

Herefordshire Council Fostering Service 2016

Statement of Purpose

OFSTED Registration: URN - SCO56304

Contents

1. Introduction
2. What the fostering service aims to do
3. What are the objectives of the fostering service
4. Who makes up the fostering team
5. What types of fostering do we provide
6. Fostering panel and recruitment
7. Principles and standards of care
8. Complaints, Monitoring and Supervision

Introduction

This statement has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The statement outlines the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and the services and facilities provided by the Fostering Service.

It is made available to staff of the organisation, foster carers, children and young people, parents and other professionals. It is reviewed on an annual basis and revised to reflect any changes as necessary.

What the fostering service aims to do (objectives)

Herefordshire council aims to develop and provide a high quality, comprehensive and integrated service that delivers excellent outcomes for children and young people in our care.

- To ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of their childhood.
- To ensure children are protected from emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect.
- To ensure children receive the education, health and social care they need to maximise their potential.
- To ensure that the services provided are flexible, responsive and supportive of carers.

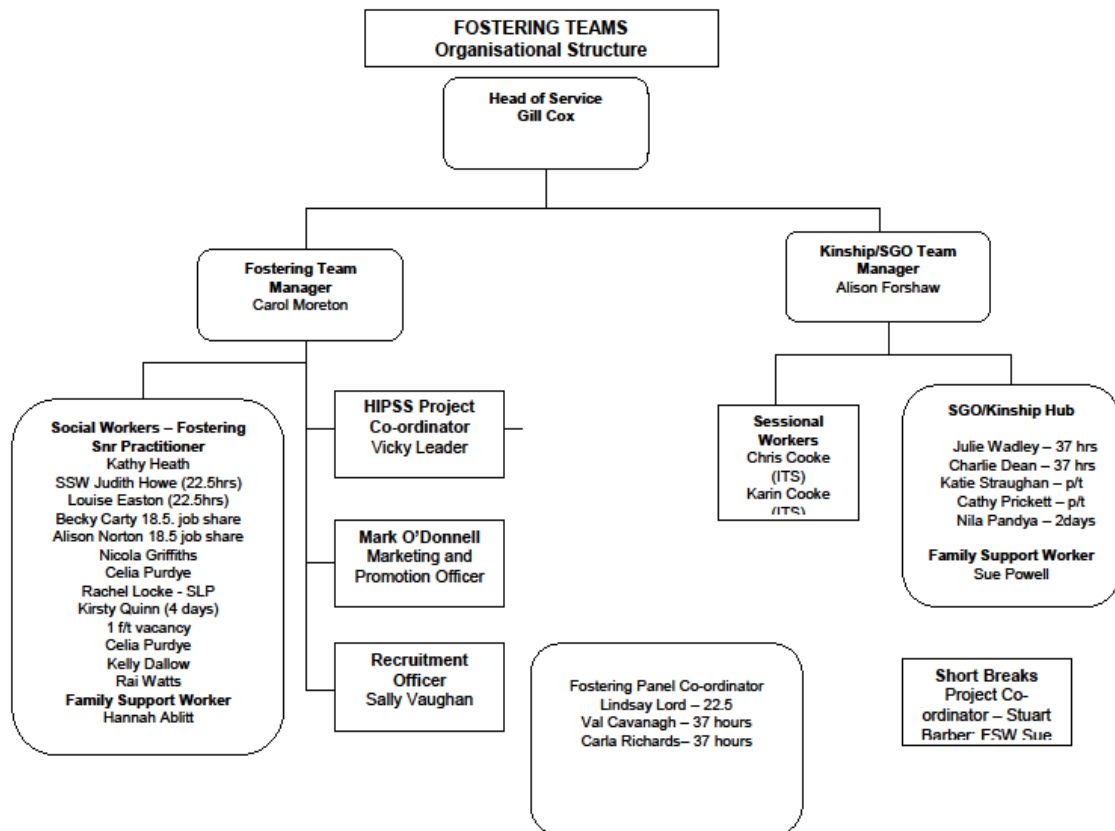
What the fostering service aims to do (objectives)

Our aims are underpinned by the National Minimum Standards for fostering to provide Herefordshire looked after children with appropriate foster placement provision primarily in Herefordshire.

