

Statement of Function and Purpose

County Fostering Service



COUNTY
FOSTERING SERVICE

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Introduction

From its beginning, the vision, ethos, and philosophy of the County Fostering Service has been one of providing a “family centred service” which supports Children and Foster Carers to be the absolute best they can be.

This Statement of Function and Purpose has been developed and produced to meet the requirements and principles contained within the following legislation:

- The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 amended July 2013 and April 2014
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011)
- The Care Standards Act 200
- The Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) 2013
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010
- Delegation of Authority: Amendments of The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 4 Fostering Services 2011
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carer: Amendment to The Children Act 1989 Vol
- 4 Fostering Services 2013
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Social Work and Children Act 2017

The document is shared with Foster Carers, Ofsted, Local Authorities. It will be updated annually by the management team, or if any specific areas need to be addressed.

We offer the best possible service to children and young people by having professional, fully trained and experienced Foster Carers who have their best interests at heart. We aim to work with Foster Carers.

We have welcome guides for all our children. Fostering can be extremely rewarding but can also be particularly challenging. We pride ourselves in respecting, acknowledging, and supporting all our families in the great job they do to not only keeping the children safe, warm, and cared for, but also valued, using a child-centred approach, embracing their diversity, cultural and educational needs. We promote social interests, hobbies, taking part in drama, sports, and music. All aspects of the child's societal and mental well-being will be thought through, and help and guidance will be offered and supported, giving them the best chance for a positive transition into adulthood.



Our Aims & Objectives

County Fostering Services Ltd aims offer an exceptional fostering service for all the carers, and children.

Our Management team and Supervising Social Workers have an excellent understanding of fostering and some even have experienced foster caring. This ensures that they have a vital insight of what is expected of a Foster Carer and how this impacts families and children.

We will work hard as a team, working together to offer full 24 hour support, training, support groups, carer's supervision with a qualified Social Worker every month, respite, and two weeks respite or payment.

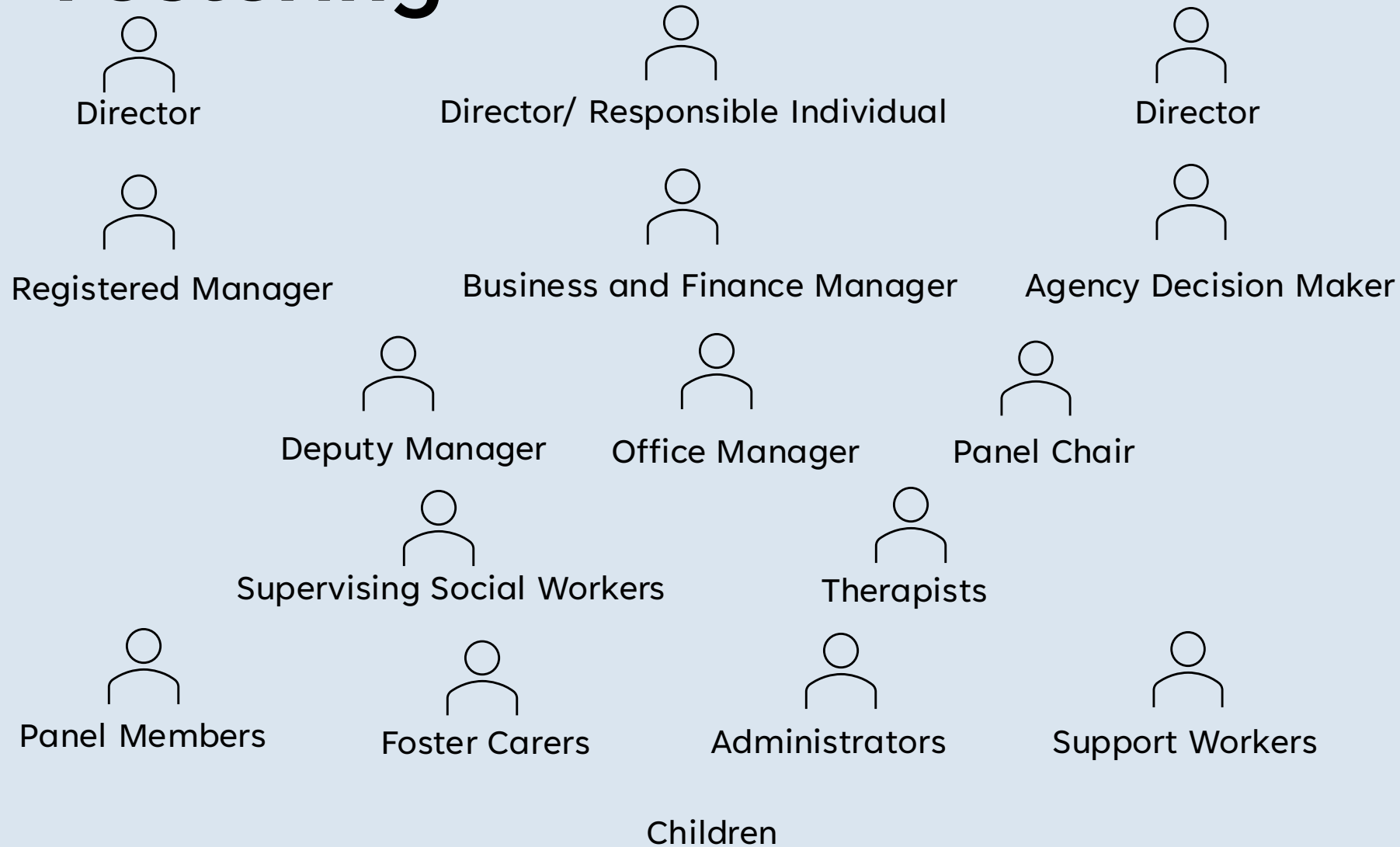
As a service, we encourage all Foster Carers, their family and foster children to join in on family days, summer events and festival activities which the agency arranges. This gives the carers and children an opportunity to meet up, be supported and have fun.

