

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – 16 JULY 2018

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|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Title of paper: | Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention | |
| Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s): | Helen Blackman – Director, Children’s Integrated Services | Wards affected: All |
| Report author(s) and contact details: | Audrey Taylor – Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption audrey.taylor@nottinghamcity.gov.uk | |
| Other colleagues who have provided input: | | |
| Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant) | | |
| Relevant Council Plan Key Theme: | | |
| Strategic Regeneration and Development | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Schools | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Planning and Housing | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community Services | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Energy, Sustainability and Customer | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jobs, Growth and Transport | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adults, Health and Community Sector | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Children, Early Intervention and Early Years | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Leisure and Culture | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Resources and Neighbourhood Regeneration | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users): | | |
| This report addresses the strategies for the recruitment and retention opportunities of foster carers. | | |
| Recommendation(s): | | |
| 1 | It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board notes the recruitment and retention performance of the Fostering Service and the activities undertaken by the service to recruit and support foster carers. | |

1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 According to the National Charity Fostering Network, Nationally over 9,000 new foster families are needed in the next 12 months to care for a range of children, with the greatest need being foster carers for older children, sibling groups, disabled children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Every 20 minutes across the UK a child comes into care in need of a foster family.

2 BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 The City has just over 632 children in their care as recorded on 1st April 2018. These are the most vulnerable children in the City, some known to services for some time, and many with

complex needs. The majority of our children are placed with foster carers, nearly 500 children are placed in foster care. The Department recognises that if children are unable to live safely with birth parents or their extended family, then a setting that offers the experience of family life is best. This is what a placement with a foster carer offers.

- 2.2 The Department places most children in our care with foster carers. We would wish to place many of our children with our own in-house mainstream carers. Cost of placement we save between 12 and 20k a year by placing children in-house according to an Empower study. A report by Empower shows that on average, each LA provided foster placement is as much as £17,000 per year cheaper than the average placement by an IFA, and that by increasing the number of LA placements with 18%*, from 67% to 85%, local authorities could save £150million a year on a national basis.
- 2.3 Many of our foster carers live in the City or the County and we would wish to recruit more carers living locally so that our children can be placed locally. They can then continue relationships with friends, and remain at the same school even if they are not living with birth families. We would prefer to place with our own carers rather than with an Independent Fostering Agency, which may be further away and disrupt established relationships.
- 2.4 For those children who are unable to live with their birth families, it is important where possible for them to retain close links with their birth family, and many will continue to have regular contact with their families. It is easier for support and contact to be maintained with local foster carers.
- 2.5 A placement near to home and within the Council makes communication easier for the child's social worker and the fostering supervising social worker, because they work for the same agency. Any successful placement is dependent on good communication between the staff concerned.
- 2.6 A successful placement also needs to be supported well. The support to the placement is easier to put in place when all work in the same department, as support from CAMHS, the Virtual School, and Targeted Support are all delivered from the same Council or linked Agencies.
- 2.7 It also makes efficient use of the budget to have more of our children with our own foster carers, as we do not have to pay the additional Independent Fostering Agency Fees.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

- 2.8 The City has a recruitment strategy aimed at recruiting more foster carers and retaining existing foster carers. We have two established and dedicated Customer Service Officers for both Fostering and Adoption, who are a point of contact for any prospective foster carer from the application stage through to approval. Each month Information Evenings are held at Loxley House, for anyone thinking about fostering. They are always attended by a foster carer and members of the fostering team to answer any queries those interested may have about fostering, and to share their own experiences of fostering. We advertise on Facebook, Twitter and on the Nottingham City Council website. We have launched our new refreshed web page as we recognise that for many applying to become a foster carer, using the internet is more convenient.
- 2.9 In May we took part in Fostering Sunday, a local campaign promoting fostering within local churches to raise the profile of fostering, and to recruit more carers. We are also working with the City Prayer Team who are co-ordinating churches across Nottinghamshire to

support in trying to recruit 100 foster homes within 3 years. We also had events in local schools, police and health services. We have recruited additional carers through these events. Audrey Taylor and Clive Chambers will be presenting a piece on Kemet radio regarding our recruitment opportunities for foster carers.

2.10 Fostering staff regularly attend local events such as the Riverside Festival, Caribbean Carnival, and Pride to promote fostering. Last year we attended 2 new events “Lark in the Park” in West Bridgford and “Glow Worm” a camping event in Clumber Park.

