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Title of Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education
Title of report:	Annual Fostering Service Report, April 2022 to March 2023
Date of meeting:	14 December 2023
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Suzy Horton, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education
Author:	Jackie Clark - Service Leader, Fostering Service
Wards:	All

1. Requested by

1.1 Requested by: Lead Member for Children, Families and Education, Portsmouth City Council in line with The Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011, Review of Quality of Care Regulation 35 and in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Service 2011.

2. Purpose

2.1 The report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Fostering Service for the period 01/04/22-31/03/23.

3. Information requested

3.1 Activity of the Fostering Service contribution to the overall aims of the Corporate Parenting Strategy for the Children We Care For.

4. Introduction - Portsmouth Fostering Service

4.1 The Fostering Service's primary function is to provide excellent care to the children we care for in Portsmouth, by recruiting, assessing, training, and supporting approved foster carers who can offer sensitive and empathetic alternative family homes to children in care.

4.2 This report will describe the work of the service and how it achieves the outcomes that are set, from the moment someone contacts Portsmouth to show interest in fostering. It describes the assessment process, to approval as foster and connected

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foster carers, the training carers receive and to looking after children. It will describe the route for those children who will leave care through a Special Guardianship Order. It will outline what can be offered to children who reach 18 in a foster family through Staying Put arrangements or who need further support in a supported lodgings arrangement. The report will highlight the work of the Mockingbird model of care since it was introduced 2021. The report will also consider Private Fostering arrangements. Finally, it will provide data about various elements of the work and in conclusion the work for the year ahead.

5. Recruitment and Assessment Team

5.1 This team is the front door to the Fostering Service: 'Foster Portsmouth', through the recruitment of potential foster carers. The team participates in the recruitment campaigns, responds to all potential carer enquiries, undertakes initial home visits and initial statutory training and the assessment of potential carers. This team works closely with the fostering marketing officers who support with development and delivery of an annual foster carer recruitment strategy for 'Foster Portsmouth' to increase the numbers of people interested in fostering.

5.2 Foster carers are assessed and approved for the number of children for which they have the skills, qualities, experience, and physical space to care. This could be between 1 and 3 unrelated children. They are generically approved for the age range 0-18 but the assessment enables the assessing social worker and prospective carers to understand and decide their suitability and preferred age range of children. Foster carers can be approved for different types of care: respite, short term, long term and parent and baby care. They may be approved for one or more types of care according to their preference, skills, and experience. Foster carers offering long term care are encouraged to care for the child beyond the age of 18 in a Staying Put arrangement to support the child's transition into adulthood. The team also assesses households offering to support a young adult through Supported Lodgings care to those age 18-24yrs, supporting them with preparation for independent living.

5.3 The Foster carers' skills and experience are evaluated during their assessment, as such when they are approved as foster carers with their skill levels determined at level one, two or three carers for which they are paid the relevant skill fee. The higher level represents those carers with substantial skills and experience of caring for children with particularly complex needs who require a high level of specific care and support. Those children are more likely to be children aged ten and over, having experienced significant trauma through neglect, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and are vulnerable to exploitation. There are also specialist parent and child carers offering homes to parents and babies with complex issues. These carers will

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contribute to the assessment and support of the parent to determine the parents' capacity to care for the child in the longer term.

6. Access to Resources and Fostering Support Team

6.1 Access to Resources (A2R) are responsible for identifying external care providers for children needing specialist care. A2R work very closely with the Fostering Support Team that has the statutory responsibility for supervising approved foster carers and supporting them to meet the needs of children. This includes accessing a comprehensive training programme and a range of provision from our partners that meet the needs of children, for example the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), and the trauma informed model of care (TIMOC) and the Virtual School specialising in helping children with their education. The Fostering Support Team also facilitate a number of support groups for carers, for example, those caring for children seeking safety & asylum, and those caring for teenagers.

6.2 All foster carers are required to have an annual review of their approval and this process is undertaken by one Reviewing Officer who sits within the Fostering Support Team. The Fostering Support Team also provides an out of hours on call service offering advice and guidance to the carers.

7. The Connected Persons Team (including Special Guardianship Support, Private Fostering and Step-Parent Adoption)

7.1 This team works very closely with the children's social work teams to identify and assess potential family members as carers for children unable to live with parents. These family members are assessed as formally approved connected persons' carers and receive supervision and support as foster carers, or they are helped to obtain legal responsibility to care for the child via a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) whereby the child can then leave the care of the local authority.

