

Harrow Fostering Recruitment Plan 2019 - 2022

The Fostering Team will be using a number of ways to attract more Foster Carers to Harrow as we need to increase our pool of foster carers. The number of children coming into care is rising; and it is more cost effective to place children with in-house carers rather than paying high cost independent fostering agencies. Placing children in house also keeps children local to their schools, friends and family networks. This means children can have quality contact with their families, where they do not have to travel long distances to the venue. Remaining local for most children also means that they can keep up their extra curricular activities and friendship groups.

Currently there are 55 fostering households in Harrow, offering 103 placements plus 7 mother and baby placements. We have 162 looked after children.

Our number of households has dropped lately with a number of carers leaving the service due to retirement, ill health and moving home. However this has not had a big impact on the percentage of children placed in house as opposed to with external agencies. 74% of children in foster care are placed with in-house foster placements.

We currently need more carers who are able to place sibling groups, teenagers, children with disabilities and culturally we do not have any Eastern European carers particularly from Romania and Poland.

Therefore during 2019 – 2020 the team will undertake the following as part of their recruitment drive:-

Work with Council's Communications Team

The Communications Team will be supporting the Fostering Team in undertaking a recruitment marketing campaign. They will focus on the following:-

Google Ads – Harrow Fostering will have a Google ad account which will mean that anyone in Harrow searching for fostering will see our ad before other agencies.

Fostering web page review – A review and re-design of the fostering web content that will be more user friendly and will have the enquiry form embedded into the page rather than click through.

Electronic JC Decaux Advert – Wealdstone has an electronic JC Decaux board which we will look to advertise on.

Professional information packs for applicants – Produce a professional information pack for applicants to be sent when making enquiries and to give at promotional events.

Videos on the web page and social media campaign – Embed videos into the fostering webpage (they were produced during our Facebook campaign). Advertise on Harrow Facebook page and internal communications.

Other ways in which The Fostering Team promote fostering within the community:-

Faith Groups, Community Groups and Schools - We regularly send posters and leaflets to local faith and community groups and schools and attend meetings with them. We put ads in the Gold Bulletin which goes to all Head teachers in Harrow Schools.

Meeting with Local Councillors – We are meeting with Local Councillors to optimise their links with local communities and groups and for their assistance in promoting fostering recruitment in the community.

Harrow Central Mosque – We are meeting with Harrow Central Mosque to work with them to reach out communities within Harrow who use the Mosque - (African/Asian and Somali Muslims). We will give posters to be displayed in the Mosque notice boards, hand out leaflets on a Friday after prayer time, and the Imam will give a talk on fostering children.

Romanian and Polish Websites/Communities - We are planning to advertise the need for foster carers through a National Romanian and Polish website and distribute leaflets posters in their shops and community halls.

Local press - Regular adverts/case studies are printed in The Harrow People, which is delivered to every household in the borough. We have ads on the My Harrow e-Newsletter.

Approved Foster Carers / personal selling and Recruit a Friend – Word of Mouth proves to be a good method to recruit carers. 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 have introduced recruit a friend parties where carers invite friends to a party in their home and the team go along to give information about fostering. There is a financial incentive for carers to take part. We supply foster carers with business cards to give out if someone expresses an interest in fostering to them.

Portable pop up - Portable pop up stands will be placed in 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.

Internal Communication - As the borough’s largest employer, staff make up a significant percentage of the Harrow population. Internal e-mails will be sent 3 times a year. We have offered all staff employees in the Council a financial incentive to recommend friends, family and neighbours to be considered as prospective foster carers. Posters are regularly put up throughout council buildings and we will have pop up stands in the staff canteen and other council buildings.

The Fostering Team also work on supporting and retaining our existing fostering carers. There are a number of incentives and support packages in place to help retain our foster carers such as the following:-

- Competitive financial allowances with an enhanced payment scheme on offer.
- Support packages for challenging placements such as input from the Early Support Team, Therapeutic Support.
- Support from an active Foster Carers Association.
- Support groups and Newsletters.
- Regular meetings and dialogue between the HFCA, Department and carers.

- Membership to the Foster Carers Association.
- Buddy and mentoring scheme/peer to peer support.
- A robust training programme, with specialist courses on offer, bespoke training given, WLA training programme, online training.
- 24 hour support through and allocated Supervising Social worker and EDT.
- Subsidised leisure facilities
- Considering introducing a Council Tax reduced payment scheme for foster carers.

Monitoring and evaluation

The recruitment plan will be monitored and reviewed regularly through the following mechanisms:-

- Monthly performance reports on recruitment and assessment activity to be provided to Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
- Quarterly meetings between the Fostering Service and the Communications Team
- Quarterly reports to the Harrow Adoption and Fostering Panel
- Key fostering recruitment data being reported at monthly Children's Services performance meetings
- Key fostering recruitment data being reported to the Department for Education (DFE) and used to compare with statistical neighbours
- In depth needs analysis will be carried out on quarterly basis by the Team Manager and Training and Development Officer to inform and update the recruitment strategy
- We will carry out a regular placement needs analysis to update and change the recruitment strategy as necessary in line with The Placement Sufficiency Strategy.
- We have a target of approving 12 fostering households = an additional 15 placements.