

KIRKLEES FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

(regs.3 & 4 Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011)

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

Our statement of purpose sets out the aims and objectives of Kirklees Council's Fostering Service. It shows how the welfare of children and young people will be met and how good outcomes will be achieved for all children in care in Kirklees.

Placement with Kirklees Local Authority foster carers is the preferred choice for the majority of children and young people who are unable to live with their birth parents or relatives. We provide a range of placements and support, working with a child centred approach, meeting both short term needs as well as providing more permanent placements with families when this is in the best interest of the child.

We want an effective, high quality child centred approach delivered through our in house Foster Care Service. It is a core objective in Kirklees' strategy for improving outcomes for children and young people. We seek to ensure that our placement within our local communities where possible.

The recruitment of, and support for Foster Carers, is a core activity for Kirklees Council, and we undertake this with great care, commitment and professionalism.

Tom Brailsford

Service Director

Resources, Improvement and Partnerships

Introduction

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011. This requires fostering agencies to produce a Statement of Purpose which will be a useful source of information to staff, foster carers, parents of the children and young people who are Looked After by Kirklees Council and placed in foster care. It also explains the facilities and services of the Fostering Service which are delivered in accordance with fostering legislation and regulatory frameworks including:

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and 2015

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011

Foster Carer Charter 2011

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 and 2015

Children Act 1989

Disability and Equality Act 2010

Human Rights Act 1998

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for Foster Carers

The Statement of Purpose sets out the aims, objectives, values and principles of Kirklees Council Fostering Service. We place great emphasis on working with children and their families to promote and maintain stability, safety and security for looked after children and young people in Kirklees.

We look to support our children's right to have a family life where they can form and maintain effective relationships, fulfil their potential and achieve the best possible outcomes within a stable, caring and encouraging environment.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually and is available to all members of staff, foster carers, children and birth parents and is publicly available on our fostering website. A copy of this statement is accessible to Ofsted and the Kirklees Fostering Network. It is included in the Foster Carers' Handbook.

Organisation and Structure

- The Fostering Service is part of Resources, Improvement and Partnerships within the Kirklees Directorate for Children and Young People.
- The role of the Service is to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers including kinship Carers, who are referred to as Connected Person or Friends & Family Carers.
- The Manager of the Fostering Service is responsible to the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and is part of the Children's Management Team (see Structure Chart).

- **Structure of the Service**

Director for Children and Young People

Mel Meggs

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Service Director - Resources, Improvement and Partnerships

Tom Brailsford

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Head of Corporate Parenting

Steve Comb

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Service Manager - Fostering

Andy Quinlan

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5 Fostering Team Managers

Rob Taylor – Mockingbird Project and Fostering Advisors

Angela Wray and Niav Cassin – Supervisory Social Workers

Rachel Head and Andrew Parkinson – Assessment Team (Form F and Connected Persons)

Where to find us

- The Director is based on the 1st Floor, Civic Centre 3, High Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2YZ.
- The Service Director is based on the 1st Floor, Civic Centre 3, High Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2YZ
- The Fostering Service is based within the Placement, Permanence & Support Service, Ground Floor, Civic Centre 1, High Street, HD1 2NF. The telephone number is 01484 221000 and the email address is PPSS.FosteringBSO@kirklees.gov.uk
- Based on this site are the Duty and Advice Service, the Assessment and Intervention Service, the Looked after Children and Care Leavers Service and we are co-located with One Adoption West Yorkshire.

Facilities

- The building has a shared main reception for all services. There is a shared telephone number/switch board.
- The Office is open from 8.45 – 5.15 (Mon – Thurs) Fri 8.45 – 4.45.
- There is ample public parking available within walking distance and access to the building for people with a disability.
- An answer phone service is available out of office hours. There is also a free phone service for fostering enquiries on 0800 389 0086.
- Information and enquiries about fostering can be made via the web site at www.kirklees.gov.uk/fostering or go to Kirklees Council and search for Fostering.

- The Emergency Duty Service provides an out of hours service for contact in an emergency on 01484 456848.
- There is also Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN) who provide a 24/7 Service, 365 days a year dedicated support service for carers on 07866 635147.

Staffing

The Service Manager, Andy Quinlan, manages the Fostering Service. There are five Team Managers- Rob Taylor, Angela Wray, Niav Cassin, Rachel Head & Andrew Parkinson

- 1 x Mockingbird & Fostering Advisors Manager
- 2 x Supervisory Team Managers
- 2 x Assessment Team Managers (Connected Persons and Form F)
- The Business Support Team which includes Panel Business Support is managed by a designated Business Support Manager, Susan Thompson.
- All the Managers and Social Workers are registered with Social Work England and are professionally qualified. All Managers and Social Workers hold a relevant social work qualification (CQSW, DipSW or Bachelor Degrees in Social Work).
- The Service Manager, Andy Quinlan, was initially in post since as an Interim Manager from May 2019 and was appointed as permanent Service Manager following interview in October 2019. He was one of the Connected Person's Assessment Team Managers prior to this appointment. Andy has over 29 years' experience as a Qualified Social Worker, 15 years of these as a Team Manager in Children's Services within Child Protection, before joining the Fostering Team

in January 2015. He holds a CQSW and a PG Diploma in Applied Social Studies and a Certificate and Diploma in Management Studies.

- The Team Managers have been in childcare in a range from eleven years to over thirty years respectively and hold relevant social work qualifications.

In March 2020 in order to develop a Mockingbird project, there was a reconfiguration of the fostering management structure. The new structure is as follows:

Mockingbird Development Manager and Fostering Advisor Manager holds a BA (Hons) degree in Community Studies, CQSW and has completed the NNEB course Introduction to Management and has completed an ILM Diploma in Management Course. He also holds the Certificate in Youth and Community Work. He has over 20 years' experience in a Fostering setting as both a Social Worker and Team Manager.

Supervisory Team - The first Team Manager holds a BSc (Hons) in Social Science and CQSW obtained 1993. Fostering Team Manager since May 2019. Prior to this Supervisor Social Worker and Adoption Social Worker since 2000 with Kirklees council. Before joining Kirklees experienced in child protection social work.

In terms of the two Supervisory Teams the second Team Manager has a BA in Social Work. She also has a Certificate in Youth & Community Work, an ILM Diploma in Management, a Diploma in Childcare, a PGCE and a PG Diploma in Leadership in Health & Social Care. She has extensive experience in Youth Work and in managing an Adult Placement/Shared Lives Scheme, where she was the Registered Manager. Within Fostering, as from June 2014, she has experience in Recruitment & Retention and Connected Persons Assessments Team in the capacity of Team Manager.

- One of the Connected Person's Team Managers has 12 years' experience as a Qualified Social Worker, He has worked as a Social Worker in a Looked After Children's Team, in the Supervisory Team in Fostering, as well as undertaking the role of Assistant Team Manager in Adoption, before moving on to Senior Practitioner in the Connected Persons Assessment Team. He holds a BA Hons Degree in Social Work, a Post qualifying Practice Educator Certificate, stage 1 & 2, a Certificate in Management Studies and a Coaching Certificate.
- The second Manager holds a BSC Hons in Social Work and she has experience since qualifying in Care Management as a Social Worker, as Safeguarding lead in a high school, in Fostering Recruitment, Connected Persons Team, both as support and assessing Social Worker, before gaining her position as a Connected Persons Assessment Team Manager.

Other staff in the service

Reviewing Officer – we now have a Reviewing Officer who undertakes the reviews of our foster carers, bringing an independence to our reviewing structure. This worker will be moving to the Child Protection and Review Unit, to allow greater independence.

Panel advisor – this is a part time post, offering advice and quality assurance to our fostering panels.

Aims of the Service

- To provide continuously improving quality placements with foster carers for all those children and young people where it is assessed as being in their best interests to be cared for in a family setting
- To recruit foster carers who can meet the assessed needs of the children requiring placement and who reflect the cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic background of the children placed with them.

- As part of Children's Services, to assist looked after children and care leaving young people within Kirklees to improve their life chances and outcomes. This involves working with colleagues within the Directorate multi-agency networks involved with children and young people.

Objectives

- For most children and young people who become Looked After, a fostering placement will be the first choice of placement unless an assessment indicates that a particular child's needs cannot be met in this way.
- To assess and where appropriate, approve relatives or close family friends as carers for children of all ages where this is seen to be in the best interest of the child.
- To recruit foster carers where children can be sufficiently close to their homes to enable them to retain important links, whether this be to family, school, or friends.
- To ensure that a child's physical and emotional health care needs are met and that a positive healthy lifestyle is encouraged to enable each child to develop.
- The Placement Support Team is a multi-agency team with access to Camhs Practitioners who work directly with foster carers and looked after children to achieve positive mental, psychological and emotional wellbeing.
- To ensure that all our children are achieving to the highest standard educationally. Our foster carers receive support and guidance from the Virtual Headteacher and dedicated practitioners in this service.
- We work to an equal opportunities' framework and all carers embrace these principles.
- Carers are treated as fellow professionals and are an important part of the team caring for the children and payment levels reflect their skill and experience.

