



Cheshire East

TOGETHER for Children and Young People

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Cheshire East Fostering Service Annual Report

April 2020 – March 2021



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Cheshire East Fostering Service

Cheshire East is a busy, long-established local authority fostering service, which undertakes the full range of fostering work from mainstream recruitment and assessment to connected person assessment and training, support and supervision of all carers. The team is centralised and operates from an office base in Middlewich and covers the whole of Cheshire East, which is a large geographical area.

The fostering service in Cheshire East recruits, trains and supports mainstream and connected carers so that we can place our children in high quality foster placements close to their family, friends and school. It is a regulated service and is subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act 2000.

We provide high quality, stable placements for children with mainstream and connected foster carers, who can meet their needs, and who have high quality support, supervision and training. Our service is founded on good relationships with foster carers, with children and their social workers, and with everyone involved in the child's network, built on honesty, integrity, challenge and support, and we make strenuous efforts to achieve this. We make consistent efforts to listen and respond to our carers, ensuring that problems or worries are talked about openly and resolved quickly. We want our carers to have a voice and to be involved in the development of the service, and to this end we have significantly strengthened our consultations with foster carers and the ways in which we involve them in service development.



Where it is possible to do so, children will be supported within their own family with the provision of necessary services to ensure that children are safe and protected. If this is not possible, then they will be placed with extended family as connected carers in their own community. Where neither of these things is possible, early permanence with an adoptive or fostering family will be sought, and sometimes this can happen by the use of 'foster to adopt' placements. It is intended in 2021-22 to complete additional work with the regionalised adoption service of which Cheshire East is part about the use of concurrency placements.

The fostering service is managed by a Head of Service who also manages the Children with Disabilities service in Cheshire East. There is a Fostering Service Manager, and then four team managers with the social work teams under them. The business administrative support team is line managed through a separate line of accountability



but is part of the fostering service. There is a team of just over five full time equivalent fostering support workers who provide support to the service in respect of ensuring that checks are completed and who provide support groups for Sons and Daughters, for new foster carers to complete their Training and Development Standards and some general support groups such as 'Walk and Talk'. Fostering support workers are loosely attached to each of the teams.

Gill, a birth child says:

"It makes me appreciate my own parents as I see how much they put into me, C, and L. They give us their all and will really do most things we ask/want.

My room is my privacy and the boys respect that and I theirs. I don't mind sharing our animals as they are kind to them. L is really sweet and very kind in nature. My friends also think the same."

Teams in the Fostering Service

We have five teams in the Fostering Service:

- **Mainstream Recruitment and Assessment Team** – 2.5 full time equivalent social workers and a team manager – involvement in and oversight of all mainstream recruitment activity, responding to initial enquiries, arranging and undertaking initial visits and undertaking full fostering assessments and presenting these to the Fostering Panel. More recently, the team have been providing support and supervision to new carers following approval until the first review at 6 months. In this time period, the supervising social worker will ensure that the carers have a good induction and complete the required training to start them off in their fostering journey. The training officer post is also located in this team, and this worker provides Skills to Foster training for both mainstream and connected carers prior to their full approval, as well as ensuring that mandatory training is undertaken by carers, and developing a training programme for the year which is engaging and challenging for foster carers. Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and proving necessary equipment to carers.



