

TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Fostering Service

REPORT OF: David Bunce, Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on Gateshead's Fostering Service, highlighting the progress made over the last 12 months and the plan for developing the service.

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is responsible for registration, regulation and inspection of services for young people. All schools, early years provision, children's residential care, fostering and adoption services must be registered and have regular assessments and inspections. This applies to all providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors

Background

The National Fostering Standards for England were written to ensure that looked after children, birth families, prospective/approved foster carers and the general public understand what they can expect from the fostering services. Many of the National Fostering Standards restate what is already required either by primary legislation or regulations in which case both local authorities and Voluntary Fostering Agencies must comply with them. The national minimum standards help the registration authorities in determining whether the fostering agency is meeting the relevant regulatory requirements.

Inspection and regulation by external and independent agencies assists with ensuring that children and young people are achieving the best possible outcomes and are being kept safe and free from harm. Monitoring of Service outcomes and Inspection and regulation reports also give an independent account to local citizens on how well services are doing and how public money is being spent.

In April 2011 the Government published new National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Fostering Services in England. Whilst there is no requirement under the regulations for the executive side of the local authority to receive written reports on the performance of its fostering service, it is deemed good practice to produce an annual report in order to monitor the management and outcomes of the

Service and ensure that the agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for the children in its care.

Whilst there is no guidance on what should be covered in the report, there should be sufficient information on all activities undertaken by the fostering service including information relating to service development.

The annual report for April 2014 –March 2015 is attached and gives an update on the activities and progress of the fostering service.

Recommendation

That the Corporate Parenting OSC is asked to consider and comment on the content of this report.