



Fostering
Hampshire
Children

Fostering Annual Report 2022/2023

The purpose of this report is to report on fostering activity, detailing statistical performance data, and highlighting some focus areas for 2023/24.



Hampshire
County Council

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Foster Carer Households

- In 2022/2023 overall foster households increased by 19. In March 2022 there were 480 households compared to 499 households in April 2023.
- 49 new county foster carer households were approved in 2022/2023 compared to 33 in 2021/2022, however, 34 county foster carer households also deregistered. This resulted in an overall gain of 15 county carer households, and this has been reached in the face of many neighbouring authorities approving fewer foster carers than the previous year.
- Over 2022/2023 there have been 98 fostering households that have been de-registered, this compared to 85 in 2021/2022. However only 34 of these households were county carers compared to 39 in 2021/2022. The remaining de-registrations were connected carers or foster to adopt where the majority were positive outcomes for the child including adoption, reunification and special guardianship orders being granted.
- Of the 34 county carers deregistered, most deregistered due to a change in their personal circumstances including ill health, retirement, changes in employment and moving out of area.
- There were however 2 households that transferred to another agency, citing that they didn't get the support they felt they needed and did not want to undertake the diploma. One household deregistered after citing dissatisfaction with the service, this followed the service raising concern regarding the care being provided. Two households de-registered following a complaint or allegation.

Fostering Retention

Our biggest success in our retention activity has been expanding our Hampshire Hive programme.

The overall aim of the Hampshire Hive is to recruit and retain Hampshire foster carers reducing the need to place children with independent fostering agencies by:

- Improving the satisfaction of current Hampshire Foster carers.
- Attracting more foster carers to foster with HCC both those new to fostering and increasing transfers from IFA.
- Increasing localised peer support.
- Providing opportunities for children looked after to build positive peer relationships.

Hampshire Hives are based around an extended family model for children in care bringing together 15-20 fostering households to offer mutual support. Each Hive of fostering families is supported by a Hive Carer support worker (an experienced foster carer) who in conjunction with support from the fostering service social workers, will provide coaching, training, social events, flexible telephone support and sleepovers.

In March 2023, there were 16 Hives across Hampshire with a further seven planned to launch in April 2023. At this time there were;

350 Looked after children in fostering families linked to Hives.

132 birth children in fostering families linked to Hives.

16% of families in the Hives are Family Connections Carers. Family Connections Carers make up approximately **26%** of all approved Hampshire Foster Carers.

Foster Carers Survey results

- Each year we undertake a fostering survey to gather the views and experiences of our foster carers to support and improve our service. The annual foster carer survey of May 2023 was sent directly to all our foster carer households. We had 127 responses compared to 114 in 2022 which is positive.
- 84% of respondents felt satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the support from their supervising social worker, this is a slight decrease from 88% in 2022. 56.6% of foster carers felt satisfied or very satisfied with the social workers of the children placed with them, a small increase from 55% in 2022. This will continue to be an area of focus for the branch over the next year.
- 17% of carers felt that they had a placement where they were not equipped to meet the child's care needs. This is a very slight decrease from 18% in 2022. During these difficult times, the most effective responding interventions that scored highest were support from another carer and their supervising social worker, this is consistent with the results from 2022.

Fostering Support performance

Timeliness of Household Reviews

% Of foster carers with HHR's recorded in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	61%	61%	63%	60%	61.25%

Foster carers should have a household review annually. Our target is to ensure 90% of foster carers have household reviews completed within timescales. This is being addresses within our performance management framework.

Timeliness of Supervision Visits

% Of foster carers with supervision recorded in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	83%	66%	77%	83%	77.25%

Foster carers should receive supervision from their allocated fostering worker at least every six weeks. It is our target that 90% of fostering households have six weekly supervisions recorded. There was a dip in performance in Q2 and Q3 however this has picked up and improvement was evident in Q4.

Timeliness of Unannounced Visits

% Of foster carers with unannounced visits in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	83%	74%	68%	78%	75.75%

Foster carers are required to have annual unannounced visits from the fostering service. There was a dip in compliance in Q2 and Q3 with improvement shown in Q4.

Foster Carer Medicals

% Of foster carers with medical rechecks in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	79%	80%	79%	79%	79.25%

Compliance in medical rechecks has remained stable. There are still a number of GP surgeries who had not picked up this work again after the impact of COVID. We are looking to utilise private medicals for those where surgeries continue not providing this service.

DBS Checks

% Of adult household members with DBS checks in timescales	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	92%	89%	88%	89%	89.5%

The year average is within our target range.

Further Work Planned for 2023/2024

- New style fostering campaigns planned with continuous marketing activity throughout the year.
- Peer review exercises to learn and share ideas with other LAs starting with Essex.
- Further growth of our Hampshire Hives and strengthening Hive relationships with the residential sector.
- Action plans are in place to improve areas of performance.
- Improved induction plans for foster carers to provide enhanced support in their first six months of fostering.
- New Foster carers handbook to launch.
- Relaunch of theme based and geographical support groups.