



Fostering Makes a Difference

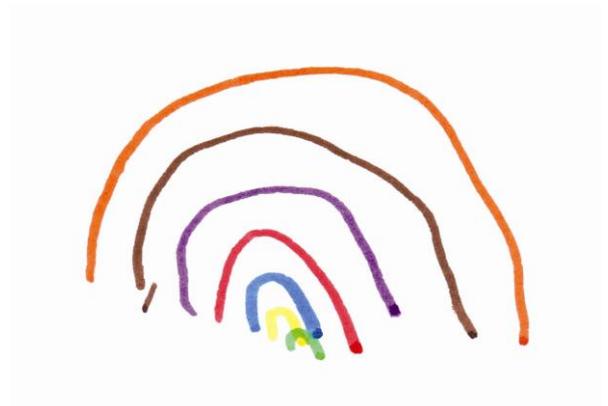
Cumbria County Council

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF

PURPOSE

2017 - 2018



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1. Introduction

This Statement of Purpose sets out the aims, objectives, values and principles of Cumbria County Council Fostering Service and describes how the aims and objectives will be met in partnership with carers, children, young people, their families and other partner agencies. It also explains the facilities and services of the Fostering Service which are delivered in accordance with fostering legislation and regulatory frameworks including:

- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services.
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011,
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: The Care Planning Placement and Case Review
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.
- Foster Carer Charter 2011.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013

In Cumbria we believe that all children and young people have the right to be healthy, happy and safe; to be loved, valued and respected; and to have high aspirations for their future.

In Cumbria we would wish all children to have secure relationships with family, friends and carers, be eager, excited, curious and engaged in learning, have self confidence, be able to co-operate and communicate socially and have the best possible health and development.

The Fostering Service is one of many services provided for children that help to achieve this vision. More information about Children's Services in Cumbria can be found on the Cumbria County Council website.

Cumbria's Fostering Service is child-centered and aims to provide high quality foster care placements for the children of Cumbria who cannot, for a period of time or permanently, live with their own birth family through the provision of the following services.



2. Aims and Objectives

The service aims to provide high quality foster care placements for the children of Cumbria who cannot, for a period of time, or permanently, live with their own family. (See Cumbria Permanence Policy)

The key objectives in providing quality placements are:

To provide placement choice and positive matching of a child with a placement

Proximity to the child's home area and culture where appropriate

Placement within the child's extended network wherever possible

Brothers and sisters should be placed together wherever possible

Proactive positive health care

Maximisation of educational opportunities and achievement for children

Planned beginnings and endings of placements

Promotion of positive contact with family and friends

Safe Care

Promotion of the child's culture and heritage

Promotion of child's interests and aptitudes

Rehabilitation to birth family wherever possible

Listening to the child and involvement in decision making

Partnership with parents

Stability of placement – a minimum of placement moves for each child

Minimising the time delay between a child becoming Looked After and moving on to a permanent placement, where this is required

Preparation for independence and successful transition into adulthood

Standards of care for effective planning for the transition from care to independence, which meet or exceed the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our services are for children and their families and all plans, service delivery and practice must reflect their needs and that they are central to all activity.

We are committed to safeguarding children in the community and understand that this will often require imaginative thinking to arrange packages of support to allow risks to be assessed and managed and maintain children with their families wherever possible.

We understand that placing a child in a Local Authority placement, either voluntarily or with a legal order, is the most serious step the Local Authority can take. The decision to do this should only be taken after full assessment and when all other options to maintain the child within their family have been fully explored and assessed.

We recognise that, for most children, removal from their family is the equivalent in terms of life stress experience to the bereavement of a parent/divorce for adults. The experience of separation and loss will have both short and long term effects on their feelings and well being, self esteem and reactions to situations.

We recognise that attachment to primary care givers is a key issue in positive child care practice and the assessment of this and the prognosis for changes in the child's life always need to be part of the ongoing assessment.

We are committed, where the decision has been made to place a child away from their family, to returning that child to the care of their family wherever the assessment indicates that the child's welfare can be safeguarded and the care and circumstances are 'good enough'.

