

Report for: Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee - 18 April 2017

Item: 10

Title: Commissioning of Foster Care Recruitment

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Ward(s) affected: N/A

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision: Non-Key**

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This Report is an update on the commissioning of foster care recruitment in the Children and Young People Service, the plans to increase recruitment in the next three months and the proposed longer term options.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the CPAC support the short term plans and review the outcomes of the findings of the longer term proposals in three months time.

3. Reasons for decision

3.1 To establish the best options for meeting the statutory and regulatory requirements to recruit foster carers in Haringey in the future and have sufficient provision for looked after children in the borough.

4. Alternative options considered

4.1 Alternative options are being fully considered and no option has been rejected at this stage.

5. Background information

5.1 In 2014, Management Consultants IMpower was commissioned to undertake a review of the training and recruitment of in house fostering households. This led to a decision to put the recruitment and marketing function out to tender. This has been taken forward in rather a piecemeal fashion and there was a lack of close Management oversight of the contract. This has meant that the service has not improved to the extent envisaged.

- 5.2 A review was undertaken in 2016 and it was agreed to again put the contract out to tender. This was not a success. The outcome was that there were no bids for the contract. The Commissioning team undertook a market testing exercise and identified 4 external providers who expressed an interest in bidding for the contract.
- 5.3 A further tendering exercise was undertaken however market response was poor and only one provider bid for the contract. This bid was assessed by the Consensus Panel in March attended by officers from Procurement, Commissioning and managers from Children in Care Service. This meeting concluded that the provider did not meet the requirements of the tender on cost grounds.
- 5.4 An interim contract with former contractor has been extended until the end of June 2017. As it is a payment by results contract, there is limited liability for the Council in continuing the contract. Four new foster carers have been brought to Panel since January 2017 through this contractor.
- 5.5 Given the poor market response, despite significant initial interest and support for the procurement process, it has now been agreed to take forward an interim in-house model whilst other options are considered.
6. A Commissioning manager will undertake an options appraisal considering the following options:
- Explore whether a neighbouring local authority would be willing to take on the training and recruitment function for Haringey Council
 - Explore a partnership arrangement with a neighbouring council to take on all the activity for the fostering function recruitment training and approvals
 - Explore whether the North London Fostering & Adoption Consortium has the capacity to provide either of these options as a collective.
7. Within the next three months, we should have a clear idea on whether any of the three options are viable and if further resources should be committed to developing one of the options a cost estimate and a timetable.
8. To ensure that the department continues to recruit adequate carers and fulfils its statutory duty as a fostering agency the following interim arrangement is proposed. The structure being proposed is as follows:
- 1 Team Manager
 - 1 marketing & recruitment officer
 - 2 Social workers
 - 1 half time dedicated administrator
9. This team will work in close co-ordination with the Council's communications team to ensure all marketing opportunities are exploited.

