

## **1. Executive summary**

Write this section after you have completed the rest of the template. It should briefly describe the story for your fostering service, its overarching objectives, the nature of the local looked after population and foster carer workforce (in-house and in other local fostering providers). Include the numbers involved and projected trajectory of need, highlighting existing and future gaps in the capacity of your foster carer workforce to meet local need, as well as current good practice and the views of foster carers and looked after children. Summarise, too, the costs involved and your local performance relative to other comparable local authorities, commenting on differences. This should logically lead to a summary of your emerging recruitment and retention strategy and action plan.

## **2. Aim of the needs analysis**

What is the context to this work and what do you hope to achieve through this needs analysis?

## **3. Local looked after children (LAC) population profile**

### **3.1 What is your existing LAC population?**

For each of the last three to five years:

- How many children became looked after, how many left and how many of those coming in had been looked after before?
- On 31 March, how many of your looked after children (number and %) were subject to a care order, how many were voluntarily accommodated?
- How many children from your area (number and %) are placed outside your authority?
- How many children (number and %) are placed 20 or more miles outside your local authority boundary? What is the profile of these children and what type of placements are they being accommodated in?
- How many children from another local authority have been placed in your area? With respect to the questions below, what is the profile of these children?
- How many children (number and %) are placed with in-house foster carers, how many with IFA foster carers?
- With respect to the questions below, what is the profile of children placed in-house compared to those placed with an IFA?
- What is your placement stability profile (e.g. number/% of children with one placement in the year; number/% with more than three placements in the year)?
- How many placement moves were planned, how many were unplanned?

- How many children are in mainstream foster care?
- How many children are in family and friends foster care?
- How many children are in specialist foster care?
- How many children are in parent and child foster care?
- How many children are in respite foster care for disabled children?
- How many children are in respite foster care for children who are not disabled?
- How many children are in emergency foster care?
- How many children are in short term foster care?
- How many children are in long term foster care?
- How many children are in residential care?
- How many children are in secure residential care?
- How many children are in parent and child residential care?
- How many children are placed with their parents?
- How many children are part of a sibling group who would benefit from being placed together and what size are the groups (e.g. number/% consisting of two children, three children, four children and so on)?
- How many (number and %) of these sibling groups are being accommodated together?
- How many children need a placement where there are no other children in the family?
- How many of these children are accommodated in a single placement?
- What is the age profile (e.g. number/% aged under 1, 2-4, 5-10, 10-15, 16/17 years)?
- What is the gender profile?
- What is the ethnic/linguistic/religious profile?
- How many children have physical disabilities?
- How many children have sensory disabilities?
- How many children have learning disabilities?
- How many children have physical, sensory and learning disabilities?
- How many children have special educational needs?
- What is the profile of children's scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (e.g. what number/% have high/medium/low scores)?
- How many children have a diagnosed conduct disorder?
- How many children have another diagnosed mental health problem?
- How many children are known to the youth justice system?

### 3.2 What is your edge of care population?

You should speak to your local Troubled Families team, MST team, Youth Offending Services; Disabled Children's Services and Child Protection and Safeguarding Services. Provide numbers over time (e.g. the last five years), if this data is available.

- How many children are subject to a child protection plan?
- What is the age profile of those on the edge of care (e.g. number/% aged under 1, 2-4, 5-10, 10-15, 16/17 years)?
- What is the gender/ethnic/linguistic/religious profile?
- How many sibling groups are there and what size are they (e.g. number/% consisting of two children, three children, four children, etc)?

- How many children are known to the youth justice system?
- How many children have physical disabilities?
- How many children have sensory disabilities?
- How many children have learning disabilities?
- How many children have physical, sensory and learning disabilities?
- How many children have special educational needs?
- What is the profile of children's scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (e.g. what number/% have high/medium/low scores)?
- How many children have a diagnosed conduct disorder?
- How many children have another diagnosed mental health problem?

**3.3 Do you anticipate an increase or decrease in your local population in the future? Do you anticipate any other significant changes in the makeup of your local population (e.g. changes in ethnic diversity, birth rate and so on). What impact might these factors have on your LAC population?**

National census information can be used to project reductions or growth in the local population and enable you to make some planning assumptions for future need.

## **4 Foster carer population profile**

### **4.1 Describe your current foster carer population**

If you have data over more than one year with respect to the matters below, it would be helpful to plot trends.

- How many foster carers do you have in-house?
- How many contracts do you have with independent fostering providers (IFPs)? Are they spot purchase or block contracts?
- How do the answers to the questions below differ with respect to your in-house foster carers and those you have access to via IFPs?
- How many vacant placements does your foster carer workforce have?
- How long have they been vacant?
- What are the reasons for vacancies?
- What is the demographics of your foster carer workforce e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, religion, educational attainment, previous/current career.
- What is the profile of your foster carer workforce regarding numbers of years' fostering?
- What is the profile of your foster carer workforce regarding the number of years they have been approved by their current fostering service?
- What are the reasons for foster carers ceasing to foster or moving to another fostering service?
- How many of your foster carer workforce are stranger foster cares?
- How many of your foster carer workforce are family and friends foster carers?
- How many of your foster carer workforce can provide specialist foster carers?

- How many of your foster carer workforce can provide parent and child foster care?
- How many of your foster carer workforce can provide respite foster care?
- How many of your foster carer workforce can provide emergency foster care?
- How many of your foster carer workforce can provide short term foster care?
- How many of your foster carer workforce can provide long term foster care?
- How many of your foster carer workforce are approved to care for one, two, three, and so on children?
- How many of your foster carer workforce are able to care for children who must be placed on their own?
- How many of your foster carer workforce are approved to care for babies, pre-school, primary school, secondary school, 16/17 year old children?
- What training has your foster carer workforce completed (including the proportion who have completed the Training, Support and Development Standards)?
- What specialist skills does your foster carer workforce have, e.g. caring for children with conduct disorder, other mental health disorders, physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, learning disabilities, children transitioning to independence?
- How many of your foster carer workforce are single, how many are in a couple?
- How many of your foster carer workforce have a job outside the home, in how many households can at least one person be at home all the time?

#### 4.2 Do you understand the reasons for changes to your foster carer population over time?

Consider your local turnover of foster carers and how this might be changing over time (nationally turnover is 13-14%): What factors are affecting your rate of turnover?

Information to inform this section might be obtained, for example, from foster carer exit interviews, other feedback from foster carers, views of supervising social workers and children's social workers, feedback from fostering panels, volumes of applications to the IRM / representations to the fostering service provider, recommendations from the IRM, records of complaints, views of looked after children.

- How many foster carers leave your service to move to another service, how many leave fostering altogether?
- How many of your foster carers experience allegations and how often do they result in the foster carers resigning?
- Do rates of pay attract people or do foster carers leave because they can't afford to foster?
- Are foster carers feeling adequately trained and supported to care for the children placed with them?
- How many foster carers leave due to a breakdown in relationship with the fostering service?
- How many foster carers leave to retire?
- How many older foster carers do you have who may wish to retire soon?
- How many referrals do your foster carers make to the IRM and/or how many

make representations to the fostering service provider?

- How many foster carers are deregistered due to child protection concerns?
- How many foster carers are deregistered because of other concerns about their practice?
- How many foster carers leave or move service because they are not getting placements?

## **5. Quality of placements being provided**

Information to inform this section might be obtained, for example, from Ofsted inspections; outcome data for your looked after children (e.g. education indicators, health indicators, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores); placement stability data; feedback from your looked after children and their families, feedback from foster carers, including exit interviews, views of supervising social workers, children's social workers and independent reviewing officers; views of the virtual school head and LAC nurses; feedback from fostering panels, recommendations from the IRM, records of complaints.

- Are children happy in their placements?
- Are they achieving their potential?
- Are placements stable?
- Are children with more complex needs being promptly placed with carers who can meet those needs, or are they experiencing placement instability?

If the answers to these questions are negative / positive, what are the reasons for this?

## **6. Quality of your recruitment and assessment process**

Information to inform this section might be obtained from Ofsted inspections; feedback from your fostering panel; feedback from applicants; IRM recommendations/feedback; statistics and views from your recruitment team; views of your decision-maker; views from supervising social workers and children's social workers about the quality/preparedness of new foster carers; views of your Foster Carers Association.

