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Item No: 17

Meeting Date: Wednesday 22nd March 2023

**Glasgow City
Integration Joint Board**

Report By: Mike Burns, Assistant Chief Officer, Children's Services

Contact: Susan Orr, Head of Children's Services

Phone: 0141 276 4858

Foster Care Summit – Update and Next Steps

Purpose of Report:

To provide an interim report to the Integration Joint Board on the recent Foster Carer Summit and proposed next steps to support foster carers in Glasgow.

Background/Engagement:

The request for a Summit came initially from a small number of Glasgow foster carers who are also members of the Foster Care Workers Union, which is a branch of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB). The IWGB membership includes carers from a number of fostering providers. They have been actively lobbying Elected Members and Senior Leaders nationally across local authorities, as well as Scottish Government representatives.

Governance Route:

The matters contained within this paper have been previously considered by the following group(s) as part of its development.

- HSCP Senior Management Team
- Council Corporate Management Team
- Health Board Corporate Management Team
- Council Committee
- Update requested by IJB
- Other
- Not Applicable

Recommendations:

The Integration Joint Board is asked to:

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	<p>a) Note the contents of the report and the reflections from Foster Carers who attended on the day; and</p> <p>b) Note the intention to seek further views from the Foster Carers not in attendance and to further develop an Action Plan to take forward service developments.</p>
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Relevance to Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan:

Foster Carers are integral to the delivery of high-quality care for children in Glasgow who cannot live at home with their own families. The Families for Children Service (Glasgow's provided fostering arrangement) is critical to the delivery of the children's transformation programme to sustain children as close to Glasgow as possible to maintain children and young people's links to their schools and communities.

Implications for Health and Social Care Partnership:

Reference to National Health & Wellbeing Outcome(s):	Foster care contributes to some of the key National outcomes in terms of improving outcomes for children and young people, and improving support for foster carers in order to ensure that children and young people who use health and social care services have positive experiences of those services, and have their dignity respected. Key to any improvements is to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm, and delivering effective services which make efficient use of health and social care services. Such outcomes are aligned to the HSCP's transformational agenda and the desire to shift the balance of care, and secure better outcomes for all children and young people living in the City.
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Personnel:	Some staff may be asked to work differently to support the development of tests of change in order to explore approaches which are effective in meeting children, young people and carers' needs.
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Carers:	Foster Carers are key to the effective delivery of services and meeting good permanence outcomes for care experienced children and young people. This paper presents a proposal for improving the service, taking into account feedback from children, young people and carers.
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Provider Organisations:	None
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Equalities:	The report is referencing current practice and outcomes, and proposals for next steps, and as such an EQIA is not deemed necessary at this stage. The wider Children's Transformation Programme, of which the work detailed in this report is a part, has been subject to a recent EQIA .
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Fairer Scotland Compliance:	The Children's Transformation Programme actively seeks to reduce inequalities and to support children, young people and carers to improve their quality of life and reduce the impact of health and social inequalities.
Financial:	Some of the requests made by foster carers at the summit have financial implications which, if to be considered, needs further scrutiny.
Legal:	Normal legal processes and procedures for Glasgow City Council will be followed in relation to developing practitioners' roles to support children, young people and carers in accordance with feedback about the service and continuous improvement of the service.
Economic Impact:	Providing children and young people with high quality care makes best use of resources, and helps to ensure positive long-term outcomes, thereby reducing future need for further specialist supports, including Adult Services.
Sustainability:	This work fully aligns with the Christie Commission report the principles of GIRFEC, the children's transformational change programme and the aspirations of 'The Promise,' which emphasise the need to deliver the right high quality support at the right time to improve outcomes. Given that the key point of leverage to deliver the transformational change programme is to develop practice at the frontline – at the point of interaction with children, young people and their families and carers – the current workforce represents a considerable resource in terms of its contribution to achieving sustainable change across all supports and services to ensure best outcomes.
Sustainable Procurement and Article 19:	None
Risk Implications:	None
Implications for Glasgow City Council:	None
Implications for NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde:	None

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Direction Required to Council, Health Board or Both	
Direction to:	
1. No Direction Required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Glasgow City Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Glasgow City Council and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To provide an interim report to the Integration Joint Board on the recent Foster Carer Summit and what next steps are proposed to support foster carers in Glasgow.

