

<b>Report to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Tuesday 26 January 2021
<b>Subject:</b>	Fostering Service Annual Report		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Children's Social Care	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Children, Schools and Safeguarding		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	No	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	No.
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

### Summary:

The Fostering Service provides a range of short term and permanent placements for our Looked After Children with foster carers who have a diverse range of skills and experience. Our foster carers provide respite support to each other, support to birth parents and carers, emergency care, care for children in preparation for adoption and long-term permanence. Many of our young people have chosen to Stay Put with foster carers and they have been able to support them beyond 18, through to independence and into adulthood.

As of 31st March 2020, Sefton Fostering Service had 89 approved mainstream fostering households caring for 159 children and 62 connected carer households caring for 67 children. The remainder of our children in care are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies, residential units, residential schools, Staying Put placements, Supported Lodgings or in semi-independent accommodation and children placed for adoption.

This is a summary report of the fostering service highlighting practice and plans to build on current achievements for the period 2019/2020.

### Recommendation(s):

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Committee continues to receive annual reports in relation to the progress of Children's Social Care Fostering Service.

### Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Overview and Scrutiny Committee have a key role as corporate parents and therefore should have an overview and understanding of the fostering service which provides in house placements for Looked After Children.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:** (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

There are no additional revenue costs identified within this report.

**(B) Capital Costs**

There are no additional capital costs identified within this report.

**Implications of the Proposals:**

**Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):**

There are no additional resource implications as a result of this report.

**Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

**Equality Implications:**

There are no equality implications as a result of this report.

**Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable:

This report sets out the foster placements for those children who become Looked After. In Children's Social Care we strive to maintain sufficiency of placements and provide good quality placements.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

Children's social care work with children, their families and carers in to improve outcomes for children

Commission, broker and provide core services:

The scrutiny of Children's Social Care fostering team supports the aspiration for all services for children to be good or better.

Place – leadership and influencer:

N/A

Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener N/A

## What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

### (A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6267/21.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4468/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

### (B) External Consultations

N/A

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### Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:  
Sefton Fostering Service Annual report 2019/2020

### Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

#### 1. Introduction/Background

Please see the appendices for the annual report which provides an overview of the fostering service activity for the years 2019/2020.

Sefton's Fostering Service is made up of a Team Manager, a Lead Practitioner, 9 Social Workers, 4 Placement Support Workers, 1 Recruitment and Marketing Officer and 1 Training and Development officer. Business support is provided by a team of 5. The service is overseen by a Service Manager who is responsible for the Fostering Service and Corporate Parenting. Children's Services Head of Service is responsible for oversight of the whole service and maintaining standards. The aim of Sefton Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, appropriate foster placements that meet the National Minimum Standards.

(2011), the requirements set out in Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and ensure the best possible outcomes for Sefton's children who require care.

Our aim is always to increase the number of fostering households so that we can offer more choice and ensure children's individual needs are met. We have a specific need for more carers who can support young people over the age of 11 years, larger sibling groups and children with complex needs.

In 2020/2021, the fostering service has been managing through the national lockdown due to covid 19 and ensuring support is provided to our carers at a critical time. However, we also recognise that we want to continue to drive improvements as a service and some of these areas include:

- Placement choice and sufficiency will remain a challenge. A whole service approach is being considered as part of Children's Service Demand Management strategy. We will be considering the structure of the Fostering Services and processes to ensure that all staff are best utilised to meet the needs of our existing carers, children in their care and meet growing demand.
- Work with our partners in marketing and communications to consider our recruitment and marketing strategy; to increase choice of appropriate placements. Undertake targeted recruitment campaigns to increase the number of foster placements for all ages of children.
- Strengthen support available to connected carers via commissioning services to assist them – Grandparents Plus/Kinship Connect