**Fostering Recruitment Strategy: 25th August 2021**

Fostering recruitment remains a key strategic focus within Regulated Services. Whilst continuing to recognize the immense skill and expertise contained within out current fostering family cohort, there is an ongoing need to expand the placement sufficiency and variety we are able to offer our cared for children. Whilst the number of cared for children continues to decrease, the needs of cared for children do not and there is specifically a need to develop our in-house ability to provide placement options for: older children; children with additional needs; children with complex needs; young people bridging out of residential provisions; unaccompanied asylum seeking children; sibling groups.

The reinvigorated recruitment campaign launched in May 2020 and continues to be reviewed and built upon.

The introduction of the Recruitment and Events Co-Ordinator has strengthened our recruitment focus and drive; the Co-Ordinator leads on engagement and marketing opportunities, as well as engaging with the local community and local business in respect of our Fostering Offer, and is now being linked regularly into Fostering Network meetings.

From September 2021, we will be re-running the marketing campaign on bus routes and on bus stops across Torbay, with a particular focus on the concept that you do not need to live in Torbay to foster for Torbay.

We have a regular marketing campaign running in local magazines, for example the Beach Hut publication, and are looking to expand on this in line with new community opportunities; we have begun to target specific publications, such as Police Life, with a particular focus on the Resilience fostering pathway due to the professional and personal skills and attributes of those perhaps retiring or moving on from careers in policing, nursing, teaching or other occupations which lend themselves to skills for fostering.

The Fostering Team were present at the Devon County Show from the 2nd July to the 4th July; the communications team promoted this through social media. This generated **eight** really good enquiries on Sunday 2nd July 2021 and a number of discussions with potential fostering families, which will hopefully convert to initial enquiries imminently.

The Gun stand said that they have a lot of members who would love to become Foster Carers however are worried that, as they own guns, they will be refused. Under the National Minimum Standards, anyone who wishes to foster has to store and register firearms safely and there is strict guidance in respect of owing a gun. Fostering have taken their details in the hope that the team may be able to explore the rules and regulations with regards owning a gun.

The mayor of Exeter approached the team and commented on how fantastic the work Torbay were doing with regards to Fostering. The use of the QR code was seen as particularly effective and allowed for enquiries to be processed in the immediacy.

Torbay Council have now entered into a three year contract with Home For Good, and have entered into the engagement phase with our local families of faith. Peter Clayton delivered a speech to the congregation of St Mary Magdalene’s Church in Torquay on the 19th June 2021, and delivered the message about the joint work being undertaken by Home For Good and Torbay to consider fostering as part our faith outworking. The Home for Good Torbay coordinator role is now being advertised and should be filled shortly. Regular catch up meetings are in place between Regulated Services and Home for Good in respect of the progress of their engagement work and all fostering social workers have now been subject to Home for Good Faith Literacy training which took place on the 22nd June 2021. There are plans to link Torbay Fostering Service with the Home for Good Facebook page and for a link to our website to be added to their homepage.

The Fostering Service have already begun to send out enquiries about the likelihood of 2022 taking place, considering the implications of the pandemic, and how the Fostering Service can be a presence at these events; this includes events such as Children’s Activity Week, the Babbacombe Fair and the Pedal Car Grand Prix.

A monthly meeting is now embedded, involving the Recruitment and Events Co-Ordinator, the Fostering Assessment Team Manager, and the Service Manager and Head of Service for Regulated, to review and monitor recruitment activity.

Next steps in terms of recruitment are:

* Enhance our use of social media, including Facebook Live drop-in sessions.
* Consultation with HR in respect of how Torbay Council as an employer can support employees considering fostering.
* Write an article about the benefits of fostering to be published in the local newspaper and as an online article.
* Confirm attendance at future events.
* Aim to replicate the success of the Train of Light Christmas event for fostering families and cared for children.
* Develop a Corporate Parenting Offer, detailing the offers made by local businesses in respect of cared for children, care experienced adults and fostering families.



Name: Becky Thompson, Head of Service (Regulated Services)

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