



Corporate Parenting Board February 2020

Assessing Permanent Carers Team

Recruitment update

The team consists of the Service Manager, one Senior Practitioner, and 4 full time Social Workers. Foster Carer recruitment sits alongside the assessments of mainstream foster carers and Connected / Kinship carers and those where a Special Guardianship is being considered for the young person.

Strategy

Throughout 2019 the service has maintained a regular 'drumbeat' about fostering in general. This has been achieved by providing a steady stream of information to the general public so that there is a continued awareness of what fostering is. The following techniques have been used

- Posters are on notice boards / rotating electronic screens in council 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.
- The team has maintained a presence at local Jobs Fairs where people can ask questions about fostering for York.
- We held a stall at York Pride highlighting the need for LGBT Foster Carers.
- Regular posts on Facebook and Twitter about Fostering in York.

The posts on Facebook and Twitter have helped us reach a wide audience. We have been able to target these to demographics most likely to consider fostering so as to improve their effectiveness.

Initiatives

In February 2019 we launched our *Foster Carer Ambassador* scheme by bringing two of our experienced Foster Carers on-board to help support the team in recruiting new carers. So far they have provided ideas and supported at recruitment fairs and at other events. We hope to further develop this in 2020.

March 2019 saw us roll out our *Show Me That I Matter home visit tool*. We want young people that have directly experienced the care system to be able to speak to those that are applying to become foster carers during the assessment process. This has been used on a number of occasions and has helped the assessor to prepare future carers for some of the realities of caring for young people and we also obtain the voice of young people in our assessments.

In June 2019 we developed a *Fostering Friendly Employers* scheme where we reach out to organisations and ask them to sign up and support their staff with time off for training / development if they wish to be foster carers for City of York council. We have rolled this out to members of staff at the council and aim to approach other employers in the city in 2020.

In July 2019 York were part of a *Faith in Fostering* pilot alongside our colleagues at Leeds and Kirklees Council and also Christian and Muslim fostering recruitment agencies. The aim of this was to encourage people of a faith background to consider fostering for their local authority. In October we followed this up by attending the York Interfaith Group open evening and talking about the importance of recruiting new Foster Carers.

Facts / Figures

Enquiries

In Quarter 1 2018 21 enquiries.

In Quarter 2 2018 32 enquiries.

In Quarter 3 2018 32 enquiries.

In Quarter 4 2018 23 enquiries.

In Quarter 1 2019 40 enquiries.

In Quarter 2 2019 25 enquiries.

In Quarter 3 2019 30 enquiries.

In Quarter 4 to date 30 enquiries.

Approvals / De-registrations

2017 and 2018 saw an overall increase in fostering households but the majority of these were connected carers. This reflects the national picture.

In 2017 we de-registered 7 mainstream carers and approved 2.

In 2018 we de-registered 8 mainstream carers and approved 3.

In 2019 we de-registered 11 mainstream carers and approved 9.

2019 figures are a significant improvement on previous years and is attributed to the focus on a designated duty system resulting in quicker responses to foster carer enquiries and an expectation of full assessment within 8 months.

Future Recruitment direction

In October 2019 we appointed two companies to lead on developing a Foster Carer recruitment campaign for 2020 and beyond. The Elephant Room have been appointed to develop a digital campaign and have consulted with our existing foster carers in order to appeal directly to the audience we are trying to reach.

This campaign will be delivered by George and Co with an expected roll out at the end of January 2020. It is expected that the number of 'high quality' enquiries that come through to the Fostering team will at least double (target of 180 in the first 6 months of the campaign and a further 120 in the following 6 months).

This would therefore lead to an increase in demand on the Fostering Team and discussion has been taking place as to how to meet this in the event that George and Co deliver as expected.

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Service Manager – Assessing Permanent Carers Team

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