

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Children and Young People's Services

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose



2017/2018

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 1 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Forward by Councillor Watson

“As Corporate Parents, all Councillors are part of the team around the child in Rotherham and it is vital that we listen to the views of young people. They know the issues they face and how services can support them, so young people’s input continues to be at the heart of how we shape our work to meet their needs.”

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Rotherham Fostering Service

1. Introduction

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (Standard 16) and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (Regulation 3(1)) state that the Fostering Service Provider must compile a written statement in relation to the Fostering Service, a 'Statement of Purpose', which details the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and the services and facilities provided by the Fostering Service. The National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Service Regulations govern the work of the Fostering Service Providers throughout England and will be used in inspecting and registering Fostering Agencies. The work of the Fostering Service is underpinned and guided by legislation and by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's policies and procedures.

This Fostering Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the standards and regulations and will be a useful source of information to Members of the Council, staff, foster carers and prospective foster carers and children and young people who are placed with Rotherham carers. It will also provide a comparator benchmark for Rotherham children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, at least annually and modified as necessary. In accordance with Fostering Regulation 4b, the Fostering Service will notify the Chief Inspector of any revision within twenty-eight days, for the purposes of this Statement the twenty-eight days will be taken from the point of ratification by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (or Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services)

2. Principles and Values of the Fostering Service

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Looked After Children Statement sets out a number of principles and these principles underpin and inform the Fostering Service:-

- A child or young person should only become Looked After by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council if it is clearly in their best interest and there are no other suitable options;
- As a general principle, the provision of accommodation for a child/young person is on the assumption that the arrangements are short-term and aimed at uniting the child/young person with their parents or other person with parental responsibility within a short timescale, unless contrary to safeguarding their health and well-being;
- The Authority is committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families through the use of resources, according to agreed protocols and procedures;

- No child or young person will become Looked After if it is considered to be contrary to their longer term needs or best interests;
- No child or young person will become Looked After solely because a cost-effective material resource has not been made available;
- No child or young person will become Looked After solely for reasons of family homelessness, inadequate housing or educational problems;

In addition, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Fostering Service:-

- Recognise that the needs of Looked After Children are paramount;
- Recognise the value, skill and commitment required of foster carers and treat them, their families and homes with respect;
- Aim to provide a range of quality placements to meet the identified needs of children who require substitute care;
- Are committed to maintaining siblings together wherever possible and promoting positive contact with family members;
- Are committed to engaging other agencies in the assessment of the needs of children and working together to clarify roles and ensuring that their needs are understood and prioritised;
- Recognise that many children will have had damaging experiences prior to placement in substitute care, as well as the effects of separation and loss;
- Recognise their mental health needs may be complex and their need for understanding of their past and access to therapeutic input is essential;
- Recognise that foster carers caring for damaged young people will encounter unknown situations on a daily basis and their own support needs need to be assessed and appropriate support systems deployed;
- Recognise that foster carers who are caring for the majority of Rotherham's Looked After Children are very valuable assets and that their time and commitment is worthy of a reasonable remuneration system;
- Recognise that all staff and carers involved in meeting the needs of children with complex needs require a robust commitment to training and learning opportunities;
- Recognise that foster carers are an integral part in supporting Looked After Children in reaching their educational potential;
- Recognise children with disabilities as children first. The same principles of service apply, while accepting that additional support services will be required to meet all their needs;

- Recognise the transition into adulthood is a major step requiring positive daily living support and enhanced connections with the adult world of opportunity and responsibility;
- Are committed to facilitating young people remaining in the foster placement into early adulthood wherever possible and that a flexible range of accommodation and support options to meet different levels of need will be a factor in the services for young people leaving care;
- Are committed to implementing the Children's Workforce Development Council's standards for foster carers and will support carers in achieving the standards.

3. Aims and Objectives

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Fostering Service are committed to working with service users, carers, the wider community and partner agencies to promote the welfare of the Looked After Children and improve their life chances by providing services which:-

- Support families;
- Provide stable, safe effective alternative care at the right time and for the right length of time and which are responsive to individual needs, circumstances and choice;
- Maintain continuity of educational provision.

In meeting these aims and objectives, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council will work to secure 'sufficient accommodation' as required by Section 22G of the Children Act, 1989 (as inserted by the Children and Young People Act, 2008) which places a general duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient accommodation within their boundaries to meet the needs of Looked After Children. Accommodation should be sufficient, not only in number of beds provided but also in respect of diversity and quality of provision available. Local Authorities need to demonstrate that they are taking steps at a strategic level to secure accommodation as is 'reasonably practicable'.

Reasonably practicable is defined as:-

- Appropriate;
- Near the child's home;
- Does not disrupt the child's education or training ;
- Enables the child to live with accommodated siblings;
- Within the area and suitable.

