

21 March 2016

Agenda Item: 6

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME –
FOSTERING SERVICES RESTRUCTURE****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval of the proposed Fostering Services staffing model, as set out in **Appendix 1**.

Information and Advice**Fostering Services Review**

2. Following a rapid increase in the numbers of looked after children from 2008 until 2012, during which time caseloads rose and staffing resources increased accordingly, foster placement numbers have stabilised. Although the demand for older children continues to be significant, the number of children under the age of 4 years has decreased due to an increase in Special Guardianship Orders and more availability of potential adoptive parents.
3. As conditions within Fostering Services are therefore relatively stable, a workstream has been set up to review the service, with a view to making staffing structures and processes as efficient and sustainable as possible without affecting the standard of provision, thus generating cashable and other benefits. This paper describes the proposed staffing structure for Fostering Services.
4. The proposed staffing structure will reduce the overall Fostering Service establishment by 4 FTE (full-time equivalent) posts and is summarised below:
 - a. A reduction from seven teams to five teams. This will include three locality teams (North, Central and South) which will align with the strategic locality model. The Fostering Futures team will remain as it is. A new Countywide Team will be created, to include responsibilities such as home-finding, recruitment, and placement support which apply to all localities. The Countywide Team will also bring together Contract Care, Family & Friends and training.
 - b. A reduction from 7.5 FTE Team Managers to 6 FTE Team Managers, which will generate a saving of £74,135¹.

¹ See structure chart (Appendix 1) for Team Manager allocation.

- c. An initial reduction of 5 FTE Supervising Social Workers (from 40 FTE to 35 FTE), which will generate a saving of £202,455. This reduction will be made by deleting existing vacancies.
 - d. A further reduction of 4.5 FTE Supervising Social Worker posts following the introduction of Social Work Support Officers. This will be reviewed in July 2016 and will be subject to the Social Work Support Officer posts creating sufficient additional capacity. This would save a further £182,210.
 - e. The creation of two Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) posts will underpin an impartial review process, and will mirror practice in other 'Good' rated local authorities. The IROs will also absorb some existing Team Manager duties, which will support the reduction in Team Manager posts. This will cost a further £46,047, the cost of one post, as budget has already been set aside for one IRO. These posts will report in to the Service Manager.
 - f. Creation of 5 FTE Social Work Support Officers to provide support to Supervising Social Workers – this will cost £123,010. The Social Work Support Officer role is based on the Social Work Support Officer role, which is currently being piloted in Children's Social Care. The Social Work Support Officers will report directly to Team Managers, and will perform all appropriate tasks for which a Social Work qualification is not required. The Social Work Support Officer role is salary grade 4.
5. This proposal will effect a total saving of £289,743, which is 4.45% of the current Fostering Services budget. The proposed structure chart is attached as **Appendix 1**.
 6. The reduction of 1.5 FTE Team Managers and 5 FTE Supervising Social Worker posts will be managed by not filling vacancies and will not result in any compulsory redundancies. The remainder will be deleted by not filling vacancies as they arise, following a review to check that the proposed structure retains sufficient capacity.

Consultation

7. Stakeholders were consulted over a period of 30 days from 21/10/2015 until 25/11/2015. A wide range of responses were received. The key themes centred on anxiety from Foster Carers over perceived reductions in support, and from Fostering colleagues regarding the risk of destabilising the service due to reduced progression opportunities, increased caseloads, and the resultant decrease in staff morale.
8. In response to concerns, initial timescales have been revised so that only 5 FTE Supervising Social Worker posts will be initially deleted, instead of 9.5 as originally proposed. The remainder will be subject to the Social Work Support Officer posts creating sufficient additional capacity, which will be reviewed in July 2016.
9. A summary of the consultation responses is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Risks

10. There is a risk that reducing the number of Supervising Social Workers will reduce the support available to Foster Carers, and that this may result in Foster Carers leaving the

Council. In practice, the inclusion of Social Work Support Officers in the model will reduce the amount of time Supervising Social Workers spend on administrative tasks and therefore should increase their capacity to spend time with Foster Carers and the children and young people they care for.

11. The potential for increased caseloads for Supervising Social Workers will be managed by:
 - (a) reducing Supervising Social Worker posts gradually, over the next 12-18 months, and
 - (b) providing extra support in the form of Social Work Support Officers.
12. The average full-time Supervising Social Worker caseload in Nottinghamshire is 11.5 households². It is calculated that following the reduction of 5 FTE Supervising Social Workers in April 2016 average caseloads will increase to 13 households, and following the further reduction of 4.5 FTE Supervising Social Workers, average caseloads will increase to 15 households. This is comparable to other local authorities³ and will be supported by the introduction of the five Social Work Support Officer posts.

Other Options Considered

13. Two other options were considered, which would have achieved savings but either proposed too few staff to achieve a sustainable model, or required new fostering roles to be created. The proposed option is seen to be the most effective way of achieving savings whilst retaining a safe and effective service.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. The staffing model proposed will deliver significant savings as part of the Provider Services project, whilst continuing to provide an excellent service to Foster Carers, their families, and the children and young people they care for.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

16. The new staffing model will deliver savings of £289,743 and will contribute towards the Provider Services Option for Change savings target of £3.127m (2016/17 – 2018/19).

² This figure includes Foster Carer assessments.

³ Beecham & Ogilvie (2007) report average caseloads of between 7-22 households in a study of Local Authorities Foster Carer support.

HR Implications (MR 28/01/16)

17. The affected staff teams and recognised trade unions have been consulted on these proposals. The proposed post reductions will be achieved by deleting vacant posts.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the proposed Fostering Services staffing model, as set out in **Appendix 1**, is approved.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social Care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Tara Pasque
Project Manager, Programmes & Projects Team
T: 0115 977 2329
E: tara.pasque@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (SLB 03/03/16)

18. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SAS 08/03/16)

19. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 16 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Beecham, J & Sinclair, I \(2007\) Cost & Outcomes in Children's Social Care: Messages from Research](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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