

## MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017/2018 REPORT

### MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
6<sup>th</sup> September 2017

### REPORT OF:

Executive Director of Children's Services

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<b>Agenda - Part:</b>	<b>Item: Update Report</b>
<b>Subject: Fostering &amp; Adoption Services in Enfield</b>	
<b>Wards: All</b>	
<b>Cabinet Member consulted: Cllr Orhan</b>	

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Fostering & Adoption Services between April 2016 and March 2017. It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that Members receive regular reports on the work of the Fostering & Adoption Services. In Summary:

- Fostering recruitment is robust with the likely numbers for 2017/18 to increase still further. In 2016-17, we assessed and approved 12 foster families. This current year we are anticipating 22-25 approvals.
- The adoption service is increasing the number of adopters recruited this year as we have now used those approved adopters we had in reserve who had been waiting for some time to be matched with a child.
- There has been an increase in the number of SGOs granted over the last 2-3 years. In 2015-16, 11 SGOs were granted on children previously looked after. In 2016/17, 32 SGOs were granted on children previously looked after and 10 SGOs on non-LAC children making a total of 42 SGOs. This year to date, 12 SGOs have been granted with more expected by the end of the financial year. We already have 20 special guardianship assessments being completed at present with numbers continuing to rise.
- In 2016-17, 10 Adoption Orders were granted. This year to date, 10 Adoption Orders have already been granted with 8 more anticipated making a total of 18 Adoption Orders by the end of this financial year
- Currently, 12 children are waiting to be placed with adoptive families. Out of these 12 children, 10 are in the process of being matched with adopters, have already been matched or are in the early stages of having families considered. For the remaining 2 children, robust family finding is taking place. (See appendix for fuller information).

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the findings of this report.

## **3. PLEASE SEE APPENDIX (FULL REPORT) ATTACHED.**

## **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

This report is for information.

## **5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To report to Members on the work and performance of Enfield's Fostering and Adoption Services.

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS**

### **6.1 Financial Implications**

The adoption allowances that have been paid has remained relatively stable over the past few years with a slight reduction since the last OCS report in October 2016. However, the amount paid out in SGO allowances have continued to grow showing a significant increase over the last few years which is expected to rise. The fostering allowances are comparable with other local authorities although we are currently reviewing the second child rate element in the allowance, as this appears to be lower than that of other local authorities, which may be impacting on our recruitment of foster carers.

### **6.2 Legal Implications**

The work of the adoption service is undertaken in accordance with the Adoption Regulations and the National Minimum Standards. Section 3 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 requires all local authorities to maintain a service to meet the needs of all people affected by adoption.

The requirements for a fostering service are set out in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the matters set out in this report comply with these requirements.

### **6.3 Property Implications**

There are no property implications.

## **7. KEY RISKS**

Any operational risks are minimised by attention to good practice in recruiting and preparing foster carers and adopters, good preparation for children, attention to detail during the introduction and transition process, and continuing support post placement.

## **8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

### **8.1 Fairness for All**

The fostering and adoption services provide homes for vulnerable children, keeps them safe from harm and allows them to benefit from a family life.

### **8.2 Growth and Sustainability**

The work of the North London Adoption and Fostering consortium delivers cost effective partnership working initiatives.

### **8.3 Strong Communities**

Foster carers and adopters are members of the community who provide a valuable service on behalf of vulnerable children in Enfield.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

Targeted recruitment strategies ensure we have a range of adopters and foster carers that can meet the needs of the complex and diverse range of children in our community.

Enfield Council has been assessed against the requirements of the Equality Framework and was accredited at the excellent level. This award has inspired the Council to continue to tackle inequality in the Borough and continue to build on the strengths of our diverse group of Councillors and staff groups that reflect the wider community to promote positive dialogue with our residents and service users. The Council is committed to being an exemplar of best practice in all equalities work.

## **10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The Fostering and Adoption Services are governed by the National Minimum Standards. Compliance is scrutinised by the Fostering and Adoption Panels and any performance related issues arising are managed by the Service.

## **11. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

The Council Health and Safety Unit comprises of four teams who provide a wide range of advice, guidance and assistance on matters of Asbestos Management, Fire Safety and Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare across the Council. The Looked After Children Service has an individual Health and Safety Procedure in place which all staff members have been sent. It is the responsibility of the Management Group to ensure that staff members adhere to the procedure as and when issues relating to health and safety arise.

## **12. HR IMPLICATIONS**

Enfield Council is committed to applying equalities when recruiting and is proud of a staff group that is represented of its community and the customer they serve. The Council has Policies in place so that all staff members are aware of their rights and the expectations required of them in carrying out their duties. Any misconduct and performance issues are dealt with robustly and all Council employees are required to work within the remits of the Dignity at Work Principles and the Employee Code of Conduct.

## **13. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

The increase in the recruitment of local foster carers in Enfield will ensure that children are placed in the locality to which they are familiar with. This will help in the building of stronger communities and social cohesion. Children will be better able to access the excellent range of services provided within the Borough.

Adoption provides a permanent home for children who cannot live within their own families. Adopters are supported to access both universal and specialist health services.

### **Background Papers**

Enfield Adoption and Fostering Annual Report 2016 - 2017