

## CYPS Overview & Scrutiny

9 November 2016



### Annual Report of the Fostering Panels and the Fostering Service 2015/16

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#### Report Carole Payne, Head of Children's Services

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#### 1 Purpose of the Report

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering (2011) require that Fostering Agencies report the activity of the fostering service to its governing bodies. The purpose of presenting this report therefore is to comply with the legislation and ensure the activity presented within this report progresses through appropriate management meetings and onto Cabinet.

#### 2 Context

The purpose of presenting this report on the activity of the fostering service and related panel activity for the period 2015/16 is to apprise senior officers and Members on the business of the service which looks after the majority of our looked after children. The fostering service is key to the department fulfilling its duties to looked after children. The ongoing developments within the service are fundamental to the department achieving improved outcomes for our children and efficiencies over the forthcoming years. Section 8 highlights the key priorities which are the focus for development over the short, medium and long term.

The report outlines the activity of the service in relation to key strategic priorities and the work of the Fostering Panels throughout the year.

The Corporate Parenting Panel take an active and focussed interest in the services delivered for Durham's looked after children. Reporting on key areas of activity ensures Members have a comprehensive knowledge of what is happening at the 'front line' and ensure they have oversight of key areas of service delivery in order to effectively challenge and drive up service standards to ensure outcomes for children are constantly improving.

Elected members are represented on each of the Fostering and Adoption Panels.

### **3 Future Priorities**

The annual report of the Fostering Panels and the Fostering Service Sets out 4 main priorities for the next year, designed to improve and expand this key area of service:

- Development of a robust Marketing Strategy to increase the number of fostering applicants to Durham to meet 100% of Durham's needs and achieve vacant capacity. This will enable matching of needs to carer skills and reduce reliance on external resources;
- Further Development of The Fostering Plus Scheme in order to provide a family based service to care for some of our children with most complex needs;
- Implementation of a review of the fostering service to ensure the resources channelled into the service are utilised in the most effective and efficient way and that the service is able to meet future demand;
- Deliver initiatives already in train to promote fostering, such as Durham County Council liveried vehicles, a concerted social media campaign and targeted recruitment to specialist fostering programmes.

### **4 Recommendation**

That the CYPS Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- Approve the attached Annual Report of the Fostering Panels and the Fostering Service 2015/16;
- Approve the future priorities;
- Support initiative to promote fostering.

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# Durham County Council Fostering Service

## The Annual Report of The Fostering Panels and the Fostering Service 2015-16



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The information presented in this report relates to the activity within Durham County Council Fostering Service and the activity of the three Fostering Panels

This report demonstrates that 2015/16 was another busy year for both the Fostering Service and the Fostering Panels. The work of the Panels and its membership is central to The Fostering Service and the Service is most appreciative of the skills, knowledge and commitment of all of its Panel members.

### **Legal perspective**

The legislation, guidance and regulation relating to Fostering Services and Fostering Panel are enshrined in;

- The Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011,
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: The Care Planning Placement and Case Review
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 which came into force on 1st July 2013.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2015, which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015

## **2. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE**

### **2.1 CONTEXT**

The Fostering Service comprises four separate teams and during the year benefitted from stability within the staff group. The teams within the service are

- The Short Term Support Team

- The Permanence Team
- The Recruitment Team
- The Placement and Kinship Team

This provides:

- A focus on the recruitment of foster carers
- A focus on children and young people requiring a permanent or long term foster care
- A focus on the assessment and support of Family and Friends foster carers
- A focus on children requiring short term foster placements and the identification of the best match for them
- A focus on maximising the resources of the Fostering Service

### **Achievements in 2015/16**

The Fostering Service, foster carers and Panels have achieved the following:

- There has been a continued, albeit gradual net increase in the number of mainstream carer households. This has risen from 226 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 to 234 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 taking into account de-registrations as well as registrations.
- There has been a continued increase in the number of approved placements in the Fostering Service. In the last three years this has risen from 513 placements in March 2013 to 630 placements.
- There has been an increase in the number of children placed in family and friends foster care over the year from 88 to 101 (see Section 3 for looked after children statistics).
- There has been an increase in matched permanent placements - 109 in 2014 to 170 in 2016.
- The approval of Family and Friends foster carers has continued to be an important aspect of the work of the Fostering Service. Importantly, 51 children successfully achieved permanence with family/connected people by becoming subject of Adoption, Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders or Child Arrangement Orders during 2015/16
- Over the 12 months period, the average length of time to complete a Form F Fostering assessment from application to approval at panel is 4.70 months. This is important for attracting potential foster carers who are keen for the assessment to be completed as quickly as possible and regularly ask how long the assessment will take.

### **Changes and Developments in 2015/16**

There have been a number of changes to the management within the Fostering Service:

- In June 2015, Bronwen Smith was appointed temporary Operations Manager Fostering, Adoption and Full Circle, following Dorothy Alexander moving to Specialist Projects post.
- Bronwen Smith's substantive post was back-filled by Jessica Cowan, and currently Andy Jennings is in post on a temporary basis.
- Lorraine Botcherby was appointed to the permanent post of Team Manager Permanence Team in October 2015

The Fostering Service has also worked on the following developments/changes:

- Review and consolidation following the Payment for Skills Review. This has helped to raise standards and improve consistency across the fostering service. There has been a reduction in the number of children in respite care, as the changes to Payment for Skills discourages foster carers from routinely taking respite. This has improved placement stability. We have also achieved significant financial savings.
- Continued development of the Fostering Plus initiative which aims to provide a multi-agency approach to meet the needs of both children/young people with the most complex needs and challenging behaviour, through providing increased support to foster carers. Although we have not achieved the target for recruitment of foster carers, the Fostering Plus Support workers have been providing "wrap around" support to children and mainstream carer's which has been invaluable in promoting placement stability and providing practical support to foster carers in crisis
- We continue to prioritise promoting placement stability for children and young people. Our NI62 and NI63 indicators (for short and long term stability respectively) remain good, and the Looked After and Permanence Management Team meet on a monthly basis to review placement stability, and also to focus on achieving permanence for children. The Panels approved the match of 45 children to permanent carers, including two sibling groups for 4 children and smaller sibling groups too
- Development of a "welcome pack" to ensure new carers have information about the support they can receive, and fostering policies and procedures at the point of approval.
- Development of the Launch Pad support group for newly approved carers to offer tailored support to carers in their first year. This group developed as a result of consultation which highlighted the need for bespoke support in year one. This also gives carers an opportunity to build relationships with others which offers mutual support as well as reinforcing key messages from the service to achieve positive outcomes for children.
- Re-establishment of the support group for Family and Friend carers on a quarterly basis, enabling carers to receive both support and training. This has strengthened informal networks for carers and identified and identified other areas of support, for example "The Relative Experience" voluntary service

- Continued development of the training provided to foster carers through the provision of additional courses to meet their needs. We promote a strong culture of learning for foster carers
- Ongoing promotion of the M8's group for foster carers own children. Research indicates that where children are engaged with the fostering task, outcomes are more positive for all involved parties. The group meets during every school holiday period, with approximately 20 young people attending. Feedback from the young people evidences that they value the opportunity to share their experiences and any concerns they have about fostering
- Work is ongoing towards the continued Investing in Children status for 2016 – 18. This is based upon the views of children and young people and how this has impacted upon the development of the service
- The Service has been involved in reviewing the process for temporary approval of Family and Friends foster carers to ensure that children are in regulated and supported care arrangements. Panel training will be developed to update panel members to reflect the changes that have taken place.
- Work has been undertaken to update the Fostering website, so that it is more user friendly and a stronger marketing tool. Changes have been positive, and work is ongoing with the DCC web team to make further improvements. Feedback to date in relation to the improvements from foster carers has been positive.
- Promotion of educational achievement for children continues to be an important focus and we have a consultation session planned for carers to look at how they can raise aspirations for the children and young people they care for. We are also developing regular training from the Virtual School Team for foster carers to ensure they are up to date with best practice in supporting children to achieve their potential. An increasing number of young people are attending University or moving into employment
- Promotion of improved health outcomes for children – the work of The Full Circle Therapeutic Team is very important in promoting the emotional wellbeing of children and young people and increasing the understanding that foster carers have of a range of issues, including attachment
- In line with best practice, foster carers are to be invited to Panel from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 for any reviews presented. This will ensure we are an open and transparent service, and provide formal acknowledgement of the work that foster carers do, as well as giving them an opportunity to share their experiences with the Panel
- Representation on the Missing and Exploited Group and the Child Sexual Exploitation group. This ensures that the fostering perspective is included and that key messages can be disseminated within the fostering service
- Consolidation of the policy changes required by “Staying Put: arrangements for care leavers aged 18 years and above, and service



wide meetings to ensure consistent practice facilitated by the Fostering Service. This enables young people to receive ongoing support as they move towards independence, whilst remaining with their previous foster carer's, where both the foster carer and the young person want the placement to continue and the social worker is in agreement

- Work is ongoing to implement the amendments made to the Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. These amendments predominantly focus on how local authorities support looked after children who are placed in long-term fostering arrangements.
- Close partnership working continues to be developed on an individual and service wide level to achieve best outcomes for children. We have quarterly development sessions for all staff in the Looked After and Permanence Service

## 2.2 FOSTER CARER INFORMATION

### Numbers and type of foster care provision

*Table 1 below gives the breakdown of foster carers by the type of foster care they provide*

Type of Care	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Short Term Care	129	135	108	101	98
Both Short Term and Permanent Care	27	35	69	70	85
Permanent Care	45	39	42	55	51
<b>TOTAL MAINSTREAM</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>234</b>
Family & Friends Care	20	26	36	39	44
Family & Friends Temp Approved	33	30	45	32	28
<b>TOTAL FAMILY&amp;FRIENDS</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>72</b>
Foster carer support respite	07	05	04	00	00
<b>TOTAL MAINSTREAM AND FAMILY &amp; FRIENDS</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>306</b>

The above shows that on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 there were 306 registered foster carers, which included 28 carers who had temporary approval under Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

This data represents a snapshot picture on this date. However, it masks the movement of carers during the year particularly Family and Friend carers, a proportion of whom are approved and de-registered within the year when a permanent order is made, for example, Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order (refer to approval and de-registration details)

## Summary and Analysis

- In relation to mainstream foster carers (short term approval; dual approval for short term and permanence approval ;and permanence approval) there has been a net increase of 8 foster carers (226 to 234 carers) when the number of mainstream de-registrations are taken into account. This is the same increase as last year. It reflects:
  - the difficulty in attracting new carers to the service.
  - an increase in carers counselled out during the assessment process if they were deemed unsuitable
  - the natural loss of carers through normal life events, eg retirement, ill health etc
- The biggest increase in the approval category of carers relates to those carers who are approved for both permanent and short term care. This has risen from a total of 70 carers able to offer both short term and long term placements to 85 carers. This relates to a change of policy in the assessment process where assessments for dual approval for both short term and permanence are completed with carers who have the potential in the future to consider a long term placement. It also relates to a change of policy in the consideration of permanent carers having the capacity and ability to offer short term placements alongside a permanent placement if this is appropriate in relation to the children already placed permanently.

This provides

  - Greater placement choice through flexibility of terms of approval.
  - Allows foster carers to gain experience of fostering before committing to a long term placement.
  - Is efficient in use of resources as dual approval registration in the original assessment avoids the subsequent need to complete a reassessment for permanence.
- The number of permanent only carers has fallen slightly, as has the number of short term only carers, but as stated above both categories have greater capacity due to the increase in carers approved for both types of fostering.
- It is particularly important that the number of carers who are approved for permanence has increased from 125 to 136. This is because of the continuing increase in the number of children requiring permanent families. This has been achieved by:-
  - The recruitment strategy which has had a specific campaign to attract new mainstream permanent carers.
  - The reassessment of current carers for permanence for a particular child/children already in placement short-term
  - The promotion of the need for permanent carers across the service.
  - Promoting wide approval categories for carers which includes for short term and permanent placements as stated above.

- Two new carers were assessed and approved for Fostering Plus which is a new initiative in relation to caring for children with particularly complex behaviours.
- There was a continued slight increase in carers who are fully approved Family and Friend Foster Carers which has risen from 39 to 44 carers. However this masks the actual number of carers who were approved during the year and were subsequently de-registered when permanent orders were made in respect of children in placement. (See de-registration information)
- In relation to carers with temporary approval this number fluctuates considerably throughout the year and the number does not represent the throughput during the year. Temporary approval is only initially granted for 16 weeks.
- The category of foster carers support respite is currently not utilised. These were relatives and friends of approved foster carers who were willing to care for a child if the foster carers required respite.

#### **Ethnicity of children and carers on 31/03/16**

	<b>Foster Children</b>	<b>Foster Carers</b>
<b>White</b>		
British	424	540
Irish	00	02
Any other white background	05	07
<b>Mixed</b>		
White and Black Caribbean	02	00
White and Black African	00	00
White and Black Asian	01	00
White and Black Asian	03	
<b>Asian</b>	00	01
<b>Black/Black British</b>		
Black Caribbean	00	00
Black African	01	01
Any other Black	00	01
<b>Any other ethnic group</b>	01	02
	<b>437</b>	<b>554</b>

#### **Analysis**

- The majority of Foster Carers approved by Durham County Council are White British and the majority of children Looked After are White British.

## Location of Approved Foster Carers

**Table 2** below shows approved foster carers by geographic location. It excludes Family & Friends carers as they do not offer placements to unconnected children and therefore the foster carer geographical characteristics are not relevant.

Locality	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Derwentside	37	40	39	41	41
Durham & Chester le Street	53	53	55	60	63
Easington	29	26	27	27	28
The Dales	33	33	35	35	33
Sedgefield	26	29	33	34	36
Out of County South	9	13	17	9	12
Out of County North	14	15	13	20	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>234</b>

## Analysis

- The locality of approved mainstream foster carers is not evenly distributed.
- Approximately a quarter of all carers live within Chester-le Street and Durham and this has continued to increase. This is the most populated area within Co Durham and centrally located and therefore within easy travelling distance for all Durham children.
- Only one locality within Co Durham has seen a decrease in approved carers. This is the Dales. All others have either remained static or increased slightly.
- The number of carers living outside the DCC boundary has risen. In most cases they live just outside the county boundary and many live in the east with easy access to the Easington area. In particular there is a group of carers living in Houghton-le Spring and another cluster in Darlington.
- Two thirds of carers living outside the County boundary offer permanent placements.

## Foster Carer Approvals 2015-2016

*Table 3 shows approval of foster carers by type of provision*

Type	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
New mainstream foster carers	33	21	27	24	22
Reassessment of	11	12	15	13	5

carers					
Family and Friend Carers	17	33	28	41	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>66</b>

## Analysis

- The number of Family and Friends approvals has fallen very slightly from the previous year
- There was a slight decrease in the number of mainstream carers approved in comparison to the previous year. This was partly due to a decrease in the number of prospective foster carers coming forward.
- It was also partly due to the number of assessments which were started, but were not completed due to issues which arose during the assessment. There were 12 assessments which were not completed. The reasons were as follows:
  - Significant debt not disclosed.(1)
  - Withdrew because of ill health of family members (3)
  - Withdrew because of effect on their son (1)
  - Couple decided to have their own child and therefore timing not right. (1)
  - Couple pursuing adoption (1)
  - Pets behaviour (1)
  - Negative references (1)
  - Failed to disclose their own child had been fostered.(1)
  - Home conditions not satisfactory (1)
  - Carer already approved as an IFA carer remained with the agency (1)
- The number of reassessments of short term carers for permanence also reduced .This was anticipated because of the change to assessing prospective carers for long term fostering as well as short term fostering if they are motivated and have the potential.
- No reassessments were undertaken due to concerns about the carers' suitability to foster.

## Foster Carer De-registrations

*Table 4 shows Foster Carer De-registrations by provision*

Type	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Short term carers only	6	8	6	8	12
Permanent carers	0	4	8	7	05
Temporary	12	42	49	55	31

approval					
Family & Friends care	5	27	14	35	32
Foster carer support respite	3	1	1	4	0
Partner of carer who has separated		1	1		0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>80</b>

## Analysis

- 80 carers were de-registered during the year 2015-2016.
- The majority of de-registrations were Family and Friends foster carers who were either temporarily approved or fully approved:
- Temporary approved Family and Friends carers de-registration decreased to 31 compared to 55 the previous year.
- Fully approved Family and Friend carers who were de-registered remained at a similar level to the previous year.
- 17 mainstream carers were de-registered which is a similar number to last year. This is lower than national figures which estimate that 10-15% of carers leave the service each year.

**Table 5 shows Foster Carer De-registrations by reason for de-registration**

<b>Reason for De-registration</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Family circumstances <i>ie house move, change of employment, health, birth/deaths</i>	1	3	8	2	5
Retired/Resigned	3	15	9	19	8
Carer withdrew from process (following temporary approval)	-	-	3	4	5
Concerns from the Service	2	2	5	9	4
Child moved on/ to independence	1		1	3	0
Child returned to family	2	17	11	17	13
Supported lodgings/staying put conversion	2	-	3	3	1
Legal orders in respect of children	12	36	31	50	40
- SGO	10	25	19	41	34
- CAO	-	-	-	5	5
- RO/IRO	2	11	13	3	1
- Adoption	-	-	-	1	1
Other					4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>80</b>

It is important to recognise that foster carers own family situations impact on their ability/availability to foster and can result in them deciding not to continue fostering for example life events such as births, deaths, relationship breakdowns and employment changes.

### **Analysis**

- 50% of the de-registrations were because a legal order had been made in respect of children being cared for. These were all positive outcomes and secured permanence for these children.
- In total 40 Family and Friends foster carers were de-registered as the result of Court Orders which secured permanence for children meaning they were no longer Looked After
  - 34 carers became Special Guardians
  - 5 carers were granted Child Arrangement Orders.
  - 1 carer had an Adoption Order granted
- 13 Family and Friends carers de-registered because young people returned home to family.
- 17 mainstream carers resigned for the following reasons:
  - 6 carers retired from fostering after long service
  - 2 carers resigned following unplanned endings of placements

- 5 carers family circumstances changed – ill health, births, employment
- 2 carers resigned following concerns raised with them about the care they provided
- 2 carers were de-registered following concerns about their suitability to foster
- One of these carers above chose to appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The IRM agreed with the recommendation from Durham Fostering Service and the carers were de-registered.

### **Views of foster carers regarding the fostering assessment**

**October 2015** – assessment and training described as “good, very comprehensive, training very good and enjoyable, it did open our eyes”

**July 2015** – “enjoyed the assessment and initial training, leaned a lot and thought about things in a different way. You learn a lot about yourself”

**March 2016** - “the preparation which has been done has been outstanding”

### **Views of foster carers and children and young people about the Fostering Service**

We seek to obtain the views of children and young people and foster carers using a variety of methods:

- Foster carer annual reviews
- Fostering Panel
- Monthly supervision with foster carers
- Consultation meetings
- Regular support groups facilitated by Fostering Supervising Social Workers
- Specific focus group meetings
- Use of survey monkey for recruitment
- Close liaison with children’s social workers and Independent Reviewing officers
- Attendance at Looked After Reviews, Care Team Meetings etc where possible.

Foster Carers advise us that they feel well supported by the Fostering Service, for example:

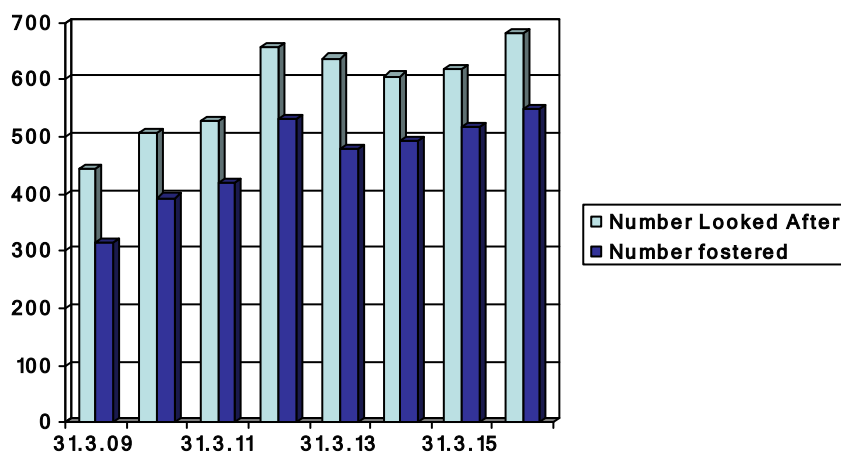
- A foster care at her annual review described her Fostering Supervising Social Worker as “a God send” and was impressed with her hard work, support and sound advice (June 2015)
- A foster carer said they felt well supported and reported regular communication from their Fostering Supervising Social Worker (Feb 2016)



### 3. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

*Table 6 shows number of Looked After Children and fostered children*

This gives the number of Looked After Children in Durham on 31st March each year and the number placed with foster carers on these dates during the same period.

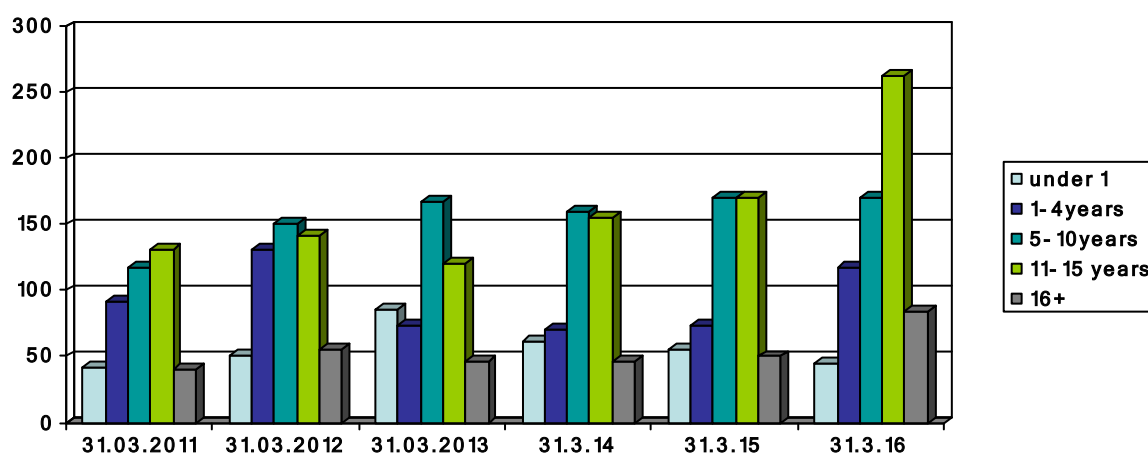


#### Analysis

- The number of Looked After Children has increased since last year from 619 to 680. The trajectory is upwards for the last three years.
- The number of children placed in foster care has increased for the last four years.

#### The number of children placed with foster carers by age

*Table 7 below gives the number of children placed with foster carers by age range on 31<sup>st</sup> March each year*



## **Analysis Need**

- The number of baby placements has fallen slightly
- The number of 1-4 years old has increased from 73 children to 118 children
- The number of children 5-10 years old has remained static
- The number of children 11-15 years old has increased considerably.
- The number of young people over 16 years has also increased

## **Views of children**

Children and young people are invited to provide feedback for their foster carer's annual review, and their social worker assists them to provide this. The feedback, which is in the form of a questionnaire is evaluated, and discussed at the review.

The Fostering Supervising Social worker speaks with the children in placement when they visit, and liaises closely with the child's social worker so that any issues or concerns about the child or the foster carer are picked up quickly

An analysis of the feedback provides evidence that children and young people feel safe and well cared for in their foster placements

## **Views of birth parents**

Feedback is sought from birth parents where appropriate for the foster carer's annual review. Very few questionnaires are returned, but verbal feedback is occasionally provided, which is discussed at the review. Any issues raised by birth parents are addressed by the Fostering Service and the child's social worker

## **4. IRO INFORMATION**

The IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) Service chair foster carer annual reviews. Foster Carer reviews is a separate statutory function under the Children Act (1989), Guidance and Regulations (2011), the National Minimum Standards (DfE 2011a) and the Fostering Service (England) Regulations (DfE 2011b) and this forms the regulatory framework for fostering services in England under the Care Standards Act 2000. Standards require the Foster Carer Review to be chaired by an independent person.

The Fostering Service Regulations state that Foster Carers are required to have a review not more than one year from approval and thereafter at intervals of not more than a year or whenever the Service consider it necessary. First review, contentious reviews and reviews every 3 years are presented to the Fostering Panel.

When chairing foster care reviews the IRO is responsible for scrutinising the Local Authority's recommendations in relation to foster carer's approval and to make recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker about what carers'

future approvals should entail. This in turn enables the local authority to appropriately match children with carer's specific skills and expertise ensuring that children are safeguarded in their foster placement and their care needs are met.

The reviewing processes also allows the IRO service to scrutinise the training needs and developed skills of carers to ensure that carers are banded at the appropriate level and that they are receiving good support from the service.