The key objectives in providing quality placements are underpinned by the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 and are:-

- To provide placement choice and positive matching of a child with a placement through identification of child's needs and taking account of any wishes and feelings of the child. (NMS 1, 10);

- To, where possible and appropriate provide a placement that is in reasonable proximity to a child's home and addresses the child's culture and heritage. (NMS 2);
- To, where possible, provide and support a placement within the child's extended family network. (NMS 2, 9);
- To promote an environment that ensures adequate safeguarding measures are in place for the child and the culture within the foster home promotes models and supports positive behaviour through adherence to policies and the skills of the foster carer. (NMS 3, 4, 5);
- That where possible and in the best interests of the individual children, as identified within assessed needs, siblings should be placed together. (NMS 2, 9);
- To allow the promotion of proactive, positive health care and well-being through Safer Care policies, promotion of child interests and aptitudes, access to relevant leisure opportunities and Health professionals. (NMS 6,7);
- To promote the maximisation of educational opportunities and achievements for children through access to relevant support and professionals. (NMS 8);
- To ensure placements wherever possible have planned beginnings and endings. (NMS 11);
- The promotion of positive contact with family and friends through effective care planning. (NMS 9);
- To listen to the children and young people and involve them in decision making. (NMS 1);
- To work in partnership with parents. (NMS 8);
- To provide stability of placement - a minimum number of moves for each child. (NMS 11);
- To minimise the length of time between a child becoming looked after and moving to a permanent placement, if this is required. (NMS 11);
- To prepare young people for independence and facilitate a smooth transition into adulthood (NMS12);
- Standards of care for effective planning for the transition of care to independence. (NMS 12).

4. Services Provided

The Fostering Service is an integral section of Children and Young People's Services and offers a comprehensive service to Looked after Children and Young People, operational teams, approved and prospective mainstream and family and friends foster carers.

The Fostering Service aims to provide suitable placements for all children and young people who are looked after in Rotherham and offers a range of foster placements:-

Task centred foster placements for children of all ages needing emergency and short term placements;

Respite care, offering time-limited breaks to families;

- Day care for foster carers who need to attend meetings or training events;
- Long term permanence placements for children and young people who cannot return to birth family and where adoption is not the plan;
- Family and friends foster care to enable children and young people who are unable to live with their parents, to be cared for by extended family members, friends or other people who are connected with them;
- Fostering Plus - a scheme to accommodate young people with the most complex and challenging needs including children subject to or at risk from child sexual exploitation. Fostering Plus carers will receive a weekly fee and a higher level of support, including wraparound support from our Looked After and Adopted Children Therapeutic Support Team.

The needs, wishes, welfare and safety of Looked After Children are at the centre of the Rotherham Fostering Service. We believe that all children and young people needing substitute care, have the right to live within a safe and nurturing family environment which meets their needs throughout childhood and which enables them to realise their full potential.

The Fostering Service is designed to operate within the corporate vision and values of the Council.

- A person may not foster more than three children in each foster home, except where all children are siblings. Applications for exemptions will usually be made because of the following exceptional circumstances:-
- The child concerned was previously placed with the foster carers and his or her placement elsewhere has disrupted;
- The foster carers have special skills to meet the child's needs which are not available elsewhere;
- The placement of the child over the limit is the most appropriate way of meeting the child's needs arising from disability, race, religion, language and/or culture;
- The placement is required to keep the siblings together.

The application can only be made with the agreement of the foster carers and the application is made to and agreed by the Agency Decision Maker. All exemptions will be reported to the next available Fostering Panel for ratification. The Fostering Panel will have responsibility for the ongoing monitoring of the exemptions.

5. Recruitment, Approval and Assessment of Foster Carers

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Fostering Service has a recruitment and retention strategy which is based upon the needs of Looked After Children.

The aim is to have a choice of placements to meet the individual needs of every child; recruitment of foster carers is a major priority for the service and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

The recruitment and retention strategy is reviewed annually.

Foster carers are recruited by a variety of methods, including personal recommendation or media campaigns highlighting a particular area of need. Adverts or articles placed in newspapers, on television or radio, use of posters, distribution of information leaflets, attendance at local shows, fetes and other public access centres.

There are two stages to the assessment process:

- Stage 1 (this should take no more than two months and commences when an enquirer's registration of interest in fostering is accepted.)
- Stage 1 of the assessment process provides the enquirer with sufficient information to decide if fostering is suitable for the family; it also provides the Fostering Service with sufficient information about an applicant's suitability to progress to a more detailed assessment without unnecessary bureaucracy or expenditure of time and resource for either the enquirer or the Fostering Service; this includes a medical assessment, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, Local Authority checks and two references.
- Stage 2 (this stage should take no longer than four months) is a more detailed assessment of an applicant's suitability to foster. It determines the applicant's capacity to meet the needs of any child/children likely to be placed with them.
- The assessment is completed using the Fostering Network Skills to Foster template and guidance via a social worker, undertaking a series of visits to the applicant's home.
- Applicants are encouraged to undertake self-assessment during the process and are given regular feedback throughout the process. The assessment is carried out in line with National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
- Applicants are expected to attend the Skills to Foster Pre-Approval Training course; this provides the applicants with an opportunity to learn much more about fostering on a programme facilitated by fostering social workers and approved foster carers.
- The Fostering Service recognises and values the contribution of existing foster carers to the recruitment process and actively supports their involvement in recruitment activity. As such, foster carers co-facilitate the pre-approval training

with Fostering Service social workers. The course runs over three days and is an integral element of the assessment process.