7.2 Those family members with an SGO continue to be supported after the order is made, by the special guardianship support worker through monthly support meetings, individual support, and access to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), a government grant for funding for specialist therapeutic support to adopted children and those living with special guardians. Special guardian support is offered by the local authority to special guardian families from the making of the order until the child reaches 18. The support is provided by the local authority in which the child lived at the making of the SGO for the first three years after the order and thereafter support becomes the responsibility of the local authority in which the child lives. However, when financial support is provided as part of the support plan for a child leaving care for special guardianship financial support remains the responsibility of the local authority in which the child was in care.

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7.3 Some families may make private arrangements for their child to live with a friend or a distant family member and therefore enter a Private Fostering arrangement. As required by legislation, private foster carers are assessed by a member of the Connected Persons team as are those families seeking Stepparent Adoption. Children who are living in these arrangements are not cared for by the local authority.

8. The Fostering Panel

8.1 To meet legal requirements and quality assure all new carers assessments, prospective and approved carers are scrutinised in terms of their suitability to care by the independent Fostering Panel which meets a minimum of twice per month. The panel consider the assessments of prospective foster carers, the first year annual review of foster carers, the panel also reviews any carers subject to a safeguarding issues and allegations regarding their care.

8.2 Although not a statutory requirement, because it is considered good practice the panel also considers the plans for a child/ren to remain living with their carer on a long-term fostering basis until they can return to their family or move onto independent living as an adult.

8.3 The panel considers applications of Staying Put arrangements for those children turning 18 and continuing to live with their foster carers and those offering supported lodgings carers, providing semi-independent homes to young adults in preparation for independent living. (Please see appendix 1: The Annual Fostering Panel Chair Report June 2023).

The Fostering Service Activity

9. Foster Carer Recruitment (national context)

9.1 Nationally, fostering recruitment has been a challenge and data collated by government shows mainstream fostering capacity has decreased slightly since 2018. Foster carers generally comprise two categories - mainstream foster carers, who care for non-related children, and connected carers who care for children within their own family/friends network.

9.1 At 31st March 2022, nationally there were 43,905 fostering households in England, and 36,050 were mainstream fostering households. Since 2018, the number of approved mainstream fostering households has decreased by 4%.

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- 9.2 There has been a downward trend in the number of applications for mainstream fostering over the last five years, for both local authority and independent fostering agencies (IFAs). A relatively large number of enquiries are not converting into applications.
- 9.3 The number of mainstream fostering applications fell from 10,520 in 2018 to 8,280 in 2022. Local authorities reported a ratio of eight initial enquiries per application and IFAs reported a ratio of 23 initial enquiries per application. The Government data collated from local authorities and IFA's indicates that a relatively large volume of enquiries are not translating into applications.
- 9.4 However there has been an increase in connected carers by 29% since 2018 (6,100). The proportion of total approved fostering households that are family and friends' households has increased from 14% in 2018 to 18% in 2022.

Foster Portsmouth Recruitment Activity

- 9.3 Portsmouth has seen an increase in the number of foster carer approvals for this year, a total of 22 compared with 11 the previous year with an increase in the number of those enquiring going on to be assessed and approved.
- 9.4 A fulltime marketing officer leads on the development and delivery of an annual carer recruitment strategy and focuses on foster carer recruitment.
- 9.5 The achieved strategy for the 2022/23 included:
- Local radio campaigns with Express Radio, Heart and Hits Radio throughout the year including advertising recruitment events and interviews with carers.
 - TV Interview BBC South Today with foster carers at the recruitment event during Foster Care Fortnight in May 2023.
 - Radio campaign to promote Foster Care Fortnight in May with foster carer interviews.
 - Digital marketing enhanced - ongoing social media -Portsmouth's Facebook, Twitter pages promoting fostering.
 - Mockingbird Model of Care promotion - local radio interviews, social media.
 - Video interviews of carers uploaded to Foster Portsmouth website.

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- Carer interviews featured in Portsmouth News and Portsmouth Flagship and other local publications -Education Term Times, the national Fostering Network Magazine- Mockingbird.
- Live recruitment events arranged throughout the year, including: The Spinnaker Tower; Hilton Hotel Portsmouth; Love Southsea Market; Victorious Festival; The Great South Run; Pop Up events at various supermarkets in Portsmouth and surrounding areas.
- New 'Foster Portsmouth' posters displayed across the city and leaflet delivery to households.
- Carers recommend a friend financial award incentive promoted to all existing carers.

