

**SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**



SPELTHORNE JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 13 MARCH 2019

**LEAD OFFICER: FRAN MAGNAVACCA, Fostering & Adoption
Recruitment and Marketing Officer, Surrey County
Council**

SUBJECT: FOSTERING IN SURREY

**AREA(S)
AFFECTED: ALL**

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

To raise awareness of fostering and the need for more foster carers in Spelthorne. Surrey County Council Fostering Service are actively recruiting across the county.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Spelthorne Joint Committee is asked to note that

- (i) Surrey Fostering Service are seeking support with their 2019 recruitment campaign from the borough and district councils, local businesses, community leaders and residents.
- (ii) There are many ways to encourage Spelthorne residents to consider fostering, support existing foster carers in the area and to ensure that Looked After children remain living in the borough. These could include:
 - Incentives for residents such as a reduction in council tax for foster carers or leisure passes for foster families in the borough.
 - Spelthorne-specific support groups or fun days for Looked After Children and Foster Carers.
 - Supporting Surrey Fostering Service by inviting us to host an information stall at community events and local celebrations.
 - Borough Councillors being mindful of fostering and the need for more foster carers when having discussions with residents in their divisions
 - Support to circulate marketing materials throughout the borough and fostering information through local communication bulletins/magazines etc.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To increase the number of foster carers in the county who can provide a stable, safe and loving home for Surrey's Looked After Children.

There are more positive outcomes for Surrey children when they are able to remain living in the county, close to their friends, family and school networks. There is also a significant cost saving for Surrey County Council, and its residents, when we are able to place children with Surrey County Council foster carers and do not have to use Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).

All Councillors in Surrey and its boroughs and districts have a responsibility for Surrey's Looked After Children.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 This item is for information.
- 1.2 The number of children coming into care in the UK is rising and as such there is a greater demand for foster carers across the nation. Surrey is not exempt from this. Over the past 3 years, the number of Looked After Children in Surrey has risen by over 10% to nearly 1000 children. Of those children who are fostered, over 40% are placed outside of Surrey with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) as there are not enough foster carers in the county.
- 1.3 At present there are around 300 Surrey County Council foster carers, however, there are over 500 children in Surrey living in foster homes. There are over 20 fostering households in Spelthorne.
- 1.4 All local authorities must comply with sufficiency duty legislation when deciding the most appropriate placement for a child. The following factors of a placement must be considered: Near the child's home; Does not disrupt his/her education or training; Enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling; Where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child; and is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable. Unfortunately, due to the deficit of foster carers in Surrey this is one area where we are not fulfilling our duty.
- 1.5 Currently we have 30 households being assessed to foster. The process to become a foster carer takes approximately 6 months. As such, efforts from recruitment campaigns are not always evident within the same year.
- 1.6 The Fostering Service aims to increase the number of foster carers for Surrey's Looked After Children and improve outcomes for vulnerable children in the county. In 2019-20 Surrey Fostering Service aims to recruit 50 new fostering households from across the county.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 Throughout 2019 Surrey Fostering Service will be visiting local shopping centres, libraries, coffee shops and community events as well as running campaigns on social media to encourage residents to consider becoming foster carers.
- 2.2 Surrey Fostering Service is currently looking at incentives that will encourage residents to consider fostering. This includes but is not limited to; increasing current allowance and fee payment rates, the introduction of a one-off set up

payment for newly approved foster carers, the implementation of the Mockingbird Family Model.

- 2.3 We will monitor the campaign monthly, looking for an increase in enquiries and applications.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 N/A

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 N/A.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 When Surrey County Council are unable to find a suitable placement with Surrey foster carers or there are no Surrey foster carers available, children will be placed with foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). IFAs are agencies that assess and approve foster carers. There are many IFAs that are for-profit organisations although some IFAs are not-for-profit.
- 5.2 The average cost to Surrey County Council to place a child with an IFA carer is £948. This cost is per child per week. With over 300 Surrey Looked After children placed with IFA carers the weekly cost to the council is over £284,000.
- 5.3 Through recruiting more Surrey foster carers the council will make savings of approximately £400 a week per child.

6. WIDER IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications
Equality and Diversity	Significant implications Surrey Fostering Service needs foster carers who are as diverse as the children they will care for. Surrey County Council has the third largest number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in England who need foster homes.

	Surrey Fostering Service has a dedicated recruitment officer whose role is to recruit more BAME foster carers as well as foster carers for UASC.
Localism (including community involvement and impact)	No significant implications
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	Significant implications Placing Surrey children with Surrey Foster Carers improves outcomes for the children and ensures the council meets its Sufficiency Duty. Children are able to remain within their local communities, maintain contact with their birth families and attend schools with their established peer groups. Furthermore, there would be better access to local services including CAMHs and Health and key workers would be based locally.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications
Public Health	No significant implications

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 7.1 Surrey Fostering Service is recruiting foster carers for children of all ages as well as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). We hope to create stronger working relationships with the District and Borough councils and communities across the county to help raise awareness of the need for more foster carers in Surrey.

8. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 8.1 Further information about fostering recruitment and marketing activities are available on request. We welcome all ideas or support from stakeholders, councillors and residents. The outcomes of Surrey Fostering Service's 2019-2020 Recruitment Campaign will be made available to the Joint Committee via a recruitment and marketing summary at year end (March/April 2020).

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Consulted: N/A

Annexes: N/A

Background papers: N/A

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