	Corporate Parenting Committee 25 th July 2018
	Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services
Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: 1st April to 30th June 2018 (Quarter 1)	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 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).

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 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 Detail

3.1 Service Values

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 2018-19 service plan is that:

- Caring and loving families will be found for children without delay and within their extended family network where appropriate.
- Diversity needs including disability, race, religion, language and culture will always be considered when placing a child.
- Placements will be well matched to children's individual needs. The best foster carers will be recruited for our children.
- 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 with the aim to have 5 net fostering households in the end of financial year taking into account termination of approvals and resignations.
- There will be a decrease in the number of resignations/de-registrations of foster carers as a result of appropriate support and well-established, positive relationships with foster carers.

3.2 Staffing Arrangements

The new Service Manager with management oversight of the Fostering Support Teams, Kinship and Adoption and Post-Permanency Teams, has been in post since 16th April 2018.

The benefits of the recent service realignment will allow continuity of relationships between foster carers and their supervising social workers, more independent scrutiny and challenge through the fostering reviewing process and a development programme for foster carers better aligned with other staff training arrangements. Through these changes, the service aims to recruit and retain more foster carers that will have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. Wider benefits to children and young people will be the creation of stronger relationships with social work teams through smaller team structures with a greater focus on staff learning and development.

3.3 Placement Activity

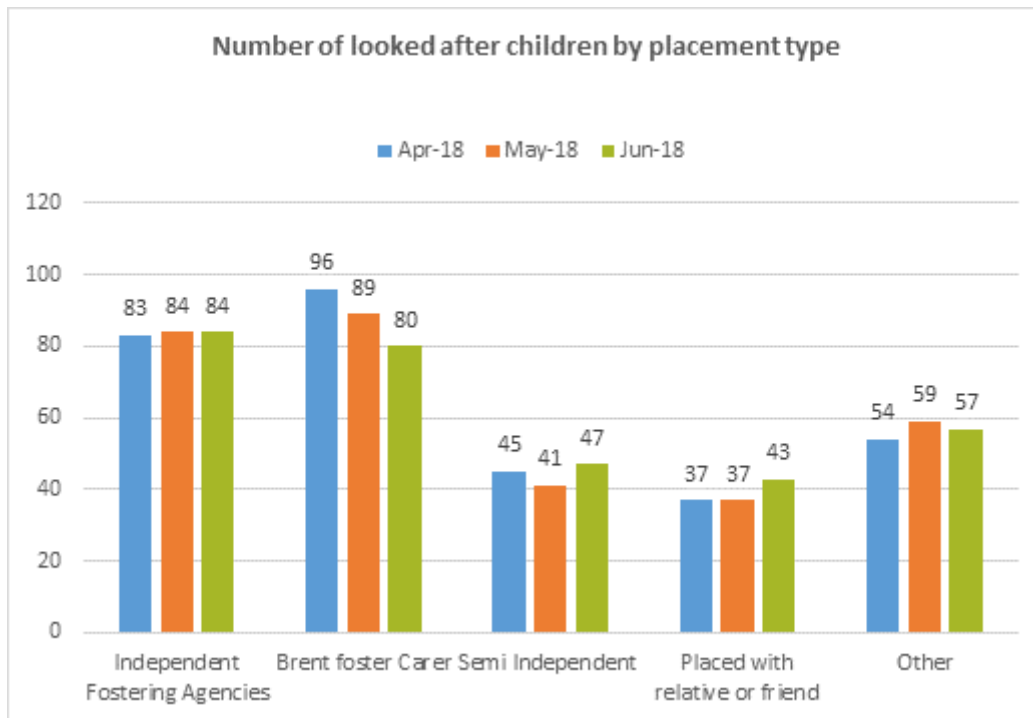
The corporate performance targets for 2017/18 were as below:

- Percentage of looked after children placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 35% - the actual percentage was 29.4%
- Percentage of looked after children placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15% - the actual percentage was 11.8%

- Percentage of looked after children placed in Independent fostering agencies – annual target 25% - the actual percentage was 27.1%
- Percentage of looked after children overall within foster placements – annual target 75% - the actual percentage was 68.7%