- To ensure the views of children, parents and carers are sought and taken into account, having regard for their age and understanding, in the continuous development and improvement of the service.
- To take the wishes and views of children and young people seriously and to enable them to be part of any decision making process that affects them.
- To recognise the importance of and support appropriate levels of contact with family and community as is consistent with their welfare and care plan.
- To recognise and value the diverse nature of the community it serves and proactively engage with the local community to identify potential carers.
- To ensure there is a sufficient range of safe and appropriate placements available for the Looked After Children in Herefordshire.
- To actively monitor and supervise all placements to ensure children are safe, their needs are met and they are making progress to achieve positive outcomes.
- To contribute to and ensure effective multi-disciplinary and partnership working to meet the health, educational and social needs of children within placements.
- The service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Children will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality, disability or social class in terms of service provision. Wherever possible children are matched within their own cultural, racial, linguistic and religious communities, and where this is not possible, plans must be put in place to keep the child's culture alive for them.
- Children with disabilities are to be placed in an environment that recognises and caters for their disability, and at the same time promotes their social inclusion.
- To ensure staff and carers are well trained and competent in delivering a quality Fostering Service, including opportunities for continued learning and professional development. To ensure all staff and carers have completed safeguarding checks and have a valid CRB.
- To provide all staff and carers support and supervision with clear lines of accountability and management.
- To provide each Foster Carer a named allocated Supervising Social Worker.
- To operate clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service, including the maintenance of comprehensive and up-to-date records on all children placed.
- To ensure all complaints and allegations against carers/staff are investigated under departmental procedures in a timely fashion and lessons learned filter to improvements in future practice.

- The Fostering Service operates a Fostering Panel that provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of Foster Carers and Foster placements. The panel will ensure the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making.
- Through the recruitment programme, specific training and supervision, foster carers are expected, with support, to give each child placed the best life chances available to them and an opportunity to be safe and secure, achieve in education, health, relationships and transitions to independence or moves back home to birth families.
- To meet the growing need for the fostering service to provide effective and prompt assessments of 'family and friend' as carers a Kinship and SGO Hub has been created in the last 12 months. This will enable children and young people to remain within their family and reduce pressure on existing in-house placements.
- For those children who require external specialist placements (IFA or Residential placement), a referral is made to the commissioning team who aim to source and identify potential placements, working in collaboration with the child's social worker.
- A HIPSS (Herefordshire Intensive Support Scheme) has been commissioned from Action For Children and in-house fostering HIPSS project Co-ordinator to assess and meet regulatory requirements in relation to HIPSS carers to meet the needs of more challenging placements and reduce spend on IFA and Residential costs.
- We have continued to absorb the provision of supported lodgings (16+ placements) into the fostering service and to recruit accordingly to provide placements for those young people who present to social care with needs that are additional to housing accommodation.

Who makes up the fostering team



What types of fostering do we provide

Short term or long term care

A child might come into care because of an illness or accident or a serious incident at home. Whatever the reasons, social services will be working with the family to resolve the issues so that the child can return home as soon as possible.

Brothers and sisters

Wherever possible siblings should be placed together. For many foster children, the relationship with their brothers and sisters is what they value most when separated from their family and staying together is very important.

Disabled children

We need carers with experience of caring for children with physical or learning difficulties and other additional needs. We provide Overnight Short Breaks to support birth families with a regular break and also need carers able to provide Short Breaks to support foster carers of children with a disability.

Parent and child

We need carers who can help to give extra support in their home to new parents and their babies, particularly teenage mums.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

We need carers able to offer emotional and practical support to children under the age of 18 who are fleeing war zones and have experienced trauma. Most of these young people will have language and health needs; training and services are being developed to support carers to learn to meet these young people's specific cultural needs.

