FOSTER CARE FORTNIGHT 2012
- A GREAT SUCCESS!

This year the Fostering Network generated more media coverage and celebrity support than ever before and published hundreds of your events on our website. Through our activity we raised the profile of fostering across the UK, encouraging more people to think about becoming a foster carer.

Coverage in over 1,000 media outlets was generated by the Fostering Network and fostering services across the UK. In addition to our 22 Minutes campaign message, our news angle in week one focused on the need for more foster carers for teenagers, and on the need for more foster carers for sibling groups in week two.

The Fostering Network held events in all four corners of the UK. Monday 14 May saw Irene and Andrew McKay named Northern Ireland’s Foster Carers of the Year 2012. We also held high profile events in Edinburgh and Cardiff to push key fostering issues up the political agenda, and hosted A Celebration of Fostering in London.

Our evaluation of Foster Care Fortnight is now under way. Please share your feedback on the impact of Foster Care Fortnight 2012, including the UK-wide campaign and your local activities – complete our short survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/fcf2012

CELEBRITY SUPPORT

Stars who threw their support behind the campaign include singer Gareth Gates (above), who appeared on BBC Breakfast, and chef and author Lorraine Pascale, who blogged for us and attended our A Celebration of Fostering event in London. Celebrity support also came from TV personalities Gabby Logan and Fern Britton, author Jacqueline Wilson, actor Samantha Morton and founder of Only Men Aloud, Tim Rhys-Evans.

We are already thinking about next year’s Foster Care Fortnight campaign – the dates are Monday 13 to Sunday 26 May 2013
Attracting and Keeping Carers

Olympic torch shines light on fostering

Foster Care Fortnight coincided with the arrival of the Olympic torch in Bath. Staff from Bath and North East Somerset Council blew up 250 fostering balloons and headed to the Circus in Bath, handing them out to people waiting to see the torch pass by. According to Ruth Martin, recruitment social worker: ‘It seemed to make a big impact as the Circus was full of our white balloons! Lots of people stopped to talk about fostering with us’.

Focus on fostering in Angus

This Foster Care Fortnight Angus Council carried out a range of activities, including a bus poster campaign, Radio Tay interviews with foster carers, and the opportunity for interested individuals to find out more by visiting www.myjobscotland.gov.uk. Angus Council established a Focus on Fostering project last November – a year-long initiative aimed at raising the profile of fostering and the opportunities it offers both for children and for foster carers. In addition the council has put in place a new allowance scheme.

Let’s get DIGITAL

The Fostering Network used digital communications and social media in new and exciting ways this Foster Care Fortnight. We launched a special 22 Minutes website, tweeted every 22 minutes during the campaign, posted foster carer blogs on Facebook, and uploaded fostering films to YouTube. We also took part in a live Guardian webchat and a live Twitter chat – a first between the Welsh Government and a charity. We were very proud that 22 Minutes was named Third Sector’s Digital Campaign of the Week as a result of all these activities.

Birmingham City Council held a fun-filled family event on Saturday 12 May. The Fostering Fiesta was hosted by Free Radio and nearly 9,000 people attended and heard the message of Birmingham’s urgent need for 300 extra foster carers. Of the many visitors to the Fostering Information tent, 160 people expressed interest and 59 of these are being taken forward as positive enquiries. The Fiesta may become an annual event. To end the fortnight, Claire Hutchings – who made the final of Masterchef last year – took charge of a culinary masterclass for foster carers.

CHILDREN’S ACHIEVEMENTS RECOGNISED IN BELFAST

Eighty-five children fostered by the Belfast Trust received awards recognising their academic, social and sporting achievements at a ceremony at Belfast’s Titanic Building on Saturday 12 May. The event was sponsored by Fostering Achievement, run by the Fostering Network Northern Ireland with government funding. Catherine Young, senior social worker who co-ordinated the ceremony, said: ‘While the awards recognise the achievements of the children and young people they also remind everyone of the wonderful job foster carers do in giving children and young people the secure homes they need to develop their potential.’
More is more in Ealing

Ealing Council made the most of the Fostering Network’s 22 Minutes message by organising 22 events and activities for Foster Care Fortnight! Their pursuits included:

- a wrap for the Ealing Gazette featuring 22 striking images of children
- handing out Oyster card holders outside tube stations during rush-hour
- info stands at various markets, community spaces and shopping centres
- posters and a stand at the council offices to promote fostering to employees and visitors
- giving stall-holders at Greenford Market promotional paper bags for their customers
- appearing on a national evening Somalian TV talk show (receiving over 75 enquiries that night, with over 100 voicemail enquiries the following day).

