

# Corporate Parenting Board

## 20 June 2024

### Fostering Service Annual Report

#### For Decision

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

**Local Councillor(s):**  
Cllr

**Executive Director:**  
T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Lisa Wilms  
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**Report Status:** Public

#### Recommendation:

Members of Corporate Parenting Board are requested to note the content and actively consider and comment upon the strengths and future recommendations.

#### Reason for Recommendation:

To be assured that the report had identified the strengths and areas for development that will strengthen the work we do as Corporate Parents and ensure that children and young people in Dorset will be happy and safe and have opportunities to reach their goals.

#### 1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require that Fostering Services provide written reports on the management, outcomes, and financial state of the fostering service. This Annual Report provides quantitative and qualitative information relating to the Dorset Council Fostering Service as required by

statutory guidance. The Annual Fostering Service Report must be presented to Corporate Parenting Board.

- 1.2 This report details the advancements that the Fostering Service has made over the 2023/2024 reporting year, particularly with the embedding and expansion of Mockingbird. The service has also been successful in the recruitment of permanent staff including the management team. Whilst the service continues to grow, soon to incorporate a specialist Kinship Service, we continue to provide stability and continuity to our fostering families, and in turn our children and young people feel more supported.

## **2. Report**

- 2.1 The service has had a very busy year and has continued to develop with a focus upon the support provided to our carers whose commitment, resilience, and skill to ensure that children's needs are met remains outstanding.
- 2.2 The highlight of the year has been the growth in Mockingbird constellations. We currently have 5 constellations, excitingly, with number six launching in the summer 2024. The program has moved at pace with the evidential knowledge that Mockingbird provides placement stability, retains foster carers, and improves the outcomes for children. This also evidences the ambition and commitment of Dorset Council and the fostering service to our foster carers and children and young people of Dorset.
- 2.3 With the cost of living crisis providing such a challenge, Dorset Council responded by agreeing a 15% uplift from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 in foster carer skill fees and coupled with a 12.43% rise in national fostering allowances, this has ensured that Dorset Council remains competitive when recruiting new carers.
- 2.4 The service knows itself well, its strengths and areas for improvement and has a clear plan to grow and develop over the next year.
- 2.5 The plan focuses on:
  - Improving outcomes for children through placing more children locally enabling them to maintain relationships with friends, family, and community
  - Developing a dedicated Kinship Service
  - Delivering value for money, reducing spend on placing children and young people externally
  - Ability to compete in the market, increasing the number and range of local foster carers with the skills and competencies required to meet our needs.
  - Supporting foster carer resilience through the delivery of high-quality supervision and training and access to specialist support when needed.

- Ensuring there is a sufficient number of foster carers with the right skills in the right location to enable appropriate matching
- Provide therapeutic training to staff to ensure fostering families are supported to a high standard.

2.6 The performance of the service has continued to strengthen with:

- The embedding of the Fostering Dashboard with access granted to both managers and social workers resulting in strengthened areas such as:
  - Foster carer supervision
  - Unannounced visits
  - Safer care plans
  - Reviews
- The implementation of both regular in-service dip sampling audits and safeguarding dip sampling audits occurring with every fostering review.
- The implementation of dip sample auditing of foster carers journeys where there has been an allegation to ensure learning is considered and actioned.

### **3. Recruitment, Assessment, Approval and De-registration**

3.1 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there were 196 Dorset Council fostering households, of which 116 were mainstream households, 71 were connected persons (approved and temporarily approved) and 9 households were foster to adopt/early permanence.

3.2 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there were 207 children and young people living in 196 in-house fostering placements which included mainstream, approved and temporary approved connected persons.

#### **3.3 Recruitment**

In this reporting period 2023/24, the fostering assessment team has recruited 14 new mainstream fostering households. There were 54 connected persons recruited and 9 foster to adopt placements. This equated to 18% of newly approved foster carers being mainstream.

#### **3.4 Enquiries, Assessments and Approvals**

In the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there were 74 enquiries from the public seeking information about becoming a foster carer equating to 18.92% conversion rate from enquiry to approval which compares to an

estimated conversion rate of 10% nationally. (Fostering Network). To ensure that this high conversion rate is achieved the following actions are undertaken.

- Enquirers are welcomed positively, provided with a personal service, and responded to within 24 hours.
- Prospective carers are given clear, engaging verbal and written information that highlights what Dorset Council Fostering can offer at every touch point with a consistent message.
- The application process is smooth and efficient with fostering carers approved as standard within 26 weeks.

3.5 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, there were a further 43 new fostering assessments in progress which includes 15 mainstream households and 28 connected persons. Of the mainstream fostering assessments, all, (subject to positive assessments) will be approved by July 2023.

#### **4. De-registration**

4.1 Nationally 13% of the foster carer workforce are retiring or leaving every year.

4.2 In this reporting period, 12 mainstream fostering households, and 29 connected persons were deregistered from fostering. Reasons for deregistration are as follows:

##### Mainstream

- 12 resigned from fostering.
- 0 initiated by the fostering service.

##### Connected persons

- 29 children moved on either returning home or becoming independent.
- 1 Foster to adopt

4.3 This has resulted in an overall gain of 29 fostering households from 2023.

#### **5. Recruitment and Marketing**

5.1 Recruitment has proved to be a challenge for fostering nationally with the government responding to this through the publication of 'Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation' February 2023.

5.2 The marketing and recruitment and retention of carers is underpinned by the Dorset Council Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2023 - 2026.

5.3 The strategic aims of the strategy are:

- To increase the number of Dorset Council foster carers through improved recruitment and carer retention outcomes.
  - To increase the range of in-house foster carer provision to provide a wider range of homes and especially more for disabled children, teenagers, and children and young people from different ethnic backgrounds.
  - To increase the proportion of our children in care who are placed in Dorset with Dorset Council foster carers.
- 5.4 The Fostering Service maintain a strong local presence, interacting in community spaces with various stands, activities and more widely through social media to share what a difference becoming a fostering family could make to a child or young person and their future outcomes.
- 5.5 Funding through the DFE to design, launch and run a pilot of a regional fostering hub has allowed Dorset Council to become part of the Southwest Regional Fostering Hub - a partnership of 15 local authorities working in collaboration to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

## **6. Marketing**

- 6.1 This reporting year saw the implementation of a new fostering image with an external marketing agency working in tandem with the Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service and colleagues from the communications team with a new standalone micro-site which is both dynamic and informative. The external marketing agency has also been used to support targeted Google advertising and this has provided focussed and informed campaigns. This has been particularly useful when highlighting the benefits of fostering with Dorset Council, with such innovations as the Mockingbird model. The service has become more competitive and a platform has now been provided to attract both individuals interested in fostering for the first time and foster carers currently with other agencies wishing to transfer to Dorset Council.
- 6.2 The service is now able to monitor all digital marketing activity and to deliver focussed and targeted advertising. This allows for the fact that foster carers can take a prolonged period to decide on fostering, and it is vital that their interest is maintained. This is supported through the provision of good information and the sharing of current foster carers experiences.
- 6.3 The service has completed 2 weeks full of activities held over the Foster Care Fortnight campaign which ran from the 13<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> May 2024. This is an annual campaign started by the Fostering Network and is designed to raise awareness of fostering and the incredible role foster carers play.

## **7. Face to Face Recruitment Events**

7.1 Face to face recruitment has been built upon over the past 12 months with attendance at events across Dorset. This has ranged from shows and events to family friendly venues. Information stands have been setup at supermarkets, coffee shops and other areas where there is a significant footfall. Significantly this has been developed with our foster carers who have been able to provide the service with their local knowledge, expertise, and time. Word of mouth still remains the primary means of recruiting new foster carers.

7.2 In all the team undertook 79 face to face events across Dorset from 1st April 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

7.3 Further engagement includes:

- Monthly online drop-in events hosted on - These have been open to the general public and advertised via our social media formats, alongside invites being sent to potential carers that have made an early enquiry with us. The drop-ins are hosted by the enquiries officer and are supported by current Dorset foster carers and social workers from the Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service. These are held both in the day time and evenings to ensure they are accessible for potential applicants who may be working during the day.
- Initial enquiry calls and home visits -These are an opportunity for potential carers to have a 1:1 discussion and to gain further information about fostering to see how it will fit for their family.
- Social media campaigns via our online formats - Facebook, Instagram and magazine advertising in local magazines delivered to households.
- Calendar events are shared with enquiring families who have made contact through the Southwest Regional Fostering Hub, as well as online, through email and via the micro site.

7.4 All our events are shared via the communications team to ensure members of the public know where we are and where they can attend to gain further information.

## **8. Fostering Panel**

8.1 Under the Fostering Service (England) 2011 Regulations Fostering Services are required to appoint a foster panel. Under Regulation 25 the fostering panel is required to:

- Make a recommendation as to whether the applicant is suitable to be a foster carer and the terms of the approval.

- Consider the first annual review for newly approved foster carers, as well as reviews following the managing allegations process, and where foster carers are seeking a change in the terms of their registration status.
- Recommend whether a person still is suitable to be a foster carer, and whether the terms of their approval (if any) remain appropriate.
- Give advice or make recommendations on other matters or cases referred to by the fostering service provider, including terminations of approval.
- The fostering panel must also advise, where appropriate, on the procedures under which reviews in accordance with Reg. 28 are carried out by the fostering service provider, and periodically monitor their effectiveness.

8.2 In addition, the National Minimum Standards 2011 requires that:

- Panels provide quality assurance feedback to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports being presented and the timeliness of assessments and decisions.

8.3 Fostering panel continues to be held on consecutive days once a fortnight on Tuesdays and Wednesday every other week.

8.4 There are currently 14 members on the central list including the panel chair. A panel is quorate when at least 5 members are in attendance. This must include the chair, a social worker and at least three other members. The increase in the number of central list members has provided resilience and most significantly a wide breadth of experience and knowledge.

8.5 During the reporting period of 2023 – 2024, the panel have been meeting in person. The panel has developed during this period led by our chair and with the strong partnership built with the panel advisor. The feedback from both professionals and foster carers is very positive.

## **9. Dorset Approved Fostering Households and Beds**

9.1 As of the 31st of March 2024, there were 449 children in the care of Dorset Council. Of these 311 or 69% of all children in care were being looked after by foster carers either through an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) or with Dorset's own in-house fostering service, which is higher than the national average, and good plus statistical neighbours.

9.2 Of the 311 children in foster care, 184 or 59.1% were placed with Dorset Council foster carers and 127 or 40.8% were placed with IFA carers.

9.3 The utilisation rate as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 of foster children to mainstream fostering households is 1.04.

9.4 Fostering households may be approved for one, two or three children. Often the approval can be for one, or two, if siblings. This is usually due to bedroom

space available. For the purpose of reporting the number of beds approved, the maximum number is reported. On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there were 114 fostering beds not in use which shows improvement from the figure of 142 last year at the same time last year.

- 9.5 There are a number of reasons why fostering beds are not in use which may range from matching to being on hold due to ill health, personal or family circumstances. Fostering households may not use the maximum number of beds they have available due to the needs of children living with them.
- 9.6 It is important to differentiate between fostering households that have vacancies and have no foster children placed (primary vacancies) and those that have vacant beds but do have other foster children in place (secondary vacancies). Likewise, fostering households that are on hold without any foster children placed have primary beds on hold and those that have children in placements but have additional unused beds have secondary beds on hold.

## **10. Fostering Reviews**

- 10.1 The foster carers annual review of approval addresses all relevant aspects of the National Minimum Fostering Standards and Regulations 2011. The reviews are initiated by the Fostering Social Worker with a written summary of achievements and significant events within the foster carers home over the preceding year.
- 10.2 A Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer convenes and chairs an independent annual review meeting. A report is then either presented to Panel and endorsed by the Fostering Panel Agency Decision Maker or submitted to the Senior Manager for Fostering who is the Agency Decision Maker for non-Panel reviews. All the completed reviews are quality assured by the relevant Team Managers who monitor compliance with the regulations before final agreement.
- 10.3 Over the last 12 months, the Fostering review process has continued to be developed with improvements made to strengthen timely completion. This has primarily been achieved through the strong partnership working with the fostering reviewing and quality assurance service. Weekly support sessions are offered by the advanced practitioners within the team, to share and support practice improvement. There is a monthly meeting between the two services with oversight from the service managers ensuring that outstanding or delayed annual reviews can be tracked and individual action plans completed. The fostering review service manager provides quarterly reports to QPAG (Quality Assurance Performance Group) to share progress and to further strengthen practice and performance in this area.
- 10.4 Of significance is the improvement in quality assurance with every review now being audited by the fostering reviewing officers. This has in turn led to an overall improvement in fostering household compliance and data and the quality of review reports.



10.5 The priorities remain within the service to:

- Complete fostering reviews within 11 months to improve timeliness and meet statutory requirement.
- Ensure the understanding and commitment from supervising social workers, QAROs and childcare social workers to contribute and inform the statutory review. This includes providing all the relevant information within the required timescales.
- Maintain high expectations in the standards of fostering reviews to ensure our foster carers have the skills, training, and support to meet the individual needs of our children & young people.
- Embed the audit framework within the FRO process to regularly highlight areas of strength and development. This will enable learning and improvement in practice from any emerging themes.
- Establish regular feedback from foster carers as part of the review process.
- Use the escalation process to drive standards and highlight key areas for managers and senior management oversight.

## **11. Foster Carer's Support**

11.1 Ensuring that foster carers feel valued is vital to maintain a strong service and to ensure that foster carers are retained. Dorset Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service offer support through a range of means.

## **12. Support Groups**

12.1 Support groups take place face to face, with the addition of an online monthly meetings for those who cannot attend in the day. These groups provided a regular opportunity for carers to come together supported by fostering social workers and managers to discuss a range of topics.

12.2 One of the key developmental areas of the service is to further develop the scope, availability, consistency, and attendance of support groups.

12.3 Groups are established across Dorset with venues including the North, South, West, Poole and Weymouth and Portland.

12.4 It has also been identified that consistency is a key requirement of the groups so in partnership with our foster carers a single agenda will be agreed which will include information sharing, training and development and keynote speakers.

12.5 The kinship support group has now progressed following feedback from our Kinship reference group. This provides a welcoming space for connect/kinship carers to come together in a dedicated group which recognises their unique needs.

### **13. Foster carer Forums**

13.1 Foster Carer Forums take place quarterly and are attended by both mainstream and connected carers. The feedback from carers has been very positive with value given to hearing about service updates, contributing to service development and speaking directly to senior managers from across children's services. The forums provide an excellent opportunity to listen to our carers and hear their views and ideas and a space for other professionals to attend, listen, hear feedback and provide updates. The attendance of the child in care nursing team, leaving care service and QARO service manager has been particularly well received.

### **14. Therapeutic Support**

14.1 The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service works in partnership with our health colleagues to promote the emotional wellbeing of children in care. A total of 22.5 hours of clinical psychology support continues to be provided through 2 part time clinical psychologists.

14.2 There has been a focus upon developing a service that is proactive rather than reactive, to ensure we can provide a graduated response and in order to achieve this the following pieces of work have been undertaken.

- The development of a working group to improve and redesign therapeutic provision for all children in care.
- Regular meetings between the fostering service and the clinical psychologists to continue to adapt their offer to meet the needs of children and our foster carers.
- The Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) training delivered to all members of the service.
- Direct work with foster carers through trial of Stormbreak – a programme related to supporting the mental health needs of children through movement.
- Foundations of attachment training for all foster carers.

### **15. Child's Voice**

15.1 Listening to children's voices is key to improving practice and the experience of children and young people. The Fostering Service supported the Coram Voice Bright Spots survey, 'Your Life, Your Care.'

15.2 89% children feel safe where they live compared to 61% young people and 82% general population and nearly all children said they trust their carers and felt that their carers are interested in their education.

15.3 The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service actively supports children and young people to share their views about how they are being cared for and supported. This includes support for keeping in touch with their family and friends, support with education, hobbies and interests and planning for the future. Views are shared ahead of child in care reviews and as part of the foster carer's annual review.

15.4 Children in foster care also have access to a children's advocate and independent visitor. This service is provided independently through NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) who are also exploring the potential of using digital workflow to raise the profile of advocacy with children, young people, colleagues, and our partners.

15.5 The Youth Voice Team are also working closely with our Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service to take a 'whole family approach' to engagement, where foster carers, their birth families, and the children they foster attend events together.

## **16. Delegated authority**

16.1 Dorset Council Children's Services continue to work to ensure that foster carers have delegated authority to make certain decisions for the children they care for. A delegated authority agreement is completed at the point of the initial placement planning meeting which provides clarity and enables foster carers to make common sense, everyday decisions about the children and young people they care for, for example allowing them to go to friends' houses for sleepovers, signing consent forms for school trips and even arranging haircuts. Completion of delegated authorities is tracked weekly to ensure timely completion by social workers.

## **17. Fostering and Supported Lodgings Carers Awards**

17.1 The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Carers Awards event took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Feedback from carers who attended was very positive, *'inspirational and brilliant'*. The event saw the celebration of the outstanding love, care and kindness Dorset Council carers provide to Dorset children and young people and their longevity of service. This year's event celebrated 39 carers being recognised for long service awards, as well as including a pioneer award and the children's director award for outstanding services.

## **18. Fostering Service Compliance**

18.1 An improvement and strengthening of the management team has seen a marked rise in compliance particularly in respect of supervision visits which are currently at 86% timeliness and also ensuring that all households are reviewed in case supervision every 8 weeks. In addition to this dip sampling

on a monthly basis and fostering reviewing audits undertaken on every review have meant that there is a greater scrutiny of the support being provided to our foster carers.

## **19. Complaints and Allegations**

19.1 The Fostering Service always takes any complaints and allegations against foster carers very seriously and all complaints and allegations are thoroughly investigated. Wherever possible we will attempt to resolve complaints informally, but these can be escalated should the complainant remain dissatisfied.

19.2 All allegations against foster carers are referred to the LADO and are thoroughly investigated.

19.3 Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 there were 12 complaints about the fostering service of which 2 were upheld:

- 2 complaints was from a child which were not upheld with the matter being informally resolved.
- 7 complaints were made by foster carers
- 1 child young person's social worker
- 2 complaints were children and young people's parents

19.4 The focus of the Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service in response to complaints made is to build rapport and build relationships whilst delivering the best possible outcomes for children and young people in care. As an authority which constantly wants to listen, learn and develop, our approach is to promote the best relationship with our foster carers, young people, and their families by learning from complaints.

19.5 During this reporting period there were 27 referrals to the Designated Officer (LADO) concerning foster carers during this reporting period. 13 of these allegations were by 9 children and 14 were from other sources.

19.6 After deliberation with the LADO, 9 had no further action, 13 were referred to the fostering panel. 4 were referred to DBS the child protection team or had section 47's undertaken. 9 referrals led to no further action through the management of allegations process because the criteria were not met and the standards of care process was followed with additional training and development being identified to ensure that both the foster carers and supporting social workers learnt from the situation, as well as ensuring the foster carer continued their fostering journey evidencing they were able to meet fostering standards.

19.7 These 27 referrals were further broken down by the following allegations:

- Physical 11
- Sexual 1
- Neglect 9
- Emotional 6

## **20. Foster Carer Training**

20.1 Foster carers have access to a comprehensive learning and development offer through the Foster Carers Training Handbook. We are able to offer a variety of online and in person training. The learning and development team have worked incredibly hard to provide flexibility to timings, capacity and availability to ensure training available to our carers is maximised.

20.2 To support the training and development of foster carers they subscribe to The Training Hub which has a wide range of specialist e-learning modules targeted specifically at foster carers. The Foster Carer Training Hub offers the UK's largest cohort of online subjects. All their online training is built upon scientific evidence. This means it is engaging, interactive, and is supported by unique modules which include assessments, course-related handbooks, and an in-depth learning outcome review to ensure the learning outcomes have been met by our carers.

20.3 This has been further enhanced by the development of the 'Fostering Together' portal and with foster carers now provided with their own Dorset Council e-mail address there is greater opportunity to access resources from Research in Practice.

20.4 Our foster carers have been part of the working group undertaking a review of the training offer to our foster carers. In addition, the kinship reference group have looked at how we best support our kinship carers moving forward, ensuring their voice is heard and acted upon. The focus has been to embed therapeutic approach within the service to ensure we meet the training needs of our carers to provide a resilient service.

20.5 Dorset Council laptops have been made available to all carers to enable consistency in accessing training platforms.

## **21. Budget**

21.1 The 2023/24 budget for Inhouse Fostering Fees & Allowances totalled £5,229,100 funding an average of 217 placements during the year.

21.2 There was an expenditure of £5,128,563.

21.3 It is anticipated that usage of in-house provision will increase going forward through the recruitment of foster carers and continued growth of Mockingbird constellations.

## **22. Mockingbird**

22.1 The standout achievement of the fostering service continues to be the launch of Mockingbird and its progression to business as usual. Mockingbird is a pioneering programme delivered by The Fostering Network in partnership with fostering services across the UK. Across the UK, there are in excess of 130 constellations. The programme nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families, supporting them to build a resilient and caring community of six to ten satellite families called a constellation.

22.2 Relationships are central to Mockingbird. The hub home carer builds strong relationships with everyone in the constellation, empowering families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate or lead to instability, which increases protective factors around the children, young people and their foster families.

22.3 Being able to support a diversity of placement types has met the needs of different care-experienced populations and embraces the ethos of the model with child-centred practice, maintaining relationships, emphasising an extended family network, and reducing bureaucracy. The model also offers supportive peer relationships for sons and daughters of foster carers.

22.4 The support and encouragement of Fostering Network has allowed Mockingbird to move with pace. We have been described as inspirational by the Mockingbird society in Seattle, who have invited our Mockingbird team to visit, share our great practice and experience how things are run in Seattle and take part in the 2024 youth summit.

## **23. Service Developments for 2024 – 2025**

### **23.1 Mockingbird**

- To continue to build on the existing 6 Mockingbird constellations with a target of 10 constellations being established by April 2025.

### **23.2 Dedicated Kinship Service**

Through the delivery of the Dorset Council Family Network Strategy we will develop a dedicated Kinship Service to::

- Identify and support family networks early.
- Build strong relationships with families and empower them to engage in decision making.
- Undertake kinship assessments that are reasonable, proportionate, and respectful.
- Provide support and training to kinship families that is tailored to their needs.
- Provide support where required to ensure financial constraints alone are not a barrier to kinship care.

### **23.3 Strengthening Foster Carer Recruitment**

- To build upon the significant advantages that the service has gained through the foster carer fee uplift, the implementation of the Mockingbird model and therapeutic support.
- The recruitment strategy to focus upon approving local Dorset foster carers with skills in the following areas:
  - The Harbour
  - Children with disability
  - Older children
  - Siblings
  - Finalise single assessment
  - Promote Fostering corporately and fostering friendly service within Dorset Council for staff.

### **23.4 Supported Lodgings Service**

- Dorset Council's Supported Lodgings Service is now being regulated by Ofsted, to ensure there is oversight to help make sure young people are safe, secure and living in appropriate accommodation which meets their needs.
- Regulations are now applicable to all Local Authorities who are providing a Supported Lodgings Service in the hope of providing a consistent service that follows best practice and promotes positive outcomes into adulthood.
- Integrate Supported Lodgings within the Fostering Service, to:
  - Create capacity for focused recruitment of supported lodgings carers.
  - Extend the training offer for foster carers to supported lodgings carers.
  - Strengthen oversight through attendance at panel.

- Embed review processes 12 months post approval for initial review and every 5 years thereafter.

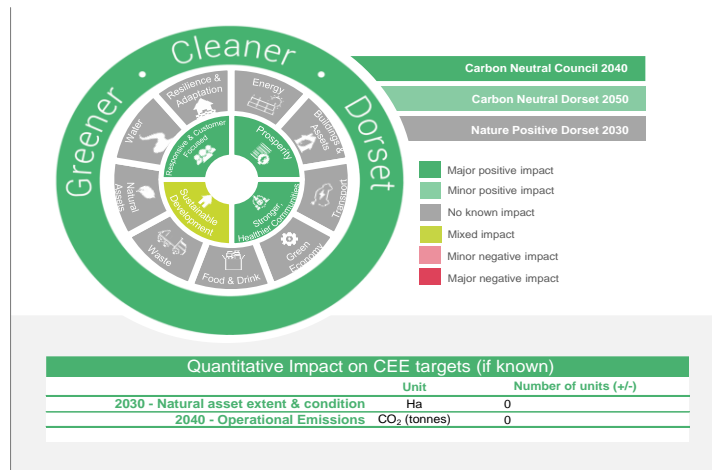
## 24. Financial Implications

24.1 The impact upon Dorset Council financially is significant as having low numbers of in-house foster carers means that there is a reliance upon expensive independent fostering and independent residential provisions.

## 25. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications.

25.1 Having sufficient foster carer capacity in Dorset will support reducing the amount of travel undertaken by families, social workers, and other children’s services staff. There are currently 187 children living in care outside Dorset. 44.96% of children (excl unaccompanied children) live over 20 miles away from home, with 27.91% living over 20 miles away and out of county. While the majority of children live in neighbouring authorities, there are some children living as far afield as Blackpool, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester.

25.2 Reduced travel should result in a reduction in the associated emissions from travel which is in line with the council’s priority of protecting the natural environment, climate and ecology.



## 26 Well-being and Health Implications

26.1 Having a sufficiency of foster carers to provide well matched, stable, caring and loving family homes to children and young people means that this is positive for their health and wellbeing. It is also key to be able to provide a home for children and young people within Dorset to maintain relationships



important to them and support links local to their families and known environment.

26.2 Therefore, providing an excellent fostering service with a sound ethos and model for nurturing relationships for our children and young people, that has the required investment, provides stability and the potential of positively impacting good health outcomes for children and young people. It is important to highlight – we are an essential and invaluable service within the children’s directorate.

**27 Other Implications**

None identified

**28 Risk Assessment**

28.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low  
Residual Risk: Low

**29 Equalities Impact Assessment**

NA

**30 Appendices**

**ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS**

<b>Natural Environment, Climate &amp; Ecology Strategy Commitments</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

<b>Corporate Plan Aims</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Prosperity	strongly supports it

Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	neutral
Responsive & Customer Focused	strongly supports it
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?</b>
<b>Energy</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Buildings &amp; Assets</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Transport</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Green Economy</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Food &amp; Drink</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Waste</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Natural Assets &amp; Ecology</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Water</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	
<b>Resilience &amp; Adaptation</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	

### 31 Background Papers

NA

### 32 Report Sign Off

32.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring

Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151  
Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)