

Corporate Parenting Board - 24 May 2010

Title of paper:	2nd Annual report of the Fostering Service - 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Satinder Gautam Director of Specialist Services	Wards affected: All
Contact Officer(s) and contact details:	Lynne Anderson, Service Manager – Fostering York House 2 nd Floor, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. NG1 3NS Tel: 51713	
Other officers who have provided input:	Lynne Anderson	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
World Class Nottingham		
Work in Nottingham		
Safer Nottingham		
Neighbourhood Nottingham		
Family Nottingham		
Healthy Nottingham		
Serving Nottingham Better		
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
<p>The service continues to recruit mainstream carers despite unprecedented competition from the private sector.</p> <p>The process regarding using a pool of independent assessors to provide assessments of fostering applicants is now beginning to be effective.</p> <p>There is an increasing trend towards recruiting more Kinship carers, although these resources often convert to other outcomes i.e. Special Guardianship or Residence Orders.</p> <p>Support of foster carers has been well maintained despite management shortages, but de-registration of foster carers remains high.</p> <p>We have continued to successfully recruit foster carers.</p> <p>A new set of National Minimum Standards has been released for implementation this year, which will require a co-ordinated response from all of Children & Families.</p> <p>Fostering fortnight will commence in the city on 17th May with a range of activities.</p>		
Recommendation(s):		
1	It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board note and comment on the activity of the Fostering Service 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.	

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Recruitment Activity

The Recruitment team provide a point of first contact for members of the public interested in both the fostering and adoption services of Nottingham City Council.

Facilitating this and maintaining the high public profile required to produce the required number of appropriate applications to foster or adopt a Nottingham child, the team engage in a range of activities.

- organise publicity in a range of media
- produce and distribute information literature
- liaise with placement service to ensure targeting of recruitment efforts to address priority needs (age, ethnicity etc) and monitor outcomes of recruitment activity against needs
- respond to personal, telephone, email and website enquiries from people interested in becoming foster carers or adopters
- provide a high visibility presence as a contact point and information exchange service at public events such as the City's Riverside Festival and Caribbean Carnival and from time to time at other highly trafficked venues such as supermarkets
- present and promote their own marketing and recruitment events, drawing other service providers into sharing and supporting these events
- link with and capitalise on national events and publicity (Foster Care Fortnight in May, Black History Month in October, Adoption Week in November and LGBT History month in February)
- provide monthly 'information meetings' where members of the public are given detailed information, meet existing carers and are invited to begin their application process
- conduct home visits and other investigations to identify the appropriateness of applications to foster being accepted and passed to assessment workers for full home study
- provide pre-approval training for foster carer applicants
- work where possible with existing foster carers in delivery of recruitment and training activities
- liaise and work closely with the Home from Home short breaks service in promotion and recruitment events and pre-approval carer training
- contribute to other aspects of the fostering service - foster carer support events, the Children Who Foster group and FACE editorial group

A summary of recruitment events in 2009 can be found in appendix 1.

1.2 Good news

- events – the recruitment team has varied the pattern of events organised and attended to ensure it remains fresh and to contact as wide a cross section of population as possible. Many were attended by portfolio holder.
- enquiry stats holding up
- excellent feedback from pre-approval training
- monitoring timescales for processing enquiries and applications has been improved – but the need to balance speedy outcomes must be balanced with moving at the enquirers pace.

- website update - a number of changes driven by the corporate web design and department marketing & communications team; the recruitment team are currently looking at further changes to enhance the website's appeal and usefulness to enquirers

1.3 Challenges

- liaison with placement service / sufficiency monitoring – ever closer liaison is required to recruit applicants willing to take the hardest to place children
- changes in marketing officer, the post is vacant at year end and there are staffing vacancies in the Recruitment Team.
- Marketing budget remains low at £20k – it has not been increased since 1998
- Unfortunately cost and availability precludes use of Market Square for recruitment events which have been very successful there in the past
- competition from IFAs, who offer foster carers more cash per placement than does the City Council
- Retention figures continue to be present a challenge, matching the number of foster carers approved in 09/10

Despite these problems the level of activity and responses remains high, although there is as always a very significant drop off from the numbers enquiring to those eventually approved at panel. (See data below.)

