

SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

FOSTERING SERVICES - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2013 - 2014

1 Introduction

The National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Fostering Services issued by the Secretary of State in 2011 form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the regulation of fostering services.

The regulations require the fostering service to have a Statement of Purpose, which sets out the aims and objectives of the fostering service as a whole, and the services and facilities which are provided.

The manager of the fostering service must ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose.

The statement must be reviewed and updated as necessary, but at least annually, and published on the provider's website.

This is the Statement of Purpose for 2013- 14 of the Fostering Service of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

2. Foster Care provided

Solihull Fostering Service provides the following types of foster care:

- **Mainstream Foster Carers** - The Mainstream foster carers offer placements to children from 0-18 years. The type of placements includes emergency, planned, short term, long-term, and respite. The nature of the placement will depend upon the assessment made by the child's social worker, in line with the child's care plan. The majority of Solihull's foster carers are Mainstream.
- **CHESS: Therapeutic Foster Care** – CHESS Fostering capitalises on the strengths of the previous Multi-Treatment Foster Care model while incorporating other approaches, models and research. CHESS aims to offer 12 bespoke clinically-led integrated specialist therapeutic fostering placements for children aged 3 – 16 years of age. CHESS also includes 3 part time respite carers, offering regular respite to all the children placed with CHESS carers.
- **Family and Friends or Connected Person carers**– where relatives or friends of the family become foster carers for a known child. An assessment will take place of the carers as is the case with all other foster carers, and this is undertaken by a Fostering Team social worker. As with Mainstream foster

carers once approved at the Fostering Panel, Family and Friends carers are allocated a named Fostering Team social worker, who will provide advice and support via formal and informal supervision.

- **Family Link Scheme** - the scheme offers children and young people with disabilities breaks away from home for short periods, up to a total of 28 days per year. These breaks are with Family Link foster carers. Usually the carer is matched with one child. The child's family and the Family Link carers are supported by social workers and they arrange the breaks at times to suit everyone.
- **Support Care and part time carer-** the aim of these schemes is to offer children and young people (0-16 years) day or overnight care as part of a support package to help families overcome their difficulties and prevent the need for young people becoming looked after on a full-time basis. 'Support Carers' are fully approved foster carers who offer children/young people breaks away from home at times, which suit them and the child's family. Usually 'Support Carers' are 'matched' to a child and intervention will take place with the child, family and social workers to help families resolve problems.

