

Fee Paid Foster Carers: Progress Report

The authority invested an additional 380K into the fostering service budget, in 2011/12, to increase the number of fee paid foster carers. Fee paid foster carers, Fostering Futures (long term, therapeutic placements) and Emergency Carers (placements of up to 6 weeks intended duration) receive an annual fee commensurate to 24-28K per annum. In addition, these fee paid foster carers receive a weekly allowance in respect of the child/ren placed with them.

The additional investment of 380K represented:-

- a) The potential to recruit an additional 10 fee paid foster carers = 300K.
- b) The associated employee costs (to recruit and support these foster carers). 2 additional social workers at a unit cost of 40K per annum = 80K.

Outcomes

- a) Two additional social workers were recruited to the fostering service.
- b) Advertising and marketing activity generated a very positive response to the fee paid foster carer opportunities i.e. over 150 enquiries were received.
- c) The terms and conditions provided by the authority proved to be very competitive in attracting existing foster carers to transfer from other local authorities/ independent fostering providers.
- d) Five applications were received from foster carers already approved with independent fostering providers; one from another local authority. 8 foster households for long term placements will have been approved by end March 2012. Of these 8 foster households, 2 are black foster carers. 3 foster households for emergency placements will have been approved by end March 2012. A further 4 foster households for long term placements will have been approved by end May 2012/ end June 2012. For budgetary management reasons, the recruitment of additional foster households is **not** achievable **without** further additional investment in the fostering service.
- e) Enquiries which did not meet the expectations of fee paid fostering were directed to the mainstream fostering service. This had resulted in a net gain of 6 foster households by end January 2012.

Conclusion

The additional investment in the fostering service has resulted in very positive outcomes and internal fostering capacity has been significantly increased. This has many benefits:

- a) More children and young people can be placed in local foster placements, local to their family and community of origin.
- b) The authority's associated costs (social work time/travel, reviewing officer time/travel, business support/administration) are less when children and young people are placed in an internal placement. This increases overall business efficiency.
- c) Expenditure on the external placement budget reduces. Projected expenditure is 15 children less than anticipated (source of information Katy Ashmore, Finance). At an average cost of 1K per child per week, this represents an annual saving to the authority's external placement budget of 780K in 2011/12.

Further efficiency measures, to the authority's external placement budget, could be achieved with additional investment in the authority's fostering service. An additional 1.5M would secure an additional 50 fee paid foster carers.

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