



Brighton and Hove
Children and Young People's
TRUST



Annual Fostering Service report

2009-2010

**Fostering and Adoption Service
253 Preston Road
Brighton
BN1 6SE**

www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk

1. Introduction

The report will detail the work undertaken by the Fostering Service within the Children & Young People's Trust [CYPT] from April 2009 – March 2010, including information on fostering recruitment activity, the work of the Fostering Panel and developments within the Service.

The report will also highlight national developments in fostering practice and provide information on the profile of the children in care population within Brighton & Hove.

A key priority of the CYPT is to ensure children can be brought up safely with their birth parents or within their wider family network if at all possible. The Fostering and Adoption service is a city wide service and contributes to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the city in line with the priorities outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan. Since March 2010 the Fostering & Adoption service has been managed within the integrated area working branch.

When a child does come into care foster carers play a pivotal role in the multi agency team around the child. Foster carers take children and young people into their homes often at very short notice and work to ensure the best possible outcomes for the child in care. Ideally that child will be able to return to their birth family but if that is not possible achieve permanence either through adoption or another legal order or through long term foster care.

Fostering is a highly regulated area of social work practice and is governed by the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 under the Care Standards Act 2000. The Department of Education is now taking forward the review of the minimum fostering standards and the first consultation in relation to the new draft standards has resulted in a considerable revision of the standards which will be subject to a further consultation process in the autumn of 2010 with a planned implementation date from April 2011.

The national profile of fostering remains very high. On 31st March 2009 there were 60,900 children in care in England and approximately 80% of these children were living with foster families. This reflects the local situation in Brighton and Hove with 83% of the children in care population living in foster families at end March 2010.

Within Brighton and Hove there was a significant rise in the numbers of children coming into care from December 2008 which has remained high but stabilised over the last six months. At the end of March 2010 the number of children in care excluding respite was 467. This represents a 16% increase compared to March 2009. This rise in numbers of children in the care system is a national picture although Brighton & Hove has a higher proportion of children in care than the national average. This very rapid rise of children

coming into the care system has put significant pressure on all aspects of the CYPT's services for children in care and has continued to result in larger numbers of children needing to be placed with agency providers.

The Children & Young Person's Act received royal assent in November 2008 and it contains measures intended to strengthen the legislative framework underpinning the care system and to improve the life chances for young people in care. Key elements of the Act are the focus on the need to improve placement stability and the opportunity for young people to stay in their foster placements post 18 rather than move out into independent living before they are ready. The Department for Children, Schools and Families now the Department of Education also undertook work within the year to update and streamline the regulations and guidance relating to the Children & Young People's Act 1989 as well as the roles and responsibilities of the Independent Reviewing Officers. The new regulations bring changes such as the care plan for the child not being changed unless a review is called and agreement not being given to children moving placement during critical stages of their education unless this is unavoidable. These regulations will be implemented from April 2011.

Within the CYPT a corporate parent strategy group has been meeting during the year to finalise the work that was undertaken in conjunction with young people in care on the corporate pledge for children in care. This group has also undertaken work to update the corporate parenting strategy which should be completed in the autumn of 2010. A new corporate parenting board has also now been established with representatives from young people in care and care leavers as well as from the Brighton & Hove Foster Care Association.

2. Fostering Service

The Fostering Service Manager has continued to be Clare Smith for 2009/10. The Service comprises the Fostering Team and the Intensive Placement Team and the Service Manager also has responsibility for the administrative team and for line managing the Independent Visitor Co-ordinator that is now located within the Fostering & Adoption service. The Fostering service has 3.8 Practice Manager posts and there is very close liaison between the Fostering & Adoption & Permanence teams given the overlap in the work with some children moving through from fostering to adoption. Foster carers are also supervised and supported within the Family and Friends team and Adoption & Permanence team and the work of those teams is reported on within the annual adoption agency report.

The Practice Managers within the Fostering Team take lead responsibility for different aspects of the service; John Donnelly takes the lead for recruitment and also foster carer training, Sharon Lake takes the lead for the placement finding duty service and Lesley Burgess for parent and baby carers and carers for unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Intensive Fostering Team is managed by 1.2 Practice Managers, Amanda Freeman and Sarah Wilkins and they both also play a role in supervising staff in the Fostering team and providing management cover to the duty service. The Intensive Placement

Team was formed in 2006 and works to enhance placement stability and provide an increased level of support to intensive fostering placements.

The teams are made up of a number of experienced social work practitioners, social work resource officers and intensive placement team support workers. As well as the placement finding duty service the service also runs a recruitment duty service to prospective foster carers.

The Agency Advisor, Graham Whitaker, plays a key role in ensuring the effective running of the Fostering Panel, providing a quality assurance role in relation to reports being prepared for panel and for providing specialist advice to staff within the Children and Young People's Trust in relation to fostering work. A separate report on the work of the Panel written by the Independent chair of Panel is appended to this report.

The Head of Service is also involved in the monthly multi agency pre-birth referral and strategy group and information on pre birth work and parent and baby foster placements will be provided within this report.

The Fostering Service Manager attends the quarterly meetings of the South East Local Authority Regional Foster Carer group which meets to share practice and policy issues.

The Fostering service was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2009 when the service was rated as 'outstanding'. Ofsted have now moved to a 3 yearly cycle for Fostering service inspections unless there is a reason to inspect more frequently. Ofsted also now require an annual fostering dataset from all local authorities and fostering agencies which gives a comprehensive picture of fostering provision nationally.

3. Fostering Recruitment Activity 2009/10

The recruitment strategy for the service is updated annually and is developed in response to the profile of children in care and the trends in the demand for placements considered alongside the profile of Brighton & Hove's foster carers. At the end of March 2010 there were 163 fostering households approved by Brighton and Hove including family and friends foster carers with 205 filled placements. Foster carers can be approved for up to 3 children if appropriate but there may be many reasons where decisions are made that carers need a short break from fostering or that it is not appropriate to have another child in placement alongside a child with particular complex needs. Of these fostering households; 260 carers were White/ British and 16 were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

The Fostering Service during the year has maintained a profile on the recruitment of carers for older children (10 years+), Black and Minority Ethnic [BME] carers and parent and baby carers but has continued to broaden the recruitment activity in acknowledgement of the very high numbers of children coming into care and the fact that it has not always been possible to place younger children under 10 years with in-house foster carers.

During 2009/10 there were 265 enquiries received by the Fostering team from prospective carers. There were 5 information sessions held during the year that were attended by 97 prospective carer households. These enabled applicants to have the chance to find out more about fostering and meet carers before making the decision with workers from the service about whether to proceed on to the preparation group. There were 16 applicants attending preparation groups over the year and 11 of those progressed to the assessment stage. There is clearly a very high drop out rate from initial contact to the assessment stage. The numbers of enquiries did go up over the year but many more people made enquiries that were not suitable or did not have the physical space in their house or time in their lives to take on the commitment of fostering.