- Connected Carer Assessment and Support Team** – 8.5 full time equivalent supervising social workers and a team manager. This team go out with children’s social workers to see possible Regulation 24 carers when a child needs to be looked after by someone other than a birth parent and the role in this instance is to advise and support the child’s social worker in the application of fostering regulations and to assist in determining suitability. The team also undertake viability assessments and full fostering assessments of connected carers and provide support and supervision once children are placed and when full approval is given. Much of the work of this team is driven by court timescales and most assessments are filed within the care proceedings. Where the overall care plan is one of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), this team will undertake the SGO assessment. Some SGO assessments are ‘private’ in the sense that the child is not a cared for child and there may only have been limited involvement from children’s services for the child. There is a small sub-team in this team, consisting of a supervising social worker, a half time education support worker and a family support worker who is also part time. This sub team have oversight of all Special Guardians in Cheshire East and provide support groups and training to this group, as well as individual support where this is needed. The children in this group are generally not open cases to social care, and the input is to support the whole family rather than being on an allocated child basis. Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and proving necessary equipment to carers.
- Mockingbird Support and Supervision Team** – two supervising social workers and a team manager. One of the supervising social workers is the liaison worker required by the Mockingbird model and this worker supervises the hub home carer for each constellation and also some of the constellation carers. There are significant reporting and fidelity requirements associated with Mockingbird, and this team collates that information which is fed back to the Fostering Network. This team has also been working on the development of the second constellation which will launch in early 2022. The Mockingbird team also supervises and supports some mainstream carers who are not Mockingbird carers. This is a legacy position due to the fact that the staff were already established in the support and supervision team before moving across to the newly established Mockingbird team, and where possible we try not to disrupt carers support experience by frequent changes of supervising social worker unless that is absolutely necessary. The Team Manager of this team also takes a turn in being the Duty Placements Manager to support the placement of children in urgent need of care. Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and proving necessary equipment to carers.
- Mainstream Support and Supervision Team** – 7.6 supervising social workers and a team manager. This team provides support and supervision to mainstream, short breaks carers and some connected carers. One supervising social worker in this team takes the lead in urgent placement finding for children and also in long term permanent placement finding for children, he works closely with the Placement Team in this regard, which has responsibility for the commissioning of external placements, both fostering and residential for children, he is assisted in this task by a part time fostering support worker. Another

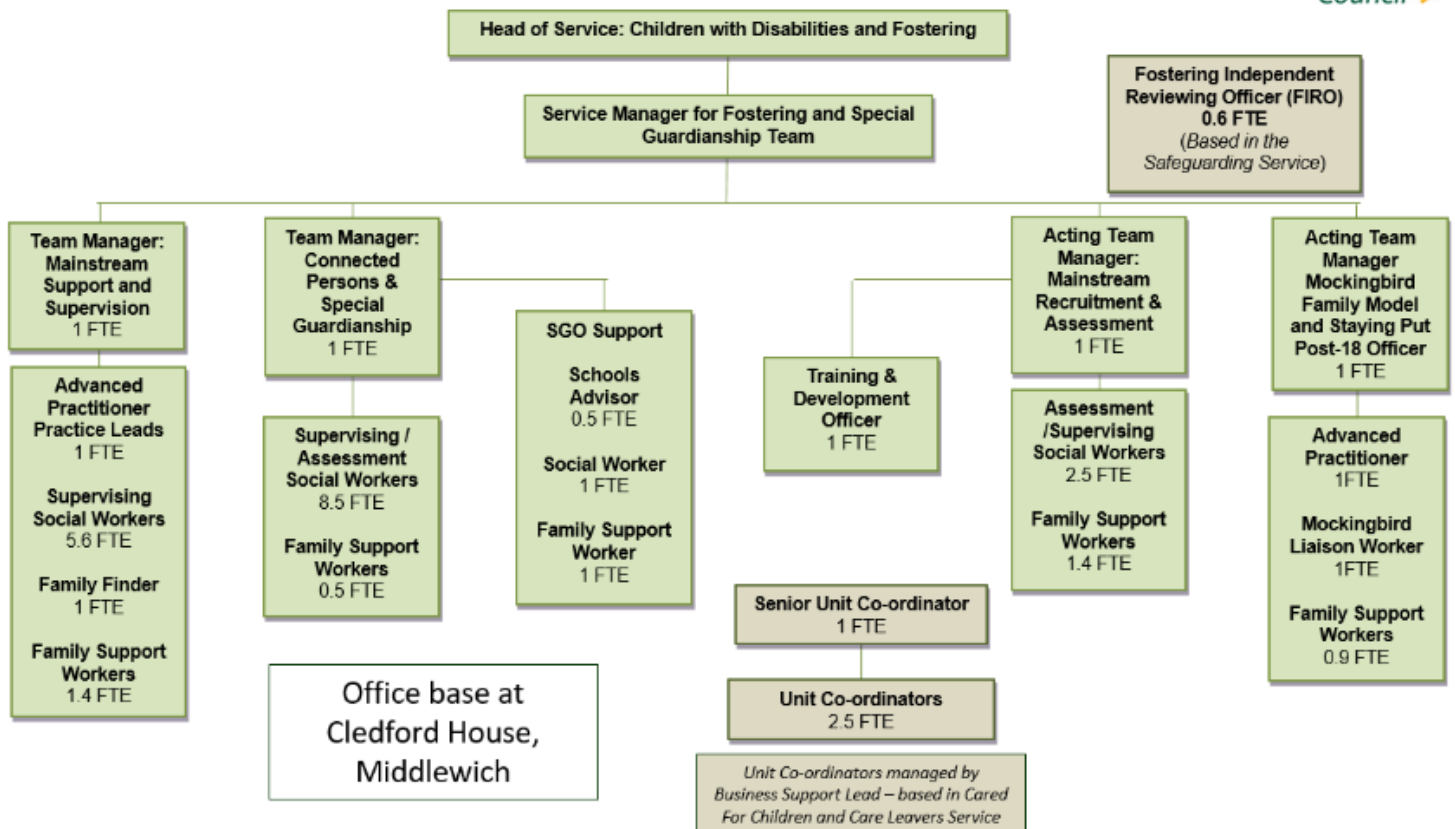


supervising social worker provides support and supervision to all of the short break carers and works closely with the children with disabilities service in order to achieve this, she also has some mainstream and connected carers on her caseload too. Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and proving necessary equipment to carers.

- Business Administrative Support Team** – This team has one full time senior unit co-ordinator and 4 unit co-ordinators, one of whom is full time. They provide administrative support to the service in the conduct of fostering checks and data collection. This team will also ensure that office telephones are answered, messages are appropriately directed, and will send out communications as required to foster carers. A key element of this role is the support to the fostering panel by taking minutes, liaison with the panel chair to ensure that minutes are correct and approved, ensuring that the reports are placed on the SharePoint for panel members to have access to prior to panel, and that the reports and minutes are provided to the Agency Decision Maker in a timely way for the final decision to be made. They then ensure that this is placed on Liquid Logic and that the carer goes on the Register of Foster Carers.

Fostering Service Structure Chart

Fostering and Special Guardianship Team



Fostering Panel

Meets two and sometimes three times per month to consider panel business. The panel chair is independent and is not employed by Cheshire East. panel is assisted by an independent service advisor who again, is not employed by Cheshire East, and he undertakes the gatekeeping function for panel to ensure that all matters placed before panel meet the necessary minimum regulatory requirements. The service advisor has experience of chairing other local authority panels and independent fostering agencies (IFAs) and brings that experience and knowledge to the role. There is also a vice chair of panel who takes the chair when the usual panel chair is unavailable for some reason. The central list consists of a further eight panel members aside from the chair and vice chair. The service advisor does not sit as a voting panel member, his role is to provide advice to panel and to the service.

Fostering Development Board

Oversight and governance of the fostering service is via a development board which consists of the Director of Children's Social Care, the Head of Service, Service Manager, Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer, Mockingbird Team Manager, Head of Service for Children's Commissioning and a linked staff member from communications. This group oversee and drive the development plan for the service and ensure that targets are set and adhered to.

Summary of 2020 – 2021

The period April 2020 to March 2021 was characterised by Covid and the restrictions that individuals were placed under to contain the virus. The impact on every citizen was significant, but especially so for foster carers and children, particularly when the schools were closed. In no sense was this a 'normal' year.

Face to face contact for children with their families was stopped for a time and happened via video conferencing. There were some unanticipated consequences of this, one of which was that children generally seemed to find virtual contact less disruptive than when face to face, with fewer issues of young children being upset after it had happened, and also of parents being able to see the foster carer actively supporting their child to have contact with them, and thus improving the relationship between the carers and the parent as a result. There is no doubt that for many children, the absence of seeing a parent or loved one face to face was a significant and difficult event. We had thought that restrictions may result in placement disruptions, but this did not happen any more than it happens in more normal times. There were a number of foster carers who felt unable to take new children into their home over the last nine months of 2020, this being a time when no-one had been vaccinated and there was an understandable high level of concern about Covid, particularly for older carers and those with an underlying condition.



This eased somewhat in early 2021, when the vaccine was being rolled out and becoming more readily available.

Placement demand continued to be steady through the year, with particular pressures in placement finding for teenagers with some complex or challenging behaviours, and also for sibling groups.

