

# CYPE Scrutiny Commission

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Fostering Service

Annual Report 2021/22 and Statement of Purpose

CYPE Scrutiny: 25 October 2022

Lead director: Caroline Tote

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service Corporate Parenting
- Author contact details: 0116 454 1657
- Report version number: v1

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the council Fostering Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration. Our priority continues to be the recruitment of foster carers to enable more children to continue to live within local family households.
- 1.2 The majority of our children looked after (69%) are placed in foster care, with our foster carers looking after 50%, 281 children and young people on 31st March 2022. Despite a reduction on the previous year, the percentage of local in - house carers remain above the national average.
- 1.3 We have good rates of retention of foster carers and 37% of mainstream carers have 0-5 years' experience, 27% 5-10 years, 20% 10-20 years and 16% over 20 years' experience.
- 1.4 The Fostering Service currently supports 151 mainstream fostering households, 62 Kinship fostering households and 7 short break fostering households. The percentage of kinship fostering households has reduced although remains above the national average. This is in part due to the number of special guardianship arrangements allowing for children to remain living with family members without the need for formal care arrangements.

- 1.5 The service received 157 new enquiries in 2021-22, of which 57 households applied, and recruited 17 new mainstream fostering households in 2021-22, which was three lower than the previous year; 39 assessments were started or in progress. The number of recorded enquiries was lower than the previous year partly due to changes in recording methods and the drop off in general enquiries following the first lockdown.
- 1.6 Most of our children are placed locally, with 91% of our mainstream foster care homes located within Leicester and Leicestershire. This remains above the national average.
- 1.7 Long term placement stability continues to be a priority. We continue to exceed national and regional trends with more than 73% of children remaining in their home for more than 2 ½ years.
- 1.8 53% of our foster carers approved this year were approved to care for sibling groups. We extended and/or changed approvals for 11 mainstream fostering households to care for children on a permanent basis achieving permanence for 25 children. Children requiring permanent fostering placements are actively tracked to progress matching and permanence with positive outcomes for these children.

## **2. Recommended actions/decision**

- 2.1 This report is for information only and the Executive are asked to note and approve the Fostering Service Annual Report for 2021-22 and identified priorities for the coming year.

## **3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement**

- 3.1 The report has been prepared in consultation with the Service Manager for the Fostering Service and shared with relevant stakeholders in the mainstream Fostering and Kinship Teams, and the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team. The report will proceed to Children, Young

People and Education Scrutiny Commission. The report contains some direct quotations from carers who have been supported over the past year.

#### **4. Background and options with supporting evidence**

4.1 This is a covering report for the attached Fostering Service Annual Report 2021/22.

#### **5. Detailed report**

5.1 Please refer to the attached main report. If you have any questions about the information contained in this Annual Report or the Statement of Purpose, please contact the Fostering Team on 0116 454 4510.

#### **6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications**

##### **6.1 Financial implications**

6.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

Martin Judson, Head of Finance  
Adult Services / Education and Children's Services  
Tel 37 4101

##### **6.2 Legal implications**

6.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

Pretty Patel, Head of Law  
Tel 37 1457

### **6.3 Equalities implications**

- 6.3.1 The Equality Act expects us to show due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. Our public sector duty expects us to demonstrate how we do this, and included within this is how we undertake decisions, what information we are informed by and what impacts we have taken into consideration to address needs now and in the future.
- 6.3.2 The aims, objectives and services provided by the Leicester City Council fostering service as detailed in the annual report and activity refer to the support provided to our children looked after across all protected characteristics, the service continues to attract applicants with a range of heritages. The Fostering Service's aim is to maintain a sufficiently large and diverse range of foster carers and short-breaks carers to match children and young people's needs.
- 6.3.3 The service also advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations by encouraging and publicising fostering services to enable all members of the community to consider fostering as a positive option and to recruit from a wide variety of backgrounds to meet children's individual needs.
- 6.3.4 In addition, the service helps to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by recruiting foster carers who will respect the diverse cultures and lifestyles within society and who will bring up children and young people who will respect these differences. Potentially, children and young people will come from a wide range of backgrounds; all have different family situations, experiences, and will all need different types of care.
- 6.3.5 Going forward any new initiatives being developed along with current areas of work underway such as the digital transformation and introduction of the new CRM tool, need to ensure equality considerations are embedded throughout

the process going forward and equality impact assessments completed as appropriate.

