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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL

**Tuesday, 10th January, 2023 at 7.00 pm in the Conference Room,
Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XA**

Membership:

Councillors: Elif Erbil (Chair), Gunes Akbulut (Vice Chair), Ahmet Oykenler, Andrew Thorp, Adrian Grumi, Nelly Gyosheva, Suna Hurman and Ruby Sampson

AGENDA – PART 1

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee are invited to identify any disclosable pecuniary, other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests relevant to the items on the agenda.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2022.

4. LEVEL OF CARE PLACES IN THE BOROUGH AND THE NATIONAL SHORTAGE OF CARE PLACES (Pages 5 - 14)

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide members of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel with an update on the level of care places in the borough and the national shortages of care places.

5. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (Pages 15 - 20)

To provide an update on the work that has been taken to recruit and retain children social workers.

6. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS (Pages 21 - 48)

This report updates the Scrutiny Panel on the work of the Fostering Service relating to the recruitment and retention of foster carers, which was highlighted as a priority for the Cabinet Member.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23 (Pages 49 - 52)

To note the Children, Young People and Education Work Programme for 2022/23.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on 23 March 2023.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2022

MEMBERS: Councillors Elif Erbil (Chair), Gunes Akbulut (Vice-Chair), Adrian Grumi, Nelly Gyosheva, Suna Hurman, Ruby Sampson and Andrew Thorpe

Absent: Councillor Ahmet Oykenner

Officers:

Peter Nathan (Director of Education), Jo Fear (Service Manager, Admissions), Neil Best (Head of Strategic Resourcing & Partnerships – Education), Barbara Thurogood (Head of SEN), Stacey Gilmour (Governance Officer)

Also Attending: Press Officer

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for lateness were received from Peter Nathan, Director, Education.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were received:

Cllr Adrian Grumi declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 4 and 5 of the agenda as his wife has recently been working in an Enfield primary school.

4. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Jo Fear, Head of Admissions and Attendance highlighted the key points from the report which included information on Enfield's Education Welfare Service, impact of the pandemic on attendance and Enfield's response, attendance data pre and post pandemic as well as the White Paper and new non-statutory guidance on improving attendance.

Members extended their thanks for the clear layout of the report and then commented as follows:

1. In response to Members questions regarding the Enfield Education Welfare Service, officers advised that Enfield has an established team

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of Education Welfare Officers who work in partnership with schools, agencies and families across the Borough offering a holistic approach to improving school attendance. In addition to carrying out the Local Authority's (LA's) statutory duties, the Service also offer a traded element to Enfield's academies and free schools.

2. Cllr Erbil requested an explanation regarding the use of penalty notices (PN) by schools and how these were applied. Officers provided a detailed response and advised that term time leave of absence for holidays is problematic and this year schools have been encouraged to issue PNs where holidays are likely to be the reason for non-attendance.
3. Cllr Thorpe said he was heartened to see attendance improving following the pandemic. However, he noted that the data was disproportionate amongst certain ethnic groups and asked what was being done to address this. Officers provided information on the initiatives in place to address this issue which included coordinating an Attendance Forum, school drop-in sessions as well as engagement work with community groups to encourage attendance.
4. Cllr Sampson felt that during the pandemic Covid was being used as an excuse for absence and often these absences were not recorded by schools. Officers acknowledged that the drive on attendance wasn't as tight during the pandemic as schools had been faced with a very difficult and challenging time. Even if there were 'suspicions' with regards to absence it was not always possible to follow these up due to varying factors including lack of staffing. However, educational welfare was still taking place during this time to positively support parents and help them engage with the Public Health Team to discuss any concerns and worries they may have had about sending their children to school during the pandemic.
5. Cllr Grumi asked if there was any correlation between a request for authorised absence being refused, but it being taken anyway. Officers advised that they had been unable to collect this data but agreed that it would be useful to match up and 'tease out' some of these issues.

The Chair thanked Officers for their informative update.

5. SEND PLACES

RECEIVED the report of Neil Best, Head of Strategic Resourcing & Partnerships and Barbara Thurogood, Head of Special Educational Needs. Neil highlighted the following key points:

1. The report provided an update on special education need placements, current pressures, and activities to increase the number of places within Enfield and to reduce out of borough expenditure.
2. Details were also provided of current and projected demand for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) places, current provision both in-borough and out-of-borough and the related costs to the Council.

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3. There had been a significant increase in SEND provision during recent years with Enfield Council putting in extra resources and commissioning designated units within mainstream schools. But because of limited capacity to extend existing schools, the council had decided to establish new facilities
4. The Council had almost “maxed out” in terms of large SEND schools in the borough and there was a huge demand on the ‘high needs’ element of the dedicated schools grant – provided by the government to support schools- and it was currently £13 m in deficit.
5. The number of pupils with an education health and care plan (EHCP) – which provide extra support for SEND pupils- is expected to grow by 10% over three years.
6. Currently 468 young people with SEND are being educated in other boroughs, costing the council around £14,000 extra per pupil compared with in-borough schooling. This can lead to young people being separated from their communities and experiencing longer journey times, along with added costs for travel assistance.
7. Two priority sites in Enfield have been identified to provide 136 extra school places for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Portcullis Lodge Car Park in Enfield Town and Addison House in Southgate have been classed as ‘priority sites’ to help meet the growing demand for SEND provision.
8. The Council has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) Free School Wave 2022 to have the two priority sites included, which would see the government provide funding if the projects are delivered in partnership with free school providers. The Council will find out next April if it has been successful.
9. Alongside this the SEN Service has been developing small scale additional SEND provision within mainstream schools where specialist assistance is provided to pupils within their setting.

In response members commented as follows:

1. Cllr Thorpe said that the acceleration of the Council’s SEND Development Programme would lead to a “step change” in the number of available places and he was incredibly disappointed by the decision to pull the paper from a Cabinet meeting held last month. The withdrawn report sought Cabinet approval to establish new SEND provision at Portcullis Lodge and Addison House, with £1.6m needed to progress development work.
2. Officers acknowledged the decision would delay the opening of a new school but assured Members that, having established the programme, this would not be “kicked into the long grass”. However, the other thing in terms of delay that was important right now was the cost of delivery as construction costs have gone up and up and were not likely to reduce.
3. In response to Members’ concerns regarding the predicted growth locally in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), Officers advised that the number of children with EHCPs has been increasing nationally since the commencement of the 2014 reforms. This is partially due to

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the extension of the age group from 18 to 25. The SEN service has reviewed its operational delivery including its SEN Panel where decisions for Education, Health & Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) and decisions to issue an EHCP are made. The new changes have resulted in 23% fewer needs assessments undertaken and 10% less ECHPs have been issued.

4. Officers added that a lot of guidance has also been issued to schools to assist in identifying the needs of children and young people earlier and the development of Early intervention models, such as Enfield Community Advisory Support (ECAS) has meant that there is an offer to support children and young people with communication needs to prevent the need for an EHCP.
5. SEN are holding a Speech and Language Summit with health to make certain that there is a credible offer to meet the speech and language needs of the community and to ensure that children do not need an EHCP to access speech and language provision from health.

The Chair thanked Officers for their updates and the reports which were well focused and easy to follow.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

NOTED the work programme for 2022/23.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

NOTED the dates of future meetings as follows:

Tuesday 10 January 2023
Thursday 23 March 2023

All meetings commence at 7pm and will be held in the Conference Room at the Civic Centre.

The meeting ended at 8:40pm

London Borough of Enfield

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel: 10th January 2023

Subject: Level of care places in the borough and the national shortage of care places

Cabinet Member: Cllr Abdul Abdullahi
Executive Director: Tony Theodoulou

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this briefing is to provide members of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel with an update on the level of care places in the borough and the national shortages of care places.

Relevance to the Council Plan

2. Looked After Children are an extremely vulnerable group, the majority of our looked after children have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect and/or a range of other challenges.
3. Statutory guidance requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient accommodation for Looked After Children within the local authority's area which meets their needs – 'the sufficiency duty'.
4. The sufficiency duty is laid down in 22G of the Children's Act 1989, which states that it is the **General duty of the local authority to secure accommodation for Looked After Children.**
5. Finding local suitable placements continues to be a priority for Enfield's children's services. The current Commissioning Framework (2020-2023) and the Placement Sufficiency Strategy (2021-2026) sets out our plan to ensure looked after children will have access to provision locally and allow us to deliver on the right outcomes for children and young people.
6. The Placement Sufficiency Strategy is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Lead Cabinet Member with the delegated authority to carry out this function on behalf of the Council.

