

Notice of Meeting

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families Decisions

**Date & time**

Tuesday, 13
October 2020 at
9.30 am

Place

remote

Contact

Angela Guest
angela.guest@surreycc.gov.uk

Chief Executive

Joanna Killian

Please note that due to the Covid-19 situation this meeting will take place remotely.

Please be aware that a link to view a live recording of the meeting will be available on the Cabinet Member for Transport Decisions page on the Surrey County Council website. This page can be accessed by following the link below:

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/mqCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=767>

Cabinet Member

Mrs Mary Lewis (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families)

AGENDA

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members present are required to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter:

- i. Any disclosable pecuniary interests and / or
- ii. Other interests arising under the Code of Conduct in respect of any item(s) of business being considered at this meeting

NOTES:

- Members are reminded that they must not participate in any item where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
- As well as an interest of the Member, this includes any interest, of which the Member is aware, that relates to the Member's spouse or civil partner (or any person with whom the Member is living as a spouse or civil partner).
- Members with a significant personal interest may participate in the discussion and vote on that matter unless that interest could be reasonably regarded as prejudicial.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

a Members' Questions

The deadline for Members' questions is 12pm four working days before the meeting (**06/10/2020**).

b Public Questions

The deadline for public questions is seven days before the meeting (**07/10/2020**).

c Petitions

The deadline for petitions was 14 days before the meeting, and no petitions have been received.

3 FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

(Pages 3
- 42)

The Fostering Annual Report (2019/20) and Statement of Purpose seek to provide Members with a review of fostering services in Surrey.

Joanna Killian
Chief Executive

Published: Monday, 5 October 2020

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES****DATE: 13 OCTOBER 2020****LEAD OFFICER: JOANNA KILLIAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE****SUBJECT: FOSTERING REPORT & STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2019/20****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Surrey Fostering Service Annual Report (2019/20) and Statement of Purpose seek to provide members with a review of Fostering services in Surrey for 2019/20. The documents provide information as to the work undertaken within the service during the last year, how the Fostering service has met the needs of Surrey's Looked After Children, statistical data regarding service performance and identification of key issues alongside the work to be undertaken in the coming year to address them.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member notes the content of the Annual Report and associated Statement of Purpose.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards 2011 and associated statutory guidance requires that Local Authority Fostering Services present regular reports of activity to elected Members. This report captures activity of the Surrey Fostering Service for the period April 1 2019 to March 31 2020.

DETAILS:

1. Please refer to the Fostering Annual Report (Annex 1) and Surrey Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2019 (Annex 2).

CONSULTATION:

2. This report was submitted to the Assistant Director, General Fostering and Director Corporate Parenting and was approved.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

3. This report does not highlight any financial risk as it is a summary of the performance of the Surrey Fostering Service for the year 2019/20(1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020).

Financial and Value for Money Implications

4. There are no financial implications based upon the 2019/20 review.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

5. Although significant progress has been made over the last 12 months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook is uncertain. The Public Health crisis has resulted in increased costs which are not fully funded in the current year. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected from next year onwards, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the report and associated statement of purpose.
6. Whilst this report does not contain any direct financial implications the use of fostering services form a key part of the Medium term financial strategy. We are therefore aiming to deliver high quality services within the agreed budget envelopes.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

7. The Annual Report and associated Statement of Purpose are provided for the information of Members as an exercise of the Council's children's social care functions in respect of Fostering, carried out by the Surrey Fostering Service. This is in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, The National Minimum Standards 2011 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (amended) and associated amended regulations and guidance.
8. Neither document requires a decision.
9. In accordance with the above legislative requirements, following the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families approval, both documents will be made publicly available.

Equalities and Diversity

10. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been completed as the report focuses on the performance of the service during 2019/20.

Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications

11. Surrey's Fostering Service aims to recruit foster carers to meet the sufficiency needs of the service and enable as many children as possible to remain within Surrey therefore retaining links with their local communities. There is an ambitious recruitment strategy in place that aims to attract diverse, high quality applicants who are supported and developed to meet the needs of our Looked After Children.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

12. Once Cabinet Member approval is given, the Fostering Annual Report and Standard of Purpose will be published and made available to all who are interested in adopt through and support services provided by the Surrey Adoption Service.
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Contact Officer:

Clark McAuley Service Manager, Specialist Fostering

Consulted:

Fostering Service Managers, AD General Fostering, Director Corporate Parenting

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Fostering Annual Report 2019/20

Annex 2 – Fostering Statement of Purpose (September 2020)

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Surrey County Council Fostering Service



Annual Report 2019-2020

Author: Steve Orchard

1. Introduction

This Annual Report should be read in conjunction with the Foster Care Statement of Purpose for 2020. The Statement of Purpose sets out the legislative and regulatory context under which Surrey County Council carries out the functions of the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service is a regulated service and subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Surrey County Council's Fostering Service provide a range of short term and permanent foster carers who have a diverse range of skills and experience. Foster carers provide family-based services ranging from weekend respite/short breaks to supporting birth parents and carers, preparing a child for adoption, or providing a permanent home for a child through to independence. There continues to be a high number of family members and friends who come forward for assessments within legal proceedings.

In April 2019, the Fostering Service underwent a large change management programme and now has specific teams to undertake particular fostering functions for the wider Children's Service. There are 2 Service Managers and 9 Team Managers, overseeing General Fostering, Short Breaks, Family and Friends Assessments, Special Guardianship assessments, Supported Lodgings, Private Fostering assessments and visits and Foster Carer Recruitment and Training. At full capacity, there are 46 (FTE) Supervising Social Workers, 4 Supported Lodgings Officers and 3 Marketing Officers.

This Annual Report will identify areas of improvement over the last financial year and provide a forward plan for 2020-21.

2. Children Looked After in Surrey

On the 31st March 2020 there were 983 Looked After Children in Surrey County Council, of which 72% were living with foster carers. This is an increase of 1% compared to 31st March 2019.

There were 280 general foster carers available to the Fostering Service at the end of March 2020.

445 children were living with in-house foster carers with 320 children in general foster care, 123 in Friends and Family placements and 2 young people placed in Supported Lodgings. This equates to 45% of the overall Looked After Child population of 983. A further 88 young people were subject to a Staying Put or over 18's Supported Lodgings arrangement.

As of March 2020, 216 children were living in placements provided by Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA), equating to 21.9% of the overall Looked After Child population.

During the reporting period there has been a 7% increase in the number of children placed with Surrey foster carers and a corresponding decrease in the use of IFA provision. There has also been an increase of 4% of children living within Surrey County Council compared to 2018/19.

Below is a breakdown of the demographics of the children looked after in Surrey as of March 2020.

- 55% of looked after children are males
- 30% of the children are from a BME background
- 70% of the children are from a White British background
- 34% of the children are 0-10 years old
- 66% of the children are 11-16 years old
- 21% of the children are living with IFA carers
- 45% of the children are living with in house carers

Gender	Number of children	%
Female	436	45%
Male	547	55%
Total	983	100%
Ethnicity %		
Asian / Asian British	60	6%
Black /African / Caribbean / Black British	85	9%
Mixed	85	9%
Other ethnic group	5	6%
White	691	70%
Total	983	100%
Age band		
	Number of children	%
0-4 years	132	13%
5-10 years	198	21%
11-15 years	343	35%
16 years plus	311	31%
Total	984	100%

3. Placement stability

In the reporting period, the figure for children passing their two years in placement rose from 157 in April 2019 to 192 on 31 March 2020. This equates to 67% of the overall cohort of children living with in-house foster carers for over 2 years.

During the same period there were 42 children who experienced three or more placement moves as identified in the table below.

Month	Apr 2019	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2020	Feb	Mar
SCC Total Placed	132	135	136	144	143	140	134	131	130	135	130	143
In-house number	2	3	4	5	3	3	5	4	4	5	1	3

4. Allegations against Foster Carers

During the reporting period, there were thirty referrals to the LADO service.

- Two were duplicated cases, two carers living in the same household and allegations being made against one carer only
- Three referrals were made for IFA carers living in Surrey
- Seven referrals were for advice only as they did not meet threshold for further action
- Seven referrals were found to be substantiated
- Five referrals were found to be unsubstantiated
- One referral was found to be malicious

Two further cases are ongoing as the foster carers have appealed to the IRM following the Fostering Panel decision to terminate their approval. Three further cases are ongoing as there are Standards of Care investigations being undertaken. Other outcomes include specific training being recommended and referral to a Mockingbird constellation. In two cases where the allegation was substantiated the child was moved.

5. Complaints made against the Fostering Service

During the course of the reporting period, the Fostering Service received seven complaints. Only one was from a looked-after child. Three complaints were made in relation to Post Order Support, one was in relation to a lack of communication and the other two were in relation to the quality of service received. All were resolved at stage one of the complaints process and all but one within a suitable response time.

During the reporting period eleven compliments were received by the service. The main focus of the compliments relates to the quality of service delivered or for positive communication and interaction undertaken by the person involved.

6. Standards of Care Investigations

In October 2019, the Fostering Service introduced a new Standards of Care Investigation template. Clarity of the process and use of the format was provided to all staff members during a whole service development day.

Standards of Care investigations should be concluded within a twenty-eight-day period with the outcomes signed off by a manager from the service. Due to the process being new to Surrey, some latitude was permitted, and a longer period allowed in order to complete reports and ensure the learning process was embedded with staff.

For the recording period in question, there were fifteen Standards of Care investigations, ten were referred to the Fostering Panel for consideration alongside recommendation for further training, buddying and support.