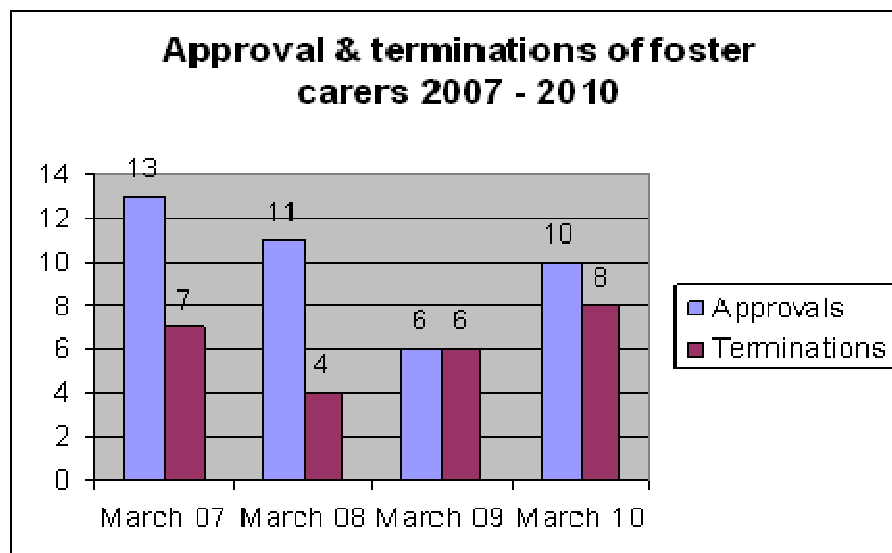
There were ten new sets of foster carers [excluding family and friends] approved in the year. These new carers included one new parent and baby foster carer and all the other foster carers had approval ranges that extended to include teenage children reflecting the needs of the service.

The total number of fostering resources [excluding family and friends foster carers] has grown over the last 5 years although for the last two years the number of new carers approved has been broadly balanced with the number of carers that were lost to the service through resignation or termination of approval. Managers within the service continually work to review the recruitment strategy and the way the service is configured to ensure recruitment and assessment activity is given a high priority alongside the other areas of work. However without an increase in staffing into the service there is limited capacity to expand further as it is essential that all foster carers and particularly those newly recruited receive a high level of support from the service with the fostering task. The service has used 2 regular freelance social workers to assist with undertaking assessment work and has recently recruited a further two workers to undertake this work. Once carers are approved they have then to develop a new relationship with their supervising social worker so use of freelance social workers to assist with recruitment and assessment work can only have a limited role.

There is a turnover of carers every year as fostering can be a very challenging and demanding task and some carers decide that it no longer fits with their family life or retire due to health issues or due to the fact that they move some distance from Brighton & Hove. In 2009/10 there were 8 resignations or terminations of approval plus 2 terminations of approval of individual carers where a couple had separated but one of the carers continued to foster. There were also 8 assessments that were discontinued during the year for a variety of reasons including unexpected health issues or changes in lifestyle such as starting new relationships that effected decision making about wanting to pursue fostering.

The service always works hard to ensure foster carers are retained and the service currently does not lose foster carers to the independent sector. In the past few years there have been some approved foster carers from the independent sector wanting to move over to Brighton and Hove. However the

national increase in numbers of children in the care system has resulted in all the local fostering agencies being much busier and being able to offer their carers a broader range of children needing placements including younger children so there has been less of an incentive for carers to consider a move over to the local authority in order to be assured of always being provided with a fostering placement.



Of the new foster carers approved one couple was dual heritage and there is another assessment underway in relation to a BME couple.

Recruitment strategy

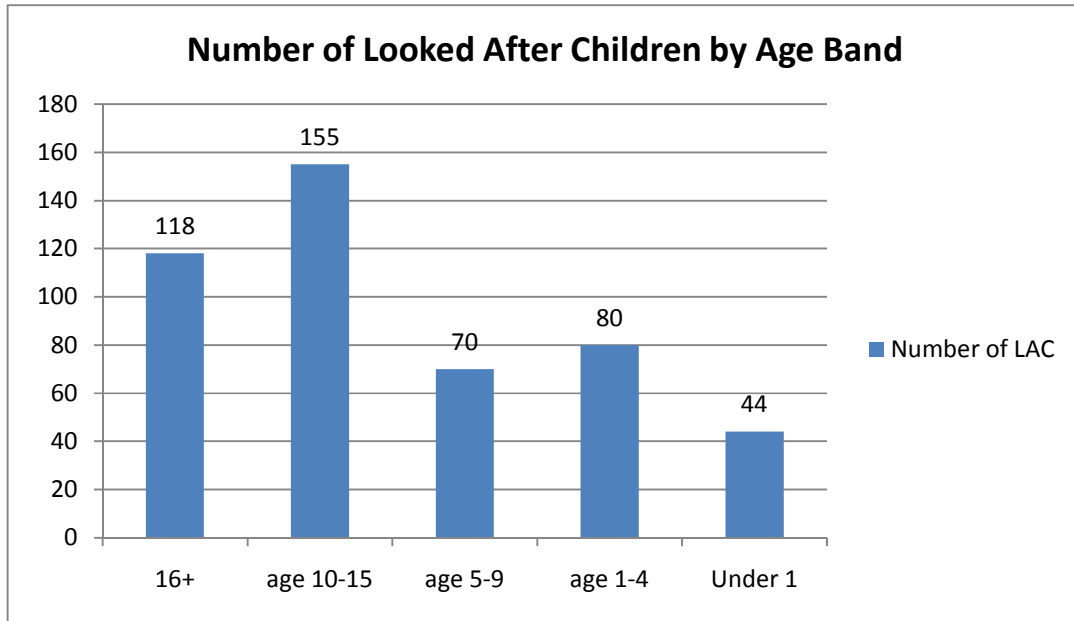
The Fostering service works closely with the council press office and there have been a number of features in the local press over the year presenting 'good news' stories which profile fostering households. There are regular advertisements in the local press and a significant campaign for National Foster Care Fortnight which is in May each year. This year the service ran a number of stalls at local supermarkets during fostering fortnight as well as attending other key community events during the year.

Many prospective foster carers seek out information about the service on-line before they make contact and the service has a dedicated website which is kept updated with information about recruitment events.

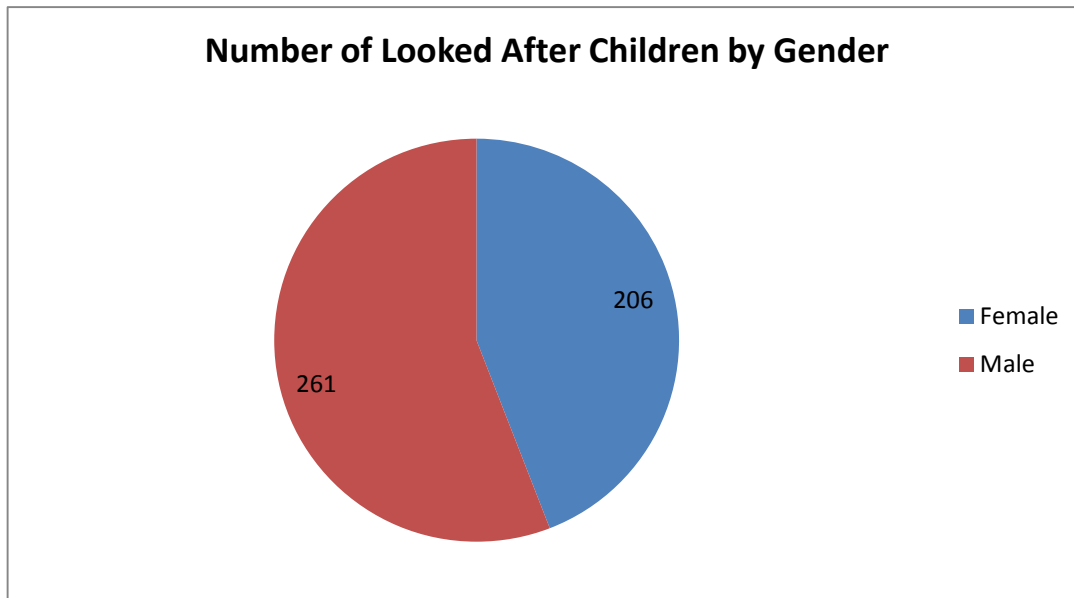
Foster carers and young people continue to play a key role in recruitment events by attending information sessions and talking to prospective carers about their experience of fostering and the fostering task. The lead Practice Manager maintains an oversight of the recruitment activity and provides regular reports to the whole management team. It is planned that these recruitment activity reports will start to be considered at regular intervals at the CYPT performance board.

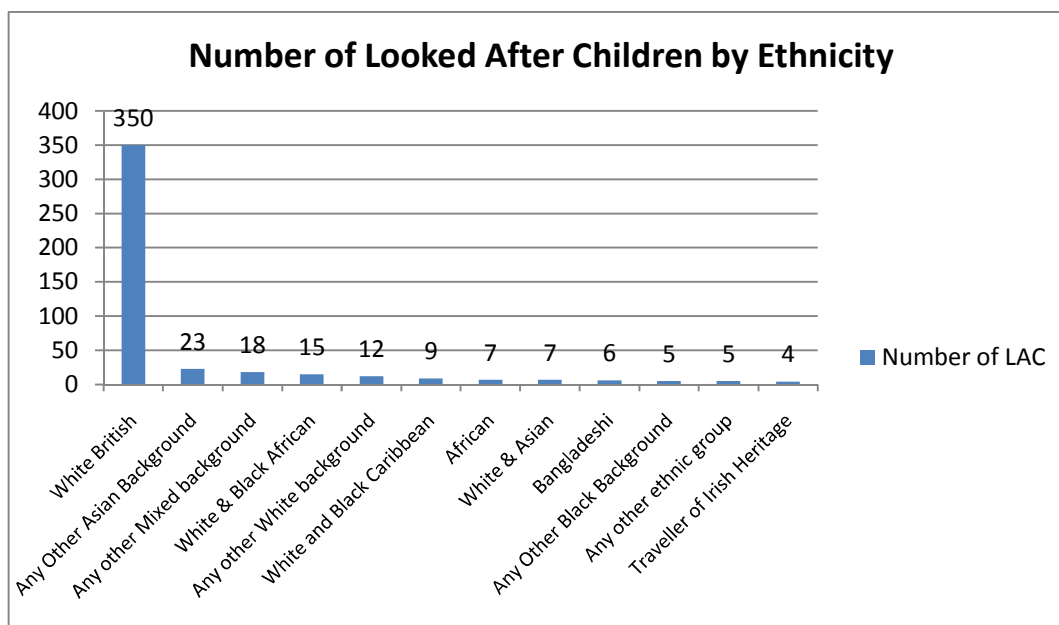
Profile of children in care 2009/10

The following graphs give information on the age breakdown, gender and ethnicity as a snapshot at end April 2010



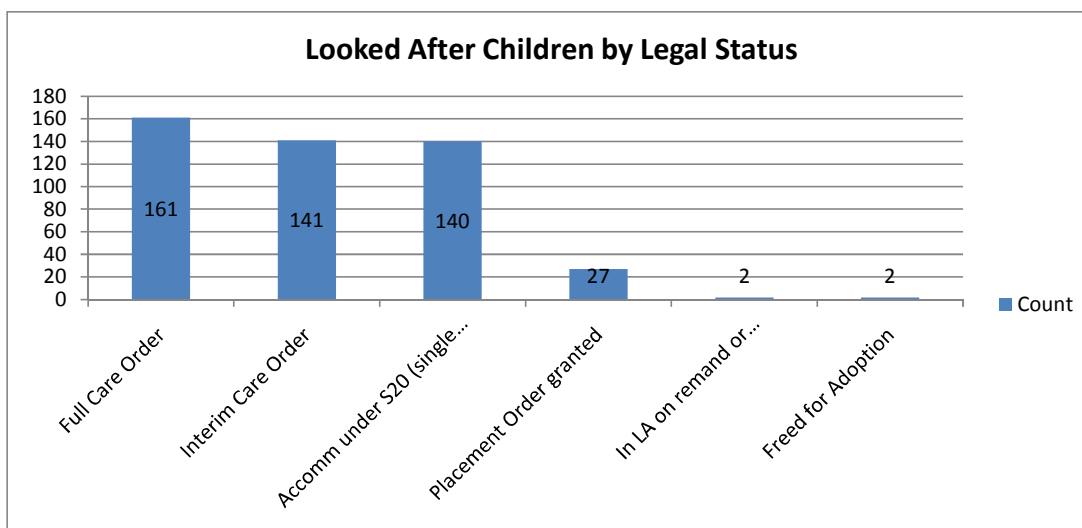
The gender split in the care population was 56% (261) male and 46% (206) female.





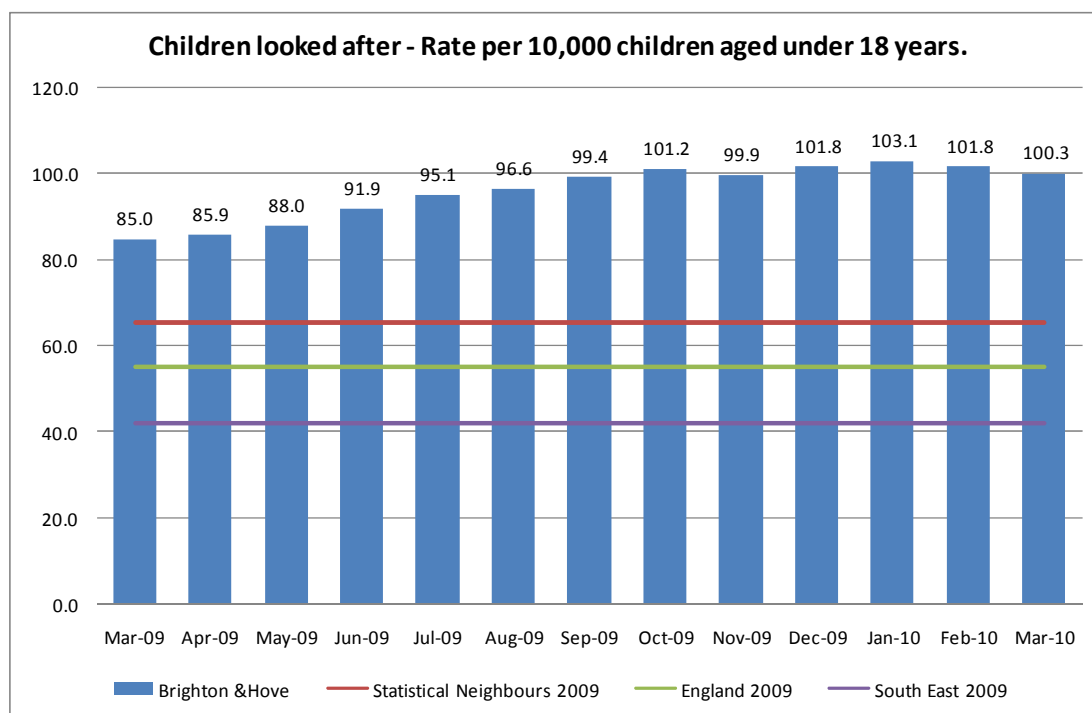
It is evident from this graph that the majority of children in care, 75%, are White British. However there have been sustained increasing numbers of black and minority ethnic children in the care system and hence the need to continue to focus the recruitment strategy on increasing the numbers of BME foster carers.

In terms of legal status the majority of children in care are subject to a legal order, either full Care Order or Interim Care Order. Analysis of the figures show that it is more likely for younger children in care to be subject to legal orders than older children who are more heavily represented in the cohort of children that are voluntarily accommodated under Section 20 of Children & Young People's Act 1989.



The following graph shows the numbers of children in care per 10,000 children and demonstrates how this rate has gone up from 86 per 10,000 in April 2009 to just over 100 per 10,000 by the end of March 2010. The

information in relation to the national rate is just a snapshot picture at end March 2009.



5. Placement Activity

The Fostering Service runs a duty service for social workers needing to find a foster placement for a child. This service is overseen by a Practice Manager and has two dedicated workers supported by other staff within the team.

The duty service has had a sustained high demand for placements with continued pressure on resources over the last year. The increased number of referrals has been across the board with very high requests for placements for parent and baby foster placements and placements for teenagers and sibling groups.

This high demand for placements has continued to have an impact on the capacity of the service to consider the detail of the matching requirements of the child and to find placements that fit with the matching needs. As the increase in numbers of children in care is a national issue and neighbouring authorities have also experienced rising numbers of children coming into care there is therefore pressure on available fostering or residential resources across the south east. There have at times been very limited availability of placements and although both the fostering duty team and agency placement team have worked very hard to find appropriate matches for children there has sometimes been a need to place children or young people at some distance from Brighton and Hove or to place more challenging children with carers that were newly approved. If appropriate a variation to a carer's approval range will be given or an exemption to the normal fostering limit if following a risk assessment that is considered appropriate to enable children to be placed with in-house carers.

Agency placements

The Fostering Duty service works to place children with in house foster carers that meet their needs where ever possible and referrals are passed to the agency placement team when there are no appropriate in-house placements available. All referrals are received by the fostering duty team and there is close liaison with the social workers in the area teams to try and ensure that referrals are completed to give a clear picture of the matching requirements of the specific child and the outcomes required from a placement. Many of the referrals still come to the duty service with requests for placements to be found at very short notice which limits the capacity at times to focus on finding placements that fully meet the matching needs. For some children a dual search is carried out between both teams given the limited timescales available to find an available placement.

There is a close working relationship between the duty service and the agency placement team who oversee the contracts with the independent providers and the volume of placement activity require frequent liaison and discussion between the teams about practice issues. The duty team will organise planning meetings to consider care plans and matching needs where there is more time available for placement finding or where the child has particularly complex needs.

As of 31st March 2010 there were 153 children in agency placements and 11 adults that were also in agency parent and baby foster placements. This is a substantial increase from the same time last year when 109 placements were being purchased. This obviously has significant financial consequences given the higher unit costs of agency placements; however it reflects the rise in numbers of children in care and the lack of capacity to expand in-house fostering resources.

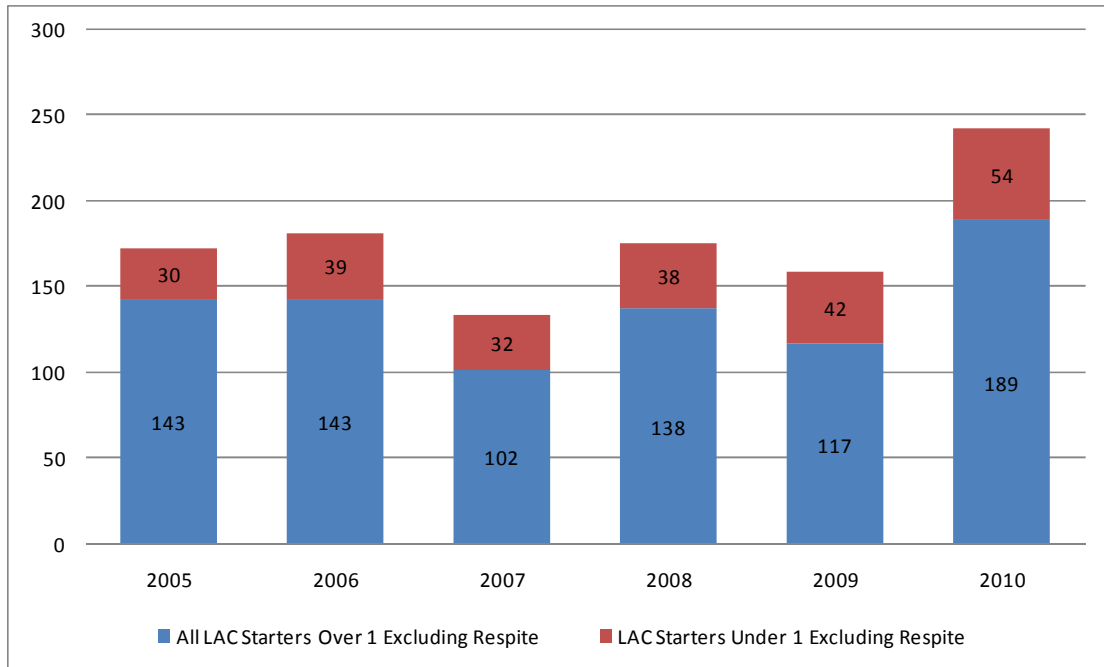
Parent and baby placements

During the year there has also been a sustained high demand for parent and baby foster placements. Most of these placements are made at birth and as part of a care plan within proceedings. The social work team at the Royal Alexander Children's Hospital [RACH] no longer has responsibility for pre birth referrals and assessments and this is now undertaken by the area teams. Given the significant workloads in the area social work teams it has to be acknowledged that pre birth referrals are not always able to be afforded priority and in some situations there has been limited opportunity for robust assessment work before the baby is born. Pre birth assessment work has also been undertaken by a variety of different social workers and not all staff have had that specialist experience. Clearly any change in practice will take time to settle in and early permanence planning is one of the areas that is being considered within the value for money work programme currently being undertaken within the CYPT. However the lack of opportunity to undertake full and timely pre birth assessments has inevitably contributed to the increased

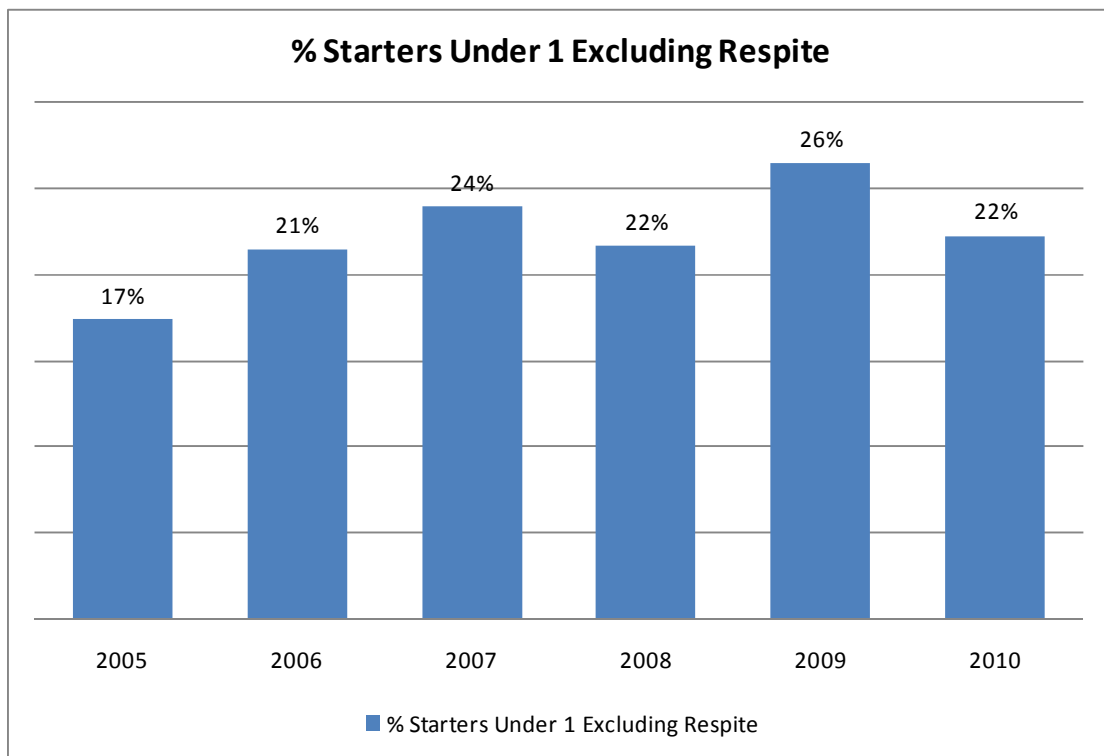
number of referrals for parent and baby placements and the length of time that some placements extend to.

The following graphs give information about the numbers of children under 1 in the care system.

LAC Starters Excluding Respite Aged Under and Over 1 by Financial Year



Percentage of LAC Starters Aged Under 1 Excluding Respite



The Pre birth referral and strategy meeting is a multi agency meeting that has continued to meet monthly to consider referrals of babies that may be at risk of a child protection plan or care proceedings at birth. Brighton & Hove have a high number of referrals in relation to vulnerable babies and many of the referrals relate to concerns about the parents substance misuse. The high numbers of under 1s in the care system demonstrate the need to give priority to ensuring that services are effectively co-ordinated pre birth and that timely assessments are undertaken to ensure that there is minimal delay in achieving early permanence for the most vulnerable babies

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 the Pre birth referral panel considered 139 referrals, of these 66 were first time mothers with the remainder 73 having previously had either one or more children. An analysis of the referrals from the client data base indicated that 16 (11.5%) of the mothers were care leavers. However the number maybe higher as some of the referrals relate to mothers that have moved into Brighton and Hove and their previous care status may not be known or some older mothers may have been in care for a period of time a number of years ago.

The referrals are distributed across the 3 social work areas in the city as shown below.

Area Team	Number	%
Central	52	37.4
East	52	37.4
West	35	25.2

Of the cohort of referrals considered by the panel 79 children were made subject to child protection plans at birth and 46 babies became subject to care proceedings at birth [although at the time of the analysis in June 2010 12 of these babies were still unborn]. Of the 46 babies that were subject to care proceedings at birth 30 went into parent and baby foster placements.

There are 10 approved in house parent and baby carers with another experienced carer planning to move over to this fostering task. There is a turnover of parent and baby carers as this can be a very demanding task with the carer needing to provide an intensive level of supervision and support to the parent and most new parent and baby carers continue to be existing foster carers that decide they would like to extend or change their fostering role.

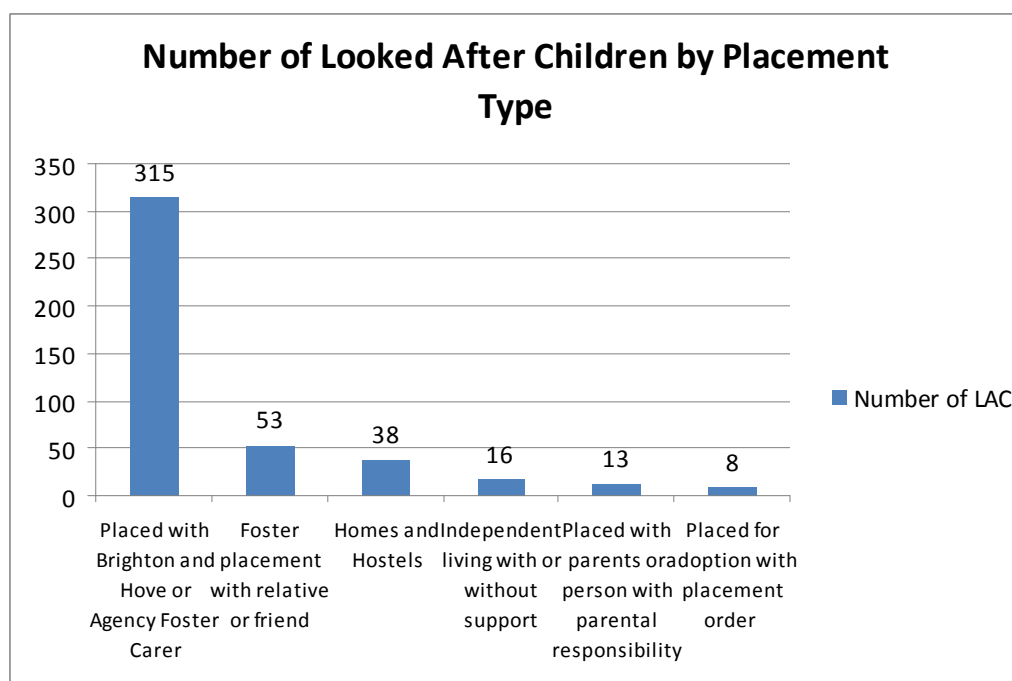
Many of the placements go on for quite a long period with some placements lasting over 12 months so there can often be limited turnover of new placements becoming available. Sometimes these placements have to be used for other children that are coming into care and need an emergency placement for example a sibling group. At any one time there can be on average 20 parent and baby foster placements with roughly an equal number of inhouse and agency placements being made.

During 2008/9 the Head of Service and the Consultant Nurse for CiC completed a piece of evaluation work to consider the outcomes of these placements over a 4 year period from April 2004 – March 2008. The

evaluation work involved an analysis of the data relating to these placements plus interviews with foster carers, birth parents and key professional groups. A number of practice recommendations flowed from this piece of evaluation work which relate to pre birth work and the management of parent and baby placements and these will continue to be considered in the value for money working group that is now chaired by the Head of Safeguarding. Presentations on this evaluation work and early permanence planning have been to a variety of different groups within the year including the local Family Justice Council conference in November 2009 which is chaired by the Designated Family Judge and attended by local lawyers and guardians.

Placement type

The following graph gives information on placement type for children in care in Brighton & Hove as a snapshot in April 2010. Two thirds of the children are placed with either in-house or agency foster carers, 11% with a family and friends foster carer and 8% are in a residential setting.



