

<b>13 September 2022</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Fostering Recruitment Update</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-key	
<b>Report of:</b> Dan Jones – Strategic Lead Children Looked After		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Janet Simon – Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sheila Murphy – Corporate Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is</b> Public		

## **Executive Summary**

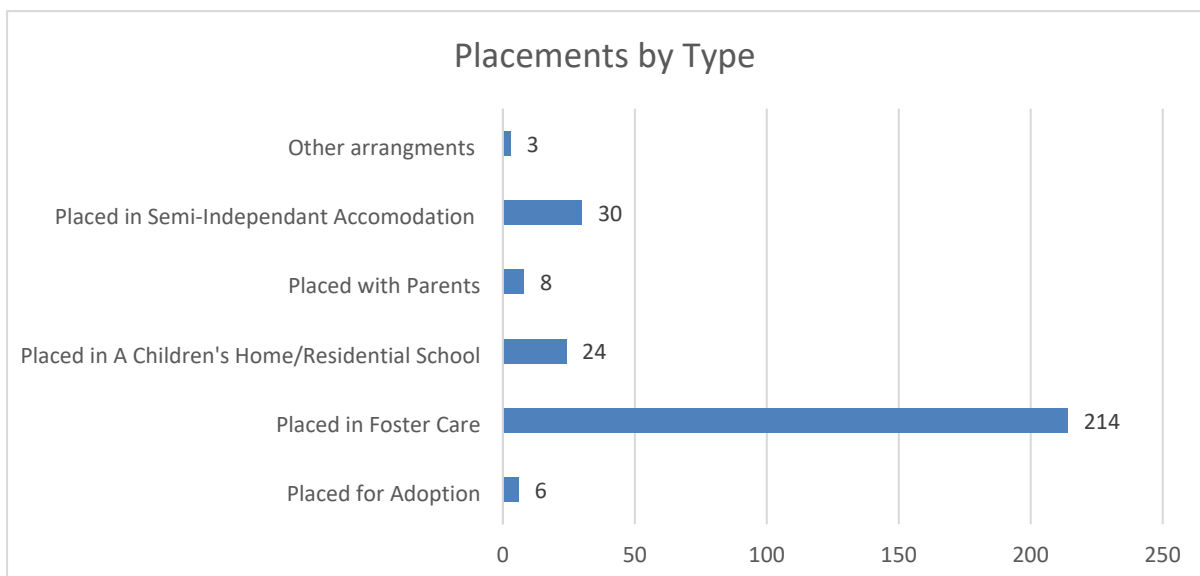
This report provides the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an outline of the fostering recruitment being undertaken and includes Key Performance Indicators reflecting the impact of the new brand with the implementation of the new marketing campaign.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 Members are updated on the Thurrock's Fostering Recruitment Strategy and its impact on the numbers of foster carer approvals.**
- 1.2 Members note the marketing activities being undertaken so opportunities are created to increase the recruitment of foster carers**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1** This report is prepared to appraise members on the progress of recruitment of Foster Carers for Thurrock Council. We accept applicants from any background who are able to meet the National Minimum Standards for fostering and offer a safe loving home to a child. The recruitment process usually takes about four months from application to approval. This is shorter if the applicant is already an approved foster carer from another agency.
- 2.2** At the end of July 2022, there were 285 children looked after by Thurrock Council. They were placed as follows:



Of the 214 children placed in foster care at the 31 July 2022; the breakdown between external and internal placements is as follows:

31/07/2021	
<b>In House</b>	
<b>Total number of Fostering Households</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Number of children placed with in house carers</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>IFA</b>	
<b>Number of children placed with IFA carers</b>	<b>110</b>

The number of children placed with Thurrock approved carers varies throughout the year but it usual for the range to be between 100-120 children placed with our own foster carers.

### 2.3 National Picture

Ofsted provide annual statistics on the national picture for fostering. It last reported in November 2021<sup>1</sup>. Key points from the report in terms of recruitment are:

- The demand for foster placements exceeds the number of carers available and recruited
- People are more likely to enquire about fostering than in previous years but are less likely to make an application
- Nationally, 32% of applications resulted in approval as carers compared to 44% in previous years

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2020-to-31-march-2021/fostering-in-england-2020-to-2021-main-findings>

In July 2022 the Care Review<sup>2</sup> was published. This comprehensive review of the care system made specific recommendations in regard to Fostering Recruitment. Key points are:

- A Nation Recruitment Campaign to approve 3000 additional carers each year between 2023-2026
- Connected Carer should be sought from the wider child's network in addition to their family and friends (e.g., Teachers, nursery nurse etc)
- Extension of the Mockingbird Model of support to carers
- Enhanced training offer

The Government has yet to respond formally to the Care Review, but it is anticipated that action will be taken in respect of Fostering Recruitment on a national level in line with the review. Thurrock will continue to promote and recruit foster carers in line with current plans and will review the strategy when and a clear plan from central government is announced.

#### 2.4 Local Offer

Thurrock Council has a highly competitive support offer for our foster carers. Foster carers approved by Thurrock Council receive:

- Priority for local placements for Thurrock children.
- Regular social work and clinical psychological 1:1 time and support
- An established fostering community with formal and informal support groups
- Online and in person specialist training program
- Hub carer model (*in development*)

Thurrock provides the following financial support per child per week

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<sup>2</sup> <https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/final-report/> - pg 135 of the Final Report

Child's Age	Allowance only	Allowance + Care Skills fee	Allowance + Care Skills Plus fee	High need rate (Enhanced allowance and fee)
0 to 4	£147	£347	£397	£497
5 to 10	£168	£368	£418	£518
11 to 15	£210	£410	£460	£560
16+	£252	£452	£502	£602

In addition, Foster Carers who live in Thurrock and Foster a Thurrock child for a minimum number of days per annum have their Council Tax waived

## 2.5 Current recruitment position

### Last financial year Apr 2021 to March 22

- Newly Approved Foster Carers = 11 Households
- Applications made that did not result in approval = 17 Households
- Left Fostering = 13 of those:
  - 1 Household ceased fostering due to ill-health
  - 3 Households had their approval ended due to standards of care concerns
  - 9 Retired from Fostering

### This financial year Apr 2022 - August 2022

- Newly Approved Foster Carers = 3 Households
- Applications made that did not result in approval = 5 Households
- Left Fostering = 7
  - 1 Household ceased fostering due to ill-health
  - 2 Households left due to standards of care concerns
  - 4 Households retired from fostering
- 8 Households applications are being assessed as suitable to foster

**Progress of applications (year to date compared to last year):**

	April	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total YTD	2021/22
Number of households attending Information Sessions	1	1	3	0	-	5	39
Number of Enquiries	14	17	12	11	7	61	171
Number of IVs completed	6	3	2	6	2	19	72
Number of Applications Received	2	4	0	0	3	9	18
Number of applications dropped out	0	0	0	1	4	5	17
Numbers of approved foster carers	2	0	0	1	0	3	11
Transfer from IFA to Thurrock	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

## 2.6 Recruitment Activity

In the financial year 2021/22 Thurrock Council engaged in a broad range of recruitment activity and marketing. This included:

- Advertising in the MailOnline
- Television advertising
- Prominent advertising on the Thurrock Council Website
- Social Media Marketing via Instagram/Facebook and Twitter
- Physical Marketing around the borough, Billboards, Lampposts and Banners

This generated increased enquires and applications but end effect as demonstrated above is that Thurrock Council's position at the end of the year in terms of the number of foster placements available is broadly similar.

Continued marketing is required to both maintain our current position and to seek to grow the numbers of carers approved by Thurrock Council. A forward plan is attached to this document outlining out future actions. This will be reviewed should the government announce a nation campaign to ensure Thurrock Council aligns and benefits from such a campaign.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 In terms of recruitment of foster carers, Thurrock is able to recruit and support enough foster carers to keep the number of children placed in house stable. The effect of increased recruitment activity in the last year was to ensure sufficient carers were recruited to offset those leaving fostering. Thurrock requires a significant increase in applications to increase its position.
- 3.2 Thurrock Council will need to continue to attract members of the public in to foster. This will require further development of our marketing approach including using a range of media to generate interest and enquiries.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 Members to note and consider the options available

### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 We consult monthly with our foster carers via a group focussed on recruitment. Their views and ideas are included into our planning.

### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 The Communications Team have supported the recruitment of Foster Carers and we would want this to continue with foster care recruitment being a corporate priority with marketing being innovative and wide ranging.

### **7. Implications**

#### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**  
**Strategic Lead Corporate Finance – Resources  
and Place Delivery**

The increased recruitment of foster carers will assist in the reduction of Independent Fostering Agencies and support the Council with their own cohort of foster carers.

#### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Urenna Nwulu**  
**Safeguarding Solicitor – Team Leader**

Thurrock Council is a registered Fostering Agency and recruits Foster Carers in line with its statement of purpose. The statement of purpose sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering agency and is required to be consistent with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, the National Minimum Standards 2011, and the amended regulations.

The Council has a duty under Section 22 G of the Children Act 1989, so far as reasonably practicable, to secure accommodation for looked after children in the Council area, which meets the needs of those children: where this is consistent with those children's welfare.

Section 22C specifies that the provision of a foster placement is one of the ways the Council may provide that accommodation. The placement, so as is reasonably practicable must:

- a. Allow the child to live near his/her home;
- b. Not disrupt the child's education or training;
- c. Enable siblings to live together
- d. Meet a disabled child's particular needs
- e. Is within the Council's area

The successful recruitment of foster carers will assist the Council in meeting these duties

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**  
**Community Engagement and Project**  
**Monitoring Officer**

Applications to foster are welcomed from anyone of any background who wishes to apply. They are assessed against the National Minimum Fostering Standards and individual needs, circumstances etc. are addressed in detail.

The Fostering Service is committed to furthering equality, promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination in all its forms. We are committed to placing the needs of children first; to recognise children, young people and carers as individuals, and to treat our service users, carers and partner agencies with dignity and respect. We are also committed to raising the profile of equality and diversity issues across the Council.

The Fostering Service actively and consciously values diversity and difference and seeks to provide a high-quality service and fair and equal treatment for all our carers, children and young people. Our approach to promoting equality and diversity is to provide bespoke services, with due consideration and sensitivity to the complex needs of children and young people and families.

Increasing the numbers of foster carers provides greater choice of placements for looked after children and improved matching of children with carers. This will support our Thurrock children to fulfil their potential as they have homes providing stability.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

Good practice is to place children in care in their local community where possible to do so. Unless the number of local foster placements are increased this could lead to children being placed further away.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Thurrock Fostering Statement of Purpose
- Payments to Foster Carers Policy
- Fostering in England 2020 to 2021: main findings - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2020-to-31-march-2021/fostering-in-england-2020-to-2021-main-findings>


9. **Appendices to the report**



- Recruitment activity plan


**Report Author:**



Dan Jones  
Strategic Lead CLA










	Outcome	Actions	Progress	Timescales	RAG Rating
	<b><i>Thurrock Fostering service has a clear brand which is known and identifiable and recognised in Thurrock</i></b>	<b><i>Fostering Brand</i></b>			
		Banners across Thurrock so the brand is 'Out There'.	Banners have been placed within the Community. Posters in local shops and surgeries	Ongoing	
		Current Banners are visible around local schools, churches.	Banners have been placed in the Community. Recruitment team regularly check on them, to make sure not damaged or need replacing	Ongoing	
		Promote the brand through website, social media, Facebook, Instagram and the Council Twitter feed & TikTok.	Brand is promoted through these channels. Reviewed on a regular basis	Ongoing	
		Continue to Promote events on other Groups on Facebook	Recruitment continue to promote upcoming Thurrock Fostering events on other groups Facebook pages. Such as Fosterline, New Family Social, Local Community groups etc	Ongoing monthly	