- The course introduces applicants to the challenges of foster care, the kinds of experiences children may have had and why they may behave in certain ways; it provides information about professionals that foster carers work with and sets out expectations of being a foster carer.

6. The Fostering Panel

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has two Fostering Panels a month. The Panel is convened in accordance with the National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The Panel considers all matters relating to fostering, family and friends care and matching children to long term placements. The assessing social worker completes a report and presents the report to the Fostering Panel, which will consider the application and make a recommendation about the applicant's suitability to foster. The Panel makes a recommendation to either approve or not approve as a foster carer.

The Panel's recommendation is considered by the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council is the Head of Service for Looked After Children, Fostering and Adoption. The National Minimum Standards 2011 (14.10) states that the Agency decision must be conveyed orally within two working days of being made. The assessing social worker will be responsible for conveying this decision. The Panel Administrator will inform the applicants of the decision in writing within five working days.

On approval, a supervising social worker will be allocated to the foster carer.

Where an applicant does not agree with the Agency Decision, the applicant may make representation to the Agency within 28 days of the decision or make representation to the Independent Review Mechanism for the Agency decision to be reviewed independently by an alternative independent panel. The independent review panel does not have the power to change the decision but can refer the matter back to the Local Authority Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker for reconsideration if the independent panel disagrees with the Agency decision.

7. Supervision of Foster Carers

The service recognises that supervision and support for carers is vital. It is important that the carers' work is recognised as providing the major component in meeting the needs of Looked After Children in Rotherham.

Carer satisfaction and retention is essential for a healthy Fostering Service.

All carers (including family and friends carers) have an identified supervising social worker. The supervising social workers visit carers regularly (NMS21) to monitor the

standards of care provided, assist the carer to play their part in the child's Care Plan and identify any training and development needs.

Supervising social workers are responsible for ensuring that the care offered to children in foster care meets the required standards.

The supervising social worker visits and telephones the carer regularly whilst the child is in placement. Home visits to the foster carers take place at a minimum of six weekly intervals. These can be increased as assessed need determines, for example, fostering households where there are exemptions, newly-approved foster carers who require a higher intensity of support, placements where more challenging and complex children and young people are placed, or placements where additional support, guidance, training or education is required by the carer.

As part of the monitoring of the work of foster carers, there will be at least one annual unannounced visit by the Supervising social worker to the foster carers' home (as stipulated in NMS 21:8).

8. Foster Carer Reviews

In accordance with Fostering Service Regulation 28, all approved carers undergo an annual review, which is chaired by the Foster Carer Reviewing Officer. The Foster Carer Reviewing Officer is independent of the Fostering Service, and is situated and managed within the Safeguarding Team. The first review following approval is always presented to the Fostering Panel (Regulation 25(5)). Subsequent annual reviews may also be presented to the Fostering Panel in situations where termination of approval is sought, when significant changes in the terms of approval are being considered, where there are major concerns about suitability of the carer or following the investigation of any allegations against the carer. Rotherham has recently implemented the practice standard of the review being formally presented to panel on at least a bi-annual basis in order to re-enforce the safeguarding aspect of this process.

The main aim of the review is to determine whether the carers' approval continues to be suitable and whether there should be any changes in the terms of the registration.

The review is an opportunity to look at the progress the carer has made and to set targets and goals for the next year; within the Personal Development Plan, training, learning and development needs are also assessed and identified; a recommendation for future approval is made by the Supervising social worker and IRO.

Quarterly meetings take place between the Fostering Service and the Independent Reviewing Officers to identify any quality assurance issues and as a means to monitor and review.

9. Family and Friends Foster Carers

A social worker is identified in the Recruitment Team to undertake Family and Friends Assessments, including those placed under Regulation 24 (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010). Regulation 24 placements are approved by a nominated person (the Agency Decision Maker) at the point of placement.

The Fostering Panel is notified of all placements made and full assessments are returned to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation to be made.

Recommendations from the Panel are then considered by the Agency Decision Maker.

There is an identified social worker in the Supervision Team who supports and supervises carers approved under the Family and Friends category. Family and Friends foster carers access the foster carer support groups. In addition, there is a facility for a specific support group for family and friends foster carers as and when the need arises.

10. Training

The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 (17 (1)) states that the Fostering Service must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.

Standard 20, 'Learning and Development of Foster Carers': Outcome and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 states that 'Foster carers receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively'.

A clear framework of training and development is in place and this is used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their training and development needs. Training, learning and development of foster carers are also key elements of the Foster Carers Charter 2011.

The role of all foster carers is valued by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council; there is a strong commitment to ensure that foster carers have access to the right support and development opportunities. Training and development is an intrinsic part of fostering. Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has a clear expectation that all foster carers will participate in training offered by the Authority as fully as possible. There is an expectation that foster carers will complete the CWDC Training, Support and Development Standards portfolio and this expectation is endorsed by Fostering Panel on approval.

These opportunities enable foster carers to meet the often complex needs of the children and young people for whom they care and to develop skills and knowledge to keep the foster family and the fostered children safe and protected.

It is also important that foster carers are able to document and evidence their skills and knowledge throughout their fostering career.

Learning and development within Rotherham Fostering Service is comprised of three tiers:-

- Pre-approval;
- Induction;
- Continual personal development.

The training policy details the elements contained in each of these tiers, the requirements of the Children's Workforce Development Council, the associated standards as well as outlining the variety of training methods employed.

Foster carers' training needs are constantly monitored by supervising social workers and formally evaluated through annual reviews of the carers' terms of approval.

Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan, as required within Section 7 of the CWDC standards, drawn up in conjunction between the Fostering Supervising social worker and foster carer.

The Personal Development Plan is reviewed annually at the Foster Carer Review by the Independent Reviewing Officer, the foster carer and the Fostering Supervising social worker.

All foster carers are provided with their own Continual Professional Development Portfolio. This is used to record evidence of training undertaken, record self-reflection on what has been learned from each developmental activity and how it affects the carer's care and practice.

The Portfolio includes the following:-

- Foster Care Training Policy and Agreement;
- Initial PDP;
- Subsequent Reviews of the PDP;
- Reflective learning logs;
- Certificates;
- Other relevant documents (ex. questionnaires) ;

It is a requirement that foster carers access a minimum of three development activities annually.

A Payment for Skills Scheme is in operation and foster carers can progress through the Skills Levels 1 to 3 by developing a portfolio of evidence of skills, abilities and knowledge they have in meeting the required criteria. One element of the criteria is that carers must have completed specified training or development activities, such as CWDC training, support and development standards for foster carers.

11. Support to Foster Carers

11.1 Fostering Supervising Social Workers

Each foster carer is linked with a supervising social worker, who visits regularly to provide support and supervision.

They monitor standards of care, encourage high standards and help the carer manage problems which arise. They are also available for telephone consultation and liaise with the social worker for the child.

11.2 Independent Support

Foster carers are eligible for individual membership of The Fostering Network. This allows them access to advice and support, including legal advice, independently of the service. In respect of support during serious allegations or complaints against foster carers, independent support is provided via Foster Talk.

11.3 Support for Foster Carers and their families

There are four support groups facilitated across the borough, which are run at various times of the day to maximise foster carers opportunity to attend one of these. Each provides expert speakers on matters of interest and an opportunity for carers to share and problem solve together. One of the support groups is specifically aimed at newly approved foster carers to support their learning and development in their first year of fostering.

There is also a support group for the sons and daughters of foster carers.

In addition, newly approved foster carers are supported by being linked up with an experienced foster carer as 'buddies'.

11.4 Websites

Information is available on Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's website about the fostering task, with clear links to the recruitment sites.

There is also a specific fostering website for people interested in fostering, (www.fosteringinrotherham.org.uk)

Rotherham Fostering also has an active Facebook and Twitter account, which are used to share information about fostering and events, share success stories, and promote recruitment:

Facebook: www.facebook.comhttp://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fosterrotherham>

11.5 Out of Hours Service

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has an Out of Hours Team and foster carers can contact this team of social workers outside of office hours, should the need arise.

11.6 Rotherham Therapeutic Support Team

Therapeutic services/advice/support is provided by Rotherham's Therapeutic Support Team and by other CAMHS providers through a single point of access. Rotherham's Therapeutic Support Team is managed by a Clinical Psychologist and is made up of three qualified therapeutic staff, a social worker and usually has within the team an additional two trainee Psychologists who provide therapeutic support and consultation under the supervision of the Clinical Psychologist. Regular consultation is given to the Fostering Service by this team, who also provide training to staff and foster carers. This team will expand through 2017 to two Clinical

Psychologists and one post Special Guardianship Order Social Worker, one post Adoption Support Social Worker and four Therapeutic Workers

11.7 The Virtual School

Education is a key priority for Looked After Children in Rotherham. Improving educational outcomes for Looked After Children is actively supported by the Corporate Parenting Panel. Foster carers are expected to support and encourage children in their education and develop good working relationships with the foster child's school. Rotherham has a 'Virtual School' which provides guidance and support to Looked After Children and their carers in relation to education. This team recognises that education is life-long learning, and thus provides training to foster carers on Personal Education Plans and the education of Looked After Children, including pre-school, primary, secondary education, and beyond.

