



**Corporate Parenting Board,  
February 2019- James Lee**

Foster Care Recruitment update

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In 2018 the responsibility for Fostering Recruitment moved to the Assessing Permanent Carers Team (APC).

**Strategy**

City of York's Fostering strategy consists of two approaches – one is our own internal approach and the other is via 'You Can Foster'. There is no dedicated budget for recruitment and marketing.

1. Internal

Throughout 2018 the service has maintained a regular 'drumbeat' about fostering with a dedicated Duty Line and e-mail box for enquiries and a response time of 24 hours to an initial enquiry. Progress has been achieved by using the following techniques:

- Slots on BBC Radio York have been used to talk about the need for more foster carers.
- In summer of 2018 BBC News and their website featured one of our Foster Carers who was interviewed along with the young person she was preparing to send to University.
- Posters are on notice boards / rotating electronic screens at West Offices and other council buildings as well as NHS buildings.
- A number of bus stops in the city feature the You Can Foster adverts. These posters are targeted at potential applicants who wish to provide a placement for teenagers.
- The Communications Team has arranged for press releases with photo ops from councillors / chief executives.

- There has been a recent article in Streets Ahead magazine with examples of case studies.
- In May we 'took over' the Park Run at the Race Course and set up a stall for people to take information.
- The team has maintained a presence at local Jobs Fairs where people can ask questions about fostering for York.

We have found that Social Media, in particular Facebook, is an effective way to get the message out. It allows us to reach a lot of people for little cost and also hits our demographics in terms of potential applicants. Our web team are currently collecting data around activity on the City of York Fostering 'landing page' (when it is most viewed, how long they viewed etc) so we'll be able to take this information and target more specifically in 2019.

We will be focussing our internal strategy for the coming year around the times of year when we have traditionally had the most enquiries to our service.

In **October** York launched the 'If you've worked with Children...' adverts. The aim is to make it York specific as we believe that people are proud of being from York. A number of our previous enquiries came from people with a childcare background so we wanted to directly appeal to them to see if they could help us.

In **January** we will launch our 'empty nesters' campaign. January has historically been a month when there is a slight increase in the number of enquiries. It's a time of new beginnings for people and they decide that now is the right time to pick up the phone.

**May** will see the launch of the National Fostering Fortnight so we will take this opportunity to build on positive stories in the mainstream media. For May 2019 our idea is to look at how foster carers can make a positive difference to young people's lives – we will use examples from our own carers and also use young people from the Show Me That I Matter group to put across the Voice of the Child.

## 2. You Can Foster

York were approached by and signed up to the regional You Can Foster campaign from April 2017. Hosted by Bolton City Council, You Can Foster brings together a number of councils from the North West and Yorkshire to collectively pay for a co-ordinated and market-tested

campaign. This includes regional, prime time TV advertising, a clear brand, digital advertising, paid-for social media posts plus sequences of social media posts for member authorities.

Although we have seen more 'conversions' through our own campaigns we are early on in terms of this project and some of the benefits, in particular being part of a larger cohort and sharing of knowledge. We are monitoring the impact of this project given the cost of £3000 a year.

## **Facts / Figures**

Our enquiry rate has remained consistent quarter on quarter and we have seen a slight increase in the last year for example in 18/19 Quarter 3 - 32 enquiries.

2017/18 saw an overall increase in fostering households but the majority of these were connected carers. This reflects the national picture.

In 2016/ 2017 approved 1.

In 2017/2018 approved 3.

2019/20 to date there are 4 mainstream assessments underway with another 4 households attending the upcoming Skills to Foster training. After this training these 4 households may progress to mainstream fostering assessment.

## **Future Recruitment ideas**

### 2020 Strategy

Data indicates that more people make web based enquiries than through other methods. Digital campaigns are most effective so using data collected by the web team we will be able to target more effectively in order to maximise recruitment opportunities.

Foster Carer involvement – Research tells us that most foster carers know other people that foster. We want to use this knowledge to empower our existing foster carers to help in recruiting new carers. We are incentivising existing carers to refer a friend or family member and we are going to recruit 'foster carer ambassadors' who will play an active role in recruiting new foster carers.

Young People involvement - We have engaged our SMTIM / ISM young people in the recruitment of new foster carers. Approving foster carers who are realistic about what the role entails will lead to robust carers and improve our retention figures.

Connected Carer Skills to Foster training – The Assessing Permanent Carers Team deliver mandatory pre-approval training to all foster carers 3 to 4 times a year. Due to an increase in the number of Connected (Kinship) Carers the team now delivers bespoke training to this group in order that they get a dedicated service. This also means that mainstream carers will receive pre-approval training that is specific to their needs.

Fostering Friendly Employers – This is the Fostering Networks programme which aims to encourage local employers to support fostering and foster carers. We will reach out to some of the major employers in the city (including City of York council) to see if they will sign up to a charter which will offer potential foster carers flexible working and paid time off for attending training or settling a new child into their home.

James Lee  
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