FAMILY VALUES PROJECT

END OF PROJECT REPORT

AUGUST 2016

1) INTRODUCTION

The Family Values Project was set up in 2014 as part of the Council's Demand Management Programme. iMPOWER Consulting Limited were contracted to work with the management and staff of the Fostering and Adoption Service to deliver the project.

While the project was primarily set up to work with the Fostering Service, it was acknowledged that the Adoption Service could also benefit from support and hence both services took part in the initial stages of the project. The Adoption Service ceased to be part of the project at the end of Phase 3, when the Department for Education's adoption regionalisation policy was introduced and the service's work to become part of an East Midlands-wide adoption agency became the driver for future improvements and changes.

The project was set up to help the service tackle a number of issues it was facing including:

- Finance – over time the proportion of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements compared with in house foster carers registered with Derby City Council had increased. At the time the project was being set up nearly half of Derby's foster children were placed with IFA carers, a proportion that had significantly increased since 2012. It costs the Council far more to place a child with an IFA carer than one of its own in house carers. In common with all Council services, Fostering and Adoption needed to seek ways of making savings. Increasing the proportion of in house carers would be a very effective way of doing this.

- Performance – it was agreed that the service could benefit from a review of performance in terms of speed of recruitment, assessment and approval of carers and adopters.

- Permanence – the service acknowledged the need to recruit more carers to meet the needs of children that are waiting and improve the support available to carers throughout the process and once they have a child placed.

- Staff culture – the need to embed a strong culture of performance monitoring, improvement and joint working and a positive approach to change.

- Engagement with carers – the need to better understand carer motivations and experience of the service and reflect these in service improvements.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Increase the capacity and efficiency of the fostering and adoption service

- Improve timescales for the fostering and adoption processes

- Reduce spend on independent fostering agencies

- Improve the experience of prospective and existing foster carers and adopters

- Develop a more targeted approach to marketing and recruitment initiatives

Phasing:

The project took place in four phases:

Phase 1 (August to November 2014) – introduce staff to the Values Modes model of understanding what motivates people and how this impacts on the best way of engaging with them; undertake carer, adopter and staff surveys; undertake business analysis of Fostering and Adoption Service performance.

Phase 2 (December 2014 to January 2015) – use Phase 1 findings to design initiatives and develop implementation plans.

Phase 3 (February to October 2015) – implement initiatives with support from iMPOWER.

Phase 4 (November 2015 to July 2016) – implement further improvements in house.

iMPOWER Consulting Ltd worked with the Council to deliver phases 1 to 3 of the project. They prepared reports for the Council at the end of each phase, plus other resources including staff presentations and draft plans. This report does not seek to repeat the contents of those reports, but covers Phase 4 and overall project performance.

2) PHASE 4

At the end of Phase 3, iMPOWER Consulting Ltd withdrew from the project leaving the Council to implement further changes and improvements to its Fostering Service via an in house team. As set out above, the Adoption Service did not take part in Phase 4 as its emphasis had switched to working with external partners to set up an East Midlands-wide adoption agency.

As part of the end of Phase 3 handover, iMPOWER worked with the Fostering Service to develop two action plans to be delivered during Phase 4. The first action plan focused on the recruitment and assessment of potential new foster carers and the second on support for existing in house foster carers.

The key themes covered in the action plans were:

i) Recruitment & Assessment:

Recruitment – further develop:
- capacity of staff and carers to undertake word of mouth campaigns
- rolling programme of marketing events
- marketing materials and communications

- review initial enquiry in service call handling pilot

Assessment - review:
- assessment process
- communication with applicants
- training offered during assessment

- consider methods of influencing carer choices

ii) Support - to set up and run 3 support groups tailored for foster carers who provide:

- Long Term/Permanent placements

- Time Limited placements

- Family & Friends placements

Overall good progress was made in delivering the action plans. Highlights include:

- Successful call handling pilot – initial call handling now taken back within the service on a permanent basis

- Recruitment Officer post made permanent
- New pages and functions added to fostering section of Council's website
- 16 carer volunteers trained to take part in word of mouth campaigns
- Over 20 word of mouth and other recruitment events held
- Several improvements made to Stage 1 of the assessment process
- Long Term/Permanent and Time Limited support groups launched

A full list of Phase 4 achievements is attached at Annex A.

