



Fostering Marketing Strategy 2021-2022



Derby City Council

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Introduction

This strategy sets out our approach to recruiting foster carers over the next year: 2021-2022.

Derby City Council (DCC) is a public sector fostering service which provides foster placements for Derby's children. DCC, as part of "the East Midlands Framework" also commissions independent fostering agencies (IFAs) to provide foster carers for our children in care. Whilst DCC has a close and good working relationship with the IFAs, we are also in competition with them in terms of recruiting new foster carers. Derby Fostering Service and the IFAs recruit from the same pool of prospective foster carers.

Derby City Council needs to significantly reduce its current reliance on using IFAs as this offers greater value for money and would result in fewer children being placed outside their birth city. In 2019, DCC introduced a corporate approach to the recruitment and retention of foster carers and through establishing a Corporate Board with ownership from the Lead Member and Chief Executive. This has galvanised energy, capacity and crucially some new ideas around the perennial challenge of foster care sufficiency.

Derby's Fostering service has many unique selling points on which it needs to build on in order to carve its niche in the market and achieve its objectives over the next year. The service aims to be recognised as the Derby's premier fostering agency.

We aim to incorporate the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people in care at all stages of the process; specifically asking our Children in Care Council what they wanted from their placement.

When asked what makes a good foster home, our children and young people said they wanted it to be homely and they wanted to feel safe.

They told us they want a supportive environment where they are listened to. Children and young people want to be able to talk to their foster carers about their problems and have carers that are encouraging, caring and will give them good advice

This marketing strategy identifies opportunities and challenges in order to achieve annual targets.

Aims and Objectives:

Building on our new corporate approach to fostering, our aim is to:

- **Achieve a sustainable business model by increasing the number of in-house foster carers by a net of 30 approvals by March 2022.**

Our marketing objectives are to:

- Increase enquiries by 25% achieving a total of 375 by March 2022
- Increase our conversion rate from enquiry to a completed initial visit to 50%, by generating high quality marketing qualified leads (event booking/visit bookings)
- Attract 10% of total enquiries specifically for children and young people with complex needs, by targeting healthcare/police professionals
- Attract 30% of total enquiries for children ages 10-15

Marketing Strategy

Our marketing activity will focus around four 'peaks' or campaigns to recruit more foster carers. These peaks will be centred on recruitment events and other major activities which will require full participation by all Fostering colleagues with support from the Corporate Fostering Board. In light of COVID-19 we are responding to changing digital trends and have increased our events, holding an additional event in November. The extra event raised significantly high enquiries, justifying the need to hold four events over 2021-2022.

Between peaks we'll carry out lower level ongoing targeted marketing activities which will be paced and the content rotated so that our audience doesn't become so familiar with them that they become oblivious to the message and take no action.

This year we will be targeting the unemployed in and around Derby city. The effects of COVID-19 has seen high level redundancies which could be an opportunity to promote fostering as a career. Furlough support will be ending in September and this will be a key time to promote fostering.

The focus will be on the quality of service, the needs of children, support for our foster carers and fostering as a career. We will also recognise that fees and allowances are important to prospective foster carers and will promote the payment for skills structure for foster carers which is linked to Foster Carer training and development to financial remuneration.

Alongside this mainstream activity we will run a sub-campaign of targeted activity aimed at professionals working in the health, social care and policing professions targeted specifically at recruiting foster carers for children and young people with complex needs.

Business Analysis

During the last three years, work has been ongoing to deliver local sufficiency of placements, in light of challenges faced by the Local Authority to recruit in-house foster carers and the national shortage of foster carers for Local Authority and private providers.

As at 31 March 2020:

- 435 of the 588 children in care were in foster placements (74%) compared to a national average for children in care places in foster placements of 72%.
- Of those in foster care, 76% of your children and young people are with an IFA (compared to 58% in December 2016). This proportion is continually increasing.
- The total number of young people fostered by in-house carers was 105, which is 24% of the total fostering placements in total.
- 25% of our young people are placed in a foster placement inside the city boundary, this is lower than previous year. The use of IFAs has increased which would ordinarily correlate with an increase in numbers of children placed out of area.
- Just under 50% of children entering care during 2019-20 were white British. The number of children from all other ethnicity groups is increasing over time.
- Young people aged 10-15 years continues to be largest age group for entering care.

Derby currently uses the East Midland Regional Framework (EMRCF) to place young people with IFA carers, where in-house carers are unavailable. The number of placements purchased from IFAs has increased steadily over recent years to 335 at 31 March 2020, which is high. These placements are often made to meet specific and often complex needs, or to facilitate sibling group placements which have risen over the last 12 months, with large sibling groups of 5 or 6 now being referred.

In addition to a reducing number of internal foster carers, a review has highlighted a shortfall of in-house and specialist placements for those with complex needs such as risk of:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Offending behaviours
- Physical and learning disabilities
- Mental health issues such as self-harm
- Drug use

This has resulted in an increase in spot placements being made 'off framework' in order to successfully match young people

Target Market

DCC aims to recruit carers who have strong links to our 'Here for Derby' values; 'We are strong', 'We are bold', 'We care' and 'Great people, one team'. Our foster carers care deeply for the children and young people in their care, are courageous and find innovative and creative ways to Change a life but at the same time are strong enough to recognise they do not have all the answers and know when to ask for help.

We have learned from our research that foster carers need to feel valued as professionals and appreciated for the excellent job they do. It also revealed that foster carers want a high standard of communication and support from their fostering service. Our marketing communication plan will adapt the messages and use the correct channels to reach our target customers.

Our Experian data and research combined with our focus group research has formed [foster carer personas](#) outlined below.

Fostering Fiona – 35-45 with an HH income of £70,000. Married with two children and lives in Derby in a semi-detached 4 bedroomed house, she enjoys family trips, eating out and family days. Fiona identifies as mother hen who feels responsible for keeping her family together with a rescuer mentality, she responds to digital marketing, social media and signage. The marketing message for Fiona would be that fostering enhances her family life and that there is great flexibility with income that fits around the family life. The elevator pitch is that she can change a life and that DCC foster carers receive exceptional support.

Fostering Carly - 43-46 with a HH income of £25,000. Single, divorced with 2 sons and has been a full time carer for 5 years with an IFA. Carly lives in Normanton in a 4 bedroomed semi-detached house and enjoys cooking, teaching, training and outdoor activities. Carly taught for 20 years prior to becoming a foster carer and still lives in the marital house with extra bedroom space. Carly's main challenges are ensuring continuity and the financial implications of moving from an IFA to LA. DCC aim to place our looked after children with our own local families first and are prioritised over IFA carers. The elevator pitch being that fostering with your LA keeps children local, the application process is straight forward and there is an excellent package of support that recognises your skills.

Fostering Paul – 26-29 with a HH income of £65,000. Married to partner Ben who works part time, lives in Allestree, is a home owner in a 3 bedroomed detached house. Paul enjoys socialising with friends and holidays abroad. Good family influences and background with large family network, he has not considered fostering until recently and unsure if fostering or

adoption would suit them better, his husband spent time in care as a child. Paul's goals are to become a family and enrich his home life and support his husband's ambition to become a full time carer. Main concerns for Paul and his husband are how this will change their lifestyle and how they will feel when a placement comes to an end. The elevator pitch would be that fostering changes lives of local children and local families and that DCC will train and support every step of the way.

Key Marketing Messages

- *"Here for Derby"* We care about matching our children with local families, who can make a difference for Derby every day.
- *"I am, I can"* This campaign aims to bust all the myths around fostering and encourage everyone to consider themselves as a potential carer. Rule yourself in and not out.
- *"I can foster"* Has your home life changed due to the pandemic? Now is the time to consider your options. You could become a foster carer? If you are unemployed, single, retired etc.
- Foster carers are *"great people working as part of an important professional team"*. We get the best out of each other and together we can achieve great things for Derby.
- *"We are there for you every step of the way"*. You will be heard and empowered to have the confidence to ask for help and support when you need it

Extended Marketing Messages

- 1) Every child deserves a happy and healthy childhood and we are seeking foster carers who think so too.
- 2) We *carefully match* local children to local families so that their needs are met. We care about creating a safe, comfortable and loving home in the community in which they grew up.
- 3) We give our foster carers the highest level of support and training, with 24 hour, 365 day on call support services. We support our foster carers to complete a professional qualification, attend support groups and have their own social worker.
- 4) DCC's Foster carers join a great professional team which is driven to make a positive difference every day and change children's lives for the better. Our foster carers are valued and trusted and as a team we support each other.