Long term fostering

Some children are unable to return to their families. They will require a stable, long term fostering placement until they reach the age of 18 or beyond.

Family and friends

Family and friends carers play a key role in allowing children to remain living with adults that they know and trust if, for whatever reason, they cannot live with their birth parents. In such cases Herefordshire Council is committed to ensuring that, where possible, a child or young person can remain living within their own family network.

The support that family and friends carers receive is critical to the success of any placement.

Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS)

Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) is a new therapeutic fostering service to children and young people looked after by Herefordshire Council with the most complex needs that would normally need to be cared for in residential care, away from their local communities and networks.

Therapeutic foster care gives children and young people who have experienced significant trauma in their lives an opportunity to overcome adversity and have the chance to form stable and secure relationships with their carers and live appropriately ordinary lives.

HIPSS is a dedicated friendly, creative team of professionals from psychology, education, social care, fostering and youth work. We work with children and young people aged 7-18 years with complex needs.

Supported Lodgings Placements

Young people often need support with becoming independent. Especially those people who have lived in care, are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers or vulnerable and homeless. Supported lodgings provide a safe place for them to become confident and learn about living as an adult: Carers who can inspire and provide them with an environment to help them build independent living skills and help them build a positive future.

Private fostering

Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 (or 18 if disabled) goes to live for 28 days or more with someone who is not a:

- Parent (including step parent)
- Legal guardian or person with parental responsibility
- Close relative (like grandparent, brother or sister, aunt or uncle)

Fostering Panel and Recruitment

The Fostering Panel

Hereford operates its own Fostering Panel for the approval, review, registration and deregistration of carers.

The Fostering Duty Service

A Duty Social Worker is available throughout office hours. The purpose of this service is to identify placements for looked after children and support carers in times of crisis when their own supervising social worker is not available.

Fostering Family Support Worker

Herefordshire Fostering service has developed a family support worker role, who is available to provide outcome focused, direct work with children, young people and their carers. Trained in the Solihull Parenting Approach she is able to further equip carers to meet the needs of the children in their care.

The Recruitment Service

The Marketing and recruitment officers are responsible for providing a recruitment strategy to respond to service needs and ensure we have sufficient placements for those children in need of Foster placements. This service involves marketing and advertising for foster carers at events and using websites and social media resources. The recruitment officer undertakes initial assessments, checks and references – known as Stage 1 checks - to determine if an applicant meets the criteria

required. The fostering social workers then complete Form F assessments of those applicants in preparation for presentation to the fostering panel (Stage 2).

16+ placement providers are recruited and are subject to an assessment by the Supported Lodgings social worker that is then verified and approved by the fostering service management team.

The Training Service

The fostering team provides training for foster carers both prior to and post their approval.

Preparation training is carried out over three full days and covers basic underpinning knowledge and experiential learning relevant to the task of fostering. The course is underpinned by the seven Training Standards that carers are expected to meet in the first year of their approval, these standards are:

1. Understand Principles and Values
2. Understand your role as a foster carer
3. Health, Safety and Healthy care
4. Know how to communicate effectively
5. Understand the development of children and young people
6. Safeguard children and young people
7. Develop yourself

Carers are expected to meet with their supervising social worker within 6 weeks of approval and develop their Personal Development Plan in line with the Training, Support and Development Standards. It is at this stage that carers will discuss with their supervising social worker what they need to do to meet the standards within the first year of their approval.

There is a programme of training for carers who are engaged in the fee payment scheme and who wish to progress through from level 1 at approval to level 3.