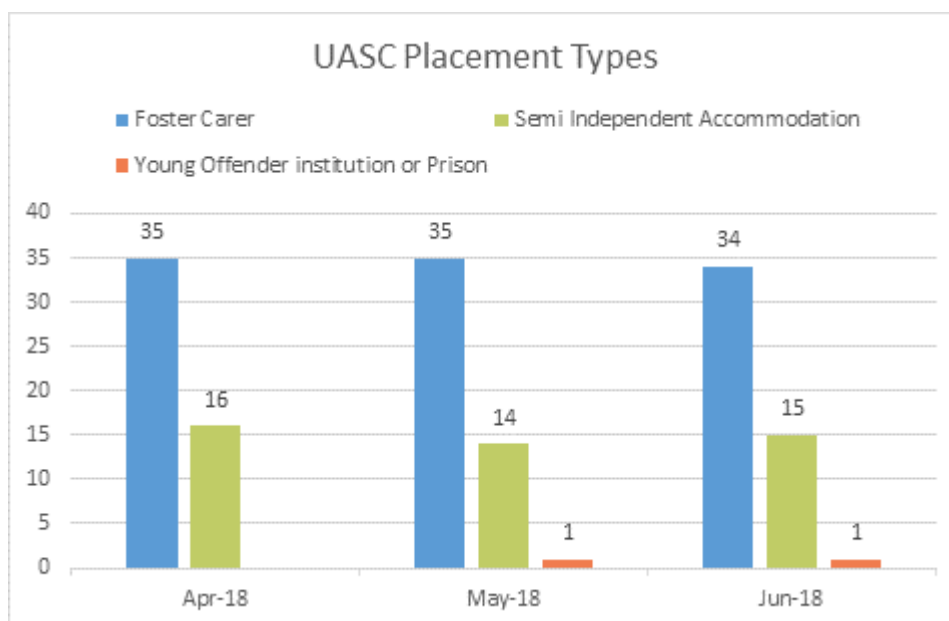
As of the 30th June 2018:

- 80 children were placed with Brent foster carers, compared to 92 children as at 31st March 2018. This represents 25.6% of total looked after children.
- 85 children were placed with IFAs, same as previous quarter (Jan – Mar 2018). This is 27.2% of the total looked after children population.



- There are 47 looked after children (aged 16-17) in semi Independent accommodation (residential accommodation not subject to Children's Home Regulations) as at 30/06/2018, which represents 15.1% of all looked after children.
- 43 children were placed with a relative or family friend on a fostering basis as of 30th June 2018. This is 13.7% of total looked after children.
- 208 looked after children were living within a fostering setting on 30th June 2018. This is 67% of the total of all looked after children. This is a similar position to the end of Q4 where the percentage was 68.7% of LAC.

As of 30th June 2018 Brent looked after 50 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), 2 fewer than the previous quarter. 15 UASC are placed in semi-independent accommodation, 34 are placed in foster care and 1 is placed in a Young Offender Institution.



3.4 Recruitment and Assessment

The fostering service carried out 8 recruitment focused activities within the reporting period with the aim of raising awareness of fostering and encouraging potential foster carers to contact Brent Fostering Service. During this quarter, the main presence was during Foster Care Fortnight (14 – 27 May 2018) when a double decker bus was hired to travel across the borough, visiting local supermarkets and sports facilities. A drone video was used to capture and publicise the recruitment activity. Additionally, there were 3 information evenings held monthly at the Civic Centre, providing an opportunity to members of the public to find out more about the fostering role and to enable Brent to determine whether an individual or family has the potential to become a carer for Brent.

The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 34 contacts (telephone calls or emails requesting further information) and 25 enquiries (expressing serious interest in becoming foster carers) in relation to fostering. Of these, 10 possible referrals were identified and of those applicants, 7 people wished to continue the process and be visited by social workers. As of the end of Q1, there were 2 formal assessments in process – one is in stage 1 and the other in stage 2.

The target for the service in 2018-19 is to recruit 5 net fostering placements within the reporting year once carer resignations and terminations of approval are taken into account. We have achieved a total of 2 new fostering household approvals with net growth of 1 fostering household in Q1. This is due to lower than anticipated conversion rates from referrals to 'initial visits' as 7 out of 10 referrals resulted in initial visits and only 1 of the initial visits conducted in Q1 has progressed to a full assessment. Reasons for not progressing beyond the initial visit stage included: issues around the applicants' financial stability; immigration status; applicants' changing their mind; and applicants' decision to remain with their current agency.

Additionally, a number of assessments have not progressed during the stage 1 and stage 2 assessment process. In Q1, 3 out of a total of 9 assessments ended in Stage

1, 1 assessment ended in Stage 2, and 1 assessment has been deferred for 6 months. The reasons for ending these assessments are varied and include:

- Applicants' personal circumstances changed due to bereavement or ill health;
- One case where it became evident that the applicant's level of proficiency in English was not sufficient;
- Applicants' lack of transparency, or lack of communication with their partner and with the agency.

More recruitment activities have been scheduled for the next 3 months with a specific target in areas that may provide more potential carers with a spare room, that include: a leaflet drop in Cricklewood, Brent Cross, Kensal Rise and Kensal Green; two days in Moberly Sports Centre (based in Kensal Rise); Chalkhill Festival; and another Facebook campaign.

Additionally, one staff member within the fostering team has been assigned a specific task of contacting those people who had expressed an interest in fostering with Brent in the past but had asked for more time to consider their decision further, in case they are now ready to proceed to initial visit.

3.5 Fostering Panel

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 service was pleased to retain the same councillor who has sat on the panel previously after the local elections. The panel chair and vice chair are independent people with professional and personal experience of fostering and panel members include those with personal experience of the fostering system. Current demand requires three panels to be held every two months.

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 or 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 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 has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and relays any issues or concerns to the relevant manager. The panel makes recommendations to the service and these recommendations are referred to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Head of Service, LAC and Permanency.

During the period 1st April – 30th June 2018, 3 panels were held with 11 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within these cases:

- 2 new fostering households were recommended for approval;
- 6 fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review;
- 1 fostering household's approval was terminated due to a failure on the part of the foster carer to meet 6 out of the 7 fostering standards (The foster carer had resigned in the last period of reporting);
- 2 fostering households resigned from their fostering role – one to join another local authority and one relocated away from Brent (both fostering households had resigned in the previous reporting period);

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

3.6 Training and Support to Foster Carers

The Fostering Development Co-ordinator has been in post since January 2018 and released the new 2018-19 training calendar for foster carers last month. The feedback thus far has included positives in relation to the varied programme of courses offered, the varied locations in which the sessions are run (spread throughout the borough), the new co-ordinator herself and the fact that fewer courses are cancelled at short notice.

During this reporting period, 15 individual training courses were offered. These courses were as below:

- Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) Coaching session (these are the 7 standards by which every approved foster carer is measured and the portfolio to be completed within 1 year of approval at panel; within 18 months for Family and Friends Carers)
- Preventing placement breakdowns
- Record keeping
- Attachment
- Staying Put, Transitions and Independence
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- Managing and de-escalating conflict
- Finance for foster carers
- Play with me! Child focused play
- Professional Boundaries
- Role of Brent's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – to coordinate all allegations and concerns made against a person who works with children
- Dealing with disobedience
- Developing good bedtime routines
- Raising confident children
- Managing aggression

The carers' feedback about training sessions has been very positive. For example, carers found it useful to understand the allegations process and the role of the LADO in the Brent's LADO training session. The carers also felt that the professional boundaries training session was well presented, which made them feel comfortable and at ease to share their thoughts within the group discussions. Carers also noted a refresher course should be provided for future, which has already been agreed. Carers reported the managing and de-escalation training session was very informative and interactive. They were able to discuss conflict and how matters are best resolved using various strategies. The trainer feedback stated that the carers need a better understanding of the TSDS and to take more opportunities to support each other to attend training.

3.7 Monitoring – reviews, allegations, complaints

A total of 15 annual fostering household reviews were held in this period. A total of 7 reviews scheduled for March had to be deferred as a result of staff absence from work.

The 7 reviews which were scheduled for March have been completed. Cover arrangements continue to be provided through Aidhour, who are familiar with the expectations and standards required. Annual reviews due in April have been completed and they are currently working through reviews for May and June. It is hoped that this arrangement will remain in place until the staff member resumes work in August 2018.

During this quarter, there was one new allegation made about a foster carer that is currently being investigated by the LADO. In addition, the previously outstanding allegation (from the previous reporting periods) that was due to be reviewed has been reviewed and recommendations have been made for taking to Fostering Panel.

The Panel Advisor and the ADM hold quarterly meetings to review all feedback received from the Fostering Panel to review learning to disseminate within the service to improve social work practice. In this period, the following actions were taken as a result of fostering panel feedback:

- Performance issues raised by the Fostering Panel were addressed by managers directly with the relevant workers;
- Learning from the panel feedback continues to be used in supervision to support Supervising Social Workers to feel more confident to address early signs of possible Standards of Care and feel able to address them in a timely manner.

Team Managers continue to discuss these cases as case examples in their team meetings to disseminate the learning and also use the cases within group supervision.

3.8 New Developments

Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

Brent's Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted in May 2018. The Ofsted Report will be mentioned in the next quarterly report as it was published outside of this reporting period.

Social Pedagogy

This approach is being embraced by the fostering service. It provides an additional toolkit for direct work with carers to assist them in developing the way in which they can work with children and young people. The Developmental Lead for Social Pedagogy sits within the fostering teams now and offers consultations and joint home visits with the aim of reducing placement breakdown before issues become too great. Two social workers are being trained as Social Pedagogical Practitioners and receive group supervision in this task by the Developmental Lead. This is expected to provide better service for foster carers and improve placement stability for children.

Out of Hours support for Foster Carers

A proposal has been made to offer a specialist out of hours service for foster carers, delivered by supervising social workers who have existing relationships with carers. This is intended to support recruitment and retention of foster carers. A pilot is planned to commence by the end of July and the committee will be provided with an update in the next quarter.

Contact Officer

Onder Beter, Head of Service, LAC and Permanency.
Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 0FJ.

Tel: 020 8937 1228

Email: onder.beter@brent.gov.uk