



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Derby City Council Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

August 2011

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People's Services**

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1. INTRODUCTION

New Fostering regulations, guidance and standards for fostering were introduced in April 2011. This statement of Purpose has been revised to incorporate any required changes following publication.

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Regulations 2011, 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 are 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.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

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 an allocated, qualified supervising 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 commitment to a child-centred approach
- A good quality foster care service to the children of Derby City
- The maximum stability possible in the lives of young people, to enable them to fulfil their potential in life
- Consideration for the gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, 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 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.

3. STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

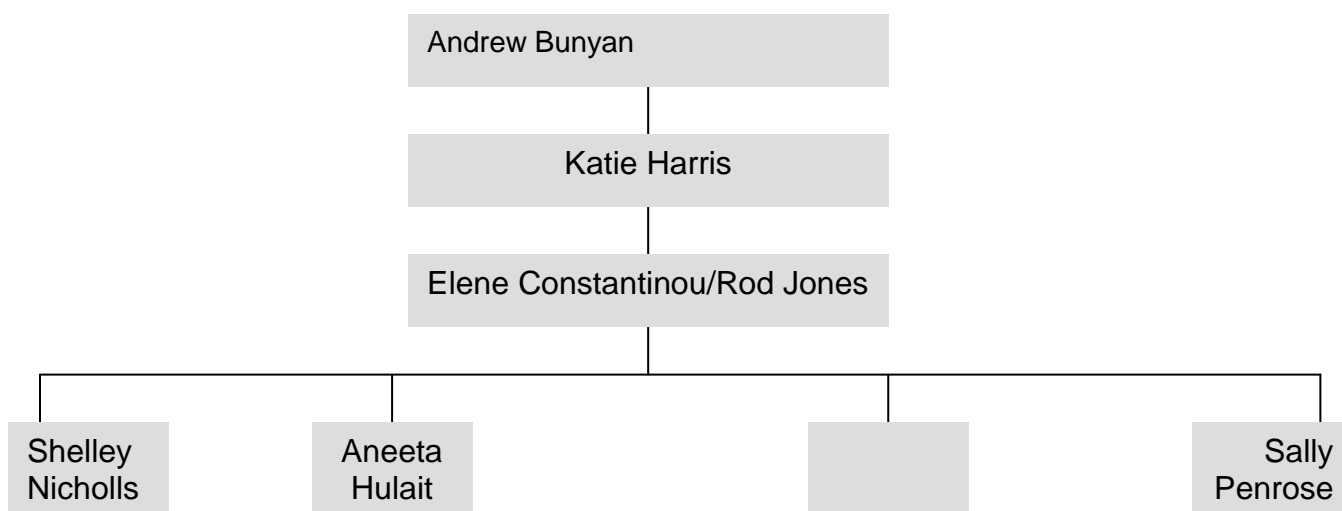
Derby City Fostering Service is an integral part of the Derby City Council Children and Young people's department. As such it is governed by, and follows all policies and procedures that apply to the City Council as a whole.

Derby City Fostering Service follows specific procedures relating to the provision of and support to foster placements. The procedures implement guidance and regulations and national minimum standards and national guidance and in relation to the recruitment, training, approval, support, and review of foster carers.

The Fostering Panel has a constitution and membership arrangements which comply with the Fostering Regulations 2011.

4. 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:-



Andrew Bunyan	Strategic Director of Childrens' Services
Katie Harris	Service Director, Specialist Services Fostering Panel

	Decision Maker
Elene Constantinou	Head of Service, Children in Care
Rod Jones	Deputy Head of Service, Regulated Services
Shelley Nicholls	Team Manager
Sally Penrose	TeamManager
Aneeta Hulait	Team Manager

The Service 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 strategic management of the service. The Deputy Head of Service is responsible for supervision of the fostering managers. Information and progress reports on the service are provided as required, to inform senior management as to the operation of the service and report on issues of concern or shortfall.

The team managers are responsible for the day to day management of the fostering service, the supervision of supervising social workers, the appropriate matching of children to available carers, and dealing with complaints and representations at the initial stages.. The team 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.

Of the three team manager posts (3FTE), one Team Manager takes lead responsibility for the duty system; one takes responsibility for support to foster carers, post-approval training and for the provision of a short break service to disabled children, and provision of a fostering service to disabled children. The other takes responsibility for the recruitment of foster carers, pre approval training and assessment of prospective foster carers. All the team managers provide regular supervision to their respective team of social workers. In addition team managers have a role in liaising with education and health, the other social work teams, including locality, children in care teams and children with disabilities. There are also close links with the leaving care service.

