

# ITEM 8

Appendix 2



## **Derby City Council Fostering Service**

### **Statement of Purpose**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, issued by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, govern the work of fostering service providers throughout England. These standards will be used in the inspection of fostering agencies and fostering services provided by local authorities.

Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering services regulations 2002 require a fostering agency to produce a Statement of Purpose, which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 1(4).

This statement of purpose has been prepared in accordance with these requirements. It will provide a source of information to all areas of the Children and Young People's department, partner agencies, fostering team staff, foster carers and prospective carers.

The statement will be reviewed no less than annually and amended accordingly.

# **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE**

## **1 Mission Statement**

In line with the department's overall objectives, Derby City Council Children and Young People's Services aims to provide a fostering service for young people which is safe and transparent; a service which meets the needs of children and young people who need to be looked after away from their family, for whatever reason and for whatever length of time is required.

We aim to make the operation of the fostering service clear and understandable to carers, young people and staff, and we welcome consultation and suggestions regarding the continuous improvement of the service to children who are looked after.

We aim to recruit carers within and around Derby City who can meet a range of needs, and to recruit carers who will provide placements which reflect or respect the foster child's ethnicity, culture, religion and language.

We aim to provide a service that will support foster carers in their caring role. This will be provided through appropriate preparation and training, and by the support of a specified, qualified fostering support social worker. Foster carers will also have access to additional support in their task, as detailed under Section 5 of this statement.

We aim to provide:-

- A good quality foster care service to the children of Derby City
- A commitment to a child-centred approach
- The maximum stability possible in the lives of young people, to enable them to fulfil their potential in life
- Consideration for the gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, culture, abilities and disabilities of fostered children, when making placement decisions
- 24 hour support and advice for foster carers
- An inclusive, partnership approach, which embraces the child or young person, their family, the foster family and any 'professional' person involved in the foster placement.
- A fee paid fostering scheme to support the placement of more challenging children and young people
- A short break 'Link' scheme for disabled children as part of the city's provision to children in need.

## **2 Status and constitution**

Derby City Fostering service is an integral part of the Derby City Council Children and Young people's department. As such it is governed by, and follows all policies and procedures that apply to the City Council as a whole.

In line with National Minimum Standards, Derby City Fostering service follows specific procedures relating to the provision of and support to foster placements. The service works to approved procedures relating to the recruitment, training, approval, support, and review of foster carers.

The Fostering Panel has a constitution and membership arrangements in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

### **3 Management structure**

The Fostering service for Derby City is regarded as a Provider service within the Children and Young People's Department.

The structure is as described below:-

Sara Bolton	Derby City Council Cabinet member for Social Care (June 2007)
Keith Woodthorpe	Assistant Director, Children and Young People's dept. Fostering Panel Decision Maker
Katie Harris	Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption
Lynda Stone	Service Manager, Fostering
Sally Penrose	Service Manager, Fostering

The Assistant Director is responsible for the interpretation and implementation of the policies of the City Council in relation to the fostering service. Policies are discussed and their implementation agreed via the mechanism of the Children and Young people's Department's Core Group of senior managers.

The Head of Service is responsible for the ensuring that policies are interpreted correctly by the fostering service, and is responsible for the supervision of the fostering managers. She produces information and progress reports on the service as required, to inform senior management as to the operation of the service and report on issues of concern or shortfall.

The service managers are responsible for the day to day management of the fostering service, the supervision of fostering social workers, the appropriate matching of children to available carers, and dealing with complaints and suggestions at the first level. The service managers also produce monthly reports on the operation of the service, highlighting changes in the number of children looked after, number of carers approved and de-registered, and any developments or shortfalls in the service.

One Service Manager takes lead responsibility for the duty and recruitment aspects of the service, and initial training. The other Service Manager takes lead responsibility for the post-approval training and support of carers and for the provision of a short break service to disabled children, and provision of a fostering service to disabled children.

## **4 Recruitment, approval, review, training and support of foster carers**

The procedures followed in the recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers are as laid out in the foster care procedures manual. In brief, the process is as described below:-

### **RECRUITMENT**

- Recruitment activity is co-ordinated by a Service Manager Fostering, in conjunction with the Marketing Manager. Recruitment will incorporate all available media, as seen to be appropriate, and will respect issues of confidentiality. Recruitment in Derby city is achieved via advertising and articles on a regular basis in local press
- When an enquiry is received from a person interested in fostering, a Registration of Interest form will be completed, and basic details obtained. Initial queries from enquirers will be addressed.
- Enquirers will be sent, within 3 working days, information about the fostering task in the form of an information booklet, and information as to the allowances payable
- An initial home visit will be arranged with all those who express interest in finding out more about fostering.

### **ASSESSMENT**

- Potential carers complete an application form, and consent forms to enable statutory and personal references, including CRB checks, to be obtained on the applicants and any member of their household aged 10 years or over.
- Foster carers are informed about the assessment and approval process and the requirement to attend a preparation/training course. An assessment agreement form is completed with the carers.
- Assessments should be completed within 6 months from the date of receiving a firm application. Reasons for delay will be recorded.
- Applicants to become foster carers for Derby City will be assessed using a competency-based approach, broadly following the Fostering Network competency assessment model. Amendments to this format have been incorporated into this model, following team discussion, and with the agreement of the Fostering Panel.
- During the assessment, prospective carers will be encouraged to compile a family book, providing information about themselves and their family. This will provide information to the panel and to a child whom it is proposed to place with the carers.
- Applications from relatives or friends to become carers under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Regulations will be completed by social workers from within the Fostering Team. These will follow a format agreed within the fostering service. This format meets the requirements of the Regulation, but does not follow the competency-based model and seeks to respect the special situation of family and friends who wish to be considered as foster carers.
- Preparation/assessment training is provided for applicants, and carers are required to complete this training. Training covers the responsibilities of becoming a foster carer

and working in partnership with the Children and Young People's department and the child's family.

- Completed assessments are shared with the applicants – excluding all references – and applicants are invited to make their own comments on the report.
- Referees are advised that any reference on an applicant may be disclosed to the applicant under and within the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

## **APPROVAL**

- The completed assessment report is presented to the Fostering panel, for approval, and the Fostering social worker and the applicants attend the panel for discussion.
- The panel makes recommendations regarding approval, and the panel decision is passed to the Agency decision maker, the Assistant Director, for the final decision. Panel members' views regarding approval are individually minuted in order to record any dissent from the decision to approve or reject the application.
- Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision regarding approval.
- Where approval is not given, the applicants will be informed in writing. They will be informed as to their right to make any representations on the matter to the panel within 28 days.
- Where a decision is taken not to continue with an assessment, the applicant will be informed as soon as possible. If they are not in agreement with this decision, they will be invited to make representations to the panel in writing or in person within 28 days. The recommendations of the panel will then be communicated to the panel Decision Maker and the applicant informed in writing of the outcome.

## **REVIEW**

- An approved foster carer must be reviewed at least every year.
- Annual Review Reports are prepared according to the agreed format for Derby City, and follow the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Vol. 3 - Family Placements.
- The contents of the report are shared with the foster carer before panel. Carers are invited to attend panel and also to contribute their own written comments on their experience of fostering, and on the service they have received from the local authority.
- Reports on foster carers are requested from social workers of children in placement, and any comments from children or their parents regarding the foster placement will be included in the review report. **Comments from children of foster carers will also be sought and included.**
- In addition to annual reviews, matters reported to the fostering panel include:-
  - any serious concerns raised about the carers
  - any change of approval criteria proposed
  - any placements made outside the normal fostering limit
  - any significant changes in the household circumstances.

## **TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

- Pre-approval foster care training is regarded as an essential part of the assessment and preparation process.

- Applicants are advised that their contribution and response to training will be monitored and that it forms part of the assessment process.
- Training covers the essential elements as outlined in the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Regulations 2002
- Foster carers have access to training provided by the Children and Young People's department for Social Workers and other Social Care staff
- The fostering service has a training post dedicated to the post approval training and development of foster carers and adopters.
- Derby City provides access to a B tech qualification for foster carers, provided on-line by AKAMAS. Support for carers to follow this course is co-ordinated by the fostering training officer.
- Specific seminars and workshops are made available to foster carers on particular topics as the need and resource is identified. e.g. attachment, life story work, drug awareness.
- Foster carers are invited to support groups, which are held on a half-termly basis, and focus on different age groupings of children and special interests e.g. disability. Support groups have topics for discussion and speakers as appropriate, and as identified by fostering social workers or carers
- Consultation is available to foster carers, on an appointment system, with a clinical psychologist who has dedicated time for the advice and support of foster children and their carers.
- Additional support is available for carers of sexually abused foster children from the Sexual Abuse unit in Derby. Specialist workers work directly or in a consultation capacity with the problems and behaviours associated with the child who has been sexually abused.
- Derby City fostering social workers provide a 24 hour help and advice service via a dedicated telephone number, to provide consultation and support out of office hours. (This is a separate service to the Children and Young People's Services out of hours emergency service )

## **5 Fostering services provided**

### **TIME LIMITED PLACEMENTS, INCLUDING EMERGENCY AND BRIDGING PLACEMENTS**

Derby City fostering service provides placements for children from 0-18+ years, to meet the need for both emergency or planned admissions arising out of the work of the Family Resource workers based at Ashtree House, Social Care Workers in the Reception team based at Rosehill Street, and the Assessment and Care Planning teams based at Stanley Road and at Derby City hospital. N.B. As at June 2007, the department is in the process of re-organisation into multi-disciplinary teams, but the fostering service is to remain as a single service meeting the needs of the area teams.

Foster carers are fully involved in the decision as to the type of fostering they will be approved for, and some carers will be approved for more than one type of fostering. 'Time-limited placements' is the term used in Derby to refer to placements that may last anything from a few days to placements of up to 2 years. The term covers ANY placement designed to be on-going whilst Care Plans are being devised and implemented, and often where Care proceedings are in process.



## **RESPITE PLACEMENTS**

Respite foster carers are approved foster carers who choose to offer placements on a very time-limited basis only. This may be through choice, or because of limitations in their availability. Most Respite carers have full or part-time jobs.

Respite carers offer placements to parents or carers of children living in the community where their assessed needs indicate a benefit from short breaks away from the family. This may be to relieve family stress, or to do some direct work with a challenging young person.

Respite carers also offer short breaks to children cared for by other foster carers.

## **SUPPORT FOSTER CARERS**

Support foster carers provide planned respite care to named foster carers. They are usually relatives or friends of the foster family and nominated by the carer. The foster children will therefore normally be known to the support carer or will come to develop a relationship with them. The support foster care scheme reduces the need for 'stranger' placements for children in order to achieve respite for the main carer.

Support carers are assessed by a fostering social worker, specifically for the children of a specific foster family and approved by the Fostering panel for that task.

## **LONG-TERM PLACEMENTS**

Derby city operates a policy of trying to achieve permanence through adoption for all children under the age of ten, who cannot be rehabilitated home or to a member of their extended family. For older children, where adoption is determined not to be a viable option, long-term fostering may be the Care Plan of choice. The fostering team recruits specifically for children needing long-term care. This could include home-finding for long-term placements for children in time-limited placements, children in residential care and children in agency residential placements, or fostering placements outside Derby where long-term foster care in the child's home area is indicated. The fostering team also considers requests from existing foster carers who wish to change their approval status to become long-term foster carers.

## **FEE PAID PLACEMENTS**

Some young people can be identified as having particular emotional and behavioural problems, which result in them needing more than average time, effort and skill from their foster carer to manage the challenges they present. A foster carer with the appropriate behaviour management skills and who cares for a child or young person who meets the criteria, may be approved to become a Project foster carer as part of the service's fee paid scheme.

Fees can be paid at one of three levels: the level of fee to be applied to an individual placement will be decided by a sub-panel of the Fostering panel made up of the Head of Service and the service managers. Reports from the fostering social worker and/or child's

social worker will be prepared according the agreed guidelines and criteria applicable to the scheme. The carer will be required to sign a 'contract' as to the services they will provide to the young person.

Where Fee paid status is confirmed, the relevant fee is paid to the foster carer in addition to fostering allowances, in recognition of the extra work involved in caring for the young person.

## **CHILDREN FIRST PLACEMENTS**

The fostering team recruits foster carers to care for children with significant disabilities. Placements made with Children First carers are generally intended to be long-term placements. Children First carers receive a fee (normally equivalent to Fee level 2) in addition to fostering allowances. The children who fall within this scheme will:-

- Have a disability resulting from substantial and permanent impairment of function (this can include substantial physical illness, communication disorder, sensory impairment, learning of physical disability) Children may have associated emotional and behavioural difficulties but these difficulties alone would not make them eligible for this scheme
- Have a Statement of Special Educational Need (children 4-16 years)
- Have a paediatric consultant (children 0-16 years)
- Qualify for at least middle rate DLA
- Be 17 years of age or under at age of referral

A carer approved for this scheme will be approved as a foster carer in the normal way, but receive additional training and information as relevant to their role, and as required by the needs of the individual child placed with them.

## **LINK CARERS**

Children with a disability are defined as 'children in need' under Section 17(10) of the Children Act 1989. Local authorities have an obligation to assess the needs of disabled children and offer relevant services to maintain them within their families and give them the opportunity to access services relevant to their social, emotional, cultural, physical and developmental needs. Derby City operates a Link Care scheme, as part of its strategy to meet this requirement.

Link carers provide a short-break service to children with disabilities, who are assessed as needing this service. Link carers are approved foster carers. In addition, they receive general and specific information and training regarding their role as a Link carer via one-to-one sessions and occasional workshops. They are provided with specific information about the disability of the child they are 'linked' to. Opportunities to gain experience via visits to other services for disabled children within the Children and Young People's department are offered where appropriate. Guidance from relevant health professionals is offered in relation to specific health needs of the child e.g. specialist nurses, Occupational Therapists.

Link carers are matched to a specific child or children and planning meetings are held with the parents to make all the arrangements for the nature of the link e.g. whether day care or overnight, and to share information about the child's needs.

Link Care may be offered to children living with their family, who are not accommodated. The Link service is also offered to carers within the Children First Scheme, to provide their carers with respite care.

Link care may be offered for up to 90 days per year, but the normal maximum will not exceed 48 days. Typically the Derby city scheme offers one weekend a month, day care and additional sessions during the long summer holiday.

## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

- ❖ The Fostering service provides a dedicated telephone line for carers out of office hours. This is continuously manned by qualified fostering social workers, on a rota basis. It provides an advice and consultation service
- ❖ Carers can access the Children and Young People's department's out of hours emergency service (Careline) where necessary, for support and advice e.g. where a child goes missing.
- ❖ The Children and Young People's department funds dedicated time from a qualified clinical psychologist, to offer advice and support to foster carers and their foster children. This service is based at the Derby City Children's hospital. The psychologist also offers information/training sessions to foster carers in relation to identified need.
- ❖ The Children and Young People's department offer to carers the services of their Child Sexual Abuse Unit. This service offers counselling to children and young people who have suffered sexual abuse, and advice and support to foster carers in managing and supporting the child who has experienced sexual abuse.
- ❖ The Children and Young People's department provides assistance to foster carers in meeting the educational needs of their foster children via the Education of Looked After Children team, dedicated to improving the education and life chances of children who are 'looked after'. This includes the funding of an Educational Welfare Officer specifically for Looked After children. Foster carers can get support in matters relating to their child's attendance and support in school.
- ❖ There is a departmental scheme to offer foster carers financial assistance in relation to the purchase of a larger vehicle, or an extension of their home, to help them care for a number of foster children.
- ❖ 2 designated nurses for Looked After children are available to Looked After Children 57 hours per week. They offer advice and support to foster carers, to enhance their ability to promote the health of the foster children they care for.

## **6 Staffing of the Fostering Service**

The fostering service is led by a Head of Service, who is Katie Harris. Katie has relevant qualifications for this task viz. - LLB, MA in Social Work, D.M.S., and 30 years experience in the Child Care field.

In addition there are two service managers who have relevant social work qualifications, plus NVQ5 in management, and a fully qualified team of 15 social workers, both full and part-time.

## **7 Numbers of foster carers**

Derby City seeks to recruit carers to meet the placement requirements for its population of Looked After children. At the end of May 2007 Derby City has:-  
176 foster carers, of whom:-

98 are carers offering time-limited or long-term placements. In addition, 27 carers are approved to offer care to a 'relative or friend'

51 are carers identified as offering placements under the Fee-paid fostering scheme – a total of 79 young people under 18 have been assessed as warranting a fee at level 1,2 or 3, including 16 disabled children. A further 5 carers receive fee payments for children whom they continue to support beyond the age of 18 years)

A total of 57 carers offer respite placements (including those offering short breaks under the 'Link' scheme):

32 carers offer respite placements only, whilst 25 carers offer respite alongside mainstream placements.

7 carers have been approved under the new support carer scheme, to support specific carers and their children

20 carers provide care to disabled children under the 'Link' care scheme.

15 carers provide placements for children under the Children First scheme.

During the year April 2006-7, 32 new carers were approved (including 15 Regulation 38 placements. 26 carers ceased fostering – a net gain of 6 carers.

Approximately a third of Derby City foster carers live outside the City boundary.

Demand for placement generally exceeds supply, and therefore placement choice is very limited. Currently 7 children are placed in 6 foster homes over the Normal Fostering Limit. Recruitment is an on-going activity to aim to increase the supply of foster carers and to replace the number of carers who leave the service, whether through retirement, de-registration, or because of recruitment activity by independent fostering agencies.

## **8 Number of Children and Young People in Foster Placement**

There are currently around 229 children and young people placed in foster homes belonging to Derby City and supervised and supported by Derby City Fostering team social workers

In addition, 53 children and young people are currently placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements.

1 young person in foster placement is an asylum seeker

## **9 Number of complaints and their outcome**

There were no complaints about the Fostering service itself in the Year 2006-7.

Complaints by and about foster carers may be dealt with through the department's Complaints procedures. A system for logging concerns specifically about the fostering service has been operating since June 2003.

For the period April 2006-7, there were 21 complaints against foster carers.

8 were complaints by a child of physical abuse. All were investigated. 2 were acknowledged; one investigation led to agreement that the child should be moved. The other involved a family and friends carer where specific stresses were recognised, and the child remained in placement. There was no evidence to support the other 6 allegations.

3 allegations were of sexual abuse. One could not be proven, but the carer resigned; one was retracted and there was no evidence whatsoever to support the allegation. One was an unproven allegation against an adult child of carers not resident in the home; child protection procedures were followed but no evidence of abuse emerged. The case involved a child with a significant learning disability.

3 were complaints of emotional abuse; all were addressed by the fostering service, and dealt with through supervision and training.

2 were complaints of neglect and were investigated but no evidence was found to support the complaint.

There were 5 other miscellaneous complaints, all of which were followed up but did not raise any major concerns regarding foster carer practice or safety.

One foster carer resigned from the service as a result of allegations made by a teenage girl.

One family and friends carer was de-registered because of the male carer's refusal to work in partnership with the department.

Incidents, accidents, and allegations relating to foster carers are recorded separately on foster carer files and included in Foster Carer Annual Reviews.