



**Corporate Parenting Committee
27th July 2017**

**Report from the Strategic
Director of Children and Young
People**

**Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report
1st April – 30th June 2017**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This is in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011).
- 1.2 The report covers the first quarter of this reporting year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review, comment on and question the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence that the management of the fostering service is being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for children.

3.0 Service Values

- 3.1 The in-house fostering function is positioned within the LAC and Permanency Service of the Children and Young People's Directorate. The vision for the service as set out in the 2017-18 service plan is that:
- We will increase good quality local placements for children by securing more in-house fostering placements. We will recruit, assess and approve new foster carers to accommodate 10 placements by the end of September 2017 and an additional 10 placements by March 2018.
 - There will be a decrease in the number of resignations/deregistrations of foster carers as a result of appropriate support and well-established, positive relationships with foster carers.

- Placements will be well matched to children's individual needs. The best foster carers will be recruited for our children.
- Diversity needs including disability, race, religion, language and culture will always be considered when placing a child.
- Children will be found permanent families without delay and within their extended family network where appropriate.

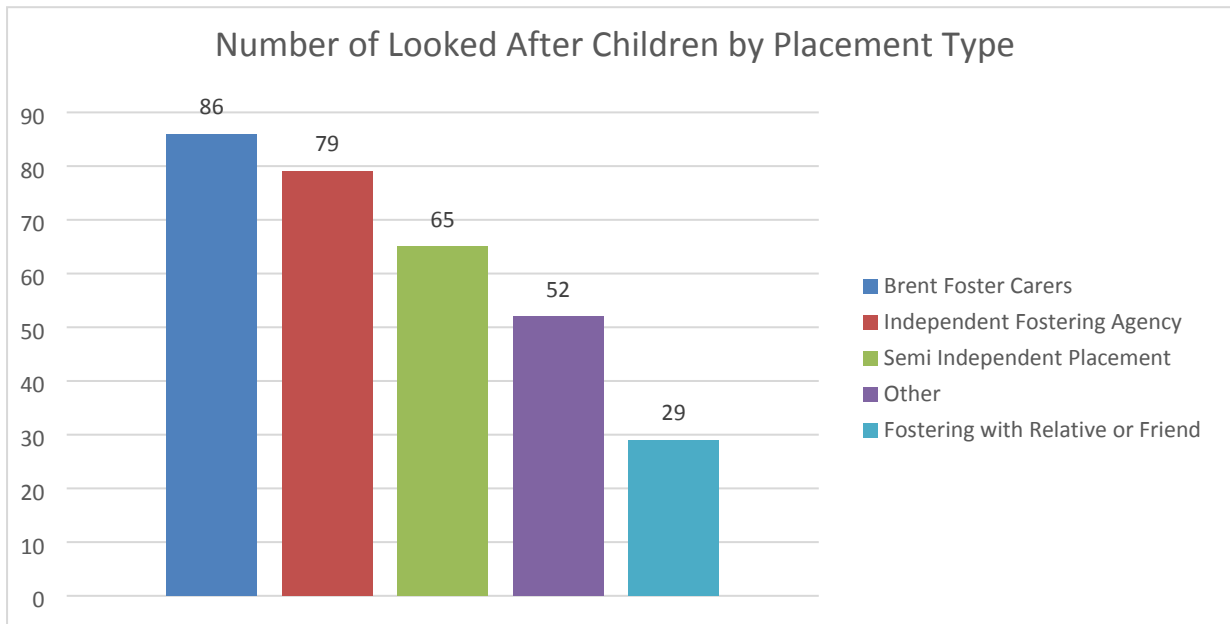
4.0 Staffing Arrangements

- 4.1 Staffing arrangements for fostering remain unchanged compared to the last reporting year. The primary in-house fostering functions are distributed across two teams:
- The recruitment and assessment of foster carers is completed within the Placements Assessment and Recruitment Team.
 - The ongoing support and supervision of foster carers is the responsibility of the Fostering Support Team.
- 4.2 The Fostering Panel Advisor, Fostering Reviewing Officer and Fostering Development Co-ordinator roles are also managed within the LAC and Permanency Service and are line managed separately from the two operational teams in order to provide appropriate challenge within the service.

