

July 2021



Children and Families Scrutiny Panel
Response to recommendations made by the Panel
Martin Smith - Service Manager, Permanence

Recommendations from the Panel

At the October 2020 meeting, when considering the issue of the recruitment of in-house foster carers, the following recommendations were made by the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel:

- 1) That consideration be given to providing full time funding for the proposed specialist foster carers.
- 2) That examples of the feedback provided by enquirers who did not progress to become foster carers is circulated to the Panel.

The Panel agreed that the appropriate time to discuss the issues raised by the above recommendations was during a wider conversation on placement sufficiency.

Providing full time funding for the proposed specialist foster carers.

Context

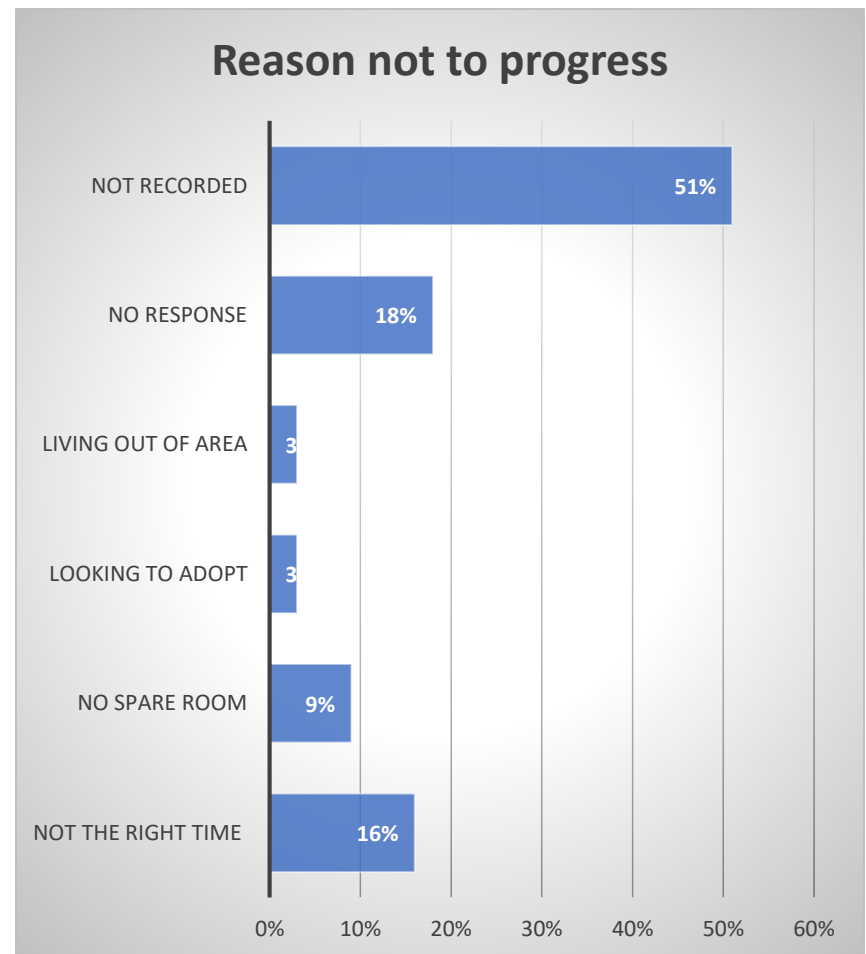
- Under current employment law foster carers do not qualify as either employees or workers.
- The role of foster carer is governed by statute and regulations.
- They are not salaried, but statute allows for an allowance to be offered to cover the costs of caring for a child.
- There is no requirement for fee payments to be made to foster carers to recognise their time, skills and experience.

Providing full time funding for the proposed specialist foster carers.

- The council offers an allowance that is above the national minimum standard and competitive with neighbouring local authorities.
- A skills-based scheme is in place that offers an additional fee on top of the allowance.
- Those foster carers recruited to our specialist fostering schemes receive the highest fee level.
- Our current specialist schemes include the parent-child scheme and the 'step-across' scheme.
- Both schemes offer a retainer between placements, subject to various conditions.
- Demand is such that there is unlikely to be a significant break between placements for our specialist carers.

Feedback provided by enquirers who did not progress to become foster carers

- This year 189 fostering enquiries were received a slight decrease from the previous year.
- 'Not the right time' and no spare room were the main reasons that enquiries did not progress.



Feedback provided by enquirers who did not progress to become foster carers

Change in employment

Poor health

Relationship difficulties

Moving house

Children are going up to school

Working full time

Worried about impact on own children