

## Corporate Parenting Board - 20 January 2014

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|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Title of paper:</b>  | <b>Fostering and Adoption Marketing, Recruitment and Retention</b>   |                                     |
| <b>Director(s)/<br/>Corporate Director(s):</b>  | Helen Blackman, Acting Director<br>Children's Safeguarding<br>Claire Richmond, Interim Director<br>Policy, Partnership and Communication   | <b>Wards affected:<br/>All</b>      |
| <b>Report author(s) and<br/>contact details:</b>  | Esme MacAuley, Business Partner, Children and Families<br><a href="mailto:Esme.MacAuley@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Esme.MacAuley@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a><br>Kirstie Gee, Fostering and Adoption<br>Marketing and Communications Officer,<br><a href="mailto:Kirstie.Gee@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Kirstie.Gee@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a> |                                     |
| <b>Other colleagues who<br/>have provided input:</b>  | Michael Edwards, Communications and Marketing<br>Foster Carers, Adopters and colleagues (Focus Groups)   |                                     |
| <b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s)<br/>(if relevant)</b>  |  |                                     |
| <b>Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:</b>  |  |                                     |
| Cutting unemployment by a quarter   |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Cut crime and anti-social behaviour   |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City   |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre  |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Help keep your energy bills down  |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Good access to public transport   |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Nottingham has a good mix of housing  |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs   |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events   |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Support early intervention activities   |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens   |  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>  |  |                                     |
| <p>A strategy has been developed to set out a new direction for the fostering and adoption service to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children in our care.</p> <p>Its focus is on how marketing can help generate more enquiries from potential foster carers and adopters into the system and the role the Customer Service Officers play in turning enquiries into applications as well as improving the customer experience of making an application. The retention of fosters carers post panel approval is a key element of the strategy. This will reduce Nottingham City Council's dependence on Independent Fostering Agencies who currently look after 53% of the children in the Council's Care, bringing a significant financial benefit to the Authority.</p> <p>The strategy aims to take an evidence based approach, sets out SMART objectives with mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. It also reflects feedback from existing foster carers and adopters.</p> <p>The strategy has been developed in response to a new directive from the Department for Education (DfE) to speed up adoption processes to avoid drift and delay in placing children for adoption. To support local authorities to meet these new target timescales, the DfE has introduced the Adoption Reform Grant. Nottingham City Council's allocation totals £1.186 million from April 2013.</p> |  |                                     |

| <b>Recommendation(s):</b> |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>1</b>                  | The Board to approve the direction of travel which will ensure that Nottingham City Council is able to deliver a new way forward for the service to ensure that children are matched to suitable carers in a more timely manner. |
| <b>2</b>                  | The Board to acknowledge the importance of the role of marketing and Customer Services Officers in the drive to recruit more foster carers and adopters and improve outcomes for children in care.                               |
| <b>3</b>                  | To acknowledge the work being carried out to put systems in place to reduce dependence on Independent Fostering Agencies in order to achieve significant cost savings for the council.   |

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 As of 7 January 2014, Nottingham City Council had 20 children with placement orders but without any links or matches to adoptive parents (out of a total of 71 children in the home finding system). Panel are currently approving on average three adopters per month; this means Nottingham City Council could find 36 placements within 12 months. In 2012/13 33 out of 310 enquiries were turned into approvals giving a conversion rate of 9:1.
- 1.2 The majority of children these 20 children are White British but there are three children of Black African / Caribbean heritage and half comprised of sibling groups of two or more. More than two thirds of the group are male. Ages range from 0 months to 8 years.
- 1.3 As of 6 January 2014 Nottingham City Council had 127 foster carer households looking after 139 children. In 2012/13 Nottingham City Council converted 16 enquiries out of a potential 625 enquiries, giving a conversion rate of 39:1.
- 1.4 As of 7 January 2014, 47% of children in the care of Nottingham City Council were placed with NCC foster carers and 53% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). This has significant cost implications to the Authority. Nottingham City Council wants to redress this balance over the next three years so that the proportion is 80% with NCC and 20% with IFAs.
- 1.5 Nottingham City Council's data shows increasing numbers of the Polish, Dual heritage and Black Caribbean children needing to be placed with foster families, as well as a large proportion of teenagers, disabled children and sibling groups which are typically more difficult to place. There is also a need to recruit more respite carers.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

- 2.1 The focus on time targets within the Government's adoption policy means there is a greater need to recruit adopters to help ensure a speedy match is possible for the children in the care of Nottingham City Council. The ambition is to halve the time to find 36 placements to within 6 months, not 12 months.

- 2.2 A more targeted approach to marketing will increase numbers of carers who can be matched to children in care, especially Polish, Dual heritage and Black Caribbean origin.
- 2.3 There are significant costs savings attached to increasing the number of Nottingham City Council foster carers as it will reduce the dependency on using IFAs.
- 2.4 The Customer Service Officers will give a fast response to enquiries that come through the various channels then monitor and quality assure the process throughout the customer journey to Panel approval. This will help reduce the number of people who drop off and will also improve the experience of those that become approved foster carers so they are more likely to recommend the service to others.

### **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 None

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)**

- 4.1 Redressing the balance from a 47:53 ratio between NCC carers and IFAs to an 80:20 ratio over a three year period has a significant financial benefit to the Authority.
- 4.2 The additional marketing support and Customer Service Officer posts in place to deliver the strategy have been funded through the Adoption Reform Grant and has no cost implications to the Local Authority.

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

- 5.1 It is proposed that dedicated marketing support and Customers Service Officers minimise risks to both the organisation and young people in care. These roles are considered instrumental in setting a new direction for the service, in an effort to strive for better outcomes for children in care in Nottingham.

### **6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (EIAs)**

No equality impact assessment has been carried out as this report does not propose changes to policies or procedures.

### **7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Fostering and Adoption Recruitment, Retention and Marketing Strategy.

### **8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

- 8.1 None