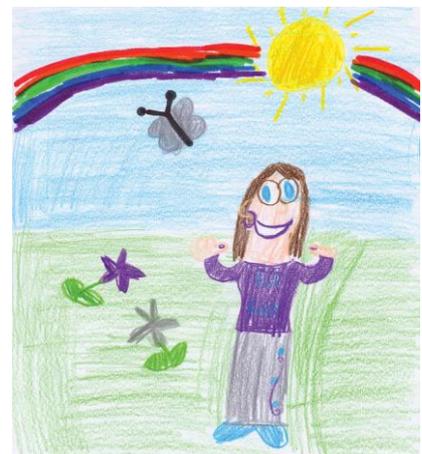
We recognise that, although the educational, employment and other outcome indicators for children adopted at a young age are improved for many children who are separated from their families, their prospects are not significantly enhanced by substitute care.

We are committed where a child cannot remain in the care of his/her parents to exploring fully the prospects for placement in the extended family and friend network. When there are people in this network willing and able to care for the child, there must be very clear reasons why such a placement is not utilised, notwithstanding the need to ensure that the carers are safe and able to meet the child's needs.

We recognise the value, skill and commitment required of foster carers and treat them, their families and homes with respect.

Our objective is to provide a range of quality placements to meet the identified needs of children who require substitute care. Educational and health progress is our high priority aiming at good opportunities for employment, housing and social relationships in adult life.

We recognise that placement stability is the key to improving outcomes for children and the need to secure



a permanent placement, preferably with legal sanction, as soon as possible if the child cannot return to the care of his/her parents, is the greatest service we can offer a child.

We are committed to maintaining siblings together wherever possible and promoting positive contact with family members.

We are committed to engaging other agencies in the assessment of the needs of children and working together to clarify roles and responsibilities in ensuring that their needs are understood and prioritised.

We recognise that many children will have had damaging experiences prior to placement in substitute care, as well as the effects of separation and loss. Their mental health needs may be complex and their need for understanding of their past and access to therapeutic input is essential.

We recognise that foster carers, caring for damaged young people will encounter unknown situations on a daily basis and their own support needs need to be assessed and appropriate support systems deployed.

We recognise that foster carers caring for the majority of children are very valuable assets and that their time and commitment is worthy of a reasonable reward system.

All staff and carers involved in meeting the needs of children with complex needs require a robust commitment to training and learning opportunities.

Children experiencing disabilities are recognised as children first. The same principles of service apply, while accepting that additional support services will be required to meet all their needs.

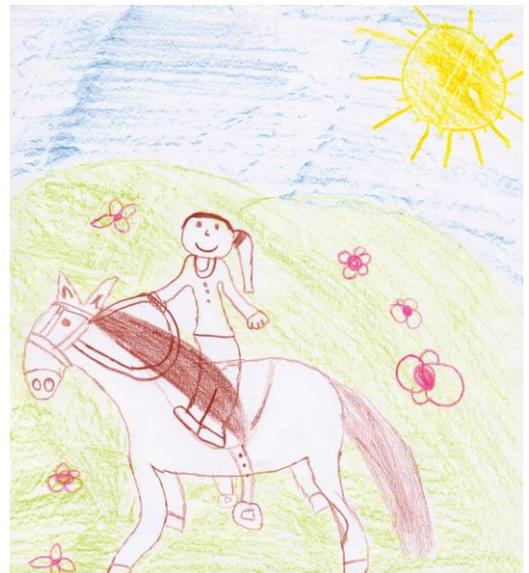
We recognise the transition into adulthood is a major step requiring positive daily living support and enhanced connections with the adult world of opportunity and responsibility. A flexible range of accommodation and support options to meet different levels of need will be a factor in the services for young people leaving care.

We are committed to facilitating young people remaining in the foster placement into early adulthood wherever possible.

We are committed to achieving the Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers and will support carers in achieving the standards.

Services Provided

A range of placement types are provided seeking to meet the variety of assessed needs for the majority of Children Looked After by Cumbria County Council:



PLACEMENT

SERVICES

Adoption

For those children who cannot return to their own families and where permanent legal security with a new family will promote their best life chances. A number of our carers are skilled at bridging children into their adoptive placements.

Legal Permanence

For those children where adoption is not appropriate but where a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order legally secure their future.

Permanent Fostering

For those children who will not be able to return to their family, but for whom Adoption, Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship may be a step too far. These are often older children, who retain loyalty to their birth family and where direct contact is in their best interests.

Emergency Scheme

For those young people who need a home for up to two weeks while a plan is put in place for their return to family or to a suitable short or long term placement.

Short Term Fostering

For children where assessment of their needs is required before planning for their permanent care can be completed. A return home may be the outcome or a permanent placement with another family.

Respite Placements

For children in the community who require a series of short-term breaks to provide support and allow them to remain at home. Some of these are children with a disability, but also children in need in other ways.

Shared Care

This special placement scheme provides support to children with a disability and their family. Normally the child is linked with a carer who provides regular support e.g. one weekend a month. This gives the child positive experiences and their parents/carers a well earned opportunity to 'recharge their batteries'.

Friends and Family (Connected Person) Foster Carers

Some children and young people who are looked after are cared for by members of their family or friends network who have been assessed and approved as carers.

4. Services to Foster Carers

Recruitment

Cumbria's Fostering Service has a recruitment strategy which is based upon the needs of children looked after.

Foster Carers are recruited by a variety of methods, including personal recommendation by existing carers and media campaigns highlighting a particular area of need. Newspapers, TV, radio, posters, leaflets, shows, fetes, organisational groups, schools etc. are targeted at different times. Members of the public who are interested are invited to contact the Recruitment and Assessment Team. The fostering link on the County Council website offers more information and an opportunity to contact the service on line.



Enquirers have the opportunity for a telephone conversation with a member of staff within 24 hours of their enquiry. A home visit is offered within two weeks to discuss their interest further. Appropriate prospective carers are then invited to attend a series of preparation sessions. Fostering Preparation Training is based upon the nationally recognized Skills to Foster Course developed by the British Agency of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF).

This training is evaluated and reviewed by the service annually.

Assessment of Foster Carers

Foster carers are assessed by qualified Social Workers, using the nationally recognised Form F developed by BAAF. This document requires detailed information and a wide range of evidence in respect of the carer's background, current relationships, family lifestyle, support networks and parenting capacity. The assessment is in two stages, the first incorporating statutory checks.

The assessing social worker has a duty to verify the information they are given and they will do this by taking up a number of references – with the Police, Probation, CAFCASS, Health, GP, Education, as well as contacting a number of personal referees, employers, former partners and children from previous relationships.

This process is designed to help the carers and the assessing social worker to identify the sort of caring which will fit in with their lifestyle, their own wishes and the age, sex and needs of the children they would best be able to care for.

Timely assessment is important for prospective carers and to meet the needs of children, so assessments are generally completed within four months of allocation to a Social Worker following preparation groups. This timescale can be affected by-

- The availability of the carers for the assessment work to be completed.

- The timely return of statutory checks/ references
- The priorities within the Service in terms of the needs of children waiting for placements.
- The complexity of the assessment and issues that need further exploration.

Approval

In the assessment document the Social Worker will make an analysis of the strengths and vulnerabilities in the application and make a recommendation in respect of the type of caring and number of children and age range and gender and the type of placement.

All foster carers see the complete assessment report and have the opportunity to suggest changes and make their own comments. They are then invited to sign the completed document.

The Fostering Panel recommends to the Agency Decision Maker if approval is appropriate or not, or if further work is required before a decision can be recommended.

There are two Fostering Panels operating, one in the North and one in the South of the County. The Panels meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and the associated regulations. The Panels take place on a fortnightly cycle so there are two per month. Panel members are made up of professionals from Children's Services, elected members and independent members who have experiences relating to substitute care. The Panel also has access to legal, medical and educational advice.

All applicants seeking approval are invited to attend the Panel meeting. The Panel are able to ask them questions and they are able to address Panel members.

The Panels are also involved in the review of carers and when termination of approval is required.

Supervision and Support for Foster Carers

The service recognises that supervision and support for carers is vital if they are to feel valued and recommend the service to others . It is important that their work is recognised as providing the major component in meeting the needs of Children Looked After in Cumbria. Carer satisfaction and retention is essential for a healthy Fostering Service

The service acknowledges that it is reliant on the goodwill of carers' families and the professional conduct of carers and seeks to treat carers' homes and families with respect and acknowledge the demanding nature of the tasks they undertake.

Social Workers Fostering visit carers regularly to look at standards of care provided, assist the carer to play their part in promoting the outcomes in the child's care plan and identify any training needs. Over the first year assistance to carers to achieve the TSD Standards will be a major focus for development.

Foster carers are subject to annual review of their approval. The first review is considered by the Fostering Panel, and the Panel will then consider reviews at least three yearly. If significant changes to their approval details are recommended at other times, this is considered at Panel.

Types of Support Available:

Social Workers Fostering, – Each foster carer has a Fostering Social Worker, who visits every 4-6 weeks to provide supervision and support. They monitor standards of care, encourage high standards and help the carer manage problems arising and focus on what is needed to achieve the outcomes in the child's plan. They are also available for telephone consultation and liaise with the Social Worker for the child. They will meet with the carer when the child's care plan is updated to ensure clarity and identify support needed to carry out the work required.

Payments to Foster Carers – Foster Carers receive payments according to a scheme, which is reviewed annually with carer input, and circulated to all carers. They are paid the statutory weekly allowance to meet the child's needs. Carers can apply to progress on the Foster Care Career structure, which encourages carers to develop their skills, and which attracts a weekly fee payment.

Foster Care Associations – Each area of Cumbria is encouraged to have a Foster Care Association, representatives of which meet with managers in Children's Services on a quarterly basis to discuss areas of mutual interest, developments and any areas of tension.

Foster Talk – The Fostering Service enrol all mainstream foster carers as members and a contractual arrangement for independent advice and mediation is provided by this national organisation for a number of authorities in the England of which Cumbria is one.

Insurance for Foster Carers – Foster carers are insured by the County Council in respect of death and personal injury and are able to make claims against the County Council insurance in case of damage and theft by foster children and their families.

Support Groups for Foster Carers – Each Division runs support and development groups for carers providing speakers on matters of relevance and an opportunity for carers to share and problem solve together. These groups provide valuable, up to date training and development opportunities..

Foster Care Reviews – Foster Carers are reviewed annually where their care of children, approval details, their skill development and training needs are examined along with any issues they or others wish to raise. This process is the cornerstone of the provision of quality care and the relationship between carers and the Fostering Service. The review is carried out by an Independent Reviewing Officer who considers the views expressed and evidence provided by carers, children, Social Workers and others.

Foster Care Agreement – A written agreement between foster carers and Children's Services formalises mutual expectations.

Sedbergh Drive Support and Assertive Outreach Service – provide support to prevent family and placement breakdown through work with young people 11-15 years old and their carers. This includes an Assertive Outreach service up to 10 am and at weekends.

Out of Hours Service – At evenings and weekends foster carers can call the Emergency Duty Team for advice and assistance. This team will contact the Assertive Outreach Team if appropriate.

Training for Foster Carers

All applicants attend preparation training (Skills to Foster) prior to approval, where they learn more about the fostering task, the children needing placements and have the opportunity to consider how fostering will fit in with their family life and what type of fostering they might be best suited to.

Following approval, carers learn more about roles and responsibilities, health and safety, promotion of education and health in children and prepare them more fully for the realities of fostering.

A programme of ongoing training is offered to foster carers to help them extend their knowledge and skills in line with the National Minimum Standards and to meet the expectations for progression on the foster care career structure.

Foster Care Career Structure – The Scheme allows mainstream foster carers to progress from Level 1 to 2 to 3 depending on their experience, training carried out and skill development. Carers can progress from Level 1 to 2 after gaining substantial experience, completing a range of training and using this in practice so skill development can be evidenced. After further experience, training and skill development they can be assessed for progression to Level 3. Level 3 carers are the most experienced and professional carers who act as role models for other carers, exhibiting child focused practice and assisting in recruitment and training of other carers and the development of the service.

The Children's Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers are actively promoted. All foster carers are required to complete the induction standards within one year of approval.

Review of Foster Carer Approvals

Foster Carers are reviewed on an annual basis where their progress as foster carers is discussed and feedback from Social Workers and children in their care is collated. Any changes in the carer's circumstances and training attended and training required are explored. A recommendation from the Chair of the review is made in respect of their approval details and, if a significant change is indicated, this is referred to the Fostering Panel. Each three year review is referred to the Fostering Panel and the recommendation in terms of future approval is referred to the Agency Decision Maker.

5. Services to Children and Young People

Care Plans

Each child who needs to be 'Looked After' has a Care Plan which addresses the short and long term individual needs of the child. The child's Social Worker is responsible for co-ordinating the co-operative work between the carers and the relevant agencies to ensure that the aims and outcomes of the Care Plan are progressed. The Social Worker is also responsible for monitoring the welfare of the child and, within this, the standard of care and safety within the foster home. The Fostering Social Worker, Social Worker and Foster Carer work together to maximise the child's potential within the placement.



