



Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 2024

TIME: 5:30 pm

**PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles
Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ**

Members of the Commission

Councillor Batool (Chair)

Councillor Cole (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Barnes, Haq, Joshi, Dr Moore, Pantling and Pickering

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)

Youth Representatives

Jennifer Day

Janet McKenna

Teaching Unions representative

UNISON Branch Secretary

Members of the Commission are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

For the Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Ed Brown (Senior Governance Officer)

Katie Jordan (Governance Support Officer),

Tel: 0116 454 6350, e-mail: committees@leicester.gov.uk

Leicester City Council, City Hall, 3rd Floor Granby Wing, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

Information for members of the public

Attending meetings and access to information

You have the right to attend formal meetings such as Full Council, committee meetings, and Scrutiny Commissions and see copies of agendas and minutes.

However, on occasion, meetings may, for reasons set out in law, need to consider some items in private.

Dates of meetings and copies of public agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website at www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk or by contacting us using the details below.

Making meetings accessible to all

Wheelchair access – Public meeting rooms at the City Hall are accessible to wheelchair users. Wheelchair access to City Hall is from the middle entrance door on Charles Street - press the plate on the right hand side of the door to open the door automatically.

Braille/audio tape/translation - If you require this please contact the Democratic Support Officer (production times will depend upon equipment/facility availability).

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Filming and Recording the Meeting - The Council is committed to transparency and supports efforts to record and share reports of proceedings of public meetings through a variety of means, including social media. In accordance with government regulations and the Council's policy, persons and press attending any meeting of the Council open to the public (except Licensing Sub Committees and where the public have been formally excluded) are allowed to record and/or report all or part of that meeting. Details of the Council's policy are available at www.leicester.gov.uk or from Democratic Support.

If you intend to film or make an audio recording of a meeting you are asked to notify the relevant Democratic Support Officer in advance of the meeting to ensure that participants can be notified in advance and consideration given to practicalities such as allocating appropriate space in the public gallery etc..

The aim of the Regulations and of the Council's policy is to encourage public interest and engagement so in recording or reporting on proceedings members of the public are asked:

- ✓ to respect the right of others to view and hear debates without interruption;
- ✓ to ensure that the sound on any device is fully muted and intrusive lighting avoided;
- ✓ where filming, to only focus on those people actively participating in the meeting;
- ✓ where filming, to (via the Chair of the meeting) ensure that those present are aware that they may be filmed and respect any requests to not be filmed.

Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact:

Katie Jordan, Democratic Support Officer on 0116 454 6350.

Alternatively, email committees@leicester.gov.uk, or call in at City Hall.

For Press Enquiries - please phone the **Communications Unit on 0116 454 4151.**



USEFUL ACRONYMS IN RELATION TO OFSTED AND EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

(updated November 2015)

Acronym	Meaning
APS	Average Point Score: the average attainment of a group of pupils; points are assigned to levels or grades attained on tests.
ASYE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
C&YP	Children and Young People
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CFST	Children and Families Support Team
CICC	Children in Care Council
CIN	Children in Need
CLA	Children Looked After
CLASS	City of Leicester Association of Special Schools
COLGA	City of Leicester Governors Association
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CYPF	Children Young People and Families Division (Leicester City Council)
CYPP	Children and Young People's Plan
CYPS Scrutiny	Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission
DAS	Duty and Advice Service
DCS	Director of Children's Services
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EET	Education, Employment and Training
EHA	Early Help Assessment
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EHP	Early Help Partnership
EHSS	Early Help Stay Safe
EIP	Education Improvement Partnership

ELG	Early Learning Goals: aspects measured at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
EY	Early Years
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage: (0-5); assessed at age 5.
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
ESFA	Education Skills and Funding Agency
FS	Foundation Stage: nursery and school Reception, ages 3-5; at start of Reception a child is assessed against the new national standard of 'expected' stage of development, then teacher assessment of Foundation Stage Profile areas of learning
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Education
GLD	Good Level of Development
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KS1	Key Stage 1: National Curriculum Years (NCYs) 1 and 2, ages 5-7; assessed at age 7.
KS2	Key Stage 2: NCYs 3, 4, 5, and 6, ages 7-11; assessed at age 11.
KS3	Key Stage 3: NCYs 7, 8 and 9, ages 11-14; no statutory assessment.
KS4	Key Stage 4: NCYs 10 and 11, ages 14-16; assessed at age 16.
KTC	Knowledge Transfer Centre
LA	Local Authority
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LARP	Leicester Access to Resources Panel
LCCIB	Leicester City Council Improvement Board
LCT	Leicester Children's Trust
LDD	Learning Difficulty or Disability
LESP	Leicester Education Strategic Partnership
LLEs	Local Leaders of Education

LP	Leicester Partnership
LPP	Leicester Primary Partnership
LPS	Leicester Partnership School
LSCB	Leicester Safeguarding Children Board
LSOAs	Lower Super Output Areas
MACFA	Multi Agency Case File Audit
NCY	National Curriculum Year
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NLEs	National Leaders of Education
NLGs	National Leaders of Governance
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PEPs	Personal Education Plans
PI	Performance Indicator
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QA	Quality Assurance
RAP	Resource Allocation Panel
RI	Requires Improvement
SA	Single Assessment
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy
SCR	Serious Case Review
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SIMS	Schools Information Management Systems
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SLEs	Specialist Leaders of Education
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRE	Sex and Relationship Education
TBC	To be Confirmed
TFL	Tertiary Federation Leicester
TP	Teenage Pregnancy
UHL	University Hospitals Leicester
WIT	Whatever it Takes

YOS	Youth Offending Service
YPC	Young People's Council

PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

FIRE / EMERGENCY EVACUATION

If the emergency alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building immediately by the nearest available fire exit and proceed to the area outside the Ramada Encore Hotel on Charles Street as directed by Democratic Services staff. Further instructions will then be given.

8. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

**Appendix C
(Pages 1 - 22)**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report to provide an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service during 2022/23.

fostering

Leicester City Council

Annual Statement of Purpose 2022/23



Purpose

We are required to produce a written Statement of Purpose each year which sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people, and foster families.

The Statement of Purpose is available to all staff, prospective carers, children and young people, parents, and other professionals in a variety of formats. You can find the most up to date copy on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering.

Summary

The Fostering Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children who are Looked After, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home. The service allows our children and young people to live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched foster families.

The Statement of Purpose explains the aims, objectives and services provided by Leicester City Council Fostering Service, as well as details about our complaints and quality assurance services.

The primary aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that children who require a foster care placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

We are committed to supporting our foster families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about the fostering service and the support offered can be found in our Foster Carers Handbook available at www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this Statement of Purpose, please contact the fostering team on 0116 454 4510.

Our Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that children who require a foster care placement are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

Objectives

- To provide a skilled and flexible fostering service that can meet the wide range of assessed needs of children and young people requiring foster care placements.
- To recruit, assess and approve enough foster carers who live in the Leicester area, ensuring as far as possible that children can be placed in the local area.
- To assist and maintain appropriate links for children placed in foster care with family, community, schools, and friends.
- To match children and young people to foster placements that can meet their assessed needs, taking into consideration the views of the child as part of this process.
- To support children placed with friends and family outside the Leicester area, where the placement is in their best interests.
- To place siblings together wherever possible; and where this is not possible due to safeguarding or other reasons, determined efforts will be made to reunite siblings as soon as is possible and where appropriate.
- To consider race, language, culture, religion, gender, gender orientation and ability, when matching carers to the needs of children.
- To support the implementation of the child's Placement Plan, Care Plan, or young person's Pathway Plan in conjunction with other relevant partners.
- To support placement stability, including where appropriate, availability of the placement to the young person after they reach the age of 18 years.
- To provide a designated supervising social worker to each foster carer, and ensure foster carers receive good quality support and training, to assist them to provide the best parenting for children in their care.
- To work in partnership and openness with foster carers and all other partners who are involved in supporting the child or young person's welfare.

Our principles

The Fostering Service believes: -

- Children in foster care are entitled to experience a family life in which they feel loved and secure in the same way as any other child.
- Children should be encouraged to be proud of their heritage and background and to reach their full potential, celebrating their talents and achievements into adulthood.
- Foster families are recognised as often providing the basis for positive change in a child's life, leading them to grow and develop to become successful adults.
- Children should be consulted, involved, and listened to, with appropriate consideration given to their views concerning important decisions affecting their lives.
- The specific needs of children with additional needs should be carefully considered when making and supporting foster placements.
- Children and young people should be supported and encouraged to maintain links and contact with their families and communities of origin, and foster carers will be encouraged to support these efforts.
- Children should not be allowed to 'drift' in care and should be prepared for permanency as determined by their care plan, whether this be reunification with family, adoption, permanent foster care, or independence.
- Children should be safeguarded in care and be protected from harm, including against other actions by children or young people themselves.
- The fostering service and foster carers will operate within the practice and policies agreed by Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The Service

Service Manager: Georgina Oreffo

Telephone: 0116 454 4506

In the absence of the Fostering Service Manager, Mike Evans (Service Manager – Placement & Commissioning) deputises as Service Manager, (0116) 454 4500.

The fostering service employs 4 Team Managers, 22 (full or part time) Supervising Social Workers, 2 Child Care Support Workers, a Publicity Officer, and an Enquiry Officer. The service is supported by a small team of business support administrative staff.

Recruitment Team

Team Manager

Supervision and Support Teams

Team Manager Mainstream and Kinship Fostering (one full time, one part time)

Kinship Assessment Team

Team Manager

Children and Families Support Team (CFST)

Team Manager

The CFST provide various direct therapeutic interventions with foster children and foster carers experiencing placement difficulties, including specialist advice and training.

Additional Information

Leicester City Council is an approved Fostering Service provider and is inspected by Ofsted.

The Fostering Service is managed by a Service Manager supported by dedicated Team Managers (Standard 17)

The Head of Service, Child Safeguarding Quality Assurance is the Agency Decision Maker (Standard 14)

Leicester City Fostering Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations. (Standard 14)

Recruitment

The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, and approves new foster carers. The service supports individuals and families from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds from all parts of the community, who can bring a variety of experiences to the fostering task and help to support our children and young people in care.

Mainstream Foster Carers

The Fostering Service provides an enquiry officer who anyone interested in fostering can call in person, or alternatively, visit our website, email, or phone to request information. An information pack including a Registration of Interest Form is sent to enquirers within 24 hours. Recruitment of carers is planned to maximise interest in foster care. Recruitment campaigns are supported by a dedicated publicity officer. Regular foster carer recruitment events are held throughout the year and target specific campaigns including National Foster Care Fortnight.

Recruitment is focused on the areas of greatest need including permanent placements, sibling groups, teenagers, short breaks for children who have disabilities, mixed heritage, Black and Asian children, and geographical areas that are underrepresented with foster carers.

On completion of the Registration of Interest Form, Local Authority checks are carried out, and a phone interview completed. If the application is successful an initial visit is arranged where further discussion will take place to establish, for example, whether the prospective carers are likely to have sufficient space, and time, to foster and more information about the task of fostering is given.

After a Stage 1 agreement form being completed, the service will carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, Probation, The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), health visitor/schools' references (if the prospective carers have children) and character references. Applicants must have full health assessments completed by their own GP.

Prospective carers will be invited to commence the assessment process and complete the Stage 2 Assessment Agreement subject to satisfactory checks and references. An assessment will usually take 3-4 months involving approximately 8 visits (currently completed virtually and face to face). A specific form designed by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) is used for assessment and is competency based. Applicants will be invited to attend a pre-approval course, called "Skills to Foster" and currently they are required to complete on-line training courses.

Following the assessment, the social worker will write a report, which is read, amended if necessary and signed by the applicant. The report is submitted to a Fostering Panel whose task it is to consider recommending the approval of foster carers. At the Panel, all members will have read the reports. Prospective carers and the assessing social worker will attend the (virtual) panel. Foster carers can only be carers for one fostering provider.

Following the Panel, a recommendation is made to the Agency Decision Maker (Head of Service, Child Safeguarding Quality Assurance). Where foster carers are approved, a letter of approval detailing the terms under which the carer is approved, and the matching criteria, will be sent i.e., children's ages; gender; the number of placements, and the type of placement.

If prospective foster carers do not agree with the decision made by the fostering agency, they may appeal to the Fostering Panel to reconsider. If still wanting to challenge the ADM's decision, the applicants can request for the matter to be considered by the Independent Review Mechanism.

