



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

People Services

Children & Families

Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose 2019/20

Sheffield Fostering Service
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1. Sheffield's Vision

Sheffield City Council Fostering Service sits within the Children and Families Service within the Council. The Council is ambitious for all of Sheffield's children and has high aspirations for looked after children and high expectations of looked after children's services.

Our Vision

Our vision for children in Sheffield is that:

'Children and young people are safe and supported to achieve their full potential'

Our principles for delivering this are that:

- Children are at the centre of our practice
- We intervene at the earliest opportunity
- Our workforce is skilled and supported to do the work that they need to
- Children and families benefit from high performing and high quality services



2. Introduction

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services England Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that all fostering services produce a Statement of Purpose that sets out its aims and objectives, and describes the services and the facilities that are provided.

This Statement of Purpose seeks to meet those requirements, setting out how the service is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved for all children cared for within the service. It also demonstrates the processes which we have in place to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers.

The Statement of Purpose can be viewed and downloaded from Sheffield City Council website www.sheffield.gov.uk and is available to all members of staff, foster carers, children and birth parents and the general public.

The Statement of Purpose and its contents are updated annually to reflect current practice, personnel and legislative changes. It also links to the Children's Guide which is made available to all children, subject to their age and understanding, at the point of placement.

2.2. National Legislative and Policy framework

Sheffield City Council's Fostering Service is run in accordance with the following legislation:

- **Children Act 1989**
- **Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011**
- **Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2013 (Amendments to the Children Act 1989)**
- **Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011)**
- **Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)**
- **Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010**
- **Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (Amendments) 2015**
- **The Disability and Equality Act 2010**
- **The Human Rights Act 1998**
- **The Children (Leaving care) Act 2000**



2.3 Our Pledge

Sheffield City Council's Pledge to looked after children is a promise that the Council as a whole, social workers, their managers and other professionals make to children in care. The full pledge can be found at: www.sheffield.gov.uk

Our promise to our looked after children is that we will:

- ❖ Help them remember their history
- ❖ Keep them **safe**
- ❖ Keep them **healthy**
- ❖ Help them **enjoy life** and **achieve their goals**
- ❖ Help them get ready for their **future**
- ❖ Give them **a voice**

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 Aims:

The main aim of Sheffield City Council's Fostering Service is to provide safe, high quality family based care for children and young people which values, supports and encourages them to grow and develop as individuals into adulthood. As well as promoting their health and general well-being, the service is committed to:

- Providing a service that is welcoming, accessible and inclusive
- Ensuring that foster carers are supported to help children and young people to reach their maximum educational ability.
- Ensuring foster carers provide good parenting for all children who are looked after and that children will be consulted and encouraged to actively participate in their care and family life.
- Ensuring that the service offered is compliant with statutory requirements, sound principles and good practice and works within the principles of value for money for the council
- Multi-agency working and developing partnerships and protocols with organisations which can meet the needs of our looked after children,



working at all levels in partnership with Education and Health to promote the wellbeing of children in public care in Sheffield

- Respecting the rights and responsibilities of looked after children and their carers and involve them in all aspects of service delivery.

The Fostering Service aims to provide a high quality, responsive, child-centred service in relation to its core functions and to recruit and support new foster carers from within our diverse community and from the kinship networks of looked after children wherever this is in their best interests. We prepare applicants through training to be able to deal with the range of issues that foster carers face when looking after children. The service assesses each applicant comprehensively to ensure that they are suitable and able to carry out their role. We supervise and support carers to ensure that they promote and achieve the highest standards of welfare and safeguarding and secure improved outcomes for then children they foster.

3.2 Objectives

Our key objective is to provide a sufficient choice of high quality foster placements to meet the complex and diverse needs of individual children and young people who need alternative family based care. In providing suitable placements, we will ensure effective information sharing with foster carers and ensure that we give careful consideration to the matching needs of children and carers to ensure the best possible placement match is made to meet the individual needs of children and young people.