9.6 There were a total number of 237 enquiries received in 2022/23. Those enquiries were followed up by direct contact by a member of the recruitment team and a home visit for those wishing to proceed. The home visit (if appropriate), leads to the formal application assessment. Marketing research shows it can take two to three years for a prospective foster carer to make the decision to apply to foster after gathering information from various sources.

9.7 Local authority and independent fostering agencies (IFA's) effectively compete for prospective carers. For example, Portsmouth will seek to recruit carers from within the city but also within a twenty-mile radius of Portsmouth to enable children in care to remain in touch with family, their community and attend school or local education provision.

Table 1

Year	Enquiries	Initial Home Visits	Enquiry to IHV	Approved	Home visit to approval	Enquiry to Approved Conversion Rate
2022/2023	237	36	15%	22	61%	9%
2021/2022	216	37	17%	11	30%	5%
2020/2021	274	40	14.6%	29	72.5%	10.6%
2019/2020	269	60	22.3%	31	52%	11.5%
2018/2019	336	71	21.1%	11	15.5%	3.3%

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- 9.8 Table 1 shows that the conversion rate for Portsmouth in 2022/23 was 15% for enquiry to home visit and 61% for home visit to approval - 9% for enquiry to foster carer approval. The lower conversion rates from enquiry to approval are due to the number of enquiries being made by people not in a position to foster at the time, for example, making tentative enquiries in considering a lifestyle change, not having bedroom space, health issues or not in a financial position to balance employment and fostering. However there has been a significant improvement in terms of the increase from 2020/21 in the number of those prospective carers going forward to be assessed and approved. Some of those coming forward were carers transferring from independent fostering agencies and some were encouraged by existing carers feedback regarding the support offered to Portsmouth carers. Recruitment of foster carers is very much influenced through successful retention of carers therefore it is critical that existing foster carers feel valued by the local authority and are well supported in their role.
- 9.9 Fostering assessments are completed in a two-stage process over a total of eight months. The National Minimum Care Standards guide the timescale for foster carer assessment. Stage one is for the safeguarding statutory checks to be completed- DBS, medical report and references and stage two the initial training and home/family assessment. In 2020 Portsmouth implemented a practice standard of a total of six months for an assessment to be completed (up to four months for a carer transferring from another agency). For 2022/2023, the average timescale for assessments completed 2022/23 was 5.1 months.
- 9.10 There were 22 newly approved mainstream foster carers and 14 connected carers which is a total increase of 36 fostering households. During the same period there was a total of 23 mainstream and connected carer fostering households deregistered.
- Two of the households were deregistered as they became special guardians to the children they cared for, which is a positive outcome.
 - Five were connected carers who were deregistered as the children moved home to their parents.
 - Thirteen carers resigned due to retirement, health issues or a change in their personal circumstances.
 - One carer resigned due to feeling not adequately supported.

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- Two fostering families were deregistered due to a review of their approval and the decision made that they were unsuitable to continue to be carers.

9.11 In Portsmouth there were 237 enquiries during 2022/23 resulting in 27 applications being made during that period. Those considering fostering tend to make enquiries at a very early point when they may not be able to make an application and at that point are often gathering information. For example, they need to have a bedroom available for a child, consider their family circumstances including their availability to care for a child, and any financial implications. Of the 27 applications to become foster carers made that year:

- 22 went on to be approved.
- 7 were still in assessment (applications having been made in the latter part of the year).
- 6 applications were closed. The reasons for those applications (assessments) being closed were due to applicants': significant health issues, decision to move abroad, not suitable to proceed; change of personal circumstances.

9.12 Those 22 fostering households approved comprised of five applications from fostering families wishing to transfer from independent fostering agencies. This is an increase from four transferred from IFA's the previous year.

9.13 Feedback from those choosing to become foster carers for Portsmouth refer to Portsmouth Fostering Service being local with close contact with the team and the support available, particularly the Mockingbird model.