Following approval, the carer will be sent:

- Foster Carer Agreement
- Complaints and Access to Records information

- A copy of the Foster Carers National Minimum Standards
- The Fostering Services Regulations (2011/13)
- Foster Carer's Logbook
- Fostering Network leaflets on record keeping, insurance, contact, regulations
- Information on taxation for carers
- Notification details
- Virtual School Team Information
- Children's guides according to carer's approval
- Application form for Leicester City Council Leisure passes / Library access
- Fostering Training information
- Training Support and Development Standards
- Promotional support and information aimed at foster carers

After approval, responsibility for the carer's support and supervision will transfer to the Supervision and Support Team located within the Fostering Service.

Kinship Foster Carers

A family member or Connected Person may be identified as a potential future foster carer for a specific child or children by a social worker and will be referred for assessment by the Kinship Assessment Team.

The Service Manager, Fieldwork Service, may agree to an immediate placement with the Kinship Carer, under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, following an Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) completed by the Supervising Social Workers responsible for IVA's. The child's social worker will inform the Kinship Assessment Team Manager of an immediate placement, if made. This will trigger Stage 1, and a full assessment by the Kinship Assessment Team.

Following a recommendation by the Fostering Panel and approval by the Agency Decision Maker, a letter of approval detailing the terms under which the carer is approved will be sent including the specific children's details, the number of placements, and the type of placement.

Following approval, the Kinship Foster Carer will be sent the same information as that sent to all mainstream foster carers as detailed above.

After approval, responsibility for the carer's support and supervision will transfer to the Supervision and Support Team located within the Fostering Service.

Our policy on Kinship Foster Care Placements is contained in Appendix 2.

Different Types of Placements

The service provides:

- Family placements for children and young people from birth up to and including the age of 18 years.
- Placements for babies and young children, including those with a range of complex needs.
- Placements for children with disabilities and those children with medical needs who need adapted accommodation.
- Placement for children and young people who are unaccompanied asylum-seekers.
- Transition support to another placement, return home or independent living post 16/17 years of age, as part of a planned process.
- Placements for children and young people from varying ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.
- Support from the Child and Families Support Team (CFST) to provide appropriate direct work to maintain placement stability.
- Support for young people who are aged 18 and continue to live with their foster family as part of 'Staying Put' provisions.

Emergency placements

These placements are initially provided for 24 hours, and up to 5 working days, pending work to return the child home, to their previous placement, or alternative placement. Some placements may continue to be provided for a short-term period (where the care plan agrees this assessment, and the carer is approved for such placements).

Short-term placements

These placements are intended to meet the care plan for the young person, to enable the young person to return home or to an alternative placement within a short timescale. Flexibility of care is a significant feature in ensuring success in moving children on to their next placements, at an appropriate time, in consideration of the child's needs and circumstances.

Permanent placements

These placements are where the child's care plan is permanency, within foster care. Foster Carers return to Panel to approve the match and update their approval as permanent foster carers for the child.

Kinship (Family and Friend) Foster Care

This provision is where relatives or friends are approved for specific, named children. The length of the placement will vary, dependent on whether permanency is achieved through kinship care, Special Guardianship, or a return to a parent.

Assessment and Support Plans for Special Guardianship

The service contributes to the assessment for Special Guardianship Orders and support plans, where the foster carer seeks to, or obtains a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) on a child for whom they are caring.

Short Breaks

This service gives support to families caring for children with disabilities by providing time limited overnight stays and short breaks for children, to help support families and offer new experiences for children.

Support for Foster Carers

- A named, allocated supervising social worker for approved foster carer(s)
- A 24-hour on-call system staffed by qualified social workers
- Membership for all fostering households to Foster Talk
- An independent 24-hour support line operated by Foster Talk
- Discounted activities and days out through Foster Talk
- A comprehensive Foster Care Handbook
- Recreational activities supported through the Leisure Fund
- Free sports pass for use in all city swimming pools and gym facilities
- 4 weeks paid leave per year for specialist contract foster carers
- A rolling training programme linked to carers' accreditation levels

- Briefing sessions on key issues on national and local changes
- Development and peer support group sessions
- Therapeutic support services for children with more complex needs
- Corporate membership of Fostering Network
- Sons and Daughters support Group for foster carers' own children
- Representation on the Corporate Parenting Forum
- Equipment provided to meet placement needs

Ongoing Professional Development

All carers will discuss their development and training needs with their supervising social worker and new on-line training courses are available to all carers.

