

CAN YOU GUESS WHO FOSTERS?



Foster Care Fortnight™ 2014

**Your guide to
getting involved**

the fostering network
the voice of foster care



GUESS WHO FOSTERS

For *Foster Care Fortnight™* 2014!

Members of the public are being asked if they can guess who fosters as part of the Fostering Network's *Foster Care Fortnight™* this year.

The annual campaign, which this year takes place from Monday 12 to Sunday 25 May, raises the profile of foster care across the UK and is an opportunity for fostering services to raise awareness to help recruit the foster carers they need, as well as publicly thanking their foster carers for the work they do.

Part of the recruitment activity will involve dispelling myths on who can foster. This year's *Guess who fosters* theme aims to take this one step further by providing fostering services with the opportunity to highlight the skills and qualities needed to foster for their service.

In January 2014 we launched our recruitment targets for the year to publicise the need for more people to come forward to foster some of society's most vulnerable children. For two weeks in May the media spotlight focuses on fostering. This guide is packed with suggestions for how your fostering service can get involved and make the most of *Foster Care Fortnight™* 2014.

For more information on the Fostering Network's *Foster Care Fortnight™* 2014 please contact

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get in the FRAME

Building on *Foster Care Fortnight™* 2013

Foster Care Fortnight™ 2014 builds on last year's call to action to *Get in the frame*, the theme for *Foster Care Fortnight™* 2013.

The aim of the *Get in the frame* campaign was to encourage people who have an interest in, a connection to or would like to support fostering in their area, to put themselves in the frame to raise the profile of fostering.



Fostering services across the UK took to their high streets, airwaves and print to truly bring the campaign to life.

Our online gallery picked out some of the stars of the campaign, including sons of foster carers Gareth Gates and children's minister Edward Timpson MP, care leaver Claire Marshall and Josephine McClelland, winner of the 2013 Foster Carer of the Year in Northern Ireland.

The Fostering Network's Pinterest page was also packed full with pictures sent in by fostering services, capturing the diversity of people interested in and connected to fostering. Swansea City Council created their *12 days to make a difference* campaign while Telford and Wrekin launched *Put yourself in the frame*, campaigns which have both continued throughout the year.

Creating a visually impactful campaign, while building on the foundations many fostering services established for last year's *Foster Care Fortnight™* was high on the list when deciding on this year's theme...

CAN YOU GUESS WHO FOSTERS?

This year's theme turns the spotlight on your fostering service's current foster carers, challenging any pre-conceived stereotypes as to who can foster and providing a vehicle to showcase their skills and qualities, thereby recognising their achievements to complement your foster carer retention activities as well as recruitment.

Who should I pick?

Pick from your current foster carers those who will speak positively about their experience of fostering with you and will help to attract the types of new foster carers you need to meet the needs of your local looked after children. On the cover, we have chosen a relatively broad selection of society, but you may prefer to focus your campaign on a particular ethnic group, or people who live in more rural settings, for example, depending on your local need for foster carers. Involving your foster carers in the planning and development of your campaign will show that you value their input, which will be reflected in their willingness to help you.

In the spirit of guessing, there need to be some 'wrong' answers too ie people who do not foster. As in the example of the *Get in the frame* campaign, these can be people who do not foster themselves but are connected to fostering in another way: a local celebrity who supports your campaign, a son or daughter of a foster carer or a care leaver who has gone on to university, started a career or had their own family.

What if our foster carers don't want to take part?

As many of you know, word of mouth remains an incredibly powerful tool to help recruit new foster carers. For those foster carers who aren't keen to take part in the marketing campaign, you can still engage them to attend local fostering information evenings, staff the phones for initial enquiries and help your service run stalls and coffee mornings. To take their place in the visual part of your campaign, stockphoto websites such as thinkstockphotos.co.uk or shutterstock.com provide affordable alternatives.

Once we've chosen, what should we do?

There are many ways for you to use *Guess who fosters*. Use your images on posters and flyers, and create a buzz in your local high street by inviting foster carers and others to attend and encouraging members of the public to guess who fosters. Create a gallery on your website, hyperlinking the images through to pages with the individual's profile, release a case study a day on your social media channels or use them to create a feature in your local media...

USING THE THEME



GUESS WHO FOSTERS

SEARCH

HOME ▼ HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ▼ CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- FOSTERING
- BECOMING A FOSTER CARER
- TYPES OF FOSTERING
- TRAINING AND SUPPORT
- FOSTER CARE FORTNIGHT
- GUESS WHO FOSTERS**
- MIKE'S STORY
- WAI'S STORY

GUESS WHO FOSTERS

Can you guess who of these people are foster carers just by looking at them? What skills, qualities and experience might they have to make them excellent foster carers?



Click on each image to read more about them and see whether you have any similarities that would make you a great foster carer like them.

Seven tips for developing your campaign

1. What do we want to achieve?

Be clear from the outset what your service wants to achieve this *Foster Care Fortnight™*. Create a list of objectives and the methods through which you intend to achieve them. Is it a retention opportunity? If yes, how will you ensure all your foster carers are included or are there particular groups to which you want to pay special attention? Or is it a recruitment exercise? If so how many new foster carers do you need and how many visits to your websites or initial enquiries do you think you need to generate in order to achieve this? This will be influenced by:

2. Who do we need to target?

Completing a needs assessment might seem to many a daunting prospect. But it is a vital cog in understanding the needs of looked after children in your area, the foster carers you currently have and therefore where the gaps are. Help is available in the Fostering Network website's recruitment and retention section.



3. How much resource do we have?

As with last year's *Get in the frame*, this year's campaign can be as large or small as you want it to be. Your service's existing foster carers are a fantastic resource available to you. Given this is a time when the majority of fostering services are doing some form of recruitment activity, are there local opportunities to work in partnership to share expenses and spread the campaign wider?

4. What does our campaign look like?

Based on what you've found in tip two above, tailor your campaign imagery to reflect the types of people your fostering service is seeking to recruit. Sticking with the *Guess who fosters* theme or incorporating the call to action into your current strapline will help amplify your message and allow you to be part of the national campaign.



5. Communicate and update

Foster carer recruitment and retention is a team effort, right from the top of your organisation including the chief executive or the lead member to those on the ground making it happen. Map out exactly who needs to be informed or involved to make sure that everybody connected is up to speed on what your fostering service is hoping to achieve through the campaign and crucially beyond.

6. Be prepared

The hope with any marketing campaign is that your target audience will respond to your call to action. Make sure that your enquiry lines are sufficiently staffed for an increase in calls, and that everyone in the process is able to respond quickly to help maintain the enquirer's interest.

7. Evaluate

Evaluation of course comes at the end of the campaign to assess its effectiveness at meeting the objectives you set. It is though important not only to set SMART objectives in the development of the campaign but also to be flexible enough to react and adjust elements during it to overcome obstacles and make the most of *Foster Care Fortnight™*.



CELEBRITY SUPPORT

A locally recognisable celebrity can give your *Foster Care Fortnight™* campaign a significant boost to not only engage local media but capture the interest of prospective foster carers.

In 2013, the Fostering Network built on our existing relationships, capturing a whole range of celebrities including Lorraine Pascale, Gareth Gates, Jacqueline Wilson, Tim Rhys Evans and the lead politicians for children across all four countries in the UK in the frame.

We did this by getting back in touch with their agents – www.spotlight.com is a useful website to find contact details – and specifically targeted those people with a connection to fostering.

Locally, Somerset County Council continued last year's success by securing support from local resident Sir Ranulph Fiennes and former care leaver Bruce Oldfield. South Gloucestershire Council snapped former England wicketkeeper and resident Jack Russell, while Hertfordshire managed to get the cast of *Birds of a Feather* in their frame.

There were also many more examples of local radio presenters, weather presenters and politicians. These are the people we really do advise you to try and engage with as they will have a local connection and as in the case of Tom Isaac, a rugby player for Ospreys, can help attract new audiences to foster care.

With their permission (gained through their agent), you can invite your celebrity to the launch of your campaign, present at an awards event or even just provide a supportive quote to back your campaign. Including them as a 'red herring' in your *guess who fosters* imagery will certainly spark interest.

Having a celebrity support your campaign is not the be all or end all to make your campaign a success, particularly given this year's theme focusing on those people who currently foster. Do not be tempted to persistently target celebrities on social media to support your campaign if they or their agent do not appear keen to be involved. Also, be prepared to offer to cover any expenses such as travel, but paying a fee for their appearance is unnecessary – save your resources to use elsewhere in your campaign.

Our celebrities are your celebrities

Use the quotes and pictures of celebrities who back our *Foster Care Fortnight™* campaign in your local activity, for example, "Gareth Gates supports *Foster Care Fortnight™*. Find out how you can foster with (INSERT YOUR NAME) fostering service."

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO TO GET INVOLVED

Offline: advertising, information sessions and activities

Advertising

It is true, online media is forging ahead of its offline equivalent, but advertising in printed media through magazines, newspapers and trade press can still be relevant to your cause. It is also adapting, often meaning that as well as coverage in the hard copy version of the publication, your advert will also feature in the online version as well.

Check in with your communications colleagues, either within the team or in a corporate centre, who may have existing relationships with relevant publications to advise on a channel that will reach your target audience and ensure you get the best value for money.

Information sessions

The majority of fostering services now hold information sessions for those interested in fostering on a regular basis, often inviting current foster carers and their sons and daughters along to talk about their experience of fostering. As Durham Council did with the Fostering Network's recruitment targets news release, your fostering service can use *Foster Care Fortnight™* to signpost to your upcoming sessions and incorporate the *Guess who fosters* theme into the session.

Activities

Publicity stunts, such as Essex's abseil or Blackburn and Darwen's fostering freeze in 2012, require a lot of co-ordination and commitment but they do provide a fantastic spectacle to generate interest. This year's *Guess who fosters* theme could lend itself to a competition in your region or a large scale event in your local high street. Do make sure you have all the necessary permissions before going ahead.

Online

The *Guess who fosters* theme provides a great opportunity to develop online content. You can create online case studies of your existing foster carers alongside members of your team, local councillors and so on as the 'red herrings', ie not foster carers themselves but connected to and supporting foster care.

Through social media, you can post daily questions challenging people to guess who fosters, the skills required to be a foster carer, the requirements for your fostering service and so on to create interactive content and boost your social following.

HOW THE FOSTERING NETWORK CAN SUPPORT YOU

Throughout the year, the Fostering Network continues to work on a number of initiatives to support fostering services to recruit and retain foster carers.

Our recently published *Why foster carers care* and *Local Authority fostering service benchmark* reports provide information on the values of foster carers and local authority performance across a number of recruitment benchmarks, respectively, to help inform your recruitment and retention activity.

The full complement of the Fostering Network's recruitment and retention resources is available from the recruitment and retention section of our website, including the *Motivations to foster* toolkit, *Recruiting the foster care workforce of the future* guide and *Getting started in social media* guide.

Keep up to date on our social media activity during the fortnight through our Facebook, www.facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork, and Twitter, @fosteringnet, accounts where we will be posting daily updates for you to use and share.

You can also sign up to receive our monthly *Attracting and Keeping Carers* blog, which will have special editions during *Foster Care Fortnight™* to keep you up to date with all the great activity happening around the UK. And join in the debate in our monthly online discussion about recruitment and retention topics.

For more information on any of the above, please contact James Foyle:

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look out on Twitter for
#guesswhofosters
and use it in your tweets!

**CAN YOU
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SUSTAINING INTEREST AFTER THE CAMPAIGN

Foster carer recruitment is a year round activity, with many fostering services evaluating and learning from previous campaigns in order to launch recruitment campaigns at specific times of the year, *Foster Care Fortnight™* often being one of them.

The objective of the *Foster Care Fortnight™* for the Fostering Network is to raise the profile of fostering across the UK and provide an opportunity for fostering services to create local activity to tie in with the campaign, often with an aim to recruit new foster carers.

Fostering services often experience a spike in the number of enquiries they receive during these campaigns, but many express that this initial interest is not followed up or individuals are not suitable to the role of foster carer. Becoming a foster carer is not a decision taken lightly, and for those people who have only recently considered it as an option, fostering services are advised to encourage them to discuss it with their family to decide whether it is right for them. Others who come forward may have been thinking of doing it for a number of years, and this is the trigger to inspire them to take the next step.

For either, it's imperative that fostering services capture these individuals' details, invite them to sign up to receive a newsletter, follow or 'like' your social media channels, or even keep them in the loop for when information sessions are running. Developing these relationships that hold true to your fostering service's values will leave your service well-placed if the individual chooses to progress their application at a later stage or indeed to recommend you to one of their colleagues, friends or family.

NOT SUITABLE BUT COULD FOSTER? PASS THEM ON!

If an enquirer expresses a firm desire to only foster an age range or a type of foster care that you don't currently need or aren't expected to need, don't recruit them just to boost your numbers or turn them away. Put them in touch with another local fostering service you may work closely with that might urgently need people with their skills and qualities.