

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Out of Borough Placements

**REPORT OF:** Sheila Lock, Interim Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

---

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the nature of out of borough residential and foster placements. The report demonstrates the profile of provision and the statutory duties relating to placements for Looked After children.

---

---

### 1. POLICY CONTEXT

The information and proposals in this report are in line with the Council's statutory duties and with the outcomes for children and young people set out in the Corporate Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan and Gateshead's Sustainable Community Strategy - Vision 2030.

Giving children the best start in life is one of the four main priorities of the Council's Plan for 2014-17. Gateshead Council seeks to continuously improve outcomes for Looked After Children in order to improve their life chances and opportunities. These outcomes are closely linked to placement stability and ensuring that children have placement choice and are matched and placed with the right carers.

As a local Authority we need to have a sufficiency strategy that outlines the needs of our looked after population, the types of placements required and how we will meet the changing demands and requirements of a changing population. Within the sufficiency strategy it is recognised that whilst the majority of Gateshead's looked after population can be cared for within our own resources, there are a small number that need provision from a range of external providers.

### 2. BACKGROUND

In 2010, seven Local Authorities worked together to set up an Approved Provider List of Independent Fostering Agencies as it was apparent that local authorities were purchasing placements from Independent Fostering Agencies, however they were being charged differently and the monitoring of the agencies was not consistent within the region. The consortia approach was developed to achieve;

- Standardising prices across the region – a three level price model was implemented to fix prices and achieve better value for money across the region.
- Standardising processes across the region and streamlining quality assurance procedures – the consortia share information about the quality of care delivered and work together to improve the standards of foster care provisions across the region and improve safeguarding practices.

A Contracts framework was developed and implemented with the Independent Foster Care Providers who were willing and able to meet the tender criteria, This new framework and monitoring arrangements was implemented on 1 April 2011. This was reviewed in 2014/15 and there was an opportunity for additional providers to join this arrangement. Governance arrangements are in place to manage Provider relationships and to monitor the quality of provision.

### **3. Expectations of the Contract with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Providers**

There are clear expectations set out in accordance with National Contract Framework specification and terms and conditions,

- All providers will have equal opportunity regards being approached for work,
- there is a clarity of expectations and service requirements on commencement of contract
- There is an opportunity for collaborative working and continuous improvements throughout the duration of the contract

### **4. Commissioning and Monitoring Arrangements for Independent Fostering Agency placements**

Providers are evaluated as part of the commissioning agreement, Each Local authority has responsibility for the monitoring of specific Independent Fostering Agencies. They complete a quality monitoring visit prior to any agency being on the approved providers list and also undertake an annual check which consists of:-

- Quality evaluation - Pass/ Fail
- Insurance
- Financial Viability
- Health and Safety
- Safeguarding
- Equality and Diversity
- Ofsted inspection rating
- Submission of policies and procedures for checking
- Responses to method statements
- Provider confirmation they can meet agreed pricing schedule

The consortium meet with all providers on a 6 monthly basis to raise issues or concerns from either the provider or the consortium. This has proved beneficial and has helped with standardisation across agencies and Local Authorities.

If there are any issues relating to a specific agency or carer these are raised and addressed jointly by the fostering service and the contracts officer in commissioning with the agency.

### **5. Costs of Independent Fostering Agency Placements**

As part of the regional agreement the costs are standardised within the commissioning agreement. The Core Cost Specification comprises six placement types, one specialist arrangement and four age ranges.

The placement type and cost are agreed at the start of the placement and are reviewed in accordance with the child's LAC review and agreed with the IFA. The average cost is £750 per week.

## 6. Number of Out of Borough Placements

Every effort is made by the fostering service to place children within Gateshead, however this is not always possible and for some children it is necessary to place them outside of Gateshead.

On 21st September 2016 there was a total of 114 Looked After Children placed with foster carers outside of Gateshead:

- 86 children are with Gateshead foster carers
- 10 children are in placement with connected people (7 of those are under Reg 24).
- 18 children are in IFA placements

The majority of these young people are placed within a 20 mile radius of Gateshead and continue to attend education within Gateshead. This occasionally changes with permanent placements and can only be agreed as part of the care planning and review process for the child.

### **Total Number of Children in Out of Borough Fostering Placements**

Local Authority Area	Number of Children	Number of Carers
Barnet	4	4
Dunstable	1	1
Durham	31	18
Newcastle Upon Tyne	27	14
North Tyneside	2	2
North Yorkshire	1	1
Northumberland	11	8
South Tyneside	6	5
Stockton	1	1
Sunderland	30	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>70</b>

### **Children with In-house Foster carers who live Out of Borough**

Local Authority Area	Number of Children	Number of Carers
Barnet	4	4
Dunstable	1	1
Durham	26	13
Newcastle Upon Tyne	26	14
Northumberland	10	7
South Tyneside	5	4
Sunderland	24	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>53</b>

The four children that are placed in Barnet are a sibling group of Jewish Children, who needed to be out of the area to safeguard and protect them. These foster carers were assessed by staff from Gateshead's fostering service, were approved by Gateshead's fostering panel and are reviewed by reviewing officers from Gateshead.