- Regular audits identify any gaps in provision and the marketing strategy enables the Service to target and prioritise areas of greatest need.
- If children have to be placed with carers who do not reflect their background, carers and children will be given the support and advice to enable them to retain their identity.
- To obtain regular feedback from young people in placement about the service they receive, in advance of their Foster Carers' Review and when they leave the placement.
- A Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering Service is allocated for each carer and is responsible for ensuring that the care offered is of a good standard.
- Annual reviews of carers are used to evaluate their experiences, skills and any required changes to their profiles.
- Regular meetings take place with representatives from the Kirklees Fostering Network. (The support group set up by and for Kirklees foster carers).
- The Service pays the membership fee to the Fostering Network for each carer, with a view to ensuring that they receive up to date information about the national developments in the fostering service. The Fostering Network also provides advice and support around e.g. mortgages, insurance, tax etc.
- There are clear safeguarding procedures for the investigation of any allegations against a carer and these are set out in the procedures manual for staff and foster carers.
- The staff within the Service are qualified, experienced in working with children, committed to developing a quality service, and themselves receive regular supervision and annual appraisal.

Principles and Core Values

- The principles and core values within the Fostering Service are driven by improving the life chances for all our looked after children and Care Leavers.
- The welfare of the child is paramount. A child centred approach is central to the recruitment and training of carers and in making placements. The child's needs in relation to ethnicity, culture, language, gender and disability are taken into account.
- The service aims to make a range of foster carers available to ensure that placements to be well-matched and to thereby minimise the moves children may experience.
- Payments to foster carers should be at a level that will support recruitment and retention strategies. Foster carers should be appropriately rewarded for their time and commitment in line with their skills, identified in their approval profile.
- The Looked after Children paperwork and assessments assist in monitoring service provision and outcomes. They are actively used in placement planning meetings to ensure that the needs of the children are met.
- Independent Fostering Agencies should be a placement option for children who could benefit from fostering and where in-house provision is not available. We actively work with our Commissioning Department to ensure we achieve the best outcomes for our children as well as obtaining value for money.
- If carers provide a placement for greater numbers of children than they are approved for we would complete an amendment to profile document.
- If a carer is being considered for more children than within their approval profile or above the limit of three children, this is discussed in detail and potential risks assessed with the Team Manager. This includes consideration of the needs of the children already placed and their views as part of the decision-making process.

An out of profile or exemption document is completed and this is signed and agreed by the Service Manager and should be presented to panel within 3 months if the child is still in placement.

- If an exemption is required, written consent is obtained from the Service Manager or in their absence, the Head of Service. Any exemption is reported to the next available Fostering Panel. The action required within 7 days of agreeing an exemption is set out in Regulation 23 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- Foster Carers' Terms of Approval can only be amended following a review as outlined in Regulation 28 of the Fostering Regulations (England) 2011 and updated in the 2013 amended Regulations.
- Foster Carers are provided with the standard equipment necessary to provide the service.
- If specialist equipment or adaptations are required to meet that child's need, this will be considered by the Service Manager who will assess the application in line with budgetary restrictions and if necessary, refer to the Head of Service. Such requests are assessed by the Occupational Therapist in the Disabled Children's Service.
- Foster Carers have access to a prompt and responsive supervision and support service. This includes support from the Multi-Agency Placement Support Team.
- All foster carers receive preparation and assessment prior to approval. On-going training and support are seen as essential to their development and ability to meet the needs of children.
- There should be compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care and with the legislative/DOH guidance framework within which the service operates. Foster carers are also required to complete the TSD (Training Support Development) workbooks in their first year of practice.

- Consultation with foster carers will contribute to decisions about service developments.
- Those making enquiries or applications to foster should receive a prompt, courteous and efficient response.
- There are clear written policy statements covering all aspects of service provision and the regular Newsletter to all our Foster Carers is designed to keep them informed and to exchange information.
- The Service's performance against policy and objectives is monitored and subject to a process of continuous improvement.
- Links are maintained with professional bodies in the field of family placement in order to keep abreast of professional and legal changes. We have corporate membership of Coram/ BAAF and Fostering Network.
- There is consultation with fostered children though liaison with the Children's Rights and Participation Service and other means as appropriate – including the young people's website. Young People who are placed in Foster Care take part in the delivery of Skills to Foster Training; they are part of the Assessment process and their feedback helps in decision making in the area of recruitment.
- Our Pledge has been developed by the Children's Rights Team. It is a promise to the looked after Child from Kirklees.
- A partnership with the Kirklees Fostering Network is developed and maintained through regular meetings.
- Appropriate out of hours support is available to foster carers and children.
- We have a range of support group for all those involved with the Fostering service.

- There is an immediate investigation of an allegation or complaint against a carer in line with the authority's Safeguarding Procedures to ensure the safety of that and any other child placed.
- All carers have independent support offered via the Fostering Network or Foster Talk.
- Carers are made aware of the Safeguarding Procedures that will be followed.
- Any carer wishing to adopt a child in placement with them is given due consideration and the same initial process is followed as with other applicants wishing to adopt via One Adoption West Yorkshire.

Services Provided

Staff in the Fostering Service are responsible for the recruitment, training, supervision and support of all the foster carers who offer a range of placements.

All carers are provided with a range of training and are expected to complete the TSD Workbook within the first year of approval and attend training which enables them to progress through the skills levels.

All carers are able to access Kirklees Employee Healthcare Services.

Procedures and Processes for Recruiting, Approving, Training, Supervising, Supporting and Reviewing Carers

- We have 4 members of staff involved in our recruitment of foster carers. Three are fostering advisors and one member of staff involved in marketing and communication
- Three Assessing Social Workers undertake Form F assessments and are part of the Assessment Team.
- A Marketing Strategy is in place and continually updated to meet the current needs of the children of Kirklees. Recruitment is the core activity of this team and is

targeted towards the changing needs of Children in Care and service developments as required.

- A range of recruitment activities are used to attract Carers including adverts, floor stickers, shopping centre screens, fostering leaflet stands, articles and 'real life' stories from approved foster carers in the local press, DVD's, special events, information drop in sessions, promoted posts on Facebook, council owned media, alongside various activities with the Kirklees Fostering Network. Developing links with the local community and local businesses and schools. We also have a number of unique selling points to attract potential Foster Carers.
- Retention activities are also a core activity of this team. These include: co-facilitating Foster Carer Support Groups; organizing and facilitating the 'Celebration/Awards Event' during Foster Carers' Fortnight, to mark the milestones within Foster Carers careers, as well as an annual 'Thank You Event' for all Foster Carers; Partnership working with Huddersfield Giants in securing free season tickets for fostering households; working collaboratively with KFN to facilitate family activity days and ensuring that foster carers are kept abreast of service developments through the Foster Carer Newsletter.
- We work closely with the KFN, informing them of campaigns and in relation to supporting Skills to Foster Training.
- The fostering webpages are regularly reviewed and updated and include experiences of our approved foster carers, anonymized profiles of children and brief outlines of the fostering process. Enquirers can contact the team online or via a Freephone telephone number. We also are part of 'You can Foster' which is regional collaborative and we obtain enquiries through their holding page.
- The fostering pages of the Kirklees website includes DVDs, including one basic introduction to fostering and others of a foster family sharing their experiences of fostering. DVD's are constantly being produced and renewed and are used for

training purposes and at events too. Our unique selling points are about to be added to the website, as is a list of events we are holding for the year.

- Applications are welcomed from anyone who can meet the required foster carer competencies and have a sufficient level of literacy and language skills to meet the requirements of the TSD Workbook.
- Foster carers also need a sufficient level of literacy and language skills to be able to advocate for the children in their care.
- Due to the demands of fostering it would usually be expected that applicants have sufficient life experience to carry out the required tasks. There may be exceptions to this rule when applicants are seeking to care for a specific child (family and friends care).
- Smoking is discouraged and smokers will not be considered for children under the age of 5 or children of any age who have respiratory or heart problems. We can re-assess if the applicants have then given up for at least a year and would want to foster children under 5 years of age.
- There is no upper age limit, but all applicants must be sufficiently healthy and active to be able to offer care to a child.
- Applications are welcomed from people regardless of marital or employment status, gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural background, disability or sexuality.
- There is an immediate exclusion for anyone who has been convicted of an offence against a child or a serious offence against an adult.
- All enquirers are able to speak to a Fostering Advisor within the Recruitment Team about their interest in fostering and to gain more information about becoming a foster carer. The Fostering Advisors run a Duty Service Monday to Friday during normal working hours.

- During this initial contact call (Expression of Interest) there is an information exchange, so we ask a number of standard questions to help us build up a picture of the enquirer, in line with GDPR we request permission to access any records that we may hold on them, if permission is granted then we can progress with the enquiry. They are able to ask questions of us and we can outline the fostering task and the process. At this stage the enquirer may just request the Information Booklet to consider. This Booklet covers all the types of family placement and the tasks and expectations required of a foster carer. If so, this can be sent out and the call will be NFA'd (no further action) and followed up with a letter. The Fostering Advisor will make a note in their diaries to follow this back up at a later date.
- It may be identified at this stage (Expression of Interest) that the enquirer does not have a spare bedroom, or other details given that would rule them out. The Fostering Advisor would talk this through with them, the form would be completed and this would be closed down, following the process above.
- If the enquirer is still interested and wants to progress to an Initial Visit and the Worker agrees with this the Expression of Interest will be sent to the Manager to make the decision based on the Fostering Advisor's findings and recommendation. She will then allocate this task to a worker for an Initial Visit (IV). Where possible it would be the same Fostering Advisor for continuity.
- The allocated Fostering Advisor undertakes an initial visit (taking a copy of the Information Booklet and Our Pledge) to discuss their interest and circumstances in more detail. On this visit any immediate issues may be identified which might preclude approval e.g. lack of space, medical issues or a specific criminal record are discussed in detail so that it can be recorded and considered as part of this mini assessment. All applicants need to demonstrate a level of literacy/language skills which will enable them to meet the required competencies. A short written piece of work is undertaken at this time to help identify any issues in this area.

- The Fostering Advisor will advise the applicant of any concerns and the likely decision regarding proceeding with the enquiry if they are wanting to progress to the Assessment Stage to become Foster Carers.
- The Initial Visit is written up either the same day or the following day at the latest, a recommendation is made by the Fostering Advisor and this is sent to the Manager for their decision. This is approved by the Team Manager and the Fostering Advisor is notified. They then call the enquirer to inform them of the Managers decision.
- The outcome of the Initial Visit is confirmed by letter, which will either contain the Essential Information Form (EIF) which is a formal application. If this is their wish, they complete the application form which gives their signed consent for all the statutory checks with other agencies and a full medical with their own GP. Or they receive confirmation and the reasons why it is not appropriate to proceed.
- On the return of the EIF the Applicants will be invited to the Skills to Foster Training and be allocated a Fostering Advisor for Stage 1 and a Social Worker who will undertake the part 2 of the Form F Assessment. This can be allocated as a Stage 1 or a concurrent assessment depending on the applicants' personal circumstances and the Manager's decision, based upon the visiting Fostering Advisors recommendations. Applicants can withdraw by notifying us in writing at any time during the assessment process.
- All our recruitment material is regularly reviewed and updated where necessary.

Initial Training and Assessment

- All applicants are required to attend the 'Skills to Foster' Initial Training prior to going to the Fostering Panel.

- These courses are run bimonthly and are block booked the year before so that they are well planned.
- The groups take place over 3 days 9.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. usually over 2 consecutive Saturdays and one Sunday for prospective carers.
- Carers undergoing assessment are provided with guidance by their Fostering Advisor to support them in completing their portfolio of evidence of competencies. This is then checked by the Assessing Social Worker.
- Training for all groups is based on the National Fostering Network course, *Skills to Foster*.
- The areas covered are:
 1. Why children come into care
 2. The legal setting
 3. Child development and understanding/managing behaviour
 4. Awareness of child protection/safer caring
 5. Working with parents, social workers and other professionals
 6. Moving children on
- The purpose of this training is to help applicants understand the full range of tasks and requirements of foster carers. The course is underpinned by issues of equality and diversity which are considered throughout the course.
- It is also an additional assessment tool whereby social workers and applicants consider whether fostering is right for them. It can help applicants to decide which type of fostering they are most suited to.

- Social workers from the Recruitment and Supervisory Teams run the course along with other professionals in the field of childcare, experienced foster carers and some looked after children.

The Assessment and Approval Process

Once the application is made, and its progression is agreed by the Team Manager, a Social Worker is allocated to undertake the Part 2 Form F Assessment. This involves a detailed family study using the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F which covers the following:

- Family Background and childhood including education
- Adult life including employment and previous relationships
- Personality and current relationships
- Household members (including children) and lifestyle
- Other children (including adults) and social/support network
- Caring for Children (Parenting Capacity)
- Working effectively with others
- Understanding identify and diversity
- Motivation and timing of application
- Preparation, training, expectations and the impact of Fostering
- Understanding of Safe Caring
- Own children
- Prospective carers will be asked to complete a competency portfolio as part of the assessment. This is supported by their Fostering Advisor and then checked by the Assessing Social Worker.
- Any children will be interviewed, including those not living at home, and their views sought on another child joining the household.

- Significant ex partners are interviewed.
- All statutory checks are carried out in all areas that the applicants have lived as adults (other Local Authorities).
- Specialist checks as required, for example if they have worked in the armed forces.
- Enhanced checks are undertaken (DBS) on both applicants, all people aged 17 and over in the household, and regularly staying visitors i.e. adult children.
- Applicants are required to have a full medical conducted by their GP and paid for by the Fostering Service. The Medical Advisor then informs and advises the service and the Fostering Panel of any medical issues, which may affect their ability to undertake the fostering task.
- Written references are taken from three referees. Two must be non-related and are interviewed about their views on the applicants' suitability to foster.
- References are also taken up from schools where the prospective foster carer has school age children and from any employers where the work is with children.
- We also seek a reference from a Fostering Agency where applicants have previously or currently approved as Foster Carers with this agency.
- Where applicants have lived overseas, we seek international checks as appropriate.
- We are committed to completing the Form F and bringing to panel within 5 months of receiving their application form.

- Their Assessing Social Worker presents the Form F and the front sheet of competency portfolio to Panel. Both are signed off by the Social Worker and Recruitment Team Manager.
- The Fostering Panel is made up of a cross section of people involved with or have knowledge of children and young people, which includes social workers, foster carers, a local councilor, education professional, medically trained individuals and other independent members.
- The Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.
- The Agency Decision-Maker makes the final decision taking into consideration the Panel's recommendation.
- Applicants are notified by their worker of the recommendations by phone.
- Notices are then issued giving terms of approval or reasons for not being approved and details of the appeals procedure.
- The Panel also considers the proposed matches of children requiring long-term placements to approved families. Panel also considers extensions to Reg 24s and the approval of connected persons' carers.
- For a foster carer who has completed a portfolio and training, the reward element (wage) for fostering commences at the time of them becoming available as carers or, for long-term carers, when they are matched to a child. The child's allowance element is paid from the date of placement.

- Where it is decided that the immediate placement of a child is required and it is assessed as being in the child's best interest to place them with a person known to them, but who is not an approved foster carer, they may be approved under Regulation 24 and 25 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010.
- An assessment of the suitability of the carer(s) and their household, including checks with relevant agencies, must be carried out by the child's social worker and authorised by a Head of Service before the child can be placed.
- These details are passed to the Connected Persons part of the Assessment Team to undertake, if required, the assessment for approval as family and friends foster carers. Placements made under Regulation 24 are presented to Fostering Panel on completion of references, DBS and Medical checks. We initially have 16 weeks for the completion of the assessment, but this may be extended only once by a further 8 weeks if the assessment is taking a longer period due to problems in receiving checks etc.
- Any applicant(s) who are not recommended by the Fostering Panel may appeal and make representations about the recommendation to the Fostering Panels Agency Decision Maker or to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.
- Applicants are informed of their rights of appeal by letter and forwarded a leaflet giving details of the I.R.M (Independent Reviewing Mechanism)

Different types of foster carers

Short-term Carers

- Carers are recruited to take children and young people when they first come into care from home if family members are unable to care for them.

- It is the first choice of placement for all children.
- Placements can last from a few days up to about two years whilst permanent plans are made. This is likely to be a return home or to family members or move on to an alternative permanent family, which for younger children is likely to be adoption. For older children, this could be either a long-term foster placement or residential placement.
- Regular support groups are run for all our foster carers, including connected persons, long term foster carers and a group aimed at birth children and grandchildren of foster carers.
- The carers also run their own support group known as KFN (Kirklees Fostering Network). They organise both formal and informal events such as coffee mornings and provide informal support. They provide 24/7 telephone support as detailed previously.
- A number of carers are able to provide foster care for mothers and their babies who require this.

Long-Term Carers

- These carers offer a home to a child/young person where the plan is that they cannot return to live at home, but they are likely to still be in contact with their family.
- Long-term foster carers want to offer a permanent home to a child/young person until they leave care and live independently. Some children do return home to their birth family when they are older, usually 16+ but other children do remain under Staying Put with their long-term foster carers after they have reached their 18th Birthday.

Family and Friends as Carers (also known as Connected Persons)

- Relatives or friends who take a child who is Looked After in an emergency require initial approval by a Head of Service, under Regulation 24 and 25 of the Care Planning regulations.
- As above they will be fully assessed as family and friends (Connected) foster carers if appropriate and taken to foster panel with a recommendation.

Short Break Service (SBS) Carers

- For children and young people with a disability whose families require a break from caring for them.
- Short breaks may include midweek or weekend overnight stays and/or a few days during the school holidays.
- All the short break carers have their own supervising social worker, training and support.
- Children are either assessed or referred for this service by Social Workers in the community teams or by social workers in the Disabled Children's Service.
- Short Breaks Carers can now choose to undertake this type of care on an as and when basis (paid as and when they take a child/young person) if they wish.

There are also Parent & Child Foster carers and Respite carers.

Placement Team

The Placement Team deals with all requests for placements and is available from 8.45 am until 5.15 pm every day except Friday when they finish at 4.45pm. The Team are also involved in requesting approval for the commissioning and approval of placements with Independent Fostering Agency placements, Independent Providers of Residential,

Specialist Units, Assessment Units for Mother and Baby, 16 plus, Semi-independent living arrangements for Looked After Children, as well as Long Term Family Finding.

Supervisory Teams

All carers have their own supervising social worker from the service whose responsibility it is to offer supervision, support and guidance to the carers in all aspects of their role and carry out the annual reviews.

Although social workers do not have case responsibility for any child placed, their first responsibility is to the child and ensuring that the care offered is of a good standard.

Visits are opportunities to discuss concerns, progress or difficulties in placement. The care offered to the child and significant events are recorded on the supervisory visit form with a copy given to the carer.

Supervising Social Workers visit on a regular basis, dependent on the circumstances of the placement (fortnightly for all first placements for new carers). Telephone contact will be maintained in between times as necessary and workers ensure their carers are informed of who to contact, if required, when they are not available through leave, non-working days, etc.

It is expected that most visits will be pre-arranged, but National Standards require workers to make at least one unannounced visit per year. It is also a requirement that the bedroom of any child placed is seen on a regular basis by the carers' social worker or social worker for the child.

Workers within the Fostering Service run a variety of support groups for carers involved in different types of fostering. There is usually an element of training provided plus opportunity to discuss any fostering issues.

Records

- All details regarding foster carers and records of contacts are held electronically.
- The foster carers have a right to request to see their files and are encouraged to be aware of their content.
- Records of supervisory visits are signed by foster carers and supervising worker. There may be some information that they are not entitled to have access to, in line with the Data Protection Act.
- Foster carers are required to keep records on individual children using record sheets. Written guidance on how to complete these records is provided and support/training is provided via the support groups and by supervising social workers.

Confidentiality and Conflicts of interest

Foster carers are provided with full information about the children placed with them and are expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on carers and looked after children who are subject to National Standards and Data protection legislation. Staff and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

Duty Service

- Social Workers from the Supervisory Teams run a Duty Service which is available from 8.45 am Monday – Thursday (8.45 am – 4.45pm Friday) and they respond to queries from carers if their worker is not available (annual leave/off work sick).
- Enquiries from members of the public interested in fostering are dealt by the Recruitment Team Duty during office hours in line with the other duty services that run within Fostering. There is a free- phone number 0800 389 0086,

messages can also be taken and there is a text facility where members of the public can leave their contact details.

- Enquiries may also be made through email PPSS.FosteringBSO@kirklees.gov.uk and via the Kirklees Fostering Service website which contains information about the service.
- If an urgent placement or advice to carers is required outside of office hours, the Emergency Duty Service is available on 01484 456848. There is also an out of hours help line which is run by foster-carers, KFN (discussed previously).

Reviews

- Foster carers are reviewed on an annual basis. We have now employed a Reviewing Officer, where previously the Department undertook peer reviews. Reviews include reports from the social worker of any children placed, the carers' own report, health and safety checklist, individual safe care policy, Personal Development Plan (training log) and report from their supervising social worker.
- All documents are passed to the Team Manager who completes a short report, commenting on the recommendations and any proposed changes to the carers' profile.
- The Fostering Panel considers any change to a carer's profile at their first review and any review where a foster carer has been subject to an allegation or serious complaint or we are unhappy with some aspect of their caring.
- The Agency Decision Maker considers all Reviews presented to the Fostering Panel in line with the Fostering Regulations.

Post Approval Training

- The Service is committed to the training of its foster carers and provides a range of courses run specifically for carers or alongside members of staff.
- Carers are expected to continue to attend the training as identified in their Personal Development Plan and to progress up the skills payment levels. For carers who work this is sometimes difficult to fit around work schedules, although effort is made to run some training at evenings and weekends.
- The following courses are mandatory, Safe Care, First Aid, Health and Hygiene Skills Development, Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect. If a couple are approved **both** must attend the first 3 courses above.

A number of carers have achieved NVQ 3 Caring for Children and Young People, some of these also have their NVQ Assessor Award. Carers who have gained experience and completed foundation training are now put forward for the Diploma (Children and Young Peoples Workforce).

- A comprehensive list of training is offered each year. This is reviewed annually to take account of the changing needs of the service and requests from foster carers. Additionally, there are more training courses online which foster carers can access.
- Foster Carers also have access to SCILS (Social Care Information and Learning Services) and EILS (Education Information and Learning Services), both of which offer online resource-based courses. EILS is aimed at staff in Early Years and Child Care. There are course topics such as coping with challenging behaviour, eating disorders and facilitating children's social and emotional development. Additional courses and training are provided around Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation.

- There are generic topics available on SCILS such as maintaining confidentiality: anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice and an introduction to fire protection.
- Special arrangements can be made for carers who need specialist training in relation to a specific child. Carers may also be able to identify training from other sources which is relevant to their development. These can be considered on an individual basis.
- For carers living outside of Kirklees, we have links with the authorities in which they live and arrangements can usually be made to link carers into training which is held locally.
- The foster carers own support group, KFN also offers training opportunities. Sessions are held where areas of interest are identified by the foster carers or where there are new developments in the service. Here are some examples of the sessions the KFN has run:
 - Children's Rights
 - Role of the Youth Justice Team
 - Child in Care Reviews
 - Dental Hygiene
 - Role of the Children in Care Health Team
 - Basic Food Hygiene
 - Tax benefits for carers.

Termination of approval

- Foster Carers are required to give twenty-eight days' notice in writing if they wish to terminate their approval. This takes effect 28 days after receipt by the Fostering Service and cannot be retracted. Resignations are presented to Fostering Panel as part of their quality assurance function.
- If there are concerns about carers' performance this is discussed either at their annual review or a specially arranged review.
- The Fostering Panel considers all terminations which are recommended by the fostering service. In the event of a termination which is recommended by the Fostering Service the carers may attend Panel to put their point of view as well as providing a separate report. The Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.
- The carer(s) have twenty-eight days to appeal either back to Kirklees or to the IRM if they disagree with the decision
- The Agency Decision-Maker makes the final decision

The Children's Guide

- This includes basic information about foster care and guidance on what to do if they have a complaint about any aspect of the service and how to access an independent advocate.
- It is distributed to all foster carers and young people in foster care.

- A separate guide on all aspects of being Looked After has been compiled by Children's Rights Service and is provided for all Looked after Children aged ten years and over.

Kick Website

- The local authority has a website for young people (KICK) which allows them to rate the care which they receive and comment on any foster home which they have experienced. The website also contains the opportunity to rate other services which they receive as looked after children.
- Compliments are shared with the individual families if the young person has moved on to another placement
- The website is promoted through children's reviews, and by the Children's Rights workers and by the foster carers who encourage them to use the site. Prizes are offered as an incentive for young people who use the site.

Policies and Procedures

- The staff group has access to an electronic procedural manual for the Children and Young People Service, accessible via the Council's intranet.
- Procedures relating to foster carers are also included in the Foster Carers' Handbook which is updated as required. The updates are circulated to all carers as an electronic version.

Other services available to Children and Young People Placed with Foster Carers but not provided by the Fostering Service

Health

- Children who are 'Looked After' are prioritised for a service by CAMHS. Any referrals can be facilitated through the Emotional Wellbeing Clinic.
- Co-located within the Children in Care and Care Leavers Service are a Designated Nurse, Specialist Nurse for Children with Complex Health Needs and a Specialist Nurse for Care Leavers. The team also has a Looked after Children's Designated Doctor / Consultant Pediatrician and a Pediatrician, based on another site.

The health team is available daily for advice, support and signposting. Training is also provided to Foster Carers and they are available to attend foster carer network meetings.

Six monthly or annual health assessments are organised through the Children in Care health team and are carried out by Children in Care Health Team or their colleagues in Health Visiting and School Nursing.

Virtual School

- This team is based in the Learning Service, overseen by the Virtual Head Teacher for Children in Care. The focus is the Educational Needs of Children in Care. Their role is to advise social workers and foster carers on educational matters e.g. arrange extra input /tuition for children ensuring that looked after children are having their needs met in school.
- Specific training courses are run for foster carers on the educational needs of Children in Care, Appeals procedure, etc.

- Team Members are involved in close liaison with schools that have Children in Care, the production of the child's Personal Education Plan, and if there are particular difficulties in the school setting.

Children in Care and Care Leavers Service

- This service has responsibility for all Children in Care and young people who have a plan for permanency via long term foster care, residential care, supported accommodation, placement at home on Care Orders as well as Care Leavers, offering support up until 25.

Complaints & Compliments

If carers wish to make a complaint or compliment about the service, they can contact a manager of the service or:

Yasmin Mughal/Helen Sanderson
Complaints and Representations Manager
Complaints Unit Freepost
Civic Centre 1
Ground Floor
High Street
Huddersfield
HD1 2NS
Email: children.complaints@kirklees.gov.uk
Telephone: 01484 221000

Alternatively, they may contact Ofsted. Ofsted is an independent organisation responsible for checking that Kirklees Fostering Service is complying with the set

standards. A foster carer may also speak to them if they want to make a complaint or have a concern about the service. They can be contacted at:

Ofsted North,
3rd Floor
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Anne's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA
08456 404040
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk