

Gate 1 Business Case

Date: 20th April 2010

Project Title: Therapeutic Fostering

Directorate: CEF

Project Manager:

Roland Minto

Business Owner:

Barbara Foster

Budget Holder:

Brian Amos

Resource Requirements

Revenue funding in **existing** budget £2,349,100

Revenue funding required – **new** £180,000

Phasing of expenditure 2010/11 £

Full Year £180,000

Other resources required
(please specify)

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Baseline/Context

It is generally in the best interests of looked after children and more economic for them to be placed with foster carers

There have been overspends against a number of fostering budgets in 2009/10, mainly due to payments to carers, both CA072 cost centre and CA074 therapeutic fostering. The current spend on CA072 for 09/10 is £1,522,983 against a budget of £1,302,000. The budget for CA074 on foster carer payments is £78,800 against a spend of £155,757.

In part the children that are being placed have more complex needs and require in some cases extra resources to maintain placement stability. The consequences of placement instability are increased costs through use of private fostering providers and residential care. Thurrock's vfm position (spend and performance) for children in care is good

Growth Justification and Evidence (including benefits of growth and implications of not going ahead)

The successful maintenance of fostering placements significantly reduces the use of residential care and placements with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) Thurrock currently has approximately 232 children looked after. Of this number 162 young people are placed with in-house foster carers or relatives and friends who are foster carers.

Thurrock has over 123 approved fostering households who can offer up to 196 placements, however a proportion of these at any one time will not be used due to carers taking breaks or matching considerations. There is a national short fall of foster carers and Thurrock is competing with Independent Fostering Agencies. As a consequence high quality support to carers becomes essential.

The Authority has created a high quality training programme for a successful Therapeutic Foster Care Team and this needs to be maintained and expanded so that we constantly improve our potential to maintain and expand this low cost high quality part of our provision

Risks

If additional resources are not provided there is a risk of increased use of IFA's and/or residential care which are higher in both placement costs and higher likelihood that young people will be placed out of authority and incur other costs for example transport.

Stakeholder Engagement

National research reports that children in care prefer local, family placements so that their friendship and family networks are minimally disrupted by being in care. School performance is adversely affected by placement instability and disruption as are other outcomes (mental and physical health, pro-social behaviour and so on