

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM No. **11**

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

Social Work Committee : 2nd March, 1999.	Subject : National Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign - Launch, 15th February, 1999.
From : Jim Dickie, Director of Social Work Prepared by : Cheryl Moran, Senior Child Care Officer	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the National Foster Care Recruitment Campaign which has been organised by the Scottish Office, and North Lanarkshire Council's response to the campaign.
- 1.2 The campaign was launched on 15th February, 1999 and will take place over a period of two weeks.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities Conference (COSLA) in June, 1997, Sam Galbraith, MP, Minister for Children's Issues, indicated that the Scottish Office would be prepared to contribute funding for the running of a National Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign.

The Minister indicated that improving the availability of foster carers was an essential first step of using foster care as an alternative to placing many children inappropriately in residential care settings.

- 2.2 Following this announcement a working group was set up comprising representatives from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and the National Foster Care Association (NFCA).
- 2.3 The working group concluded that a national campaign, combining radio coverage and newspaper advertising would be run during the two week period commencing Monday, 15th February, 1999.
- 2.4 The aim of the national campaign is to highlight the challenges and rewards of fostering with a consistent message going out throughout Scotland.
- 2.5 The Scottish Office have established a response team to deal with enquiries from members of the public throughout Scotland and will send out an information leaflet to every enquirer. (The information leaflet is attached for information).

- 2.6 The names and addresses of every enquirer will be forwarded to the local authority where they reside, to be followed up with an information pack and initial interview where requested.
- 2.7 The Scottish Office sought the commitment of every local authority to provide a local response to the national campaign.

3. NORTH LANARKSHIRE'S RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

- 3.1 North Lanarkshire is committed to raising the profile of fostering through national and local recruitment campaigns. The recruitment programme is informed by the Children's Services Plan (Section 7.3b): to increase the number of foster carers by 20%, and to increase the number of foster resources for children and young people over the age of twelve years.
- 3.2 In response to the opportunity provided by the National Recruitment Campaign, North Lanarkshire intends to promote the recruitment of foster carers in the undernoted ways.
- 3.2.1 **A joint advertising venture with South Lanarkshire**

Large posters reflecting the message of the National Recruitment Campaign will be displayed on the back outside panels of a series of buses which operate throughout North and South Lanarkshire. This initiative will take place from the beginning of March, 1999 for four weeks. A single local rate telephone number will be displayed and will connect enquirers to a response team within their own authority.

3.2.2 North Lanarkshire's Recruitment Campaign

North Lanarkshire intends to continue to reflect the message of the National Recruitment Campaign by placing a series of advertisements in each of the local papers for two weeks at the beginning of March, 1999. A press release and local interest stories featuring foster carers will be placed alongside the advertisements.

Following the advertisements a series of four open nights will take place in various locations in the authority to enable local people to meet with foster carers and area team staff to find out more information about fostering.

- 3.3 North Lanarkshire ran similar campaigns in 1997 and 1998. In 1998 more than 60% of initial enquiries were in response to recruitment campaigns.
- 3.4 North Lanarkshire is committed to working in partnership with current foster carers to promote the fostering service.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The cost of the National campaign is £100,000 and the National Recruitment Campaign is funded by the Scottish Office on the basis that each local authority is committed to ensuring that a local response is available to all enquiries.
- 4.2 North Lanarkshire's recruitment campaign is being funded through existing budgets and there are no additional financial costs involved.

5. SUMMARY

- 5.1 Foster care is a key component of the North Lanarkshire strategy to shift the balance of care from children moving from residential settings. There is currently a shortfall in foster care resources to fulfill this part of the strategy.
- 5.2 The National Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign is welcomed by local authorities in raising the profile of fostering at a national level. It is of particular importance that fostering as an alternative to other forms of residential care for many children who are accommodated is a major theme of the campaign.
- 5.3 North Lanarkshire's initiatives aim to reinforce the message by targeting local communities and providing a range of opportunities to encourage people to find out more about fostering.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- It is recommended that Committee -
- note the contents of this report.



**JIM DICKIE,
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK
16TH FEBRUARY, 1999.**

(For further information contact Cheryl Moran, Senior Child Care Officer - Telephone 01698 332045).

ChildCare/Admin/CmtRepNFCRC