



# Lincolnshire Fostering Service

QUARTERLY REPORT  
OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2021

## **Quarter Three Fostering Report–2021/2022**

The Annual Report for 2020/2021 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2021. The Statement of Purpose was revised and was ratified on the same day. This is the third quarterly report for 2021/2022.

### **Introduction**

In 2021/22, the Fostering Service has an annual budget of £9,100,233. All Foster Carer allowances have been increased by 2% for this financial year. This has ensured that allowances continue to remain in advance of the government recommended minimum rates. This is important as the foster care sector is more competitive with several independent agencies actively recruiting in the area and to retain our competitiveness, allowances are a significant factor.

Foster Carer availability has been compounded by the on-going effects of the Covid 19 pandemic which has resulted in an increase in numbers of children in care and diminishing Foster Carer availability owing to health and other social factors. The budget also continues to afford flexibility to provide enhanced allowances to certain categories of carers such as those offering permanence or managing children with distressed behaviours that otherwise would be hard to place.

During this third quarter of this year, the service has continued to respond to the continuing effects of the pandemic by continuing to offer support in a variety of ways. Alongside face-to-face supervision and support, the virtual foster care community continues to grow from strength to strength providing a wraparound support service to all fostering families. This is critical in securing their wellbeing in the invaluable role they undertake in caring for children and promoting placement stability.

With the ongoing challenges of the pandemic the service has experienced peaks and troughs in sufficiency as a direct consequence of health vulnerabilities, social and lifestyle factors. During this period the number of additional fostering beds returning has slightly increased with a total of 90 still being unavailable for service to use.

During quarter three the number of children in care had continued to rise to 696 (sourced by monthly reporting at the end of November 2021). At the same time those placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) decreased to 35. There are 7 who were unaccompanied migrant children living in accommodation which is provided independently of an IFA.

During this period 54 children became children in care for the first time in this quarter, of these were twenty placed in foster care and nineteen placed in Kinship placements hence resulting in a large percentage of the children being cared for locally. The percentage of children in foster placements has slightly reduced to 70% however this remains within the target tolerance.

The effects of the pandemic continue, and the placement stability figures (children who have been in care continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years) stands at 70.2% which is a decrease in this quarter but remains above target.

Likewise, the percentage of children in care with three or more placements during the year stands at 3% which at this stage in the year remains good, but this is a cumulative indicator and may change at year end. Despite showing promise this continues to be a difficult year, yet Foster Carers have proven to be very resourceful and committed to the children they care for. However, placement availability has been negatively impacted as some Foster Carers have chosen to concentrate on the children already in their care and declined to take additional placements.

For all placements, the service continues to ensure that Foster Carers are well supported and that potential problems/issues are identified early. This has been further reinforced by the continued success of the service approach which has embedded Caring2Learn and this continues to encourage fostering families to share and find solutions to problems and develop a whole range of tailored training and community support.

All Foster Carers have had priority access for the Covid 19 booster vaccine programme, and this has reflected the value placed on them by the Council. The service engages in providing data for public health regarding the take up by carers which to date reflects a promising interest akin to that of the primary and secondary courses.

Within this period recruitment activity continues to show promise which will be closely monitored, given the need to ensure there are enough skilled and knowledgeable Foster Carers for the children in care population. This will need to be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure that any surge in interest is capitalised upon given the pressing need to recruit more local high-quality carers who can meet the needs of Lincolnshire children. The service continues to find innovative ways to reach out to potential Foster Carers by continuing to make the most of online and social media platforms.

During this period and owing to the continued increase in the children in care numbers, the rise in the number of children placed in Independent Non-Maintained provision (Independent Fostering/Residential Providers) and the resultant increase in costs in the past few years the Council commissioned transformation work relating to children in care.

The fostering service continues to be engaged in various aspects and strands of this transformational work with a strong focus on the core offers to Foster Carers and implementation of the Valuing Care Toolkit as a further measure to match Foster Carers skillset and children's needs.

### **Recruitment and Retention:**

Fostering recruitment continue to work through the challenges presented by the pandemic and recruitment activity is returning to a more stable place that matches previous activity trends. Recruitment has developed into an area that is seen as everyone's responsibility with a wider pool of Supervising Social Workers completing half of initial visits. As restrictions have eased the service has adopted a smarter way of working using both face to face and online interactions and this will continue to be reviewed.