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3) OVERALL PROJECT PERFORMANCE

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i) Project Achievements

During Phases 3 (fostering and adoption) and 4 (fostering only) the project acted as a catalyst for introducing change and making numerous improvements to the services. A full list of outputs and achievements is attached at Annex B. Headlines include:

- Initial enquiry handling for both fostering and adoption taken back from Derby Direct (the Council's generic call handling service) to allow people interested in fostering or adoption to talk to an expert from first contact.

- Introduction of a Recruitment Officer supporting both fostering and adoption to help improve the service provided to enquirers and potential applicants and support the marketing function.

- Successful embedding of the recruitment approach recommended by iMPOWER which enables the service to identify and target potential foster carers and adopters using the Values Mode approach and tailor recruitment activities to suit their preferences.

- Improvements made to fostering assessment process

- Improvements to the training offer made as a result of a survey of foster carers and adopters

- Establishment of two support groups for foster carers.

- Introduction of a newsletter for foster carers.

ii) Fostering Performance Targets

In July 2015 fostering performance targets were agreed for the project. Performance against these targets has been monitored and reviewed by the Family Values Core Group on a monthly basis since then. The service will continue to monitor and analyse performance against these targets now the project has ended.

The table below sets out the targets and performance against them over the period July 2015 to June 2016.

Target	Annual Target	Baseline Performance July 2014 – June 2015	Project Performance July 2015 – June 2016	Analysis
Number of enquiries	250	179	272	**Target exceeded** – over the project year, 272 enquiries were generated. This represents an increase of over 50% against baseline.
Number of initial visits	108	47	69	**Target not achieved** – over the project year, 69 initial visits took place. This represents an increase of just under 50% against the baseline. In terms of conversion rate, it represents a small drop from 26% to 25% in the number of enquiries resulting in visits. This is significantly below the 43% conversion rate needed to meet the project target. Over the period March to June 2016, the initial visit monthly target of 9 visits per month was achieved – if this level of performance is sustained, the target will be achieved in the future.
Number of approvals	25	11	5	**Target not achieved** – over the project year there were 5 approvals. This is only 20% of the target and a decrease of 54% against the baseline year.
Number of de-registrations	12	14	16	**Target not achieved** – over the project year there were 16 de-registrations. This is 4 over target and 2 more than the baseline year. Though over target, all de-registrations were either for routine reasons eg retirement or change of personal circumstances or in some cases, carers resigned when they adopted the children who had been placed with them. In Phase 1 of the project iMPOWER found that Derby's de-registration rate was 11.8%, compared with the national average of 12.3%. Using the average number of foster carer households over the year (110), this represents an increase to

				14.5%. Due to the low number of approvals and the higher rate of de-registrations, the number of fostering households has fallen from 119 to 107 over the last year. The ratio of IFA to in-house placements is now around 60:40. It may be that this situation reflects the low number of initial enquiries etc in the baseline year and once the new higher level of enquiries and initial visits feed through into applications, the situation may improve. The service are committed to undertaking a thorough analysis of the results and implementing improvements where there are further lessons to learn.

iii) Performance Against Objectives

Performance against the project's five objectives is analysed in the table below.

Objective	Analysis
To increase the capacity and efficiency of the Fostering and Adoption Service	**Partially Achieved** The project enabled the Fostering and Adoption Service to make all of the improvements set out in Annex B, however, there is still much to do and future improvements to the Adoption Service are now dependent on move to set up a regional agency. Performance against this objective was negatively impacted upon by the loss of momentum caused by 3 changes of manager within 6 months on Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team and the move to Council House.
To improve the timescales for fostering and adoption process	**Partially Achieved** It was agreed fairly early in the project that the emphasis should be on improving the effectiveness and quality of the processes rather than speed, especially on fostering where timescales were less of an issue than for adoption. Several improvements have been made in line with this.

To reduce spend on independent foster agencies	**Not Achieved** Unfortunately the proportion of in house carers has continued to fall over the period of the project and therefore spending on IFA placements has increased. The ratio of IFA to in house carers has risen from about 45:55 to around 60:40 over the life of the project. Though the project has not yet yielded results, the rise in the number of enquiries generated through the project may ultimately lead to a reversal of the continuing increase in IFA places if the service can continue to generate an increased number of enquiries and successfully convert these into new foster carer households.
To improve the experience of prospective and existing foster carers and adopters	**Achieved - but more work to do**. Over the life of the project many improvements have been made that should make for a better experience for service users. These include service taking back initial calls from Derby Direct, changes to website, establishment of Recruitment Officer post and support groups, plus improvements to the Skills to Foster training and awareness raising with Children's Social Workers around the role of foster carers.
To develop a more targeted approach to marketing recruitment initiatives	**Achieved** This has been the most successful aspect of the project with the word of mouth concept now embedded, numerous marketing events held, a pool of 16 carers established to take part in events, new marketing materials developed, website improved, wide ranging leafleting campaign ongoing and rolling marketing plan in place. Going forward, the next major piece of work will be for the Fostering Service to update its 2013/16 Marketing and Recruitment Strategy.