6 Fostering support services

The provision of a range of support services from the individual work provided by the supervising social worker to training and support groups, an out of hours service, support with respite arrangements and an extensive school holiday activity programme for children in placement all play a key role in ensuring carers are enabled and supported to meet the needs of the children in their care. It is also a significant factor in the retention of foster carers and enables the service not only to ensure carers are well supported in line with the fostering minimum standards but also enables Brighton and Hove to compete with the better independent fostering agencies locally.

The Fostering service has continued to work hard over the year to review and develop the support package provided to carers, the central component of which is the supervisory relationship. The service has a stable staff group of experienced social workers and all carers have an allocated social worker.

A new development within the year has been the provision of an additional website for the on-line version of the Foster carers' handbook to enable carers to have access to a more user friendly resource tool that can be easily updated and added to as required.

Support groups

There is a general monthly support group open to all carers which is long standing and well attended. There is also a new carers group which runs annually over a number of sessions. Recently an additional group has been set up for carers of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. This group will meet occasionally and will also be a forum for training and for networking between the carers.

A specific group for parent and baby foster carers is now well established which has a clear training element with a programme of different speakers. There is also a group for the intensive placement foster carers and it is an expectation of being part of the scheme that they meet together regularly with the two dedicated workers who supervise the placements.

There is also a plan to set up a 'Fostering Changes' group later in 2010. This is a national programme which was developed and piloted in a few areas and is a parenting skills programme that has been developed to focus particularly on the fostering task. Three staff have been trained in running this programme and it is hoped this will be a helpful addition to the support and training programme for carers.

Support for carers of BME children

The recruitment and publicity officer for BME carers also provides a specialist support role to carers of BME children. This is in recognition of the fact that a number of our BME children in care are placed trans-racially and their foster carers may need additional input in order to ensure they are supporting the child's identity needs.

The service has updated and re-issued the handbook for foster carers on the care of BME children and the dedicated worker visits carers to offer advice on specific issues like dietary needs as well as providing information on toys and activities as well as community and other support groups to join.

7 Foster carer training

The service continues to offer a comprehensive training programme to foster carers that builds on the basic training they receive during the preparation group and assessment process. A working group is held with staff and foster carer representatives to review and develop the training programme.

There are 9 mandatory courses that carers are expected to take up over the course of their first two years post approval. Carers also have the opportunity to take up additional training provided within the training programme for foster carers or the wider training programme offered within the CYPT.

The service also continues to support foster carers that are interested in developing their skills through the NVQ Level 3 award for carers and there continues to be sustained interest amongst foster carers in completing this professional qualification.

CWDC learning and development standards

Following the introduction of the Children's Workforce Development Council [CWDC] Learning and Development standards for foster carers in April 2008 the service has continued to run a support group for carers working to complete the workbook. It has to be acknowledged that compliance with this new requirement for carers to demonstrate their core knowledge and skills for the fostering task has been a significant undertaking for the carers themselves and for staff within the service that have taken a lead in running the support and training programme. It is a requirement that all existing carers will have achieved completion of the standards by April 2011. This will represent an additional workload during the forthcoming year providing this enhanced input to carers. There is also a plan for carers who have completed this task to provide mentoring support to other carers.

8 Independent Fostering Support

The Fostering Service continues to have a contract with an independent company to provide support to foster carers subject to a serious complaint or allegation. This service also offers a 24 hour helpline to carers which has been used by a number of carers. During 09/10 Fostering Support Ltd provided more in-depth support to 2 foster carer households. This involved providing telephone support, meeting with the foster carers, assisting in the preparation of reports and on occasion attending Foster Panel with the foster carers.

Evaluations received from foster carers using the service are extremely positive and the service plays an important part in the retention of foster carers whose experience of being subject to a complaint or allegation can cause considerable distress in some cases leading them to end their fostering career. Good practice guidance from the Fostering Network the leading national charity for fostering issues strongly recommends the provision of an independent support service for foster carers.

9 Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers

The sons and daughters of foster carers play a vital role in the fostering task and the service has continued to provide them with dedicated support services. Fostering is very much a family activity and research has shown that placements are more successful and less likely to break down when there is a

positive framework of support in place that includes the sons and daughters of carers.

The Intensive Placement team provide specific activity days within the school holidays for these children which are well attended [see table below]. The fostering team also organise as required a session co-facilitated by the children of experienced foster carers for the sons and daughters of newly approved carers or carers that are undertaking the assessment process.

Holiday Period	Places offered	Places filled	No. of different young people	Gender
Easter 09	17	15	15	9M & 6F
June half-term 09	15	13	13	4M & 9F
Summer 09	15	9	9	5M & 4F
Oct half-term 09	15	10	10	5M & 5F
Xmas 09	32	32	32	
Feb half-term 10	12	12	12	7M & 5F

10 Foster Care Association

Brighton and Hove Foster Care Association has been in existence for 6 years. It provides a number of resources for foster carers and their families including a buddy scheme for new foster carers and a quarterly newsletter for all foster carers keeping them up to date with news and events. It has also organised a number of social events for foster carers and their families including regular drop in coffee mornings in different locations and has also now developed their own dedicated website. The association is working actively to complete the work to register for charitable status.

Members of the Association are also involved in various working parties and are consulted with in relation to new developments within the Service. Since the establishment of the corporate parenting board in Jan 2010 there have been 2 representatives from the association co-opted on to this board.

11 Children in Care Health and Education teams

The Consultant Nurse for children in care and her colleagues continue to work very closely with the service. They provide training input to foster carers as part of their mandatory training but also run additional workshops for staff and carers as needed. Over the last year the Nurse Consultant organised a seminar on Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder which was very well attended by carers as well as additional training for carers on sexual health and protective behaviours.

The Nurses for children in care also provide additional support and advice to foster carers as required about any health issues related to their children in placement. From April 2008 as part of the Care Matters agenda there has

been a national requirement to report on the emotional well being of children in care and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire are sent to carers to complete on an annual basis with input from the young person as appropriate. The results of these are analysed by the health team for children in care. For children that are shown to have score highly follow up support and advice is provided to carers and social workers by the health team.

The Education team for children in care also work closely with the service and provide input to the training programme. The Educational Psychologist for CiC has developed good links with the service and has worked during the year to provide additional support and advice to carers on a range of educational issues. She has now started to hold regular drop in surgeries for carers.

12 CAMHS service

There is no longer a specialist team within CAMHS for referrals in relation to children in care. Referrals for these children are dealt with by the three area teams within CAMHS and can be seen by a range of different clinicians at CAMHS with an expectation that these referrals receive an assessment appointment within 4 weeks.

An art therapy group has continued to run during the year which is co-lead by a worker from the Intensive Placement team and therapists from CAMHS with significant experience of working with children in care. In addition to this these workers also ran a successful intensive art therapy group for children in care and adopted children during summer 2009 which will run again during 2010.

13 Intensive Placement Team

The Intensive Placement Team (IPT) works to support the general development and placement stability of children and young people aged between 7 and 16 years living in Brighton and Hove foster placements including Family and Friends placements.

The remit of the team also includes the supervision of a limited number of Intensive Foster Placements where enhanced levels of placement support are required to sustain ongoing placement stability. IPT Support Workers are allocated to provide direct work to children and young people individually and in groups. Among its services, IPT offers a morning unit to support young people return to school where there is a break in education and to help support placement stability. An integral part of the team's work is to provide activity programmes for children and young people during each school holiday.