- 6.3.6 The Equality Impact Assessment is an iterative document which should be revisited throughout the decision-making process and should, ultimately, also consider any consultation findings. The findings of the Equality Impact Assessment should be shared, throughout the process, with decision makers to inform their considerations and decision making. Where any potential disproportionate negative equalities impacts are identified in relation to a protected characteristic/s, steps should be identified and taken to reduce or remove that impact.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer,  
Tel 37 4175

#### **6.4 Climate Emergency implications**

- 6.4.1 There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Environment Team Tel 37 2284

#### **6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)**

- 6.5.1 None

### **7. Background information and other papers:**

- 7.1 Fostering Service Annual Statement of Purpose 2019/20.

**8. Summary of appendices:**

8.1 None

**9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

9.1 No

**10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?**

10.1 No

# fostering

Leicester City Council

Annual Report 2021-22





# Purpose

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

The Fostering Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children looked after, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home. The service ensures that our children and young people live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched foster families, and that our families are supported to deliver the best outcomes for our children and young people.

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**Our aim for children who are cared for is that that they will have a clear understanding of why they are looked after by the local authority, be given an opportunity to make sense of their experiences, knowing who is there to support them to achieve their goals and lead successful lives.**

The Fostering Service is also 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 Fostering Service Annual Report and Statement of Purpose are available to all staff, foster 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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering).



# Highlights of 2021-22

The fostering service has continued to support our foster carers and the children in their care. Routine visits and reviews moved to virtual meetings in accordance with national and local restrictions on contact during the pandemic, and then returned to pre-covid visiting. Where children and carers needed to be seen in person, contact or home visits have taken place throughout this year.

Support for our foster carers has been provided through online forums, webinars, training events and professional practice days, whilst peer support has been encouraged. The Service Manager has continued to provide a weekly bulletin to foster carers since the pandemic providing additional advice and support, and access to online resources. We have developed more online presence and we have increased our starting fees for new foster carers.

The Fostering Panel has continued to meet throughout the past year to ensure that potential foster carers can continue to be assessed and approved, and that children can be matched to carers without delay.

Joint working with the children in need team continues to be very successful in improving the quality of viability assessments for potential Kinship carers and we have also been able to cease the use of external providers leading to a higher quality of assessment.

## Key Successes

- ♥ We have increased our starting financial offer to be more competitive, which has led to an increase in high quality applications.
- ♥ Our work with corporate communications and digital transformation has opened new ways of working, which once implemented will lead to quicker response times, more focused work, and automation of tasks leading to better conversion rates and prioritising of resources.
- ♥ Our capital funding scheme has allowed existing foster carers to expand their homes and offer more homes to children and young people.
- ♥ Foster carers continue to tell us that we are supporting them, and we have found lots of new ways of offering support such as buddy schemes, online forums, webinars, training events and professional practice days and regular newsletters from the Fostering and Adoption Service Manager.

