

Derbyshire County Council
Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose 2023/24



1 Introduction

- 1.1** This Statement of Purpose has been produced to meet the obligations of Derbyshire County Council Fostering Service under:
- Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
 - Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- 1.2** The Statement of Purpose provides a clear description of the aims and objectives of the fostering service provided by Derbyshire County Council. It will also outline the services and facilities provided by the fostering service.
- 1.3** The Statement of Purpose is formally approved by the Head of Children in Care Provision and it is reviewed annually. The statement of purpose will be reviewed by June 2024.
- 1.4** The Statement of Purpose is available to anyone working for the fostering service, to children who may be placed in foster care, their parents, and legal guardians and to anyone wishing to foster.
- 1.5** The Statement of Purpose is available on the Derbyshire County Council Fostering website at <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/foster/foster-for-derbyshire.aspx>. A copy of this statement can be made available on request.
- 1.6** A written guide to the fostering service (“the children’s guide”) is also available which includes an accessible summary of the Statement of Purpose for children.

2 Aims of the Fostering Service

- 2.1** Provide high quality safe care within a family setting for children and young people who are unable to live within their own families or who need short breaks.
- 2.2** To offer a range of carers, which can meet children's needs and a sufficiency of placements to enable placement choice.
- 2.3** To give children as much stability as possible so they can fulfil their potential in life.
- 2.4** To provide high quality support and supervision to carers by qualified and experienced staff

3 Objectives of the Fostering Service

- 3.1** Listen to our children and young people and act upon any concerns raised by them.
- 3.2** Ensure that children participate in decisions relating to the care they receive and plans for their future, according to age, experience, understanding and ability and that they are provided with advocacy and independent support.
- 3.3** Work in partnership with children and their families, with foster carers and with other professionals in promoting the interests of children in care. We will use the comments of children, their families, and foster carers to improve the service.
- 3.4** Ensure that children and young people can become securely attached to carers who can provide safe and effective care throughout their childhood.
- 3.5** Place children and young people in care in local foster placements where relationships with family, friends and community are maintained and there is continuity of health, education, and cultural and spiritual links.
- 3.6** Recruit, assess, support, and develop a diverse range of local foster carers who can care for children with wide ranging needs.
- 3.7** Respect and recognise the importance of the ethnic origin, cultural background, abilities and disabilities, gender and sexual orientation, religion and language of children, their families and of foster carers.

- 3.8** Provide appropriate placements and support for children as described by their care plan on the following issues: - their contact and relationships with parents, siblings, wider family and community; their education; their health and access to leisure, and to develop their interests and social skills.
- 3.9** Ensure all staff are suitable to work with children, and that they are qualified and supported in continual professional development.
- 3.10** Ensure that where a child has a special need or a disability, we will provide appropriate care to meet their needs, including consideration of the provision of equipment and adaptations of the home.
- 3.11** Offer assistance and support in preparing children in care to live independently while they are still in foster care and to offer continuing support when they have moved into independent living arrangements.
- 3.12** Give young people the opportunity to 'Stay Put' with their Foster Carers once they are 18 and ensure that Foster Carers are supported to enable this to happen.

4 Service Delivery

The service is divided into central and local services which offer the following functions: -

- I. Recruitment and Approval of carers
- II. Support and Supervision of foster carers
- III. Provision of specialist placements for disabled children and teenagers with complex needs

I. Recruitment and Approval of Carers

This is a central recruitment team which covers the whole county and is responsible for: -

- Recruitment and assessment of a sufficient and wide range of carers to meet the diverse needs of children in care.
- An ongoing recruitment campaign using all available media aimed at attracting new carers.
- Delivering training to fostering applicants (Skills to Foster).

II. Support and Supervision Teams

There are three teams offering services on a local basis to foster carers: -

- Ilkeston covering the south of the county - Amber Valley, Erewash and Swadlincote.
- Chesterfield covering the north of the county - Chesterfield borough, Staveley, North - East Derbyshire and Bolsover.
- Buxton covering High Peak, North Derbyshire Dales and Glossopdale areas.