10. Numbers of Approved Carers and Placements

10.1 As of 31/03/23 Portsmouth had **225 fostering households (Table 3)**.

10.2 Each carer household will be approved for a specific number of children according to bedroom availability, the carer's preferred age range of child, and the skills and experience of carers in meeting children's needs. Those fostering households will also offer variation in terms of short term, long-term and/or respite care. Those households have the potential to provide homes for a total of 468 children at any

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one time according to the number of children and type of care for which they are approved. 31 of the 225 fostering households were connected carers.

- 10.3 This means 14% fostering households were approved specifically to care for the child/ren to which they are related and are therefore not "mainstream" foster carers. Three foster carers were approved adoptive families and were temporarily approved as foster carers specifically for the children they were seeking to adopt therefore were also not mainstream foster carers. There has been an increase in connected carers for Portsmouth from 10% 2021/22 to 14% 2023. The increase reflects the national trend for increasing number of connected carers by 29% since 2018. The proportion of total approved fostering households that are family and friends' households has increased from 14% in 2018 to 18% in 2022.
- 10.4 The mainstream foster carers can be approved for a maximum of three children, four if siblings. Not all carers will be approved for the maximum number of children according to their wishes, skills, experience. Carers may not have the maximum number of children in their care at any one time. For example, a child with very complex issues and high support needs may need be the sole focus of the carer. Some carers may choose to limit the number of children they look after for a period due to their own personal circumstances.
- 10.5 Some carers may be on hold for personal reasons or a formal complaint about their care being investigated and not available to look after any children. If a carer is on hold for 12 months, or they have a change in their household circumstances they would have a review of their approval. The carers approval status will also impact on their capacity. They will be approved for respite, short-term and long-term care. Some may also be approved for parent and baby care. For example, if they are providing parent and baby care, the carers would not be able to care for another child in any of the other categories.

11. Children We Care For

- 11.1 At 31/03/23 there were 389 children in our care (Table 3). 263 were living with Portsmouth foster carers which is the equivalent of 67.6% within our own fostering family households.
- 11.2 Of the remainder of those children:

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- 30 children were PCC or external residential children's home.
- 42 children were with independent fostering agency carers (IFAs).
- 27 children with a care order were placed with their parents.
- 2 were in parent and baby residential homes.
- 10 were with fostering for adoption placements or with their adoptive families.
- 15 in residential education, health, secure placement, or unregulated placements.

12. Number of Children Needing Care

- 12.1 Access to Resources received a total of 512 referrals for children 2022/23, an increase from the total 429 the previous year. Some of those children were already being cared for and needed a change of placement/carer, however there were a total of 201 for children needing to come into care. Not all those children became cared for with some remaining with the parent or staying with family members.
- 12.2 Children needing a change of carer reflects a relatively low number of vulnerable children who have experienced significant trauma in their backgrounds and have complex issues which can be a challenge and not sustainable longer term for some carers. Matching children with suitable carers, those with the skills, experience, and resilience, does not necessarily equate with those carers available and offering to care at the time.
- 12.3 The highest proportion of children needing foster families, either being referred from living at home or needing a change of carer is the older cohort 11-16 years. The second cohort are young sibling groups, including twins. Portsmouth has been successful in being able to match most children with inhouse foster carers, and the majority of Portsmouth children remain living in stable fostering family homes.

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The table below illustrates the age bands of children referred needing care over the course of the year- the type of placement needed and outcome of referral.

Table 2

Age Band	2021/ 2022	2022/23
0 - 4 yrs.	86	150
5 - 10 yrs.	113	77
11 - 16 yrs.	155	227
17+ yrs.	75	58
Types of placements		
Parent and child	22	44
Siblings	63	62
New referral	161	201
Placement Change	134	130
Respite referral	137	181
Outcome		
IFA	26	42
In House	271	287
Other*	141	181

*External residential, PCC children's home, parent/, referral withdrawn were age 11-19

The table below illustrate below the number of fostering households has remained consistently above 200 and most children in the care are placed with Portsmouth foster carers.