IPT's steady-state work provides a valuable resource in the fostering service's efforts to maintain placement stability. New projects have been developed by the team to supplement this objective while aiming to provide further opportunities for growth and enjoyment to our children and young people in care. The OFSTED inspection report in 2009 acknowledged IPT's very positive contribution to the delivery of the Every Child Matters agenda.

Morning Unit

The Morning Unit remains part of IPT's services to support placement stability. The unit operates four mornings per week between 9am and 1pm during school term times. It provides up to three spaces per morning for children and young people placed in Brighton and Hove foster placements.

During the year there have been slightly increased numbers of referrals in relation to slightly fewer young people referred to the unit but those that have been referred have attended for longer periods and have needed some intensive support. Feedback from carers suggests that they consider it a highly supportive resource. IPT endeavours to work directly with the young people on the unit to help them understand and to modify where possible the kind of behaviours that often led to school exclusion in the first place. Furthermore, IPT staff members play an active role with social work and educational colleagues, to secure young people's readmission into suitable educational provision as soon as possible and minimise the risk of further exclusion.

Type	April 2008/9	April 2009/10	change from 2008/9
Referrals	33	37	+4
Individual Young People	19 (12 Male, 7 Female)	15 (10 Male, 5 Female)	-4
Sessions offered	156	212	+56

Reason	April 2008/9	April 2009/10	change from 2008/9
Fixed-term exclusion	18	15	- 3
Permanent exclusion	1	0	-1
Informal exclusion	2	1	-1
Reduced timetable	2	2	0
No school place	2	3	+1
Attendance issues	3	10	+7

Activity programme

IPT provides a range of holiday activities for children and young people looked after during school holidays. Activities provide respite for carers and opportunities for children in care to share and enjoy different experiences together.

Holiday Period	Places offered	Places filled	No. of individual young people	Gender
Easter 09	90	83	47	25M & 22F
June half-term 09	47	40	35	17M & 18F
Summer 09	297	284	66	29M & 37F
Oct half-term 09	56	52	41	19M & 15F
Xmas 09	141	141 (inc. carers)	87	
Feb half-term 10	63	55	43	23M & 20F
Total	726	687		

Group work

IPT staff members have worked with the Creative Sounds Project in the last year and facilitated a 10 week workshop. IPT staff worked with 2 specialist external music tutors providing the opportunity for young people to learn and play music together. Feedback from young people and foster carers was very positive.

With the support of the IPT children and young people in care were involved in exhibiting their artwork at the Brighton and Lewes Fringe Festival and the staff team have 3 staff members that are qualified to assess for national qualification arts award for young people.

Listen Up Scheme

Under this scheme the IPT have continued to organise distribution of the listen up cards which facilitate access to leisure activities in the city. The team also continue to link with Brighton & Hove Albion FC who provided 155 free tickets for children and young people and 74 free tickets for accompanying adults over the year.

Direct work

IPT Support Workers also provide direct work to children and young people individually. The child or young person is allocated a worker who will work with them on a weekly basis addressing specific areas of need such as life story work; protective behaviours; anger management or assisting young people and their carers to access appropriate resources in the community. The work aims to support the healthy development of the young person's self esteem and sense of identity. The team are currently facilitating direct work with 26 young people with a waiting list of 6 young people all of whom will be allocated to begin work in September. This individual work is subject to

regular review to ensure that it is focused and purposeful and fits with the care plan for the young person.

Intensive Fostering Placements

Intensive Foster Placements [IFP] aim to provide stability and continuity ideally as a permanent placement but certainly beyond the short-term. An intensity of professional support is provided and foster carers are expected to provide an intensity of care in order to sustain the placement. It is not the child's needs or the capacities of the foster carers alone but a close fitting match between the two that defines an IFP.

Supervising social workers within the team supervise a limited number of Intensive Foster Placements where enhanced levels of placement support are required to sustain ongoing placement stability. The enhanced package of support to carers includes intensive supervision, an additional element within the fostering rate and regular respite.

IFP carers will also have access to the IPT morning unit, activity programme and the allocation of an IPT Support Worker. Supervising social workers also facilitate the IFP Development Group in order to support carers with their professional development, share common challenges and strategies to resolve them and to help develop a coherent identity for the scheme.

Intensive Fostering Placements

	April 2008-9	April 2009-10	Change from 2008-9
Carers offering IFP	8	11	+3
Young people in IFP	9	15	+6

13 Fostering Panel

It is the responsibility of the service to ensure the effective running of the Panels and the Agency Advisors manage the panel administration team and take a lead in the recruitment of panel members. Panel contributes significantly to the positive work of the CYPT in planning for children and providing a key quality assurance role.

Panel has been particularly busy during the year and this in part reflects the significant number of family and friends foster placements.

A report on the activity of the fostering panel prepared by the Independent Chair, Sarah Borthwick, is appended to this report.

14 Complaints and allegations

During 2009/10 there were 2 child protection allegations in relation to foster carers. One led to a 'standards of care' investigation which is yet to return to Fostering Panel and the other one resulted in no further action being required.

There were 3 other standards of care investigations. Out of these one has led to a recommendation that the carers are de-registered and one has led to a change in terms of the carer approval the other one required no further action.

One child has made a Stage 1 complaint in relation to the fact that her previous carers were being investigated in relation to a standards of care matter and she was supported to make a representation to Fostering Panel. There was a further complaint from prospective foster carers which progressed to Stage 2 independent investigation in line with the corporate complaints process.

15 Service Planning 2010/11

The service continues to focus on ensuring recruitment work is given a high priority and regular reports on progress with recruitment will be made to the CYPT's Performance Board in the forthcoming year.

The current value for money work programme within the CYPT will continue to focus on the need to ensure that maximum use is made of in-house fostering provision and that parent and baby foster placements are used as part of an effective assessment and care planning pathway for vulnerable babies that ensures timely resolution of permanence plans.

Work is also currently underway within the service to review the permanence policy and consider the assessment process for carers wanting to offer permanence to a child in their care.

The service is also currently revising and streamlining the foster carer review process and young people in care are involved in the work to update the consultation forms for children in care and the sons and daughters of carers.

There are also plans for continued development of the links with the 16+ support team to ensure that young people leaving care are enabled to continue living with their foster carers on a supported lodgings basis as appropriate.

Sharon Donnelly
Head of Service, Fostering & Adoption
July 2010

Appendix 1

BRIGHTON & HOVE FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT (1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010)

1. Introduction

This report briefly summarises the work of Brighton & Hove and Barnardo's Link Plus Fostering Panel over the last year. It has been a really busy year and the workload of the Panel has increased markedly. This is in line with the higher demand locally for placements for children both in foster care and family and friends' care and it reflects the national picture.

I have now completed my first full year as the Independent Chair of the Panel and I have been impressed by the quality of the work that has been presented. A number of Panel members have also completed their first year and I believe we have been able to work effectively as a group and with staff and carers.

2. Composition of the Panel

The Panel is constituted in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2002 and the Fostering Services (Amendment) Regulations 2009.

