

Appendix 2: Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy 2022 - 2024



Context

Currently there are approximately 154 children placed with our own foster carers. The fostering Recruitment approach outlines our approach to ensuring there is sufficient, high quality, flexible and responsive foster care provision to meet the needs of the care population in North Lincolnshire. Fostering marketing and recruitment is a key priority for the Council's communication plan with a view to continuing to increase and retain the number of in house foster carers. This builds on our success whereby:

- most children are placed locally with North Lincolnshire foster carers
- There are very low – and reducing – numbers of children placed with commissioned providers
- Retention of foster carers is high
- The number of new carers recruited throughout the year is increasing

Objectives

The fostering recruitment service's key objective / aim is to increase the number of in house foster carers and retain foster carers that we currently have approved to us. The objectives will be aimed at helping the Fostering service meet its aims. Below are the six key communications objectives for the fostering marketing. These are linked to individual campaigns and initiatives in the months ahead.

- Encourage take up of Fostering within North Lincolnshire
- Ensure the process from application to approval is swift and simple for carers
- To develop a greater awareness and knowledge of fostering /Supported Lodgings
- To overcome any concerns surrounding who can foster – dispelling any myths
- To encourage belief and support for foster carers and the role they undertake
- To communicate the role, rewards and benefits to encourage prospective carers to come forward
- To encourage retention of existing foster carers.

We have set ambitious local targets to recruit at least 20 'mainstream' foster care households over a 12 month period.

To meet the local needs for foster carers, our targeted recruitment includes:

- Foster carers specifically for children aged 11+
- Foster carers who can care for sibling groups
- Supported Lodging providers
- Foster carers for children with disabilities
- Geographically targeted activity. Although there is demand for foster carers across the council, consideration during campaign planning will be given to specific demands in any key identified areas. This will form the basis of the grassroots campaign within communities

Delivering the Strategy

There are a number of key areas that have a key focus in the delivery of the recruitment strategy:

- Use of stakeholders and key influencers – ensuring communities, stakeholders and influencers have an understanding of the role of foster carers and why they should support it and encourage people to consider fostering.
- Using ‘word of mouth’ – ‘word of mouth’ is an important vehicle to encourage and raise awareness of fostering to potential carers. Existing foster carers can be the best vehicle to ensuring this happens and work will continue with current foster carers to help recruit new foster carers.
- Foster carers assist in recruitment events, in the training of potential new foster carers in providing support and encouragement and have a key role in the recruitment of new carers
- Research – recruitment planning uses research to gain clear insight into people who foster and in identifying and targeting potential new carers
- Visibility – the recruitment campaign will continue to be delivered all year round with targeted campaigns at peak times and in relation to specific groups.
- The use of online tools, media and websites is an essential part of successful recruitment. The Councils website has been re-designed and will continue to be developed with further updates to include case studies and videos featuring our foster carers.
- Positive and responsive initial contact with foster carers is vital. The development of Recruitment Support Officers within the service has developed the main point of contact for prospective foster carers, thus establishing a consistent approach to enquiries.

Foster Carers as Key Partners in Delivering the Strategy

Utilising existing foster carers, word of mouth is a key tool. Therefore we will continue to use our existing foster carers and continue to encourage them to be active advocates. This also helps the retention of foster carers in demonstrating how much our carers are valued. Many already see themselves as having a clear role in terms of the recruitment of new carers.

Existing foster carers will continue to be an integral part of recruitment through;

- Case studies – updating case studies for use across the website and other events and opportunities.
- Fostering events – feedback informs us that direct two way communication is preferred over other methods of communication by people interested in fostering. We will continue to deliver both virtual and – subject to Covid rules face-to-face open events and road shows
 - + the events will be scheduled on a variety of days / times to enable the potential carers to find a time to suit them – including fitting around existing career commitments
 - + We will continue to promote the fact that these are an opportunity to engage with current foster carers, to hear their first-hand experiences

Recruitment Activity

The recruitment of carers is in the context of our One Family Approach and is built upon:

- Identifying the key areas of demand
- Creating a community level recruitment campaign such as use of neighbourhood hubs, libraries and children’s centres
- Research into the motivations of foster carers to enhance a targeted recruitment approach

- Key communication messages that will appeal to the motivations of the target group – planned campaigns to meet the needs of the profile of children needing foster care in N Lincs. Examples include carers for under 5's, sibling groups, teenagers and children who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum.
- Developing the communication mix of channels to reach our target market including newsprint, radio, social media, professional groups apps (such as NHS app), displays and community information.

A continued feature of the work is keeping in touch with persons who have made contact expressing a potential future interest in becoming foster carers. Enquiries that may progress to assessment are kept in touch with by Recruitment Support Officers. This has been further expanded by the addition of a second RSO. It is anticipated that this contact will build relationships and familiarity to lead to a formal enquiry when the time is right and then on to foster carer approval.

