

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/15**

**COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

2ND JULY 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

Agenda Item No:

**Present Numbers of Foster
Carers and Deregistration
Reasons**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding the number of foster carers presently registered within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Members:

- (i) note the contents of this report.
- (ii) Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The remit of Rhondda Cynon Taff Fostering Service is to provide placements that meet the needs of children who become looked after. This is achieved either by placing children with foster carers that are recruited specifically to undertake the role or by placing children with relatives under a kinship care fostering arrangement (relative foster carers).

3.2 The annual Rhondda Cynon Taf Care and Social Services Wales Inspection of Fostering undertaken in February 2013 identified that overall foster carers were providing a good quality of care and a report was taken to Corporate Parenting Board on the 13th May 2014 detailing the inspection findings.

4. FOSTER CARER NUMBERS

4.1 The present numbers of children placed with foster carers within Rhondda Cynon Taf are **510** with **149** of these children being placed with kinship carers.

- 4.2 The Fostering Service recruited **29** new foster carers in 2013-2014, bringing the present total of foster carers registered with Rhondda Cynon Taf to **229**. Due to the number of looked after children it is not possible to place all of the children looked after with Rhondda Cynon Taf carers and therefore **200** children are presently placed with independent fostering agencies.

5. DEREGISTRATION PROCESS AND NUMBERS

- 5.1 During 2013-2014, **29** foster carers left the service. This number is made up of both Rhondda Cynon Taf carers and kinship carers. The reasons for termination with the service are:

8	De Registered
10	Foster Carers who were granted Special Guardianship Orders
5	Resigned due to a variety of reasons including one foster carer going back to University and one foster carer sadly dying.
6	Children were returned to parents and the kinship care arrangement ended.

- 5.2 The Fostering Regulations (Wales) 2003 require that all foster carers have their approval status reviewed on an annual basis. All reviews of approval reports are presented to the Fostering Panel, which is chaired by an independent person as required by the Fostering Regulations (Wales) 2003.
- 5.3 All foster carers are encouraged to contribute to the report that is presented to the Foster Panel and are provided with a copy. They are also able to separately provide written comments to the panel and are invited to attend and bring along an independent person to provide them with support.
- 5.4 Fostering Panel members are provided with a pack of information to consider with each review case, they are then able to give a recommendation to the agency on whether they agree to the:
- a) Foster carer approval being continued
 - b) Foster carer approval being terminated
 - c) Decision being deferred for additional information to be gathered before a recommendation is made.
- 5.5 Following the recommendation of Panel, the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) considers the papers. If the ADM is minded to agree with the Panel's recommendation to terminate the approval of a foster carer the carer is provided with a letter explaining the opportunities for appeal.

Carers can appeal within 28 days to either the RCT Fostering Panel to reconsider the case or to the Independent Review Panel (IRM). The IRM is facilitated by BAAF on behalf of Welsh Government and gives foster carers recourse to have their case reviewed independently of the Local Authority.

- 5.6 The IRM can only provide a recommendation which is then reconsidered by the ADM. The RCT ADM makes the final decision after reconsidering all the information following appeal. Foster carers are informed in writing of the decision.
- 5.7 Whilst the service provides support to foster carers, the main focus of the service is always on the ability of the foster carers to provide quality care to vulnerable looked after children.
- 5.8 From 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014 a total of **9** carers were presented to fostering panel which resulted in a recommendation to terminate approval of **8** (this number includes kinship carers). This is a decrease on the number of terminations of approval from 2012/13, when the total number of carers deregistered was **17**.
- 5.9 Reasons for recommendation of termination of approval are varied. During 2013/14 the following reasons for termination were noted:

1	Child Protection concerns
2	Issues with quality of care provided to children placed
1	Health and Safety concerns with home conditions/Pets
2	Unable to sustain positive working relationships with professionals. Dishonesty
1	Unable to provide placements to children where transport necessary. No placements provided for over a year.
1	Placement breakdown following foster carers relationship ending. Unable to offer placements to children.

- 5.10 Out of the **8** carers recommended for termination **4** carers have appealed to the IRM. The assessment made on **1** carer where a recommendation to terminate was approved was carried out by a social worker independent of RCT Fostering Service.
- 5.11 Terminating the approval of a foster carer is never taken lightly. It is acknowledged that the process is extremely difficult for the individual carers involved and also for staff who would have been supporting the carers for lengthy periods of time. It is therefore intended that annual Business Meetings will be set up with Members of the Fostering Panel and staff to reflect and consider lessons learnt from terminations undertaken and to, if necessary, develop and up-date guidance around this difficult area of work.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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2ND JULY 2014

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Item: Present Numbers of Foster Carers and Deregistration Reasons

Background papers: Annual Rhondda Cynon Taf Care and Social Services Wales Inspection of Fostering

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