

Appendix 1

“
**IF I CAN DO IT
SO CAN YOU.**
**BECOME A
FOSTER
CARER**
”

FOSTERING RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

2014-2015

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1. Background and Aim

On any one day there are approximately 63,000 children living in foster care in the UK. Foster care provides them with a safe, secure and nurturing family environment, and allows them to keep in contact with their own families if they wish and if it does not compromise their welfare. The Fostering Network estimates that nationally there is a shortage of 8,600 Foster families in the UK. This deficit has an impact for every local authority upon, choice of placement for CLA, permanence planning for children, retention of foster carers and cost outcomes. A further 1025 foster carers need to be recruited in London (Fostering Network Recruitment Targets 2014)

Fostering Network has estimated that each foster family costs £11,500 to recruit [Tapsfield and Collier, Cost of Foster Care, Fostering Network & BAAF, 2005]. It is therefore essential that carers once approved are provided with a comprehensive range of support services to enable them to cope with the very challenging task of fostering and meeting the needs of Looked After children and young people.

This document will provide a profile of the current carers. It will consider local demographics and key issues impacting on recruiting new foster carers. It will include the key responsibilities that are held by staff in the service. The report will look at the key issues affecting fostering in Harrow and complement the Children Looked After Sufficiency Strategy which outlines the needs of the CLA population.

The aim of the recruitment strategy is not just about recruiting more carers but to attract prospective carers who share the linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the children and who have the skills, experience and capacity to offer the best care possible. It is imperative that our pool of carers can meet the needs of the children coming into our care so that their experience of being looked after provides them with care, stability, security and positive life chances and outcomes.

2. Research – Recruitment of Foster Carers

The Department for Education recently published (Adoption and Fostering; Understanding motivations and barriers. March 2013.) This research provided a deep and comprehensive insight into the barriers, triggers and motivations that exist in relation to recruiting foster carers. The findings revealed that :-

- **One in five adults may have some interest in adopting or fostering in the future.**
- **Many myths about regarding fostering need dispelling**
- **The messaging must be simpler and clearer.**
- **Those predisposed to adopt or foster commonly have an altruistic streak.**
- **We should communicate the benefit to both ‘me’ and ‘we’.**

The research tells us that adults have misconceptions around fostering and what is involved and whether they would be suitable to foster. Fostering is an emotional topic to engage with because of the intense self-reflection it demands. Barriers include not only personal fears, for

example of not bonding with a child, but also the impact on others such as children already in the home. Considering, applying for, and becoming a foster carer are major life decisions.

Communications must successfully overcome these emotional barriers and reassure people they will be supported throughout their journey into fostering.

The findings found that the following groups were predisposed to fostering -

1. Those Involved in altruistic activities (i.e. have done voluntary work, are active in their local community or are currently working for a not-for-profit organisation).
2. Those that have previous experience of fostering (i.e. know someone who is currently a foster carer or were formerly a foster carer).
3. Aged 25 to 44 years old.
4. Married, or heterosexual and single (as opposed to non-married but in an enduring relationship, in a civil partnership, or gay/lesbian/bisexual. These groups do also have an increased propensity to adopt or foster within the total sample, but did not feature as prominently amongst the seven priority audience groups).
5. Actively practicing a religion.
6. Working in higher managerial, intermediate managerial or skilled manual work.

3. London Borough of Harrow

The 2011 MYE (Mid-year Estimates) for Harrow shows a total population of 240,500: 118,900 men and 121,600 women (rounded figures). These latest estimates show that Harrow's population has increased by around 14.5% since mid-2001. This is above London's growth rate of 12.1% and England's growth rate of 7.4% over the same period. 158,400 (66%) of Harrow's residents are of working age, which is now regarded as 16-64. 48,200 (20%) are children aged 15 and under; and 33,900 (14%) are aged 65 and over.

Harrow is considered a borough of "contrasts", with high levels of affluence in such areas Harrow-on-the-Hill, Pinner, and Stanmore and high levels of deprivation in Wealdstone. Save the Children reported in 2011 that over 7,000 children are living in poverty in the Borough.