## Local Profile



- ♥ The majority of our Looked After Children (69%) are placed in foster care, with our foster carers looking after 50%, 281 children and young people on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- ♥ The Fostering Service currently supports 151 mainstream fostering households, 62 Kinship fostering households and 7 short break fostering households.
- ♥ We received 157 enquiries in 2021-22, of which 57 households applied.
- ♥ We have recruited 17 new mainstream fostering households in 2021-22.
- ♥ In addition to the 29 assessments progressed from enquiries received in 2021-22, a further 10 assessments remained on-going from the previous year 2020-21 – in total 39 assessments were started or in progress during 2021-22.
- ♥ Long term placement stability continues to be a priority. We continue to exceed national and regional trends with more than 73% of children remaining in their home for more than 2 ½ years.
- ♥ 53% of our foster carers approved this year were approved to care for sibling groups. We extended and/or changed approvals for 11 mainstream fostering households to care for children on a permanent basis; this confirmed permanence for 25 children.
- ♥ Most of our children are placed locally, with 91% of our mainstream foster care homes located within Leicester and Leicestershire.
- ♥ We have an experienced cohort of foster carers: 37% of mainstream carers have 0-5 years' experience, 27% 5-10 years, 20% 10-20 years and 16% over 20 years.
- ♥ We are recruiting to match the needs of our children in care: 77% of Leicester City Foster Carers are white British compared to 82% nationally. 23% of our carers have

diverse heritages, compared to 15% nationally, and our foster carers speak over 20 languages and practice 16 different religions, some with no religion.

# Recruitment and Retention



Increasing the number of Leicester City foster carers is a significant priority for the Council. We aim to recruit and retain a large and diverse range of foster carers and short-breaks carers to match our children and young people’s needs.

Our dedicated recruitment and assessment team consists of 1 Team Manager, 1 Publicity Officer, 1 Enquiries Officer, 4 Assessment Workers and a Child Care Support worker. It should be recognised that as corporate parents, all services across the organisation play a role in supporting and delivering better outcomes for our foster families and our children. Our Publicity Officer works closely with colleagues in the Corporate Communications Team to create appropriate and cost-effective recruitment campaigns, based on areas of need, using various online and more traditional methods such as posters, postcards and banners as well as recruitment events, radio campaigns and adverts in newspapers.

Our Enquiries Officer is available on the phone, e-mail, social media and in person at regular recruitment events to provide a friendly, warm welcome to fostering for Leicester City and to discuss individual circumstances.

Those interested in fostering and provided with an application pack and are given information about upcoming information events. Once an application pack is received, an initial visit is arranged to discuss individual circumstances in more detail. This ensures that we are assessing the right people, at the right time.

Our assessments are completed by assessment workers in a timely fashion but are also comprehensive and ensure that the foster family are ready to become foster carers.

## Outcomes

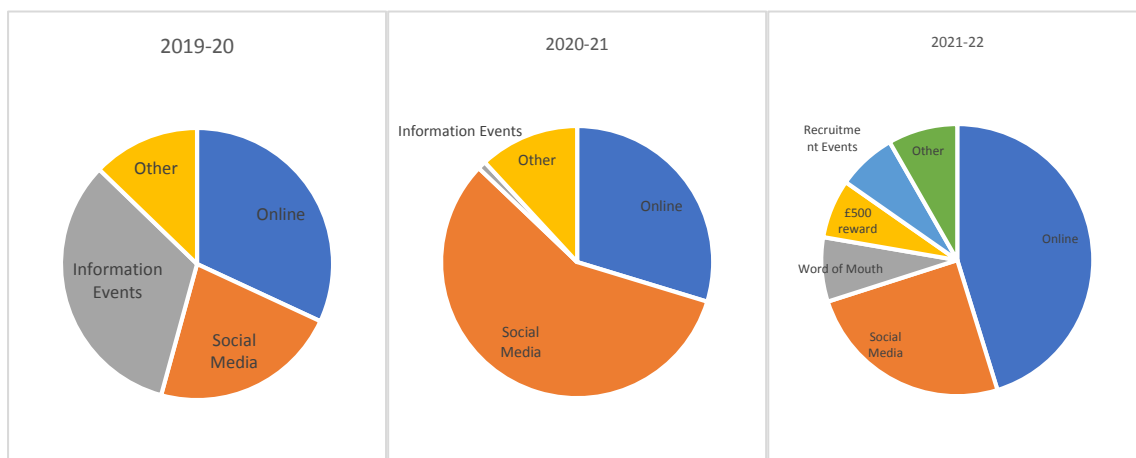
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Enquiries	257	197	408	157
Applications	52	41	48	57
Assessments	47	31	25	29
Approvals	27	18	20	17

