



Foster Care Recruitment

Recruitment activity

- Written annual Recruitment Strategy and evaluation of what is successful
- A clear 'brand identity' which is used in all adverts/activity
- A mixture of 'fixed' and one-off adverts
 - roundabouts, posters in the hospital, council website, volunteer centre website
 - Adverts in newspapers, parish magazines, Primary Times, News Central - 7 campaigns so far since April this year
- Face-to-face events are effective
 - drop-ins and information sessions at council offices, stalls at the Canal Festival, Picnic in the Park, Bedford Market
- Engaging with schools – stalls at upper school open evenings, and targeted presence in the special schools
- Editorials in newspapers and radio interviews
- New opportunities through social media – adverts on Google and Facebook, You Tube video, and posts on Twitter and Facebook

Our results

- 218 enquiries in 2011-12
- 128 so far to September 2012
- Important to respond quickly:
 - All enquirers sent an Information Pack within 24 hours of their enquiry
 - Social worker will then ring the enquirer within 2 working days and carry out an initial visit within 7 working days.
- 41 new households approved in 2011-12
- 20 approved in first six months this year
- Conversion rate of enquiry to approval is 19% - above the industry average of 10%
- Important to retain existing carers alongside recruitment

What foster carers tell us

- We don't lose carers to independent agencies once we have approved them
- Foster carers actively choose to foster for a council rather than in the private sector
- They feel well supported by the fostering service and value the support groups and practical support for placements
- If the shared service is split Central Bedfordshire is likely to retain more than half the foster carers as they know and trust the current service and personnel

Fostering allowances

- Allowances are only one factor of many that influence foster carers
- July 2011- consultation held with carers about how they wanted the amount of allowances to be determined
- A policy of continuing to pay 110% of Fostering Network recommended rates was formally adopted in line with the outcome of the consultation
- As the rates for 2012-13 were published so soon after the 2011 consultation we did not consult again regarding the specific amounts proposed.
- Rates for 2013-14 have been proposed by the Fostering Network and we are starting this year's consultation, the outcome of which will be brought to this panel
- We constantly evaluate how we compete with other fostering providers and take account of the factors that influence whether people start or cease fostering