
 

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE FOSTERING SERVICE

MAY 2023

 Previous update of this document:

May 2020, May 2022, April 2023

This Statement of Purpose is published in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations for Fostering Services (England) Vol 4 including amendments introduced in July 2013. The Statement is intended to provide a clear description of the aims, objectives and organisation of South Gloucestershire Council’s Fostering Service.

The Statement of Purpose also includes descriptions of the services and facilities provided by South Gloucestershire Council and partner agencies, which support the objectives of the Fostering Service.

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**South Gloucestershire’s Vision for Children and Young People:**

**Enabling every child and young person to thrive. Children & young people should have a good start in life, be safe and do as well as they can, while being able to access support where necessary.**

* 1. **Core Values of South Gloucestershire Fostering Service**

In South Gloucestershire, we take our role as Corporate Parents very seriously. We want to make sure that all of the children and young people in South Gloucestershire’s care really benefit from all the efforts made by us and our partners, and grow up to be confident and successful adults.

Within the Fostering Service, **we believe** that children and young people in South Gloucestershire’s Council’s care **should**:

* Grow up in a stable, loving family
* Grow up with their birth family if they can be looked after safely
* Grow up with a family with whom they are already connected if they cannot live with their family
* Be enabled to maintain meaningful links with their family, friends, and relevant others by being placed as close to them as possible if they do come into care
* Be matched with families who reflect their race, culture, language and religion where possible, balancing this with their needs to have a permanent home within a reasonable timescale
* Know why they are in care and what their plan is
* Be looked after by carers who are provided with accurate, relevant and up to date information on the reasons for care, the direction of care planning and all necessary information about the child
* Be placed with their brothers and sisters where a good assessment of their needs suggests this is the right thing to do
* Have their health, education and therapeutic needs understood and met
* Know where they will live until independence as quickly as possible once it is clear they cannot return home
* Have access to good aftercare and know that they have the right to stay with their foster carer when they reach the age of 18 if both parties agree

These are our core values. This means that within the South Gloucestershire’s Fostering Service, **we will:**

* Respect our children and young people, listen to what they have to say and work hard to understand them
* Make sure assessments of their needs are recorded in a way they understand, and that they have clear, positive, and timely written plans
* Enable and support children and young people to overcome the many obstacles they may face
* Ensure children and young people are supported by all those around them working together in partnership in their interests – including wider birth families, carers, peers, school, health and any additional services or agencies individual young people may feel are important
* Be timely in our responses to their needs
* Recognise and positively value and promote each child’s ethnic origin, cultural heritage, sexuality, and religion
* Recognise and take account of the particular needs of children and young people who have disabilities
	1. **The Aims and Objectives of South Gloucestershire’s Fostering Service**

Our aim is to meet the needs of our foster children through delivering our core values, by working in partnership with them and their families, and with our partners. We will intervene in the exercise of parental responsibility only so far as it is compatible with the safeguarding needs of the child, and we will ensure that their foster placements are of the highest quality.

The Fostering Service seeks to provide a range of placements for children and young people who are looked after by South Gloucestershire Council, including parent and child placements and placements with connected carers, to meet the diverse needs of those children and improve outcomes in their lives. We will do this by ensuring children are suitably matched to skilled, well supported carers who will provide good quality care.

The overall objectives of the South Gloucestershire’s Fostering Service are:

* To recruit enough foster carers to meet the needs of the children requiring placements
* To train foster carers to ensure they are suitably equipped to provide the quality of care required
* To support foster carers to meet the needs of the children & young people in their care, including their health, education and therapeutic needs
* To ensure children & young people are matched with the right carers for them and that their placements are stable and successful
* Where foster care is the best option for a child’s permanent home, that these arrangements are secured as soon as possible

We support our foster carers to achieve our aims and objectives through:

* High quality planned and regular supervision.
* Annual reviews
* A comprehensive training and development offer, which is considered annually at the foster carer review.
* Regular foster carer Engagement Events which take place 3 times a year which allow foster carers to communicate directly with the appropriate managers. There are also online questionnaires which enable the fostering team to consult with foster carers on specific topics.
* Support groups which are run monthly and are organised by geography, or by the specific type of care offered and one for carers’ own birth children.
* Publishing and advertising our Foster Carers handbook.
* Out of hours Foster Carer Helpline, which is staffed by Social Workers within the fostering team. Support also continues to be available through the out of hours Emergency Duty Team.
* A buddy scheme for foster carers in their first year
* Support from a clinical psychologist for foster carers looking after children who have therapeutic needs
* Involving carers and young people in some of our foster carer recruitment and training
* Paying allowances commensurate with experience and the needs of the children and young people
* Acting according to our Foster Carers Charter
* Providing a leaflet for birth families about how we recruit and supervise our foster carers

We work with our colleagues and partners to achieve our aims and objectives through ensuring children and young people who are fostered have access to good quality support services as set out in this document.

* 1. **Service Delivery**

In South Gloucestershire, our Fostering Service is delivered primarily through three teams.

The Recruitment and Assessment team undertake Mainstream, Connected Persons and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments, from application through to approval, the internal placements and share the care team also falls under this service area.

The Mainstream support team offer supervision and support to approved mainstream foster carers.

The connected persons support team, offer supervision and support to connected persons foster carers as well as offering a SGO support and signposting service.

All teams have suitably qualified social workers, advanced social workers and senior social workers as well as a team manager.

**The Fostering Service:**

* Recruits and assesses carers in sufficient numbers to meet the diverse needs of the population of looked after children and carers for children who have disabilities who will provide short breaks.
* Has an ongoing recruitment campaign making use of all the available media outlets including social media, aimed at attracting the carers that are needed.
* Undertakes viability assessments on family members or others who have a significant connection to the child, who have come forward to be assessed as carers for that child. If positive, a full assessment is then completed on them to become either foster carers or Special Guardians for the child.
* Provides the regular supervision, support, and annual appraisals of foster carers.
* Identifies suitable placements for children and young people with the aim of ensuring that placements can meet their diverse needs including their ethnic origin, sexuality, religion, culture, language, and disability.
* Provides pre-assessment preparation, pre-approval training, post-approval training and support to carers including connected carers.
* Provides specific services to support placement stability and prevent breakdowns – FACS (Foster Carer and Children support), WAYPOINT, Breakthrough mentoring, and 1:1 intervention with Thinking Aloud
* Provides ‘share the care’ foster carers for children and young people with disabilities and stay over foster carers to those foster carers who need a break.
* Ensures that children and young people in foster care have access to the range of services they may need, whether health, educational, social or vocational to meet their needs.
	1. **Management**

 **Name: Aimee Williams – Service Manager**

Date of Appointment:       April 2021

Pen Picture:

Aimee has many years’ experience working in the fields of Fostering, Adoption and Looked after children

Having qualified as a Social Worker in 2008, she began working for Gloucestershire County Council in the Looked After Children’s Team.  In 2013 she moved to South Gloucestershire Council working as a Fostering Social Worker in the Fostering team, and then a childcare social worker in the Children in Care team.

In 2016 Aimee starting in post as a Consultant Social Worker where she remained for several years, supporting practice and development across all teams in children’s services.  During this time Aimee supporting many students and ASYE’s as Practice Educator and Practice Development Advisor.  Aimee also worked as an Independent Social Worker completing fostering and adoption assessments, and viability assessments.

Aimee then moved into post as the Team Manager of mainstream fostering in South Gloucestershire for a period of time.

In 2021 Aimee became Interim Improvement Service Manager for Corporate Parenting for a period, before moving into a substantive post as Fostering and Adoption Service Manager in 2022.

Aimee developed South Gloucestershire’s WAYPOINT therapeutic team and is now Service Manager for Fostering and WAYPOINT.  Aimee is the Agency Decision Maker for fostering in South Gloucestershire.

Name: Darryll Whitney – Team Manager - Panel Advisor

Date of Appointment: 2020

Pen Picture:

Darryll has over 25 years’ experience working in childcare social work across a number of settings including child protection, children looked after, court work, family centred services and fostering. Prior to this, Darryll was involved in youth work and was a foster carer himself for Torbay. Darryll has been a team manager in frontline child protection services, looked after children, and fostering services.

