 matters heard comprising of: 31 children had their best interest decisions agreed, 23 fostering applications were approved. 3 foster carers were de-registered due to safeguarding concerns, 5 Dormant foster carers were deregistered, 27 first and subsequent review of foster carers were heard, 5 changes of approval category, 7 exemptions to the usual fostering limit, and 26 Family and Friends matters The fostering panel is very ably managed by the Panel Advisor.

12.5 The diagram is an illustration of the work of the fostering panel for the review period 2013-2014



12.6 There are two business meetings and two training events each year. Individual panel members are able to access the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board training as required. Each panel member is appraised each year by the panel chair and there are regular feedback meetings between the panel chair, the panel advisor and agency decision maker.

### **13.0 Complaints decision made**

- 13.1 There were 3 referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), the regulatory body which hears appeals from fostering applicants and existing foster carers who were not recommended for approval or continuation of their approval by the panel and agency decision maker.
- 13.2 To support the work of the panel, we continue to recruit panel members for our central list from education and health.
- 13.3 Complaints (Foster carers)  
There were 3 complaints/allegations which resulted in 2 de- registrations of foster carers.
- 13.4 Complaints about the service  
There were 6 complaints, these included the length of time it has taken to conclude investigations, delays related to payments, service changes and complaints about social workers. In the main the complaints about social workers have been related to social workers challenging standards of practice. The service reviews complaints, learns from them and makes adjustments and improvements.

### **14.0 Private fostering (PF)**

- 14.1 Private Fostering is governed by the Private Fostering Regulations 2009 and the services to Private Fostering arrangements are regularly inspected by Ofsted. The last inspection was 2009. Where a child or young person is not related to their care givers, are under the age of 16 years and live in the household of their care giver for a period of 28 days or more, this is considered to be a private fostering arrangement. The responsibility for private fostering transferred to the fostering team in 2012, when it was agreed that the work was more akin to that of the Fostering Service.
- 14.2 The Duty and Assessment service completes the child in need assessment and the assessment of the suitability of the private foster carer is completed by the fostering team. All private fostering arrangements have an allocated supervising social worker who visits to monitor the arrangement and provide advice and support to private foster carers. Private foster carers have access to our in house foster carers training i.e. Safe care and first aid behaviour management etc.
- 14.3 Under the Private Fostering Regulations the fostering service is required to raise awareness about private fostering amongst the public and professional groups. The targeting of professionals to assist in identifying children who may be in a private fostering arrangement continues to be the focus of the Fostering Service.
- 14.4 The service also worked closely with the marketing and communications team, who has produced publicity materials for raising awareness and booklet for professionals have been updated.
- 14.5 There were 13 referrals to Children Services during 2013-14. However a number of these were not converted to a private fostering arrangement for the following reasons:
- Young people reaching the age of 16 years.
  - Young people returning to other family members.
  - Disqualification of the arrangement due to the criteria for Private Fostering being compromised.
  - The placement did not meet Fostering Regulations.
  - One carer obtained Special Guardianship Order for the young person

- The Foster Carers had a number of issues that caused concern for both the Fostering Social Worker and also the Child's Social Worker

## **15.0 Summary**

- 15.1 Overall the work of the Fostering Service has increased significantly and brought with it the challenge of meeting the individual demands of the various timescales in different parts of the service. In addition to recruiting and supporting foster carers, the team works with adoption when placing children in adoption placements, life appreciation events and introductions of children into adoptive placements.
- 15.2 The future will bring challenges in terms of changes to the management team as there are two Consultant Social work posts vacant, which will bring challenges in the stability of the team.
- 15.3 We will continue to embed the new Children services reorganisation (New Working Model), whereby the fostering service functions are now provided by three social work units. One unit focus on Recruitment and Assessment of mainstream foster carers, one unit provides support to all of our approved foster carers, and the other serves Family and Friends (Connected persons). The restructuring of the service will enhance our capacity to focus on the respective areas

## **16.0. Future Service Development/Challenges for the next year**

- Continue to work to embed the new Children's Services structure, whereby the fostering service functions are now provided by three social work units.
- To recruit 35 foster households in 2015, including specialist carers to meet our placement needs
- To work with the Fostering Network Project which will help us to develop and improve our recruitment performance.
- Contribute to the reduction in the numbers of children who are looked after through increase in the numbers of permanence orders secured (Special Guardianship and Residence Orders). This will also be supported through the re-launch of the permanence strategy, including the amended permanence financial support policy.
- Reduce the numbers of children placed in external foster care placements. This will be achieved by increasing internal capacity by creating additional new placements (for new and existing carers) and "stretching" existing carers in terms of numbers of children placed, age and complexity of need.
- To continue to focus on recruitment for sibling groups and teenagers providing placements for more challenging children/ young people.
- Set up a specialist foster placement scheme (specialist carers).
- Re-introduce plans for the 'introduce a carer' scheme as we know that word of mouth is a successful recruitment strategy, our carers will receive a financial reward when one of the people they introduce is approved at the fostering panel.
- To utilise technology to reach a larger audience
- To reduce the number of applicant fall-outs at each of the recruitment stages we intent to research to ascertain the reasons why people expressed an initial interest in fostering but then did not pursue their application.
- To recruit carers for parent and child assessment placements
- Over the last year we have not been able to recruit the numbers of fostering households needed. We have introduced a 0 – 18 approval category to achieve greater placement choices.

- To introduce a fee structure that will engage and reward foster carers for the work they do.

### **Key Improvements**

- We aim to increase the number of Family and Friends carers progressing to application for Special Guardianships and Residence Orders
- Encourage the take up of all carers attending training and completing the Training & Development Standards.
- To develop “Specialist Foster Service” to cater for the effects of the emotional impact of trauma for children and young people, to aid children’s placement stability and the development of resilience for looked after children.
- To work with the Black Country Consortium to further the training of Wolverhampton Staff and Foster Carer for KEEP Safe training and KEEP for 3-6 year olds.
- To source appropriate relevant training for Specialist Foster Carers to enhance foster carer Learning and Development