

**YOUNG NOTTINGHAM
SELECT COMMITTEE**

6 JANUARY 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SPECIALIST SERVICES

FOSTERING RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY - UPDATE

1 SUMMARY

This report provides details of fostering recruitment activity that has taken place between 1 April 2008 and 30 November 2008, as requested at the Young Nottingham Select Committee meeting on 4th March 2008.

2 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Members are requested to note and comment on the fostering recruitment activity that has taken place for the current financial year to date.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 During April 2008 there were an unusually high number of de-registrations of foster carers which offset approvals. The net effect was that between April and October 2008 there was a loss of 18 mainstream carers and 28 placements. During this time there were 12 mainstream carers approved, resulting in an additional 18 placements.
- 3.2 The net effect of approvals and de-registrations between April and October 2008 is a loss of 8 mainstream carers and 11 placements.
- 3.3 The fostering service projects that in the second half of this year de-registrations are likely be considerably less and approvals will be up compared to the first half. From November 2008 to March 2009 the total numbers of approvals and projected approvals will be 18 and de-registrations will be 5, creating a net gain of 13 foster carers, yielding approximately 26 vacancies. However, there needs to be awareness that the existing foster carer population is an ageing one. Retirement numbers are high and foster carers continually make life decisions which take them away from fostering as an activity, therefore recruitment must continue to be robust. The loss of the dedicated Marketing Officer for fostering places poses a considerable challenge for future recruitment activity.

4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 Report on activity for recruitment and assessment by Outcomes UK Independent Fostering Agency):

- (a) Outcomes UK are presently working alongside the Nottingham City fostering service to complete fostering assessments. Since March 2008 to the present date Outcomes UK have progressed 12 mainstream carers to Foster Panel, which have been approved;
- (b) Outcomes UK are currently progressing 12 Form F applications to panel;
- (c) the Nottingham City fostering service have progressed 4 Form F applications through panel to approval to date. These have been carried out by one member of staff in recruitment. Staff will still be available to carry out Fostering Form F assessments (the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) carer assessment form), as necessary, as an internal resource.

4.2 (a) The number of Regulation 38 (Fostering Service Regulations 2002 approving relatives as carers for children) reports has recently steadied, and there is now a more consistent flow of one a week. The fostering service has recently overhauled the policy and procedures for Nottingham City for Regulation 38 and in doing this, have developed a much more robust system of vetting. This has resulted in a number of requests being returned to Child Care services to be assessed as private fostering, or for orders to be imposed to safeguard the child's welfare. Training and presentations are being devised for Child Care services, which will commence in January 2009.

4.3 Freelance Assessors:

- (a) the Fostering Assessment Team has now identified 7 external Freelance Assessors to carry out Form F assessments. The workers come from a range of backgrounds, which include probation, mental health and child protection. This activity has taken place without any attributed advertising costs. Costing for each assessment has been set by Departmental Management Team (DMT);
- (b) a comprehensive job description and person specification for the Freelance Assessors have been written, which incorporate the core skills involved in direct work with children and Framework of Assessment Guidance. These also relate to the national minimum standards for fostering;
- (c) a Freelance Assessors Agreement has also been composed. This outlines the conditions of employment, the legal framework, and

responsibilities of the Freelance Assessors toward Nottingham City fostering service. All of these documents have been seen and ratified by Human Resources in the Performance and Change Team;

- (d) Freelance Assessors have met and discussed the framework of the team and how it will be managed, trained and supervised. They have also been inducted with the new BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) Form F 2008, including the competencies;
- (e) the fostering service is now in a position to start allocating Form F assessments to Freelance Assessors. Also identified are 2 part time Fostering Support Social Workers, who have already had 3 Form F assessments allocated to them.

4.4 Projections:

- (a) Nottingham City fostering core staff have progressed 3 Form applications to approval. Nottingham City core staff are currently progressing 3 further Form F applications;
- (b) currently there are 9 Form F applications being allocated to Freelance Assessors;
- (c) given present activity, and future fostering applications, the aim would be to achieve the DMT target of up to 40 approved mainstream carers for the year end to March 2009, and to define this within budget.

4.5 Work has been done with placements in matching up available vacancies, and analysing more closely the abilities of foster carers. Work has been carried out in changing approvals to stretch the age ranges of foster carers, and in putting resources in to support them with more challenging children. Nottingham City fostering have also adopted a 0-18 years approval range in line with competitors to allow a broader range of placements, and to manage variations and extensions more appropriately. The result of this is a drop from around 38 vacancies in September 2008 to around 19 vacancies in November 2008.

5 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

None

6 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

National Minimum Standards – Fostering Services Department of Health 2004

Fostering Service Regulations 2002

IAN CURRYER
ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Sandfield Centre
Sandfield Road
Nottingham
NG7 1QH

Contact Officer:

Julie Lewis, Head of Children in Care

Telephone number: 0115 9150850

Email address: julie.lewis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

3 December 2008