Mainstream Recruitment and Assessment

Prior to October 2020, Cheshire East had been in a collaborative recruitment arrangement with the other three Cheshire local authorities, and an independent review of the fostering service in January 2020 reached the conclusion that this was not working well for Cheshire East, and the decision was taken to leave Foster 4.

This was planned to have happened at the end of June 2020, however, the Covid pandemic resulted in this being delayed until the end of September 2020, and on 1st October 2020 Cheshire East commenced recruitment under our new 'Together for Fostering' branding which we had been developing for some months beforehand, together with foster carers. Enquiry numbers increased significantly, and we were generally undertaking around 12-14 mainstream fostering assessments at any one time. However, it soon became apparent that this would not be a normal year in terms of the expected ebbs and flows of fostering recruitment that usually happen. It seemed that the reality and practicalities of Covid were disrupting the usual rhythms of foster carer recruitment, and further, that most local authorities across the North West were experiencing this, as well as IFAs. This strongly indicated that there were other forces at work in terms of people's choices and decision making, and that force seemed to be Covid.

- Between 1st April 2020 and 31 March 2021, there were:
 - 181 initial enquiries
 - 63 initial visits
- In the year 2020-2021, we approved 15 new mainstream fostering households which provided 23 homes for children, plus another six homes if siblings were able to share a bedroom. This was an improvement on the previous year 2019-2020 when we were with Foster 4; during that year, eight new fostering households were approved.

At the time of writing, there is no obvious sign that the usual patterns of enquiries and recruitment will re-emerge imminently. However, we continue to make huge efforts to recruit carers and ensure that anyone who does make an enquiry has our comprehensive information booklet and has a conversation with a knowledgeable staff member, who can answer any questions and arrange for an initial visit to take place. We have also held



drop-in virtual sessions for those interested in fostering but who want to know more before they submit an enquiry.

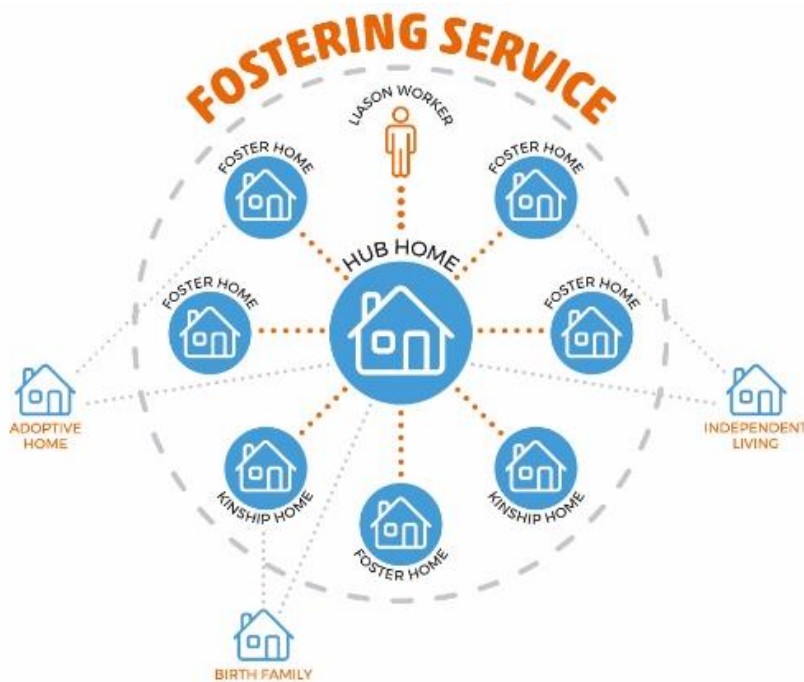
Design an Easter Egg Competition

In April 2020 we had a competition to design an Easter egg for children of foster carers, in collaboration with regional fostering services. One of our children won second prize and a voucher; this is their picture, the bunny egg.



Mockingbird

The other notable event of this year was the development and launch of Mockingbird in Cheshire East. Cheshire East were successful in a bid to the Department for Education to work alongside the Foster Network to develop Mockingbird. We had appointed a Mockingbird team manager in March 2020, and we advertised among our foster carers for a hub home carer and the decision was made by a competitive interview process. Mockingbird as a model is entirely reliant on good relationships between the carers in the constellation and the hub home carer, and of course between the carers and the service. The relationships between the carers were all initiated and developed within a period when significant restrictions were in place, and it is a huge tribute to all those carers and staff that it got off to such a good start. The launch event was particularly moving – despite being virtual!