Background

National context

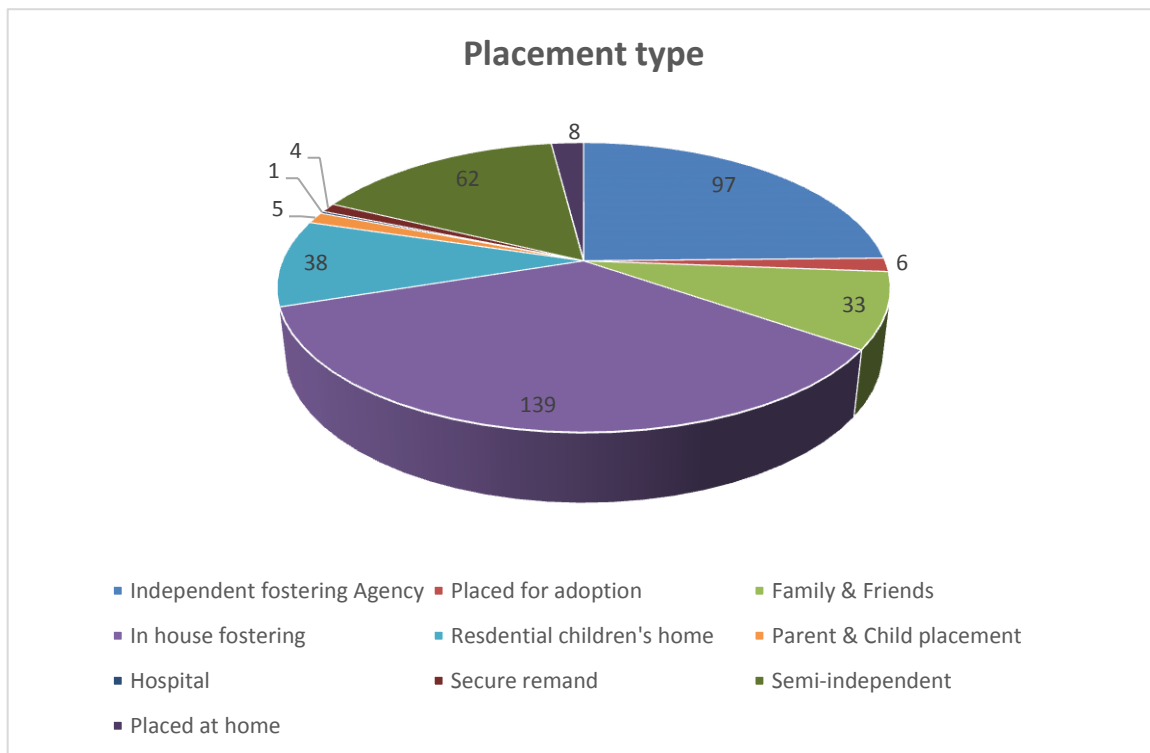
7. There are 80,850 looked after children in England and over two-thirds of looked after children live in foster care and 16% live in residential care.
8. The current annual cost for children's social care services is circa £5.7 billion.

9. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is the independent regulator of services that care for children. Both fostering services and children's homes fall within Ofsted's remit.
10. In England, local authorities use a significant amount of private provision for children's homes, with around 78% of places being provided by the private sector. Over the last five years, the private sector's share of children's homes in England has risen by 26%, while the number of local authority homes have declined by 5%. The voluntary sector is very small and is in decline.
11. The average size of children's homes have also fallen, with most children's home now providing four or fewer places.
12. Local authorities maintain their own in-house fostering agencies, but also rely on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). In England, local authorities provide 64% of foster placements with 36% of foster placements with IFAs
13. The number of looked after children has also increased steadily, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the population. In the last five years, the number of looked after children rose by 14%. Needs are also shifting, with placements needed for much older children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and children with more complex needs, which has led to an increased demand in specialist foster placements and therapeutic residential placements.

Enfield context

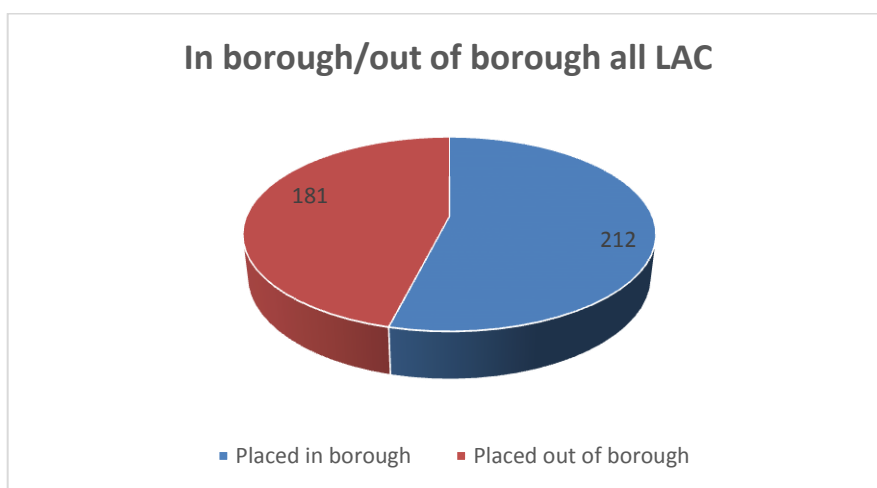
14. Currently (September 2022) there are 393 children in care and the breakdown of their placements are as below:

Type of placement	No. of LAC
Independent fostering Agency	97
Placed for adoption	6
Family & Friends	33
In house fostering	139
Residential children's home	38
Parent & Child placement	5
Hospital	1
Secure remand	4
Semi-independent	62
Placed at home	8



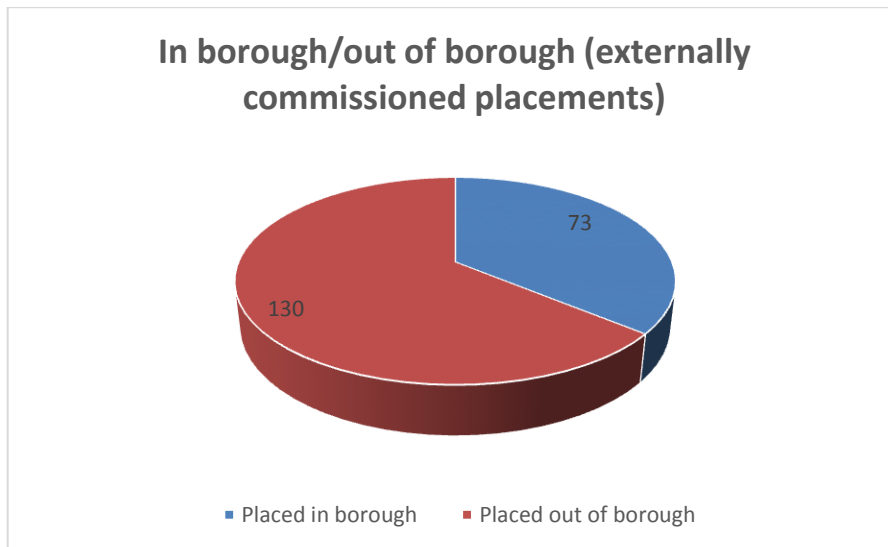
Location of our Looked After Children

In borough/out of Borough	No. of LAC
Placed in borough	212
Placed out of borough	181



In borough/out of Borough (Externally commissioned)	No. of LAC
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placement)	
Placed in borough	73
Placed out of borough	130



Main Considerations for the Panel

15. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published a report on 'Children's social care' in March 2022 and Josh MacAlister published 'The independent review of children's social care' in May 2022 which both state that there is a shortage of appropriate places in children's homes and with foster carers, meaning that some children are not getting the right type of care. It also states that children are being placed at a distance from their family home or their local authority.
16. The shortage of care placements is also leading to local authorities including Enfield having to pay high prices for foster carers and residential placements.
17. Enfield is committed to ensuring, wherever possible, that children looked after receive the right type of placement.
18. When a child comes into care an assessment of need is undertaken and a decision is made on the type of placement that is required. This is usually a foster placement, a residential placement or a semi-independent placement.
19. Due to a lack of local placements, Enfield children are having to be placed away from the borough and sometimes many miles away from their parents, school and social networks. Research evidence shows this consistently leads to poor outcomes for children.
20. In Enfield, we have an in-house fostering service that recruits local foster carers.
21. Currently Enfield does not have any in-house or a contracted local residential home provisions and as a result Enfield purchases all our residential placements from private providers on a 'spot-purchase' basis.

22. The placements market is failing to provide sufficient supply of the right type of placements which leads to looked after children being placed in settings that are not suitable. For instance:

- Out of borough and sometimes even more than 20 miles from their home
- Separated from their siblings, due to the shortage of carers who can take sibling groups
- Unable to access local services, such as education and therapy
- Children in some occasions having to be placed in unregistered and unregulated settings, which is illegal.

23. The average weekly fee in Enfield has increased from circa £3000 per week to £5000 per week for residential care in the last 3 years and the increase is much higher for residential placements with therapeutic input. The CMA have stated that the profit margins of the residential homes are averaging at 22.6% and for IFAs it is 19.4%, with an average annual increase of 3.5% after accounting for inflation.