Marketing activities

These activities are designed to avoid 'over-marketing' by setting a manageable number of events with due consideration to the financial and human resources available. The plan comprises a maximum of four marketing **peaks** each year interspersed by digital and traditional advertising activities to maintain a market presence.

The annual flagship event will held be in and promoted during Foster Care Fortnight each May. Marketing should focus heavily on the motivations of Foster Carers inspiring them to take the next into fostering.

OUTPUTS	OUT-TAKES	OUTCOMES	ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT
Marketing and promotional activity Internal advertising in the Council House Google AdWords /sponsored Facebook External advertising Local business partnerships toolkits Media pro-active/reactive Digital reach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unique people reached with social media - Average reach per each organic and paid for post - Average impressions per post 	Number of potential foster carers who are actively engaged Engagement rates with internal communications Engagement rates with social content, click through rates, average video view length time	Enquiries generated Educating the local people about fostering and requirements Planting the seed for future opportunity Event booking and IV conversation	Number of people who book onto an event but don't turn up Ensure reputation of the fostering team and the Council is protected and strengthened The people who turn up to the event not correctly informed and can't proceed

Risk and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
COVID-19 – inability to hold public events or drop-in sessions	Online virtual events being investigated and planned, face to face events if allowed.
COVID-19 - Social care and health care workers not reachable with the current pandemic	Promote and target later in the year
Premium advertising sites not available or sites unsuitable	Further investigation of costs, availability, timings etc, for ongoing opportunities. Provisional booking as soon as possible with the advertising team
Capacity of the fostering team to cope with a high number of bookings and event attendees	Booking IV visits at events and increase staffing for initial visits
People choose to go to an IFA event rather than the Council event due to the promise of more money	Promote our financial package and make sure our recruitment offering is competitive and robust
Staffing moral and increased workload slowing the sales process	Increased support for staff and targeted results

Resources

Campaign 1
<p>Council House Promotions (high density roadside boards and event boards, bus station takeover for eight weeks) - £2,500</p> <p>Facebook advertising - £800</p> <p>Campaign development design - £850</p> <p>X60 A4 posters, x 500 A5 posters – £50</p> <p>AV screens – free</p> <p>Digital graphics – free</p> <p>Toolkit and internal coms –free</p> <p>Total cost £4,200</p>
Campaign 2
<p>Council House Promotions (high density roadside boards and event boards, bus station takeover for eight weeks) - £2,500</p> <p>Facebook advertising - £800</p> <p>Campaign development design - £850</p> <p>X60 A4 posters, x 500 A5 posters – £50</p> <p>AV screens – free</p> <p>Digital graphics – free</p> <p>Toolkit and internal coms –free</p>

Total cost £4,200
Campaign 3
Council House Promotions (high density roadside boards and event boards, bus station takeover for eight weeks) - £2,500 Facebook advertising - £800 Campaign development design - £850 X60 A4 posters, x 500 A5 posters – £50 AV screens – free Digital graphics – free Toolkit and internal comms –free Total cost £4,200
Campaign 4
Council House Promotions (high density roadside boards and event boards, bus station takeover for eight weeks) - £2,500 Facebook advertising - £800 Campaign development design - £850 X60 A4 posters, x 500 A5 posters – £50 AV screens – free Digital graphics – free Toolkit and internal comms –free Total cost £4,200
Campaign 5
Specialist fostering FB campaign - £2000 Google -£3000 Total cost £5,000
Total cost: £26,000

Budget and value for money

Delivering the proposed activity for 2021/22 will require a budget of £28,600 which includes a 10% contingency. Currently £15,000 of funding has been allocated by the Communications and Marketing team to cover activities. This leaves a shortfall of £13,600 that needs to be covered corporately.

An ongoing value for money assessment will be carried out to ensure resources are used in a way that creates and maximises value. A wide range of alternatives were assessed to develop appropriate low cost, high impact options which will deliver against our outcomes.

Consideration of risks and uncertainties has been undertaken, including a 10% contingency on the advertising budget, to provide confidence in the assessment.