A Cheshire East Foster Care from the Implementation Working Group said:

“What an utterly marvellous event... a tribute to the tremendous job you have done and your leadership. (Hub Home Carer) was so impressive ...the team that she has already formed just looked so natural and really proves the power of foster carers and social workers working together as equals. She seems to have an innate ability to inspire and lead; I know the first hub home will be a great success.

I was so proud to be a fellow foster carer”

Our Fostering Network Mockingbird Coach wrote:

“(Satellite Carer) said the most touching thing I have ever heard during my 5 years of Mockingbird.....Mockingbird is heaven sent!!!”

A Satellite Carer has told us:

“As you know I am hugely grateful for all the support, guidance and friendship that being a part of the Mockingbird family has given me. As a newly approved foster carer with my first placement, I have always felt included, unjudged and have been able to tap into a huge wealth of knowledge and experience whenever I've needed. Never once have I ever felt alone as I know I have my Mockingbird family to fall back on.”

The first constellation initially consisted of eight families by March 2021; an experienced mainstream single female hub home carer, an experienced mainstream deputy hub home carer, four other mainstream carers, one of whom was newly approved and three friends and family carers. This is a good mix, and all of the carers feel that they have benefitted from the support that comes with Mockingbird.

A Child's Social Worker from Cheshire East Care Planning Team said:

“I think the Mockingbird model is a fantastic new resource and think it will be beneficial for both to my young person and his carers to be a part of it.”



Mainstream Support and Supervision and Retention of Foster Carers

In this year, we lost seven mainstream fostering households through resignation, no foster carers were de-registered. One of these carers went to an IFA and others moved away from fostering due to life changes, or retirement.

As of 31 March 2021, Cheshire East had 99 approved mainstream fostering households.

We reviewed historical investigative processes under the Designated Officer processes (formerly Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO) for foster carers to ascertain which stage of the process resulted in the most delay in resolving the issue. It was clear that the delay occurred due to a lack of timeliness in progressing foster carers reviews after the investigation and then attending Fostering Panel. As a result of this review, we changed our approach to this. Our new process is that key dates and timescales are set at the beginning of the process and that carers are informed about these. This has helped to ensure that this investigative process is managed and concluded within the shortest possible timeframe. When an investigative process is necessary, this is very stressful for foster carers and some leave fostering as a result. We believe that our improved approach has helped us to retain carers who may otherwise have left.

We believe that we offer high quality support to carers, and carers are encouraged to contact a manager if they have an issue. Managers have an 'open-door' policy and will always talk to carers who are unhappy about something.

A review of foster carer allowances and fees took place, there having been no change in these for several years. In Cheshire East, foster carers get a professional fee for each child, as well as allowances, most fostering services pay one fee only. Going forward, the pay award for foster carers will mirror the pay award given to council staff negotiated through the National Joint Council. Foster carers were given a pay increase that was backdated to April 2020 which took account of the years in which there had been no increase at all. This means that Cheshire East payments to foster carers are among the highest local authority payments in the North West. Our allowances are paid at rates that are above the national minimum recommendation.

We do our utmost not to disrupt the relationship between the foster carer and their supervising social workers, as we know that this can make carers feel that they need to 'start again' with a new worker, we believe that the best support for foster carers is to have a supervising social worker that they trust and feel they can rely on. There are times when changes need to happen however, and we try to make this as easy as possible. Over the year 2020-21, we had a number of staff in the support and supervision team who were on maternity leave and so we had several interim workers to cover their roles.



A birth child and a placed child said:

“I see N as my sister”
 N’s comments: “I don’t feel like it’s my foster home it’s just my home - I want everything to stay normal”

Long term family finding also happens in this team, as well as the immediate finding of homes for children who need to come into care at short notice. Sometimes, long term families are sought from IFA carers, and staff in this team will read the Form F of potential matches and will then take things forward to secure permanent homes for these children.



Some very wet Walking and Talking Foster Carers

Another child says...