*Table 8 shows the number of foster carer reviews completed*

	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
<b>Number of Foster care reviews</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>Number of reviews held within time-scale</b>	<b>99.2%</b>	<b>98.2%</b>

## **5. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL FOSTERING PANELS**

In broad terms the role of a Fostering Panel is to:

- provide an independent perspective, informed by a range of expertise and skills
- monitor and quality assure social work practice in the best interests of children and young people placed in foster care.
- provide recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker that accurately reflect the facts of the case presented to it in relation to the approval of foster carers, matches of children for permanence and children's plans

The Legal Framework of Fostering Panels is contained in Appendix 1.

In April 2013, the Fostering Service established a third Panel to manage the increasing volume of work reflecting the increased activity of the service.

The current configuration of Fostering Panels is

- Two Permanence Panels (including Family and Friends work)
- One Panel focussing primarily on short term carers

This framework has ensured that matters are presented to Panel in a timely manner. Further consideration will be required to the structure of the Panels should the current volume of work continue to increase.

### **5.1 Membership of the Panels**

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 The Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011 came into effect. This resulted in changes to the composition, quoracy and processes in Panel.

It is recognised that Panels operate most effectively when there is a diverse membership with an understanding of the fostering tasks and the needs of children. Panel composition therefore includes a wide range of professional backgrounds, adults who have experienced foster care/adoption, and foster carers from other agencies as well as elected members.

Prospective Panel members complete an application form and are interviewed for the post. Disclosure and Barring checks are undertaken and personal references taken up. There is a clear induction process, induction pack and an opportunity to observe a Panel prior to sitting as a member. Panel members are expected to sign a confidentiality statement and receive an annual appraisal. They are also offered the opportunity to attend training, including specific panel training.

A new Fostering Panel Induction Handbook has been developed and distributed to Panel members giving substantial information about fostering and Panel processes and practices.

## **5.2 The Role and Function of the Permanence and Fostering Panels**

The Fostering Panels are required to:

- Consider each application of prospective foster carers for approval as foster carers offering placements of a short term nature or permanent placements.
- Make recommendations to the Fostering Service regarding the terms of approval for those applicants and their suitability to become foster carers.
- Consider those applications made by Family and Friends following their temporary approval as foster carers under Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 to:
  - offer permanent or short term placements and
  - to recommend whether or not the applicants are suitable to become foster carers for named child/children.
- Consider all First Annual Foster Care reviews (regulatory requirement) and subsequently Foster Carer reviews every 3 years (Durham County Council policy)
- To consider any contentious reviews of approved foster carers and make recommendations regarding terms of approval and continued registration.
- Ensure feedback to the Agency Decision Maker and Senior Managers of the Durham County Council on Fostering Service policy, procedures and practice matters

### **5.3 Agency Adviser to the Fostering Panels**

Each Fostering Panel is supported by an Agency Adviser. During the period of this report the Agency Advisers to the Panels were:

- Paul Lundie and Lorraine Botcherby (Team Managers, Permanence Team) for the Permanence Panel
- Andy Jennings and Jessica Cowan (Temporary Team Managers) for the second Permanence Panel
- Florence Coulter (Team Manager, Recruitment Team) for the Fostering Panel

### **Agency Decision Maker**

During this period The Agency Decision Makers for the Fostering Panels were:

- Karen Robb, Strategic Manager, Looked After Children and Permanence
- Dorothy Alexander, Operations Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Full Circle.
- Bronwen Smith, Operations Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Full Circle

### **5.4 The Independent Review Mechanism**

From April 2009 the Independent Review Mechanism was extended to cover fostering matters having previously been only focussed on adoption issues. It provides an independent review of the suitability of fostering applications presented to it from potential and current foster carers in cases where the decision has been not to approve them as a foster carer, or to terminate or change the terms of their approval. This year one Durham applicants or foster carers made representations to the Independent Review Mechanism.

### **5.5 Training**

The training needs of Panel members are identified through their individual annual appraisals, Panel activity and processes.

Panel have access and training programme information which has given them access to CAMHS, LACES and the general courses which are available to Foster Carers.

All Panel members have also completed e-learning Data Protection training. During the year training was provided to Panel regarding the new structure of Children's Services, an update on the Fostering Regulations and Standards, and training delivered by young people related to their perspectives

## **Fostering Panel Business Meetings**

These meetings occur twice a year. These meetings consist of the Chairs, Vice Chairs, Agency Advisers, Panel members and Senior Managers.

They are chaired by the Strategic Manager, Looked After Children and Permanence or Operation Manager, Fostering and Adoption. The purpose of these meetings is to share information, to promote consistency across the Panels, to improve Panel practice/processes, to identify training needs and to discuss strategic Service Developments which may impact on Panel business.

## **Permanence Review/Placement Stability Meetings**

Bi-monthly Permanence Review Group meetings are held to monitor the progress of all aspects of permanence and placement stability. These meetings are attended by Operation Managers and Team Managers across Looked After and Permanence Service. They ensure that all plans of permanence are progressed within the desired timescales and children's carers are reviewed to ensure any drift and delay is addressed.

## **6 THE FOSTERING PANEL**

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 stipulated the establishment of a Central List of panel members and Durham's Central List includes health, education, foster carers, care experienced members, County Councillors and social workers.

The membership and experience of individuals serving on the Fostering Panel is as follows:

Chair Independent, Cherryl Pharoah  
Vice Chair Social Work Representative, Kathy Welch, Team Manager  
Vice Chair Education Representative, Susan Dolphin, Education Team Manager

Core members from the central list		
County Councillor	DCC	Anne Bonner
Foster Carer	Independent	Dorothy Gibson
Social Work Representatives	DCC	Bayna Brown
Social worker	Independent	Anne Welsh
Looked After Nurse	Independent	Claire Roebuck
Care experienced	Independent	Sarah Dawson

Additional central list members attend when required.

The Fostering Panel, in accordance with regulations, is chaired independently of the Fostering Service. Gareth Lambert, a BAAF Trainer/Consultant had been appointed and completed his induction period, but unfortunately was unable to take up the post due to the demise of BAAF.

We are delighted that a new Chair, Cherryl Pharoah, has taken up the role and she brings to the post a long established career in Children's Services and experience of chairing Panels.

During the year the Panel welcomed one new Panel member, Bayna Brown, who is a Team Manager in Durham Residential Services with extensive experience of Looked After Children.

## 6.1 Fostering Panel Activity

The Panel met 11 times during the year.

