

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

CYPS Directorate Leadership Team, 28th March 2019

Report Title

Big Hearts Big Changes – Market Management Project

Options to Increase the Recruitment of In-House Foster Carers

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jon Stonehouse, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Jenny Lingrell, Assistant Director Commissioning Performance & Inclusion
01709 254836 or jenny.lingrell@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The purpose of the Market Management Project is to increase the range of options available to provide sufficiency of accommodation for Rotherham's Looked After Children.

The draft LAC Sufficiency Strategy demonstrates that there are not enough in-house foster carers to meet current demand. The principles set out in the LAC Sufficiency Strategy suggest that in-house foster care is the best way to meet the needs of many of Rotherham's Looked After Children, and that this provides the best value for money.

The current Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy has not yielded a net gain in Foster Carers as the pace of (appropriate) de-registrations has outstripped the approval of new Foster Carers.

A new draft Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy has been prepared but it is acknowledged that current and planned activity may not provide the pace and volume of recruitment that is required. The Market Management Project Group has explored a number of options that have the potential to significantly accelerate progress towards increasing the number of Rotherham foster carers.

Recommendations

1. DLT is asked to approve options to increase the pace and rate of foster carer recruitment

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Draft Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy
- Appendix 2 Draft LAC Sufficiency Strategy
- Appendix 3 Draft Proposal from Bright Sparks

Background Papers

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Improving Lives Select Commission informal workshop

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Big Hearts Big Changes – Market Management Project

Options to Increase the Recruitment of In-House Foster Carers

1. Background

- 1.1 The draft LAC Sufficiency Strategy demonstrates that there are not enough in-house foster carers to meet current demand. The principles set out in the LAC Sufficiency Strategy suggest that in-house foster care is the best way to meet the needs of many of Rotherham's Looked After Children, and that this provides the best value for money.
- 1.2 The current Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy has not yielded a net gain in Foster Carers as the pace of (appropriate) de-registrations has outstripped the approval of new Foster Carers.
- 1.3 A new draft Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy has been prepared but it is acknowledged that current and planned activity may not provide the pace and volume of recruitment that is required. The Market Management Project Group has explored a number of options that have the potential to significantly accelerate progress towards increasing the number of Rotherham foster carers.

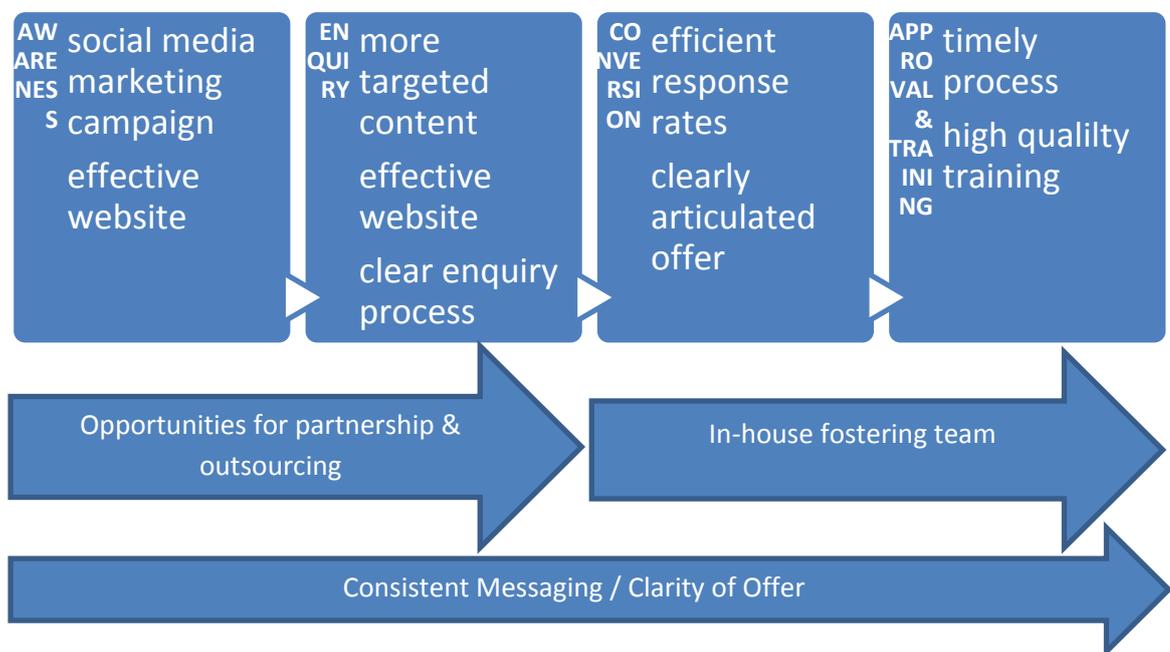
2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The draft Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy references recent research commissioned to support local authorities recruit more foster carers. Fostering Network together with the Department for Education, identified that there are two key groups of potential foster carers: pioneers and prospectors.
- 2.2 Pioneers are motivated by an intrinsic desire to 'do the right thing' and to contribute to improving society. This group are motivated by the outcomes they can deliver rather than being motivated primarily by financial gain. This makes things like the support available a primary consideration when choosing between a foster carer for a local authority or an independent fostering agency.
- 2.3 Prospectors are motivated by monetary gain and maximising their own standing and importance; they will look for opportunities to advance and take pleasure in recognition and reward.
- 2.4 The Narey Report (2018) identifies that social media is increasingly being used to improve recruitment. The Fostering Network suggests that as many as 38% of all enquiries now come through the internet. Rotherham's digital presence at the moment is almost non-existent; the website is hard to reach and navigate, and Twitter and Facebook accounts are not well used.
- 2.5 The key strands of activity identified in the Draft Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy are to:
 - Raise awareness through social media, word of mouth, campaigns in the workplace, neighbourhood engagement and using stakeholders and key influencers;

