

Appendix 1

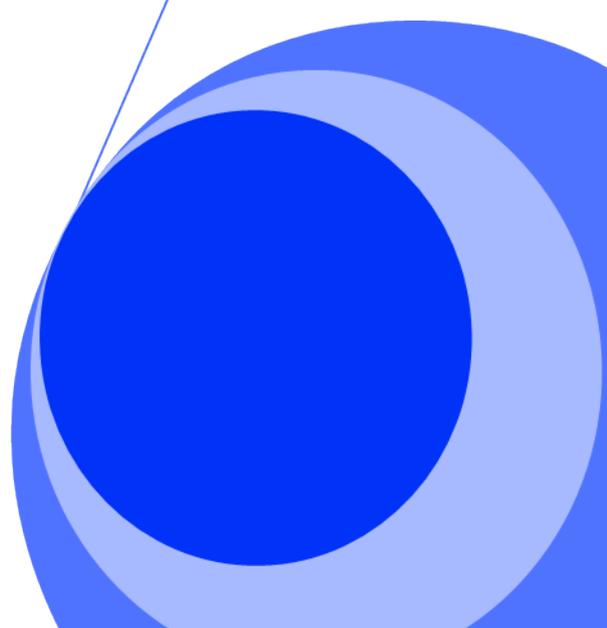
Fostering Service Review

Kent County Council

13th - 15th June 2016

Sally Pillay, Head of Tri-Borough Fostering & Adoption Service

Sania Khan, Consultant Social Worker



1. Background

This report has been prepared as an external review of the Fostering Services within Children and Family Services' Department at the request of the Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting, Kent County Council.

Fostering Services provides care for children and young people covering a vast geographical area and offers a variety of placement options including permanent, temporary and respite care depending on the needs and circumstances of the child or young person.

The service is also responsible to recruit, assess, support and deliver duty services to all foster carers and connected person's carers.

2. Scope and Objectives

The focus of this review as agreed with the Assistant Director was undertaken over a three day period and covered the following key areas.

1. Recruitment and Assessment of Foster Carers
2. Duty Supervision and Support to Foster Carers
3. Quality Assurance
4. Workforce Development

The fostering service and quality assurance and safeguarding unit audited in excess of 100 cases from the across the fostering service. The independent reviewers analysed the outcomes of the above case audits, randomly selected cases in each of the above categories to bench mark the service's capacity to self-assess and thereafter completed case discussions with social workers. This enabled the reviewing officers to compile a list of themes to support the future development of the service.

Additional information was gathered from other sources and included essential documents such as the recruitment strategy, assessment reports, the carers training and development plans, annual reviews, attendance at two panels and a range of service users (children and foster carers) as well as partners in practice, namely the virtual school, Kent foster carers association, Independent reviewing officers, service managers and observation of practice in real time.

3. Findings and Recommendations

The Reviewing Officers identified many positives which will be highlighted in the body of the report; however the following are of particular note.

The recently appointed Assistant Director and the new Head of Fostering are ambitious for the service and have already started to implement changes that are leading to improved practice and will further develop the services for children and young people who are looked after.

Staff at all levels are engaged with the new leadership and are appreciative of the renewed focus on fostering. Most of the staff we met said that they felt valued and supported by KCC. They enjoy their work and were committed to children.

Similarly the foster carers and children who participated in the focus groups did so with enthusiasm and passion. Indeed they are a credit to KCC.

3.1 Recruitment of Foster Carers

The fostering service was restructured in 2012 to improve the efficiency of the service and to ensure that local children's teams worked closely with fostering services by bringing them under a local service manager who is responsible for both the children's team and fostering service.

Recruitment and assessment of foster carers is undertaken by two central teams who are also responsible for assessing connected person's carers, these are directly managed by the Head of Fostering.

The recruitment strategy is comprehensive and effective as the performance data reflects that there is a steady flow of new carers approved by the team throughout the year. There are monthly support team meetings which the assessment team members attend and share information about placement needs. This is good practice and supports understanding placement needs and sufficiency.

The placements duty team captures good qualitative data on the sufficiency of placements and this informs the sufficiency strategy; however this information should be shared with staff so they are involved in the development of the sufficiency strategy. Staff should be aware of the information and the process by which the sufficiency strategy is prepared. Staff confirmed that they were not involved in building or contributing to the overall recruitment or sufficiency strategy. Pulling the data and intelligence from the different points of the fostering service will lead to a more sophisticated strategy.

We were very impressed with the knowledge and level of experience of the workers in the recruitment and assessment team. They were positive about their work, clearly enjoyed working in this area of fostering, spoke positively of the support they received from management and were keen to contribute to the overall improvement of fostering services.

Assessments reviewed were completed in timescales, there was clear evidence of both workers and managers tracking and monitoring progress in this regard. Case files reviewed had evidence of supervision notes and workers confirmed that they received regular supervision and an appraisal of their performance for 2016.

Staff reported that they received regular supervision, felt valued, enjoyed their work and were clearly delivering on their performance targets. While supervision was taking place regularly, the notes only described what the workers fed into the discussion as opposed to adding value or enabling the assessor to reflect on their assessments or promote enhanced practice. The programme of supervision and signs of safety training that is on offer will further develop the routine supervision to be more reflective and analytical.

