


## REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

**12 November 2018**

<b>Subject:</b>	Foster Carer Scrutiny Work Group 2017-18
<b>Cabinet Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Simon Hackett - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
<b>Director:</b>	Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	Councillor Joyce Underhill – Chair Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board Deborah Breedon, Scrutiny Officer <a href="mailto:Deborah_breedon@sandwell.gov.uk">Deborah_breedon@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

**That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board:**

1. consider the findings of the Foster Carer Work Group and refer comments to the Sandwell Children's Trust to develop the foster carer offer and support recruitment and retention of foster carers.
2. request an update from the Sandwell the Children's Trust relating to Foster Carers in Sandwell.

## **1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Chair of the Children's Services and Education(CSE) Scrutiny Board requested a summary of the findings of the Foster Carers Work Group 2017-2018 and an update about Foster Carers in Sandwell.

## **2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION**

- 2.1 Sandwell's vision is to ensure our children get the best possible start in life and for Sandwell to be a place where we live healthy lives, where people increasingly choose to bring up their families, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.
- 2.2 The Sandwell Children's Trust commenced on 1 April 2018 and delivery of foster care in Sandwell was transferred to the Trust. Foster carers talked with the Council to ensure continuity of service and that they were consulted about the Sandwell foster carer offer before the transfer.

## **3.0 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

- 3.1 Lead officers and foster carers were consulted during evidence gathering.

## **4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 None arising from this report.

## **5.0 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Increasing the number of Sandwell Council foster carers would make a reduction of demand for agency foster carers and potentially make savings.
- 5.2 The number of looked after children (LAC) in Sandwell continued to increase and the number of foster carers employed by Sandwell Council was reducing.
- 5.3 Cost of incentives to recruit and retain foster carers to Sandwell Council work force would be an investment to save on costs of agency staff.

## **6.0 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 Legislation and guidance relating to foster care:  
Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4:  
Fostering Services (2011);  
Putting Children First 2016;  
The Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 6.2 Under Section 479A of the Education Act 1996, the Secretary of State has the power to give a local authority such directions as the Secretary of State thinks fit to enable the functions under this legislation (children's social care functions) to be performed to an adequate standard.

## **7.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The Trust will be subject to and will have to adhere to the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 that are relevant.

## **8.0 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 The Trust has adopted the Council's Information Governance and Data Protection policies. The Trust responds to freedom of information and subject access requests. Data sharing agreements and protocols have been drawn up between the Trust and the Council which determine the ways in which the two organisations work together.

## **9.0 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS**

- 10.1 The Trust is implementing actions to recruit and retain foster carers.
- 10.2 The Foster Care Training Plan 2017 provides a range of training and development opportunities to develop foster carers skills in meeting the needs of looked after children.

## **11.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)**

11.1 Sandwell Children's Trust aims to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families and improve social care practice. In this way the Trust will contribute towards the health and wellbeing of the wider community.

## **12.0 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

12.1 There is no impact on any Council managed property or land arising from this report.

## **13.0 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

13.1 In conclusion, the report outlined the process, the evidence gathered and the findings of the Foster Carer Work Group. It has provided a summary of incentives and the conclusions of the work group in the report attached at Appendix 1.

## **14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14.1 Sandwell Corporate Parenting Board Dataset June 2017

Risk register to Audit Committee August 2017

Scrutiny Update April 2017

Fostering Action Plan

Foster Carers Group (task and finish) steering group

Foster Friendly Council:

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/championing-fostering/fostering-friendly>

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/content/combining-fostering-report-v5.pdf>