They are supported by staff from Gateshead’s fostering service and Looked After Children’s team to ensure the children receive the best possible care.

### **Children in Reg 24 – (Connected Person carers) Out of Borough Placements**

Local Authority Area	Number of Children	Number of Carers
Dunstable	1	1
Newcastle Upon Tyne	3	2
Northumberland	1	1
Sunderland	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

These children are all placed with relatives whilst final decisions are made regarding their care plans, They are assessed and supported by the fostering service and approved by the fostering panel if the placement is required longer than 16 weeks

### **Children in Independently Commissioned Out of Borough Placements**

Local Authority Area	Number of Children	Number of Carers
Durham	5	4
Newcastle Upon Tyne	1	1
North Tyneside	2	2
North Yorkshire	1	1
Northumberland	1	1
South Tyneside	1	1
Stockton	1	1
Sunderland	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>

Whilst the fostering service do not have a direct responsibility in the support and supervision of these placements the fostering service do carry out safeguarding checks on an annual basis to ensure placements are safe and continue to meet the needs of the child/children in placement. These checks are completed prior to any placement being made and after each foster carer review.

The placement that is commissioned in Sheffield was necessary to safeguard and protect the children from their father. This needed to be out of the region and the address needed to be protected from all family members.

## **7. IFA Placements**

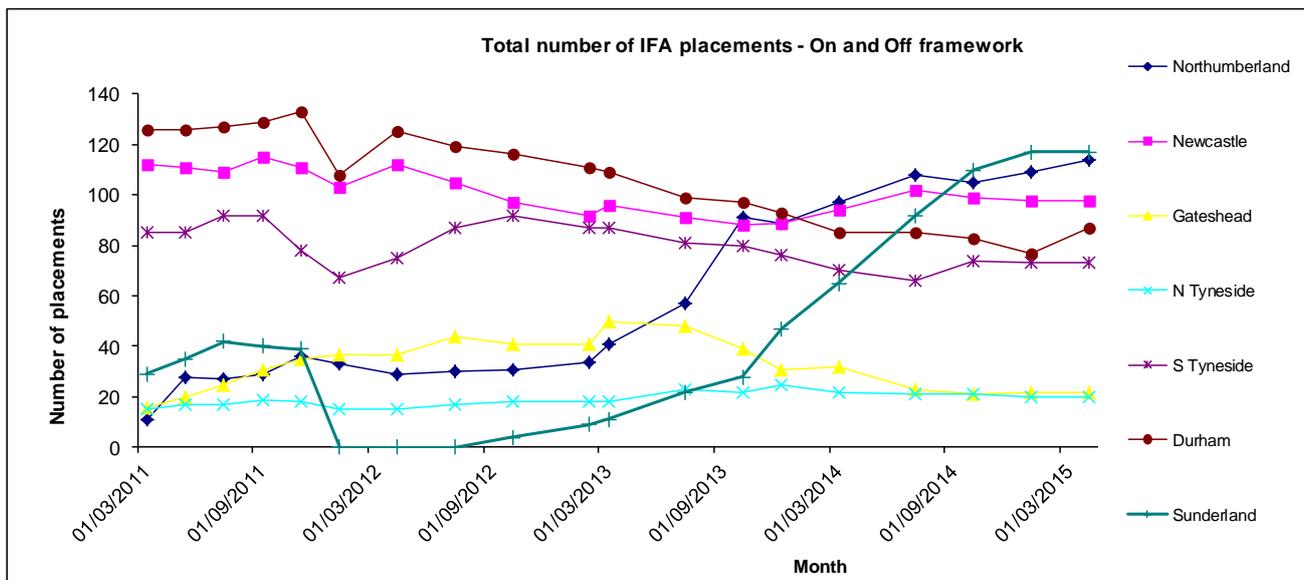
All Independent Fostering placements are approved and monitored by the regular External Placements Panel which is chaired by Elaine Devaney, Service Director – Children and Families. Every effort is made to keep the use of these placements to a minimum, and also to return children to our own foster placements as soon as possible. However if there are

ongoing care proceedings the Service is often directed by Court to leave the children in their placements until these proceedings are concluded.

## Numbers of Children Placed in IFA Placements

	31st March 2013	31st March 2014	31st March 2015	31st March 2016
Placed in IFA Placement	49	32	22	24

As of 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016, Gateshead had commissioned Independent Fostering Placements for 24 children. Of the new placements commissioned during the last financial year, six of these placements were needed for teenagers with complex and challenging behaviour where there were no in house foster carers with the necessary skills or space to accommodate them. Several sibling groups were also placed in Independent placements where the requirement from social workers was to keep the children together and it was not possible to do this within the Service.



Gateshead in comparison with the neighbouring regional Local authorities has a low usage of IFA placements and it is our aim to continue to reduce this further.

