

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF COVENTRY CITY FOSTERING SERVICE

(Revised July 2015)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is a requirement of the Fostering Services England Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that each fostering agency produces a Statement of Purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided. This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements, how the service is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved for all children in its care. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers.
- 1.2 The Statement of Purpose also links with the Children's Guide which is provided to all children, subject to the child's age and understanding at the point of placement. This statement is available to all members of staff, foster carers, children and birth parents and is publicly available on our fostering website. A copy of this statement is also lodged with Ofsted. The statement is updated and amended annually.

2. National Legislative and Policy framework

Coventry Fostering Service is run in accordance statutory requirements outlined in the:

- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2013 (Amendments to the Children Act 1989)
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011)
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving care) Act 2000
- The Children's Workforce Development Council - Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (2007)

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 Coventry Fostering Service believes that every child Looked After should be able to enjoy the same quality of life and opportunities as all children.
- 3.2 Coventry Fostering Service recognises that a child's needs are best met by a nurturing family and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in an appropriate alternative family placement wherever possible.
- 3.2 The first priority will be for children to be placed with family or friends (known as connected person's carers) and supported under regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations where this placement is deemed suitable and the child is looked after. Other placements may include a child and parent/s being placed together in a foster home.
- 3.3 Coventry is committed to placing children and young people with our approved foster carers and has developed and invested in a dedicated and comprehensive Fostering Service that actively works to meet the quality standards required and the diverse needs of the children who become looked after by Coventry and their families. We are also committed to placing children and young people with Coventry based foster carers in order for them to maintain contact with families and friends, to continue at the same school and thrive within their community wherever possible.
- 3.4 Each child/young person will have access to service that recognises and addresses their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. Individuality, difference and diversity are valued and celebrated and children's health, well-being and educational needs are given high priority to ensure that they reach their full potential
- 3.5 Children's safety and welfare are actively promoted in all fostering placement together with protection from abuse and other forms of significant harm.

4. Aims

- 4.1 The main aim of Coventry Fostering Service is to provide safe, high quality foster care placements for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals. As well as promoting their health and general well-being, the service is committed to:
 - ensuring that foster carers are encouraged to help children and young people to reach their maximum educational ability.
 - ensuring foster carers provide good parenting for all children who are looked after and that children will be consulted and encouraged to actively participate in their care and family life.
 - ensuring that the service offered is based on statutory requirements, sound principles and good practice and works within the principles of value for money for the council

- multi- agency working and developing partnerships and protocols with organisations which can progress the needs of our looked after children
 - working at all levels in partnership with Education and Health to promote the well - being of children in public care in Coventry.
 - respecting the rights and responsibilities of Looked After children and their carers and involve them in all aspects of service delivery.
- 4.2 The fostering service also aims to provide a high quality responsive child-centred service in relation to its core functions and to recruit new foster carers from within our diverse community and from the connected persons networks of looked after children wherever this best meets their needs.
- 4.3 We prepare applicants through training to be able to deal with the range of issues that foster carers face when looking after children. The service assesses each applicant comprehensively to ensure that they are suitable and able to carry out their role and to supervise and support carers in order they promote and achieve the highest standards of welfare, safeguarding and outcomes for looked after children.
- 4.4 The Service is involved in assessing potential carers for their suitability to be granted Special Guardianship in court proceedings, together with arrangements around support to those granted such orders.

5. Objectives

- 5.1 To ensure that there is a choice of high quality foster care placements available to meet the complex and diverse needs of individual children and young people.
- Each foster carer will have a qualified social worker (supervising social worker) for supervision and support and to assist with identifying and reviewing carer training and development needs as part of a Personal Development Plan
 - To promote a safe, stable and enabling environment ensuring that children and young people are listened to and protected from abuse and neglect.
 - To promote the child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development by providing each child with the opportunity of developing their full potential, through health care, education and leisure activities that will enhance their life chances.
 - To have a positive regard to for the child or young person's racial, religious and cultural needs. All children should have equal access to local family based care

- The individual child's needs/ wishes and feelings are paramount and are taken into consideration in relation to their placements
- Siblings will be accommodated together wherever possible and appropriate.
- To promote contact for the child or young person and his/her birth family throughout their placement, and to encourage and facilitate this as appropriate
- To ensure foster carers make children and young people aware of their rights and the complaints, compliments and advocacy process by providing the relevant information.
- To ensure that approved foster carers are clear about their role and that they are supported in their tasks, duties and responsibilities by having adequate support mechanisms in place and as outlined in their terms and conditions and the foster carer agreement
- The Skills Fee scheme ensures quality by providing a competency and skills framework with clear expectations for foster carers, together with a training and personal development programme.
- Ensure that all practice promotes equal opportunities for all and value diversity of both foster children and carers regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religious beliefs, disability or marital status
- To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair and that any concerns are addressed and information about the complaints procedure is made available to all.
- Ensure that service performance is monitored, assessed with outcomes measured via a Quality Assurance Framework.
- To promote team and personal development and training for both staff and foster carers
- Consult regularly and learn from those that are in receipt of services through comments, compliments or complaints and have regular meetings and consultation with foster carers, senior managers and elected members.
- Consult regularly with children who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard.
- A commitment to continuous improvement through the provision of wider placement choices for children by pioneering more innovative approaches to foster care that are needs led, delivering flexible packages of support to children in public care

6. Confidentiality and Conflicts of interest

- 6.1 Foster carers are provided with full information about the children placed with them and are expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on carers and looked after children who are subject to National Standards and Data protection legislation. Staff and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

7. Principles and Standards of Care

- 7.1 Coventry Fostering Service is committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards and offering quality provision. It has been developed and is managed in accordance with the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and the principles outlined in the National Minimum Standards 2011. These standards apply equally to our connected persons carers.

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Children who are looked after are consulted regarding their wishes and feelings in regard to all aspects of their care. They will be provided with a Children's Guide to Fostering
- Every child who is looked after will have a safe care plan, health plan and a personal education plan
- Every child looked after will be encouraged to participate appropriately in religious and cultural beliefs in accordance with their wishes and feelings and developmental understanding
- Every child looked after will be cared for in an environment free from oppression, discrimination and prejudice, encouraging them to develop a positive sense of their own identity
- The fostering service will support the identified aims and objectives of the child or young person's care plan and work alongside other professionals in the implementation of this
- The fostering service will work in partnership with other professionals to promote contact between looked after children and their family and other significant persons
- Foster carers have a handbook (fact file) which guides their practice and clarifies expectations, responsibilities and standards

8. Children's Guide

- 8.1 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 and Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern.

9. Services Provided

9.1 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. It does this by assessing, registering, supervising, supporting and training a wide range of carers.

9.2 Coventry operates a Skills Fee scheme which incorporates the majority of approved foster carers. All Foster Carers are financially supported via weekly allowance payments (child age related). Weekly allowances are paid at Fostering Network recommended rates. The Skills Level fees operate at four levels which sets out practice requirements, training and development expectations and support group attendance requirements.

9.3 Level 4 Carers have the highest level of skills and competencies and have a more demanding range of tasks that they must undertake. In return they are paid the highest level of fee. Within the levels there are differing areas of specialism depending on carer's skills, abilities and interests.

9.3 The differing types of foster carer approval are:

Short Term:

Time limited placements across all skills levels.

Long Term:

Planned, permanent placements across all skills levels.

Respite:

Planned, child needs led support for placements and agreed support for carers across all levels.

Support Care:

Part of a package of support (including day care and child minding) where carers provide planned time limited support to maintain children with their families and prevent children coming into care.

Connected persons Carer:

Providing placements for children and young people known to the carer.

Respite Care:

Short breaks provision, sitting scheme and long term placements for disabled children.

10. Management Structure as at July 2015

Executive Director

Brian Walsh

Interim Assistant Director

Yolanda Corden

Principle Social Worker

Vicky White

Head Of Service

Jivan Sembi

Service Manager & Registered Manager of the Fostering Agency

Elizabeth Gosling
(since 6th October 2014)

Family Placement Service Teams & Managers:

Assessment Team: Mike Tomkinson and Bonnie Moulton
Support Team: Stuart Lance-Penchon and Sharon Benedict
Permanency Team: Pat Branson, Kath Evans and Ruth Homer
Panels Manager: Marian Eagleson (starts in September 2015)
Recruitment and Development Officer – Rachel Brown

10.1 There are 3 teams in the Family Placement Service and these are bases on functions within the service.

- The Recruitment and Assessment Team is responsible for fostering, adoption, step parent and special guardianship assessments.
- The Support Team provides on going support to mainstream foster carers and adopters, Connected persons Carers, and Special Guardians.
- The Permanency team works with the Neighbourhood teams to identify the needs and profiles of the child/ren requiring permanency, whether via adoption or fostering, at an early stage to begin to inform the assessment team of the types of placements that are likely to be required and track possible matches of children with carers as they make their way through the system.
- A Panels Manager to oversee both Fostering and Adoption Panels.

- 10.2 All Team Managers are responsible to the Service Manager and the management group share responsibility for developing policy and procedure in line with national regulations and standards to ensure a safe and stimulating environment for Looked after children.
- 10.3 The City council appoints elected members to corporately oversee the work of the Children's Social Care Service and delegates certain responsibilities to the Assistant Director who is the responsible individual for financial management, management systems and the safe care of children. The Head of Service is the Agency Decision Maker for fostering.
- 10.4 There are currently xx full time equivalent qualified social workers across the service (including Managers) with differing responsibilities for and within the service. All workers hold a social work qualification apart from three child and family workers based in each of the teams who support life story work, carer recruitment enquiries and carer retention tasks.

11. Protecting children from harm

- 11.1 Coventry Service operates a safe recruitment process for all staff employed by the agency. In addition, there is a rigorous vetting and assessment process undertaken with all potential carers. Enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks are repeated every 3 years for all carers and staff.
- 11.2 Our processes and procedures will ensure that any concern is addressed and monitored by the management team and will inform service development and best practice, for example: poor quality of care/breach of foster care agreement; child protection procedures which deal with allegations of abuse against foster carers and through the complaints procedures.
- 11.3 Children are made aware about these procedures through their social worker, fostering supervising social worker and the Children's Guide. They also have access to a Children's Rights Advocacy service independent of the service.

12. Provision of Therapeutic Services.

- 12.1 The Service has a referral route to the Journeys and Coventry Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), who provide therapeutic input to children and young people in foster placement, some consultation to carers and other professionals. CAMHS comprises of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and child and adolescent mental health practitioners with expertise in children's mental health. This is accessed the single front door. .

13. Provision of Health Promotion Support Services

- 13.1 The Designated Nurse for Looked after Children in conjunction with other nurses within the team, oversee Children's Annual Health Assessments and have input into the health promotion of Young People. Dedicated paediatricians advise the fostering panels on medical issues for applications to foster. The Service Fostering Service works with others in children's services to ensure looked after

children's needs are addressed. The Fostering Service is committed to ensuring the health outcomes for young people looked after continually improve.

14. Provision of Educational Support Services

- 14.1 There is a virtual head teacher for Looked After Children to look at improving the attainment attendance and exclusion issues and to improve partnerships with schools in Coventry. There is a qualified teacher based in the service providing training, support and advice to foster carers regarding their looked after children's educational needs.
- 14.2 Coventry fostering service recognises the need to improve Looked After Children attendance at school. The Fostering Service works closely with the carers in addressing this issue and this has resulted in a significant improvement in attendance of children in foster care in recent years.
- 14.3 Within Children's Services we have an expectation that holidays will not be taken in term time and that children are not routinely taken out of school. We work together with our colleagues to ensure that this only occurs in exceptional circumstances and not as a rule.
- 14.4 The Fostering Service works alongside and supports educational initiatives for looked after children by promoting children's educational needs to our Foster Carers. Carers are expected to attend Personal Education Planning Meetings with children and young people and, where appropriate, the supervising social worker will also attend. Within the educational setting, young people in year 10 and 11 can access 1:1 tuition.

15. Provision of Leisure, Sport, Cultural and Religious Activity

- 15.1 Foster carer training and supervision promotes the importance of leisure provision for looked after children and young people with the expectation that carers will seek out and support new experiences and activities to enhance children's self-worth, social development and independence.
- 15.2 Foster carers and their families are able to access the Passport to Leisure. This gives free access to certain leisure facilities. The council as a whole provides a 'Corporate Offer' to foster carers, their families and looked after children improving free access to a range of council services, including sports and leisure opportunities such as free swimming lessons and free gym use.
- 15.3 We aim to support all young people in their religious and cultural beliefs and customs. We ensure that information is available to provide understanding of different cultures and religions. We will provide resources that may be needed to ensure young people are able to practice their beliefs and customs. We are committed to directly challenging racism and ensure that all young people who access our services are aware of our policies in relation to anti-oppressive practice and anti-racism.
- 15.4 We will ensure that all people are treated equally, regardless of age, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or religion. Fostering supervising social workers

assist and advise carers with issues such as appropriate placement matching and with trans racial placements.

16. Care leavers provision

16.2 The Route21 Looked After Children's social work teams work closely with the Fostering Service and other professionals to provide a holistic approach to meeting young people's needs. Coventry is committed to supporting young people to remain in their foster placement beyond 18 years of age in order to experience normal family life and preparation for independence if this supports them more effectively. The 'Staying Put' policy provides financial and other support for former foster carers making commitments to young people age 18 - 21years.

17. Recruitment of Foster Carers

17.1 The Fostering Service has a recruitment strategy which utilises up-to-date data regarding the gaps in current resource provision. Currently, more places are needed for teenagers; sibling groups; children and young people with disabilities or additional needs.

17.2 There is an ongoing recruitment strategy and the adoption and fostering pages within the Coventry City Council website are updated regularly and include details of information sessions which are held approximately every 4 weeks across the City. The Fostering Service uses a variety of media, including digital and audio to recruit new carers. The strategy is informed by national research and local evaluation and analytics to ensure that methods utilised are most likely to achieve the desired results. A distinctive brand has been established and maintained and our 'reach' within our target communities has been extended. We work closely with the corporate communications team on our marketing and media strategy.

17.3 We are engaging with our foster carers and young people who have experiences of foster care to help recruit carers and have implemented a 'Foster Friendly Employers' strategy is in place for Coventry City Council, which will enable the service to develop closer relationships with local businesses. The examples from the other Local Authorities area are being incorporated into our strategy and we are offering a range of benefits, offers and events for Foster families and their looked after children.

18. Approval and Assessment Process

18.1 Persons over the age of 21 may apply to become a Foster Carer (but between the ages of 21 and 25 yrs we will need to have evidence of relevant transferable skills and / or related experience). Initial responses and advice to enquirers from the recruitment team are welcoming and within set timescales, normally the same working day.

18.2 There is immediate exclusion of any applicant who has been convicted of any serious offence against a child or adult. Interest is welcomed from all members of

the community, regardless of relationship status, employment situation, class, gender, sexuality, culture, ethnicity or religion.

- 18.3 The majority of initial enquiries and registrations of interest about fostering with Coventry are received through a range of sources including information events, the dedicated recruitment phone line and via email.
- 18.4 The website is regularly reviewed to ensure information is up to date, accessible and user friendly. When a person contacts the Service to express an interest in fostering they will be able to have a discussion with a social worker who will explain the process, take some initial information and offer an initial home visit if appropriate.
- 18.5 At the home visit we will discuss fostering with the enquirers and members of the family, check the home conditions are safe, warm and clean and that there is space for a foster child to sleep, do homework and play and participate as a full family member.
- 18.6 If all parties agree that fostering could be suitable for the family, a formal application is made and statutory checks are completed. Whilst checks are in progress applicants are invited to attend training and preparation groups ('Skills to Foster') is then made. The preparation training undertaken utilises the Fostering Network 'Skills to Foster' course which includes subject areas on Child Development; Separation and Loss; Working Together; Safe Care; Moving On.
- 18.7 The service runs 6- 8 Skills to Foster courses a year, normally at evenings and weekends and as demand dictates. The training is run by qualified fostering supervising social workers, experienced foster carers with contributions from care experienced young people and colleagues from health and education .
- 18.8 When preparation training is completed, the applicants begin an assessment that includes the requirements laid down in Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards in Foster Care (2011), Assessment and approval of Foster Carers 2013 (amendments to Children Act 1989) and Schedule 4 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (where children are fostered by relatives and friends).
- 18.9 All carers are subject to a number of statutory checks and references:
 - Disclosure and Barring Checks on all members of the household over the age of 18
 - Child Protection Checks
 - Local Authority Checks
 - Three personal references
 - In addition, interviews are conducted with grown up children and children
 - living in the household

Foster carers are additionally asked to undertake:

- A full medical examination with their GP. (Applicants for short breaks are asked to complete a medical questionnaire which is sent to their

G.P. for verification / comments)

- A work reference from present or previous employer
- To agree to the department making contact with any schools which their children attend to ascertain the school's view on their involvement / suitability
- To agree to the department making contact with ex partners regarding their application to foster.
- If the family have lived outside the UK, checks from the country of origin or previous residence are also requested.

- 18.10 The majority of foster carers are subject to a competency based assessment. The depth of this assessment will depend on the role for which the carer is being assessed, with appropriateness and proportionality being the measure of this. All potential carers are invited to be fully involved in the assessment and to use self completion sheets as a tool to look at their competencies. The fostering service uses the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form C foster carer assessment format for the completion of its assessments.
- 18.11 Connected persons foster carers are subject to an alternative assessment taking into account the nature of the task and the requirements of Schedule 4 (Care Planning Regulations 2010). Connected persons foster carers are not normally required to produce a portfolio or evidence of experience and skills. They are encouraged to do so and can also access the 16 week KEEP programme..
- 18.12 The assessment of a foster carer would take place in the applicant's home over a period of six to eight visits, plus reference interviews and interviewing other relevant parties. The assessing social worker would ensure that timelines, analysis of significant relationships, the family dynamics and characteristics of the foster carers underpin and inform the assessment. The assessment focuses on the individual or individuals applying to become foster carers and their family. We make a detailed assessment and analysis of their past and present experiences, the skills and competencies which they would bring to their new role and help them to think about their reasons for applying to become foster carers. The assessor will also use the process to assess the applicant's suitability to foster children with differing needs including disabled children and this is made transparent.
- 18.13 The assessments, together with a portfolio of evidence of experience and skills compiled by the foster carer are presented to a fostering panel. Applicants are encouraged to attend with the assessing social worker. All information gathered (except references) is shared with the applicant/s. The social worker's assessment is shared with them prior to the panel.
- 18.14 The fostering panel meets monthly and is independently chaired and comprise of people from a variety of backgrounds. They consider and recommend the approval, or not, of all foster carers. The recommendation then goes before the Agency Decision Maker who makes a final decision. Any appeals can be made within 28 days and may either make further representation to the fostering panel or have their assessment considered by the Independent Review Mechanism who in turn will make a recommendation back to the

agency.

- 18.15 All foster carers are subjected to an annual review of their status as foster carers. This is a formal review of the work that they have undertaken during the year and includes an opportunity to reflect on achievements and learning. Annual reviews are undertaken by SSW and draw on contributions from the Foster Carer and family, Supervising Social worker, Child's Social Worker, Looked After Child / Young Person and other professionals involved with the placement. A report is presented to the fostering panel in the case of all first reviews, significant changes to the carer's registration or cases of concern.

19. Support, Supervision and Training of Foster Carers

- 19.1 All foster carers are linked with a qualified social worker (fostering supervising social worker) who provides supervision and support. The supervising social worker undertakes a minimum of four supervisory visits per year to approved carer(s) and additional regular visits as required (monthly). They also make at least one unannounced visit per year. All visits and contacts with the foster carer are recorded.
- 19.2 The completion of Foundation training in Theraplay by 7 staff in the Family Placement Service has meant the delivery of monthly workshops to Foster carers on effectively using these principles whilst working with children. Feedback from the monthly workshops which involve the child has been that this relationship based intervention is meeting the needs of carers who are working with children who have a number of attachment related behaviours
- 19.3 The service believes that it is important that foster carers are able to access support and at the time that they need it. During office hours if a foster carer is unable to contact their own supervising social worker they can contact a Duty supervising social worker for advice and support. The supervising social worker will usually be the first point of contact for the foster carer and be able to offer support, advice, guidance and supervision regarding most matters relating to fostering and the care of the child.
- 19.4 Additionally, every looked after child has an allocated social worker. This person will usually be the first point of contact for the foster carer for any information and advice on issues that relate to the child. If this worker is not available during office hours, a duty worker is always available to deal with any urgent problems or issues.
- 19.5 If additional support is required outside of these times, foster carers can contact the Emergency Duty team or access a carer support line outside of core hours.
- 19.6 Coventry fostering service provides an Independent Support Service to foster carers (currently commissioned through Fostering Network) where this is required for mediation purposes or to provide advocacy support for the carer during allegations. The fostering service believes that carers should be fully reimbursed for the costs of looking after a child, and provides weekly allowances at Fostering Network recommended rates. In addition, travel and

other additional payments are made available to carers together with essential equipment for the task. Payments in the form of a weekly fee are available to carers who meet specific requirements on the Skills Level fees .

- 19.7 At times, all children can have accidents that cause damage. When such damage occurs, carers are initially asked to claim on their own household insurance. Any excess payments or increase in premiums that results from this can be reclaimed from the department. In the event of the carer's insurance not covering the loss or damage, a claim can be submitted for consideration by the Fostering Service.
- 19.8 The Fostering Service provides a range of foster carer support groups, assisted by supervising social workers. The groups generally involve carers across all skill levels and take place in the daytime at a variety of venues across the city.
- 19.9 Foster Carers Handbook and Diary. All Foster Carers are provided with a electronic link to the handbook and diary which gives factual information which they need to know about the service and to perform their role. This includes key information and guidance on safe care; allegations; education; medication; recording and record keeping; the role of social workers and key policies and procedures. Policies and procedures are also available to carers online via the Departments children's procedures manual.

20. Training

- 20.1 The Fostering Service believes that a comprehensive training programme for both staff and foster carers is key to their personal and professional development. Training provides people with the required skills and knowledge, necessary in providing a high quality service. It is also key to safeguarding children, foster carers and their families by informing them of how to care for children safely.
- 20.2 Training is an opportunity for all foster carers to acquire new skills, assist with personal and professional development and explore new ideas via peer support and group discussion.
- 20.3 The KEEP programme intervention has continued to be offered to both foster carers and special guardians. It has now become part of the mandatory training for carers who are approved to take children within the age of 4 to 11. Results continue to show that carers value the 16 week programme and report improved behaviours for specific children.
- 20.4 The Fostering Service has a clear training strategy, covering pre-approval training to potential applicants, induction training for newly approved carers and post approval training which incorporates the Children's Workforce Development Council / Training and Development Standards certification A comprehensive rolling programme of training is available and reviewed regularly, meeting the on-going professional development of foster carers throughout their fostering career. Connected persons foster carers are also provided with targeted training opportunities more suited to the fostering task of caring for family members or friends' children.

21. Complaints Procedure

- 21.1 The City Council Children's Social Work Service operates a complaints service which is independent of the Fostering Service. Foster Carers are given a Complaints and Compliments leaflet, detailing the process if they wish to make a complaint when they sign the Foster Carer Agreement.
- 21.2 Birth Parents are given a copy of the Complaints and Compliments Leaflet in the Information Pack for Parents which is provided by social workers of children in placements.
- 21.3 It is the role of the child's social worker to give them the complaints leaflet for looked after children and to inform them of the Role of the Children's Rights Service. The child can also make their views known through the review system and they are sent a consultation form about the placement prior to the foster carer review. Details of how to complain and how to contact Ofsted are available in the Children's Guide to Fostering.

22. Allegations

- 22.1 All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated and actioned through Coventry Safeguarding Children Service, reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Coventry Safeguarding Children's Board under the procedures for Investigating Allegations against Adults Caring for Children. The Coventry Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures are followed. Foster carers are offered independent support during this process which can be accessed via their supervising social worker.

23. Monitoring performance

- 23.1 The performance of the Service will be monitored at a number of levels and in a number of ways:
- Ofsted will inspect regularly to ensure that the Service complies with legislation and standards
 - Report annually to the council's Executive Board.
 - Report quarterly and annually to Corporate level (Elected Members)
 - Report monthly on service performance to Head of Service and Fostering Steering Group
 - Activity will be monitored at a strategic level against the objectives, performance indicators and tasks as contained in the Improvement Plan.
 - In addition to the above, a Quality Assurance and Performance framework monitors the Fostering Service key requirements.
- 23.2 The following Key Performance Indicators will be used to monitor the Fostering Service:

Performance Indicators:

- No and percentage of children looked after in foster care and adoption.
- National PSA target – Placement Stability (% of children under 16 years looked after for 2.5 years or more in the same placement for at least 2 years)
- The Fostering service will recruit new foster carers and increase the number of carers for children (targets as agreed).
- All assessments will be completed within 6 months.
- All newly approved carers will carry out agreed induction training within first year of approval
- Continuous auditing of carer case files to ensure statutory compliance and good practice standards

24. Contact details

The Service is currently based within the Children's Social Work Service at:

Family Placement Service
Civic Centre 1,
2nd Floor
Little Park Street,
Coventry
CV1 5RS
Telephone: 024 7683 1873

OFSTED Contact Details

Ofsted
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