11.8 Leaving Care Service

The Fostering Service works closely with the Local Authority Leaving Care Service, which is responsible for providing support and guidance to all Looked After Children post-16 years and those leaving care.

The Local Authority has recently transferred the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator post to the Fostering Service with a view to increasing the number of foster carers converting to supported lodgings carers to offer Staying Put placements to young people in their care when they reach age 18. The Local Authority is committed to providing Staying Put placements to as many care leavers as possible and we see the transfer of this post into the Fostering Service as a positive development in helping us to achieve this.

In addition, the Local Authority also manages a Post-16 Accommodation Project, which includes two semi-independent homes for care leavers providing sixteen placements in total as well as several dispersed properties and an outreach service for care leavers in their own tenancies.

11.9 Health

Rotherham has a named nurse to promote the health of Looked After Children. Carers are expected to actively promote the well-being of children in their care. The Looked After Nurse provides a link into a wider LAC Health Team to ensure effective co-ordination and delivery of Health Services to Looked After Children.

In addition, Rotherham also has a named nurse specifically to meet the health needs of children subject to CSE.

11.10 Child's Social Worker

Social workers for children in placement have an important role to play in supporting foster carers. The dedicated Looked After Children's Social Work Team ensures this support is consistent. They provide essential information about the child and family background, inform the foster carer about the plans for the child and involve them in the care planning process. It is an important part of their role to represent the wishes and feelings of the child, especially where the child is very young and less able to do this him/herself.

The child's social worker carries out statutory requirements in relation to the child, including statutory visits, ensuring reviews and medicals take place and that the plans for the child are progressed without delay.

11.11 Annual Events

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has four annual events for foster carers. The first event is the Celebration Party for foster carers and children as part of Fostering Fortnight in May. The second event (generally in November) is the Foster Carer Celebration Dinner. The third event is the Christmas Party for foster carers and children in December, and the fourth is the Fostering Easter Event.

In addition to this, Rotherham Fostering Families are very proactive in working with the service to promote an annual calendar of events, including family activities during the summer holidays and recruitment events.

The purpose of these events is to thank carers for all their hard work and acknowledge their dedication to children and families. It is also an opportunity for carers to meet with one another, with Children and Young People's Services' staff and Elected Members in a pleasant and informal setting.

11.12 Consultation with Foster Carers

Consultation with foster carers takes place on a number of levels, at training events, at support groups and in surveys focusing on specific topics.

One recent example of a consultation with carers was a consultation meeting called for all carers about the development of additional foster carers support groups. Foster carers told us that they wanted:

- A choice of which support group they could attend
- Attendance linked to progression

- Time and space to informally chat to and support each other

In addition, carers participating in the consultation supported the Service's plan to develop two new support groups.

11.13. Right2Rights Service

Rotherham's Right to Rights Service (R2R) actively seeks to work directly with all Looked After Children; they provide an individual advocacy service, facilitate involvement in voice and influence opportunities and provide information in creative and imaginative ways. Their work includes supporting Young Rights Representatives, such as the Orchard Flyers, which is a rights group for children and young people who access Disability Short Break Services at the Orchard Centre.

Looked After Children entering the service are visited by the R2R service and are given a Promise Pack containing useful information booklets and resources which aids the capture of important information and experiences as these children journey through care.

R2R encourage Looked After Children to contribute to their statutory review by supporting their attendance and the development of personal skills and understanding of the process. They have developed initiatives such as the Online Review Form, where each child receives a letter prior to their review encouraging them to fill in a consultation paper and the process to follow. Looked After Children can communicate with this service via telephone, text messaging, communication cards and e-mail links via the R2R website.

12. Structure of the Fostering Service

The Rotherham Fostering Service reports to the Members of the Council. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services is Councillor Gordon Watson. The Chief Officer responsible for the Service is Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services.

Responsibility for Social Care is delegated to Mel Megs, Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families.

The Head of Service for Looked After Children, is Ian Walker, who takes strategic lead for Children in Care, including Fostering and Adoption.

The Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption is Anne-Marie Banks.

There are two Fostering Team Managers, one for recruitment and the other for support and supervision of foster carers. There are three managers covering these posts presently, namely Yvonne Howe, Carol Stickland and Clive Purniss. There are also plans to appoint a third manager within the fostering service.

All managers in the service hold a social work qualification, as well as management qualifications and post-qualification experience in services for children.

13. Staff in the Fostering Service

The Fostering Recruitment Team is made up of ten social workers, one training officer, and the Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator.

The Fostering Supervision Team is made up of twelve social workers

The Service also has a marketing officer who works across both the Fostering and Adoption Service.

The staff of the Fostering Service are recruited and managed following the principles of positive selection, supervision, induction and appraisal processes of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and incorporating practice outlined in the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards 2011.