Recommendation

24. There are a number of recommendations that is being recommended by various reports notably the two mentioned above 'Children's social care market study' by the CMA and 'The independent review of children's social care' by Josh MacAlister. Some of the recommendations which Local Authorities can implement are:

- Increase local authority foster care provision - to look at innovative projects, either by individual local authorities or group of local authorities, targeted at recruiting and retaining more foster carers to reduce reliance on IFAs.
- Working with other local authorities to shape the market and procurement techniques and improve understanding of what market shaping and procurement models work well
- Individually or sub-regionally develop new in-house care homes that are needed to transform care, which will have the benefit of better guaranteeing that children remain in their home area and it significantly reduces scope for profit making from private providers.
- Sub-regionally look at ways to increase capacity to end inappropriate placements and Local Authorities to take on the responsibility for the commissioning and running of secure homes.

Enfield's commissioning priorities

25. Enfield have a Commissioning Framework and a Placement Sufficiency Strategy which identifies the gaps in the market and the response we are taking to the above recommendations.

26. The following are our strategic priorities and commissioning intentions for the next three years to tackle the issue of shortage of placements:

- Housing First – this is a scheme run by Centrepont, who will work with our high risk care leavers to access to council tenancy much earlier than our current pathway.

- Changing the use of the current Barnardos children's home in borough from a solo unit to a 3 bedded children's home, to increase our children's residential home provision for Enfield Looked After Children.
- To develop 2 x three bedded children's home in borough, with a care provider being appointed to further increase our children's residential home provision for Enfield Looked After Children.
- Looking to increase allowances and fees paid to Enfield foster carers, which will help recruit more in house foster carers and mitigate high cost out of borough placements with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and to increase Enfield's in house pool of foster carers.
- To invest in loft conversions for our existing foster carers, which would increase capacity within Enfield's in house fostering and avoid costly out of borough IFA placements.
- To move away from spot purchasing Home Care to implementing a robust Home Care tender which will allow quality support agencies to work with our children and families and support them in their home to prevent children coming into care.
- Working with Pan London boroughs, to develop a 22 bedded secure welfare children's home in London, for children who are at risk of exploitation, which will avoid unsuitable placements out of borough and provide more suitable placement capacity.
- Working with Housing Gateway to open 3 x three bedded semi-independent units, which will be for young people who are not yet ready to hold their own tenancy but are independent enough to live on their own with some support. within Enfield for care leavers, which would increase capacity for semi-independent placements.
- To develop a children's short breaks unit in borough, to prevent children coming into care by providing respite for the parents of children with disability/complex needs

Conclusions

27. It is evident from the above report that demand outstrips supply in the children's care market.
28. It is a statutory duty for all children to have the right type of placement and for Enfield to meet its 'sufficiency duty'.
29. In order to meet our sufficiency duty, Enfield has a number of commissioning priorities and intentions which will increase capacity across all placement types over the next few years.
30. Enfield and other partners to work collaboratively to deliver the right type of provision and access more local support services to increase outcomes for our children and young people.

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Date of report: November 2022

Appendices

Appendix A – Commissioning Priorities Timeline

Background Papers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-market-study-final-report/final-report>

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/>

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Scrutiny Panel: 10th January 2023

Subject: Level of care places in the borough and the national shortage of care places

Appendix A
Commissioning Priorities Timeline

No.	Commissioning Priority	Estimated 'Go Live' date
1.	Housing First	Apr-23
2.	Barnardo's 3 bedded children's home	Apr-23
3.	2 x three bedded children's home	Nov-23
4.	Increase allowances for in house foster carers	Apr-23
5.	Invest in loft conversions for our in house foster carers	Ongoing
6.	Home care tender	Oct-23
7.	Pan London Secure children's Home	Apr-25
8.	3 x three bedded semi-independent unit in borough	Apr-23
9.	In house short breaks unit	Apr-25

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London Borough of Enfield**[Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny - 10th January 2023]**

Subject: Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers**Cabinet Member: Cllr Abdul Abdullahi****Executive Director: Tony Theodoulou**

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the work that have been taken to recruit and retain children social workers.

Relevance to the Council Plan

2. **SAFE, HEALTHY AND CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES**
 - Keep communities free from crime
 - Inspire and empower young Enfield to reach their full potential
 - Deliver essential services to protect and support vulnerable residents
 - Create healthy streets, parks and community spaces

Background

3. This briefing provides a summary of Children and Family's Services activities to recruit and retain children social workers.
4. Enfield Children Services workforce is of central importance in delivering an excellent service to our children and families. There is a commitment to rise to the national challenges regarding the recruitment and retention of Children's Social Workers.
5. We aim to recruit quality staff to Enfield and to develop the capability and competence of workers, in order to offer the best possible service to our children and families.
6. We aspire to have a well-qualified workforce with high levels of job satisfaction, leading to good levels of retention, with clear career development opportunities, managed by effective strong leaders. Building on existing strengths, to develop our training, development, recruitment, leadership and practice in order to develop confident and skilled practitioners. This will result in ensuring the safety of vulnerable children within stable and permanent families and the ability to bring about and sustain change and improved outcomes.
7. Our approach has included focusing on:
 - Workforce recruitment, retention and stability
 - Workforce development

- Leadership and management
- Our work culture

Main Considerations for the Panel

8. *Key issues, challenges, comparative data, costs etc*
9. Stabilising the children's workforce has been a major challenge in recent years, during the height of the pandemic significantly more social workers left the profession than in previous years. Whilst the rate of leavers has decreased there continues to be a trend including newly qualified social workers leaving to join recruitment agencies after completing their first year in a permanent role.
10. By having a stabilised workforce it allows us to build strong, consistent and robust relationships with the families we work with which can make the biggest difference to their overall outcomes. To attract talented workers manageable caseloads and opportunities to develop are high on the lists on what makes workers want to join a local authority.
11. There is a children workforce strategy in place and a newly established children workforce task group responsible for driving the workforce strategy. This group reports to the quarterly People Workforce Group.
12. **Workforce data as of 30 September 2022**
 - No: of children and Family social workers, was 201.20 (FTE) an increase from 184.05 compared to the same point in 2021
 - No: of starters 72.80 (FTE) a significant increase from 34.40 at the same point in 2021
 - Number of leavers was 36.50 (FTE) a slight increase from 34.50 at the same point in 2021
 - Turnover rate was 18.14% reduction from 18.74% at the same point last year
 - No: of agency workers at 30 September (FTE) was 31.30% compared to 28.72% at the same point last year
 - Average caseload (per FTE) was 14.04 a reduction from 17.57 at the same point last year
13. At the time of writing this summary (December 2022), there were 19 vacancies across children and families social work teams.
14. **Our approach to recruiting and retaining staff** - has included reviewing the benefits to working in Enfield. Ensuring that our offer is competitive and effectively marketed to encourage high quality practitioners to apply and stay in Enfield. This has included offering a golden handshake and promoting the opportunity of paid sabbaticals.

15. All social work vacancies are advertised on different job vacancy platforms that are known to be read by the profession. In addition, more targeted action has been undertaken such as recruiting from overseas, attending a job fair and the longer-term strategy of growing our own social workers through our apprenticeship programme.
16. Between April 2022 – December 2022, 48 permanent social workers have joined children and families' services. This includes 20 experienced international social workers (ISW). A second cohort of 10 ISWs have been interviewed and accepted offers, they are expected to join the local authority in January 2023.
17. Our grown your own social work apprenticeship programme currently has eight apprentices with a further four due to start in March 2023. This year we expanded this opportunity to train as a social worker at the council to those who do not work for the council this included local residents. In August 2023, three apprentices will have completed the SW apprenticeship programme. Successful completion of the programme means they will be able to register as social workers, with Social Work England and begin work with us as qualified social workers. We will be working with them to match them to vacancies.
18. Our recent attendance at a national job fair at the end of November 2022 successfully resulted in 31 expressions of interest in joining Enfield. The plan is for human resource to follow up each enquiry.
19. With the success of recruiting staff this year there are now teams where it had been previously difficult to recruit and retain staff that are now more stable, such as the Assessment and Intervention teams.
20. When social workers decide to leave, there are a number of reasons that influence their decision including
 - Other opportunities outside of LBE – becoming an agency worker
 - Work pressures/demands and limited provision of business support
 - Distance from home
 - Unclear social work career progression scheme
 - We have not been satisfied with the quality of their practice and asked them to leave
 - Wanting to move away from front line child protection
 - Childcare/family issues
21. We continue to look at new ways to recruit workers and are moving forward with creative ideas such as The Social Work Hub. This hub approach involves working with a recruitment agency to source permanent social care staff. This initiative has the benefit of speeding the onboarding process and reducing the possibility of applicants going with another local authority.