Most notably, Darryll has been a team manager within fostering services for the past 12 years. This has been with three different local authorities and also a period of time working in an independent fostering agency, as a regional manager. Darryll has had involvement in a number of strategic developments within local authority fostering services, covering delegated authority, permanence via fostering, parent and child fostering and remand fostering. Additionally, Darryll was part of a national working party with the Department for Education in developing national guidance on delegated authority and placement planning for children in care. Darryll has extensive experience as a fostering agency advisor and has advised fostering panels in 3 different local authorities.

Name: Jo Avery – Team Manager – Mainstream Support

Date of Appointment: 2021

Pen Picture:

Since qualifying as a social worker in 2004 with a DipSW, Jo has been employed by South Gloucestershire Council, initially in the Fostering Service (Family Placement Team) and developed a new Adoption Support service before moving to the Kingswood locality team in 2009 where she worked as a duty social worker. Jo returned to the Fostering Service (Family Placement Team) in 2011 where she supported the development of the Short Break scheme and mainstream foster carers.  Jo also spent time as the lead for a Supported Lodgings scheme.

Jo became an Advanced social worker in 2016 and then progressed to senior social worker and then Fostering Team Manager of connected care in 2021.

Mike Tomkinson – Interim Team Manager – Recruitment and Assessment

Date of Appointment Jan 2023

Pen Picture:

Mike has worked in Children’s Social Care since 2000. Mike has worked in a number of different service areas including, residential parenting assessment centre, Child Protection, Looked After Children, Children’s disability and young carers. Since graduating in 2009 with a BA (Hons) Social Work, Mike became a Registered Manager for a short breaks residential centre and managed community short breaks for children with disabilities.

Since 2013 Mike has worked as a team manager within fostering and adoption recruitment and assessment teams as well as taking on quality assurance management roles. Mike has extensive experience in strategic service development for fostering services as well as being a foster carer himself for 13 years.

Mike joined South Glos. in January 2023 as an interim team manager for the recruitment and assessment team in fostering.

Louise Thomas – Acting Team Manager – Connected Persons, SGO Support

Date of Appointment April 2023

Pen Picture:

Since completing a degree in social work in 2014 Louise Thomas has been working within the permanency service, adoption, Connected care and Special Guardianship.

Louise Thomas joined South Gloucestershire Fostering Service in August 2018 as an Advanced Social Worker and worked her way into a senior practitioner. In April 2023 she started her new role as Acting team manager of SGO support and connected care.

Shanti Eaves

Head of Service – Localities, Corporate Parenting and Fostering

Date of Appointment: September 2022

Pen Picture:

Shanti is an experienced senior manager in local authority children’s services. She has been a Responsible Individual for a Children’s Trust Fostering Service as well as being a ADM for fostering in local authority and Children’s Trust Fostering services. Shanti commenced her post at South Gloucestershire as Head of Service with responsibility for Fostering Service in September 2022.

The Head Services has overall responsibility for all social care services for children and young people, including the Corporate Parenting Service.

The Agency Decision Maker for the fostering service is the Service Manager – Aimee Williams for Fostering and WAYPOINT, though this is delegated to other Service Managers when necessary.

The service is monitored at a strategic level through regular key performance indicator measures. Cabinet members and elected members receive regular reports on the performance of the service.

**4.1** **The Organisational Structure of the Fostering Service**

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**4.2 Staffing**

* All social work staff have a social work qualification and are registered with Social Work England.
* When appointed all social work staff within the Fostering Service have a DBS check.
* All staff have access to internal and external training and have access to monthly supervision and an annual appraisal which also considers their personal and professional development.
* The Fostering Team Managers provide all the social work staff supervision within the teams.
* The team also contains a training officer, and a fostering administrator who administers the fostering panel.
* The Fostering Service is supported by a dedicated fostering business support team.
* The Development and Training Officer oversees the development of the training programme. They have responsibility for maintaining the booking site, advertising courses, and delivering some of these courses. They also oversee the collation of evaluation feedback, carer’s attendance at training, and updating carers training records on Mosaic.
* The Recruitment and Marketing officers are responsible for the development of the marketing strategy, and for using the sufficiency strategy, trend analysis, and analysis of the fostering workforce to support targeted recruitment.
* The Placement Officers oversee the duty desk and identifies foster homes for children and young people including stay over care. This role includes overseeing placement needs and works to tackle delays in finding children and young people the foster homes they need.
* The FACS workers deliver short pieces of focused work directly to children, young people, foster carers, and foster carers’ children with the specific aim of supporting placement stability.  They also run a group for foster carers own children to support them with their role within fostering families.
* The WAYPOINT Team provides a variety of therapeutically informed support including:

 Support to children, young people, and their families to prevent entry to care along with placement stability and support to foster carers and their networks.

