

Title: **Foster Carers Member Champion – Annual Report 2021**

To: **Cabinet** On: **16 November 2021**

Name of Champion Member: **Councillor Mills, FosterCarers Member Champion,  
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## **Introduction**

As well as the Member Champion for Foster Carers, I am also the Corporate Parenting Board strand lead for apprenticeships and have taken the opportunity to include detail on this area of work as well as providing an update in respect of Fostering.

## **Fostering**

### Recruitment Campaign

In September 2021 the Council launched a 'We Are Family' Torbay Fostering Marketing and Communications Strategy; this involved a number of adverts on popular bus routes across Torbay and in bus stops.

Advertisements were also placed in Torbay Weekly, Primary Times, Police Life, Kings Ash News and on Radio Exe.

The team also attended the Devon County Show in the summer of 2021 with a stand and a live opportunity for prospective applicants to create an initial enquiry.

A Refer an Applicant scheme was also introduced for our existing fostering families in September 2021 (see below).

### Torbay's Refer a Fostering Applicant Scheme

Word of mouth and the sharing of positive experiences is a recognised way of attracting new customers within the commercial world, fostering can make such a significant impact on a young person and sharing those experiences could encourage other people to also become foster carers. Therefore, the Torbay's Refer a Fostering Applicant Scheme uses some of the commercial world's techniques. If an existing foster carer refers a prospective fostering applicant to the Council, the Council will pay a £250 thank you gift, at the point that the applicants are approved at our Fostering Panel and accept their first placement.

### Home for Good Coordinator

The Home for Good Co-ordinator role for Torbay has now been filled. The Co-ordinator has begun engagement work within the communities of faith within Torbay, promoting Torbay fostering opportunities.

We now entered into a three year contract with Home For Good, and have entered into the engagement phase with our local families of faith. Peter Clayton delivered a speech to the congregation of St Mary Magdalene's Church in Torquay on the 19th June 2021, and delivered the message about the joint work being undertaken by Home For Good and Torbay to consider fostering as part our faith outworking.

All fostering social workers have received Home for Good Faith Literacy training.

I am delighted that the Home for Good Co-ordinator role for Torbay has now been filled. The Co-Ordinator has begun engagement work within the communities of faith within Torbay, promoting Torbay fostering opportunities.

### Local Businesses

I was delighted to see that our looked after children will be experiencing the Train of Lights again this year also that Paignton Zoo is now happy to issue family annual passes to all our existing fostering families and hopefully new fostering families in the future. The team have developed a Corporate Parenting Offer which details all of the opportunities offered to cared for children, care experienced adults and fostering families provided to us as part of this offer by local businesses and organisations.

### Care Leaves Covenant

In September there was the launch of 'My Voice', Torbay's Care Experienced Drop In at the Foyer in Torquay. This was well attended by young people aged 16 plus also several of their Personal Advisors (Pas). There was a lovely atmosphere and it was clear to see that there was an excellent relationship between the young people and their PAs.

The Covenant provides a number of opportunities for care experienced young people, for example access to exclusive opportunities in terms of careers, mentoring and discounts as well as nationwide opportunities through local business or organised (for example, top football clubs offering free fitness sessions or mentoring). It also provides a way for our care experience team to link in with other Local Authorities, be alerted to opportunities for care experienced young people and share good practice.

### South Devon College

I was keen to find out what provision there was for our care experienced in further education. I was impressed with the response I saw at South Devon College. Indeed, with the care and support that they offer our care leavers and the leaflet given to every one of them has a subtitle of 'everything you need to know about accessing support to reach your goals'. This is extremely user friendly and answers all the questions a new student would need to know or where to go for support and guidance I was also very impressed with the on-site 'Job Shop' where students can find part-time employment/volunteering and connecting with employers.

### Apprenticeships

It is my belief that the apprenticeship situation for our care experienced children has not progressed as quickly as I personally would have liked. An apprenticeship programme for care experienced young people would need funding to be allocated.

I appreciate the work that has been undertaken jointly with HR on a preparation for work scheme, which would support our cared for and care experienced young people in engaging in CV writing workshops, preparation for interview work and other opportunities to develop their skills in line with their education, employment and training support, does in some way attempt to provide employment support.

In addition, the team within Children's Services in conjunction with HR are working on a work experience scheme, drawing on the opportunities that exist across the Council to create a 'menu' of work experience opportunities as well as preparation for work support.

We are also currently working with MIDAS and SWISCO on two bespoke opportunities for care experienced young people to have work experience opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

Having taken the time to set out what I have learnt and undertaken during the last 12 months it has become obvious to me that I have gone beyond that of the Fostering Member Champion role. However, also being the Corporate Parenting Strand Lead for Apprenticeships, coupled with being a Member on the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board has enabled me to develop and gain a greater understanding of the role and work of Children's Services.

## **Recommendation and decision required:**

That cabinet consider the funding of an apprenticeship scheme for a maximum of five care leavers, to be introduced when working in the office fully returns.

## **Cabinet response**

The cabinet welcomes the aspiration of funding an apprenticeship scheme for a maximum of five care leavers, and will consider this in future budget setting when government funding is known.