Recommendations

- Create a feedback loop between the different service points to enable a better and more relevant recruitment strategy that will create sufficiency.
- A regular feedback loop to be used to discuss sufficiency and consult and include staff when the sufficiency strategy is being updated.
- A review of the approval criteria for foster carers will enhance the process of pulling the right carers through and reduce the number applicants dropping out later in the process thus leading to improved efficiencies.
- To add value to both the supervision and appraisal process the written format for capturing supervision should be reviewed. Support managers to enhance their supervision skills through training on reflective supervision practice.

3.1.1. Connected Persons

The assessment of connected person's foster carers is held within the generic fostering recruitment service and the assessment of special guardianship is undertaken within the children social work teams. Upon approval the connected person's foster carers are supported within the generic fostering support teams. A clear Friends and Family Policy is available on Kent County Council's website that covers different care options and support available.

The audit of connected person's carers did not reveal any themes that were notable.

The assessment template used to assess connected carers is lengthy and creates additional work for the assessing social workers. The length of the report does not necessarily add value to the assessment as the same information could be captured in a more succinct and concise format.

Recommendations

- Review the assessment format to include information that supports the service, panel and ADM to make an informed judgement about the approval of a specific carer for a specific child.
- Review the practice and the statutory guidance in relation to allegations against professionals with the view to improve practice, the quality and outcomes of the investigation.

3.2 Duty Supervision and Support

3.2.1 Duty

The review team were able to observe two duty teams in action.

The knowledge and skills observed reflected social workers who were competent and capable. There was one social worker who was particularly impressive. He was keen, had good knowledge of the available resources and has good oversight of the challenges and demands on placement resources.

The electronic spreadsheet embedded within the data system also enables the service to update vacancies and capture qualitative information, including reasons for placements with external providers. The vacancy list (range and number of carers) available for placements was high which meant that in theory more placements should and ought to be made with vacant in-house approved carers. However the

practice proved very different as we found that the decision making process to agree a match was far more complicated and relied on the fostering social worker's agreement to proceed as opposed to the expertise of the duty worker in making the most suitable match. In essence when a carer is on a vacancy list, the carer should be able to accept any placement deemed to be a suitable match. Unfortunately the duty worker was observed to be "waiting" for agreement from the supervising social worker before confirming a placement while simultaneously fielding anxious phone calls from the child's social worker requiring confirmation of the placement match. This created an unnecessary extra step and delays for the children's team. We observed some complicated processes in the decision making and IT arrangements for making and ending placements and they cut across team and geographical boundaries. The fostering duty team needs to have greater control over the vacancy list to make robust use of resources when considering potential placement matches. This would need some consideration by the Head of Fostering so that efficiencies can be achieved.

Recommendations

- The offices should deliver duty using the same systems, resources and practice. This creates consistency for staff and for foster carers. This is part of the work plan of the Head of Fostering ensuring that there is priority given across the county to the systems and resources for placement duty.

3.2.2. Support

The best test to determine how carers experience the support they receive is via their feedback which we captured during the focus group. The focus group was attended by a range of carers with different levels of fostering and life experience.

Most of the foster carers rated their support as good. They said that social workers were experienced, flexible and easy to talk with. They valued the training they received as it gave them a good opportunity to develop their skills and felt reassured and valued by KCC. They particularly enjoyed the days out and events hosted by KCC.

Carers felt proud of the many opportunities that children enjoyed and the fact that their birth children were made to feel part of the process. The group also felt a great sense of achievement especially when children moved to permanent families or had successful outcomes like access to higher education.

An area for engagement is with new carers who reported frequent changes of social workers and expressed their wish for consistency in their support. They did not have the same confidence with their supervising social workers and reported they thought they were overworked.

Training

The newly approved carers benefit from a block of five support groups. The support group is very well facilitated and had a good balance of structure, information and the support element. It was well attended and the carers were observed to participate fully. A range of topics were covered which were led by the facilitators and the carers.

A TRP model of training is highly valued by both professionals and carers alike. The level of support and training including monthly network meetings, blocked placements (no under 16 in the household), access to specialist support groups and training is having a positive impact.

There are no weekend or evening training options available to foster carers. Consideration could be given to delivering training in the evening or weekends to support short break carers or respite carers.

Complaints

The carers were reticent about making formal complaints and were unsure of the response they would receive from social workers.

We did not request information on complaints, compliments but did have a brief oversight of a case that had passed to the Independent Review Mechanism. Therefore it is difficult to assess the extent to which carers are using the complaints process that is in place.

The foster carers will benefit from having some training around the complaints procedure and information with regard to escalating complaints. The service should be able to capture all complaints and compliments with the view to developing and improving service delivery, practice and customer satisfaction. The learning from complaints should be shared in the fostering and CIC Teams.

Communication between the fostering service and carers was another issue that most of the carers highlighted. They said that they valued the consultation meetings but did not receive feedback on what actions are taken to address their concerns and thus they remain unresolved for them.

Some carers had direct access to a finance officer while others did not know who or how to contact the finance officer. Carers also seemed confused by what items could be claimed, for instance some carers had access to a claim form for attending the focus group while others were unfamiliar with the form. Similarly carers expressed confusion about payments they received but did not understand why and or how the amount was calculated.

Recommendations

- Review the duty systems to assess where efficiencies might be achieved and consider if there is potential to improve the carer's experience.
- Generally consider the communication strategy for foster carers and ensure that all carers should have access to the formal complaints procedure and training on how to make a complaint.
- The fostering service and the Corporate Complaints Team should capture both complaints and compliments to promote a culture of learning and development
- The finance policy/guidance for carer's fees and allowances needs more clarity as expressed by the carers. A clear finance policy with a detailed remittance statement and an identified link finance officer would provide carers with the information, forms and support as and when required. There should be a clear communication strategy between the fostering service and carers. Where issues are raised and resolved this should be noted so that carers are aware of the actions being taken by the department.

