

Report for: Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

Item number: To be added by the Committee Section

Title: **Fostering recruitment update**

Report

authorised by : Ann Graham, Director, Children's Services

Lead Officer: Keith Warren

Ward(s) affected: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 To update members on the recruitment of foster carers.

2. Recommendations

2.1 For Members to Note.

3. Reasons for decision

N/A

4. Background information

4.1 The Fostering Service is responsible for the recruitment and ongoing support for all in-house foster carers for children in Haringey. Fostering provides a loving, stable family environment for our Children Looked After who are some of the most vulnerable children in our county.

4.2 Nationally, there is a shortage of foster carers. In Haringey, although our numbers have increased over the past year, we still need more foster carers. The recruitment of new carers is of vital importance and is driven by our wider Adolescent, Fostering and Residential Strategy, incorporated within our LAC sufficiency strategy which sets out our plans to increase in-house placement provision in Haringey.

4.3 The Fostering Service's key priorities in recruitment activity are to:

- Provide new placement capacity to meet the demographic and diverse needs of Haringey's Children Looked After
- Recruit, train and support foster carers who can provide the highest quality of care to our children

- Increase in-house placements, reducing the use of Independent Fostering Agency resources

4.4 The Fostering Service in Haringey recruits foster carers from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, to reflect the diverse needs of children in care. Applications are welcomed from enquirers of all ages over 21 years, males and females, people in employment/not in employment and homeowners/those living in rented properties. The service also welcomes applications from LGBTQ community and works in partnership with 'New Family Social' ([New Family Social - Home](#)) to promote its recruitment messages.

4.5 Haringey Principles

- Where it is right to do so, all children will be supported to remain within the care of their families or communities with connected carers
- Where this is not possible, early permanence with adoptive families or foster carers will be sought to promote a sense of emotional wellbeing and a sense of belonging
- Children and young people's voice will be respected, and we will actively seek their engagement in decisions about their needs, their future and the provision of services
- High quality placements and provision of support to parents and carers to meet the needs of children and young people.
- Where possible and right to do so, children and young people should be placed within Haringey with Haringey carers to maintain a sense of connectivity with their community.
- Parents and carers are an integral part of the service, to be involved in planning for the child and service provision to ensure that the very best care is provided to our children and young people.

4.6 The fostering service have been successful in securing homes for our Children Looked After with Connected Carers', so they are able to remain within their own network of family and friends. Where this is not be possible, we work hard to ensure that our marketing strategies to attract new carers incorporate the above principles.

4.7 Since the implementation of our Fostering Recruitment Strategy, we have seen an increase in number of enquiries we receive on a monthly basis and also the number of carers being approved at panel.

4.8 Key Objectives for Fostering Recruitment in Haringey:

Objective 1 - To increase the number of in-house Foster Carers in Haringey, reducing our reliance on independent fostering agencies.

To recruit and approve 8 new foster carers. So that we increase the number of in-house foster carers and the range of high-quality placement options. This includes increasing the overall placement capacity by 30.

Objective 2 - To increase our recruitment of foster carers from diverse backgrounds.

We need a wide range of foster carers who are reflective of our children and our community. We need to be creative in our recruitment approach utilising the skills and advice of the existing foster carers from diverse backgrounds and working with our partners in Haringey to extend our reach in the community.

Objective 3 - To ensure the support offered to foster carers is competitive and attracts the right carers into our service.

We have reviewed our financial support package, and we work continuously with our foster carers to ensure we provide the best possible support, that is tailored to foster carers individual needs. We have also created a 'Benefits and Perks of Fostering for Haringey' leaflet, highlighting other non-financial incentives to foster carers in Haringey.

Objective 4 – To expand our specialist fostering provision including Mockingbird Hubs, Secure Based Trained carers and Specialist carers.

As part of our recruitment strategy, we will inform prospective carers about the options to develop and specialise as they progress as foster carers, increasing our offer of specialist fostering provision.

The Implementation of the Recruitment Strategy has led to the service looking at the key objectives, leading to the development of an action plan to meet each of the objectives.

This has been through the development of a creative and varied approach to reach a wider audience (please refer to presentation on fostering recruitment), which details the various approaches used by the service to raise our profile and awareness of fostering in Haringey.

The success of the strategy is demonstrated through the increase in placement capacity increase, preventing children from being placed in IFA placements or residential homes.

Year	Mainstream	Connected Carers	Reg 24	Variations to approval	Total capacity increase (no. of children)
2022/23	5	5	10 (16)	2	33
2023/24	10 (13)	6 (9)	13 (18)	6	46

Our overall target for capacity increase in 2023/24 was 35, which the service exceeded.

4.9 The Fostering Recruitment Journey So Far 2024/25

4.9.1 To further enhance the work we have been doing to recruit new mainstream carers, as well as support family/friends to take on the long-term care of our Looked After Children, we have been working within the service to expand further capacity within our existing pool of carers.

4.9.2 We are keeping all of our carers under regular review and have recently undertaken a piece of work where we have reviewed all of our carers that could potentially have the capacity to take more children. Following the review, we identified the availability of 3 placements to add to the vacancy list.

4.9.3 This will remain an ongoing piece of work, with a 3-monthly review of carers that are on hold for various reasons. The carers currently on hold are for various reasons including: family bereavement, ill health, taking a break, standards of care investigations etc.

Since April 2024

	Mainstream approvals	Connected Carers approvals	Reg 24 carers	Variations to existing approval	Total capacity increase
April 24 to date	2 (2)	5 (6)	9 (9)	5	25

4.9.4 In addition to the above, we have a further 9 Mainstream carers in the assessment process, 2 of which are due to be presented to the fostering panel for approval this month (October) and 2 scheduled for approval in November.

4.9.5 Haringey have also collaborated with Islington in undertaking joint recruitment activities. There have been joint events and advertising bringing together both Haringey and Islington.

4.9.6 The trajectory based on the overall work so far in Haringey is promising and we hope to further increase in-house placement provisions for our Looked After Children for 2024/25.

5. Contribution to strategic outcomes

N/A

6. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 - A Whistlestop Tour From March 2023

7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985