There has been an increase in requests for placements for children in the '13+' age range over the period 31st March 2011 to 30th November 2015. These are often the most complex children and difficult to place. Targeted recruitment has taken place over the last two years in an attempt to increase the number of teenage placements Gateshead can offer.

### Permanent Placements with IFA carers

There are 8 young who are matched long term with their IFA carers. This decision has been part of the care planning process for the child, agreed by the external placements panel and matched at Gateshead's fostering panel. Whilst this does have a financial implication for the council the decision has been made in order to provide placement stability and achieve best outcomes for the child.

There are also 7 young people where it has been agreed by the external placement panel that they will remain in their IFA placement as a task centred placement to independence as they are settled in placement and a move would be detrimental to them.

## 10. Private Residential Home Usage

Over the past year the number of young people in private residential care has been steady at 19 young people. Averaging one admission and one discharge a month.

From the current young people in private children's homes the profile is as follows;

- 6 children have disabilities and are in long term residential provision.
- 7 young people are 16-17 year old
- 2 young people are in secure welfare provision
- 7 have placement costs shared with health and or education services
- 3 younger children who are 8years, 9years and 11years are in treatment/assessment placements, 2 of which are supported with education and health funding

<b>Age and Geography of Young People in Private Residential Care</b>		
<b>AGE</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>
8 yrs	1	Cumbria
9 yrs	1	Cumbria
10 yrs	0	
11yrs	1	Cumbria
12yrs	1	Sunderland
13yrs	2	Cumbria, Newcastle
14yrs	4	Durham x2, Newcastle, Scotland (secure placement)
15yrs	2	Newcastle, Sunderland
16yrs	3	Cumbria x2, Middlesbrough
17yrs	4	Northumberland, Durham2, Scotland (secure placement)
<b>Total</b>	19	

The service strategy is committed to decreasing the overall number of young people in residential care meeting needs where appropriate in foster care. For a small number of young people residential care is necessary.

One of our in house residential children's homes will close in the coming months reducing in house resources by 5 beds. The service is planning alternative provision approaches to prevent young people requiring residential placements through strengthening early intervention approaches.

There are currently two females in custody both aged 17yrs old and are placed at Rainsbrook Young Offenders Institution, Rugby in Northamptonshire. One of these young people will leave custody in March and will be integrated back to the Gateshead area.

## 11. Out of Borough Arrangements

The ADCS host a website which allows local authorities to add secure contact details and procedures about notifying a local authority if a child is to be placed in their authority boundary area. When Gateshead places a child in another authority there is a clear process in place to inform the host authority and if there are significant risks to share that risk assessment with the authority and the police.

Several DCSs have suggested that it would also be helpful if secure email contact details for police forces were available. To that end in collaboration with the College of Policing

there is a pilot project which aims to encourage Local Authority colleagues to also notify the relevant police force when a child is being placed out of area, based on the needs/risk of the child. It is hoped that this additional notification channel will assist in the safeguarding of some of the most vulnerable children in the care system. The pilot will take place for 3 months starting on 1st March 2016.

The criteria for when to notify a Police Force is when a child placed out of area meets **1 or more** of the following:

- Is a victim of CSE
- Believed/suspected to be at risk of CSE
- Suspected/known to be a CSE perpetrator
- Has past episodes of missing/absent from care or home
- Has a gang involvement or association
- Is a trafficked child
- Is an unaccompanied asylum seeker.

Seven police forces will be taking part in the pilot:

- Greater Manchester Police
- Lancashire Police
- Kent Police
- Durham Police
- South Wales Police
- Norfolk Police
- Essex Police

## 12. Case Study

Female young person aged 14years mother has resumed chaotic risk taking behaviour. The service has attempted to evaluate whether any family members can look after the young person who will be placed under section 20 voluntarily looked after. The social worker has identified one family member and requested the fostering service undertake a viability assessment.

The fostering service worker visits the family member who lives in Sunderland and makes relevant checks. Their recommendation is positive that the family in the short term are suitable to become a connected person foster carer.

Full consultation takes place with the young person. A planning meeting takes place considering all of the implication if the young person is moved to the connected person foster carer.

The service manager confirms a decision to place the young person with the relative who becomes a connected person foster carer.

Notification is sent to the host authority regarding a child being placed in their area.

The young person is moved to the connected person foster carer. The foster carer transports the young person to her school in Gateshead.

A full assessment from the fostering service needs to be completed within the next 16 weeks and presented to the Fostering Panel.

### **13. Conclusion**

The fostering service continues to focus on the recruitment of foster carers within a 30 mile radius of the authority boundary. The service has successfully reduced the use of Independent fostering placement by half. The service has a strategy in place to further reduce Independent Fostering Agencies and private residential usage.

### **14. RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is asked to consider and comment upon the contents of this report.

**CONTACT:** Jill Little  
Service Manager  
Looked After Children Services  
Ext. 3420