

Newport City Council

Children's Services

Fostering Service

Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy

2019

Review in 2022

Foster carer recruitment strategy

2019 - 2022

Introduction

Responsibility for the recruitment of foster carers with Newport City area belongs to the Fostering Team.

The Fostering Team will attempt to recruit as many foster carers as possible, representing as wide a range of social class and ethnic grouping as possible, to meet the needs of children and young people within Newport City area. The effect will be to expand the number and choice of placements available, including post 18 years' arrangements, which support our young people into adulthood.

The strategy sets out the approach taken to recruit foster carers over the next three years: 2019-2022.

It is part of a range of strategies to improve placement choice for children and young people in need of placements.

Aims and objectives:

To provide an effective, high quality and best value fostering service to meet the needs and numbers of the children looked after population.

To improve placement stability and choice for children and young people

Increasing the number of in house foster carers for UASC, older teenagers, disabled children, sibling groups and respite support.

To recruit parent and baby foster carer placement(s).

Targeted recruitment campaigns for difficult to place children with specialist training and support packages.

To reduce the number of children and young people placed with independent fostering agencies to reduce the cost of out of county provision.

To respond promptly to potential carers and ensure clear information is shared and the assessment process is prompt.

In order to provide, effectively, more equitable placement choices, and to guarantee that net gains in our carer cohort are, on average, more than net losses, we need to recruit a variety of carers who can meet the placement demands presented by the following:

- age
- a range of diverse needs
- large sibling groups
- short term and long-term fostering,
- respite care
- short break for children with disabilities,
- supported- lodgings,
- placements where there are issues of ethnicity and/or religion.

Sources of enquiries will be monitored closely and each recruitment event and occasional P.R. activities reviewed and evaluated in an attempt to achieve optimum results, and most prudent use of scarce resources.

The recruitment process – advertising, initial contact, initial visits, training and assessment - will be monitored closely in an attempt to identify positive areas as well as common ‘drop-out’ points pre assessment and a system of feedback introduced to receive and record the views both of enquirers who progress to approval, and those who drop out of the process earlier. Such monitoring will be the responsibility of the Foster Team Manager and will link with the quarterly report required under the Fostering Regulations 2019.

Prompt and smart response to initial enquiries will continue to be imbedded in the Recruitment Strategy, with our target being to arrange an initial visit within **seven** working days after sending out the information pack to the prospective foster carer.

Reduction of the authority’s dependence on Independent Fostering Agencies for out-of-county placements will be an ongoing objective of the Recruitment Strategy.

The Fostering Team will aim for wider dissemination of information regarding Private Fostering.

The overall strategy will be reviewed in January 2022 so that plans/events can be amended or approved for the coming years.

Scope

The recruitment strategy covers the development of Newport's fostering service in the provision of mainstream, disability, respite and potential mother and baby carers.

Target

A recruitment target of **60** new fostering households/families over the next 3 years offering short term, respite and long term placement; this means a minimum of 20 new fostering households/families a year.

Summary

The council aims to ensure that all children living in Newport have the opportunity to grow up in permanent, safe and loving homes where this cannot be provided by the birth family or adoption. The key objective is to recruit a pool of carers who meet the assessed needs of the children needing placements.

*Today, over 65,000 children are living with almost 55,000 foster families. The Fostering Network estimates that a further 8,100 foster families are needed across the UK in the next 12 months alone, in order to ensure all fostered children can live with the right family for them. **Fostering Network 2019.***

Statistics

The number of foster families recruited to Newport in the last three years has been 16.

Date	Number of new fostering families approved	Number of foster families leaving the service	Net number of gain/loss
2016 - 2017	1	General: 13 Kinship: 10	-22
2017 - 2018	3	General: 15 Kinship: 4	-16

2018 - 2019	12	General: 13 Kinship: 5	-6
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The need for additional foster carers is because a number of carers leave the authority each year, for genuine reasons. The reason for loss of kinship foster carers is very different to the loss of general carers. Many Kinship carers are lost as they become Special Guardianship Carers and this is a positive reason for the loss of carers. As at 1st June 2018 we had 150 fostering households consisting of single carers and couples. We had a total of 222 foster carers:

Age – our youngest approved foster carer was **26-year-old** and the oldest approved foster carer **74-year-old**. Breakdown of ages for our 222 foster carers is:

Age range	Number of foster carers
20 - 29	11
30 – 39	23
40 – 49	39
50 – 59	93
60 – 69	48
70 - 74	8

Our foster carer population has 149 foster carers who are age 50 year+, which is 67% of our foster carers. We have 40 fostering households where one or more of the foster carers is age 60 year +. In the next 5 – 10 years we risk the majority of these households retiring.