2.11 We appointed on a year’s contract, a dedicated Recruitment Consultant and a Fostering Project Officer to assist with Recruitment. There was a target set of 12 for the number of foster carers to be recruited last year. We have exceeded this, we had a net gain of 20 carers. Due to the success in the increase in recruitment their posts have been made permanent. We currently predict we could recruit as many as 40 carers this financial year, if we continue with the current progress.

2.12 RECRUITMENT STATISTICS

| Month | Marketing Activity | Month | Foster Carers | | | | | | Month | Mainstream Beds Only | | | | Child Placements | | | | | |
|--------|--|--------|---------------|----|---------|---------|----------|----------------|--------|----------------------|------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-----|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | | Enquiries | RO | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Approval | De-regn/resign | | Available | Used | Vacancies useable | Utilisation rate | NCC | IFA | Month | NCC | IFA | |
| Apr-17 | Schools, Mosque & Trent Vineyard | Apr-17 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 0 | Apr-17 | 221 | 166 | 29 | 75% | 184 | 292 | ↔ | Apr-17 | 38.66% | 61.34% |
| May-17 | Fostering Fortnight | May-17 | 40 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | May-17 | 216 | 162 | 29 | 75% | 193 | 292 | ↔ | May-17 | 39.79% | 60.21% |
| Jun-17 | Bestwood Get Together, Lenton Abbey Fun Day | Jun-17 | 17 | 15 | 20 | 5 | 2 | 0 | Jun-17 | 216 | 162 | 30 | 75% | 199 | 292 | ↔ | Jun-17 | 40.53% | 59.47% |
| Jul-17 | Pride, Splendour, Priority Families, Southglade Park Live, Penny Appeal | Jul-17 | 30 | 7 | 26 | 4 | 1 | 3 | Jul-17 | 231 | 165 | 29 | 71% | 193 | 292 | ↔ | Jul-17 | 39.79% | 60.21% |
| Aug-17 | Riverside Festival, Beach - Nottingham City Centre, Loxley House Pop Up Stand, Beeston/Hyson Green/Hucknall Market, Glo Worm, Lark in the Park | Aug-17 | 34 | 8 | 26 | 5 | 1 | 0 | Aug-17 | 232 | 158 | 30 | 68% | 197 | 284 | ↔ | Aug-17 | 40.96% | 59.04% |
| Sep-17 | Facebook Campaign, DWP and NHS talk. | Sep-17 | 26 | 9 | 28 | 10 | 0 | 0 | Sep-17 | 226 | 166 | 25 | 73% | 203 | 284 | ↔ | Sep-17 | 41.68% | 58.32% |
| Oct-17 | Beeston Market, Priority Families, Market, Church leaders meeting, Penny Appeal, Bus advertising, St Pauls | Oct-17 | 28 | 7 | 33 | 13 | 1 | 0 | Oct-17 | 230 | 162 | 28 | 70% | 197 | 283 | ↔ | Oct-17 | 41.04% | 58.96% |
| Nov-17 | DWP tax Office, Facebook promotions | Nov-17 | 20 | 10 | 21 | 23 | 2 | 2 | Nov-17 | 226 | 172 | 19 | 76% | 213 | 283 | ↔ | Nov-17 | 42.94% | 57.06% |
| Dec-17 | Facebook promotions, information evening | Dec-17 | 21 | 6 | 18 | 22 | 5 | 0 | Dec-17 | 218 | 179 | 22 | 82% | 216 | 275 | ↔ | Dec-17 | 43.99% | 56.01% |
| Jan-18 | Facebook promotions, information evening | Jan-18 | 34 | 11 | 16 | 18 | 4 | 0 | Jan-18 | 218 | 178 | 28 | 82% | 215 | 270 | ↔ | Jan-18 | 44.33% | 55.67% |
| Feb-18 | Facebook promotions, information evening, Church leaders meetings, NHS meetings | Feb-18 | 50 | 6 | 10 | 22 | 6 | 0 | Feb-18 | 226 | 175 | 32 | 80% | 211 | 267 | ↔ | Feb-18 | 44.14% | 55.86% |
| Mar-18 | Facebook promotions, information evening, Church leaders meetings, Council Tax leaflet | Mar-18 | 35 | 5 | 15 | 16 | 8 | 0 | Mar-18 | 236 | 177 | 42 | 75% | 212 | 266 | ↔ | Mar-18 | 44.35% | 55.65% |
| Apr-18 | Facebook promotions, information evening, Church leaders meetings. | Apr-18 | 35 | 5 | 13 | 12 | 4 | 2 | Apr-18 | 242 | 176 | 48 | 73% | 202 | 266 | ↔ | Apr-18 | 43.16% | 56.84% |
| May-18 | Fostering Fortnight- fostering Sunday, Walk in the Park awareness, radio, Notts TV , regional press. | May-18 | 40 | 6 | 15 | 18 | 4 | 2 | May-18 | 243 | 184 | 46 | 76% | 210 | 263 | ↔ | May-18 | 44.40% | 55.60% |
| Jun-18 | Heart Church information event, Facebook adv, Google Ad words | Jun-18 | 35 | 4 | 14 | 18 | 2 | 0 | Jun-18 | 248 | 191 | 35 | 77% | 218 | 247 | ↔ | Jun-18 | 46.88% | 53.12% |

