

**Powys County Council
Fostering Service**

Report for Scrutiny Committee 16th December

Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Update

Marketing Activity Undertaken

Specific adverts have been created to focus on the recruitment of teenagers. These have been distributed in the following ways –

- across some of the main postal areas across Powys via Royal Mail
- placed in County Times, Brecon & Radnor & Shropshire Star w/c 30th November to tie in with the Royal Welsh Winter show
- attendance at Winter show 30th November & 1st December
- Digi story developed
- 'A day in the life of a foster carer' article sent to In Focus for inclusion in next edition
- Teenager leaflets sent to Pensions Dept for inclusion in pension letters to imminent retirees.
- Twitter feed set up in English & Welsh
- Regular posts on Facebook
- Discussion with PAVO as to using their networks for dissemination of teenager adverts etc

Recruitment Update

Since 1st September 2015 until 25th November and following a more focused approach in advertising for carers to provide placements for teenagers and children with more complex needs we have received 31 enquiries from people expressing an interest in fostering.

Of these:

10 have been closed – reasons cited: no spare bedroom (1), moving house (2), young baby at home (2), IFA carer not wishing to transfer (1), not ready (3), no response to follow up (1)

3 initial visit have been undertaken – 2 recommended to progress to training and application, 1 recommended not to progress.

11 have requested initial visits or have appointments scheduled. It is planned that these will be completed by the end of December where possible. However, some applicants have asked for visits after Christmas. These visits will be completed in January.

7 are being followed up – calls, emails or letters sent

Of the 31 enquiries received, interest has been expressed in the following areas of fostering -

Teenagers: 2 have expressed interest in teenagers

0-11 years: 14 have expressed a wish to foster this age group and not older.

Respite: 2 have specified a wish to offer respite only

Unspecified: 13 enquirers have not specified an age, wishing to seek advice and guidance

Applications to Foster

7 applications are outstanding – and these people have been contacted to encourage completion of the application form.

Of these 3 are wishing to consider teenagers, 3 respite only and 2 wish to foster 0-11 years only.

1 application has been received for the provision of respite care

A further 3 couples are currently attending Skills to Foster preparation training.

Assessments

5 assessments are currently being undertaken.

1 is specifically looking to provide placements for teenagers

2 are being assessed to provide respite care

1 is looking to provide short term care

1 is a specific friends and family assessment

Where people have expressed an interest in caring for teenagers, we are clear that these assessments will be prioritised to ensure placement availability for this group of young people. I would expect that where possible assessments will be completed within three months providing there are no issues that arise during the assessment period.

Current Approved Foster Carers and provision of placements

This provides information on the number of approved foster carers and the number of children they are able to provide placements for and the current number of vacancies available.

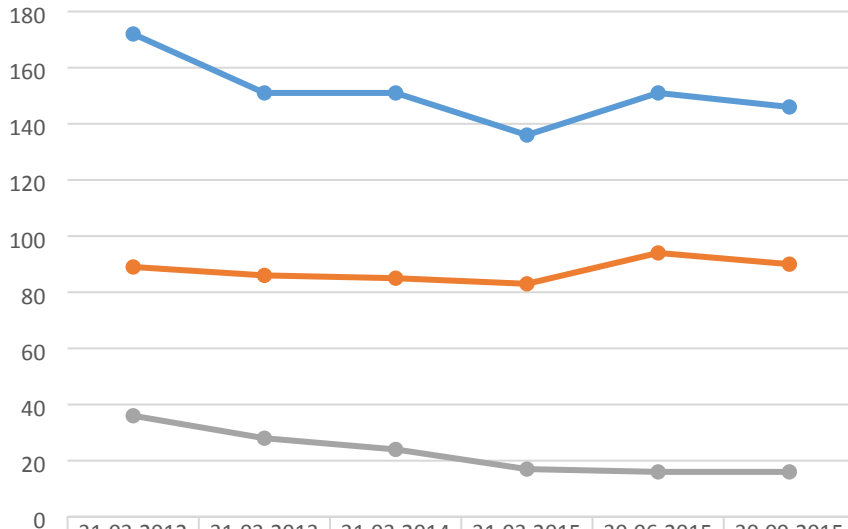
		Placements available	Vacancies
Total number of carers	120	194	38
Generic	69	114	22
Respite/Short Breaks	40	62	16
Family and friends	11	18	0

Data Comparison of Placements

This information provides a summary of children's placements across the last three years and evidences a steady increase in children placed with in-house foster carers. Our current rate is at 62%.

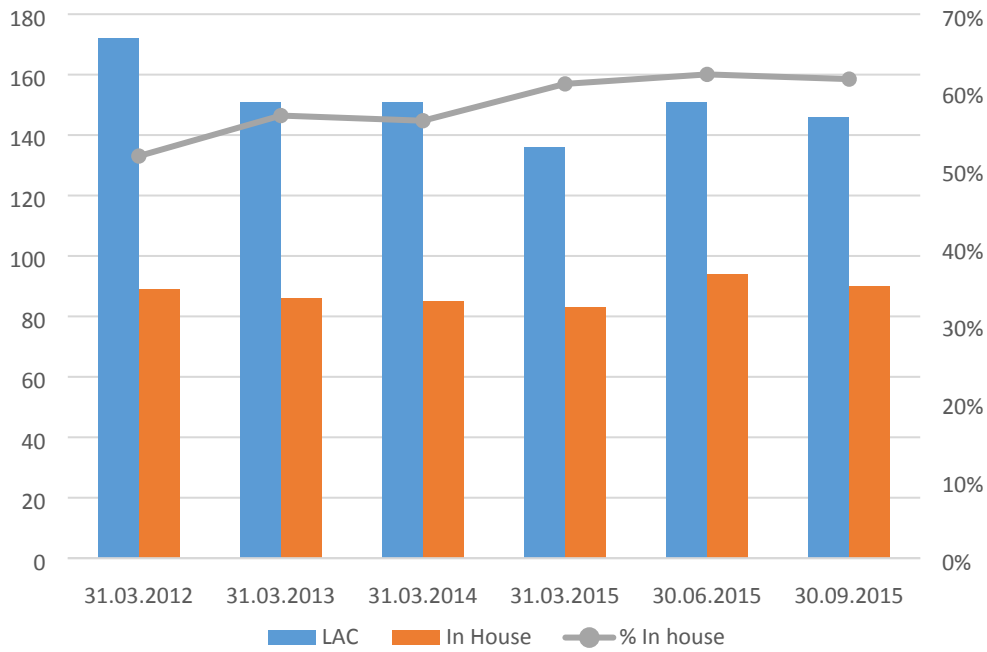
	31.03.12	31.03.13	31.03.14	31.03.15	30.06.15	30.09.15
LAC	172	151	151	136	151	146
In House	89	86	85	83	94	90
Friends and Relatives	19	18	16	16	18	17
Adoptive	10	8	6	1	1	4
Parents	5	4	10	7	10	7
Independent Living	2	1	1	2	2	2
IFA	36	28	24	17	16	16
Residential – External Provision	7	3	5	5	4	5
Residential – Internal Bannau Unit	3	3	4	5	5	5
Secure Unit	1	0	0	0	1	1
% In house	52%	57%	56%	61%	62%	62%

Looked After Children and Placement Type



	31.03.2012	31.03.2013	31.03.2014	31.03.2015	30.06.2015	30.09.2015
LAC	172	151	151	136	151	146
In House	89	86	85	83	94	90
IFA	36	28	24	17	16	16

Looked After Children and % Placed with In-house Carers



Summary

Whilst we have seen an increase in the numbers of enquiries being received by the team, we continue to find that people new to fostering are not initially looking to provide placements for teenagers or children with more complex needs.

However, we should be encouraged by the increase in enquiries and look to continue to recruit suitable generic foster carers. It is important that we invest in these applicants, provide them with appropriate training for the role as a foster carer, provide them with effective support and supervision in their role and over time assist in their development and confidence to consider caring for teenagers and children with more complex needs and behaviours.

We have many examples of foster carers who initially applied to become respite carers and who have gone on to provide long term stable placements for children when they have increased their experience of fostering on a short term basis. We have carers who have been fostering for Powys for many years some of whom have been doing so for 30+ years.

We believe that as a service if we provide the support and positive recognition to our foster carers of the invaluable role they play, they in turn will show true dedication and commitment to not only the children that are placed with them but also to continuing to provide a service to Powys County Council.

Our intentions over the coming months are to continue the increased activity in marketing campaigns to ensure a high rate of enquiries continues particularly for carers able to provide placements for teenagers.

We will implement our new Tier Model to encourage career progression of foster carers and with this the encouragement to consider providing placements for teenagers. A clear training and development package will be implemented from April in line with the new training programme which will focus more heavily on targeted training for those caring for teenagers. Further development will also be made around the support packages available for these foster carers to enable them to maintain placements that become more challenging and complex.

Lisa Hocking
Fostering Team Manager
02.12.15