They offer support to children and young people when stepping down from residential care to foster carers or family.

* 1. **Children with Disabilities**

Children with Disabilities are supported by the Children with Disabilities team (CWD Team), which is part of the 0-25 service. The CWD team is responsible for assessing Children with disabilities and their families, and identifying appropriate support via Children in Need, Child Protection or Looked after Children Plans.    The largest cohort of children known to the team are provided with services under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and are community based.  On occasion, children or young people with disabilities benefit from longer breaks away from their home, or by living fully outside of their families, and as such they may be provided with this service via the ‘Share the Care’ (short break) service or full time foster placements.  Share the Care is a specialist short break service within the Fostering Service in which Foster Carers are specifically recruited to provide a family setting break to children and young people with disabilities.

When it is felt appropriate that a child known to the CWD team requires a short break or placement within the fostering team, a referral is made to the service via the fostering team, who in turn, identify a suitable Share the Care Foster Carer.  In most situations, once a potential match has been identified, introductions are made between the fostering family and the child or young person’s family.   A series of short tea visits often occur until everyone is sure the placement is right, and the child/young person is happy before moving on to spending longer with the Foster Carer and starting to stay overnight.

* 1. **The Functions of the Fostering Service**

**6.1** **Recruitment of Foster Carers**

The Recruitment and Assessment team is overseen by the team manager and employs 3 specialist Recruitment and Marketing Officers. 1, FTE Senior Marketing and Recruitment officer, 1, 0.5FTE Marketing officer and 1, 0.5FTE Recruitment Officer as core members of the team to ensure the successful recruitment of Foster Carers. This process is constantly monitored for trends and provides monthly data to check that they are on target to recruit the necessary numbers of carers. The recruitment process is clearly defined, and an annual analysis is undertaken to amend the recruitment strategy**.**

Prospective Foster Carers have an initial discussion with the Recruitment Officer who the sends the Fostering Information Pack by return of post to those wanting more information. If the prospective Foster Carer wishes to proceed with their enquiry, they will be invited to attend a Fostering Information Event, to find out more about what fostering involves. Fostering Information Events are held monthly throughout the county, in a relaxed community venue. Prospective Foster Carers will then receive a Home Visit from a member of the Fostering Team to discuss their interest more fully. Following a positive Home Visit, the prospective Foster Carers will be invited to complete an Application Form. This is where statutory checks and references are completed. Applicants will be invited to attend the Skills to Foster Preparation Course, during which an assessment based on the Coram BAAF Form F is completed. The courses are held every three months, and to prevent assessment delays, Stage One and Stage Two are run concurrently.

Initial enquiries received from Foster Carers currently approved with an independent fostering agency or neighbouring local authority wishing to transfer, will be fast tracked. A member of the Fostering Team will arrange to visit immediately to discuss the potential transfer. If this proceeds successfully, the social worker will discuss this initial assessment with their manager and the decision is made to progress to the next stage. The applicants will complete the application form and the assessment process will commence.

In some instances, family members or others who have a significant connection to the child come forward seeking to look after children who have been assessed to need to be in care. These carers are described asConnected Carers.In these instances, a viability assessment will be completed. Temporary approval for up to 16 weeks can be given under regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, for the child to stay with the connected carer, whilst the full assessment is undertaken.

The assessment process incorporates the principles and, where appropriate, specific sections of the Children Act 1989. The process also integrates the requirements and expectations of the National Minimum Standards 2011, amendments to the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, vol 4 for fostering services July 2013, and the UK National Standards for Foster Care detailed under section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The assessment is divided into two stages:

Stage one covers the information required in part 1 of schedule 3 of the fostering regulations and incorporates statutory checks. (DBS Checks with Children’s Services and other agency records, health assessments and 3 references.) Stage 1 of the assessment gathers the immediate screening information to ensure suitability to proceed to stage 2 and provides the prospective Foster Carer the opportunity to consider fostering and whether it is appropriate for them and their family.

The second stage of the assessment is a period of intensive assessment and training based on the Coram BAAF Form F to ascertain whether the applicant has the necessary competencies to foster and to identify the range of children’s needs the applicant is able to meet.

Generally, the two stages of the assessment will be carried out in parallel to avoid delay where possible. The assessment process takes approximately 12-16 weeks.

The report is then presented at the fostering panel with recommendations. The approval process is similar for both mainstream carers and connected carers, although the timescale for connected carers is shorter due to the placement regulations.

**6.2** **Approval - The Fostering Panel**

The fostering panel has the primary function of considering assessments to foster and making recommendations on the approval of foster carers for South Gloucestershire Council. Terms of approval can relate to people wishing to provide long term foster care, short-term foster care, Share the Care, stay over care, and connected care arrangements. The panel also considers how many children the prospective carers can foster, and the age range of the children.

The fostering panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker, who is the Service Manager for Fostering and WAYPOINT.

The panel will also consider brief reports regarding the cessation of assessments where necessary, resignations and Special Guardianships, allegations and complaints**.** The panel also have a function to quality assure the paperwork, which is presented, to ensure that it is suitable for the decision they are being asked to recommend.

The panel also considers all annual reviews for foster carers within the first year of approval (and thereafter all annual reviews on a 3-yearly basis) and proposals for any changes in registrations of foster carers. All de-registrations are put before panel for consideration. All other annual reviews and temporary changes are considered by the Team Manager of the Fostering Team to determine whether the foster carer’s terms of approval remain suitable. Any concerns arising from this are taken by the Team Manager for discussion with the Fostering Agency Decision Maker and decisions for temporary changes, such as over numbers, are ratified by the Fostering Agency Decision Maker.

The panel meets monthly and is chaired by an independent chair. Additional panels are arranged where necessary to meet demands of the service. The panel chair writes an annual report about the business of the panel which will include relevant observations and discuss emerging trends.

If an applicant or Foster Carer is dissatisfied with the recommendation of the fostering panel, there is a right to review via the Service Manager, who is the Fostering Agency Decision Maker, with a view to the panel being asked to reconsider their recommendation, or an approach can be made to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

**6.3 Post Approval**

All foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker from the Fostering Team. There are several categories of approval:

* Mainstream Carers – who will be available to offer children placements on an immediate or planned basis within their approval basis and age range. Placements will have a clear focus depending on the care plan for the child. There is a clear emphasis on permanence from the outset – either for the child to return home (often referred to as reunification), or working with the child and family and others towards preparing the child for permanency, either through permanent fostering, adoption or special guardianship or working towards independence. Foster carers and the social workers who support them will be keen to ensure that no child or young person’s plans drift and will do all they can to counter any delay in the process of achieving permanence for them.
* Respite/stay over Foster Carers provide stay over care for children who are placed with mainstream carers.
* Share the Care Foster Carers provide short breaks for children with a disability.
* Connected Carers are carers who are members of the child’s family, or are known to them previously, and are approved for those specific children.
* Long-Term Foster Carers – are carers who have a child who is placed with them on a permanent arrangement often until independence.
* Staying Put – When children reach the age of 18, they have the option to remain with their former carers if both parties agree, in what is called a ‘Staying Put’ arrangement.

**6.4 Training and reviewing**

All Foster Carers are trained to meet the Fostering Regulations Minimum Standards. All applicants attend a preparation course as outlined above. Following their approval carers are required to demonstrate within one year their ability as matched against the induction standards. This is extended to 18 months for Connected Carers.

South Gloucestershire has established a specific induction, training and support group programme called ‘Launch Pad’, for all kinship carers, whether they are applying for a special guardianship or becoming connected carers. The course runs throughout the year and carers can join at any point, and all connected carers are invited to participate. The course is made up of 6 sessions and recognises that, unlike mainstream foster carers, families are thrown in at the deep end without having had a course to prepare them for what lies ahead. This course aims to do that as well as recognise the difficulties that ‘Kinship Carers’ face.