Harrow is a diverse borough, having 63.8% of its population from the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) communities, with the largest group being of Indian ethnicity.

"The first release of 2011 census data confirms the extent of growth in children as it shows a 33 percent increase in children 0-4 years old since the 2001 census. This is the largest increase of any age group by a significant margin (5 percentage points) and reflects Harrow's incoming population and higher birth rates, particularly amongst mothers who were not born in the UK. The GLA population projections forecast a further growth in the 0-18 population of 5.7 percent over the 4 years of the MTFs. The changing demography will increase costs across most of Children's Services, in particular children in the care system.

As a result, thresholds and practice are being reviewed and there is expected to be an increase in children and families who are deemed to require social care services. This is likely to increase the numbers of looked after children and child protection cases. In

anticipating the numbers of children likely to enter care in the future, a number of factors need to be considered. Firstly, we have recognised the need to intervene more effectively at an earlier stage, particularly in relation to younger children if we are to improve their outcomes. This will lead to an increase in numbers of young children entering care until safe permanency can be secured.

An additional area of pressure relates to the entry into our care of older children as a consequence of the Southwark Judgement. The Southwark Judgement, made by the Law Lords in May 2009, is a piece of case law that obliges children's services to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. In the past, many children's services deemed that young people in this age group did not necessarily "need care" from local authorities but "help and support" in accessing housing benefits. The local authority position is that wherever possible older children need to be supported to remain at home and this is a key strand of our Access to Resources development work. However, increasing numbers of London boroughs are experiencing greater rises in older entrants to care supported by legal challenges to decision.

In Harrow, entry into care in the 17 year age band has been our largest area of increase. This represents a significant challenge as placements for older young people are more difficult to secure and more costly and the young people also continue to have entitlements to services and resources up to the age of 21 in all cases and 25 in some circumstances. This poses a significant financial risk."

Source: London Borough of Harrow Commissioning Panel Proposal 2013-2015

4. The Fostering Service

The Fostering team sits within the Placements Services within the Targeted Services Division. Within the Fostering team there are three Supervising Social workers, two assessing social workers, one Senior Practitioner, a part time Training and Development Officer and one part time Play Therapist. The role of the assessing social workers is, to recruit, undertake initial visits and carry out assessments of prospective foster carers, the supervising social workers supervise the foster carers and all of the workers facilitate training include Skills to Foster for Prospective foster carers, and run support groups and information evenings, and supervise foster carers.

The specific tasks of the Fostering Team are:-

- Recruiting, assessing and training prospective foster carers
- Supporting approved foster carers
- Provide advice on providing placements for children looked after or those entering the care system
- Attending reviews of children in foster care
- Complete and attend annual reviews of foster carers
- Attending meetings where decisions are being made for future plans for children
- Developing the fostering service and improving practice
- Facilitate support groups, training and information evenings
- Attend panel meetings pertaining to children and foster carers
- Chair placement agreement meetings
- Raising awareness of fostering.

- We will continue to raise awareness and recruitment of fostering within Harrow
- We will ensure all steps in the recruitment process from enquiry to assessment are consistent and professional to support the marketing activity. Monitoring forms will be used to record timescales and communication.

The Harrow Fostering Service works to place children with in-house foster carers that can meet their needs. The Access to Resources team receives all the referrals of children that need a placement; either children coming into care or children that need a change of placement or respite placement. They identify a placement with an in-house foster carer and if this is not possible to source a placement from one of the independent agency providers on the council's preferred provider list.

The LAC nurse for children in our care ensures that the children and carers have access to advice, as they need it with regard to all health issues including nutritional advice amongst other things.

The Play Therapist attached to the fostering team ensures appropriate counselling and emotional support is given to children and foster carers.