The service has social workers and administrators. A training officer based in the team leads on the training and the development of foster carers and completion of the CWDC training, support and development standards workbook. The service also has a marketing officer who is responsible for the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy and Plan (as well as that of the Adoption Service).

All social workers within the team have a social work qualification and previous experience of working with children and families and are subject to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's corporate standards for continuous professional development.

All staff are subject to the Council policy on recruitment, staffing, equal opportunities and discipline. All social workers are subject to enhanced D.B.S. checks; administrative staff have D.B.S. checks.

Administrative support is primarily delivered by the Fostering Team clerks, who are managed within a small Administrative Team for the Family Placement Service.

A full list of the social work staff of the service (together with qualifications and experience) is included in Appendix 1.

14. Monitoring, Evaluation and Management of the Service

Regular performance and statistical information is collected in relation to the work of the Fostering Service. Performance information about the Service is reported to the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker, the Director of Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting and Elected Members via the Corporate Parenting Panel.

In 2015 – 2016 13 foster carers were assessed and approved, and in 2016 – 2017 this increased to 23 fostering families being successfully assessed and approved as Rotherham Foster Carers.

At the end of year 2015 – 2016 the number of children in RMBC foster placements was 180 children. This has increased to 201 children being placed with 169 fostering households.

A number of quality assurance measures are in place to monitor the quality of the Fostering Services.

- Fostering Panels are Chaired by an Independent Person and regular liaison takes place between the Chair of the Panel and the Fostering Service to identify any quality assurance issues and training requirements;
- Reviews of foster carers are undertaken by a Foster Carer Reviewing Officer and these are presented to Foster Panel bi-annually. This was a change in practice in 2016 – 2017 when previously Reviews were presented at panel in line with National Minimum Standards, namely following the first year of fostering, change in circumstances or following a safeguarding investigation. The aim of this is to ensure best practice with Panel having greater scrutiny over the practice and compliance of the service.
- All papers presented to the Panel are quality assured by the relevant Team Manager and the Fostering Panel Advisor;
- Foster carers have access to the complaints procedure;
- File audits are undertaken by the Fostering Managers within a Quality Assurance Framework;
- A Supervision Performance Audit Tool has been devised and is placed on the front of each foster carer's file to ensure relevant checks are up-to-date and that actions from reviews have been completed;
- The Fostering Service has and will continue to undertake periodic satisfaction surveys of foster carers; in addition, the CYPS Performance Team undertakes satisfaction surveys of newly-approved foster carers and 'journey mapping' activity of both prospective and registered foster carers;
- All staff have regular supervision and annual Performance Development Reviews.

15. Equalities and Diversity Issues

The Rotherham Fostering Service is committed to promoting Equal Opportunities in every aspect of its service. Training on equality and diversity is strongly promoted during the preparation process for new foster carers and forms part of the assessment. Ongoing training on equality and diversity is provided to all approved foster carers.

The need to recruit foster carers who are representative of the general population is reflected in the recruitment and retention strategy for foster carers, with a particular emphasis on the developmental work with the black and ethnic communities of Rotherham. All promotional material makes it clear that foster carers from across the population are needed, including same sex carers, older carers and carers from the black and minority ethnic communities. Management information in the gender, race and disability of existing foster carers is analysed on a regular basis.

The Service has succeeded in recent years in increasing the number of carers in the Service who are from different ethnic minority backgrounds and in recruiting same sex foster carer couples.

Specialised Fostering Services for children with disabilities are provided through the Families Together Scheme. Management information on race, gender and disability of the children requiring a fostering service are analysed on a regular basis.

16. Allegations against Foster Carers

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Fostering Service:-

- Recognise the crucial role that foster carers play in looking after its most vulnerable children;
- Acknowledge that Looked After Children may exhibit behaviour that can be damaging, both to themselves and those around them;
- Acknowledge that dealing with Child Protection concerns, serious incidents and complaints is a stressful and difficult time for foster carers and their families;
- Will ensure that enquiries are progressed in a way that is fair and open to the carer and their family as well as to the child;
- Will ensure that decisions and actions are taken without delay and in line with legislative and Local Authority timescales;
- Ensure that foster carers have immediate access to information and advice from an independent support if there is an allegation against them or the Fostering Service has informed them that they have a serious concern about their practice or standards of care. (NMS 22);
- Ensure that foster carers are prepared, through pre-approval training and assessment, of the possibility that allegations could be made against them.

All allegations of abuse made by children against foster carers, or members of the foster carers' family, are thoroughly investigated in an unbiased way. Local procedures for handling child protection allegations are followed.

The investigation is evidenced based and takes a balanced view of the allegation; unfounded allegations are sometimes made. A decision as to how to proceed will be made which will be in the best interests of the child.

Where a complaint against a foster carer constitutes a safeguarding allegation, this is dealt with as a safeguarding enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act, 1989, and is investigated under safeguarding procedures.

