



Derby City Council

Corporate Parenting Committee
29 July 2016

ITEM 10

Report of the Strategic Director for Peoples
Services

Foster Carer Recruitment

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services require that the executive side of the local authority:

- a. Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every three months;
- b. Monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children;
- c. Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

(Standard 25.7)

The Fostering Agency is required to produce a Statement of Purpose which is updated once a year. The current Statement of Purpose was presented to Corporate Parenting Committee on the 1 December 2015.

- 1.2 This report outlines the progress made between January to June 2016 in fostering recruitment activity. The main improvement to be noted is within initial enquiries which has experienced an 85% increase when compared to the previous year.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the Fostering Agency report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To comply with guidance and regulations and National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Family Values Project work in conjunction with iMPower was completed in October 2015. The project commenced with a diagnostic overview of the service which took place between August and November 2014. This allowed for full engagement with social care staff, the communications team and our existing carers through a series of workshops, surveys and focus groups. The Family Values model approach has been integral to facilitating the desired changes to our marketing and recruitment strategy. The final phase of the project will be completed in July 2016 and has concentrated on embedding changes to our recruitment approach, improving enquires, and ensuring the assessment process is more streamlined with management oversight regarding targets and performance.

Marketing materials and the Derby City Council website have been updated and fostering information sessions take place in the Council House, local venues and neighbouring authorities to attract potential applicants within a 20 mile radius of the city. In addition the fostering recruitment team facilitate a weekly drop in at the council house. Fostering Fortnight and LGBT week were well planned and the team provided a high profile marketing plan throughout both periods. Recruitment and media events include a foster carer whenever possible and their support in attracting new applicants is invaluable. Evaluation reports on key marketing events are provided for the service by the marketing officer.

Overall the impact on the service has been productive and there has been an increase in Fostering enquiries in the first half of 2016 compared to the last two years. These enquires are closely monitored with the aim of improving the conversion of enquiry to initial visit and application. Further work on improving the two stage assessment process and Skills to Foster training has been undertaken between February –July 2016.

- 4.2 A Topic Review was held in November 2015 to provide an overview of the Family Value project work completed with iMPower and consider recruitment and assessment performance. Councillors were able to meet with a focus group of staff and foster carers and the opportunity to visit an Independent Fostering Agency
A full report from member services will follow.

- 4.3 The fostering recruitment and assessment team has one full time team manager, and 6.1 FTE social work staff. The team has experienced a high turnover of team managers in the first six months of the year with a full time permanent manager commencing in this role on the 20.06.16. The team covers all aspects of work undertaken to recruit and approve new foster carers alongside referrals from Early Help and Children's Safeguarding to complete Regulation 24 assessments when children subject to legal orders have been placed with extended family members (connected persons). These assessments of temporarily approved carers are complex and court directed which require urgent allocation to meet assessment and court timescales. There have been eleven requests for Reg 24 assessments to be undertaken by the team in the first six months of 2016. At this stage four of these assessments are progressing in line with the child's care plan..

- 4.4 A three year Marketing Strategy and the Marketing Action Plan was implemented in January 2013. The annual Marketing Action Plan is a rolling programme of events coordinated with the fostering service via monthly marketing meetings. This has reinforced a more targeted approach identifying local community groups via “word of mouth” recruitment campaigns as well as a more generalised marketing approach using all forms of media. To increase our ability to promote “word of mouth” campaigns training has been undertaken with a small group of foster carers who regularly attend recruitment events and are able to promote fostering within their local community groups. The service is developing links between our approved foster carers and people making their first enquiry and/or attending fostering information sessions. A briefing on Skills to Foster was delivered to the Children in Care Council to provide an overview of the training provided to applicants and for further consideration by the CIC Council regarding their involvement in the Skills to Foster programme.
- 4.5 Between 1st January and 30th June 2016 the fostering service received 148 fostering enquires and sent out 132 information packs. 43 initial visits have been undertaken (compared to 46 initial visits undertaken between January and December 2015) and 25 households were invited to make an application. 9 fostering applications were received with a further 16 potential applications pending.

Fostering enquiries converting to assessments is under target and assessments converting to approvals over the six month period are low. Four households have been approved as mainstream foster carers and four households have been approved as Friends and Family Carers. Figures at the end of June 2016 showed there were a total of 134 approved fostering households of which 111 provide a range of time limited, permanent and respite/short-break placements. The service also supports 23 approved Friends and Family carers.

At the end of June 2016 12 assessments were in progress, which is under the target of 20. Four are mainstream assessments in Stage 2 with anticipated approval dates in September and October 2016.

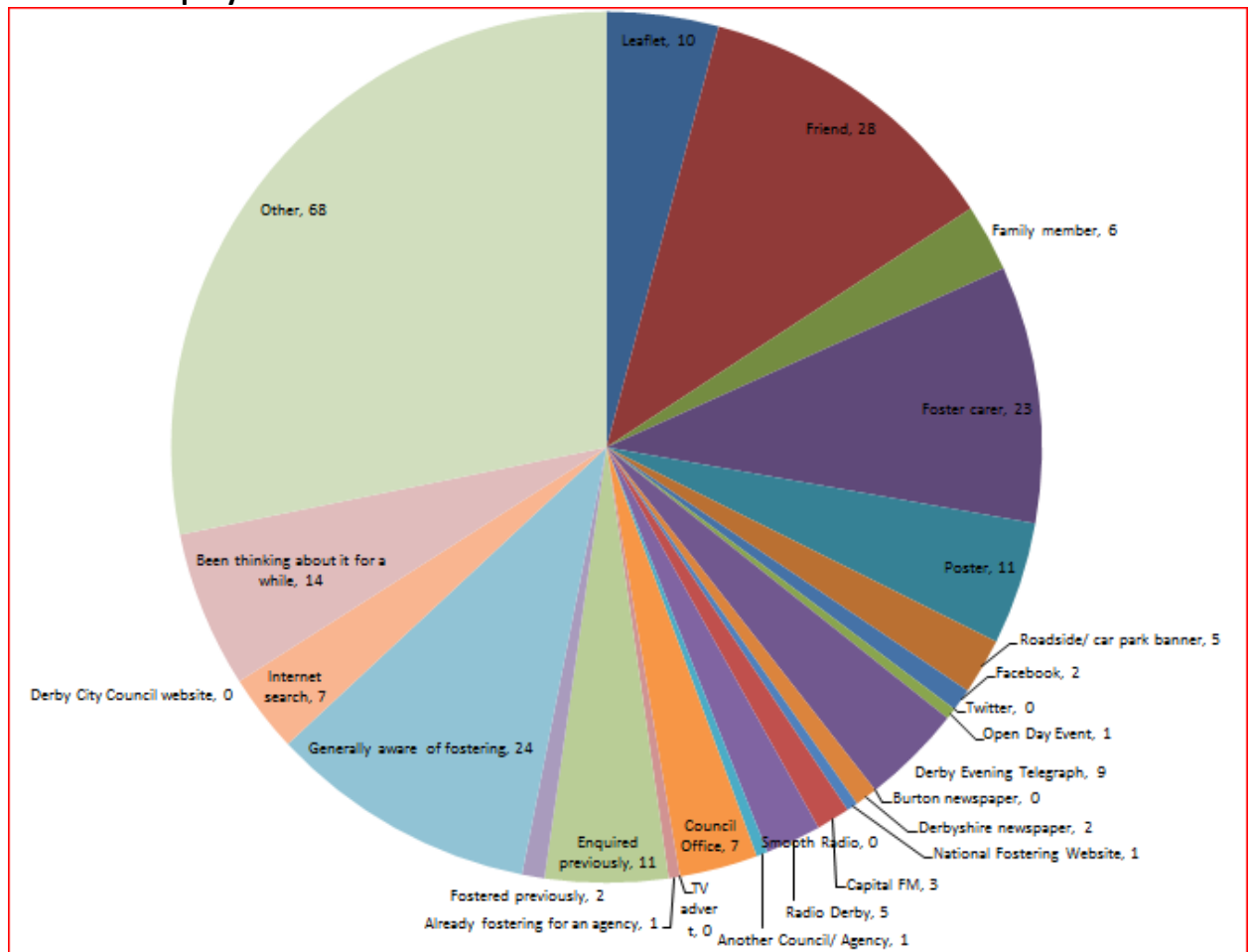
Historical Enquiries Comparison 2013 - 2016

	2016	2015	2014	2013
January	21	14	30	34
February	17	8	16	32
March	34	20	11	35
April	16	5	13	20
May	30	20	27	39
June	30	33	24	33
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>181</i>
July		28	28	20

Classification: OFFICIAL

August		11	11	16
September		23	9	19
October		19	10	14
November		25	8	20
December		18	14	17
Total		224	201	299

Source of Enquiry 2015-2016



Initial visits and conversion rates January – June 2016

	Initial Visits	Invited to make an application	Applications received
January	4	2	2
February	3	2	1
March	8	4	3
April	11	6	2
May	8	6	1
June	9	5	0
Total	43	25	9

Classification: OFFICIAL

Prospective applications are followed up by the recruitment officer approximately 20 working days after the application form is left with the prospective carer. The main reason prospective carers give for not proceeding is that it is not the right time due to family circumstances.

Assessments in progress since January 2016

	Assessments underway at <u>beginning</u> of month	Withdrawals	Approvals	New applications	Assessments underway at <u>end</u> of month
January	15	0	0	0	15
February	15	1	1	3	16
March	16	1	2	2	15
April	15	1	0	1	15
May	15	1	1	1	14
June	14	3	0	1	12

Marketing Campaigns

The service took part in LGBT Fostering & Adoption Week which ran from 7th to 13th March 2016. Between 7th March and 30th April the fostering service received 46 enquiries compared to 24 in 2015. This indicates a 22% increase in enquiries for this period.

The service also took part in Fostering Fortnight which ran from 16th to 29th May 2016. During the 2 week campaign the service received 21 enquiries compared to 12 enquiries for the same period in 2015.

- 4.6 The recruitment officer for Fostering and Adoption became a permanent post in January 2016 and supports the recruitment process with the tracking of enquiries, data reports and attending recruitment events. The recruitment officer links closely with the business development officer in the Communications team and contributes to the work identified in the marketing plan. It was highlighted by the fostering service as an essential post to support management oversight and marketing activity and was developed further during the Demand Management project to improve data collection and tracking of applications.

- 4.7 The council budget for all marketing activity across the fostering and adoption service is £26.306 . The marketing plan is monitored via monthly marketing meetings involving key staff from the fostering and adoption teams. The largest areas of expenditure are external printing, media advertising, promotion through radio and newly acquired marketing merchandise.
- 4.8 Fostering allowances have been reviewed for 2016-17. An increase of 0.5% was agreed across all age bands.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Suanne Lim Service Director of Specialist Services 01332 642669 suanne.lim@derby.gov.uk
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Sally Penrose 01332 6438817 sally.penrose@derby.gov.uk Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of providing the Fostering Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets. A budget increase in 2015-16 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 increase the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

In the event of an appeal to the IRM the cost falls on the fostering service provider. The fee is around £2500 for each case.

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 The service became managed by a Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption in July 2015 when the Deputy Head of Service post was deleted. There are three full time Fostering team managers and 16.6 FTE social workers who carry out the full range of fostering activities. One full time Adoption team manager with a team of 7.5 FTE social workers and a full time manager for the Therapeutic Service for LAC and Adopted children who manages the Adoption support team (3.5 FTE) and Leopold Street. The service recruited and appointed two full time casework support officer posts in December 2015 which adds further capacity to the business support requirements related to the service.

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 ethnic minority communities and carers for children with disabilities.

Health and Safety

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

Environmental Sustainability

6.1 None arising from this report

Property and Asset Management

7.1 None arising from this report

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. The Fostering and Adoption Service supports the Council priorities of :
- Inspiring start in life
 - Inspiring start in life by improving educational outcomes
 - Inspiring working life by improving skills and creating jobs