Further Objectives:

- To promote a safe, stable and enabling environment ensuring that children and young people are listened to and protected from abuse and neglect
- To promote the child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development by providing each child with the opportunity of developing their full potential, through health care, education and leisure activities that will enhance their life chances
- To have positive regard for the child or young person's racial, religious and cultural needs. All children should have equal access to local family based care
- That individual children's needs, wishes and feelings are paramount and are taken into consideration in relation to their placements
- Siblings will be accommodated together wherever possible and in their best interests



- To promote contact for the child or young person and his/her birth family throughout their placement, and to encourage and facilitate this as appropriate
- To provide timely permanence fostering placements for children who need them
- To ensure foster carers make children and young people aware of their rights and the complaints, compliments and advocacy process by providing the relevant information
- To ensure that approved foster carers are clear about their role and that they are supported in their tasks, duties and responsibilities by having adequate support mechanisms in place and as outlined in their terms and conditions, tasks, skills and competencies framework and the foster carer agreement
- Each foster carer will have a qualified social worker (supervising social worker) for supervision and support and to assist with identifying and reviewing carer training and development needs as part of a Personal Development Plan
- The Skills Payments model ensures quality by providing a competency and skills framework with clear expectations for foster carers, together with a training and personal development programme
- Ensure that all practice promotes equal opportunities for all and values diversity of both foster children and carers regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religious beliefs, disability or marital status
- To ensure that all decisions are transparent and fair and that any concerns are addressed and information about the complaints procedure is made available to all
- Ensure that service performance is monitored and assessed with outcomes measured via a Quality Assurance Framework
- To promote team and personal development and training for both staff and foster carers
- Consult regularly and learn from those that are in receipt of services through comments, compliments or complaints and have regular meetings and consultation with foster carers, senior managers and elected members
- Consult regularly with children who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard and accounted for
- A commitment to continuous improvement through exploring and implementing innovative practice models
- The child's plan will be based on their individual needs and will be reviewed at every looked after child's review. It will consider how permanence can be achieved through a range of options including:



return to birth parents, placement with family or friends, long term fostering, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Order or Adoption.

4. Management Structure

Director of Children & Families

Carly Speechley

Assistant Director Provider Services

Paul Dempsey

Fostering Service Manager

Anne-Marie Banks

Recruitment Team Manager

Karen Rummens

Fostering Supervision Team Manager

Paul Morris

Fostering Supervision Team Manager

Linda Goulding

Fostering Supervision Team Manager

Sadia Alam

Placement Team Manager

Nettie Parkin
Williams

Fostering Panel Advisor

Lisa O'Keefe

Connected Person Team Manager

Katie Day/Charlotte
Allcock



5. Service Structure

The Fostering Service is managed by the Fostering Service Manager. There are 6 full time equivalent Team Managers and a full time Fostering Panel Advisor. The managers work as a team to provide strategic and operational management to the Fostering Service.

The Recruitment Team is made up of 1 team manager, 5 FTE social workers and 1 FTE interviewing officer. This team recruits and assesses prospective foster carers.

We have three Supervisory Teams who provide management and support to a case load of 8 FTE social workers per team. All three teams have mixed caseloads and support and supervise carers approved for all types of placements including task, permanence, support care and short breaks. Each team have a dedicated support worker whose main function is to promote stability of placement and retention of carer by working closely with the carers and children in their care.

The Connected Persons Team is made up of 1 FTE team manager, 3.5 FTE social workers and 1.5FTE support workers. This team assesses and supports connected persons foster carers, provides support to Special Guardians and assesses and supports private fostering arrangements.

The Placement Team is made up of 1 Team Manager, 2 FTE placement officers, 3.5 FTE assistant contract officers, an information monitoring officer and a business support officer.

The Service also has a full time Panel Advisor who also manages the services foster carer training and development officer.

All social workers in the teams have a Diploma in Social Work or equivalent and are registered with Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). All social workers are supported to attend training in relevant areas. The teams bring a variety of experience to the service, such as experience of working across other disciplines associated with social care fieldwork, residential, disabilities, youth justice and education.

The support workers and placement officers within the service are also working towards, or have achieved appropriate NVQ qualifications.



6. Foster Carer Recruitment and Assessment

6.1 The Fostering Service has identified that the best way to recruit foster carers is to maintain a high profile within the community. To achieve this, the fostering service has a **Communications Strategy for Fostering**, which is updated on an annual basis to reflect requirements. The Service works closely with the Communications Team and across the region to maximise the recruitment and marketing opportunities. Activities include city wide outside advertising, social media campaigns, local media campaigns and attendance at community events. We work closely with existing foster carers to recruit via positive word of mouth. The Service is also part of the 'Migration Yorkshire' project, which is launched in May 19 whose aim is to raise the profile of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and to attract more people to become foster carers to care for these children across South Yorkshire.