17. Complaints and Compliments

The Children Act, 1989, requires Local Authorities to have a robust procedure for investigating complaints made by young people receiving Social Care services or complaints made by adults on their behalf.

The complaints procedure is viewed as a useful tool for indicating where services may need adjusting. It is a positive aid to inform and influence service improvements, not a negative process to apportion blame.

The complaints procedure consists of three stages;

- Stage 1 is based on local resolution, where staff and the complainant discuss and attempt to address the complaint within ten working days with an additional ten working days for more complex issues or if an advocate is required.
- Stage 2 involves an investigation into the circumstances of the complaint. This is carried out by the Children's Complaint Investigating Officer who reports their findings and conclusions and makes recommendations to an Adjudicating Officer. In addition, an Independent Person is engaged to oversee the investigation to ensure that the process is open, transparent and fair. The Adjudicating Officer is responsible for deciding on the report recommendations. This process should take twenty-five working days with a permitted maximum of sixty-five working days.
- Stage 3 involves a Review Panel giving further consideration to the complaint. The Panel consists of three independent people. The Panel must be convened and operating within thirty working days, it has five working days to issue findings and the Local Authority must respond within fifteen working days.

Wherever possible, complaints are dealt with informally. Where appropriate, in the first instance, any complaint by or against a foster carer will be dealt with on a problem-solving basis. There is a written procedure given to all foster carers as part of the Fostering Handbook. The Council has both corporate and Children's Services Complaints Procedures that operate if no resolution can be achieved at the problem solving stage.

Where a complaint against a foster carer constitutes a safeguarding allegation, this is dealt with as a safeguarding enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act, 1989, and is investigated under Safeguarding procedures.

Our children's guide is specifically designed for children and young people which advise them what to do if they have a complaint.

Regular monitoring reports on the numbers and outcomes are presented to Children and Young People's Services' Management Team and an annual report is received by the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Between 1st April, 2015 and 31st March, 2016, 3 complaints were received by the service. All of which were dealt with at stage one of the complaints process.

Compliments: The fostering service also received 18 compliments, 3 regarding foster carers, and 15 regarding the wider fostering team. Further details can be obtained from the Complaints and Compliments Service.

18. Fostering Service Details

The Fostering Service is based at:-
Riverside House
Main Street
Rotherham

S60 1AE

Tel 01709 382121

Email – Fostering@rotherham.gov.uk

Websites – www.fosterinrotherham.co.uk

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council’s Fostering Services are regulated by Ofsted. Their contact details are:-

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 4234

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Signatures:-

Signed: Date:
Mel Meggs, Director of Safeguarding,
Children and Families

Signed: Date:
Councillor Watson, Cabinet Member

Signed: Date:
Foster Carer Representative

Appendix 1

Name:	Qualification:	Experience:
Ian Walker Head of Service Children in Care	Diploma in Social Work. Diploma in Management	Social Work Experience since 1994 Vast experience in a variety of settings. Senior Management in three local authorities.
Anne-Marie Banks Service Manager Fostering & Adoption	BA (hons) Degree in Social Work Studies and Diploma in Social Work PQ Child Care Award & Advanced Award in Social Work Post Graduate Diploma in Professional Practice (Management & Leadership)	Social work experience since 2002, including 6 years management experience in fostering and therapeutic provision in fostering and adoption.
Carol Stickland Team Manager Fostering – Recruitment	Certificate in Social Work MA in Professional Practice	Social work experience since 1984 in children’s residential services and fostering services; previously, a foster carer for 5 years.
Yvonne Howe Team Manager Fostering – Specialist Team Manager	BA Honours Degree in Social Work Studies. Practice Educator Award Level 1 & 2	Social Work experience since 2008 including working in Child Protection/Child in Need and within Looked After Children’s Team and then within Fostering. Management Experience.
Clive Purnis Team Manager Fostering – Main Stream	Diploma in Social Work (CQSW)	Social work experience since 1986. 8 years child protection experience in England , Scotland and in Germany. 12 year’s experience in fostering including; management of both a local authority fostering service as well as an Independent fostering agency. 3 years experience of managing an out of hours

		local authority team.
Maureen Connolly	CQSW Diploma in Social Work Post Graduate Diploma in Advanced Professional Practice Advanced Award in Social Work	Social work experience since 1980 in children's residential services as a worker and manager; subsequent posts of Resource Office (Residential Services) ad Children's Complaints Officer, Children's Social Worker and Fostering Social Worker (2009-2010) and Deputy Manager (since 2010).
Amie Scaife	Batchelor in Social Sciences with a specialisation in SW. MA in Professional Practice	Two years experience working in the Voluntary sector in South Africa Social Work experience since 2006. Worked in Adult Physical Disabilities, Child Protection Team and the Looked After Children's Team and Fostering.
Sue Arnold	CQSW BA(hons) in Social Science with Geography and Politics PQ Award	Social work experience since 1973 in a variety of settings, including children's social work teams and fostering VSO in FIJI (training office in social work department)
Shauna Smith (Agency)	BA Honours in Social Work	Social Work experience since 2007. Working in Child Protection and Fostering also working with Children with Disabilities
Lisa Ledger	BA Honours in Social Work	Social Work experience since 2005 working in Child Protection and then Looked After Children's team and then also Fostering experience.
Simon Dewick	BA (hons) in Applied Social Sciences CQSW	Social work experience since 1988, including 'generic' social work, children in need work, child protection, looked after children, mainstream and specialist fostering, including the Shirt Breaks for Disabled Children

