

Myth-busting Fostering Recruitment Hubs

Introduction

This document is based on our **Myth-busting Fostering Recruitment Hubs webinar** held on Monday 4th September 2023. To re-watch the webinar, [click here](#). To find out more about the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme and access bid support documents, [click here](#).

If you would like to discuss the programme or any of the issues raised in this document, please get in touch with your coach or laura.powerwharton@mutualventures.co.uk.

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Myth 1: A Fostering Recruitment Hub will just be a call-centre.

- This is an opportunity to create a recruitment hub that offers a different approach to receiving enquiries from prospective foster carers. Far from a call centre, it should be a service that really puts foster carers at the centre, providing ongoing emotional support and practical advice.
- Think about the vision in your region and how you will improve end-to-end experiences of prospective foster carers.

North East Pathfinder insight: In the North East, the Fostering Recruitment Hub will deliver training across the region to ensure foster carers receive consistent information about what fostering involves. They will also deliver a buddy scheme, where experienced foster carers across the North East will support prospective foster carers.

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Myth 2: There isn't a benefit to regionalising recruitment for LAs already recruiting adequate numbers of foster carers.

- This is an opportunity for those LAs struggling to recruit foster carers to do better, and to drive up performance across the region.
- Remember this isn't just about recruitment. It's an end-to-end programme. A LA in your region might recruit well but could improve their retention of foster carers.
- Your ability to address recruitment challenges within your region will be stronger as a group, rather than as individual LAs – for example, via a regional communications campaign to attract prospective foster carers for specific groups of children and young people.
- You should also think about how you work with other clusters. There is an opportunity for LAs to come together to learn, problem solve and enhance your collective influence.

3

Myth 3: The burden on the lead LA will outweigh the benefits.

- DfE recognise the important role that lead LAs will be playing in the design and implementation of Fostering Recruitment Hubs. This is why lead LAs will receive additional funding to enable them to drive forward change in their region.
- Lead LAs have an opportunity to be at the centre of change and enhance their reputation.
- There will be important development opportunities for staff.
- A reflection from the RAA programme is that is a real privilege to lead transformation. Lead LAs will be at the forefront of doing things differently, taking the best of what works, and co-producing change with foster carers.

North East Pathfinder insight: Together for Children, the lead for the North East Pathfinder, saw this as an opportunity to innovate and felt they could lead the region to do things differently.

4
Myth 4: Fostering Recruitment Hubs will impact hard won individual local authority reputations.

- The recruitment hub is an opportunity to bring everyone up to that higher standard, not about taking away from the good work LAs are already doing. It's ultimately about driving up performance across your region.
- Remember to create those safe spaces in your regions so that people can have difficult conversations, express challenges and problem-solve together so that all LAs feel valued and can express any concerns.

5
Myth 5: Setting up a Fostering Recruitment Hub will threaten existing staff jobs.

- LAs will still maintain their statutory duties in terms of assessments and approvals. This means you'll still need existing staff and expertise within each LA to ensure this is delivered.
- The regional recruitment hub will lead to changes in jobs roles and responsibilities. This can offer exciting opportunities for staff in your LA, but it's also important to think about how you prepare staff for this change and support them in testing this approach.
- Where you don't have all the specialisms or skills resourced in your LAs or regions, the recruitment hub funding allows you to resource additional roles and skills needed to deliver better support to foster carers.

North East Pathfinder insight: In the North East, smaller LAs didn't have dedicated fostering communications staff, and so they used the funding as an opportunity to resource a dedicated communications role in their hub.

6
Myth 6: Fostering Recruitment Hubs are not a sustainable model for recruitment.

- Of course, this is a new approach to fostering recruitment, so we need to test and learn around sustainability.
- If your hub can deliver the ambition of more foster carers then it will generate savings and/or avoided costs, creating a strong business case for continued investment.
- Regions should ensure they have measures and KPIs to allow them to understand the impact of their hub and adjust their approach based on evidence and learning.
- Funding for the programme will run until 2025, giving regions a real opportunity to test approaches and adapt them to meet local needs but also to think about how regional recruitment can be a sustainable approach in the future.

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Myth 7: Once we submit our bid, nothing can be changed.

- There will be things that can't or won't change once you submit your bid, for example the lead LA will provide important continuity for delivery and they will receive funding from DfE.
- However, there will be things you submit in your bid which you'll need to iterate and change as your region works through implementation of the recruitment hub and into go-live.
- Just remember, this is about people – you need to submit a great bid but you will need to adapt your approaches as you learn to really support and co-design with foster carers.

North East Pathfinder Insight:

- In the North East, they set up their governance structure at the beginning but as they worked through implementation, they realised that they needed specific working groups to solve challenges and to adapt the purpose of boards to ensure they could make decisions at the right level.
- Similarly, with staffing, the North East identified a staffing structure based on enquiry numbers across the region, when they went out to recruit they found it challenging to recruit exactly to this structure so adapted their approach to ensure they wouldn't lose skilled employees who were committed to delivering a successful recruitment hub.