22. **Development of our workforce is a priority**, - we aim to provide an environment in which social workers are able to develop their practice and career.
23. For our newly qualified social workers we have strengthened their induction by including a Readiness to Practice (RTP) programme. This is a bespoke course over 2 weeks targeted at raising the new starters understanding of what they need to know to undertake the role of a social worker. Since the RTP was put in place in February 2021 a total of 28 NQSWs have completed the course.
24. There is a comprehensive annual learning and development offer ensuring all social workers have access to training that will enhance their skills, knowledge and confidence, between April and December 2022, 444 training places have been taken up.
25. For our experienced social workers there is the opportunity to develop supervisory skills by becoming a practice educator which includes supporting a social work student in placement. Since April 2022 we have provided 15 opportunities to social worker to have a student. Providing this development pathway to experienced social workers allows Enfield to take students from universities and shows our commitment to being a learning environment. By taking on final year students, we aim to recruit and retain as many of our final year students when they complete their studies.
26. Succession planning is part of our longer-term strategy, it is aimed to retain good quality staff and fill vacancies at more senior levels as they become vacant. To support staff stepping up into these roles, a bespoke social work leadership course has been developed. A 10-week programme has been delivered to service managers and a six week programme for Team Managers started in November 2022. Feedback has been positive. These programmes align to the Social Work England practice standards.
27. Listening to staff enables senior managers to understand why they stay or why they may be considering leaving. Listening events regularly take place and are an opportunity for the Director and the Principal social worker to obtain free and frank feedback from social workers. This improves the flow of communication between the frontline and senior managers.
28. **The wellbeing of staff** - is important the pandemic put into sharp focus the need to focus on staff resilience and morale as these can be factors as to why staff may leave. The council's employee assistance scheme is regularly promoted, and staff are encouraged to use the service.
29. Increasing the workforce has brought caseloads down, which reduces pressure. Support and advice is offered by managers and the Principal Social Worker. Celebrating success is a key feature in team meetings as well as creating an environment where social workers feel safe to practice.

30. On the 19th December 2023, the Children and Family's services moved to Thomas Hardy House. The investment into the new hub, brings all teams together in a vibrant modern office. Being together provides opportunities to increase efficiency and better outcomes for families. The new hub location has good traffic links and access to range of shops, creating a desirable location for current staff and an attraction for new staff to work in Enfield.

Conclusions

31. In summary this reports highlights that whilst there continues to be challenges in the recruitment and retention of social workers there have been improvements. There is a workforce strategy in place with a clear focus on short, medium and long term actions aimed to stabilise the workforce and provide the development opportunities that will make Enfield be an attractive consideration to future social workers.

Appendices

None

Background Paper

N/a

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0208 132 0364

Date of report 16th December 2022

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London Borough of Enfield**Children, Young People & Education Scrutiny Panel – 10th January 2023**

Subject: Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers Report**Cabinet Member: Cllr Abdul Abdullahi****Executive Director: Tony Theodoulou**

Purpose of Report

1. This report updates the Scrutiny Panel on the work of the Fostering Service relating to the recruitment and retention of foster carers, which was highlighted as a priority for the Cabinet Member.

Relevance to the Council Plan

2. Enfield Council's foster carers provide stability, care and family support to children and young people who are not able to live with their birth family. This is often a temporary arrangement whilst work is being undertaken to return the children to their families but can also be a long-term arrangement if it is decided that it is not safe for children to return to the care of their birth parents. Our pool of foster carers will be the Looked after Child's alternative family for as long as that care is needed. With the help and support of their family and friends in their support network, they can make a positive difference to the children in their care and prepare them for the future.

Background

3. The Fostering Service is staffed with experienced practitioners and managers. The areas of specialism within the service are 2-fold: the recruitment and assessment of foster carers; and the support and development of foster carers once they have been approved as suitable to foster.

All approved foster carers have a named supervising social worker who provides them with regular supervision, monitors the quality of care they deliver and supports their professional development. A comprehensive and flexible training and development programme is available for all carers.

Enfield is a part of the North London Fostering & Permanence Consortium (NLFPC) made up of Enfield, Barnet, Camden, Hackney, Haringey and Islington. The boroughs work together, sharing training, recruitment activities and fostering placements for children across the six boroughs. Shared planning and funding have allowed the consortium boroughs to deliver more cost effective and innovative services to foster carers and special guardians.

Main Considerations for the Panel

4. The fostering recruitment and assessment team continually look at ways in which to attract new foster carers for Enfield's Looked After Children. This has been challenging throughout the pandemic and the current economic climate due to the national cost of living crises. This has resulted in potential foster carers feeling that having an extra child in the family home would lead to added costs on their household bills resulting in people not wanting to apply to become foster carers whereas they may have considered it in the past. This has impacted heavily on local authorities and independent fostering agencies nationally, in their efforts to recruit new foster carers. Retention of foster carers is also proving a challenge as they struggle to 'make ends meet' with rising fuel costs and food bills. In light of this, the service is looking at ways in which to address this using innovative ideas and 'invest to save' schemes to recruit new foster carers and retain the existing ones.

4.1 Costs

The average cost of an in-house foster placement is £450 per week and the average cost of an IFA placement is £900. The extra cost of one child in an IFA per year is £23,400. As the national demand for foster carers increases, even with IFAs, the lack of the local authority's own in-house carers can lead to children being placed in residential placements, usually out of the borough, at an average cost of £5000 per week.

An IFA placement or a residential placement being out of the borough has other indirect costs attached, such as:

- Transport costs to and from the child's school (which will in most circumstances be in Enfield).
- Costs and time of social workers and IROs to conduct LAC visits and LAC Reviews.

It is evident that greater social work can be undertaken when a child is placed with in-house carers; the chances of them returning home or to a family and friends' carer is much higher which avoids the need for on-going care costs for a child.

4.2 Comparison Foster Carer Enquiries and Approval Stats

The table below gives an overview of the comparison figures amongst the NCL boroughs during the year 2021-22.

	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Hackney	Haringey	Islington
Number of FC Enquiries	108	163	236	234	56	284
Number of	11	6	17	14	12	5

FC Approvals						
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It is positive to note that Enfield has the highest number of foster carer approvals during this year.

During the current year from 1st April to 30th November 2022 (to date), the table below shows the figures so far for foster carer enquiries and approvals amongst the consortium boroughs.

	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Hackney	Haringey	Islington
Number of FC Enquiries	110	194	162	94	39	No stats received
Number of FC Approvals	4	1	7	7	6	a/a

Currently we have 8 fostering households still in assessment so it is anticipated that by the end of this financial year (as at 31/03/23), we will have approved 15 new foster carers (subject to the Agency Decision Maker's approval).

4.3 Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers

4.4 Fostering Allowances

Research was undertaken to look at whether Enfield can be more attractive to recruit, assess and approve more foster carers. First and foremost, I looked at our foster carers allowances and noted that the fostering rate for children in the 0-10 age band was lower than the DfE recommended minimum rate and lower than the NCL boroughs. (See table below, figures are per week).

Age Band	Camden	Enfield	Hackney	Haringey	Islington
0-4 years	£380	£325.29	£409	£377	£379
5-10 years	£380	£325.29	£412	£377	£379

A proposal has been put forward to increase the Enfield allowances for children in the 0-10 age band to £375 (calculated as an average of the NCL boroughs). By doing this, it is anticipated that our offer to recruit more foster carers and to retain our current pool of carers will become more attractive.

Enfield's fostering allowances in the 11-17 age bands are comparable with the NCL boroughs and are even slightly higher than in two of the NCL boroughs. Therefore, these do not need adjusting.

4.5 **Birthday, Festival and Holiday Allowances**

The table below is what Enfield is paying their foster carers compared to the NCL boroughs for birthday, festival, and holiday allowances (per year).

	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Hackney	Haringey	Islington
Birthday	£176	£207	£77	£100	£232	£186
Festival	£176	£207	£77	£100	£232	£186
Holiday	£226	£414	£244	£450	£874	£350

From the table above, it is clearly evident that Enfield's birthday, festival and holiday allowances are much lower than most of the NCL boroughs and it is felt that this is a contributing factor to retaining foster carers and attracting new foster carers. Therefore, a proposal has been put forward for Enfield's birthday and festival allowances to be increased to £150 per year and for the holiday allowance to be increased to £450 per year. Again, it is anticipated that this will improve the potential to recruit new foster carers and will help to retain existing foster carers.

4.6 **Retention Package**

Following a benchmarking exercise with our NCL boroughs, a proposal has been put forward as part of a retention package to our foster carers, so that our carers feel valued and remain as carers with Enfield. The plan is to offer annual retention payments to foster carers based on the number of years they have fostered for Enfield, as follows.

Foster carers approved for:

- 2 years will receive £300
- 5 years will receive £600
- 10 years will receive £1,500
- 20 years will receive £2,500

If agreed, this retention package will commence in the new financial year (1st April 2023).

4.7 **Energy Fuel Payment**

It has been acknowledged that the gas and electricity fuel crisis has impacted on everyone, including our foster carers, many of whom are struggling to manage as they continue to care for our Looked After Children. Recently, it was agreed that a one-off fuel payment of £300 should be paid to our foster carers which they will receive by the end of December 2022. This payment will also be offered to foster carers newly approved until the end of this financial year. NCL boroughs are making similar payments to their foster carers also.