RETENTION STRATEGY

2.13 We continue to maintain our efforts to retain the carers that we have, and to look at innovative ways to “reward” our carers for what they do. We have a well-established, dedicated and experienced team of supervising social workers. Every foster carer has their

own supervising social worker who regularly visits them, and who they can contact at any time regarding their fostering role. We are in the process of increasing the team of Supervising Social Workers to ensure foster carers are supported.

- 2.14 Our foster carers are regularly and formally reviewed where any changes to their status can be discussed and agreed. We run Support Groups for foster carers in Clifton and Lenton, where foster carers can meet with other foster carers in their area. We have introduced a Buddy scheme, offering peer mentoring by approved foster carers. We are looking to support the North of the City also with a support group.
- 2.15 The fostering team have developed a Therapeutic Support Team. The Therapeutic Support Team provides therapeutic based interventions, support, and advice, recognising that caring for children can feel overwhelming at times and sometimes patterns of behaviour and the way families get on together can become very stuck. They offer monthly consultation slots for foster carers and professional and also offer home visits.
- 2.16 There are six-weekly Fostering Business meetings that alternate between day and evening sessions. The meetings offer all our foster carers the opportunity to meet with Senior Managers within the Department, and for the Department to share current issues and concerns, and consult in relation to new initiatives.
- 2.17 The Service Manager, Virtual School regularly attends the Business meetings to address any issues in relation to education that carers may have. So far this year we have also had the NSPCC attend the Business meeting, in relation to work they are doing with life story work for children in foster care. Life story work is important for children who are in foster care for some time to help them maintain a clear understanding of their life history.
- 2.18 The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) has attended, to inform foster carers in relation to the contact that the Department has with them to provide advocacy for children in care, and children who are subject to Child Prevention Conferences. NYAS also provides an independent visiting scheme for children in care who are not regularly in contact with their birth families, and who have been assessed as requiring this service.
- 2.19 We have recently fully reviewed and updated our training programme for this year. Where we have received positive comments from foster carers, we will run a course the following year, or more than once during the year. We have incorporated foetal alcohol syndrome and transitions into adulthood training.
- 2.20 We pay for all our carers to be members of the Fostering Network where they can receive the latest information relative to developments in fostering, and they also access the services of the Fostering Network Advice and Mediation Worker.
- 2.21 We are constantly looking at different ways to reward our carers and acknowledge our appreciation of them.
- 2.22 Works Perks is an employee benefits scheme where staff can choose from over 6000 lifestyle discounts, we have recently extended this to include foster carers. This can include discounts at well-known shops, cinema, discounted holidays and travel, and local offers from businesses. We consulted with foster carers, and most foster carers have received their ID badges to access the scheme.
- 2.23 We are seeking to build an in-house supported lodging service. We are looking to place a number of care leaver's, young people age 16 plus with some on-going care needs, that

require guidance within supported lodging arrangements, to support them into eventual independence. These young people may have experienced placement breakdowns, and will be in need of support to help them achieve their potential. We are also working on specialist recruitment of foster carers for parent and baby placements, we currently only have 1 in-house parent and baby placement.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 None.

4 FINANCE COLLEAGUE COMMENTS (INCLUDING IMPLICATIONS AND VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 None.

5 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COLLEAGUE COMMENTS (INCLUDING RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES, AND LEGAL, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 None.

6 STRATEGIC ASSETS & PROPERTY COLLEAGUE COMMENTS (FOR DECISION RELATING TO ALL PROPERTY ASSETS AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE) (AREA COMMITTEE REPORTS ONLY)

6.1 None.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No, an EIA is not required because: the report does not contain proposals or financial decisions.

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

8.1 None.

9 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

9.1 None.