### Summary of Panel Activity

*Table 9 below summarises Panel Activity*

Activity	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Form F assessments of short term carers presented to Panel *	34	20	15	17	20
Reassessments presented to Panel			5	3	4
Review of short term carers	29	32	69	36	35
Deregistration of short term carers	07	8	0	8	7
Matches of children with carers				3	13

\* Please note this includes assessments re-presented to Panel because of initial deferments

### Analysis

- The number of Form F's presented to this Panel increased slightly from 17 to 20. Similar to the previous year, a number of the assessments were undertaken for foster carers who would be approved for permanence only and therefore they were presented to the 2 Permanence Panels.
- There were 4 reassessments of carers. Three were reassessments of short term carers to provide permanent care for child/children in placement. One was a reassessment of a carer as a single carer following the break up with her partner.
- The number of foster care reviews presented to Panel remained at a similar level.
- There were two reviews which were brought to Panel because of concerns about the standard of care provided. Panel considered the information and recommended de-registration in both cases. This was subsequently endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker

- The number of de-registrations was similar to the previous years but remains below the national average for de-registrations of carers.
- Panel’s workload was expanded to consider reassessments and matches for carers whose original approval was presented at the Panel for short term. The match of 13 children placed with 8 different families were recommended for approval by Panel.

## 6.2 The Terms of Foster Carers Approval at the Fostering Panel

There has been a change in policy to approve carers for a wider age range but within this having a clear assessment of the best match in terms of age

*Table 10 below gives a breakdown of carers by preference for age of placements*

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
0 – 2 years only	2	1	2	1	0
Under 11 years	11	12	9	13	15
11 years plus	5	2	2	1	1
Wide age range	8	2	1	2	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>

### **Analysis**

- The majority of newly approved carers’ skills lie in the 0-11 age group with 15 carers being approved for this category.
- No carers were approved for babies only, in line with the priorities in the service, but 8 carers terms of approvals included approval to care for babies.
- 4 households were approved and are able to foster children with a very wide age range. This relates to their considerable previous experience.
- 1 household only was particularly interested in fostering teenagers.



### 6.3 Foster Carers by Locality

*Table 11 gives a breakdown of new foster carers by area*

Area	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Durham & Chester-le Street	9	7	2	5	3	7
Derwentside	5	5	6	1	6	3
Easington	4	1	0	0	1	2
Sedgefield	1	3	5	2	3	3
The Dales	3	7	2	4	3	2
Out of County	3	3	2	2	1	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>

#### Analysis

- There was an uneven distribution across the County of carers approved
- The highest numbers of new carers live in the Durham area which is the most central locality.
- There was no targeted marketing of any geographical area during this year.
- The carers living out of the county live near the border of County Durham in Darlington and the Sunderland area

### 6.4 Foster Carer Reviews

*Table 12 below shows the type of reviews.*

Type	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
First reviews	25	24	20	10	12
Reviews called following a specific issue	4	4	2	1	1
3 year reviews		4	47	25	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>

## Analysis

- There was a similar number of reviews presented to Panel this year.
- The majority of reviews presented to Panel were third reviews – 19 in the year.
- Two foster carer reviews were presented to Panel as a result of concern. The Panel recommended de-registration and this was endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker

## De-registrations

There were 6 de-registrations of short term foster carers and **Table 13** below show the reasons for de-registration.

Reason	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Family circumstances <i>ie house move, change of employment, health, birth/deaths</i>	3	4	7	5	3
Retired/Resigned	1	3	1	3	2
Carer withdrew from process					
Concerns from the Service	2	1			2
Foster carer respite support no longer needed	1	1			
Child moved on/ to independence					
Child returned to family					
Supported lodgings/staying put conversion					
Legal orders in respect of children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SGO</li> <li>- CAO</li> <li>- RO/IRO</li> <li>- Adoption</li> </ul>					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

## Analysis

- There were less de-registrations of short term carers this year than previous years.
- 1 couple retired.
- 2 carer's health problem resulted in resignation.
- 1 couple resigned due to a change of employment

- 2 carers were de-registered because of concerns. The Panel recommended de-registration in both cases which was endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker. One couple appealed this decision through the Independent Review Mechanism who also recommended de-registration and the Agency Decision Maker subsequently confirmed this decision.
- 1 carer resigned. There were concerns about the care she provided and she resigned prior to the matter being presented to panel.

## **6.4 Key Themes from The Fostering Panel**

### **Quality of Reports**

- The quality of reports to Panel this year has been good with Panel regularly commenting about the high standard of the Foster Carer assessments. Importantly feedback from carers in Panel confirms their view that the reports were accurate and thorough.

### **Positive Views from Panel**

- Panel members in their appraisals commented positively about the management of the Service and Chairing of the Panels.
- Panel members were appreciative of the high quality of administrative support to Panels.

### **Feedback from applicants & social workers about Panel**

Applicants and social workers are given the opportunity to feedback via a questionnaire when they attend Panel. 2015-16 feedback examples included:

- The Panel were fair and relevant with their questions. We were treated with respect.
- Although it was a daunting experience, we were made to feel at ease immediately. We were given the opportunity to answer and ask questions.
- A good experience as appropriate questions were asked and it was nice the answers we gave were listened to, knew a lot about us which was reassuring.
- At first terrified- but within minutes of arriving we were met, made to relax, feel lots better. We felt it was really pleasant, were fairly treated and listened to

The majority of returned questionnaires stated they had waited approximately 5 minutes, although a couple stated they waited a longer period.

Most applicants stated they did not have any suggestions for improvements. However, one carer stated that the panel could be more diverse which had already been identified as an action.

## **7 PERMANENCE PANELS APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016**

The membership and experience of individuals serving on the Permanence Panel A is as follows:

Chair	Alison Walton (Independent)
Vice Chair	Elizabeth Varley (Independent - Education)

Regular members from the central list:

Representative for Children	Sarah Dawson
Foster Carer	Andrea Lawson (Independent)
Health (Medical Advisor)	Dr Jo Poot (Independent)
County Councillor	Cllr Mamie Simmons
Social Work Representative	Deborah Hood
Social Work Representative	Ann Haigh

Additional central list members attend when required

The membership and experience of individuals serving on the Permanence Panel B is as follows:

Chair	Sheila Sunter (Independent)
Vice Chair	Dave Hodgson (Social Work Representative)

Regular members from the central list:

Representative for Children	Sarah Dawson
Health	Zoe Lister (Independent)
Education	Pamela Norman (Independent)
County Councillor	Cllr Maureen Stanton
Social Work Representative	Delia Jack

Additional central list members attend when required.

Each of the Permanence Panels are chaired by someone independent of the Agency, in accordance with regulations.

- Alison Walton became the Independent Chair of Permanence Panel A, initially on a temporary basis from June 2015 and on a permanent basis from October 2015. Alison is an experienced Social Worker and Senior Manager in children's social care.
- Sheila Sunter continues as the Independent Chair of Permanence Panel B. Sheila is an experienced Social Worker and Team Manager in children's social care.

Sheila and Alison bring a wealth of experience in family placement, Looked After children and child care to their chairing roles. Dr Jo Poot, Consultant

Paediatrician became the Medical Advisor to the Permanence Panels in 2015/16 and attends as a continuing member of Permanence Panel A.

During the year there have been changes in the composition of the Panels:

- Councillor Maureen Stanton joined Panel B in April 2015.
- Fostering Supervising Social Worker, Permanence Maxine Santos was replaced by Deborah Hood of the same team, in April 2015.
- Delia Jack, Fostering Supervising Social Worker, Recruitment & Assessment was a member of Panel B throughout the 2015/16 year.
- Independent Foster Carer Andrea Lawson from Sunderland City Council, replaced Andrea Brady in the same role in May 2015.
- Dave Hodgson, Senior Practitioner, Short Term, became Vice Chair of Panel B in October 2015, replacing Alison Walton upon her taking over the Independent Chair of Panel A on a permanent basis.

### **7.1 Permanence Panel Activity**

Panel A met 11 times and Panel B met 10 times during the year. There was one Extraordinary Panel meeting held on 30 March 2016.

*Table 14 - Summary of Permanence Panel Activity*

<b>Panel Workload</b>		<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Approvals of permanence foster Carers		2	12	6	2
Approvals of permanence foster Carers via reassessment		11	11	9	0
Approval of Family Friends foster carers (Form C)		30	28	41	39
Approval of children as suitable for permanence via long term fostering		47	52	22	24
Match of children approved for permanence with an IFA permanence foster carers		1 (2 children)	11 (14 children)	9 (9 children)	7 (8 children)
Match of children approved for permanence with permanence foster carers		13 (15 children)	22 (29 children)	42 (54 children)	16 (24 children)
Reviews of foster carers	1 <sup>st</sup> Reviews	9	14	22	18
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Reviews	3	42	25	16
	Other	0	0	0	2
	Total	12	56	47	36
De registrations of foster carers		71	70	97	73

## **Analysis**

- The significantly increased level of Family Friends Foster Carers recommended for approval at Panel over 2014/15 has broadly been maintained (39).
- In fact the number of children matched to permanent foster carers (32) is greater than the number of children's plans approved for requiring permanence through long term fostering in each of the last 2 years (24 and 22).
- The 24 children's plans recommended by Panel in the last year for children requiring permanence through long term fostering represents consistent performance with the previous year, 2014/15, following two years in which a significant backlog of cases was addressed.
- Slightly more First annual reviews (18) as required by regulations, were presented to Panel, than other reviews at the discretion of the Fostering Service, which would include those recommending change of approvals, contentious issues and 3 yearly reviews (16).
- Deregistrations returned to their 2013/14 levels, with almost three quarters (72.6%) following the granting of Court orders as to the long term residence of one or more children, one or more children returning to live with parents or other family members or a young person achieving independence. Each of these represent a positive permanent outcome for the children concerned.

## **7.2 Approval of Permanence Plans for Children/Matching**

*Table 16 shows approval of permanence plans for children and their match with permanent carers*

<b>Permanence Plans/Matching</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Approval of children as suitable for permanent placement	47	52	22	24
Match of children approved for permanence with an IFA permanence foster carers	1 (2 children)	11 (15 children)	9 (9 children)	7 (8 children)
Match of children approved for permanence with permanence foster carers	13 (15 children)	22 (29 children)	42 (54 children)	16 (24 children)

## **Analysis**

- There have been 24 children's plans recommended by Panel in the last year for children requiring permanence through long term fostering. This represents consistent performance with the previous year, 2014/15, following two years in which a significant backlog of cases was addressed.

- The Permanence Team continues to work closely with the Adoption Team and on occasions when a plan of adoption cannot be achieved within the child's timescale, these cases are transferred to the Permanence Team so permanence via long term fostering can be considered; usually reflecting the contingency agreed at Court upon the granting of the Care Order.
- There have been 8 children matched with Independent Fostering Agency carers over this period, which is again consistent with the previous year.
- 24 children were matched with 'In House' carers in this year, which is consistent with the average performance for 2012/14.
- The number of children matched to permanent foster carers (32) is greater than the number of children's plans approved for requiring permanence through long term fostering in each of the last 2 years (24 and 22).

### **Foster Carer Reviews**

There were 36 reviews of foster carers presented to Panel and Table 17 below shows the type of reviews.

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>No</b>
First Reviews	18
Third Annual Reviews	16
Other Reviews	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>

### **Analysis**

- The first annual review is presented to Panel in accordance with regulations. 18 such reviews were considered by Permanence Panels in year.
- Third annual reviews are presented to Panel and subsequent reviews at least 3 yearly, providing independent scrutiny of the progress and development made by foster carers at various stages of their fostering careers. 16 such reviews were referred to Panels.
- Reviews are also presented to Panel when a significant issue is raised and/or a change in approval is recommended. 2 of these were considered.

### **De-registrations**

There were 73 de-registrations of permanent foster carers which also incorporate Relative Friend Carers. Table 18 below shows the reasons for de-registration.

Reason	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Carer moved	0	0	0	0
Carer unable to meet standards and uncooperative/unsuited to care	0	6	8	0
Carer adopted child	0	0	1	1
Residence Order/Child Arrangement Order granted	11	13	5	5
Special Guardianship Order granted	25	19	63	33
Breakdown/disruption of placement	3	2	0	0
Move to supported lodgings scheme	0	3	2	0
Changes in family circumstances	1	0	0	0
Rehabilitation to family	17	11	10	13
Retirement	0	1	0	4
Young person moved to independence	0	1	0	1
Resignations	9	3	3	7
Change of Care Plan	5	0	0	0
Child moved to foster care/adoption		4	1	1
Carer withdrew		3	4	8
Another family member came forward		3	0	0
Remains on independent TC basis		1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>73</b>

### Analysis

- The trend for more than half of de-registrations to follow the granting of Court orders as to the long term residence of one or more children has continued, with 53.4% following the granting of Adoption (1), Residence or Child Arrangement (5) or Special Guardianship (33) Orders. These cases represent positive outcomes for children under Court scrutiny.
- Taken together with the number of de-registrations (13) following one or more children returning to live with parents or other family members, without the need for such Orders, and 1 de-registration following a young person achieving independence, 72.6% of de-registrations followed one or more children achieving a form of permanence.
- 8 relative friend carers withdrew as they requested not to continue with the assessments.
- 4 mainstream permanent carers retired.
- 6 mainstream permanent carers resigned due to various reasons.



## **Family and Friends Foster Carers**

*Table 19*

<b>Approvals</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Approval of Family Friends foster carers (Form C)	33	28	41	39

### **Analysis**

- The significantly increased level of Family Friends Foster Carers recommended for approval at Panel over 2014/15 has been maintained, reflecting positive consideration of the child's family network within the assessment process, in line with the Children Act 1989 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- The BAAF Form C Assessment tool has been continually used across Durham County and there have been 39 Relative and Friend Assessments presented to Panel and approved this year.

### **7.3 Key Themes from Permanence Panel**

- Within the reports presented to Panel this year, the Fostering Service's Form F Reports remain comprehensive. Matching Reports from Fostering Supervising Social Workers and children's Social Workers have also continued to be to a good standard.
- Form C Assessments of kinship, friends and family connected persons to the child, have maintained improvement, with few exceptions requiring deferment for additional information.
- Contact issues and the health needs of both applicants and children, have been key themes within Form C assessments, as has consideration of how both younger and older applicants will manage currently placed younger children during their teenage years.
- A significant issue towards the close of the year has been a delay in the return of some DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) enhanced clearances and a number of Medical assessments for Form C applicants under regulation 24, necessitating a greater number of extensions of temporary approval for assessment under regulation 25 and the re-scheduling of Panels' business.
- The quality of Child Permanence Reports (CPR) has been good, informing positive Panel recommendations and Agency decisions as to the need for permanence via long term fostering.
- The improvement in the representation of children's views within reports presented to Permanence Panels in 2014/15 has been maintained and further embedded in practice in 2015/16.

- Panel continues to be served very well by dedicated administrative support, including an Extraordinary Panel meeting required to meet demand in March 2016.
- The Panels' workload continues to be significant, and further work has been undertaken by the Agency Advisors and Panel Administrators to enhance quality assurance and timeliness at all stages of the process, prior to and following Panel, in the coming year.

#### **7.4 FEEDBACK FROM PERMANENCE PANEL**

Feedback questionnaires are offered to all applicants and professionals who attend Panel. Pre-paid envelopes are provided so that they can be completed later and sent to the Panel Administrator if this is preferred.

##### **Feedback from professionals attending Panel**

- Professionals reported that their experience of attending Panel was positive.
- They stated that Panel members were welcoming, introduced themselves and were friendly.
- They felt questions were fair, that answers were listened to, that Panel members were sensitive, and Panel was objective and gave appropriate consideration.
- Waiting times were generally satisfactory ie 0-15 minutes but 1 hour 25 minutes in one case.

##### **Feedback from applicants**

- Applicants reported that the process of attending Panel was explained to them before Panel.
- They said that they were shown to the Panel room if they had not attended before.
- Waiting times were satisfactory ie 0-20 minutes.
- They felt listened to, treated with respect and had the opportunity to ask questions within Panel.
- The Panel Chair and Agency Advisor clearly explained the Panel's recommendation outside Panel, immediately following it being made, and explained the process of consideration by the Agency Decision Maker.

## **8. Conclusion and Future Priorities**

The majority of looked after children are placed within Durham's fostering service. It has become increasingly challenging to manage the growing demand for placements in-house due to the increase in the looked after children population. Use of Independent Fostering Agencies has grown as a result. This does not necessarily provide better outcomes for children, but it does have an adverse effect on resources for the County as expenditure increases in line with increased usage.

Achieving efficiencies, despite the increase in the looked after children population, is predicated upon significant developments taking place regarding the fostering service. On that basis there are four specific priority areas to focus upon over the forthcoming year. These are as follows:

- Development of a robust Marketing Strategy to increase the number of fostering applicants to Durham to meet 100% of Durham's needs and achieve vacant capacity. This will enable matching of needs to carer skills and reduce reliance on external resources;
- Further Development of the Fostering Plus Scheme in order to provide a family based service to care for some of our children with most complex needs;
- Implementation of a review of the fostering service to ensure the resources channelled into the service are utilised in the most effective and efficient way and that the service is able to meet future demand;
- Deliver initiatives already in train to promote fostering, such as Durham County Council liveried vehicles, a concerted social media campaign and targeted recruitment to specialist fostering programmes.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – The development of the Fostering Plus model aims to reduce expenditure regarding children with complex needs by diverting the need for them to be cared for in internal residential care and in high cost external fostering and residential placements where appropriate.

Investment into the Fostering Marketing Strategy on an ‘Invest to Save’ basis aims to reduce expenditure in the long term by achieving sufficient capacity of internal resources to meet the needs of Durham’s looked after children

**Staffing** – The Fostering Review may have staffing implications but it is too premature at this stage to provide any detail

**Risk** – Failure to develop the Fostering Service risks the Council’s ability to meet demand for looked after children.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – The fostering service endeavours to ensure the carer population is reflective of the children it serves

**Accommodation** – No implications

**Crime and Disorder** – No implications

**Human Rights** – Provision and ongoing development of fostering services aims to ensure all children who need to be cared for away from their home have the opportunity where possible to live within a family setting.

**Consultation** – No implications

**Procurement** – No implications

**Disability Issues** – The Fostering Recruitment Campaign aims to recruit carers who can meet the needs of looked after children who are disabled. They form one of the targeted groups for fostering recruitment

**Legal Implications** – No implications

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF PANELS**

#### **ACTS**

The Children Act 1989  
The Data Protection Act 1998  
The Protection of Children Act 1999  
The Adoption and Children Act 2002  
The Children Act 2004

#### **REGULATIONS**

Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011  
The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review  
(England) Regulations 2010  
The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and  
Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments)  
Regulations 2013

#### **STANDARDS**

UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999  
Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment,  
approval, training, management and support of carers  
1999  
Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011

#### **GUIDANCE**

The Children Act 1989 Guidance vol 4: Fostering  
Services 2011  
The Children Act 1989 Guidance vol 2: Care Planning,  
Placement and Case Review 2011  
Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local  
Authorities 2011  
Effective Fostering Panels BAAF 2011