5.0 Placement Activity

- 5.1 The corporate performance targets for this year relating to fostering remain broadly similar to last year:
- Percentage of looked after children placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 35%.
 - Percentage of looked after children placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15%
 - Percentage of looked after children placed in Independent Fostering Agencies – annual target 25%.
 - Percentage of looked after children overall within foster placements – annual target 75%
- 5.2 The overall LAC population has reduced to 311 as at 30th June 2017 compared to 329 as at the 31st of March 2017, this is a 5.5% reduction.

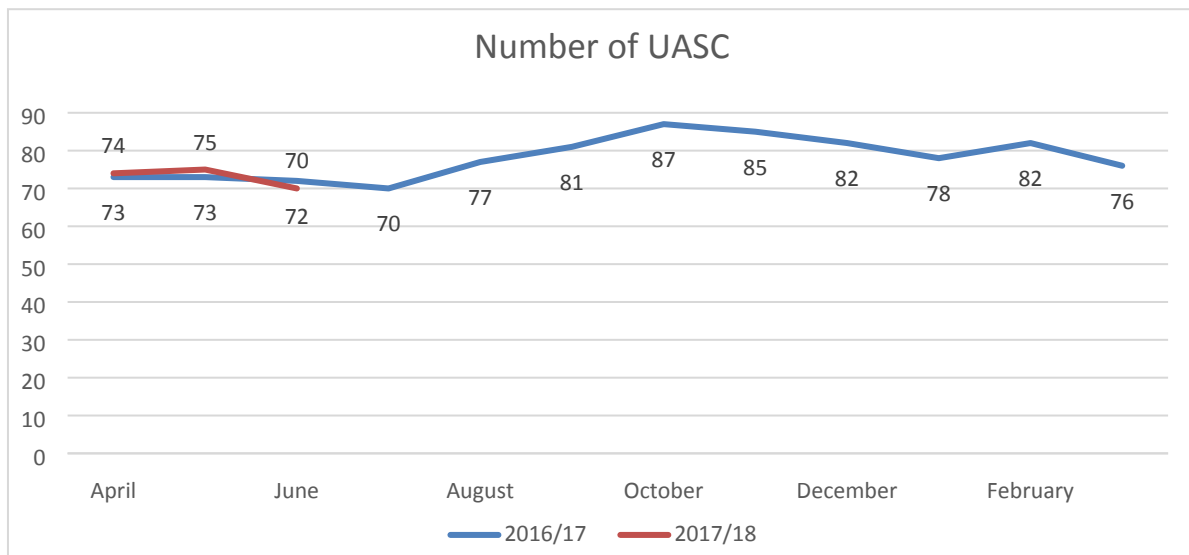
As of the 30th June 2017:



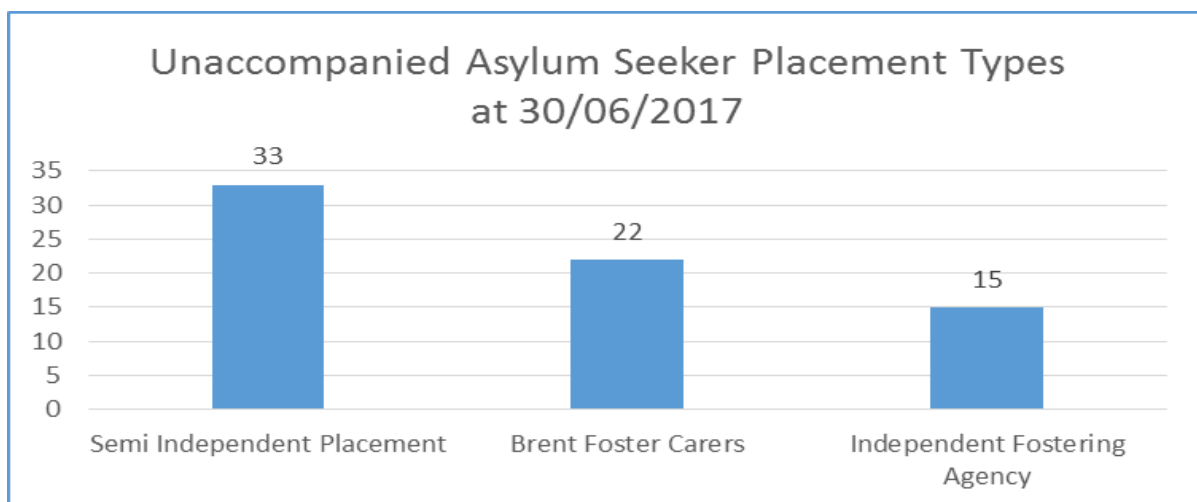
Please note **'other'** includes Children's homes (including secure), residential schools, hospitals, placement with parents, other local authorities and placed for adoption with placement order not with current foster carer.

- 86 children were placed with Brent foster carers. This represents 27.7% of total looked after children.
- 79 children were placed with IFAs. This is 25.4% of total looked after children.
- There are 65 looked after children in Semi Independent accommodation (Residential accommodation not subject to Children's Home Regulations) as at 30/06/17, which represents 20.9% of all looked after children
- 29 children were placed with a relative or family friend on a fostering basis. This is 9.3% of total looked after children as at 30/06/17.
- 194 looked after children were living within a fostering setting at 30/06/17. This is 62.4% of total looked after children. The lower percentage is explained due to a reduction in the overall number of looked after children and an increase in the number and proportion of our looked after children aged over 16 years' old. It is a significant challenge to identify foster placements to accommodate much older teenage young people.

5.3 The most recent reporting period has seen a plateau reached in the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) approaching the borough for support.



5.4 As of 30/06/17 there were 70 UASC, compared to 72 as at 30/06/2016. The 70 UASC represents 22.5% of all LAC as at 30/06/2017. This percentage is higher as compared to the same period last year (20.5%) due a decline in the overall number of Looked After Children. 33 UASC are placed in semi-independent accommodation and 37 are placed in foster care.



6.0 Recruitment and Assessment Activity

6.1 The fostering service carried out 7 recruitment focused activities within the reporting period with the aim of raising awareness of fostering and encouraging potential foster carers to come forward within the Brent community. During this quarter our main presence was at our fostering fortnight outreach events with stalls on Wembley and Kilburn High Roads as well as within the Civic Centre reception area.

6.2 We have continued holding the monthly information evenings at the Civic Centre for members of the public to find out more about the fostering role and to enable us to determine whether an individual or family has the potential to become a carer for Brent.

6.3 The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 59 enquiries for fostering. These enquiries resulted in 8 initial visits. As of the 30th June 2017 there were 12 formal assessments in process under the 2-stage fostering assessment.

6.4 The target for the service in 2017-18 is to recruit 20 fostering placements within the reporting year; with a net growth of 5 fostering households once carer resignations and terminations of approval are taken into account. We have already achieved 5 new fostering approvals (with 6 potential fostering placements) in the first quarter of 2017-18 and another 5 prospective fostering households are booked into panel for approval within the months of July and September 2017. The target set for this reporting period (quarter 1) has been met.

7.0 Fostering Panel

7.1 The fostering service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The service maintains a diverse and highly experienced central list of Panel members that includes an elected member. The panel chair and vice chair are independent people with professional experience of fostering and panel members include those with personal experience of both sides of the fostering system. Demand requires three panels to be held every two months.

7.2 The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a Foster Carer, Connected Person(s) (Family and Friends Foster Carer) and the terms of their approval.
- The first annual review of each approved carer and any other review as requested by the fostering service, including those of a Standards of Care issue and those exploring any allegations made.
- The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a Foster Carer.

