



Foster a Future

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

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Newcastle
City Council 

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What is a Statement of Purpose?

The Statement of Purpose is the means of providing information about Newcastle City Council's Fostering Service as required by Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulation (2011).

The Statement of Purpose is a source of information for the families, foster carers, and short break carers of children and young people cared for in foster placements. It is also for people thinking of becoming foster carers, and for staff within the City Council, and from other agencies.

'A Children and Young Persons Guide to Being Looked After' is available and should be provided to children being cared for in foster care placements.

Ofsted regularly inspects the Fostering Service to ensure that they achieve the aims and objectives set out in the Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose is revised annually.

Mission Statement

The Newcastle Fostering Service aims to provide a good quality, highly regarded service that inspires confidence in children and young people, carers, staff, managers and partner agencies. The service will provide and maintain foster placements that enable children in care to fully achieve their personal, social and educational development and employment potential.

Aims of the Fostering Service

Newcastle City Council's Fostering Service aims to:

- Meet the needs of all Newcastle's children who have been assessed as requiring a foster placement.
- Provide a range of good quality family-based care for children who are unable to stay with their own families.
- Provide children with a safe, stable, nurturing family experience which will promote their health, educational achievement and emotional wellbeing.
- Value diversity by recruiting and training carers who respect, promote the ethnicity, race, culture and religious identity of the children and young people they care for.
- Respect the gender and sexual orientation of children and young people in placement.
- Listen to children and young people about their needs, wishes and experiences.
- Work together with the Placements Service to ensure that children and young people are placed with carers who have the range of skills and experiences to meet their needs.
- Be wholly committed to children and young people cared for in fostering and short break placements and to focus on their needs.

- Advise children and young people in foster care placements of the Complaints Procedure and assist them in making a complaint if they choose to do so.
- Support children to access advocates as outlined in the Children and Young Person's Guide to Being Looked After'.
- Work together with the allocated social worker from the respective Social Work Team, ensuring that the child or young person's views about their foster placement are listened to and taken into consideration when decisions are made, especially when there is a Child in Care Review.
- Work together with the Virtual School and LAC Health to enable children and young people in foster care to maximise their learning and educational skills and opportunities and achieve the best standards of health care and health awareness.
- Work together with the 16+ Team to ensure that young people are supported as they make the transition from foster care to independent living and benefit from training and employment opportunities.
- Support young people to move into Supported Lodgings placements if these placements would best meet their needs.
- Provide high quality training for prospective foster carers and approved carers.
- Enable carers to participate in a wide range of training opportunities including online LMS and multi-agency training.
- Support foster carers to provide the highest possible care to children and young people.
- Promote the partnership between the Fostering Service and the children and young people in foster placements through Voices for Choices and a range of consultation activities.
- Work closely with children and foster carers to ensure their views are included in all aspects of the care and services provided by the Fostering Service.
- Keep abreast of research and best practice developments and deliver a service which complies with and exceeds the National Minimum Standards requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 issued by the Secretary of State for Health under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000.
- Employ appropriately qualified and well-motivated staff.
- Support carers to offer staying put arrangements for young people who would benefit from these arrangements

Objectives of the Fostering Service

In order to achieve the service aims, the service needs to meet the following objectives:

1. Recruit and retain enough skilled and experienced Foster Carers to meet the demands of the children in care population, promoting placement stability and providing increased choice for all children requiring a foster placement.
2. Match children to carers whose assessed skills and abilities reflect their approval category. The carers must be able to work with the child, the child's plan and members of the care team in a way that helps meet the child's needs in all the following areas:
 - Emotional and behavioural development
 - Health
 - Family and social relationships including contact arrangements
 - Social presentation
 - Self-care skills
 - Education and educational achievement
 - Identity
3. Provide support to placements that takes account of the child's assessed needs and the skills and experience of the carers. Whenever needed, bespoke and creative support strategies are developed and put in place that are monitored, reviewed and revised as needed.

To help the service achieve its aims and objectives, Service Improvement Plans (SIP) have been developed. The SIP is reviewed and revised regularly to assess progress and to reflect ongoing service development requirements.

Summary of the procedures for recruitment, support and review

Recruitment and Engagement Officer

The fostering services Recruitment and Engagement Officer (REO) supports the fostering service to recruit new carers and retain those carers once they are approved by helping us stay connected.

The REO develops, monitors and reviews the Service Recruitment Strategy in close partnership with fostering management and the Council's Comms team and aims to run a series of recruitment events and activities throughout the year. The REO manages all initial enquiries from prospective Foster Carers and ensures that all enquiries are progressed in a timely manner.

As well as driving the fostering services Recruitment Strategy, the REO regularly consults with foster carers to help the Fostering Service identify and provide the support foster carers and children in placement need. The REO aims to coordinate a programme of support and consultation events which will take place throughout the year. Any feedback from these sessions will be fed back to managers and will help inform the fostering services SIP.

Recruitment Criteria

Newcastle City Council Fostering Service has a commitment to equal opportunities and welcomes diversity by valuing applications to foster from all sections of the community. We welcome people from any ethnic, cultural or religious background who:

- are over 21
- are in reasonable health
- live within a 50-mile radius of Newcastle
- are single or are part of a couple
- have or do not have their own children
- are from LGBTQ+ communities
- are employed or unemployed
- own their own home or live in rented accommodation

Recruitment Strategy

The service has a Recruitment Strategy which is regularly reviewed. Dependent on service needs, the local recruitment environment and national trends, in house recruitment activity can involve a wide range of campaigns and approaches including:

- Focused recruitment campaigns
- Information Evenings
- Public relations campaigns
- Regular advertising in the local, regional, national broadcast, digital and print media.
- Social media including the Fostering Service Face Book and web pages
- Bespoke marketing materials
- A range of recruitment and engagement events including pop up shops and local drop ins
- Word of mouth
- Recruitment from foster carers family and friend's support network

Fostering Friendly Employer

Newcastle City Council has adopted Fostering Network's fostering friendly employment policies, such as offering foster carers flexible working and paid time off for training and settling a new child into their home.

The scheme helps employers to support and recognise the roles of their employees who foster.

Members of the scheme agree to implement a fostering friendly HR policy for all foster carers in their employment (regardless of their fostering service) and to promote Foster Care Fortnight, our annual campaign to raise the profile of fostering and to encourage people to consider becoming foster carers.

Enquiries Process

The Fostering Service aims to respond to enquiries quickly and efficiently within two working days. Our Recruitment and Engagement Officer carries out a telephone discussion with enquirers and if both agree, a home screening will be arranged.

Screening and Application Process

Following a screening visit If the enquirer and the screening worker both agree that the application should progress, the enquirer will be invited to submit an application form. If the screening worker is not recommending progression, a manager from the service will review the screening report and make the final decision. If the manager agrees that the screening should not progress, applicants should be notified in writing, with reasons, within 10 working days.

Applications can only be progressed after the service has received the application form as this also provides the service with the applicants consent to commence checks.

Assessment Process

Once an application has been received and accepted, the service will allocate an assessing fostering social worker who will undertake an assessment of the applicant's suitability to foster. The assessment process can either be broken down into 2 separate stages or completed concurrently. If there are potential issues which may stop an assessment from progressing to Stage 2 (the home study stage), Stage 1 (the checks stage) can be completed first.

If the decision has been to complete Stage 1 prior to commencing Stage 2, information from the checks and references including the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and medical checks will be provided to the Agency Decision Maker. A decision will then be made about

whether to progress to Stage 2. If the decision is not to proceed, the applicant will be notified of this decision in writing along with the reasons within 10 days of the stage 1 information being received.

If the assessment progresses into Stage 2 or Stage 1 and 2 are undertaken concurrently and the applicant has not informed of a decision to rule them out on the basis of stage 1 information within 10 days of the service receiving that information, regulation 26(2) of the Fostering Regulations 2011 applies. Schedule 3:2 of the regulations sets out the information that the fostering service needs to gather about an applicant as part of the assessment process. Applicants must also satisfactorily complete the pre-approval Training Programme.

Stage 2 will normally include between 4 – 8 home visits and interviews. Children of the applicants and referees will need to be visited or spoken to and it may be necessary to speak to previous partners if they have parented children with an applicant. Previous employers will need to be contacted if an applicant's role has involved working with children or vulnerable adults. If the service needs to seek further clarification in order to make a recommendation, further checks or references may be sought, however, these will only be requested with the applicant's knowledge and permission. Stage 1 and 2 combined should take no longer than 8 months from application to Agency approval.

Report format

The assessing social worker will use the CoramBAAF (Coram/British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering) assessment forms to present the evidence they have gathered and to make a recommendation about the applicant's capacity to care for a child in care. The completed Form F (for Mainstream, Community and Short Break foster carer assessments) or Form C (for Connected Persons assessments) will then be presented at the Fostering Panel. The service's own bespoke assessment reports are used for both support carer assessments and for Supported Lodgings carer assessments.

Brief Reports

If information comes to light before the assessment is complete that the applicant is unlikely to be suitable to foster, a 'brief report' can be compiled. This report will detail the assessment work completed to date and the reasons for considering the applicant unsuitable. The applicant must be notified that the brief report is to be sent to panel, provided with a copy of the brief report and given 10 working days from the date of the notification to send their observations to the fostering service.

Fostering Panel

To operate, a Fostering Panel must be made up of at least 5 people from the Panel's Central List. This is a list of people who the service has deemed suitable to act as panel members. All panels should include at least one of the following:

- Panel Chair
- Panel adviser
- Panel administrator
- Social worker representative
- Independent members

The panel also has access to medical and legal advice from the Fostering Services identified medical and legal advisors. Independent members will be people from a range of backgrounds and may have knowledge and experience in areas such as Health, Education and Social Care. They may also have personal or professional experience of fostering.

Newcastle City Council has a commitment to equal opportunities and all panel members are required to sign a declaration on appointment. This declaration includes a commitment to observing data protection protocol and adhering to confidentiality requirements. Panel members are appraised yearly, and any training issues identified. Joint training is organised at least once yearly for panel members and the Fostering Service and panel business meetings take place to ensure panel members are kept up to date with service or policy developments.

Approval of Foster Carers

As part of the Foster Carer assessment and approval process, applicants are invited to attend panel along with the assessment worker.

National Minimum Standard 14.5 requires that “foster carers and prospective foster carers are given the opportunity to attend and be heard at all Panel meetings at which their approval is being discussed and to bring a supporter to panel if they wish”.

They should have access to all reports that are being presented to Panel and be given the opportunity to submit a written response to those reports if they wish.

If a carer takes a supporter to Panel, it will be the Chair who decides whether the supporter can speak on behalf of the foster carer. It would need to be made clear that if a solicitor is acting as a supporter, they are not there as a legal representative.

The assessment worker will present the brief or full Form F or Form C report to panel for consideration, along with any observations submitted by the applicant and any other relevant information which could include medical information, DBS and any other information from completed checks.

The Fostering Panel will consider all the information available and will provide an approval and registration recommendation to the Decision Maker who is a designated senior manager from within the service.

More than one Decision Maker may be appointed, but they may not delegate their authority to another person. National Minimum Standard (NMS) 23 sets out the qualifications, knowledge and experience required of the Decision Maker.

Regulation 27 requires that the Decision Maker must take account of the fostering panel's recommendation before deciding whether to approve a person as a foster carer, and on what terms. Their decision must be made within seven working days of receipt of the panel's recommendation via the Fostering Panel minutes (NMS 14).

The Fostering Panel can also make recommendations about further training or assessment, for example, following a brief report to panel or in the case of an approved carer, following a Foster Carer's review of approval. It is the ADM who will make the final decision on whether carers are approved and registered as Foster Carer's for the service.

The Decision Maker is also responsible for deciding whether a person and their household remain suitable to foster, and whether the terms of approval remain suitable, following each review of the foster carer's approval.

The decision should be based on the written report of the review; taking account of any recommendation by the fostering panel (which must be provided on the first review and may be provided for subsequent reviews) and any recommendation of the IRM.

In reaching a decision or making a qualifying determination, the Decision Maker should consider *Hofstetter v LB Barnet and IRM* [2009] EWCA 328 (Admin), in which the court set out guidance for the way in which an agency Decision Maker should approach a case.

When recording the decision or qualifying determination, the Decision Maker should:

- list the material considered in reaching the decision
- identify key arguments
- consider whether they agree with the process and approach of the panel(s) and are satisfied as to its fairness and that the panel(s) has properly addressed the arguments
- consider whether any additional information is now available to them, that was not available before the panel, and whether this has impacted on its reasons or recommendation
- identify which of the reasons for the panel's recommendations that they do and do not wish to adopt
- state these reasons and any other further reasons for their decision.

Once a foster carer is approved, they must be notified in writing of this fact and of any terms of the approval. Terms may specify, for instance, that they may foster only a specific named child or children or may identify a maximum number of placements which may be made at any one time.

Terms may also include factors such as short term or long-term placements, short break care, or inclusion in a particular fostering scheme. Foster carers must also enter into a foster care agreement, covering the matters set out in Schedule 5 to the Regulations (regulation 2 and NMS 14).

Appealing an Agency Decision

If a foster carer disagrees with the Agency Decision Maker's Qualifying Determination, they have the right to make representations within 28 days, by either writing to the services fostering panel or to the Independent Review Mechanism (the IRM).

If, within 28 days, no representations are received, and no application is made to the IRM, the Decision Maker is free to decide whether to approve the applicant as a foster carer (following a full assessment), continue the assessment (following a brief report) or amend their terms of approval.

If representations are received, the matter must be referred to the fostering panel and a fresh decision then made, taking account of the panel's further recommendations.

If the application is referred to the IRM, the fostering service must supply the IRM with the documentation submitted to the fostering panel and any relevant information received subsequently, along with copies of the notices of determination (regulation 29).

The Decision Maker must take account of the recommendation of the IRM, as well as that of the original fostering panel, in reaching a decision about approval.

How to apply to the IRM

Foster Carers can apply to the IRM by post or email. They must include:

- Their name, address and contact details
- the grounds (reasons) why they disagree with the fostering service determination
- the date of the Qualifying Determination letter
- the contact details of the fostering service.

The IRM will:

- review the carers suitability as a prospective foster parent(s)
- review any proposed changes to their terms of approval
- make a recommendation to the fostering service on their suitability to foster a child.

The IRM will not:

- make a final decision about the case, this is done by the Decision Maker after they have received the recommendation and minutes of the IRM panel
- consider whether fostering should be the plan for a child
- deal with complaints against the Fostering Service – these should be made through the complaint's procedure.

Foster Carer Ongoing Training and Development

All foster carers are required to attend mandatory training and refresher training to keep up to date with legislative changes and good practice developments. In addition to this, further training may be identified as needed in the foster carers Personal Professional Development Plan (PPDP).

The services training is facilitated by the dedicated training co-ordinator. The training co-ordinator is skilled and experienced worker in the Fostering Team who develops the training programmes for prospective and approved foster carers. The pre-approval training

programme is a four-day training event which is delivered to applicants within stage 2 of the assessment. If carers are in a partnership, both partners must be assessed, approved and attend mandatory training.

Training is linked to the Fostering Network's Skills to Foster training programme and is designed to provide applicants with a greater understanding of the expectations of the fostering role. It is fully supported by a range of audio-visual materials and a comprehensive selection of reading materials. Applicants' progress and understanding is reflected in the accompanying work books. The training allows the service to assess the applicant's responses and interactions throughout the sessions and helps provide evidence for the assessment process.

Approved foster carers are encouraged to attend ongoing identified training events as part of their progression. They may need to undertake specific training identified in their Personal Professional Development Plans (PPDP) by their supervising social workers or as part of their Foster Carer Review.

Pre-approval Training

Completion of the pre-approval Skills to Foster training Programme includes:

1. What do foster carers do?
2. Identity and life chances
3. Working with others
4. Understanding and caring for children
5. Safer Caring
6. Transitions
7. Review and conclusion
8. My family fosters

The Pre-approval training also incorporates:

- Information on the aims and policies of Newcastle Fostering Service
- Safeguarding children
- Attachment and loss
- Child development
- Caring for traumatised and abused children
- Health and safety
- Legal background to children in care
- Allegations against foster carers
- Complaints and representation procedure
- Record keeping

Personal Professional Development Plan (PPDP)

After approval the supervising social worker draws up a PPDP with the carer. The PPDP will take account of the carer's past qualifications (relevant to fostering). The supervising social worker will then consider any skills gaps and develop an individual training programme.

Induction training (within one month of being approved)

- Welcome letter
- Staff and management flow chart
- Promise to Foster Carers
- Fostering Scheme of Allowances
- Contact and Support details
- Information on FUN
- Training Calendar hand out
- Online learning account (LMS) created for each carer with instructions for sign up
- Information on Foster Talk
- Daily and weekly recording
- Claim forms, payment deadlines and dates
- Information about the Training Support and Development Standards
- Statement of Purpose
- Foster Carer Handbook

Core Mandatory Training within (12 months of approval)

- Managing Behaviour (updated 3 yearly)
- First Aid (updated 3 yearly)
- Safer Caring (incorporated into the pre-approval training and then updated 5 yearly)
- Medication awareness (via LMS – updated 3 yearly)
- Safeguarding Level 1

Additional training available as part of carers learning and development

Training Delivered by the service's Psychotherapist:

- Personality development – infancy to 12 years
- Personality development – adolescence
- Children who have experienced sexual abuse
- Young people who self-harm
- Trauma and loss
- Therapeutic refection sessions
- Containment
- Resilience

Training delivered or coordinated by the services Training Coordinator:

- Understanding ADHD and ASD
- Attachment
- 12-week Solihull training course – promoting attachment
- Introduction to therapeutic parenting
- FASD training
- Neonatal abstinence drug dependent babies (mandatory for all baby carers)
- PACE – Parents against Child Sexual exploitation
- Children in Care and their education
- Dyslexia Awareness (unison)
- Disability awareness
- TSD and LMS support drop in session with fostering Training coordinator Equality and Diversity training (via LMS) Life Story Work
- Sexual Health Awareness briefing
- Healthy lifestyles briefing - Information on Smoking and Second-hand Smoke, Food, Health and Eating Well
- Promoting the benefits of Physical Activity for Children and Young people (via LMS)
- Permanence - Moving On to Long term Fostering
- Helping children move onto adoption
- Disclosures, acting as an Appropriate Adult and PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act Training for Interviewing) Briefing
- Child specific training for children with disabilities and complex medical needs.
- Parent and child fostering
- Fostering for adoption

Foster carer support

Newly approved foster carers will be supported by their assessing social worker until their first review has taken place. This is to ensure that for their first placements, the new carer has support from someone who fully understands their background and capabilities. The worker will support the carer to complete their PPDP, TSDs and essential training during these first 12 months. After their first review, the carer will transfer to a supervising social worker (SSW) in the support team for the remainder of their fostering career.

All foster carers are required to sign a foster carer agreement and a separate supervision agreement. They are required to maintain a written log of the day to day care of the child and any events that have occurred. These should be handed to the supervising social workers at every supervision visit.

Foster carers are supervised on a 4-6 weekly basis. It is the SSW's responsibility to ensure the foster carer is providing the best possible standard of care to the child and an unannounced visit will take place at least once per year.

The Fostering Service values the work of foster carers and recognises that theirs is a complex, demanding and challenging task. Giving consistent, dedicated and appropriate

support to foster carers is, therefore, a high priority for the Fostering Service and this is achieved by:

- Ensuring every foster carer has their own dedicated supervising social worker who will visit them frequently to provide support, supervision, practical assistance and advice.
- Ensuring that in the absence of the supervising social worker the foster carer has access during office hours to the duty social worker and if necessary, to a fostering manager.
- Ensuring foster carers have access by telephone to support from qualified and experienced foster carers outside of office hours and can access advice and assistance from qualified social workers from the Emergency Duty Team.
- Buddying up inexperienced foster carers with experienced carers
- Offering regular support groups, and meet up events to enable foster carers to build up support networks
- Encouraging carers to identify support carers during assessment that they can be available to the carer if needed
- Offering additional advice and support from the service's psychotherapist if needed
- Offering frequent training to foster carers throughout the year thereby helping to build on skills and providing opportunity to meet with other carers.
- Enabling foster carers to meet with a manager from the Fostering Service to discuss any concerns
- Ensuring foster carers from the Black Ethnic Minority Communities have additional support as identified within the placement plan
- Informing foster carers how to access additional support and advice from Fostering under Newcastle and Foster Talk.
- Providing additional advice and support from one of the service's resource workers as needed.
- Recognising the achievements and contributions of our carers through our website, our newsletters and our annual Foster Carer Awards.

Fostering under Newcastle – FUN

FUN was developed and is run by a group of Newcastle City Council foster carers. The group has charitable status and aims to:

- work in partnership with children's services, giving carers a voice
- be a source of help, advice, support and practical assistance to foster carers
- raise public awareness about the work undertaken by foster carers
- work in partnership with the Fostering Service to help shape and develop our services.

FUN organise regular social activities for foster carers and children. They send regular newsletters to all members and holds support sessions for carers. The executive committee and the education and finance sub committees have regular meetings. The group invite a member of the fostering service (usually a fostering manager or our recruitment and engagement officer) regularly to these meetings to highlight any issues and input into service development.

Members of FUN are invited to attend or contribute to the discussions at the Child in Care Multi-Agency Partnership (CiCMAP) group which is also attended by the Service Manager for the fostering service.

Foster Talk

This service provides help and assistance to foster carers and advocates or mediates on their behalf if they are subject to an allegation or if they are unhappy with the decisions of the fostering service.

Foster Carer Reviews

Foster carers approval categories are reviewed at least annually to ensure the care foster carers provide meets the required fostering standards set out in the 'Fostering Services Regulations 2011'. Foster carers annual reviews are carried out independently of the Fostering Service by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and must consider whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable to foster.

The fostering service must make whatever enquiries it considers necessary to inform this judgement; which may include checks and further assessment in relation to any new members of the household.

A written report must be prepared, and in the case of the first annual review this must be presented to the fostering panel for a recommendation. If it is decided, taking account of any recommendation from the fostering panel if applicable, that the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable, then the foster carer must be notified in writing.

There is no requirement in the Regulations to refer changes or terminations of approval to panel for a recommendation. However, the fostering service provider is required to take account of any recommendation made by the fostering panel if the matter is referred to them. The decision will then be made by the Agency Decision Maker.

A determination to change a foster carer's terms of approval is not a qualifying determination if, following a review of the carer's approval under regulation 28:

- the foster carer provides their written agreement to the change and
- The fostering service provides the foster carer with a written statement setting out whether they consider the foster carer's household to have additional support needs as a result of the change, what these needs are and how they will be met.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)

The IRO's are managed independently of the Fostering Service and their role is to:

- Review all placements made and determine whether these have been appropriate in terms of the carer's capacity to meet the needs of each child.
- Provide reassurance to the families of children and young people in care that good care standards are being maintained and that the carer's performance is monitored independently of the Fostering Service.

Foster Carer resignations

A foster carer may, at any point give written notice that they wish to resign from their role. As such, their approval is automatically terminated 28 days after receipt of the notice by the fostering service (under regulation 28(13)).

Neither the ADM nor the fostering service have the power to decline a resignation. Instead, they can only offer advice; informing the carer that their resignation will automatically take effect after 28 days – regardless of whether the notice is then withdrawn.

Procedures for the investigation of allegations or complaints made against foster carers

The local authority has the responsibility for ensuring that children are protected from significant harm as defined by the Children Act 1989, and for the investigation of any allegation or report of significant harm. Foster carers understand the need for children to be protected from harm and the necessity for the speedy and thorough investigation of concerns.

If a child makes an allegation against a foster carer, the investigation of child protection concerns is conducted in accordance with Section 47 of the Children's Act and in compliance with the local procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). All child protection concerns are investigated independently of the Fostering Service to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. Currently the guidelines suggest that the Children Social Work Team will conduct the investigation, but the local authority may consider other arrangements, such as for example asking another local authority Children's Services to become involved, depending on the circumstances of the case.

Role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Working Together 2015 says that Local authorities should have designated officer, or team of officers (either as part of multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children. Any new appointments to such a role, other than current or former designated officers moving between local authorities, should be qualified social workers.

- Newcastle City Council has identified a designated officer (referred to as the LADO) to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases of allegations of

abuse made against those who work with children as set out in the Allegations against People who Work with Children Procedure.

- Their role is to give advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organizations; liaise with the Police and other agencies and monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible consistent with a thorough and fair process.

In relation to Fostering Services, it is an expectation of the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 that:

- A manager within the Fostering Service is identified to be the Designated Person who liaises with the LADO in all cases to which this procedure applies and manages the allegations against foster carer process;
- All staff within the Fostering Service are aware of the requirements of this procedure, including the role of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Any person who receives information or suspects that a child has suffered or is suffering Significant Harm in a foster placement must immediately inform the child's social worker or their manager.

On receipt of any such information, the child's social worker, or their team manager must immediately:

- Inform his or her team manager and service manager;
- Inform the LADO
- Inform the supervising social worker;
- Refer the matter to the relevant Assessment Team.

The supervising social worker will:

Inform the designated manager within the Fostering Service and, in consultation with the designated manager;

- Inform the social workers for any other child in the placement;
- Inform any other local authority with an interest in the foster placement.

The relevant Assessment Team must implement the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board's Inter Agency Procedures in relation to the allegation/suspicion. They will gather relevant background information and convene an Initial Evaluation Discussion.

Other investigative routes may be identified as more appropriate at this stage, for example, the complaints process, and should be considered as an alternative to a Section 47 Enquiry.

At this stage, the Regulatory Authority must be informed of the allegation/suspicion and the supervising social worker's manager must ensure that an invitation is sent to them to be represented at the Strategy Meeting.

In exceptional cases where immediate action may be necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child, the child's social worker and his or her manager may decide to request that a new placement be identified. Further information about the process of investigation allegations against carers can be found online at

<https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/contents.html>, under chapter 5.1.7: Allegations Against Foster Carers.

The local authority recognises the importance of providing foster carers with an appropriate level of support and advice during the process of a child protection investigation. Arrangements have been made to ensure that the foster carer will be provided with support and advocacy from an agency that is independent from the local authority so that no conflict of interest may arise. The supervising social worker from the Fostering Service will continue to liaise with the foster carer but will be unable to support the carer in an advocacy role until the investigation is completed. The support and advocacy service to foster carers is currently provided by Foster Talk, their contact details are available from the Fostering Service. Support and advice to foster carers is also available from FUN.

A child or young person may make a complaint that does not fall within the scope of the child protection guidelines. All children and young people in foster placements receive, if age appropriate, information about how to make a complaint using the formal People's Directorate complaints procedure. This is a three-stage process with an emphasis on early resolution. At stage 1 of the procedure, a manager (usually the fostering manager) will investigate the complaint. At stage 2 there is an independent investigation and a response from the Director for People. At stage 3 the complaint is reviewed by the Complaints Review Panel, which is chaired independently of the local authority. The outcome of any allegations made against foster carers will be reported to the Fostering Panel for consideration and recommendation.

The child's own social worker will help and advise them as necessary and they will also be provided access to and information about independent advocacy services.

The Placements and Services Provided by the Fostering Service

Types of Placement Provision:

Emergency Placements

Some placements are made at times of crisis for families or when a child's safety can only be achieved by providing foster care. Sometimes the children and young people in emergency foster placements are subject to Police Protection Orders, or Interim Care Orders. These placements are coordinated by the Placements Service who receives detailed information about the personal history and needs of the child or young person from the child's social worker. The Placements Service liaises with the social worker, the foster carer and the Fostering Service to ensure the identified foster placement is suitable for the child. If there is no suitable in-house provision available, The Placement Service will liaise with the child's social worker, Senior Management and the Mini Competitions team to secure an appropriate placement.

Respite placements

Respite placements enable carers to take a short break from caring responsibilities while they tackle a serious problem, resolve a crisis, have a health need attended to, or take a much-needed break. Children and young people may also need a break from their usual placement for some other reason. The pros and cons of respite should be identified and assessed by the child's social worker in conjunction with the supervising social worker before a request for respite is made to the Placements Services.

Short breaks for children with disabilities

The service provides short break foster care for families with children with disabilities. The children spend most of their time living at home with their families, but they also have short stays with foster carers – anything from a few hours to a few days. This provides both the children or young people and their families with a break.

Short Term Foster Care

Children who cannot remain at home on a temporary or a long-term basis, will usually be placed initially in a short-term placement while plans are being made for their longer-term future. Short term foster care does not offer the child long term stability, so it is important that an alternative plan is progressed as soon as possible. If the child is settled and cannot, for safety reasons, return to their family permanently, the short-term foster carer may be approached and asked if they would consider caring for the child longer term. This may be through a Special Guardianship Order or by providing a long-term foster placement. If this is not possible, an alternative long-term placement will need to be sought.

Long term foster care

Children in long term foster care are usually subject to Care Orders. When the care plans are being made for a child, the need for a long-term placement is identified. If the child cannot be matched long term with their short-term foster carer, the service will attempt to identify an alternative long-term placement.

The Fostering Service recruits, trains and approves some of its foster carers to provide long term care. When the need for a long-term placement is identified in the care plan, the social worker for the child makes a referral to the long-term family finder, a supervising social worker within the fostering service. A referral meeting is held to advise the Fostering Service of the child or young person's personal history and individual needs.

The long-term family finder will then strive to identify an appropriate placement for the child. Once a match has been identified, the Fostering Service completes a comprehensive assessment to provide information about the prospective long-term carers to the Fostering Panel. In addition, the child's social worker provides a matching report. The Panel considers the needs of the child or young person, looks at the skills, abilities and experience of the proposed foster carers and either recommends or does not recommend the match. It is the Agency Decision Maker who makes the final decision about whether a long-term match should go ahead.

Black Minority Ethnic Matches

Newcastle Fostering Service endeavours to match the needs of children with appropriate foster carers and to ensure that as many children as possible are fostered within the service and within the boundaries of Newcastle. From time to time it is not possible to place a child from a specific black minority ethnic community with a foster carer of the same ethnicity. When this happens, we hope to be able to provide the child and their foster carer with appropriate support and advice so that the child's assessed needs can be met.

Staying Put

Since May 2014, fostered young people in England have had the right to stay with their foster families after they reach 18 years of age (as long as both parties agree) under a Staying Put arrangement. A Staying Put arrangement has a specific meaning in legislation. It refers to the situation when a young person, who has been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, remains living with the foster carer with whom they were placed when they turned 18. It is the young person and their foster carer who make the joint decision to establish the arrangement, based on their commitment to each other.

Staying Put is referred to as an 'arrangement' to differentiate it from a foster 'placement'. The young person staying put is no longer a child in care after they reach 18 years of age. They are a young adult and a care leaver. They are entitled to support as a care leaver up to the age of 25 and will be allocated a personal advisor. A staying put arrangement is governed by the care leavers' legislation and statutory guidance rather than the fostering services regulations.

Build a Future

Build a Future is one of the services specialist schemes and is aimed at supporting children who are living in residential homes or who have complex needs and on the cusp of requiring residential services.

A Build a Future placement provides the child with a safe and therapeutic environment to grow and develop. Build a Future carers are supported by a dedicated team and are provided with bespoke training and support. Build a Future provides a unique challenge to

carers and the support and financial package attached to this scheme have been developed to reflect this.

Family, friends or connected persons foster carers

A connected person is a person who is a relative, friend or someone who is significant to the child in some other way. This may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a child minder, teacher or youth worker. A relative is defined in the Children Act 1989 as a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership and step-parents.

Family and friends foster carers who are caring for a child at the request of the local authority are provided with support, including financial support, to help them meet the child's day to day needs. All connected carers will be offered bespoke training, advice and guidance to help them care for the child.

Before this type of placement can be made, a visit will be undertaken to carry out a viability assessment and all family and friends' applicants will be provided with guidance about the assessment process, and what this means in relation to approving them as carers. This is to enable them to make an informed decision on whether to proceed. If all parties agree, a full assessment can be progressed. The assessment of the connected person may be undertaken while the child resides in short term foster care. It is sometimes in the child's best interests to be placed with the connected persons before a full assessment has been carried out. In these circumstances, temporary approval will need to be sought and if agreed, the child can move in while the assessment is being undertaken. The assessment should be completed within 16 weeks and presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation. An Agency Decision will then be made (please also see section on the Fostering Panel). In exceptional circumstances, an 8-week extension can be agreed by the fostering panel but the final decision needs to be made within 24 weeks.

Parent and child placements

On occasions it may be appropriate to place both the parent and child together into a foster placement while further assessments are undertaken. These placements are referred to as parent and child placements. Carers who take parent and child placements are expected to be experienced foster carers with the relevant skills and accommodation.

Community Fostering Scheme

The Community Fostering Scheme works with the child's social worker to help maintain the child in their own family home. If the child has already been placed in foster care, they help to reunify the child with their own family if this is the plan. The foster carers in the scheme are skilled and experienced at engaging with children and their families and in helping them to achieve their goals. The scheme ensures that there is always someone there to listen to the child and to put their wishes and choices at the forefront of any decisions that are made.

Foster carers working for the scheme have regular supervision with a dedicated social worker from the Fostering Service who is also the coordinator of the scheme. They meet regularly for group supervision and to share their experiences and learning.

Supported Lodgings Scheme

The service's Supported Lodgings scheme aims to give young people, aged between 16 and 21, good quality accommodation together with the security and support that living with a responsible adult can offer. There are lots of reasons why young people need supported lodgings. It could be that they have experienced a family breakdown or have recently left full time care and are not ready to live on their own.

The scheme provides a stepping stone for young people to help them learn the skills to live independently. Supported Lodgings carers need to:

- have a spare room
- provide two meals a day, typically breakfast and an evening meal
- offer a young person support and understanding

Children's Placements

Placement Plan and Child's Care Plan

A Placement Planning Meeting must take place within 72 hours of a child being placed to plan the placement and consider the placement plan. The placement plan forms part of the child's care plan and should, whenever possible, be drawn up before the child is placed (regulation 9 (2) of the 2010 regulations). The placement plan sets out in detail how the placement meets the child's needs as set out in the care plan. The Foster Carers should play an active role in agreeing the contents of the child's placement plan and must have a copy of the child's placement plan (Standard 31). An effective placement plan will ensure that the foster carer receives essential information about the child, including his or her health, educational and emotional needs, how these may affect the child day to day and appropriate strategies for responding to these needs.

It will also include information about significant events in the child's care history. Schedule 2 of the 2010 Regulations sets out the matters which must be included in the placement plan and relevant statutory guidance is included in Volume 2. Where it is not possible to draw up a placement plan prior to placement, it must be completed within five working days of the start of the placement.

Delegated authority

The Government is clear that foster carers should be authorised to make everyday decisions about their fostered child wherever possible within the legal framework. Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) 2010, Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and associated statutory guidance, which came into force in April 2011, underline the importance of social workers liaising closely with parents, children and foster carers from the start of a foster placement. Delegated authority is the process that enables foster carers to make common sense, everyday decisions about the children and young people they care for, such as signing consent forms for school trips, arranging hair-cuts and visits to friends.

Holders of parental responsibility can delegate authority to foster carers to undertake such tasks and decisions. Foster carers never have parental responsibility for a fostered child, so they can only take decisions about the fostered child where that authority has been delegated to them by the local authority and/or the parents. Delegated authority should be completed at the placement planning meeting and reviewed with the child's care plan on a regular basis.

Safe Care Policies

Approved foster carers are required to sign their agreement to a household specific safe care policy. In addition to this, every child in placement should have an individual safe care policy that is completed within 5 working days of the placement starting. The policy should be drafted by the supervising social worker who will gather the necessary information from the child's social worker. All parties will then need to sign their agreement to the policies which will thereafter be kept under review and revised as circumstances change.

Review of Children's plans

All children in foster placements have an allocated social worker who visits the child regularly. Their care plan is regularly reviewed to make sure they are well supported. These are statutory responsibilities.

Annual Child in Care awards

The service encourages all carers and social workers to recognise the positive contributions and achievements attained by children in care through the annual Child in Care awards. This event is a celebratory event and carers, social workers and managers are expected to attend to support the children and young people in our care.

Our Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers

Newcastle City Council has committed itself to adhering to the Children's Pledge and continues to monitor and review its processes in respect of consultation with carers, children and young people. Newcastle's Pledge to children in care and care leavers can be found below:

Being in Care

We will work together to make sure that you get the best care possible. We will include you in this, so you have the information you need, when you need it. We will find you the right placement and help you to be safe and active.

Having a say on what you think

We promise to listen to what you say and will make sure you know what is happening. We will make sure you know all the ways your voice is heard and how you can help build your individual care plan.

Education

We know that good education gives you the best opportunities in life. We will support you to reach your educational potential and plan for the future. We will shape education that helps you reach your aspirations.

Health

Your health is important to us. We will work closely with you to help you access local services that will support your physical, emotional and mental health.

Leisure

We will support you take part in hobbies and activities that you enjoy and help you to take part in new experiences.



Achievements

We want to celebrate your achievements with you and help you to inspire other children in care and the people around you.

Contact with Families/Friends

Contact with your birth family should be in your best interest and we will review this regularly, making sure we involve you in any discussions. We will also work to help you access your friends and communities wherever possible.

Your Future

We have huge ambitions for you and want to match your aspirations on every step of your journey. We have teams dedicated to supporting you to make the right educational, training and employment options and will help you make the start to adult life you deserve.

Social Workers

Our Social Workers will get to know you and will strive to make sure you are well supported. This is our promise to you, and we will work with you to achieve this.

The Fostering Team

The Fostering Team is divided into 5 sections and each section has a dedicated manager as follows:

1. Support and Long-Term Matching
2. BAF, Short Breaks, Supported Lodgings and Support
3. Recruitment, Assessment, Training and Support
4. Family and Friends and SGO
5. Placements Team

The Team Managers are managed by Deborah Anderson, Registered Manager, Fostering and Adoption. Paul Lundie, interim Service Manager, Corporate Parenting, oversees the Registered Manager and the Placements Team.

All Team Managers act as duty manager and panel advisor on a rota basis.

The fostering service has 38 workers which include:

5 x senior practitioners

1 x psychotherapist

1 x Recruitment and Engagement officer

1 x Training Coordinator

1 x dedicated Community Fostering worker

1 x dedicated Short Break Worker

1 x dedicated Supported Lodgings Worker

2 x resources workers

1 x Service Improvement Assistant.

The fostering service receives support from a dedicated team of Business Support Officers

A full Fostering Team Structure Chart has been included at the end of this Statement of Purpose.

Working Together - Partnership support for foster carers

The Fostering Team works in partnership with colleagues from the Council's Children, Education and Skills Directorate, Health, and other independent agencies to support the Foster Carers and the children in placement.

Designated Teachers

Every school has a designated teacher for children in care.

Independent visitors

Children have access to Independent visitors; trained volunteers who will visit children at their request and advocate on their behalf.

16+ Team

As a child approaches their 16th birthday, they will be allocated a social worker from the 16+ team. The 16+ team prepare children in foster placements to take the next steps towards independence. Working alongside their carers, the team help the children to develop independent living skills and to access training, employment or further education opportunities.

Children with Disabilities Team

Children with disabilities may have an allocated social worker from the Children with Disabilities (CWD) team. This team can provide advice, guidance and support to families and foster carers caring for children with disabilities and complex health needs.

Distribution of this Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose is available to the public through the Foster a Future website. Hard copies are also available and can be provided as needed to:

- Foster carers and prospective foster carers
- Children in Care
- Social Workers, professional colleagues and key partners
- parents and family members of a child cared for in a foster placement

Copies are available from the Fostering Service upon request. Contact details are:

Foster a Future, Floor 3, Allendale Road Depot, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 2SZ,
Phone (0191) 277 2430

A summary of the Statement of Purpose is available in community languages and in Braille upon request.

Consultation

Newcastle's Fostering Service welcomes any feedback you might wish to give after reading this Statement of Purpose. You can make your views known by passing them to your social worker or by contacting one of the managers from the Fostering Service. Your views are important to us and help us to improve our services.

Foster Carer's Comments

"Any little help I can provide gives me great satisfaction and seeing a smile appear on a child's face is the most wonderful reward a carer can receive. I would strongly urge everybody to consider some type of fostering. The skills we acquire throughout life are the most important gifts we can pass onto the next generation."

Helen, foster carer and retired teacher

"My name is Kerry and when I was around 14 when I decided I was going to be a foster carer. I had family and family friends who fostered. I wanted to do it better! When my girls where 5 and 6 they told me about a girl in class who was fostered then adopted, they asked was this what I wanted to do help kids get forever family's I told them it was and they said let's do it, so we did.

It's at times been a bumpy ride and nothing can prepare you for it. But seeing the kids come out of it at the other end is worth every second. I found out I was stronger than I thought and I wouldn't have it any other way".

Kerry, Foster Carer

"The programme you go on is very direct and to the point. It is explicit about what might take place, but this was brilliant as I was able to prepare for the worst, which has never actually happened. There have been bad times, but we've always found a way round and I have 24/7 support if ever I need it."

Being a foster parent is a privilege. You get an extended family that you can be proud of, a very fulfilling and rewarding life and I would wholeheartedly recommend it to others, especially those from a BME background like me. I consider myself a very fortunate woman."

Sarah, Foster Carer

"I can pick up the phone at any time to get whatever support I need from the Council, whether this is advice, medical help or just to have someone to talk to. It's never lonely and the benefits far outweigh the challenges.

"I consider myself extremely lucky. Nowadays I get to meet the adoptive parents when the handover takes place. While it is of course painful, I get to see how much the child will be loved and meet lovely new people. Best of all, where they want to stay in touch we do so and I have many children who see me as a grandparent type figure, which makes me happy."

Margaret, foster carer, MBE

“Since registering I've welcomed five young people into my home, including two staying with me right now. It's gone extremely well and there's plenty of support should I ever need it”.

Melissa, Supported Lodgings

Children's Comments

“I lived at Jane's house for five years. Sometimes I was cheeky, and I ran away a few times. Jane helped me and talked to me a lot. She helped me go to school and learn things. When I was 16, I left Jane and went back to my mam. Jane gave me lots of help and really cared for me.

I am now on a training scheme and it's good. I still go and see Jane sometimes. I like to talk to her about things that are going on for me now.”

John

“I have been in my placement with Karen for four years. I didn't know what to expect when I came in to care. I was very scared and sad, but Karen was

very good. She listened to me and explained why I couldn't be with my mam and dad. Karen was always there when I wanted to talk. She helped me a lot.”

Adam

“I am going to be with Janice for a long time maybe until I'm 21! I like being here because Janice looks after me and helps me a lot. I didn't know what to expect when I came to live here. I am happy here although I miss my mam sometimes”.

Paul

“I was just seven years old when I was placed with Sarah and it was difficult at first. I was very nervous, but my sister was there so that gave me some reassurance.

Thankfully the fostering team have always been close by and they continue to be on hand whenever I need help and guidance.

You don't need to be nervous or disruptive. You might feel like rebelling but think twice because everyone is there to support you and ensure you have everything you need. They just want you to do well. Our Foster Carer has looked out brilliantly for us and we continue to enjoy being part of a loving and supportive home.”

Anthony

“My advice to children and young people being offered a foster placement is to stick with it, get your education and listen to what people advise because actually all they want is for you to do well. Finally, keep an open mind and concentrate on your future, not what's happened. There's so much you can achieve.”

Chelsea

Name and Address of Regulatory Body

OFSTED
National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Address of Fostering Service Provider

Foster a Future
3rd Floor, Allendale Road Depot, Byker
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2SZ
Telephone: 0191 2772430

The Responsible Individual

Jayne Forsdike, Assistant Director of Childrens Social Care
Fourth Floor
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8QH

Agency Decision Makers

Paul Lundie
Interim Service Manager Corporate Parenting
Newcastle City Council
Allendale Road
Byker
NE6 2SZ

Kim Brown
Principle Advisor
Fourth Floor
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge

Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8QH
Lead Fostering Manager

Deborah Anderson
Newcastle City Council
Allendale Road
Byker
NE6 2SZ
Telephone: 2772430

Useful Contacts

The Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street London
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 020 7783 8330
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Childline provided by the NSPCC

Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London
EC2A 3NH
Call free on 08001111

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Foster a Future Fostering Service

Paul Lundie

Interim Service Manager

Deborah Anderson

Registered Manager Fostering and Adoption

Placements Team

Placements Specialists

John Walker
Ellen Tate

Placements Business Support

Rob Dorn
Sarah Shaw
Emma Mason
Clare Gill

Permanence Team

Senior Practitioners

Maggie Mensah
Sarah Croft
Ross Summerly-Smith

Fostering Team Manager

Shauna Garrett

Fostering Team Manager

Marie Robinson

Fostering Team Manager

Jayne Saul

Fostering Team Manager

Victoria Johnson

Service Improvement Assistant

Louise Marshall

Family and Friends/SGO Team

Senior Practitioner

Claire Bryden

Social Workers

Joanne Curran
Kevin Hugman
Jayne Adamson
Nicola Whitehill
Catherine Croney
Lyndsey Winskill

Community Fostering

Emma Mortimer

Support Team

Senior Practitioner

Sandra Quinnin

SSWs

Sarah Quinn
Vacancy
Angela Hogan
Jayne Drew-Zardis
Sarah Booth
Rebecca Hatton (mat)
Sarah Clymer
Susan Hamilton
Amanda Harland

BAF Team

Lewis Roberts
(Senior Practitioner)
Kate Purdy
(Psychotherapist)
Wesley Mills
(Resource Worker)

Support Team SSWs

Nelly Hakizimana
Lauren Varney
Esther Ekeng
Clare Stuart
(Resource Worker)

Short Breaks

Leslie-Ann Fawole

Supported Lodgings

Graham Clark
(Senior Practitioner)

Recruitment Team

Charlotte Goodall
(senior Practitioner)
Sam Cornforth
(Recruitment and Engagement Officer)

Assessment team

Claire Fairington
Amy Graham
Rhiannon Studholme
Ruth Foster
Stephanie Patterson
Louisa Atkinson (mat)

Training Officer

Heather Parkin

Fostering Business Support

Lyn Lovell (Panel)
Marie Walker
Chris Baker
Katherine Swinney
Rachael Hunter
Megan Rowe
SGO/CAP Panel
Rosie MacGregor
Lesley Collins
Adoption
Karen Walsh

If you would like to make a comment, suggestion or make a complaint please contact:

**Complaints and Customer Relations Team
Children's Services Directorate
Freepost RSXR-YGCJ-KKHK
Newcastle City Council
Civic Centre
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 8QH**

Phone: 0191 277 7427 (9.30am – 3.30pm weekdays)

Email: complaintschildrens@newcastle.gov.uk

www.newcastle.gov.uk