What do you like about living with your foster carer(s)?

“They are really nice. I like our holidays and spending lots of time together. We have trips to the beach and go to watch Leeds Utd play – that’s fun! I’m allowed to go out and play with my friends and my friends are allowed to come to our house.”

What activities do you enjoy doing the most with your foster carer(s)?

“Watching Leeds Utd play and going to Elland Rd stadium. Watching movies and having a takeaway. We go on lots of walks with the dog. Going to Wales to see C, seeing the siblings playing and popping in on M and J for a chat and a coke”

Is there anything you don’t like about your foster carers?

“Not really. They’re fair”



Connected Carer Assessment and Support and Special Guardianship Team

The connected team in Cheshire East is busy team with a steady stream of viability assessments and Regulation 24 work also. We will place a child with their extended family where it is safe to do so, and children usually thrive in these placements. Because we know that connected carers often need to deal with difficult family dynamics around issues such as contact, birthdays and festivals, we have been able this year to develop and provide a Skills to Foster training course for connected carers that not only puts them in touch with each other as connected carers, but also helps them to think about and prepare for the difficulties and dilemmas involved in caring for a child from your wider family network.

In 2020-21, we did 242 Viability Assessments, of which 81 resulted in a full Fostering Assessment. Of these 81 assessments, 31 resulted in the permanent placement of children. The remaining 50 ended in one of the following options:

- Applicants withdrew
- Applicants were assessed as a contingency and the children were never placed.
- Applicants were considered not suitable to be recommended as alternative carers.

When a child who lives with a connected carer is placed on a full care order at the end of care proceedings, the placement is the permanent home for the child until they are 18 or no longer need to be cared for. During the court process, the needs of the child are considered against the capacity of the carer, and this is a matching process, so there is no plan that the child will ever move. Connected carers receive the same payments as mainstream foster carers and the same opportunities for training and development. Generally speaking, the foster carer will continue to be supervised and supported by the same person who did their assessment, thus helping to build that critical relationship of trust.

Within the connected team, there is a small sub-team which works with families where an SGO has been granted. The children may sometimes be open to a social worker, but the support provided by this team is to the family unit, rather than to the child. This team arranges support groups and meetings, special guardians also have access to the training that foster carers have, and if there are particular issues that need to be addressed but are not significant enough to warrant that the child has a social worker, then this small team can provide some bespoke support.



Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer

We are fortunate during this year to have recruited a knowledgeable Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) with an excellent understanding of fostering to undertake foster carer reviews. She inherited a position whereby some reviews were out of timescale, but she has worked hard to rectify this position since then. Foster carer reviews have generally been held virtually, with some being face to face where the issues were difficult or complex or carers were upset about something. It is hoped that we can get back to more reviews being face-to-face over 2021-22.

- 78% (138) of foster carer reviews were on time, and 21.6% (38) were out of timescale. Reasons for being out of timescale usually related to there having been a Designated Officer investigation.

During reviews, if there are concerns, consistent effort is made to ensure that there is a plan developed that will support the carer through the necessary development and training to resolve the issues. Secure Base interview techniques have been used successfully in this context with some carers.

J, a child, told the Reviewing Officer:

“Grandpa's doing an amazing job, we are all really proud of him, stepping up to take care of us when Gran died”

Successes in 2020 – 2021

Despite the difficulties posed by Covid, we had lots of successes in 2020-21:

- On 1 October 2020 we launched our own fostering brand ‘Together for Fostering’ which we had developed over many months with foster carers.
- In October 2020 we launched our first Mockingbird constellation with funding from the DfE and in partnership with The Fostering Network. The launch was a virtual event which involved all the Mockingbird carers who each spoke about why they had become part of it and what their hopes were for Mockingbird in Cheshire East.
- We had identified that there was an issue about the involvement of foster carers in the service, and so we ensured that all major fostering activity was undertaken in collaboration with foster carers, such as the branding and marketing, Mockingbird, SharePoint and Portal development and also in relation to the development of policies and procedures.
- We have recruited more mainstream foster carers this year – 15 – this is more than we have recruited for a number of years, and this was a significant improvement on the previous year with Foster 4, where we recruited eight mainstream fostering households.
- We recruited to our training and development post and have been able to develop a comprehensive training offer for foster carers and also to provide Skills to Foster for



mainstream and a separate Skills to Foster offer for connected applicants to take account of and reflect the different nature of fostering for them and some of the family tensions that they may experience as a result.