Online activities have brought many benefits and so the fostering service will continue to include online options to increase capacity, accessibility, and convenience for Foster Carers in the future. This has included online recruitment events and the fostering preparation course.

The Preparation to Foster courses has been delivered online over the last year, plans have been made to offer both face-to-face and virtual events in 2022/2023. Plans have been made for three face-to-face courses and three virtual courses within the next financial year. This way of working will be evaluated to ensure it is a most appropriate use of time and resource.

Each course is facilitated by a Supervising Social Worker, Caring2Learn representative and at least one Foster Carer Champion.

Fostering Information events take place on bi-monthly basis and over the last year have been held virtually. Those making formal or informal enquiries to foster are encouraged to attend these events. Virtual events have seen a substantial rise in people attending, recent changes to encourage participation has also made these sessions much more interactive and relational. This is supported in the feedback and improvement of conversion to people going on to stage 1 of the recruitment process. The current conversion of those going into stage 1 following attending a recruitment event is 69%.

A recruitment audit and review has been completed to look at each of the different stages to establish what is working well, what we are worried about and what needs to happen to maximise production and improve the conversion rate of initial enquiry to approval. The work continuing will closely monitor quality with a strong emphasis on good customer service and community. Initial results from the impact of changes in practice and processes can be seen through key performance indicators. Conversion rates following initial visits has already seen a rise of 6%.

The online recruitment system is now active, and the service have started to use this with all most recent applicants. Initial feedback is positive and business support staff appreciate the time it saves them in some of their administration duties.

Retention of Foster Carers remains the most effective means of recruitment. Providing individual levels of support to our carers and specifically those newly approved remains crucial.

Caring2Learn and its application of key principles and models of support and learning for Foster Carers and the wider service have proven the impact these have on Foster Carer retention and outcomes for children. Caring2Learn has been further embedded within the Fostering service from project to business-as-usual model. Applying these principles within Foster Carer recruitment has already started to impact on performance in this area.

The Caring2 Learn Practice Supervisor is now fully integrated into the fostering team and takes a lead on all fostering matters including recruitment, retention, training, development, and support.

The links with the virtual school continue to support the fidelity of this global approach in shaping the work to support 'Learning Homes and Caring Schools' to support and drive forward the good practice for all children in care in Lincolnshire.

Work continues to develop a community hub approach across the county. The support forums continue to act as a way for Foster Carers to access support from other Foster Carers, children's service's teams, and schools. This is providing a more integrated approach to

support. In a recent survey fostering households identified peer and community support and hub platforms as one of the strongest parts of their support offer.

Feedback from the Foster Carers strongly indicates that virtual platforms have helped carers overcome challenges to attending events, such as childcare. Online support plays a huge part in helping people to connect and support each other away from geographical and office hours challenges.

The hub largely continues to be supported by the Foster Carer champions who have roles that cover responsibilities as 'Hub Links'. This replaced the fostering 'buddy' system and feedback has been positive from both carers and staff.

All newly approved carers have previously been allocated a 'Hub Link' within the first month of their fostering journey, however, the service have now moved to allocating these during the assessment stage to support applicants being able to establish a network within the community. Therefore, it is more likely they will access general support and guidance from more experienced carers through established relationships rather than relying on new connections. It is hoped that soon the service will be able to allocate applicants a Supervising Social Worker earlier in the assessment process.

A tiered support offer has been set out, which includes a stage 1 support package, stage 2 support package and then a support offer to all approved carers. This allows for a smoother transition to fostering for applicants. Supporting them to be better informed and equipped for the journey, whilst feeling and experiencing a level of support from the service. The intention is to support and boost their level of confidence in Lincolnshire as a fostering provider.

Hub Links are allocated thoughtfully to promote relationship and connections between carers and their support network. Hub Links have also been allocated to existing carers and Special Guardians where they are experiencing challenges and require additional support. Participation in the different areas of the hub continues to increase; all platforms despite the current restrictions remain in place. Assessed need is monitored to ensure that the right kind of support is identified and delivered. Carers have welcomed the return of face-to-face support and feedback from carers is very positive with regards to their feeling really supported.

A retention audit has been completed, this has involved an analysis of the carers circumstances that led to a resignation or long periods offline. We have identified key themes and trends which will inform the retention plans and next steps regarding retention.

A recent survey along with the audit information has formed a picture that general advice and support for Foster Carers is going well; however, carers feel more support and improvement is required during challenging times often relating to the trauma experienced and behaviour exhibited by the children they care for. A challenging time has shown to be the most likely reason Foster Carers consider leaving the service or spend time offline. This is a key area for attention, planning, action, and ongoing review for 2022/2023. Other key themes for retention include support to carers that are offline, new Foster Carers and staff retention.

## **Marketing:**

During this quarter 91 Initial Enquiries of Interest (IEI) were received from the public enquiring about becoming a Foster Carer.

There have been 3 newly approved households, 10 in total for the year 2021/2022 so far.

On 13 December 2021 there were 41 open applications in stages 1 or 2, with 8 of these having a panel date booked before the end of March 2022.

## **Advertising**

### **October**

- E-newsletter campaign to those who have signed up to the front door newsletter on the website but haven't made an enquiry / filled out an IEI yet with the aim of gaining conversions
- Foster Carers' Viewpoint focusing on caring for siblings
- 20,000 audience targeted ads across Stamford, Grantham, Spalding, Bourne and Newark websites belonging to the Iliffe Media Group

### **November**

- Information Event on Thursday 18 November 2021 at 6:30pm
- Fostering advert running on Lincs FM
- Online advert on Lincolnshire Today website
- Half page advert in Lincolnshire Life magazine and online skyscraper
- Advert in Lincs and Wolds Scene magazines
- Advert in Simply Boston and Spalding magazines
- Targeted paid-for Facebook advert
- Advert in Gainsborough Life magazine
- E-newsletter campaign to those who have signed up to the front door newsletter on the website but haven't made an enquiry / filled out an IEI yet with the aim of gaining conversions
- Article on Int Comms advertising information event
- Foster Carers' Viewpoint from a single Foster Carer who looks after teenage girls
- 20,000 audience targeted ads, HPTO (Grantham Journal and Bourne Local websites) and NPTO (Stamford Mercury, Spalding Today and Newark advertiser websites).

### **December**

- E-newsletter campaign to those who have signed up to the front door newsletter on the website but haven't made an enquiry / filled out an IEI yet with the aim of gaining conversions.
- Foster Carers' Viewpoint focusing on caring babies and children with additional needs
- 20,000 audience targeted ads across Stamford, Grantham, Spalding, Bourne and Newark websites belonging to the Iliffe Media Group.

## **Permanence campaign**

The permanence campaign continued with a range of advertising as follows:

### **October**

- Online advert on Lincolnshire Today website
- Targeted paid-for Facebook adverts

### **November**

- Radio advert specifically for permanence running on Lincs FM

### **December**

- Online advert on Lincolnshire Today website
- Half page advert in Lincolnshire Life magazine and online skyscraper
- Advert in Lincs and Wolds Scene magazines
- Targeted paid-for Facebook adverts
- Article on Int Comms about the need for more long-term carers

## **Parent and Child Campaign**

Stage 2 of the campaign, which targets new Parent and Child Carer households externally, began in Q3. Activities included:

- Updating information on Information Events to reflect changes in training and support
- Article on Int Comms advertising the need for more Parent and Child Carers and the skills needed.
- Article in Children's Bulletin advertising the need for more Parent and Child Carers and the skills needed.
- Targeted LinkedIn advert throughout October
- Ongoing organic Instagram and Facebook posts
- Engagement with schools, churches, district councils etc. to ask them to put messages / adverts on their websites, social media channels & newsletters.
- Filming and editing of Parent and Child Carer talking about the role to use on social media platforms in the New Year.

## **Social Media**

In addition to the paid-for adverts which target people to attend events / for specific roles i.e., Parent and Child Carer, organic posts are also scheduled to our social media channels. Quarter three has seen the Facebook and Instagram pages continue to develop the community feel we want to portray to the public with posts including (but not restricted to):

- Foster Carers' Viewpoints
- Thanks to our Foster Carers from various staff members, and from LCFC and Lincoln Theatre Royal

- Individual congratulations / posts to some Foster Carers receiving long-service awards
- Local charity / good causes e.g., Lincs FCs Cash4Kids and the Book Trust's Christmas Appeal
- Health and wellbeing tips and advice
- Foster Carer videos explaining FASD

Throughout November it was National Men's Health Awareness Month and so various posts went out about men looking after their mental and physical health and referring to useful national websites for more help and information.

By far the biggest engagement that we see is from posts which feature Foster Carers experiences, stories etc. which suggests that this is what people want to see more of.

### **Men's Listening Group**

In conjunction with Men's Health Awareness Month, several male Foster Carers were consulted about what we could do to assist with their health and wellbeing, and it was suggested a Men's Listening Group be set up. This has been completed and is due to start in January and will be run entirely by male carers with a Champion leading on this.

### **Handbook**

The Foster Carers' Handbook was updated during this quarter and is now available to all foster families on Google Drive rather than it being printed and posted out to them. The idea being that these documents are live and will always be the most up-to-date information for Foster Carers to access.

### **Online Registration of Interest (ROI):**

During quarter 3 work was undertaken with the Digital Engagement Team to move the Registration of Interest (ROI) Form online to give applicants a better customer experience as they receive email notifications at each stage and when different elements of their checks and references are back. This went live at the beginning of December 2021.

### **Family Finding:**

During the third quarter of this year Family Finders has continued to meet on a monthly basis to consider all children with a care plan for long-term fostering who do not already have a placement identified. Considering the on-going restrictions in place surrounding Covid 19 some of these meetings have taken virtually or a hybrid model adopted.

Over this quarter eight children have been considered a sibling group of two and six singletons some of whom are currently placed in residential settings.

During this period two out of the eight children has been removed from Family Finders. The sibling group of two have returned to live with their previous Foster Carers following a placement breakdown with an independent fostering agency provider. This will remain their long-term placement and as such they have been removed from Family Finders.

The Permanence Campaign is on-going and includes a variety of advertising on social media, radio, and local publications. In the third quarter this has included, Lincs FM, Lincs Today, Lincolnshire Life, Gainsborough Life, E-newsletter, Facebook, Int Comms, County News, Lincs Scene, Wolds Scene and Primary Times. The fostering service now has a dedicated Instagram page which we are utilising as part of our recruitment drive.

The County Council fostering web page continues to provide information on long-term fostering and the support available to Foster Carers.

The permanence event is currently in the planning stage through due to take place on the 27 January 2022. The six children currently on Family Finders will have their profiles circulated within the event and their social workers will attend to discuss them individually with the Foster Carers who attend. The service aim to try to secure permanent placements for the children or long-term respite opportunities where they get to experience family life and build long lasting connections with a foster family.

Family Finding review meetings, chaired by senior managers, are also taking place to consider children where no suitable match has been identified after a three-month period to ensure there is no delay for children. During this third quarter it has not been necessary to refer any children to the Family Finder review process.

During this quarter there have been very few children referred to Family Finders. Unfortunately, it continues to remain a challenge to identify long term placements with carers approved for permanence with many children remaining with their task-centred carers on a long-term basis. We currently do not have any approved permanent carers with vacancies to consider a placement, however, the service is aware that two sets of potential carers have expressed an interest in permanence, however, they are currently in stage 1 of the approval process.

### **Training:**

In this quarter virtual training continues to be delivered. It is anticipated that some face-to-face events will return in March 2022. Considering this virtual training has been offered to support carer's introduction to fostering and their continued development.

The fostering training offer is currently under review and a revised offer will go out to all foster households in February 2022. Their current offer is dated up until April 2022.

34 courses were delivered during this quarter with 270 attendees taking part from fostering households.

Courses delivered via Zoom or Teams – 32.

### **Training:**

- First Aid training
- Restorative Practice
- Kid Skills

- Safeguarding
- Safe Care

### **Practice Workshops:**

- Introducing Social Pedagogy
- Introduction to Restorative Practice
- Introduction to mindfulness, Creating Calm
- Kid skills
- Introduction to Trauma Awareness
- Supporting sleep, nightmares, and night terrors.
- Supporting autism, A carers perspective
- Supporting ADHD and FASD, A carers perspective
- Time2talk
- Fostering Weekly Programme (Caring2gether, 6 weeks)

### **E-Learning:**

LSCP courses are still being accessed and Foster Carers have attended.

- Safeguarding
- Safeguarding refresher
- Hidden harm
- Covid 19
- Think Safe be safe
- Equality and inclusion
- E-safety

### **Learning Homes:**

The toolkit for new carers which includes the standards from the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) has been well received. The service is now starting to see these come in for assessment resulting in carers receiving a Learning Homes award with an expectation to resubmit a portfolio every three years to ensure on-going personal and professional development.

Currently there are seventy-five foster homes and four residential settings that have achieved their Learning Homes Award. Due to the number of toolkits collected over recent months and the expectations that all new carers complete the award within twelve months of approval; the service are seeing the number of awarded homes to continue to rise significantly.

### **Celebration Event:**

The Foster Carer Celebration took place on 19 October 2021. The event celebrated the contribution and achievements of our fostering community. Foster Carers received their long service awards, a voucher, flower arrangements, lapel badge and personalised certificate. The voucher and lapel badge are given to carers as a token of gratitude and was positively received at the event.

This event was supported by a wide range of personnel from Lincolnshire County Council and associated partnerships. All of whom who are committed to achieving the best outcomes for our children and young people in Lincolnshire.

This event sought to celebrate, show, and share amongst the community the wide and varied ways in which Foster Carers support children, young people, and their families across their journey. Following feedback practice awards were introduced this year in the following areas.

- Virtual School Award for outstanding contributions to children’s learning
- FAST Award for outstanding practice towards outcomes for children
- Children in Care Award for outstanding practice towards outcomes for children
- Support to the Fostering Service for going above and beyond in service
- Community Award for dedication and contributions to the fostering community

New Foster Carers were also formally welcomed to the community, providing the opportunity to thank them for choosing Lincolnshire as their provider.

**Kinship:**

Placing children and young people with family and friends remains the first consideration when they first enter care. This continues to be looked at throughout their care journey experience. Kinship continues to work with the area locality teams in refining this process and regular discussions and joint supervisions with the children’s social workers and practice supervisors are key to this.

Between the 1 October 2021 and the 15 December 2021 the following data reflects the work undertaken during this period:

Number of Referrals	SGO	Reg.24 and SGO	Reg. 24 / Connected Person	Private Fostering	Statutory Checks/CAO/38(6)	Private Law SGO
47	10	7	16	3	10	1

In comparison to quarter two the service does not yet have the final data for December 2021 however, there are further referrals expected as indicated via court orders and memos.

At this time the fostering Kinship service have received the same number of referrals as in the second quarter two however, the expectation is that this quarter will exceed the previous one. Such figures support and highlight the growth in Kinship referrals and specifically with Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2013 connected person referrals accounting for 70% of all referrals.

The number of SGO only assessments has almost halved since the last quarter but the number of regulation 24 placements (with or without an SGO) has increased only slightly. This suggests the number of regulation 24 placements remains relatively stable albeit a slight increase.

In terms of the number of SGO assessments having reduced this is most likely to be as a direct consequence of court proceedings taking longer owing to the impact of the ongoing pandemic. The service continues to work within the court directed timescales but invariably mean that the involvement of the fostering service is longer than ordinary.

As the service enhance and further detail reporting of Kinship activities, the service is now including those requests for statutory checks due to the increase in the numbers. This provides a more accurate representation of the work being undertaken and the continued pressure on the fostering service. Statutory checks are undertaken when locality teams are completing assessments for the court such as Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Orders where the Local Authority is not the corporate parent (private law) or the children remain with their birth parents.

In terms of private law special guardianship assessments there has been a drop in these, and private fostering assessments have remained the same as the last quarter.

In all aspects of the work there remains a strong focus on joint working between fostering and children's social workers. Early discussions with the locality team continue to take place to identify referrals and any issues early on in terms of care planning for children. This allows for the sharing of information relating to the referral to be completed at an early stage resulting in coordinated approach aimed at improving the lives and outcomes for children and young people.

### **What's working well?**

The use of virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams mean early discussions can take place and decisions expedited.

More joint supervisions are taking place because of the above.

Face to face visits to applicants and carers are continuing to take place.

Joint visits are being undertaken to applicants / carers and children by the Supervising Social Worker and the Children's Social Worker.

There is open communication between the Fostering Panel booking team and Kinship to ensure a smoother and more effective panel booking system, and to support panels run as best as they can.

### **What are we worried about?**

All parts of the children's service are keen to ensure that the quality of the viability assessments is received timely and are of sufficient quality to aid assessments and determine placement options for children.

The service has seen in the year to date an increase in multiple viability assessments for the same child or children. This is placing pressure on the service and is being addressed by ensuring that family network meetings are being utilised at the point of entry to care.