The Panel has had full and stable membership over the year. Members were:

- Sarah Borthwick, Independent Chair
- Coun Jayne Bennett, Brighton & Hove elected member
- Miriam Patrick, independent member, ex foster carer
- Jacqueline Stillwell, Barnardo's officer, vice chair
- Andy Gay, Barnardo's officer, child care (started in April 2009)
- Kay Woodley, independent member, ex service user
- Amanda Freeman, Brighton & Hove CYPT officer, fostering
- Gerry Brandon, Brighton & Hove CYPT officer, childcare
- Yvette Queffurus, Brighton & Hove CYPT officer, health (left in May 2009)
- Vanessa Wright, Brighton & Hove CYPT officer, health (started in May 2009)
- David Noble, Brighton & Hove CYPT officer, education
- Andy Hill, independent member, foster carer

Graham Whitaker was Fostering Agency Adviser to the Panel and Wendy Kenyon was Panel Administrator.

Unfortunately the Panel has no black and/or minority ethnic representation and this will need be a priority in the recruitment of new Panel members.

Panel members and staff demonstrated a very high level of commitment over the year.

3. Work of the Panel

The Panel meets on a monthly basis. It met on **14** occasions from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010. Two additional Panel meetings were needed due to the volume of work being presented.

The Panel dealt with and made recommendations on **104** case presentations. Brighton & Hove presented **84** cases and Barnardo's Link Plus presented **20** cases. Most notably over the year, **4** more families were approved as foster carers than in the previous year and the work around family and friends' carers more than doubled.

The Panel recommended approval of **15** new carers:
10 were Brighton & Hove foster carers
5 were Link Plus carers

The Panel dealt with first annual reviews for **7** carers:
4 were Brighton & Hove foster carers
3 were Link Plus carers

The Panel dealt with reviews and variation of terms of approvals for **12** carers
7 were Brighton & Hove foster carers
5 were Link Plus carers

There were **21** terminations of approval of foster carers:
12 were Brighton & Hove foster carers
7 were Link Plus carers
2 were family and friends' carers

The vast majority of these terminations of approval were resignations of carers following a number of years' service.

The Panel made **40** recommendations in relation to family and friends' care (**21** more recommendations than in the previous year). This year:

There were 20 initial (interim) approvals
There were 14 continued initial (further interim) approvals
There were 6 full assessments

The Panel did not recommend an interim approval in **1** family and friends' case.

In addition, the Panel endorsed an exemption to the usual fostering limit of three children in **1** case. It deferred for more information in **3** cases.

The Agency Decision Makers agreed with all of the Panel's recommendations.

4. Functioning of the Panel

Process

The Panel works well. It is friendly and welcoming to those attending and it is able to praise and challenge practice appropriately. The business is conducted in a thorough way and all Panel members participate and ask questions. The Panel sees applicants and carers with social workers and it sees social workers on their own when additional questions need to be asked about assessment practice or about confidential references. Occasionally the Panel sees carers with an independent support person without their social worker. It did this twice over the last year. The Panel also met with 3 children when considering an approval and match with family and friends' carers

Feedback

Feedback forms are given to all social workers, applicants, and foster carers attending the Panel. The Panel received **23** feedback forms for this year. **16** were from applicants and carers and **7** were from social workers. These were very positive about the experience of attending Panel and this was reinforced by informal feedback from other social workers and managers. People feel they are treated with courtesy and respect. Many comment that, although it is daunting to meet with such a large number of Panel members, they are quickly put at ease and enabled to participate. The practice of introducing myself and outlining the questions that will be raised prior to people coming into the room has been received very positively.

Information about the Panel

Applicants and foster carers should have information available to them in respect of Panel members and the Agency Decision Makers in the waiting room. This will be updated this year. A booklet is sent to them about attending Panel and they have discussions with their assessing social worker or supervising social worker to prepare them for attending Panel.

Liaison with the Service

For every case presented to the Panel, I complete feedback forms for the Agency Decision Makers. This arrangement works well. In addition, the Panel meets on occasion with the Service Manager and Practice Managers for the fostering service in Brighton & Hove to discuss developments. Panel also meets occasionally with the Head of Service for Brighton & Hove. It has met with the Agency Decision Maker for Barnardo's Link Plus to discuss the development of a Contract Care scheme for carers offering short breaks to disabled children.

Reviews and training

Panel members have continued to get to know each other and develop their roles and responsibilities over the last year. The Fostering Agency Adviser and I met with all Panel members individually over the year and completed annual appraisals. This was a very useful exercise and it reinforced people's commitment and ability to contribute to the Panel process. I also had an appraisal with the Agency Decision Maker for Brighton & Hove and the Agency Adviser. Unfortunately the Panel training day which was arranged for

early January 2010 could not take place but this will be rearranged for the coming year. This will be an important opportunity for Panel members to reflect on their work and to learn about new fostering developments.

5. Practice

Foster carer assessments and reviews of approval

In general the work presented to the Panel has continued to be of a high standard.

Brighton & Hove social workers have started using a new format developed by BAAF for assessing prospective foster carers and Panel members have been very impressed at the thoroughness of the new assessments undertaken.

Panel was very pleased to recommend approval of one family who were of dual heritage in the last year. Panel is aware of the work undertaken by Brighton & Hove to try to find more families who are black and/or of minority ethnic groups. It is also aware of the training and support provided to carers of black and minority ethnic children who are placed transracially and transculturally. The Panel continues to be mindful of its role in the approval and review of carers who offer such placements.

There were two contested terminations of approval and Panel members considered that the work undertaken was good. Independent support was provided to the carers and comprehensive and sensitive reports were completed. Panel members appreciate how difficult these matters are both for the carers concerned and the social workers. The Fostering Services (Amendment) Regulations 2009 allow carers to apply for an independent review of a proposed decision not to approve or reapprove them as foster carers. This was not used in the past year although an application has been made in the current year.

Family and Friends' carers

The Panel's work more than doubled in relation to dealing with family and friends' carers and we were impressed at the very high level of commitment offered. However some of the work was very challenging for Panel both in respect of the nature of the cases and the paperwork. There was improvement in respect of some initial reports but it is difficult to achieve good information in 6 weeks and present it to Panel as required by the Regulations. There were some reports which were not adequate and further information was urgently required before an interim approval was recommended or agreed. In one case, approval was not recommended after further information had been gathered. Further work has been undertaken in Brighton & Hove to improve the format of the reports and to develop understanding about the complexity of relationships and dynamics within the families concerned. Guidance to staff has clarified social workers' responsibilities in the field work and family and friends' teams. The new report format should allow more focus

on how the family and friends' carers specifically meet the needs of the child or children concerned.

The Panel was concerned about the impact of such an increase in the workload on the family and friends' team. Panel was also aware that, due to a number of unavoidable factors the team was seriously short staffed. Panel members therefore raised concerns about this with the service. This had already been recognised by the Head of Service and a number of measures were put in place to alleviate this.

Link Plus Carers and Contract Carers

The Panel was pleased to recommend approval of **1** part time Contract Carer over the last year. Contract carers are able to provide a considerable number of short breaks to disabled children and the Panel was impressed at the high level of skill and experience evidenced in the assessment.

Link Plus assessments and annual reviews have continued to be of a very high quality.

6. Conclusion

The organisation and functioning of the Panel worked well over the year. It remains an effective Fostering Panel and I am looking forward to our continuing development and work over the next year.

Sarah Borthwick
Independent Chair, Brighton & Hove and Barnardo's Link Plus Fostering
Panel (June 2010)

