

Appendix A

Fostering Service
Statement of Purpose
2016/17



Statement of Purpose – Central Bedfordshire Fostering Service

This Statement of Purpose arises from Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Standard 16 of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.

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1. Introduction

Central Bedfordshire Council Fostering Service Statement of Purpose is prepared in accordance with the requirement of the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Fostering Services. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 governing the work of Fostering Services throughout England.

Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Service (England) Regulations require a Fostering Service to produce a statement of purpose which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 16.

It is intended as a useful source of information for foster carers, Fostering Social Workers, Child Care Social Workers, Children, Young People and any person with parental responsibilities. The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose should be child focussed and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.

2. Aims and Objectives

Aims

To provide foster placements for children who need to be placed in a suitable home on an emergency basis, whether this is as 'career' foster carers or family and friends (Connected Persons) carers.

Services are offered for children on the principal that their needs and welfare are best met within a caring and nurturing environment.

Objectives

To provide a high quality Fostering Service to children, their birth parents, foster carers and social work colleagues

- To provide foster placements that meet the needs of children requiring such a placement
- To ensure safe, stable and consistent care for every child placed in foster care
- To promote equality of opportunity in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation
- To ensure that the ethnic origin, cultural background, religious heritage, language and all other protected characteristics of children are fully recognised, valued and promoted
- To recruit a range of foster carers from diverse ethnic, cultural and other backgrounds to meet the needs of children needing placements
- To provide support services that promote and enable the retention of foster carers

- To ensure that, at all times, the teams provide services that are effective and that practices are clear, open, honest and fair to all service users
- To ensure that foster carers are enabled to promote positive outcomes for children placed with them
- To actively promote and support training opportunities for all foster carers
- To ensure that the Fostering Teams meet Fostering Regulations, National Minimum Standards and best practice.

3. Management and Staff Structure

The ultimate responsibility for the Fostering Teams rests with Elected Members.

The Assistant Director then gives strategic leadership to Children's Services (Responsible Person).

The Head of Corporate Parenting Service co-ordinates the activities of the Fostering Teams along with the Adoption Team, Resource and Placement Team and Children in Care Teams, and promotes partnership working across Children's Services and partner agencies

The Practice Manager for Fostering (Registered Manager) provides operational management, quality assurance, performance and budget management and co-ordinates the work of the two Fostering Teams. In addition to supervising the work of the two Fostering Team Managers, the Practice Manager also supervises/manages the work of the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer, whose work covers both fostering and adoption as well as the Panel Adviser for the Fostering and Permanence Panel. The Practice Manager also reports to senior managers on service activities and issues of concern.

Team Managers are responsible for the day to day management of Social Workers recruiting, assessing and supervising foster carers, matching of children to available carers, dealing with complaints and representations and producing activity reports and statistical returns.

Both Team Managers provide regular supervision to their respective team of Social Workers/.Family Support Worker. As part of the Corporate Parenting Service they teams work closely with the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer, Marketing, Recruitment and Training Support Officer and other teams within the Corporate Parenting Service as well as liaising with the Children with Disabilities Team/Early Intervention Teams and partner agencies.

The Practice/Team Managers and all social workers are professionally qualified with commensurate social work experience. Staff have an annual Personal Development Review (Your Year) and Central Bedfordshire Council's Learning and Development Team provides bespoke training that meets the identified training needs of staff as well as providing more general corporate training. In addition to the Social Workers and Family Support Worker the team is supported by two Business Support Officers who are supervised by the team managers. A part time clinical psychologist is also available to provide supportive consultations to carers, LAC social workers and supervising social

workers. This person has access to external clinical supervision as well as organisational line management from the Practice Manager. A structure of the service is attached in Appendix A.

4. Our Services to Children

The primary purpose of the Fostering Service is to provide high quality, safe, secure and caring foster families for children who are unable to live with their parents. Whenever possible and where safe to do so, children will be placed with someone from their extended family or a close family friend. (Connected Person) These arrangements are recognised in legislation as 'Family and Friends' foster placements. Where this is not possible, placements will be found with one of our approved foster carers or a suitable foster carer approved by an Independent Fostering Agency. We aim to clearly identify the particular emotional, physical, cultural and religious needs of a child and find a foster family who can best meet those needs.

As well as offering short/long term, emergency and respite the service also offer some specialist services.

The Family link scheme offers short breaks for children of all ages who have a physical or functional disability. Family link carers care for children in their own home, in the child's home or by taking the child to an activity. Periods of short breaks will be carefully planned and could be for a few hours occasionally or whole weekends on a regular basis.

The service also provides a salaried family link fee based scheme whereby the carer is linked to a number of children/adults who have complex medical needs.

The youth care scheme provides specialist care to young people over the age of 10 who have needs that are particularly challenging or complex.

Except in emergencies, we plan introductory meetings between the child and the foster carer in an effort to lessen the anxiety for the child of moving to a new family. Where a child is placed in an emergency the child's social worker or the foster carer's supervising social worker will give the child as much information about the foster carer's and their household as possible. Profiles are kept on all foster carers and these can be used to help provide children with relevant information about the fostering household/area etc. even in an emergency situation.

Children will be visited in placement by both their own social worker and the foster carers supervising social worker. Children will be encouraged to express their wishes and views about their foster placement and will be invited to provide written feedback about their placement for the foster carer's annual review. The children of foster carer's are invited to provide written feedback regarding their parents foster carer's annual review.

5. Matching Process

Central Bedfordshire Resource and Placement Team identify foster carers who have vacancies and work with the Fostering Teams to assess if this is the most appropriate placement for the child. If they agree, the match is proposed to the foster carer/s and the child's social worker who will further consider the match, involving the child as appropriate, and makes the arrangements for the placement, if agreed.

6. Children's Guide

A children's guide is provided to all children in care, when placed, when they are of sufficient understanding to be able to benefit from the information contained in the guide. The aim is to provide information about what it means to be fostered, what social workers do and what children can do if they are not happy in their foster home or if they have any worries or concerns. The guides are reviewed annually and a copy is sent to Ofsted and all the services foster carers. The link to view the Children's Guide can be found at: <http://cicc-central-beds.tfhosts.co.uk>.

7. Recruitment and Assessment of Prospective Foster Carers

The Fostering Service works to a Recruitment and Retention Strategy which is updated annually. a copy of this strategy is available by emailing: Jenny.thornhill@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The strategy recognises the need to recruit local foster carers who will be able to meet the diverse needs of the children requiring foster homes. If you are interested in fostering the link for this can be found at: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/fostering.

The Fostering Service is also responsible for the temporary approval and full assessment/approval of Family and Friends foster carers (sometimes referred to as 'Connected Persons' foster carers). These placements often start during care proceedings and many such placements go on to become permanent arrangements through Residence, Special Guardianship or Adoption Orders. If Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments are required, these are generally completed jointly by the Fostering Team and relevant childcare team.

8. The Fostering and Permanence Panel

The Fostering Service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The service maintains a 'central list' of Panel members. The Panel Chair and Vice Chair are Independent people with professional experience of fostering. Other panel members on the central list include a Social Worker with more than three years relevant post-qualifying experience, a Central Bedfordshire Councillor, Independent members and the agency medical advisor. The panel generally meets twice a month and detailed minutes are kept of all Panel meetings.

The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster carer and the terms of their approval
- The first annual review of each approved carer and any other review or requested by the Fostering Service
- The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a foster carer

New applicants and existing foster carers are invited and encouraged to attend Panel when their application or review is presented to Panel.

The Panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and feeds back any issues or concerns to the Registered Manager. The Panel makes

recommendations to the Fostering Service and these recommendations are referred to the 'Agency Decision Maker' for a decision.

If the Panel or Agency Decision Maker is minded not to recommend approval, applicants are advised that they can request their case is reconsidered by the Panel or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for a review of their case.

9. The Foster Carer Charter

Central Bedfordshire Foster Carer Charter "Children Come First"

The Fostering Service is committed to providing and promoting safe, stable and nurturing placements where the outcomes and life chances for looked after children are positive. In order to achieve this it is important to have a working relationship which is based on trust and respect between all those involved in the care of the child.

The service has worked in partnership with foster carers to achieve the charter, which explains what the roles and responsibilities of the service and the carers are towards each other and the children they care for. The link to view the Foster Carer Charter can be found at: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/children/adoption-fostering/foster-support.aspx>.

10. Support and Supervision of Foster Carers

Once a foster carer has been approved by Panel, they will be allocated their own supervising social worker who will provide regular supervision and support. On approval and at any time during their fostering career when foster carers require additional support a 'mentor' can be allocated. Foster carers can also access telephone support out of office hours from the fostering duty worker who is on call from 5.20pm until 10pm weekdays and throughout the weekends and bank holidays.

The service holds quarterly Foster carer Forums ('Talk time'), where foster carers have the opportunity to meet and exchange views with senior managers. In addition the Fostering Service provides periodic social events for foster carers and their children and recognises the dedication and commitment of foster carers with an annual 'Celebration of Fostering' event.

Central Bedfordshire Council also pay for all its foster carers to have individual membership with Fostering Network, allowing them access to an unlimited and extensive range of independent support services.

Foster carers are currently provided with Max Cards which provide discounts on a range of attractions and family friendly activities both nationally and locally.

Foster carers have access to the Foster Carers Handbook which contains useful information for foster carers in relation to fostering issues.

A regular newsletter is also provided for foster carers keeping them up to date on current issues forthcoming training/events, new policies etc.

The Fostering Service arranges various monthly support groups for foster carers and regular events for children of foster carers.

Foster carers also run their own Foster Care Association which is supported by Central Bedfordshire Council.

11. Reviewing the Approval of Foster Carers

The approval status of all foster carers is reviewed annually or whenever there is a change of circumstances or concern about the standard of care. First Annual Reviews and those where there is a change in carers' terms of approval or where there have been a complaint or allegation are presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for consideration. Foster carers are invited and encouraged to attend Panel for their Review.

All other Reviews are presented directly to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision about ongoing approval.

The foster carer review officer sits within the Professional Standards Service providing independent scrutiny and challenge to the service.

12. Training for Foster Carers

As part of the assessment process foster carers are expected to attend the "Skills to Foster" preparation training and First Aid Training.

Once approved all foster carers are expected to undertake a range of training to update their skills. The national standards developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (Training, Support and Development Standards) provide a framework for training for the first two years of a foster care role and set out what foster carers should know, understand and be able to do:

Standard 1: understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people

Standard 2: understand your role as a foster carer

Standard 3: understand health and safety and healthy caring

Standard 4: know how to communicate effectively

Standard 5: understand the development of children and young people

Standard 6: safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm)

Standard 7: develop yourself

Foster carers have an annual PDP (Personal Development Plan). The Fostering Service operates a fees based scheme whereby foster carers not only receive an allowance for the child but they also receive a fee depending on the tier they have achieved.

The tiered scheme is linked to training foster carers have to achieve to be approved and is then linked in with the PDP to ensure they continue to attend identified training to meet their specific needs.

Approved foster carers have access to a broad range of training which includes classroom based courses as well as e-learning. The classroom based courses are available during the daytime, evenings and weekends meaning those carers in employment can also attend. Via the CPD Online training website they can access training from different

streams within Central Bedfordshire Council including Early Years, Virtual Schools, Local Safeguarding Board and the Domestic Violence team. By having access to many specialist courses, foster carers can tailor their training to suit any specific requirements based on the needs of the child they have in placement, as well as attending the core training courses required by the National Minimum Standards of Foster Carers.

Training provided adheres to the Children and Family Care Act 2014 in relation to the requirement for educational attainment.

13. Complaints

All local authorities are required to ensure a complaints process is provided under the Children Act 1989.

All complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Central Bedfordshire local and National requirements.

Children, their birth family and foster carers are all given a copy of Central Bedfordshire Council's complaints leaflet.

Children are made aware of the complaints procedure, children's rights services and of their right to make representations and complaints. The information is contained in the Children's Guide.

Birth families and carers will be advised of the complaints procedure and their right to make representations and complaints.

14. Monitoring

A report is written for the Corporate Parenting Panel on a quarterly basis providing the executive of the Council with information/data in relation to the agency's activity.

Other monitoring includes staff supervision linked to an appraisal system, monthly recorded visits to foster carers, Annual Reviews, the Fostering and Permanence Panel and feedback from training sessions, case recording and peer/management audits. Team managers monitor data about incidents of concern in foster care including: restraint; allegations; complaints; unauthorised absence. The Registered Manager (Practice Manager) monitors the schedule 6 and 7 requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

15. Evaluating the Service

The information gathered through quarterly and annual reports, audits, inspections and customer feedback is constantly evaluated by the managers of the Fostering Service, to judge its on-going effectiveness and make changes where necessary.

The Fostering Service is also subject to formal inspection by Ofsted and inspections usually take place every three years.

16. Arrangements for the Revision and Circulation of the Statement of Purpose

The Registered Manager is responsible for the annual revision of the Statement of Purpose. Revisions may occur at other times if necessary. Staff and foster carers will be consulted on proposed revisions as appropriate.

The revised Statement of Purpose will be presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel annually for their consideration.

The revised Statement of Purpose will be sent to Ofsted annually and when any significant changes have been made, within 28 days of approval by the Registered Provider.

The Statement of Purpose will be available to all staff via the Council's Intranet and to members of the public via Central Bedfordshire Council'

17. Useful Contacts

The Regulatory Authority is:

Ofsted
Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M12 WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231
E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Fostering Teams are subject to regular inspection and inspection reports are available from the Fostering Teams or on www.ofsted.org.uk

For more information about Fostering in Central Bedfordshire please contact:

Fostering Team
Corporate Parenting Service
Central Bedfordshire Council
Unit 16 Stephenson Court
Fraser Road
Priory Business Court
Bedford MK44 3WJ

Tel: 0300 300 8090

Independent Review Mechanism:

Independent Review Mechanism
Unit 4 Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road

LEEDS
LS12 6AJ

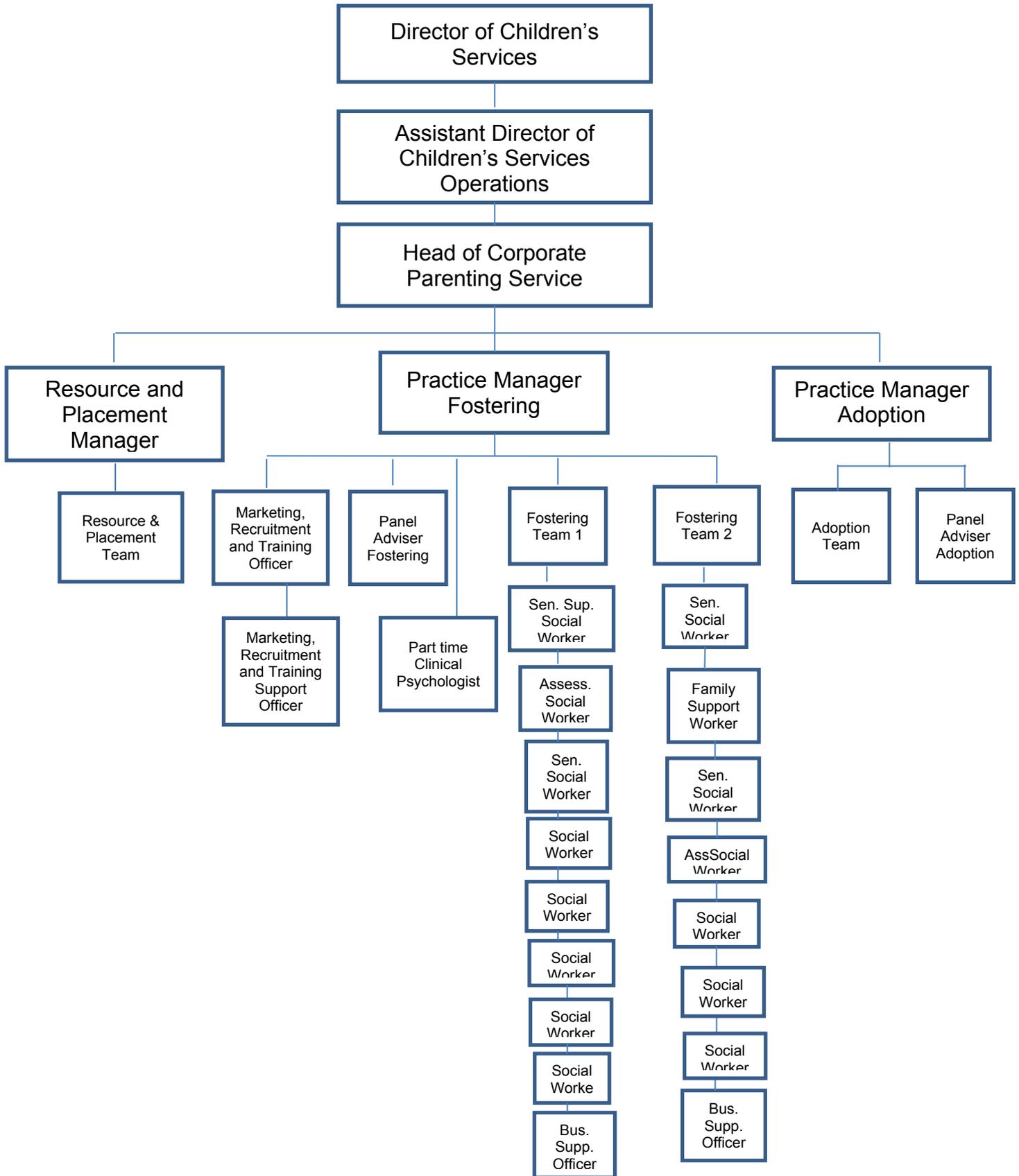
Tel: 0845 450 3956 (charged at local rate) or 0113 2022080
Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

Fostering Network:

Fostering Network
87 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8HA

Tel: 0207 620 5400
Email: info@fostering.net

Appendix A – Structure of the Service



Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

April 2016

Approved:

Signed.....

**Susan Harrison
Deputy Chief Executive and
Director of Children’s Services**

Dated.....

Signed.....

**Cllr Carole Hegley
Executive Member for Children's Services**

Dated.....