There are concerns regarding the court timetabling for SGO assessments is at times insufficient to do quality assessments including statutory checks. There has been reduced timescales to as little as four weeks from referral to court filing.

### **What needs to happen?**

Joint supervisions to continue to be booked for each Kinship referral at the point of allocation. The need to offer advice and guidance is a part of the fostering role and will continue to form part of the fostering quality assurance process.

### **Staying Put:**

Staying Put is discussed at the first review following the young person's 16th birthday with the decision being recorded on their pathway plan, which is then followed up at each review. Discussions around expectations and finances are undertaken with the young person and Foster Carers with a license agreement being completed prior to them turning 18. This ensures the transition to Staying Put is smooth with young people remaining informed about the process having support and stability to transition into adulthood. The service continues to work with Shared Lives to ensure that all placements consider the requirements of the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011.

Staying Put continues to be an active part of the fostering service and we continue to receive a steady flow of referrals. There are currently 29 young people waiting to join the scheme when they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Each Staying Put arrangement is discussed at the first children in care review following the young person's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. The decision regarding Staying Put is recorded within the young person's Pathway Plan and is reviewed at each children in care review thereafter.

During this third quarter of 2021-2022 the number of young adults in Staying Put arrangements stands at 40, which is identical to quarter two.

Of the 40 young people ten adults are attending university, twenty-four are in full time further education, two are in employment and two are on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme. The remaining two are currently NEET with one being a new mum and the other having been made an offer of employment.

During the third quarter three young people left the Staying Put scheme. One had a positive move on into their own property, one left to return to their country of birth and one was the result of a placement breakdown. One young person returned to their Staying Put arrangement following on from a brief, unsuccessful period of living independently with their partner.

During Covid restrictions the service adapted with support and guidance available to existing and potential Staying Put providers given via email, telephone, and IT platforms (e.g., Zoom or Teams). With the easing of Covid restrictions, Staying Put has returned to completing license agreements and other information gathering and sharing activities with face-to-face meetings.

### **What's working well:**

- Children's teams continue to joint work with fostering and the Staying Put Co-Ordinator to ensure Staying Put arrangements are put in in a planned and informed way. Despite Covid, teams have continued to work jointly, attending meetings together, joint visits with regular communication
- Good communication flow between Barnardo's Leaving Care Service and Staying Put. Information is being passed between services in a timely manner and joint working takes place to address and issues arising within Staying Put arrangements
- Staying Put providers are responding positively to meeting returning to being face to face though some are still preferring meeting to be held over Zoom or Teams.

### **What needs to happen:**

- Reasons behind referral number remaining static needs further analysis. Staying Put is one option for young people leaving care and not the only option. It is important that within the care planning early discussions continue to take place as part of the care planning process to plan accordingly should staying put be the preferred option for the young person and their carers.

### **Conclusion:**

During the last year and to date the impact of Covid 19 continues. Despite the vaccination and booster programme and gradual easing the availability of foster placements to the service is still reduced and is an ongoing challenge that sits within a local and national context.

During this quarter placement stability has continued to be strong but placement availability across the board is still reduced. The number of placement requests and the care plans for permanent fostering represents a significant challenge for the Directorate overall whilst the recruitment of permanent Foster Carers remains worryingly low.

The service continues to use creative and innovative approaches to reach out to potential Foster Carers, including making the most of online and social media platforms yet it is envisaged that face to face events will safely resume to aid our efforts and overall strategy.

The Covid context is still to be fully understood in terms of longer-term effects however, as a service our best efforts and motivation is to remind all households of their continued value to the authority and the children they care for. Maintaining high quality supervision and support is central to this in the context of maximising and mobilising our capacity. Equally, for many households they have and continue to make the difference and have despite the enormous challenges have demonstrated their commitment to the children in their care.

Foster Carer's engagement within the virtual fostering community has continued to be a real strength and results in many carers sharing experiences, supporting others, and drawing upon their experience in mass. It is a community that is going from strength to strength and for many is a further layer of support to the support and supervision from the service which is a statutory responsibility.

The continued efforts in the areas of recruitment, retention and the broad ranging support offered to fostering families is at the heart of what is delivered in Lincolnshire. This alongside fostering's engagement in the transformation work is where the ongoing support to carers will also evolve and will help shape the service going forward.

Deborah Crawford

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