These teams are responsible for: -

- Maintaining a pool of trained, skilled, competent, and well supported foster carers whose skills, abilities and competencies are reviewed on an annual basis.
- Providing a high level of support and supervision to all foster carers so that carers can deliver the quality of care required to meet the needs of children in care.
- Identifying foster homes for children which can meet their identified needs; and where any gaps in matching occur, address these needs by provision of additional support.
- Delivering training courses to approved carers that meet the requirements of the Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers (TSDs) and where appropriate to provide specialist training required to meet the needs of the children and young people placed in their care.

III. Provision of specialist placements for disabled children and teenagers with complex needs

There are two centrally based teams that provide these services: -

The Contract Care Team

This Team supports foster carers specifically recruited to provide (short and longer term) placements for teenagers who would otherwise be placed in residential or specialist agency care. The team comprises of a manager, social workers, and Family Resource Workers.

The Disabled Children's Fostering Team

This team provides the following services: -

- Short term breaks and longer-term placements for disabled children
- Supervision and support to those carers who have placements for disabled children (the team shares this role with the local fostering teams)
- It also supports foster carers who provide a mix of disability and mainstream fostering.
- A specialist, intensive care scheme - whereby carers provide round the clock care for children with disabilities with a range of complex needs who would otherwise be in residential care.

5 Structure and Staffing of the Fostering Service

(Please refer to the end of the Statement of Purpose for a diagram outlining the overall structure which is currently under review, with a revised structure to be finalised by September 2023)

- Overall responsibility for the performance of the fostering service lies with the Registered Manager. This is the Service Director - Safeguarding and Specialist Services. They are the Registered Manager with OfSTED.
- The Responsible Individual for the Fostering Service is the Strategic Director of Childrens Services.
- The Agency Decision Maker is the Head of Children in Care Provision. They are responsible for fostering panel decisions and provides independent oversight of panel business including approvals, incidents, complaints, allegations, resignations, and de-registrations.
- The Operations Manager supports with day-to-day fostering operations, providing line management support and supervision to eight fostering managers.
- The Panel Advisor provides the non-voting advisory role on fostering panels, covering all regulatory functions relating to the appointment of foster panel members, panel business and provides recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.
- The Service Support Manager is responsible for implementing recruitment and retention and a range of project work.
- The Team Manager for mainstream fostering assessments is responsible for managing a team of assessment social workers.
- The Team Manager for Family and Friend's is responsible for managing a team of family and friend's assessment workers. (This post is within the central Recruitment and Assessment Service).
- The Team Managers for the Support and Supervision Teams, the Disabled Childrens Team and the Contract Care Team have the responsibility for the day-to-day operational running of the fostering service.
- Two Practice Supervisors offer practice supervision on all case work (group and one to one) and offer personal supervision to social workers within the team.
- Supervising Social Workers provide the main day-to-day contact with all foster carers. They are responsible for support and supervision of foster carers.
- Family Resource Workers who are unqualified practitioners provide additional support to foster carers under the direction and supervision of a Team Manager or a Supervising Social Worker.

6 Qualifications and Staff Development

- All social work staff and managers are qualified Social Workers and are registered with Social Work England. Managers hold appropriate managerial qualifications.
- Copies of staff qualifications, registration, references, and checks are kept on personnel files.
- Regular supervision, training and annual personal development and performance appraisals are conducted and learning, and development opportunities are made available for staff each year. Social workers have access to internally provided and external courses.
- All staff and managers are trained in systemic practice. This is a model applied across Children's Services.