Enquiries from prospective foster carers are welcomed from all communities within Sheffield and the surrounding districts, to ensure the children placed are placed locally and can continue with their existing education placement and local connections. We would also consider enquiries from further afield as we do occasionally require placements outside Sheffield. The Fostering Service recruits positively from the diverse communities in Sheffield and welcomes all applicants to contact the service and discuss fostering opportunities further.

Information evenings are held every six weeks throughout the year. This has attendance of staff from across the Service and approved Sheffield City Council foster carers. Other events also take place throughout the year such as attendance at city centre events and information stalls.

6.2 Preparation of Foster Carers

All enquiries will receive a response from the service within 24 hours (one working day). Interested applicants will be invited to attend one of the information evenings to share more details about fostering. In addition written literature will be provided.

All suitable applicants are offered an initial home visit. An assessing social worker undertakes an initial assessment in relation to the applicant's suitability to foster and if this is deemed positive then the applicants are invited to attend the 'Skills to Foster' preparation course. This 3 day course helps to prepare applicants to be able to manage the variety of issues they will experience if they become foster carers. Attendance of this course contributes towards the overall fostering assessment.



6.3 Assessment of Foster Carers

Running alongside the preparation course, the applicant is subject to a formal assessment. On average, assessments, pending statutory checks, take between 4 to 6 months from commencement to approval. The assessment is evidence and competency based. It includes specific verification checks that comply with the requirements of Schedule 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and Regulation 26. These include an enhanced DBS, medical check and local authority check.

Once the assessment has been completed, the report is submitted to the fostering panel. Sheffield City Council holds two fostering panels meetings each month. The fostering panel complies with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011. This independent panel is made up of people from a variety of backgrounds. The panel considers and recommends the approval, or not, of all applicant foster carers. The recommendation from the fostering panel is then considered by the Agency Decision Maker who makes the final decision. This decision is made within 10 days of the panel meeting.

Applicants are encouraged and supported to attend the fostering panel meeting where their application is considered. All recommendations and decisions are communicated to the applicant both verbally and in writing.

6.4 Assessment of Connected Persons Foster Carers

The Fostering Service assesses carers for children placed with them under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. The full assessment should be completed within 16 weeks of the placement starting and during this assessment period they will also be supervised by a social worker in the Fostering Service. In exceptional circumstances an additional 8 weeks can be given to complete the assessment (with agreement from the Agency Decision Maker). During the assessment period, connected persons foster carers can obtain support from their assessing social worker, can access the out of hours fostering helpline and will be invited to a specific connected persons training course. They will also be invited to a regular support group specifically for connected person's foster carers.

6.5 Assessment and Support for Special Guardians



Special Guardianship Order assessments are completed by children's fieldworkers. Once the order is made the Fostering Service's Connected Persons Team provides ongoing support and advice as required. This may include making applications to the Adoption Support Fund which provides financial packages of support to fund therapeutic intervention if it is assessed as required and necessary. The team offers a menu of support to Special Guardians, including: telephone advice, home visits, support groups, training, support with contact issues, and signposting to universal services, dependent on the needs of the Guardian and child. Carers with Special Guardianship Orders receive means tested allowance payments via the Fostering Service.

6.6 Private Fostering

Initial Private Fostering notifications are received by the Safeguarding Hub and passed onto the appropriate fieldwork team to make an initial visit. Once the initial visit has assessed the likely status and initial suitability of the arrangements, the Private Fostering household is allocated to the Connected Persons Team for assessment of suitability. If the assessment is positive and it is decided that the Private Fostering arrangements are suitably safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare, the Connected Persons Team becomes responsible for ensuring that this continues to be the case all the while the arrangement continues. The team will make at least 6 weekly visits in the first year and then at least 12 weekly visits in following years. An annual review is conducted each year. When a privately fostered child is approaching 16 (unless they have a disability, then it would be when they are approaching 18) the Connected Persons Team will review the young person's circumstances and future plans.

