



Derby City Council

Inspiring Young People Board 21 September 2015

ITEM 6

Report of the Chair of the Inspiring Young People Board

Topic Review: Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers

SUMMARY

- 1.1 On 4 August 2015, the Corporate Scrutiny and Governance Board referred the recruitment of in-house foster carers to the Inspiring Young People Board for a detailed Topic Review.
- 1.2 On 11 August 2015, the Chair of the Board met with the Acting Director for Children and Young People to discuss the possible scope of a Topic Review into the recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- 1.3 On 10 September 2015, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Board met with the Director of Specialist Services and the Head of Fostering to further discuss the possible scope of the Topic Review.
- 1.4 At the meeting on 10 September, the Chair and Vice Chair agreed a number of possible lines of enquiry:
 - Why have foster carers left the service and is there a theme?
 - Review the results of the iMPower foster carer consultation?
 - In terms of recruitment, why do initial enquires not proceed to conversion?
 - Review of the process of the setting of fees.
 - Carry out a visit to an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).
- 1.5 Consideration will be given at the Inspiring Young People Board on 21 September 2015 to the scope of a Topic Review into the current actions in place to increase the number of Derby City Council foster carers and retain current foster carers.
- 1.6 The aim of the Topic Review will be to make a series of recommendations on how to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the Corporate Scrutiny and Governance Board decision that the Inspiring Young People Board complete a topic review into the recruitment of in-house foster carers
- 2.2 To agree the scope of the Topic Review into the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To provide the Inspiring Young People Board with the opportunity to consider the scope of a Topic Review into the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Recruiting more foster carers for Derby City Council will have a positive impact on the Councils budget, specifically the spend for external independent sector fostering placements and will also allow more children in care to be placed locally to Derby.

4.2 Background Information

Significant activity has been undertaken by the fostering service and Council focussing on the recruitment and retention of foster carers. This has included utilising a specialist marketing Consultant in August 2013 to June 2014.

This work delivered:

- A two year marketing strategy profiling the benefits and opportunities of becoming a foster carer or adopter for Derby
- An updated one year action plan for 2014 to 2015
- Significant changes to DCC website using local foster carer and adopter input with real examples
- Improvements to available web information and its accessibility
- Foster carer, adopter and social worker dvd's available on the website
- Information pack for foster carers and adopters using input from local carers
- Greater public profile of marketing campaign- lamp post banners
- Updated adoption handbook(web based)

- 4.3 As part of the corporate demand management initiative the fostering and adoption service embarked on a service wide project to further support our ability to recruit more foster carers and attract adopters. This was a partnership with iMPower using their Family Values programme. This work started in late August 2014 and continues to date. Details of this work are given below:

4.4 **What we did:**

- Surveyed 22 staff and ran 5 staff workshops
- Surveyed 104 foster carers and ran three focus groups
- Undertook a 'Values Modes' survey of staff and carers
- Undertook a detailed business analysis
- Worked with the team to develop a set of initiatives

What we found:

- Recruitment is poor – too few enquiries and too few conversions
- First contact with the Council is poor
- A high proportion of children are in IFA placements, which are £15k per annum more expensive than in-house
- Utilisation of foster carers is in line with national averages
- Staff and carers shared a very similar set of values. These similarities will help us target new carers
- There are opportunities to improve the speed of assessment and peer networks

What next:

Developed 3 workstreams

- Recruitment, Assessment and Support
- Use our Values Modes insight to target specific groups with messages that will appeal to them.
- Foster carers a key part of the workstreams and marketing using a word of mouth focus

4.5 **Current work priorities**

Increasing the number of foster carers

- Improving the number and quality of our enquiries
- Improving our conversion rate
- Thinking creatively about where to source foster carers from
- Building on the strong reputation of the fostering service

Increasing the range of children foster carers consider

- Having a greater impact on how foster carers think about the children they want to look after
- Working with existing carers to get them to advocate, and to think about the type of children they want to care for.

Improving the level of support

- Build on the positives identified to ensure foster carers are content and less likely to leave – particularly through improved peer network support

Improving the enquiry and conversion process

- Understand the best way to receive enquiries

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A David Walsh – Head of Democracy and Claire Harrison – Senior Democratic Services Officer
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 None arising directly from this report.

Legal

- 2.1 None arising directly from this report

Personnel

- 3.1 None arising directly from this report

IT

- 4.1 None arising directly from this report

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Effective scrutiny benefits all Derby people and the very nature of the Board looks in depth at equality in all its investigations.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 None arising directly from this report

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

Risk Management

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 Our aim is to work together so that Derby and its people will enjoy a thriving sustainable economy, good health and well-being and an active cultural life. The work of this board contributes to the Council's big ambitions to give people in Derby 'an inspiring start in life', particularly by improving educational attainment. The work of the board also aims to support children and young people across the city in getting the most out of their time at school and focus on what actions we can take from birth right through to when they leave education at 18 and beyond, to contribute to the Council's ambition for giving people in Derby 'an inspiring work life'.