



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Derby City Council Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

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Director of Children & Young
People's Services**

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1. INTRODUCTION

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 16 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 16.1.

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

As an integrated part of the Children and Young People's Department's commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable children, Derby Fostering Service has the following aims:

- To meet 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
- To put children's safety and welfare first in everything we do
- To give children as much stability as possible so they can fulfil their potential in life
- To provide placements which meet needs arising from their gender, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, religion, culture, abilities and disabilities.
- To make our work clear and understandable to foster carers and children and seek their views about how we work and how we can do better
- To recruit local people with the qualities needed to look after our children, give them thorough preparation and training and support them whenever they need it
- To work with our partners to ensure foster carers get professional guidance and supervision) in all aspects of the task

- To recognise the challenges of looking after children with extra needs by paying a fee on top of fostering allowances
- To provide short breaks for children with disabilities.

3. STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

Derby City Fostering Service is a part of the Children and Young People's Directorate and complies with its policies and procedures. Policies and procedures specific to fostering comply with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 and The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Volume 4: Fostering Services. Procedures cover the recruitment, training, approval, support and review of foster carers and the operation of the Fostering Panel.

4. MANAGEMENT AND STAFF STRUCTURE

Andrew Bunyan	Strategic Director for Children's Services
Mark Barratt	Service Director, Specialist Services
Vacancy	Head of Service, Children in Care
Rod Jones	Lead Service Manager, Regulated Services
Shelley Nicholls	Team Manager
Sally Penrose	Team Manager
Aneeta Hulait	Team Manager
Lynda Stone	Professional Advisor to the Fostering Panel
Hazel Halle	Chair of Fostering Panel
Fostering Social Workers	16 full time equivalent posts

The Service Director gives strategic leadership to the Specialist Services Department and is the Agency Decision Maker for the purpose of registering and de-registering foster carers.

The Head of Service co-ordinates the activities of the fostering service with those of children in care social work and adoption services, and promotes partnership working across the CYPD and partner agencies.

The Lead Service Manager provides operational management, quality assurance, performance and budget management and co-ordinates the work of the three fostering teams. In addition to supervising team managers he reports on to senior managers on service activity and issues of concern.

Team managers are responsible for day to day management of social workers recruiting, approving and supervising foster carers, matching of children to available carers, dealing with complaints and representations and producing activity reports and statistical returns.

Of the three team managers, one manages the duty system, receiving and responding to referrals for placements. One takes responsibility for support to foster carers, post-approval training and for the provision of a short break service to disabled children. The third leads on recruitment and assessment of foster carers and pre-approval training. All the team managers provide regular supervision to their respective team of social workers and liaise with children in care and early intervention teams, the disabled children's team, the leaving care team, the therapeutic unit, training and marketing teams and partner agencies.

5. RECRUITMENT, APPROVAL, REVIEW, TRAINING AND SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS

Recruitment

Recruitment activity is co-ordinated by the recruitment team manager working with a specialist marketing officer in the Communications and Marketing Team. We recruit through advertising and articles in the local press and radio, leaflets, posters, publicity events, the internet and word of mouth. All relevant information about becoming a foster carer can be found on the Council website.

We welcome inquiries from everyone who is interested in fostering and we prioritise those who appear most able to meet the needs of the children that the council has to place and who meet the minimum criteria. When an inquiry 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 does initial checks. If these are satisfactory information about the fostering task in the form of an information booklet, and details of fostering allowances are sent to the inquirer within five working days. Target timescales are being considered within the fostering review.

An initial home visit is arranged with all those who express interest in finding out more about fostering through the completion and return of the fostering inquiry form. If there are reasons for not inviting an application, the manager will write to the inquirer 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. They are informed about the assessment and approval process and the requirement to attend a preparation and training course.

An assessment agreement form is then completed with the carers. Assessments are usually completed within eight months of the date the application is accepted. Reasons for any delay are recorded.

Applicants are assessed using the BAAF (British Agency for Adoption and Fostering) Prospective Foster Care Report. During the assessment, prospective carers are encouraged to compile a family book, containing information about themselves and their family. This provides information to the panel and to any children who might be placed with the carers.

Applications from relatives or friends, known as 'Friends and Family' carers, to become foster carers are carried out following a satisfactory viability assessment completed by the child's social worker. The assessment is the same as for all foster carers but the established relationship with the child, the fact that they are being assessed to consider a specific child, and their ongoing support needs are taken into account.

All applicants are required to attend pre-approval preparation and training groups. Training covers the responsibilities of becoming a foster carer, the impact on the carers' own family and the implications of working in partnership with professionals and birth families. Recently we have run specific training for family and friends carers.

Completed assessments are shared with the applicants, excluding 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 and the fostering social worker and the applicants attend the panel for discussion. Foster carers are fully involved in the decision as to the type of fostering they are approved for, and some carers are approved for more than one type of fostering.

The panel makes a recommendation regarding approval, which is sent to the agency decision maker 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 are informed in writing. They are informed as to their right to make any representations on the matter to the panel within 28 days. They are also informed about their right to appeal to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.

When the applicants appear to be unsuitable before the assessment is completed they may be asked to withdraw their application. If they choose not to do so the assessment will be completed.

Review

All approved foster carers must be reviewed at least once a year. The supervising social worker completes the annual review report which covers the issues required by regulations and minimum standards. The report is scrutinised by the team manager. The Fostering Panel considers carers' first annual review after approval. Thereafter the panel considers the annual review every three years. The panel also considers any annual review following inquiries into any issues of concern about the carers, such as section 47 inquiries. Other annual reviews are considered by a Review Panel consisting of the Lead Service Manager and at least one independent team manager.

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 are included in the review report. Comments from children of foster carers also included.

In addition to annual reviews any serious concerns raised about the carers, proposed changes of approval criteria, any exemptions or placements outside the normal fostering limit, and any significant changes in the household are reported to the fostering panel.

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 complies with National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Regulations 2011.

All approved Foster Carers are required to complete the CWDC Training and Development Standards for Foster Care within twelve months of approval. Foster carers have access to relevant training provided social care workers and are expected to complete seven mandatory training topics within the first 12 months of approval. We have a training officer dedicated to the post approval training and development of foster carers.

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. More advanced training qualifications for foster care are available and specific seminars and workshops are provided on topics such as attachment, unconscious processes and dissociation.

Foster carers are invited to informal 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. They are also invited to become involved in the Foster Carer Association which is due to be formally re-launched early 2013.

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 following referral from early intervention or children in care teams. Time-limited placements may last from a

few days up to 2 years and may be used to work towards children's return home or to complete care proceedings and put in place plans for permanence.

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 carers provide planned respite care to named foster carers who are known to them. They are usually relatives or friends of the foster family and nominated by the carer, exercising delegated authority, so they usually know the children they look after or develop a relationship with them. Support carers reduce the need for children to be placed with people they do not know in order to achieve respite for the main carer. They are not required to be assessed and approved as foster carers and can receive an allowance for the time they look after the child. Those who do wish to become approved foster carers are assessed and approved in the usual way and subject to the same requirements and standards as all carers.

Long-Term Placements

We aim 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 includes home-finding for children in time-limited foster placements or in residential care. 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 have additional needs, such as 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 relevant 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 panel of fostering managers chaired by the lead service manager. Reports from the fostering social worker, foster carer and/or child's social worker will be prepared according to 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 provides short break care to meet this requirement. Short break care does not include care provided to a child subject to a care order.

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 in one-to-one sessions and workshops. They are provided with specific information about the disability of the child they are linked to. Opportunities to gain experience through visits to other services for disabled children 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 and 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 does not exceed 48 days. Typically the 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 staffed 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, for instance when 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 and training sessions to foster carers in relation to identified need.
- The Leopold Street Therapeutic Unit offers counselling to children and young people with needs arising from abuse or attachment difficulties, and advice and support to foster carers.
- The Education of Looked After Children team supports carers in matters relating to their child's attendance and support in school.
- Carers can get financial assistance to buy 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 Lead Service Manager, Regulated Services.

In addition there are three team managers who have relevant social work and management qualifications, and a fully qualified team of 16 FTE social workers in three 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 December 2012 Derby City had 178 fostering households of whom:

- 100 are carers offering time-limited or long-term and respite placements;
- 28 carers are approved to offer care as a 'relative or friend';
- 17 carers are approved under the support carer scheme, to support specific carers and their children;
- 14 carers offer respite placements only
- 19 carers provide care to disabled children under the 'Link' care scheme.

9. NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER PLACEMENT

There are currently 187 children and young people placed in foster homes belonging to Derby City and supervised and supported by Derby City Fostering Service

10. NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOME

In the year to 31 March 2012 there was one appeal to the Independent reviewing Mechanism about a decision of Derby Fostering Service. The IRM decision was not to ask Derby to review its decision.

In the same period there were six allegations of misconduct against foster carers, one of which resulted in a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

There were fourteen complaints about the fostering service, including its foster carers, and ten of them were upheld.