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Directorate of People and Communities

Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

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Introduction

1. This document is produced in compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, National Minimum Standards Fostering and with Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
2. All information is correct as of 1st August 2016 and has been approved by North East Lincolnshire Council elected members.
3. The document will be reviewed and revised in August of each year. Significant in year changes will be put in writing to the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Values

The values which underpin the Fostering Service are as follows and reflect those principles which are enshrined in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering;-

- The child's welfare, safety and needs should be at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings actively sought, listened to and taken into account.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self confidence and self-worth.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account
- The significance of contact for looked after children, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised as is the foster carer's role in this.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible without unnecessary restrictions.
- The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as a core member of the team around the child.
- Foster carers have a right to full information about the child.
- It is essential that foster carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for the child.
- Genuine partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential for the National Minimum Standards to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, fostering service providers and foster carers.

Focus on Outcomes

In North East Lincolnshire, our key corporate priority outcomes for children and families are incorporated in the 2014-16 Children and Young People's Plan. They are grouped under the outcomes which are at the centre of all public provision for children:-

- Skills and employability
- Local employment
- Independence
- Active people in the community
- Healthy lives
- Safety

The key priority outcomes of the Children and Young People's Plan are included on the page overleaf. The Statement of Purpose reflects these key priorities.

The Fostering Service recognises that the positive relationship between the child and the foster carer is one of the main foundations for achieving improved outcomes.

The work of the Fostering Service is designed to ensure that the central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer is acknowledged and that the work of the wider team around the child is undertaken in a way that strengthens and supports the role of the foster carer.

Priority Outcomes of North East Lincolnshire Council's Children & Young Peoples Plan 2014 – 2016

What We Want To Achieve

- **Skills and employability**
 - Young people enjoy meaningful work experience
 - Training and education to be matched to the jobs available
 - Young people are to be supported to be ready for work
- Young people will be inspired by success.

- **Local Employment**
 - More sponsorship, apprenticeships and training opportunities
- Combat youth unemployment.

- **Independence**
- Young people have the skills for life
- Children and Young people enjoy positive activities
- Young people are enabled to manage their money
- Promote how to talk to young people

- **Active people in the community**
- Young people promote North East Lincolnshire
- Young people have voice and influence
- Honest communication

- **Healthy lives**
- Young people have positive sexual health
- Children and young people make positive choices based on positive messages
- Children and young people enjoy emotional health and well being

- **Safety**
- Young people promote good behaviour
- Young people are kept safe online and on social media
- Young people are kept safe from bullying and exploitation
- Children have someone they can trust and can talk to

Aims and Objectives of the Fostering Service

Aims

The Fostering Service aims to provide a sufficient range of high quality foster placements to meet the assessed needs of children looked after by the Council, including children with disabilities receiving a series of short break placements. Foster carers will be appropriately assessed, trained and supervised in order to provide high quality care that values diversity and individual identity, promotes healthy development and maximises children's life chances through the promotion of positive behaviour and educational attainment

Foster carers will ensure that children and young people are provided with a service that not only values diversity and promotes equality, but also promotes healthy development and emotional security as foundations for a successful and rewarding life. The Fostering Service is based on a set of underpinning values which are listed in the introduction.

Objectives

The Fostering Service has a recruitment strategy which supports the Council's objective of having a range of placement options available to provide each child or young person with a foster placement that is carefully matched and capable of meeting the child's assessed needs. Recruitment will be in line with the Council's strategy to meet the sufficiency duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010.

The Fostering Service will promote and safeguard the child or young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare. All applicants will provide satisfactory disclosure and barring checks, applications will not be considered from applicants or household members who have committed offences specified under regulation 26(7) (b) of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011. Applicants must also receive satisfactory medical reports and will not be considered to foster children less than five years of age if they smoke. All applications will be considered on the basis of their capacity and ability to look after children in a safe and responsible way which meets their developmental needs, irrespective of considerations relating to issues such as age, race or sexuality.

All children have a written placement plan, which describes how their needs will be met and this will be reviewed regularly. The Fostering Service will support foster carers to ensure that the child's assessed needs across the seven

dimensions of development are met. Needs in relation to gender, religion, race, culture, language, disability and sexuality will also be considered. Particular emphasis will be placed on the holistic development and achievement of each child or young person. Special attention will be paid to their emotional and social wellbeing, the development of positive relationships with their foster carers and their educational outcomes.

Children's views, wishes and feelings will be sought on all decisions concerning their daily lives and their futures. Where decisions are not taken in line with their wishes, clear explanations will be given. Children are encouraged to take part in planning meetings and reviews. Foster carers will be supported through training and supervision in effective listening and responding to children's views.

Foster carers and children will have knowledge and understanding of the complaints procedure. All complaints against foster carers will be investigated in a thorough and timely manner through the Children's Rights and Representation Team, with all parties being informed of the outcome, and the location of documentation being clearly recorded.

Allegations of abuse or neglect against foster carers will be investigated according to the procedures developed with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and in consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer. Records will be kept and shared in line with the expectations set out in the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 and statutory guidance.

Foster carers will receive full information about expectations, remunerations and Children's Services policies and procedures and will comply with these procedures. Payments will be made to foster carers in a timely fashion and at a level of maintenance per child which meets the government's national recommended minimum. Foster carers will receive regular supervision, support and access to training to enhance the quality of their care and maximise their personal development.

The Fostering Service will promote the life chances of children in foster care by ensuring that their educational needs and health needs are assessed, reviewed and met, in line with the Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well Being of Looked After Children and the Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Education of Looked After Children. Foster carers will positively support educational attainment through following the Fostering Service's Education Policy which includes active school liaison, advocating on behalf of a child and ensuring every child's regular school attendance. Foster carers will be supported in meeting educational needs by all partners and specifically by the Looked After Children in Education team, led by the Virtual Head.

Support to carers to meet the health needs of children will be by guidance and training from the Fostering service and by the specialist services of the Health Team for Looked After Children. Emotional and social development will be supported and encouraged by foster carers who will work to ensure that every child is offered opportunities for the development of talents, interests and hobbies and by the Fostering Service providing resources to encourage access to sporting and leisure activities. Screening for emotional well being will be carried out and appropriate interventions planned for those most at risk of poor outcomes.

In acknowledging the importance of family and friends of looked after children, the fostering service will promote contact in line with the agreed care plan. Foster carers will encourage and facilitate such contact as is agreed to be in the child's best interest and in the child's placement plan.

The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children, whose roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

The people who work in or for the fostering service are fully vetted and selected as being suitable to work with children and young people; they are managed, trained, supervised and supported so as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience is sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the service.

North East Lincolnshire Council's Fostering Service has policies and procedures which are fully implemented for the assessment, approval, support, supervision and training and development of foster carers. These generally apply to all foster carers whether full time, short break carers or family and friends carers. However short break carers and family and friends carers will be treated in line with the specific guidance and the agreed disapplication of certain regulatory requirements.

All necessary records are maintained and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children. There is a confidentiality policy which relates to both foster carers and foster children; issues arising from confidentiality are taken into account throughout children's involvement with the service, and their privacy respected at all times.

Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to contribute to good quality decision making and to regularly comment on the quality of the service. Panel members are appropriately vetted, well informed and receive regular training.

Foster carers are given the opportunity through newsletters, consultation events and meetings with senior managers to contribute to the development of the service.

Services Provided

Types of Foster Care Placements Offered

There are a number of different types of fostering placements aimed at maximising the service's flexibility in responding to the needs of individual children.

- **Mainstream Care:** These are carers who look after children whose needs do not require a more developed knowledge or level of skill. Carers are paid a fostering allowance for each child in their care. Where the care of a child requires a particular tasks to be carried out and the carer possesses the skills to carry out this task an Exceptional Task Allowance is payable. Although a mainstream fostering placement may last anything from one day to one year or beyond, it is not intended to be open-ended.
- **Long Term Care:** These are carers who look after a child for whom the plan is permanence through foster care. A matching process takes place, which assesses children's needs and identifies carers' abilities to meet those needs. Long term carers may be paid a variety of different rates depending upon the needs of the child.
- **Contract Care:** Contract carers look after children whose needs demand a higher level of skill, understanding and tolerance. Carers are paid a Fostering Allowance and a professional fee for each child in their care.
- **Contract Plus Care** This scheme as in contract care is designed to meet the needs of children who require skilled carers but who also need a placement where they can be either the only child or for accommodating larger sibling groups. It is also used for rolling respite care for children with disabilities and challenging behaviours. Carers receive a Fostering Allowance for each child in their care but also receive a weekly professional fee which is paid for 52 weeks of the year.
- **Short Break Care:** Carers who provide regular short breaks, which can be for one night, a weekend or a holiday, for children with disabilities. This provides families with regular breaks to attend to other family members' needs, thus enabling them to continue caring for their child within the family home.
- **Specific Placement Care:** Specific Placement care is designed to cater for those children who pose a higher level of risk and/or require a high level of individually tailored management and supervision. Carers are required to be available on a full time basis, and able to manage high risk. Carers receive a Fostering Allowance and a professional fee based upon the senior care officer's salary scale, plus a sleep-in allowance.
- **Parent and child placements:** Occasional placements for parent(s) and children for purposes of assessment and support within a clear timescale may be provided. Any such arrangement will be subject to the requirements, guidance and regulations of Annex B of the Children's Act 1989 Volume 4.

Support for Children and Foster Carers:

- **Link Workers:** Each Foster Carer has a named social worker from the Fostering Service who is responsible for their supervision, support and development. Contact is maintained through home visits and also via telephone calls, texts, e mails, with visits being made at least monthly. Support is also extended to the children of Foster Carers.
- **Out of Hours Support:** Carers have access to North East Lincolnshire's Out of Hours Service for issues which arise outside office hours.
- **Carers' Support and Development Group:** This group, open to all carers, meets regularly with a variety of themes and speakers, including a short training input.
- **Buddy Scheme:** New carers are linked, for the first year following approval, to experienced carers who will offer additional support and advice.
- **Fostering Network Membership :** All approved fostering households are full members of the Fostering Network membership scheme and become eligible for all the benefits of this membership
- **Foster Helpline :** This is provided by the Fostering Network for all approved families to give telephone advice and support in cases of need
- **Independent Support for Carers when allegations or complaints are made** This is provided by a specialist agency which has access to professional staff who can respond within 24 hours of referral.
- **Specialist Clinical Psychology Advice** All foster carers have access to the services of two clinical psychologists from CAMHS for advice, behaviour management strategies and assessment of specific issues as well as training courses run by CAMHS .
- **Looked After Children in Education Team** Support to all children in education, the development of Personal Education Plans for each child and specific support during periods of difficulty.
- **Looked After Children's Health Team** Specialist assessment, training and advice is available for foster carers and children and young people from this team which includes a Consultant Paediatrician and two nurses. All health care plans are made and monitored by this team.

Training:

A comprehensive package of training is available to all carers as a rolling programme. This has been reviewed in line with the Training, Support and Development of Foster Carers' Standards. Foster carers have a range of options for training including mentoring, e learning and guided reading as well as traditional courses. There is a core set of training for all carers after they have completed the “**Skills to Foster**” course and been approved as carers; alongside this a range of other training modules are offered.

Core Training Elements

1. Role of the Foster Carer
2. Safeguarding Children.
3. First Aid
4. Team Teach

Other training modules currently offered are:

- Child Development 0-5yrs, 6-10yrs, 11-18yrs
- Helping Children Cope with Fear
- Communicating with Children
- Working with Birth Families
- Preparing Children for Moving to Adoptive Families
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Paediatric First Aid and Resuscitation
- Emergency First Aid
- Introduction to Attachment
- Education and Looked After Children
- Child Health
- Bullying and Discrimination
- Sexual Health and Relationships
- Preparation for Independence
- Record Keeping for Foster Carers
- Safer Caring for Foster Carers
- Delegated Authority Training
- Family Links Parenting programme
- Transition Training

- Diversity
- Life Story Work

There are also “e” learning opportunities on a range of topics including “Safeguarding”, “ Safer Caring “, and “Obesity” , “Contact “ and others.

Enhanced training for targeted groups of carers and staff relating to understanding attachment issues and consequent behaviour is available; this is in the form of a four day workshop, considering specific children and suitable strategies in the light of their emotional needs and behavioural displays.

Carers also have access to other “in house” training and external courses, including individual training on matters such as caring for drug withdrawing babies. Carers apply for training via their link worker and fliers giving course details are regularly sent out to all carers as well as entries in the newsletter. Individual Personal Development Plans are in place for all foster carers and are reviewed at least annually.

Education:

A Looked After Children in Education Team (LACE) addresses the educational needs of looked after children, monitors progress and also champions the cause of individual children.

- There is a designated Virtual Head Teacher who oversees the progress of all looked after children and works to achieve coordinated support across the whole provision for looked after children.
- Foster carers can obtain specialist advice on literacy and numeracy from the LACE education co-ordinator via their link worker.
- Specific educational packages are designed and delivered by the LACE team to meet the needs of Looked After children who are unable to manage in school or have been excluded for a fixed term.

Health:

The Looked After Children’s Health Team, consisting of three nurses and a medical adviser/designated doctor, promotes the health of looked after children. The Medical Adviser is a consultant paediatrician. The Health team develops and monitors health care plans, holds weekly clinics, provides access to other services and drop in events and also can make home visits. Both the Looked After nurses and designated doctor can be contacted by social workers, foster carers and children for individual advice.

Psychological Support:

Two Clinical Psychologists based with the CAMH service are available for consultation at the Fostering and Adoption Service on request. Social workers, foster carers and children can request a referral via the Fostering & Adoption Team. Advice, assessments and direct work are provided as well as training courses on attachment and assistance in care planning.

Leisure Activities:

Looked After Children receive an Lincs Inspire card which entitles them to free usage of certain leisure facilities within the area. Cards and details are obtained via the child's social worker or Fostering Link Worker.

- Children also have access to a range of other activities through local services and Children's Centres. Details can be obtained from the child's social worker or Fostering Link Worker.
- The Fostering Team has a library of reading material and other resources such as videos which foster carers can use. Carers can also borrow a range of materials and resources to help children with literacy and numeracy or other specific issues such as moving on to adoption or changing foster placements

Library Access:

All looked after children are encouraged to join their local library for free.

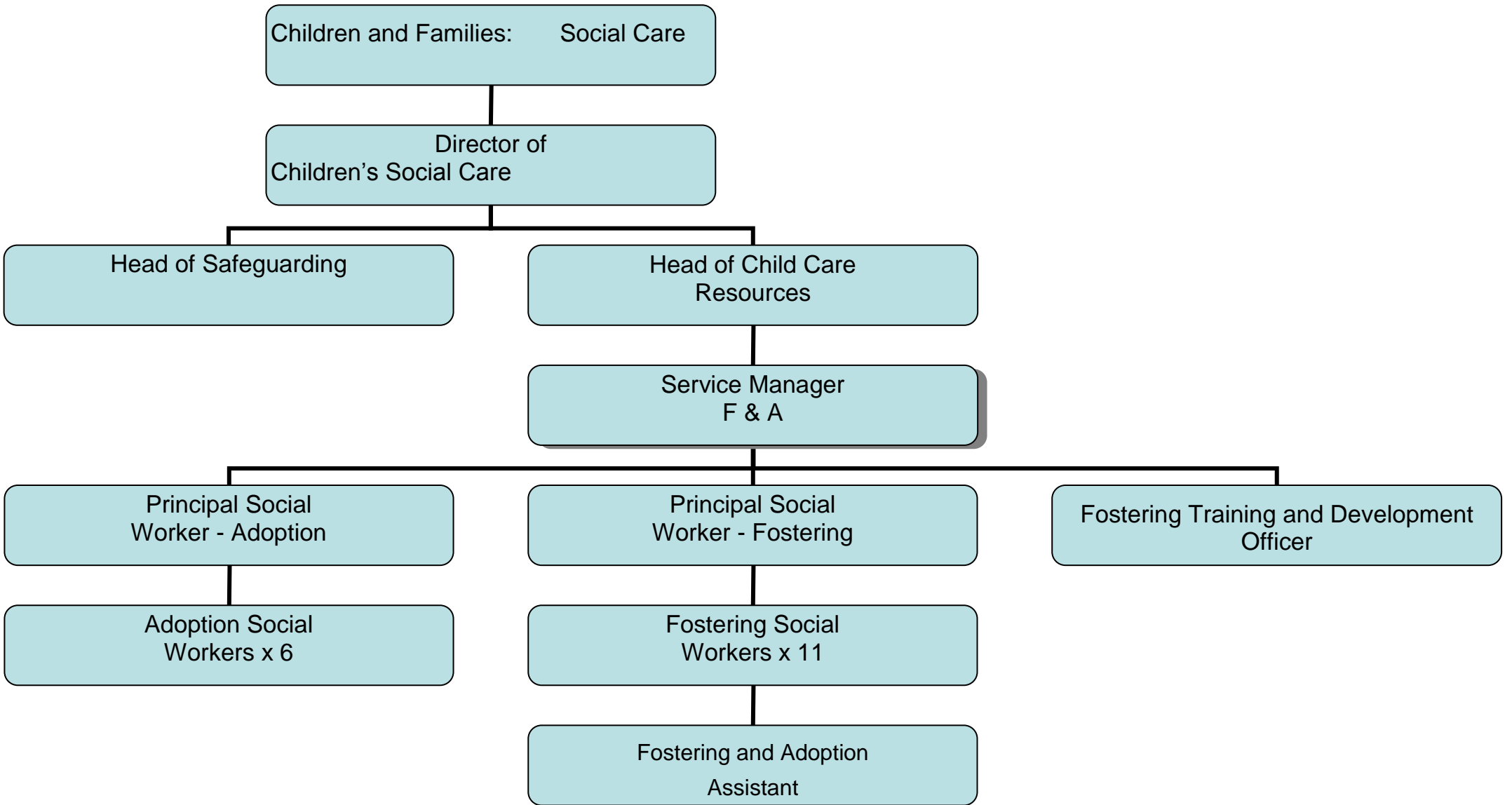
PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

Children in Care Council:

This forum was developed by the Participation Officer and Service Manager for the Through Care Team, giving a voice to Looked After Children. Consultations and surveys are arranged on matters affecting Looked After Children. Presentations to the Corporate Parenting Board have been made and a Council Pledge to Looked After Children has been developed and endorsed. The Children in Care Council meet fortnightly.

Planning the Annual "Health" Day

Young people are encouraged to participate in the arrangements for this annual event.



Foster Carers as at 31st March 2016

North East Lincolnshire currently has 98 approved foster carer households. This number includes

Mainstream carers	23
Specific Placement Carers	3
Contract Carers	55
Contract Plus Carers	14
Short Break Carers (Disability)	3

Some of the above carers are approved as short stay carers only.

Children as at 31st March 2016

North East Lincolnshire Council had 294 children who were Looked After

- **219** were in placements with North East Lincolnshire Council approved foster carers and temporary approved relative foster placements.
- **6** children with disabilities receive care via a series of short breaks with short break foster carers

Process for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing Foster carers

- **Recruitment**

The recruitment strategy includes maintaining a high level of information at public access points throughout the community and targeted media campaigns. The North East Lincolnshire Council web site also features information on fostering. A marketing strategy and annual plan for recruitment are in place.

Enquiries are welcomed from all sections of the community and the enquiry booklet and letter encourages enquirers to judge their own suitability in relation to the skills and abilities they have to offer rather than any other factor. Enquiries are encouraged from prospective foster carers via letter, telephone, office interview or e-mail as well as web forms for initial enquiries. On receipt of an enquiry, an information pack is sent out, along with a letter asking enquirers to contact the service if they would like a social worker to visit to answer further questions. The information booklet and Enquiry Form can also be accessed via www.nelincs.gov.uk. On receipt of the telephone call an appointment will be made to visit the enquirer. Although office hours are 8.30am – 5.00pm, there is flexibility outside these times for social work visits to accommodate individual enquirers' availability.

Enquirers who wish to proceed and are deemed to be suitable candidates are invited to complete their application and to attend the next available "Skills to Foster" course.

Preparation and Assessment

On receipt of their application prospective foster carers enter stage one of the fostering process and all statutory checks are undertaken.

“Skills to Foster” courses are run 4 times a year or more often according to demand. Applicants can be requested to attend courses run by other authorities in a regional training consortium if the timing of these is more appropriate.

Courses take place at the weekend to maximise accessibility.

All applicants are strongly encouraged to attend all sessions (8). These sessions give applicants the opportunity to find out more about fostering and to meet experienced foster carers before making the decision to make a formal application.

There is a workbook which is given to each applicant in order to record and safeguard the learning materials used during the training and development course.

Once statutory checks have been returned successfully applicants can proceed to stage two; the home study. If applicants are not successful in stage one or subsequently withdraw from the process, the file of gathered information is retained in the archives for 25 years or until the retirement age of applicants where child protection concerns were recorded.

All applicants and members of their household over 16 years of age and any adults who are likely to have unsupervised responsibility as babysitters for children in placement are required to apply for an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Checks are made with the current local authority, Community Health and all relevant Local Authorities where the applicants have lived for the last 7 years, as well as from employers and education and schools where the family has school aged children.

A standard medical examination and assessment is requested to be carried out by the applicant's doctor. The completed forms are sent to the Medical Adviser to the Fostering Service for analysis and comment. Any issues identified are discussed at an early stage before proceeding to a full assessment.

Written references are sought from three personal referees, two of whom must not be related to the applicants. Each referee is visited and a written record made of their comments regarding the applicant's suitability to be a foster carer. Occasional further references are taken up where deemed to be necessary to support the application.

If applicants are divorced or have had co-habiting relationships, contact may be made with previous partners particularly if there are children of the relationship. Children of the applicants will be interviewed and involved in the assessment process as far as possible, according to their age and level of understanding.

Applicants will be interviewed in their own homes. Where there is a joint application, each applicant must be seen alone on at least one occasion. Visits take place during the day or in the evening although if all evening visits are required the assessment may take longer.

The Home Study assessment is completed using the BAAF Form F framework and is aimed to be completed and heard by panel within 8 months of an application being made. This includes details of all references and checks, and a series of sections including genograms, eco maps, a personal profile, applicants own experiences, relationships past and present, parenting capacity and experience and understanding of issues facing looked after children and their families. An assessment of competencies is also completed and the applicants collate a portfolio of evidence in conjunction with their workbooks to demonstrate how far they have progressed towards achieving the Certificate of Successful Completion of the Standards for the Support, Training and Development of Foster Carers.

Applicants receive a copy of their completed assessment and can comment on its findings before it is presented to the Fostering panel for consideration. Applicants' comments on the preparation and assessment process are welcomed and evaluation comments are taken from the training which they receive.

Applicants are invited to attend the Fostering Panel when their application is being considered and will be present for most of the panel discussion.

- **Family and Friends Carers**

Where family or friends are identified as potential foster carers for a child, the full assessment and preparation will be the same as for any other applicant, but giving extra flexibility where needed to accommodate specific circumstances. For example, the family's capacity to meet the needs of other types of foster children will not be assessed.

Family and Friends carers will be expected to work on the Standards for the Training, Support and Development for Foster carers using an amended format which takes into account of the specific circumstances as necessary. Information, guidance, payments and training opportunities will be the same as for all other foster carers.

- **Short Break Carers**

The assessment and preparation process is the same for Short Break applicants; the "Skills to Foster" course includes specific elements referencing the additional factors to take into account when caring for a disabled child on a series of short breaks. These are designed to ensure that applicants understand how to meet the needs of children and families accessing the short break service.

- **Fostering Panel and Approval**

North East Lincolnshire Council's Fostering Panel meets once a month to consider new applicants for approval, some reviews of approvals and any proposed de registrations. The panel will also consider any other matters referred to it.

Following consideration of cases the panel makes a recommendation on suitability and any terms of approval which is passed together with the minutes to the Decision Maker, Head of Child Care Resources who will make the decision on behalf of North East Lincolnshire Council.

Once the decision is made, the applicants are notified verbally and also formally in writing of the outcome.

If the decision maker is minded not to approve an application to become foster carers or to terminate approval or to change the terms of approval, applicants are informed of the reasons in writing and are given 28 days to choose whether to accept the proposed decision, make representations to the agency or approach the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for a further consideration by an independent panel. Any representations or recommendation from the IRM must be considered by the Fostering Panel and either a new recommendation is made or the original recommendation is confirmed.

If there are no representations or earlier agreement, when the 28 days have elapsed, the Head of Child Care Resources then makes the final Agency decision and applicants are informed both verbally and also formally in writing. There is no further redress.

- **Induction**

All newly approved foster carers go through an induction process, prior to any placement being made, to build on the knowledge they have gained since they began their preparation. Induction includes an Induction Folder, a Foster Carer's Diary Records folder together with the full Foster Carer's Handbook and a comprehensive Foster Carer agreement. The details of these materials are discussed with their supervising social worker and attention drawn to the contents and significant areas of practice for each foster carer's awareness.

- **Supervision and Support**

All foster carers have a named link worker who is responsible for their supervision, support and development.

Each carer will be visited regularly and usually at least monthly. Short Break carers are visited at least every 3 months but generally more often as required. At least one unannounced inspection visit will be made each year to all carers and a full record of the visit will be completed. All visits are recorded using the current report format with carers agreeing the content.

All carers are invited to a regular Carers' Support and Development group meeting. These meetings are held during school times.

Out of Hours support is provided by the Out of Hours Service on the main office number of 01472 325555 after normal office hours. There may also be direct liaison with the fostering link worker up to 8 pm and at week end days as necessary and agreed.

Foster carers can make direct referrals to both the Looked After Children's Health Team and to the Looked After Children's Education Team (LACE) for additional support in health and education matters. Referrals to the Clinical Psychologist require the link worker or child's social worker to make a formal written referral via the Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption, with a clear plan of the outcome being sought in each case.

At approval all foster carers become members of the Fostering Network and are sent a 'Welcome' pack of information and leaflets from Fostering Network. This covers a wide range of matters including financial issues such as taxation, and the role of different professional staff.

Carers are able to take up to 14 nights respite from their caring role in any year with out loss of fee. All foster carers can expect to have a speedy response to any call for help which they make. When placements are under stress, placement support meetings are arranged with all relevant support professionals.

An annual Celebration Evening is held for all North East Lincolnshire Council's foster carers where long service awards are presented.

- **Training**

The Foundation Training for foster carers is a rolling programme. Courses are repeated each year or two years and new modules added. Details of the current courses on offer are under the section on Support for carers and children, page 8-9. The arrangements reflect the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers and have been reviewed to take account of the revised National Minimum Standards for Fostering

Carers also have access to in house training on Child Protection, First Aid and Attachment. E learning courses are available through the service from Fostering Network on an expanding number of areas of learning and also from the local CAMHS provider on Infant Emotional Well Being. Other courses are accessed as and when required to meet specific carer development and training needs.

- **Reviews**

Annual reviews of the suitability and the terms of approval of all carers will be conducted by the Fostering Service. From 1st April 2011, these have been conducted by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

Unless the Fostering Panel specifies an early review after 6 months of becoming approved, all carers are subject to a review of approval within one year from the date of first approval and annually thereafter. Every third year DBS checks, all statutory checks and references are renewed.

There may also be ad hoc reviews where issues of concern or significant changes have arisen and a further review is felt to be necessary.

All first and three yearly reviews will be presented to the Foster Panel for a recommendation regarding continued suitability to be foster carers and carers are encouraged to attend the panel meeting. Reviews following allegations or complaints will always be presented to panel for a recommendation. Other reviews will usually be presented to the Fostering Panel, but straight forward situations with no change may be managed directly through the decision maker once the review has been completed.

- **Allegations**

Where foster carers become the subject of allegations of abuse or neglect, there is an agreed procedure drawn up with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to investigate all such allegations using the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) process and this will be followed in all cases. Foster carers are able to access, via the service, an independent support service from a national body, which can be activated within 24 hours. This provides both telephone and face to face support and advice.

Service Monitoring and Quality Management

- **Supervision of Staff**

All staff receive regular monthly formal supervision which is recorded. There is considerable freedom at all other times to approach the Principal Social Worker or the Service Manager for advice, decisions or guidance in weighing up issues arising in foster placements or proposed placements.

Staff have annual appraisals which examine work quality and effectiveness as well as productivity and set targets for the coming year. A plan for continuing professional development is made each year to ensure that learning is continuous.

- **Annual Service Development Plans**

Annual service development plans are drawn up each year and reviewed in team days and in management supervision. These documents include a review of the previous year against targets and outcomes. The aims can relate to both major and minor matters, as attention to detail can make a difference to service quality.

- **Placement Sufficiency Planning**

Recruitment and publicity occurs across the whole year. The Marketing team supports publicity and recruitment events and strategic planning is summarised in the Council's Child Care Placements Sufficiency document. A marketing plan is refreshed each year with recruitment events across the year. Liaison between the Fostering Service Manager and the Child Assessment Safeguarding Service Manager aims to ensure that the likely short to medium term placement requirements is predicted. Longer term shifts in need are raised through various monitoring activities by Heads of Service and through Management Performance Days.

- **Second Opinion Visits**

These are carried out for all assessments by a colleague fostering social worker and are used to explore any areas where more detail or analysis is required. They also give the applicants an opportunity to check out any issues of concern with another staff member. The second opinion visiting social worker can challenge the assessor's analysis if sufficient concerns exist.

- **Panel Reports**

The panel reports on issues of quality, timeliness and consistency through the panel adviser and through written summaries of issues arising each quarter. The panel chair has meetings with the Service Manager and Decision Maker across the year and also through annual reviews of the independent chair role. A formal panel reporting system has been introduced and a short annual report is delivered at the end of the year.

- **Monthly Monitoring Reports**

Monthly reports on a range of matters which require regular attention are monitored. These include complaints and compliments, current exemptions, incidents and accidents as well as progression of enquiries and assessments. Renewals of due Criminal Record checks are also tracked along with review timings. The monthly fostering panel monitoring statistics also include the tracking of time scales for assessments and unmet placement need.

- **File Audits**

These are carried out regularly through the year. Recording is read by the supervisor at regular intervals. Complaints, allegations and concerns logs are checked in supervision. Random audits and specific issue audits such as unannounced visits or quality of recording on supervisory visits are carried out by the Service Manager. These may include any issues arising from concerns or significant findings from complaints or reviews to follow up quality matters.

- **Management Reports to Executive**

The executive side of the Local Authority receives written reports on the Management, outcomes and financial state of the Fostering Service every three months as per standard 25.7 of Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011

Complaints

All service users, including children, foster carers, prospective foster carers, and birth family members are given written details of North East Lincolnshire Council's complaints procedure.

It is hoped that the majority of difficulties which arise can be resolved through discussion and negotiation at a very early informal stage. Concerns can be put to the Service Manager at any time, in e mail or telephone or letter form and responses will be within 2 working days.

Complaints are dealt with in three stages.

- **Stage One**

A written or telephone complaint can be made either to the Service Manager of the Fostering and Adoption Service or to the Children's Rights and Representation section of the Children's Services Directorate. Complaints will be acknowledged in writing, within 2 days and a full written response, addressing the detail of the complaint will, be made within 10 days. An extension can be applied for a further 10 working days if needed.

- **Stage Two**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response an investigation will be undertaken by an independent officer. The aim is to complete this investigation within 28 working days, although if the circumstances are complex, the investigation may take longer.

- **Stage Three**

If the complainant is still not satisfied they are entitled to request a Review Panel to consider their complaint. This panel is made up of an Independent Chair and 2 Elected Members or senior officers from another Directorate. They will make recommendations to the Executive Director of Children's Services).

The Ombudsman

Complainants have the right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied following completion of Stage Three

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)

The inspecting body for all fostering services and fostering agencies is Ofsted. Inspections are carried out regularly to ensure that good outcomes are being achieved for all looked after children and that children are safe and well cared for by services which are compliant with the standards and regulations. Complaints may be made direct to Ofsted at the Manchester address or email contact as listed at the end of this document.

Complaint Information formats

Information on making complaints is available in different formats e.g. Braille, Makaton, audio tape and in different languages from the Children's Complaints and Access to Information Manager:

Children's Complaints and Access to Information Team

Cleethorpes Civic Offices

Knoll Street

Cleethorpes

North East Lincolnshire

DN35 8LN

Telephone: (01472) 326426

E-Mail: ChS.customerservices@nelincs.gov.uk

The Inspecting body for Fostering Services is

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

E-mail: <mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk>

Fostering and Adoption Service

Cleethorpes Civic Offices

Knoll Street

Cleethorpes

North East Lincolnshire

DN35 8LN

Tel: 01472 325545

E-mail: fosteringandadoption@nelincs.gov.uk

Background Information				
Document Purpose	Fostering Statement of Purpose			
Author	Strategy and Planning Team strategyandplanning@nelincs.gov.uk			
Subject	Fostering			
Every Child Matters Outcomes Achieved	Levels of Significance			
	High	Medium	Low	None
Being Healthy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staying Safe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoying and Achieving	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making a Positive Contribution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Achieving Economic Wellbeing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate Priorities	Levels of Significance			
	High	Medium	Low	None
Improve Homes, Streets and Open Spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Strengthen the Local Economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a Safer and More Secure Area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve Health and Wellbeing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a Well Managed, Top Performing Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any amendments that are made to the document need to be recorded and monitored. The table below must be completed and the previous version archived.

Review Date	Amendments Made	By Whom (Name/Job title)	Stakeholder Approval (Name, Job Title, Organisation)
September 2011	Updated Statement of Purpose	D Ferguson – Strategy and Planning Officer	Sheila Ingram – Service manager Fostering and Adoption
October 2013	General Amendments Made	Maria Chase – Service Manager	Maria Chase – Service Manager
December 2014	General amendments made.	Maria Chase – Service Manager	Maria Chase – Service Manager

Not Protectively Marked

August 2015	General amendments made.	Maria Chase – Service Manager	Maria Chase – Service Manager
August 2016	General amendments made.	Maria Chase – Service Manager	Maria Chase – Service Manager