

**Cambridgeshire Foster Carer's Association's Report**  
**September 2020**

**Summary**

The purpose of this initial short report is to provide the following:

- Indicate activity carried out in partnership with the Fostering Service
- A view of challenges we face together over the coming months
- How we engage carers and provide an opportunity to contribute
- Future vision for our Association

**Background**

The aim of our Association is:

To raise the profile of foster carers and ensure we are viewed as professionals by social workers and those working with the children we look after.

Work in partnership with the Fostering Service to; advance foster carer's views and recommendations and improve the support, services and remuneration of foster carers.

Ensuring the best possible care and service to all our Children in Care.

**Recent Partnership Activity**

Facilitated by our Association, carers have been working together with Managers on a number of projects over the past year. Below are some highlights of recent partnership activities.

Foster Carers' Charter - A carer worked together with a senior manager to create the document. Final draft agreed and now with the Fostering Service for final approval

Foster Carers Agreement - Significant input from carers to both wording and style. Final draft agreed

Renewal of FosterTalk Contract - The Fostering Service arranged virtual presentations delivered by FosterTalk and The Fostering Network. Together with the Association, we enabled carers to select their preferred option.

**Challengers for the Coming Months**

Before the publication of the proposed 'Review of Fostering Allowances', committee members were given the opportunity to review and suggest changes to the letter sent to carers. The final version reflected our input. Since the publication, our Association has been supporting and encouraging carers to get involved in the consultation process outlined in the letter.

We now look forward to working together to design a consultation process to manage the supplementary financial issues of savings, pocket money and travel

expenses. There are carers with no links to our Associations, accordingly we recognise our role as facilitating and supporting the Fostering Service communication activity to ensure all carers have the opportunity to be heard.

Our Association has welcomed the initiative to recognise the contribution made by carers throughout Covid-19 pandemic. The letter sent to carers recently clearly highlighted the difficulties we all faced, especially those caring for children with complex needs.

We share a common objective of coming to the end of this year with many of these difficulties behind and building a fostering community with the capability to make a real difference to the children we care for.

## **Engaging Carers**

As with other organisations, the lack of face to face communication has made us consider how we involve carers in Association activity.

The Association has a Closed Facebook Group of 109 members and a website email system. We are able to successfully share information with 140 carers. System data shows 85 - 90% open our emails and read Facebook posts. We have the opportunity to distribute surveys and questionnaires to a significant number of carers.

We recognise the need for better communication in the opposite direction, from carers to committee members to improve our representation. We intend to hold our first Virtual Carers Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September, sending an invitation link to all carers. Previously, with face to face meetings, opportunities to attend or get involved are limited for child care reasons. We will see how many carers log on and if we can manage a sizable virtual meeting.

## **Future Vision**

Facilitated by The Fostering Network, our Association has started attending virtual meetings with other foster carer associations in our region. We want to build on the experience of others and share good practice.

The Covid-19 pandemic restrictions continue to limit progress in meeting one of our key aims of supporting local activities and events across our county. Previously, we had started using the Local Fostering Support Meetings as a meaningful way to engage more carers and act on their ideas and suggestions.

The vision for our Association is twofold. To have a valued contribution to our Fostering Service at a strategic level while supporting and facilitating local activities for both carers and children across our community.