There has been some attempt to identify what impact the general economic downturn has had on recruitment. While some people may be more likely to consider fostering due to becoming unemployed and therefore having free time, others are less likely to do so as fear of unemployment in the household results in them choosing to hang on to whatever employment they have rather than leave it to devote themselves to fostering. Indications nationally are varied and locally it seems and these factors balance each other out.

1.4 Statistics/ Trends

General enquirer/applicant trends are very similar to the year 08-09:

- The number of information packs sent out, an indication of recruitment activity in generating initial enquirers, ranges from 29 to 135 per month. The average of 60 per month shows remarkable consistency with figures of 63 and 60 in the two preceding years.
- Attendance at information meetings, an indication of committed enquirers, ranged from 5 to 22 households per month. The average, 13, is a disappointing fall from preceding years' figures of 18 and 19.
- The number of applications made, an indication of the number of people who have made an informed choice to foster and regard us as the agency with whom they prefer to do so, ranges from 4 to 16 per month. The average of 9.1 per month is a slight increase on last year's figure of 8.6 but down on the previous outstanding average of 11.6 in 2007-08.

There is a very high 'drop off' between people seeking information about fostering and then attending a meeting but for both fostering and adoption approximately two thirds of people who do attend an information meeting go on to make an application.

1.5 Fostering Recruitment applications 09/10

Fostering (not including Kinship carers)

Enquiry Packs Requested - 721

Info Meeting Attendance - 157 (households)

Application Packs requested - 109

Panel Approved – 18 , average 1.5 placements each

There will always be enquirers whose outcome is reached more slowly than others due to personal circumstances such as health issues or unexpected changes in household composition which need time to resolve or settle before fostering can be considered.

The average time from application to approval at panel last year was 7.2 months, just outside the target time of 6 months. Admin processes have been improved to chase the progress of statutory checks and references well before the applicants go to panel. Previously where we have been dependent on other agencies to respond to our requests this has led to a time lag and we have put in risk management measures to ensure this does not delay panel applications.

1.6 Assessment Activity - Types of assessments

There are 3 types of assessments:

1. Mainstream
2. Reg. 38 interim assessments with family and friend carers (Kinship Care). Many of these applications won't go through to a full approval as other orders such as Residence or Special Guardianship Orders may be deemed more appropriate after interim approval has been granted.
3. Full Kinship assessments.

1.7 Assessors

- There are 23 independent social workers in the assessor pool.
- This large pool of assessors has enabled us to improve the waiting times for mainstream assessments and most importantly access within timescales increasing number of Reg. 38 applications.
- The assessors come from various backgrounds. Some are fully independent workers, many already work for the department in different roles and others come from probation service or work within the County.
- The challenges are to keep hold of these assessors due to the increasing private sector work available to independent social workers.

There has been an increase – in line with other Local Authorities - to recruit more Kinship Carers. Since December 2009, 14 Regulation 38 assessments have begun. Of these 9 have been given interim approval at panel and so will progress to full Kinship assessments. In addition there were 2 full Kinship care assessments already in the process, which means there are 11 full Kinship assessments in the system, and 7 of these are due for panel before August 2010. In addition a further 2 Reg. 38 assessments have converted to other orders.

1.8 Panel activity

Mainstream approvals for 2009/10 – 18 fostering households yielding 32 places.

Mainstream de-registrations 2009/10 - 18 fostering households, loss of 30 places

Net gain for the year of – Breakeven fostering households, +2 child places.

When considered across the country, although there has not been an increase in mainstream carers, this is a good outcome because recruitment of mainstream carers by local authorities is at an all time low. Many other local authorities have not recruited any carers e.g. Lambeth. The authority has maintained numbers for this year. In line with the trend in other local authorities we are increasing the number of Kinship carers – as discussed above.

A full breakdown of panel activity can be found in appendix 2.