4.8 Invest to Save Initiatives

4.9 As part of our recruitment and retention plans, I and the fostering team have identified a number of initiatives that we are progressing to attract new foster carers as well as retain existing foster carers. 4.3 and 4.4 above relate to a review of allowances and this is in the process of being agreed.

4.10 Additional Bedroom Grant

4.11 We are offering foster carers the opportunity to apply to have additional bedroom builds through loft conversions or extensions to so that additional placements can be provided to our Looked After Children. This is being fully funded by the Council's Capital Funds Programme which will span over a 9-year rolling period. A criterion for accepting applications from foster carers has been agreed which is included in the Policy for this scheme. Ultimately, the aim is to provide more in-house placement for our children, but this scheme will also benefit foster carers as their properties will increase in value.

4.12 Foster Carer Ambassadors

We have now identified a group of existing foster carers willing to be involved in recruitment events to attract new carers. The role of these ambassadors is to talk directly to people showing an interest in fostering such as the process, what to expect when being assessed, the role of fostering panel, and support offered to carers once they are approved.

4.13 Buses and Billboard Adverts

4.14 We are in the process of obtaining quotes to advertise and promote Enfield's fostering service on buses and billboards in the borough. We will be choosing a bus route that drives through many of the routes in the borough although we do acknowledge that there will be some cross over into neighbouring boroughs.

4.15 'Buddying' Scheme

It has been acknowledged that some newly approved foster carers are (understandably) anxious at the prospect of having their first placement following their approval. Therefore, a scheme has been developed to pair new foster cares with experienced foster carers who can support them in their first year of fostering and beyond if necessary. This support is in addition to that provided by the carers' fostering social workers.

4.16 'Golden Hello' Initiative

4.17 This initiative is aimed at foster carers already approved with an agency but are considering a move to Enfield. It has been acknowledged that as

such carers will need to be re-approved by Enfield, they should receive a fee of £1000 for their commitment to being re-assessed and upon their first placement of a child. Flyers are currently in the process of being printed for distribution.

4.18 **Staff Referral Scheme**

4.19 To encourage Enfield's employees to support our efforts, we are launching a new scheme for Enfield staff to receive a bonus connected to referring friends, family, colleagues or business associates to Enfield's fostering team to be recruited as foster carers. We are offering £500 to the Enfield Council employee who refers a potential foster carer to us, upon the person becoming approved as a foster carer and accepting their first placement. We are promoting this via Staff Matters and the Children's Service Centre of Excellence newsletters.

4.20 **STAR Parties**

4.21 Existing foster carers have been approached to host Start Thinking About Recruitment (STAR) parties in their homes for people in their network or their friends' networks that may be interested in fostering. Research has shown that the best way to recruit foster carers is through 'word of mouth' and recommendation by foster carers already approved. Foster carers have volunteered to host such parties which will commence in the New Year when the busy festivity period is over.

4.22 **Valuing Foster Carers**

4.23 From talking to our foster carers, it is evident that they do not always feel valued in their roles as foster carers which is a national issue amongst foster carers and not unique to Enfield. Having considered this, I and the HoS for our LAC Service attended a foster carers support group recently whereby we listened to carers, responded to questions, and gave them the opportunity to come up with ideas as to how the department can make improvements. Feedback following our attendance to this group revealed that our carers found this to be very useful and felt it was a constructive way in which to communicate their needs to senior management. As a result of this, it has been agreed that I and the HoS will attend these groups on a regular basis moving forward.

4.24 Recently we held a festive event for our foster carers whereby we invited relevant professionals, Councillors, and senior management including directors. Foster carers felt valued and were happy to be connecting with each other again following the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. Carers who had fostered for Enfield for more than 10 years were also presented with a long-service award certificate and gift voucher.

4.25 Foster Carers Experiences of Navigating Systems to Become Foster Carers

4.26 Foster carers can use a variety of ways in which to express interest in becoming foster carers:

- The Council's Website and our own bespoke Fostering Website, both have links giving straightforward access to information and a user-friendly application process.
- On-line portal system which can be accessed via the above websites.
- We offer a daily telephone duty system so carers can call and speak personally to a team member about fostering and complete an expression of interest application should they feel ready to proceed.
- Foster carers can email us and expect to receive a response on the same day or the day after.
- We hold monthly information sessions which provides potential carers with an overview of what fostering entails and gives them an opportunity to ask any questions to help them make very important decisions.
- We have regular campaigns and events promoting fostering in Enfield which raises awareness and interest from people considering a career in fostering. Experienced staff are available to respond to enquiries following these.

4.27 Feedback from Foster Carers on their Experiences of Becoming FCs

4.28 As part of our Audit Moderation Programme, we include feedback from foster carers on their experiences of becoming foster carers. Comments from foster carers include the following:

- Applicants generally found our recruitment process straightforward, uncomplicated, and easy to follow. Some were surprised at how quick the process was from initial enquiry to initial visit.
- They stated that the team had made the process easier for them and that any queries they had were answered and encouraged their desire to become foster carers.
- They felt they had learnt a lot through the process and found it a positive experience. Some said they enjoyed going through the assessment and that they were starting the role with knowledge and tools that they gained during the assessment process.

- Applicants felt the preparation training was enjoyable, enlightening and helped to develop their understanding of fostering and provided more insight about what the role entails.
- Some applicants felt the process was at times intrusive and time consuming, with some lengthy sessions, however, they understood why the assessment had to be in-depth, and most felt the level of detail was appropriate.
- Applicants said they developed positive working relationships with their assessing social workers and found that the assessors explained the process to them clearly and the requirements of the role. Most found the assessor was sensitive to their experiences and needs.
- Following the training and the assessment, applicants said they felt ready and prepared to face the challenge of caring for a child.

4.29 It is pleasing to note that the majority of our foster carers remain with Enfield for a long period of time. We have in the region of 30+ foster carers who have been fostering for more than 10 years and some that have fostered for more than 20 years. Inevitably, we will always have foster carers that feel they can no longer continue in their roles, but this is not unique to Enfield, this is a national occurrence across all fostering agencies.

4.30 **Resignation and De-registration of Foster Carers**

As I have indicated above, it is not unusual to have foster carers being de-registered due to them resigning or the department deciding that they are no longer suitable to foster. Unfortunately, despite efforts to retain and approve new foster carers, the number of carers de-registered usually matches the number of new carers approved. Therefore, the number of approved foster carers in each financial year tends to be static. Having said this, reasons for de-registrations vary and with foster carers who go on to adopt or become SG carers for the children placed with them, this should not be viewed as a deficit as their roles as foster carers have changed to provide better outcomes for our children. Equally, children placed with foster carers who remain with them until adulthood convert to 'staying put' carers and are de-registered as foster carers due to this. In this financial year to date (as at 30/11/22), we have had 12 foster carers being de-registered for various reasons, as follows:

- 1 x carers resigned due to change in their family circumstances as a result of their birth daughter's sudden escalating behaviour issues.
- 1 x carer resigned due to her declining health and finding the last placement challenging as a result of this.
- 1 x carer resigned due to significant change in family circumstances i.e. adult daughter and 4 grand-children moving into the home.

- 2 x carer(s) resigned due to moving out of London.
- 1 x carer(s) resigned due to significant change in family circumstances i.e. their father becoming very unwell and needing to prioritise elderly parents.
- 1 x carer resigned as the young person placed with her as a family and friends' placement had moved to semi-independence living and was no longer a Looked After Child.
- 2 x carer(s) resigned as they obtained SGOs on the children placed with them and they became Special Guardians in place of Foster Carers. This is very positive as the children (6 in total) are no longer in the care system.
- 1 x carer retired.
- 1 x carer(s) were de-registered as family and friends foster carers by the department due to allegations from one of the children placed that she and her siblings were being mistreated. This de-registration was not challenged by these carers as they had stated their intention to resign had we not taken action to safeguard the children.
- 1 x carer(s) resigned due to very specific placement preferences which could not be met by the department. Carers were also constantly disgruntled despite efforts by the team to appease them.

I am anticipating that we will have 3-4 more de-registrations by the end of the financial year as carers have informed their social workers that changes in their family circumstances have resulted in their ability to offer future placements to our Looked After Children. However, I am confident that now we have good proposals in place to retain carers, we will have fewer foster carers indicating their intentions to leave Enfield to go to IFAs who, on the whole, offer better incentives. Making foster carers feel more valued is the key to retention in my view.

5. **Conclusions**

The recruitment and retention of foster carers is a national crisis impacting on fostering agencies nationwide. This has been mainly due to the cost-of-living crisis where potential foster carers feel that having an extra child in the family home would lead to added costs to their household bills, resulting in people not wanting to apply to become foster carers.

- 5.1 The requests for placements for our Looked After Children is ongoing and whilst this crisis continues, we are having to look at creative ways in which to recruit in a very competitive market to keep up with demand.

