

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Personnel Committee**

**24<sup>th</sup> July, 2017**

### **Report of the Head of Children and Young People Services – Andrew Jarrett**

#### **Matter for Decision**

#### **Wards Affected:**

All Wards

#### **Proposal to create an additional Supervising Social worker in the Fostering Service**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to seek Members agreement to make changes to the current establishment of the Fostering Service and to create an additional Supervising Social worker post within the team.

#### **Executive Summary**

Approval is sought to create an additional supervising social worker post in the fostering team. The post is required to increase capacity in the service with the aim of providing high quality support to foster carers to improve outcomes for children and young people who are looked after, and to improve stability of placements. By improving the stability of children in foster carer there will be a reduction in placement moves and a reduction in the number of children who will need to be placed with independent foster carers thus reducing the expenditure on the Looked after Children Budget.

## Background

The Neath Port Talbot Fostering Service is responsible for the recruitment assessment training and supervision of foster carers who are approved by the Local Authority. In addition the service provides the support and assessment of family carers and Special Guardians. The Service operates within the requirements of the Children Act 1989, The Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2015, the Fostering Service (Wales) Regulation and the Special Guardianship Regulations 2015.

The Service consists of 2 teams: An assessment team, and a supervision team.

The current establishment is as follows:

<b>Supervision Team</b>		<b>Assessment team</b>	
1 FTE Team Manager	Grade 11	1 FTE Team Manager	Grade 11
1 FTE Deputy manager (Placement Coordinator)		Grade 10	
Recruitment and retention Officer		Grade 8	
Play Therapist 1 FTE		Grade 7	
1 FTE Consultant Social worker	Grade 10	1 FTE consultant social worker	Grade 10
6 FTE Supervising Social workers	Grade 9	6 FTE Supervising social workers	Grade 9
		3 FTE Fostering support workers	Grade 6

### Role of the supervising social worker

Supervising social workers are required to

- Offer a high quality support service to foster carers to ensure that each of the children's needs and outcomes are met.
- Formally supervise foster carers on a monthly basis and to maintain contact with the carers in between including unannounced visits
- Attend all meetings for the children placed including statutory reviews
- Be the link between carers and children's social workers and partner agencies to ensure that the plan for the child is carried out
- Support carers with placement move on including moves to long term placements, adoption, rehabilitation
- Chair disruption meetings when there are issues in placement

- Chair placement meetings when a child is first placed with a foster carer
- Prepare matching reports for long term placement matches.
- Participate in the duty system and support placement identification
- Ensure that carers have up to date medical, DBS checks, references and that they are reviewed on an annual basis and that the reviews are presented to the fostering panel for re-approval.
- Attend and facilitate regular support groups for carers and to participate in recruitment and retention activities as well as being involved in consultation events for foster carers.
- Participate on a rota basis on preparation training for new foster carers.
- In addition it will also be required that the social workers are active in ensuring that they take forward the development of the secure based attachment model of working; this will involve more in-depth consultation with carers to carefully plan for how children's needs will be met and how behaviours will be managed in placements.

Over the past few years the fostering team has worked closely with the case management teams within Children and Young People Services to implement the actions in the LAC Strategy.

The efforts of the service have resulted in:

The number of children who are looked after reducing from **468** on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 to **348** on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

The number of children placed with Independent Fostering agencies reducing from **117** on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 to **62** on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

A reduction of the number of children placed in residential provisions reducing from **15** on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 to **10** on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

The number of children who have been placed with NPT foster carers has remained fairly consistent with **246** children placed with in house carers in March 2014 compared with **224** children placed in March 2017. The current number of Looked after children with in house carers is 181 with the service having capacity to offer up to 238 placements. This demonstrates that although there have been a significant number of

children, being Looked After; those who are looked after are now predominantly placed within the NPT provision. This direction needs to continue in order to reduce the expenditure on Independent Fostering Provisions and there needs to be an increase in the capacity of the number and range of placements available.

Alongside the LAC strategy, the service is working to a fostering recruitment strategy under which it is required to increase the number of foster carers who are approved and retained by the Local Authority, improve the delivery of support to foster carers and to improve stability within foster placement. By improving the stability of placements and reducing the number of moves a child has in foster care there is likely to be a significant improvement in the successful outcomes for the child. Each placement results in additional trauma for a child and impacts on that child's behaviours. As behaviours escalate there is an increased likelihood that the placement will experience a breakdown. This often results in children moving through the care system from in house placements, through to Independent agency placements and may even lead to residential placements being required.