1.9 Support Activity

The numbers of carers de-registering still presents a challenge. It can be seen that the highest number is problems with family/changes of circumstances, the second highest is work commitments. This compares with 2008/09 when the biggest reason for de-registration was retirement (5 households) and work commitments (4 households). Measures are in place to ensure that newly approved carers have a 6 month probationary period during which only placements which are suitable for the terms of their approval are made with them. Obviously not all factors are known at the point of placement but as far as possible only the least challenging placements are made with these carers. Secondly, it is proposed that disruption meetings are to be held for all children and young people whose placement comes to an unplanned end. This will have the benefit of analysing where the risk factors of the placement lay. Where a foster carer proceeds to de-registration, a team manager makes a home visit and completes a report for the reasons for de-registration of the foster carers views and in particular those which make suggestions to how the service can be improved. These are fed back to panel for discussion and analysis.

1.10 Extensions projects

There are a number of well established carers who would be able to take more children than they currently do but they are limited by the nature of their accommodation. 5 applications for extension projects to their homes have been presented this year and £72,600 has been committed to extending 2 foster carers properties, (based on an annual budget of £35,000 plus some cost savings from previous years). This has resulted in an additional 2 long term placements available to the service.

1.11 Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Standards

There are now new regulations and National Minimum Standards that are due to be implemented in September 2010 which places extra responsibility on local authorities. There is an OFSTED inspection due Dec 2010 – this will check that the legislation is being imbedded into practice. Furthermore there is a requirement to have CWDC portfolios to evidence foster carers skills and learning ready by April 2011 for each fostering household. This has been a very large piece of work and resisted by foster carers nationally. In Nottingham City we are implementing the CWDC standard and have supported foster carers with a rolling programme of workshops run by supervising social workers to ensure fosters carers are compliant with the regulatory framework.

To date 33 foster carers have completed all 7 standards, 20 carers have completed the NVQ in Health and Social Care and are completing an equivalency portfolio and 95 carers are attending the rolling programme of workshops which are expected to complete by October this year.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

2.1 No recommendations.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 N/A

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)

4.1 There are no financial implications.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 The work of the Fostering Service will contribute to positive outcomes for Children in Care in the Nottingham City area by providing safe and secure placements to vulnerable children and young people.

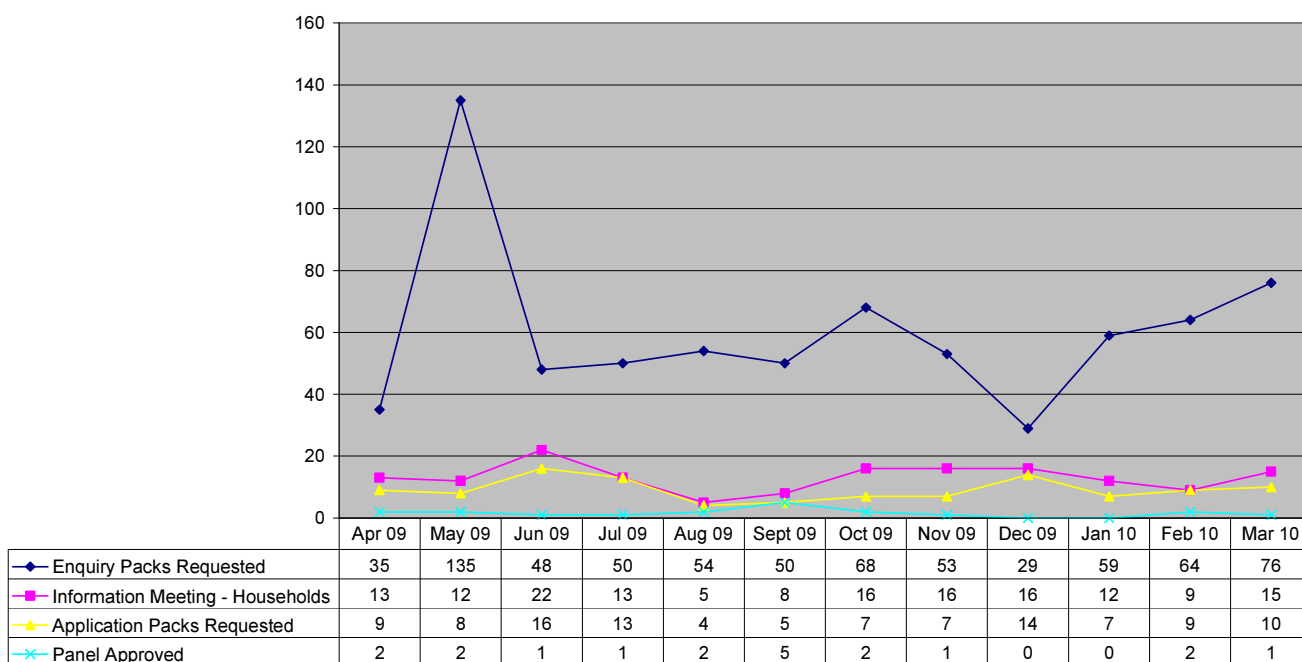
6 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