- We have used some of the Mockingbird principles to develop a buddying/mentoring scheme using existing carers to support newly approved carers for carers who are not in Mockingbird.
- During the Covid lockdown period, when schools were closed, we paid all carers an additional £25 per week per child to help carers with the additional costs of having children at home all the time.
- We started a regular newsletter which goes out about every two months and contains a variety of information about the service, about numbers of cared for children, activity in the fostering service and other interesting reading; these have been well received and foster carers have also contributed items for the newsletter.
- In May 2020 the safeguarding service appointed a new fostering independent reviewing officer who had an established track record of working within fostering services.
- In collaboration with foster carers, we developed a SharePoint for all foster carers, this contains policy and procedure information, newsletters and other articles with interesting reading on a variety of subjects, all new foster carers get a log in as part of their induction process.
- In collaboration with foster carers, we developed a Portal for foster carers, this enables them to submit a (currently limited) number of forms into the fostering service and the form goes straight into Liquid Logic, our case management system. The variety of forms will be increased over the coming months following a reconfiguration of the fostering part of Liquid Logic.
- We increased the fee payments for all foster carers in April 2020.
- We started the process of recruiting to a new post of Assessment and Recruitment Team Manager. This ensured that this area would be given particular focus and drive.
- We found homes for three children who had Covid because our carers were willing to take them into their homes.
- During Covid lockdowns, we increased our frequency of contact with foster carers to ensure that they and everyone in their household were ok.
- We supported carers during lockdowns by doing shopping and other essential things for them when they were unable to do this for themselves due to the need of someone in the household to shield.
- We improved our response to complaints made by foster carers to ensure that discussions always took place with carers who had an issue and that issues were resolved as soon as possible.
- We undertook a review of Designated Officer investigations over the previous few years due to concerns from carers that these were taking too long to resolve. The review found that the delay in resolution was arising during the internal fostering processes, and not due to delay in the formal investigative process being concluded. As a result, we developed a new process whereby all necessary steps and meetings (foster carer review and fostering panel) were booked in at the start of the process, and foster carers were informed about this and had some confidence in the timescales for resolving the issues. This has resulted in the overall duration of



these processes being significantly reduced, which is better for foster carers, and better for the service.

- The Fostering Development Board became the key governance body for the fostering service, recognising that the improvement of the fostering service, and mainstream recruitment in particular, are central to the overall health of children’s services. The Fostering Development Board is the primary means by which plans are developed, tracked and implemented and reviewed, and will ensure the progression and delivery of the plans for 2021-2022.

Challenges of 2020-2021

- Covid presented a number of challenges not least of which initially was a lack of available technology to undertake video calling to foster carers and other staff members, however this was rectified fairly quickly to help carers use technology to interact and undertake meetings and virtual visits.
- It took staff and carers some time to adjust to the new ways of working that were necessitated by Covid such as risk assessments and virtual visits.
- Ensuring that the Fostering Panel was able to continue to function effectively during lockdown, initially this was facilitated by telephone conference calling and then later via Teams.
- Some newly approved foster carers did not feel able to take a child into their home after approval and later resigned without ever having cared for a child.
- Some foster carers did not feel able to take new children into their homes during the tightest lockdown periods, so placement options were reduced during those times.
- Some foster carers were hesitant about resuming in person visiting by supervising social workers
- Some new enquirers and applicants found it hard to fully commit to fostering during the uncertainty that Covid created.