The Connected Persons Team promotes awareness of Private Fostering with the public and professionals working with children. This is achieved through ongoing awareness raising activity, utilising social media, placing posters, and through networking with local authority colleagues in health, education and social care, as well as in the independent education sector.

Connected Persons Helpline

The Connected Persons Team runs a helpline every weekday afternoon to offer advice and support to Regulation 24 Carers, Special Guardians, and Private Foster Carers on 0114 273 6489.

6.7 Review of Foster Carers



Sheffield City Council has a comprehensive procedure for completing reviews of foster carers that complies with Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards. Our review procedures focus on the core competencies for foster carers, including continued training and development and National Minimum Standards.

Foster carer reviews are carried out annually, as per requirements; however, additional reviews are also undertaken where necessary, such as following any serious allegations or significant changes of circumstances for foster carers.

First reviews are always presented to the fostering panel in line with fostering legislation. Foster carers, with the support of their supervising social workers, are expected to attend.

7. Foster Carer Support and Supervision

At the end of March 2019 the Service has 248 approved foster families, who are providing placements for 272 children.

Every foster carer is allocated a qualified supervising social worker. The supervising social worker will offer support, advice, guidance and supervision regarding matters relating to fostering and the care of the child.

Foster carers can expect to be visited at a minimum of six weekly by a supervising social worker, but visits may often be more frequent than this dependant on the needs of the foster carer or placement. Visits will include both announced and unannounced visits. During the supervisory visit, discussions take place about all issues regarding any child in placement and any issues relevant to the fostering task. This will include, for example, support, learning and development opportunities, and family dynamics. Discussions will particularly focus on how children's needs are being met within the placement, and how the child can be helped to achieve their maximum potential.

Foster carers can access their supervising social worker during office working hours. If the allocated worker is not available, the service has a duty worker who will be available. There is also a contact and liaison officer based with the Fostering Service who will make regular contact with foster carers to provide service updates and information on upcoming events. In addition they will support carers with any other queries.



All foster carers are provided with access to Sheffield City Council Fostering Service Handbook. This is updated regularly and can be accessed via Sheffield foster forum website which is only accessible to Sheffield City Council approved foster carers.

All foster carers have access to the out of hours Fostering Service helpline to discuss issues with a suitably qualified duty social worker. This is always a supervising social worker from the Fostering Service. In addition to this a foster carer can also access the social care out of hour's team emergency duty team.

Sheffield City Council holds a contract with Foster Talk which provides independent advice and support to our foster carers. Sheffield City Council also has a Research in Practice account and can access additional learning resources. Foster carers have a dedicated Training and Development Officer, who in addition to delivering core training, offers additional training opportunities and can support carers to access online training courses provided by the service.

There are seven different support groups held frequently across the city. In addition there is a Fostering Association; 'Voices', who represent the fostering community. They meet with senior managers on a regular basis and give feedback to the wider fostering community at Sheffield's quarterly fostering open forum meetings.

The Fostering Service provides an annual subscription to Fostering Network which provides independent advice and support to foster carers.

All newly approved foster carers have an identified mentor to support them during their first year of fostering. This is an experienced foster carer who has the necessary skills and qualities to undertake this role.

The Fostering Service has a team of support workers in the service. They offer a variety of assistance to foster carers including sessions with foster carers on specific issues and 1-1 direct work with children. They facilitate various trips and activities for foster carers and children and facilitate the various support groups that take place across the city.

Our contact and liaison officer's (CLO) role is to communicate and engage across the fostering community, promoting events and training and ensuring that foster carers are receiving regular contact and updates from the service.

Foster carers have access to psychological support via the MAPS (service) Multi Agency Psychological Service and there is a psychologist allocated to



the Fostering Service who provides consultation and support to supervising social workers, foster carers and children in placement.

The Service offers an attractive financial support package to foster carers inclusive of a weekly allowance and skill level payments, in addition to the wrap around support that foster carers are offered in supporting our children in care. Full guidance on all foster care payments and allowances are provided to foster carers.

8. Foster Carer Training

Sheffield City Council is a learning organisation; it provides foster carers with ongoing professional training which is delivered locally. Foster carers are expected to attend regular training to enable them to meet children's needs, in a way that is consistent with the National Minimum Standards. The fostering service produces an annual training programme that will include the core training elements that are considered essential for foster carers to undertake.

