RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER CARERS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

THE CHALLENGES

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HOW DO WE DEVELOP EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION TECHNIQUES?

- SOUND DATA ON NEED – what are the demographics of this group of young people needing this resource in your area?

- HISTORY - have these young people been previously known or have they become known as a result of a crisis?

- KNOWLEDGE OF EXISTING POOL OF FOSTER CARERS - how does this match with the needs of young people?

HOW DO WE DEVELOP EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION TECHNIQUES?

- VIEWS OF EXISTING FOSTER CARERS - seek feedback on what motivated them to foster

- FOSTER CARER REVIEWS – Find out what challenges foster carers have faced and what services and support have been available to meet these

- EXIT INTERVIEWS - undertake exit interviews with foster carers to inform practice and service delivery

HOW DO WE DEVELOP EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION TECHNIQUES?

SUPPORT SERVICES – Clarify the wrap-around support services that are available for foster carers including health, education and services that support transitions

RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS – use feedback and information gathered to inform future recruitment activity

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES - THE COMMON MISTAKES

- LACK OF FORWARD PLANNING – the continuing recruitment of foster carers is a given. Have your annual campaign plan in place

- LONG-TERM APPROACH - must be a balance between both the drip, drip approach, alongside specific campaigns

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES - THE COMMON MISTAKES

- KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE – Who are the people who can meets the needs of older looked after children – what do these people look like and how do we best communicate with them

- THE BUY-IN - existing foster carers, young people who are looked after, members of the community, council members must all know and support any recruitment activity

FOSTERING OLDER CHILDREN: WHAT'S STOPPING PEOPLE?

- STEREOTYPES- public image of teenagers as being difficult and hard to parent. A young person in care is viewed more negatively.

- NEEDS OF ENQUIRERS – those enquiring about fostering vary widely in their family set-up. Those with younger children worry about how they would cope with an older child and those with older children worried about how another older child would fit in with their family

RECRUITMENT: WHAT CAN WORK

- FOSTER CARER INCENTIVE SCHEME – recommendation of a friend, neighbour who could provide a resource for older children

- INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE - older looked after children getting involved in a range of recruitment initiatives and the preparation training for prospective foster carers.

- VIEWS OF FOSTER CARERS – videos on fostering website of foster carers talking about their fostering experience which includes those caring for older children
- THE MEDIA – developing strong links with the local media and ensuring they are informed and supportive of recruitment activity

- FULLY INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING CAMPAIGNS WHICH INCLUDE

- Outdoor advertising – billboards, phone kiosks
- Facebook advertising
- Radio advertising
- Editorial in local community and parish magazines
- Poster distribution – doctor's surgeries, leisure centres, vets, borough council offices etc.
- Website
- Social media
- Information events

- BUDDY SCHEME - linking experienced foster carers/buddies with prospective foster carers during the assessment stage

- ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONIES FOR FOSTER CARERS - celebrate their commitment, their care and years of service to fostering

- TRAINING AND LEARNING - a range of learning opportunities through direct and on-line training that develops skills, knowledge and understanding to support foster carers in their care of adolescents

RECRUITMENT - NEW WAYS OF WORKING

- TARGETED RECRUITMENT - research by the Fostering Network on motivation to foster showed 63% of people who foster either worked or volunteered with children

- INCREASED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA– Facebook, twitter

- MOSAIC DATA – which provides a wealth of information on the residents of (Northamptonshire) to enable targeted campaigns

- EXISITING TEENAGE FOSTER CARERS - learning from existing foster carers of what works and what would aid them further