The comprehensive training programme available to all carers offers opportunities for specialist ‘one off’ or more specialist courses, such as training to enable carers to offer Parent and Baby Placements. Training opportunities are sought which provide the chance for foster carers to train alongside social workers and others involved in working with children and young people looked after. Foster carers are offered opportunities to attend external or regional training and to attend training held in conjunction with a neighbouring authority.

All approved foster carers (including connected carers) will have an allocated supervising social worker from the Fostering team. The social worker will regularly visit the foster carer to discuss ongoing placement and development issues. An annual review is undertaken incorporating comments from the foster carers, children who have been or are in placement, independent reviewing officers, and childcare social workers. The first annual review and every third year thereafter will be presented to the fostering panel. In addition, annual reviews reflecting a change in foster carer’s registration are also presented to the panel. All other reviews are considered by the Fostering Team Manager as outlined above.

* 1. **Finances**

A clear policy about foster carers fees and allowances is available for all foster carers to see and is uploaded onto the Council Tri-X website.

Carers are paid according to the age of the child they are looking after. This includes the age-related allowance, and a fee which is a payment for their skill as a foster carer. It is anticipated that the foster carers provide all the child or young person needs from the age-related allowance. Clear guidance and expectations about this are included in the “Foster Carers fees and Allowances” document.

**7.1 Foster carer Banding Scheme**

Approval at the different fee payment levels for foster carers will depend on:

* The foster carers’ assessed core skills
* Their experience of caring for and working with children and young people
* Training and personal development that has been undertaken

There are 3 bands, each with increasing expectations of availability and skill. The criteria for each banding are fully explained in the “Criteria for Foster Carer Banding 1, 2, 3, ” document. This document is available for foster carers and is on the Council Tri-X website.

It is expected that most foster carers will commence on Band 1.

Foster carers must be able to demonstrate that they have continued to meet all the requirements for their banding level through their Personal Development Plan and the evidence within their annual review.

Foster carers who wish to progress to a higher banding must demonstrate their suitability by evidencing how they have met the criteria and the impact this has had on their fostering practice. Moving to a higher banding will normally be considered once a foster carer has provided the necessary evidence that they have met the criteria. Agreement to an increase will be decided by the team manager and service manager for Fostering and WAYPOINT.

When a foster carer is not meeting the criteria of their current banding level, they will be given three months to make the changes needed. Where this does not happen, foster carers will revert to the appropriate banding.

Connected carers are able to move between bandings in the same way as mainstream carers. Short break carers have a different payment system.

* 1. **Additional Services for Foster Carers**

**8.1 Education Support**

The Virtual School caters for all South Gloucestershire’s Looked After Children, and works to ensure that children looked after develop the same aspirations for achievement in school as all children, and are given the same opportunities and support as children who are not in care who have not experienced the same level of disruption and instability.

The Virtual School will ensure that all pre-school and school age children have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which is regularly reviewed. All pre-school children will have a Foundation Stage PEP when they attend pre-school or nursery. As well as monitoring achievement, the plans will identify strengths as well as areas of social and academic need where additional support is required. The plans are reviewed at least twice a year and feed into the statutory review where they can be monitored. The plans ensure the educational needs of the child are given specific emphasis within the school.

The child’s school can arrange the provision of home tutors and can arrange extra-curricular activities to develop children’s interests and build confidence. The Virtual School is responsible for monitoring academic progress, attendance and exclusions. They meet regularly with foster carers to discuss educational issues. The Virtual School are available to support foster carers, students, schools, and social care to ensure that all children in care are receiving the best education possible.

A home to school transport agreement is in place to ensure continuity of school when a child becomes looked after or changes placement. It is known that some children prefer not to travel by taxi and this view is considered when a school placement change is being discussed. There is an expectation that where at all possible, foster carers provide transport themselves.

Children with special educational needs are supported within school and, where there is an assessed need, through an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). In line with the Foster Carers Charter, foster carers play a full part in the EHCP process.

**8.2 Health**

South Gloucestershire Local Authority have support from a Designated Doctor and a Named Nurse for children and young people looked after. They provide advice to foster carers and social workers on a range of health care issues for looked after children. Foster carers can contact and have support from the Named Nurse throughout the placement of the child and young person.

It is a legal requirement of the Children Act 1989 that every child/young person should have a Statutory Health Assessment when they come into care, and every 6 months for children under 5 and every year for those over 5. This should be a holistic health assessment of the child/young person’s physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing.

