



Recruitment of Foster Carers

SUMMARY

- 1.1 Derby City Council complies with the 'Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children' by providing placements and by commissioning them from external organisations. As a fostering service provider it recruits and supports around 180 fostering households. A growing number of independent fostering agencies also recruit in the Derby area. Placements with independent fostering agencies cost, on average, twice as much as in-house placements. This report describes the joint working between the Marketing and Communications Team and the Fostering Service to recruit new foster carers.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the reports

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 A report on the marketing and recruitment activities of the fostering service was requested by members on the Corporate Parenting Sub-Board in September.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 From October 2011 a Marketing Officer post joined the Communications Division as part of a Council-wide centralisation of strategic services. Fostering recruitment now benefits from the support and expertise of colleagues in the entire Communications Division and a lead officer is designated to focus on marketing and communications for foster carer recruitment.
- 4.2 From 2012 the Communications Division has been executing a strategic marketing plan and action plan, together with a specific additional action plan to promote Foster Care Fortnight.
- 4.3 The action plan is a live document which is reviewed regularly to ensure that activities remain relevant, that the call to action remains clear and interested potential carers continue to meet the needs of the fostering service.

4.4 Evaluation from Foster Care Fortnight in May 2012 demonstrates that certain activities used in previous years no longer yield a positive outcome and other new activities delivered for the first time have been received positively. For example:

Use of web site and social media:

- Publicising events for Foster Care Fortnight 293 web page views
- Use of Twitter to signpost to web pages Reach 8,288 users
- Tweets posted to Facebook page Reach 300 users

4.5 The Communications Division is involved in the current fostering review where it has become clear that the marketing element of fostering recruitment sits at the very front end of the recruitment process. This position is crucial in creating interest and raising awareness but should not be confused with the more complex process of recruitment that involves specialist social workers.

4.6 The fostering recruitment and assessment team consists of a team manager and social workers (5.2 whole time equivalent). Social workers support the marketing team to run promotional events, including a regular open day held at Albion Street. Their presence gives members of the public the opportunity to discuss their interest in fostering and find out more about the fostering task and the process involved in becoming a foster carer.

4.7 Most inquiries are made by telephone to Derby Direct. Others are made by direct telephone call to the fostering team, e-mail through the Council website, personal contact at promotional events, or through existing foster carers. There is a drop-in session at Derby Direct once a week, staffed by a social worker.

4.8 Initial inquiries are managed by a team member who follows them up, usually within 2 days. Basic screening checks are carried out and if there are no concerns at this stage an information packs is sent out. If the inquirer returns an expression of interest and requests a home visit, the worker then offers an appointment within two weeks. Other team members assist with these tasks to ensure a prompt response at all times.

4.9 If screening checks do indicate some cause for concern the worker follows these up and, if necessary, telephones the inquirer to give them advice.

4.10 The purpose of the home visit is to give the potential foster carers information, allow them to ask questions and discuss relevant issues, and make an initial assessment of their suitability to foster. If the worker judges that they are likely to meet the minimum requirements he invites them to submit an application.

4.11 When they receive an application the team carries out statutory and personal reference checks before it is allocated to a worker for assessment. Typically a full-time worker works on four assessments at any one time. The assessment consists of interviews with the applicants, their children if they have any, including grown-up, personal referees and any former partners or spouses.

- 4.12 An assessment usually takes between 6 and 8 months to complete, depending on individual circumstances. Health or other personal issues, or family events can sometimes extend the timescale. As the team is currently fully staffed assessments are allocated very quickly after the application is received.
- 4.13 During the assessment the applicants a four day pre-approval training course. The course is delivered jointly by fostering social workers and foster carers four times a year
- 4.14 The completed assessment is presented to the fostering panel which makes a recommendation as to whether the applicants should be approved or not. After the panel has made its recommendation the agency decision maker makes the final decision on approval. The agency decision maker is the Service Director for Specialist Services.
- 4.15 Social workers in the recruitment and assessment team continue to support newly approved carers for a period of three months before passing the supervisory role to a worker in one of the two support teams.
- 4.16 Timescales for the recruitment process are tracked on an internal database. We are currently looking at ways to improve our monitoring information.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	N/A
Financial officer	N/A
Human Resources officer	N/A
Service Director(s)	N/A
Other(s)	Elene Constantinou – Head of Service – CIC & Registered Services

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Fostering Action Plan

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of providing the Fostering Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets. We have recruited to an additional post in the recruitment and assessment team to enable us to increase foster carer recruitment and keep pace with demand for friends and family carers. A budget increase in 2012-13 has allowed fostering allowances to be up-rated to keep pace with the recommended national minimum rate.

Any increase in the shortfall of in-house placements has a direct financial effect due to the much higher placement costs in the independent sector. It is therefore essential to maintain and if possible increase the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

Legal

- 2.1 The fostering function of the Council is regulated by the 1989 Children Act and the Associated Fostering Regulations, guidance and the minimum standards published in 2011.

Personnel

- 3.1 Since June 2011, the fostering service has been managed by a lead service manager who is also responsible for children's residential services and three service managers. Previously a Head of Service had combined the management of fostering and adoption. One service manager post is currently covered on a part-time basis following the post-holder's return from maternity leave. 16.8 full time equivalent social workers carry out the full range of fostering activities.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The service continues to give due consideration to race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, religion, and disability in relation to children being placed and for adults who apply to become foster carers. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and further efforts will be made this year to recruit carers from BME communities and carers for disabled children.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 This is considered at all stages of the recruitment, assessment, training and support of foster carers. All the managers in the service have completed mandatory Health and Safety training in the last three months.

Environmental Sustainability

6.1 Not applicable

Asset Management

7.1 Not applicable

Risk Management

8.1 Risk is managed at all stages of the fostering process.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

9.1 Corporate and departmental objectives are pursued through business plans and individual performance plans throughout the service

Appendix 2

FOSTERING ACTION PLAN

Deadline	Channel/Trigger	Activity and Key Messages	Audience	Lead	Budget	Evaluation/ Benchmark	Progress
See separate action plan for Foster Care fortnight – budget spent for FCF £1800-approx							
7 Jul	Event Open Day at Albion Street	Press release. Information on council website and twitter. Adverts in DET and Derby Lite.	All residents	DG	£620 for adverts	12 visitors to the event	Complete
27 Jul	Event Open Day at Findern Garden Centre	Promote event using website, twitter, facebook and posters at the venue and nearby areas in Littleover, Finder, Etwall	Older people and families	DG	Free	5 visitors, 40 leaflets distributed	Complete
July/Aug	Marketing Intelligence Database collection	Create database of enquiries and collate details from past events	All Enquiries	DG	Free		In progress
July/Aug	Mystery shopping exercise	Log turnaround times/experience/suggest improvements	Enquiries through DD	MB CW	Free		Briefed. In progress
July	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free	Click through	In progress
July	Publication Welcome pack	Evaluate current welcome pack and look at other LA for good practice	All Enquiries	DG/ CDT	Printing TBC	Enquiries to DD or online	In progress
July	Quarterly evaluation to HOS/Mgnrs/Directors	Evaluation of promo activity of sub campaigns including FCF	Internal	DG	Free		In progress
August – 14 September – Older Teens sub-campaign (GCSE/A level results 16/23 Aug)							
August	Publication General leaflet with higher payments scheme	Write and design leaflet with new branding. Printing as and when needed. Promo channels of new info. Direct residents to website for more info.	All residents	DG	Free	Coded leaflet. Friendly url.	With CDT. Awaiting photos
August	Photo shoot	New photographs of BME, Asian, LGBT, teenagers, professionals	All residents	DG/ CDT	£200	Complete	w/c 28 Aug
August	Publication and Media Children In care Charter	Charter designed by CDT. Promote – how? Send out press release about the Council's charter.	All residents	DG/ CDT/ Media	Free		With CDT w/c 13 Aug
August	Media/Press coverage Exam results success	News release/case study about CiC who have done well at their exams.	All residents	DG/ Media	Free		w/c 3 Sept
August	Website information	Review website information and update	All residents	VB	Free		w/c 20 Aug
August	Physical evidence	Update reception. Look at revamp of Perth	Visitors	DG	Free		w/c 20 Aug

	Update reception area	St reception. New photos, mags, visible new branding					
August	Promo video – Older teens	Older teens promo – storyboard/organise promo video. Arrange meeting at CiC meeting to encourage volunteers. Record voice overs of older teens and what it means to find a foster family. CDT to animate typography of what teens said.	All residents	DG/ CDT	Free		In progress
August	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up enquiries using database – promote open day	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
17 – 28 September - LGBT sub-campaign (Derbyshire Pride)							
8 Sept	Event- Open day at Albion Street	Promote event using a variety of communication channels- Website,DET, Radio Derby, Facebook, Twitter Organise/redesign materials for open day	All residents	DG/ CDT/ Web	£600	9 visitors to the event	Completed
10 Sept	Training Social Media as a Family Finding Tool	Training session to determine aspects of SM that can be used for recruitment. DG to report and make recommendations.	All residents	DG	£25 + travel £21	Complete	Completed
Sept	Questionnaire Is Fostering for me?	To determine if fostering is right for the enquirer. Amend quiz for website and welcome pack.	All Enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
Sept	Internal marketing/ Mystery shopping evaluation	Evaluate findings, plan improvements to customer service. Arrange briefings if necessary or training sessions	Internal	CW	Free		
Sept	Launch sub-campaign Older teens	Promote new film on website. Using social media and website (liaise with web team on SM plan).	All residents	DG/ CDT/ Web	Free		
Sept	Press Adverting	Articles in Derby Lite and DET promoting open day with direction to website	All residents	Media	Free		
Sept	Social media/website Social media advertising	Facebook/Google ads Facebook forum – peer to peer. Liaise with web team on SM plan.	All residents	DG/ Web	Initial costs £1000		
Sept	Direct marketing Eshot to LGBT group	Write and design eshot. Send to LGBT groups members on database	LBGT community	DG/ CDT	Free		
Sept	Arrticle/Media	Look into case study in Local Pink paper & websites – see Targeting LGBT slides	LBGT community	DG	Free		
Sept	Poster	Publicity in LGBT HQ	LBGT	DG	Free		

			community				
Sept	Bus advertising	Bus sides to promote fostering 500	All residents	DG/ CDT	£2500- 3000		
Sept	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
October – BME sub campaign (Black History Month)							
Oct	Quarterly evaluation to HOS/Mgnrs/Directors	Evaluation of promo activity of sub campaigns	Internal	DG	Free		
Oct	Launch sub campaign BME Carers/Children	Design poster/flyer aimed at BME. Use real case study.	BME Community	DG	Free		
Oct	Event	Attend Black History Month event	BME Community	DG	Free		
Oct	Event	Organise/promote event or send letter/targeted poster to community groups/churches/temples. Produce posters	BME Community	DG	£200		
Oct	BME Media	Interview on Radio Ikhlas BME Newspapers/ Church Magazines –	BME Community	DG	Free		
Oct	Event Open day at Albion Street	Promote event using a variety of communication channels, Radio Derby Adverts in DET/Derby Lite -Twitter, Facebook,	All residents	DG	£600		
Oct	Communication to local employers	Health Services- email to staff bulletins. Toyota –email to staff bulletins Rolls-Royce –Posters in 20 sites	Staff at local organisations	DG/ CDT	Free		
Oct	Advertising	Adverts in Yellow Pages – Derby, Nottingham	All residents	DG	£600 for 2/3 books		
Oct	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
Babies and pre-school sub-campaign							
Nov	New Media - Video 'Live and in action'	Use existing foster carers to talk about their experiences. Hire of studio at Quad	All residents	DG	£200		
Nov	Media and Advertising	Articles in newspapers in Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire	All residents	DG	£300		
Nov	Foster carer evaluation	Use select number of foster carers to evaluate recent fostering communication	5-10 Foster carers	DG	Free		
Nov	Email	Email to local schools, include some school newsletters	All parents/staff	DG	Free		

			at school				
16 – 18 Nov	Event Arrange Open Day BBC Children in Need	Send out news release and promo event/open day	All residents	DG	£620 for adverts in DET/Lite		
Nov	Advertising	Small advert in Thomson's Directory –	All residents	DG	£150		
Nov	Advertising	Fostering 500 advert in Your Derby	All residents	DG	Free		
Nov	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
Nov	Outdoor Promo	A3 and A4 Colour posters distributed in surgeries, libraries leisure centre and other venues	All residents	DG/ CDT	Free		
Nov	Social Media Advertising	Advertising on Facebook to target specific groups	All residents	DG/ CDT	Free		
December – NHS, youth workers, staff, other childcare professional sub campaign							
Dec	Launch Foster carers film	Promote online, via media and email database of new publicity	All residents	DG	Free		
Dec	Incentive Marketing/ Relationship Marketing	Discuss possibility of bonus scheme encouraging staff to foster and benefits.	Internal	DG/ CDT	Free		
Dec	Advertising	Posters in Derby Theatre, Guildhall and Assembly Rooms	Visitors to venues	DG/ CDT	£250-£500		
Dec	Direct Marketing	Flyer to promote bonus scheme via payslips	DCC Staff	DG/ CDT	£200		
Dec	Event Royal Derby Hospital and Kingsway Hospital	Target staff/professionals. Send email to staff bulletins. Produce new posters at staff notice boards	Staff/ Childcare Professionals	DG/ CDT	Free		
Dec	Direct Marketing	Send out e-bulletin to registered Derby childminders/nurseries. Attach PDF poster aimed at targeted group	All residents	DG/ CDT	Free		
Dec	Event	Attend retirement days/leaving events at Council as a career/job	Staff	DG/ RE	Free		
Dec	Event Open day at Quad	Promote event with press release and social media. Contact Quad to use their website	All residents	DG	Free		
Dec	Internal marketing	Use display screens at CH to promote Fostering 500	DCC Staff All residents	DG/ CDT	Free		

Dec	Internal marketing	InTouch article – bonus scheme for staff and case study or Fostering 500 advert	DCC Staff	DG/ RE	Free		
Dec	Media/article/case study	Advert/case study in Derby Homes magazine	DH Staff	DG	Free		
Dec	Media/article/case study	Advert/case study in NHS staff magazine	NHS Staff	DG	Free		
Dec	Outdoor promo	Poster Derby Rail station	Professionals	DG	£120 – 2 wk, 4 sheet		
Dec	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
January – Family & Friends/Sibling groups sub-campaign							
Dec	Radio advertising	Promote Fostering 500, new year, new career	All residents Professionals	DG	£2400 2wk		
Jan	Quarterly evaluation to HOS/Mgnrs/Directors	Evaluation of promo activity of sub campaigns including FCF	Internal	DG	Free		
Jan	Launch sub campaign F&F and sibling groups	Produce new poster/flyer aimed at F&F and promote bonus scheme and fostering of sibling groups. Promote facebook forum.	All residents F&F	DG/ CDT/ Web	Free		
Jan	Incentive Marketing/ Relationship Marketing	Produce letter/eshot to promote bonus scheme for F&F for them to give out to F&F and WOM.	F&F	DG/ CDT	Free		
Jan	Event F&F day	Coffee morning for potential FCs to speak to real FCs – peer to peer	All residents F&F	DG	Derby Quad - £100		
Jan	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
February – Older people sub-campaign and targeting Derbys boroughs							
Feb	Advertising	Use latest ACORN data to promo in target areas of Derby/Derbys in local newspapers	Targeted areas	DG	£500		
Feb	Outdoor promo	Bus Station poster. Book with VB	All residents	DG	Free		
Feb	Outdoor Promo	Council Vans – 10 White vans	All Derby	DG/ CDT	£2500		
Feb	Outdoor promo	Use latest ACORN data to use lamppost banners in targeted areas	Targeted areas	DG/ CDT	£78 per banner.		
Feb	Target areas	Use latest ACORN data to promo in targeted areas such as shopping centres, libraries	Targeted areas	DG	Free		

Feb	Target areas	Use latest ACORN data to promo in targeted areas using community notice boards	Targeted areas	DG	Free		
Feb	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
Feb	Outdoor promo	Use refuse truck with Fostering 500 message	All residents	DG/ CDT	£500		
March – Children with disabilities sub-campaign – Share the Care week							
March	Direct Marketing	Send a fostering leaflet with the Council Tax to all Derby households or wraparound DET/Derby Lite. Code all promo with QR or dedicated website or phone number to monitor enquiries.	All residents	DG/ CDT	£3500 for leaflet in 110,000 homes, £3200 for Derby Lite - 4 page wraparound to 60,000 homes		
March	Direct Marketing	Send eshot to school about the need to recruit carers for deaf children. Attach PDF poster aimed at target audience.	Local deaf BSL people	Social worker	Free		
March	Publication	Promote scheme for short breaks for children with disabilities in style of holiday brochure. Use local hospitals/schools & send eshots. Limited print run.	Carers for disabled children	DG	£100		
March	Relationship marketing Direct marketing	E-shots/letters to follow up their fostering enquiry using database	Follow up enquiries	DG/ CDT	Free		
					Total	£18,200	
					Contingency		