The aim of the fostering service is to improve the quality of supports available to foster carers and children in order to improve stability and therefore improve outcomes.

**Work to date:**

- A play therapist has been appointed within the fostering service to provide advice to carers on behaviour management and to undertake direct work with children
- Groups of foster carers within NPT have participated the 'confidence in care' programme; a National programme of training for all foster carers.
- LACES (LAC Education services) as well as the education wellbeing team and the inclusion team have developed VIG (video interactive guidance) work with foster carers to promote positive parenting (via the pupil deprivation grant)
- Supervising Social Workers have been trained in advanced attachment, secondary trauma and trauma recovery model.

- An outcome focussed way of working has been rolled out across Children and young people services in NPT in line with the social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2015. The focus of working with children & families is to support them to identify their personal outcomes. All plans for children are now focussed on identifying priority risks, strengths and outcomes.

### **Next steps**

- A marketing action plan has been developed which aims to increase the number of foster placements available with NPT foster carers. The focus of recruitment is increasing the number of foster carers for children over the age of 11 and carers who can look after sibling groups.
- Work is progressing to appoint a clinical psychologist to provide clinical supervision to foster carers
- The fostering service must ensure that it is working to support the outcome plans for children and that carers are central to the children's plans. As such the service is currently implementing a pilot of a secure based model for supporting foster carers. The model is complimentary to the outcome work with families and works on strengths and supports required to assist carers in meeting the needs of children. Training has been provided to all staff, a pilot is underway in the team with roll out to follow. The emphasis of the team is to support foster carers to develop a more 'therapeutic' way of working with children and to improve stability.

### **Current staffing difficulties**

There are currently 6 FTE supervising social workers in the Supervising team in addition to the consultant social worker.

The supervising team support 140 approved foster carers/on average 23 per supervising social worker.

The actual breakdown of the number of carers and the number of individual children supported by each Supervising social worker is as follows:

Role	Number of hours worked	Number of carer households supported	Number of children placed with the foster carers*
Consultant Social worker	30	16	25
Social worker 1	30	19	20
Social worker 2	37	20	28
Social worker 3	37	21	28
Social worker 4	37	22	21
Social worker 5	37	21	28
Social worker 6	37	20	31

*\*NB some carers are pending transfer from the assessment social workers to the supervising social workers which is why the figures above do not equal the total number of carers approved.*

There will be an anticipated 10 new foster carers approved by September 2017, who will need to transfer from the assessment team to the supervising team.

## Proposal

In order to ensure that carers receive the quality of support required within the fostering regulations and code of practice approval is sought to create an additional supervising social worker post in the supervising team. This would reduce the average number of foster carers supported by each worker **16** until September 2017 and to **18** from September onwards.

Create Social Worker Post in Supervising Team of Fostering Service Grade 8/9 scp by:

- Reallocating 25.5 vacant Social Worker Hours Grade 8/9

- Deleting a 7 hours Grade 10
- Obtaining the remaining £5.5 k from the existing Looked after Children Budget

There is currently a total of 25.5 vacant social work (Grade8/9) hours available in the fostering team staffing budget .This includes a vacant 18.5 hours post due to flexible retirement with the remaining hours resulting from a number of staff reducing their hours. In addition it is proposed that 7 hours are deleted from the consultant social work (grade 10) post (currently vacant).

There will be a shortfall of 4.5 hours needed to create an additional Full Time Social Worker Post Grade 8/9 in the Fostering Supervising team and this equates to £5.5K.

It is therefore, proposed that this is obtained from within the Looked After Children budget. The proposal is based on the additional supervising social worker assisting the service in delivering placement stability and reducing the number of children placed in independent foster placement therefore there will be savings in the LAC budget as a result of the post being created

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment it has been determined that this proposal does not require an Equality Impact Assessment.

## **Workforce Impacts**

The proposal would provide additional support to improve the stability of children who are Looked After and to increase the support to foster carers with the aim of reducing the number of children who are placed with independent fostering agencies.

## **Legal Impacts**

1. There are no legal impacts.

## **Risk Management**

2. There are no significant risks associated with this proposal.

## **Consultation**

3. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

## **Recommendations**

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **APPROVE** the addition of a new supervising social work post within the fostering team structure.

## **FOR DECISION**

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision**

The purpose of the additional post within the service is to ensure that there are sufficient arrangements to support foster carers within NPT in order to improve the stability of children in care are reduce placement breakdowns and reduce the number of children who move to independent foster placements.



## **Implementation of Decision**

This decision is for immediate implementation.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Financial appraisal template

## **List of Background Papers**

Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form

## **Officer Contact**

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