- Is your marketing targeted in a way that attracts applicants able to meet the needs of your looked after children, or do you receive large numbers of enquiries from unsuitable applicants?
- What is your rate of conversion from assessment to approval?
- What proportion of applicants choose to drop out of the process, what proportion are counselled out and what proportion does the decision-maker decide not to approve following a fostering panel recommendation?
- What are the reasons for applicants dropping out / being counselled out / being deemed unsuitable by the decision maker?
- What are the experiences of applicants going through the assessment process?

- Are successful applicants adequately prepared to meet the challenges of fostering?

## **7. Comparison with other LAs**

How does the data you have collected here compare to other local authorities and with independent fostering agencies?

Information to inform this section can be obtained from the Fostering Network's benchmarking survey, Ofsted's dataset and DfE statistics.

A comparison with IFAs might be obtained through your partner IFA(s)

## **8. Costs**

- How much does it cost to recruit a foster carer?
- Does this differ depending on the type of foster carer being recruited?
- How much do different types of foster placement cost (e.g. foster care vs. children's home, specialist vs. non-specialist, in-house vs. IFA, etc.)?
- How do these costs break down (e.g. fostering allowance, cost of providing therapeutic support to the placement, etc.)?
- What is the cost of a placement breaking down?

## **9. Gap analysis**

You may find additional information to inform this section in your local sufficiency plan (i.e. your local plan for meeting the duty in s22G of the Children Act 1989).

Based on the information you have collected and analysed via this needs analysis, to what extent does your local foster carer workforce (in-house and IFA) meet the needs of the current and projected population of looked after children in your area?

For example:

- Do you have sufficient numbers of foster carers in your area or do you need to recruit / commission more?
- Are you using the existing capacity of your foster carer workforce in the most efficient way, or are there, for example, large numbers of foster carers with vacancies? If there is a high placement vacancy rate in your area, why is this?

- Is your local foster carer workforce a good match (in terms of their location, capacity, skills, expectations of their fostering role and so on) for the needs of your current and projected looked after children, or do you need to target recruitment/commissioning better in order to change the profile (demographics, skills, capacity and so on) of the foster carer workforce in your area? For example, do you have enough foster carers able to meet the current and projected need for placements for sibling groups; for children needing placements of different durations; for children needing a carer able to manage challenging behaviour or disabilities and so on? Are your foster carers a good match for the ethnic, linguistic, religious profile of your local looked after children? Is the geographical spread of your foster carers such that children can be placed close to home, where this is in their interests?
- Are your looked after children in the most appropriate placement to meet their needs (in terms of outcomes and value for money?)
- Is the balance of in-house to commissioned placements in your area right?
- Do you need to commission placements more strategically and/or work more effectively with your IFPs (in terms of communicating your strategy, monitoring outcomes and so on) to secure a planned workforce that meets the spread of children's needs in the most effective and efficient way?
- Do you need to improve the training, support and so on of your foster carer workforce to improve retention and/or the match with current/projected looked after children's needs?
- Do you have foster carers who, for whatever reason, are no longer in a position to meet children's needs even with training and support? How do you respond to such situations?

## **10. Recruitment and retention strategy (to be completed by end of Oct)**

What good practice have you identified which you want to continue doing or want to do more of?

What is your strategy for closing any gaps you have identified between the needs of your current and projected looked after population and the ability of your local foster carer workforce (in-house and IFA) to meet these?

For example, do you need to change the way you:

- maintain your needs profile of your local looked after population and the ability of your foster carer workforce to meet these needs (including how you will fill any gaps in the data you have to inform your needs analysis);
- market foster caring to your local population and attract the right people into fostering;
- take applicants through the assessment process for approval to foster;
- support, train and monitor the effectiveness of your foster carers;

- commission independent placements?

What is your strategy for doing this?

To what extent is your strategy innovative?

To what extent does your strategy meet the Government's objective for this project of attracting and retaining a broader range of foster carers who can meet looked after children's needs?

You may identify a number of areas which need addressing, but for the purposes of this project wish to focus on a smaller number of key priorities.

### **11. Recruitment and retention action plan**

What actions will you take to implement your strategy and achieve your objectives?

What are your key products?

What are your key milestones?

What will your staff responsibilities be for achieving your action plan?

What risks / issues are there and how will they be mitigated?