2. Background

- 2.1. A Foster Carer Summit was held in the City Chambers on 1st February 2023.
- 2.2. The summit came initially from a commitment by the previous Chair of the Integration Joint Board having been lobbied by a small number of Glasgow foster carers who are also members of the Foster Care Workers Union, which is a branch of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB). The IWGB membership includes carers from a number of fostering providers. They have been actively lobbying Elected Members and Senior Leaders across local authorities countrywide, as well as Scottish Government representatives. They feel action is required to bring about real change in how foster carers are viewed and treated.
- 2.3. The Summit was organised by staff from Families for Children, the HSCP's fostering and adoption service. It was hosted by Councillor Chris Cunningham (Convener for Health, Care & Caring and Older People) and Mike Burns (Assistant Chief Officer, Children's Services).
- 2.4. Families for Children extended an invitation to all Glasgow's approved foster carers and short breaks carers (previously known as respite carers). The Summit was attended by 52 individuals, representing 51 of Glasgow City's 394 foster carer households, meaning approximately 12.9% of Glasgow's carer households were represented on the day.
- 2.5. 7 Elected Members from a range of political parties attended the Summit.
- 2.6. Both Service Managers from Families for Children were in attendance along with several colleagues from the service, all of whom acted as facilitators for round table discussions.
- 2.7. Also in attendance were Julie Edgington, (Principal Officer, Children's Rights Service), Chizy Lingham (Promise Participation Worker); Alison Cowper (Service Manager, Independent Audit and Review Team), and locality Heads of Service.

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2.8. Representatives of the IWGB were invited and attended as observers.

3. The Agenda and Areas Discussed

3.1. The agenda for the Summit included a “Welcome & Opening Remarks” from Councillor Cunningham, followed by a presentation on “Keeping the Promise and Nurturing Glasgow” by Mike Burns. Reference was made to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry which Children and Families Service Managers attended daily to ensure that all relevant learning points were captured.

3.2. There followed discussions at 10 round tables, which allowed attendees to reflect on the presentation and offered an opportunity for carers to raise and discuss any issues they wished to highlight.

3.3. The feedback gathered at each table is being collated and analysed, and the findings will be shared with the Integration Joint Board in due course, but some clear themes emerged on the day. These centred around financial support; practical support; the status of foster carers; retention of carers, organisational issues; and trade union recognition.

3.4. Carers reported that finances are hugely important. They highlighted that Glasgow City’s fee and allowance levels did not change for several years until recently. They would like to see further increases in Glasgow’s fee and child’s allowance, and ultimately wish to see Scotland-wide nationally agreed fee and allowance payment levels. They see this latter point as critical to a level playing field with independent fostering agencies. It was noted that the current Chair of the Integration Joint Board has previously written to the Scottish Government in this regard. In addition, Social Work Scotland have been lobbying COSLA and the Scottish Government to conclude the work.

3.5. Foster carers outlined that financial pressure has increased with the current cost of living crisis. They suggested a review of the clothing payment for new admissions, and the level of payments made for birthdays and Christmas. They reported that they need more money to be able to continue to deliver high quality care to Glasgow’s children and young people.

3.6. Some carers spoke about the impact of transitions and not having time to process this or grieve when a child leaves their care because, financially, they need to take another child. They asked about retention payments and financial support for well-being breaks.

3.7. The impact of COVID was discussed. Some carers shared very personal stories of loss and family members’ ill health, and they spoke of the challenge of balancing this whilst caring for Glasgow’s children.

3.8. Many carers spoke very positively about the support they receive from their Supervising Social Workers in Families for Children, but highlighted a need for more practical support, for example; easier access to short breaks; support with school matters; access to therapeutic services; and peer

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support. There was a clear desire for the resumption of in-person support groups to be able to form connections with other carers.

