



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

FOSTERING SERVICE

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION BRIEF 2017
DATE: 14/12/2017

Havering
Making a Greater London





INTRODUCTION:

What we are currently doing

The fostering team is working hard to be the sufficiency that affords looked after children an opportunity to be cared for by in house carers, close to family and friends and with limited disruption to school life.

There are approximately 250 looked after children of which 107 are placed with in house carers (77 with LA foster carers; 12 in Connected persons arrangements and 14 in regulation 24 placements. There are 80 children in IFA foster placements.

This is the first time we have more children placed with in house foster carers over IFA placements.

Introduction of pathway carers – to support YP with multiple complex needs



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OVERVIEW APRIL 2017-OCT 2017

The Recruitment & Assessment Team received 95 prospective enquiries between 1st April 2017– 31st October 2017 and completed 22 home visits.

To support continued level of enquires throughout the year, the fostering service has “an always on” recruitment campaign alongside three targeted marketing campaigns throughout the year highlighting: - specific age ranges and sibling groups.

We currently operate a 12.5% conversion rate from enquiry to approval (up from 8% for April 16 to March 17), with an average enquiry rate of 13.57 per calendar month.

Havering’s Conversion rate is comparatively higher than surrounding London boroughs, where Newham, Redbridge and Tower Hamlets have highlighted a decline in conversation rates to approx. 6%, the national average is 10% for 2016.





OVERVIEW APRIL 2017-OCT 2017

- ❖ Currently Havering fostering service has 107 in-house foster placements including connected carers. In October 2015 the figure was 82, and in October 2016 it was 74. This is showing an increase in use of in house placements.
- ❖ The service has approved 8 foster carers between April 2017 and October 2017, providing placements to 9 children for various ages, 3 whom were teenagers and 3 lots of sibling placements. Of this figure 3 foster carers specifically offer placements to children aged 11 years plus.
- ❖ Our new approved carer households since April 2017 are 4 White British, 2 Black Caribbean, 1 Black African and one Portuguese and Egyptian couple. We are increasing the diversity of our foster carers; but are limited due to the current demographics of Havering.
- ❖ Through key campaign messages and increased face to face interactions, the fostering service evidences that the calibre of applicants who have transitioned to approved foster carers are demonstrating increased capabilities in working with children aged 11 plus.
- ❖ The Pathway Carers Programme has allowed foster carers to be supported with a wrap around package that includes: designated AP; access to therapeutic support; Virtual school; increased visits; 3 monthly review of placement and designated support group for the pathway carers.
- ❖ Review of carers who have not had a placement for a three month period and explore ways to re-engage them with potential placements.





FOSTER CARER ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

The overall fostering recruitment process takes approximately 6 months for prospective foster carers to complete both stages. The assessment considers motivation, family situation, home environment, history, value systems, social skills, emotional strength, personal strengths, areas for development, understanding racism/oppression etc. This intense process aims to establish if applicants are suitable and safe to become foster carers for the communities' most vulnerable children. Some households choose to withdraw once they realise the in-depth safeguarding processes.

Processes are reviewed to ensure that applicants are not only suitable, but motivated to engage and become part of the fostering service; engage in training; work within fostering standards and develop their skills to match the evolving needs and demographics of YP coming into care.

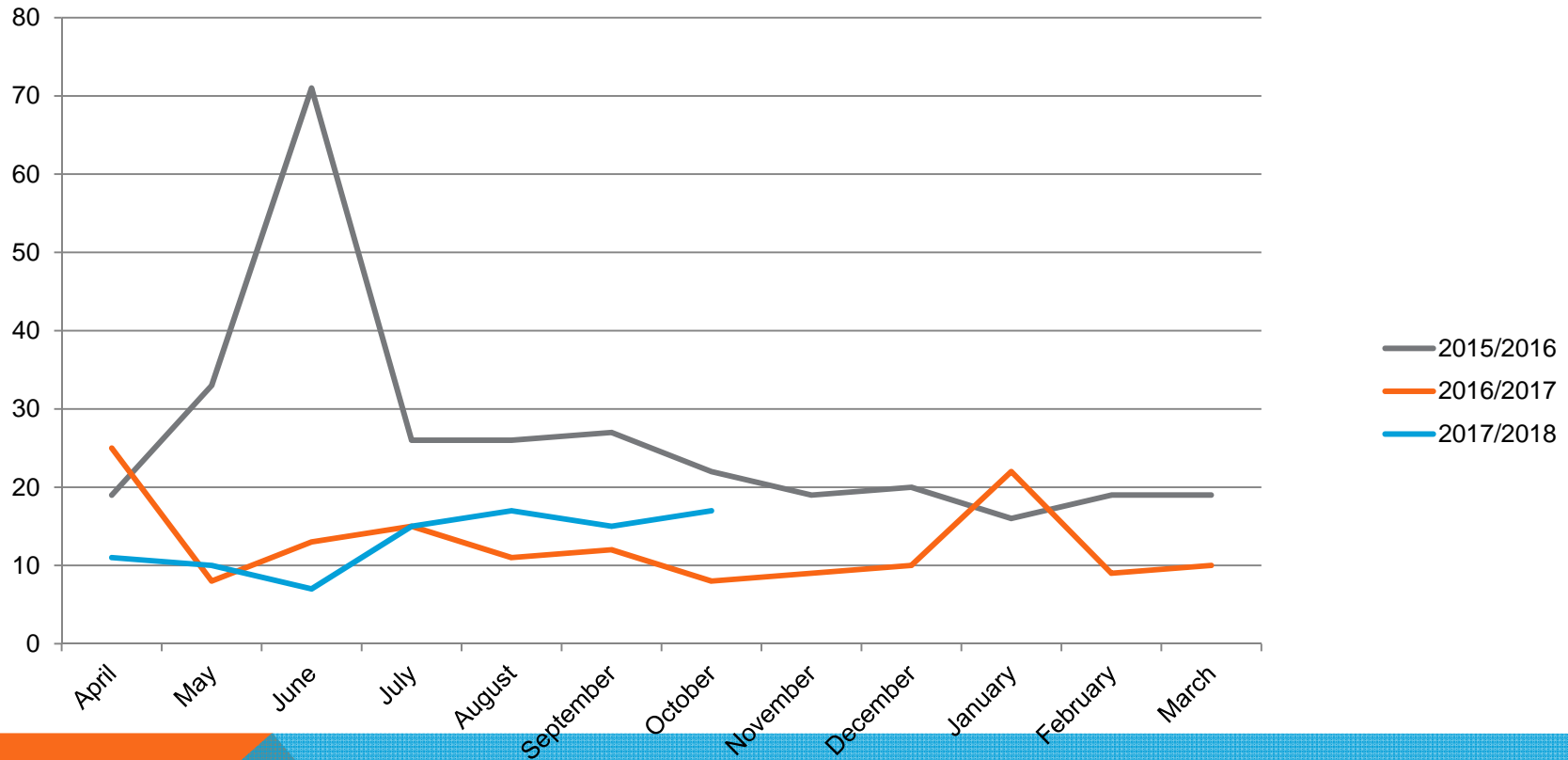
Household members are considered within the assessment/ training in order to strengthen the offer to YP

Further work is being undertaken to support and develop all household members and other key support networks via training and discussion opportunities





FOSTERING INITIAL ENQUIRIES APRIL 2015- OCT 2017



*please note the high figures for June are assessed to be due to a combination of Fostering fortnight, a large amount of national media coverage in radio/TV shows and the use of Network Natives (advertising network) None of these enquiries converted to approvals.



2.0 ADVERTISING AND MARKETING ACTIVITY

To support foster carer recruitment, advertising and marketing operational activity is structured to cover the full 12 month duration. This guarantees continuous fostering recruitment activity; whilst ensuring the recruitment and assessment team can effectively manage enquiries and ensure assessments are undertaken in the Ofsted regulated time frame of between 4-6 months.

Havering has a high saturation of IFA (Independent Fostering Agencies) who are either local or national agencies all targeting the same pool of potential foster carers.

To ensure our message is not lost, Havering fostering service will spend approximately £22,975 till January 2018, with the remaining allocated funds being set apart for the new Fostering Ambassadors programme. Each enquiry costs £129.07 to generate.

2.0 ADVERTISING AND MARKETING ACTIVITY

During 2016/2017 the main emphasis of the marketing messages has been to promote that teenagers need foster carers. These are some of our hardest to place young people. The 3 key campaigns have been targeted during May 2017, November 2017, and January 2018.

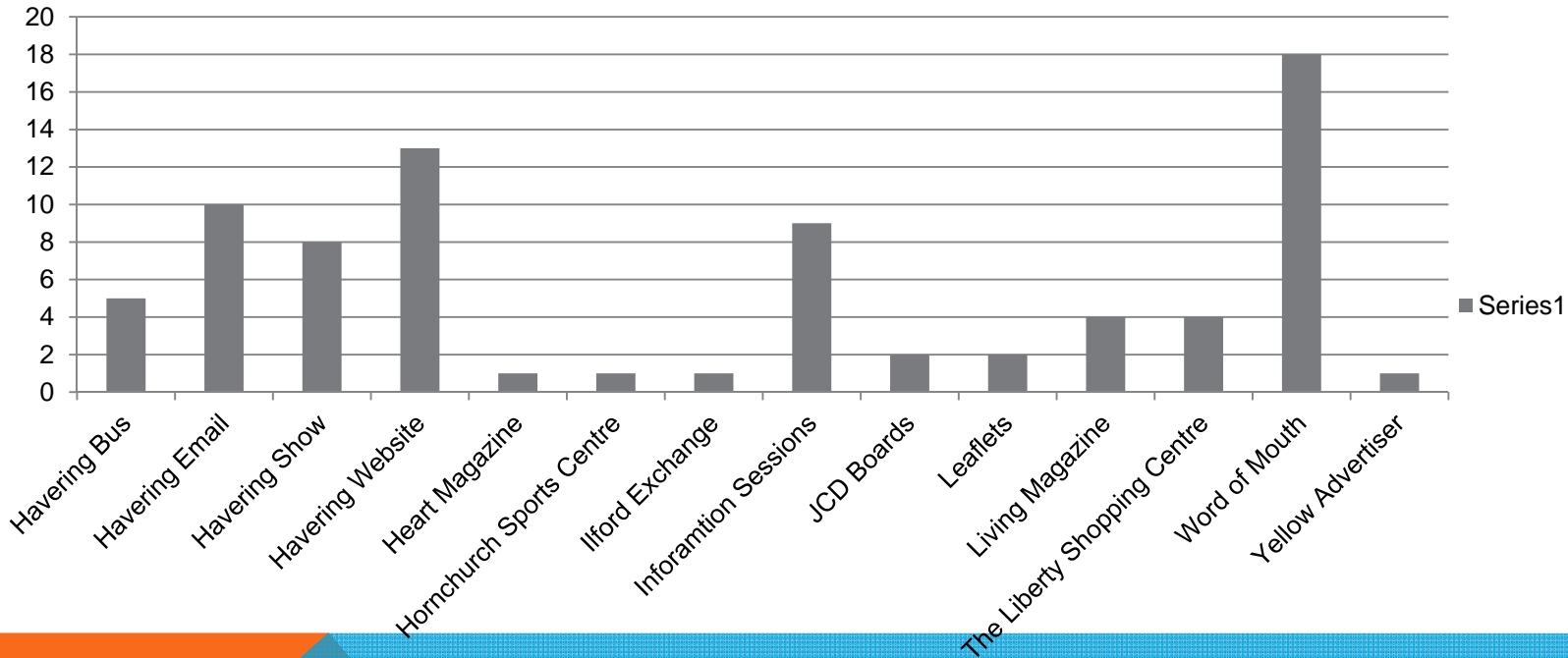
Marketing activity has ranged from:

- ❖ Working in collaboration with the Children in Care Council to produce radio adverts
- ❖ Hosting promotional events around and outside of the borough,
- ❖ Print publications, billboards
- ❖ Producing bi-monthly case studies, press releases and social media and Havering E-news.

It is important to understand how our marketing and communication messages engage with members of the public, and what entices prospective applicants to apply with Havering Council.

All prospective foster carers are asked to state where they acquired either information regarding Havering's fostering service or learnt about us. Further data is to be captured on the initial method of interest noted for each approval at the Fostering and Adoption Panel and factored in to further marketing plans.

TABLE 1.0 DEMONSTRATES ADVERTISING AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS RECORDED FROM 95 ENQUIRES.



2.3 WORD OF MOUTH

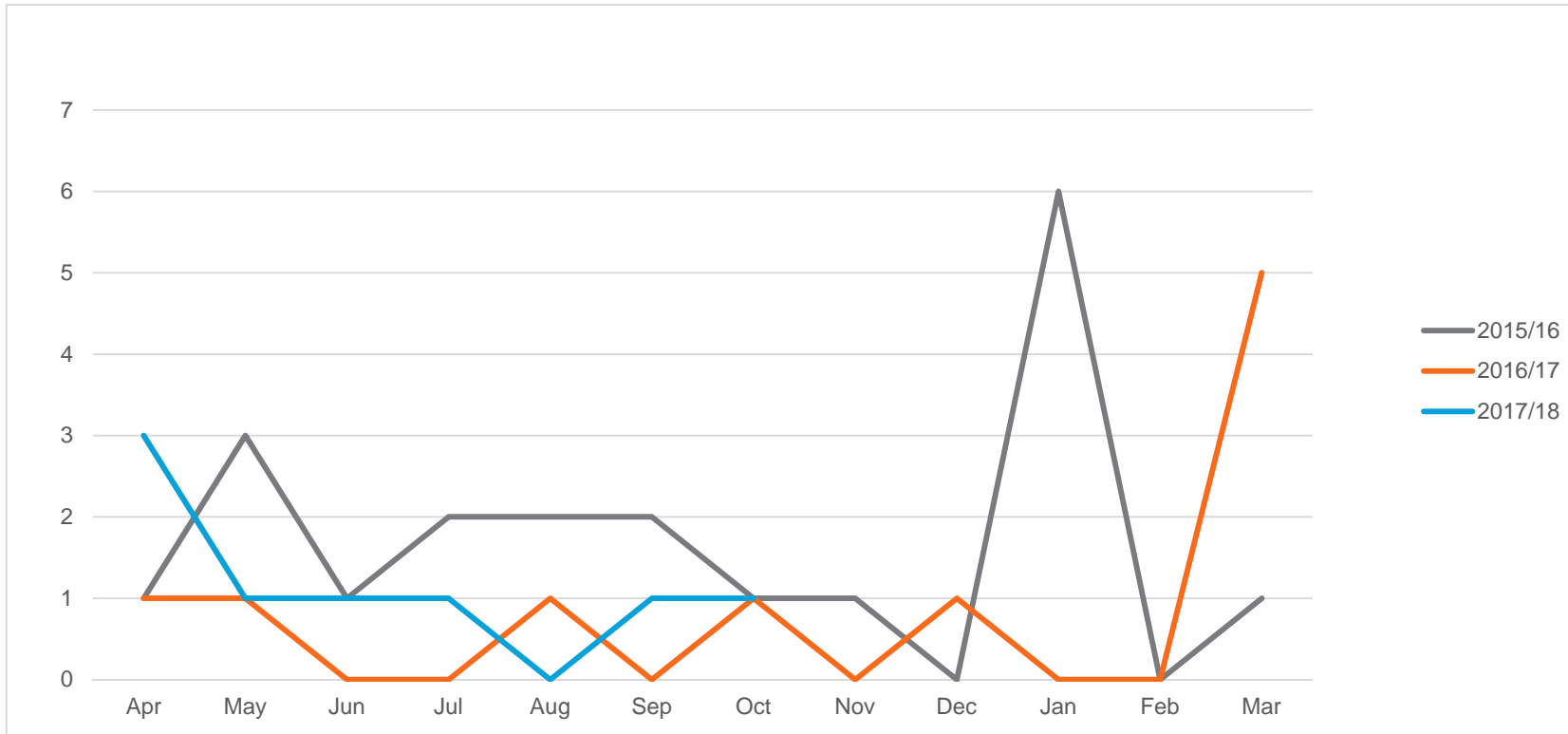
- ❖ **Word of mouth has grown significantly as a source of reference for information sharing amongst our applicants.**
- ❖ **The approach this year was to promote foster carers case studies every two months via the Living magazine, the aim is for each feature to become a conversational piece in the community.**
- ❖ **We have ensured that our internal processes are streamlined and each applicant received a positive experience and interaction when engaging with the service.**
- ❖ **Use of the Fostering Ambassadors to help spread the word in a positive**

All applicants receive a response within 24 hours and all applicants deemed less suited to fostering and therefore not progressing are notified with a timely response which includes reasons as to why we are unable to proceed. Reasons may include: not having spare bedrooms; --

2.4 FACE TO FACE ENGAGEMENT

- ❖ **Active promotional activities throughout the year, targeting Romford, Hornchurch high-street, Upminster high street, various supermarkets and ad hoc locations outside of borough.**
- ❖ **This enables and allows direct interface with members of the public, supports myth busting and encourages people who are unsure if they are a viable candidate to have an informal chat.**
- ❖ **Our evaluation has demonstrated that various marketing activities have contributed to all approvals, and not one advertising avenue proved the most effective from enquiry to approval. This supports our multi-layered marketing and advertising approach.**
- ❖ **The new Fostering Ambassadors programme has been implemented to grow direct recruitment through face to face engagements utilizing the foster carer to be a positive voice for Children's services.**

FOSTER CARER APPROVALS APRIL 2015-OCTOBER 2017



3.0 THE NEXT STAGES FOR 2017/2018

- ❖ **The Recruitment & Assessment Team currently have 5 households booked to attend January 2017 Skills to foster training.**
- ❖ **This is a 3 day detailed work shop that is only offered once prospective foster carer has successfully completed a positive initial enquiry and home visit.**
- ❖ **Events scheduled until March 2018; with activities already being identified for 2018/19**



4.0 DE-REGISTRATIONS -

2015/16 = 9

2016/17 = 15

2017/18 = 6 (until Oct 17)

Table 2.0 Lists the reasons and number of Foster Carer de-registrations since April 2017 to end of October 2017 (not including connected persons).

<u>Reason for de-registration</u>	<u>No. of Carers</u>
Care Standards/allegation/not working with department	3
Moved	1
Health Issues	
Foster Carers personal relationship ended	1
Death of carer	1



4.0 DE-REGISTRATIONS

Table 2.1 lists the reasons the number for foster carers de-registered during 2016/2017

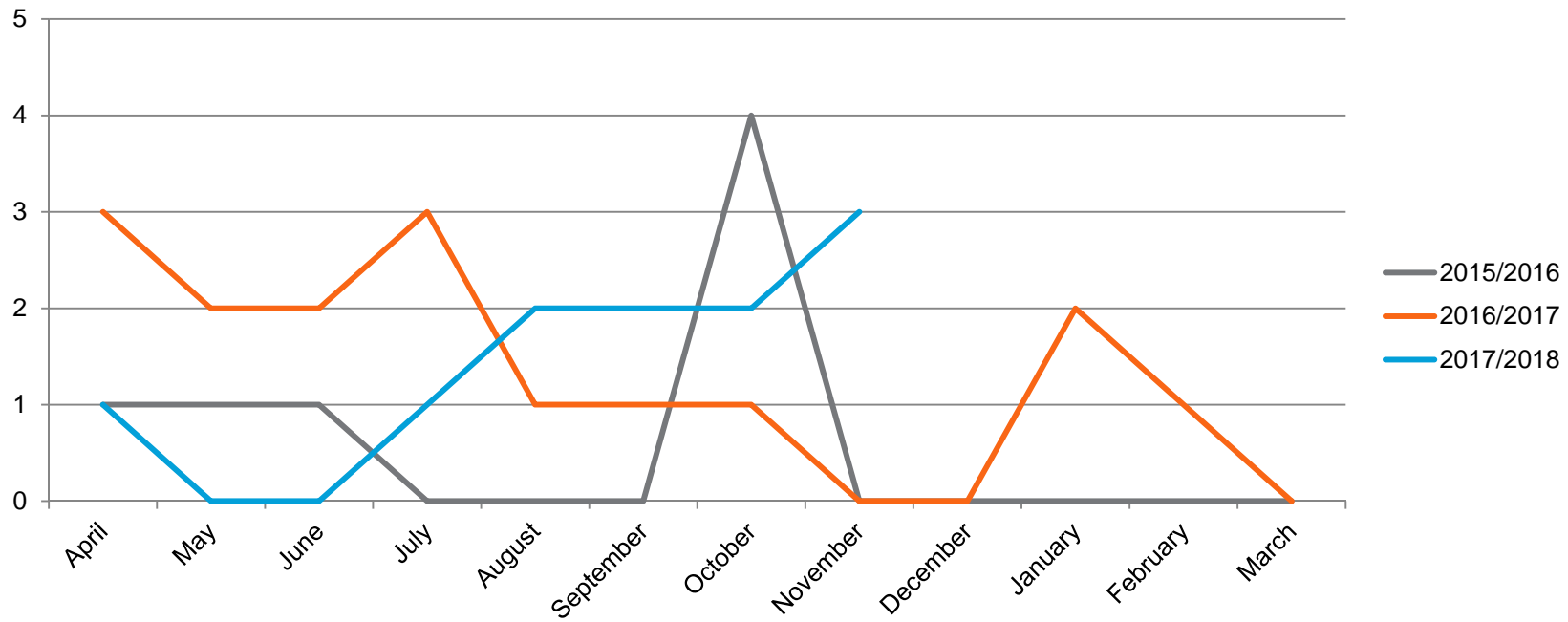
<u>Reason for de-registration</u>	<u>No. of Carers</u>
Retired	4
Care Standards Issue	4
Moved over 100 miles	2
Health Issues	1
Foster Carers personal relationship ended	1
Could no longer cope with the emotional element of fostering – Personal Choice	1
Decision to foster for neighbouring borough/IFA	2

Since 1st April 2017, six Foster carers have been de-registered. This figure shows increased retention against last year's de-registration figures.

Generally withdrawals from the fostering service are natural i.e. retirement, moving, health needs/relationships changing etc. but there have also been a number of difficulties for some Foster Carers regarding their understanding and development difficulties around the changing needs and complexities of young people coming into the care system, and the subsequent challenges from the department.



FOSTER CARER DE-REGISTRATIONS APRIL 2015-OCT 2017



WHAT ATTRACTS FOSTER CARERS

Recent feedback from current Foster Carers to understand what attracted them to fostering highlighted the following:

- ❖ **Flexibility**
- ❖ **A career for some who had been out of the workplace for a while bringing up their own families**
- ❖ **Seen as a professional**
- ❖ **Ability to 'earn' money while working from home.**
- ❖ **Clarity around the level of support (especially when IFAs transition to LA carers)**
- ❖ **Progression from being a child minder**
- ❖ **To give something back to the community**
- ❖ **One ex-care leaver who wants YP to know they can be successful**

This feedback will be used to influence upcoming campaigns in 2018.



PROGRESS AND COMPARISON WITH OTHER LAS:

- ❖ **On track to recruit 20 new fosters carers during 2017/2018, especially for teenagers and sibling groups (with separate bedrooms available).**
- ❖ **In comparison with some neighbouring boroughs Havering is doing well. Newham have recruited seven foster carers since April 2016. Redbridge have recruited one foster carer in this financial year.**
- ❖ **The Fostering Ambassadors initiative will encourage current Foster carers to become more integral to the recruitment process by arranging further events and attendance at different venues will assist the range and frequency of recruitment opportunities including local faith groups.**
- ❖ **Currently there are 9 people (5 households) who are on the skills to foster training.**
- ❖ **Direct emotive messages used in advertising visuals have been referenced during skills to foster training. This reinforces the message that the service continually needs a multi-layered approach when seeking to recruit foster carers.**



FOSTER CARER APPROVALS APRIL 2015- OCTOBER 2017

In order to retain foster carers recruited the following has been implemented:

- ❖ **Increased SSW visits at point of first or initial placement**
- ❖ **Review of SSW supervision of foster carers**
- ❖ **Increased joint visits with ISS SW staff**
- ❖ **Separate support group for newly approved foster carers (up to two years post approval)**
- ❖ **Induction programme for new foster carers**
- ❖ **Linking of foster carers to offer a level of informal support**
- ❖ **Using feedback from foster carers to review service provision**
- ❖ **Introduction of the Ambassadors scheme**
- ❖ **Embed links with HFCA (New Committee)**
- ❖ **Foster Talk – independent support to foster carers when there are allegations**
- ❖ **Use of pre-placement planning meetings to improve matching and ensure child's profile is understood in context of their lived experiences**
- ❖ **Systemic training for Pathway carers**
- ❖ **Monthly of three monthly reviews of care arrangements for children within the Pathway foster care arrangements.**

PROJECTIONS:

- ❖ From 2015 to date a total of 30 foster carers were de-registered. This was due to a number of factors such as ill health, death, non-compliance with care standards and change in circumstances.
- ❖ In 2016/17 a total of 15 fostering households resigned, and to date in this financial year 6 fostering households resigned. Some of these resignations were necessary in order to maintain quality of care giving standards and environments for looked after children.
- ❖ The fostering team aims to reduce the number of de-registrations by ensuring effective support/ monitoring and training is in place not just for carers but also for the SSWs. Looking at the number of deregistration over the last three financial years the average loss is 10 per year.
- ❖ By the end of the financial year 2017/18 there will be at least 85 fostering households projected to be on Havering foster carer register. This will include 9 new approvals from December 2018.
- ❖ There are at least 4 house-holds on the skills to foster starting in January 2018 who will not be approved within the financial year



RECOMMENDATIONS:

The continued support from the council in supporting the fostering message will have a direct positive influence on the number of new approvals.

There is evidence that foster carer recruitment is progressing positively within Havering aided by the new Fostering Ambassadors' scheme.

In order to maintain a high level of foster carer recruitment, retention and satisfaction Havering plans to:

- ❖ To have fostering visuals on Havering Branded transport; this is currently being demonstrated by Waltham Forest where their yearly fostering target is 33 approvals during 2017/2018.
- ❖ To have a fostering promotional recorded message played to all inbound calls and increased visuals in all parks would support our 'always recruiting campaign'. Alongside the continuing programme of events and activities that are noted to engage interest, we are also considering other methods on a regular basis and encourage other Foster Carers and employees to share further ideas. Expand advertising campaign to neighbouring boroughs
- ❖ Monitor impact of the Fostering Ambassadors Scheme
- ❖ Monitor impact of Pathway carers in providing in-house carers to young people with multiple complex needs.
- ❖ Build in continuous feedback loop from foster carers, YP in care, professionals, to SSW and child's SW
- ❖ Embed pre-placement planning meetings
- ❖ Use HFCA to support recruitment and retention work
- ❖ Identify training / learning when foster carers resign (what could have been done differently)
- ❖ Advertise for foster carers using staff literature within hospitals; education and any other caring professions.
- ❖ Use LSCB partner agencies to raise the recruitment campaign within the different agencies