Matching

Every effort is made to match the needs of a child with the appropriate placement and the following issues are considered:

Continuity of the child's education
Proximity to home
Ease of contact arrangements with family
Health issues
Culture and ethnicity
Religion

When considering foster families, the following are considered:

Approval details – type of fostering, age and gender of children approval for
Age and needs of other children in the household
Proximity to home area and education for the child being matched
Ability to facilitate contact
Ability to meet the child's cultural background and religious needs
Ability to understand the child's past experiences and their influence on the child's behaviour and presentation.

Agreements

Foster carers, at the beginning of all placements, agree to care for the child appropriately and report any causes for concern to the Social Worker. The placement agreement meeting clarifies the agreed length of the placement and the expectations of all those involved.

Contact

Positive contact between the child and his or her family is essential where it contributes positively to the child's development so long as it does not compromise the safety of the child, and all those involved encourage this to facilitate the child's understanding of their circumstances, minimise the feelings of loss and allow early return home where appropriate.

Social Worker Visits

Children's Social Workers visit in line with the minimum statutory requirements, but also over and above this to meet the needs of the child and his/her own care plan. The child is seen on his/her own regularly and their views in respect of the placement and their other needs are sought. Any concerns are explored with the Fostering Social Worker and the carers. Children should have access to the telephone in a carer's home to contact their Social Worker and are supplied with the correct number.

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

The stability of schooling and educational achievement is seen as a major objective for Children Looked After. The Fostering Service recognises that high expectations are essential to encourage children whose self-esteem may have been damaged, that they too can achieve in school and college.

Every effort is made when a child is placed with foster carers to maintain their school place until a permanence plan is implemented. No child should have a change of school at the same time as a move from their family or subsequent move of placement where this can possibly be avoided. On many occasions, school, teachers and peers can provide a level of stability, which allows the child a better chance of managing the changes, grief and loss in the other areas of their life.

Improving the educational outcomes for children looked after is a key priority. We want all children looked after to enjoy school and to achieve well. A Virtual Head Teacher for Children Looked After has been in post since 2008, working with the Virtual School Team to ensure all children and young people looked after have access to the best possible provision.

On some occasions other matching issues will render it impossible to maintain a child's school place but every effort is made to ease the transition and ensure that the staff of the receiving school are fully briefed on the circumstances and the child's educational and support needs.

Each child has a Personal Education Plan where their education needs are highlighted and where all those involved seek to work together to maximise progress.

Foster carers are required to take children to good, local schools and encouraged to provide 'good parent' type support to the school and child and to give very positive messages about the value of achievement. At Children Looked After and Foster Carer reviews this area of practice is highlighted and any training needs identified.

Much work has been undertaken by the Looked After Children Education Service in identifying children whose educational potential is at risk and supporting the young people in the school setting and/or challenging the school in respect of the allocation of places or exclusion policies.

Virtual School Team

The service promotes the educational achievement of children looked after, ensuring that **all** can enjoy and achieve. The team comprises of a Virtual School Head, teachers and Inclusion Officers. The team works closely with their colleagues and other services in their area.

The service provides support to children/young people looked after and their carers, teachers in schools and Social Workers. Key aspects of their work include:

- Securing school places and supporting transition e.g. primary to secondary
- Ensuring high quality provision is in place for all children looked after
- Tracking the progress of all children looked after
- Support with Personal Education Plans
- Advice to schools on the learning needs of children looked after
- Support and advice for foster carers
- Training events for foster carers
- Training sessions for groups of teachers in schools
- Providing additional learning materials e.g. revision guides for year 10 / year 11

HEALTH OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

The health of children in foster care is another serious priority for the Fostering Service in recognition of the poor health care which some children may have received prior to being Looked After.

Many may have missed immunisations, dental care or indeed follow up on specific health issues e.g. asthma, allergies and more serious physical difficulties.

Foster Carers are encouraged to ensure that they provide a 'good parent' approach to health care ensuring that health matters arising are attended to promptly and thoroughly and the child is given messages that his/her health is very important and that he/she is going to be well cared for. This also includes messages about healthy eating and appropriate exercise.

Each child has a full health assessment when they become looked after, which is reviewed annually and any needs/deficits identified with a plan for action. The foster carer will prioritise this important appointment.

All children are registered with a GP and should have six monthly dental checks. All these issues are monitored at the children's statutory reviews.

The arrangements with the Health Trusts for the conducting of initial and review of health assessments are now in place in all parts of the county. The Children Looked After Health team has dedicated nurses as well as access to doctors as required.

Many children who are Looked After have emotional problems which may require specialist input from the CLA Emotional Health and Wellbeing Workers, Child and Adolescent Mental Health or other specialist Services.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The Fostering Service does not discriminate between children and seeks to provide a service to meet the assessed individual needs of all children. Children with Disabilities have specialist Social Workers skilled in assessment and brokerage of service packages.

At any one time, a small but significant number of children with serious disabilities are cared for on a full time basis by foster carers. It is a credit to the foster carers involved, that many of these placements provide the highest quality of care and relationships. On occasions, foster carers have nursed terminally ill children in their own homes, providing loving care alongside medical interventions.

A variety of children who have moderate or severe learning difficulties and a growing number who are diagnosed along the Autism spectrum or with Aspergers syndrome, are cared for in foster care. In such placements, it is essential that the carers are engaged with the specialist multi-agency network, which provides the package to meet the child's health and educational needs.

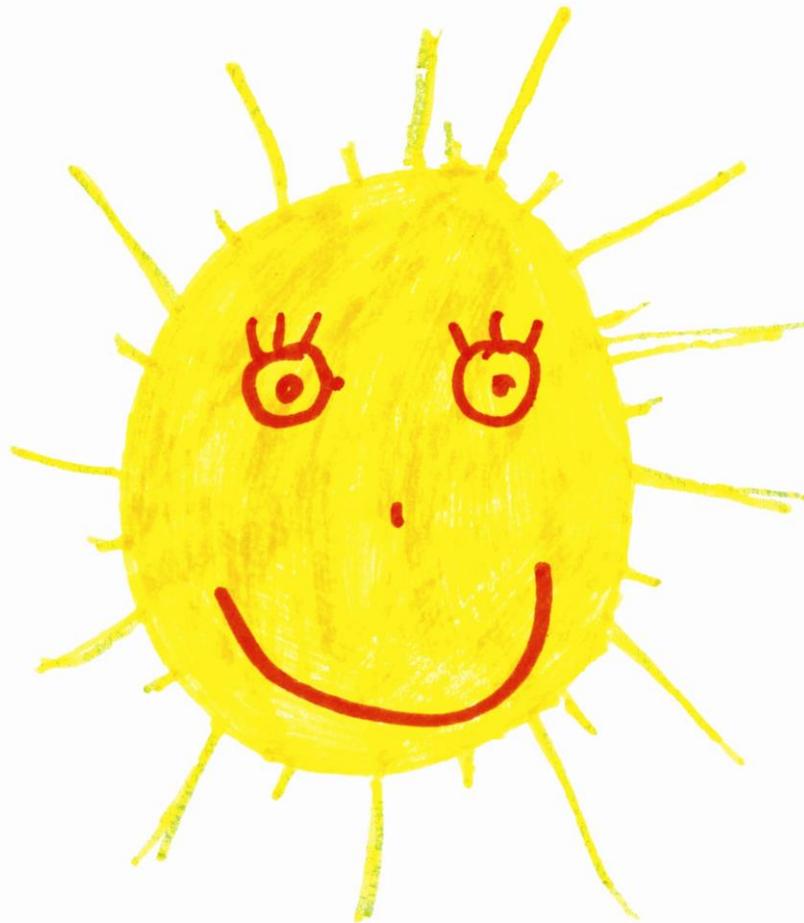
The Shared Care Scheme is targeted at maintaining children with a disability in their own homes by providing short term care or respite, to support the child's parents and give the child positive experiences.

A number of children who had some form of special needs require permanence through permanent fostering and the service seeks to identify families who have the capacity to provide a secure loving home. The demand for such placements often outstrips the supply but those carers who can and do meet the needs of children with a disability are exceptional in their commitment.

CHILDREN WITH A MINORITY ETHNIC HERITAGE

The Fostering Service has a range of measures to ensure that each child's individual needs are identified and positive efforts made to meet them. The measures range from hair and skin care to the provision of permanent placements and support to carers.

