

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020****Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL  
WORK****FOSTERING SERVICE RECRUITMENT AND MARKETING PLAN 2020/2021****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval of the proposed Fostering Service Communications and Marketing Plan for 2020/21, and informs the Committee of the increase in foster carer recruitment activity that the Fostering Service has delivered since August 2019.

**Information**

2. In order to provide family homes for an increasing number of children and young people who are looked after, the Fostering Service has a challenging target to achieve a net increase of 50 new foster carers over three years, 2019 – 2022.
3. In order to support this ambition the service has recruited dedicated resource to deliver a programme of recruitment, publicity, and information events, and a marketing plan has been devised by the Communications & Marketing Team which increases and focusses marketing activity in order to attract as many potential foster carers as possible.
4. The recruitment activity that the Fostering Service has implemented includes:
  - a. development of a dedicated Recruitment & Assessment Team
  - b. fostering information events have been increased from three per year to at least one every month, and over a wider demographic area
  - c. child-specific adverts on the Council's job vacancies page
  - d. social media work has increased – fostering events are consistently and effectively publicised on Facebook, and efforts are being made to ensure that these are liked and shared. Members have committed to supporting this
  - e. events targeted specifically at faith groups have been arranged
  - f. the Fostering Conference in September was very well attended and showcased the new fostering film – existing foster carers were left energised and feel like they are ambassadors for the service. Next year's conference is already being planned
  - g. foster carers (and Members) now receive a monthly newsletter containing service updates and details of upcoming fostering recruitment events so that they can promote them

- h. the Fostering Service web pages and the fostering information pack have been completely updated to reflect the improvements made.
5. The full Fostering Service Communications and Marketing Plan is attached as **Appendix 1**. Highlights include:
- a. a media event at Sherwood Forest, involving local school children creating land art and planting trees
  - b. local magazine adverts
  - c. schools portal adverts, web banners, and digital information screens
  - d. District Council magazines and Parish Council newsletter articles
  - e. internal bus and tram advertising
  - f. boosted Facebook posts.
  - g. search engine optimisation
  - h. targeted marketing.
6. Following the introduction of increased foster carer fees and the September publicity campaign:
- 23 fostering assessments are taking place
  - the average number of enquiries per month has increased from 8.3 to 15.7
  - 21 initial visits are taking place (where enquirers and supervising social workers consider progressing to assessment in more depth)
  - 12 Fostering Panels booked for January - May 2020 (11 Mainstream applications, 1 Independent Fostering Association transfer)
  - of the 27 carers who left NCC this year: some became Special Guardians for the child they were looking after which is a positive outcome, 8 resigned following concerns/were not reapproved at panel following concerns raised and the remaining carers resigned for "other reasons/retired". No carers have left this year to become IFA carers.

### **Other Options Considered**

7. No other options have been considered.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

8. To support the recruitment of a net increase of 50 new foster carers over three years, 2019 – 2022, in order to meet increased demand for family-based placements.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Data Protection and Information Governance**

10. There are no data protection implications in the recruitment activity or the Communications and Marketing Plan.

## **Financial Implications**

11. The budget for the work is set at £17,500 and will be contained within the Fostering Service budget.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Committee approves the proposed Fostering Service Communications and Marketing Plan for 2020/21

**Steve Edwards**

**Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work**

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## **Constitutional Comments (AK 18/02/20)**

12. The report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (SAS 27/02/20)**

13. The budget for the work is set at £17,500 and will be contained within the Fostering Service budget of £7.0m.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Development of the Fostering Service – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 11th February 2019](#)

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C1353