

Derby City Council Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose: *why we are here and what we will do.*

September 2018

**Andy Smith
Director of Peoples Services**

CONTENTS

	Page no.
1 Introduction: why do we need this document?	3
2 Aims and objectives: what we want to achieve	3
3 Status and constitution: how we fit into Derby City Council	4
4 Management structure: who are the managers for the fostering social work team?	4
5 Recruitment, approval, review and training of foster carers: how we get more foster carers, what they have to do to become a foster carer and how we help them to look after you.	5
6 Fostering services provided: what types of foster care do we offer?	9
7 Staffing: who works in the fostering social work teams?	13
8 Numbers of foster carers: how many foster carers have we got?	13
9 Numbers of foster children: how many children and young people are in foster care in Derby?	13
10 Complaints and outcomes: numbers of complaints against foster carers and the fostering social work team and what happened.	14

The purple text in this document is designed to help Children and Young People to understand what the Statement of Purpose is. This is a requirement of the 2011 Fostering National Minimum Standards, (Standard 16.1) and links to the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011(Part 2, section 3(1)).

1. INTRODUCTION **why do we need this document?**

The Government and Derby City Council want to ensure that you; foster carers; and Social Workers are aware of what the Law says about fostering and what the rules are.

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 People Services, partner agencies, fostering team staff, foster carers and prospective carers **and children/young people.**

The statement will be reviewed no less than annually and amended accordingly. **We will make sure that this document is updated every year.**

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

Mission Statement; things we want to make sure happen:

As an integral part of People Services commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable children, Derby City Fostering Service has the following aims:

- **We always try to help children and young people live within their family where it is safe to do so. If this is not possible then foster carers will look after you.**
- 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 make sure you are safe and happy in foster care, whatever the reason why you are living away from home and for whatever period of time**
- To put children's safety and welfare first in everything we do. **You being happy and safe is the most important thing to us**
- To give children as much stability as possible so they can fulfil their potential in life. **We want you to do the very best you can in everything you do**
- To provide foster placements which meet children's needs arising from their gender, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, religion, culture, abilities and disabilities. **We want to make sure that we all celebrate the things that make you who you are**
- 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. **We want you to let us know how we could do our job 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. **We need to make sure that we have enough foster carers in and around Derby to look after the children/young people who need foster care. We also need to**

make sure that the foster carers are helped to look after you in the best possible way.

- To work with our partners to ensure foster carers get professional guidance and supervision in all aspects of the task. This includes active support and promotion of the Children in Care Council. **This is where we will ask other people involved in fostering about how we can do things better. The Children in Care Council is something that you can get involved in, they give advice to Derby City Council and let the Council know what it is like being a Child/Young Person in care.**
- To recognise the challenges of looking after children with extra needs by paying a fee on top of fostering allowances. **We will make sure that the foster carers are given enough money to look after you properly and access training to support them in their role**
- To provide short breaks for children with disabilities. **Some children with disabilities have short periods of time away from their family with a regular short break carer.**

3. STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

Derby City Fostering Service is part of the People 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 functions of the Fostering Panel. **The Fostering team is part of People Services in Derby City Council, and has to work within the law. There are lots of rules about fostering; we have to make sure that foster carers and social workers know what these rules say.**

4. MANAGEMENT AND STAFF STRUCTURE

Andy Smith	Strategic Director of People Services
Suanne Lim	Service Director, Childrens Integrated Services
Sally Penrose	Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption
Shelley Nicholls	Team Manager – Supervision and Support
Sheila Bartram	Team Manager – Supervision and Support
Katie Jones	Team Manager – Recruitment and Assessment
Kath Sherwin	Chair of Fostering Panel
Fostering Social Workers	16 full time equivalent posts
Jessica Walker	Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer – 1FTE

The Service Director gives strategic leadership to the specialist teams within Childrens Integrated Services. **This person makes sure that all the other people who work in the fostering service know what the law says; what they should do and how this fits into the other parts of the children's workforce in Derby City Council. This person also acts as Agency Decision Maker**

The Head of Service co-ordinates the activity of the fostering and adoption service and is responsible for promoting partnership working across the People Directorate and partner agencies. The Head of Service (HOS) 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 the HOS reports on to senior managers on service activity.

