



Borough of Poole

Children and Young People's Social Care Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2008-2009

CATEGORY: FOSTERING
SUBJECT: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2008

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Information required by Regulation 3 Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

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Fostering Service
Statement of Purpose

1. Mission statement

- 1.1 To provide a range of safe and secure foster placements to meet the assessed needs of children in care and promote and safeguard their welfare.
- 1.2 To ensure that placements promote stability and positive outcomes for children and young people by working in partnership with young people, carers, birth families, other professionals and the community.

2. Principles of the Service

- 2.1 Achieving permanence for a child will be the key consideration in working with children in need and their families and in working with any child who becomes looked after by Poole Children and Young People's Social Care.
- 2.2 Children and young people who cannot live with their own birth families have a right to a choice of suitable foster placement which provides stability and promotes and safeguards their welfare.
- 2.3 Foster placements should provide a high standard of physical and emotional care and a safe and secure environment in which children are protected from abuse and harm.
- 2.4 Children and young people's needs will be at the centre of the work of the Fostering Service. Children and young people will be fully involved and consulted regarding all aspects of their care.
- 2.5 The Fostering Service is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality. Services will be provided which meet individual needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.
- 2.6 The Fostering Service recognises the importance of birth families and continuity of relationships. Wherever possible, foster placements will be provided locally in order to maintain family, school and community ties. The Fostering Service will actively promote and support appropriate family contact.
- 2.7 The Fostering Service will ensure that a young person's educational, health, emotional and social needs are properly met in order to promote health and personal development and maximise education opportunity. A successful fostering service is based on partnership between foster carers, social workers, other professionals, the young people and families who use the service. Partnership work will be actively promoted in order to maximise the life chances of young people in care.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Service

The main aims of the service are to:

- 3.1 Recruit, assess, support and develop a diverse range of foster carers who can provide safe and secure care to children with wide ranging needs.
- 3.2 To ensure children and young people have stability and choice in placement.
- 3.3 To promote the use of kinship (family and friends) care for children and young people who cannot live with their birth parents.
- 3.4 To ensure that children and young people are carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting their assessed needs. The service will, if needed, commission foster placements from outside the local area and with other foster care providers in order to meet specific needs and make the most appropriate match.
- 3.5 To ensure that safe care is practised within every foster placement in order that children are protected from abuse and harm.
- 3.6 To ensure that a child's ethnic religious, cultural and linguistic needs are properly understood and met in placement.
- 3.7 To ensure that people who work in or for the service are suitable to work with children and young people and are managed, trained and supported to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care.
- 3.8 To ensure that children and young people are able to exercise choice regarding their foster placement and are fully involved and consulted on matters regarding their care. The service should provide for sibling groups to stay together, when assessed as appropriate for the needs of the children, where possible.
- 3.9 To provide a suitable foster care environment for older young people in which they can develop the necessary skills and knowledge for independent living and make a successful transition to adulthood.
- 3.10 To ensure that care arrangements made by parents privately under the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 provide care for the child which will promote and safeguard his or her welfare.
- 3.11 To ensure that cost effective services are provided and commissioned which maximise available resources.
- 3.12 To ensure appropriate records and management information are kept in relation to individual foster carers, children and young people and fostering services.

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In order to achieve the above aims the Fostering Service will:

- 3.13 Maintain a sufficient number of foster care placements in relation to the numbers, needs, age range and characteristics of the looked after children population and review this annually through the team and unit business plan.
- 3.14 Maintain a target of 8.5% of children in kinship care placements.
- 3.15 Maintain a target of 80% of looked after children in family placements.
- 3.16 Maintain a target of no more than 15% of children are placed more than 20 miles from Poole.
- 3.17 Enable matching to carers specifically approved and skilled to meet assessed needs and aim to have placements within approval criteria.
- 3.18 Set an annual target to reduce the proportion of children inappropriately experiencing 3 or more placement moves in any year and monitor this annually.
- 3.19 Aim that children who have been in care for over 2 years are in stable placements. Set annual targets and monitor this annually.
- 3.20 Monitor the time taken to find permanent placements for children and ensure that there is no unavoidable delay.
- 3.21 Involve young people, and foster carers in developing appropriate services and building their feedback into service development.
- 3.22 Provide young people with written information about foster care.
- 3.23 Provide foster carers with training, support and written guidance about their role in order that they can fulfil the full range of caring responsibilities

4. Services Provided

- 4.1 The fostering service will meet a range of needs by providing:
 - Short term foster care to support families through crisis, family breakdown or in and emergency to protect a child from harm.
 - Permanent substitute family care through adoption or long term fostering, for children who cannot return to their birth family.
 - A shared care service providing respite day and overnight care for children with disabilities
- 4.2 Specific matching will be undertaken on all placements evidencing how a child's needs will be met.
- 4.3 There are three main categories of foster care in Poole – Standard care, Enhanced care and specialist placements supported by double or more enhanced fee levels.

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The number of foster carers in each category is determined by the assessed needs of the Borough's Children in Care population and, to meet these needs, the fostering team are responsible for delivering a recruitment and training strategy designed to maintain an appropriate mix of carers.

- 4.4 All approved foster carers are expected to meet the standards required for Standard foster care. They need to be able to demonstrate an appropriate level of competence and understanding of the needs of children in their care. Pre-approval training is required. It is expected that carers continue their professional development through on-going training. A comprehensive programme of training is made available to them.
- 4.5 Where placements require carers to have qualities and skills at the Enhanced level, certain criteria have to be met. The child/young person is likely to have difficulties in a number of areas. Foster carers may have to deal with complex issues around, for example, physical and/or mental health, substance misuse, sexuality and challenging behaviour.
- 4.6 Specialist placements may be planned which support young people with severe behavioural difficulties and needs, or who may present a risk to themselves and/or others and who would otherwise require a specialist, out-of-authority residential placement. Some children with a disability may have their needs met in a specialist placement. Carers must be able to evidence appropriate skills and availability to meet the needs of the children.
- 4.7 Remand Foster Care – Poole operates a joint remand foster care scheme with Bournemouth Borough Council. This currently provides for a single retained remand foster carer (registered with Bournemouth Social Services) who is paid a weekly fee equivalent to the prevailing Bournemouth project care rate.
- 4.8 Shared Care Scheme – Under the Shared Care Scheme a child with a disability is linked to a shared carer who offers care for regular periods (for example for a day a week or a weekend a month), and for occasional longer periods such as a week. The care is usually in the shared carer's home and normally at weekends or in school holidays. The shared carers are assessed and approved as foster carers if they provide overnight care, and there is a similar assessment for day carers.
- 4.9 Private Fostering - Poole fostering team will work alongside childcare social workers in the assessment of the suitability of the arrangements made for the placement of the child. Private foster carers will be offered training and support. The fostering service will take measures to increase public understanding of the need for private fostering arrangements to be notified to Children and Young People's Social Care.

5. Facilities and Services for Children and Carers

5.1 Education

The Fostering Service promotes the educational attainment of all children and young people in foster care with a focus on inclusion, appropriate and local school placements, attendance and personal and academic achievement. Each child has a Personal Education Plan which is regularly reviewed. There is a designated

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teacher in every Poole school responsible for liaison, educational monitoring and pastoral care arrangements for children looked after.

Children and Young People's Integrated Services employ a specialist support teacher, an education welfare officer and educational psychologist for both children and carers in supporting inclusion and educational attainment for children in care, including those who are placed outside of the Borough. Regular links are maintained with CYPSC through multi-agency resource panels.

5.2 Health Care

Each child placed with foster carers will be registered with a medical practitioner and have access to medical care as (s)he may require. Initial health assessments are undertaken by the designated nurse for children in care who, with the consultant paediatrician, ensures referral to specialist services. The nurse can be contacted by carers and young people to discuss specific health concerns.

5.3 Therapeutic Services

An Intensive Support Team for Children and Young People, The Maple Service, serves Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset. It is based on a multi-disciplinary team offering assessment and therapeutic support services. The service includes an out-of-hours telephone help line, which is available in respect of children with identified mental health problems. A psychiatrist is on call for children in serious crisis and the service is linked to inpatient provision for adolescents. The team will provide out reach support and children looked after with mental health problems are a priority group for this service.

The Poole CAMHS service provides mainstream (tier 1 and 2) mental health services with consultation for foster carers, social workers and young people. A social worker/therapist is employed jointly by CAMHS and Children and Young People's Social Care and provides a regular link with the CAMHS service.

A clinical psychology service funded by the Dorset Health Care Trust offers a dedicated consultation service. Foster carers can consult the psychologists about behaviour management and emotional disturbance in children. Regular training sessions with the clinical psychologists are available to staff and foster carers.

5.4 Out of Hours Service

This service is shared by the three local authorities, Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset. It provides a team of social workers, who are available outside office hours to offer emergency social work support to all client groups. The service can offer telephone advice, has access to placement information and emergency placements with foster carers and residential units. OOHS workers will visit to offer assistance and support to carers and children who are reported missing from placement etc. They fax information on the following working day to the child care social worker and fostering service.

5.5 Access to leisure and other facilities.

The fostering service is keen to promote self esteem and resilience for children. The Borough of Poole's "Access to leisure" scheme is available to foster carers and children in care across sport and cultural events. Local libraries are engaged in promoting services for children in care.

5.6 Advocacy Service

An Advocacy Service for children in care is commissioned from NCH. The advocacy worker sends information about the service to all children in care who are over eight years. NCH should be informed of all reviews for over eights and advocates will attend reviews and help children resolve issues or use the complaints procedure.

5.7 Connexions Service

The Connexions Service works across Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset and has a responsibility to work with young people between the ages of 13 and 17 in order to provide them with information, advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities. It aims to help young people engage in learning, achieving their full potential and make a smooth transition to adult life.

The support provided to young people will reflect need. Universal services are provided to all young people regarding further education, training or career opportunities. Personal advisers are available to provide help to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people to overcome barriers to learning and progression.

5.8 Youth Services

Youth Services within the Borough of Poole have identified children in care in their inclusion strategy and assist young people having good access to youth worker support, activities and facilities

5.9 Spirituality Project

A part time spirituality worker funded by Faithworks works with children, birth families, carers, social workers and other professionals to provide information, support and direct links in order to explore way of meeting the spiritual and faith needs of children in care and enable them to develop emotional resilience.

6. Procedures and Processes for Recruiting, Approving, Training, Supporting and Reviewing Foster Carers

6.1 The Fostering Service consists of Family Placement Social Workers and Social Work Assistants who have detailed guidance on the recruitment, approval, training, support and review of foster carers and shared carers.

6.2 Recruitment and approval will follow the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and Code of Practice 1999. Applicants will be responded to promptly, provided with written and verbal information. Interested and potentially suitable applicants will be offered an initial home visit subject to the outcome of this, a family placement social worker will be allocated to undertake a comprehensive foster carer assessment.

6.3 If Poole children are placed with an Independent Fostering Agency the Poole fostering team performs a quality assurance role, ensuring that information on the proposed placement provides sufficient evidence of the carers' suitability. The Children's Services Contracts Officer works alongside the fostering team and childcare social workers in co-ordinating and monitoring the arrangements.

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- 6.4 Fostering assessments will be presented to the Fostering Panel and applicants invited to attend and give written feedback on the assessment report. Recommendations will be passed to the agency decision-maker. Representations about decisions can be made within 28 days as outlined in Fostering Services Regulations.
- 6.5 Approval of immediate placements (Regulation 38), i.e. immediate placements made with someone who is not an approved foster carer but who is known to the child in a family or friends capacity, will be by the Head of Service and details presented to Fostering Panel within 6 weeks of a child being placed.
- 6.6 Initial training will be given to new fostering applicants. Foster carers' reviews will record further training needs and training that has been undertaken for individual carers. Training will be promoted for all Poole foster carers and individual records kept. Some sessions will be offered with social workers and other agencies.
- 6.7 All foster carers will receive appropriate induction information. This will consist of a handbook together with appropriate policies and guidance including
- Protocols and guidance when children go missing.
 - Whistle blowing procedures
 - Permissible forms of control
 - Links and support contacts
 - Arrangements for dealing with complaints
 - Child protection and allegations and fostering reviews
 - Financial arrangements.
 - Safe Care
 - Bullying
- 6.8 Every foster carer will sign a foster carer's agreement (regulation 28 (5)(b)) and in addition a placement agreement (regulation 34) containing all the information the authority considers necessary to care for an individual child.
- 6.9 Supervision of carers is the responsibility of the Family Placement Social Worker who will provide their manager and carers with a written record and monitor and enhance the support given to carers from different agencies and workers.
- 6.10 From April 2008 the Family Placement Social Workers will be supporting foster carers to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care. An Implementation Plan has been introduced and working groups include foster carers and young people.
- 6.11 Foster carers are encouraged to have a personal development plan and to take advantage of relevant training opportunities. A comprehensive training planner is made available to all carers and foster carers are supported to undertake the NVQ in Health and Social Care.
- 6.12 Formal foster carer reviews will be undertaken annually. The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer will enhance the quality assurance aspect of this function. Contributions to the review are from the Family Placement Social

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Worker, the foster carers, the child care social workers, and wherever possible the child/ren in care and their families.

- 6.13 Support to foster carers includes membership of Fostering Network which provides regular information about all aspects of fostering and relevant child care issues. Support to carers from the Family Placement Social Workers is regular and there is a duty system to ensure that a member of the team is available during office hours.
- 6.14 Support groups, both day and evening sessions, are planned regularly throughout the year and will often include a training element. Support groups for the children of foster families are held several times a year. A group for male foster carers is also planned.
- 6.15 The Fostering Team organise a variety of social events for carers and their families. These include picnics, a Christmas party, and other gatherings. These events have proved very popular. Foster carers are also invited to an annual celebratory event which is an opportunity for senior managers and elected members of the Borough to acknowledge, as Corporate Parents, the work undertaken by foster carers.
- 6.16 Poole foster carers have membership of an independent support group, the Foster Carers' Voice, which prepares newsletters and holds support groups. The Foster Carers' Voice representatives meet with senior managers and contributes to valuable discussions about policy and service development.

7. Approval of the Statement of Purpose

- 7.1 The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated annually and formally approved by the Borough of Poole Community Support and Education Scrutiny Committee.

Gerry Moore
Head of Service
March 2008

Appendix 1 Numbers of children placed and numbers of foster carers

Appendix 2 Numbers of complaints and their outcomes

Appendix 1

Numbers of children placed with foster carers

107 Poole children were looked after at 31st March 2007. 85 (79%) were placed in foster care (69 with in-house carers, 2 with carers from other local authorities, 6 with independent fostering agency carers and 8 with friends and family carers).

Number of foster carers

There were 73 approved foster carers at 31st March 2007, with approval for 117 places. In addition there were 29 shared carers approved for 39 links, including day care and overnight placements for children with a disability.

Appendix 2

Numbers of complaints and their outcomes 2006 –2007

Between April 2006 and March 2007 there were 3 complaints

1. Ongoing complaint carried over from 2004 –5 by independently provided foster carers, referred to Ombudsman – resolved June 2006.
2. May 2006 Stage 2 complaint re overpayment. Resolution achieved.
3. October 2006 complaint by foster carer about support and advice available in regard to education and exclusion of young person. Independently investigated. Response sent 26.06.07

Numbers of complaints and their outcomes 2007 –2008

Between April 07 and March 2008 there were five complaints regarding the fostering service.

1. July 2007 Complaint from carer about confidential information made accessible to young person. Resolved by letter from Principal Manager.
2. August 2007 Complaint from foster carer about access to loan to purchase a vehicle carrier. Resolved by letter (Sept 2007) from team manager.
3. September 2007. Representations from foster carers about procedures regarding allegations against foster carers. Policy revised.
4. September 2007. Complaint from parent about child care and fostering response following emergency admission to care. Ongoing.
5. November 2007. Complaint from school about carer. Resolved in meetings with school by Principal Manager and Team Manager responsible for child.