

Bath and North East Somerset Council - Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

INTRODUCTION

Bath and North East Somerset Council provides a full range of services for children in need through our safeguarding, social care and family support services. This includes the fostering service.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the fostering team fit with national and local aims and objectives, along with the relevant supporting information.

- Fostering Services – National Minimum Standards 2011 (Care Standards Act 2000)
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- B&NES fostering placement strategy
- B&NES permanency policy
- Safer recruitment policy
- Children living away from home guidance

Aim 1

Recruit foster carers who can offer a range of placements to provide care for the assessed needs of looked after children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset. These include:

- Emergency and respite placements
- Short breaks for disabled children and young people
- Short term placements which prepare children for return to their family or other routes to permanent care arrangements
- Long term permanency placements
- Placements for sibling groups together

Activity:

- To organise and run recruitment campaigns leading to the approval of carers from a range of backgrounds to meet the diverse needs of looked after children
- To offer a timely and courteous response to prospective foster carers' enquiries, assessing suitable candidates within statutory timescales
- To offer prospective carers a preparation course based on the 'Skills to Foster model'
- To complete fostering assessments within 4 months (and no longer than 6 months)
- To complete connected persons (Reg 24) assessments within 16 weeks
- To carry out special guardianship assessments
- To keep recruitment methods current and relevant, with a view to increasing the numbers of in-house fostering households

Aim 2

Support foster carers to continually develop high levels of skills to meet children's needs.

We endeavour to treat all those with the fostering task with respect, to promote equality, and pay due consideration to individual needs.

Activity:

- To provide a comprehensive annual training programme for foster carers with a requirement to complete core skills training in safeguarding, first aid, safer caring, child sexual exploitation and equality and diversity within the first 2 years and every 3 years thereafter
- To provide 3 informal Coffee and Learn mornings and 1 consultation day where a range of training and peer support is offered, as well as having informal face-to-face contact with members of staff in the Family Placement team. This is supported by providing a crèche for a limited number of foster children when other arrangements are not possible
- Out of hours telephone support up until 11pm (EDT after 11pm) is provided for advice and a 'listening ear' when faced with difficulties with a child in placement
- To pay foster carers an appropriate financial allowance in line with inflation. In addition foster carers may receive further financial recognition for specific tasks undertaken and when children with complex needs are placed
- It is expected that foster carers will provide weekly diary sheets about a child's day to day progress and proof of relevant training

- To provide appropriate training to develop understanding of anti-discriminatory practice
- To arrange interpreters and translation of material when necessary and reasonable
- To support foster carers to promote the highest levels of health and wellbeing for all children in care, and enable them to realise their personal aspirations and potential.
- Multicultural resource library and equipment.
- Support and challenge carers to develop a wider range of skills
- Provide specific support, as may be required to kinship carers who have typically become foster carers through a different route

Aim 3

Supervise foster carers to ensure they offer appropriate and safe care for children who are looked after.

Activity:

- Once approved, foster carers have a named social worker in the Family Placement team to provide support and supervision
- Social workers will visit foster carers as required, but at least six-weekly when children are in placement
- Social workers will complete supervision recording for each visit detailing outcomes and actions from the meeting. An agreed copy of which is provided to the foster carer
- The Local Authority will complete annual foster carer reviews in required timescales
- To fund and manage a fostering panel (National Minimum Standards 2011) to make informed and appropriate recommendations, decisions and plans. Panel will maintain an overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care
- To undertake annual inspections of foster homes including a health and safety check, including at least one unannounced visit a year
- To develop foster carers to have a safe care agreement to be shared with children and young people in placement
- To ensure appropriate checks and references are undertaken during all fostering assessments, including Regulation 24 carers, and are updated appropriately

Aim 4

Retain foster carers and develop a competent, experienced and appropriately trained placements service.

Activity:

- To provide a comprehensive range of training opportunities
- To provide opportunities for carers to achieve qualifications relevant to the fostering role
- Arrange support groups and events in appreciation/recognition of the commitment foster carers make to children/young people
- To ensure regular breaks are available to support foster carers, taking into account their own family's needs
- To provide school holiday activities (day trips) and residential breaks for fostered children, staffed by the Family Placement team. This scheme is called R2K
- Leisure access cards for fostered children and carers' own children
- Insurance cover in excess of that can be claimed through personal or household policies

Aim 5

To work in partnership with foster carers, children and young people and their families, alongside other professionals and agencies.

Activity:

- To provide a placement service to ensure requests for placements are assessed and processed effectively, with children being provided with a placement most appropriate for their needs
- To provide full and appropriate information to foster carers regarding planning for children, including care plans, local authority materials, support from the virtual school service and consultation from a psychologist based within the team
- Consultation for foster carers from the CAMHS service is sought when appropriate, and is regularly achieved
- To deal with all complaints and allegations in a way that fits with the council's policy and legislative requirements
- To ensure that the professional network provides accurate and up to date information to foster carers about a child/young person's history and current needs, including relevant information about their family

Aim 6

Ensure that the fostering team is run with suitably qualified staff so that children are safeguarded and receive care which promotes their overall development to the highest standards.

Activity:

- To work in close partnership with our colleagues in Children's Services
- To provide effective management oversight
- Recruit and retain staff with the appropriate qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience for their post and responsibilities. To ensure that all appropriate DBS checks are made and references are undertaken
- All social workers are registered with the Health and Social Care Professions Council (HCPC) and meet the ongoing professional development requirements

Aim 7

For young people to be able to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of 18, to continue to build independence skills until they are able to make a timely progression into independence.

Activity:

- To provide a staying put scheme to enable young people to remain with their former foster carers up to the age of 21. The principle which underpins the scheme is to enable young people to experience a gradual transition to independence
- To give young people appropriate support to successfully remain in education and training before moving into independence
- Holiday periods whilst at university can be facilitated under staying put arrangements

This statement of purpose was last revised in July 2016; it will be updated annually

R. Pickering
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Rosemary Pickering
Family Placement Team Manager

Date *2.8.16*

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Richard Baldwin
Divisional Director, Children and Young people Specialist Services

Date *2/8/16*

R.Baldwin
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Michael Evans
Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families

Date *Whwan 8/8/16*

For more information please contact the Family Placement Team at:

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FAMILY PLACEMENT TEAM

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Rosemary Pickering**

**Deputy Team Manager
Merryn O'Connor**

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Senior Practitioners

Geeta Palmer

Sara Moran

Social Workers

Birgit Foerster

Natasha Randolph

Anne Giddings

Jana Rodriguez

Ruth Martin

Steve Simpson

Mary Swan

**R2K Co-ordinator
Becky Brown**

**Training Officer
Sue Scullard**

**Family Support Practitioner
Sara Litherland**

**Marketing/Recruitment Intern
Olivia Lindsey**

Admin Assistants

Sherry Webster

Sue Carr

Emma Hiscox