The panel makes recommendations to the fostering service on each of the cases presented and these recommendations are then referred to the Agency Decision Maker, who is the Head of Service, Looked after Children and Permanency, who makes the final decision.

7.3 During the period 1st April – 30th June 2017, 4 panels were held with 16 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within this group:

- 5 new fostering households were recommended for approval;
- 1 prospective fostering household was found unsuitable to foster;
- 6 fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review;
- 1 fostering household was put on hold pending additional work following Standards of Care concerns;

- 1 fostering household was put on hold pending a risk assessment following an allegation;
- 1 foster carer's suitability to foster was terminated due to sudden ill health;
- 1 fostering household resigned due to a change in circumstances (no spare room left for fostering).

All of the recommendations made to the Agency Decision Maker were ratified.

7.4 The panel has a quality assurance role, monitoring the standard of reports presented to it and the timeliness of decisions for children. This information is then taken back to the Agency Decision Maker. Feedback is also gathered from applicants and social workers attending panel. This data is analysed by the Agency Advisor and Agency Decision Maker at quarterly meetings and any positives, issues or concerns are relayed to the relevant manager with challenge questions being presented for follow up where necessary.

8.0 Training and Support to Foster Carers.

8.1 As part of our Learning and Development offer to foster carers we provide a range of mandatory and identified training courses including sessions in evenings and at weekends.

8.2 During the period 1st April to 30th June 2017, 16 individual training courses were offered providing 126 training spaces. Where there are attendance concerns at training this is followed up by Supervising Social Workers, the Fostering Reviewing Officer and the Fostering Panel.

8.3 The Fostering Development Co-ordinator role is currently vacant. This is putting some additional pressure on the service, but a process is underway to recruit a replacement.

9.0 Monitoring Arrangements

9.1 All foster carers, regardless of the length of their approval with Brent must have an annual review of their arrangements. The Fostering Reviewing Officer completed 34 annual reviews out of a possible 39 during this period. Of those uncompleted:

- 3 were cancelled by the Fostering Service due to further work being required in two cases and another being due to staff absence;
- 2 were cancelled by foster carers due to other commitments.

These reviews have all been re-scheduled.

9.2 During the reporting period there was one formal allegation made against a fostering household. This was investigated through the Local Authority Designated Officer

(LADO) process and has been concluded. The carer's annual review has been brought forward, so the matter remains unresolved.

- 9.3 There were three new Standard of Care meetings held during this quarter. Concerns was raised against one carer due to not working in partnership and not following directions in relation to the care plan; one carer had concerns raised around communication and understanding her role; and one carer demonstrated a lack of understanding of her role and was not available to support the young person's emotional needs. All of these concerns remain under review.

10.0 Future Developments

- 10.1 A Social Pedagogue has been recruited and will commence in role within the next month. The job description is attached. As set out in last quarterly report, the focus of their work will be to support the development of social pedagogical thinking and practice with those staff who have undertaken previous training and to undertake direct work with Brent fostering households and Looked after Children, modelling a social pedagogic approach to support carers to effect positive change. This will mean more focused work with young people who have challenging behaviour, which will in the long-term improve placement stability. In addition they will be working closely with the Fostering Manager, Operational Managers, Principal Social Worker and Learning and Development Team to promote and embed social pedagogical practice.
- 10.2 As part of our 2017 Fostering Fortnight (beginning 8th May) campaign we held a Brent schools' art competition which was a real success with a number of Brent schools participating. The winner of the competition, a pupil from Christ Church Primary School had a visit from Ledley King (Tottenham Hotspur) and our Brent foster carer Shabana Fazaldin, at a whole school assembly where she received her Tottenham Hotspur prize. The winning entry has been used in our current JCDecaux marketing campaign.

Some of our staff also took part in a photo shoot with well-known football players from Spurs that helped our social media presence during this campaign.

Appendices / Links

- (i) Brent's 'Make a Difference' Fostering Campaign:
<https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/children-and-family-support/fostering/make-a-difference/>
- (ii) Social Pedagogue Job Description

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