

SURREY FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2016/2017

INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose has been produced to meet the obligations of Surrey Fostering Service under:

- Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011

It provides a clear statement of the aims and objectives of our Fostering Service and sets out our strategy for meeting those aims and objectives.

The Statement also provides details of:

- Our principles and standards of care
- The services we provide
- The support we provide
- Complaints against the Fostering Service
- The management structure of the Service
- The numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of our staff
- The numbers and types of foster carers provided by the Service
- The number of children using our service
- The procedures and processes for recruiting, approving, training, supervising and reviewing foster carers
- Links with other policies and procedures
- Arrangements for revision and circulation

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Surrey Children's Service has designated services for children in need and in care to promote their health and development.
- 2.2 For some children remaining at home is not always possible so an alternative placement is required to meet their needs.
- 2.3 The first option for children that cannot remain with their birth parents is within the child's extended family or friendship network and if that is not possible, with Local Authority foster carers.
- 2.4 The objective of our Fostering Service is to recruit, assess, train and supervise a sufficiently large and diverse pool of foster carers able to provide placements to meet the assessed needs of every child appropriately referred to us, ensuring that achieving permanency is the focus from the time that the child becomes looked after.

3 PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CARE

- 3.1 Fostering is primarily a service for children, and no adult has a right to become a foster carer.
- 3.2 Applicants and approved foster carers have the right to respect in all our dealings with them and, providing it does not conflict with safeguarding the welfare of children, our full support at all times.
- 3.3 Children have the right to be protected from harm and abuse.
- 3.4 Local Authority foster carers are key stakeholders in the service. They are volunteers not employees.
- 3.5 When matching children with foster carers we will seek to ensure the following, unless any of these are inconsistent with promoting the welfare of the child:
 - Siblings are placed together
 - Contact with birth family and friends is facilitated
 - Children are placed as close to home as possible
 - Children are placed with foster carers that meet their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs
 - Whenever possible there will be a period of introduction before the placement commences
 - The views of the child are sought prior to and on a regular basis, during the placement

- The educational and health care needs, including any needs arising from a child's disability, are met by the foster placement.

4. SERVICES PROVIDED

- 4.1 Short-Term Foster Care: placements that assist in the assessment of the child's needs and prepare the child for moving on to permanency or return to home in line with their agreed care plan.
- 4.2 Permanent/Long Term Foster Care: placements, which will continue into adulthood.
- 4.3 Short Breaks Fostering
- Short-stay care for disabled children provided by a series of overnight or weekend breaks.
 - Fee Paid Carers Scheme: short break foster carers who give a commitment to provide a minimum of 200 nights a year for severely disabled children one at a time, as part of the short breaks fostering scheme.
- 4.4 Connected Persons (Family and Friends): carers who were known to the child/young person or their family prior to the placement starting. This includes Special Guardianship and Private Fostering arrangements
- 4.5 Enhanced Fostering – experienced foster carers who are able to take young people with complex and challenging behaviour.
- 4.6 Parent / Child Scheme: providing placements to enable parenting assessments to be completed in the community
- 4.7 Supported Lodgings: providing supported accommodation for 16-18 year olds and care leavers
- 4.8 EDT Carers: foster carers who are available to the Emergency Duty Team to take children for up to 5 days

5. SUPPORT PROVIDED TO FOSTER CARERS

Each foster carer will have access to:

- A supervising social worker
- Regular home visits and telephone support
- Support groups for newly approved and existing foster carers.
- Support group for Family and Friends carers
- Support Group for Special Guardians

- Fostering allowances and skills payment in line with Fostering Network's recommended rates.
- A support group and activities for foster carers' own children
- Activities for foster carers, birth children, foster children and social workers through the social pedagogy programme
- Comprehensive pre and post-approval Learning and Development programme
- Support to complete the DfE Standards for foster carers including support groups and where needed mentoring
- Out of hours support via EDT.
- Independent support services if an allegation is made against them.
- Activities / events for foster carers, their birth children and Looked After Children
- A scheme which enables loans to foster carers for adaptations or extensions to their property, to assist in the costs of moving house, or to purchase a vehicle (where criteria are met).
- An insurance scheme that covers damage or loss to the contents of the foster carer's home or car (arising as a result of damage caused by a looked after child)
- Regular updates on developments and useful information through the Fostering OK magazine and the Foster Carer website
- Specialist nurses based in the CCGs to assist with health care issues
- A secure web-site providing information and advice for foster carers
- A Resource Library for foster carers offering DVDs and books on loan
- Membership of FosterTalk, an independent organisation offering specialist information, discounts, advice, and help to foster carers, and on-line educational support for children

The following additional support services will be available as appropriate:

- Support from a fostering support worker to work on a one-to-one basis with the foster carers and/or foster children
- Support from a social pedagogue
- Access to a CAMHS Children in Care service

- Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children through a mentoring scheme
- DfE Standards mentoring –assisting in completion of Standards
- The Buddy Scheme for prospective and new foster carers
- The Head / Deputy Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Children in Care advocating for children to ensure that they have sufficient educational support and access to appropriate schools
- Assessment, Treatment and Consultation (ACT): a team which offers specialist consultation regarding children who sexually harm
- Computers and laptops for Looked After Children in their foster homes via the Home Access project
- Consultation with the Ethnic, Language Minority Achievement Team (ELMA) on educational attainment for children from an ethnic minority.
- Care Leaving Service supporting care leavers with issues around their independence.

6. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE FOSTERING SERVICE

Complaints are dealt with in line with Surrey County Council policy. All foster carers have access to information on how to make a complaint

7. STAFFING OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

7.1 Please refer to the end of the Statement for the management structure.

7.2 Staffing in the Fostering Service:

- 1 Care Service Manager
- 2 FTE Care Services Team Managers
- 8.58 FTE Assistant Team Managers
- 45.2 FTE Qualified Social Workers in the fostering teams.
- 2.7 FTE Qualified Social Workers: Short Breaks Scheme
- 2.0 FTE Social Pedagogues
- 16.4 FTE unqualified social work staff

In addition the Fostering Service commissions the following resources on a part-time basis:

- Independent Chair of the Fostering Panel.

7.3 All social work staff hold a professional social work qualification (DipSW, CQSW or equivalent).

7.4 The experience of our social work staff includes:

- Children's social work in a range of different settings
- Fostering and Adoption Work.
- Child and Adult Mental Health
- Specialist Attachment Work
- MIM and Theraplay

- Story Stem Work

- Working with Disabled Children
- Counselling
- Social Pedagogy

8. FOSTER CARERS

In April 2015 the Fostering Service had 325 approved foster care households (excluding Short Break carers) caring for a total of 387 children. There were also 73 young people over the age of 18 years, continuing to live with their foster carers. At the end of March 2016 the Fostering Service had 357 approved foster care households (excluding Short Breaks carers) caring for a total of 403 children. There were also 108 young people over the age of 18 years, continuing to live with their foster carers under Staying Put arrangements

MATCHING

8.1 The fostering service matches the needs of children with the abilities of foster carers and make-up of foster families when making decisions about the best placement for each child.

8.2 The fostering service has a dedicated family finding function for children, which identifies permanent placements.

9. RECRUITMENT, APPROVAL, TRAINING AND REVIEW OF FOSTER CARES.

RECRUITMENT

9.1.1 The service aims to recruit a flexible and diverse pool of foster carers who are able to meet the needs of all children appropriately referred for a foster placement.

9.1.2 To help achieve this aim, the Recruitment Manager has been working with iMPower to recruit foster carers in a more targeted way to increase the pool of foster carers that can meet the needs of the children and young people referred to the service. The Recruitment Officer works closely with the county Communications

Team and takes a lead with fostering recruitment activity across the county.

- 9.1.3 General fostering applicants are assessed and a report using the BAAF Form F is written. A form, specific to Surrey, has been devised for assessment of Family & Friends carers and Special Guardianship Orders, and this continues to be well received by Surrey's courts.
- 9.1.4 The objective of the assessment process is to ensure that we recruit a competent, committed and safe pool of foster carers who are able to respond to the complex needs of children referred to the service.

APPROVAL

- 9.2.1 Completed assessment reports are presented to one of Surrey's Foster Panels, along with the prospective foster carers attending. The panel considers the application and then refers the applicants' assessment, with their recommendation to the Agency Decision-Maker.
- 9.2.2 The Agency Decision Maker makes the final decision on approval. The decision is confirmed to the foster carer in a letter. Any conditions attached to the decision will be given in writing.
- 9.2.3 Should the Agency Decision Maker be mindful not to approve, the applicant have twenty-eight 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.
- 9.2.4 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 carers' 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.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- 9.3.1 The fostering service places a high value on the training of foster carers and believes that training and skills development are an integral part of the fostering task from the point of application, lasting throughout the fostering career. The emphasis therefore is on on-going learning and development.
- 9.3.2 A comprehensive Learning and Development programme is on offer to build the core knowledge and skills of all foster carers.
- 9.3.3 All applicants are required to attend preparation groups through the Skills to Foster training course, in addition to a basic Safeguarding course and Recording training before they are approved as foster carers. A preparation session is also available for prospective carers' own children
- 9.3.4 Following ratification of their approval by the Agency Decision Maker, foster carers are given access to the foster carers' secure website, access to of the Fostering Handbook (on the website) and briefed on the Learning and

Development Programme and Support Groups, which they will be expected to attend.

- 9.3.5 For new foster carers there is an expectation they will complete core topics within the Learning and Development Programme, relevant to their role, within a specified timescale and in line with the National Minimum Standards
- 9.3.6 Newly approved general foster carers have 12 months in which to complete the DfE Standards. Family and Friends carers have 18 months to complete the Standards
- 9.3.7 Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan, which is regularly reviewed outlining their specific learning and development needs, and they are encouraged to build up a training portfolio. This helps to determine the Skills Level for carers and an additional weekly payment is made linked with this
- 9.3.8 All new foster carers will be offered a group or mentor to support them in completing the DfE Standards. Existing foster carers may also receive support from a mentor as identified by the supervising social worker.
- 9.3.9 Each foster carer has a workbook to enable them to evidence their progress in meeting the DfE Standards, which starts with the Skills to Foster training
- 9.3.10 The Personal Development Plan and progress regarding the DfE Standards will be monitored and signed off by the supervising social worker during supervision visits
- 9.3.11 All training and development is linked to the Standards and is reviewed prior to and within the foster carers' first Annual Review, and annually thereafter.
- 9.3.12 The fostering service ensures that the required learning and development opportunities are accessible to all foster carers. This will be achieved through learning and development being delivered in a variety of formats at different venues and at different times of the days, including on-line training, books and DVDs.
- 9.3.13 Regular meetings between the Learning and Development team, the fostering service and representatives of foster carers take place in order to ensure that the Learning and Development programme is tailored to the needs of foster carers.
- 9.3.14 Access to a Diploma qualification is available for all experienced foster carers
- 9.3.15 Practical support will be made available to facilitate learning and development.

REVIEWS

- 9.4.1 The Fostering Service will review the approval of all foster carers not more than a year after approval and thereafter whenever the service considers necessary, but at intervals of no more than a year.

- 9.4.2 The Foster Panel considers the first Annual Review and makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.
- 9.4.3 Supervising social workers will complete subsequent Household Reviews and a Care Services Team Manager will sign them off.

Foster panel will also consider reviews in the following circumstances:

- 9.4.4 Where there is a proposed change of the terms of foster carers' approval, which increases the age range or number of children they wish to be approved for
- 9.4.5 When a foster carer resigns
- 9.4.6 Where there is a proposal by the fostering service to terminate a foster carer's approval
- 9.4.7 Where the outcome of a safeguarding investigation involving the foster carer or a member of their household is substantiated or where there are significant concerns about the foster carers' standards of care
- 9.4.8 Any changes to the approval of the foster carer on the suitability to care for a child or changes in the terms of approval are considered a 'qualifying determination'. A foster carer may, if they disagree, make representation to the Foster Panel or apply to the IRM for a review of the decision within 28 days. The Agency Decision Maker will take into account the views of the members of Foster Panel and/or the IRM when making a final decision. There is no right of appeal but foster carers may access the complaint's procedure if they feel unfairly treated
- 9.4.9.1 In carrying out Household Reviews, the service will always seek to obtain the views of the following:
- The foster carers and members of their household, including their own children
 - Foster children who are living in the foster home
 - Social workers who have had children in placement during the preceding twelve months
- 9.4.10 All Household Reviews will consider the training and development needs of the foster carers. The foster carers' progress in meeting targets outlined within their Personal Development Plan, linked to the DfE Standards, is also reviewed at Reviews.
- 9.4.14 The support needs of the foster carers' own children will also be considered at Reviews.
- 9.4.15 Checks are updated in line with statutory guidance and the fostering service policy are updated as required.

10. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 10.1 At all times, the fostering service in Surrey will operate in a manner that is consistent with the aims and objectives of this Statement.
- 10.2 All policies, procedures and guidance provided to staff and foster carers will accurately reflect this Statement.
- 10.3 The fostering service will work with other parts of the Council and external agencies, including other fostering service providers to ensure that as far as practicable, the services are consistent with this Statement.

11. REVISION AND CIRCULATION

- 11.1.1 This Statement has been produced by managers of the fostering service in consultation with staff and foster carers.
- 11.1.2 The Care Services Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Statement is updated or modified when necessary, but at least annually.
- 11.1.3 The revised Statement will be presented to Members annually for their approval.
- 11.1.4 The Statement will be provided to:
- Ofsted
 - All staff
 - All relevant and prospective foster carers
 - All stakeholders to the Fostering Agency's business
- 11.2.1 A full copy will be provided on request to children or parents using the Service.