

10 July 2012		ITEM 6
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Establishment of Foster Carer Association and Development of Foster Carers Charter		
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Oliver Gerrish		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Not Applicable	
Accountable Head of Service: Barbara Foster Head of Service, Care and Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson Director Children Education and Families		
This report is public		
Purpose of Report: to provide a formal notification to the Committee on the establishment of a local Foster Carers Association and report progress on the development of a local Foster Carers Charter.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is for information only.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 **The members of the Corporate Parenting Committee are asked to note contents, and commit their support to the ongoing development of the Committee.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The growth of local Foster Care Associations has accelerated over recent years, with active associations in many areas of the country. They are seen as examples of good practice in encouraging foster carers to play an active and constructive role in the development of fostering services, and both the National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011, and the Statutory Guidance 2011, indicate that local authorities should give positive support to such initiatives.
- 2.2 Thurrock previously had a Foster Carers Committee, but over the last few years the level of activity had declined. Towards the end of 2011 some of the newer Thurrock Foster Carers took the initiative to reconstitute the

association, with the support of relevant professional staff locally and external support via the national body, Fostering Network.

- 2.3 In 2011 the Children’s Minister announced an initiative to encourage local authorities to develop their own local “Foster Carer Charter”, which could be used to “unite foster carers, local authorities and fostering services around a shared understanding.” In parallel with the work around the Association, work has also been taking place to develop such a Charter for Thurrock.
- 2.4 This Report is intended to bring members of the Committee up to date with these developments.

3. Foster Care Association

- 3.1 Over recent months a group of Foster Carers have invested a great deal of time and energy in planning the future development of the Foster Care Association, culminating in a launch event at Treetops School on June 30th, to which various senior managers and members have been invited.
- 3.2 Foster carers have redrafted the constitution, and have set up an active committee of enthusiastic members who will coordinate and promote activity.
- 3.3 The overarching aim of the Association is:

To set up an association for the local foster carers and their Foster Families. This will be to provide information and advice, support, development, learning opportunities and also to organise social events for Foster Carers for both their children and the children in their care. This will be in partnership with the local authority.

- 3.4 The Association is to be known as the **Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association** in recognition of the contribution that all foster carers bring to Thurrock, regardless of where they are located within the service.
- 3.4 Although the Association is still in an early stage of development, officers welcome and value the engagement of carers in this process, and believe it will offer a substantial contribution to the positive growth of the service, as well as demonstrating the kind of good practice which will encourage potential foster carers to join us in Thurrock.

4. Foster Carers Charter

- 4.1 In parallel with the above, work has been undertaken on developing the Thurrock Foster Carer Charter. This has been led by some of the professionals working within the service. However the early drafts have been shared with members of the One Team Committee, who are happy with the content. A final draft will be available shortly, after which we will need to clarify the route for political sign off and ownership of the Charter within the authority.

- 4.2 Ensuring the Charter is distributed and supported at all levels locally will be a further demonstration of commitment to good practice, and meet the expectations of Central Government to have such a document meaningfully in place.
- 4.3 Subject to clarification of the appropriate process, a final version of the Charter should be available at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee will receive update reports on both these developments as requested.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

There are no immediate financial implications to these developments, although discussion has taken place about the authority making an annual contribution to facilitate the work of the Association. This decision will need to be made in the light of overall budgetary considerations for future years.

6.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report

6.3 Equality and Diversity

There are no Equality and Diversity Implications arising from this report.

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