5. 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 Team Manager Fostering, in conjunction with a Marketing Manager. Recruitment will incorporate all available media and will respect issues of confidentiality. Recruitment in Derby City is achieved via advertising in the local press, editorials, human interest stories, word of mouth, (particularly from other foster carers), information on the Derby City Council website, leaflets, insertions in council tax letters and publicity events.
- Information about fostering is available on the council's website
- Enquiries are welcome from all those interested in fostering
- Enquiries are prioritized from those people most able to meet the needs of the children that the council has to place and who meet the minimum criteria.
- When an enquiry is received from a person interested in fostering, a Registration of Interest form is completed and basic details obtained which is passed to the fostering team from Derby Direct. Once this is received in the fostering team a dedicated recruitment social worker follows the enquiry up. Where appropriate information about the fostering task in the form of an information booklet, and information as to the allowances payable will be sent to the enquirer within five working days.
- An initial home visit will be arranged with all those who express interest in finding out more about fostering through the completion and return of the fostering enquiry form.
- If there are reasons for not inviting an application, the manager will write to the enquirer setting out the decision not to proceed and the reasons.

Assessment:

- Prospective foster 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 16 years or over.
- Prospective 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 8 months from the date of acceptance of an application. Reasons for delay will be recorded.
- Applications to become foster carers for Derby City will be assessed using the BAAF Prospective Foster Care Report.
- 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, known as 'connected persons', to become foster carers of children who are looked after but known to them will be completed by social workers from within the Fostering Team following sight of the viability report completed by a child care social worker, and completion of an application form. The format of the assessment report will be as for any foster carer but the established relationship with the child, the fact that they are being assessed to consider a specific child, and their ongoing support needs will be taken into account.

- 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 the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Approval:

- The completed assessment report is presented to the fostering panel, for consideration, and the fostering social worker and the applicants attend the panel for discussion.
- The panel makes recommendations regarding approval, and the panel recommendation is passed to the agency decision maker, the service 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.
- Anyone affected may use the Derby complaints and appeal process or make an application for review by the Independent Review Mechanism.

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 Regulations 2011, the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Vol. 4 – Fostering Services.
- 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 (exemptions and extensions).
- Any significant changes in the household circumstances.

Training and Support:

- Pre-approval foster care training is 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 2011
- All approved Foster Carers are required to complete the CWDC standards for foster care within twelve months of approval.
- Foster carers have access to training provided by the Children and Young People's department for Social Workers and other Social Care staff
- Carers are expected to complete 6 core training topics within the first 12 months of approval.
- The fostering service has a part time training post dedicated to the post approval training and development of foster carers (and adopters).
- Foster carers are encouraged to give feedback on training and to highlight any areas of training that they would find useful for inclusion in the annual training booklet.
- A programme leading to NVQ3 in child care is available.
- 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. Support groups have topics for discussion and speakers as appropriate, and as identified by fostering social workers or carers

6. FOSTERING SERVICES PROVIDED

Time Limited 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 Locality based social work 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 usually 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. Where adoption (or special guardianship) 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 children in time-limited placements, children in residential care and children in agency residential or agency foster placements. The fostering team also considers requests from existing foster carers who wish to change their approval status to become long-term foster carers, special guardians or adopters to children in their care. In these circumstances it is expected that the child will have been in placement for a minimum of one year before such a request will be considered.

Fee Paid Placements:

Some young people can be identified as having particular needs, e.g. emotional and behavioural problems, or needs arising from a disability 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 be part of the service's fee paid scheme.

Fees can be paid at one of four 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 deputy head of service and the team managers. Reports from the fostering social worker, foster carer 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.

Short Break Carers:

Under Section 17 (6) Children Act 1989, short break care may be offered to children living with their family, who are not accommodated and the child does not become looked after.

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 Short Break Care scheme, as part of its strategy to meet this requirement. Short break care does not include care provided to a child subject to a care order.

Short Break carers provide a short-break service to children with disabilities, who are assessed as needing this service. Short Break carers are approved foster carers. In addition, they receive general and specific information and training regarding their role as a Short Break 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.

Short Break 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 Short Break e.g. whether day care or overnight, and to share information about the child's needs.

Short Break care may be offered for up to 75 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 departments 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 the 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.
- ❖ A designated nurse for looked after children provides advice and support to foster carers, to enhance their ability to promote the health of the foster children they care for.
- ❖ Any foster carers who are employees of Derby City Council are entitled to additional leave to enable them to attend fostering related meetings etc

7. STAFFING OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The fostering service is led by the Deputy Head of Regulated Services.

In addition there are three team managers who have relevant social work and management qualifications, and a fully qualified team of 16.79 FTE social workers, across the three fostering teams.

8. 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 June 2011 Derby City has 186 fostering households of whom:

- 104 are carers offering time-limited or long-term and respite placements;
- 21 carers are approved to offer care as a 'relative or friend';

- 27 carers are approved under the support carer scheme, to support specific carers and their children;
- 14 carers offer respite placements only
- 18 carers provide care to disabled children under the 'Link' care scheme.

To date in 2011 we have approved 14 carers of whom are family and friends foster carers.

9. NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER PLACEMENT

There are currently 231 children and young people placed in foster homes belonging to Derby City and supervised and supported by Derby City Fostering social workers.

10. NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOME (JANUARY 2011 TO JUNE 2011)

There were no complaints about the Fostering service itself in the first half of 2011.

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.