Table 3

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No of foster carers households	218	211	214	237	220	225
No of children in care	417	493	468	381	387	389
No of children with PCC Carers	258	288	246	242	272	263
No of children with IFA Carers	67	60	58	31	40	42
No of children with Residential Carers	21	23	30	24	26	30
Remainder*	71	122	134	84	49	54

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*Placed at home with parents, placed with prospective adoptive families, education/health/secure placements, alternative arrangements

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Table 4

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Children leaving care	187	151	198	209	128	162
No of children leaving care to SGO	22	12	10	12	8	11
No of children leaving care to adoption	30	15	26	17	18	13
No of children leaving care to return to parents	35	21	26	22	29	25
No of children leaving care - transferring to staying put arrangement with foster carers (data not collected prior to 2022/23)	-	-	-	-	-	25
Remainder*	100	103	136	158	73	74

13. Staying Put and Supported Lodgings

13.1 Fostering families with children living with them long term may stay beyond the age of 18 years. There were 25 Staying Put arrangements agreed during 2022/23 (Table 4), an increase from 10 the previous year bringing the total to 30 over the course of the year. Such arrangements enable children in care to remain with their foster family up to the age of 25 years (if in full time education) as they prepare for independence. The increase in staying put arrangements reflects fostering families developing enduring relationships with the children they care for and continue to support them through to independence. The increased number of those carers offering Staying Put arrangements means a reduction in the number of care experienced young people leaving their foster family and moving to a supported lodgings carer. However, some care experienced young people may move on from foster family to alternative semi-independent accommodation in the community.

13.2 Supported lodgings carers offer semi-independent living to young adults between age 18 and 24 years old. There were three households approved for supported lodgings, the equivalent number were approved the previous year 2022/2023.

13.3 Therefore, in terms of mainstream carers, including supported lodgings carers and connected carers there were a total of 39 new carer households for 2022/2023.

14. Connected Carers

14.1 When children come into care, we explore the potential for those children to live within their wider family first in the event of them not being able to return to live with parents.

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14.2 For the period 2022/2023 a total of 52 assessments of connected persons were initiated. Within that cohort of family friends being assessed there may be more than one family member considering caring for the child/ren and not all will go on to be approved either as connected carer or special guardian. Some family members withdrew, and some assessed as not suitable. Of the assessments completed this year there were 13 connected carer families formally approved as foster carers for related child/children and seven connected persons assessed and granted special guardianship orders for children.

14.3 In terms of other types of connected care there were eleven private fostering arrangements approved for the children staying with family friend or distant relative culminating in a total of fourteen children living private fostering arrangements over the course of the year. These children are not cared for by the local authority, however the private fostering assessment ensures there is a safeguarding oversight of the child living away from parents for more than 28 days. There were no step-parent adoption applications made. It may be that step-parent adoption is not the preferred legal option for those families as there are now a greater range of legal orders they can choose.

15. Concerns/Complaints/Allegations against carers

15.1 Complaints against carers can range from care standards not being met to allegations of abuse of a child.

15.2 There were 18 complaints made against carers regarding their care of children, with seven resulting in a review of their approval. Of those:

- The number of complaints/allegations increased from 10 to 18 for the year 2022/2023. The increase in allegations referred for a fostering household review reflects an increase in complaints and allegations nationally as identified by the Fostering Network and Foster Talk.
- The number of concerns and complaints regarding carers has increased over the course of this year and it may be reflective of the uncertainty, stress, and pressures of the significant changes in living arrangements, relationships, employment and health and aftermath of the Covid pandemic and the impact and challenges caring for children with complex issues.
- Two fostering families were deregistered due concerns regarding their standards of care.
- One fostering family submitted an appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), however the IRM upheld the recommendation to deregister them as foster carers. The IRM is a review process which

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prospective or existing foster carers can use when they do not agree with a decision made in respect of their approval as foster carers.

16. Foster carer support and retention

- 16.1 The fostering support team is responsible for the supervision and support of all foster carers with a full-time social worker supervising an average of 20 fostering households. Carers have their own allocated supervising social worker visiting at least monthly to support the carer (Government timescales six weekly), and ensure they are meeting the child's needs. They will also undertake a minimum of one unannounced visit per year. In partnership with the carer, their social worker supports them to complete their statutory Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS), and identify appropriate enhanced training and additional support they may need to enable them to meet children's needs. Working closely with children's social workers supervising social workers will identify any issues relating to the carer that may impact on placement stability and increase their support and arrange regular placement support meetings.
- 16.2 There are a range of support groups for foster carers throughout the year , for example a support group for carers of teenagers, carers of children seeking safety & asylum, and a parent and baby carer support group.
- 16.3 Foster carers can also be supported by our Foster Carer Mentors, highly skilled and experienced foster carers who will work alongside foster carers needing specific support offering guidance and support through a challenging period.
- 16.4 Our CAMHS team offers the carers therapeutic support group on a six weekly basis and will complement that through CAMHS consultations for individual carers and their supervising social workers when there is a specific need relating to the child they care for.
- 16.5 In addition, the Fostering Service provides an out of hours support line for carers, which means carers are able to speak directly with a member of fostering team often preventing a crisis situation and the need for the carer to contact the overarching Hampshire Out of Hours Service.
- 16.6 There are also opportunities for carers to meet socially with each other and members of the team through foster carer lunches held termly.
- 16.7 Foster carers can contribute to service development through the Foster Carer Liaison Group which meets bi-monthly. The Liaison Group comprises a core membership of foster carers who set the agenda, liaising with other carers to raise any issues or comments for service development. The meeting is chaired by the

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Head of Service for Children We Care For with other staff representative members including the Service Lead Fostering, Service Lead for Building Your Futures, Service Lead for Service Quality Team, Participation Officer and Virtual School Head Teacher.

17. Foster Carer Training

- 17.1 Portsmouth Fostering Service offers a wide range of learning opportunities to all carers from the start of their journey in assessment starting with Skills to Foster training. The training pathway provides courses face to face, virtual and webinars daytime, evenings, and weekends.
- 17.2 All carers receive a copy of the training pathway and the annual training calendar. Additional learning opportunities are offered throughout the year as they become available such as webinars and workshops offered by Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board and when appropriate, foster carers can join training with social workers. We also work closely with other specialist departments in Portsmouth to offer specialist medical training to carers such as tracheotomy etc. Carers also can join the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting which offers support in several ways: online learning, workshops and group sessions.
- 17.3 Carers training needs are identified through carer supervision and through wider service development. For example, the Trauma Informed Model of Care (TIMOC) implemented across children, families and education is provided to all carers. In 2022 to promote children we care for returning home, Supporting Positive Family Time and Strengthening Relationships was promoted and introduced to all carers.
- 17.4 There was a decline in carer attendance in training for 2022 however the highest engagement was with the TIMOC training (114 sessions attended by a total of 19 carers), Safer Care (30), Introduction to Safeguarding (42), Digital Parenting -online safeguarding (38) Emergency Paediatric First Aid (48) for this year which reflects carers awareness and commitment to mandatory training. However, there was an increase in carer cancelling/non-attendance at training over the course of this year which suggests a correlation with carers experiencing significant challenges this year. For example, increasing numbers of children needing carers has meant some carers looking after more children they would ordinarily do so or may be caring for a child outside their preferred age range. This means the commitment to caring for those children may impact on their availability to attend training.
- 17.5 However, there was an improved engagement with Supporting Positive Family Time and Strengthening Relationships which supports the family safeguarding model and working with parents/family members to ensure a return home for the child remains

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a consideration for all children we care for and promotes continuing bonds for those children who may need to remain with carers longer term.

- 17.6 The table below is an illustration of some of the training available to all foster carers and numbers attended.

Table 5

Row Labels	Count of Course
Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)	31
Allegations Complaints and Standards of Care Concerns	10
Basic Awareness of Children who Display (HSB) Harmful Sexual Behaviours	5
Caring for the Traumatized Child	19
Cultural Competencies in Looked After Children	7
De-Escalation Training for Foster Carers	28
Digital Parenting (Online Safeguarding)	38
Emergency Paediatric First Aid (Foster Care)	48
Exploitation Masterclass - Consider Your Language - Victim Blaming	16
Information Governance & GDPR	8
Introduction to Nonviolent Resistance (NVR)	6
Introduction to Safeguarding	42
Loss and Bereavement of Looked after Children	6
Non-Violent Restraint (NVR) advanced - Helping with anxiety	4
Preparation for Permanence	7
PREVENT	2
Promoting Attachment and Resilience in Looked After Children	20
Promoting Resilience and Happiness for Carers	15
Relationships and Sex Education	20
Reporting and Recording	28
Safer Care	30
Substance Use for Foster Carers	2
Supporting Positive Family Time and Strengthening Relationships	24
Team Around Your Portsmouth Child (TAPC)	10
Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS)	12
Trauma Informed Model of Care (TIMOC)	114
Understanding Behaviour	6
Skills to Foster Training for Mainstream Carers	28
Grand Total	586

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

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18. Mockingbird Model of Foster Care