- 3.9. Carers raised the use of Transport and Support Services (TaSS) for taking children to and from family time or for school/nursery travel, and some of the challenges this presents for them and their foster children, especially around the use of different drivers/escorts.
- 3.10. It was acknowledged that the increase in support to families in the community and the reduction in the number of children being accommodated mean the profiles of accommodated children require carers to have skills and resilience to respond to trauma and complex needs.
- 3.11. Access to regular short breaks with people who become a known person to the child and access to childcare to attend meetings, training, etc, was raised as an area for further development.
- 3.12. Carers spoke about the impact for themselves and children of drift and delay in care planning, and also highlighted the impact of frequent changes of social worker in terms of visits, knowledge of children and young people's needs, and level of support.
- 3.13. There was lots of reflection on carers' and children's experience of attending Children's Hearings. Several carers raised that they do not have Relevant Person status for the children in their care. They feel their knowledge and contribution is not valued in the Children's Hearing system and in other formal settings and meetings.
- 3.14. Some Carers stated they feel undervalued. There were lots of reflections about their status as carers and feeling their critical caring role is not promoted or valued, and that they are at times not recognised as having significant knowledge of the children in their care.
- 3.15. There was lots of discussion about the retention of carers, and how this could be addressed through improved support/finances, etc. Some carers also spoke about the risk of lack of a pension and feel there is no future proofing for their retirement.
- 3.16. Some Carers in attendance indicated that they wish to be represented by a trade union to help to promote their rights as foster carers. Other carers were equally clear they do not wish to be involved with a carers' union. There is a formal process that any union would need to go through to obtain formal recognition, and IWGB representatives have been advised how to seek formal recognition.
- 3.17. A significant majority of Glasgow's Foster Carers were not in attendance at the event. Some preferred not to be involved in this type of forum, and therefore other methods of engagement are important to ensure that the needs and preferences of all carers are taken into account in the process of developing and improving the service. Views will be sought through direct

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communication with all carers around the themes identified at the Summit, and carers will be invited to raise any additional matters.

- 3.18. The Families for Children service will develop a plan of action (first draft at Appendix 1) to address the themes raised at the Summit and from wider carer consultation. Further reports will be made to the Integration Joint Board to provide information on the action plan and progress.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The Integration Joint Board is asked to:
 - a) Note the contents of the report and the reflections from Foster Carers who attended on the day; and
 - b) Note the intention to seek further views from the Foster Carers not in attendance and to further develop the Action Plan to take forward service developments.

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APPENDIX 1 - FOSTER CARE SERVICES – ACTION PLAN V.1 20/02/2023			
AREA FOR CONSIDERATION/ DEVELOPMENT	ACTION REQUIRED	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (S)	TIMESCALE
Communication and consultation with foster carers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forum for foster carers to feedback views to be established and held at regular intervals, like the recent summit. 2. All Foster Carers to be afforded the opportunity to submit their views on what they need to support them to care for Glasgow’s children. 3. Foster Care representation to be sought for the Children’s Champions’ Board and The Promise Board for Glasgow. 	Cathy Coll, Service Manager, Joanne Bradley, Service Manager, Susan Orr, Head of Service.	June 2023
Support to foster carers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A review of support to carers to be undertaken. 2. Support Groups to be re-established face to face to allow carers to meet with each other to benefit from peer interaction. 3. The Nurture Framework, the model of care for Glasgow, to be introduced and carers to be invited to participate in learning opportunities in relation to this. 4. The opportunity to access short breaks to be reviewed in line with the aspirations of ‘The Promise,’ including recruitment and retention of short break carers. 5. Support available to foster carers to enhance their health and wellbeing to be reviewed and updated. 6. Guidance on ‘good transitions’ to be developed that benefits both carers and children. 	Cathy Coll, Service Manager, Joanne Bradley, Service Manager, Susan Orr, Head of Service.	October 2023

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AREA FOR CONSIDERATION/ DEVELOPMENT	ACTION REQUIRED	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (S)	TIMESCALE
Support for Children and Young People	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports available to children and young people in foster care to be explored, detailed and shared with carers. 2. Practice guidance to be developed along with TaSS to improve the experience of both children and foster carers in relation to transport provision for family time/ school and nursery. 3. A renewed focus on care planning and permanence for children in foster care to be established. 	Cathy Coll, Service Manager, Joanne Bradley, Service Manager, Susan Orr, Head of Service.	October 2023
Financial Considerations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further discussions to take place with Scottish Government, COSLA and Social Work Scotland regarding the proposed national allowance for foster carers in Scotland. 2. Consideration of increasing allowances for birthdays and holidays to be explored. 	Susan Orr, Head of Service, Mike Burns, ACO, Children's Services.	April 2023