

Title: **FOSTERING SERVICES – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

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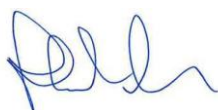
Effective Date: Immediate

Sector: Children's Social Care

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Purpose

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirement of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 (Standard 16) and The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Regulation 3).

Scope

This policy and guidance applies to Senior Managers, Service Leaders, Team Leaders, social workers and all PCC support staff engaged in the provision of service to children and families and foster carers

PORTSMOUTH CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

FOSTERING SERVICE

Statement of Purpose

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1. Introduction

This statement has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 and associated Regulations.

The statement outlines Portsmouth's Fostering Service our aims and objectives, principles and values. It also describes the services that are provided and how we monitor these services and manage our performance against these objectives. This statement is reviewed annually.

2. Aims and Objectives

Through highly competent and motivated staff, to purchase and provide safe and secure family based care to meet the assessed needs of Looked After Children, balancing costs and outcomes, and achieving best value.

To work with service users, carers, the wider community and partner agencies to promote the welfare of children looked after and improve their life changes by providing services which:

- Support families - Provide stable, safe and effective alternative care at the right time and for the right length of time and which:
- Are responsive to individual needs, circumstances and choice.

To recruit, assess, train, manage and support foster carers of sufficient numbers and diversity to provide placement choice for looked after children which meet or exceed the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 and The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and in accordance with the principles of the Foster Carers' Charter.

The key objectives in providing quality placements are:

- To provide placement choice and positive matching of a child with a placement
- Proximity to the child's home area and culture where appropriate
- Placement within the child's extended network wherever possible
- Brother and sisters should be placed together wherever possible
- Proactive positive health care
- Maximisation of educational opportunities and achievement for children
- Planned beginnings and endings of placements
- Promotion of positive contact with family and friends
- Safe Care

- Promotion of the child's culture and heritage
- Promotion of child's interests and aptitudes
- Rehabilitation wherever possible
- Listening to the child and involvement in decision making
- Partnership with parents
- Stability of placement – a minimum of placement moves for each child
- Minimising the time delay between child becoming Looked After and moving to permanent placement, where this is required
- Preparation for independence and successful transition into adulthood
- Standards of care for effective planning for the transition from care to independence

3. Principles and Values

We are committed to safeguarding children in the community and understand that this will often require imaginative thinking to arrange packages of support to allow risks to be assessed and managed and maintain children with their families wherever possible.

We understand that placing a child in a Local Authority placement, either voluntarily or with a legal order, is the most serious step the Local Authority can take. The decision to do this should only be taken after full assessment and when all other options to maintain the child within their family have been fully explored and assessed.

We recognise that, for most children, removal from their family is the equivalent in terms of life stress experience to the bereavement of a parent/divorce for adults. The experience of separation and loss will have both short and long term effects on their feelings and well being, self esteem and reactions to situations.

We recognise that attachment to primary care givers is a key issue in positive child care practice and the assessment of this and the prognosis for changes in the child's life always need to be part of the ongoing assessment.

We are committed, where the decision has been made to place a child away from their family, to returning that child to the care of their family wherever the assessment indicates that the child's welfare can be safeguarded and the care and circumstances are 'good enough'.

We are committed where a child cannot remain in the care of his/her parents to exploring fully the prospects for placement in the extended family and friend network. When there are people in this network willing and able to care for the child, there must be very clear reasons why such a placement is not utilised, as long as the carers are safe and able to meet the child's needs.

We recognise the value, skill and commitments required of foster carers and treat them, their families and homes with respect.

Our objective is to provide a range of quality placements to meet the identified needs of children who require substitute care.

We are committed to maintaining siblings together wherever possible and promoting positive contact with family members. We are committed to engaging other agencies in the assessment of the needs of children and working together to clarify roles and ensuring that their needs are understood and prioritised.

We recognise that many children will have had damaging experiences prior to placement in substitute care, as well as the effects of separation and loss. Their mental health needs may be complex and their need for understanding of their past and access to therapeutic input is essential.

We recognise that foster carers, caring for damaged young people will encounter unknown situations on a daily basis and their own support needs need to be assessed and appropriate support systems deployed.

We recognise that foster carers who are caring for the majority of Portsmouth's looked after children are very valuable assets and that their time and commitment is worthy of a reasonable reward system.

All staff and carers involved in meeting the needs of children with complex needs require a robust commitment to training and learning opportunities.

Children with disabilities are recognised as children first. The same principles of service apply, while accepting that additional support services will be required to meet all their needs.

We recognise the transition into adulthood is a major step requiring positive daily living support and enhanced connections with the adult world of opportunity and responsibility. A flexible range of accommodation and support options to meet different levels of need will be a factor in the services for young people leaving care.

We are committed to facilitating young people 'Staying Put' with their foster carer into early adulthood wherever possible.

We are committed to implementing the Department of Education Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for foster care and will support carers in achieving the standards.

4. Services Provided for Children

Family Link Carers for children with disabilities

Foster Care for children needing:

- Family and Friends care
- Permanence
- Planned Respite Care

- Emergency and short stay care
- Parent and Child placements

5. Services to Foster Carers

Recruitment

Portsmouth's Fostering Service has a recruitment strategy which is based upon the needs of children looked after. The recruitment strategy is reviewed annually.

Foster Carers are recruited by a variety of methods and using a variety of mediums, including drop-ins, personal recommendation or media campaigns highlighting a particular area of need. Social Media, newspapers and magazines, TV, radio, posters, leaflets, shows, fetes and recruitment events are used to raise the profile of fostering and the need to recruit more carers. Particular groups are targeted at different times to meet identified need. Members of the public who are interested are invited to contact the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team in person, by telephone, e mail or social media. The FosterPortsmouth website offers more information and an opportunity to contact the service on line.

Details of the enquirer's circumstances are taken and an information booklet about the service is sent out within 24 hours. Applicants are offered a home visit to discuss their interest further. Appropriate prospective carers are then invited to attend a series of preparation sessions. Fostering Preparation Training is based upon the nationally recognised Skills to Foster Course.

This training is evaluated and reviewed by the service annually.

Assessment of Foster Carers

Foster carers are assessed by qualified Social Workers, using the nationally recognised Form F developed by Coram BAAF. This document requires detailed information and a wide range of evidence in respect of the carer's background, current relationships, family lifestyle, support networks and parenting capacity.

The assessing social worker has a duty to verify the information they are given and they will do this by taking up a number of references – with the DBS, Health, GP, Education, as well as contacting a number of personal referees and former partners and adult children. This forms Part 1 of the fostering assessment and applicants are required to successfully complete part 1 of the assessment before they can progress to Stage 2.

The assessment is designed to help the carers and the assessing social worker to identify the sort of caring which will fit in with their lifestyle, their own wishes and the age, sex and needs of the children they would wish to care for.

The length of this process can vary but the optimum time is five months from application.

Approval

In the assessment document the Assessing Social Worker, will make an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the application and make a recommendation in respect of the type of caring and number of children and age range and gender and the type of placement. The Fostering Panel recommends to the Agency Decision Maker if approval is appropriate.

The Panel meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and the associated regulations. Panel members are made up of professionals from Children's Services, elected members and independent members who have experiences relating to foster care. The Panel also has access to legal, medical and educational advice.

All applicants seeking approval are invited to attend the Panel Meeting. The Panel Members are able to put questions to them and applicants can address the Panel. All foster carers see the complete assessment report and have the opportunity to suggest changes and make their own comments. They are then invited to sign the completed document.

Supervision and Support for Foster Carers

The service recognises that supervision and support for carers is vital. It is important that carer's work is recognised as providing the major component in meeting the needs of Children Looked After in Portsmouth. Carer satisfaction and retention is essential for a healthy Fostering Service. The fostering support team provides support and supervision to all types of foster carer including Lodgings Plus carers who have their own worker.

Supervising Social Workers, visit carers regularly to look at standards of care provided, assist the carer to play their part in the child's care plan and identify any training needs. Carers are encouraged and supported to achieve the TSD Standards within required timescales. Foster carers are subject to annual review of their approval. If changes to their approval details are recommended, this decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker.

Types of Support Available:

Supervising Social Workers – Each foster carer is allocated a Supervising Social Worker, who visits regularly to provide support and supervision. They monitor standards of care, encourage high standards and help the carer manage problems arising. They are also available for telephone consultation and liaise with the Social Worker for the child.

Payments to Foster Carers – Foster Carers receive a standard fostering allowance in line with the Government National Minimum South East Fostering Allowance Rates and a skill fee according to their skills level. The Fostering, Staying Put, Family Link and Lodgings Plus Allowance Policy is reviewed annually and circulated to all carers. Carers are paid on a weekly basis. Carers can apply to progress to a higher skill level which encourages carers to develop their skills.

Foster Carers Liaison Group – foster carer representatives meet with managers and the lead Cabinet Member on a quarterly basis to discuss areas of mutual interest, developments and any areas of tension.

Independent Support – Portsmouth commissions a service to provide independent advice and mediation to foster carers subject to an allegation or serious complaint. Foster Carers are also able to use the Local Authority’s confidential counselling service.

Support Groups for Foster Carers – A number of support groups are organised for carers providing expert speakers on matters of interest and an opportunity for carers to meet other carers and to share and problem solve together.

Newsletter– A quarterly Newsletter for foster carers is published keeping carers up to date with information, news stories and events.

Foster Care Reviews – Foster Carers are reviewed annually where their approval details, their skill development and training needs are examined along with any issues they wish to raise. This review is undertaken by a designated Reviewing Officer who does not have any supervisory role for the carer or their supervising social worker. This process is the cornerstone of the relationship between carers and the Fostering Service.

Foster Care Agreement – A written agreement between foster carers and Portsmouth City Council has been implemented formalising expectations on both sides. This should be read alongside the Foster carers Charter.

Portsmouth City Council Foster Carers' Charter is a shared agreement which sets out what carers and Portsmouth City Council can expect from each other and demonstrates our joint responsibilities to children and young people in our care.

Out of Hours Service – The fostering support team runs its own out of hours service after office hours until midnight every day and 9.30 am until midnight on weekends and bank Holidays. This is to ensure that foster carers can contact team members at key times out of hours when they need advice and support. From midnight until the next morning Hampshire out of hours deals with emergencies.

Child Adolescent Mental Health Service - The Clinical Team provides consultation, advice and support for foster carers.

Virtual School - The Virtual School provides consultation, advice and support for foster carers on education matters.

Looked After Children's Nurses - The LAC nurses provide consultation, advice and support for foster carers.

Training for Foster Carers

All applicants attend a series of preparation sessions prior to approval, where they learn more about the fostering task, the types of children need placement and have the opportunity to consider how fostering will fit in with their family life and what type of fostering they might be best suited to.

Following approval, carers learn more about roles and responsibilities, health and safety, promotion of education and health in children and prepare them more fully for the realities of fostering.

A rolling programme of more detailed training is offered to foster carers to provide them with a higher skill level in line with the National Minimum Standards and to meet the expectations for progression on the foster care career structure Foster Care Career Structure. Carers can progress from Level 1 to 2 to 3 depending on their experience, training attended and skill development and the services they can provide.

Staying Put Arrangements

Staying Put is encouraged when the young person and carer agree that it is their preferred option. There is a worker within the team who specialises in Lodgings Plus arrangements and can work with the carer and social workers to ensure that arrangements are in place for the transition from care to care leaver.

Access to Resources

The support team also includes the access to resources team. The access to resources team find placements for all looked after children within PCC resources and in external provision. The team work closely with colleagues from education and health to ensure that they have the right provision to support the placements. The team are supported by a contracts officer to ensure that contracts are in place and reviewed for all children and young people placed externally.

6. Structure and Personnel

Structure

The Deputy Director Children's Social Care leads a team of three Senior Managers. The Head of Looked After Children Services manages the fostering service.

Staff in the Fostering Service

The staff of the Fostering Service are recruited and managed following the principles of positive selection, supervision, induction and appraisal processes of Portsmouth City Council and incorporating practice dictated by the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011.

There are two fostering teams, the recruitment and assessment team and the support and supervision team. These teams are managed by a Service Leader Fostering who ensures both teams work together and provide a cohesive service. Each team is managed by two team leaders.

There are social workers and social services assistants within each team supported by administrators working across the Fostering Service.

All staff are suitably qualified and experienced and are subject to Portsmouth City Council's corporate standards for continuous professional development.

Section 10 of this report contains details of the qualifications of all staff working in the service.

Procedures and Processes

The procedures and processes, which guide the Fostering Teams for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing carers are contained within:

- Marketing Strategy
- Fostering on line policies and procedures
- Looked After Children on line Policies and Procedures
- Panel Policy and Function
- The Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards (2011 and 2013)

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Management of the Service

Performance and Statistical Information

The Fostering Service gathers a range of statistical data to assist with monitoring and evaluating performance. This information is portrayed in the annual reports of the fostering panel, access to resource team and the Ofsted dataset.

8. Complaints

Wherever possible, complaints are dealt with informally. Where appropriate, in the first instance, any complaint by or against a foster carer will be dealt with on a problem-solving basis. There is a written procedure in managing concerns, complaints and allegations against foster carers which is given to all foster carers. The Council has both corporate and Children Services complaints procedures that operate if no resolution can be achieved at the problem solving stage.

Where a complaint against a foster carer constitutes a safeguarding allegation this is dealt with as safeguarding enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and is investigated under safeguarding procedures.

Our Children's guide is specifically designed for children and young people which advises them what to do if they have a complaint.

Regular monitoring reports on the numbers and outcomes are presented to the Senior Management Team and Corporate Parenting Board.

9. Contacting the Regulator

Ofsted is responsible for inspecting the Fostering Service. They will also receive and investigate any complaints about the Fostering Service. Significant incidents are also reported to them. The contact details are Ofsted Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

10. Staffing

Name	Hour	Role	Qualification
Gill Burtwell	37	Service Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BA Honours, MSc Social Policy and Social Administration, CQSW, Practice Teaching Award, NVQ4 and Certificate in Management
Tony Knight	37	Team Leader Support and supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diploma in Social Work, BSc Post Qualifying Child Care Social Work
Charlotte Tooley	37	Team Leader Support and supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BA Honours Social Work
Les Valentine	37	Team Leader Recruitment and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CQSW, Practice Teachers Award, Mental Health Officer
Donna Egan	37	Team Leader Recruitment and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diploma in Social Work, Master of Social Work, Post Qualifying Specialist Award, Practice Educator
Nick Poore	37	Higher Grade Social Worker Reviewing officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CQSW, Diploma in Social Work, Certificate in Practice Education, Post social work qualification parts 1 and 2, Triple P qualification level 4
Michael Cooper	37	Social Worker Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BA(Hons) Social Work
Jane Bowns	32	Social Services Assistant Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary certificate in Social Care plus 31 years' experience in residential, family centre, supervised contact, family support and early help support team work
Lynne Luff	18.5	Social Services Assistant Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSC(Hons) Health Studies, Stage 2 Youth Work Certificate
Tracey Brown	37	Social Worker S&S, OOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NVQ 3 and 4, Foundation Degree, BA(Hons) Social Work
Denise Cuffe	25	Social Worker S&S, OOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diploma in Social Work
Andrea Peters	37	Higher Grade Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualified Social Worker (social worker and social pedagogue), Multi Systemic Therapist, Qualified preschool teacher and early childhood educator, postgraduate course in Family Therapy

Jane Cardy	37	Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA(Hons) Sociology and Applied Social Studies, CQSW
Jenny Houghton	37	Higher Grade Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Social Work, BSc Post Qualifying Child Care Social Work, Practice Teaching Award
Emma Wilkinson (maternity leave)	37	Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Social Work
Emily Dodds (maternity cover)	22.2	Higher Grade Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc (hons) Applied Social Sciences, Diploma Social Work, Post Qualifying Award – PQ Consolidation Module, PQ Childcare Award and Practice Educator
Claire Knight	37	Social Services Assistant Lodgings Plus S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NNEB, K100
Nicholas Reeve	37	Higher Grade Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dip Social Work, Masters in Social Work
Kerry Shannahan	18.5	Higher Grade Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Professional Social Work, CQSW
Chloe Silvester	37	Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc (Hons) Social Work
Tequila Parker	37	Social Worker S&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc (Hons) Social Work
Ryan Bragg	37	Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Social Work
Annita Andreou	37	Higher Grade Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Psychology, MSc Social Work, PQ Social Work award
Rachel Gearing	18.5	Higher Grade Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Social Work
Kristian Healey-Ryder	18.5	Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc Social Work
Koren Luddington (maternity leave)	37	Social Worker R&A - Private Fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc (Hons) Human Communication, Speech and Language Therapy, NVQ2 Health and Social Care, MA Social Work, Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

Amiee Dennis (maternity cover)	18.5	Social Worker R&A - Private Fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Social Work
Kerry Ward	31.5	Social Services Assistant R&A Lead on Training, Lodgings Plus and OOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Batchelor of Education (Primary) with honours & QTS
Paula Kyme	37	Higher Grade Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dip SW, MSW, BA(Hons) Cultural Studies
Kerry Bailey	30	Higher Grade Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dip SW, BA(Hons) Social Policy and Administration Part 1 PQCCA
Sophie Adams	22.2	Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Social Work
Sinead Dwyer-Parker	37	Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Hons Social Work
Chloe Hamilton	18.5	Social Worker R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Social Work, Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
Emilie Vincent	37	Social Services Assistant R&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Psychology, MSc Forensic Psychology
Liz Smith	37	Business Support Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Diploma in Administrative Management Institute of Administrative Management, ILM certificate in First Line Management, Certificate in Marketing- Chartered Institute of Marketing
Madeline Tyler	37	Business Support Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ3 Business and Administration
Tina Beazley	37	Business Support Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration European Driving Licence, NVQ3 Business and Administration
Maureen Allen	37	Business Support Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Ed. (Hons) in Biological and Environmental Studies
Michelle Blaikie	18.5	Business Support Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSA3 Typing, RSA2 Word Processing, RSA1 Communications, RSA1 Numeracy