

Fostering

Purpose of the report and Summary

This report has been completed at the request of the Corporate Parenting Board to provide statistical information about the numbers of foster carers who go on to care for children on a permanent basis and to provide a brief over view of Fostering for Adoption and Concurrent Placements.

Key Information and Questions for Board Members

The following data is taken from the period 1.4.2013 to 31.3.2014;

- 5 Lancashire foster carers adopted the child in their care, a further 3 are in the process but orders have not been completed.
- 21 Lancashire foster carers took a Special Guardianship order on the child in their care.
- 39 Lancashire foster carers who had children placed on a short term basis agreed for those children to become permanent placements (58 children).

Concurrent placements;

- To date 13 children have been placed with 10 families.
- 3 of these children are now adopted.
- 1 unborn child is currently matched to be placed at birth.
- 2 additional families are due to be approved.

Fostering for Adoption;

- The first fostering for adoption placement has been identified and is due to take place imminently.

Background

Concurrent placements and fostering for adoption are more recent routes to the traditional path to adoption.

What is concurrent planning?

Concurrent planning for children aged 0 – 2 years aims to achieve permanent families for the most vulnerable young children in local authority care. The child is placed directly with concurrent carers, who are approved both as foster carers and

adopters whilst the Court makes a decision about the child's future. During this time the child's parents and sometimes other family members are assessed to see whether the child can be cared for and brought up within his/her own family. The child either returns home to their birth family, or is adopted by their concurrent carers.

If the Court decide that the birth parents are able to meet the needs of the child, concurrent carers will be involved in helping the child return to their birth family. Concurrent carers will have given the child the love and security that was needed as well as helping them to settle back with their family.

Advantages of Concurrent Planning for Children and Carers

- Concurrent planning recognises the needs of very young children for stability and security
- It avoids the delay and repeated moves that young children can often experience in the care system
- It enables children to be placed earlier in a permanent family, whether this is with the birth family or concurrent carers who will become the child's adoptive family
- If the concurrent carers do adopt the child they have cared for, they will have the advantage of having cared for the child from a young age and they will be in a special position of knowing the child's birth parents and understanding their difficulties having met them during contact

Fostering for Adoption

Fostering for Adoption is the most recent initiative to feature within the adoption system.

There are circumstances where it is appropriate and lawful to place a child with carers who are dually approved as adopters and foster carers during the period of temporary care and until the court makes a decision about the appropriate order by which the child's long term future is secured in the event that an order is necessary.

It is important to understand the differences between concurrency and Fostering for Adoption. Concurrent planning requires the identification and delivery of a a plan to return the child home while the child is placed with carers who are approved for both fostering and adoption and who support the plan. In the event the plan proves to be unsuccessful the foster carers can go on to adopt the child once care proceedings and the placement order application are completed.

In fostering for adoption the child must have a plan of adoption. The plan need not have been agreed before the court and or by the adoption agency decision maker. The plan therefore could be subject to change.

Under current law and regulations the local authority have responsibility for determining which foster carers the child is placed with until care proceedings and the placement order application is decided.

When would fostering for adoption be appropriate?

There are a range of circumstances which may indicate that in planning for the child placing with carers who are approved for both adoption and fostering might be the best child-centred plan. It is essential that the local authority has fully explored its responsibilities to engage the birth parents and the wider family.

Where these have been explored and no options realistically identified then Fostering for Adoption may apply. Typically in one of the following circumstances:

- Where parents have had one or more children previously placed for adoption or other forms of permanence and their circumstances have not changed significantly.
- Where this is the first child the circumstances of the parents and the level of risk to the child are so profound there is no proactive plan to return the child to the birth parents or other family members.
- Where parents have indicated they may wish their child to be adopted but have not formally consented.

Decisions required

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note the content. No decision is required.

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