7 Support and Training for Foster Carers

After approval each foster carer will have access to:-

- Comprehensive pre-approval and post-approval learning and development programme (also available online where appropriate).
- Learning and development opportunities which are accessible to all foster carers - delivered in a variety of formats at different venues and at different times of the days, including on-line training, books, and DVDs.
- Support to complete the DfE Standards for foster carers including support groups and where needed mentoring.
- A fostering service welcome pack (this includes: - two identity cards, a training schedule, introductory guides for children entering foster care).
- An induction welcome event for new carers.
- The Foster Carer Handbook, held within the procedure's online pages. Hard copies are available on request (<http://derbyshirecaya.proceduresonline.com/>) This provides guidance on their role and information on additional resources.
- A monthly newsletter is available online. There are regular updates on developments and useful information through the Foster Carer's website.

- The annual Financial Handbook providing information on all fees, allowances, and additional funding.
- An allocated Supervising Social Worker who will visit every 6 weeks, provide telephone support, and undertake an unannounced visit once a year.
- Membership of Foster Talk, an independent organisation offering specialist information, discounts, advice, and help to foster carers, and on-line educational support for children.
- Advice and support from the fostering duty team during working hours
Support from the Out of Hour's Team, available outside of office hours. Tel: [01629532600](tel:01629532600).
- Support groups for newly approved and existing foster carers.
- The Foster Carer Council - which gives foster carers a voice in the strategic and operational functions of the fostering service.
- Independent support services if an allegation is made against them.
- Activities / events for foster carers, their birth children, and children in care on an ad hoc basis
- The Head / Deputy Head Teacher of the Virtual School for children in care to ensure that they have sufficient educational support and access to appropriate schools.
- Specialist named nurses to assist with health care issues and conduct annual health assessments.
- A pass for free access to leisure and sporting activities in the county.
- A scheme which enables loans to foster carers for adaptations or extensions to their property, to assist in the costs of moving house, or to purchase a vehicle (where criteria are met).
- An insurance scheme that covers damage or loss to the contents of the foster carer's home or car (arising because of damage caused by child in care).
- Local resources for foster carers offering DVDs and books on loan.
- Long service recognition for carers who have provided a service for over 10 years.

The following additional support services will also be available as appropriate:

- Support from a family resource worker to work on a one-to-one basis with the foster carers and/or foster children.
- A Children's Participation Team which incorporates Advocacy and Independent Visitors.
- Access to a CAMHS/Action for Children service.
- A Mentoring Scheme for all foster carers.
- Derbyshire and Derby Sexual Health Services who offer guidance on sexual health, teenage pregnancy.
- Derbyshire Recovery Partnership providing support around substance misuse and can offer treatment to older children in care.
- Computers and laptops for children in care in their foster homes.
- A Care Leaving Service supporting care leavers with issues around their independence.

*Also refer to the Foster Carer Charter which outlines what can be expected of the service to ensure foster carers are supported to care for Derbyshire Children in Care to be the 'best they can be'.

8 Annual Reviews

- Foster carers suitability is reviewed on an annual basis. The Supervising Social Worker will assess the performance of the carer over the preceding year. Feedback is sought from the foster carers, from birth parents, from children placed and the carers' own children, as well as the placing field social workers.
- The first Annual Review is considered by the Fostering Panel and thereafter is considered by the Team Manager. A recommendation is made to the Agency Decision Maker who is responsible for the final decision.
- A review may also be held prior to the Annual Review - if there are concerns regarding a foster carer's progress or change in circumstances. These cases will be referred to the Fostering Panel.
- Where carers are deemed not to be meeting the competencies a report will be written by the Supervising Social Worker either deferring their approval until the identified gaps have been remedied or recommending termination of approval. Carers will be able to make written representations and attend the Panel in person if they so desire.
- If the Agency Decision Maker's qualifying determination states that a carer's approval should cease, the foster carer has 28 days to make further representations to the Panel in writing or in person. In addition, carers have the right to appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Details available on <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-review-mechanism>

9 Complaints, and Compliments

Derby County Council Children's Service has a Complaints and Compliment's Procedure available on the website and within the Fostering Handbook. All types of feedback are welcome, but they usually come in one of the following forms:

- service enquiry
- compliment
- complaint
- general comments

Other ways to contact:

- Contact by email: cs.feedback@derbyshire.gov.uk. or use the form available on the website.
- By writing to FREEPOST, Derbyshire County Council.
- Calling Derbyshire on 01629 533190 Mon-Fri 8 am to 8 pm; Sat 9:30 am to 4pm.