		<p>Promote the Council Tax rebate offer to enhance the recruitment of foster carers.</p>	<p>Council Tax exempt - Advertised in Council Tax leaflet that was distributed in Annual bill. Advertised on Council webpages. Spoke about at fostering information events.</p>	<p>Review October</p>	
		<p>Enhance the use of banners to be advertised on prominent roundabouts within Thurrock</p>	<p>Currently we only have 1 roundabout outside Gateway school in Tilbury - renewed again on 7th May 2022 for another year at a cost of £750 Fostering would like more prime roundabouts but at present none available •Update April 2022 - Offered Southend Road/slip road on to A13 Stanford-le-Hope bypass – SS17 9HD for £2950 +VAT but decided to expensive and not a prime r/about. Hana confirmed unable to have it for cheaper as r/abouts are in demand.</p>	<p>Be reviewed on a monthly basis</p>	
<p><b>Outcome</b></p>		<p><b>Actions</b></p>	<p><b>Progress</b></p>	<p><b>Timescales</b></p>	<p><b>RAG Rating</b></p>

	<p><b>Corporate Parenting is owned through the Council and the Thurrock Fostering brand in all departments.</b></p>				
		<p>Thurrock Jobs website - Need for Foster Carers</p>	<p>Job Website has Fostering Banner on main landing page advising we need more Foster Carers</p>	<p>Completed</p>	
		<p>Promote our brand on Council vehicles that drive around the borough</p>	<p>Agreed in principle 14 fleet van to have fostering logo on both sides of the vehicles. (Total Cost £650 + VAT) -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• March 2022 Update - Awaiting to finalise - Comms will follow up/chase</li> <li>• 27/4/22 Update - Hana advised fleet got in contact yesterday (26/4) need artwork resize. Hana arranging.</li> <li>• 7/6/22- Update - Hana has chased again and asked for artwork dimensions, so we can re-size, if not we will go with original artwork they have</li> </ul> <p><b>end of July</b> - Hana sent another email and CC The manger in as well, asking for update on vans - upto 18/8 still not rec'd a response</p>	<p>Be reviewed in September 2022</p>	
		<p>Head Teachers Bulletin</p>	<p>Fostering Article in Head Teachers Bulletin on 4th May and 18 May 2022, Before and during FCF</p>	<p>Completed May 2022</p>	

		Thurrock Fostering Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review on fostering council webpage by FC and feedback is to have a Q&amp;A/Myth busting section</li> <li>• Update 22/4/2022- emailed Steve - response no - by policy, we don't have any FAQs on the website because they are invariably just a duplication of information provided on individual service pages, which in the past have invariably resulted in information either getting out of step or doubling the maintenance overhead to keep the same information up-to-date in two different formats for no quantifiable benefit</li> <li>• 22/4/2022 - Asked if we could have a Myth busting section - awaiting response</li> </ul>	Review June/July 2022	
		Thurrock Fostering Logo on signature strip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During FCF Sheila M agreed that all staff can insert fostering logo on signature strip for 2 weeks. Jo Desmond emailed all staff</li> </ul>	Completed May 2022	
		Lyn's Blog - Raise staff awareness	<p>Making staff aware of the importance and need for FC. Liking our Facebook page.</p> <p>Recruitment officers had a blog in Lyn's weekly message and talked about FCF and fostering</p>	Completed May 2022	

		#Team Thurrock - Raise staff awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on 'In the Loop' section (corporate notices) advising FCF starting on 9th May</li> <li>• FCF article and picture of Recruitment Team</li> <li>• Another way of making Thurrock Council staff aware of the need of Foster Carers</li> </ul>	Completed May 2022	
	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>RAG Rating</b>
	<i><b>Our advertising promotes our offer</b></i>				
		New video promoting 'Siblings'	Video being produced late 2022 with 34 other LA/trust. This video's topic will be Siblings – No cost as there is still money left over from 2021 'Out There' video that was produce in 2021.	Review Oct 2022	
		Fostering Calendar	To be designed by Recruitment Team and distributed to everyone that has enquired over the last 3 years	Oct 22 - Start designing	
		Fostering e-Christmas Card	to start design process in Nov 2022 and to email to everyone that has enquired over the last 3 years	Nov-22	
	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>RAG Rating</b>
		<i><b>Marketing Opportunities</b></i>			

	<p>Gazette</p>	<p>4 Paid Fostering Ads in Gazette throughout 2022 (Cost in Total £704.48+VAT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thursday 12 May 2022</li> <li>• Thursday 8 September 2022</li> <li>• Thursday 3 November 2022</li> <li>• Thursday 5 January 2023</li> </ul>	<p>Completed (comms have arranged on our behalf)</p>	
	<p>Havering Resident Magazine</p>	<p>Fostering Advert in Magazine 1/2 page fostering advert- 15000 A4 glossy magazine given away with every copy of the Romford Recorder in month of April and May</p>	<p>Completed April 2022</p>	
	<p>Primary Times Magazine</p>	<p>Fostering Advert given to us for free in their Easter edition magazine. Primary Times goes into all primary school in Essex into the children's bookbags(61,000 copies printed). Also magazine online with a hyperlink on our Ad to our website</p>	<p>Completed - April 2022</p>	
	<p>Thurrock Adult Education Centre</p>	<p>Recruitment team are constantly keeping in touch with TACC, who support us in raising awareness of Thurrock Fostering</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

Show	Date
Singin' In The Rain	05.04.22
The Play That Goes Wrong	02.05.22
Rocky Horror Show	06.06.22
Private Peaceful	27.06.22
Rock of Ages	05.07.22
Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em	12.07.22
The Osmonds	26.07.22
We Will Rock You	01.08.22
Waitress	08.08.22
The Cher Show	16.08.22
Joseph & The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat	26.09.22

Cliffs Pavilion Programmes

Thurrock Fostering Advert in their show programmes - 11 shows from April 2022 to Sept 2022.  
Always shown on Back page

Ongoing - ends Sept 2022

Working with Thameside Theatre to promote Thurrock Fostering

Recruitment to speak to Thameside on a regular basis and request they share out Thurrock Fostering post on their FaceBook page

Ongoing



Lakeside Shopping Centre

Hold fostering drop-in at their Community Stand - When available for free

reviewed monthly



Drop-ins at Local Supermarkets

Once a quarter to have a community fostering stand in Thurrock at Morrisons, Tesco, Asda and Sainsburys.

Dates so far:

- 26/4/2022- Morrisons - Corringham
- 10/5/2022- Morrisons - Grays
- 20/5/2022 - Asda - Tilbury
- 7/9/2022 - Sainsburys - Chafford

reviewed quarterly



Thurrock News - residential e-newsletter

**29th April 2022** - FCF fostering article in the residential newsletter and shows next 6 info/drop in events - **Completed**


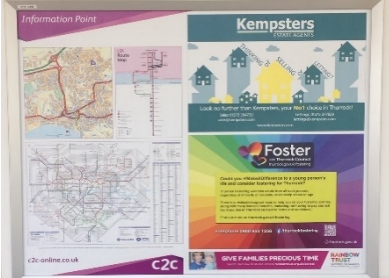
**13th May 2022**- FCF fostering article in the residential e-newsletter and shows next 3 info/drop in events - **Completed**



Raise awareness to Thurrock Residents about the need for Foster Carers at Thurrock Council - Continue to advertise throughout the year





**Aug 2022** - Plan to have another fostering article in august e-newsletter

Continue to review during the year - Next review July 2022



	Billboards	Billboard on M25/Lakeside roundabout - From December 2021 until 27 June 2022	Apr-22	
	Billboards	Additional Billboard aquired on corner of London Road & Western Avenue - New Billboard installed 26/4/2022 for 1 year - Cost £3900 + VAT for 12 months. Plus £350 for vinyl poster.	Completed May 2022	
	Train Stations: Advertising at C2C train stations	Highly visible information point units being installed at a number of C2C stations in approx April 2022/May 2022. 430mm x 610mm space agreed at a cost of £1495+VAT for 12 months	Completed May 2022	

		<p>Vaccine Centre at Thurrock Hospital</p>	<p>Vaccine Centre have agreed to have our fostering leaflets and our fostering roller banner at centre. Also have A4 colouring pictures for children to colour whilst waiting which has our fostering logo at the bottom</p>	<p>Completed June 2022</p>	
		<p>Bus Stations/Bus Stops</p>	<p>New bus stops are being erected in 2022 with new advertising options.  <b>Update Aug 2022:</b> Hana is hoping by September have an update re Bus Stops advertising</p>	<p>Review in Sept 2022</p>	
		<p>Enhance the use of banners on street lampposts</p>	<p>At present 8 Banners on lamppost on Crown Road/Grays Bus station  Fostering would like more Lamppost Banners when additional sites become available</p>	<p>Review in August 2022</p>	

 <p>The Orsett Show</p>		Orsett Show	<p>Fostering will have a stall outside - obtained for free - saving of £120. Have to purchase extra staff wristbands 2 x £13</p> <p><b>Update Aug 2022</b> - Comms arranging 1/2 page fosterinf ad in their digital programme</p>	Sep-22	
		Basildon Pride	<p>Have a stall outside. Also we will be in their Discovery Hub (educational zone). Will have 3 x 10 minures slots to speak about Fostering with Thurrock Council</p>	Sep-22	
		Sky TV advertising	<p>Depending on Budget to be looked at again in September 2022</p>	Sep-22	
		Grangewaters	<p>Contacted Wendy Warman to ask for help with this</p>		
		Cycle Hub	<p>Contacted Julie Cooper to ask for help with this</p>		
		Libraries and Hubs	<p>Contacted Natalie Smith to ask for help with this</p>		
<b>Outcome</b>		<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>RAG Rating</b>

	<b><i>Our advertising is a call to action</i></b>			
		The Thurrock Council fostering webpage shows how we are achieving in our recruitment of foster carers. We can celebrate reaching our targets. Encourage residents to join us to meet our target number of carers.	On our webpage we have a visual aid (20 Houses) to show we need 20 Foster Carers in 2022. Smiley face shows in the house when we have a new Foster carer approved at panel.	Reviewed every 2 weeks on a Thursday
		Fostering adverts encourage enquiry.	Facebook & Social media posts to entice people to enquire about fostering	Review monthly
		The councils communication at key times (Christmas, Mothers/father's day, times of thanks) recognises the work of foster carers	Facebook posts to reflect this	Review monthly
		'Empty Nest' campaigns, birth children leave home and households may consider fostering, including respite	Facebook posts to reflect this	Review monthly
		Foster carers celebrations events, achievements and long term service awards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•13/4/2022 - Recruitment team and TM Sandra - looking into venues. Details of costings of venues given to Dan and Janet</li> <li>•Update April 2022 - Awaiting for confirmation of budget</li> <li>•Update May 2022 - on hold due to costings</li> </ul> <b>PROGRESSING - Date arranged for 7th October 2022 at Ye Olde Plough House</b>	Progressing

	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>RAG Rating</b>
	<i><b>Our communication and advertising reflects the diverse need of our children</b></i>				
		Our materials need to reflect the diverse nature of Thurrock and families, representing all parts of the community	Continue to reflect this in all advertising, materials, leaflets, Facebook posts etc	Ongoing	
		Thurrock Fostering Calendar diverse	Recruitment Team when designing calendar to make sure calendar is diverse with the pictures	Oct-22	

Events:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
3rd September 2022	Saturday	10am to 7pm	Orsett Show
3rd September 2022	Saturday	11am to 7pm	Basildon Pride
6th September 2022	Tuesday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
7th September 2022	Wednesday	10am to 2pm	Sainsbury's Chafford Hundred
17/09/2022	Saturday	10 - 5pm	High House Community Group
21st September 2022	Wednesday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event
3rd October 2022	Monday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
18th October 2022	Tuesday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event
2nd November 2022	Wednesday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
16th November 2022	Wednesday	12noon to 9pm - t.b.c.	Orsett Hall Christmas Market

18th November 2022	Friday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event
1st December 2022	Thursday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
Date to be confirmed but either 3/4/10/11/17/18 Dec 2022 - waiting to hear back	Saturday/Sunday	time to be confirmed	Grays Beach Park Christmas Market
19th December 2022	Monday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event