iv) Lessons Learned

Attached at Annex D

4) NEXT STEPS

Fostering Service management is committed to building on the achievements of the project and will continue to monitor performance and introduce further service improvements on an ongoing basis. Members of the former Family Values Core Group will continue to meet on a fortnightly basis under the remit of the Recruitment Strategy Group to oversee this work.

As part of the end of project preparations, it has been agreed how each achievement made during Phase 4 of the project will be embedded in Fostering Service work and how further improvements will be made. Full details are set out in Annex C.

Annex C covers the commitments made by the Fostering Service itself. In addition, the Service considers it essential that the Council continues to fund a full time Fostering and Adoption Marketing Officer within the Communications Team whose involvement in the service is key to delivering a robust marketing plan, making full use of lessons learned from iMPOWER and broadening the use of IT and social media.

Communication:

In order to communicate the outcome of the project this report will:

- Be circulated to the Director - Delivering Differently, Acting Director of Specialist Services, all managers within the Fostering and Adoption Service, Head of Performance, Head of Communications and the Director of Strategic Services and Organisational Development.

- Form part of the Council's Annual Fostering Agency Report which will be submitted to People Services Directorate Management Team and Corporate Parenting.

- Be shared with members of the Fostering Panel.

In addition:

- An article outlining Phase 4 achievements and next steps will be included in the Foster Carers' Newsletter. This follows up on the letters sent to all foster carers and adopters at the end of Phase 3 updating them on the service improvements introduced up to that point.

- A display will be put together in the Fostering Team area to inform staff of project outcomes and next steps.

ANNEX A – PHASE 4 ACHIEVEMENTS

RECRUITMENT

- **Initial call handling** - confirmation that calls will be taken back by the service from Derby Direct on a permanent basis following successful pilot. This will ensure that callers can speak to someone with fostering knowledge and expertise from first contact.

- **Recruitment Officer** – dedicated Recruitment Officer post made permanent. The role of the Recruitment Officer is to:
  - monitor the progress of enquiries from receipt of the enquiry to completion
  - Follow up contact at initial stage of enquiry to ensure enquirer has received an information pack
  - Ensuring quick response by service to arrange initial visits
  - 'Keeping in touch'/point of contact for applicants to keep them up to date with progress of their assessment
  - Responsibility for updating performance scorecard for monthly fostering recruitment activity
  - Working with Recruitment Lead to develop word of mouth campaign opportunities
  - support recruitment events and work closely with the Marketing Officer/Communications Team

- **DCC website** updated & enhanced:
  - Request to call back facility added to make it easier for people wanting to make an initial enquiry to get in touch with the service.
  - Request to transfer page added to provide information for existing foster carers interested in transferring to the Council.

- **Word of mouth**:

- Further briefing sessions held to train foster carers to take part in word of mouth campaigns. Pool of 16 foster carers now in place to take part in future campaigns. Carers taking part in events receive £10 voucher as a thank you.

- Around 20 word of mouth and other recruitment events held including:
  - 19th Nov Derby Night Market – very successful event leading to 15 enquiries
  - Regular sessions held at Derby Royal Hospital every 6 to 8 weeks
  - Links established with Home for Good – successful events held at Allestree Woodlands and Riverside Churches

- **Marketing materials** updated and amended - roadside banners and posters purchased, plus gazebo for use at events.

- Further **fostering information sessions** held – 8th December and 8th March.

- Sustained **leaflet campaign** – flyers regularly placed in an increasing number of venues in and around Derby. Also every 2016/17 Council Tax letter contained a flyer.

- **Performance Monitoring** – introduced monthly scorecard report to monitor performance against recruitment, assessment and foster household targets, discuss ways of making further improvements and issues.

ASSESSMENT

- **Initial Visits** – improvements made to speed and process for booking initial visits.

- **Stage 1** changes introduced:

  o Now make an initial visit plus 3 further visits to discuss the fostering role, gather initial assessment information, start chronology, create eco map, undertake dog assessment (where needed), Health &Safety checks, collect referee details and DBS information.

  o Revised initial visit form introduced.

  o Introduced guidance notes to help applicants complete various forms and questionnaires.

  o Skills to Foster training now taking place during Stage 1.

  o New risk assessment introduced where DBS reveals offences that do not automatically debar applicants from fostering. This addresses the applicant's attitude to offences and the effects they may have on placed children.

  o Monthly reviews of Stage 1 applicants introduced to help keep track of applicants and reduce any delays.

  o Formal decision now made at end of Stage 1 on whether applicant is suitable to progress to Stage 2.

- Form requesting **feedback on assessment process** being developed.

SUPPORT

- Three **support groups** set up themed around:
  - o Long Term/Permanency – sessions held 24th February & 17th May
  - o Time Limited Placements – sessions held 27th January, 27th April & 6th July.
  - o Family & Friends – in planning - first session not yet held.

- **Fostering News** – new newsletter aimed at all approved foster carers established. Two editions published so far. Newsletter contains information on forthcoming training, practice features, recruitment updates, news features and manager profiles.

- **Induction course** for newly approved foster carers developed. Will include opportunity to meet all key people will work with including Fostering Managers, Head of Service, Finance and Training. Will also cover standards.

ANNEX B - OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS – PHASES 3 & 4

RECRUITMENT

Fostering

- **Initial call handling** - calls taken back by service from Derby Direct on a permanent basis following successful pilot. This will ensure that callers can speak to someone with fostering knowledge and expertise from first contact.

- **Recruitment Officer** – a dedicated Recruitment Officer post introduced and made permanent. The role of the Recruitment Officer is to:
  - monitor the progress of enquiries from receipt of the enquiry to completion
  - Follow up contact at initial stage of enquiry to ensure enquirer has received an information pack
  - Ensuring quick response by service to arrange initial visits
  - 'Keeping in touch'/point of contact for applicants to keep them up to date with progress of their assessment
  - Responsibility for updating performance scorecard for monthly fostering recruitment activity
  - Working with Recruitment Lead to develop word of mouth campaign opportunities
  - support recruitment events and work closely with the Marketing Officer/Communications Team

- **Word of mouth**:

  - 5 key target groups and areas identified – churches, schools, NHS, Duffield and Darley Abbey.

  - Series of briefing sessions held to train foster carers to take part in word of mouth campaigns. Pool of 16 foster carer volunteers in place to take part in future campaigns. Carers taking part in events receive £10 voucher as a thank you.

  - Over 30 word of mouth and other recruitment events held.

- **Marketing materials** - updated and amended – new postcards, posters, flyers, roadside banners and posters, plus gazebo for use at events.

- **DCC website** - updated & enhanced including:
  - Request to call back facility added to make it easier for people wanting to make an initial enquiry to get in touch with the service.

- Request to transfer page added to provide information for existing foster carers interested in transferring to the Council.

- **Fostering information sessions** introduced – 4 events held.

- **Home for Good** – working relationship established with faith based voluntary organisation to promote fostering. Home for Good have agreed a target of recruiting 12 new fostering families, though not all of these families will necessarily be with the Council.

- **Performance Monitoring** – introduced monthly scorecard report to monitor performance against recruitment, assessment and foster household targets, discuss ways of making further improvements and issues.

Adoption

- **Initial call handling** - taken back by service from Derby Direct to ensure that callers can speak to someone with adoption knowledge and expertise from first contact.

- **Recruitment Officer** – dedicated Recruitment Officer post covers adoption as well as fostering – see above for details.

- **Word of mouth** – see above – several joint events.

- **Marketing materials** - updated and amended – new postcards, posters and flyers produced.

- **DCC website** - updated & amended.

- **Home for Good** – working with the faith-based voluntary organisation Home for Good to promote adoption.

ASSESSMENT

Fostering

- **Initial Visits** – improvements made to speed and process for booking initial visits.

- **Stage 1** changes introduced:

  - Now make an initial visit plus 3 further visits to discuss the fostering role, gather initial assessment information, start chronology, create

eco map, undertake dog assessment (where needed), Health &Safety checks, collect referee details and DBS information.

o Revised initial visit form introduced.

o Introduced guidance notes to help applicants complete various forms and questionnaires.

o Skills to Foster training now taking place during Stage 1.

o New risk assessment introduced where DBS reveals offences that do not automatically debar applicants from fostering. This addresses the applicant's attitude to offences and the effects they may have on placed children.

o Monthly reviews of Stage 1 applicants introduced to keep track of applicants and help reduce any delays.

o Formal decision now made at end of Stage 1 on whether applicant is suitable to progress to Stage 2.

- Form requesting **feedback on assessment process** being developed

Adoption

- Adopter matching information – new written guidance produced to provide advice to adopters going through the matching process.

- Child snapshots – new monthly snapshot reports introduced to provide prospective adopters with information on current children Derby has available for adoption.

- Adoption Link – the Council now subscribes to Adoption Link – this web-based service allows the Council's Family Finders to share the profiles of children placed for adoption on line so that they can be searched across the UK, helping to speed up the adoption process. It also helps Derby City adopters looking for a match to search a wider range of children.

SUPPORT

Fostering

- Three **support groups** set up themed around:
  - o Long Term/Permanency – sessions held 24th February & 17th May
  - o Time Limited Placements – sessions held 27th January, 27th April & 6th July.
  - o Family & Friends – in planning - first session not yet held.

- **Fostering News** – new newsletter aimed at all approved foster carers established. Two editions published so far. Newsletter contains information on forthcoming training, practice features, recruitment updates, news features and manager profiles.

- **Induction course** for newly approved foster carers developed. Will include opportunity to meet all key people will work with including Fostering Managers, Head of Service, Finance and Training. Will also cover standards.

Fostering & Adoption

- Training provision - survey of approved foster carers and adopters undertaken to gain feedback on training offer. Report and recommendations produced. Working group established to take recommendations forward.

ANNEX C – EMBEDDING PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS & MAKING FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

ACHIEVEMENT	AFTER THE PROJECT HAS ENDED HOW ACHIEVEMENT WILL: i) BE EMBEDDED IN THE FOSTERING SERVICE AND ii) FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS MADE
RECRUITMENT	
Initial call handling - calls taken back by service from Derby Direct on a permanent basis following successful pilot, ensuring that callers can speak to someone with fostering knowledge and expertise from first contact.	Now established as part of Recruitment and Assessment Team duties. Systems embedded. Have 2 Child Support Officers who can support call handling where cover is required. Will continue to look at making further improvements to the service.
Recruitment Officer – dedicated Recruitment Officer post made permanent. The role of the Recruitment Officer is to: • monitor the progress of enquiries from receipt of the enquiry to completion • Follow up contact at initial stage of enquiry to ensure enquirer has received an information pack • Ensuring quick response by service to arrange initial visits • 'Keeping in touch'/point of contact for applicants to keep them up to date with progress of their assessment • Responsibility for updating performance scorecard for monthly fostering recruitment activity • Working with Recruitment Lead to develop word of mouth campaign opportunities • support recruitment events and work closely with the Marketing Officer/Communications Team	Post has been made permanent. • Continue to ensure quick response to enquiries and close working with team manager to ensure cases are allocated quickly • Continue to monitor and follow up enquiries and act as point of contact for applicants • Continue to work closely with the recruitment lead to consider new opportunities for recruitment and plan events • Continue to take part in marketing events. • Continue to work closely with the Marketing Officer so that marketing activity reflects wishes of the fostering and adoption teams • Monitor marketing plan and take part in Marketing Meetings • Work with Marketing Officer to improve publicity materials • Work with Marketing Officer to improve website and social media presence. • Continue to produce monthly performance reports regarding enquiries, initial visits and assessments
DCC website - updated & enhanced	Website content will be reviewed regularly by HoS and other Fostering Service staff. Will work closely with Marketing Officer and others to put forward and implement updates. Will consider establishing a Facebook page. Will continue to monitor and seek to influence search engine optimization.

Word of mouth: • 5 key target groups identified	**Faith** – have wide range of contacts – will seek to maintain and expand where possible **Health** – have regular programme of visits to Royal Derby Hospital. These are proving successful – will seek to maintain. **Education** – limited progress. Consider that best way forward is to ask carer volunteers with good links to their local schools to engage. **Duffield & Darley Abbey** – events held – limited results. **Police** – information on police website – will seek other opportunities where possible. **Other –** will seek to identify other key target groups where appropriate eg transition groups.
• Briefing sessions held to train foster carers to take part in word of mouth campaigns. Pool of foster carers in place to take part in campaigns.	Briefing sessions have now been offered to all current carers. Will wait until new carers approved before offering further sessions. WoM campaigns now covered in Skills to Foster training and regular articles in Foster Carer Newsletter. Reward vouchers have been introduced as a thank you to carers taking part in events.
• Word of mouth and other recruitment events held.	Will maintain rolling calendar of events. Current Marketing and Recruitment Strategy covers the period 2013 to 2016. Will produce new Strategy.
Marketing materials - updated and amended	Marketing Materials to be kept under review and updated as appropriate.
Fostering information sessions introduced	Will continue to deliver sessions on a quarterly basis until December 2016 and then review.
Sustained leaflet campaign – flyers regularly placed in an increasing number of venues in and around Derby.	Will continue to place flyers in current venues and seek additional locations.
Performance Monitoring – now produce monthly scorecard report to monitor performance against recruitment, assessment and foster household targets, discuss ways of making further improvements and issues.	Recruitment Officer will continue to produce monthly scorecard reports. Members of the Family Values Project Core Group will continue to meet monthly to consider the reports for at least the next 6 months. Will undertake more detailed analysis of performance highlighted by the reports.

	Reports will be taken to Corporate Parenting, Directorate Management Team meetings and Fostering Team Meetings.
ASSESSMENT	
Initial Visits – improvements made to speed and process for booking initial visits.	Revised system embedded. Keep under review and introduce further changes as appropriate.
Stage 1 changes introduced: o Now make an initial visit plus 3 further visits to discuss the fostering role, gather initial assessment information, start chronology, create eco map, undertake dog assessment (where needed), Health &Safety checks, collect referee details and DBS information.	Revised visits schedule embedded. Keep system under review and introduce further changes as appropriate
o Revised initial visit form introduced.	As above.
o Introduced guidance notes to help applicants complete various forms and questionnaires.	Recruitment Team Manager to review and introduce further guidance notes as appropriate.
o Skills to Foster training now taking place during Stage 1.	4 StF courses to be delivered per year.
o New risk assessment introduced where DBS reveals offences that do not automatically debar applicants from fostering. This addresses the applicant's attitude to offences and the effects they may have on placed children.	Risk Assessment embedded. Keep system under review and introduce further changes as appropriate
o Monthly reviews of Stage 1 applicants introduced to keep track of applicants and help reduce any delays.	Embedded. Keep system under review and introduce further changes as appropriate
o Formal decision now made at end of Stage 1 on whether applicant is suitable to progress to Stage 2.	As above
Feedback form on assessment process being developed.	Introduce feedback form. Review all feedback produced and consider emerging themes as part of Recruitment and Assessment Team development.
SUPPORT	
Three support groups set up themed around: • Long Term/Permanency	Will undertake further work to embed support groups.

• Time Limited • Family & Friends	
Fostering News – new newsletter aimed at all approved foster carers established. Two editions published so far. Newsletter contains information on forthcoming training, practice features, news features and manager profiles.	Team in place to deliver newsletter with support of contributions from other members of the service.
Induction course for newly approved foster carers developed. Includes opportunity to meet all key people will work with including Fostering Managers, HoS, Finance and Training. Will also cover standards.	In development – format will be used for the first time when next set of approvals come through.

ANNEX D – LESSONS LEARNED

What went well:

- Ownership by Director and Head of Service – championed and prioritised project throughout.

- Project successfully re-energised and refocused marketing and recruitment activities.

- Engagement of iMPOWER to provide external perspective and expertise – iMPOWER undertook thorough business analysis and surveys. Values Mode and word of mouth provided valuable tool for helping Service to understand its customers and potential customers and how best to engage with them.

What did not go well:

- Combining fostering and adoption in the same project – the issues faced by the fostering and adoption services are different and distinct. The key driver behind the project was to help resolve issues faced by the Fostering Service. While the Adoption Service did benefit from taking part in the project, the key focus throughout was on the Fostering Service.

- Staff engagement – a small core group of managers and staff supported and drove the project forward, but not all staff chose to actively engage in the project after the series of staff workshops had taken place during Phases 1 and 2.

- Carer engagement – though many foster carers and adopters initially came forward to volunteer to take part in the project, it was difficult to maintain their engagement, which led to many volunteers quickly falling away.

- During the period of the project there was a high turnover among Fostering Service managers which led to continuity issues.

- During the early stages of the project, the Fostering & Adoption Service was in the process of moving premises and undergoing a partial restructure. This distracted staff and led to continuity issues.

What would be done differently next time:

- Project set up – establish separate, more tightly focused projects for fostering and adoption.

- Staff engagement – undertake more preparation with staff before the project starts to raise awareness and ensure clarity around expectations.

- Carer engagement – undertake more planning to achieve clarity about the roles carers would be asked to take on to support project delivery.