

Statement of Purpose

2021-2022





Introduction

This report provides information about the Fostering Service and outcomes for children and young people looked after by Norfolk Fostering Service from 1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021 as well as key priorities for 2021-2022.

Recruitment & Marketing

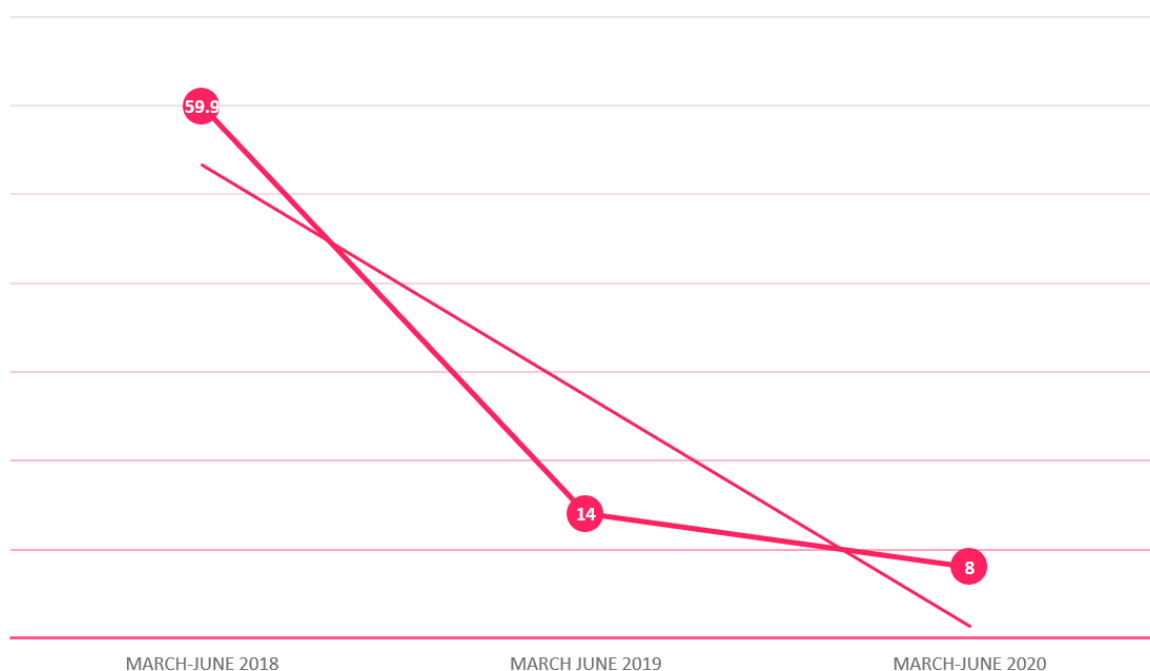
Recruitment Activity

We continue to ensure that initial visits take place, responding to any enquiries in 24 hrs, 72 hrs, if the period involves weekend or Bank Holidays and an Initial visit completed and signed off in 10 days.

The time taken for applications to be returned has also decreased from an average:

- 59.9 days – March - June
- 2018 13 days – March - June 2019
- 8 days – March - June 2020

Days to return application





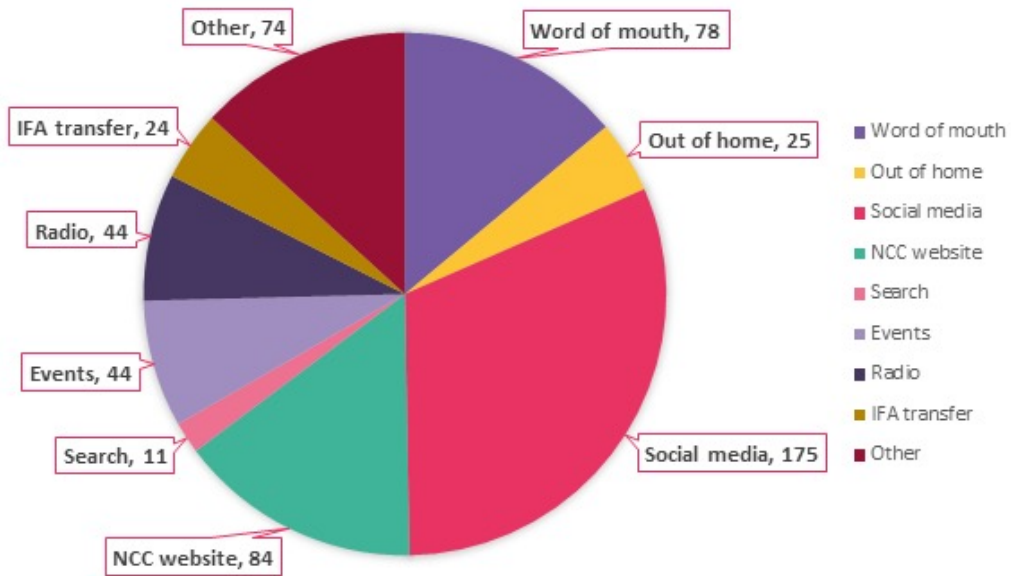
- Between November 20 and March 21, we developed a whole new approach to how we operate our front door of receiving new enquiries
- Duty Workers are now called Fostering Recruitment Advisors and deal with initial enquiries within 1 working day, they follow a completely new process
- All enquiries have the option to attend one of three sessions which are aimed at the information they wish to gather. These are either a face-to-face 1-2-1 session, a virtual 1-2-1 sessions or, if they are just information gathering, they can attend one of our virtual drop-in sessions, which are ran once a month
- Alongside this new process, there has been a new dashboard developed that tracks their initial enquiry from point of entry to approval or deciding fostering is not for them.

Overview of Recruitment Activity

- 514** Initial enquiries received from new prospective fostering households between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 96** Stage one assessments were completed between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 0** Application refused approval at panel between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 96** Initial visits (or equivalent) undertaken following enquiries between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 36** New prospective fostering households commenced foster care training between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 36** Applications from prospective fostering households received approval between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 96** Applications received between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 36** Stage two assessments completed between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021
- 4** There was an additional 1 CWD household and 3 Kinship households.

Average number of months it took foster carer households to progress through the stages in the journey to approval was 6 months. 72% were 6 months or under and 94% were completed within 7 months.

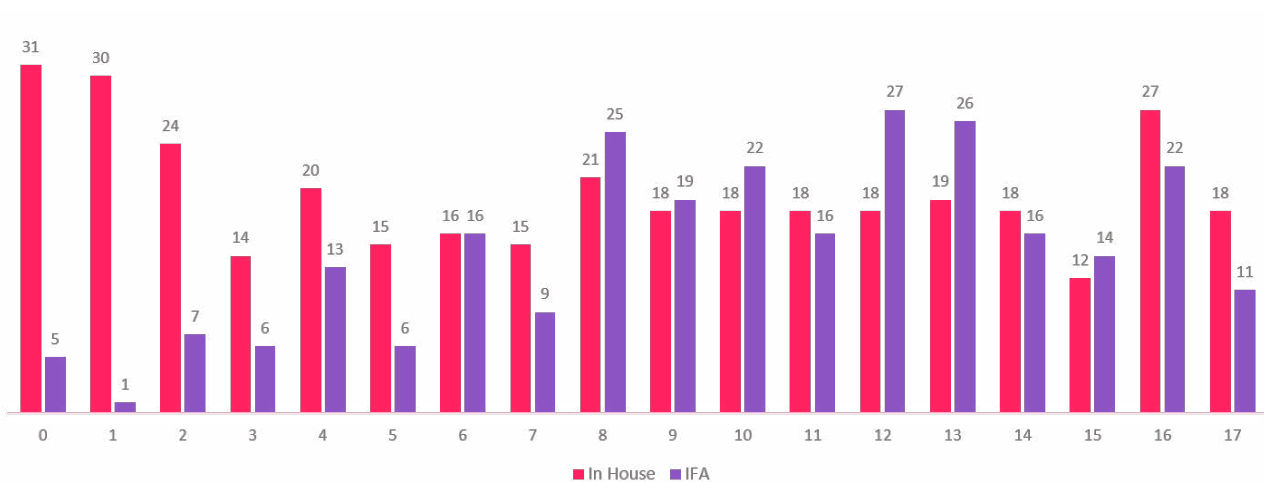
From presenting assessment to Panel, ADM decision was within 14 days.



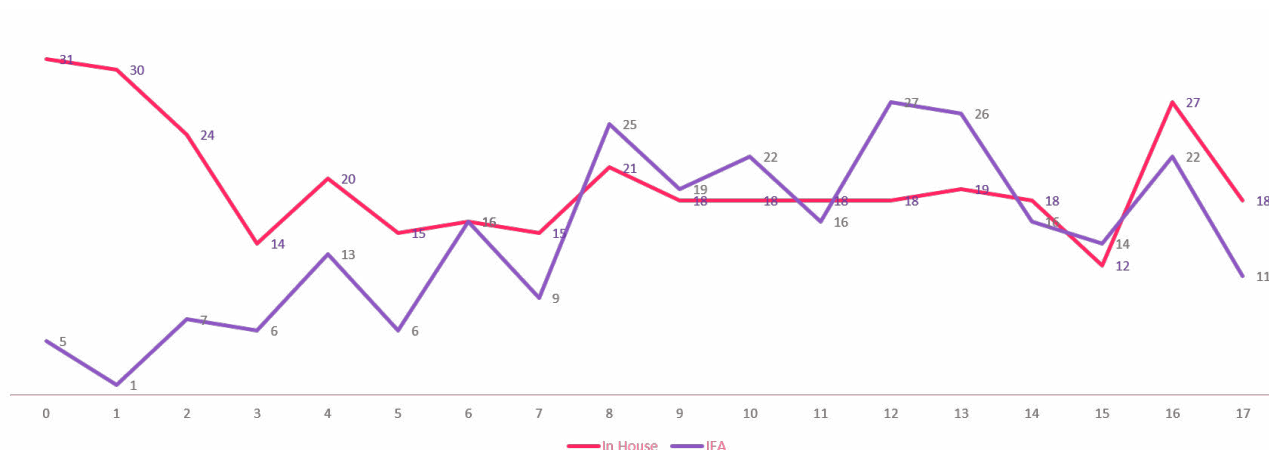
Areas of Focus

- There are a low number of Foster Carers who are only intending to foster teenagers, therefore the recruitment strategy and the Foster Carer Ambassadors are promoting this type of fostering
- We require more foster carers looking after children aged 8 plus.

LAC Child Age at month end by In House and IFA as at 31 Mar 2021



LAC Child Age at month end by In House and IFA as at 31 Mar 2021



Areas of Focus

- We know that we need to build and specialise in unaccompanied asylum- seeking children and children with disabilities
- Increase the number of parent and child placements/step down
- A more diverse pool of Foster Carers from a range of ethnic backgrounds.
- Continue recruiting New Roads and Enhanced Foster carers
- Continue recruiting emergency and PACE bed foster carers
- Continue developing the fostering ambassadors and buddies in a trauma informed way with a clear focus on vital signs

Marketing & Communications

Strategic changes to our marketing from March 2020 to January 2021

From 16th March 2020, due to the current COVID-19 Pandemic, we have had to alter our approach to recruit new foster carers over the past nine months and we have successfully implemented the following:

- Virtual online information sessions
- Tighter response rates to those enquiries who could not attend a virtual session
- Live Q&A sessions
- Podcast channel dedicated to the world of Fostering (Fostering Focus)
- Targeting specific cohorts through Mosaic data
- Virtual drop in sessions promoted on social media channels.



Rebranding

We took the decision to rebrand the service in October 2020.

The brand now helps reposition us in the marketplace as one of the leaders in the market, it is more appealing and engaging with our audience.



Marketing Objectives

The target of 648 enquiries, leading to a potential 64 new foster carers for the new financial year (2021/22).

In an ever-changing world, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we are seeing more people investigating the possibilities of a career change, placed on furlough or being made redundant. Based on the profiles of the types of children, we are looking to place, we have undertaken a report detailing the types of carers we have in place and their placement criteria.

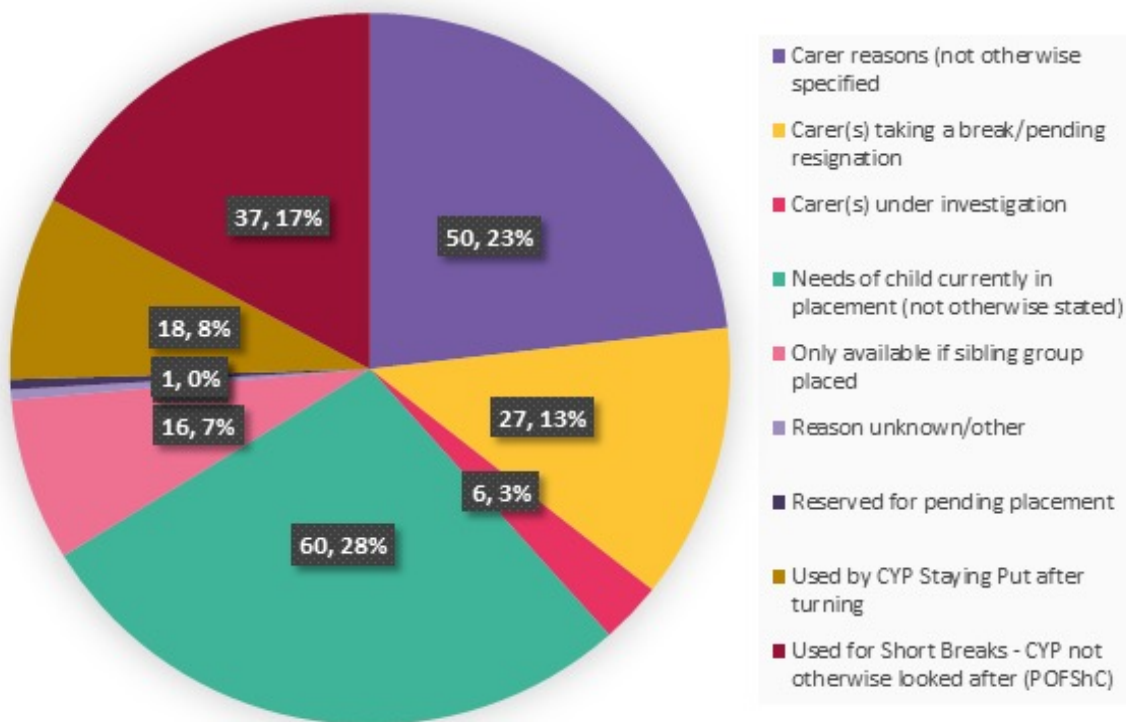
This has then been overlaid to show the key types of carers we specifically need to recruit.

Supervision & Retention

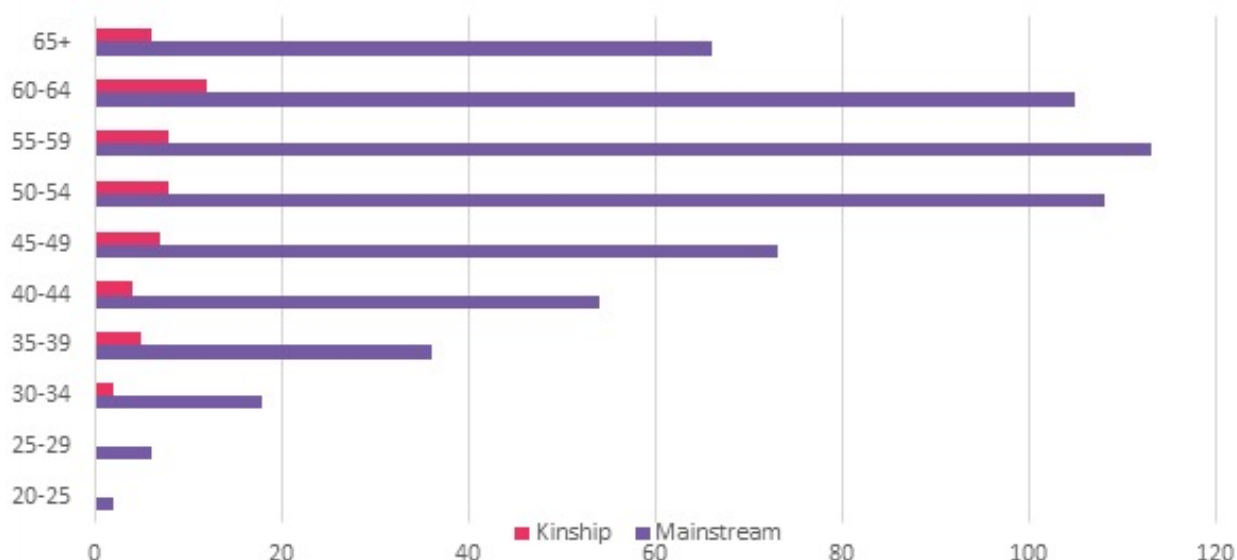
Supervision and retention of foster carers

- Number of households at 31st March 2021
- Occupancy rate: 333 mainstream and kinship fostering households to 409 children - 1.3%
- 358 (including foster carers who are temporarily approved) with 696 places providing care to 409 children

Reasons for Unavailable Places



Age range of foster carers by type 2020/21



Support Groups (Network Meeting Groups)

We alternated the times to allow foster carers to be flexible around attendance (10am and 8pm), so that the groups would be more accessible to carers throughout the pandemic period. This generated positive feedback from carers who have not previously been able to attend these events, due to them clashing with other daily commitments.

Norwich/Great Yarmouth/North Walsham/West areas held 28 virtual network group sessions: these events were a combination of social events as well as much more focused discussions by bringing speakers from a variety of backgrounds: Sleep East, ongoing communication from the Operational Lead of the service and managers, Matthew Project, Fostering Network, Family time colleagues and Early years LAC advisor.

In addition to these, we organised virtual drop-in events to discuss carers' wellbeing, placement searches, suggestions for improvement.

Feedback from foster carers led us to create other groups:

- A Kinship network group that is now focusing on designing a leaflet and other sources of support for kinship carers either during their temporary or full approval.
- Duty sessions – to allow foster carers and service to come together around sufficiency and relationship practice, we have facilitated sessions to look at how we communicate our placement needs, how we profile children who are active to our searches; Foster carers feedback has been invaluable in practice improvement.



- Information hub Sessions – continued development of the information hub, which is now being updated on a weekly basis with a summary of placement searches, so that there is ongoing communication between the service and foster carers in terms of support and sufficiency.
- Improved duty system by committing a small duty team to the daily placement search activity with carers' support worker being able to support placements made or at risk of vulnerability.
- Regular communication with foster carers by emailing promptly any changes that have occurred, as a result of the pandemic impact

There is an active Fostering Advisory Partnership group (monthly meetings) whose aim is to maximise the welfare of children in our care through the promotion of good practice and partnership working, to adopt a culture of continuous improvement, to offer ideas on new and innovative ways of working, promote working partnerships through facilitating good communication, create opportunities for children and young people to meet together for the purpose of growth and development through activity and learning.

The group is continuously evaluating its impact on outcomes for Looked after Children and has started working closely with the NICC to ensure that the children's voices and lived experiences are heard by those who care for them. The Advisory group has directly contributed (via its Task and Finish and CPD groups) to the development of the reflections and learning events following a placement ending, savings policy, communication plan.

Advice and Mediation Support

The Advice and Mediation service offers confidential and independent advice and support to foster carers and agency staff as well as mediation between foster carers and agencies.

By purchasing this service, Norfolk County Council is acknowledging that foster carers are an essential part of the professional team around the child and recognising that foster carers are uniquely vulnerable and may, at times, require additional independent support.

This service assists the service in retaining foster carers in these times of an acknowledged national shortage of foster carers.

The main sources for the referrals had been around allegations, concerns, financial implications and care planning. Children Who Foster Group



Children Who Foster Group

We have held many events to support the foster carers' own children during the pandemic:

- Pet show, talent show, various other social events.
- The group is also instrumental in the training of applicants by delivering a session about impact of fostering on own children.
- Foster carers' own children are being celebrated by having a voucher sent to them on their birthdays.

Matching

"I just wanted to put forwards my thanks for...the SSW's amazing support and to make you aware of how amazing she is as our support social worker.

She had been incredibly insightful and understanding of my family's best interests are and what our strength and weakness are as a foster family.

I know I can approach our SSW with any concerns and speak openly without judgment, safe in the knowledge she will act on anything I've asked help with.

We feel very lucky to have such a supportive team around us as a fostering family."

- Trained 8 Supervising Social Workers in Non-Violent resistance parenting.

Signs of Stability Meetings

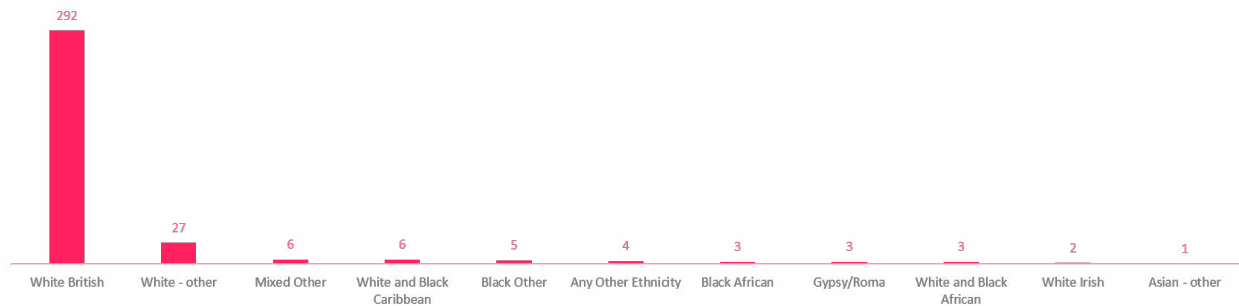
It is interesting to note the increase in all these events over the second half of the year when the pandemic was at its height.

Deregistration of mainstream foster carers has remained steady: 40, despite new factors that have influenced the fostering role: Covid-19 as a precipitator or directly impacting on the carers' circumstances and evaluation of their future by bringing new challenges to the fostering households.

De-registration Breakdown

Reason for De-registration	Total
COVID-19	8
Gained Special Guardianship Orders	4
Adoption	1
Staying put offer	2
Local Authority Concerns	12
Retiring	9
Health Reasons	3
Other	1
Total	40

Breakdown of the Ethnicity of children placed with in house carers at 31st Mar 2021





Enhanced Fostering Team

Enhanced Fostering Carers

- Cohort of 10 fostering households.
- 4 are newly qualified with this being their first foster placement.
- 5 households have a residential background of at least one foster carer.
- 1 household stepped back to mainstream fostering and young person remained in placement.
- 2 fostering households increased their terms of approval to offer an additional placement each.
- 2 fostering households offer respite to another Enhanced fostering carer.
- 1 foster carer developed into Enhanced fostering Buddy for new carers.

Enhanced Fostering Young People

- There are currently 10 children matched to Enhanced Foster Carers.
- There are a further 9 young people profiled and actively searching for a new Enhanced Foster Placement. The young people are equally split from referrals – currently 4 are male and 5 are female.
- A further 5 children had the direct work and support of the team in specialist placement profiling, matching and support.
- Total number of referrals was 40 for the year. This came from a mixture of young people in residential care across the United Kingdom from the age of 9 years upwards. The majority are teenagers and have been in a residential placement for at least one year, following multiple fostering placement breakdowns.

Pandemic impact on Enhanced Fostering

- The Covid pandemic has affected the number of young people who are ready to explore and prepare to move to long- term fostering through the Enhanced Fostering Team.
- Sadly, some have regressed or been further traumatised from the impact of the pandemic itself. This has led to an increase in the number of young people needing a longer period in residential care to finish and complete pieces of specialist support. It has pushed back the number of young people who are now ready to explore stepping down to Enhanced Fostering.



Linked Families Short Breaks

Linked Families Current cohort of carers

- 28 fostering households – 7 are fee paid carers. Fee paid carers are available for 4 nights per week and 45 weeks per year
- 11 of the 28 fostering households have at least one carer over the age of 60
- 16 of the 46 total carers are over 60 and 25 over 55
- 2 fostering households offer a full-time placement
- 2 fostering households offering shared care arrangements
- 4 fostering households offering respite care to full time foster carers.

Linked Families – Children

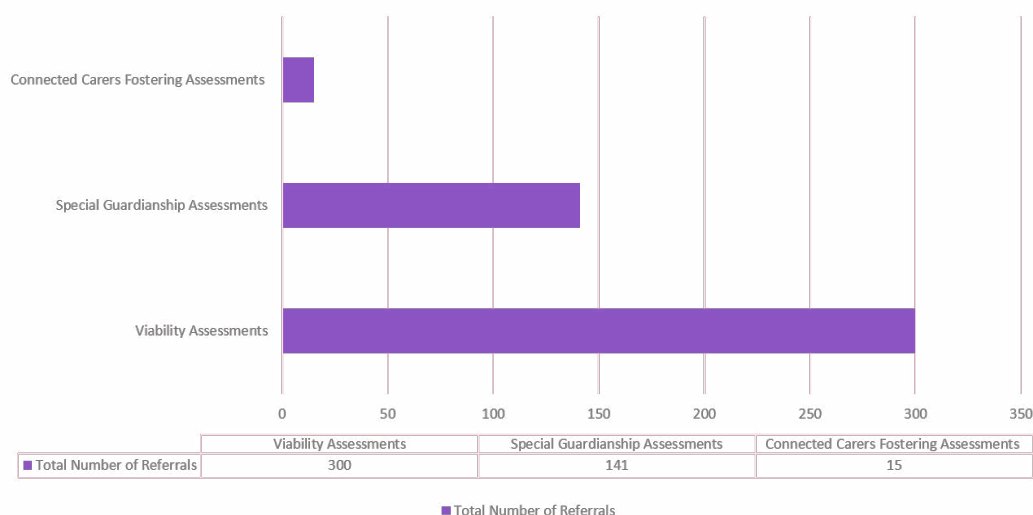
- There are 31 children placed or matched with carers
- There are 9 CYP on the waiting list aged 6 to 16, the majority are 12 and under. They have a variety of needs; ASD, ASD/SLD, SLD/epilepsy and PMLD
- A further 12 children worked with during the pandemic
- Two members of staff have been trained and delivered epilepsy training to foster carers.

Kinship Assessment

Kinship Assessment Team

During the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, the number of referrals was 456.

Total Number of Referrals





- There has been a reduction of 35% of fostering assessments, from 23 in 2019/2020 to 15
- This is paralleled by the increase in Special Guardianship Assessments from 93 in 2019/2020, to 141 the year ending 2020/2021 an increase of 65%.
- Viability Assessments continue to increase, from 215 in 2019/2020 to 300 in 2020/2021 an increase of 71%
- Referrals have increased from 363 to 456 over the past year an increase of 79%
- There have been 11 unborn children referred an increase of more than 100%
- The main age group of children referred in is 2 years and under
- 326 White British children were referred into the team
- 29 children from Black ethnic groups
- 31 from White ethnic groups
- Only 1 disabled child has been referred

Private Fostering

Private Fostering Summary

- In April 2020 Private Fostering moved from the Kinship Team to the Fostering Recruitment Team.
- The majority of privately fostered children within the team, in line with previous years, were those from overseas studying English at Language Schools.
- The Team Manager's role includes consultations with internal teams and external partners
- Many consultations with internal teams have taken place over the year and the majority of these do not proceed to a Private Fostering notification as they are deemed not to be private fostering or to be unsuitable.
- Consultations demonstrated that external agencies required further support to understand what constitutes as a Private Fostering arrangement and when an alternative framework would provide a more suitable long term care arrangement.
- Internal consultations discussed where there might be a need for legal stability and a main carer that can exercise Parental Responsibility on a day to day basis.
- All external Private Fostering notifications are initially processed via Norfolk's Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) who then re-assign to the Fostering Recruitment Team.
- The Fostering Recruitment Team Managers ensures that the legal requirements for assessment of children and carers are met within the defined timescales.

Private Fostering Activity

Reason for De-registration	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Number of private fostering notifications received in the year	42	36	24
Number of new private fostering arrangements that began in the period	31	24	18
SW visits to child within 7 working days of notification or commencement	97%	100% (for those notifications that progressed to assessment)	100%
Number of new arrangements that had visits at least every 6 weeks	31	26	18
Number of children in existing private fostering arrangements at the start of the year	12	6	2
Number of arrangements with Regulation 8 visit out of timescale	0	0	0
Percentage of Regulation 8 visit in timescale	100%	100%	100%
Number of private fostering arrangements that ended in the period	32	34	20
Arrangements that ended as the Young Person turned sixteen years old	8	2	1
Number of children in private fostering arrangements at the end of the year	11	2	4 2 subject to assessment

Activity and Ethnicity of children

Source of notifications	Number of arrangements
Children's Social care teams and early help	4
Ambulance	1
Language Schools	10
Norfolk Schools	2
Other LA	1 (Lincolnshire)
Norwich City Football	0
Child's Relatives	100%

	5-9yrs	10-15yrs	16 & over
German	0	2	0
Chinese	0	3	0
Asian Other Thai	1	0	0
Indian	0	2	0
Dutch	0	1	0
Japanese	0	1	0
White British	0	12	0
White, Black, African	0	2	0



Fostering Panel

Role and Remit of Panel

- Crucial role to play in provision and monitoring of quality of foster carers for the children of Norfolk
- Fostering panel meets the Fostering Service Regulations 2011/15 in respect of how it is constituted
- Provides independent scrutiny and challenge to the operational fostering service
- Fostering panel and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations and decisions in line with the objective to promote the welfare of the children in foster care in Norfolk.

Foster Panel Achievements 20/21

- Panel has been operating using Microsoft Teams during this period due to the Global Pandemic
- Panel had to become paperless due to the above circumstances and panel members have embraced this significant change
- Panel has continued to meet up to 5 times per month and has met on 56 occasions over the measured period
- 191 cases have been presented to fostering panel over this period – hearing a variety of cases (see chart below)
- The Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS) are embedded in respect of being a quality assurance benchmark for foster carers and the service
- Feedback processes have been strengthened
- New system designed and implemented in relation to independent scrutiny of existing carers – Best Practise Review panels. Over 20/21 period 72 cases heard

Business through panel during 20/21

	1 Oct 2019 – 31 Mar 2020	1 Apr – 30 Sept 2020	Oct 2020 – Mar 2021
Mainstream Assessments including CWD	18	17	23
Connected Persons Assessment	2	8	4
First Reviews	24	23	22
Review following allegations	4	1	5
Termination of Approval	1 (no appeal)	1	2
2nd Review	1	2	2
Changes of Approval	N/A	5	3
Best Practice Reviews	N/A	35	37
Total cases presented to panel in the period	50	93	98

Feedback from a foster carer 11/8/21

Panel was initially a daunting prospect. However, we had all the information regarding who was attending, and were comfortable that panel was online. It enabled us to attend even though we were at home isolating with COVID. It also meant the complexities of arranging cover was not required.



Learning & Development

Training

Between 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021 we have delivered:

159 courses

42 were cancelled due to COVID-19

1470 foster carers attended training

106 people did not attend a booked course

417 carers cancelled a place

Following consultation with foster carers and fostering supervisor, the learning and development programme has been adapted to meet the evolving needs of placements.

In addition to the essential courses, Norfolk Fostering Service has offered a wide array of specialist courses:

- Developmental Trauma
- Family Network Training
- Introduction to Attachment Theory
- Norfolk Steps – De-escalation Training (5-11; Adolescent)
- Restorative Approaches (5-11 years; Adolescent)
- Secure Base Training
- Therapeutic Life Story Work
- Non Violent Resistance (5-11; Adolescent, CWD, UASC)
- Drugs and Alcohol (Adolescent)
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Get Active! (0-5 years)
- Healthy Mind, Healthy Life, Rediscovering resilience
- Introduction to Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)
- Moving to Adoption (0-5 years)
- Understanding Autism
- Nurturing Attachment

Complaints and Compliments

"I have a supportive supervising social worker who communicates effectively with me. She is good at listening and helps me to be reflective in supervision."

My team are excellent.

Our SSW and the team Manager are exceptional.

My support team have been amazing and understanding especially when we have had difficulty.

Very professional and meaningful.

"My SSW is amazing and our latest Child SW thinks about the whole placement rather than just the LAC children"

Very good supervision despite covid.

I always get an answer to any queries and everyone is very helpful would put an eleven!

The support we receive and continue to receive is first class as far as we are concerned.

Very good social worker and the team always keeps in touch.

Support and supervision are not the same thing. I am satisfied that I am well supervised.

I have always received excellent support and supervision. I have been treated with respect and consideration.

Complaints

There has been a very limited number of complaints this year: 7 relating to fostering and they have all been closed: the themes were isolated and have not provided a pattern to ensure that the service needed to act upon, apart from one logged by a young person around savings which has triggered the need to implement a policy, this has been subsequently launched in June 2021.

Other feedback

- Advice from other Foster carers support we get, training that you are constantly wanting to improve Support team, Everything so far. Other foster carers, feeling proud to be a part of Norfolk's fostering team. And seeing the difference Foster carers make to children's lives.
- Their commitment to carers and young people, helping the children thrive, Friendly team that support us., Approachable staff make support easy to access. They act very professional.
- How included birth children are my child has had a great deal of involvement and even small details like a birthday card go a long way! Being valued as a member of the team around the child.

Child's feedback

What happened in the first 3 months?

- First 2 months were OK getting to know people, generally feeling OK!
- Then bang! COVID – 19!!
- Feeling restricted
- Unable to see friends
- Working from home

Child's first year

Activities I do on my own:



First year in foster care

Activities we like to do as a family...



Feedback from a child

Support

"Support about my family is amazing from my foster carer – I can always talk to her about anything."

"My foster carer will always support me in my decisions about my education – when I wanted to drop Maths to do History, my foster carer supported this and talked to the teachers."

Child's first year

Letter & Life story work

- The Fostering Service had started working with me when I'd received a letter from my family. I decided I wanted to know more.
- My foster carers were always there to talk through any of the thoughts that I was having whilst they went on a fact-finding mission!



Next Steps

Summary & Developments

- Developing a practice model that positions the Social Work relationship and role with children, young people and carers as key to managing and addressing the identified needs of young people and their carers. This will re-focus the service delivery to optimise the potential for the practice model to become fully embedded and develop successfully. This will mean ongoing 'life story' work through the My Norfolk Approach with children and young people to support them to understand and make sense of their early and recent experiences).
- Deliver a therapeutic parenting approach training package to all foster carers by increasing the frequency of the Nurturing Attachment programme (3 times a year)
- PACE Parenting
- Realign and achieve price parity between inhouse and independent fostering agencies. This will mean reset the link between the foster carers' skillset and placement offer to ensure that children are in the right placements.
- Launch the savings policy for all children looked after by foster carers registered with Norfolk Fostering Service

Appendices

- [The Local offer - Children in care - Norfolk County Council](#)



Contacts



Contact Details for OFSTED and the Children's Commissioner

Any serious concerns regarding the Fostering Service practice can be referred to the OFSTED inspectorate. The main office for the OFSTED fostering inspectorate service is:

OFSTED National Business Unit
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Anne's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 40 40 40 E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



If a child has any serious concerns relating to the Fostering Service, they can contact the Children's Commissioner for England. The details are:

Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT



Norfolk County Council Contacts

Information about our fostering service can be accessed via the Fostering Duty Line: **01603 306649** or visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering

Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
Norfolk
NR1 2DH

ADM/ Assistant Director - Corporate Parenting - Kate Dexter

Head of Fostering Service - Laura Gavrilă

Team Manager, Fostering Recruitment Team - Wendy Jones

Team Manager, Fostering Service Team 1 - Mike Woodward/Fiona Carter

Team Manager, Fostering Service Team 2 and Linked Families - Catherine Halliday

Team Manager, Fostering Service Team 3 - Fiona Carter

Team Manager, Enhanced and Duty Team - Julie Brooks

Panel Advisors - Katie Greaves/Evelien Clifford

Team Manager Kinship Assessment Team - Vacant (temporarily covered by Laura Gavrilă)

Norfolk
fostering

The logo for Norfolk Fostering is centered on a solid pink background. It features the word "Norfolk" in a yellow, rounded, sans-serif font. Below it, the word "fostering" is written in a white, rounded, sans-serif font. A yellow curved line, resembling a smile, is positioned directly beneath the "fostering" text, with its ends extending under the 'f' and 'g'.