Plans for 2021-22

Service Development Plans 2021-2022

| What | By Whom | When |
|---|--|--|
| Our training opportunities for foster carers will develop into a blended approach of face to face and webinars or online training – Covid permitting! | Training SSW | February 2022 |
| We will develop Reflective Groups for foster carers, facilitated by staff and carers themselves | Training SSW, Supervising Social Workers | Launch August 2021, then recruit carers for a second group to launch in year |



| | | |
|--|---|---|
| We will continue to promote placement stability and to match children into long-term placements where that is the right thing to do | All | Ongoing |
| We will continue to support special guardians and their children, and we note that there seems to be a more general acceptance and commitment nationally to the importance of this work | SGO Team | Ongoing |
| We will launch our second Mockingbird constellation | Mockingbird Lead Team Manager | January 2022 |
| We will explore the use of concurrency placements with Adoption Counts, our regionalised adoption service | Service Manager | January 2022 |
| We will continue to use Foster to Adopt where possible in order to promote early permanence for children | All | Ongoing |
| Funding has been secured for a programme of optimization of the fostering areas of Liquid Logic, our case management system which will ensure that the processes and workflows for fostering are more closely synchronised with the way in which cases evolve, particularly for connected carers. This will mean in turn that we have accurate reporting of performance and timeliness for the fostering service and will be better positioned to understand and develop our own performance | All, in consultation with Project Manager for Optimization and ICS team | Launch December 2021 and then review and refine |
| We will continually review our performance in key areas and make changes where they are needed in order to ensure that the service is self-critical and responsive | All | Ongoing |

Diversity Plans 2021-2022

| What | By Whom | When |
|--|--|--------------|
| Increase the diversity of the fostering panel central list to ensure that we have a wide variety of ages and cultural backgrounds and in particular, representation of people with an experience of having been cared for | Service Manager and Panel Chair | January 2022 |
| We will ensure that our recruitment materials, advertising and methods of recruitment are accessible to all and are reflective of the diverse population that live in Cheshire East and will attract a wide range of people to become foster carers for Cheshire East. | Comms Lead, Service Manager and Recruitment TM | Ongoing |



| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| We will undertake targeted recruitment to find warm and welcoming homes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. | Comms Lead, Service Manager and Recruitment TM | January 2022 |
| We will continue to ensure that all foster carers receive training in relation to diversity which encompasses ethnicity, social class, gender identity, sexuality and disability | Training SSW and Supervising Social Workers | Ongoing |

Consultation and Involvement Plans 2021-2022

| What | By Whom | When |
|--|--|--------------|
| We will continue to ensure that foster carers are routinely involved in the development of the service | Head of Service, Service Manager, Team Managers, Training SSW, Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer | Ongoing |
| We will begin to work with carers to develop a Foster Carer Association with key foster carer representatives with whom the service can consult. | Head of Service, Service Manager, Team Managers | January 2022 |
| We will develop a year-long plan of foster carer forums which will be undertaken either virtually or in person (depending on Covid) to ensure that carers have the chance to meet and mix with each other and talk things through with service representatives | Head of Service, Service Manager, Team Managers | January 2022 |
| We will continue to ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly and thoroughly and respond to all concerns raised | Head of Service, Service Manager, Team Managers | Ongoing |

Mainstream Fostering Household Recruitment Plans 2021-2022

| What | By Whom | When |
|---|--|--------------|
| Cheshire East intends to become a Fostering Friendly Employer | Head of Service | March 2022 |
| We will get out and about to shows and other events in the Cheshire East area, such as The Cheshire Show and Geronimo and become involved in local networking events to | Head of Service, Service Manager, Team Managers, | January 2022 |



| | | |
|--|---|--------------|
| promote the Cheshire East fostering service and enhance our foster carer recruitment | Supervising Social Workers, Fostering Support Workers, Comms Lead. | |
| We will undertake more community-based advertising and recruitment activities, developing links with local groups and organisations | Comms Lead, Assessment and Recruitment TM, Supervising Social Workers and Fostering Support Workers | April 2021 |
| We will develop and share a recruitment strategy 2021 - 2023, we want to be ambitious and regularly active to meet our sufficiency demands and attract new foster carers | Comms Lead, Service Manager and Assessment and Recruitment TM | April 2021 |
| We will start targeted recruitment to find homes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children | Comms Lead, Service Manager, Assessment and Recruitment TM | January 2022 |
| We will undertake targeted recruitment to find homes for young people who are in residential settings who want to live in a family, and to find homes for young people who may otherwise go into a residential setting | Comms Lead, Service Manager, Assessment and Recruitment TM | January 2022 |
| We will develop a Parent and Child Fostering Scheme to work with adult parents, and also with young people under 18 who are to become parents | Service Manager, Assessment and Recruitment TM | March 2022 |



Working for a **brighter future** together

