

DECISION-MAKER:	CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
SUBJECT:	RECRUITMENT OF IN HOUSE FOSTER CARERS
DATE OF DECISION:	1 OCTOBER 2020
REPORT OF:	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
<p>There is a confidential appendix attached to this report, the confidentiality of which is based on Category 3 of paragraph 10.4 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).</p> <p>If the content of this report were to be treated as a public document it would reveal information that is both commercially sensitive and detrimental to the business affairs of the Council.</p>	
BRIEF SUMMARY	
<p>This report and accompanying strategy outlines Southampton City Council Fostering Services' strategy to recruit more in house foster carers over the next three years. It outlines the national and local context, the current position, what we know works, the strategies going forward and progress to date.</p>	
RECOMMENDATIONS:	
	(i) That the Panel scrutinise the strategy to recruit in house foster carers attached as Appendix 1.
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	Panel to have sight of and opportunity to scrutinise the foster carer recruitment strategy.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
2.	None
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
	Introduction
3.	The Placement Commissioning Sufficiency Statement and Strategy 2020-2025 outlines Southampton City Council's strategy to fulfil its statutory duty to ensure that, through direct provision or commissioned services, a range of placements sufficient to meet the needs of all children in care are available

	<p>locally or that there is a plan in place to move towards that position. The recruitment of in house foster carers forms part of this strategy alongside securing the following provisions for the children we look after;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent foster care placements • Residential children’s home placements • Supportive accommodation for young people • Adoption placements <p>The Southampton City Council Fostering Service Recruitment Strategy 2020-2023 sets out our approach to be taken to recruit foster carers over the next 3 years.</p>
	<p>National and Local Context</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Key points of note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National statistics tell us that there are fewer foster carers, looking after more children. • There is no national or unified approach to the recruitment of foster carers. • The provision of foster carer is provided by a range of local authority, private and voluntary organisations. • A lack of interest nationally in fostering and becoming a foster carer. • Increased competition from other local fostering services; local authorities and independent agencies. • Geographically we are not well placed. Potential foster carers local to Southampton have the option of looking at Dorset, Hampshire and Portsmouth Fostering Services. In addition we have a number of local well established independent fostering agencies, including Fairways and Blue Sky. • The impact of the pandemic.
	<p>Current picture</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>As of the 31st March 2020, there were 207 approved fostering households, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 165 Mainstream Foster Carers • 32 Connected Foster Carers • 10 temporarily approved Foster Carers <p>From our gap analysis our objective is to focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the number of in-house foster carers • increasing the number of long-term foster carers for older children • increasing the number of foster carers for disabled children, sibling groups and children with complex needs • increasing the existing cohort of specialist foster carers with a focus on providing, emergency and ‘parent and child’ placements • implementing the Specialist Foster Carer Scheme to widen the placement options for children and young people who have been placed in residential care.

	What works?
6.	<p>There has been a decline in the number of enquiries over the past three years. Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, there has been a high level of recruitment activity which has centred on targeted recruitment campaigns achieved through several key activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media • Foster Care Fortnight campaign • Events • Carer Videos • Radio Advert • Billboard advertising • Word of Mouth (WOM)
7.	The draft Fostering Recruitment Strategy, attached as a confidential appendix, outlines the approaches that have been utilised by the City Council and their effectiveness at generating enquiries.
	Key strategies – What are we going to do?
8.	The draft Fostering Recruitment Strategy, attached as a confidential appendix, outlines the approaches to be followed to meet the objectives identified above.
	Progress
9.	<p>Progress is reviewed by way of a 6 monthly report to the Corporate Parenting Board. The first progress review of the strategy will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on 4 November 2020.</p> <p>Highlights to date include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of in house foster carers has seen a downward trend over the last two months. • The pandemic has meant that our regular drop in events and our main events have been cancelled as we have been unable to use community venues and large venues such as Ageas Bowl. • We have turned to increased activity on social media and ‘virtual events’ such as the Southampton Job Fair. • Our use of in house fosters carers has been maintained at 60% and IFA 40% of foster placement, which is consistent with our neighbour authorities. • Feedback from our foster carer community has been positive and we are able to use this in our recruitment messaging. For example, nine in 10 foster carers rated the support they receive from their dedicated social worker as 'good' or 'excellent'.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
10.	None directly as a result of this report.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
11.	None directly as a result of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
12.	The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000.
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
13.	Southampton City Council's has a statutory duty to ensure that, through direct provision or commissioned services, a range of placements sufficient to meet the needs of all children in care are available locally or that there is a plan in place to move towards that position.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
14.	None directly as a result of this report
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
15.	None directly as a result of this report

KEY DECISION?	No
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Draft Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy - Confidential

Documents in Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out?	No
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Data Protection Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out?	No
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Other Background Documents

Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	None