

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 6th September 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Christine Taylor – Divisional Manager, Children in Care

SUBJECT: Foster Care Recruitment

Ward: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide information on the progress of the revised recruitment and retention campaign for foster carers

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That content of the report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 A Placement Strategy Review in respect of children in care was presented to the Executive Board of the Council on 5th November 2009.

3.2 The review focused initially on the borough's situation in relation to foster care. It identified that barriers to the recruitment of carers needed to be overcome in order to address a severe shortage of carers and the resulting high cost of placing a significant number of children in external provision.

3.3 As a result of that first stage of the review, the Executive Board agreed to support an Invest To Save Bid to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers through an increase in allowances.

3.4 The increased allowances will be introduced on 7th September 2010. However advertising and marketing activity has publicised the improved allowances since January 2010.

3.5 A summary of the activity between January and July 2010 is as follows:

- 148 enquiries from potential carers
- 6 information events held with a further 4 planned
- 26 potential carers have attended skills to foster training with more training planned for September.
- 7 new foster carers have already been approved, providing placements for 11 children.
- 10 further assessments are currently underway with the potential to

produce up to 15 placements.

- 7 existing carers have been de-registered during this period for various reasons, including changes in circumstances, concerns about practice and end of placement.

- 3.6 Advertising and marketing activity will continue throughout the year using a variety of mediums such as posters, leaflets, taxis, information events, articles, newsletters, buses, billboards, banners etc.
- 3.7 In addition to local activity, there is to be a North West fostering campaign which will commence in October 2010 and of which Halton will be part. This campaign aims to recruit a minimum of 150 new carers across the region by June 2011. The North West Improvement Efficiency Board has awarded funding to this campaign.
- 3.8 The recruitment and retention of carers continues to present challenges but since January 2010, activity has increased and new placements are now becoming available to children in care.
- 3.9 In addition to the increase in allowances, the role of Family Support Assistant has been introduced to the fostering team. This role provides additional practical support and advice to carers and is available some evenings and weekends.
- 3.10 Existing carers have received the new developments well and new carers have been attracted by the improved service offer. Some carers who were previously registered by other agencies have now joined Halton.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The recruitment of additional carers has already improved the availability of placements for children coming into care and has reduced the need for expensive alternative placements.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 5.1 Children and Young People in Halton
Improved recruitment and retention of foster carers will ensure that more children in care are able to remain within their own community. A larger number of carers will also result in greater choice and more appropriate 'matches' for young people.
- 5.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton
If young people are able to remain in Halton whilst in care, they will experience less disruption to their education and will benefit from the partnerships that have developed within the borough in relation to future employment and learning opportunities.
- 5.3 A Healthy Halton

Children in care and their carers will be able to access local resources which will help to provide for their physical and emotional health.

5.4 A Safer Halton

Young people often wish to remain within their own community and the ability to do so improves their likelihood of achieving well in all areas of their life.

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

If children in care feel settled and comfortable within their community they are likely to engage better in the opportunities the borough has to offer them.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 The first 6 months of the revised campaign have seen positive results. These need to be sustained in order to produce the number of carers required.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 Improving placement choice for children in care will improve their life chances and contribute to ensuring that the needs of this vulnerable group are met.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact
Children in Care Strategy	Grosvenor House	CT
Placement Strategy review Executive Board Report 05.11.09	Grosvenor House	CT
National Minimum Standards for Foster Care	Ofsted Website	CT
Fostering Effective Recruitment North West Campaign	Grosvenor House	CT