



The North East Area Council

March 2018

Building on Community Assets together with the Foster Care Team – final Report

1. Background

In November 2016, the Foster Care Team gave a presentation to the North East Area Council highlighting the need for more Foster Carers in Barnsley, and their objective to improve the recruitment, and retention, of quality Local Authority Foster Carers. The North East Area Council agreed to support the Foster Care team in a recruitment and marketing campaign to increase awareness about Foster Care, to encourage local residents to consider becoming a Foster Carer, and highlighting the need for Barnsley Carers for Barnsley children.

A Steering Group was formed comprising of a Councillor from each of the four Wards of the North East Area Council, Councillor Hayward, Councillor Sheard, Councillor Ennis, and Councillor Makinson, and Councillor Tim Cheetham in his capacity as Cabinet Spokesperson for People Achieving Potential, together with representatives from the Foster Team, the North East Area Council Team and Corporate Communications.

2. The Launch of the Campaign

It was agreed that a workshop should initially be held with members of the four Ward Alliances in February 2017, to discuss what the best way would be to deliver the message to the local communities. Some Foster Carer came to the workshop and delivered very powerful messages about what it was like to become Foster Carer and their own experiences. Table discussions followed and the feedback gave the Steering Group a lot of ideas to enable them to take this initiative forward. The Ward Alliances members agreed to support the initiative and spread the message in their local communities, and help with the publicity. A photograph was taken of all present and it was agreed that this would be used to launch the campaign.

3. Building on Community Assets, Local Links and Community Knowledge

An Action Plan was drawn up and it was agreed that the community would be drenched with both publicity material, and information, through an area wide communication and media campaign. A toolkit of communication methods was drawn up which included:



- Regular meetings of the Steering Group
- Good, regular communication links between The North East Area Team and the Foster Care Team.
- To drench the community with posters and flyers – to distribute flyers and posters around The communities in Notice Boards, Key Access buildings, Working Men’s Clubs, Doctor’s Surgeries, Community Centres, Sports Centres, Coffee mornings, Barnsley Premier Leisure venues, local supermarkets, Churches, Takeaways, Play Groups, U3A, Schools, Nurseries, Job Centres, Careers Office, Libraries, Tenants and Residents Associations and Supermarkets, and local shops.

- The Foster Care Team agreed to host Information and Taster Sessions at local key access venues.
- Information to go out on Church bulletins.
- A recruitment banner to be used in all publicity.
- Foster Care stalls at Health Fayres, Galas Proms and Community Activity events.
- Press coverage to include Barnsley Chronicle and Dearne FM.
- A Social Media campaign to include Face Book and Twitter to help raise awareness.
- An article in Village Life, the North East Area’s community magazine which is delivered to every household in the North East Area Council.
- Regular updates to the four Ward Alliances.
- Information to Parish Councils.
- Articles in Straight Talk.
- Links with partner agencies who work in the area, such as Berneslai Homes, through attendance at the North East Area matrix meetings.
- Regular feedback to the North East Area Council

4. What did this Lead to....

In 2016, the Foster Care Team had received 52 enquiries over 12 months. For the time period of April 2017 to March 2018 the overall Foster Care statistics, to which North East Area Council have greatly contributed too, are as follows:

- 146 enquiries in total
- 84 No further action
- Currently have 18 assessments ongoing
- Currently have 13 households at assessment stage

- Initial enquiries still being followed up
- Home visits booked
- The Foster Care Team will have achieved 36 approved households by the end of March 2018

The benefits of placing a child in a loving, supportive home, is always paramount. However, the cost savings of this initiative are quite significant as it can be noted that the cost to look after a child in care a week are in the region of:

- Approximately £500 with a Local Authority Foster family
- Approximately £800 with an Independent Fostering Agency
- Approximately £2,500 - £3,000 with a private residential placement if no fostering placements are available.

5. Conclusion

It was agreed that raising the awareness of residents in a concentrated area has worked really well, and Building on Community Assets, Local Links and Community Knowledge has ensured positive results.

The dramatic increase in Foster Care enquiries has been significant. This has been a great example of what can be achieved through partnership working, and the results of the campaign will have such a beneficial, positive effect on the young people who need the help and support of Foster Carers.

The North East Area Council has been proud to work with, and help support, the staff from the Foster Care Team. The Foster Care Team would like it to be noted that:

'It's nationally recognised that selling the Foster Care, product, is unlike promotions or marketing of any other kind. Foster Care changes the lives of the people we recruit, perhaps forever, and for many it's a 24/7 commitment for years of their life.'

Caroline Donovan
North East Area Council Manager
Communities

Jon Banwell
Head of Service
Children in Care

