



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2**  
**NOVEMBER 2021**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**LEICESTERSHIRE FOSTERING AGENCY STATUTORY REPORT**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to note the activity of the Leicestershire Fostering Agency between March 2020 and March 2021.

**Background**

2. Leicestershire County Council is responsible for the Local Authority Fostering Agency and undertakes statutory responsibilities relating to Fostering.
3. Under the National Minimum Standards (NMS) (25.7), all Fostering agencies are required to provide a report to the Executive<sup>1</sup> regarding its activity and work and that of the Fostering Panel. The full report can be found appended as Appendix A to this report.

**Summary of Report**

4. The service operates within a competitive market, with both surrounding local authorities and private providers of placements. As such, ambitious priorities and targets were set in the following areas:
  - Increasing Leicestershire's market share of mainstream foster carers
  - Increasing the numbers of kinship carers
  - Increasing the number of Supported Lodgings providers
  - Increasing Leicestershire's specialist foster carers
  - Ensuring carers are supported and trained to provide the best possible care.
5. A range of work is completed by several teams within the service to ensure priorities and targets are met:
  - The Recruitment Team – enhancing the overall recruitment and experience of prospective foster carers
  - The Assessment Team – to assess prospective foster carers and to ensure quality reports are presented to the Fostering Panel
  - The Team around the Child – supporting foster carers to provide the best possible care

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<sup>1</sup> The executive in Leicestershire is the Lead Member and Scrutiny Members.

- The Kinship Team – to assess prospective foster carers who are known to the child (for example family or friends)
  - The Dedicated Placement Support Service – supporting specialist carers, assisting children to move or remain in family-based placements and the recruitment, assessment and support of independent visitors (and matching to children).
6. There have been a number of achievements delivered by the Fostering Agency in 2020-21. This includes that placement stability had been maintained during the Covid-19 lockdown and the support to carers had been strengthened. The service has provided high quality training through virtual forums and improved how the voice of the child and carers are captured in Annual Reviews.
7. A mentoring scheme for new and inexperienced carers has been developed and the service has increased the capacity of the Dedicated Placement Support Team to offer more advice and support to carers and children with complex needs. Over the year there has also been an increase in the number of Independent Visitors and Supported Lodgings Carers. The service has also maintained excellent staff retention.
8. A performance overview for 2020-21 is below:

Recruitment Targets for 20/21:		
25 Mainstream Carers	2 Specialist Carers	3 Supported Lodgings Providers
Recruitment Activity for 20/21:		
12 Mainstream Carers	1 Specialist Carer	12 Supported Lodgings Providers
11 Independent Visitors (Total 46)	30 Kinship Carers	40 Staying Put

9. The Fostering Service receives many calls from the public who are considering becoming a carer for children. Criteria is used to help the enquirers understand whether they are able to offer care; some of the questions the Service asks are very specific and relate to safeguarding. Other questions relate to the circumstances of the carer and their experience caring for children. Some enquirers are not able to be carers due to their histories or their current situations. The Service received 499 of these calls and 90 proceeded to what is called an initial visit.
10. A rigorous but supportive process is used to ensure that Leicestershire is able to offer children the best possible placements and where there are issues, the right support is offered carers to offer the best possible placements.

11. Having this level of detail also helps the service to understand the opportunities for service improvement and targets for the following year, which are set out in section 9 of the Annual Report.
12. An overview of targets and priorities for 2021/22 includes:
  - Recruitment of 35 mainstream Foster Carers, 5 Specialist Carers, 15 Supported Lodgings Carers and 20 new independent visitors
  - Greater investment in marketing to ensure all campaigns are running as effectively as possible, including an ongoing mainstream fostering campaign, Supported Lodgings campaign and a Specialist Carers campaign.
  - Retention:
    - a. The service will continue to look for opportunities to develop its carers and introduce the therapeutic model. It will ensure all carers have access to the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting.
    - b. The service will embed a hybrid model of Foster Panels, incorporating both virtual and face to face meetings.
    - c. Return to face to face Foster Carer Forums, whilst following government guidance.
    - d. Review Practice Standards across the service ensuring that Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity are recognised.
    - e. Develop Reflective Supervision across the service.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Leicestershire Fostering Agency Annual Report 2020-21.

### **Officers to Contact**

Sharon Cooke, Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care  
Tel: 0116 305 5479  
[Sharon.Cooke@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.Cooke@leics.gov.uk)

Kelda Claire, Interim Head of Service, Fostering, Adoption, Children in Care and the Virtual School  
Tel: 0116 305 9084  
[kelda.claire@leics.gov.uk](mailto:kelda.claire@leics.gov.uk)

Joss Longman, Service Manager, Fostering  
Tel: 0116 305 3288  
[Joss.Longman@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Joss.Longman@leics.gov.uk)

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