The Designated Doctor and Named Nurse undertake many health assessments for South Gloucestershire Children and Young People who are Looked After.

Foster Carers will be contacted to arrange an appointment by the Community Child Health Department. Foster Carers will be asked to complete a form regarding the Child/Young person’s dental health and vision and be asked to complete a Carer’s report.

The outcome of the health assessment is the Health Action Plan which forms part of the child/young person’s Care Plan and this should be available 4 weeks after the child/young person becomes looked after. Foster carers are involved in the health planning for the child in their care as part of the team around the child. The health plan clearly sets out the objectives, actions, timescales and responsibilities arising from the health assessment.

An annual Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is organised by the young person’s Social Worker and completed by the carer and young person (aged 11-17 years) and scored by the Named Nurse. The SDQ assesses the emotional stability of the child or young person. Where the score of the SDQ is particularly high, the score should be discussed with Thinking Aloud by the Social Worker or Named Nurse who then makes a referral where appropriate.

Thinking Aloud is a specialist CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) team for Looked After and Adopted children in South Gloucestershire. The team currently consists of a Drama Therapist and Clinical Lead, a Clinical Psychologist, and a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist. The team provides a service directly to children and young people who have emotional health needs, but also offers Foster Carers, Adopters and Special Guardians consultation and training, to include topics such as Attachment, Trauma and Therapeutic Re-Parenting. The team also liaises with other agencies such as locality CAMHS services, the Virtual School, Community Paediatrics and voluntary agencies to facilitate a holistic response to young people’s emotional health needs.

All Looked After Children and Young People can be referred to a substance misuse specialist for children looked after and care leavers, within the Drugs and Alcohol Team, they may undertake direct work, provide advice and consultation to fostering service social workers and foster carers and contribute to foster carer training. This worker is a member of the Safer South Gloucestershire service.

The Transitions to Independence team (support for young people leaving care) and their cohort of young people can also access the Named Nurse for non-urgent advice and support on an ad hoc basis.

**8.3 Other Support**

The Fostering Service is a member of Coram BAAF (the British Association for Adoption and Fostering) and the Fostering Network. The Fostering Service also provides foster carers with free membership with the Fostering Network.

Foster Carer families are invited to join members of the corporate parenting panel for an annual barbeque and to a Christmas party celebration.

Training – Research in Practice Membership,

Telephone Support Line manned by Fostering Social Workers

Variety of E learning Provision – KCA/AC Education/Virtual College

Monthly Training E Newsletter

Buddies

Engagement events

Online newsletter

Support groups

* 1. **Youth Offending Service** **(YOS)**

A protocol is in place defining responsibilities between YOS and fostering service social workers and carers. YOS workers will always be involved with young people looked after who offend and will provide advice and support to foster carers where required.

* 1. **Commissioned Services**

Independent Fostering Agencies are commissioned to provide foster placements when necessary. There is a placements team which is responsible for the external commissioning of placements.

* 1. **Complaints and Advocacy**

All foster carers, birth parents, children and young people, have access to South Gloucestershire Council’s complaints service. Information on this service is made available in the Foster Carers Handbook,in leaflets given to parents, and in the Children’s Guide. Consultation forms used at statutory reviews contain a question regarding knowledge of this process.

On becoming looked after, all children and young people are given information on an advocacy service, (Reconstruct), who are an independent provider commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council.

There is a clear and published policy, “Complaints, Standards of Care Concerns and Allegations against Foster Carers”. This policy is shared with foster carers and is available on the Council’s Tri-X website. The Service Manager for Fostering and WAYPOINT, is the “Designated Person” to manage allegations against foster carers working closely with the Local Authority Designated Officer, (LADO).

A copy of the Council’s complaints procedure is available by request or by visiting the South Gloucestershire Council website. Swan Advocacy has been commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council to support adults in the complaint process.

Complaints regarding the fostering service can be made to:

 CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk

**The Registration Authority**

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) is the inspectorate for children and learners in England. Ofsted has a legal responsibility to promote improvement and to register and inspect social care services such as council fostering services.

 The address of the National Business Unit is:

Ofsted

National Business Unit

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231