

Transforming fostering in Derbyshire



1. The Spark

Derbyshire County Council has a well performing fostering service. However, each year more carers were leaving the service than were joining, increasing the Council's dependence on independent fostering agencies.

Many of these agencies were set up to provide more expensive, specialist placements and were concentrated in pockets around the county. Over-reliance on these placements therefore not only added cost but often left children accommodated further away from their home networks.

The Council therefore wanted support to re-think their approach to fostering; from recruitment, through placement to retention. Aware of iMPOWER's innovative and award-winning work in this area, the Director of Children's Services invited us to help.

2. Family Values

iMPOWER's Family Values programme helps councils to transform their fostering service by using behavioural insight to change relationships between the council, the community and carers.

The Family Values project involves facilitating agreement amongst carers and staff on the priority improvement opportunities, uniting them behind a case for change and then co-designing and implementing practical interventions which make the difference.

As with all our Family Values projects, our work with Derbyshire was collaborative; we worked with senior management, the fostering team, foster carers, and the broader children's services team. The energy comes from within and when iMPOWER leave it is in the knowledge that the outcomes are sustainable.

3. The Insight

- 80% of Derbyshire foster carers shared a specific values set.
- Despite generating more interest (enquires) in recent years, the conversion rate remained stubbornly low; at 6% compared with an average of 11%.
- 30% of carers didn't agree that the council made them feel valued; carers wanted to be more involved in the service, making a difference not only through placements, but also by supporting recruitment and other foster carers.

These insights, along with iMPOWER's co-ordination, provided the basis for council staff and foster carers to come together and reimagine a better way of delivering fostering services and support.

4. The Result

- **A 25% increase in recruitment for 2015/16** (to 53 carers)
- A recruitment pipeline and run rate which **projects between 61 and 83 carers recruited** in 16/17 (so 100% increase)
- **Expected annual savings of £1m - £2m** by 2018/19 in addition to service culture of carer-centred improvement and incalculable human benefits for Derbyshire children in care

After an intensive period of support, iMPOWER's support tapered and project management was taken over by a local foster carer.

The rates at which enquirer are converted to approved carers tripled for the new methods of enquiry generation and utilisation also increased by 10% as values-based reforms were introduced.

5. The Impact

This project has unlocked a new approach to the optimisation of recruitment, utilisation and retention. It has provided a constructive way for the Council to engage with some of its most valuable people. But most significantly, it has provided more Derbyshire carers for Derbyshire children.

"iMPOWER provided the insight, guidance and framework... We are now continuing with that approach and seeing the benefits both in recruitment and how our carers are supported." - Mel Meggs Service Director (Early Help & Safeguarding)

CONTACT

For more information on this case study or our wider work in fostering and adoption, please contact Olly Swann at Oswann@impower.co.uk / 020 7017 8030

Our approach

iMPower develops solutions to complex social challenges that are bespoke to each client.
However, our approach and our values remain constant

People with first hand **experience** in their field

Using behavioural insight to **manage demand**

Sustainable change

Impact: improving practice, saving money

Openness: sharing our emergent thinking

Understand the **whole system**

Seeing the problem **differently**

Always **co-designed** with staff

Clients **better equipped** to take on challenge of 21st Century public services

PROJECT
TIMELINE

Project starts July 2014

Placing foster carers at the heart of the project

Using 'Values Modes' methodology to understand values and behaviours of foster carers

Opportunities to work with senior management, the fostering team, foster carers, and the broader children's services team

Working closely with foster carers and staff so that they owned the changes and felt positive about the recommendations

The iMPower and Derbyshire teams set up four working groups through which carers and staff jointly prioritised, developed and delivered plans to recruit and retain more foster carers

A 25% increase in recruitment for 2015/16 (to 53 carers) and expected annual savings of £1m – £2m by 2018/19

Council armed with recommendations, business analysis and fully costed implementation plan to transform the service

Project ends March 2016. iMPower apply learning to future Family Values projects and inform iMPower's thinking on the future of fostering



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