Annual Reviews/Unannounced Visits

Due to staffing vacancies within the West teams, the numbers of completed Annual Reviews and unannounced visits was lower than in the East teams, particularly from November 2019 onwards. The General West teams were heavily depleted during that reporting period due to illness, leave and staff members leaving the service. This has since been addressed and numbers are improving.

The East teams were well staffed throughout the reporting period and have higher completion figures throughout.

The Fostering Service is currently undertaking steps to ensure that Annual Reviews are celebrated as an event and undertaken in a more independent manner than they are currently. To this end, a business plan has been submitted in order to create two Independent Review Officer posts. The postholder will provide independent oversight of the reviewing process, ensuring challenge is held towards the service and the carer. The post holder will also offer consistency to the role of panel advisor in order to raise practice standards in assessment and reviews.

Whilst planning for the implementation of the reviewing officer role, additional scrutiny and independence is provided by a process of oversight by two Team Managers prior to being sent for Agency Decision Maker agreement. This allows for quantitative and qualitative assurance of the document. Feedback is gathered from all relevant professionals and includes all children currently living in the home and those who have lived there in the preceding twelve months.

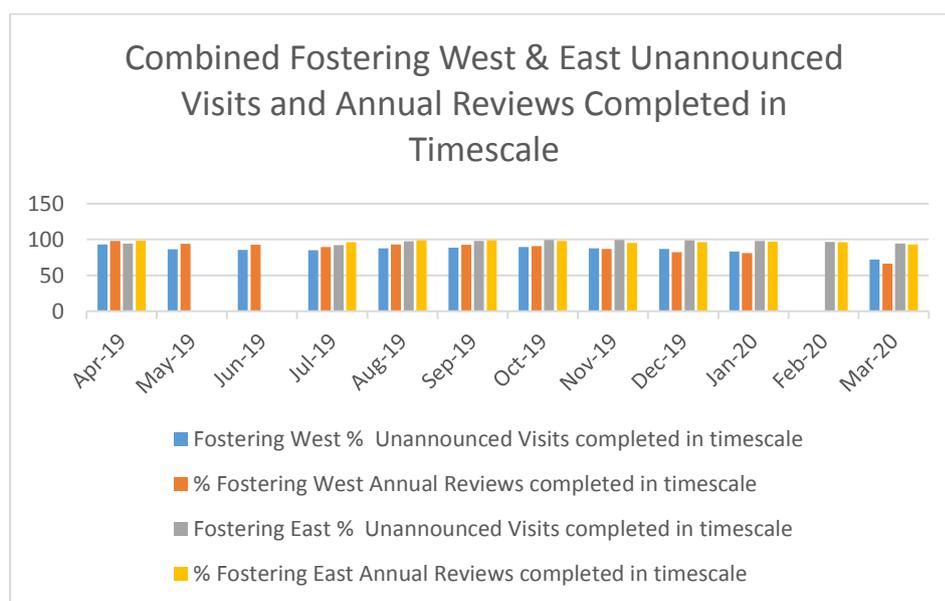


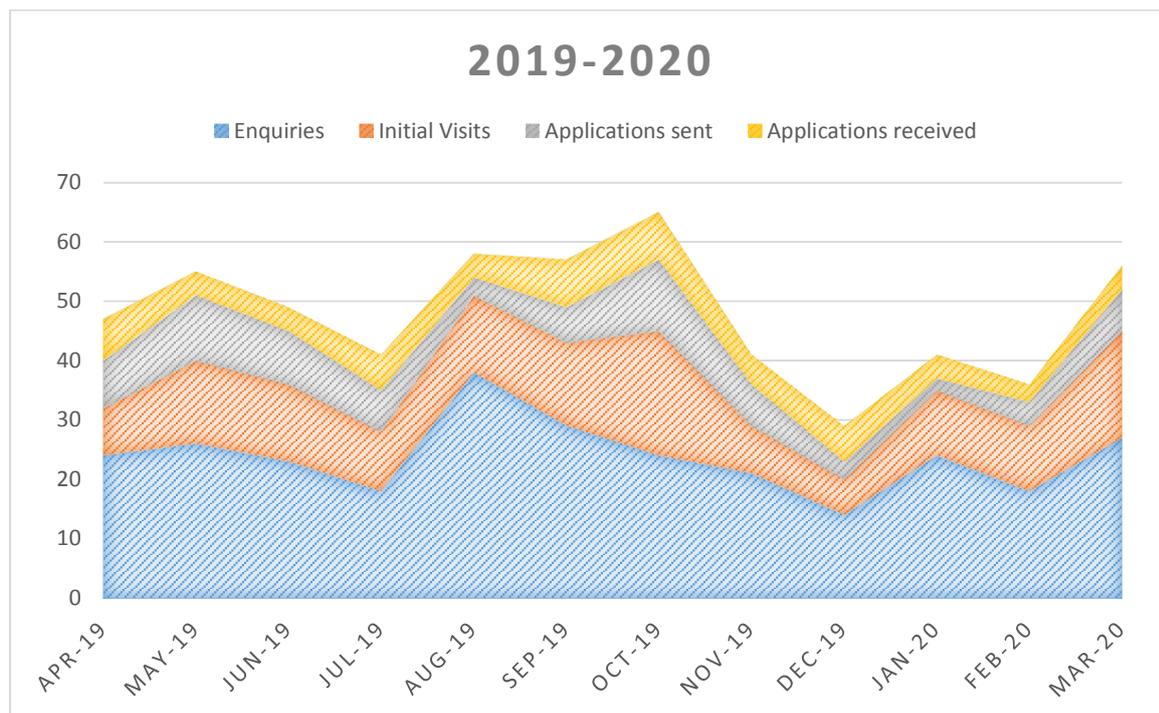
Table 4

7. Recruitment and Assessment

In 2019-20 the team received 286 fostering enquiries, 63 applications and approved 37 fostering households and 5 supported lodgings carers.

During the year, 28 fostering households had their approval terminated at panel and 4 supported lodgings carers also had their approval ended. Therefore, the net gain of fostering households in 2019-20 is 9 and there is a net gain of 1 supported lodgings carer.

Throughout the year, 18 households did not complete the assessment process. At the end of the year there were 28 general fostering ongoing assessments and 5 supported lodgings assessments. There were 53 connected persons assessments presented to panel this year compared to 29 in 2018/19, which is an increase of 46%.

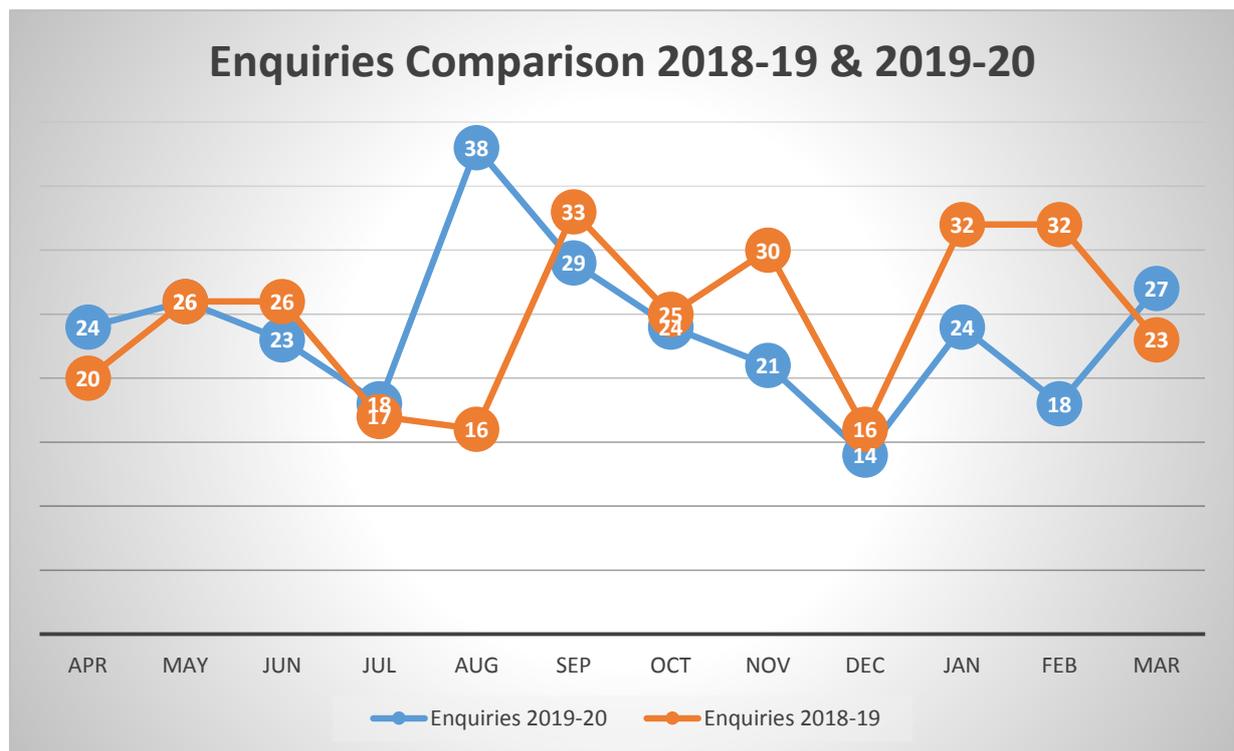


Conversion Rates

The following table shows conversion rates as a percentage of the whole number:

Enquiry to Approval	15%
Enquiry to Initial Visit	51%
Initial Visit to Application Sent	54%
Initial Visit to Application Received	43%
Application Received to Approval	67%
Enquiry to Application Received	22%

Enquiries Comparison



Assessments and Approvals



8. Panel

Fostering Services Regulations (2011) and National Minimum Standards (2011) require a Fostering Panel to be constituted, chaired by an independent person. The Agency has a “Central List” of people who have experience, expertise and knowledge about fostering matters who will make up the Fostering Panel.

There are currently 18 members of the Fostering Panel Central List, including the Independent Chair. The voice of the child/young person is represented by members of Surrey Participation and User Voice apprentices and one independent member who all have care experience. The voice of the foster carer is represented by a member of one Fostering Panel and this remains an area of need. The Fostering Panel Central List also has registered social work members and representatives from health, education, disability and elected members.

The panel has maintained a very stable membership during the year with regular attendance by panel members across the four panels ensuring the panel was always quorate.

The Central List would benefit from being increased to include a wider membership in the areas of education, mental health and Family and Friend’s carers. It is also acknowledged that the panel needs to have a more diverse membership to better reflect the population of Surrey.

An Independent Vice Chair was recruited in November 2019; however other members of the Panel have largely remained the same. This has ensured continuity and consistency during this period.

The key areas identified by the Independent Chair as themes for the panel are:

Themes

1) Children’s Social Worker Feedback / attendance at panel

In the year April 2018/19 80% of children’s social workers either attended panel or provided feedback on the care the children were receiving. This is a marked improvement from the year before where a 68% attendance was reported. The Fostering Service Managers have been receptive to feedback on the crucial need for children’s social workers to provide information to panel and they have supported escalation processes to enable this to happen.

2) Safeguarding

Discussions have taken place between the Panel Chair and the Service Managers in relation to aspects of the panel’s safeguarding role with foster carers. There have been improvements in the escalation of issues and direct communication with the panel chair about actions taken. Panel concerns are addressed by the Fostering Service.

3) Children’s Participation

Supervising Social Workers are now more responsive to finding creative ways to gain children’s direct feedback and where this is not possible to provide evidence informed information on children’s experiences of their care. Further work is needed to ensure that all children are provided with numerous inclusive opportunities to communicate their feelings about the care that they

receive through different mediums that they are comfortable with. This remains an area of need that panel will continue to report on.

4) Foster Carer Training and Support

Most of the feedback pertaining to the fostering service is positive and evidences that social workers have high aspirations for children and provide the necessary support and guidance for the foster carers. Where issues have been highlighted such as placement breakdowns, communication issues/ delays and a lack of support during standards of care investigations, this has been addressed by the Service and Team Managers.

April 2019 – March 2020 - Cases considered by Fostering Panel.

Case Type	Total	Unanimous Positive recommendation	Majority Positive recommendation	Unanimous Negative recommendation	Majority Negative recommendation
Mainstream Assessments	44	40	3	1 (Stage 2 report)	0
Short-term / long-term	34				
Respite only	2				
Family and Friends assessments	53	49	1	2	1
Family and Friends eight-week extensions	46	42	3	1	
1 st Foster Carer Reviews (mainstream)	16	16			
1 st Foster carer reviews (Family and friends)	13	13			
Post approval allegations / Standards of Care	9	8	1		
Change of Approval	21	19	1	1	
Long Term Matches	8				
Variations	4				
Exemptions	1				

9. Covid-19 support to Foster Carers

It is well documented that the Coronavirus pandemic has had a profound impact on the way services have operated, particularly during the 'lockdown' phase of the government issued guidance. The service maintained regular communication with foster carers throughout the pandemic, offered support, provided regular updates and ensured twice weekly liaison with the chair of the Fostering Executive.

The outcome from the range of additional support measure appears to have been very well received with calm amongst foster carers and no great shift in terms of the numbers of children needing to be moved due to unplanned placement endings. Foster carers have fed back that Fostering teams had acted responsibly and professionally and continued to deliver a highly supportive service throughout the Covid-19 crisis.

The authority chose not to incorporate Children Act 1989 Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. It was felt that the current legislation enabled Surrey County Council to continue with its improvement journey particularly the role of Fostering Panel in continuing to hold the service to account.

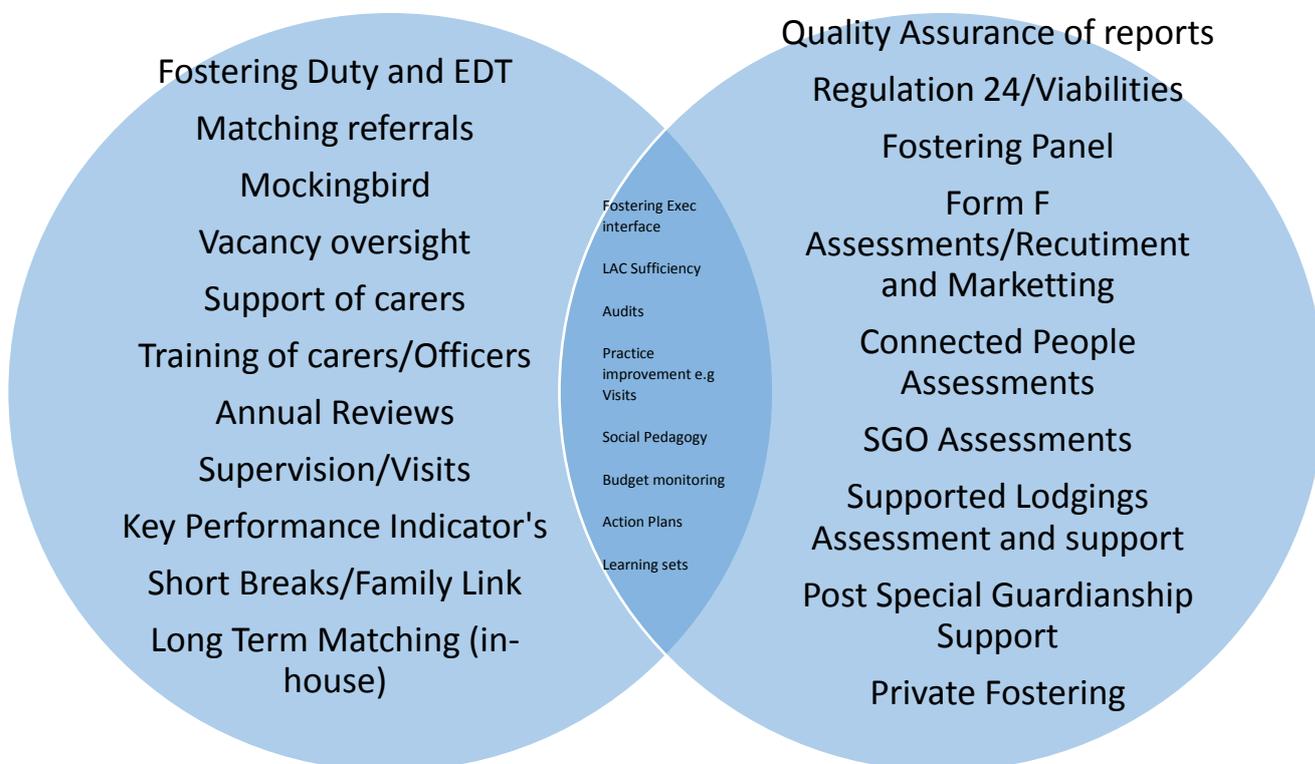
10. In Service Developments:

Change management process

From October 2018 to May 2019, Surrey County Council underwent a large change management consultation, implementation and delivery programme, which included the Fostering Service. Changes were made at Service Manager level and a recruitment project undertaken to recruit to the managerial vacancies as well as the social worker vacancies. The 9 Team Managers were provided with clarity of role and the Fostering Service divided into two areas: Assessment and Support.

Fostering Support Functions- Carol Norrington
Directly managing Bethany Florence, Mandy Knight,
Gianna Forward, Dipti Pandya and Louise Erskine.

Fostering Assessment Functions- Clark McAuley
Directly managing Clare Mynett, Debbie Church,
Lizanda Earle and Fiona McGowan



The Fostering Service was reshaped to allow for dedicated teams in a couple of areas where the work was previously spread throughout the service; A bespoke Fostering Recruitment Team with dedicated supervising social workers and Marketing Officers, including a nominated individual solely for the purpose of improving recruitment of carers for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

The Fostering Service also now has two bespoke teams for the assessment of Family and Friends carers. Regulation 24 assessments, due to capacity and volume of these assessments, are undertaken by the whole service on a rota basis. The Family and Friends teams are also responsible for the provision of post order support, SGO assessments and Private Fostering arrangements.

11. Current Staffing Structure and recruitment

During the course of the reporting period, all vacancies have been filled with experienced and capable staff members, raising the overall quality of the service.

The culture of the service has improved with a professional and supportive outlook engendered with quality assurance and professional challenge becoming the norm. Managers regularly attend foster carer support groups across the county, building relationships with foster carers, addressing issues arising and increasing confidence in the service. This has been well received as carers report better access to decision makers and subsequent reduction of delays in making decisions.

The staffing group is predominantly female with a high number of workers identifying as white British. This would reflect the predominantly white British county in which we are based but not necessarily the cohort of children and young people or foster carers, however steps are being taken

to challenge any unconscious bias within the county's recruitment processes, with learning and development opportunities being rolled out. The Fostering Service is implementing peer learning opportunities to ensure ongoing learning in the area of anti-discriminatory practice and cultural competence training being at the forefront of all we do, with space to challenge and learn from colleagues and peers.

The Fostering Service has 21 Senior Supervising Social Workers bringing a wealth of knowledge and expertise. The Senior Workers are expected to take a lead in the learning and development of colleagues and students within the team, lead on supporting and developing foster carers and having a thorough, reliable knowledge on fostering regulations in order to ensure a high standard of practice.

12. General fostering

Surrey County Council awarded foster carers with an allowance uplift above that of the recommended DFE annual guidance of 1%. Both the foster carer skills allowance *and* child allowance were raised by 10% on July 1st, 2019. This raise has allowed Surrey to be more competitive in recruitment and reputation with our comparative neighbours and local IFA's.

Child allowance		Skills level payments		Under-10 total payment	Over-10 total payment
Under 10	Over 10	1	£0	£185.11 level 1 skills	£279.90
£185.11	£279.90	2	£101.94	£287.05 level 2 skills	£381.84 skills level 2
		3	£142.29	£327.40 level 3 skills	£422.19 skills level 3

Table 6

13. Mockingbird

Since engaging with The Fostering Network (TFN) in May 2018, the Fostering Service had completed a self-assessment questionnaire and Operations Protocol. The documents were delivered in the autumn of 2018, marked and a Coach appointed by TFN in April 2019.

An ambitious Action Plan was written and implemented in May 2019 with a view to achieve launching the service in October 2019. Foster carers were invited to express their interest and a formal recruitment process was implemented. Job descriptions, financial matters and expressions of interest in joining the constellation were arranged and the Action Plan, which TFN recommends can take up to 12 months to implement and complete, was achieved in a 6-month period.

The well attended Launch Event took place in Cobham and the first constellation was implemented on October 29th, 2019. The second Constellation was launched in February 2020. A third constellation is due to launch in August 2020.

Constellation 1 (Redhill- South West)	Numbers
Number of fostering households involved	10
Number of foster children involved	11
Number of care leavers involved	1

Number of Staying Put young people involved	1
Number of foster carer birth children involved	20
Number of placement disruptions avoided	4
Constellation 2 (Farnborough- South East)	
Number of fostering households involved	8
Number of foster children involved	11
Number of Care Leavers involved	1
Number of Staying Put young people involved	1
Number of foster carer birth children involved	3
Number of placement disruptions avoided	4
Constellation 3 (Sunbury on Thames-North-West) to be launched August 2020	

Table 7

Foster carer handbook

The new Foster Carer Handbook was written and launched following consultation with the Fostering Executive from February 2020. There are alterations proposed to the way summer payments are made and to firm up the intention of weekly savings for children. At the time of writing, both areas are currently being finalised.

There are plans in the future for the Handbook to be made an electronic document enabling easier access to carers and staff and a swifter process of updating.

14. Long term matching

In the reporting period six children were permanently matched to in-house foster carers. Due to the low numbers of children who have been long term matched throughout the reporting year a new process has been devised to address this.

15. Fostering Executive

The Executive Committee is made up of two Members from each of the four Surrey Fostering quadrant Committees plus the Chair. It also consists of volunteer carers from the whole of Surrey. It is chaired by Jane Porter. The Fostering Constitution requires updating as the Executive continues to provide support as follows:

3.1 'Membership of the Association is automatically open to all present, prospective Foster Carers and Kinship Carers approved by Surrey.' And 3.3 'The Fostering Executive will seek to support all carers currently, or previously registered as Foster Carers by Surrey'.

Work has been ongoing with the Chair of the Executive to alter the Constitution to 'present day foster carers' as they are, by definition still providing a service to foster carers who have been de-registered. This leads to more support than they are currently able to offer. To enable overall improvement of the Executive, an action plan has been developed. This has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The fostering service and chair of the Fostering Executive meet fortnightly in order to share issues pertinent to carers. This is in addition to the Service Managers attending the Fostering Executive meetings bi monthly and AGM.

16. Short Breaks for Disabled Children

Short Breaks play a vital role in enabling children with disabilities to remain in the full-time care of the birth families by providing regular short breaks, preventing family breakdown.

Children who access the short breaks service of fostering receive a service from social workers within Children with Disabilities Team. Their care packages are funded via the DPR process.

Short Breaks foster carers are recruited and assessed in the same manner as general carers but with an additional slant of disability awareness and understanding. Short Break carers are reviewed and supported in line with The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

The matching process within short breaks is thorough and considered, in close consultation with the child, their parents, social workers and short break carers. The process is child lead in preparation for this relationship to be long standing.

At the present time, there are 13 Short Break foster carers offering short breaks on a regular basis to nine children. Short Break carers are very experienced and well trained in the provision of care for children with a disability. They receive specialist training in order to meet the child's health care needs and are offered an additional support group for short break carers and foster carers who care for disabled children full time. Specialist equipment is provided and adaptations are made to houses in consultation with the OT service.

There is a dedicated team within the Fostering Service to support Short break carers and foster carers who care for children with disabilities made up with three FTE social workers and one part-time Team Manager. These workers all have a background in the field of disability and can offer the specific knowledge and expertise these carers need in order to meet the needs of the children.

There is currently an ongoing recruitment plan to seek more carers for this area.

17. Foster carer relationships with the service

Over the course of the last 12 months, the Fostering Service has endeavoured to build positive relationships between carers and the service in the context of reorganisation and ongoing improvement journey. Service Managers have ensured that each quadrant has a regular Fostering Support Group and have attended those support groups on a regular basis, taking part in Question and Answer sessions and ensuring that they have undertaken requested tasks in a prompt manner.

Support groups are facilitated by a Supervising Social Worker with a guest speaker often involved from other agencies or from different teams around Children's Services. This has been well received and attendance figures have improved as a result of this. Guests from the Virtual School, Housing, Social Care and Leaving Care have all attended Q and A sessions. Feedback has been highly positive.

Virtual Support groups, introduced during the Coronavirus pandemic have been well received and attended, enabling more carers to attend due to not needing to find childcare. There is a view that the service will adopt this form of support group, alongside face to face support groups in the future.

The new Service Managers have introduced “Breakfast with the Service Managers” which will be an opportunity for all foster carers to meet with the service managers and hear of new developments within the service and have an open Q&A session quarterly. The first was held virtually and was well attended.

18. Foster carer continuous training and development

There is a vast amount of training on offer to Surrey’s foster carers on different platforms. Foster carers have access to classroom and virtual training via platforms on Olive, AC Education, Care Knowledge, National Association of Therapeutic Parenting (NATP), Cornerstone Project (Virtual Reality training) and The Fostering Network.

Prior to attending panel all general foster carers are required to have attended the following training;

- * Recording
- * Working Together to Safeguard Children
- * PREVENT
- * Intro to Trauma & Attachment
- * Total Respect

Post approval training is compulsory for all new foster carers as part of their Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) and there are monthly TSD workshops facilitated by a foster carer which have helped new carers and existing carers towards completing their standards.

All registered foster carers are expected to attend regular training activities throughout the year and this contributes to their skills fee element in recognition of their knowledge translating to being better able to meet the needs of our children. Carers are expected to complete a PDP each year, highlighting their gaps in knowledge and future training they, and the service, feel to be necessary.

Mandatory training includes

- * Paediatric First Aid, (to be renewed every 3 years)
- * Handling & Administering Medication (E-learning)
- * Working Together to Safeguard Children (mandatory 3-year refresher)
- * Ensuring Safe Care
- * Training & Development Support Standards
- * Managing Behaviour Part 1
- * Life Story Work
- * Safeguarding Disabled Children
- * Cultural Competency

A bespoke Training and Development Steering Group is in place to address continuous development programmes for foster carers. This group sits bi-monthly and is formed of foster carers, managers

from the Fostering Service and members of Surrey's Academy. The group highlights and identifies developing training needs of foster carers and considers how these needs can be met.

The Fostering Network provides training specifically to those involved in the Mockingbird Family Model and the virtual reality training is used through the initial stages of assessment to enhance understanding of attachment and trauma. We have increased the volume of headsets due to the positive impact this training has had. This will also be linked with NATP as their therapeutic training will offer further assistance, particularly in placement stability.

Surrey's Parent and Child foster carers have additional opportunities to access therapeutic peer supervision from a Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist from the Parent Infant Mental Health Service and the infant observation training course is provided by the same team.

Foster carers for disabled children are provided with 1-1 specific training for children's individual health care needs via AC Education and health partners, and we are in the process of arranging therapeutic supervision for these carers via a Lead Consultant child and adolescent psychotherapist. Moving and handling training specific to individual children is provided by our partners in the OT service.

The Fostering Service has engaged with the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting (NATP) with over 100 households joining the online training programme. This has been particularly helpful for foster carers who were previously exhibiting 'blocked care' as they now recognise the signs, and this has led to placements stabilising across the quadrants.

The Fostering Service is working with carers who hold degrees and diplomas in Social Pedagogy to determine how this training can continue to be developed and delivered within Surrey.

Staff within the Fostering Service have access to the same training as foster carers and are encouraged to share their learning with others via peer supervision.

The fostering service, in addition to giving carers access to Care Knowledge, also hold a resource library in each area office, encouraging carers to borrow resources to enhance their learning. We encourage carers to write reviews of material they have found beneficial which is shared with others to encourage their interest.

19. Fab to Foster

Fab to Foster training/workshops are for foster carer's own birth children, designed to assist them in coming to terms with sharing their parents with fostered children. Up to 4 sessions per year are held around the county. They are generally for children aged 8 – 18 but there can be flexibility around age if it is felt that the individual child can cope with the content. The aim is to give birth children more of an insight about fostering, to meet others and to have fun. There is a lot of emphasis about how important the role is that they play in fostering, after all, they are sharing their parents, their toys and their homes. The staff members involved also have a 'concern box' too for children who have questions that they do not want to ask on the day.

Sessions held in reporting period:

August 29th 2019 – 12 children

October 30th 2019 – 3 children

February 15th 2020 – 8 children

20. LCS end to end review

LCS is the main recording system within Surrey Children's Services. The Fostering element of LCS has been underdeveloped. To address this several members of the Fostering Service have been involved with the redesign of element of the Fostering module within LCS to ensure it captures accurately the work of the service. On completion this will enable more accurate information to be held regarding the service and reporting on a range of Key Performance Indicators.

21. Management Priorities for 2020-21:

- Recruitment of up to 65 new foster carers, with particular interest in teenage children and children with a disability.
- Embedding LCS changes, allowing the Fostering Service to collate and analyse data in all areas of the service.
- The quality and delivery of supervision, across the Fostering Service will be improved through individual, group and whole service learning and development.
- Key Performance Indicators have already been implemented but due to the issues created within LCS, we have not been able to progress. They can be progressed from September 2020 onwards.
 - Monitoring the reduction of external fostering placements
 - Recruit up to 65 new foster carers for 2020-21
 - Specific recruitment of BAME and LGBT+ carers
 - Annual Review assessments, quality and timeliness improved
 - Unannounced Visits, quality and timeliness improved
- Quarterly meetings with the Local Authority Designated Officer will take place in order to assist with improvements to safeguarding Looked After Children within fostering.
- Improve the quality and timeliness of Standards of Care reports to a 28 day timescale.
- Business case to be submitted to seek an Independent Officer to oversee the foster carer Annual Review process.
- DBS and Medical checks to be timely for all new and existing foster carers.
- Development and clarity of the Senior Supervising Social Worker role.

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Surrey County Council
Statement of Purpose
2020 – 2021

Author: Steve Orchard

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1. Introduction

Surrey Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 and Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

This Statement of Purpose is intended to give a clear description of Surrey's Fostering Service and to provide a clear statement of the aims and objectives and set out the strategy for meeting those aims and objectives.

2. Aims and Objectives

Surrey's Fostering Service is committed to providing an outstanding service to all children in Foster Care and to providing a standard of care that meets or exceeds their needs.

Surrey's Foster Care Charter recognises that Foster Carers have skills and expertise and make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

High quality foster care is provided to ensure the wellbeing and progress of children in public care. Foster Carers are a vital part of caring for our children and their contribution to the development of the service is valued and recognised.

We are committed to Foster Carers receiving a high standard of supervision, support and training to ensure that children and young people in Surrey receive the highest standards of care which meets their individual needs.

Alongside the wider Surrey Children's Service, the Fostering Service recognises the importance of a strengths-based approach to working with families.

2.1 Our Aims:

- All children in Foster Care are safe, secure and well cared for in high quality foster homes that enable them to flourish.
- The Fostering Service offers a range of foster homes, which are able to meet children's needs and a sufficiency of placements to enable placement choice.
- The Fostering Service provides high quality support and supervision to Foster Carers which is based on a clear understanding of trauma and attachment by qualified and experienced staff.

2.2 To meet these aims Surrey's Fostering Service is based on the following objectives for our children:

- Our Looked After Children grow up in a safe, secure and loving environment.
- We provide well-planned, high quality foster homes, which meet children's individual needs and enable them to develop and progress.
- We listen to children and young people and take their wishes and feelings into account and actively encourage them to be part of decision-making about their care.
- We offer foster homes throughout Surrey, which enable children to maintain links to their family, friends, community and education.
- We recognise that family and friends are often able to provide the best option for children who are not able to live with their parents.
- Our foster homes allow children opportunities to develop their interests, and enjoy, wherever possible, unrestricted family life.
- Our Looked After Children are able to fulfil their educational potential, supported by their Foster Carers, Social Workers and the Virtual School.
- We ensure that each child is valued individually, and Foster Carers are able to support each child's care plan.
- Foster homes either reflect or positively support the child's racial, cultural and religious background and children's identity and self-worth are promoted and supported.
- Siblings are placed together wherever appropriate and possible.
- We provide a range of different fostering schemes to meet the needs of children and young people who might not otherwise be able to be fostered i.e. One to One Fostering, Supported Lodgings, Parent and Child Fostering.
- Our Foster Carers promote children's physical and emotional health supported by Surrey's Looked After Children's nurses.
- We work with and support Carers to promote placement stability, to give all children a secure and settled care experience.
- When a child is unable to live permanently with their family, we will work closely with other professionals in accordance with the child's care plan, where appropriate, to either support Friends and Family foster care or find and support long term fostering placements which match the child's needs and enable them to have a secure and full family life.
- Disabled children and children with complex needs have their individual needs met via a specialist disability service offering full time foster homes and short breaks with Carers who receive specialist training and support.
- Children's contact with their parents, siblings and wider family is valued and facilitated.
- Young people are given the opportunity to 'Stay Put' with their Foster Carers once they are 18 and Foster Carers are supported to enable this to happen.

2.3 Recruitment and assessment of Foster Carers

Surrey has a dedicated Recruitment and Assessment team and a detailed Recruitment Strategy which focusses on increasing the number and range of Foster Carers in Surrey to meet the needs of our Looked-After Children.

- Prospective Carers are assessed in an open, thorough and reflective way to explore their ability to meet the needs of Looked-After Children. Prospective Carers are required to access training, support groups and buddying as part of the pre-approval preparation
- Surrey's Fostering Panels are independently chaired and held in accordance with Fostering Regulations. Panel membership consists of a range of suitably knowledgeable and experienced individuals.

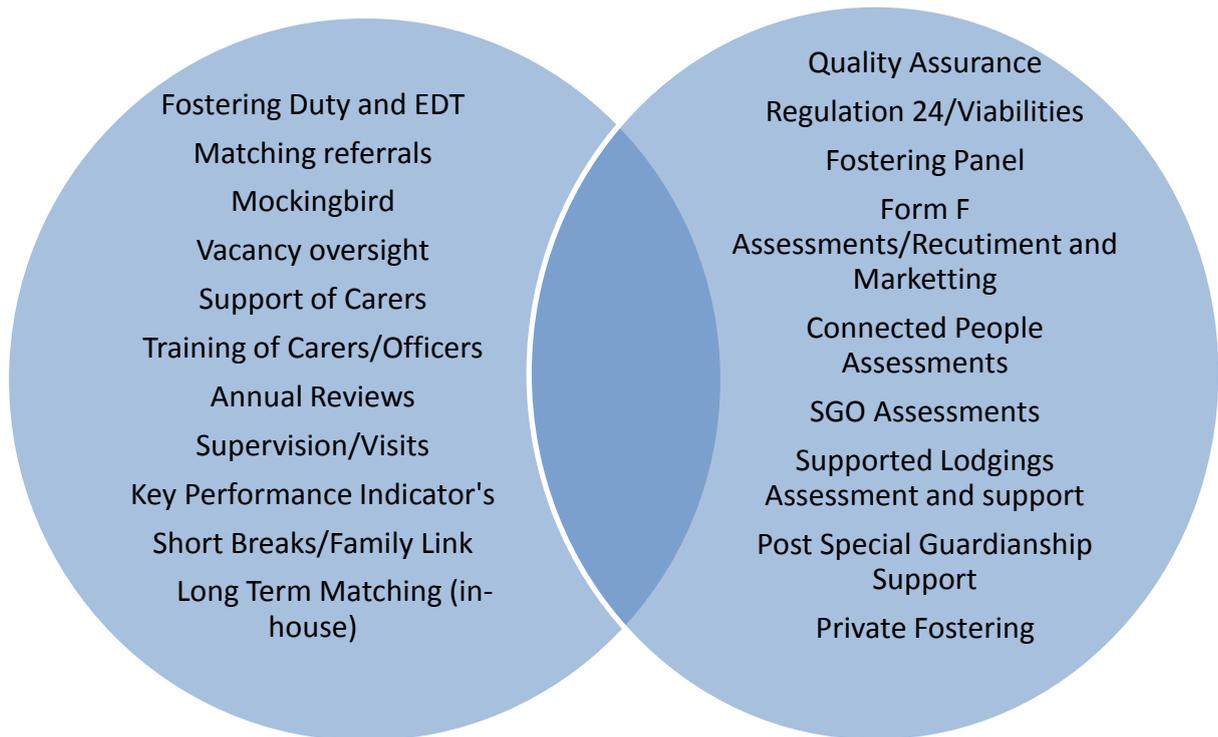
2.4 Supervision, Support and Training for Carers

- We value our Foster Carers and offer high quality, child focussed supervision, which includes drawing on knowledge and understanding of trauma and attachment.
- Foster Carers are given full information about each child, so they are able to meet the individual care needs of each child.
- We work together with Carers in an open, fair and respectful way.
- We work in partnership with Foster Carers in developing our Service, policies, procedures and training.
- Foster Carers participate in a range of training opportunities and have access to a range of classroom based and e-learning courses and resources which assist their development and learning.
- All our Foster Carers have access to the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting.
- Virtual Reality training
- A range of support groups and a buddying system are available to Carers.
- Foster Carers are an essential part of the multi-disciplinary team around each child, working closely with children's Social Workers, the Fostering Team, health, education and CAMHS.
- We work with Surrey's foster Carer associations and executive committee to develop the Fostering Service and listen to the views and experiences of our Foster Carers.
- All Foster Carers are aware of Surrey's complaints procedure and offered support and guidance in using this when needed
- All Foster Carers have membership of the Fostering Network to offer additional support and independent advice.

3. Structure and Staffing of the Fostering Service

Fostering Support Functions- Carol Norrington
Directly managing Bethany Florence, Mandy Knight,
Gianna Forward, Dipti Pandya and Louise Erskine.

Fostering Assessment Functions- Clark McAuley
Directly managing Clare Mynett, Debbie Church, Lizanda
Earle and Fiona McGowan



3.2 Surrey's Fostering Service consists of:

2 Assistant Directors who hold overall responsibility for the management of Fostering, General Fostering managed by Siobhan Walsh, Assistant Director for South West Surrey and Specialist Fostering managed by Jo Moses, Assistant Director for North West Surrey and the Responsible Individual.

Fostering Service Managers (x 2) 1 has oversight for all elements of the Service which requires an assessment. The other has oversight of all support and short-breaks. One of the Service Managers is the Registered Manager of the Fostering Service.

Independent Chair of Fostering Panels who chair Surrey's 4 Foster Panels each month.

The Fostering Teams are based in Woking and Redhill. The Fostering Teams are as follows:

4 General Fostering Teams, 2 in the West and 2 in the East.

1 Short breaks for disabled children & disability specialists, Countywide.

1 Recruitment Team based nominally in the East.

2 Friends and Family Teams, (and private Fostering) 1 in the East and 1 in the West.

1 Supported Lodgings Team, Countywide.

There are 46 FTE Supervising Social Workers within the Service, 4 Supported Lodgings Officers and 2 Marketing Officers.

The Fostering Service is supported by the Business Support Team.

Corporate Parenting – the Fostering Managers and Foster Carer representatives participate in Corporate Parenting meetings across the County. This enables a partnership approach to ensure the highest level of care for our Looked-After Children and to develop our services to meet both Countywide and local needs.

3.3 Qualifications of Staff

All Social Work staff and Managers are qualified Social Workers and are registered with Social Work England.

3.4 The Fostering Service works closely with:

Looked-After Children's Social Work Teams
Virtual School
CAMHS Children in Care
Medical Advisors
Looked-After Children's Nurses
Independent Reviewing Officers
Gateway to Resources - Children's Placement Team
Care Leavers Service

4 Functions of the Fostering Service

4.1 Recruitment

Surrey has developed a recruitment strategy in conjunction with our Carers and staff, which is designed to help deliver targeted campaigns based on the needs for certain types of Carers including the recruitment of Carers for siblings, teenagers and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children.

We have a bespoke and dedicated Recruitment Team consisting of 5 Social Workers, 2 Marketing Officers and a Team Manager. Recruitment work is carried out in partnership with staff from the Fostering Team and a group of experienced Foster Carers.

Information about fostering can be obtained by calling our free-phone number 0800 0969626 or find Surrey Fostering on Facebook or visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/fostering

4.2. Assessment of General Foster Carers

Initial enquiries are taken by the Recruitment Team and followed up with a detailed initial visit. This stage of the recruitment process is designed to help prospective carers explore the complexities involved with the task so that they are well informed and in receipt of sufficient knowledge to make an informed choice. This process is preliminary to the assessment.

Once an enquirer has completed a formal application, Stage 1 of the assessment commences with checks and references taken up and the applicant completes 'Skills to Foster' training. All of the recruitment process is undertaken by a Social Worker from within the Recruitment Team. Once Stage 1 is completed, the Social Worker will complete Stage 2 of the assessment using the Coram BAAF form F. Stage 2 focusses on assessing the applicants' suitability to become Foster Carers including interviewing them, their children and other household members and three of their referees. As well

as assessing their suitability, the assessment process also aims to prepare applicants for the role of Foster Carer.

Surrey aims to complete assessments from application to panel within 6 months.

4.3 Assessment of Friends and Family Foster Carers

Friends and Family Foster Carers will often be assessed for temporary approval as Foster Carers for a specific child or children under Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. This assessment will be carried out by a fostering Social Worker in conjunction with the child's Social Worker. Temporary approval can be given by a Fostering Service Manager. Following temporary approval, a full assessment is carried out and presented to Foster Panel within 16 weeks. Under certain circumstances, a further 8-week extension can be requested.

4.4 Pre-Approval Training

All prospective Foster Carers complete 'Skills to Foster Training', Safeguarding training and recording training prior to approval. They are also asked to complete introductory training on attachment. Skills to Foster training is usually led by a member of the Recruitment Team and an experienced Foster Carer. Skills to Foster training is run regularly throughout the year in a range of locations, either 1 evening a week for 6 weeks or for 3 consecutive Saturdays.

4.5 Foster Panel

Four Panels sit monthly chaired by one independent person. There are two Panel Administrators who minute all Panel meetings. Team Manager's act as Panel Advisor on a rota basis. The membership of the Panels is in line with Fostering Regulations and includes a care experienced young person in its membership.

Foster Panels make recommendations which are then passed to the Agency Decision Maker. This role is shared by the Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Performance and the Assistant Director for Children's Resources.

Prospective Foster Carers are expected to attend panel alongside their assessing Social Worker. Panel Members are aware that attending Panel can be daunting and therefore endeavor to put prospective Foster Carers at ease. All questions are asked through the Panel Chair.

4.6 Approvals

Foster Panel will make a recommendation regarding approval or range of approval, including numbers of children to be placed and possibly other limitations of approval. It is the Agency Decision Maker that makes the final decision. The decision including any limitations to approval is confirmed to Foster Carers by letter.

Should the Agency Decision Maker be mindful not to approve, the applicants have 28 days in which to make further representations or to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for review of this decision which is known as a Qualifying Determination.

Following the IRM the Agency Decision Maker takes into account the Review Panel's recommendation as well as that of the Foster Panel when making a decision on a Foster Carer's suitability to foster a child. There is no appeal against the decision of the Agency Decision Maker at this stage, although applicants may use the complaints procedure if they feel they have been treated unfairly during the process of decision-making.

4.7 Termination of Approval and Resignations

Foster Carer resignations are submitted in writing to Panel and the Carer's resignation acknowledged in writing.

Should the Panel recommend termination of approval this is then submitted to the Agency Decision Maker. If the Agency Decision Maker decides to terminate approval, this is confirmed to the Carers in writing and the Carers are given the following options:

Option 1 – Accept the qualifying determination:

Foster Carers can accept the decision and advise the Fostering Service within 28 calendar days from the date of the letter, if this is their preferred option. The qualifying determination will be confirmed, and a formal decision will be sent to the Carer.

Option 2 – Representations to the Agency:

The Foster Carers can choose to make representations to the Fostering Service, which must be in writing and be received within 28 calendar days. On receipt of representations the written representations may be referred to a Fostering Panel to consider and to make a fresh recommendation. The Fostering Panel's recommendation will be taken into account when the final decision is made by the Fostering Service.

Option 3 – Application to the Independent Review Mechanism for a Review:

The Foster Carers may wish to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) to review the Fostering Service's qualifying determination. The Foster Carers' written application and their reasons for the application must be received by the IRM Review Panel within 28 days. A copy of the Review Panel's recommendation will be sent to the Fostering Service and will be taken into account with the original Fostering Panel's recommendation when the Fostering Service make the final decision. An IRM publication providing an explanation of the process and contact details are available.

If the Fostering Service has not heard from the Foster Carer or the IRM Review Panel's Administrator after the period of 28 calendar days has expired, a decision will be made by the Fostering Service and the Foster Carers will be notified of that decision.

4.8 Placement Finding

All requests for a foster placement are made using a placement referral form. Referrals are sent, in the first instance to the Gateway Team, who gate-keep all referrals. When a foster placement is required, the Gateway Fostering Duty Team will identify vacancies within the Foster Carer database. They will also send the referral to the Fostering Service for additional oversight of the referral.

Team Managers in General Fostering take the lead in the finding permanent foster families process with the support of the Fostering Duty Team.

Team Managers within the Fostering Service participate in fortnightly Permanency Tracking Meetings across the County, alongside Team Managers and Service Managers from Adoption, Looked After Teams and the Child Protection and Proceedings Teams. Social Workers and Supervising Social Workers present to Panels and the Fostering Service shares in decision making regarding long-term care plans for children.

4.9 Support to Foster Carers

The Fostering Executive are made aware of all newly approved Foster Carers in order for them to be welcomed into the Fostering Network. Foster Carers are encouraged to attend fostering support groups in their local area. All Foster Carers will be given a 'buddy'. This is another, very experienced

Foster Carer who will assist with issues that Foster Carers may not need to discuss with their Supervising Social Workers.

There is a telephone support line for all Foster Carers, offering advice and guidance. The support line is available until 11pm each evening and the workers work in conjunction with EDT to offer support to Carers outside of normal office hours.

4.10 Supervising Social Workers

All approved Foster Carers have their own Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering Team who will visit the Carers at least 6-weekly and make an unannounced visit at least once a year. Visits to the Carers should include seeing both Carers, the children in placement at least every 3 months, and the Carer's own children. Visits can reduce to 10-12 weekly for very settled long-term matched children with the agreement of the relevant IRO and Team Manager.

Supervision with Foster Carers takes a strengths-based approach and is informed by knowledge of trauma and attachment. Supervision will include space to address any personal or family issues relevant to fostering but should focus on the needs and progress of each child in placement.

Supervision will also address each Foster Carer's learning and development plan. Supervising Social Workers will meet with Foster Carers annually to complete a household review.

Supervising Social Workers are responsible for ensuring DBS checks, medicals and other required documents are up-to-date and recorded.

Supervising Social Workers will attend Placement Planning Meetings and may attend Looked-After Children's Reviews.

Supervising Social Workers will take a lead role if there is a concern or an allegation made regarding a Foster Carer and give the Carer information in order to seek independent support if required.

4.11 Support Groups

All Foster Carers are invited to attend a range of support groups which are held at a variety of locations both day and evening. There are also a number of specialist support groups. Details of the groups available are published on Yammer, a secure on-line site specifically for our Foster Carers and in the monthly newsletter, 'Fostering Matters'. Support groups give an opportunity for Foster Carers to meet other Carers and develop support networks and they may also have a learning and development function with outside speakers or by focusing on specific issues. All groups are co-facilitated between Foster Carers and fostering workers.

4.12 Buddying Scheme

All newly approved Foster Carers are offered the opportunity to 'buddy' with an experienced Foster Carer, who will offer advice and less formal support than the Supervising Social Worker

4.13 Training, Support and Development Standards

The Training, Support and Development Standards consist of 7 standards designed to support Foster Carers to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to give the best possible care to children and young people.

Newly approved Foster Carers are expected to complete the TSD standards within 12 months of approval and Family & Friends Foster Carers have 18 months. Workshops led by an experienced Foster Carer are available to support new Foster Carers to complete their TSD standards. In some circumstances 1:1 support may be available.

4.14 Learning and Development

All Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Carers have access to an extensive training programme, with courses specifically designed for Carers and joining those open to Social Workers and other Children's Services staff. In addition to training courses, online training is available, and Foster Carers are able to access the Fostering Services library of relevant books. The Fostering Service also holds occasional one-off specialist training events and conferences.

All Foster Carers have a learning and development plan which is reviewed annually and monitored during Foster Carer supervision.

All Carers have access to the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting and the array of training and "listening circle" support available.

Please see the Foster Carers Training Pathway in the Fostering Handbook.

4.15 CAMHS Support Groups and CAMHS Consultations

The Fostering Service works closely with 3Cs (CAMHS Children in Care) with Foster Carers participating in regular therapeutic support groups and with a CAMHS Social Worker offering consultation and support to Supervising Social Workers. 3Cs also may provide services directly to children and/consultation to Foster Carers.

CAMHS also offers the STARS service to children who have been sexually abused, as well as specialist mental health workers for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children and for care leavers.

There is also support and input available from Assessment, Treatment and Consultation (ACT), which provides specialist consultation and therapy for children who have sexually harmful behavior.

4.16 Life Story Work

The Fostering Service has access to the Life Story Work training and dedicated dashboard which holds resources to assist in helping workers produce Life Story Work and guidance on how best to deliver this to children.

4.17 Mockingbird

Surrey Fostering Service have joined with The Fostering Network to implement and deliver The Mockingbird Family Model to its Foster Carers and children. This model delivers a family type support network by a "Hub Carer" being central to a constellation of up to 10 Carers. The Hub Carer offers formal and informal emotional and practical support via training, social gatherings, sleepovers and daycare to the children within the constellation to reduce the risk of "burn out" and to establish placement stability.

4.18 Story Stems

The Fostering Service is able to carry out a limited number of Story Stem assessments with children in Foster Care. The Story Stem Assessment asks children to respond to a set of narrative story stems where they are given the beginning of a 'story' highlighting everyday scenarios with an inherent dilemma. Children are then asked to 'show and tell me what happens next?' This allows some assessment of the child's expectations and perceptions of family roles, attachments and relationships, without asking the child direct questions about their family which might cause them conflict or anxiety. Referrals are made to the Fostering Service and in consultation with 3Cs.

4.19 Respite Care

Occasionally Foster Carers may need children in their care to stay with another Carer for a short period of time; this may be due to other commitments, health reasons or other personal circumstances. Where possible, we expect children to participate in Foster Carer family holidays, but recognise that sometimes this may not be possible or Carers might need space to refresh and re-energize. Where possible, respite should be arranged with someone the child knows and be located where the child can continue with their normal activities.

In some circumstances it may be beneficial for the child and for placement stability for the child to have a regular break with a consistent Carer. This may also be for Family and Friends Carers who do not have their own support networks.

4.20 Out of Hours Support/ Telephone Support Line

Carers are able to access support out of hours by contacting the Emergency Duty Team. For all Surrey CC Foster Carers, there is also a dedicated telephone support line which is available until 11pm every day.

4.21 Yammer

Yammer is a secure online community for Surrey's Foster Carers and fostering workers. It enables the Fostering Service to share information about learning and development, support groups, family finding. It also offers a secure online space for Foster Carers to ask questions, have discussions, share information and seek support.

4.22 Foster Carers Handbook

The Foster Carer's Handbook contains comprehensive guidance for Surrey Foster Carers. This is available on Yammer. The Handbook is updated and revised on a regular basis.

4.23 Foster Care Executive and Foster Care Associations

Surrey supports its Foster Care Association which is divided into 4 areas, each area meets and organises events pertinent to their needs.

Each of the 4 Associations nominate 2 representatives to meet with Managers at Fostering Executive Meetings which are held on a regular basis.

The Management Team consults with the Fostering Executive Members on issues relating to the development of the Fostering Service and meets with them regular to ensure working in partnership is maintained and Carers voices are heard.

4.24 Fostering Network

All Surrey Foster Carers are members of the Fostering Network and are able to access independent support and advice from this organisation when required. This includes support if Foster Carers are subject to an allegation.

4.25 Fab to Foster

Fab to Foster holds groups for Foster Carer's own children. Groups are across the county and can be split into groups for 5 – 12-year olds and 13 – 18-year-olds. The groups meet quarterly and arrange different activities as well as providing a forum for children to share their experiences of being part of a fostering family.

4.26 Financial Support

All Foster Carers receive the fostering allowance relevant for the age of the child they are caring for

(there are 2 rates, one for 0-10 and one for 11-18). There are 3 skills levels which attract different levels of payments. Foster Carers progress through the levels and subsequently maintain the level they have achieved by completing training or learning opportunities.

One to One and Mockingbird hub carers are paid a specific rate instead of the general Skills payment.

Supported Lodgings Carers and Staying Put Carers are paid an allowance for their time and skills in supporting young people and do not receive any money to be spent directly on the young person. They also receive a rent payment from the young person.

The Fostering Service has a loans scheme for Foster Carers for adaptations or extensions to their property, to assist in the costs of moving house, or to purchase a vehicle where criteria is met. Foster Carers should discuss any requests with their Supervising Social Worker who will consult the Team Manager and Service Manager and if appropriate submit a business case for consideration.

The Fostering Service also has an insurance scheme that covers damage or loss to the contents of the Foster Carer's home or car as a result of the actions of a child or young person placed with them.

4.27 Welcome Packs and Story Sacks

These are provided for children and young people when moving to a new Foster Carer or Supported Lodgings Carer. This includes hand-made quilts provided by the Linus Project for all Looked-After Children. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who may experience disrupted sleep patterns due to their experiences are offered a 'sleep pack'. Young people who move to a Supported Lodgings placement are given a welcome box of practical items to help with independent living skills.

4.28 Educational Support

This is provided with the **Virtual School**, which promotes the educational needs of Looked-After Children and ensures that children have a suitable school place. There is also specialist Virtual school provision for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Children in Foster Care may also be able to access laptops through bursaries where needed. Surrey's Race Equality and Minority Achievement (REMA) Team can offer assessment and support for children from minority ethnic backgrounds. REMA offers educational assessments to all Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in Surrey's care.

4.29 Foster Carer Household Reviews

All approved Foster Carers have a thorough household review at least once a year. The first household review is presented to Foster Panel. Additionally, any requests for an increase in approval are submitted to Panel.

Household reviews are carried out to ensure that the care our children are receiving is the best possible care and to ensure that Carers are receiving high quality support and training.

A household review will include:

- An update of the foster family's personal circumstances over the preceding year.
- Feedback from children in placement or who have been in placement over the preceding year.
- Feedback from Foster Carer's own children who are part of the household.
- Feedback from children's Social Workers and/or Independent Reviewing Officer.
- An updated health and safety assessment.
- Checks are updated in line with statutory guidance and the Fostering Service policy are updated as required.

- A meeting with Foster Carers to evaluate their care and their own progress and professional development over the past year.
- Review of training undertaken and an updated learning and development plan.
- Reviews are completed by the Supervising Social Worker and shared with the Foster Carers. The review report is quality assured by the relevant Team Manager and submitted for approval to the Fostering Service Manager. The 'signing off and celebration' element to Annual Household Reviews is currently under review by the Service.

Foster Carers are informed in writing regarding the outcome of their Annual Review. The outcome of the Annual Review is currently recorded on the Foster Carer's electronic records by the Service Manager.

5 Safeguarding

5.1 Risk Management

When children are placed with Foster Carers a matching form and risk assessment are completed by the Supervising Social Worker. It focusses on the child's needs and what the identified Foster Carers need to know and do in order to meet that child's needs.

5.2 Allegations

The **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**, as outlined in Working Together 2010, ensures that allegations against people working with children are progressed in a timely and appropriate way.

The LADO is made aware whenever it is alleged that a person who works with a child, including Foster Carers and members of their household, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child; or possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates she/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The investigation of any allegation is carried out in line with advice from the LADO. If an allegation is upheld this will need to be presented at Foster Panel.

Wherever possible the Fostering Service will be open in their communications with Foster Carers unless this impacts on the welfare of the child.

Foster Carers can seek independent advice and support from Fostering Network.

Surrey Fostering's Allegations Procedure has recently been revised in consultation with Foster Carers.

5.3 Standards of Care Investigations

If the Fostering Service has concerns about a Foster Carer's standards of care for a child, they may raise this with the LADO in the first instance or depending on the severity of the concern, raise this directly with the Foster Carer. All causes for concern will form part of the Standards of Care Investigation and the outcome and recommendations will be discussed, recorded and shared with the Carer.

5.4 Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

IROs chair all reviews of Looked-After Children, confirming their care plans and have oversight of the implementation of those plans. IROs have a clear safeguarding role in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children in Foster Care.

6 Placement types

6.1 Short-Term Fostering

Short-Term Foster Carers look after children for a limited period of time. This may be until children return to their birth family or until they are able to move to permanent placements such as longer term fostering, adoption or Special Guardianship. Short-term Carers often look after children in an emergency or at a time of crisis in a family's life. Short-term Carers are skilled at caring for a range of children, providing reassurance and stability during a time of uncertainty. Short-term Carers often care for children during care proceedings and will contribute to the assessment of children's needs.

6.2 Emergency Duty Team (EDT) Fostering

A limited number of Foster Carers provide a fostering service to the Emergency Duty Team and offer emergency foster placements out of hours. Placements can be for up to five days. EDT Carers are on a rota of 1 week in 4 on call and are paid a retainer. If the on-call EDT Carer is full then other Carers on the rota will provide back up.

6.3 Permanency and Long-Term Fostering

Long-Term Fostering is when the Carer is offering to care for the child on a permanent basis until they are 18 and beyond. This is for children whose care plan for Long-Term Fostering is thought to be in their best interests. This plan allows children to become part of a family unit yet still with the opportunity to retain links with their birth family. Some long-term fostering arrangements may evolve into a Special Guardianship Order where this is thought to be appropriate.

6.4 One to One Fostering

One to One Fostering is for children who have been assessed as benefiting from a high support foster placement without any other children in the household, in order for their individual needs to be met. One to One Foster Carers receive a higher-level supervision and payment to enable children who may otherwise have been placed in a Children's Home.

6.5 Parent and Child Fostering

Parent and Child Foster Carers provide placements which enables parenting assessments to be carried out within a family setting, enabling vulnerable parents to have the opportunity to learn how to care safely for their child. A number of Supervision Social Workers are trained to carry out PAMS assessments (Parenting Assessment Manual Software) and a specific support group is help for Parent and Child Foster Carers. Parent and Child Foster Carers are also able to access clinical supervision from a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist and also to complete the child observation training provided by the NHS.

6.6 Short Breaks Fostering

Short break Carers offer regular short breaks to children with disabilities and/or complex health care needs, who either live at home with their family or are with Foster Carers. This affords the children's main Carers with a regular break and broadens children's experiences and networks.

6.7 Disability Fostering Service

The Fostering Service offers specialised support to Foster Carers who care for children with disabilities and/or complex health needs. Support is provided by Supervising Social Workers with specific expertise in this area and specialised training through our health care partners.

6.8 Mockingbird Hub Carer

Mockingbird Hub Carers provide formal and informal emotional and practical help with up to 10 fostering families who live in a geographically close area to themselves. They offer social gatherings for all the fostering families as well more targeting social gatherings just for the children, or 1:1 tea

visits, day care or overnight visits to the children to support placement stability and ensure Carers receive support to enable them to meet the needs of the child. Hub Carers do not have a Looked After child in their full-time care and receive paid holidays and rest days.

6.9 Supported Lodgings

Surrey's Supported Lodgings Scheme provides safe, supportive, home based accommodation to young people who are aged 16 to 21 and in the care of Surrey Children's Services or who are care leavers. In some cases, we continue to support young people up to their 25th birthday if they are in full-time education.

Supported Lodgings Carers are recruited in a similar way to Foster Carers, but the assessment is different from that for fostering and completed within 4 months. Assessments are submitted to the Service Manager for approval. Supported Lodgings Carers are supervised and supported by a specialist team of Social Workers and Supported Lodgings Officers.

6.10 Staying Put Arrangements

Staying Put is for young people who remain with their Foster Carers when they are aged 18 and over. If young people are in full-time education, the full fostering rate continues to be paid until the end of the academic year in which the young person turns 18. After this, or if the young person is not in education, the Staying Put allowance is paid and young people are charged a weekly rent which is paid to the Carer.

All Staying Put arrangements are supported by a written agreement. There is an expectation that all long-term foster placements will progress to Staying Put arrangements, so that the young person continues to be part of their foster family until they are ready to move to independence.

6.11 Family and Friends Carers and Special Guardianship Orders

When a child is unable to remain in the care of their parents, being placed with wider family or friends is often the best option. Temporary approval is given by the Service Manager following an assessment for temporary approval under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 2010 and in line with the Regulations a 16-week assessment is undertaken. Assessments of family and friends for Special Guardianship are also often Court directed and up to 3 assessments for a child or sibling group are often requested in order to enable greater choice.

The Fostering Service also assesses and supports Special Guardians, with Special Guardianship continuing to increase as a beneficial way to secure a permanent Order for those children that adoption would not be appropriate for.

6.12 Private Fostering

Private Fostering arrangements are assessed and supported by the Friends and Family Team under the Private Fostering Regulations. Private Fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a Carer for 28 days or more. A child in a Private Fostering arrangement is not a Looked-After Child.

6.13 Foster to Adopt

Foster to Adopt Carers foster a baby or toddler while the Court decides on their future care. There can be different outcomes and it may be decided that it is in the best interest of the baby to live with birth parents or other relatives. If the decision is for the child to be adopted the placement can then become an adoptive placement. Foster to Adopt Carers are supported by the Adoption Team.

6.14 Foster care and Supported Lodgings for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Young People

Surrey has a high number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in its care and Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Carers may provide homes for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Other young people may also be placed alongside Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and young people.

7. Complaints by Foster Carers

Complaints are dealt with in line with Surrey County Council policy. All Foster Carers have access to information on how to make a complaint. Complaints will be resolved informally where possible by the Supervising Social Worker or their Manager using a restorative approach. Where this is not possible the Carer may take the complaint to the Service Manager. If a Carer is not satisfied with the response they may take their complaint to the User Voice and Participation Service, who also offer advocacy for children wishing to make a complaint regarding Children's Services including Fostering.

User Voice and Participation Service

Tel: 01483 519095

Fax: 01483 519446

Email: families.feedback@surreycc.gov.uk

Children's free phone number: 08000 562 132 (not free from mobiles)

Children's text number: 07805 846386 children's email: be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk

8. Monitoring and Evaluating the Fostering Service

There are a number of systems in place to monitor and evaluate the Fostering Service.

- Social Workers, Managers and Foster Carers receive regular supervision to maintain high standards expected of Carers and workers.
- All reports are quality assured by Managers.
- Annual Unannounced Visits are made to Foster Carers.
- Service Managers review all Foster Carer household reviews.
- There are tracking systems in place to monitor timescales from enquiry to approval of new Foster Carers.
- Feedback is requested from Carers at the end of Skills to Foster course and after every training course attended.
- Feedback is requested from Carers, children and young people and Social Workers as part of the Foster Carer review process.
- Foster Panels ask for feedback from Carers who attend Panel.
- Foster Panel and the Agency Decision Maker gives feedback to presenting Social Workers on the quality of their assessments as part of their quality assurance role.
- Team Managers carry out regular audits with fostering workers which examine the quality of the work.
- Fostering Service Managers meet monthly with members of the Fostering Executive to discuss and develop feedback from Carers.
- An annual Foster Carers survey is sent to every fostering household.

9. Links with Other Policies and Procedures

At all times, the Fostering Service in Surrey will operate in a manner that is consistent with the aims and objectives of this Statement.

All policies, procedures and guidance provided to staff and Foster Carers will reflect this Statement.

The Fostering Service works with other parts of the Council and external agencies, including other

Fostering Service Carers to ensure that as far as practicable, the services are consistent with this Statement of Purpose.

10. Ofsted

Ofsted is responsible for the regulation and inspection of Children's Social Care Services including Local Authority Fostering Services. The National Minimum Standards and Fostering Regulations are designed to set minimum acceptable standards for the safe running of Fostering Services.

**OFSTED,
National Business Unit,
Royal Exchange Buildings,
St Anne's Square,
Manchester
M2 7LA 0845 404040
www.ofsted.gov.uk**

11. Circulation of Statement of Purpose:

All Surrey's Foster Carers (on Yammer).
Children's Services staff who work with Looked-After Children.
Surrey's User Voice and Participation.
Surrey Fostering Association.
Children in foster care and their parents (on request).

If this document is required in braille, large print, another language or in audio format please contact the Fostering Service.

12. Fostering Service Contact Details:

**Fostering Service
Surrey County Council
Quadrant Court,
35 Guildford Road,
Woking
GU22 7QQ.
Tel 01932 794444**

**Fostering Service
Surrey County Council
Consort House
5 – 7 Queensway
Redhill RH1 1YB
Tel 01932 737867**

Executive Director:

Director for Corporate Parenting: Tina Benjamin

Assistant Director: Siobhan Walsh/Jo Moses

Registered Manager: Clark McAuley, Service Manager

**Responsible Individual: Jo Moses, Assistant Director,
North West Safeguarding and Looked-After Team and Fostering.**