Fun at the zoo!

To celebrate Foster Care Fortnight, Carolina House Trust arranged a day trip to Edinburgh Zoo for all their foster families and fostered children. They had a recruitment stall in the main foyer of the zoo, which was staffed all day by supervising social workers and foster carers.

Portsmouth takes fostering to the high street

Portsmouth City Council opened a pop-up shop for one week as a way of bringing fostering to the high street and recruiting new foster carers. The shop was promoted through a Facebook and Google advertising campaign, a paid for ‘insight fortnight’ on a regional radio station and five days of free coverage in the local newspaper. Portsmouth tailored the Fostering Network’s 22 Minutes message, instead using the strapline ‘Every five days’ to reflect how often a Portsmouth child needs a foster home.

Foster care charter for Middlesborough

The achievements of Middlesbrough’s foster carers were celebrated during Foster Care Fortnight at the annual Foster Care Recognition Evening, which also featured the launch of the town’s new Foster Care Charter (complete with cake). The celebration came as 10 local authorities across the region joined forces in a major radio campaign to raise awareness of the urgent need to recruit new foster carers.

New website and DVD for Swansea

The Foster Swansea campaign planned a range of activities for Foster Care Fortnight, including recruitment events, a new look website and a DVD launch event at the National Waterfront Museum. The DVD aims to dispel some of the myths around fostering and encourage people to think about what they might be able to offer. The service and around 200 foster carers also attended the Olympic Torch Relay event at Singleton Park on 26 May – a Foster Care Fortnight and Olympics double celebration!
Policy NEWS

The Fostering Network has welcomed proposals announced in England by children’s minister Tim Loughton during Foster Care Fortnight, including:

- Encouraging employers to offer foster carers in their employment more flexibility.
- Making the assessment and approval process for foster carers more responsive and timely.
- Being even clearer that authority for day-to-day decision-making should be delegated to foster carers unless there is a good reason not to.

The Fostering Network also welcomed the Scottish First Minister’s commitment to explore the introduction of a national minimum allowance for fostering in Scotland. This commitment came from Alex Salmond during First Minister’s Question Time, where he outlined some of the issues the Government will be looking at as part of a new children and young people’s bill.

New membership BENEFITS

Over the next few months we are introducing a series of new membership benefits, all designed to make membership of the Fostering Network the number one choice.

Our new partnership with Towergate Insurance provides competitive and comprehensive household insurance, specifically developed for foster carers. All foster carer members of the Fostering Network will receive an exclusive 10 per cent discount on the already competitive rates.

We have also negotiated a discount at Merlin theme parks throughout the UK for foster carer members and their families.

Please do spread the word about these great new membership benefits!

Find out more at www.fostering.net/member-offers

Foster carer transfer protocol

The Fostering Network has published a new protocol on the transfer of foster carers in England. It provides good practice guidelines for when a foster carer wishes to transfer between fostering services, to ensure a smooth transition for foster carers and fostering services.

You can download the protocol from www.fostering.net/transfer-protocol

The Fostering Network Annual Conference 2012

London Tuesday 13 November

The theme for this year’s conference is Safer Caring: a new approach.

Find out more at www.fostering.net/annual-conference

Don’t forget the Fostering Network’s Recruitment Champions scheme if you want peer advice on recruiting foster carers from those who have experienced similar challenges.

Find out more at www.fostering.net/recruitment-champions

And finally...

Thanks for reading! Please continue to share what is happening at your fostering service and get in touch if you would like any guidance or support to improve the way your fostering service attracts and keeps its foster families.

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