All foster carers will be supported to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards evidence workbook for foster carers within their first year post approval. A rolling programme of workshops covering the standards will take place throughout the year.

Key training course will be mandatory following a foster carer's approval. Foster carers will also have access to a range of other courses. These will be from a cross section of specialisms and included external agencies delivering courses.

Foster carers will have access to training that is delivered in various formats to allow for maximum participation. This will include website training, workshops and 1:1 learning.

All foster carers that are involved in the delivery of training to other foster carers will complete the 'Training for Trainers' course.

Supervising social workers will regularly discuss with the foster carer their individual learning and development needs. The foster carers Learning & Development Plan will be updated annually at the foster carers' annual review.

All foster carers are aware of the skill level criteria. Opportunities for a foster carer to progress through the skill levels will be discussed frequently with the



foster carer and the supervising social worker and be considered at the Annual Review. Relevant opportunities will be made available for the foster carer should they wish to progress through the skill levels.

9. Compliments & Complaints

Sheffield City Council welcomes representations from anyone that has contact with the fostering service. We particularly enjoy receiving compliments rewarding our foster carers for their high level of service.

The complaints procedure in this authority can be initiated by anyone who is dissatisfied with the service they receive. All complaints are taken seriously and investigated.

All registered foster carers are members of Fostering Network and have access to legal representation and advice through this organisation. Sheffield City Council fostering service pays the registration fee. Foster carers are also offered independent advice and support via Foster Talk.

The fostering service works within Sheffield Council's complaints procedures. In the first instance, it is hoped that the fostering service would attempt to deal with any complaint or representation, however if this is felt inappropriate, all foster carers have complaints information and leaflets that show how to complain and how complaints are dealt with.

Sheffield City Council's Complaints Team can be contacted directly at:

Complaints Team
Floor 2
Howden House
Sheffield
S1 2SH

Telephone: 0114 273 4660
Email: complaints@sheffield.gov.uk

During 2017/18 the Fostering Service received 0 complaints.



10. Monitoring & Evaluation of the Fostering Service

We promote a transparent culture of continuous improvement, paying careful attention to the feedback we receive about the service.

Arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of the service to ensure that the fostering service is effective, efficient and that the quality of service is of an appropriate standard.

- All staff has regular supervision
- All attendees at the fostering service information evenings have the opportunity to complete an evaluation form
- All prospective foster carers complete an evaluation of the Skills to Foster training
- All assessment reports are quality assured and signed off by a team manager before being presented to fostering panel
- When a foster carer is approved, they are requested to complete an evaluation of the approval process and their experience of attending the fostering panel
- Children who are leaving their foster placement are requested to complete the 'end of placement' comments form
- Issues arising from any complaints are discussed, with any recommendations following a complaint being implemented
- Feedback is received from fostering panels via the panel advisor and the quarterly panel chairs meetings. Attendance at these meetings includes, panel chairs, vice chairs, panel advisor, agency decision maker and the fostering service manager
- Annual reports are submitted to senior managers via the scrutiny panel
- Contract meetings are held with partner agencies
- The fostering service complies with Fostering Service Regulation, Schedule 6



Fostering Panel Chair's Report

This report is produced annually by the independent chairperson. It details the volume and type of work at the panel and the quality of reports presented to panel. It details training undertaken throughout the year and identifies strengths and areas of further training needs.

Business Contingency Planning

The fostering service has a policy and set of procedures in the event of any kind of disaster occurring to ensure continuity of service. The business continuity plan is reviewed annually and updated when required.

Annual reports are submitted to senior managers via the scrutiny panel

External Inspection

The Fostering Service is inspected by Ofsted as part of the wider inspection of Children's Services under the new 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS) framework with reference to the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards & Regulations 2011. Inspection reports are public documents. A copy of the most recent inspection report is available from the website www.sheffield.gov.uk or at www.ofsted.gov.uk

The annual Fostering Data Set is submitted to Ofsted.
Ofsted contact details are:

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Store Street
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M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Children's Rights advisors are:

Bea Longmore: bea.longmore@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
Lisa Prendergast: lisa.prendergast@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
Benedetta Doria: benedetta.doria@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Further information can be obtained from:
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand>

Foster Sheffield's Future



Or ring: 0800 528 0731 or email:
help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk