

Fostering Annual Report Cambridgeshire County Council

Period Covered	1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021
Date Completed	June 2021
Name / position of author	Head of Service Fiona Van Den Hout

Report Context

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require that the Fostering Services provides written reports on the management, outcomes, and financial aspects of the Local Authority’s Fostering Service. This report provides an overview of activity from the last financial year, April 2020 to March 2021, and outlines the plans from the service for the forthcoming year, April 2021 to March 2022.

Executive Summary

The delivery model for fostering services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has changed with the launch of the new Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service on 1 December 2020. The new service enables us to combine some activity which opens up the possibility for us to do more, such as training for foster carers but also to improve the quality of and build resilience in our fostering services.

The core roles and functions of our fostering services have remained separate, for example Cambridgeshire staff supervise Cambridgeshire foster carers, and Peterborough staff supervise Peterborough carers with carers being approved for one Local Authority depending on where they live. There is a combined recruitment and assessment function, the supervision and support function and a combined dedicated team that undertakes household reviews, training and audit ensuring that all work is underpinned by the National Minimum Standards.

During the year, the fostering service has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, and the detail of this is discussed below where relevant. The Adoption

and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 came into force on 24 April 2020, which provided easements to fostering regulations for fostering services, thereby changing the regulatory framework temporarily. Most of these easements ended on 25 September 2020.

Key highlights:

In this reporting period, the service recruited 25 new fostering households.

On 31 March 2021 there were a further 10 assessments in progress. This activity will carry over into 2021/22.

In this reporting period, 19 foster families resigned from fostering leaving an overall net gain of 6 households. The majority of the households who resigned told us that issues relating to the pandemic was the primary reason for resignation.

Five Foster Carer households transferred to an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) from Cambridgeshire.

On 31 March 2021, 51.2% of all children living in foster care were living with in-house foster families which was an improved form the same time the previous year.

A comprehensive on-line and virtual training offer was available to carers in assessment and existing foster carers.

Audits and inspections

Fostering service deep dive audit

Our self-assessment:

A deep dive of activity has been undertaken since the new service became live in December 2021. It is clear that there are some critical areas of improvement required that will enable the service to meet the strategic priorities as outlined in the Statement of Purpose.

The culture and practice of the service needs to focus more widely on improving the offer to Foster Carers so that they feel better equipped to offer family-based care to our most vulnerable children and young people.

	<p>Children entering care currently are presenting with more challenging behaviours and are often entering care later in life, resulting in Foster Carers needing to provide care to children and young people with more complex needs as a result of what they have experienced. In order to meet this need, the service needs to champion a “can do” attitude to the fostering task within the framework of offering high support and high challenge to our fostering community so that our Foster Carers achieve their full potential.</p> <p>In addition, recruitment activity needs to be more focused on recruiting foster carers that are able to care for this cohort of children and young people. Foster Carers need a team around them, and to feel part of the team around the child they are looking after, in order to successfully deliver on providing safe, secure and consistent care.</p> <p>Our Foster Carers resilience and ability to work through the ups and downs of the caring task will be celebrated and supported. Such an attitude will be held by the Fostering workforce and we will share an ethos of not giving up on young people that results in another change for them. This will be underpinned by a strong value base held by the Leaders and Managers of the service.</p> <p>Key areas of service improvement are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruiting more carers: improving sufficiency of local foster homes for local children and developing a strong pipeline of confident foster carers who meet the care needs of our children and young people in care.• Working with our current cohort of carers to enable them to care for our most vulnerable children and young people through extended offers of training, support, a clinical offer and the re-purposing of services.• Immediate Notice given by foster carers will be scrutinised and challenged. The service through Supervising Social Workers will manage Foster Carer’s expectations and identify how we can support carers more effectively and when they first ask for it.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By applying a consistent approach to the process of Household Reviews through the new dedicated Household Review and Practice Standards team, reviews will now be conducted independently with the offer of high support and high challenge at its centre. • There are insufficient foster carers able to care and provide short breaks to children and young people with disabilities. Recruitment in this area is weak and this is a critical area of improvement.
Ofsted	<p>There were no Ofsted inspections in this period.</p> <p>Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, Cambridgeshire participated in a Partners in Practice Peer Review with colleagues from Essex in June 2020. The visit was positive, and included the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a thorough assessment of workload, resource and capacity – completed • Complete the review of the fee structure – completed • Mine the willingness of CCC foster carers to contribute to the development of the fostering service – in progress • Develop an analysis of carers’ learning needs – in progress • Address the foster carer review process – completed • Look to streamline the matching of children into long-term fostering placements – completed • In the recruitment process review the plan to use alternatively qualified staff for the initial visit – in progress • Focus on developing the Fostering Panel – in progress • Ensure that Liquid Logic implementation meets the needs of the Fostering Service – in progress • Ensure that staff and foster carers are trained in appropriate cultural awareness and sensitivity to meet the needs of children in their care – ongoing

Summary Fostering Households

Number of Foster Carers (Year End)	Total: 227 Including 164 mainstream, 22 respite and short break. 41 Connected Carers	Percentage of children in care fostered in-house (Year End)	51.2%
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Carer Recruitment and Retention

Comments on recruitment and retention strategy and performance:

The 2020-21 Recruitment, Marketing and Communication strategy outlined the key aims and priorities for the fostering service in respect of increasing the diversity, skills and experience of the foster carers. The key priority was to ensure children and young adults in care are cared for in a loving, secure and stable family household.

Dedicated campaigns moved from a mixed media approach to predominantly online due to face-to-face events being cancelled because of the pandemic. Success was achieved over bank holidays when activity was increased to capitalise on this.

The headline figures are detailed in the table below.

Activity	Annual figure
Enquiries	329
Initial Visits	101
Application forms sent	79
Attended Skills to Foster	47
End of year assessments in progress (Form F commenced)	10
Approved	25
Number of resignations and de-registrations	19
Net gain	6

The conversion rate from enquiry to assessment was 10% with 52 assessments commencing in the reporting year.

For 2020-2021, the fostering service set aspirational targets to recruit 40 new fostering households. The target was not achieved but this does need to be viewed in the context of the pandemic which has been a challenge for Local Authority recruitment of foster carers nationally.

We know there is a need to recruit more carers for children aged 10 years and over, sibling groups and children with more complex needs and disabilities. We also know that we need to challenge ourselves and our carers to maximise utilisation of vacant beds to ensure that children and young people do not move to live in externally purchased provision at a distance from their support networks.

The engagement and retention of carers has been promoted through a variety of ways:

The Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association (CFCA) continues to be well attended and they have taken a proactive approach in reaching out to other foster carers to offer support to them. A regular 'Zoom' drop-in was organised by the CFCA, attended by a range of new and established foster carers. Staff members including senior managers attended the meetings.

Payments and vouchers were given to foster carers and children in care, in lieu of social events which were not able to take place in person during Lockdowns, due to social distancing rules.

Foster carers received their vaccinations early in recognition of their critical role status and their value within the organisation.

Foster carers continue to be present at Council Corporate Parenting Committee to represent the views of the fostering households.

Regular newsletters were sent to all fostering households updating them about the service, government guidance around the pandemic and wider council news.

The work to standardise foster carer allowances was completed and the new system was implemented in September 2020. An additional 'thank you' payment was also given in recognition of the commitment and care our foster carers were providing during the pandemic.

Core functions of the Fostering Service

The fostering service's aim is to provide a high-quality responsive child-centred service in relation to its core functions and to recruit new foster carers from within our diverse community. We prepare applicants through training to be able to manage with the range of issues that foster carers face when looking after children. The service assesses foster carer applicants i.e. Mainstream Foster Carers, Connected Persons Carers, LINK Carers, Supported Lodgings Carers and those who offer Private Fostering. The service undertakes comprehensive assessments and checks to ensure that prospective carers are suitable and able to carry out their role. We supervise, support and develop carer's skills and knowledge in order that they promote and achieve the highest standards of care, safeguarding and outcomes for children in care.

The types of Foster Care offered include; Short Term/Time Limited, long-term; parent and child; short breaks LINK care for children with disabilities; respite, emergency, supported lodgings and PACE.

PACE: The Local Authority has duty to provide accommodation to children and young people under the age of 18 years who have been arrested and charged in relation to a criminal offence. PACE stands for Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 which placed this duty. PACE transfers take place in order to limit the amount of time children and young people are required to spend in police custody with the young person being transferred to Local Authority accommodation overnight before being presented to court the following morning.

The service also supports young people to stay with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 years in a 'Staying Put' arrangement if this is considered the best plan for the young person. This is not regulated fostering activity, and the young person, having left care, in most cases will no longer have a social worker but will receive support from a Personal Advisor employed by the Local Authority.

Safeguarding - allegations & standards of care

Allegations against foster carers	
The number of allegations against foster carers made by fostered children	7
The number of allegations against foster carers made by other sources	5
The number of children who have made allegations against their foster carers	7
The number of foster carers who have been subject to allegations	12
Information about the categories of alleged abuse	
Physical abuse	7
Sexual abuse	0
Neglect	1
Emotional abuse	4
Information about the actions resulting from allegations against foster carers	
How many referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) did you make?	0
How many referrals to the local authority child protection team were made?	10
How many Section 47 enquiries were made?	0
Information about the outcome of investigations of allegations	
Concern(s) resolved - no further action	4
Continued monitoring for an agreed period	1
Concern remained, referred to fostering panel to review foster carer approval	7
Timescale for investigations	
less than 21 working days	0
22-30 working days (4 - 6 weeks)	4
31-50 working days (6 - 10 weeks)	5
More than 50 working days (> 10 weeks)	3

Approximately 5% of foster carers were subject to allegations during the year. In the year, no carers resigned due to the allegations or were deregistered although there were investigations in progress at the end of the year where this is the anticipated outcome.

The new Household Review & Practice Standards team have been involved in completion of all investigations since 1 December 2020 and have provided independent scrutiny to the process. The learning from investigations is being incorporated into the service through regular thematic practice workshops as staff and Foster Carer development needs are identified.

Complaints (not relating to children)

<i>Include complaints against the agency and carers not relating to care of a child.</i>	<i>Number received in period:</i> 7
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Summary of any complaint and resolution/outcome:

COMPLAINANT TYPE	SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT	OUTCOME
Foster Carer	Foster carer has had problems with payments	Partially Upheld
Foster Carer	Foster Carer is upset at lack of support over several months.	Not Upheld
Foster Carer	Foster parent complaining about fostering payments being incorrect.	Upheld
Foster Carer	Foster carer complaining about lack of support.	Partially Upheld
Relative	Connected Persons Team were unhelpful with support to move.	Not Upheld
Relative	Inaccuracy of a viability assessment and related Court report	Not Upheld
Relative	Complaint process	Partially Upheld

Of the seven complaints made, one was fully upheld, three were partially upheld and three not upheld. There were two complaints relating to allowance payments which were upheld and partially upheld. A new financial payment system was introduced which caused initial teething problems, these have since been rectified.

Two of the complaints related to lack of support by the social worker however one of these was not upheld. The service always seeks to identify learning from the complaints to improve practice.

Compliments:

The following are a selection of the compliments received by the service.

Compliments about our foster carers

These young ladies wouldn't be achieving in this way without your support, so thanks to you too!

H said what an excellent carer you are for J. I hear he has been saying how he feels part of a proper family and he has made tremendous progress in your care. H said that you go above and beyond for J, including making family contact with his siblings very natural. It was really nice to hear this and therefore I just wanted to thank you for all you are doing.

"I just wanted to say a very big thank you to N & M who always made me feel welcome, allowed meetings to take place in the family home and provided refreshments. They always completed reports for the children including extensive health reports, they were excellent at advocating for the children's needs. It's been a pleasure working alongside them"

Compliments about Fostering Social Workers:

"We are incredibly lucky to have D as our supervising social worker who always helps us pick up the slack of any other professionals."

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for everything you've done to help me over the past few weeks. It's so much appreciated, and I will be making contact with the head of the service in due course to say how brilliant you've been."

I would just like to acknowledge what a fantastic job is done by A. Truly, I'm not sure if we would still be fostering without her support. She has such a caring approach, thinks outside the box and always has the welfare of both the children and ourselves right at the front of her practice. I know that I can rely on her. The last twelve months of the pandemic have been incredibly hard for fostering families, with many of the children struggling with their mental health. I am just so glad to have a Support Social Worker who genuinely cares and supports our family, often picking up the jobs that should be done by others and generally ensuring that everything needed is in place.

I wanted to pass on a compliment in relation to J and F who worked tirelessly today to find a placement for a young man, and showed great creativity, professionalism, and patience in a highly charged situation. They did not give up, and in the end their commitment resulted in a successful outcome.

Young person about their foster carers:

Reported by an IRO: 'H is so thankful for his foster carers about whom he said 'they transformed me into what I am now' and he is extremely grateful for them.'

Carer training and other development opportunities provided:

The annual foster carer training programme was initially severely impacted by the Covid pandemic, as it relied on the traditional face to face delivery method. However, to bridge the gap, the training coordinators were able to identify online training opportunities from organisations such as the Open University and AIM to complement the electronic training providers (ME learning) which had already been commissioned. This ensured that foster carers could keep up to date with their learning whilst juggling the home schooling of children. The service acquired Zoom which allowed a range of courses to be offered virtually and was well received. The list of courses and attendance figures are below.

Session	Date	Time	Duration	Number of spaces	Spaces booked	Spaces waiting
Contact Workshop	26/05/2020	1:30pm	90	10	4	0
Contact Workshop	09/06/2020	6:00pm	90	10	7	0
Safer Caring - A New Approach	23/06/2020	10:00am	120	12	12	0
Building Attachments Part One - The Secure Base	30/06/2020	10:00am	180	12	11	0
Allegations and complaints: Understanding the Procedure	02/07/2020	10:00am	180	12	10	0
Fostertalk Tax	03/07/2020	10:00am	90	25	6	0
Allegations and complaints: Understanding the Procedure	09/07/2020	10:30am	180	12	10	0
Life Story Workshop	14/07/2020	10:00am	120	12	9	0

Play and Theraplay Ideas	16/07/2020	11:00am	120	12	6	0
Recording Workshop	17/07/2020	1:00pm	120	16	15	0
Play and Theraplay Ideas	23/07/2020	10:00am	120	12	3	0
First Aid for Fostering	12/09/2020	9:30am	360	12	12	2
First Aid for Fostering	15/09/2020	9:30am	360	12	10	4
TSD Workshop	22/09/2020	10:00am	120	16	10	0
Staying Put	29/09/2020	10:00am	120	16	7	0
Safer Caring	01/10/2020	10:00am	120	16	13	0
First Aid for Fostering	03/10/2020	9:30am	360	12	10	0
Supporting Children in Education (Primary)	07/10/2020	10:00am	120	16	9	0
TSD Workshop	08/10/2020	10:00am	120	16	5	0
Online Safety	14/10/2020	10:00am	150	16	14	0
First Aid for Fostering	15/10/2020	9:30am	360	12	11	6
Fostering and Drugs & Alcohol	19/10/2020	10:00am	150	18	8	0
Supporting your Child in Education (Secondary)	21/10/2020	10:00am	120	16	10	0

First Aid for Fostering	24/10/2020	9:30am	360	12	13	7
Building Attachments - The Secure Base	03/11/2020	10:00am	180	18	6	0
Reunification	19/11/2020	10:00am	240	16	7	0
Impact of Adult Substance Misuse on Children	23/11/2020	10:00am	150	18	9	0
Allegations and Complaints: Understanding the Procedure	24/11/2020	10:00am	180	16	12	0
Communicating with Children	03/12/2020	10:00am	180	16	7	0
Impact of Adult Substance Misuse on Children	11/01/2021	10:00am	150	18	7	0
Working together workshop	12/01/2021	10:00am	120	16	8	0
Working with Contact	15/01/2021	10:00am	270	16	12	0
First Aid for Fostering	16/01/2021	9:30am	360	12	16	9
Neglect the Bigger Picture	19/01/2021	10:00am	180	16	9	0
First Aid for Fostering	10/02/2021	9:30am	360	14	17	0
Impact of Abuse	11/02/2021	10:00am	180	16	0	0
Reunification	02/03/2021	10:00am	240	18	7	0

Supporting your Child in Education - secondary	04/03/2021	10:00am	120	18	5	0
Staying Put Workshop	16/03/2021	10:00am	120	16	12	0
Allegations and Complaints: Understanding the Proc	19/03/2021	10:00am	180	18	16	0
SEND Workshop for Foster Carers	23/03/2021	10:00am	120	20	19	0
Domestic Abuse	25/03/2021	10:00am	180	18	16	0

E-Learning

722 virtual modules on the ME learning platform were completed between April 2020 and March 2021 with peaks in June 2020 and January 2021, with 98 modules being completed in June and 101 modules being completed in January 2021. In August 2020 the service commissioned the Foster Carer Training Hub, for additional e-learning. To date 242 modules have been completed, showing the value in online course provision. Given the good level of engagement, the service plans to continue a hybrid programme of virtual and face to face training courses.

Carer consultation, engagement and support:

Support groups have operated for both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foster Carers separately throughout the year with some changes made to take account of social distancing rules.

Historically Cambridgeshire's support groups have run face to face on a geographical basis due to the size of the county (Huntingdon area, Cambridge area and Fenland area), during daytimes and evenings. These have continued throughout COVID through virtual meetings. These groups are organised and run by the Fostering Supervision and Support Team.

The support group for link carers has met quarterly and provides an opportunity for carers to share their experience and seek peer support.

Going forward, it is anticipated that a hybrid model of some face to face and some virtual support groups would be beneficial. Virtual support groups have reached some carers who previously struggled to attend.

All new carers are buddied with an approved foster carer prior to approval to offer peer support in the early stages of their fostering career and as needed.

Foster Carers were consulted on the review of fostering payments. This exercise was completed in September 2020.

Fostering Panel:

The Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering Panel has continued to operate and consider foster carer's suitability of approval as foster carers and annual and post-allegation reviews of fostering households. It has also noted resignations of fostering households.

The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 were not utilised by the service in relation to panel activity apart from the following:

- Panels were held virtually via 'Teams.'

Richard Holland is the fostering panel chair. There has been no vice chair during this reporting period and 26 panels sat during the year.

Fiona Van Den Hout, Cambridgeshire Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and since December Head of Service for Fostering and Simon Green, Head of Provider Services & Change Management Adviser acted as Agency Decision Maker for the Fostering Panel.

Heads of Service Sam Nour, Samantha Howlett, Fiona Van Den Hout (until December 2020) and Myra O'Farrell (from December 2020) acted as the Local Authority's nominated officer for regulation 24 placements.

The Fostering Panel Adviser role was held by Despina Kaoura, Steve Crossman and Jenny Braddock.

Foster Panel receives medical advice from Dr Bowers.

Due to the pandemic the joint annual training for panel has not taken place. This is scheduled for September 2021.

A recruitment drive has increased the central list aimed to increase diversity and social worker representation.

Staff Team

The management of the service was carried out by:

Lou Williams, Director of Children's Services

Nicola Curley, Assistant Director

Fiona Van Den Hout, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting

Kate Knight, Lead Corporate Parenting Manager, two service managers, and four team managers. An additional team manager was recruited and started in her post in January 2021.

On 1 December 2020 Fiona Van Den Hout became Head of Service for the fostering service in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The three service areas each had a service manager as follows with these arrangements continuing beyond the reporting year:

Supervision and Support: Despina Kaoura

Household Review & Practice Standards: Sue King

Recruitment and Assessment: Vacant, Anita Hewson was appointed with start date of 1 June 2021.

The structure for the service from 1 December 2020 changed following staff consultation, resulting in three Recruitment and Assessment teams, three Supervision and Support teams and one Household Review and Practice Standards team.

Alternatively qualified staff include Recruitment officers, Placement officers, a Training Lead and a Training Coordinator.

All staff receive monthly supervision and yearly appraisals which due to the pandemic took place in September last year.

Team consultation / engagement:

Team meetings for staff and managers are held monthly. During the period of the pandemic when staff have worked both at home and in offices, most teams have held weekly catch-up meetings to support staff wellbeing.

Fostering service staff have been consulted twice about the structure of the service.

The councils have provided corporate support opportunities for staff including monthly wellbeing sessions and weekly briefings called 'Covid Conversations.' Monthly staff surveys have been carried out to capture views on engagement and wellbeing.

CHILDREN IN CARE

Consultation and participation

Children in foster care give their views about the care they receive in their foster homes in a variety of ways. They are asked to contribute to the annual reviews of their foster carers, by completing a questionnaire. Children can also use the 'Mind of My Own' app to give their views and these are also sought by their Independent Reviewing Officer and in most cases their advocate.

All children and young people in care are given information about how to make a complaint about the care that they receive.

The participation team supports the Children in Care Council to provide feedback about specific subjects as requested by the wider service and areas of interest they also raise. Consequently, children and young people in care through the Children in Care Council sourced and provided welcome packs for children who come into care in an emergency.

The service will continue to identify opportunities to engage with the Children in Care Council and Participation Team as we are committed to hearing the voice of children in care as we shape and improve the service in the coming year.

Percentages of children in Local Authority foster carer compared with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA)

	% of all children fostered living in IFA foster care at month end		% of all children fostered living in LA foster care at month end	
		CCC	CCC	
April 2020	49.2%	50.8%		
May 2020	48.8%	51.2%		
June 2020	48.5%	51.5%		
July 2020	49.3%	50.7%		
August 2020	48.4%	51.6%		
September 2020	48.2%	51.8%		
October 2020	48.8%	51.2%		
November 2020	47.8%	52.2%		
December 2020	49.4%	50.6%		
January 2021	49.8%	50.2%		
February 2021	49.2%	50.8%		
March 2021	48.8%	51.2%		

The percentage of children living in local authority foster care has remained broadly similar throughout the year. There have been challenges due to the pandemic as a greater number of fostering carers were on hold for periods due to a household

member shielding, being in a high-risk group or due to social isolating. Other foster carers took children outside of their terms of approval to ensure that the local authority foster homes were used where possible.

Private Fostering

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to monitor the safety and wellbeing of children and young people living in Private Fostering arrangements. Private Fostering arrangements are made between parents or carers who have parental responsibility for that child and another individual in order that they can take on care of their child for a period of longer than twenty-eight days. This arrangement should be reported to the Local Authority for a safeguarding assessment and monitoring.

Cambridgeshire has an established private fostering process which has had success in identifying a high number of private fostering arrangements due to an effective communications strategy and through developing relationships with Language schools in Cambridge.

The pandemic reduced the numbers of children and young people attending Language schools, consequently the numbers of private fostering arrangements were lower than previous years, with 55 children living in private fostering arrangements during the year.

Development and Targets for 2021-22

Customer Service Timescale Targets set for 2021/2022:

- All enquiries from prospective foster carers into the Recruitment Team will be responded to on the same day or the very next day (within 24hours)
- Initial Home visits to take place within 3 working days of receipt of enquiry
- Registrations of Interest (applications to foster) to be progressed within 5 days and allocated to an assessing social worker

Foster Carer Recruitment Targets set for 2021/2022:

- Mainstream new approvals:
25 new households of which 7 are for children aged 12 years and over
- Link household new approvals:
6 new households

Assessment timescale targets set for 2021/2022:

- Timeframe for completion of Form F (Home Study) assessments is 4 months
- Conversion from enquiry to application:
21/22 - 15%
22/23 - 20%

Percentage of children living in in –house provision targets set for 2021/2022:

- Year-end 44% of all children fostered are living in in house foster homes

Other key areas for development:

- A refreshed and revised recruitment campaign targeting the types of carers who can meet the needs of our children
- A revised website that is attractive to members of the public and encourages them to foster for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- Our fostering campaigns for 2021-2022 include: Thank you Campaign in July (children thank foster carers for the amazing things they do), 1,000 voices Campaign in September (raising the profile of foster caring), Sons and Daughter month in October (celebrating foster carers birth children and the contribution they make to fostering), Emergency Appeal in November (urgent call for action for foster carers), Christmas Wishes Campaign in December, New Year Campaign in January (calling for our partners involvement) and LGBTQ + week in March.
- Continue to learn from our foster carers and maintain a close working relationship with both foster carer committees – The Foster Carer Partnership.

- Involve our foster carers in all aspects of our service: in recruitment activity, training, mentorship of newly approved carers and providing peer support to approved carers.
- Provide training to prospective carers that equips them during the assessment process with the skills they need to care for the children we know we will need foster homes for.
- Explore the offer of diploma courses and foster carer mentorship qualifications.
- Implement an audit framework bringing the National Minimal Standards into sharper focus in all we do including Household Reviews.
- Develop our support offer to prospective and approved foster carers to increase their confidence and skills

Signature	[Redacted]
Head of Service (Name)	Fiona Van Den Hout
Date	2 July 2021