

HULL FOSTERING

Statement of Purpose*



*Updated July 2017



www.hull.gov.uk/fostering



01482 612 800



/HullFostering



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Introduction

It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations that each Fostering Service produces a Statement of Purpose, which includes its aims and objectives.

This Statement of Purpose sets out what services are provided for children who are placed by the Fostering Service. It also provides information regarding the principles and standards of care expected of the Fostering Service.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and revised annually. OFSTED will be notified regarding any such revision within 28 days. Copies of the revision will be made available to approved foster carers and children placed by Hull Fostering Service.

A copy of the Statement of Purpose will be made available to any person working for the fostering service, any foster carer or prospective foster carer, any child who is being fostered or the parent of the child.

Hull Fostering is committed to treating all children and their families, foster carers, staff and colleagues using the service in a fair and respectful way, giving positive regard to their differences and individuality.

Hull Fostering pledges to ensure equal access to services regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or disability.



1. The Hull Fostering Management Structure

Alison Murphy

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR ADULT CHILDREN & FAMILY
SERVICE**

Jon Plant

City Children's Safeguarding Manager

Michele Priest

**Assistant City Manager
(Resources)**

Andrea Lewis

**(Group Manager)
Fostering, Adoption and Residential**

Joanne Pearson
Fostering
Team Manager

Sarah Knight
Fostering
Team Manager



2. The Service's Current Strategy

Hull Fostering aims to provide a locally, family based care option for any child who needs to become looked after. The strategy encompasses the comprehensive support framework available to children and their foster carers. This is designed to maximise the input of multi agency support packages – residential children's homes staff, education, health and other partner services. This intervention is aimed at minimising the number of placement moves and to ensure that the child's long term interests are met.

Hull Fostering recruits, trains and assesses prospective foster carers and connected person's carers. Carers are prepared for the fostering task, and once approved, they continue to be supported, trained and assisted in their development by Hull Fostering.

The service works closely with Localities and the Looked After Children's team including the Leaving Care Team, residential workers in Children's Homes, Health, Education and others to ensure that children are placed as appropriately as possible and that the care offered, is of as high a standard as possible, according to the needs of individual children.

There are foster carers offering a wide range of support and care to looked after children and children in need. There is also a limited number of mother and child placements where by the two can be placed together and the mother can be supported by the mainstream foster carer to meet the needs of her child.

The core of the carer population is what is currently referred to as *mainstream* foster carers. These carers are approved and registered for a particular number, age, and sex of child(ren) and are paid an allowance for the care, nurturing and maintenance of the child(ren) placed with them. In addition, Hull Fostering has introduced Fostering Excellence, which is a payment for skills scheme offering a *fee* to each carer according to their skills and experience.

Other registered carers offer support and care on a more limited basis, this often being more compatible with their lifestyle. These carers are a valuable and nurturing resource for looked after children and those living with their families.

Within this cohort of carers Hull Fostering are developing schemes to cover emergency provision such as for those young people remanded into Local Authority care or entering the care system under an emergency for a short period of time. Hull Fostering is also looking to develop a cohort of carers who are trained and skilled in caring for disabled children and/or those with additional physical/emotional needs



3 Aims, objectives and principles of Hull Fostering

It is our strategic aim to deliver a high quality, cost effective fostering service to accommodate the needs of Hulls' looked after child population and those in need of additional support to remain living with their families.

We aim to:

- Value, support and encourage children and young people to develop and grow positively as individuals, as well promoting health and general well being the service is committed to ensuring that foster carers are encouraged to help children and young people reach their maximum potential.
- Make the right placement for a child from the first day they become looked after;
- Ensure fostering staff are supported through supervision, training and development, enabling them to continue to offer high quality supervision and embed fostering standards;
- Ensure that all foster carers receive the same support and opportunities;
- Continuously improve our placement support strategy, including individualised packages of assistance, to enhance children's quality of life and life chances, and to base future planning and service delivery on the needs and views of local looked after children, their families and carers.

It is Hull Fostering's primary objective to comply with the National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011, issued by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2002.

To achieve this primary objective and have high quality opportunities for looked after children, the Fostering Service makes the following commitments.

4 The Foster Carer Charter

Hull Fostering has adopted the principles of the National Foster Carer Charter 2011.

Children come first

- Children in foster care deserve to experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving foster family with carers who can make everyday decisions as they would their own child and without the child feeling that they 'stand out' as a looked after child.
- Children must be given every support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfill their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to promote their talents and skills. Above all, they should be listened to.



Local authorities and fostering services must

- Recognise in practice the importance of the child's relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child's life and which can endure into adulthood.
- Listen to, involve foster carers and their foster children in decision-making and planning, and provide foster carers and their foster children with full information about each other.
- In making placements be clear about the continuing care or support there will be (including for the child into adulthood), be sensitive to the needs of the foster carer and the child in making and ending placements and have contingency plans should the placement not work.
- Treat foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child and support them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- Ensure that foster carers have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care. That includes liaising with local foster carers groups and seeking to respond to problems and disseminate best practice.
- Make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support, allowances, fees, and holidays they will receive including in cases of dispute with the service or during gaps in placements.

Foster carers must

- Provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own child, and be a "pushy parent" in advocating for all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and wellbeing and co-operate fully as part of a team with other key professionals in the child's life.
- Support their foster child and do all they can to make the placement work. Take part in learning and development, use skills and approaches that make a positive impact and enable the child to reach his or her potential. Support their foster child to help them to counter possible bullying and discrimination as a result of their care status.

5 Our principles are based on our equal opportunities statement

The Fostering Service will work in a way that is non-discriminatory and respects ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, religion and ability. Information about prospective and registered foster carers and their families will be treated confidentially. The service will also operate within the "Access to Information" Policy and operates within the Freedom of Information Act legislation.



6 Children's Guide

Subject to the child's age and understanding, the Fostering Service ensures the child receives the Children's Guide at the point of placement and that the foster carer explains the contents of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible.

The Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate.

Where a child requires it, the guide is available, where appropriate, through suitable alternative methods of communication, e.g. Makaton, pictures, tape recording, translation into another language.

The Children's guide also provides information on useful contacts including the Children's Rights Director. These are listed below:

Office of the Children's Rights Director

Website: www.rights4me.org
Address: Dr Roger Morgan OBE, Children's
Rights Director for England
Ofsted, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway,
London WC2B 6SE
Telephone: 08456 404040
Freephone children's helpline: 0800 5280731

Department of Education

Website: www.education.gov.uk
Address: Children in Care Division
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith
Street, London W1P 3BT

Ofsted

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk
Address: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street,
Manchester M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



7. Types of Fostering provided:

7.1 Overview

The fostering service approves foster carers to look after children aged 0-18 years. Many of the children placed have experienced difficulties including abuse or neglect before being fostered. Some children and young people present with very challenging behaviour, special needs or complex health conditions.

Hull Fostering recruits, trains and independently assesses prospective foster carers and supports them when they attend at the Hull City Council's fostering panel. A range and number of different types of fostering provision ensures flexibility in meeting children's individual needs.

Approved foster carers are supervised, regularly reviewed and monitored by the Fostering Social Workers; the foster carers are also supported by other Fostering staff such as Pod Coordinators, Support Workers and the Placement and Commissioning Team.

Financial allowances are paid to foster carers above the national recommended rates for each child. These allowances may be supported by additional 'skill' payments to foster carers for three separate skill bands. Additional payments are available to support foster carers; examples of such payments are setting up costs, equipment and mileage costs.

In order to ensure children are appropriately placed, their needs are met and their outcomes are improved, the fostering team staff work closely with a range of other professionals that include: locality Social Workers, children's safeguarding and looked after children's Independent Reviewing Officers, children's home staff, health service and educational staff, such as the 'looked after' children's nurse and the virtual head teacher.

7.2 Mainstream fostering

'Mainstream' is a term used to describe foster carers who are approved for a particular number, age and gender of child(ren). Placements may be for:

- Short/emergency term care – temporary care whilst assessment and care planning is carried out or until a crisis is resolved.
- Medium term care – whilst legal proceedings or a longer term birth family crisis is resolved.
- Long term care – more permanent care for children with a plan of permanence through foster care. These carers often become "specific" carers for a certain child, which gives the child/young person a greater sense of "belonging"

7.3 Respite Carers

Respite carers provide support to fostering households in a number of ways. They may offer regular planned respite to fostered children. They may offer day care to children placed with other foster carers either on a planned basis or in an emergency situation, or they could provide a temporary home for children who become looked after for a short period of time. Carers can be approved as both mainstream and respite carers and this is reflected in their approval.



7.4 Family and Friends fostering

The purpose of family and friends fostering is to increase placement choice for children by enabling them to be cared for by people they already know (connected persons). The aim is to meet the local authority's statutory obligations with regard to relatives and friends approved as carers. Our support to this specialist care option includes a range of support services to relatives and friends to ensure continuity of care for children. We work with family and family friends to build links for the carers in the local community and develop appropriate support for carers and children. The Family and Friends Team aims to work alongside connected carers to support them and help them make decisions around longer term options for the children and young people whom they care for. There is specific training and a specific support group for these carers.

7.5 Support Care Fostering

This scheme offers places for children who primarily live at home with their families. Support care is offered with local registered foster carers who by offering support, help to keep children and families together. The Support Care Team aims to provide a positive experience for children and families by offering choice, respect and dignity. The emphasis is to work together in partnership in a safe and child centred way. This team are managed through the arm of Children's Services that offer Access and Assessment services.

7.6 Parent and Child placements

Hull Fostering also provides fostering or supported lodgings placements that are part of the wider, multi-disciplinary Parenting Assessment and Support Team (PAST). Family based care options are considered when a more intensive assessment of parents' ability to care for their child or children is needed. The foster carers are trained to observe interaction between the parent/s and the child alongside offering practical guidance to the parents and child placed with them. Foster carers' assessments form part of the overall assessment that is presented to the courts as part of legal proceedings alongside of a specialised PAMS assessment.

7.7 Supported Lodgings, Leaving Care and Staying Put

The Leaving Care team supports young people from the age of 16 to 24 years of age in the transition from care to independence and offers support and advice when they leave care. They offer a range of accommodation options for young people leaving care including supported housing projects, hostel accommodation and the successful Supported Lodgings Scheme. Foster carers can continue to care for young people after the age of 16 years under the Supported Lodgings or Staying Put scheme. Foster carers can be dually registered as Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings providers. Foster Carers can also be registered specifically for a young person under the Staying Put scheme and continue to be supported by their allocated Fostering Social Worker.



8. Management, Staffing and Service Structure of Hull Fostering

8.1 The Fostering Service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible child care and support to foster carers, ultimately accountable to the elected members and the chief executive of the council.

8.2 A strategic lead is provided by the Assistant City manager, reporting to the Head of Service, the “Agency Decision Maker” is provided by the Group Manager for the purpose of recommendations made by Hull Fostering Panel.

8.2 The 2 Fostering Managers cover each area during absence and directly manage the day-to-day Fostering Service. The Managers report to and are accountable to the Group Manager who is, in turn, directly accountable to the Assistant City Manager.

8.3 Levels of delegated responsibility are clearly documented and understood by all staff.

8.4 Each member of staff has a job description updated in 2013, in accordance with Job Evaluation and the restructure of our services, at that time. These job descriptions clearly outline the tasks and responsibilities of the post, and the skills and knowledge required to carry them out effectively.

8.5 Each foster carer has a designated Fostering Social Worker who provides regular supervision and whose responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly defined.

8.6 As part of Hull City Council, the fostering team has access to support and services of a range of specialist staff that include:

- legal advisors
- medical advisors
- Practise development officers
- Specialist foster carer training officer
- 2 independent fostering reviewing officers
- Human resource officers
- Health and safety officers
- Support service staff
- Participation and Rights officers
- Recruitment and Marketing Officer.



9. Personnel

Hull Fostering

Michele Priest – Assistant City Manager

Andrea Lewis – Group Manager

Fostering Managers (2)

Fostering Social Workers (11)

Fostering Support Workers – (3)

Fostering Social Worker QA

Placement Finding Social Worker

Finance Clerk/Support (1plus MA)

Pod Co-ordinator (2)

Recruitment, Media and Marketing Officer

Supported Lodgings:

Supporting Lodgings Workers (2)

Support Care Team:

Social Workers (2 fte)

Family and Friends:

(Specialism within Fostering Team)

Social Workers (3.5 fte)

Foster Panel:

Foster Panel Support Officer (1)

Foster Panel Chair (2)



10. Recruiting, Approving and Reviewing Foster Carers

The following is a summary of the procedure for the recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers.

Information is easily available and understandable for people to make an informed choice. Information is available from a variety of sources including:

- Community Groups
- Local hospitals, doctors' surgeries and clinics
- Other Social Services and Council premises
- Colleges, schools and universities
- Citizen's Advice Bureau's
- Area Committees
- Local groups e.g. Kenworthy House, Brunswick House, RAPP
- Housing Offices
- Ministers/Places of Worship
- Shopping malls and Supermarkets
- Leisure Centres and Libraries
- Current approved foster carers

Information is currently available in standard glossy leaflet format. If required it can also be made available in large print, audio and Braille for those with special needs and a variety of languages other than English.

Hull Fostering produces only marketing material that shows, and evidences clearly our commitment to equalities and removing the barriers to accessing our services by all families in the community.

There is a fostering website, www.hullcc.gov.uk/fostering. The fostering web site provides information about fostering, types of fostering, help and support and allows those wishing to make further enquiries to apply for information on line. This request is then fed through to the Fostering Support Worker who sends out an information pack within 48 hours. The enquirer's details are logged and followed-up within 5 working days.

E-mail addresses have also been set up to contact Hull Fostering on-line and for when people complete the application form on the web site. The e-mail address is Fostering@hullcc.gov.uk

Furthermore, Hull Fostering now has an outward facing Facebook page which allows members of the public to see some information about fostering in Hull and allows them to ask basic questions or request an information pack. This form of communication is becoming ever more popular and is proving to be the preferred communication format for prospective foster carers whom wish to enquire or ask a question regarding recruitment.



11. **Stages in recruitment (flow chart)**

Hull Fostering aims to complete this process in 26 weeks.

Hull Fostering Process

Stage 1 Commences

Fostering Enquiry Received, Information pack sent including the types of fostering schemes, other information and FAQ's



Initial Telephone Call by fostering Support Worker answer further questions



Fostering presentation facilitated monthly



Home Visit with a Hull Fostering Support Worker statutory checks begun DBS Completed



Stage 2 Commences

Undertaken Full Assessment by independent social worker approximately 6 month



Preapproval Training must be completed before fostering panel



Attend the Hull Fostering Panel



Final decision made by agency decision maker



Foster carer is approved- confirmation letter received 28 days to appeal if necessary
Hull Fostering aims to complete this process in 26 weeks



12. Support for Foster Carers

12.1 Post Approval

All foster carers are allocated a named, qualified Social Worker as their key contact with Hull Fostering. The Fostering Social Worker has frequent contact with the carers and carries out supervision looking at practice, offering advice, support and discussion about training needs through the Fostering Excellence Scheme. All carers are enrolled on induction training that can take up to 18 months to complete. This training is evidenced through a portfolio which has been designed to reflect exactly the standards set for carers in by the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS). Carers are encouraged to participate in identifying their support and development needs, helping to shape the Fostering Service's training and development programmes. Experience and participation in training will increase skill and confidence in our foster carers and ensure they are better able to understand and respond to the complex needs of looked after children and their families.

12.2 Reviews

All foster carer households are reviewed on an annual basis. This will include obtaining written information from placing Social Workers about the carers practice over the past year, written information from any children living in the household ,birth children and looked after children, and information from the foster carers regarding the past years fostering. The review will also consider the training and development needs of the foster carers and their family. An Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer chairs the Review. The Reviewing Officer, as with the LAC statutory reviews, are responsible for the co-ordination and chairing of foster carers annual, 3 yearly and ad-hoc reviews. The IFRO posts are line-managed separately from Hull Fostering and are based within the Independent Conference and Reviewing Officer Team. Once the Review is completed annual reviews with change, three yearly reviews and ad-hoc reviews will be presented to the Foster Panel who will make a recommendation about their continued registration. Annual Reviews with no change are passed straight to the Agency Decision Maker to sign off. This is co-ordinated by the Panel Support Officer. Every three years the review will include updated Disclosure and Barring Service checks, medical checks, reference requests and visits plus other statutory checks.

12.3 Health and emotional wellbeing

Support and advice is available from a team of Clinical Psychologists who work directly with foster carers, Fostering Social Workers and the child's Social Worker. There is also a dedicated Looked After Children's Psychologist.

Activities include:

- Attending systemic reflective discussions.
- Attachment awareness sessions.
- Home visits to assist with the matching process.
- Consultancy sessions each week
- Understanding challenging behaviour.
- Working alongside carers to improve placement difficulties.
- Access to specialised services through CAMHS provision.
- Referrals are received via Fostering Social Workers.



12.4 Independent Support Service

This service is commissioned by Hull Fostering and provided by Foster Talk (Fostering Independent Support Service). The service provides independent support, advice and advocacy for foster carers who are subject of a complaint or allegation. They also provide an independent mediation and representation service for foster carers who are in conflict with the Local Authority or have made a complaint against Hull Fostering. Foster Talk provides all our fostering households with a full membership package including free legal and tax advice.

12.5 Fostering Support Groups

Fostering Support groups offer support, information, advice and training opportunities to all foster carers. They allow foster carers to share their experiences and develop a network with other carers in their local area. The meetings are monthly and are an invaluable opportunity to hear about new fostering developments. Hull Fostering also offers a male only carers support group. Each group is coordinated by a member of Hull Fostering and a foster carer leader. The foster carer leader goes on to represent their group on the Foster Carer Consultation Group.

12.6 Foster Carer Consultation Group

Hull Fostering is committed to ensuring that the voice of foster care locally is heard and that carers are involved in the direction of travel for our services. The FCCG is a vital part of our Quality Assurance Framework and the group is made up of foster care leaders from local support groups alongside carers with specialist knowledge, experience or interests. We aim to reflect the fostering population and to give the carers a voice which can directly influence policy and practice locally.

12.7 Children Who Foster Group

Hull Fostering has a well established support group for Children Who Foster. This groups tries to meet every school holiday in the form of an activity both indoor and outdoor.

12.8 Vehicle Provision

Hull Fostering has a commitment to supporting foster carers, whenever possible, to hire appropriately sized vehicles to meet the needs of foster carers and their children for family holidays and outings for a maximum of 14 days in a given financial year (April to March).

12.9 Training and Development for Foster Carers

Training for foster carers starts with an introductory information session. Prospective carers then move on to undertake pre approval training which comprises of 3-6 sessions in preparation for a Looked after child being placed within the household. Training is slightly different for Friends and Family foster carers, acknowledging the need is slightly different.



12.9 (cont.) Foster carers thereafter are expected to show a commitment to their ongoing development and practice. Foster carers also have the opportunity to complete the Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce. Carers training and development needs are reviewed and recorded and they are encouraged to contribute to the developments and improvement of training opportunities for carers.

All training for foster carers has been developed in accordance with the UK National Standards for Foster Carers, the National Minimum Care Standards, the Common Core Skills and Knowledge and the Children's Workforce Development Strategy.

12.10 Special Events for Foster Carers

A number of social events organised for fostering households and the children in their care, throughout the year. This includes activities which are discounted such as Flamingo Land, Hull Panto to more structured events such as Summer and Christmas Parties which include long service awards and awards for children's achievements.

12.11 Supervision and Support

All foster carers are allocated a named Fostering Social Worker who will provide them with regular supervision, advice and support. The focus will be on assisting with career development and aiding access to appropriate information and training to equip foster carers to provide the best quality of care to the children they look after. We have 2 levels of support to our carers which reflects the sort of support and guidance you may need at different times in your fostering carers. High Support offers a named worker who will visit you at least every month and will call you at least fortnightly. This worker will support and guide you in meetings and contributing to planning or training. For new carers this is supplemented with the offer of an experienced foster carer mentor. Low Support offers a named worker to visit you for supervision every other month and will be available to you on the phone when required. They will support you at meetings, if required, and will offer the full range of support services according to your needs. These levels of support are discussed and agreed with you and confirmed in the worker's supervision with their line manager.

12.12 Out of Hours Support

Out of hours support is provided by the Immediate Help Service who can be contacted on (01482)788080. In addition to this, Foster carers have access to the Edge of Care telephone support service, provided by Hull City Council Edge of Care Children's homes, which provide outreach support in emergencies. The aim is to provide both practical and professional support to maintain children in their existing placement thus creating stability and security.

12.13 SOVA Independent Visitors

SOVA recruit volunteers who will befriend and visit children who are Looked After who do not have significant contact with their family. They are co-located with the Fostering Team at Kenworthy House and provide part of the integrated provision to Looked After Children

