

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	The Executive – October 2015
Date:	19/10/15
Subject:	Fostering Recruitment – Technology
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Aled Morris Jones
Head of Service:	Anwen Huws, Head of Children's Services
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Local Members:	

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s
<p>The Isle of Anglesey County Council’s Child Placement Team (fostering service) needs to recruit a further 10 foster families every year, a target set by the 3-year ‘Invest to Save’ project, to December 2016.</p> <p>Historically, word of mouth has been the most effective recruitment method in fostering. However, the internet has become number one, with online enquiries this year overtaking word of mouth for the first time in the UK. Leading charity, The Fostering Network, reports that the web now generates 33% of local authority fostering enquiries on average. By comparison, just over 6% of Anglesey’s 2014/15 enquiries were online. It is clear we have work to do in order to make more effective use of this media in our recruitment campaigns.</p> <p>Fostering micro-sites and social media offers a higher level of direct engagement between services and their local, target audience, and fostering agencies are making full use of this technology. From 2012 to 2014, The Fostering Network found that the presence of fostering services on social networks (including local authorities) increased 400%. Anyone interested in becoming a foster carer can search online and instantly find out more about fostering, from more sources, than ever before.</p> <p>Establishing Facebook, Twitter and a micro-site for fostering on Anglesey would support the Invest to Save initiative, which aims to increase the number of foster carers on Anglesey, thus providing local homes for local children, offering them the best possible start in life, and reducing the authority’s need for non-standard placements.</p> <p>This proposal projects a professional, modern image for the authority’s fostering service, in line with the activities of other organisations. In addition to supporting the recruitment and retention of foster carers, our presence online would facilitate networking with other</p>

agencies and enable us to maintain boundaries over what may already be being shared in the public domain.

In light of the above, the service recommends, and seeks the Executive's approval:

- To develop an Isle of Anglesey County Council fostering micro-site (at the earliest opportunity);
- To establish Facebook and Twitter accounts (early 2016).

In order to fulfil this we will work with our corporate partners to:

- Ensure that relevant guidance and policies are in place for the management of accounts;
- Integrate the corporate identity and fostering service branding;
- Ensure that accounts across all platforms are in keeping with the council's overall brand and strategic aims.

It is vital that the fostering service develops its online presence. For anyone thinking about fostering on Anglesey we need to be available and responsive, delivering an efficient and effective, quality customer service.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

This is a decision about the direction of the Anglesey fostering service. With increasing pressure to find new, cost-effective ways to recruit and retain the foster families of the future, local authority and independent fostering services are increasingly making innovative use of technology. We have opted for this proposal in order to keep pace with current developments.

There are issues that will need consideration at the appropriate time and in partnership with others from Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Graphic Design and Communications.

The alternative for the service is do nothing; continue with the current arrangement, disseminating fostering-specific content through the existing Corporate Communication channels. This option has been rejected because:

- Our statistics demonstrate it is not effective enough;
- We risk not achieving the recruitment targets of the Invest to Save project;
- We risk being left behind in the highly competitive online fostering 'marketplace'.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

The authority’s Corporate Parenting Panel recommended on 07/09/15 that this be considered by the Executive.

It concerns Council Corporate Communications and Corporate Identity.

CH – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

The authority concentrates all online activity on corporate facilities such as the website, Facebook and Twitter pages. However, a precedent has been set with the identified need for a separate micro-site and related social networking pages for tourism (Visit Anglesey).

The Authority has noted its aim to be professional, innovative and outward looking in its approach, in order to provide efficient, effective and quality services for its citizens, and the transformation of ICT is a key priority. This proposal is consistent with this corporate aim.

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

The proposal would support the cost-avoidance/savings for the authority identified in the Fostering – Invest to Save project.

It is within budget, related costs are staff time:

- ICT willing to allocate resources to develop a micro-site internally;
- Fostering URL in place already (www.maethu-fostering.org);
- Facebook and Twitter are free;
- Social Media managed by Recruitment & Marketing Officer.

DD – Who did you consult?

What did they say?

DD – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	Not consulted
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	Not consulted
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	Not consulted
4	Human Resources (HR)	
5	Property	
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	John Thomas, ICT Business Transformation Manager – consulted with Scott Rowley, Head of Corporate Transformation. There is a justifiable need. Request to remove all barriers for the Fostering service to have their own Social Media and

		Website.
7	Scrutiny	
8	Local Members	
9	Any external bodies / other/s	<p>At its meeting 7th September, 2015, the Corporate Parenting Panel considered the author's full report:</p> <p><i>"The Panel was supportive of the proposal and identified further potential opportunities that might be explored in due course to use Skype and Facetime technology to support Foster Carers and also as a link between Foster Carers themselves.</i></p> <p>It was agreed to recommend to the Executive –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>That a fostering micro-site be developed [...]</i> • <i>That a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter be developed [...]"</i>

E – Risks and any mitigation (if relevant)		
1	Economic	
2	Anti-poverty	
3	Crime and Disorder	
4	Environmental	
5	Equalities	
6	Outcome Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk that the Invest to Save Project will not achieve its annual target of recruiting 10 additional Foster Carers. • Risk of competition from other independent fostering providers and/or neighbouring local authorities.
7	Other	

F - Appendices:

FF - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):
Fostering Recruitment and Technology (24/08/15)