Enquiries to applications	20%	21%	13%	36%
Applications to assessments	90%	76%	46%	51%
Assessments to approvals	57%	58%	80%	55%

## Initial Enquiries

Our online presence remains strong, and the increased financial offer means we are now more competitive against our neighbouring local authorities and independent fostering agencies. Of the 157 enquiries received, a snapshot of where enquiries are received from is shown below

- 45% (71) via Internet
- 25% (39) via Facebook
- 8% (12) via Word of Mouth
- 7% (11) via £500 reward
- 7% (11) via Recruitment Events
- 8% (13) other – including google ads, leaflets, Leicester Mercury etc



As part of our new strategy, we have:

- ♥ Increased our starting financial offer to be more competitive with private agencies
- ♥ Increased our social media presence, held 23 Virtual Information Sessions offering both day and evening session. The team have also completed a video recording of a presentation of Information Session, to use virtually.
- ♥ Created a Facebook Enquiries Form
- ♥ Refreshed our printed materials for Short Breaks and Postcards

Two successful recruitment strategies have been the 'golden hello' and the £500 reward payment. 7 of the 17 approved carers received a 'golden hello' of £1000 as they were approved for either sibling groups, or teenage placements. 2 current foster carers received a £500 reward for recommending friends who went on to be approved this year. This is a positive recruitment aid, as the applicants already have a realistic view of fostering and have friends who can offer support and advice.

We are currently progressing with procuring a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool which will help to respond to enquiries and applications at a time which is best suited to the enquirer, prioritise those who are most interested, automate admin processes, and

highlight trends and areas of interest to ensure we are focusing on what matters will deliver the best outcomes. This is expected to be in place by the end of 2022.

## Applications

Nationally there is a distinct difference in conversion rates of initial enquiries to applications. Our conversion rate is approximately 1 application per 10 enquiries received, which compares well against IFAs with an average conversion of 1 application per 20 enquiries received, while other local authorities reported a conversion of 1 application per 9 enquires.

Of the 57 applications received, 52 progressed through to initial visits and 5 were withdrawn or rejected.

Of the 52 scheduled for an initial visit, 40 proceeded to an initial visit, 5 are awaiting an initial visit and 7 withdrew prior to attending an initial visit.

Of the 40 who proceeded to an initial visit, 29 were progressed through to assessment and 11 were withdrawn or rejected.

- 2 withdrew due to personal reasons
- 2 language barriers
- 3 lacked experience
- 1 financial
- 1 space/housing
- 2 availability / not meeting service needs

## Assessments

In addition to the 29 assessments progressed from enquiries received in 2020-21, a further 10 assessments remained on-going from the previous year 2019-20 – in total 39 assessments were started or in progress during 2020-21.

Our assessment timescales remain positive, with 87% of mainstream assessments being completed within 4-5 months, (compared to 90% in 2020-21), well under the National Minimum Standard of 8 months.

Applicants who are unsuccessful include those who fail to meet basic requirements, for example their working pattern may not be flexible enough; they may lack experience of looking after or working with children; they may demonstrate that it would be unlikely they will meet the minimum standards. Some applicants may express attitudes inconsistent with fostering; they may have health issues that prevent fostering; some will be excluded after negative background checks.

## Approvals

In 2021-22 we approved 17 fostering households.

Type of household	Number	Percentage	Max approval of household
Mainstream permanent	4	23%	7
Mainstream not permanent	10	59%	10 (14 if siblings)
Mainstream respite	1	6%	1
Short Breaks	2	12%	2

It is not uncommon to see a higher number of not permanent carers during their initial approval – this allows the new cares the opportunity to gain experience and adapt their lifestyle to fostering. Over time, we begin to see not permanent carers expand their approval to permanent fostering at a time which is right for them and the children in their care (for example, the fostering panel heard 11 changes to approval this year).

