

# Fostering Recruitment and Retention

14 June 2023



## Agenda

10.00 Welcome and Introduction

10.30 Development of Foster for Wales

11.15 Fostering Network recruitment and retention research

12.00 Break

12.15 Using behavioural insights to inform campaign delivery

12.45 Working successfully with Foster Carer Associations

13.15 Lunch

14.15 GM Fostering campaign: Fostering Unfiltered

14.45 Involving foster carers in branding

15.15 Discussion tables

“I don't say this lightly but feel there is a crisis developing in foster care and I don't mean a shortage, I mean crisis.”

# Welcome

Where we are as a region

- Over 2000 children in external fostering placements
- Average weekly cost of £880 per child
- Total regional spend of £2.6m each week
- 843 placed at distance in fostering households outside and not bordering the North West



# **Finding ~~placements~~ families and homes for our children**

## **Sufficiency**

### **Everyone's Business!**

Anna Lomas, Service Manager – Fostering  
14<sup>th</sup> June 2023

# Regional and National Crisis

- ♥ Continued increase in number of Cared for Children
- ♥ Ageing profile of foster carers
- ♥ Cost of living crisis
- ♥ Lingering Covid impact
- ♥ Training
- ♥ Complexity
- ♥ Stretch

# How are we doing in Wigan?

- ♥ 19 new fostering households
- ♥ 30% of our newly approved fostering households are under 35 years
- ♥ Just over 50% for sibling groups
- ♥ 14 more children living with our carers over the last year
- ♥ 15 more young people in Staying Put
- ♥ Resignations have matched approvals but our new carers are more active
- ♥ Work to do on availability and stretch

# Stable Homes; Built on Love

Mission - 'to increase the number of foster homes across the whole country, so that children can stay nearer to their friends and family when they come into care' (Stable Homes, Built on Love 2023).

A familiar but different story...

Safe **loving** homes

Children have **loving** people in their lives

Corporate parents should act like a **loving** parent

When leaving care you should continue to feel **loved**...



# Building connections

“Connection is why we're here. We are hardwired to connect with others, it's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives” (Brene Brown)

All of us in Wigan...

with our carers

with our communities

with our staff

Through this we build stickability because we build empathy and ultimately the ability of our foster carers to put themselves in their children's shoes, to understand and to nurture.

# Planting and growing the seed.....

- Learning through assessment, planting and growing the seed, holding conversations, Motivational Interviewing...
- Fast track process – we know that applicants with work-related experience start their fostering journey having lots of skills that are needed for fostering successfully and tailor the pace of the assessment to this
- 1 of our approvals last year came to us via meeting us at an event and 2 of our current assessments came to us via recruitment events – don't underestimate the impact that can be made with community events!
- Large number of fostering extended families – new carers and grand carers
- Baby only carers – meeting our profile of referrals but also at the start of their journey.....

# What are we doing in Wigan?

- ♥ New marketing and recruitment strategy including development of website and liquid logic, being purposeful, planned and measuring outcomes with our dashboard
- ♥ Come and Meet events with our carers linked to social media posts
- ♥ Thickening the stories about foster carers, love and belonging
- ♥ Connecting in the community and with our foster carers through events and newsletters
- ♥ Encouraging word of mouth recommendations
- ♥ Stretch of our existing foster carers – Room Maker project
- ♥ Training and development – Therapeutic Skills to Foster – mandatory training in assessment
- ♥ Growing Mockingbird



Wigan's marketing and PR team create media releases, design external advertising, digital and social media communications.



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# Say it as it is...

- ♥ Not 'giving notice' but 'we are struggling to continue to look after Alex'
- ♥ 'Homes' and 'families' not 'Placements'

# Finally, it is everyone's business to build connections

- ♥ Foster carer support and nurture
- ♥ Strong, strengths based referrals
- ♥ Focus on placement stability and working through loss
- ♥ Importance of matching forms in identifying gaps and support needed.

## Discussion tables

Collaborative working across the UK - World Cup Fostering Football campaign case study (Allison Czerwinka)

Fostering friendly employers (Gabrielle Sulek)

Community engagement events (Anna Lomas)

Managing a digital agency effectively (Helen Picton)

Reflections on Foster Care Fortnight (Karen Walley)

Collaborative working (Emma Newey)

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