Before matching any child to a carer, they will have been robustly assessed (Form F Assessment), approved (Fostering Panel) with some training completed. A matching process is completed to ensure that the right Foster Carer is matched with the child or young person. Our aim is to help develop the child, their self-worth, well-being, promote equality and diversity by recognising ethnic origin, religion, cultural, gender, and sexuality. We promote health and well-being, by keeping records/ health passport and ensure Foster Carers keep up with all medical appointments or therapy required.

In order to review and improve the service we offer, we regularly seek feedback from the children, Foster Carers, Local Authorities, Supervising Social Workers and any other agencies involved with the child.

County Fostering Services strives to offer efficient and effective delivery of high-quality fostering services, with best practice paramount. The service is personalised and responsive to the needs of the individual children, Foster Carers, and Local Authorities.

Organisation Model for County Fostering



Foster Carers Handbook



All Foster Carers will be given a handbook which will have all relevant information, help and guidance to help them throughout their fostering career. Within the handbook, there will be clear information on training, finance, annual reviews, safeguarding and how to make a complaint. A copy of our statement of purpose will be included and any other relevant information.

Foster Children will also be provided with a handout with all relevant information about County Fostering Services Ltd, management structure, what to expect and who to talk to if they have concerns or wish to make a complaint. Addresses and telephone numbers will be provided within the booklet of professional's details that they could use if they wish to do so. This would include Ofsted, children's commissioner, foster talk, fostering network and our management team.

These handbooks will be regularly updated, and additional information added as appropriate. Foster Carers will receive a memory stick with all relevant documents including this statement of function and purpose.





Training

Training will be provided to develop the skills and knowledge ensuring best practice at all times. The training will consist of online training, face to face in a group setting, one to one (if required) and all approved Foster Carers will complete Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for foster care training within the first 12 months.

Prior to stage 1 all potential Foster Carers will attend a two-day course called "Skills to Foster". This course will support potential Foster Carers with the knowledge and skills that they need to make informed decisions about fostering and going forward with their fostering assessment. This also includes training on safeguarding, safer caring and health and safety. It will confirm the expectations regarding recordings and the documents that will need to be used. Experienced carers will attend too, to give added discussions and answer questions. Within the course, we will discuss the roles of the professionals that may be involved in the child's life. Training does not stop there; this is ongoing throughout their Fostering Career.

Once approved, you will be expected to complete the Training and Development Standards (TSD's) within 12 months. These will enable you to demonstrate via evidence of logs, thoughts, reports, informal and formal training that you understand and have achieved the 7 standards:

- Understanding the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people
- Understand your role as a Foster Carer
- Understand health and safety and health care
- Know how to communicate effectively
- Understand the development of children and young people
- Keep children and young people safe
- Develop yourselves

First aid training for all carers is mandatory as is safeguarding, safe caring, trauma and PACE, health & safety and fire safety.

We will also offer training on allegations, CSE, internet safety, understanding self-harm, managing behavior, and managing anger to name but a few. Online training via The Training Hub and Social Care Solutions is also available.

We take training very seriously. Foster Carers will need to be committed to attend training. Both newly approved and experienced Foster Carers need to attend training, we can always learn something from each other and the trainers. Workshops will also be undertaken at support groups. These could include speakers, presentations on a variety of subjects and information.

Independent living skills course will be offered to all 16-18 year olds. Independence starts much earlier, and Foster Carers need to encourage children to increase their age-appropriate independence skills.

Recruitment assessment and approval of Foster Carers

County Fostering Services respond to individuals and couples who wish to be considered as Foster Carers within 24 hours. Discussion with a member of the team will offer them basic information, answer any questions, and arrange an initial visit to discuss things further, meet other members of the family and see their accommodation. The initial visit will discuss the Form F, assessment and advise them about the in-depth exploration on their childhood, relationships, background, family networks, finances and reasons for them wanting to foster.

Foster Carers must be over 21 years, have a spare bedroom for the child, be able to drive before the stage 1 process can be considered. They also need to be computer literate. If they are interested in continuing, an application form will be sent to them to enable, with a DBS and consent form. These will enable the stage 1 process to be activated.

The stage 1 process will include various checks and references: an enhanced DBS disclosure and medical are also essential. Any referees will be visited when they submit their reference to verify this under the safer recruitment guidance. Documentation will be required e.g marriage certificate, mortgage statement, utility bill, personal and employment references and references from their birth children who are no longer living in the family home and any children in the home.

The Registered Manager will monitor when the stage 1 is complete and sign this off before proceeding to stage 2. Although the Form F can be started to run concurrently with the stage 1 checks, it will still be deemed in stage 1 until signed off and all the checks completed.

The Registered Manager will decide if a Form F is to go ahead to stage 2 and allocate a social worker to start the assessment. Often, the stage 1 and stage 2 of the assessment run concurrently. Generally, the interviews and discussions with the candidate take place in their family home but there are times when they can meet at an alternative venue such as the office. The assessment focuses on the individual or individuals applying to become foster carers and their immediate family. This involves talking about their past experiences, marriage, previous marriages, their children, stepchildren, education, and work. It may feel intrusive for applicants however to be prepared for fostering panel, the assessment needs to be robust. The Form F. will be shared before presenting to panel, and comments added by the applicants.

The fostering panel pack will be given to the panel chair 2 weeks before panel. Other panel members will be able to read the panel papers via the electronic system charms. They will make recommendations about the presentation at panel of foster carers to the agency decision maker. If all in agreement, the agency decision maker will confirm their approval. This will be the date of approval and not the panel date.

Each year, foster families are presented to fostering panel and the panel make recommendations to the agency decision maker. The supervising social worker or an independent social worker will complete the report for panel and present the carers. The carers will attend their annual reviews to have feedback about how their year has gone, to offer any additional support needed and to thank the carers for their hard work.



Fostering Panel

County Fostering have a fostering panel which is used to recruit Foster Carers and also to review each year of the fostering family. They will look at the evidence presented to them and make their recommendations. This recommendation will then be sent to the Agency decision maker for a final decision.

All panel members have training to be able to do the best job they can to make sure that all families at County Fostering are safe to look after children. The fostering panel also provides feedback and set goals for the foster carers so that they are able to continue to improve. This is also a good chance for the carers and us as a company to reflect on the last year.



Types of Placements

Emergency

Emergency placements can occur and need placing sometimes very quickly, only a few hours. These cases would be put forward to only our experienced foster families.

Respite

We encourage all foster carers to take a short break without the children to recharge their batteries. These breaks give a well-earned rest to the foster carers. The children will be placed with one of our approved foster carers. They are given 2 weeks respite per year.

Short Term

Short term can be up to 2 years. Within this time, court proceedings maybe on-going. The long term/permanence will be formulated within this time.

Long Term

Once a full assessment has been undertaken and matching agreed. The case will go to panel where agreement will be given for long term placement in your family. Giving stability and sense of belonging to the child.

Sibling

Our more experienced foster carers often take on sibling groups, which enables children to stay together.

Parent and Child

We can facilitate a placement for parent and child for a limited time period whilst they are being assessed.

Staying Put

Once the child reaches 18 years old, there are arrangements now for the child to stay post 18 years giving more help and support if required.

Bridging Placements

Children and young people live with short term foster carers who have the experience of moving them on to permanent placements such as Adoption, into their own Independent Accommodation or a planned move to another foster placement.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Foster carers with skills and experience to look after and support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and help them to settle into new country and be supported with language, social inclusion, education, and health.



Services to Children and Young People



The primary purpose of the Fostering Service is to provide high quality, safe, secure and caring foster families for children and young people who are unable to live with their parents or immediate birth families. Whenever possible, and where it is safe to do so, children and young will be placed with someone in their extended family or a close family friend. These arrangements are recognised in legislation as 'Family and Friend' or 'Connected Persons' foster placements. The Fostering Service is committed to supporting this type of placement for our children as a first consideration of foster care. Where this is not possible, foster placements will be found with one of our approved foster carers (in – house foster carers) or a suitable foster carer approved by an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA – external provision). We aim to clearly identify the emotional, physical, cultural and religious needs of a child and to find a foster family who can best meet those needs. Our aim is always to try and keep sibling groups together where this meets their identified needs. Other than when emergency situations arise, we plan all fostering placements and promote introductory meetings between the child and the foster Carer. Each foster carer receives a welcome book upon their approval and every child or young person placed will be given a copy of the children's guide to aim to lessen the anxiety for the child or young person when moving to a new family. Where a child or young person 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.

Independent Skills

Independent skills are taught throughout the placement and are age dependent. Often carers can believe that doing everything for a child is caring however all children need to learn these skills to start the preparation for their independent future. All Children Looked After will be encouraged to be as independent as their age permits. For those who are 16- to 18- year will be encouraged to take part in our independent living skills course/workbook with their foster carer, personal advisor, and social worker. Designed to promote independence away from the foster home and start the preparation for independent living. Any difficulties will be supported and encouraged further with specialist support if necessary. We will also make sure that they have a bank account, passport, provisional driving license and a well-rounded knowledge to ensure they are ready and able to move on successfully. To not teach young people independent skills while they are in foster care, can jeopardize their successful transition into independent living, having their own accommodation



Complaints and Compliments



Complaints procedure will be explained to foster carers, children, and anyone that is connected to County Fostering Services Ltd. We value all feedback and will take all complaints seriously. All will be acknowledged and hopefully resolved within 7 days. The full procedure will be explained, and support given through-out to gain a positive outcome. Information will be given on how to take your complaint onto another stage if you are still unhappy with the outcome. Details of Ofsted will be given along with the full complaints procedure for County Fostering Services Ltd.

All foster carers will be given membership to foster talk. They will provide 24-hour legal advice, legal expenses insurance cover, counselling helpline, advise on personal finances, tax/ accountancy and they can also give you help and support if an allegation is made against you.

Fostertalk: 0844 8003880

In addition, we have devised a "whistle blowing" policy which is designed to give staff and foster carers freedom to expose any area of bad practice to management in the agency. We foster a culture of openness and positive engagement so that any issues are managed effectively. We have devised children guides where all the information on how to complain will be in the booklet. We also have feedback forms which we will regularly hand out to everyone involved in all areas of our organisation.

Everyone likes a compliment, so when these are received at County Fostering Services, we thank the sender and record the compliment on charms.

Any compliment about foster carers from professionals, family or children will be shared with the foster carers and uploaded to charms.



Education

All children have a fundamental right to education to enable them to meet their full potential and fulfil their dreams and aspirations.

We will work together with the local authority and education provisions regarding a child having a personal education plan (PEP) which will be reviewed and monitored each term. Additional support can be given if required and we will work with our foster family to encourage them to support the children in the best possible way.

Some children need additional support in the form of an Educational Health Care Plan. These are instigated by the child's school and overseen by the special educational needs department within the local authority (SEND).

Transport to and from school will be provided by our foster carer unless other arrangements have been agreed by the Local Authority. Sometimes the children can get the bus, walk or cycle to school, depending on their ability and maturity,

Extra support should be given to all 16-18-year-olds to get them ready to move on to Independence. We encourage all of these young people to take part in our Independent Living Skills course, which is highly informative, helpful, supportive and hopefully fun!



Matching

The matching process is a very carefully considered process. To get this right is critical and will increase placement stability and retention. Placing a child with the wrong family i.e. not experienced enough, other children in placement different ethnicity or culture etc. could result in placement breakdown which will not be in the child's best interest, causing more upset and potentially having a negative impact emotionally.

Time should be taken to go over all of the carers experience, knowledge, and suitability before considering any matching to the child. Shortcuts should not be taken as this could potentially cause distress to the child, affect their self-esteem and their general well-being.

Key areas to consider when making a placement match:

• Safeguarding • Personal history • Identity/ethnicity/ culture/ religion • Health/ Disability • Education/ training/ employment • Contact • Interests and aspirations.



Summary

County Fostering Services are committed to forming partnerships with Local Authorities and working together to offer a great service to our families and our children.

The children and carers are our most valuable asset.

We believe that the practice of working together is important in providing a network of services to children and families. Training and support are high on our agenda for both the carers and children.

Children's and men's forums offer the opportunity to talk, but also to have fun and feel valued.

Support groups are informative and a source of support and guidance from other carers, forming additional support bubbles.

Annual events take place at Christmas, Easter and in the Summer holidays.

County Fostering Services Ltd will continue to be committed to modelling good practice, which will be developed through reflective experience and a high-quality training programme.

If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact us in writing or via telephone using the information on the front of this booklet.

We welcome your interest and comments.

Details of Registration

County Fostering Services Ltd –
Company Number 11280393

Flexspace 4, Summerhouse Road,
Moulton Park, Moulton Park Industrial
Estate, Northampton, NN3 6BJ