## Retention

In 2021-22, 27 fostering households left the service as seen below:

Type of household	Number of households	Percentage	Max approval of household
Mainstream permanent	4	15%	9
Mainstream not permanent	18	66%	31
Mainstream respite	4	15%	9
Short breaks	1	4%	1

The context of our retention of foster carers for 2021/22 is that it has been a difficult and emotionally taxing year, with the pandemic and isolation and greater levels of demand on families. Subsequently, most carers (14) left due to changes in personal circumstances (52%) which included new employment and moving cities, a couple separating, a change in family dynamics, supporting a nephew, and prioritising family needs. Six households left due to concerns raised by the Service, and four left due to ill health. One carer resigned following a complaint, one transferred to an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and one household left due to their foster child turning 18.

## Kinship (Family and Friends) Carers

There is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess all potential family members as potential kinship carers for looked after children. Locally we have a comparatively high number of kinship carers.

Family members who need to be considered for kinship care are subject to a Joint Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) usually carried out by the Children in Need Service arising out of care proceedings.

A Supervising Social Worker from the Kinship Team has been ‘embedded’ alongside Social Workers in the Children in Need Teams, to support quality and consistency of viability assessments giving advice and collaboratively completing joint viability visits.

The joint working has proved to be very successful in improving the quality of viabilities. Resources are being focussed and dedicated to identifying positive family options alongside counselling out negative viabilities.

There have been no assessments outsourced to an external provider since August 2020 following reconfiguration of the Kinship Team, leading to a higher quality of assessment. Of the assessments completed in 2021-22:

- ♥ 15 were approved
- ♥ 5 were concluded as negative



# Fostering Panel

The role of the Fostering Panel is to make recommendations to the local authority regarding the suitability of foster carers. The panel also quality assures reports and gives feedback to the Team Managers to promote opportunities and share learning.

The Panel consists of experienced individuals who work to ensure that Looked after Children in Leicester City enjoy a consistently high standard of care with approved foster carers who can meet their needs.

From June 2021 all first Foster Home Reviews are brought to Panel, and the foster carers attend. This improved practice and has begun to give an overview on carers' first year's fostering.

In 2021-22 a total of 23 panel meetings were held – these meetings considered:

- ♥ 37 applications across mainstream, kinship and short break households
- ♥ 11 changes to approval
- ♥ 12 first reviews
- ♥ 17 additional requests (such as extensions to regulation 25, attached support and exemptions).

## Our Local Support Offer for Foster Carers

### Our Team

The main source of support for our foster carers is access to an experienced and qualified Supervising Social Worker allocated to each fostering household. Foster carers indicate that this relationship is one of the most important elements of the local offer. The Team around the child is invaluable as shown in the comments below.

“C is 7 years old, has global developmental delay and is awaiting hearing aids and requires speech and language in line with an EHCP. It is noted how well the foster carers have been working with the adopters and with professionals towards C having a family – how she has gone above and beyond, C has been placed there 2 years. The work that has taken place to get C's journey to this point is acknowledged, the Social Worker, Adoption Worker, and colleagues well done in this – I could see on your faces how proud and delighted you are. This is a good news story given C's age and health needs- and a previous adoption placement not lasting, no one has given up on him.”

### Our Local Offer

In addition to our Supervising Social Workers day-to-day support, we also offer a range of other support resources to support our foster carers, this includes:

- ♥ Our Foster Carers are provided with membership to Foster Talk, an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting Foster Carers. They provide a comprehensive support package including 24 hour legal, counselling, and medical

and first aid helplines; accountancy and tax advice, high street discounts, legal expenses insurance, education advisory service, and independent support during allegations.

- ♥ A comprehensive Handbook for Foster Carers is published online.
- ♥ There are close working relationships with a range of childcare professionals including the child's Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, the Virtual School Team, Health colleagues, and the Children and Families Support Team (CFST) providing therapeutic advice and direct work.

*"A always supports B to come to his therapeutic sessions. She offers a warm response to B before and after his session and takes an interest in his emotional health. A seems to have a great understanding of B and his needs with regards to the impact of developmental trauma. They appear to have a healthy loving relationship and B knows that she cares about him. I wish we had more fosters carers like A".*

- ♥ All carers have an annual review meeting chaired by a Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) who sits outside of the service within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team.
- ♥ Peer support is established, by foster carers in the city.
- ♥ An annual professional development Conference went ahead virtually this year, allowing more foster carers and workers to join.
- ♥ Active Leicester Membership entitles the whole fostering family and those they care for to access free swimming and gym.
- ♥ 30 hours free childcare is provided for foster carers meeting eligibility criteria.
- ♥ Bespoke financial support is provided to foster carers via a Leisure Fund, to enable children and young people to sustain their interests over time, building confidence, skills, and enjoyment.
- ♥ Access to Bullfrog Arts focuses on improving the emotional health, wellbeing, and self-efficacy of looked after children and young people and their foster carers through music and singing culminating in an annual concert, which was virtual this year.
- ♥ It is hoped that the annual celebration and Meet the Team events will be reinstated in line with changing government guidance on group gatherings.

## Sons and Daughter's Group

The group is an activity-based support group for sons and daughters of our registered foster carers which has previously met regularly throughout the year. Due to the inability to meet up over the past year we have missed the meetings and activities for the young people, plus opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings about the experience of fostering.

Members of the group have previously contributed to the Skills to Foster training programme for new carers and have also contributed to Ofsted inspections. As a group they have evolved using feedback from consultations with the children and their parents, in supervisions, from foster home reviews and team meetings, which has highlighted the need for more training. As a result, we have previously been able to provide training on several relevant issues which included on-line grooming, the role of the Supervising Social Worker, Bullying, Loss and Transitions and building resilience in terms of support networks. Outcomes from the training events are then in turn fed back to the service, informing individual practice and Service Development. Young People have taken a lead role in the planning and running of activities. The previous take up of young people wanting to be part of the working group, as well as attending regular activities, clearly evidences the need for support and training for sons and daughters, so that they are better able to support their own needs and a successful placement of a Looked after Child. Our Supervising Social Workers all get to know the sons and daughters of our foster carers and will speak and meet with them individually subject to parental consent.

### **The Children and Families Support Team (CFST)**

The Children and Families Support Team (CFST) provide assessment and intervention to children and their families and carers to enable them to live safely in their family environment and within the community. The team has worked with 38 children who are Looked After by the local authority over the past year, working with the child or young person and their caregivers. They have worked with 8 young people (Lac and non-Lac) who have used Sexually Harmful Behaviour and are subject to Harmful Sexual Behaviour Plans. Additionally, CFST provide training to foster carers and Hub meetings for case discussions and support. Over the past year CFST has helped 16 foster carers via the CFST Hub. From a parent whose son was helped therapeutically:

“I feel the therapy has really helped my son and is a much-needed service. C listened and helped my son with some deep-rooted issues, her knowledge and guidance helped him to confront traumas/issues and gave him coping strategies. I feel he connected with C and he felt comfortable talking to her she made him feel at ease and relaxed, she was not judgmental. C would let him talk and get his feelings out, she would interject with her thoughts and opinions and give him ways to cope and a different perspective. I definitely feel my son came out of the therapy with a better understanding of his own traumas, better and more positive relationships with people around him and less angry. Thank you very much C for such a brilliant service and therapy that has help my family so much”

### **Training for Foster Carers**

The three main areas of our training offer are Initial preparation training for mainstream carers, ongoing offer of training for all carers, including one-off training provided by partners, and Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for all carers.

During lockdown The Skills to Foster courses have been run on a rolling programme approximately every 8 weeks to meet the needs of applicants. 4 courses were completed during 2021 - 22, this included a brief virtual introduction session, 2 online courses (8 hours of content each) 2 virtual training sessions with a social worker and a foster carer and a one-to-one reflective session. Over the past year 34 applicants were trained. This was followed by a session for Sons and Daughters, for ages 7 to 18. There have been 5 virtual or blended Son's and Daughter's sessions. The feedback from this is positive, with 14 children appreciating an understanding of confidentiality, safeguarding and what a Supervising Social Worker does.

A new virtual course has been developed and run by the Kinship Team, entitled Introduction to Kinship Foster Care. Other new virtual courses have been provided by Inspire Training including Therapeutic Parenting; Calming the angry child; Dealing with lying; Using PACE in real life; Overcoming compassion fatigue; Surviving the holidays; How to deal with arguing. Foster Carers received a regular weekly email from the Service Manager with attachments and hyperlinks on a range of relevant information and resources throughout the year.

The 2021 Annual Conference '*The Power of the Senses*' was run virtually by the Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team at Beacon House. The conference provided an understanding of children's sensory systems impacted by trauma and loss and included a toolbox of practical everyday sensory strategies to support regulation

The Service has a well-established e-learning platform from Kate Cairns Associates, offering a range of general and specialised fostering topics. Currently 66 courses are offered from Level 1 to Level 3. An e-learning journal completed by carers offers opportunities to reflect on practice and there is opportunity to be mentored by their Supervising Social Worker in an interactive way outside of face-to-face contact.

Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) are completed by carers through commissioned e-learning from The Grey Matter Group. Carers have been completing courses at home, starting the Standards over the past year and completing them. The six weekly drop-in sessions were moved to a virtual platform due to Covid-19 restrictions, so the carers continued to benefit from the support from the Fostering Team and an experienced foster carer. All carers must complete their TSDS; mainstream carers need to complete this within a year of approval and Kinship Carers within 18 months. Newly approved carers are now demonstrating they can complete within this timescale. Further work is being undertaken to support kinship carers. The reviewing of individual foster carers and their training is monitored in supervision and in the Foster Carer Annual Review.

## Quality Assurance

Foster Home Reviews are completed by a dedicated Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO), whilst unannounced visits and supervisory visits completed by Supervising Social Workers, all contribute to an assessment of the child's lived experience in the home. Timeliness of foster carers' reviews has improved significantly, with 96% completed. This means that foster carer's performance, consideration of training and development needs are reviewed regularly. Foster carers are positive about the support that they receive from their Supervising Social Workers and the service.

Whilst unannounced visits dipped during covid precautions, compliance has now returned to pre-covid levels, as shown by the Foster Home Review Monitoring forms:  
1-4-21 to 1-9-21 96% of annual unannounced visits were completed (93 FHRs)  
2-9-21 to 31-3-22 99% of annual unannounced visits were completed (71 FHRs)  
Commendations over the past year have included the following from a social worker:

*"D provides an outstanding level of care. M is 100% incorporated into D's family life. It is a very happy, active, supportive and caring family and Ma is thriving in D's care.  
M enjoys an array of healthy activities, he is frequently attending after-school activities and clubs particularly so pre covid  
D is very aware of the impact of trauma throughout early years. Whilst recognising the neglect suffered by M she work hard to support M to overcome these experiences. D has developed an extremely positive relationship with parents to ensure M enjoys his contacts and all involved feel happy, engaged and supported.  
D is supporting M with his attendance at CFST  
In respect of the foster home D provides a very safe environment and a happy environment. M is fully supported to participate and achieve. He had as lots of activities that he enjoys and D is so positive in relation to education. M has been supported to come on in leaps and bounds since being in this placement.  
D is extremely supportive and acts very quickly and willingly on suggestions that I make. D is a pleasure to work with and I am very appreciative of the support and care she gives M".*

Below is what child L said about his care; he drew a lovely picture of P calling him for dinner and him on his computer asking for more time on his game!! With lots of laughs written over the picture.

*"I have my own money. I feel like family, not a foster kid. Mum nurtures me, she gives me love, buys me things and feeds me. The house isn't dull and it's funny. We have good times together. I love that B lives here. I can tell mum and K anything. I have nice things. D and M give me cuddles.  
I sometimes feel like I don't get as much freedom as others eg can't help myself to snacks, restrictions on screen times.  
Mum has helped me with all the above. Mum and K helped me to talk about my emotions. They help me see how important education is and if I do well at school I'll have a better future. They praise me if I do good and help me with my confidence.  
I only wish that there were no rules around my screen time. Although I understand why".*

Foster Carers are now attending and supporting the five Corporate Parenting subgroups, (Active Citizenship; Health and Wellbeing; Education Training and Employment; Preparing for Successful Living; A Place to Live). This allows Foster Carers to contribute to and influence decision making and service developments for Children Looked After.

## Managing Allegations

From 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, there were 21 households involved in incidents of allegations against Foster Carers. All allegations or concerns are followed up rigorously by the service.

Safeguarding Strategy Meetings and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) investigations were held. There were 3 substantiated allegations (two involving neglect and one of physical harm). There have been 10 post LADO Reports where all findings have been presented to the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker. Three fostering households have subsequently been deregistered.

## Placement Stability

- ♥ 6% of our children looked after experienced 3 placement moves or more which is currently lower than England and our statistical neighbours (10%)
- ♥ 73% of our looked after children have been in placement for over 2 years which is currently higher than England (70%) and our statistical neighbours (70%)

Stable and secure relationships are a vital element to ensuring that our Looked After Children are safe and have the best possible opportunities to fulfil their aspirations, whilst consistent and high-quality relationships with carers add to their resilience and security. Robust actions are taken to prevent placement breakdown and stability meetings are called to identify additional resources to stabilise placements deemed to be vulnerable.

As part of the strategy to improve permanence for our children looked after, a permanent fostering monitoring group (PFMG) has been established to review and track all children to ensure progress and prevent delay. This promotes better outcomes, supports placement stability, and reduces long-term arrangements with more costly IFAs.

Activity to support family finding for permanence includes:

- approaching existing foster carers – through a monthly e-bulletin.
- recruiting more permanent foster carers.
- approaching local Independent Fostering Agencies – through a new e-bulletin; this has had a positive start in identifying permanent homes for our children.
- The use of Link Maker to search for possible placements outside of Leicester City
- bespoke recruitment for specific children – this will be an innovative recruitment approach as evidenced by conversations with Coram BAAF.

## Staying Put Scheme

Young people who are care leavers have the option of staying with their foster carer after they turn 18. Care Leavers make good use of Staying Put arrangements with their ex-foster carers post-18, with 58 young people using this as a 'springboard' for increased independence, e.g., before they move on to their own accommodation, or higher education opportunities. All care leavers are encouraged to consider this option prior to leaving care,

and currently 16 care leavers aged 19 and 20 remain living with their carers under 'staying put'.

Other young people return to their carers for Sunday lunches and celebratory events, and for ongoing support and interest in their lives. Policies and guidance are appropriately targeted for young people, professionals and those foster carers who wish to participate.

## Looking Ahead to 2022-23

### Recruitment of Foster Carers

Whilst we have an overall need for more foster carers, there are specific needs for more carers who can support young people over the age of 11 years, larger sibling groups and children and young people with more complex needs due to trauma histories and attachment difficulties.

We will continue to develop our permanence recruitment scheme and two new specialist foster carer schemes to care for children and young people with more complex needs.

We will strengthen our position using a CRM which will support our recruitment team to better understand and deliver a timely, effective response to enquiries and applications.

### Enhancing our Local Offer

We will continue to enhance our local support offer using learning from their annual foster home reviews and in consultation with foster carers to shape a local offer which meets the needs of our foster carers.

### A Corporate Wide Commitment to our Foster Carers

We will continue to champion and advocate for a corporate wide commitment to our foster carers, recognising each service's role as a corporate parent to support our foster carers. As part of this work, we will develop a foster carer charter which will outline our commitments.

### Participation and Engagement

We will continue to build on our participation and engagement work with our foster carers ensuring that their voices are heard and help to shape our services going forward. Visit [www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering) for more information.

# 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](http://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](http://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 Fostering 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](mailto: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 2023.

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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering).



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