All foster carers have access to support and information through their membership of Foster Talk.

10 Name, address & contact details of OfSTED

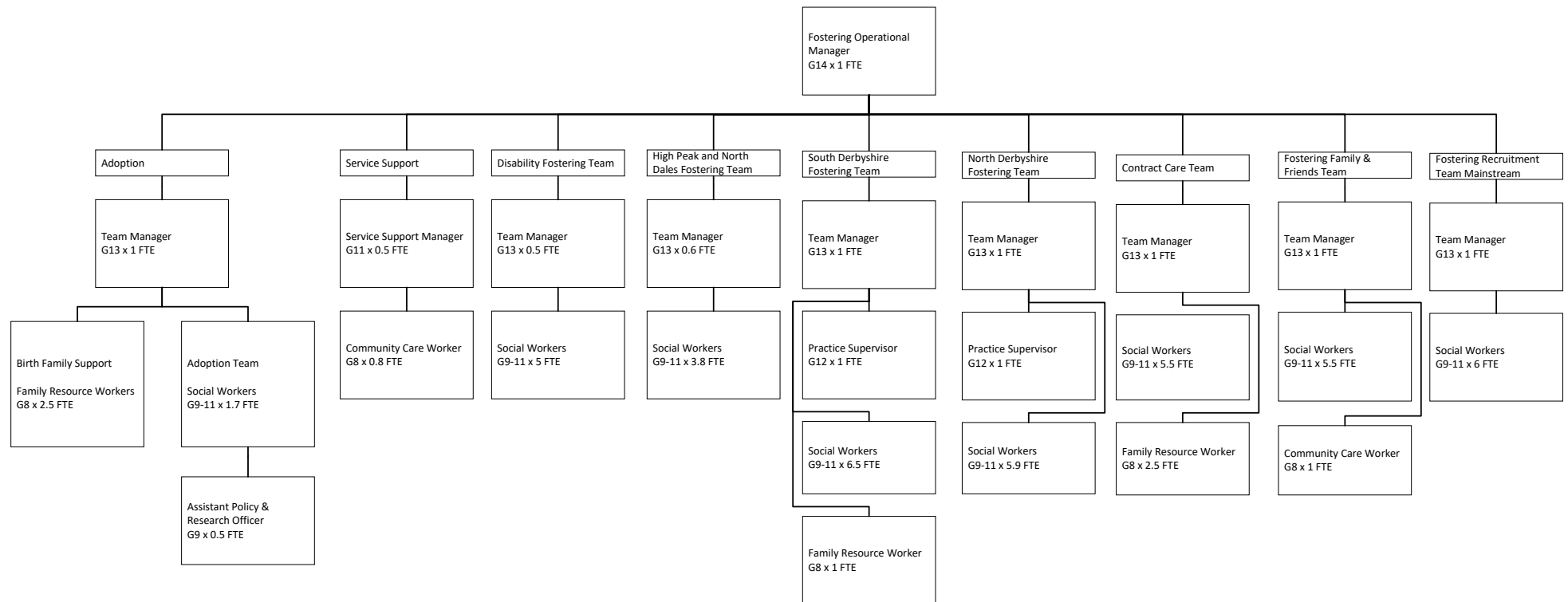
OfSTED

NBU, 3rd Floor
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square Manchester M2 7LA

Tel: 0845 404040 **E:** enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated in 12 months, with next review date June 2024.

Fostering and Adoption



Current structure is under review and will be revised and finalised by September 2023.

