

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board
Date: 19th November 2018
Title of report: Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers

Purpose of report: To update the Board on the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Not applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	Not applicable
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Not applicable
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Elaine McShane (for Sal Tariq) – 7.11.18
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	Not applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Not applicable
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Viv Kendrick (Children's)

Electoral wards affected: Not applicable

Ward councillors consulted: Not applicable

Public or private: Public

1. **Summary**
Purpose of report is to inform the Board of the various strategies in place to assist the recruitment and retention of foster carers.
2. **Information required to take a decision**
Not applicable
3. **Implications for the Council**
 - 3.1 **Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)**
Not applicable
 - 3.2 **Economic Resilience (ER)**
Not applicable
 - 3.3 **Improving Outcomes for Children**
Recruitment of Foster carers – there is national shortage of foster carers. This has led to a dependence on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). Not only does this have a financial impact on the Authority, it also means that we do not have overall control of the placements and decision making.

Since the Acting Service Manager for Fostering was appointed in May this year, we have appointed a new recruitment manager and have revamped our recruitment process. There is now a monthly Recruitment and Retention meeting that looks at all aspects of this work and feeds into our fostering sufficiency report.

Recruitment:

- In order to recruit more foster carers we have undertaken or have planned various events in the coming year. Drop in events – these are events where the public call in and can talk to recruiting staff, fostering staff and foster carers. Since April we have had 4 events. These have been held at the John Smith's Stadium. The next session is on the 4th December 2018. We have Fostering Advisors, Foster Carers a Social Worker and Team Manager attending this session.
- January 2019 – this is one of the main recruitment campaigns focussing on difficult to place children and teenagers. This will include information on our roundabouts. We are liaising with the Children in Care Council in regards to this campaign.
- Community events – we attended the Pride event in September in Batley in order to have a more diverse approach to recruitment. In total, since April we have attended 12 community events so far to raise the profile of Fostering. We also was involved in a Park run during Foster Carer Fortnight in May this year. New for 2019 we are joining in a children's Park run in a Sunday morning in June. We feel that parents will be present supporting their children so we should have a good audience.
- In May 2019 during Foster Carers Fortnight there will be a Foster Carers Recruitment Event event, the first of its kind, which will have a high level of publicity. A wide range of professionals involved in fostering will be available to meet the public and discuss the Fostering journey from the first phone call to us up to the first Annual Review as an Approved Foster Carer. This

will include the unique support we have in place in Kirklees. The Placement Support Team.

- Use of the Kirklees vacancy page to advertise fostering.
- Web page – recent up of the page with DVD of two carers. We will use social media to direct people to our Fostering web pages. The audio of these DVDs will be used on social media, on podcasts reaching once again a new audience. The web page will promote our support team which we feel is unique to Kirklees and not found in all authorities.
- <https://youtu.be/-nnVbkcem70>
- <https://youtu.be/ZbbGvcF-Snl>
- Application for licence to have pop up stalls in Dewsbury, Batley and Huddersfield. There will be three per month from April to September 2019.
- Continued use of twitter and face book account to generate awareness.
- We have approached Costa Coffee in relation to us holding Fostering Coffee mornings at their venues across Kirklees.
- Three stands have been purchased. These can be left in locations across Kirklees, covering all localities, with leaflets and information. These will be placed in a variety of public places and council buildings, where the public attend, schools, town halls, leisure centres and libraries etc. We are awaiting delivery and the first place we are hoping to have them in in Town Halls – given everything that is going off during December at these venues. Locations would be Huddersfield Town Hall, Dewsbury and Batley.
- Use of professional newsletters to raise awareness – for example police, fire and prison service.
- Our own foster carers – this is one of best ways of recruiting and carers are offered a ‘golden hello’ of £500. This has recently been raid from £250 as we know that word of mouth is the best way of recruiting Foster Carers.
- Foster friendly – encouraging local businesses to take a foster friendly approach. This is a new initiative that is in early stages of development.
- Kingsgate big screen at Shorehead – to advertise on the screen.
- Bollards (this is new for 2019) and roundabouts – these will continue to have advertisements in 2018/19
- Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing magazine – information in the magazine regarding forthcoming events (circulation 25,000). Article to go in before the John Smiths Event on the 4th of December. This is a new development.
- Internal newsletters – promoting Kirklees as a foster friendly authority. Targeting front line staff.
- 8 families in the assessment process.

- Strategy of getting 25 new households expressing an interest by 25th December – ‘25 for 25’.
- 4 new fostering families approved since April.

Retention:

- Use of the placement support team to develop foster carers skills and assist with difficult placements and challenging behaviour. This is a resource that not all authorities have and therefore something to highlight when recruiting foster carers.
- Training for foster carers – to skill our carers to undertake the role of foster carers for our children.
- Training for our supervisory social workers (SSW) – we are looking to introduce coaching skills to assist the social worker in supporting their carers.
- Business meetings with Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN) to improve communication and problem solving. Open to all foster carers.
- Award ceremony – to recognise long service and dedication to the role of fostering.
- Celebration event – invitation to all foster carers to attend a social event, meal and entertainment as a thank you for their commitment and hard work over the year.
- Improved communication with senior management – assisted by the appointment of a permanent Service Manager and Head of Service.
- Joint meeting between Head of Service, Service Manager and the Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN) helpline representatives – to address helpline issues.
- Revamped handbook is to be launched.
- Use of restorative approach – high challenge and high support to staff and workers.

3.4 Reducing demand of services

The aim is to reduce the need to place in Independent Fostering Association placements. This will reduce cost and result in more children being placed in the Kirklees area.

3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

Not applicable

4. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable

5. **Next steps**

To implement the above strategies and improve the marketing strategy so as to increase the numbers of enquiries that lead to new carers being approved.

6. **Officer recommendations and reasons**

That the report be noted.

7. **Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations**

Not applicable

8. **Contact officer**

Andy Quinlan, Service Manager (Fostering)

9. **Background Papers and History of Decisions – N/A**

None

10. **Service Director responsible**

Elaine McShane, Service Director (Family Support and Child Protection)