With the increasing number of children looked after it is important that we work to recruit more foster carers in order to place our children within Newport, if this is in their best interests. In 2018-2019 the below shows the low numbers of carers approved in Newport:

Enquiries 65

Initial Home Visits 21

Allocated 13

Approved 5

Placements numbers 10

Plans:

To increase recruitment numbers.

Create media interest with press releases including stories from carers.

To update our online presence to have a fit for purpose website which diverts potential carers through the online process. Social media strategy with regular updates sent through to corporate services to add to Facebook/Twitter.

To have a dedicated budget for recruitment which will allow time and resources to be allocated for recruiting foster carers

To work towards recruitment of a dedicated recruitment officer

Look at long term recruitment planning

Have a marketing plan consider adverts in newspapers, via twitter, Facebook and so forth

Video campaign via cinema's

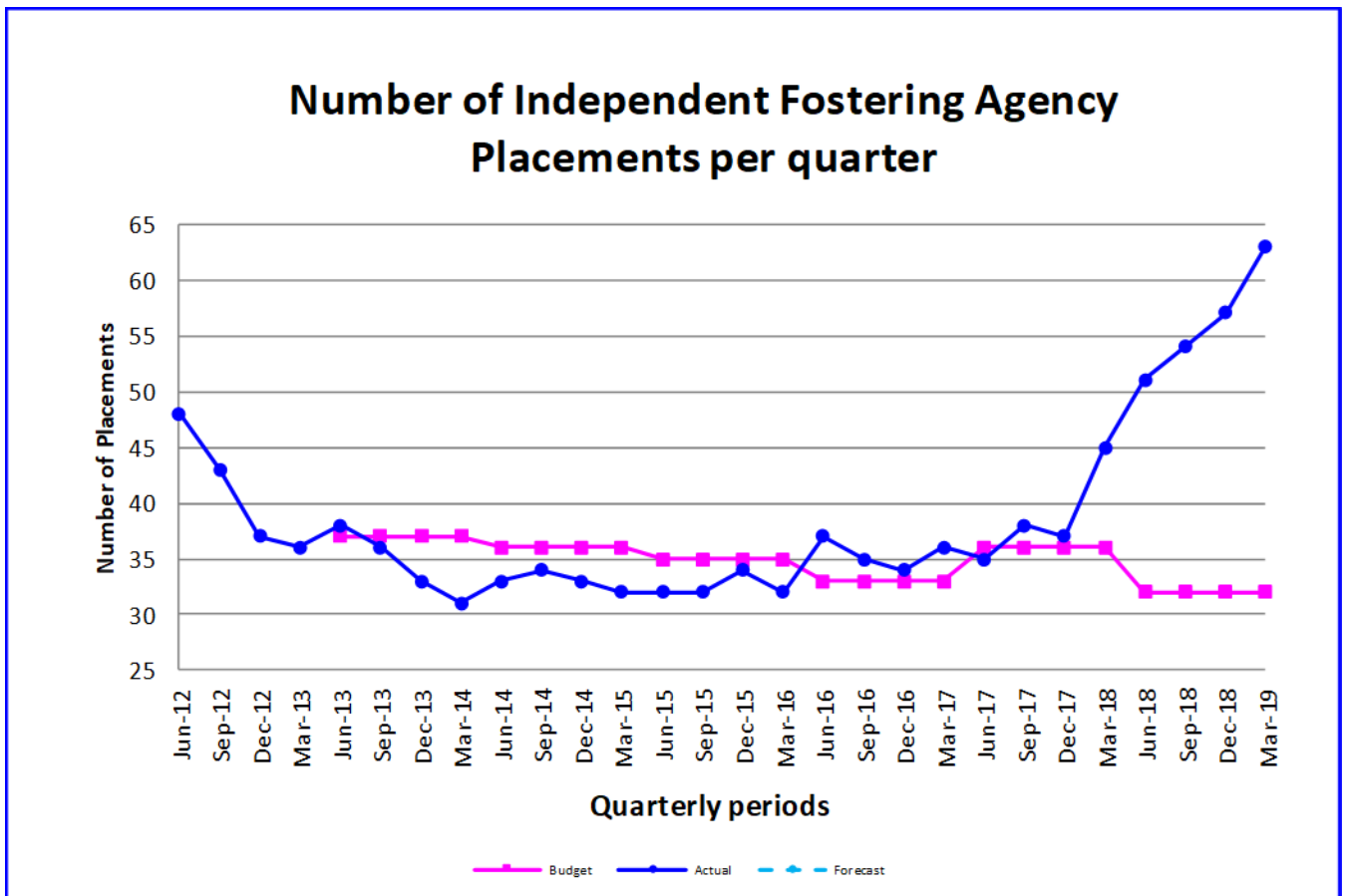
Poster campaign/leaflet campaign/banners where agreed

Outreach events targeting key areas in the city. Gain permission to use stalls in supermarket foyers, leisure centre or stalls in shows.

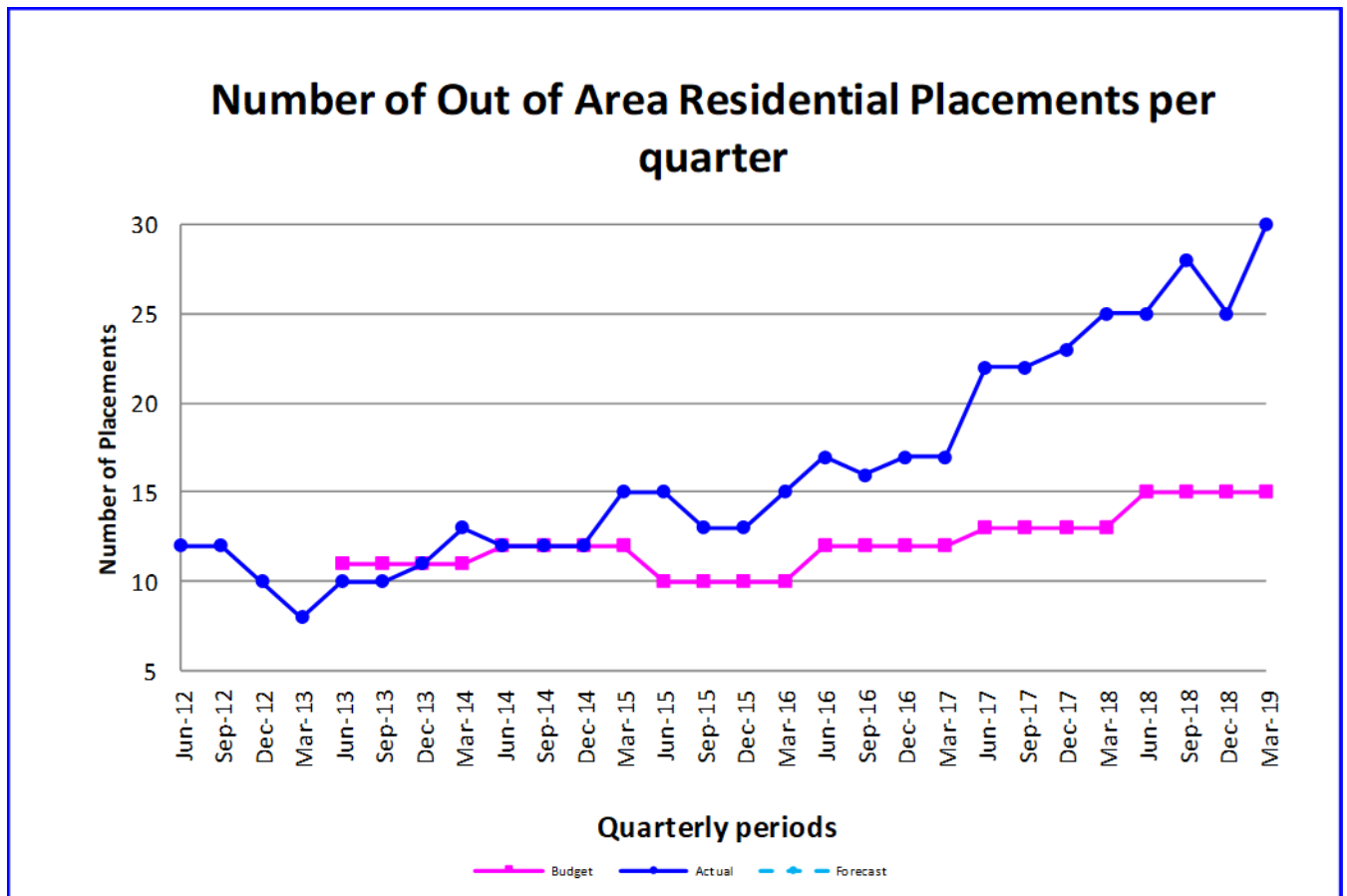
Increase support groups for carers.

Coffee mornings and welcome events to be marketed and held.

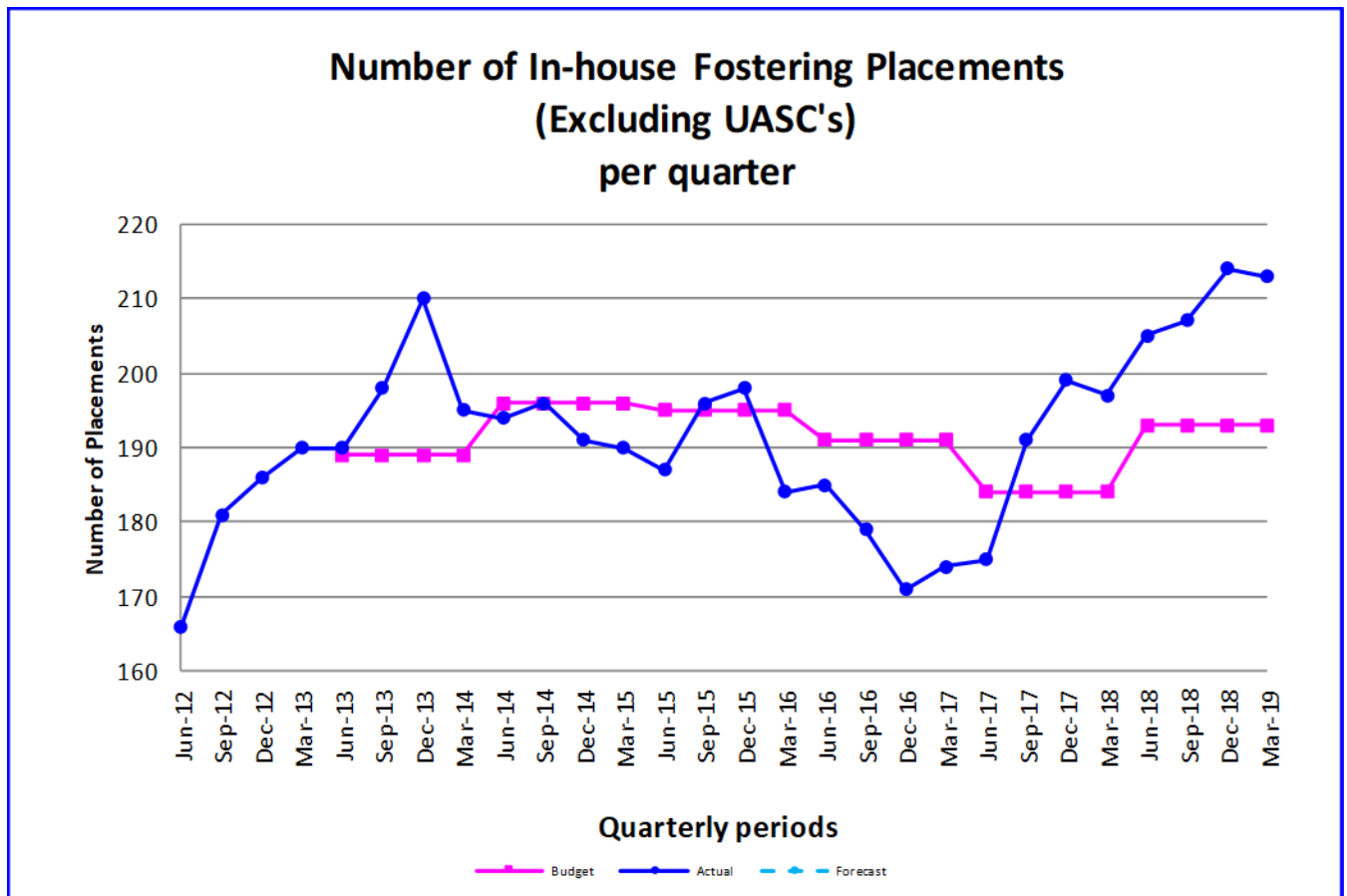
To improve partnership working both with other authorities to share good practice and local businesses who can encourage their employee's to foster and can also become a fostering friendly employer.



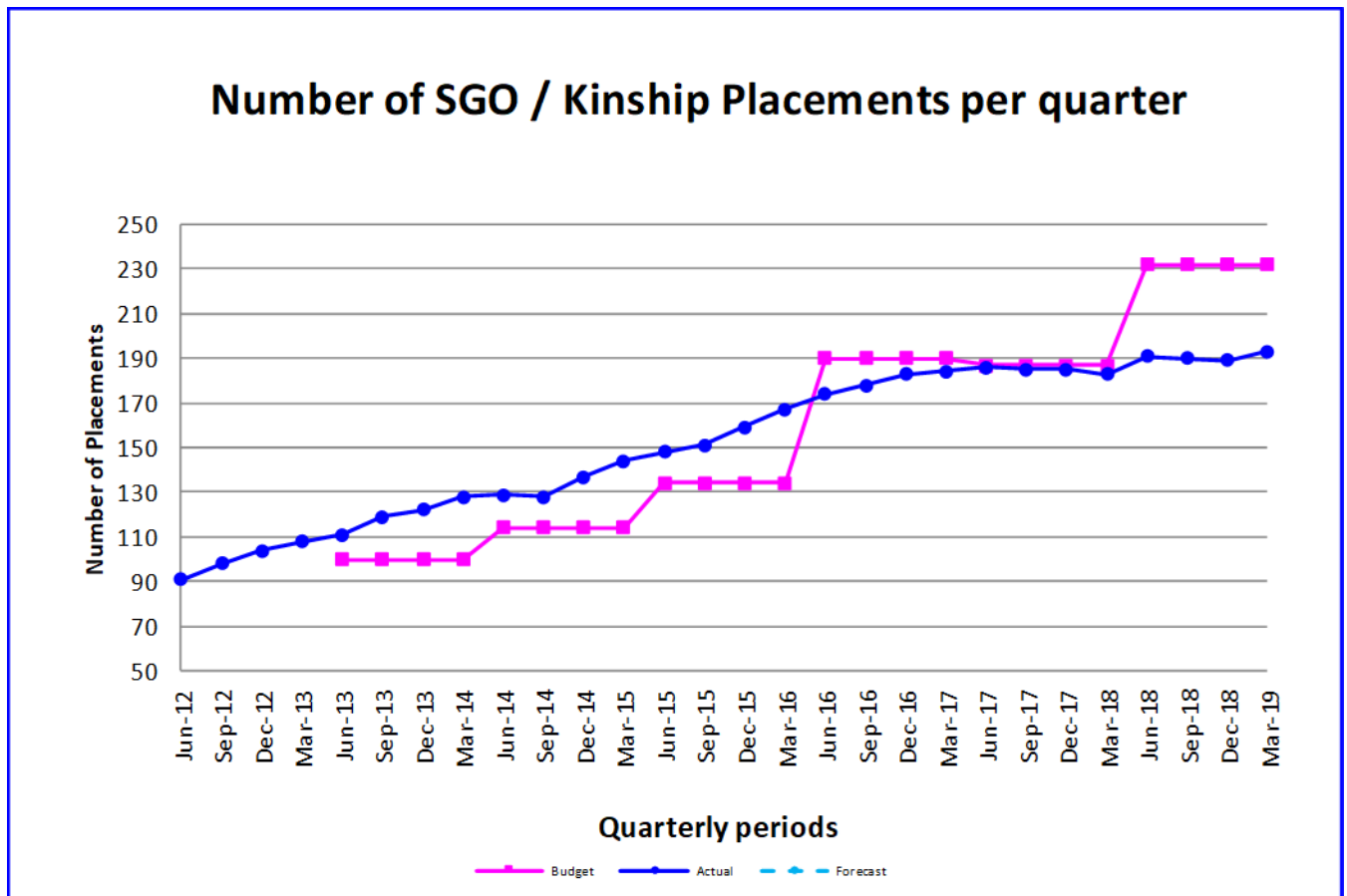
From December 2017 the number of Independent placements has increased significantly; through increasing numbers of Newport Carers there will be a reduction in out of county placements.



The number of out of county Residential placements has increased and a workstream regarding opening new residential properties in Newport is working to reduce this number. Increasing the number of Newport Foster carers should also reduce the number of out of county residential placements. The reduction in December was the opening of a new residential home in Newport whereby young people returned to Newport.



The number of in house placements has started to fall and this is linked to a reduction in carer numbers and low recruitment numbers of carers. Through increasing carer numbers there will be an increased number of placements available to place children in house.



There has been a significant increase in SGO/Kinship placements within the preceding 12 months and this has led to the creation of a new Family and Friends team to provide additional support to these carers. Increasing the number of suitable Family and Friends placements continues to be a priority as this reduces pressures upon the in house general foster carers.

Process for recruitment

Enquiry Stage

Newport Fostering Service receive enquiries from prospective foster carers through the link on the Fostering page on the corporate website and telephone referrals made directly to our Duty Fostering system. Notifications of online enquiries are received through a dedicated mailbox, which is monitored by our social work assistant and in her absence the duty officer. Our social work assistant and duty officer are the first point of contact and the ‘face’ of Newport fostering, their roles are pivotal to the recruitment process and promoting a positive image of fostering for Newport. Each applicant making an on line enquiry is contacted within 2 working

days to provide more information about the process, gather more information from the applicant and answer any questions. An electronic information pack is sent out to applicants within 24 hours of us making contact.

Our social work assistant continues to follow each applicant through the process at each stage maintaining a strong link with the customer. In addition to this the role is pivotal in tracking and maintaining information on each applicant from enquiry to approval.

Recruitment Process

We provide a seamless process for recruiting foster carers. The process has a target date of 26 weeks from initial enquiry to panel date. Initial Home Visits are booked in at first phone call when appropriate or within 3 working days of the information being provided to the applicant. During the home visit there is opportunity to answer any further questions, provide the applicant with more information about fostering for Newport and collate information for a brief report. If the applicant wishes to proceed and the fostering service are satisfied with the information to date the applicants will be invited on the next Skills to Foster training, which is a two day pre-approval course facilitated by staff from the fostering team and foster carers approved with Newport Fostering Service.

Newport fostering also hold evening meet and greet events for applicants who may have just missed the opportunity to attend the Skills to Foster course. Our Care2Foster for Newport meet and greet session give applicants the opportunity to meet a number of staff who have different roles in the Fostering Service, colleagues from other services such as education and foster carers approved with Newport. We use a 'speed dating' format for applicants to move from table to table talking to staff and foster carers.

We provide information in a timely way ensuring that applicants feel valued throughout the process and that the process continues to be responsive to the customer's needs.

Allocation of assessments

Prospective foster carers can be allocated an assessing social worker any time after the initial home visit. Assessing social workers will visit the applicants in their home

on a regular basis to complete the assessment. Children and any other adults living in the household are also interviewed as part of the assessment process. Fostering is very much a family commitment and the views and experiences of everyone in the household need to be considered when completing the assessment report. Checks and references are completed as part of the process and information included in the final assessment report.

Tracking, Reporting

It is necessary to record all data on all applicants who contact us. Applicants are tracked throughout the process and data collated for analysis.

Feedback/Evaluation

Enquirers/Applicants are asked for feedback during different stages of the recruitment process. Approved foster carers are also asked for feedback. Exit interviews are given to all foster carers who are deregistered to provide feedback. This feedback is evaluated to help inform future planning.

Competition

An increasingly competitive market means potential foster carers are offered a wider choice and we need to ensure that we are foremost in offering the preferred local option. Encouragingly Newport continues to attract carers transferring from IFAs and other authorities although unfortunately has lost carers to private agencies. Private agencies advertise both nationally and locally.

Publicity and marketing activity will not exclude anyone due to Gender, Sexual Orientation, Ethnicity, Cultural needs, disability, sexual orientation, or relative social or economic status. Recruitment practices comply with Newport City Council's policies and procedures including Equality and Diversity Policy. The use of translation service for publications or face to face will be offered when required.

CONCLUSION

The Fostering team is committed to maintaining a high profile for recruitment, and will continue to seek imaginative and productive ways of presenting fostering needs and opportunities in locations where they may be communicated to as large a section of the community as possible.

The budgetary implications of such a strategy are clearly understood; however, funding will be committed as appropriate, subject to the limitations of scarce resources. The Newport Fostering scheme are looking at using low cost methods of awareness raising such as Facebook and twitter, however effective recruitment comes at a cost and in order to sustain a presence in the market we need to be have an ongoing commitment to recruitment activity.