- 5.2 We also need to consider that whilst we strive to recruit new foster carers, we have existing foster carers who are de-registered for various reasons, such as, retirement, a change in their family circumstances impacting on their ability to continue with fostering, carers whom we feel are no longer suitable to foster due to standard of care issues, and children becoming adults wishing to remain with their carers via 'staying put' arrangements.
- 5.3 Despite the challenges we face as a service, the benchmarking exercise that I have undertaken has evidenced that we compare well with our NCL boroughs. I anticipate that the finance review, together with the initiatives I have outlined above, will improve the prospect of recruiting more new carers and help to retain our existing carers.

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Date of report: 13th December 2022

Appendices

Appendix A – Marketing and Recruitment Strategy 2022-23

Background Papers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-market-study-final-report/final-report> (Recommendation 1.3)



MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

2022 - 2023

Introduction

Enfield Council's foster carers provide stability, care and family support to children and young people who are not able to live with their birth family. This is often a temporary arrangement whilst work is done to return the children to their families but can also be a long-term arrangement by order of the court or as approved by the agency decision maker. Our pool of foster carers will be the looked after child's alternative family for as long as that care is needed. With the help and support of their family and friends in their support network, they can make a positive difference to the children in their care and prepare them for the future.

We need to ensure that there are enough carers available to support the number of Children Looked After (CLA) who require care in Enfield. As of April 2022, there are 387 CLA by the council. There will be some sibling groups matched to foster carers able to care for siblings. Despite an increase in the number of carers over the last year, there are still more CLA, an increase of 27%. As a result, there is a shortfall of foster carers in the council, meaning that not all placements can be filled inhouse. This shortfall can increase further as some carers stop fostering due to deregistration, retirement and other circumstances.

Enfield is a diverse London borough. The children needing placements come from a range of racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Our strategy will therefore be informed by the demographic makeup of CLA children as we aim to engage with potential carers of a similar background to the children requiring placements. This will include targeting people within specific ethnic and religious groups that are currently underrepresented within our current pool of foster carers.

We will also be targeting groups that are traditionally more likely to foster. This could include those within the LGBT community looking to care for children, single people and couples who work with children, as well as those whose own children have grown up and left home.

Foster carers need to live in, or within reasonable travelling distance to the borough for numerous reasons. Children need to remain close to their family, friends and community networks and to existing resources such as schools, doctor surgeries etc. However, we also acknowledge that it is not always appropriate or possible to place looked after children in the borough with local foster carers. Some promotional activities may stretch outside the boundary of Enfield to areas such as neighbouring London Boroughs (Haringey, Camden, Islington etc.). We will maintain links with neighbouring authorities, both generally and through our partner agency the North London Fostering Consortium, in recognition of Enfield's needs.

Recruiting foster carers requires ongoing, year-round campaigns on multiple platforms. There will be a focus at certain periods of the year (e.g. Christmas, back to school, Foster Care Fortnight) where there is a general increase in awareness for fostering. We will therefore look to exploit this organic increase in interest and ensure that any potential carers relevant for Enfield Council come to us as the fostering agency of choice.

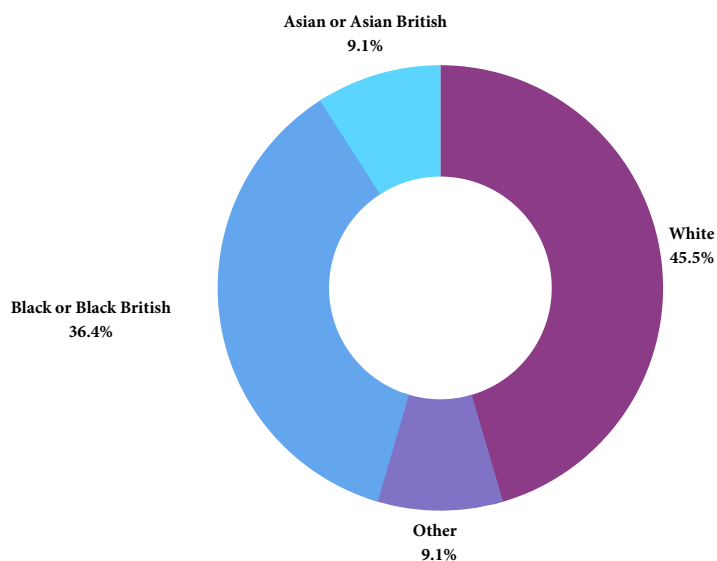
The COVID-19 pandemic has had numerous ramifications for foster carer recruitment. However we are getting back to face-face events, information sessions and offline marketing. We will continue to have a focus on digital platforms, such as Eventbrite, Facebook and Google Ads, due to the increased performance we have seen over this period.

This strategy will span over the financial year 2022-2023 and outlines the strategies and campaigns that will be employed throughout this period to recruit and retain a pool of foster carers to support the London Borough of Enfield. There were 17 approvals in the previous financial year. While our marketing budget has been cut from £20,000 to £10,000, our target for unconnected foster carer recruitment for 2022/23 is 18 approvals.

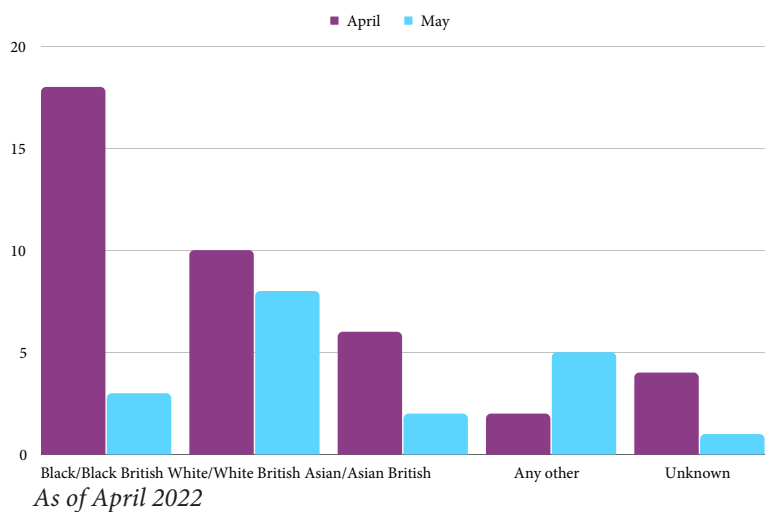
Enfield Council will also make efforts to raise awareness to families who may be in a private fostering situation to declare this arrangement to us so that we can advise and support them to look after the children in their care.

Analysis of looked after children and foster carer population

Children Looked After (CLA) with episode of care



Enquiries by ethnic groups



45.5% of all children looked after are from a White ethnicity. Black or Black British children make up the next largest group (36.4%) while Asian or British Asian were the third (9%). The rest of the CLA are made of children from other nationalities as well as those of mixed nationalities.

The majority of all confirmed enquiries came from people of a Black British, Caribbean or African ethnic group. This is positive as many CLA come from this group. The next highest number of enquiries came from those of a White, White British or White European background. This shows that more can be done to target these individuals within the community as they are the largest ethnic group within Enfield and half of the CLA fall into this ethnic group.

Within each category of looked after children, there are also specific ethnic groups with their own unique cultures and backgrounds to consider. One such group is Albanian; we have made a concerted effort to target members of this community by advertising in Albanian language papers and social media pages. We will continue to analyse the data of CLA and target groups as specifically as possible to ensure the makeup of our foster carers mirrors that of the CLA more closely.

Foster Carer Motivations

Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a challenge for all local authorities in the United Kingdom. Neighbouring local authorities will often compete with each other for the same pool of people which is more prevalent amongst the smaller geographical authorities in the London region.

There will also be competition from independent fostering agencies that work both regionally and nationally and who can, in some cases, offer a more attractive support/finance package. They also have an increased marketing budget, allowing greater exposure, particularly on digital platforms such as Facebook and Google where CPC (cost per click) bidding methods mean the more you spend the more traffic you receive.

Comprehensive training and development are cited as a key reason for choosing a local authority over an IFA. These sessions offer carers the chance to develop their skills and gain appreciation of how fostering can affect everyone concerned.

We will also emphasise that we provide out of hours contact with our social work team for advice, guidance and support and a 24-hour helpline. This package of support will appeal to the foster carers who above all want to see a child develop and flourish in their care.

Looking into the motivation of approved carers, their reasons include:

- Wanting to make a difference
- Having a spare bedroom to offer
- Looking for a new career path
Enjoying caring for children personally/ professionally
- Knowing someone who has experience in fostering
- Awareness of need for foster carers from reading or verbal communications
- Suits current family circumstances with options to create/extend family
- Own children have grown or moved away
-

Using the information we have on our existing foster carers, such as age, location and ethnicity, we can start to create a profile of who we can target as prospective foster carers and what individual motivations we may wish to appeal to.

Key messages

These are some of the messages we will be using in our adverts based on the findings above about the motivations of carers and the current misconceptions around fostering:

Raising awareness of fostering in general:

- Fostering can make a positive and lasting difference to a child's life
- Fostering can benefit the community as children brought up in a stable home are more likely to thrive in the future
- Fostering gives children a loving, stable and secure family home
- We need a diverse range of carers to cater for the diverse range of children in need of foster care
- Fostering offers many avenues for personal and family development that will benefit you later in life
- Fostering can be tough, but the good days are extremely rewarding and don't just put a smile on a child's face, but yours as well!
- Private fostering support is available so tell us about your foster caring arrangement

Promoting the rewarding aspect of fostering and its long-term impact

- Make a difference today and help children in need achieve their full potential in life
- There will be hard days as a foster carer, but putting in the work today will give you and the child huge rewards in the future
- The most rewarding thing about fostering is being involved in changing a child's life for good, taking them out of a traumatic situation into a positive one
- Help children and young people in our community and start your rewarding career as an Enfield Foster Carer

Promoting the inclusive nature of fostering:

- No matter what your background, you could make a brilliant foster carer.
- We need a diverse range of foster carers to care for a diverse range of children with individual needs.
- If you're over 21, love working with children and want the satisfaction of making a difference, fostering is for you.
- Applications are welcomed from single applicants as well as couples and there is no discrimination on grounds of class, race, culture, or sexuality.
- Fostered children can settle quicker in a family that matches their racial, religious, and cultural background

What Enfield Council can provide:

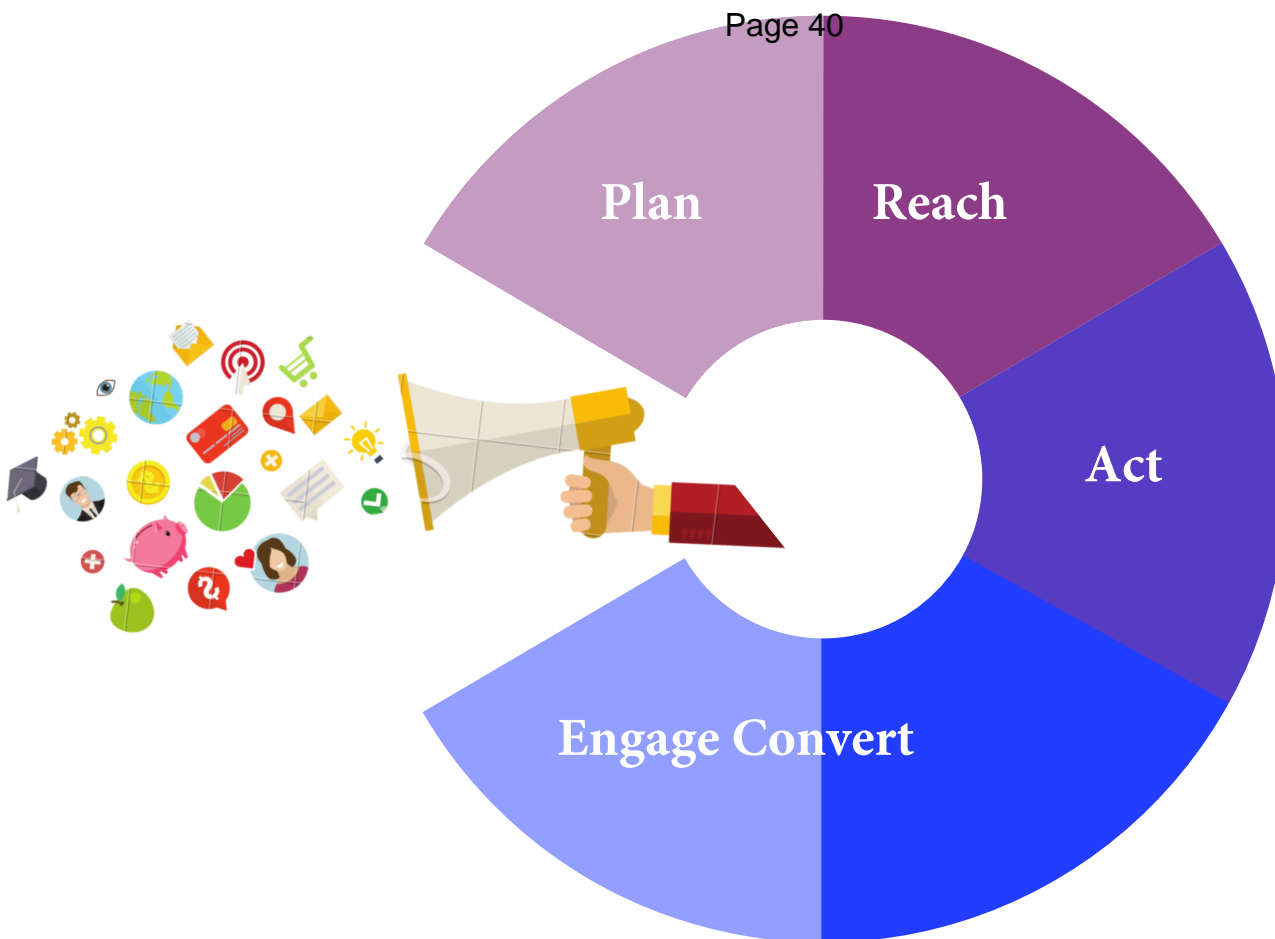
- Enfield Council's Fostering Service is committed to recruiting more foster carers to meet the needs of looked after children requiring a foster placement
- Everyone interested in becoming a foster carer will be welcomed without prejudice and will be given clear written information about the preparation, assessment and approval procedure
- Enfield Council's Fostering Service offer help, encouragement, support and guidance in assisting prospective foster carers in every aspect of the application process
- All applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the fostering process

Marketing and Communications strategy

From the 1st of April 2021 to the 31st of March 2022, we received 236 enquiries. A large percentage of these were from family and friends of current foster carers, therefore a core part of this year's communications will be encouraging foster carers to keep referring potential candidates to us. There has also been an increase in the number of enquiries through social media platforms and Enfield's website. We will therefore be looking to expand the use of online advertising through sources such as Google Ads, Facebook and other social media platforms.

As a result of a reduced marketing budget and the performance campaigns over the last year, we will be focusing most of our efforts on more continuous streams of advertising. We will aim to constantly raise awareness of fostering rather than putting most of our resource into one off campaigns. This is because there is a greater risk of not generating leads from standalone marketing efforts that only have a limited window where they can be effective, thus reducing return on income. However, we will still look to partake in bigger marketing campaigns in times of heightened fostering awareness such as Fostering Fortnight, back to school period and Christmas.

We will also ensure that we are engaging with potential carers who may not have ever considered fostering. We can do this by following what is known as the 'RACE' framework as shown by the funnel below. We are currently very strong at converting 'hot' leads during the convert and engage stage (as shown by high number of family and friends enquiries). However, we can be doing more to engage with candidates at the top of the funnel and make sure they are pushed to act and submit an enquiry.



Plan – This strategy document. We will be aiming to increase the number of people attending information sessions and capturing initial details of candidates just finding out more information.

Reach – This will be a mix of both - continuous digital marketing efforts on PPC platforms and social media, as well as long term adverts throughout Enfield that try to engage with members of the public and raise awareness of fostering. This could include billboard/poster ads or long-term print advertising such as patient and education booklets. With any information captured, make sure that these ‘cold’ leads are kept in touch with via email marketing.

Act – Once people are aware of fostering, we then want the best enquirers to go on to make an initial enquiry. While they may do this directly via an advert, this can also be achieved by encouraging people to sign up to information events on the website or getting in touch with our team for more info.

Convert – Getting the initial enquiry/application forms submitted. This means we are quick to follow up from information sessions/events and informal enquiries through the website/phone.

Engage – Utilising our foster carers for recruitment activities such as events, online content etc. Encouraging family and friends fostering so they advocate becoming a foster carer with Enfield Council.

Action Plan 2022-2023

We will be running campaigns and undertaking marketing activities throughout the financial year aimed at covering all aspects of the 'RACE' framework identified in the previous section. The overall goal is to maintain a high profile for Enfield's Fostering Service and increase the number of prospective foster carers moving through the recruitment process.

Action	RACE	Timescale	Who by	Output	Evaluation
Compile a recruitment calendar listing the key activities and important dates to note in each month to instruct the year's marketing and advertising campaigns	Plan	September 2022	Recruitment and Marketing Officer (RMO)	Calendar for staff to alert them of key dates and opportunities we are utilising to promote fostering. Programme of events and promotional work around the key dates identified	To be included within RMO's strategy plan
Work with foster carers to identify referrals from their friends and family networks	Engage	Ongoing	Recruitment team and SSW	Learn from successful schemes already carried out by other local authorities such as the STAR (Start Thinking About Recruitment) parties	Monitored and recorded by recruitment team (Duty sheet)
Planning public events	Reach	Ongoing throughout the year	RMO	To raise the awareness of fostering and obtain expressions of interest for immediate follow up	Monitored and recorded by recruitment team (Duty sheet)

Action	RACE	Timescale	Who by	Output	Evaluation
To increase relevant traffic going to the fostering website through PPC advertising, SEO improvement and increased visibility on corporate Enfield platforms	Act/Convert	Ongoing	RMO and DS team	SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) content to be updated regularly. Rolling PPC Improvement of user experience on site.	Web enquiry numbers recorded as source of enquiry.
Local press advertising - mainly based within specific community papers in Enfield	Reach	Ongoing	RMO	Selecting existing publications and any new recommended ones as they come onboard throughout the year and during key times as indicated by the campaigns.	Expressions of interest monitored and collated by marketing officer in the quarterly statistics report. Also monitor website traffic when specific campaigns go live.
NHS advertising within specific practices and publications	Reach/Act	Ongoing from previous year	RMO	Adverts within patient booklets to advertise monthly information sessions (2-year deal agreed with Ordnance Unity Centre). Events in NHS venues tbc.	Signups to information sessions to be monitored (Duty sheet)
Outdoor advertising on school gates	Reach	From May 2022 ongoing TBC	RMO	Raising awareness of fostering for Enfield and any upcoming events.	Source of enquiry monitored and collated by recruitment and marketing officer in the quarterly statistics report

Action	RACE	Timescale	Who by	Output	Evaluation
Increase social media presence (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) with content and paid ads	Reach/Act	Ongoing	RMO	Regular update to social media pages to ensure content is up to date and of interest. Engage with relevant topics such as major news or events. Post interactive content such as videos, blogs etc.	Social media insights, analytics, traffic reports and enquiries generated
Outreach events to staff at the Civic Centre and other internal comms	Reach/Act	Ongoing	RMO	Work with the Culture Change team and marketing comms team to make staff aware of the Council's fostering need and any events are circulated in forums such as Staff Matters, Intranet etc.	Monitored on duty sheet
Fostering Recruitment Materials and literature	Reach	Ongoing	RMO	Items used for recruiting foster carers –brochures, banners, t-shirts and other promotional items. These can be used at events or distributed amongst the community	Consistency with existing materials and choice of value for money items. We will also review all collateral to ensure it is up to date. Can track success of each item based on duty sheet.
Press Office and media	Reach	Focusing on key dates (May, September, December)	Marketing officer / Press team	Raising awareness	Press coverage and enquiries received as results

Action	RACE	Timescale	Who by	Output	Evaluation
Private Fostering Awareness activities	Act	Ongoing	RMO & Social worker for private foster carers	Outreach activities to communities we understand as more likely to be engaging in private fostering arrangements	Number of enquiries and monitoring any trends that identify which communities are engaging in private fostering arrangements to inform future campaigns
Email bulletins to prospective carers who agree to be contacted by email communications	Reach	Monthly	RMO	Reminders of upcoming information sessions and events	E-marketing site insight
Foster Care Fortnight	Reach/Act	May 2022	RMO	Promotional activities to raise awareness of fostering in Enfield	Web and social media insights and enquiries directly associated with the activity during this period
School Newsletters and events	Reach	Ongoing	RMO	To promote Enfield Fostering	Results to be evaluated on Duty sheet

Evaluating communications/ recruitment activities

We will always look to see which paid campaigns have led to the best performance in terms of approved foster carers. While the source of enquiry is captured on the Initial Enquiry form, most enquiries involve multiple sources (e.g. see poster on street, Google fostering, click on Google Ad, go to website to find more information, sign up to event on Eventbrite, initial enquiry). We will therefore aim to ensure that relevant marketing activities are being undertaken at each stage of the RACE tunnel, so our exposure is high and candidates are being pushed to submit an enquiry.

Word of mouth referrals remain an effective way of recruiting new carers. Enfield continues to offer an excellent financial incentive to existing foster carers for referrals from their friends and families network.

One major change this year would be that more events and information sessions will move back to face to face interactions as we have found this to be most effective in engaging with applicants.

We will undertake the following evaluation methods to assess and analyse the success of our activities:

- Enquiry numbers and monitoring demographic data especially in relation to our target audiences
- Web analytics to monitor website usage and social media influence.
- Evaluation forms after attending information sessions
- Media monitoring by press office and web team as appropriate
- Profile of event attendees to measure if we are reaching out to identified target groups
- Anecdotal feedback from staff and partners
- Feedback from prospective carers who are not pursuing fostering to find out why
- Statistics monitoring the number and sources of enquiries every 3 months
- Monitoring the progress of the current pool of prospective carers and sharing every 3 months the statistics and reasons for any drop outs in that period with the team

The fostering allowance is also in review currently as it is looking to be increased. Once increased, this will attract more applicants to Enfield Council.

Invest To Save (Recruitment & Retention)

A digital marketing budget averages around £20,000, according to Shima Taylor, Marketing Manager. Our current budget for year 2022-2023 is £10,000. Please see below on ideas for invest to save with marketing.

- 'Golden Hello' - Financial incentive to move from IFA to Enfield Council. A lot of foster carers are put off to transfer due to the long application process. However, with financial incentive this would make it more attractive to them. £500 upon approval at fostering panel and a further £500 upon first placement.
- Staff members' referral fee of £500 upon approval and taking their first placement.
- Local community radio stations that we can advertise on. This can vary in pricing depending on the station. From previous research we have found this to start from £5,000. This can be a one-off basis to view results and outcomes due to high pricing.

Council Tax Reductions (other councils are offering discounted prices) This could be discounted at 50%.

- Buses and billboards - Buses can vary depending on the bus routes and duration of the add (from previous searches we have found £4,000 for 4 weeks. Billboards - we can advertise on digital advert boards on the road (these may be pricy, around £5000).

Energy allowance - This is to be implemented to existing foster carers to save money on energy bill with each placement that they have. This will draw in more foster carers to Enfield with the current economic crisis and the rise of electricity bills.

- Ambassadors - our foster carers have voices and we actively listen to them and value their input. Our carers work closely with us to inform our recruitment strategy and have come up with some very creative ideas. It is important that we include them in recruitment activities such as events, information sessions and Skills to Foster. We want our foster carers to help and support by mentoring fostering applicants in need of support or newly approved foster carers. We can pay foster carers for their time in doing this.

Considering fostering?

Our friendly team are ready to guide you every step of the way!



- ☎ Telephone: 020 8379 2831
- ☎ Freephone: 0800 038 1313
- ✉ fostering@enfield.gov.uk
- 🌐 www.enfield.gov.uk/fostering
- 📘 Fostering in Enfield
- 🐦 @FosteringEnfield

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Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Work Programme

Date of meeting	Topic	Lead Officer	Lead Members	Director	Reason for proposal	Other committee/ Cabinet/Council approvals?
29 June 2022	Work Programme					
27 September 2022	Annual Safeguarding report	Bharat Ayer/ Sharon Burgess	Cllr Abdullahi	Tony Theodoulou	The Annual report is brought to this Panel for discussion.	
	Quality & consistency of school meals across the borough	Cheryl Headon	Cllr Abdullahi	Sue Nelson	This item was proposed by Councillor Thorp during the meeting	
	Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)	Angela Bent	Cllr Abdullahi	Tony Theodoulou	Suggested item from Executive Director	
2 November 2022	School Attendance including the upcoming white paper, patterns, post-Covid and holidays to home countries	Jo Fear	Cllr Abdullahi	Peter Nathan	This was highlighted as priority for the Cabinet Member and was also proposed by Councillor Thorp	
	SEND places update on the creation of 100s more SEN places	Neil Best Barbara Thurogood	Cllr Abdullahi	Peter Nathan	This was highlighted as priority for the Cabinet Member	

	and build a new SEN school					
10 January 2023	Updates to be provided on the level of care places in the borough	Ramasasi Ramasubramanian	Cllr Abdullahi	Anne Stoker	This will be follow up following a national shortage of care places within the borough	
	Recruitment & retention of Social Workers, including the social work apprenticeships	Angela Bent	Cllr Abdullahi	Anne Stoker	This was highlighted as priority for the Cabinet Member	
	Recruitment & retention of Foster Carers	Debbie Michael	Cllr Abdullahi	Anne Stoker	This was highlighted as priority for the Cabinet Member	
23 March 2023	Information to be provided on the development of Family Hubs & Children's Centres	Ivana Price	Cllr Abdullahi	Anne Stoker	This was highlighted as priority for the Cabinet Member	
	Violence towards teachers the Panel wish to see data, patterns, intervention, safeguarding for staff	Sarah Fryer Paul Bishop	Cllr Abdullahi	Peter Nathan	This item was proposed by Cllr Thorp during the meeting	
	Youth Offenders	Ivana Price	Cllr	Anne Stoker	This item was	

	– activities to help stop reoffending, youth centres, cadets		Abdullahi		proposed by Cllr Islam during the meeting	
	Safeguarding Enfield strategy consultation	Bharat Ayer	Cllr Abdullahi	Tony Theodoulou	The Safeguarding Adults Board currently has a strategy which the SAB will be reviewing and updating in 2023. As with the annual reports, we will be developing a joint strategy that covers Page 39 adults and children's safeguarding.	

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