The Fostering Training and Development Officer ensures a comprehensive programme of training and professional development is available for all foster carers

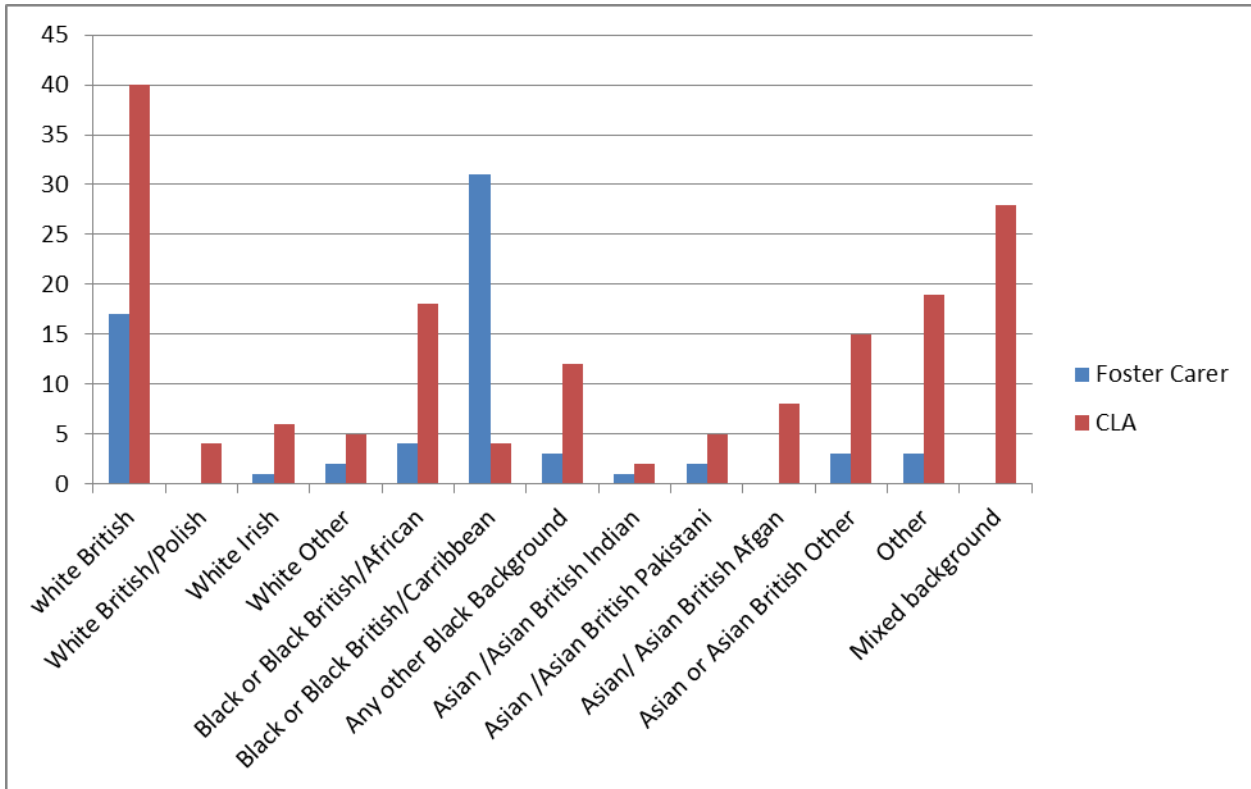
We will continue to strive to produce better experience foster carers to help achieve good outcomes for children.

5. Fostering Data

On the 1st April 2014 Harrow Council Fostering Service had 164 children looked after and of those :-

65 placed with in in-house foster carers.
 39 placed with Independent foster carers
 3 in pre-adoptive placements
 17 in residential accommodation
 16 in independent living, flat, lodgings, B&B, bedsit
 10 in foster placement with a relative
 4 in mother and baby units
 2 in young offender institution
 8 in residential schools

The following graph shows a comparison between foster carers' ethnicity and that of our children looked after.



Fostering Enquiries and outcomes April 2014 – July 2014

	2014	enquiries	closed	info evening	initial	prep group
enquiries	Apr-14	12	5	5	1	1
	May-14	12	8	1	4	
	Jun-14	13	11		2	
	Jul-14	15	6	4	5	

Strategy for Recruiting Foster Carers with Target Ethnic Backgrounds

Local community groups and places of worship

Local community press

Community radio

Word of mouth through existing foster carers from specific backgrounds

Drop in centres

Recruit a friend scheme

Recruiting through Harrow Council staff

The majority of foster carers employed by Harrow Council Fostering Team are aged in their 40's and 50's.

Age of Foster Carers (yrs) 31 st March 2013	#
20+	1
30+	3
40+	25
50+	24
60+	13
70+	2

Length of Fostering Experience 31 st March 2013	#
<1 year	9
1-3 years	19
3+ years	8
5+ years	12
10+ years	10
15+ years	10

We have 20 carers with 10+ years fostering experience. Retention of foster carers in Harrow is excellent. This can account for why the majority of carers are 40+ as they have been fostering for a number of years with Harrow. The skills and experience of a number of these carers has been built on through training and development and they have gone on to foster for the more challenging placements such as challenging teenagers, mother and baby placements and children with disabilities and complex needs.

De-registrations

- FY2012-2013 6 carers were deregistered as they were short break carers and the scheme is no longer running as short breaks are being offered from elsewhere. The Family Placement Service no longer receives referrals. Rather than having a group of carers that are no longer being used some converted to short term fostering and some left the service (those not offering overnights).

- 2 short term foster carers were deregistered, one as they moved abroad and the other as they had sadly passed away.
- 4 connected persons were de-registered as carers as they had been granted SGO's.
- FY2013-2014 to date 2 carers have been de-registered as foster carers. One following a safeguarding investigation and the other was de-registered as a short break carer. Historically in the main carers do not leave fostering for Harrow due to dissatisfaction with the service.

Strategy for Foster Carer Retention

.In addition to increasing our recruitment of new foster carers, we will also continue to have a good retention of the current carers

The main strands of our retention strategy are:-

A comprehensive training and development programme for each individual carer.

Competitive financial payments.

Local support groups and Newsletter.

An allocated supervising social worker.

24 hour support.

Harrow Foster Carer Association.

Peer support.

6. Summary of CLA Sufficiency Strategy

An analysis of the needs of Harrow Children Looked After can be found in the Sufficiency Strategy. This can be summarised by the following points:-

- Over the past three-year period there has been a 21% increase of the total number of children looked after.
- Over the past 18 months the proportion of CLA who ceased to be looked after has not increased at the same rate as children becoming looked after
- There are more boys looked after than girls but this difference has been reducing over the past five years
- 58% of our CLA are aged 12+.

- There has been a 58% increase from the previous year (2012) in the number of children looked after age 0-4.
- Rise of CLA from the following ethnic groups: White or White British: English. Asian or Asian British: Afghani, Black or Black British African.

7. Identified recruitment need

- Carers for Children with complex needs
- Carers that can offer emergency placements
- Carers for the under 5's
- Carers for teenagers
- Carers for large sibling groups
- Carers for mother and baby placements.

Specialist Foster Carers

By recruiting a wider pool of foster carers we have been able to develop and support experienced in house foster carers to become specialist carers, to care for children with more complex and challenging needs including

- Four experienced foster carers who provide parent and child placements and support parenting assessments
- A number of foster carers with professional backgrounds in social work, teaching and child care who use their extensive knowledge base and professional experience to care for children and young people with complex needs.
- Six foster carers who are providing placements and caring for children with significant disabilities and special needs.

Support is provided to these foster carers through

- A full time training and development officer attached to the fostering team who has provided a robust training programme to support these placements. We also have a play therapist attached to the Fostering Team who works directly with foster children and offers support and advice to foster carers.
- A Play Therapist attached to the Fostering Team
- Monthly support groups
- A monthly newsletter
- Annual Awards Ceremony
- An active local Foster Carers Association

Strategy for Redeploying Foster Carers to Target Needs

Our analysis of demand in the CLA Sufficiency Strategy shows there is a clear need for additional carers for teenagers, particularly teenage boys and young men, and for mother and baby placements. In our preparation and training of foster carers we ensure prospective carers are aware of the needs of the CLA population and so discuss how their skills, knowledge and potential can be best utilised . Through Foster carers assessments and annual reviews there is on going discussion regarding how we can ensure the foster carers can continue to meet the needs of the CLA population

8. Targets

Targets

Target recruitment for the Fostering team is 16 new fostering households per year. This is in addition to their work supporting the current cohort of foster carers (68 @ 1st April 2014). Based on analysis of previous retention, we currently lose an average of 3 foster carers per year. Therefore the following numbers are the target for the team:-

- April 2014: 65 foster carer households
- April 2015: 78 foster carer households
- April 2016 : 91 foster carer households

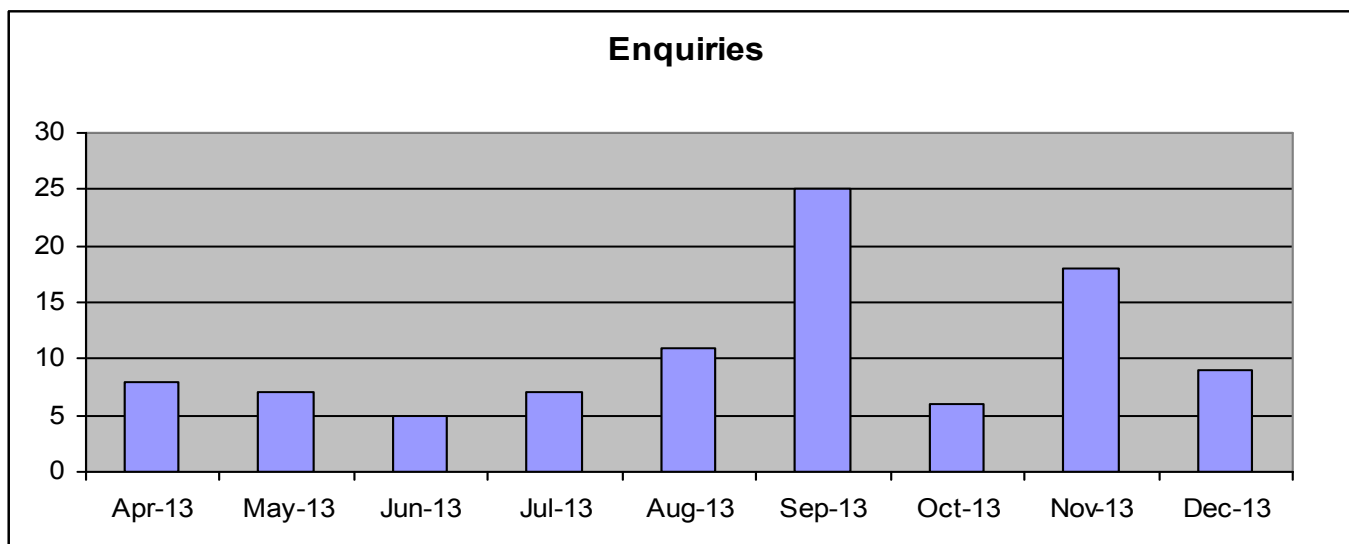
The target of 16 new foster carers per year should be achievable with this level of activity. This target is to build upon the average number of carers currently being approved per year (on average 8 per year). On average 6 enquiries are generated per month. We aim to increase the numbers of enquiries resulting in an increase in the number of approvals of foster carers, through increased marketing and recruitment activity and fostering staff dedicating one morning per month to recruitment. The fostering Network estimate that one out of ten enquiries progress to approval as foster carers. As we have 40 children in IFA placements we need to increase our fostering pool ideally to 40 more available placements. This would average to 30 more foster carers allowing 2 to leave. We aim to meet this over a 2 year period.

To meet our targets would need 160 enquiries per year an average 13 enquiries per month. We intend to build on the momentum of the recent campaign to meet this target.

In 2012/13 there were 115 enquiries and 11 approvals of new foster carers.

In 2013/14 we are targeting 160 enquiries and 16 new approvals of foster carers.

Impact of campaign September to November 2013



Total number of enquiries to fostering April 2012- October 2013

Month	Number of Fostering Enquiries
April 2012	10
May 2012	11
June 2012	9
July 2012	6
August 2012	13
September 2012	12
October 2012	5
November 2012	10
December 2012	12
January 2013	7
February 2013	8
March 2013	12
April 2013	8
May 2013	7
June 2013	5
July 2013	7
August 2013	11
September 2013	25
October 2013	6
November 2013	18
December 2013	9

On-going recruitment

The campaign results show that there were a number of people who saw and were affected by the campaign, enough so to consider fostering and contact the department. This is a success a higher number of enquiries should potentially lead to a higher number of applicants going on to be approved.

Despite a high number of enquiries it is not known at this point how many will result in approval as foster carers.

As a result of the campaign and needs analysis we will carry out the following:-

Fostering recruitment Wednesdays

The fostering team will be dedicating one Wednesday morning a month to focus on recruitment of foster carers. We have identified that the waiting time for the next stage of their enquiry to be progressed may be too long, so we have introduced monthly drop in information, meet the team sessions to compliment the monthly information evenings. Therefore, every fortnight there will be an opportunity for potential foster carers to come in to get more information and make contact with the team. Enquirers will also be offered an initial

visit if they prefer. This means a social worker will visit the applicant in their home to discuss their enquiry and assess their potential as a foster carer.

We have identified a need for more carers who can:-

- Care for teenagers who present with challenging behaviour
- Care for sibling groups
- Take mother and baby placements
- Carers of the Muslim Faith
- Carers of African heritage (including Somali carers)
- Carers of Asian (Indian) heritage

Whilst members of the team will be manning the drop in surgeries the other members of the team will dedicate their time on Wednesday mornings once a month to foster recruitment targeting specific groups in the following ways:-

Community Groups and Schools

We continue to target the local community with a locally focused strategy. We regularly send posters and leaflets to local faith and community groups and schools and have attended meetings with them.

We are making links with local colleges in order to target potential carers who have recently parented teenagers. In our recent campaign we also focused some of our marketing in September/October around the 'empty nest' when young people traditionally leave home for college and university. Within the current campaign, there will be a focus on the empty nesters period again with a view to attracting carers whose children have moved on or who have recently cared for and who now have spare bedrooms.

We met on Wednesday 12th February Harrow Central Mosque (HCM). The purpose of the meeting was to look at how Harrow Fostering team can work with the Mosque to reach out to communities within Harrow who use the Mosque - (African/Asian and Somali Muslims). HCM is keen to work in partnership with us and values what an important role fostering is and how we need more foster carers to care for Harrow's most vulnerable children. We have agreed that we will arrange one Friday a month at the end of Prayer time to have a stall and the men's and woman's exits to give out fostering leaflets. We have chosen Friday as it is the busiest prayer day and they have up to 2000 people attending prayers. We will do this for 3-6 months and then arrange for the Fostering team to give a presentation in the Mosque. HCM is arranging for a scholar to give a talk at the Mosque about the belief within Islam of having a duty to adopt orphans and care for children. We will be giving three posters to be displayed in the Mosque notice boards.

The Mosque has a link to our Fostering leaflet on their website

<http://www.harrowmosque.org.uk/>

This is going to be moved to a more prominent position.

HCM is going to arrange for a special announcement regarding fostering to be made on Good Friday - the most busy day at the Mosque.
We will be meeting HCM in 6 months to review this activity.

We will be making contact with other faith groups within the community including Sri Lankan Mosque in Wealdstone. We will be meeting local Community and faith groups and set up a stall to share information and take enquiries. We have made links with the Somali community as we have identified that we have no carers of this ethnicity, yet we have young people coming into the care system from Somalia.

Links have been made with a number of faith groups within Harrow at the Interfaith Forum on 25th February 2014. A presentation was given and leaflets given out. Representatives from the following faith groups were in attendance. Regular attendance at the inter faith forum is planned.

We will continue to target the Asian (Indian) population by having stalls at community events and advertising in Asian papers/radio.

A representative of the team attends the Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding forum at Bentley wood School. Representatives of the team will be attending the Interfaith Forum on Tuesday 25th Feb @ 7.15pm in the Council Chamber to make links with members of faith groups within the borough and look at how to reach into those communities and best share the message of fostering.

Contact will be made with Head teachers of Harrow Schools through the Gold Bulletin and leaflets sent to all schools, information put in school Bulletins and school websites where possible. We will arrange to have stalls at school fetes, open days etc.

Marketing Materials

Our marketing materials use imagery to appeal to the target groups we are aiming to reach. The marketing materials will continue to be reviewed and updated in line with the target audience.

Harrow Website

The Council has a distinct fostering page outlining information regarding fostering. The website has been updated with information about our new recruitment campaign and with new recruitment materials. Moving forward the website will be revamped to include videos, sound clips, etc. Users will be able to download the Information pack and dates, times and location of information evenings. It will also allow us to have the capability of offering training courses for foster carers and a booking in system. Links such as 'Frequently Asked Questions' and information for carers wishing to transfer to Harrow from other agencies will be added. With the Internet being used by the public more and more as a way of accessing information we need to ensure we are keeping up to date with changing technology.

The website will continue to be kept up to date and the information will always be presented in a user-friendly format. All technology will always be looked at on a regular basis to be improving service accessibility. Details of the website will be on all promotional literature.

The Fostering Team will liaise with the Communication Department to ensure that web site front page will regularly show the Fostering banner with links to more information. The image we have used to date has featured a Harrow couple who foster who are of African heritage and Muslim religion.

Google ad word to drive people to website

Ad words are 'sponsored links' where organisations 'bid' for keywords, which users might search under. The more an organisation bids for a keyword the higher its ranking in the search results and the more likely a candidate is to 'click through' the link. The links appear in a blue box at the top of the page and/or down the right hand side of the page and organisations only pay when a user clicks through to a destination site. The higher the bid, the more it costs for each click through.

Pay per click Advertising

This is an area we are exploring we are mindful of the potential spend and effectiveness as we set the budget. The Budget can be set per month at an agreed amount depending on - the key word identified; or you can limit to geographical area;

As traditional media is losing its market share as ads move to online marketing, and specifically the paid search arena, primarily from its pay per click service. Paid search is the hottest area of online marketing today and continues to grow at rate of 37% each year.

Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising is a method of advertising in which you sponsor listings on a search engine. Typically displayed both above and to the right of the "natural" or "organic" search listings, these ads are triggered when a user searches for a term relevant to the ad. These ads are sold in an auction type system where advertisers bid what they are willing to pay "per click", typically between 25p and £1.00 (though, if so inclined you can bid higher to ensure the top ranking). When the relevant ads are displayed, they are ranked according to the bid amount, with the highest bidder getting the most prominent placement. If someone clicks on the ad, you are charged the bid amount. If it is not clicked, you pay nothing. In terms of audit and tracking PPC advertising allows more control over an ad campaign, allowing feedback on its performance.

Retargeting

We are also considering retargeting this is a relatively new concept. Re-targeting will allow you to run banner ads to visitors who we know have previously visited your website. The banner ads will target visitors for up to a week after they have come off your website. It will utilise our design so it reflects our campaign.

A re-targeting campaign is one of the most powerful marketing tools available

Basically visitors who leave your site will see banner ads of yours elsewhere on the Internet for a week. The benefits: The most targeted marketing opportunity; aimed at people who've already been interested enough to visit our site already.

Local press

Regular adverts are printed in Harrow's local press including The Harrow Observer and The Harrow People which is delivered to every household in the borough. Details of how to contact the Fostering Team to express an interest in fostering is included. The adverts have been updated and imagery used to target our focus groups. There are a series of 4 adverts "If I Can Do It So Can You, Become a Foster Carer". The four images are a single middle aged white woman, a young Asian couple, a mixed heritage (black and white) older couple and a single male. These images were chosen to show that you can foster regardless of age, sex, religion, race, marital status or sexuality and debunk the myths around fostering. We will continue to have regular real life case studies and features in the local press to highlight events and points of interest in the fostering calendar.

The Councils Communications Team

The Fostering Service works with the Council's Communications Team to produce a number of news stories each year about foster carers and their experiences to supplement advertisements and to raise the profile of fostering within the local community.

Radio

We plan to promote fostering through local advertising on Northwick Park Radio. In September /October 2013 we ran a campaign to highlight the shortage of Asian foster carers. This included one of our foster carers being interviewed by BBC Asian Network alongside Harrow's Portfolio Holder for Children and Families. The Leader of Harrow Council was interviewed about this campaign on Sunrise Radio.

Approved Foster Carers / personal selling

Approved foster carers are equipped with the tools to share the message about fostering with their friends/families and colleagues. We have involved foster carers to give their story – this may involve local drop in events to take part in frank "questions and answers session" Foster carers can talk about a day in their life as a carer, what they have achieved, why they chose to foster and why they continue to foster. We will also consider asking young people leaving care to take part in recruitment events.

We use regular Newsletters to all our Foster Carers to inform them of the service and generally making them feel part of a wider team. We will use our Newsletter to ask Foster Carers for their views about recruitment and will involve them at all stages of the Recruitment Process.

Harrow Foster Carers and care leavers are regularly featured in the local press as a case study promoting the value of fostering and being fostered by a loving, stable family. Foster carers are involved with recruitment of carers and attend information evenings and Skills to Foster Courses.

We have a recruit a friend scheme where Foster carers are offered an incentive of £200 for any recommendation they make which leads to approval of a new foster carer at Panel. We write to carers individually to remind them of this scheme and give them business cards and

leaflets to share with friends/family etc. We will continue to provide a financial incentive scheme for existing foster carers as it is proven that word of mouth is one of the most effective ways of recruitment.

Information Evening Events

Monthly information evenings are held to give interested parties information on fostering and what is involved. These are advertised in the local press, website and in promotional literature. Any callers to the department interested in fostering who meet the criteria are invited to attend the next information evening. Ideal candidates can be fast tracked with a home visit.

Local community events

Harrow Fostering Team have links with job fairs and events that take place around the borough maximising the visible presence and raising the profile of fostering and promoting successes made by both the department and foster carers. The Fostering Team will continue to have a presence at local events.

Social Media

We hold regular Q&A tweet sessions to invite followers of Harrow Council to ask any fostering questions they may have and have them answered by dedicated foster carers and social workers. These sessions are advertised through promotional literature and advertising. Events and stalls the fostering team hold are advertised through the Our Harrow Facebook page.

Portable

Portable pop up stands have been placed in the reception areas of the council's main buildings including children's centres, community centres, theatres, and libraries. These will be rotated on a regular basis to cover as many areas around Harrow and outer neighbouring boroughs as possible.

Promotional Literature

Fostering packs are available at all events with a range of promotional items for interested parties to take away. These will be marked with a contact number to follow up for more information, as it is unlikely the decision to foster will be made on the spot.

Direct Marketing

We will have planned mail outs at certain stages of the recruitment phase (prior to recruitment events) so that fostering information is available to pick up by members of the public, in as many outlets as possible.

Internal Communication

As the boroughs largest employer, staff comprise of a significant percentage of the Harrow population. We have more access to staff than any other resident within the Borough. Internal emails have been sent at all key stages of the recruitment plan. We have offered all staff members in the Council a financial incentive to recommend friends and neighbours to be considered as prospective foster carers. Posters have been put up throughout council buildings and we will have pop up stands in the staff canteen and other council buildings.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

We aim to increase awareness of fostering within the borough and particularly within underrepresented groups where we have identified a need for more foster carers The recruitment strategy will be monitored and reviewed regularly through the following mechanisms:-

- Monthly performance reports on recruitment and assessment activity to be provided to Service Manager Placements
- Quarterly meetings between the Fostering service and the Communications Team
- Quarterly reports to the Adoption and Fostering Panel
- Key fostering recruitment data being reported at monthly departmental performance meetings
- Key fostering recruitment data being reported to the DFE and used to compare with statistical neighbours
- The West London Alliance Children's Efficiency Programme is collecting fostering data across the nine boroughs involved to compare performance and to consider whether any joint borough initiatives can be considered.
- In depth needs analysis will be carried out on a regular basis to inform and update the recruitment strategy following the Fostering Network's suggested template which underpinned our current strategy.

We will carry out a regular needs analysis to update and change the recruitment strategy as necessary. As a result of the fostering campaign Sep-Nov 2013 the Fostering Team analysed the results of the campaign and identified that waiting times from initial enquiry to the next stage could be too long in some cases and as a result the fostering team are dedicating one morning per month to fostering recruitment and increasing the number of information sessions and drop in surgeries. With this initiative we aim to meet our recruitment targets.