		Scheme.
Sue Pickering	Diploma in Social Work NVQ 3 Assessor	Social work experience since 1989 in a variety of settings, including children's residential services and fostering.
Anne Lindsay	BA Hons in Social Work Post Graduate certificate in Professional Practice.	Social work experience since 2008 plus 5 years as a social work assistant. Experience of duty and assessment, youth offending and leaving care as well as child protection and looked after children.
Debbie Willis	BA Hons in Social Work	Social work experience since 2008 working in Local Authority and Independent Fostering settings. Practice educator since 2015.
Michelle Dolman	BA (hons) in Social Policy and a PGDIP in social work. A Post Graduate certificate in Social Studies.	Social Work experience since 2003 including working in Duty & Assessment. Child Protection through too Looked After and Adoption. Also experience of working with children with acquired brain injuries.
Yasmina Fynn	BA (hons) in Social Work Studies. Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Practice in Family Placement and Looked After Children	Social work experience since 2009, including working in both Child Protection and Looked After Children's Teams
Elizabeth Sinclair	DipSW in Social Work. Post Graduate Certificate in Social Services Management.	Social Work Experience since 2000 previous experience as an unqualified SW prior to undertaking the DipSW. Experience in Frontline Child Protection Work. Worked with the voluntary sector at Management level. Managed a locality SW team. Also experience in fostering both in IFA and LA.
Louise Atkinson	BA (hons) in Social Work and Diploma in Social	Social work experience since 2004 in children's

	Work	social work team, substance misuse and fostering.
Rhondda Davies	Diploma in Social Work BTEC National Diploma in Social Care	Social work experience since 1990, including children's residential services, fieldwork, Action for Children Supported Lodgings Co-coordinator and Fostering.
Katie Duffield	BA (hons) in Social Work and Diploma in Social Work	Social work experience since 2002 in: fieldwork services, maternity services, Leaving care services, residential services and fostering. Also worked in Australia with aboriginal families.
Roberta Lyne	BA (hons) in Social Work Studies Diploma in Social Work PQ Award	Social work experience since 1998 in fieldwork setting and fostering service. 2 years previous experience as a court welfare office in (now) CAFCASS.
Joanne Nutton	Diploma in Social Work MA in Professional Practice	Social work experience since 1996 in a fieldwork setting and Family Assessment Team (Support Worker); since qualification as a social worker (from 2003) in the fostering service. Previous employment as a social services nursery nurse for 15 years.
Sue Carroll (Agency)	DipSW in Social Work and a BA Honours in Social Work. PQ Level 1	Social Work Experience since 1997. Initially in Child Protection and then moved in 2000 to Fostering then Adoption 2003 -2014 and then moved into Agency Work doing Adoption and Fostering.
Sadia Alam	BA Honours in Social	Social Work Experience

	Work. Diploma in Professional Practice	since 2010. Worked in Child Protection, Therapeutic Team and Fostering. Adoption Panel Member.
Nicola Flanagan	BA Honours in Social Work.	Social Work experience since 2008. Worked in Voluntary Sector and LA Child Protection team. Fostering Supervisory Social Worker since June 2015
Dawn Riley (Agency)	BA Honours Degree in Social Work including the DipSW PQ level 1 & 2. Children and Families and stand-alone Practice Teaching Award. Level 4 Health & Social Care Assessor. Cognitive & Behaviour Development HND.	Social Work Experience since 2003 in Fostering, Adoption and Child Protection. Worked in Adult Services including Direct Payments. Child Witness Advocate for Criminal Prosecutions. Independent Form F assessor and Reviewing Officer.
Barry Donnellan	Diploma in Applied Social Sciences, (CQSW)	Social work experience since 1987 in a variety of settings; children's residential, generic child-care, LAC team, a preventative project, leaving care services and as a supported lodgings co-ordinator.
Suzanne Cassidy	BA Honours Degree in Psychology & Sociology. Diploma in Social Work MA in Professional Practice with Children & their Families	Social Work experience since 1997. Working in Field Work including Family Support, Court/Care proceedings and Looked After Children. Also experience includes working within a Family Centre environment. Deputy Management of a Children's Centre for Action for Children and also working within a Therapeutic role for the NSPCC.