Key events and activities throughout the year incorporated into the recruitment campaign incorporate:

- Foster care fortnight
- Food fayres
- Campaigns around religious festivals – including Eid al-Adha and Christmas
- Supported Lodgings campaigns
- Short-breaks week
- Monthly open evenings (Quarterly in Brigg, Epworth and Scunthorpe) – both virtual and face-to-face as appropriate
- Monthly phone-ins based on our monthly specific campaigns
- 'Event Brite' online recruitment events
- Local events throughout the year
- Use of local Markets (such as a presence at Scunthorpe, Brigg and Hemswell markets).

All recruitment workers and foster carers provide information and discussion at events on the benefits of fostering for North Lincolnshire.

Information packs are posted out to potential foster carers following initial enquiries. The information booklet contains the key messages of the recruitment campaign and is relevant to the target audience. The information pack will also feature prominently on new web pages so potential foster carers are able to find out the information they need easily on the website and receive an electronic version once an online enquiry has been submitted.

Core media utilised to promote fostering recruitment include:

- Local and Regional newspapers
 - + Scunthorpe Telegraph
 - + Epworth Times
 - + Market Rasen Mail
- Local broadcast – Radio
 - + BBC Humberside
 - + Lincs FM
 - + Greatest Hits radio
- Online
 - + Twitter

- + Facebook
- + NHS app
- + North Lincs website
- + The Council's Direct News magazine

Increasing opportunities for two way engagement

We will continue to build and develop opportunities for potential foster carers to engage with us in a two way dialogue. This will include:

- Engaging with North Lincolnshire Community Hubs – to enable them to talk knowledgeably on fostering. This reinforces the fact that Libraries and Community Hubs are increasingly the 'front door' to Council customers and gives potential foster carers a friendly way to ask questions before taking the next step.
- Use of 'Event Brite' – as a means to offer carers who cannot attend drop ins to web chat with fostering recruitment staff and current carers.
- Resumption of supermarket road shows – Pitching our stand in store car parks and having store staff direct customers to our location, supported by pop up banners located at store entries and exits. We will resume this when Covid-safe across the area. This will allow active engagement with supermarket customers but will also allow staff stacking shelves or working on the tills to promote fostering and to encourage them to come and visit the stand during their lunch breaks

Wide reaching Marketing activity.

In addition to targeted aspects to the recruitment campaign we will also undertake further wide ranging marketing activities designed to reach a large number of people. We will ensure the language used taps into the motivations but we will deliver this across channels designed to reach as many people in the area as possible.

This will be achieved through;

- The continuation of placing adverts in local newspapers which the community widely read. This provides good coverage across the area but also taps into the community mindedness of potential carers
- Online advertising – Over 2022 fostering recruitment will further develop a growing online presence across social media. We will look at enhancing the reach of these social media channels by considering further use of paid online advertising. We will consider utilising a variety of options, advertising generally to the local community, but also targeted and re-targeted online advertising to reach the local people who have experience of working with children. This will include through Facebook and using Twitter and other relevant social media channels.
- Foster carers remain our best advocates and advertisers. Through engaging them in our video adverts, attendance at training and drop in events and offering foster buddies through the recruitment process we will successfully utilise the voice and experience of the community.
- Poster Campaigns – we will continue to develop our existing poster campaigns running in many doctor's surgeries, Children's centres, libraries and Community Hubs, various internal staff rooms, local shops and post offices. These are places where we are likely to attract people who currently work with children and young people or who have experience of raising families. We will also ensure enough posters are produced so that following any roadshow event, are displayed to act as a reminder of the key message and 'call to action'.

- Radio advertising – radio advertising is very effective at reaching large numbers of people across our area. At key campaign points throughout the year we will utilise radio to communicate our experience and the support we provide.

Our messages will be communicated through

- Advertising - managed and produced by the communications team, using our marketing officer we will continue to work jointly organising specific campaigns, projects and initiatives. These in future will include, council owed billboards, council vehicles, partners websites and within radio and print media as appropriate
- Local businesses and employers- Through developing connections within the local area businesses can promote the recruitment of carers through posters, flyers, social media, events and 'drop in' spaces.
- Fostering Ambassadors- The relaunch of fostering ambassadors will mean that all council employees and corporate parenting partners are able to promote fostering in their roles and community settings.
- Council branding / Fostering branding – Promotion of the Council must be aided by having a strong identity and brand from which the public can identify. The brand is used in all communication tools the council uses, from website to presentations, letterheads to leaflets. The fostering service also has an identifiable fostering brand and strap lines (such as with Supported Lodgings – 'Room to Spare, Home to share') which will continue to be used in conjunction with the Council's logo
- The Council website / social media – The Council website content is managed so that it communicates appropriate information surrounding Council projects, initiatives and in support of agreed key messages. Messages are also conveyed through the existing Council Twitter, Instagram and Facebook functions.
- The Council publication, 'Direct News' – This council publication is used to communicate Council news and events to residents in the area. This continues to be used by Fostering to promote the need for foster carers. The success of this can continue to be analysed in terms of how many applications are opened, which helps with evaluation purposes, and can help engage with passive audiences.
- Qmatic screens in public areas managed by the Council – These screens are used as part of ongoing campaigns and help raise awareness of these with key Council messages. They carry images which would support the various specific recruitment campaigns over the next 12 months.

Further targeted activity.