An annual training plan is produced by the service, and newsletters are regularly sent to all carers detailing courses available.

There are joint training opportunities for foster carers to attend training with supervising social workers, Fostering Panel members and other professionals.

A carers' annual review will highlight all courses undertaken and those that might be required to maintain the carers' approval, and to develop carers' knowledge and skills.

Each carer has their own Training, Support and Development Standards information, so they can build up a portfolio of training, specific work, or research study they have undertaken. Foster carers are encouraged to complete this online, and the service will support foster carers to do this successfully.

Support for Young People

Leicester City provides:

- Access to primary mental health workers for young people who require assessment for services about their behavioural or emotional needs.
- Access to a Virtual School Team of professionals whose remit it is to raise the educational attainment of children looked after and secure appropriate educational arrangements for young people either in mainstream or specialist provision.
- A dedicated health team of Children Looked After nurses advising and implementing a health care programme to support the general health and well-being of children looked after and living in foster care.
- Access to services available to support young people who are preparing to leave care, to live independently and access education, employment, or training into adulthood.
- A free sports pass for use in all city swimming pools and gym facilities and access to a discretionary Leisure Fund to maximise leisure and well-being opportunities.

- A dedicated Children and Young People’s Rights and Participation Team, for children looked after to ensure young people know and understand their rights.
- Access to advice, assistance and advocacy for children and young people in having their views heard, or in making complaints.
- A regular newsletter for all children looked after and opportunities for young people in foster care to meet.
- Opportunities provided through initiatives supported by the work of the Corporate Parenting Board. These can include free cycle riding courses, free access to museum activities, work experience and apprenticeship schemes, job interview practice and recreational activities.
- An Independent Visitor service for children and young people who do not have visits from their parents or extended family (or a significant adult).
- The opportunity to participate in the Children in Care Council and other Care Experienced consultation activities about the council’s services.

Children and Young Peoples Guides

All children who are placed in a foster home, receive a booklet which informs them of what the service is for, what it might feel like to live in another family home, the services that children / young people can expect from a foster carer and the service, and what to do if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care.

Children and young people’s guides are available for differing age ranges and reading abilities and types of placements, and reviewed regularly with young people, to ensure the details are updated.

A copy of the children’s guide is also available to carers of young people, their parents, and social workers on request.

Monitoring the Quality of the Service

The Fostering Service is monitored and inspected by Ofsted.

Foster carers receive at least one unannounced visit a year to their home by the supervising social worker, and regular supervisory visits.

The Service Manager responsible for the day-to-day management of the Foster Care Service monitors a range of matters identified in the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2011 (Regulation 35 (1)), to ensure the standards are adhered to and the service is developing to meet the needs of a range of children.

Inspectors from Ofsted inspect the Local Authority’s Foster Care Service as part of the inspection of local authority childcare services according to requirements laid down by the Department for Education and can contact or inspect foster care homes unannounced.

Complaints made about the Service, including carers, are monitored on a routine basis; this also includes any allegations made about staff or carers. A central record is kept of all

complaints as part of the agency's quality management process; these records are open to inspection by Ofsted.

All children looked after, and young people have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who chairs their Child Looked after Review meetings to ensure their care plan is being met and they are being provided with quality care by a range of services to meet their needs. The IRO's role is to ensure the 'child's voice' is at the centre of their plan, but to also ensure parent's and foster carer's views are considered alongside other parties in relation to how well a child is progressing.

The Role of the Fostering Panel

The fostering panel considers whether:

- Prospective carers are suitable to provide foster care, and
- Carers are suitable for a particular child or children (matching)
- The Panel has responsibility to take an interest in the general running of the fostering service and to receive reports giving over-view information about the general running of the team.

The Fostering Panel is governed by guidance and regulations. Panel members include:

- An Independent Chair
- Independent Vice Chair
- Social workers with experience of fostering and other relevant specialisms
- Independent Members (not employed by the Fostering Service and who may have personal experience of fostering or other relevant experience).
- Panel Adviser

The fostering panel meets twice monthly and occasionally monthly to ensure the process is not subject to delay.

Prospective carers are encouraged to attend the Fostering Panel.

Following a recommendation of the Fostering Panel, the papers and minutes of the meeting will be passed to the Agency Decision Maker who has responsibility for decision making on behalf of the Agency. The decisions are made following consultation with the panel adviser and access to the panel minutes. Decisions are made within seven days of the approved minutes of the panel recommendation. The decision will be put in writing to the prospective carer(s).

Complaints Procedure

The Fostering Service has a complaints procedure. Copies of the procedure and complaints forms can be requested from the Fostering Service by telephoning: 0116 454 4510.

All complaints and matters of concern are treated with respect and will be dealt with as promptly as possible, within specified timescales. The fostering service aims to resolve problems in the first instance by informal negotiation.

Children who are living in foster placements are children in care of the Local Authority and have access to the Council's Children's Rights Officer, who will assist any child in making a complaint if they wish and support them throughout the complaints process.

Whilst the investigation is ongoing, the designated Complaints Manager will make sure that carers and young people are informed of progress.

Where it is appropriate, the parents of children (or legal guardians) will be informed of any complaint or allegation made and the outcome, and their views considered.

Parents and family members, friends or advocates can act on behalf of a child to make a complaint about the Fostering Service, or the child / young person can ask the Children's Rights Service to support them.

Contact details for the **Complaints Manager** are as follows:

Freepost
RTRZ-TSAH-EXBZ
Complaints and Access to Records Team
Leicester City Council
10 York Road
Leicester
LE1 5TS
Telephone: 0116 454 0613
Email: youngpeople-complaints@leicester.gov.uk

If following the local complaints process the carer or young person remains unsatisfied with the outcome, the Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints about Council services. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman

The Oaks No2
Westwood Way
Westwood Business Park
Coventry, CV4 8JB
Telephone: 024 7682 0000

Safeguarding Arrangements

All carers will receive training on the local child safeguarding arrangements in accordance with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) procedures.

The Fostering Service adheres to all the policies and procedures of the LSCP in keeping children safe and responding to concerns when children are thought to be at risk.

The Fostering Service will listen to every concern that is raised with them about the care of children who are placed in its service. If there are concerns about the welfare or treatment of children physically, sexually, emotionally, or about neglectful care, the service will initiate enquiries in accordance with LSCP procedures.

The assessment of foster carers includes the taking of full employment and accommodation histories. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over 18 years of age living in the household. A range of referees are contacted and visited prior to foster carer approval.

Where concerns are made about the foster carers or that of their family, there is a procedure within the Fostering Service to inform carers (at an appropriate time) of any allegations made about them and what is likely to happen. This procedure is also laid out in the Foster Carer Handbook and for staff in the staff procedure manual. Copies can be requested from the Fostering Service.

Allegations that are made against foster carers are investigated using an established procedure whereby all allegations are considered by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). An independent person chairs the initial strategy meeting and oversees the process to ensure its timeliness.

In the event of complaints or concerns being raised, foster carers will receive support from the Foster Care Service and Foster Talk. Children will be supported by social workers, a Children's Rights Officer, Independent Visitors, and the family as appropriate.

During any safeguarding investigation, the placement of the child (and any other children) will be carefully considered during all stages of the investigation and subsequently when the outcome of the investigation is known.

Children and carers and relevant others will be informed of the outcome of any investigation. The Fostering Service works closely with the placing social workers for the children, the Safeguarding Unit and relevant others including Police, to co-operate with any investigation and ensure records are kept of all complaints and allegations made and their outcomes.

Each foster care family will have a Safer Caring Policy completed prior to approval, and regularly reviewed. The Safer Caring Policy aims to reduce risks to all family members and the Child who is being Looked After.

When an investigation has been held, and where there is a substantiated allegation of abuse made about a foster carer, this will be reported to Ofsted, as outlined in the Foster Care Standards and Regulations (Regulation 29 and 37).

Appendix 1: Recruitment Pathway for Mainstream Carers

1. Enquiry received. Enquiry Officer inputs on database.

2. Information pack sent out – booklet and Register of Interest Form (ROIF).

3. Completed ROIF returned. Enquiry Officer inputs on database.
LA checks completed.

4. Team Manager allocates ROIF to SSWs.
Telephone interview completed.
Initial visit completed (if appropriate)
Application accepted or declined.
Letter sent to applicant to advise about the outcome.

5. Stage 1 assessment allocated.
Stage One Agreement completed
Checks and references completed. DBS completed. Medicals, training and learning identified.
Move to Stage 7 if satisfactory. Stage 6 if not

6. Assessment ended due to Stage 1 information.
Letter sent within 10 working days of last information received.

7. Stage 1 completed
Applicants are advised they will move to Stage Two
Stage 2 assessment process commences.

8. Stage 2 assessment report completed
All paperwork completed in file – electronic and paper.

9. The assessment report is presented to the fostering panel which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker – the prospective foster carer is encouraged to attend with the assessing social worker.

10. The Agency Decision Maker considers the Fostering Panel recommendation and any other advice before making the decision as to the suitability of the prospective foster carer to be approved as a foster carer for Leicester City Council.

11. If the prospective foster carer is unhappy with the decision (qualifying determination), then they may make representations or request that the Independent Review Mechanism review the decision.

Appendix 2: Kinship Foster Care Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Kinship Foster Care is where a Child or young person who is Looked After lives with family, friends or other people who are 'connected' with them, in a placement approved by the Local Authority; this will be under a Care Order (Section 31 Children Act 1989), Interim Care Order, or provision of accommodation by agreement (Section 20 CA 1989). Kinship foster carers are assessed and approved under The Fostering Services Regulations (2011) in line with BAAF Guidance, Fostering National Minimum Standards and the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010).
2. A key principle is that children and young people should be enabled to live within their families where it is consistent with their welfare. If children and young people cannot remain at home, then placement with family, friends or connected people should be explored. Having a secure attachment and placement stability are important in building resilience and promoting children's long-term well-being. Children within kinship care are generally reported to feel secure, happy and feel a sense of belonging within their family. Research also evidences high levels of commitment from Kinship carers, their strong bonds with the children, the pleasure they find in the children themselves and the satisfaction they derive from caring.
 - 2.1. Kinship placements can allow children to maintain positive links with their heritage and their sense of identity and self-esteem can be maximised.
 - 2.2. Many carers are grandparents where issues of age and health may be a significant factor. There may also be complex family relationships, housing overcrowding or financial difficulties. Carers need time and the opportunity to reflect on the impact of their decision. Ultimately, the assessment process with Kinship carers is designed to weigh up these factors with the welfare of the child or young person as the priority.

3. Assessments of prospective kinship carers

- 3.1. In Leicester, assessments are undertaken by the Kinship Fostering Assessment Team.
- 3.2. The workers within the team undertake assessments of prospective carers and provide supervision and support to the carers where a child has already been placed with the carers. Once approved, the ongoing supervision and support of kinship foster carers passes to the Kinship Supervision and Support Team. Where children and young people leave kinship care via rehabilitation to birth parents or via permanent orders such as Special Guardianship Orders the Supervision and Support Team in conjunction with the child's social worker continue to provide support until the order is made or the child returns home.

- 3.3. All referrals are welcomed without prejudice. This includes referrals irrespective of the age, gender, sexuality, or ethnic, cultural and religious heritage of the applicant. Where possible, assessments are allocated to Social Workers that reflect the heritage of the applicant. The assessing Social Worker will be provided with access to appropriate support and guidance.

4. The Referral System

- 4.1. It may be the case that there are several family members or friends who come forward to care for children. Social workers undertake a joint Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) along with an experienced worker from the Kinship Team, to identify whether a full assessment is needed.

5. The joint Initial Viability Assessment

- 5.1. When undertaking this viability assessment, the following will be covered.

- *Relevant sections of BAAF Form C*

Interviewing the prospective carers: This will cover issues such as their motivation, their relationship with the children, birth parents and contact. Issues of safety, parenting capacity, and family history are covered and areas such as whether the applicants have any major health or child protection concerns. See Schedule 4 of the 2010 Regulations.

- *Assessing the accommodation.*

Assessment is made of the space for a child or children and the safety of sharing a bedroom.

- *Safety checks,*

Social Care client database (Liquid Logic) and police checks are completed on all members of the household, checking with other Local Authorities if the proposed carers are known to them, if they do not live in Leicester City.

- *The child's wishes and feelings* about the proposed arrangements must be considered.

6. Regulation 24 Placements

- 6.1. There is provision in the legislation for Children and young people Looked After to be placed with carers for a time limited period where a full kinship foster care assessment is to be completed. The principle behind this is to not delay placements and/or minimise placement moves.

- 6.2. Where an immediate placement is made, checks are undertaken, and the Joint IVA completed, before placement. Good practice includes viewing case files the department holds on potential carers, to identify any concerns or risks to the child.

- 6.3. Temporary approval is granted. Information about the child including the Care Plan, is given to the carer, and a Placement Plan is prepared. The Child's Social Worker will visit weekly until the first Review, and then at least monthly. The full assessment is then undertaken.
- 6.4. Where a child has been placed under Regulation 24, although such placements may be positive in the longer term, there is clearly some degree of risk if the outcome of the assessment is not positive.
- 6.5. A Foster Carer Agreement (Regulation 24) is signed by the carers, and Service Manager. The carers will receive a Fostering Allowance and are eligible for equipment.
- 6.6. If the full assessment has not been completed after 16 weeks, agreement is sought for an extension to the temporary approval, (Regulation 25). The IRO is informed. The extension is up to a further 8 weeks.

7. The Assessment Process

- 7.1. Kinship foster carers are subject to as comprehensive assessment process as mainstream carers, but the assessment is focussed on meeting the needs of the specific child or children rather than generic issues. The BAAF Form C is used.
- 7.2. The assessment itself comprises the following: -
 - A series of weekly home visits (usually 6 to 10 visits) covering the applicants' history, relationships, support networks, parenting skills, child protection issues, ADP issues. Currently these visits are virtual and face to face.
 - Applicants have a full medical with their GP.
 - A minimum of 3 referees are interviewed – one family member and two non-related individuals.
 - Statutory checks are undertaken (DBS, Social Care Records, CAFCASS, Housing, Schools, Health Visitor, Employer).
 - The views of the child or children who are looked after are sought as are the views of any children or young people in the household.
 - Birth parents are asked about their knowledge of the parenting provided by the applicants, historical and current.
- 7.3. Workers undertaking the assessment will make a recommendation as to whether prospective carers should be approved as kinship foster carers. This is presented as a report to the Leicester City Fostering Panel that meets on a monthly basis. The Fostering Panel then makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.
- 7.4. If the outcome of the assessment (at any stage of the process) is negative, this will be discussed with the applicant, the Team Manager and Social Worker and an appropriate

course of action decided upon. Legal advice will be sought, particularly in care proceedings, and advice given to the applicant.

8. Support to Kinship Foster Carers

- Kinship foster carers are entitled to receive the full fostering allowance (this includes Regulation 24 and 25 Placements).
- Kinship Foster carers are eligible to take up all the training offered by the Fostering service.
- Kinship foster carers receive specific training related to kinship issues. They are expected to complete First Aid and Training, Support and Development Standards training offered by the Fostering Service.
- Kinship foster carers can get practical help with start-up costs and equipment such as beds, bedding etc.
- All Kinship Carers will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker and have access to out of ours support available to all Foster Carers.

9. Post Approval

9.1. All kinship foster carers have their own Supervising Social Worker. Their role is to supervise the placement and carers. Regular supervisory visits are undertaken alongside Unannounced Visits and Annual Reviews.

9.2. Where appropriate we will also provide advice to carers on how to secure legal orders for permanency e.g., Special Guardianship Orders and complete the necessary reports in conjunction with the childcare social worker.

10. Partnership working

Communication and partnership working between Social Workers, Kinship Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers in the fostering service is crucial to the success of kinship foster care placements.

Review of the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

The Fostering Service reviews the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis to ensure its aims, objectives, services, and facilities provided remain appropriate to the care of children and young people. The next review is due in April 2024.

The Fostering Service maintains a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that support the management of the Service, the care of children and advice / guidance / protocols to foster carers which are contained in the Foster Carer Handbook many of which can be found on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering.