- 18.1 The Mockingbird Model of Care initially launched in January 2021 has boosted retention and received excellent feedback from carers and children involved. Portsmouth continues to be the pioneer in the south coast embedding the Mockingbird model as part of the fostering service. Based on the principle of an extended family caring for children, one hub home fostering household leads and supports a network of up to 10 fostering families-a constellation, caring for up to a total of 18 children. Three of the constellations' new carers motivation to join Portsmouth was due to the feedback from Mockingbird. Portsmouth now has five constellations. Two very experienced and longstanding carers who were considering leaving fostering decided due to the introduction of Mockingbird.
- 18.2 The constellations thrive on the relationships formed between the hub home carers and their diverse network of carers and children. The strong relationships promote mutual support, social and learning activities for the carers and most significantly, fosters positive outcomes for children we care for. Children can have sleepovers with the hub home carer when the carer might need a break, a teenager wants a break, or the child wants to spend time with another child who is living with the carer-promoting children's relationships.
- 18.3 As the strong relationships develop between the carers network there is a natural evolvment of the children forming friendships and engagement in social activities. Mockingbird also welcomes children's own family members enabling them to retain relationships with parents, siblings and those important to them. The strength of the diverse relationships and the mutual support led by the hub home carer within the constellation boosts resilience amongst the families, alleviating carers sense of isolation -practically and emotionally - and reduces the risk of placement breakdown. The research by the National Fostering Network in the recent National Independent Care Review identifies the extended family model of care as a key factor and opportunity to boost and sustain placement stability.
- 18.4 The feedback from carers and children in care within Mockingbird has been consistently positive. The carers value the mutual support, the close relationships, and opportunities to have natural breaks without impacting negatively on the children. The feedback from children has been clear in that the enjoy the opportunity to have friends and be part of social group. Children within Mockingbird have been instrumental in feeding back their experience through participation in Children in Care Council that has helped influence the growth of Mockingbird in Portsmouth.
- 18.5 Portsmouth now has five constellations : north Portsmouth, central Portsmouth and Gosport/Fareham and having launched a further two this year Havant/Waterlooville and south Portsmouth.

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18.6 This model is a great example of co-production in terms of planning and service delivery. Our foster carer contribution to the development of children and family service is highly valued and there is carer representation on the Corporate Parenting Operational Board, the Children We Care For Virtual Education Service and Children We Care For Health Service.

19. Conclusion

19.1 Most of Portsmouth's children in care continue to be cared for by Portsmouth foster carers. It is important that the rate of foster carer recruitment is in line with the increase in number of children being cared for and that carers are able to meet the complex needs of children affording children we care for safe, stable and nurturing fostering family home for as long as the child needs.

19.2 Whilst foster carer retention for Portsmouth is good there is a clear need to increase the number of foster carers able to be suitably matched with the increasing diverse number of children needing care. Portsmouth had a clear marketing strategy and recruitment indications for 2022/23 with a target to increase the number of fostering households being recruited to Portsmouth. Recruitment particularly focuses on carers for teenagers, siblings and unaccompanied children seeking safety & asylum.

19.3 The focus of foster carers support focus is to enable them to care for children who have experienced trauma and trauma informed training will continue to be part of the mandatory training for carers and the fostering team. Building on the TIMOC training, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) training is being rolled out to the fostering service over the course of 2023.

19.4 The comprehensive training offered to foster carers needs to be reviewed regularly and learning and development department will be developing a system to record and report on carer training records and feedback to inform carer and service learning needs.

19.5 Mockingbird offers a network of support that promotes a close fostering family for the carers and child that boosts placement stability. Learning from Mockingbird shows the Hub Home Carer needs to be available to their carers to support and sustain placement stability. Portsmouth has successfully launched five constellations over two years and the next 12 months will be focused on consolidating the model before further development in 2024.

19.6 The number of connected carers is increasing and those wishing to offer permanence to the child via special guardianship or adoption will be encouraged with the support they need in place. Adopt South offers a broad range of support for adoptive families

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and Portsmouth's special guardian families need to have an equitable support service.

- 19.7 The service will support and enable children to leave care in a timely way and those families continue to be receive the support they need in line with our work in place with Children returning home.

Signed by:

Sarah Daly, Director Children, Families and Education

Appendices:

Annual Fostering Report 2022-23

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report: