



Foster

Do something incredible today!

Central
Bedfordshire

great
prospects

Statement of purpose

Fostering Team, Central Bedfordshire Council
1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018

Children and families first
Working as one team close to our community
Being great corporate parents to children in care and care leavers
Much more than care
Being a well managed service and providing great public care

A great place to live and work.



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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.



1. Introduction

- 1.1. This statement of purpose has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Fostering services National Minimum Standards 2001.
- 1.2. It sets out the core aims and objectives of Central Bedfordshire Council's Fostering Service and the range of services provided.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. Detailed information about Central Bedfordshire's Fostering procedures can be found via <http://centralbedfordshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.
- 1.5. The Fostering Service is an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Service in Central Bedfordshire Council.

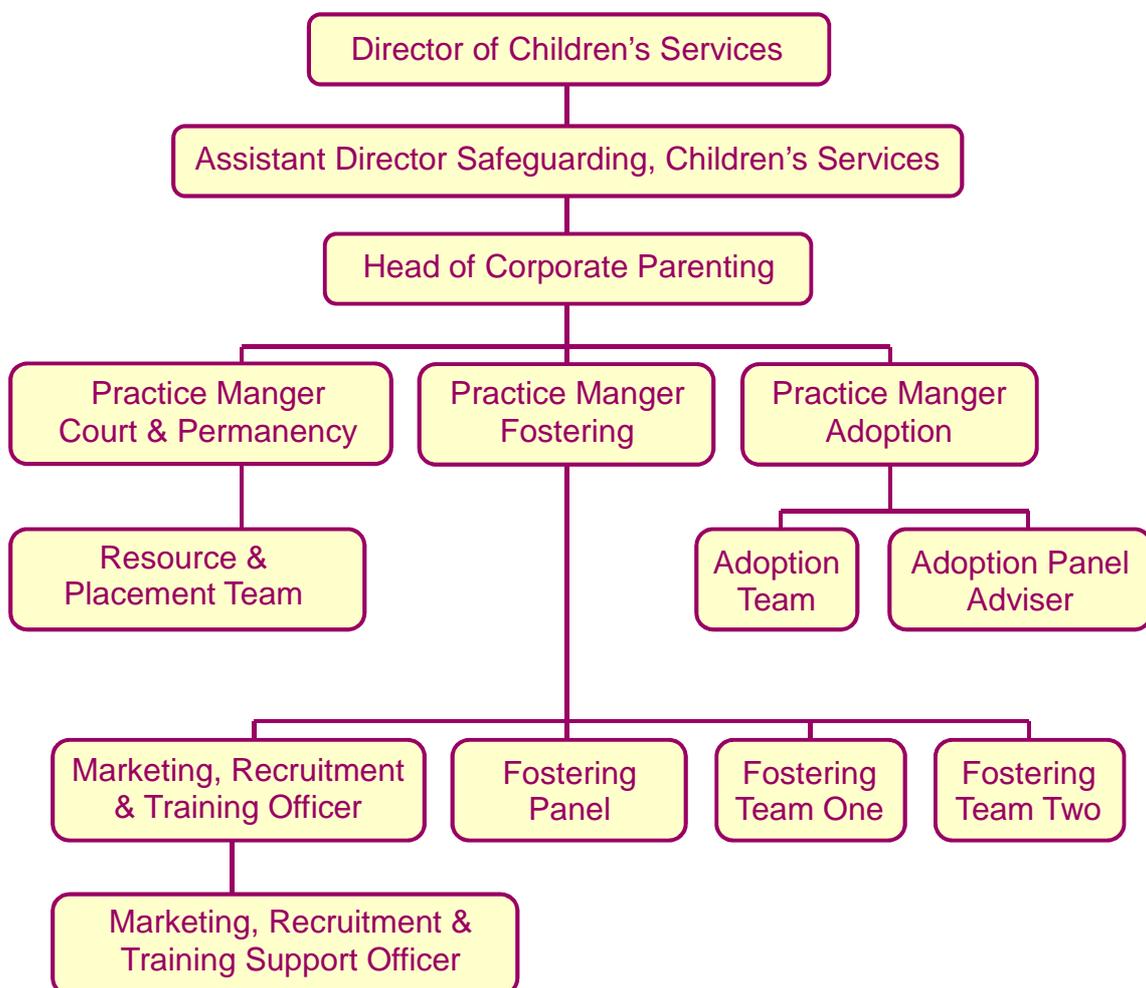
2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1. To provide foster placements for children who need to be placed in a suitable home on an emergency or planned basis, whether this is with career Foster Carers or family and friends (connected persons carers).
- 2.2. Services are officered for children on the principle that their needs and welfare are best met within a caring and nurturing environment.
- 2.3. To provide a high quality Fostering Service to children, their birth parents, Foster Carers and social work colleagues.
- 2.4. To provide foster placements that meets the needs of children requiring such a placement.
- 2.5. To ensure safe, stable and consistent care for every child placed in foster care.
- 2.6. To ensure that the ethnic origin, cultural background, religious heritage and language of children are fully recognised, valued and promoted.
- 2.7. To recruit a range of Foster Carers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to meet the needs of children needing placements.



- 2.8. To provide support services that promote and enable the retention of Foster Carers.
- 2.9. To ensure, that at all times, the teams provide services that are effective and that practices are clear, open, honest and fair to all services users.
- 2.10. To ensure that Foster Carers are enabled to promote positive outcomes for children placed with them.
- 2.11. To actively promote and support training opportunities for all Foster Carers.
- 2.12. To ensure that the Fostering Service meets Fostering Regulations, National Minimum Standards and best practice.

3. Management and staff structure



- 3.1. The ultimate responsibility for the Fostering service rests with Elected Members.
- 3.2. The Assistant Director then gives strategic leadership to Children's Services (Responsible Person).
- 3.3. The Head of Corporate Parenting Service co-ordinates the activities of the Fostering Service along with the Adoption Service, Resource Team and Children in Care Teams, and promotes partnership working across Children's Services and partner agencies.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. 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.
- 3.6. Both Team Managers provide regular supervision to their respective team of Social Workers/Social Work Assistant. As part of the Corporate Parenting Service they 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 Disability Team/Early Intervention Teams and partner agencies.
- 3.7. 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 Social Work Assistant the team is supported by two Business Support Officers who are supervised by the Team managers. A team of Psychologists are also based with the Corporate Parenting Service and are available to support children, Foster and staff.



4. Our services to children

- 4.1. 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 at home. Where ever possible and where safe to do so, children will be placed with someone from their extended family or a close family friend. These arrangements are recognised in legislation as 'family and friends' foster placements. When this is not possible, placements will be found with one of our approved Foster Carers or a suitable agency. We aim to clearly identify the particular emotional, physical, cultural and religious needs of a child and find a foster family who can meet their needs.
- 4.2. Except in emergencies we plan introductory meetings between the child and the Foster Carer in an effort to lesson 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 Carers and their household as possible. Profiles are kept on all Foster Carers and they can be used to help provide children with relevant information about the fostering household/area etc., even in an emergency situation.
- 4.3. Children will be visited in placement by both their own Social Worker and the Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker, children will be encouraged to express their wishes and view 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 Carers are invited to provide written feedback regarding their parents Foster Carer's Annual Review.

5. Matching process

- 5.1. 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 agreed the match is proposed to the Foster Carer(s) and the Child's Social Worker who will further consider the strengths and vulnerabilities of the placement, involving the child as appropriate, and makes the arrangements for the placement, if agreed.

6. Children's guide

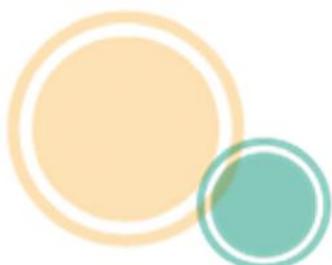
- 6.1. A children's guide is provided to all children in care, when placed, when they are of sufficient understanding to be able to benefit from the information contained in the guide.



- 6.2. 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.

7. Recruitment and assessment of prospective Foster Carers

- 7.1. The Fostering Service works to a Recruitment and Retention Strategy which is updated annually. 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.
- 7.2. Central Bedfordshire Council will recruit and assess a diverse range of Foster Carers who are able to meet the needs of children in care.
- 7.3. All members of the public who make an initial enquiry by phone email or letter in relation to becoming a Foster Carer will be referred to the Fostering Service. All enquiries will be treated as a potential resource and given a prompt response. They will be contacted, to gather further information and for a general discussion about fostering.
- 7.4. An initial enquiry form will be completed gathering basic information about the applicant/household in addition a check will be carried out in relation to applicants and all members of their household on Children's Services records.
- 7.5. All applicants will be sent an information pack and letter. Where the applicant or a member of the household is known, the enquiry will be passed to the manager for a decision on how to proceed. At this early stage it may be appropriate to advise the applicants against pursuing fostering if they clearly do not meet the basic criteria to foster. The manager's decision will be communicated to the person concerned with reasons given and the decision recorded.
- 7.6. Where the decision is to proceed the applicant will be invited to any planned information events and an initial visit to the applicant's home will be arranged. The purpose of this visit is to discuss fostering in more depth and to allow the Social Worker to assess the suitability of their accommodation. An application form is left with the applicant to complete and once returned the assessment process will commence.



- 7.7. The two stage assessment process will be fully explained to applicants and will be thorough as fair. The Fostering Service will work in partnership with applicants at all stages. Checks and references are undertaken in Stage 1, these include:
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) on applicants and all members of the household aged 18 and over
 - Written personal references
 - Employment references
 - Local Authority checks
 - Medical checks
 - School references (for children already with family)
 - Pet assessment.
- 7.8. Preparation training (Skills to Foster) is provided and all applicants are expected to complete the required training programme.
- 7.9. If the Fostering Service came to a view that an application will not succeed at stage 1 applicants will be given reasons. Some information for the assessment is provided in confidence therefore there may be some occasion where it may not be possible for reasons to be fully explained.
- 7.10. If the Fostering Manager decides that the prospective Foster Carers can proceed to stage 2, the case will be allocated to a Social Worker to complete the assessment and consider the suitability to foster. The report and the decision as to the applicant's suitability to foster should be completed within four months.
- 7.11. Once the assessment is completed this will be presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for a recommendation.

8. The Fostering and Permanence Panel

- 8.1. The Fostering Service has a fostering panel constituted in accordance with Regulations 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.



- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:
- Each application and recommended 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.
- 8.4 New applicants and existing Foster Carers are invited and encouraged to attend panel when their application or review is presented to panel.
- 8.5 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.
- 8.6 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

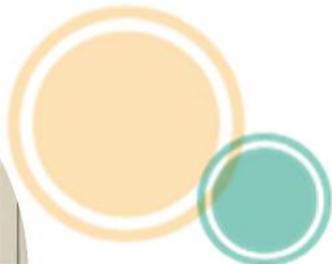
- 9.1 Central Bedfordshire Foster Carer Charter 'Children Come First'.
- 9.2 The Fostering Service is committed to providing and promoting safe, stable and nurturing placements where the outcomes and life chances for looked after children are positive. In order to achieve this it is important to have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



- 9.3 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.

10 Support and supervision of Foster Carers

- 10.1 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 carer 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.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 An annual Celebration of Fostering and awards ceremony is held to recognise the dedication and commitment of Foster Carers. Awards are given to carers who have fostered at each 5 year stage e.g. 5 years, 10 years, 15 years as well as a nominations process for Foster Carers and other professionals working with foster carers to nominate for awards such as special sons and daughters, outstanding contribution to fostering.
- 10.4 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. CBC will spot purchase Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service to provide additional independent support to foster carers when required.
- 10.5 Foster Carers are currently provided with Max Cards which provide discounts on a range of attractions and family activities both nationally and locally.
- 10.6 Foster Carers have access to the Foster Carers Handbook which contains useful information for Foster Carers in relation to fostering issues.
- 10.7 A regular newsletter is also provided for Foster Carers keeping them up to date on current issues, forthcoming training/events, new policies, etc.
- 10.8 The Fostering Service arranges various monthly support groups for Foster Carers and regular events for children of Foster Carers.
- 10.9 Foster Carers also run their own Foster Care Association which is supported by Central Bedfordshire Council.



11 Reviewing the approval of Foster Carers

- 11.1 The approved 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 review 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.
- 11.2 All other Reviews are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision about ongoing approval.
- 11.3 The Foster Carer Review Officer sits within the Professional Standards Service providing independent scrutiny and challenges to the Service.

12 Training for Foster Carers

- 12.1 As part of the assessment process Foster Carers are expected to attend the 'Skills to Foster' preparation training and complete safeguarding and First Aid Training.
- 12.2 Once approved all Foster Carers are expected to undertake a range of training to update their skills. The national Training, Support and Development Standards provide a framework for training for the first year of a foster care role and set out what Foster Carers should know, understand and be able to do. All Foster Carers are required to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards workbook within 12 months of approval (18 months for connected persons). The standards include:
- 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.



- 12.3 Approved Foster Carers eligibility for tier fees is linked to training attendance and the core training modules are outlined in the Foster Training Policy. This includes pre approval training, an induction and training expectations to be completed within their first, second and following years of their fostering career.
- 12.4 To enable Foster Carers to complete the core training they 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 on-line training website they can access training from different streams within Central Bedfordshire Council including Multi-agency, Early Years, 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.

13 Complaints

- 13.1 All local authorities are required to ensure a complaints process is provided under the Children Act 1989.
- 13.2 All complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Central Bedfordshire local and national requirements.
- 13.3 Complaints by children are dealt with under the Children's Services complaints procedure, which needs a shorter time for responding to children's complaints and the provision of independent advocacy for complaints.
- 13.4 The complaints procedure has several states; stage 1 applies to local resolution, but if this is not achieved, there are two more stages. Information on these further stages is available from the Fostering Service or from Central Bedfordshire's Customer Relations Department.

14 Allegations

- 14.1 Allegations against foster carers are dealt with in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), procedures for managing allegations/concerns about foster carers. All foster carers subject to any allegation are offered independent support from the Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service.



15 Quality monitoring

- 15.1 The quality of the work of the Fostering Service is monitored through Staff Supervision which is linked to an appraisal system, monthly recorded visits to Foster Carers including unannounced visits, annual reviews, feedback from training sessions, case recording and peer/management audits.
- 15.2 The Panel Agency Advisor provides scrutiny and feedback as does the Fostering Panel Chair person. Team Managers monitor data about incidents of concern in foster care including; restraint, allegations, complaints and unauthorised absence. The Registered Manager (Practice Manager) monitors the schedule 6 and 7 requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.
- 15.3 Regular quarterly reports are provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel providing the executive of the Council with information/data in relation to the agency's activity.
- 15.4 The information gathered through quarterly and annual reports, audits, inspectors and customer feedback is constantly evaluated by the managers of the Fostering Service to judge its on-going effectiveness and make changes where necessary.
- 15.5 In addition the Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted.

16 Arrangements for the revision and circulation of the statement of purpose

- 16.1 The Registered Manager will keep under review, and where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and will notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. Staff and Foster Carers will be consulted on proposed revisions as appropriate.
- 16.2 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's website.



17 The Registration Authority

The Registration Authority is:
Ofsted,
Ofsted National Business Unit,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
[Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

18 Contacts

For more information about Fostering in Central Bedfordshire please contact:

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

Telephone: 0300 300 8090

For copies of the complaints procedure or further copies of this statement of purpose, please contact the Fostering Service on the contact details above. If you wish to comment on this statement of purpose on the Fostering Service or make a complaint, please contact the Head of Corporate Parenting Service on the contact details above.

This report can be provided in large print and other languages.