The Head of Service is also the fostering panel advisor which has a quality assurance role for the purpose of registering and de-registering foster carers. **This person advises the panel members on who should be and who should not be a foster carer to keep children safe and well.**

Team managers are responsible for day to day management of the social work teams and supervise the social workers recruiting, approving and supervising foster carers. They also monitor the matching of children to available carers, dealing with complaints and representations and producing activity reports and statistical returns. **These people work with the staff in the fostering social work team, and help the social workers to understand what their job is all about.**

Of the three team managers, one manages the fostering 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 coordinating the marketing plan, recruitment and assessment of foster carers including "Friends and Family 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 for staying put arrangements, the emotional health and wellbeing service based at the Keep, virtual school head, workforce learning and development and partner agencies.

5. RECRUITMENT, APPROVAL, REVIEW, TRAINING AND SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS- how we get more foster carers, what they have to do to become a foster carer and how we help them to look after you.

Recruitment: how we try to make sure we have enough foster carers

Recruitment activity is co-ordinated by the recruitment team manager working with the Marketing Officer in the councils Communications Team. We recruit through advertising and articles in the local press, radio promotion, leaflets, posters, publicity events, the internet and social media. All relevant information about becoming a foster carer can be found on the Council website. A link to the fostering pages on the Council website can be found here: <http://www.derby.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/fostering/>

We have a team of social workers who find new foster carers. Becoming a foster carer is a big decision, we have to make sure that they understand what makes a good foster carer, and that they know how hard it can be for you meeting them for the first time and getting to know them.

We welcome enquiries from everyone who expresses an interest in fostering and we prioritise those who appear most able to meet the needs of the children who require foster care.

The recruitment team operates a duty system to deal with incoming enquiries. This includes a weekly 'drop in' session held at the Council House where anyone interested in fostering can speak to a social worker from the team.

When an enquiry is received from a person who is interested in fostering, the duty social worker will have a discussion with them about their motivation to foster, take some basic details and fill in a Registration of Interest form. Initial visits are offered immediately unless there are factors that require further checks.

Unless there are specific reasons for the enquiry not to progress at this point, information about the fostering task in the form of an information booklet, and details of fostering allowances are sent to the enquirer within five working days.

The fostering team work hard to make sure that anyone interested in becoming a foster carer is given the right information about what this involves at all stages of the process of them becoming a foster carer for Derby City Council.

Assessment: things we do to find out if someone can be a foster carer.

Prospective foster carers complete an application form and consent forms to enable statutory and personal references, including DBS checks, to be obtained on the applicants and any member of their household aged 16 years or over. This is known as Stage 1 of the assessment process. **It is very important to us that you are kept safe in foster care. Lots of checks are done on foster carers, including police checks.**

As part of the assessment process applicants are required to attend a preparation course known as Skills to Foster. This initial training helps to prepare prospective foster carers for their role with looked after children.

Information about applicants being assessed is recorded using the CoramBAAF Prospective Foster Care Report. This is stage 2 of the assessment process. During the assessment, prospective carers are encouraged to compile a family book, containing information about themselves and family members. This provides information to the panel and to any children who might be cared for within the fostering household.

People who want to be foster carers are asked lots of questions, which are written down by social workers who have experience of working with foster carers and children in care. The sort of questions we ask them help them to think carefully about what you will need from them, how much experience they have of looking after children, and what sort of support they will get from their families and friends.

Assessments are normally completed within 6 – 8 months of the date the application is accepted. Reasons for any delay are recorded.

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 and temporary approval by the Head of Service. 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 child already known to them, and their ongoing support needs are taken into account.

Some children in foster care are looked after by a family friend or a relative. These foster carers are called friends and family foster carers. These carers are still asked the same questions as foster carers who are not related to you, as well as how you

are looked after by them will work for everyone in your extended family, especially you.

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.

Everyone who wants to be a foster carer has to attend meetings before they become foster carers. These meetings are a bit like going to school and learning/talking about things that help people become a good foster carer.

Completed assessment reports are shared with the prospective applicants and they 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.

We also ask people who want to become foster carers to let us have details of people who we can talk to about them. This may be a work colleague; friends; their doctor; and family members who know them well.

Approval how we decide who can and cannot be a foster carer:

The completed assessment report is presented to the fostering panel. The fostering social worker and the applicants attend the panel for discussion. The Fostering Panel is chaired by an independent social worker, with significant experience in relation to looked after children living in foster care. Foster carers are fully involved in the recommendation as to the type of fostering they are approved for, and some carers are approved for more than one type of fostering. Foster carers can be approved for up to three children. There is an induction process for all panel members prior to them taking up their role. All panel members have an annual appraisal. These are completed by the panel chair and the panel advisor. The panel chair is appraised by the Head of Service and Agency Decision Maker.

All reports on people who want to be foster carers are read by a group of people called the 'Fostering Panel'. These are people with a lot of relevant experience in working with families, foster carers and children in care. They look at the report very carefully and meet the people who want to be foster carers and the social worker who has written the report.

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 on individual views to approve or reject the application. Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision regarding approval. **The fostering panel lets the Agency Decision Maker for Derby City Council know what they think about the people who want to become foster carers. This person then writes to them to let them know the outcome of their application.**

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: for more information: **www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk**

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: how we check that foster carers can still look after you well

All approved foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker and 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 national minimum standards. The report is quality assured by the team manager. The Fostering Panel considers the carers first annual review after approval. Thereafter the panel also considers any annual review following inquiries into any issues of concern about the carers, such as section 47 investigations.

Foster carers have a report written about them every year. You will be able to say what you think about your foster carers, your social worker will talk to you about this. This report looks at things that have gone well and anything that has happened that the fostering team might be worried about.

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 or complaints from children or their parents regarding the foster placement are included in the review report. Comments from children of foster carers are also included.

In addition to annual reviews any serious safeguarding 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: how we help foster carers learn the things that help them to look after you

Pre-approval foster care training (known as Skills to Foster 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 Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care within twelve months of approval. Connected persons and short break carers have an eighteen month timescale in which to complete these standards. Foster carers have access to relevant training provided by Workforce Learning and Development and approved carers are expected to complete eight mandatory training topics within the first two years of approval. Specialist on-line training is commissioned by the service.

Derby City Council provides foster carers with training; there is some training that all foster carers have to do. This includes how to look after you in a safe way; what to write down about you; and first aid. Other training that foster carers can attend includes why children sometimes feel unhappy and angry; and how to make sure that what you think and want is understood by your social worker.

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 and developmental trauma.

Support groups have topics for discussion and speakers identified by fostering social workers or foster carers. Support groups are jointly run and allow foster carers and staff to share practice developments. Derby City foster carers are also invited to become involved in Derby's Foster Carer Association and following approval are added to the Fostering Network members list. This allows our foster carers to benefit from regular updates about fostering developments and access to a dedicated legal advice line.

6. FOSTERING SERVICES PROVIDED

1. Short Term Placements

Derby City Fostering Service provides placements for children from 0-18 years, to meet the need for either emergency or planned admissions following referral from early intervention or children in care teams. Short term placements may last from a few days up to 2 years and may be used to work towards children returning home or to complete care proceedings and put in place plans for permanence.

These are foster placements that may only last a short period of time, or where the Court/Derby City Council is still deciding where looked after children should live.

2. Long-Term Placements

We aim to achieve permanence for all children in Local Authority care who cannot be rehabilitated home or to a member of their extended family. A permanency plan needs to be in place by the child's second looked after child review. Where adoption, special guardianship or a child arrangement order is determined not to be a viable option, long-term fostering may be the permanency plan of choice. The fostering team recruits specifically for children needing long-term foster care. This includes home-finding for children in short term 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 adoptive parents to children placed with them. 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. The fostering panel are provided with a permanency report which includes a matching matrix to ensure that a thorough assessment has been completed to agree a long term permanent match.

Social workers will talk to you about staying in one placement for a long period of time so that you can make friends and go to school in the same place. Some young people who have reached 18 still need support from foster carers; this is called a 'Staying Put Arrangement'. This is where you, your social worker and your foster carer all agree that remaining at your foster home after you are 18 is the best thing for you.

3. Respite Placements

These foster carers are approved foster carers who choose to offer placements on a very short term 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 pressure, or to do some direct work with the child/young person, where this is part of an agreed plan.

These are foster placements where children stay for short periods of time away from their main carer so everyone enjoys the break.

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

4. Delegated Authority

Authority for day to day decision making about a looked after child is delegated to the child's foster carer, unless there is a valid reason not to do so. The child's placement plan records who has the authority to take particular decisions about a child. This covers periods of respite and takes into account the child's views and wishes.

Delegated authority 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 main carer, exercising delegated authority, so they usually know the children they look after and have developed a relationship with them. Delegated authority reduces 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.

This means that foster carers can talk to you about decisions which you can make together. This could include you staying with a family friend for a short period, having your hair cut, or going on a school trip.

5. 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 Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption. 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.

Some foster carers look after children who need extra help, support and time.

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.

These are carers who look after children with disabilities who benefit from time out of the family home.

Additional Support Services

- The Fostering service provides a dedicated telephone line for carers out of office opening hours. This is continuously staffed by qualified fostering social workers, on a rota basis. It provides an advice and consultation service and manages any requests for emergency placements.
- Carers can access the out of hours emergency service (Careline) where necessary, for support and advice, for instance when a child goes missing. New guidance has been issued to all Foster Carers regarding the procedure to follow and forms to complete when a child goes missing from their care.
- Commissioning arrangements are in place for dedicated time from a qualified clinical psychologist, to offer advice and support to foster carers and their foster children. The Keep offers counselling/direct work to children and young people with needs arising from abuse or attachment difficulties, and advice and support to foster carers and adoptive parents.
- The Virtual School for Looked After Children Team supports foster carers in matters relating to their child's attendance and support in school.

- Carers can request financial assistance to purchase a larger vehicle, or an extension of their home, to help them care for a number of foster children or children with disabilities.
- A designated nurse for Looked After Children provides advice and support to foster carers, to advise and enhance their ability to promote the health of the foster children they care for. Looked after children under five years of age have a 6 monthly health assessment, children over five have an annual health assessment. Foster carers are advised of any follow up health needs.
- Any foster carers who are employees of Derby City Council are entitled to additional leave to enable them to attend fostering related meetings, training etc.

Derby City Council tries hard to offer lots of support to foster carers and children/young people in foster care.

7. STAFFING OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The fostering service is led by Suanne Lim, Service Director, Children's Integrated Services, People Services Directorate. Operational responsibility is led by the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption.

In addition there are three team managers who have relevant social work and management qualifications and a staff team of 16 FTE social workers across three fostering teams which cover recruitment, assessment, training/development, supervision and support.

If you are living in foster carer you will meet your foster carers social worker, they are called 'supervising social workers'.

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 March 2018 Derby City had 122 approved fostering households. Some carers have more than one approval status and this is broken down into the categories below:

- 109 approved mainstream fostering households offering short term, long-term and respite placements;
- 23 approved to offer care as a 'connected person' or friend and family carer
- 5 approved to provide short break care to disabled children.
- 2 Foster for Adoption (these are approved adopters who have children placed with them under fostering regulations whilst the plan of adoption is being progressed)

Derby City Council is always looking to attract more people interested in becoming foster carers so that we can make sure that children who need to live away from home have somewhere to live in or near Derby, so that you can carry on going to your school and keep the friends you already have.

9. NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER PLACEMENT

At the end of March 2018 the Annual Ofsted Data Collection for 2017/18 recorded a total of 98 children and young people placed in foster homes approved by Derby City Council, supervised and supported by Derby City Fostering Service.

10. NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOME

Between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2018 there were no appeals to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism about a decision made by Derby City Fostering Service to de register a foster carer.

In the same period there were 6 complaints regarding fostering households, one of which required investigation under child protection procedures by the LADO. The outcome of the investigation did not result in fostering panel recommending deregistration. There were no referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Five complaints were dealt with by the fostering service in conjunction with the child's social worker. Feedback is always given to professionals or birth parents regarding the outcome of their complaint. There were no complaints made by foster children.

There were no complaints relating to children placed with Derby City foster carers which followed the council's corporate complaint procedures.

Sometimes children/young people; parents; foster carers and other people like teachers or doctors feel that we have not done our job properly. When this happens Derby City Council will always try to learn from what might have gone wrong and try to make sure it doesn't happen again.