6.1 None

7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

7.1 None

**Fostering Recruitment Figures
Financial Year 09/10
Total Enquiry Packs - 721
Total Info Meeting Attendance - 157
Application Packs requested - 109
Panel Approved - 19**



RECRUITMENT EVENTS CALENDAR 2009

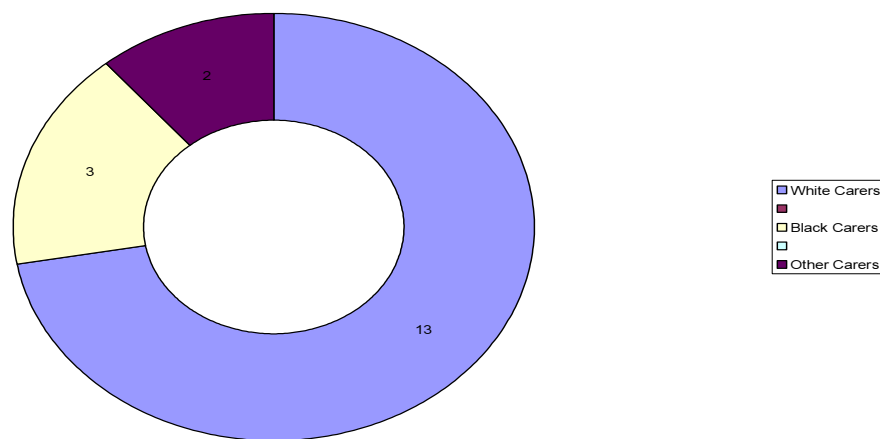
DATE	EVENT & LOCATION
10 th February 2009	Trent FM Job Fair, "Nottingham Jobs 4 Nottingham People" Victoria Centre
17 th February 2009	LGBT history exhibition, View from the Top, Waterstones, 7 - 10 pm.
7 th March 2009	Basford Family Event Family Fun Event on the 7th March Venue - NG Active This is a leisure centre behind Henry Mellish School, we will have a marquee on the playing field. open to the public from 10am until 3pm on Saturday 7th March.
9 th - 23 rd May 2009	Fostering Fortnight, Market Square
31 st May 2009	Nottingham Green Festival - The Arboretum
2 nd June 2009 – 9.30am –4.30pm	Safeguarding - Denewood Centre,

6 th June 2009	Volunteering, Market Square
13 th June 2009	Aiming High for Adoption
20 th June 2009 -	Arnold Carnival
27 th June 2009	It's a Knockout/Armed Forces Day' - Wollaton Park
28 th June 2009	
4 th July 2009	Caribbean Carnival 12-10 - Forest Recreation Ground,
5 th July 2009	
18 th July 2009	Fun in the fields - Edwalton
25 th July 2009	Nottingham Pride - Arboretum
31 st July 2009	Riverside Festival - Victoria Embankment
1 st August 2009	
2 nd August 2009	
4 th , 7 th & 8 th August 2009	Pre-approval training
14 th August 2009	Morrisons Netherfield supermarket promotion
15 th August 2009	Morrisons Netherfield supermarket promotion
18 th August 2009	Park Life - Clifton Playing Fields
25 th August 2009	ParkLife - Queens Walk Meadows
5 th & 6 th September 2009	Gedling Show
6 th October 2009	Black History Month - New Art Exchange Monday 6th October
23 rd October 2009	Mary Potter Centre 23rd
24 th October 2009	African Market Saturday 24th
25 th October 2009	African Market Sunday 25th
26 th October 2009	Your Day - Your Say: Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers Monday 26th
6 th November 2009	Family Support Group Friday 6th
9 th - 15 th November 2009	National Adoption Week Siblings... Mechanics Inst Thursday 12th November

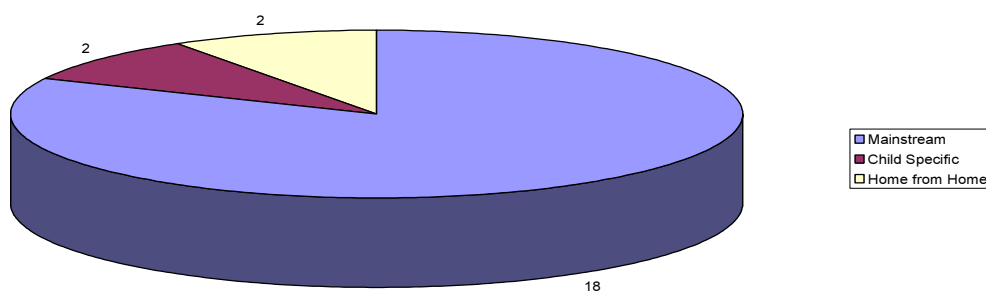
Mainstream Carers Approved – 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

	Quantity of Resource	Number of Child Places Offered
White Carers	13	24
Black Carers	3	4
Inter-racial couple	2	4
Total	18	32

Mainstream Carers Approved - Ethnicity



Approvals



Summary of Carers Approval – 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

Number of Mainstream carers approved

Inc. Short Term/Long Term/Continuing Care/Emergency/Respite

	Quantity of Resource	Number of Child Places Offered
White carers	13 (including 1 carer also approved as specialist scheme)	24
Black carers	3	4
Inter-racial carers	2	4
Total	18	32

Number of Child Specific (Relative or Friend) Carers approved

	Quantity of Resource	Number of Child Places Offered
White Carers	2	3
Total	2	3

Number of Home from Home carers approved

	Quantity of Resource	Number of Child Places Offered
White Carers	2	2
Total	2	2

Net/Gain Figures – 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

Net Gain/Loss – Mainstream Carers

	No. of Carers Appointed	Child Places Gained	Number of Carers Lost	Child Places Lost	Net Gain in Carers	Net Gain in Child Places
White	13	24	11	20	2	4
Black	3	4	6	8	-3	-4
Other	2	4	1	2	1	2
Total	18	32	18	30	0	2

Net Gain/Loss – Child Specific Carers

	No. of Carers Appointed	Child Places Gained	Number of Carers Lost	Child Places Lost	Net Gain in Carers	Net Gain in Child Places
White	2	3	4	5	-2	-2
Black	0	0	2	2	-2	-2
Other	0	0	1	2	-1	-2
Total	2	3	7	9	-5	-6

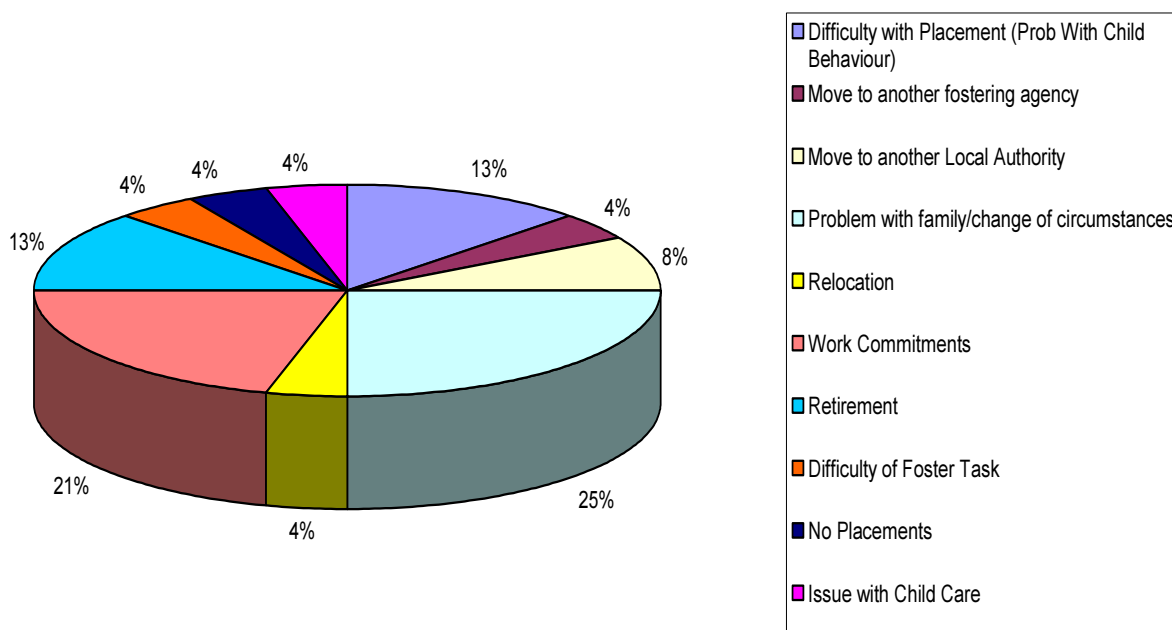
Net Gain/Loss – Home from Home Carers

	No. of Carers Appointed	Child Places Gained	Number of Carers Lost	Child Places Lost	Net Gain in Carers	Net Gain in Child Places
White	2	2	2	2	0	0
Black	0	0	1	1	-1	-1
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	2	3	3	-1	-1

DEREGISTRATIONS & LOSS OF RESOURCES
– 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

	Quantity of Resource Lost	Number of Places Lost
Conversion of Foster Carer to another resource within the department		
Adoption	3	3
Special Guardianship	1	3
Child now Adult – child specific case	3	4

Reason for Deregistration as Nottingham City Carers
Financial Year 09/10



Summary – 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

Mainstream Carers

	No. of Carers Appointed	Number of Carers Lost	Net Gain in Carers	Net Gain in Child Places
White	13	11	2	4
Black	3	6	-3	-4
Other	2	1	1	2
Total	18	18	0	2

Foster Care Fortnight
17 – 30 May 2010

Summary of Recruitment Team Activities

Advertising

- Posters paid for in bus shelters and city information panels
- ¼ page paid for advert in Arrow
- Article in Impact

(In recent years we've also advertised in Evening post and on local radio. This year's budget precluded that.)

Events

- Friday 21st and Saturday 22rd May – publicity & recruitment event in Victoria Centre
- Sunday 23rd May - recruitment information stand at Green Festival
- Wednesday 26th May - enquirers' drop-in evening / information meeting at York House
- Friday 28th May - recruitment information stand at Clifton Market

(In recent years we've held a recruitment publicity and recruitment information stand in the Market Square for the whole of the first week of the fortnight. This year's budget precludes that.)

Media

- Wed 12th May press release including interview opportunities and photo opportunity at Victoria Centre 'put your spare bedroom to good use' event
- A second press release will be released mid way through the fortnight with news of responses so far and the second week's events

(We usually get good responses to the annual F F press release but it's entirely dependent on how the media pick up on it.)

Electronic

- City website homepage - Button linking to story
- Email to partner agencies to cascade information.
- Email to marketing/comms asking for item to be included in Jane Todd's "Week in View"
- June Nottingham City Council cascade will include a report on responses to the campaign