Foster Carers Association

The association is very active and ambitious and has already established good relationships with other community bodies and the fostering services.

The chair is keen to build on its successes and shared some inspired plans that the association is currently pursuing.

Given its contribution to both carers and the fostering service the association needs more support and active involvement from its membership.

Recommendations

- Workers to discuss as part of the supervisory visit the role of the association and encourage participation.
- Promote the role at events and via written communication to carers but also make it a requirement at the higher level or requirement for a higher remuneration, thus ensuring greater involvement and continuity

Virtual School

This service is very impressive in the knowledge and positive involvement they have with Fostering and LAC services. The staff had very positive feedback from both other professionals and children alike. This is a major strength of the service.

3.2.3. Supervision

Record Keeping

The new ICS (Liquid Logic) has been criticised by the users (staff) as poorly designed, unreliable in supporting practice and generally unfit for purpose.

The case audits found that records are fragmented and information is held in a number of separate systems (hard copy, network drives, personal folders and Liberi).

Staff in the fostering service said that the development and focus on fostering was left to the end and not given sufficient importance and or attention compared to ICT developments of the same system for front line processes. Whether this was real or not it was a feeling that was expressed.

Recommendations

- Review the case recording policy and ensure it is clear and implemented for the fostering service.
- The ICT needs of individual staff needs to be assessed enabling staff to have confidence and competence to navigate the IT system. The training already made available may need to be delivered to staff again to ensure they have understood processes and systems.
- Additionally it would be worth ensuring that staff have access to “floor walkers or supers users”.
- During the review the plan for ensuring all essential records were held electronically were being put in place with additional administrative support. Head of Fostering to ensure this is completed.

Practice Standards

All supervising social workers have refresher training on the procedures policies and protocols in respect of all aspects of supervision and support. This should include training on managing allegations, the reviewers understand that the policy has been updated and the training is planned for June and July 2016. Staff need to feel confident in the investigation of allegations.

Further areas for the service to ensure there is clarity includes the documentation provided for panel, with a front sheet which has a statement of purpose and the decision required from panel. Specific fostering terms were used interchangeably and this should be clarified for staff through the refresher training.

Foster Carers' Annual Review

Managers could tell that all statutory reviews were completed from their performance data reports because the management information reported this, but they could not confirm whether the quality of practice led to improved fostering services and or whether or not the practice was aligned to the statutory requirements and quality standards. The result is that oversight to confirm their continuing suitability and identify any support, training and development needs is not good enough. The social work task should be developed so that it is a dynamic process and the importance of the annual review should be addressed throughout the year and as part of the regular supervision visits. Foster carers then receive regular feedback about their training, how well they are caring and responding as foster carers as well as identifying areas where they need support or development.

Foster carers have requested that the process is more engaging and meaningful. The service recognised that this was an area that warranted increased resource and attention. To this end a new service for the independent review of foster carers has been funded. Recruitment has been successful for the Team Manager and further recruitment is in process for the independent reviewing social workers.

Recommendations

- A clear procedure for social workers, managers and foster carers, with training on the procedure and practice in relation to annual reviews.
- Implement a new fostering review system (FIRO) that enables and promotes independent scrutiny.
- Embed and train staff and managers on the system for managing allegations against professionals and ensure that there are sufficient resources to respond promptly to allegations of harm or potential harm caused by professionals. Ensure that allegations of abuse, mistreatment or poor practice by professionals are recorded accurately.

3.3 Performance and Quality Assurance

KCC has a very impressive performance report, which is colour coded for easy reference and available to all senior managers. This should form part of team meetings with supervising social workers so they are aware of the areas that the service performs well and where there are gaps. This should be presented along with an overview of the file audit findings so that both the qualitative and quantitative data is available.

Service Managers should have management grip on the fostering service and be aware of the fostering service standards of practice. This should be consistent

across the service; there was variability in the knowledge and management grip which impacted on the quality of fostering services.

3.3.1. Management Oversight and Supervision Records

Supervision does not occur in accordance with the local authority's own policy. As a result, managers do not routinely monitor and assess progress. In some cases there were concerns, such as allegations against foster carers but in the absence of any supervision records and or management decisions it was difficult to establish the role of the management in promoting safe practice and supporting or enabling the direction of the plans. In those cases where supervision notes were evident, there are gaps in the frequency, quality and the value of supervision notes. They provided little to no reflection on practice, guidance and direction on the case and did not address the key fundamental principles and expectations of staff supervision. We were unable to establish with any clarity whether supervision happened but was not recorded or regular supervision of staff did not take place. Irrespective, we took the view that if the records were absent then supervision did not take place. Individual performance management is poor, levels of supervision are inconsistent and management oversight is lacking. All this means that social workers lack the support they need to safeguard children effectively in their fostering placements.

The internal case audits identified this as an area for significant improvement. Management oversight of cases, including scrutiny by senior managers, requires a systematic approach so that the practice can be scrutinised and by doing so move the service to consistently good service. This will be supported by the supervision training and programme of practice seminars lead by Head of Fostering. A continued programme of auditing will ensure that there is increasing evidence of management oversight and recording of supervision. This is particularly important when evidencing decision making in respect of allegations and standards of care.