Accessing potential carers from ethnic minority communities forms a key strand in the recruitment policy and plans.



6. Structure and Personnel

STAFF IN THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The staff of the Fostering Service are recruited and managed following the principles of positive selection, supervision, induction and appraisal processes of Cumbria County Council and incorporating practice dictated by the National Minimum Standards in Fostering Services 2011.

Newly recruited staff receive an induction package and an annual programme of training is designed to meet their needs for input in respect of current issues in the ever-developing field of successful child placement.

All staff are suitably qualified and registered with the HCPC and are subject to Cumbria County Council's corporate standards for continuous professional development.

The Service is managed by the Senior Manager, Children Looked After and the Service Manager-Adoption and Fostering/Service Manager Fostering .

The Fostering and Adoption Recruitment and Assessment Team provide information to enquirers, and assessment of prospective foster carers and adopters, as well as those Connected persons carers being assessed under Regulation 24.

The Central Placements Team takes responsibility for placement finding and matching and recruitment activity. They also undertake work on commissioning and contracts for fostering and residential placements procured from other agencies..

Two District based Fostering Teams have responsibility for ongoing supervision and support of foster carers, and also the Staying Put/Homestays service..

These teams are staffed by Team Managers, Advanced Practitioners, Social Workers, Adoption and Fostering Support Workers.

FOSTER CARERS AND CHILDREN PLACED

Vacancies

At any one time there are a limited number of placement vacancies and this means that placement choice is limited. The nature of a vacancy is always an area for review and discussion, as these will always depend on family circumstances and the needs of other children in the placement. Where we cannot place children with in-house carers, we purchase placements from other providers.

The Emergency Duty Team can access placements via the Emergency Foster Care Scheme and other care vacancies.

A very small number of carers care for children, either above their approval details or the normal fostering limit. These arrangements are subject to the issue of an exemption certificate following an assessment of potential risks and measures to minimise these. Exemption certificates require the authorisation of the Service Manager followed by report to panel in order that the appropriate safeguards are in place for any children being placed or any children currently in placement and are only made after consultation with carers and children's social workers and their managers.

Placement Moves

The service aims to ensure that moves for children are planned and to an appropriate placement, which can meet the overall aims of their care plan.

However despite everyone's best efforts placements sometimes have to be made on an emergency basis. Good matching between the needs of the child and the foster carer is always paramount, but matches for emergency placements may represent the best option available for a child or young person before a more suitable placement can be identified.

We are always mindful that placement moves need to be minimised.

Placement Stability

This is a key issue for the service as it can have a very significant impact on children's welfare and their long-term achievement and success into adult life.

Every effort is made to minimise moves and to work with the children and the carers where the placement is under stress to re-establish a positive experience for the child.

Cumbria has good performance in placement stability as identified in our performance reports, which is important given the high percentage of children who are looked after in foster care in the county.

Permanency

The service encourages good child care planning and recognises the need to establish every child in the placement which is most likely to meet their needs until they are ready to become independent. For many children this will be a return home to their birth

parents, for others it will be within their own extended family network, for some it will be adoption and for some it will be permanent foster care.

Children's well being is best promoted by quality care in a stable placement where they have been able to form a positive attachment with their care givers and have a full understanding of their history and circumstances.

SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

The Fostering Service makes every effort to ensure that children are cared for by safe and caring people in a child-focused environment. However, it acknowledges that no method of assessment will tell us all we need to know about people who may abuse a child or how carers will react when under stress following extremes of behaviour from a child.

Concerns about foster care practice or allegations of abuse are treated very seriously and thoroughly investigated. There are detailed procedures in respect of the management of such incidents. The Fostering Service works within the Local Child Safeguarding Board framework and follows Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

Most concerns raised in respect of the care of children are investigated under the Safeguarding Children Procedures, which give guidance as to how such issues are to be dealt with. Matters which are judged to be not of a safeguarding nature but concerns about foster care practice are investigated by the Fostering Team and recommendations made.

Every serious incident has to be reported on a Safety of Children in Public Care Form which is scrutinised by the Service Manager. A note of each issue is also made on the Utting record on each carer's case record so that any pattern developing can be examined. These forms also monitor children missing from their placement, episodes of restraint and violent incidents.

Ofsted are also informed of notifiable incidents in order to ensure external scrutiny of our practice and to demonstrate our compliance with regulations within the Fostering Service.

Staff have received copies of the whistle blowing procedures and have been made aware. Foster Carers are aware of the routes by which they can raise concerns about departmental practice regarding a child or themselves.

Foster carers can access independent support from Child Action North West during the course of a safeguarding enquiry.

Children in foster care also have mechanisms to ensure their wishes and feelings inform their care plans and are also advised in our range of children's guides how to and who to complain to if they have any concerns or complaints they wish to make. Independent advocacy for children is provided via a contract with NYAS.

MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

The Fostering Service recognises that it cannot meet the needs of Children Looked After without input and co-operation from other parts of the County Council and outside agencies.

The needs of children who have had damaging experiences are complex and need the combined efforts of a multi-agency framework if we are able to redress the balance and improve outcomes for children who are looked after in Cumbria.

The most important partnership arrangements are with:

Child and Family Support and Protect Teams, Children Looked After and Children with Disabilities Teams – to process requests for placements and work together to maximise the life chances of children in placement.

The Leaving Care Service in the CLA Teams – to ensure that the needs of young people are met as they move into independence.

Children’s Centres – to ensure that placements of young children are supported and the potential for return to their families are maximised.

Children’s Residential Units – to ensure that children are placed in the most appropriate resource for their needs.

Virtual School Team – to maximise educational provision to improve the life chances of Children Looked After.

PCT, Health Trusts and Professionals – to maximise healthy provision to improve the life chances of Children Looked After.

Schools – to maximise positive opportunities and educational achievement of Children Looked After.

Local Foster Care Associations – to maximise the quality of care in foster homes and the opportunities for Children Looked After.

Foster Talk – to promote the profile and value of fostering and adoption at a national and local level and its place in meeting the needs of most Children Looked After and offer legal support and advice. Cumbria

Child Action North West -Children’s Services also commission CANW to offer independent support to foster carers subject to allegations.

Independent Providers – to access provision for Children Looked After, which cannot be provided in the authority’s own resources.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – to help children deal with their past experiences and enable to reach their full potential.

Youth Offending Team – to work together to reduce the offending rate amongst Children Looked After in Cumbria.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Management of the Service

Performance and Statistical Information

Performance is scrutinised on a monthly basis via the performance reports for the whole service, and the Improvement Plan.

Statistical information is produced for these reports, as well as for the required DfE returns and annual OFSTED dataset.

Monthly audits are carried out by Managers in the service and the Audit and Practice development Team to focus on records and quality of work

A report on the service is produced on a quarterly and annual basis.

8. Complaints

Cumbria County Council has a complaints procedure which is made available to all those in receipt of services,

A leaflet called ‘Compliments Comments and Complaints’ is available at all offices and is on the Cumbria County Council web page.

Stage 1: Any complaint will initially be looked at by a member of staff, usually the Team Manager who will contact the service user to see if things can be resolved. Once investigations are complete, the Manager will then write to explain what they have found and what action they propose to take.

If the service user is not happy that the problem has been resolved they can ask for their complaint to move to

stage 2: A formal investigation led by an Independent Complaints Officer. A leaflet is available with details of the procedure. If the person making the complaint is still dissatisfied they can ask for the complaint to be heard at **stage 3:** A Review Panel. This panel will consist of three people, two who are independent of Children’s Social Care and a third who is

a Senior Manager from the department but who has not been involved in previous stages. The Corporate Director of Children's Services will send a letter to advise the person making the complaint of the outcome of this stage.

9. Information on how to contact the Regulator

Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
Lancashire
M2 7EF

Tel: 08456 404 040

Contact details for:
The Children's Rights Director
Roger Morgan
Ofsted
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC28 6SE

www.rights4me.org

Feedback

We would welcome feedback about the contents of this Statement of Purpose. If you would like to share your views, comments or concerns please contact:

Ruth McHugh
Service Manager
Adoption and Fostering
Cumbria County Council
Children's Services
County Hall
Kendal

or
Claire Lloyd
Service Manager
Fostering
Cumbria County Council
Children's Services
Cumbria House
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Email: ruth.mchugh@cumbria.gov.uk or claire.lloyd@cumbria.gov.uk



Ruth McHugh/Claire Lloyd
Service Managers
May 2017