
Why Foster Carers Care

part two

The values and motivations profile of newly approved foster carers



Department
for Education

The
Fostering
Network

CONTENTS

Key findings	3
Introduction	4
Method	5
Findings	6
Additional findings	12
Conclusion	14
Appendix	15

For further information contact:

James Foyle, Recruitment & Retention Consultant, The Fostering Network

e james.foyle@fostering.net

The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network

87 Blackfriars Road

London SE1 8HA

t 020 7620 6400

www.fostering.net

This research has been
conducted in partnership with



KEY FINDINGS

- 81 per cent of newly approved foster carers share a common set of 'Pioneer' values.
- At a time when the proportion of the UK population with Pioneer values is decreasing, the opposite is true of the foster carer cohort.
- Support available and peer recommendations are two of the primary motivators for selecting a fostering service.
- Money is not an important factor in the decision to foster for almost half of new foster carers.
- 41 per cent of assessments are taking longer than eight months.

INTRODUCTION

Foster carers are fundamental to our care system. Understanding what motivates them, as a group and individuals, to approach a fostering service, to request and progress through the assessment, and to provide care for a vulnerable young person is critical to the outcomes of fostered children.

Many do this not for recognition, but with an intrinsic desire to help and make a difference.

In 2013 The Fostering Network, in partnership with consultancy iMPower, sought to explore the actions and attitudes of foster carers further as part of the Department for Education-funded project to *Support fostering services to recruit more foster carers*. The basis of this research was the Values Modes theory, a psychographic categorisation based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The findings, published in the *Why Foster Carers Care*¹ report, demonstrated that 73 per cent of foster carers share a specific set of values. At that time only 37 per cent of the UK adult population shared those same values, with the foster carer results representing an unprecedented skew in the 50-year history of the theory. Values Modes theory cuts across all demographic markers including income, region, religion and education, allowing consistent core messages to be used across recruitment campaigns.

The fostering landscape is ever changing. With around 7,200 foster carers approved in England in both 2012-13, and 2013-14, fostering services are successfully recruiting new people to become foster carers. But more are needed, particularly for specific groups of children and, as the *Why foster carers care* report identified, understanding and applying Values Modes theory can improve all fostering service's recruitment and retention performance. The challenge is increased by a national shift in the UK adult population to a now 'Prospector' majority of 37 per cent, meaning fewer people, Pioneers, in the predominant foster carer Values Modes group.

This report is founded on the knowledge gained from the initial National Foster Carer recruitment survey in 2013, and the findings from a follow up survey of newly approved foster carers in 2014. Comparisons are made on the values, motivations and experience of the fostering process throughout the report and recommendations made to support fostering services to recruit and retain the foster carers they need.



¹ www.fostering.net/sites/www.fostering.net/files/uploads/pdf/why-foster-carers-care-report-v5.pdf

METHOD

A follow up to last year's National Foster Carer Recruitment survey was produced for online completion in summer 2014 by foster carers approved since 1 April 2013 to test the following key hypothesis:

Newly approved foster carers will still be categorised in a 'Pioneer' majority, but the margin will decrease to reflect the national trend of a now 'Prospector' majority.

We also sought to explore secondary hypotheses:

- The support available and a recommendation through 'word of mouth' will be increasingly important motivators to apply to a fostering service.
- Money will have greater importance in the decision to become a foster carer.

The survey maintained the significant majority of questions from the initial National Foster Carer Recruitment survey to allow for a direct comparison and analysis, with additional questions included to inform areas of enquiry. It was publicised widely, including electronically to over 10,000 members of The Fostering Network (20 per cent of the foster carer population) throughout May and June 2014. It was also advertised through The Fostering Network newsletters, social media, emails and website, and on the Fostering Information Exchange. Fostering services were encouraged to promote the survey locally.

Assuming a sample size of approximately 7,200 foster carers, the response level received provides a confidence level of 95 per cent with a confidence interval of five. The sample is therefore taken to be representative and sufficiently robust in statistical terms. We acknowledge that further focused studies with foster carers would be required to substantiate the conclusions drawn in this report for local research.

To segment the foster carer population by intrinsic motivations, a system called Values Modes was used. Values Modes is a proprietary system, which categorises people into 12 discrete psychographic types, each group representing between seven per cent and 12 per cent of the population aged 15 years and over. The categorisation is based on responses to a short questionnaire which was included within the national survey.

Values Modes is based on the psychological theory of motivation developed by Abraham Maslow and summarised in his hierarchy of needs. Within Maslow's hierarchy, three primary motivational levels are recognised – the Settler (Sustenance Driven), the Prospector (Outer Directed) and the Pioneer (Inner Directed). Further information on the Values Modes groups is available within the *Why foster carers care* report.²

Data will be reported to one decimal place where known.

² www.fostering.net/sites/www.fostering.net/files/uploads/pdf/why-foster-carers-care-report-v5.pdf

FINDINGS

Primary hypothesis:

Newly approved foster carers will still be categorised in a 'Pioneer' values group majority, but the margin will decrease to reflect the national trend of a now 'Prospector' majority.

81 per cent of recently approved foster carers are 'Pioneers', compared to 73 per cent of all foster carers.

In 2013, the British Values Survey demonstrated that 42 per cent of the entire adult population had a Pioneer value set, compared to the 31 per cent Prospector and 27 per cent Settler. This balance changed to a Prospector majority of 37 per cent in 2014.

While the number of Pioneers nationally has decreased to 32 per cent, the reverse has occurred within the foster carer cohort. Against expectation influenced by wider socio-economic factors, 81 per cent of newly approved foster carers share Pioneer values compared to 73 per cent of overall foster carers.

What do 'Pioneers' value?

In *Why Foster Carers Care* we explained the attitudinal differences of Pioneers from the other main values groups, 'Prospectors' and 'Settlers'.³

In short, Pioneers have a strong desire for fairness, a keen sense of what is right or wrong and are concerned about society. They are self-assured, have a high level of self-efficacy and will be the first to respond to what they see as a moral call to action. To engage and influence Pioneers it is therefore imperative to involve them and provide space for questions and discussion, so they may fully determine themselves whether something is 'right' or 'fair'.

Why is this important?

This research is helpful because it can help services understand WHY people make the decision to care for other children and what those people value, and can inform services how to engage approved foster carers through better support and supervision.

The evidence from this year's survey suggests this information is even more relevant when targeting and communicating with prospective foster carers throughout the recruitment process.

As explained in *Why Foster Carers Care*, the values we hold as individuals underpin our behaviours, decisions and choices. This 'customer insight' – that most foster carers have a common motivation – can therefore provide a framework for tailoring recruitment and retention strategies which successfully value foster carers, and a basis for prioritising scarce resources.



³ Appendix

why foster carers care

What does it mean practically?

Through this DfE-funded project The Fostering Network and delivery partners iMPower have been working with 25 councils in England to consider how this might change how local fostering services relate to carers.

Hertfordshire County Council fostering service has applied this approach to foster carer recruitment and retention and have increased their 'net gain' by 57 foster carers, recruiting 83 in the year ended 31 March 2014 and, crucially, reducing deregistration rates to eight per cent.

Among other things, Hertfordshire has redesigned its marketing creatives in accordance with the values brief and, perhaps more importantly, gone about creating a conversation in the local Pioneer community about foster care. This has meant mobilising foster carers in targeted word-of-mouth campaigns and using other local relationships, such as celebrities, to facilitate advocacy opportunities.

The alternative strategies

As acknowledged in the previous report, a Pioneer recruitment strategy may be the first option and one that sits most comfortably with many fostering service recruitment teams. But there are alternatives, which would broaden the values mix of foster carers providing greater diversity in placement choice and potentially better meeting the needs of children in care.

Local in depth Values Modes research has demonstrated that many fostering service personnel have the same Pioneer values as foster carers. This is not greatly surprising as many social workers, public sector and charity workers in particular will shape their careers to deliver 'public good', a key characteristic of those with Pioneer values. A key feature of Pioneers is the viewpoint that their outlook is more morally sound and therefore superior to others – they have reached self-actualisation in the hierarchy of needs. They will in turn therefore seek to associate with, and in this context recruit, people like them, providing a self-fulfilling Pioneer prophecy.

Prospectors now represent just 16 per cent of newly approved foster carers, compared to 22 per cent of all foster carers in 2013, and 37 per cent of the whole UK adult population. Those with Prospector values may challenge the current culture of fostering services, and may conflict with assessing social workers when they raise the 'what's in it for me?' element of their enquiry. But to disregard their enquiry without first exploring their potential skills and qualities to foster could be depriving the service of a highly able foster carer who could be a positive role model for a young person, and contribute to wider service improvements with their desire to 'be the best' at what they do.

Similarly those with Settler values have not been engaged to consider fostering to date. The proportion of Settlers in newly approved foster carers is down further to just three per cent compared to six per cent of overall foster carers, and 31 per cent of the UK adult population. Settlers will be reluctant to break from their routine and try something new. They will require significant support and reassurance that their actions are correct. But in turn their values of caring for family and home, structure and routine could make them positive candidates for long-term fostering. A campaign centred on 'normalising' fostering, making it the right thing to do, alongside peer advocacy, would help expand on the three per cent of newly approved foster carers who hold Settler values.

The Fostering Network is supporting and challenging 25 local authorities in England through this project to identify and realise opportunities to recruit and retain a diverse workforce through implementing Values Modes theory.

For information on the project please contact james.foyle@fostering.net

Secondary hypothesis

The support available and a recommendation 'word of mouth' will be increasingly important motivators to apply to a fostering service.

Almost 60 per cent of newly approved foster carers cited a recommendation or the perception of better support as the reason for choosing their fostering service, up from 47 per cent when compared with the previous year.

Support is clearly a crucial element of being able to foster, encompassing the support gained not just from the service during and out of hours, the supervising social worker (SSW) and financial remuneration, but also the peer network.

Despite those citing support as a key motivator, the satisfaction level for the support gained from the SSW was lower for the newly approved foster carers at 77 per cent, compared to 83 per cent of the main foster carer cohort. Although still high, it is imperative particularly for the relationship with SSW, to maintain these levels to sufficiently attract and retain future foster carers. With the prevalence of social media uptake and online communities, a poor reputation will spread quickly for a niche community such as fostering. Values insight shares the concept of a 'customer focused' recruitment strategy. This is also true for retention. Foster carers will build a strong bond if they rate and value their supervising social worker. Through working with The Fostering Network and iMPOWER, many services are now involving foster carers more in the recruitment process. Demonstrating the value and obtaining buy in from the team has been an important aspect for this to be a success. An empowered, valued and motivated workforce cannot be undervalued in the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Values Modes theory is a useful tool to achieve this.

Recommendations through 'word of mouth' are known to be one of the main sources of enquiry generation⁴ for a fostering service, as evidenced in The Fostering Network's Local Authority Fostering Service Benchmark report in 2014. Around a fifth of newly approved foster carers surveyed chose their fostering service on this basis, compared with 15 per cent from the previous year.

As we acknowledge above, this resonates with the Pioneer's willingness to communicate the need for public good. Increasingly fostering services are seeking to maximise this existing resource by encouraging foster carers to 'recommend a friend'. A number of schemes exist, with the general aspect that a foster carer will be financially rewarded if someone they have recommended is approved by the service as a foster carer. Many express mixed reaction to the local success of such schemes, with Pioneers predominantly motivated to act altruistically as opposed to seeking financial reward. This model has greatest potential when the collective are encouraged and rewarded for recommending a foster carer who is subsequently approved. Pioneers will be more inclined to act for the benefit of the collective, with the reward contributing to the self-funding of more promotional activity such as coffee mornings and information sessions held by the group to benefit the service for example.

Just a quarter of newly approved foster carers have referred someone they know to their fostering service, compared with half of all foster carers. It may be too soon for the new foster carers to 'recommend a friend' to fostering, but this is an important recruitment channel to optimise. This is of course on the assumption that foster carers would want to recommend to their service; 66 per cent of foster carers completing The Fostering Network's *State of the Nation's Foster Care* survey in⁵ 2014 said yes or they absolutely would.

Over thirteen per cent of those surveyed this year had not yet had a placement, some for many months. While less than the overall vacancy rate of 31 per cent this is particularly damaging for a newly approved foster carer.

⁴ www.fostering.net/sites/www.fostering.net/files/uploads/pdf/benchmark-report-2013.pdf

⁵ www.fostering.net/state-of-the-nations-foster-care-2014

why foster carers care

What is your 'real' vacancy rate? How many places are blocked with a particular child in mind or due to the needs of a child already in place? How many are blocked due to building improvement works, holiday, an allegation, or any other specific reason? Understanding and crucially acting on your 'real' vacancy rate will determine the extent of the issue within your fostering service.

Consider recruitment needs and how to make best use of the workforce before embarking on a recruitment campaign, and communicate with existing foster carers who could take a placement as to why their skills cannot be utilised.

Newly approved foster carers were also far more aware of alternative fostering service providers when compared to the overall fostering population, up from 88 per cent in 2013 to 95 per cent this year. This did not though have a huge impact on the number of fostering services approached; just 46 per cent considered an alternative fostering provider when researching becoming a foster carer compared to 40 per cent the previous year.



why foster carers care

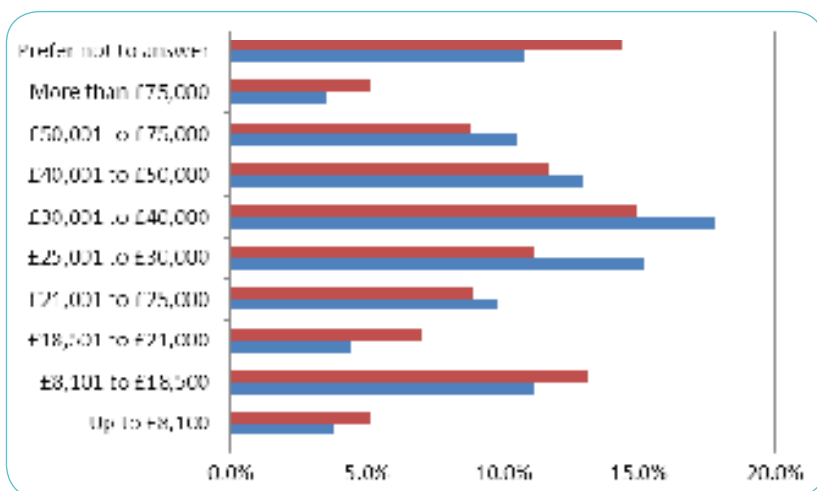
Money will have greater importance in the decision to become a foster carer

Given the overall UK adult population shift to a greater proportion of those with Prosperator values, characterised by the 'what's in it for me?' motivator and wider socio-economic factors, the expectation was that this would be reflected in the newly approved foster carers' view on the importance of finances.

Those selecting money as very or fairly important was down approximately seven per cent to 26 per cent compared with 33 per cent last year. Forty six per cent acknowledged that money was not important in their decision to foster, compared with 41 per cent in 2013.

Of course foster carers need to be able to afford to foster and, in contrast to the above, those motivated to approach their fostering service because of the fees available rose slightly from 4 to 5 per cent. A Pioneer's propensity to act altruistically should not be misinterpreted as a charitable gesture, as equity and equality are key Pioneer traits.

One possible line of enquiry as to why fewer new foster carers perceive money as an important factor could relate to an increase in household income⁶.



As the table shows £30,000-40,000 is still the most common level of household income among foster carers, albeit slightly higher at 18 compared to 15 per cent. This is also higher than the UK average household income of £26,500.

Newly approved foster carers do appear to be, on the whole, financially better off. Just 29 per cent have a household income approximately below the national average, compared to 34 per cent last year. Marginally more, 27 per

cent compared with 26 per cent, have a household income above £40,000, placing them in at least the fifth decile of average income in the UK⁷.

A survey by The Fostering Network in 2013 revealed 38 per cent of the survey's 630 respondents had paid employment in addition to being a foster carer; with over half of this cohort working more than 20 hours a week. Paid employment should be an option to foster carers if it can be demonstrated the needs of the child are not detrimentally affected, and the employment is not a means to supplement insufficient income. Foster carers should be paid fairly for the role they perform alongside other professionals in the team around the child.

While finance will not be the most important issue, parity and fairness with a comparable job will be for Pioneers. With the expectation for foster carers to take on ever more professional roles alongside supporting staff, a consequence may be a necessity to review local and national payment structures for foster carers.

This is particularly true for foster carers without a placement. The following quote is taken from The Fostering Network's *Love Fostering, Need Pay* report from 2010:

'I am happy with my income when I have a placement but it is the time in between placements that is a problem.'

⁶ All figures referred to are for gross annual income

⁷ www.ifs.org.uk/wheredoyoufitin/

why foster carers care

The Fostering Network is aware that foster carers are not covered by the protection afforded by employment status; they have no entitlement to the minimum wage, statutory sick pay, holiday pay and so on, and as such believe that fostering services should make some payment between placements.

The public sector has made many hard decisions in cutting significant funding to services in the past few years. But the need to recruit the highest calibre of new foster carers is ongoing. Many fostering services operate within a local or regional commissioning framework and it is by optimising these relationships or assessing alternative models will the sector ensure the best use of the foster carer workforce and the best outcomes for all children in foster care.



ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Application duration

The Department for Education's revised guidance on the assessment and approval of foster carers came into force in England in July 2014. The new two-stage process aims to increase efficiency in assessment for the service and remove any unnecessary delay for the applicant. The timeframe though remains as before:

A full assessment should be undertaken within a timescale which allows the fostering panel to make a recommendation on approval within eight months of the applicant first applying to be assessed.

Additional questions were therefore asked on the length of time between application to be assessed and approval, and their views on the timescales.

While a third of respondents' application took between six to eight months, the majority, over 40 per cent, took longer than the Government's requirement.

<6 months	25 per cent
6-8 months	34 per cent
>8 months	41 per cent

Discounting the additional feedback where the applicant's circumstances had changed, the most common reason for delay was social worker's long-term sick or holiday, followed by a lack of available social workers. The whole foster carer recruitment responsibility may not sit within the fostering team in local authorities, with corporate communication functions often developing and placing marketing material. It is vitally important that where this is the case, all stakeholders are aware of the resources available to avoid unnecessary delay. A number of respondents stated a change in fostering service midway through the application process, attributing the timescales and poor communication as the reason.

Despite the increased timescale, 63 per cent said the application duration was about right compared with 36 per cent who said it was too slow. Just 2 per cent said the process was too fast.

The point of application is interestingly the point at which foster carers felt most valued by their service. Three quarters felt very valued when submitting an application compared to 71 per cent at initial enquiry and 73 per cent when approved. Receiving first placement is when newly approved foster carers felt least valued, just 70 per cent. Eleven per cent felt they were not valued at all at this stage.

Demographic findings

The Government's objectives to broaden the range of people who come forward to foster appear to be having an impact on those recruited.

Although not a prerequisite to foster, there has been an increase in the number of foster carers with a degree or higher, up eight per cent to 31 per cent, or an NVQ Level 4-5 or higher, increasing to 13 per cent over the past year.

As one would expect, the age profile of newly approved foster carers is more positively skewed, although 45-54 years remains the most common age range for foster carers.

Age profile	2013	2014
20-24	0.2 per cent	0.6 per cent
25-34	4.1 per cent	10.2 per cent
35-44	20.8 per cent	32.1 per cent
45-54	44.5 per cent	40.7 per cent
55-64	26.5 per cent	15.7 per cent
65-74	3.8 per cent	0.6 per cent
75+	0.2 per cent	0 per cent

The proportion of gay or bisexual foster carers has also seen a small increase, 5 compared to 2 per cent.

Despite a number of successfully targeted campaigns with religious communities, the proportion of Christian foster carers is lower, down from 67 to 61 per cent, with 33 per cent selecting 'No faith or belief', up from 26 per cent last year.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to expectation, an even greater proportion of newly approved foster carers share a common, Pioneer, value set, compared with the overall foster carer population.

All fostering services can benefit from this finding by developing a 'customer-focused' recruitment strategy, utilising the expertise and willingness to contribute of their current foster carer cohort. As the findings demonstrate, peer recommendations are one of the most common motivators to approaching a fostering service. Empowering and encouraging foster carers to be involved in this process is a largely underutilised resource.

Support has also been highlighted as a key motivator when considering which agency to foster with. This will clearly have an impact on an individual's willingness to advocate on a fostering service's behalf. Improving communication during the assessment process, ensuring sufficient staffing and consistently valuing foster carers, are all basic principles within the support mix, to which foster carers with Pioneer values will respond.

Fostering services have a duty to provide sufficient placement choice to ensure the best match for children in their care needing fostering. Sufficiency should be balanced against capacity utilisation, and as this report acknowledges, a 31 per cent vacancy rate is unacceptable. Support extends to how foster carers are involved, managed and protected during times of under-occupancy, particularly if they are not financially compensated at this time.

Making best use of the existing workforce is a primary recruitment opportunity and will create positive relationships, which will ultimately benefit children in and coming into care.



APPENDIX: MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS AND VALUES MODES

The Maslow Groups and Values Modes defined by Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Limited ('CDSM') are derived from the British Values Survey which began in 1973 and, at the time of writing, were being conducted and updated by CDSM worldwide.

The British Values Survey is the largest and longest established survey of the values, beliefs and motivations of the British population – currently over 600 questions are measured in the survey of 3,000 to 5,000 nationally representative adults. The next round of research will be conducted in November 2013.

Decades of empirical research has demonstrated that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs best explains the values segments independently derived by CDSM from the extensive data sets. The theory provides for a dynamic understanding of the way national populations change their values over time – the changes measured by the British Values Survey.

The Maslow Groups and Values Modes are used in wide range of countries and a variety of companies and NGOs. International research, covering over 45 per cent of the world's population, has been conducted in nine countries in the last 18 months

An introduction to the development and use of Maslow Groups is contained in the book *What Makes People Tick* by Chris Rose (2011).

For further information, please visit www.cultdyn.co.uk