Recommendations

- Embed a performance management framework so that staff at all levels have timely, relevant and accurate performance and quality assurance information to enable them to improve and deliver improved services.
- Performance manage, support and review those staff and managers, as well as service managers who do not act on agreed actions arising out of a case audit. Serious consideration needs to be given to the implementation, monitoring and remedial action required to ensure compliance.
- Ensure that social workers are included in a programme of routine audits of practice to provide rigorous scrutiny of work in this area. The findings of audits should be used to embed a learning culture. Training and coaching of managers and service managers to enable motivational and inspirational leadership of the service is crucial. There was some evidence of this style of leadership in the north office evidenced by the interaction between the manager and service manager and the expressed respect that staff felt for their manager. Ensure compliance in respect of the County's supervision policy.
- Ensure compliance in respect of the County's supervision policy. The policy was seen and appears to have all the principles essential but is currently not practiced. This is a recommendation for senior management.

3.3.2. Panels

Panels observed were well managed by experienced panel members who were able to offer appropriate challenges to both staff and carers alike, but with sensitivity and skill.

The reports that are presented to panel should add value to the panel process. The purpose was not always articulated; for instance it said “permanency” but given permanency means a range of different options for children, it should state clearly that the case is being presented for a long term match between a specific carer and a child. The current system to progress matches is an overly bureaucratized process which burdens social workers with unnecessary levels of paperwork, duplication and excess use of forms. The overall impact of this increasing administrative burden is to deflect social workers from working directly with children and families. This was noted by the Head of Fostering and is being reviewed to reduce the burden on social workers.

Connected Persons Carers is a long report; however its value would be enhanced with a shorter more focussed template.

Carers were recommended for approval post 24 weeks without a DBS check, with the aim that the check would be returned before the decision maker. This process needs to be reviewed to ensure it is in line with the key panel and regulatory guidance.

Recommendations

- A review of this process for Long Term Fostering given that there is no legal requirement to present the match to panel with the view to considering alternate, more purposeful reports to enable decision making in this regard.
- A clear PPM procedure with an identified process to drive greater efficiencies will need to be supported by a good monitoring and tracking tool.
- The quality of reports presented to Fostering panels need to be strengthened along with the quality assurance role of the managers prior to panel. Reports should all have a good summary for matching children with carers
- Ensure permanent carers recruited or selected meet the needs of the children that require permanence and this should be evidenced in a single document that reflects the carers’ capacity to meet the identified and specific needs of the child. (Why this carer for this child).
- Review the approval practice for Connected Persons to align with the fostering regulations.

3.3.3. IRO Services

The IRO service reported that officers enjoyed a stable case load and were very knowledgeable about children on their respective caseloads.

They did not have access to LAC performance data and thus could not confirm how this data is used as part of the overall quality assurance role.

Placement stability was explored in detail given the feedback from children. The feedback from the IRO feedback and feedback from children correlated to the placement stability statistics which reflects this is an area that requires attention. The

IRO's felt that while disruption meetings or core stability meetings were held they lacked the essential resources to support the placements to promote stability. Placement stability is being reviewed and an innovation expression of interest has also been made to the Department of Education which is to support the development of bespoke services for children and young people to be supported in placements.

Recommendations

- A review of a cohort of children with more than 3 placement moves should be undertaken with the view to determining how to improve services to foster carers and children where there are complex needs with the view to preventing placement breakdown.
- As part of this exercise we recommend that the service looks at investing and building practice that promotes a rapid response to carers and children in those placements to include amongst many other resources a familiar respite carer and a one to one systemic therapist for the foster carer and child.
- Fostering Service to review its participation and feedback at reviews for children.

3.3.4. Children and Young People

We were impressed with the level of participation and insight of the children at both focus groups of children. Clearly they were well supported by their carers to attend; they also knew each other very well, some having attended similar meetings previously. They valued their social workers and carers alike and interestingly almost all the children identified the fostering social worker as the person they would reach out to if they were unhappy. They also confirmed that they saw and spoke to the fostering social worker regularly. This strength in the fostering practice needs to be reflected in case records and reports.

Children wanted us to take the following key messages forward:-

1. They were unhappy about "sleepovers" with their friends. They were really frustrated that they could not enjoy the life experiences that most children take for granted usually because a DBS check is required. We would recommend that the service reviews the use of delegated authority, unless of course there are clear safeguarding issues that would prevent a child from staying overnight with another child.
2. Placement stability or the number of times a child moved placements appeared to be very high. Sadly for many of the children present, they very rarely understood why they moved. This led to them changing their response to foster carers over the years as they felt less committed to establishing a relationship with a temporary person. One child it seemed still carried guilt about his behaviour towards a carer while others were almost still mourning the loss of people they deemed to be significant in their lives but with no opportunity for contact. The previous recommendation in relation to placement stability will help to understand the practice and therefore prevent multiple placement moves but it does not address the issue around the impact on children. We thought that life story work is one of the opportunities to manage this loss with the view to more intensive support as and when issues arise from the preliminary life story work.
3. Children felt unable to make complaints because complaints made in the past are yet to receive a response. We have passed the details of one person who made a complaint many years ago against a social worker and she felt

disappointed that she did not receive feedback. This case has been referred back to the Assistant Director.

4. They wanted to be supported to manage and continue their relationship with their birth families especially siblings who are still in care. They felt that they are often excluded and not offered contact with siblings who may be experiencing difficulties.
5. Housing for those leaving care was a major concern. The young people seemed remarkably knowledgeable about housing opportunities. This felt very desperate and sad for one young person whose details we have passed on to the Assistant Director for follow up.

Recommendations

- Embedded within the above comments are a range of themes highlighted for easy reference that need further exploration. More importantly it points to the areas that the service will need to direct its resources to improve the quality of care for children

3.4 Workforce

Staff turnover is impacting on staff morale and this includes the changes in senior managers. Staff expressed a lack of confidence in their value to the Council which is partly due to a loss of their identity as a “fostering” team when they co-located with the children’s team under the new delivery model. This theme was also highlighted in the feedback from foster carers who expressed the view that their supervising link social worker was in fact more of a child’s social worker because their one to one supervision sessions appears to focus mostly on the children as opposed to the developmental and support needs of foster carers.

The co-location of services, we believe is still an excellent opportunity to deliver services in a more coordinated and systemic way. Shared management between looked after children and fostering does mean that a focus has to be retained on fostering services. The current structure is supported through the new appointment of Assistant Director Corporate parenting and the new Head of Service for Fostering. This provides strategic leadership and focus on the fostering services.

There are significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced staff in all levels of the service and there is a reliance on agency staff at one point or another. Staff and foster carers reported that “managers and social workers come and go” a condition that has led to instability in the workforce, which would account for some of the staff negativity especially given the impact on increased duty tasks and allocations for permanent staff. This has had an impact on staff morale.

Caseloads were noted to be on average around 18. Caseloads of this size support the delivery of the improvements to the fostering service and will support it moving it to a good service.

4. Conclusion

We have looked and listened to the experiences of children and young people who are currently in care; those young people who are leaving care and starting their lives as young adults and those tasked with providing care for children in KCC.

We considered the quality of fostering social work practice and the difference this made, read case files, observed professional staff and discussed the effectiveness of the help and support given to children and young people and their foster carers.

Wherever possible, we met and talked to children, young people and their foster carers. In addition, we tried to understand to what extent KCC understood and knew how well it is performing and what needed to change.

KCC fostering services have been reorganised with the view to enabling a “team around the child approach” and, in doing so, fostering services appears to have dropped in its standards and practice and is not currently delivering the requirements of a good fostering service.

In considering our rating of KCC we mirrored the Ofsted judgement criteria and judged KCC to be an authority that **requires improvement**.

We found that there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children at risk of being harmed. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the authority is not yet delivering good fostering services for children and young people in care.

KCC is a vast county but with the potential to build on its resource of foster carers. It is ideally placed to challenge the IFA sector that is very active within its boundaries as well implement a creative and very innovative model of foster care services.

This however will require a management style, leadership; knowledge and expertise to not only drive the programme of change but to engage the workforce, including its resource of foster carers are on this journey.

Appendix 2

Fostering Business Plan 2016 First Review and update: 1st July 2016

(To be reviewed quarterly to ensure continuous development Incorporating the Fostering Improvement Plan March 2016 and Management Action Plan from the In-House Foster Care internal audit report dated June 2015)

Kent Fostering Service Vision: To achieve an outstanding fostering service by March 2017 that ensures consistent support to foster carers with positive outcomes and improved placement stability for children and young people in our care.

Target 1: Ensure that children and young people communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. (NMS 1.3)				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
1.1	Child in Care and Fostering Teams to promote the voice of the children and young people in their districts as a priority.	Service Managers Head of Fostering Completed	Participation Strategy signed off by the Divisional Managers Team (Assistant Directors and the Director of Specialist Children's Services) in May 2015, and presented to the Children in Care (District) Service Managers in June 2015. Joint participation workshops in place for 2016/17 for foster carers, social workers and young people.	To be measured through attendance of foster carers and social workers at participation training. Participation workshop to be part of staff Personal Development Plan and new staff induction. To achieve 70% of 864 foster carers attending
1.2	To increase feedback available for foster carers' annual reviews from children and young people.	Fostering Team Managers, Fostering Review Team Manager (to be appointed) By August 2016	Fostering Review Team to be implemented to achieve independent reviews of foster carer's approvals. Children and young people's feedback form will be redesigned through work with the participation worker. Feedback forms will be uploaded onto Liberi to give clear evidence of children's views. There will be a competition to design the new feedback form, facilitated by the Participation worker.	Review Team to be in place by August 2016. To achieve all children (age appropriate) contributing to foster carers annual reviews. To make this part of the reporting for Deep Dives. Review July 2016 – There is evidence of a change in culture that Fostering social workers now view it as their responsibility to obtain feedback from
1.3				

			Fostering Reviewing Team will set up monitoring system to ensure feedback forms are returned and part of the annual review.	children in placement. This is done through their supervision visits to carers and as part of the annual review. All area support teams to complete summary of children's feedback 6 monthly.
To ensure children's views from child in care reviews feed into foster carer supervision and annual reviews, and are acted upon.	IROs, CIC social workers and Fostering Team Managers	Child in Care social workers to complete review feedback forms for foster carer's annual reviews and to support children to complete feedback. Fostering Reviewing Team will set up monitoring system to ensure feedback forms from children's social workers are returned and part of the annual review process. The review team will create independent challenge and support practice development increasing quality assurance.	There will be an audit of 20 cases per month by the centralised fostering teams from across the county, which will include quality of annual reviews. This will give a total of 240 cases audited between May 2016-May 2017 plus an additional 100 completed for the fostering review. Any graded as inadequate will be rectified within 5 days. Measure will be zero graded as inadequate by end of year, aim of all to be at good standard (or above). Any safeguarding concern to be addressed immediately. Updated June 2016: Fostering Support Teams will complete 10 audits per month for their own team and these will be completed alongside social workers. Included within this will be direct feedback from foster carers. Team Managers will return one completed template to Assistant Director and Head of Fostering per month.	

Target 2: Ensure all foster carers have a clear training and personal development plan including training on safe care, CSE and understanding of behavior and child development to include positive control and de-escalation. (NMS 3.8, 4.6 and 5.1)

What do we	Who will do it	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure
------------	----------------	---	---------------------

	want to achieve?	and by when?		the outcome?
2.1	<p>Undertake comprehensive needs and gap analysis of foster carer training, with reference to supporting carers to take more challenging placements and missing children / CSE.</p> <p>Update the training strategy from 2013.</p>	<p>Fostering Training Manager</p> <p>MIU support with Liberi reporting</p> <p>To be completed by September 2016</p>	<p>Fostering teams ensure all foster carers understand the strategy for dealing with missing children and ensure risk assessments are updated. Managers to take missing / CSE themes and guidance to Foster Carer Forums</p> <p>All foster carer training now has a clear pathway related to career experience. Additional training now includes Missing from Care, Unaccompanied Asylum Young People and CSE as part of the ongoing training portfolio.</p> <p>All foster carers to have a Personal Development Plan initially as part of the Form F assessment, then updated at each Annual Review. Target: Training must be addressed as part of Supervision of Foster Carers and non-attendance addressed through annual review process and panel. Liberi reporting needs to improve to be able to give information on percentage of carers who have completed core training within first/second year of approval. Child Missing from Care report to be used as indicator of whether numbers of children missing from care has reduced.</p>	<p>CSE training is now incorporated into the training pathway for all foster carers of children 11+. Workshops achieved in conjunction with KFCA which has brought together staff and foster carers</p> <p>Foster carer training to become part of Liberi reporting on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Audit tool to include evidence of PDP.</p> <p>To achieve all foster carers for children age 11 plus to have completed mandatory training by May 2017.</p> <p>To develop expert and skilled foster carers for those children at risk from CSE/missing. Updated June 2016: Training Manager to set up training across the county to improve placement stability. 5k additional funding to be made available for CBT/solution focused practice. To contact independent providers and liaise with CAMHS to coordinate their offer of support for foster carer training.</p>
<p>Target 3: Maintain an effective strategy to ensure sufficient foster carers are responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. This recommendations is made within the context of recruiting a sufficient number of foster carers who can accommodate sibling groups, so as to reduce the need for exemptions (NMS 13.1)</p>				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
	Ensure better use of current	Fostering Team Managers and	All inactive foster carers have been reviewed and a number of carers deregistered, to ensure	All teams completed actions on inactive

3.1	vacancies, review and deregister where carers are unavailable	Service Managers	maximum use of in house vacancies.	carers. In house placements achieved at 96%, this has reduced recently to 89%.
3.2	<p>Update recruitment strategy to reflect use of social media and on line advertising.</p> <p>Plan for the use of the recruitment budget to include short term outcomes (Fostering Fortnight) and a longer term yearly plan.</p>	<p>Head of Fostering with Chris Clark, Recruitment Coordinator and Communications Team.</p> <p>By July 2016</p>	<p>Website updated with new images and clear branding for “Kent Fostering Service” and added to frequently to keep current. Recruitment activity focused on targeted areas: siblings, adolescents, disabled children and unaccompanied asylum young people. There will be increased use of use of Facebook, Twitter and Google to promote the service and increase applications. Evening on line Q&A web chat sessions held quarterly, target is to expand to use of a webinar.</p> <p>Target for foster carers: To recruit 150 new fostering households, to retain and achieve 900 registered foster carers.</p> <p>Retention: Every applicant to be allocated a local mentor at point of assessment (research from Fostering Network Project 2015). Support Social worker to be allocated prior to panel and to jointly attend the panel with assessing social worker.</p>	<p>Communication Team to provide reporting on number of hits to website, analysis on where people have seen information about recruitment events and overall increase in applications following Fostering Fortnight.</p> <p>Retention of foster carers to be evaluated every 6 months, using information from exit interviews. (These are to be continued to be undertaken for all carers that leave the service)</p> <p>Post approval interviews to be completed 6 months after approval, to learn from and review the recruitment process and initially support provided.</p> <p>Review of current exemptions to be undertaken by County Manager. (August 2016)</p>
3.3	<p>Introduce a “mascot” for Kent Fostering.</p>	<p>Communications team to research the use of a mascot.</p> <p>By July 2016</p>	<p>Mascot could be used to give as a toy to younger children in care and be used in advertising and promotions. To approach a local Kent company to gain some sponsorship/support with production. To explore the use of animation on the website with the aim of making it more interactive. This to be linked to creating a “target of carers” using an image such as a lighthouse, to show the increasing numbers of carers over the year.</p>	<p>This will be measured through use of feedback from applicants, current foster carers and children, to survey whether they have seen the mascot. Its success will be measured through an increase in applications for year 2016/2017.</p> <p>Review: Meeting planned for July 2016 with Communications team to progress banners, mascot and new branding.</p>

Target 4: Ensure that the County Manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies and to identify specific incidents and areas of concern, patterns and trends. This recommendation is made within the context of addressing the variable quality of foster carer Annual Reviews. (NMS 25.2)

	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
4.1	Foster carer files to be audited regularly. Themes from audit to be fed back and used to improve quality of recording at CIC meeting and extended managers meeting. .	Service Managers and Head of Fostering Team Managers By end of June 2016	Head of Fostering has audited a number of cases from each area and highlighted immediate areas of concern within a number of Annual Reviews. All areas to be supported by Sue Gardner, MIU training and support to clear back log of incomplete Annual Reviews. Fostering Review Team to be set up by August 2016. Review: Learning culture created, through audits e.g evaluation from the review of allegations identified need for staff training. Allegations workshops to be delivered to Team Managers by Head of Fostering.	New audit tool to be added to on line Liberi system. Auditing has taken place (new carers), there will now be regular audits every month. Future audit cycle to be part of regular Quality Assurance. Team Managers in support Teams to audit 10 cases per month (audit to be completed with social workers) Outcome of audits to be reported at extended managers meetings (monthly) and Child in Care. Fostering Review completed by Head of Service and Manager form tri borough June 2016.

Target 5: Handling allegations and suspicions of harm (NMS 22)

	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
5.1	<p>To have a central system for recording complaints and allegations.</p> <p>Clear leadership in management of allegations, with use of performance management where appropriate.</p>	Service Managers	<p>The information available is distributed across paper and electronic files It does appear that discussions may have been had with the LADO in two out of the three cases audited but there needs to be improved recording.</p> <p>Target: All allegations are recorded on the carer's record on Liberi and presented to the fostering panel. Peer Support Training to be provided yearly to ensure carers are supported and understand the process.</p>	<p>The procedures for what to do when an allegation is made against a carer has been updated and is available in Kent's Policy pages, and the LADO team have attended all fostering team meetings to reinforce the requirements of the police which is in line with national minimum standards to refer all allegations made against foster carers to a LADO.</p> <p>All Fostering Teams to follow the flowchart for allegations, as provided by the LADO service.</p> <p>Allegations to be added to the Fostering Dashboard/Scorecard for recording.</p> <p>Update June 2016: Head of Fostering to deliver 2 seminars on allegations for Team Managers, who will then deliver to all fostering social workers. To include LADO role, notification form and flowchart. To be held between July-September 2016.</p> <p>Notification form to be used on all allegations, sent to LADO, Head of fostering and AD.</p>

Target 6: Payment to carers (NMS 28)				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
6.1	A review of the disability enhancement payments.	Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, Head of Fostering By end of May 2016	The current payments system has some inaccuracy across the county and needs a clear policy. Allowances to be reviewed in consultation with foster carers. Letter to be sent to all disability carers by end of April 2016, to advise of payments review. (NMS 28.3) Target: To achieve a clear and transparent payment structure for carers of children with a disability. (NMS 28.5)	All carers know what payments they will receive for caring for a child with a disability. All carers will be on the correct level of payment dependent on the child's assessed level of need. This will be agreed at funding panel and reviewed yearly. Review: Policy agreed 30th June 2016.
6.2	A review of the day care payments	Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, Head of Fostering By end of Jan 2017	Carers are currently being paid below the recommend hourly Living Wage when providing day care to children. The use of day care to support placement stability to be reviewed.	To review the day care payments in line with the recommend Living Wage. Initial review May 2016 to keep payments the same, further work needed on analysis of use of day care and cost implications of changing day care rate.
6.3	A review of the payments for Skills Level 2 and Level 3 payments.	Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, Head of Fostering, Training Manager By end of March 2017	Review the function and format of the Payment for Skills Panel. Review the Competency Assessment Framework (2008) and update. Create panel checklist for presenting carers at Level 2 / 3. This would involve some additional training for panel members and staff on the process and reports required.	Carers and staff need a clear process to provide evidence for the consideration of Level 2 and 3 payments. This will be measured in achieving consistent practice across the county. Training to be delivered in line with updated competency framework. New training manager to review by March 2017.
6.4	Carers transferring from IFA's.	Completed	All carers transferring from an IFA will transfer across to Kent Fostering Service on the Kent County Council payment structure. This will be made clear at point of	The County Manager will review every 6 months what the local IFA's are paying foster carers to ensure Kent remains competitive in his payments

			application and recorded within protocol meetings.	and support package.
--	--	--	--	----------------------

Target 7: Foster Carers receive the support and supervision they need in order to care properly for children placed with them. Supervision and support of foster carers (NMS 21)				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
7.1	A consistent template for supervision that is used for all foster carers. A signed record of supervision is sent to carers and uploaded onto their Liberi file.	Team Managers, Service Managers Head of Fostering By end of May 2016	We have learnt from the KFCA survey of Foster Carers (February 2016) that 41% of carers are dissatisfied with the level of support provided and a number commented they do not receive copies of their supervision notes. Managers and staff are not consistent in what template is being used for supervision. Target: Team Managers to put together a template that will be agreed by Assistant Director.	Audits will show that one template is being used across the county. Carers will all have a supervision agreement and regularly receive the notes of their supervision (every 4-6 weeks.) There will be signed copies of supervision uploaded onto Liberi. Review: Template agreed by Assistant Director, to be built as form on Liberi.
7.2	There is an effective Out of Hours Service for foster carers.	Fostering Team Managers	Each area currently runs an Out of Hours Service for their local carers between 5pm-12 Mon-Fri and over weekends and bank holidays. This is supported by the County Out of Hours team who can be accessed at outside of these times (after midnight)	Carer's report that this works well and they have access to advice and support. (NMS 21.3) Review again March 2017.

Target 8: Preparation for Placement (NMS 11)				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
8.1	Children are carefully matched to a foster placement and wherever possible given information about the foster carers before arrival. (NMS 11.3)	Service Managers Team Managers, Head of Fostering End of June 2016	Every foster carer has an up to date profile with photographs that can be printed off and given to children before the start of the placement. Even in an emergency, the profile can be emailed to the placing social worker, to be shown to a child using current technology. Audit of referrals for each area showed inadequate information in matching section of referral form. Target: Referrals to be detailed with reasons for matching and support package for carers. Review: Update referral, placement and matching form on Liberi. Form completed, request changes through ops group.	Quality Assurance form to be used for all referrals to ensure appropriate information and matching recorded (oversight by Team Manager). Carers to ask children whether they received carers profiles prior to placement. This to be recorded in carers supervision. To cascade though child in care meetings and extended managers meeting.
8.2	Carers are given full information about the child.	Fostering Team Managers Fostering Social Workers End of June 2016	Audit of referrals for each area showed inadequate information at point of referral. Target: Referrals to be quality assured at point of referral and returned to children social workers if not of good quality.	Quality Assurance form to be used for all referrals to ensure appropriate information and matching recorded. (oversight by Team Manager) Report to Child in Care meeting on outcome of audits and areas requiring improvement. (May 2016)
8.3	Delegated Authority recorded for all children and young people.	Fostering Social Workers and Children's Social Workers. End of June	There is inconsistent use of Delegated Authority and it being recorded and signed. Target: One Delegated Authority Form to be designed and used that covers all areas e.g. medical, education, social, religious and cultural needs.	Form to be updated on Liberi. (July 2016) Delegated Authority to be recorded on all placement plan arrangements and signed copy to be given to foster carer.

		2016	Review: Form being updated for Liberi – target for implementation September 2016.	Delegated authority to be part of every audit. Any audit missing delegated authority will be rated inadequate and delegated authority to be in place within 5 days from audit.
--	--	------	--	--

Target 9: Staff support and supervision (NMS 24)				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
9.1	A signed written record is kept by the fostering service of each staff member's supervision.	Team Managers, Head of Fostering By end of May 2016	Staff supervision on casework is currently being recorded inconsistently on Liberi under case notes. Improvement required in analysis, signs of safety approach and any directed action regarding performance. Target: Template agreed by Assistant Director.	Each area to set up electronic folder to store staff supervision that can be accessed by the County Manager and Assistant Director. Supervision template to be consistent across the county. Update June 2016: ACHIEVED Supervision folders now set up for all Fostering staff, including Fostering Social workers and Team Managers. Supervision for Team Managers by Assistant Directors to be saved electronically into shared area, for access by Assistant Director for corporate parenting and Head of Fostering. Each staff folder to contain: Supervision agreement/contract PDP's/Action plans Supervision notes on agreed template Record to confirm completion of mandatory training on Data Protection, Information Governance and PREVENT. Case supervision to be recorded on Liberi on

				foster carers file. Assistant Director and Head of Fostering to audit 2 staff supervision folders per area in August 2016.
--	--	--	--	---

Target 10 Statement of Purpose (NMS 16)				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
10.1	We want an ambitious fostering service that has a learning culture and builds on the strengths of our existing services for our children in care.	Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, Service Managers Head of Fostering	<p>Kent Fostering Service has some excellent foster carers and specific schemes for children in care.</p> <p>Target: To review the current TRP scheme format, to ensure it provides best value for the funding required. To build on the Disability Fostering Service by increasing the number of carers for short breaks. To use Serious Case Reviews to inform our practice and learn across the service how to make improvements.</p>	<p>Review the Kent Statement of purpose (NMS 16.1) to ensure its aims and objectives are child focused and evidence how the service will achieve outcomes for children.</p> <p>Team Managers to use Serious Case Reviews in Team Meetings.</p> <p>Review: Innovation Bid report completed by Assistant Director June 2016.</p> <p> Innovation Bid Proposal June 2016 (.</p>
10.2	To develop a learning culture through joint training.	Fostering Team Managers, Fostering Social Workers, Panel Members and Head of Fostering. October 2016	<p>Training has been provided for panel members, fostering social workers, team Managers and Panel advisors but these have not been done jointly.</p> <p>Target: To have a joint training day/conference for all Fostering Staff and Panel members.</p> <p>Paperless panels to be introduced with training for all panel members.</p>	<p>To be organised for October 2016 and learning to be measured through evaluation</p> <p>Pilot for paperless panels to be in place by August 2016.</p> <p>Review: Panel process for Permanency and Connected Persons assessments to be streamlined and paperwork reduced. (October 2016)</p>

				Head of Fostering to deliver 2 half day seminars on Fostering Regulations to Team Managers between July and September 2016. To develop an on line training on the fostering regulations with the training department, this will be mandatory for all fostering staff.
--	--	--	--	---

Target 11: Promoting Independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care (NMS 12.1)				
	What do we want to achieve?	Who will do it and by when?	What have we achieved and what is our target?	How will we measure the outcome
11.1	Kent Fostering Service to have comprehensive arrangements for preparing and supporting young people to make the transition to independence. (NMS 12.3)	County Fostering Manager County Manager 18plus Care Leavers service. September 2016	There is a clear policy for leaving care including Staying Put arrangements. This is detailed on Tri X and within the Fostering handbook. There will be a planned review of the Staying Put policy to ensure there is an up to date leaflet and guidance for young people and foster carers. To review Fostering Handbook guidance for leaving care and staying put.	Updated policy and leaflets by September 2016 . To include policy for children that remain in secondary education after age 18, to enable foster carers to continue to be paid at fostering rate for period between 18 th birthday and end of school year after this.