

Fostering Marketing Plan

April 2017- March 2018



The Family Placement Team
Bracknell Forest Council
www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk



1. Background and objectives

The need for foster carers nationally is extremely high with the Fostering Network estimating in 2016 that over 9,000 fostering families were needed in the UK. As such recruiting foster carers is becoming increasingly competitive across the country and Bracknell Forest is no exception. Independent agencies can often be seen advertising in the local area and as an authority Bracknell Forest borders a number of other local authorities also actively recruiting.

In order to ensure we meet our recruitment target of 10 foster carers annually, as set out in the Fostering Recruitment Strategy, the aim our marketing and publicity activity is two-fold:

- To attract at least 100 enquiries a year for fostering
- Raise awareness amongst our target audience of the need for more foster carers, what fostering involves and who is eligible to encourage more people to foster in the future

To achieve these aims we must focus on the following marketing objectives:

- To use our budget effectively by advertising via marketing channels and in media that offer the best return on investment/reach to our target audience
- To have a continual presence in the local community publicising the need for foster carers – the “drip, drip” approach
- To maintain a distinctive brand and clear, engaging messaging with clear calls to action both online and on all marketing materials
- To continually monitor the success of different marketing activities and drive improvements where possible

2. The target audience

In order to be eligible to foster, we are looking to attract enquiries from people who fit the following criteria:

- 21+ years of age
- Reside within 10 miles of Bracknell
- Have a spare bedroom
- Have time to devote to a child
- Have experience and skills in caring for children
- Are in good general health
- Want to make a difference

This offers a very large audience however to yield the best return on investment we must focus our marketing and publicity efforts towards those most likely to be successful foster carers and those ideally in a position to be able to offer placements to older children and teenagers. This includes people who are financial stable and have a house with a spare room.

Based on research documented in our Recruitment Strategy 2017-2018 our primary target audience is therefore ABC1 (NRS social grade for middle class) 35-55 living within 10 miles of Bracknell. This target audience can be segmented into those that know very little about fostering and those that know more about it and are considering becoming a foster carer either now or in the future.

We will weight campaigns towards the female population as whilst we have a number of male foster carers, the majority of enquiries tend to be from females who tend then to pass on the information to their partners.

3. Key messages

Messages will be tailored to different segments of our target audience.

When building understanding and awareness of fostering messages, key messages include:

- Foster carers transform lives/make a difference
 - focussed on the rewards of what foster carers do and can achieve
- Foster carers come in all shapes and sizes
 - focussed on dispelling myths and misconceptions
- Foster carers receive both financial and emotional support and training
 - focussed communicating it's accessibility and removing anxieties

When communicating with people who are further down the line in considering fostering, messages will be more specific to why they should choose to foster with Bracknell Forest Fostering and reinforcing our brand values. Key messages include:

- We offer continuous, personalised support
- We provide local training and placements
- We value our carers
- Carers in general have high occupancy levels

4. The marketing funnel

The below illustrates a typical conversion funnel which can be applied to fostering recruitment. Advertising and publicity helps increase the number of people at the awareness stage and then activities such as information events and social media help to engage and inspire some of these people into considering fostering, eventually converting a proportion (often via the website) into enquiring and applying. Approved foster carers loyal to Bracknell Forest may then become advocates and help raise awareness in the community of what they do. The funnel gets narrower at the bottom to illustrate how the numbers of people reduce at each stage.



5. Marketing and communication channels

To reach and engage with our target audience, we will utilise the following channels:

The website – www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/fostering

A new website is due to be launched in spring 2017 and fostering will be launched on the beta site. The look of the pages will be improved with more prominent calls to action. The user journey will also be improved which we hope will lead to an increase in conversions (enquiries) via the website.

Search engines – Google

It is proposed that pay per click advertising (PPC) using google adwords is implemented to help Bracknell Forest Council capture more of those who are actively searching to become a foster carer in the area. Performing a google search is a common way of prospective carers getting information and it is estimated that in most searches 40% of people will click on one of the top three paid for ads. If someone chooses not to click on our ad we will not be charged, it is free to appear. The cost per click initially is estimated at £5.00 per click and our aim is for 5-9% of these clicks to convert into enquiries. The campaigns will be optimised over time to reduce the cost per click and increase numbers.

Social media

Social media platforms offer the opportunity not just to raise awareness of fostering but engage with those who are interested. We will therefore regularly add relevant content to the Bracknell Forest Council Facebook and Twitter pages.

We will also continue to run targeted Facebook advertising through sponsored posts as this has proved one of our most successful channels in generating enquiries. We have found that enquiries from Facebook are often from people who are at very early stages of thinking about fostering (e.g. at the top of the funnel) so it is best for awareness rather than attracting people who have been considering fostering for a while. We will therefore limit this to specific times of year where we know people are more likely to be interested in fostering.

A robust quarterly content plan will be created including a variety of different types of content including video content which is popular. It is now easier than ever to create simple, short but professional videos using smartphones so this will be planned into activity. A quarterly review of content engagement will be held so we can learn what types of content and messages perform best and build this learning into subsequent content plans.

Ambient media

Bus rear advertising is one of the most cost effective methods of advertising outdoors in Bracknell and has the benefit of travelling around the borough. It works best in conjunction with other channels to build awareness locally so we will continue to do a limited amount of this and book chunks of time so we are not paying out more than once for design and installation.

Print, radio and TV

In 16/17, over 30% of the marketing budget for 16/17 budget was spend on print advertising but only 2% of people enquiring quoted this as a source. We will therefore do a very limited amount of print advertising, preferably alongside relevant editorial.

Radio advertising has been explored and has proved successful for raising awareness for other local authorities. The cost however is prohibitive and there will be some wastage of coverage in areas outside Bracknell Forest. We will only go ahead with radio advertising if a campaign across multiple authorities in Berkshire can be planned and the cost split accordingly.

We will endeavour to gain an interview with BBC Radio Berkshire to gain free exposure to a mature audience who are within our target demographic and also on BBC South if possible.

Direct marketing

Distributing leaflets via primary schools and with council tax letters has proved a cost effective and quick way of attracting enquiries from people within the borough therefore the plan is to repeat this activity. We will also use email marketing where is it relevant, for instance we will look to send targeted emails about information events via the venues we book e.g. the library.

Events, word of mouth and PR in the local community

Regular information events should continue to be held to educate people regarding fostering. We have learnt from experience that it is best to hold these events at popular locations locally and to avoid hosting events close to Christmas or in school holidays.

We will also look to form links with local businesses, schools/colleges and community groups where we can present more about fostering to staff, as well as ensure we have a presence at a number of local community events.

In addition we will continue to utilise our own foster carers as advocates, broadcasting the message about the benefits of fostering locally by sharing information about their fostering journeys in person, in writing or through video. Where we can recognise and reward existing carers, we should look for opportunities to do this to retain them as advocates.

News releases will also be produced in order to maximise on free publicity available in local media.

Finally the referral scheme will remain in place to encourage foster carers to recommend fostering to others.

Branding and promotional materials

We have developed a brand identity for Bracknell Forest Fostering with distinct brand colours and these will be used across all materials to help give a consistent look and feel to our marketing and help ensure our advertising is recognisable. For those interested in fostering, we have recently refreshed information packs which support our brand messages and these will be updated as necessary alongside promotional flyers.

To support with our promotional events we require some items, for example a gazebo for outdoor events and banners with our new branding. These will be investment pieces that can

be used for years to come. In addition, we will produce bags to give to people who attend fostering information events and our existing foster carers that can be used to spread the message locally.

6. Measurement, records and review

We will continue to measure the results of all marketing activity as best we can.

Additional tracking on the website and access to google analytics reports will aid this. We will also ensure we ask people if they have seen our advertising at every opportunity including on our enquiry form online so that we have information from enquirers even if we are unable to contact them after enquiry, as sometimes happens.

We will continue to keep the enquiry log up-to-date so that we can refer back to this and review enquiry figures on a monthly basis to ensure we are on track to meet our annual targets.

In addition social media engagement will be reviewed on a quarterly basis including number of interactions to assess which types of messages are most effective. This insight will be used to guide future content to ensure success.

Work with the IT Services team will also be undertaken during the course of 2017/2018 to improve the fostering forms in our online database Mosaic to allow for better reporting and information regarding our co-hort of foster carers and those starting the fostering application process.

Collectively this information will be used in a full annual review which will form the basis of the 2018/2019 marketing plan.

7. Budget and activity

We have a budget of £5,650 for the year. To achieve our recruitment target, we have planned the following activity.

Paid advertising (£2,600)

Activity/Media	Month	Detail	Purpose/Objective	Cost	Design cost
Google Adwords campaign*	April - June	Adwords campaign set-up and started	To drive up enquiries from people considering fostering.	£1000	None
Bus Rear Advertising	April - June	Bus rear on bus in Bracknell	Raise awareness amongst people locally regarding the need for more foster carers	£450	None
Targeted Facebook Campaigns	May, September and January	Sponsored post from the Bracknell Forest page	Raise awareness amongst people 35-55 locally regarding the need for more foster carers and drive up enquiries	£300	None
Leaflets distributed via primary schools	September	A5 leaflets distributed via primary schools	Raise awareness amongst people locally regarding the need for more foster carers and drive up enquiries	£100 estimated print cost	Estimated £25
Print advertising	November, March	Ad in Town & Country	Raise awareness amongst people locally regarding the need for more foster carers and drive up enquiries	£200	Estimated £50
Leaflets distributed via council tax letters	March	A5 leaflet sent out via council tax letters	Raise awareness amongst people locally regarding the need for more foster carers and drive up enquiries	£250 estimated print cost	Estimated £25
Radio ad (TBC)	January	Radio ad with other Berkshire authorities	To raise awareness of the need for foster carers across Berkshire	TBC – estimated £500	

TOTAL	£3,100
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*Following a successful trial it would be advisable to continue to invest an additional £200 per month from July onwards into google search so we continue to capture significantly more fostering enquiries via google and less go to our competitors. This would require an additional investment of £1,800 on top of the marketing budget for 2016/17 which in return could help us recruit several additional foster carers. The implications of this long-term is a reduction in our usage of independent foster carers which can cost in excess of £450 more per week compared to placing a child with one of our in-house carers.

Publicity and content

Activity/Media	Month	Detail	Purpose/Objective	Cost	Design cost
Social Media posts	April - March	Weekly posts related to fostering	Raise awareness of fostering	N/A	Estimated £100 for designed images/gifs
Repurpose existing video footage	April	Repurpose existing video footage	To get short 30 second video snippets that can be used on social media	£100	N/A
Care Leaver stories	April	Source care leaver stories that be shared on social media	To show how foster carers can transform lives	N/A	£100
Images/poems from looked after children	April	Source content from children in care	To show what difference people make by fostering	N/A	N/A
News releases relating to foster care fortnight	May	News release prior to foster care fortnight and following the launch	Raise awareness of fostering	N/A	N/A
TV and radio interview	May	Interview with foster carer during foster care fortnight on BBC Berkshire and BBC South	Raise awareness of how foster carers can transform lives	N/A	N/A
Video – What is Fostering?	August	Film short video on what fostering with Bracknell Forest Council	To convey why people should foster with Bracknell Forest in a easily digestible format	N/A – to be filmed using SmartPhone	N/A

				or animated	
News release – Sons & Daughters Week	October	News release following Sons and Daughters event	Raise awareness of fostering and get people thinking about how it may fit with their family	N/A	N/A
News release – Foster Carers Celebration Evening	February	News release following Foster Carers Celebration evening	To raise awareness of fostering and how Bracknell Forest Council value our foster carers	N/A	N/A
TOTAL					£200

Notable national dates/campaigns relative for fostering social media content and publicity

Month	Detail
May	Foster Care Fortnight
June	Fathers Day
October	Sons and Daughters Week
November	National Adoption Week
January	New Year
February	Foster Carers Celebration Evening
March	LGBT Fostering and Adoption Week

Promotional and information events

Below is a provisional plan of events for the year – subject to change and alteration.

Event/Venue	Month	Detail	Purpose/Objective	Cost	Resources needed
Bracknell Spring Event	April	Stall at event in Jocks Lane	Raise awareness amongst families locally about fostering	N/A	Two people, balloons and leaflets

Coffee Morning Open Learning Centre	April	Information session after Easter in the Café at Open Learning Centre	Engage with people considering fostering to increase enquiries	N/A	Two people, refreshments, fostering guide/bags
Bracknell & Wokingham College	April	Stall at Parents Information Event	Raise awareness amongst parents locally about the need for more foster carers	N/A	Two people, leaflets and fostering guides
Bracknell Half Marathon	May	Stall at Half Marathon	Raise awareness amongst families locally about fostering	N/A	Two people, gazebo, leaflets, balloons
Times Square Foster Care Fortnight Launch	May	Invitation for the Mayor to launch foster care fortnight and meet foster carers	Provide photo opportunities for a news release and thank foster carers	N/A	Family Placement Team, Foster Carers
Crowthorne Library	May	Information session with Wokingham Borough Council	Engage with people considering fostering to increase enquiries	N/A	One person, leaflets and guides
Warfield Tesco/Frimley Park Hospital/Waitrose Bracknell/Hilton Bagshot Road	May	Promotional events during foster care fortnight	Raise awareness of fostering	N/A	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets, balloons
St Andrews Church	May	Homes4Good information session	Engage with people considering fostering to increase enquiries	N/A	One person, leaflets and guides
Sainsburys Princess Square	June	Stall in foyer	Raise awareness amongst families locally about the need for more foster carers	TBC	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets, balloons
The Look Out	July	Information session during the day	Engage with people considering fostering to increase enquiries	TBC	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets, balloons
Bracknell Summer Fun Day	August	Stall at event	Raise awareness amongst families locally about fostering	N/A	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets, balloons
School Open Evening or	September	Potential to advertise at Secondary School Open	Raise awareness and discuss fostering with parents of	N/A	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets

Company Event		Evenings	children 11+.		
Lexicon Event	September	Involvement in launch of the Lexicon	Raise awareness of fostering	TBC	TBC
Bracknell Islamic Society	TBC	Talk to members of the Islamic society about fostering	Encourage enquiries from people from a Muslim background	N/A	Two people, presentation and leaflets
Sainsburys Bagshot Road	October	Stall within foyer of shop	Raise awareness of fostering	N/A	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets, balloons
Open Learning Centre	November	Information session during the evening	Engage with people considering fostering to increase enquiries	£29	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets,
Bracknell Leisure Centre	January	Stall in high traffic area	Raise awareness of fostering and encourage enquiries from people interested in fostering	£25	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets, balloons
South Hill Park	February	Information session during the evening	Engage with people considering fostering to increase enquiries	£60	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets, balloons
Childminders Providers Meeting	February	Presentation to childminders	Encourage enquiries from people with childcare experience	N/A	Two people, presentation and leaflets
Hilton Bracknell	March	Morning information session in coffee lounge	Engage with people considering fostering to increase enquiries	N/A	Two people, fostering guides and leaflets
TOTAL					£114

Print and promotional materials

Name	Detail	Purpose/Objective	Print cost	Design cost
Gazebo	Compact Gazebo for use at outdoor events, branded	Provide shelter and also branding at outdoor events	£250	n/a
Cotton Bags	Branded cotton bags x 150	For use by foster carers and prospective carers, raising awareness of branding locally	£310	n/a
Pop up banner x 2	Branded fostering pop-up banner	For use at information events	£240	Estimated £50
Outside banner	Large banner that can be attached to railings	To publicise our attendance at difference places	£100	Estimated £50
Brochures	Update to brochure and re-print	Guide to fostering for people interested	£100	Estimated £50
Leaflets	A5 single sided leaflets	To be sent/given out publicising the need for foster carers	£450	Estimated £50
TOTAL				£1,650

TOTAL PLANNED BUDGET = £5,064

SURPLUS FOR ADDITIONAL ADVERTISING/MICHELLANOUS/CONTINENCY = £586

Appendix 1 – Background research and information relating to communication channels.

Google ads

Via Google adwords, organisations are able to bid to appear at the top of relevant searches on google. This is known as pay per click (PPC) as you only pay when someone clicks on your google ad. You can set a budget per click and maximum budget per day. Generally the higher your bid, the more likely you are to appear at the top of the results and once your daily budget has been used you will stop appearing in the sponsored results. You can geo-target searches within a particular area ensuring minimal wastage and use targeted keywords as well as negative keywords to prevent you appearing for irrelevant searches. It is a very measurable and something already done by a large number other local authorities as well independent agencies.

A google search performed in February 2017 for “Fostering in East Berkshire” revealed that Bracknell Forest Council was not featured in the top results above the fold so we will be losing traffic to competitors for terms such as this. It is important, particularly on mobile where fewer results are displayed that we are featured in the top three were possible. We can add negative keywords for terms such as “council” to avoid paying for people coming to our site that are actively searching for us specifically and where we rank highly.

Social Media

A report by We are Flint in September 2016, showed that 84% of all UK adults use social media.

YouTube and Facebook are by far the most popular platforms among UK adults online however Twitter and LinkedIn also have a large audience and therefore should not be discounted as platforms for engaging with audiences and advertising.

The Bracknell Forest Facebook page has over 7,000 likes and information can be shared from this page by individuals and other businesses/departments to give it a far wider reach. There is also the opportunity to hold events live using Facebook Live and this could help us reach a wider audience with some online events being held during the year.

In the future we will consider setting up a Facebook page specifically for fostering to engage with people specifically interested in fostering rather than in Bracknell Forest Council as a whole. This would allow us to tailor content at people who are at the “consideration” phase rather than awareness and engage with individuals on a more personal level.

Ambient media

There are many ambient and outdoor media that can be utilised to communicate a message to the public. These include everything from advertising on car park receipts to billboards, roundabouts and public transport. Outdoor advertising can be very useful for brand awareness however it can also be costly and difficult to track.

Traditional media

Advertising in magazines, local press and radio has been relied upon heavily in the past for fostering recruitment. Whilst there is still merit in advertising in some highly targeted traditional media, the cost tends to be a lot higher than online advertising and the results more difficult to track. Also the circulation of local press has been decreasing in recent years as people consume more news via the internet.