This involves groups who may not have thought about fostering before and are key target groups. This includes those working with children in caring professions like teachers, nurses, youth workers, police and others. The messaging will focus on their capacity to perform the role of fostering.

This will be achieved by:

- Targeting key workplaces, work is ongoing re communication with those deemed most appropriate such as residential units, nurseries, schools, hospitals and children's centres
- Mapping social media sites. As the target market is likely to be active in the local community our marketing officer will map social media sites for local schools, hospitals, community groups, etc. Social media forums will appeal to some potential foster carers as it presents the

opportunity for the preferred two way dialogue. We will actively promote fostering to the target market utilising our own Council and fostering social media sites.

- Targeting local areas through local businesses. Encouraging their promotion of fostering and support in retaining foster carers through rewards.

Measuring Success

The success of the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy will be measured by:

- The number of prospective carer enquiries throughout the year – monitored monthly
- The proportion of these who progress to assessment
- The proportion who progress to approval through the Foster Panel / ADM
- The number of new carers approved throughout the year
- The overall number of Foster Carers available – including those for specific targeted groups
- The number and proportion of children in care who live with North Lincolnshire Foster Carers
- The number of Supported Lodgings enquiries, assessments and approvals
- The number of Supported Lodgings providers available and providing accommodation
- The stability of the children in care and leaving care populations
- The feedback / perceptions of carers throughout the process

Foster Carer Recruitment Timetable 2022 - 2023

MARCH
Skills to foster course
Scunthorpe market drop in
Drop in info event. Advertise on Facebook.
Adverts on refuse lorries x6
Scunthorpe Market mother's day event. Advertise on Facebook and website.
Fostering tour
Advert in Scunthorpe Telegraph
Digital screens - town centre and Britannia corner
APRIL
Scunthorpe market drop in. Advertise on social media and website.
Normanby Hall 'paws in the park'. Advertise on Facebook and website.
Drop in info event and social media adverts
Poster Drop
Social media campaign
Print advert in Market Rasen Mail, Epworth Times and Gainsborough Standard.
MAY
Promotional talks – Women's institute, new life and Crosby one
Drop in info event –to Brigg- Advertised on the website and on social media
Foster care fortnight- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NLC screensavers • Radio advert Lincs FM. • Print advert in Scunthorpe Telegraph with mention of foster care fortnight. (9-22 May). • Digital screens in town • Google advert. • 7 Drop in events • Foster carer skydive event • Social media campaign • Send #FCF social media campaign to workers and foster carers • Mentions in Early Years, Families Direct, Community Champions and News Direct. • Interviews with foster carers about #fosteringcommunities
'Fostering' flower bed installation – Kingsway, Scunthorpe
JUNE
Messingham show
Summer fayres
Drop in info event. Advertise on Facebook and website.
Poster drop
Crosby international day
Supermarket trolley station adverts.
Mentions in Early Years, Families Direct, Community Champions and News Direct.
Window signs in empty shop premises – Scunthorpe town centre.
Advertising on fleet vehicles
JULY
Stall at Winterton show
Crowle Rescue Day
Broughton show
Party in the park – Normanby hall
Water's Edge wildlife family day
Talk with WI, faith groups etc
Fostering business targeting
Info event. Promote on Facebook and website.
Print advert in Market Rasen Mail, Epworth Times and Gainsborough Standard.

AUGUST
Supported Lodgings week. #whotaughtyou in shops relating to specific skills. QR code to SL website. Article in local print media and NLC Facebook.
Country fair – Normanby hall
Stall at St Johns Market – crafts table for children. Promote awareness of fostering and supported lodgings.
Fostering business targeting
Info event
New roundabout adverts (fostering and supported lodgings, Tesco/ Asda)
Poster drops
SEPTEMBER
Private fostering week –Update digital screens in town. Print advert in Scunthorpe Telegraph and News Direct about private fostering awareness. Print advert Scunthorpe United Magazine for fostering and supported lodgings (start of new season).
Info event – Advertise on Facebook and website
Facebook – Celebrating private fostering
Virtual training for LA, local businesses and for members of the public
'information hotline' advertised on social media.
OCTOBER
Print advert in News Direct, Early Years, Families Direct, Community Champions
Info event - Advertise on Facebook and website
Poster drops
NOVEMBER
'Short breaks week'. Radio advert Lincs FM/ Viking FM/ Capital. Update digital screens in town.
Treasure hunt - #shortbreaks #butterflies #NLCfostering (Gift bags hidden around visitor attractions/ dog walk spots with a card to post photos of what you found and a hashtag for our social media. QR code to website to find out more about fostering.
Scunthorpe telegraph – interview with short breaks/butterflies carer.
Pop up event at St Johns Market – focus on short breaks/ butterflies
Info event – focus on short breaks. Advertise on Facebook and Website.
DECEMBER
Stall at Normanby hall Christmas market. Provide merchandise and leaflets.
Poster drops
Drop ins with stall set up and merchandise– busy shopping locations e.g. coffee shops, supermarket cafes, The Foundry etc.
Radio and social media advertising
JANUARY
TBC
FEBRUARY
TBC
MARCH
TBC