3. Staffing and Management Structure

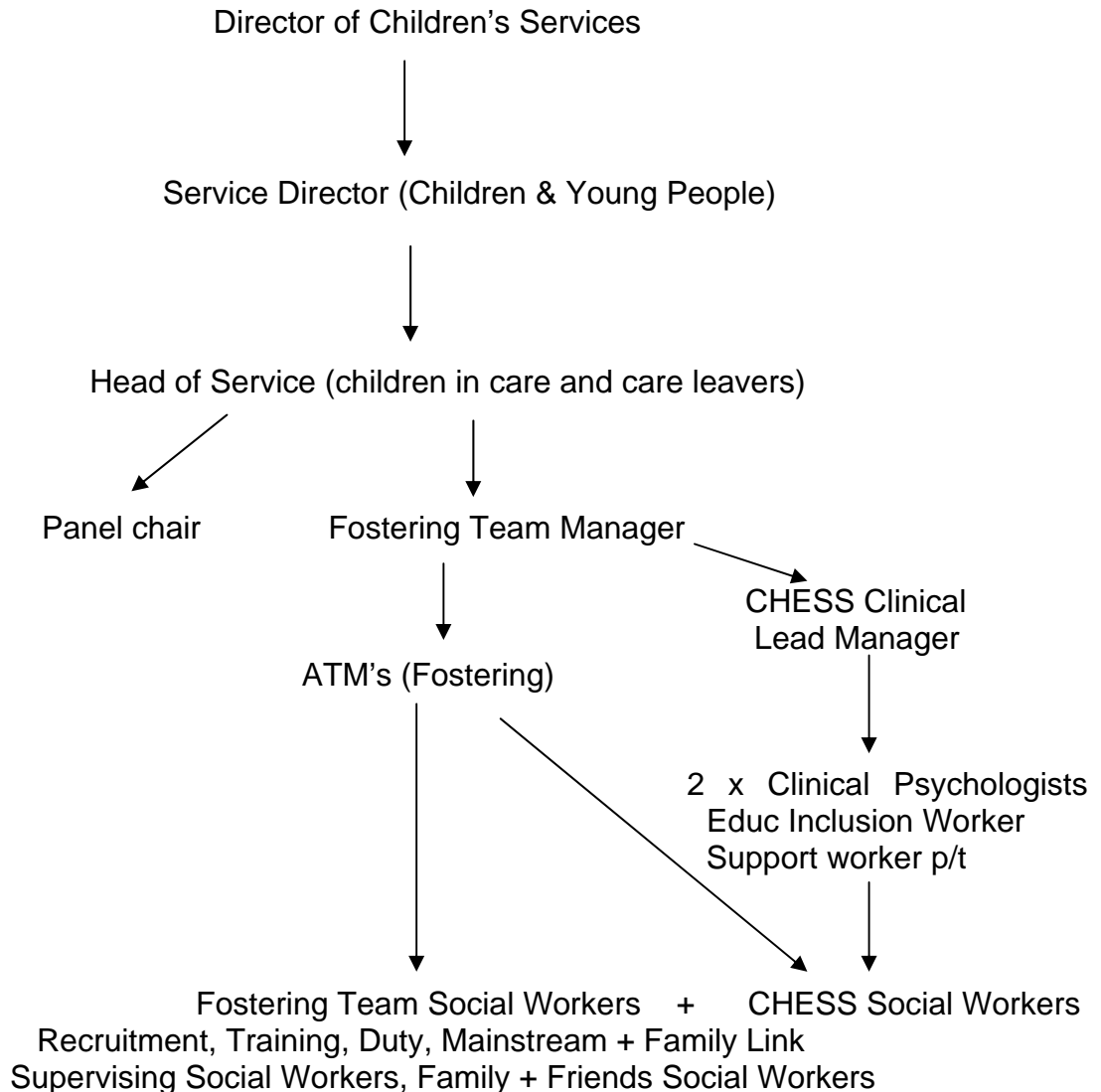
The Fostering Team is located at Jubilee House, 655 Auckland Drive, Smiths Wood, Solihull B36 0SN.

Direct responsibility for the children in foster care is held by the social workers in the Child Care Teams. See the "Joint Working Protocol - Fostering Team and the Child Care Teams" for further details.

The Fostering Team based at Jubilee House comprises of: -

- Fostering Team Manager
- 3.5 x Assistant Team Managers, including Panel Advisor
- 13.5 x full-time (or equivalent) Social Workers which includes 1.4 for CHES, 1 for Family Link, 4 for Family and Friends carers and 1 for Support Break carers.
- CHES as an integrated therapeutic service includes 1 lead Clinical Psychologist, 2.4 Clinical Psychologists, 1 Support Worker, 1.4 Social Workers and 1 Inclusion in Education Worker.
- An Administration team
- A Recruitment and Promotions worker.

How Fostering Service fits into the Organisational Structure



Qualifications - The Fostering Team Manager is Linda Franks. Linda has the following qualifications – CSS, Advanced Award in Childcare, PQ in Social Work and MSc (Social Care Leadership and Management).

There are currently 4 Assistant Team Managers – Vacant post (Mainstream), Derek Walker (Panel Advisor - half time), Pam Huggins (Family & Friends and CHES), Manjeet Bassi (Fostering & Adoption Recruitment). All the Assistant Team Managers have a DipSW or equivalent. Two of them hold the PQ in Leadership and Management. The Assistant Team Managers deputise for the Fostering Team Manager in her absence.

All social workers have a DipSW or equivalent. All social workers are encouraged to undertake PQ awards. All workers receive regular supervision as per supervision policy.

CHESS staff are multidisciplinary thus have qualifications and experience from different disciplines. Clinical Lead David Goodman holds a Cert in Social Care, BSc (Hons), MSc, ClinPsyD, Cert in Leadership.

4. Policies of the Council

The following Council policies and procedures are relevant to the provision of fostering services: -

- Children's Services Business Plan 2012/3.
- The Fostering Service Strategy 2011-2015
- Children's Placement Strategy 2011- 2015
- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2011 – 2015
- Corporate Parenting Promise to children and young people
- Children's Social Work Service Procedures

5. Aims and Objectives, Principles and Standards of Care

Solihull Fostering Service aims to provide a range of high quality foster care placements and to be the first choice option for fostering placements for the looked after children of Solihull.

It aims to provide any child who cannot live with their family, or requires regular respite or shared care to do so, a local foster family who can meet their needs for rehabilitation (where appropriate), stability and security.

Solihull Fostering Service provides a comprehensive fostering service for the Council. The service provided is based on statutory requirements and is underpinned by policy and procedure documents.

The Strategic Objectives of the Fostering Service are:-

- To deliver high quality placements for Looked after Children that meet their individual needs and support them in fulfilling their potential.
- To increase the number and range of local foster care placements provided in response to service need.

The goals of the Fostering Service are:-

- To meet the needs of looked after children and young people and support the achievement of outcomes as detailed in their care plans.
- To increase the number of foster carer placements.
- To improve the retention of foster carers
- Ensure good matching
- To increase the proportion of LAC in internal fostering placements.
- To ensure foster carers receive the support they need when they need it
- To ensure effective training and development for foster carers
- To comply with the new fostering regulations, standards and guidance

- To develop and deliver a workforce plan.

The strategy aims to coordinate the activities of the Fostering Service to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way possible to provide good quality placements for the looked after children of Solihull.

To meet our goals we will undertake the following tactics:-

- To deliver high quality placements for Looked after Children that meet their individual needs.
- Support carers to best meet the needs of looked after children and young people
- Make the best use of available resources - structure the team so it is best able to achieve the goals; consider alternative ways of structuring the Fostering Team (e.g. pods, use of Family Support Workers);
- Utilise technology effectively to improve processes and communication – what can CareFirst do (payments)
- Continue to use “Lean” to make our systems streamlined and effective
- Agree a workforce plan to enable us to effectively support increased number of foster carers
- Complete the implementation plan on regulations, standards and guidance in agreed timescales
- To implement recommendations resulting from the 2011 OFSTED inspection of the Fostering Service.
- Review the role of foster carers in relation to contact and transporting children
- To actively seek the views and opinions of young people and carers when planning and reviewing support services.

6. Client Group Served

The Fostering Service provide placements for children where an assessment has been made, by a social worker, that a foster placement will meet their needs as part of the Child/Young Person's Care Plan. The service is provided to children aged 0 to 18.

7. The services provided include: -

- Recruitment of Foster carers – the aim is to recruit 24 new foster carers in 2012/13.
- Emergency foster placements – these are emergency placements on a short term basis, accessed outside of office hours.
- Short term placements – involves looking after a child for a short term of time until they return home, move to a permanent placement or on to independence.
- CHES placements – CHES aims to offer 12 bespoke clinically-led integrated specialist therapeutic fostering placements for children aged 3 – 16 years of age, plus 3 part time respite CHES carers.

- Long term and permanent placements – involves looking after a child until they move to independence.
- Respite family link placements – a respite scheme for children with disabilities.
- Support foster care and part –time foster care – to enable children to remain living with their birth family
- Family and friends foster care
- Assessments of potential carers for private fostering, special guardianship and residence orders
- Managing private fostering in Solihull
- Links with services who provide specialist education and health service to looked after children. The Education Unit offers a crisis response service to “Looked After Children” placed with internal foster carers. This includes providing education to any child who is excluded from the next school day. The LAATCH (“Looked After Adopted Team Child Health”) service can provide psychological support to children and their carers.
- Independent Advice and Mediation Service for all our carers

8. Complaints and Allegations

The processes relating to complaints and allegations are outlined in the “Fostering in Solihull handbook”.

9. Numbers of Foster Carers; numbers of children placed

At 30 September 2012:

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| Mainstream foster carer households | 85 |
| Children/young people placed with mainstream foster carers | 89 |
| Family & Friends carer households | 29 |
| Children/young people placed with F&F’s carers | 33 |
| Family Link carer households | 10 |
| Respite placements with Family Link carers | 6 |
| Support break carer households | 7 |
| Respite placements with Support break carers | 15 |
| CHESS carer households | 12 |
| CHESS part time respite carer households | 3 |
| Children/young people placed with CHESS & Steps | 10 |

10. Recruitment of Foster Carers

The Service has an Assistant Team Manager for Fostering and Adoption recruitment and a dedicated Recruitment and Promotions worker. There is a

comprehensive Recruitment and Marketing strategy and annual plan of activity. A regular stream of publicity and advertising is undertaken to facilitate the recruitment of foster carers. As well as recruiting mainstream and part-time foster carers, there are specific campaigns for carers of sibling groups, carers of black and ethnic minority children, part-time carers and support breaks, carers for unaccompanied children and carers of teenagers, and CHES.

11 Procedures and Processes for Approving, Training and Reviewing Foster Carers

Following an expression of interest in fostering the Fostering Team send information and undertake an initial visit. If applicants meet the fostering criteria they will be invited to the preparation and training groups (based on the “Skills to Foster” course); five or six courses are run each year.

Family and Friends carers do not attend Skills to Foster courses, however, an adapted version of this course is currently being developed for Family and Friends carers.

CHES carers also undertake the “Skills to Foster” training, on mainstream carers courses. CHES carers also receive additional training.

An assessment will then take place and a Form F completed. All fostering assessments are presented to the Fostering Panel who will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker about whether they should be approved as Solihull carers and details of their approval category.

Once approved foster carers are reviewed annually; the first annual review will go to the Fostering Panel, and reviews which include the consideration of complaints/allegations or a change of approval category. Other reviews will be considered by the professional advisor to the Fostering Panel and the chair of the Fostering Panel, and again recommendations are made to inform the decision made by the Agency Decision Maker (Head of Service).

Following approval foster carers receive ongoing training. Workshops have been run on each of the Children’s Workforce Development Council’s Training, Support and Development Standards. Some experienced foster carers are receiving training and support to “mentor” other foster carers through the CWDC process. All Foster carers are encouraged to undertake the CQF Level 3 in Child Care.

12 Support to Foster carers

Foster carer(s) are supported and supervised by a named Fostering Team supervising social worker. During the first year of a foster carer’s approval, visits

will be at least once a month. For more experienced foster carers, supervision visits will be at least every two months. The frequency of visits is discussed with the foster carer and recorded in the supervision agreement. Health and safety checks and unannounced visits to foster carers take place at least annually.

Additional support for foster carers is provided. This includes: -

- A 24 hour foster carer helpline, staffed by Social Workers and ATM's.
- Educational support for children in foster care who are at risk of being excluded from school and Immediate placement in the education unit for children in foster care who are excluded from school with a structured support plan for return to education.
- Provision of a range of resources, books and materials for Looked After Children and their carers.
- Psychological support to carers and children where there is a risk of placement breakdown through the "Looked After and Adopted Team Childs Health (LAATCH)
- Foster Carers are provided with opportunities to meet together informally through support groups and also via the re-established Solihull Foster Carer Association.
- Foster Carers are kept in touch via a newsletter written by social workers, young people and foster carers.
- Independent Advice and Mediation Worker (Fostering Network) jointly funded by Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire is available for all Solihull foster carers.
- CHES carers receive additional support. Clinically led formulations are developed for each child and the CHES multidisciplinary team support the CHES carers in offering a bespoke therapeutic placement. Carers are offered regular consultations with a clinical psychologist and individual therapy is available to all children in placement. CHES carers attend a monthly support group.

13 Consultation with Foster carers

The views and opinions of foster carers are actively sought when planning and reviewing support services for carers and young people in their care. We have had regular meetings between the Fostering Team and foster carers. The Solihull Foster Carer Association is currently being re-established, and we will be establishing regular meetings with representatives. Questionnaires and consultation documents are sent to foster carers seeking their views about the services they receive and how they would like to see the service develop.

A questionnaire was sent to all of the foster carers in the summer of 2010 and there were 29 responses. Questions were asked about working relationships with the Fostering and child Care Teams, SFCA, the Advice & Mediation Service, SNAC (the newsletter) and Training (including CWDC). A new questionnaire will be conducted later in 2013.

Foster carers, social workers from the child care teams and members of the Fostering Team meet regularly at Foster Carer Steering Group meetings.

In addition, carers are member of our Fostering Strategy group which is driving delivery of the strategy.

14 Corporate Parenting

Like all corporate parents in Solihull the Fostering Service and carers have signed up to our “Promise” to children and young people in our care launched in May 2009. The promise was written with over 50 children and young people in care and clearly sets out what children and young people can expect whilst they are in our care. The five promises are that whilst in our care we will make sure that all children and young people:-

- Are respected and supported
- “Have a say” in everything about their care
- Have help and support to achieve what they want out of life
- Keep in contact with people who are important to them
- Feel cared about and loved

Solihull Foster Carers are crucial in ensuring the “Promise” is delivered to children and young people in our care.

Part of being a corporate parent is about celebrating the achievements of children and young people. Carers and other professionals can nominate any child / young person for a Looked After Child Award. These are awarded twice a year.

Celebratory Events are held every 18 months to celebrate the achievements of children and young people in our care; carers attend these events.

15 Consultation with children and young people

Integral to Solihull’s approach to corporate parenting is the active participation of children and young people. Our children in care network gives the opportunity for children and young people to meet with senior officers and give their views on their care experience and feedback on how we are delivering on our “promise” to them.

There are three age appropriate publications for children and young people in care all published twice annually. These enable children and young people to give their views or write about their experiences as well as giving the Local Authority the opportunity to give relevant information to them. Solihull’s two LACPAC’s are age appropriate packs for children and young people aged 4 to 17 years. The packs give all the information children and young people may want

whilst they are in care. Young people in care were also actively involved in developing a “Children’s Guide to Solihull Fostering Service”.

By March 2013 all Solihull foster carers will have their ‘profiles’ written up. These will be a short summary of what children and young people can expect when they are in placement with them. The profiles will be given to children and young people before they visit or meet carers. The profiles are in response to feedback from children and young people.

All children and young people in Solihull foster placements are asked to complete their views about their foster placements and these are included at panel to inform foster carers annual reviews.

A website for looked after children and care leavers is currently under development and this will eventually incorporate all the publications and information we give out to children and young people as well as providing interactive areas.

All children and young people in our care will receive an annual survey to give their views on their care experiences. Care leavers are offered exit interviews when they leave care. It is planned for further interviews to take place at 21 years and 25 years.

A group of care leavers have completed a DVD about their care experiences. The DVD is incorporated into professional training including foster carers. Young people are regularly involved in the recruitment of social work staff including Fostering Social Workers.

There are Childrens Champions in all social work teams, including the Fostering Team. It is the role of the champions to ensure corporate parenting and active involvement are embedded in everyday practice. An advocacy service is available for all children and young people in care.

16 Outcomes, Measures and Targets 2013-14

The outcomes, measures and targets for the Fostering Team for 2013-14 are as follows:-

- Review and agree allowances and fees paid to foster carers for implementation April 2014
- Review and implement the recruitment and retention strategy – and increase the number of foster carers each year, (2012/13 target of 24 new fostering household by March 2013, and net increase of 20 new carers
- Strengthen the ethos that the internal foster carers should be supported by all
- Strengthen the Fostering Services relationship with the other children’s social work teams
- Deliver 2013/4 learning and development programme for carers

- Make the best use of resources to achieve the goals - develop more effective working methods, including adapting work processes to enable home based working,
- Establish agreed fostering workforce plan
- Work with sub-regional and regional partners to improve service delivery and achieve improved cost effectiveness.
- Implement new national assessment models, and ensure timely allocation of all fostering assessments and completion of assessments, presentation to fostering panel and approvals within an agreed timescale.

Linda Franks
Fostering Team Manager
20th February 2013