

# Appendix A: Annual Fostering Service Report 2013/14

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Barnet Fostering Service operates within the regulatory framework set out in The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, associated Statutory Guidance, Volume 4: Fostering Services and National Minimum Standards.
- 1.2. Inspections of fostering services were carried out by Ofsted as single inspections until September 2013, when a new inspection framework for Children's Social Care services was implemented. The last full single inspection of Barnet Fostering Service was in November 2012, the outcome of which was a judgement of **Good**: "*a service of high quality that exceeds minimum standards.*"
- 1.3. The service has three fostering teams each with their own distinct function;
  - **Fostering Recruitment team** - is responsible for the marketing, recruitment, pre-approval training, assessment and approval of new foster carers. In addition this team also manages the Peer Support scheme, a unique scheme that coordinates support for enquirers, applicants and new carers by experienced Barnet foster carers.
  - **Fostering Support & Development team** - is responsible for the ongoing support and supervision of foster carers, post approval. This includes allocating and supporting placements of newly Looked After children and those who require a placement move. Regular supervisory visits and the completion of annual foster carer reviews are a requirement under regulations and are undertaken by the FSD team.
  - **Kinship & Permanence team** - is responsible for the assessment and approval of those carers who are already known to the child: "connected persons." These are most often family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles etc). In addition, this team carries out a large number of assessments of family members who are applying for Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs); these reports are submitted to court.
  - There are 25 staff members in the Fostering Service

## 2. Governance

- 2.1. The Fostering Development Group (FDG), chaired by the Acting Assistant Director & Agency Decision Maker (ADM), has been established as part of the overall strategy for Children in Care.
- 2.2. The aim of the Fostering Development Group is to facilitate the continuous improvement and ongoing development of the Fostering Service; this complies with the requirements of National Minimum Standard 25.1 to ensure that there is a system in place for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the service.

### 3. Fostering Panel

- 3.1 Regulation 23, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Minimum Standard 14 require a Fostering Panel to be constituted, which must be chaired by an independent person. Panel members include representatives from the Children's Service, elected members and independent members with a range of experience
- 3.2 Fostering panels carry out a range of functions including: considering applications for approval of new foster carers, considering the suitability of foster carers to continue fostering and offering advice to the Fostering Service on the overall effectiveness of the service, based on cases presented to the panel for consideration.
- 3.3. An annual Fostering Panel report is prepared by the Chair, summarising the activity of the panel and any practice issues that have been identified.

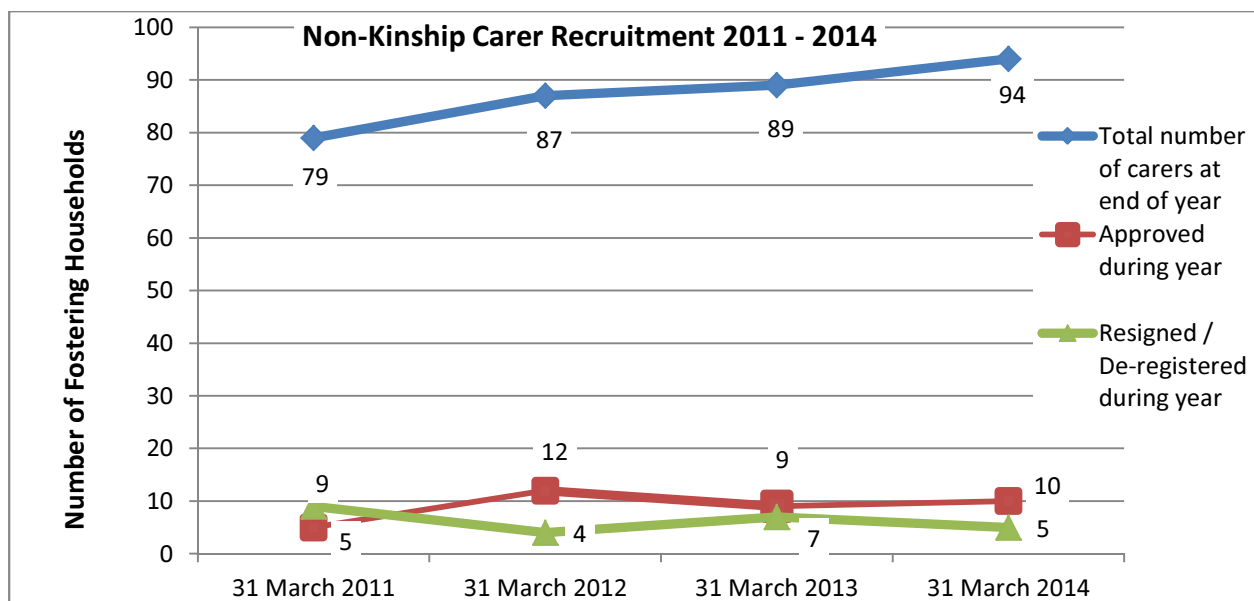
### 4. Profile of Children in Care

	Targets and benchmarking	2012-3	As at Jan 2014
Rate of CIC per 10,000 population	England 60 Statistical neighbours 44 London: 55	36.7	36.2
Number of children in care		311	314
Percentage of children in Foster care	National Average 75%	70%	70%
Number of CIC in LBB foster care	National Average 51%	133 (43%)	133 (42%)
Number of CIC in external foster care	National Average 24%	86 (27%)	88 (28%)



## 5. Fostering Recruitment

- 5.1. Whilst there has been a steady increase in the number of approvals of foster carers, and our progress is in line with our Consortium Partners and the London region, we are still experiencing a shortage of all foster carers and in particular those who can offer placements for; teenagers, sibling groups and children with more challenging behaviour.
- 5.2. The recruitment of foster carers is a key corporate priority, as increasing the numbers of foster carers who are recruited is necessary to:
  - Minimise the disruption to children's lives by keeping them within the borough
  - Improve placement choice
  - Meet the diverse range of needs of the children in Barnet's care
  - Reduce costs by being less reliant on Independent Fostering Agencies
- 5.3. The Fostering Network, which is the UK's leading charity organisation for everyone involved in fostering, estimates that an additional 9,000 more foster carers are needed nationally to meet the current demand. The Fostering Network recommends that fostering services should set a recruitment target by calculating the average annual loss of foster carers as a percentage and adding the equivalent of 5% of their workforce. Barnet has met or exceeded targets calculated in this way over the past three years, thereby increasing the numbers of non-kinship foster carers by 15 households.



Total Number of Foster Carers as at 31 March 2014 = **106 households**

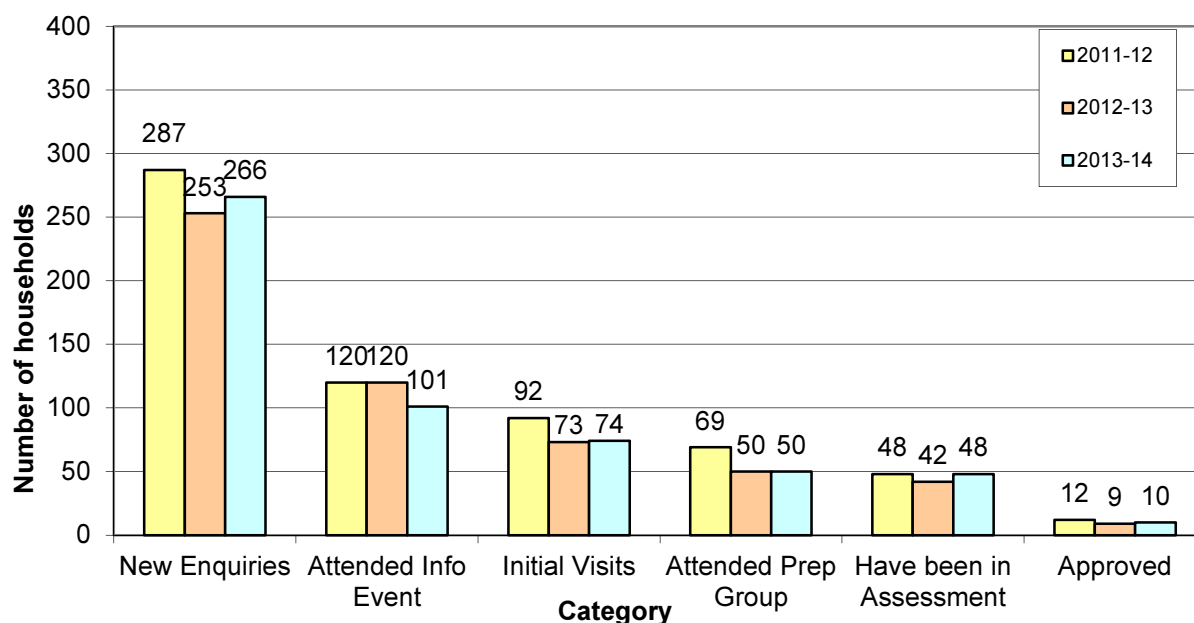


### Approvals vs Resignations / De-resignations Non-Kinship Carers 2011 - 2014

	31 March 2011	31 March 2012	31 March 2013	31 March 2014
Total carers at end of year	79	87	89	94
Approved during year	5	12	9	10
Resigned / de-reg during year	9	4	7	5
Reasons for leaving	4 x resigned personal reasons 1 x retired 1 x moved out of area 2 x de-registered 1x adopted	2 x resigned personal reasons 1 x retired 1 x BL specialist scheme ended	3 x retired 2 x resigned personal reasons 1 x adopted 1 x took children on SGO	1 x retired 1 x moved to Kent 1 x resigned personal reasons 1 x de-registered 1 x resigned after standard of care issues

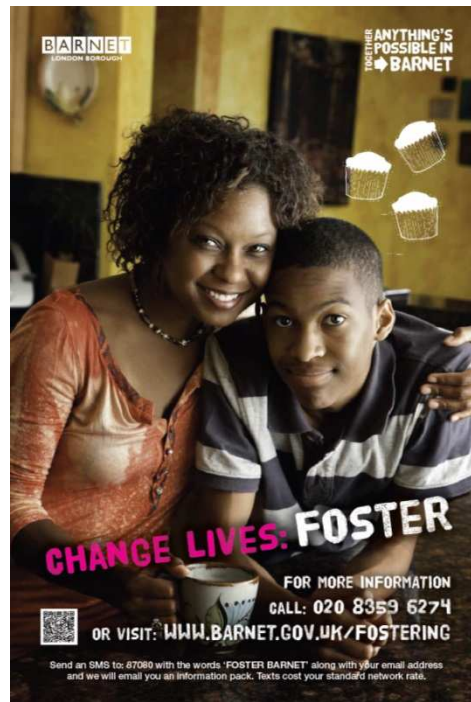
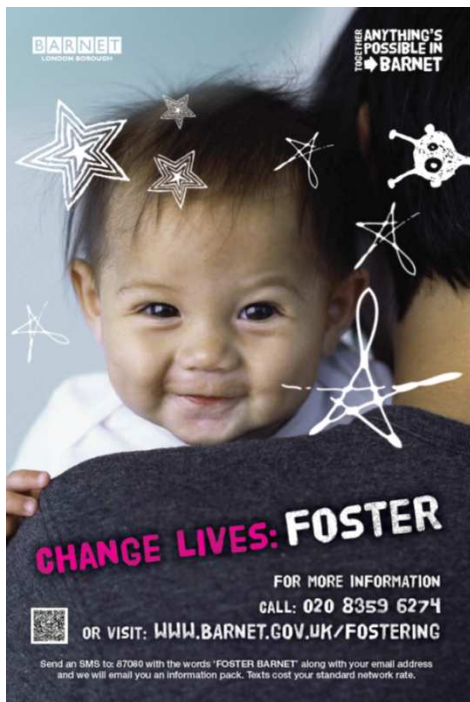
- 5.4. Barnet has a low attrition rate, 5% against a National average of 13%. Whilst it is extremely positive that we lose very few foster carers each year, recruiting sufficient additional carers for particular types of placement needs remains a significant challenge. In parallel with virtually all fostering services, Barnet needs more carers who can take placements of sibling groups, teenagers, and children with complex needs and behavioural challenges, and children who need long-term fostering placements.
- 5.5. Successfully recruiting foster carers requires careful attention to each stage of the process, ensuring retention of potential candidates and sensitive counselling out of those who are unlikely to be able to provide adequate care for troubled children. Barnet has developed a range of ways of supporting enquirers and applicants, but the conversion rate still needs to improve.

### Non-Kinship Carer Recruitment Overview by Financial Year



- 5.6. Recruitment methods are regularly re-evaluated, using data and qualitative feedback. Targeted recruitment has taken place following the use of Mosaic analysis of residents of the borough to formulate target markets.
- 5.7. A range of advertising and marketing has taken place during the year, this includes;
- Internet advertising, links and articles, fostering website
  - Local newspapers and magazines, - the Times Group newspaper, Primary Times Magazine and the Everyone's a Winner magazine
  - Tube, bus and train advertising
  - Schools, children's centres and libraries – newsletters and notice boards
  - Specific advertising on till receipts for Argos & Homebase
  - As a joint project with the North London Consortium, a 'Fostering Teenagers' film was produced and distributed on-line

- 5.8. In addition, specific recruitment projects have been initiated and developed with specific community groups, for instance the Orthodox Jewish Community in partnership with Haringey, Hackney, Norwood & Ezer Leyeldos (a voluntary organisation within the Orthodox community in Stamford Hill.)
- 5.9. More recently a new initiative has been launched to recruit additional foster carers from within the Muslim community, in partnership with North London Consortium partners.



*Examples of advertisements*

## 6. iMPower- Family Values Programme

- 6.1. In order to address the significant challenge of increasing additional placement capacity in our in-house service and reduce our reliance on Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements and residential provision, Barnet commissioned iMPower Consulting Ltd to provide a focused consultation using funding from the Adoption Reform Grant (specific time-limited funding made available by the Government to implement structural reform to the Adoption process).

- Family Values is a programme of councils working together supported by iMPower consulting
- The specific aim is to combine business analysis with insight from foster carers and adopters, in particular understanding their values, to recruit and retain more foster carers
- More broadly it aims to transform fostering, adoption and permanence by first changing the understanding and behaviours of directly involved staff

- It builds on the work already completed by eight councils working with iMPower and work underway by DfE, the Fostering Network, iMPower and a number of other councils.

6.2. iMPower are due to report their findings on the project by the end of April 2014; this will feed into the wider transformation projects already underway within Family Services and contribute to defining a new operating model for the service.

## 7. North London Adoption & Fostering Consortium (NLAFC)

7.1. Barnet in partnership with Camden, Enfield, Islington, Haringey & Hackney, form the North London Adoption & Fostering Consortium. A Memorandum of Understanding provides the framework for the consortium arrangements. Membership provides numerous practice benefits for fostering, in addition to cost savings as a result of pooled budgets for advertising and recruitment.

7.2. Specific projects have been established within the consortium; e.g. Parent and Child and Remand fostering schemes. For the Parent and Child scheme, each borough has recruited two foster carers to provide assessment placements for young women and their babies, as an alternative to high-cost residential provision. Barnet are the strategic lead for this project. The Remand fostering scheme also is operational, although less established at this stage, this project aims to place young people with a specialist foster carer as an alternative to a remand to custody.

7.3. In addition, the practice of sharing foster placements across the Consortium is gaining momentum. The financial agreement for sharing carers provides a more cost-effective option than using independent fostering agencies.

**Fostering North London**

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Welcome: Together we can change a life.

Help us to offer our children and young people the love and care of a foster home when they need the security of family life at times of change and upheaval in their own lives. Become a foster carer and we will support and help you every step of the way.

As a partnership of six local authority fostering agencies we have a wealth of experience, training and support to offer. So why not begin your journey with us today and find out if fostering is right for you.

“ Fostering has been a life-changing experience for us all. You learn so many new things and realise some of the things you take for granted in your everyday life are not the same for others. ”

Come to an information event

North London Fostering Consortium - Rec...

0:00 / 5:18

## **8. Implications from Case Law.**

### **8.1. Tower Hamlets judgement**

- 8.1.1. In 2013, an Appeal Court judgement was made in relation to fostering allowances paid to Kinship foster carers (also referred to as Family & Friends foster carers or Connected Persons).
- 8.1.2. Prior to the court judgement, most London boroughs including Barnet paid kinship foster carers the same "maintenance allowance" as foster carers who care for children who previously were not known to them; this allowance is to cover the full cost of caring for the child as defined by the DfE and the Fostering Network, who agreed minimum allowances. However, no fee or reward element was paid to kinship foster carers, on the basis that they were usually relatives of the child and therefore paying a reward element was not considered appropriate. Since the Court of Appeal judgement, fostering services must now apply the same criteria for payment of any fee element to all foster carers. In Barnet, this means that any Kinship foster carer who is willing to attend the Skills to Foster preparation group (which is undertaken by all other foster carers who are recruited) will also be entitled to the weekly reward fee on completion.

## **9. Additional service developments**

- 9.1. The aim is to recruit and retain more foster carers, particularly the types of foster carers, who with an appropriate level of skill and additional support and training could offer placements to children who at present might otherwise be placed with an IFA carer or in residential provision. And, most importantly, Foster carers who can sustain these placements to provide the stability and security needed by the child to improve their individual outcomes.
- 9.2. The service will develop a new recruitment strategy and model of support to foster carers based on the outcomes and any recommendations made at the conclusion of the iMPower project.
- 9.3. Consideration will be given to a range of possible incentives to foster carers to increase their capacity to care for additional children for example, by increasing the available accommodation within their home.
- 9.4. Revision of Barnet's support and supervision policy for foster carers
  - Consolidating and extending the Peer Support Scheme into core provision, through a partial restructure of the Recruitment team to provide funding



- Further developing the use of available fostering placements in other Consortium boroughs and in turn develop Barnet's practice of sharing our own foster carers with other boroughs if they have vacancies
- Further developing the Parent & Child scheme to provide additional assessment placement resources specifically for Barnet's use
- Develop further the Staying Put policy to enable young people to remain in their foster placements beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Consideration of implementing a specific teen-care placement scheme