- Improve the rate of conversion from initial enquiry through to final approval by increasing efficiency, articulating the Rotherham offer more effectively, including Rotherham's values, support offer and fees and allowances;
- Continue targeted work, including Muslim Foster Carer project and new projects to encourage transfer from Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) to in-house Rotherham Carer.

2.6 For the purposes of considering options to enhance this approach, the process has been broken down into four phases: awareness, enquiry, conversion, approval and training. The options considered for partnership working and outsourcing relate to the first two steps of the process and consider where they may be an opportunity to work with other organisations to raise awareness and generate warm enquiries, allowing the fostering team to focus on conversion and the approval and training process.

2.7 In addition to the work summarised below there may be targeted, community-based projects that would be led by the fostering team, for example, working in a specific ward to generate awareness through face to face events.



3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option 1 – Co:Create

3.1.1 The emphasis of the Co:Create proposal is to co-design and embed a value based approach to the recruitment process.

3.1.2 The proposal focuses on the six phases of a co-production exercise, preceded by time to plan and develop the project with the fostering team. The phases are to:

- Empathise – this phase focuses on understanding the perspectives of key stakeholders and identifying what matters most to children and young people, prospective and existing foster carers, people who are started but not completed the recruitment process and the RMBC Fostering Team
- Define – this phase involves creating a clear picture of the process and, particularly, understanding key touch-points that could be enhanced to ensure that prospective foster carers remain engaged.
- Ideate – co-designing ‘what good looks like’ through a series of workshops
- Prototype – modelling a changed process that builds on the information gathered so far and increases levels of interest and likelihood of conversion. It is also proposed that this phase would involve co-design and production of paperwork, policies and procedures.
- Test – putting the changes into action
- Deliver – includes a programme of training for RMBC staff.

3.1.3 The timescales for this work would be to commence in April 2019 and reach the final phase in August 2019.

3.1.4 The costs identified in the proposal are as follows:

Planning & development 4 days	£1,400
Empathise 5 days plus participant expenses	£2,100
Define 6 days plus participant expenses	£2,250
Ideate 6 days plus participant expenses	£2,450
Prototype 8 days plus participant expenses	£2,950
Test 8 days plus participant expense	£2,800

Staff training 4 days plus participant expenses	£1,550
Implementation 4 days plus participant expenses	£1,400
Total (including VAT)	£20,280

3.1.5 This proposal is has co-production at its heart and lacks any marketing or social media expertise. The focus is on getting the messaging right and ensuring that this is embedded in the approach of the Rotherham team who respond to enquiries. The co-production focus relies on understanding what has worked best in the past for Rotherham, rather than exploring new technologies or innovation or delivering any increase in the scale. The cost of the full proposal is less than the cost of a member of staff, and would doubtless add value to the process. However, it is not the recommended option, (although training for the staff team in value-based recruitment could be explored as a stand-alone element).

3.2 Option 2 – You Can Foster

3.2.1 Placements North West is a regional collaboration that exists in order to improve outcomes for children and young people, and provide value for money, by promoting a regional approach to commissioning children’s social care placements.

3.2.2 You Can Foster is a regional fostering campaign delivered by Placements North West. Since its conception in 2010 the project has generated enquiries from prospective foster carers through regional marketing activity. You Can Foster in its current format comprises of a brand (refreshed in 2016) and a website. Advertising drives enquiries through to the website from which they are distributed to local authorities for processing. You Can Foster currently generates around 20% of the region’s enquiries. You Can Foster currently includes local authorities from the North West, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire.

3.2.3 Placements North West is funded by the 23 local authorities in the North West and hosted by Bolton Council. All procurement and invoicing procedures go through Bolton Council.

3.2.4 You Can Foster is seeking to extend its reach into more local authorities in the region. Rotherham has the option to ‘subscribe’ this this model at a cost of £1423 per annum

3.2.5 This spend would include a digital campaign covering participating Yorkshire authorities to include:

- Low level Adwords spend over the whole year (amount agreed by participating LAs)
- Two Facebook fortnight long campaigns run at times agreed by participating LAs and with spend agreed by participating LAs)

3.2.6 The advantage of this approach is that it is low cost, and will raise awareness of fostering. Work to date in the North West has proved successful. However, the levels of advertising spend remains modest in the context of what is spent by Independent Fostering Agencies, and the level of enquiries will only increase proportionately. The messaging will not be specific to Rotherham.

3.2.7 It is recommended that Rotherham engages in this project as the investment and risk is low. However, it is not recommended that this is the only approach as it is unlikely to generate the level of response that is required.

3.3 Option 3 – Freelance Marketing Resource

3.3.1 The Fostering Team have received quotes from two freelance marketing professionals. Both would offer support with a social media campaign on a fee for service basis. Both are experience marketing professionals but do not have direct experience of running a campaign to recruit foster carers. The quotes below only include an advertising budget where this is directly referenced.

3.3.2 There is a risk that the investment in consultant time would not yield the results anticipated, or that significant further expenditure would be required to deliver the number of enquiries that are needed to convert into ‘warm leads’.

3.3.3

Quote 1	
Campaign creation, strategy, support & management (including graphic GIF and animated content)	£550 a month
Consultation fee	£240 a month (estimate)
Suggested advertising budget	£100 a month minimum

Quote 2	
Audit & Strategy Development	£1500
Initial creation of social media assets including images and animation	£1250
Creation of social media assets thereafter	£500 a month
Social Media Management March to September	£2700
Optional facilitation of Q&A session	£400
Optional Blog writing	£300 per blog
Optional photography	£200 per half day shoot

3.4 Option 4 – Partnership with Bright Sparks

- 3.4.1 Bright Sparks is a creative communications and business development agency; they have recently done a significant piece of work to explore regional sufficiency arrangements for Looked After Children. They combine detailed knowledge of market management for Children and Young People's Services with marketing and digital design expertise.
- 3.4.2 The primary goal of the project would be to create an Inbound Marketing Funnel, designed to move people from the initial awareness raising and engagement stage through to the lead prospect stage and into the Fostering Services assessment and approval pipeline. This would be a pilot exercise to understand a new model of service that can then inform service development and commissioning intentions for the future.
- 3.4.3 The full scope of the proposal is set out in the appendix. Further work would be needed to define at which stage enquiries from prospective foster carers would be handed over to the RMBC Fostering Team.
- 3.4.4 The proposal sets out costs, including an aggressive (and expensive social media campaign), as though Rotherham were engaging with the provider on a fee per service basis.
- 3.4.5 The proposal also sets out preliminary thoughts about how an innovation partnership between RMBC and Bright Sparks might be explored; this would share the risk of investment in a social media campaign and explore the best handover points between marketing experts and fostering experts.
- 3.4.6 This is the most ambitious option; it is also the most costly and has the potential to yield the best results. In order to progress in full, a business case would need to be developed to demonstrate how the cost of current sufficiency arrangements could be saved to invest in a more innovate and aggressive way of recruiting foster carers.

- 3.5 **The recommended option is Options 2 and further exploration of Option 4.** Whilst a full business case is developed, work might commence immediately to re-design the Fostering Recruitment microsite on a fee for service basis. An improved website experience will add value to every element of the Fostering Recruitment Plan. It is recommended that some of the activity outlined in the Co-Create proposal is delivered by in-house resources in the Performance Team.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 No consultation work has been undertaken yet. It is proposed that consultation takes place with existing foster carers and prospective carers who did not progress their enquiry with Rotherham. This work would be covered if the Co:Create proposal was progressed. Alternatively, it could be scoped for delivery in-house by the Performance Team.

4.2 The Looked After Children's Council may wish to be involved in this work; the project team would need to seek their views.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 There is an urgent need to recruit more in-house foster carers. The preferred options need to be implemented as quickly as possible. All options identified are in a position to mobilise quickly.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 Full procurement advice to be sought following approval of recommendations from DLT. Option 4 will require the exploration of a pilot phase and / or the use of European Innovation Partnerships guidance, which may support the development of an innovative solution to a problem, particularly where risk is being shared between two partners.

6.2 Once the options are agreed clarity is required as to whether the costs of the proposals will be met from savings within the in-house fostering team due to a change in responsibilities, through estimated cost reductions to IFA placements, or a combination of both.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 Legal advice to be sought pending recommendation of DLT. Any contractual obligations

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 The report proposes engaging with external organisations on a fee for service or partnership basis rather than delivering work through internal resources. If the proposals are agreed they will add capacity to support the work of the Fostering Team. If significant additional demand is generated and it is agreed that the Fostering Team will respond to this demand, further consideration may be needed of whether additional in-house resources are required.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 This report relates directly to work that is intended to improve outcomes for Rotherham's Looked After Children.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 A draft Equality Analysis has been completed for the Market Management Project and identifies all equalities and human rights advice and implications relevant to this report.

11. Implications for Partners

- 11.1 The recruitment of in-house foster carers will mean that more children are able to remain in Rotherham and continue to be educated in Rotherham schools and be supported through local services.

12. Risks and Mitigation

- 12.1 The Market Management Project Risk Register has been developed and includes all risks relevant to this report.

13. Accountable Officer(s)

Jenny Lingrell, Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance & Inclusion

Catherine Boaler, Service Manager, Fostering & Adoption

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.