The training programme currently offers the following workshops

- Diversity
- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Healthy Matters – (age related)
- Education
- Attachment
- Record Keeping and Reflective practices
- Safe Caring
- Behaviour Management
- Working as part of a team
- Life story work and Memory box
- Contact
- Drug awareness
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome disorder
- ADHD and Autistic Spectrum – when available from partner agencies
- Social Networking
- Parent and Child Placements
- Alcohol Awareness
- Sex Education and relationships (speakeasy)

- Positive Handling
- Impact of Domestic Violence
- Sexual Abuse.
- Pathway planning for older teens
- Attachment in teens
- Appropriate adult training
- Hidden Minorities
- UASC placement support

Carers are expected to undertake Safeguarding, Diversity and First Aid as Mandatory courses and will be expected to attend a refresher course at least once every three years for safeguarding and first aid. Diversity is rotated with specialist workshops and online courses.

The fostering service offers carers the opportunity to further their skills and knowledge by accessing Solihull training within the first three years of approval.

Any individual training identified for carers within their supervision will be considered by the fostering service manager and where appropriate to meet the needs of the placement, carers will be given the opportunity to attend individual training events.

Family and Friends carers equally have access to all training events and are actively encouraged to attend. Specific training for kinship carers is to be offered in recognition of the specific issues affecting them and their family.

Support Groups for Carers and Birth Children

The fostering team provides carers with the opportunity to attend support groups which is facilitated by a fostering social worker and provides a forum for debate, guest speakers and informal support.

A Practice Issues Group offers experienced carers a more intensive bi-monthly discussion group.

A Stay and Play group for carers with under-fives also meets weekly to enable carers and young children have social interaction.

There is also a support group led by fostering social workers for birth children which is known as FISS, providing birth children with the opportunity to meet with other birth children and share their feelings and views about the impact that fostering has on them.

Support to Approved Carers

Approved carers are allocated to a supervising social worker who supports and supervises the carer and their family. This supervision is underpinned by relevant legislation, the standards and the Fostering Regulations.

Carers are supported and assisted by supervising social workers to manage the complexities of caring for a looked after child which includes support to attend any professional meetings, advice and guidance on attachment issues, managing difficult behaviour and placement issues. Supervising social workers will help carers to manage contact issues with birth families and support any contact where appropriate.

Formal supervision will take place with every approved carer at least three times a year and a record will be kept on their file, signed by the carer, social worker and team manager. Regulations require an unannounced visit is undertaken annually and the Fostering service strives to complete 2 per annum to improve Standards.

Throughout the carers' first year reports and progress is recorded: an annual report is prepared by the supervising social worker which is presented to panel for consideration. Subsequent years are undertaken as part of a home review with return to panel every 3-4 years or if areas of concern require Panel scrutiny. In all cases a recommendation is then made by the panel for the carer in relation to their approval status.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services

A Clinical Psychologist provides advice to foster carers and social work staff on all aspects of behaviour, attachment and mental well-being through the HIPSS team as part of the TiSS Service. Herefordshire Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service may also be available for children in the care of the Herefordshire Fostering Service.

Education

All children Looked After by Herefordshire Council are encouraged to access educational opportunities and develop to their maximum potential. The Virtual School Education Service provides advice, guidance and additional curriculum support to all foster carers and children. All children in foster care should have access to a home computer and relevant educational software. Foster carers have a special link to reading schemes such as 'Letterbox'.

Health

The physical health needs of children are monitored by the Medical Advisor to the Fostering Service. Each child placed is registered with a General Practitioner. The Wye Valley NHS Trust has employed 2 specialist LAC nurses (1.5 fte) to assist in meeting the health needs of Looked After Children.

Direct works Service

This service manages and supervises contact for many Looked After Children. Intensive support to support re-unification plans and prevent placement breakdown is also being developed.

STEPS

A number of sessional workers are available for specific pieces of work with a Looked After Child and can be accessed to provide support to young people to assist in maintaining placements.

Complaints, Monitoring

Complaints, Compliments and Comments

All Local Authorities are required to have complaint procedures under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and also, where children are involved, under the Children Act 1989.

We want everyone to be satisfied with the service they receive from Herefordshire Fostering Service and the complaints procedure in this authority can be instigated by anyone who is dissatisfied with the service they receive. Young people can also enlist the assistance of a Children's Rights and Advocacy Worker. NYAS

Herefordshire Council has a complaints procedure, which is communicated to all service users and to foster carers, Looked After children and their families.

Allegations

All allegations of abuse made by children against foster carers or members of a foster carer family will be thoroughly investigated. Hereford's Safeguarding Board procedures for handling allegations are followed in all cases. The investigation of allegations against foster carers will be evidence-based and the decision of how best to proceed will be made in the best interests of the child. An independent Advice and Conciliation worker from Fostering Network is made available to support foster carers throughout the process. All foster carers receive the ongoing support of a Fostering Social Worker. A clear distinction is made between an allegation of harm and a concern regarding standards of care.

Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

Foster carers are provided with information about the children placed with them and expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on both foster 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.

Foster Carers Charter

Herefordshire Fostering Service is committed to providing and promoting safe, stable and nurturing placements where the outcomes and life chances are positive for looked after children. In order to achieve this it is important to have a working relationship which is based on trust and respect among all children services that are involved in the care of the child.

The service has worked in partnership with foster carers to achieve the charter which was launched in 2012. The charter explains what the roles and responsibilities of the service and the carers towards each other and the children we care for.

Foster Carer Representatives.

Over the last 4 years we have developed the election of Foster carer Representatives to meet with the Team Manager on a monthly basis to liaise over key issues and improve communication between the fostering service and all foster carers – general and kinship. A quarterly Newsletter is produced and support group activities planned. This is supplemented through the setting up of a Foster Carers Association in 2016 to represent Herefordshire foster carers and support fundraising activity.

Monitoring

Herefordshire Fostering Service produces annual reports. These are presented to the lead member of the Council along with the Senior Management Team at the Corporate Parenting Panel who act for the executive.

Other monitoring includes staff supervision linked to the appraisal system, 3 formal supervisions a year to foster carers, annual reviews, the fostering panel, feedback from training sessions, case recording and practice audits.

Evaluating the Service

The information gathered through performance data and annual reports, audit, inspections and customer feedback is evaluated by the managers of the fostering service, to judge its ongoing effectiveness and make changes where necessary.

The Fostering Service is also subject to formal inspection by Ofsted and inspections usually take place every three years.

Bullying

Bullying can disrupt an individual's personal, social and educational achievements. It is recognised that Looked After Children, because of their circumstances, are particularly vulnerable and the Fostering Service requires that steps are taken to prevent bullying by ensuring that foster carers and social workers understand what bullying is and the impact it can have on a child / young person's life. It provides advice and guidance on how best to deal with situations where bullying is occurring in order to help everyone involved with the child / young person remain alert to bullying behaviour both inside and outside the foster home.

Behaviour Management

Guidance on managing behaviour is made available to all foster carers through training, ongoing supervision and as part of the 'Discipline Sanctions and Rewards' section. No form of corporal punishment is permitted to be used on any child placed with a foster parent. No child placed with foster parents is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable. Physical restraint is used on a child only when it is a last resort and is necessary to prevent likely injury to the child or other persons or likely serious damage to property. If such a risk is identified appropriate training in physical restraint is provided to the foster carer. All carers are to be trained in positive handling, care and control with an emphasis on de-escalation

Recruitment, Pre-Approval Training and Support of Prospective Foster Carers

The Fostering Service provides a range of services to local people who enquire about becoming foster carers.

The following is a summary of the recruitment, assessment and approval process:

- Publicity and promotion of foster care to attract new foster carers is continuous throughout the year.
- Prospective carers are provided with information about foster care within 48 hours of making the request.
- Prospective carers who wish to have further information will be visited by a Fostering Recruitment officer within 10 days. Stage 1 checks are completed and if concerns arise the Team manager must respond within 10 days to inform prospective applicants their application will not progress to Stage2 assessment.
- Full statutory checks and references are undertaken on all applicants and CRB checks on any other adult in the household over the age of 16 years.
- All applicants complete a full medical questionnaire (British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form AH), which is made available to the agency Medical Advisor for comment.
- Applicants are enrolled in pre-approval training, which occurs prior to or concurrently with the Form F assessment, whichever provides the timeliest service. This training opportunity is also available to Kinship/family and friends carers. This is now planned for every two months throughout the next 2 years

- Assessments are undertaken by a qualified Social Worker in accordance with fostering service regulations and are completed using BAAF Form F.
- All applicants are invited to attend the Fostering Panel, which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker on the terms of their approval.

Support and Supervision

All foster carers are supervised by a Fostering/ supervising Social Worker.

All foster carers have access to support groups. There are currently three support groups in operation as described above. A family and friends support group has been offered and will continue to remain an important feature but has not been taken up to date – development of the Kinship Representatives role may help to change this.

A Duty Fostering Social Worker is available throughout office hours. The duty worker will also take all placement referrals made to the service and identify and match placements with the referrer. Outside office hours, foster carers can access the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Emergency Duty Team.

- Foster carers have access to Herefordshire Virtual school Education Service for advice and support to ensure children's educational opportunities are maximised.
- HALO leisure vouchers can be used for all Looked After Children and a discount service is available for foster carers and their families to use Herefordshire's leisure facilities.
- Foster carers who require respite on a planned basis can access respite services from other foster carers.
- A 'buddying' system is facilitated by Fostering Social Workers between experienced carers and newly approved carers.
- Foster carers are provided with the Foster Carers' Handbook covering all aspects of fostering, together with a diary and the equipment required to record and store confidential records about individual children.
- Annually, a Foster Carer Forum is convened to celebrate and inform the work of Herefordshire foster carers in partnership with elected members, officers and fellow professionals. The forum also provides a multi-disciplinary training event and a social opportunity for carers.

Ongoing Reviews of Foster Carers

All carers are reviewed annually and their continued registration is considered by the Fostering Panel, which makes recommendation to the agency decision maker as to the terms of their continued registration. Minutes of home reviews are noted at the fostering panel.

Approval and Review of Statement of Purpose

This Statement of Purpose has been formally reviewed and up dated as of July 2016. It has been distributed or is available via our website to the following agencies/departments:

- OFSTED.
- The Herefordshire Council Website.
- Foster Carers.
- A children's version has been produced for dissemination to all children using the service.

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APPENDIX A : Legislative and Regulatory background:

Principles and Standards of care

The Fostering Service seeks to ensure that its policies, procedures and practice comply with the following:

- Children Act 2004.
- Children Act 1989.
- National Minimum Standards 2011 (Care Standards Act 2000).
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- U.K. National Standards for Foster Care (Fostering Network 1999).
- Care Planning Regulations 2010.

- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and fostering Services (Misc amendments) Regulations 2013
- Code of Practice on the recruitment, training, management and support of foster carers (Fostering Network 1999).
- Training, Support and Development Standards (CWDC)

- Foster Carers Charter

Appendix B: Aims and Principles of the Fostering service:

The Fostering Service:

- Seeks to provide a sufficient choice of placements for all Looked After children wherever possible.
- Seeks to provide or commission placements with foster carers for all Looked After children who require placements in a family setting.
- Respects the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children and foster carers.
- Seeks to work in partnership with all those involved in the care of Looked After children, including children, their families, foster carers and Social Workers.
- Recognises that children with disabilities may have additional special needs for placement.
- Recognises and seeks resources and specialist provisions for those children who need it.
- The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own child/ren and to have the opportunity for as full a experience of family life and childhood as possible without unnecessary restrictions.
- Seeks to ensure that the Fostering Service and the 16 plus Team work in partnership to maximise life chances for young people leaving care.
- Seeks the views and opinions of young people and carers when planning and reviewing services.
- Seeks to provide continuity through a placement service, which works in partnership with Herefordshire's Adoption Service.
- Seeks to recruit, train and assess carers to the highest standard in order to meet the needs of local children for local placements.
- Values the child as an individual and give personalised support in line with individual needs and background, in order to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth.