STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

SERVICES TO PEOPLE DIRECTORATE

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Stockport Council Fostering Service is inspected by Ofsted.

Anyone wishing to make representations to the Commission regarding the standards of practice of the Fostering Service should contact Ofsted at the following address:-

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Preface

The Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service is required, under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards in Foster Care 2011, to produce a Statement of Purpose setting out its aim, objectives, available resources, policies and organisational structure through which it delivers the required services.

The Statement is updated on a regular basis and at least annually in order to meet the changing demands on the Service and to reflect its Business Planning processes and its commitment to continuous improvement.

Within the following document the term family placement officer will also be used in reference to short breaks officers and the term Foster carer will include short breaks carers who are registered foster carers.

The Statement of Purpose is formally approved by elected members on an annual basis.

A copy of the statement of purpose can be found on the Stockport Council's fostering webpages at www.stockport.gov.uk/fostering.

Mission Statement

The Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service is committed to a process of continuous improvement in the development and delivery of its services to foster carers, children placed with them and Social Work staff. In order to achieve this goal, the service is committed to working in partnership with parents, carers, children and young people.

The Service strives to achieve Level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, in that we aim to be recognised and known as an inclusive organisation which represents, serves and employs people as equals. The Service values people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances.

The Foster Carer's Charter underpins this Statement of Purpose

Principles

The Fostering Service staff work to the following set of principles;

1. In all work with children and families, there should be a clearly stated purpose within the context of safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare and protection.

2. The participation of children, parents (and people with parental responsibility), foster carers and significant others should be carefully considered and encouraged where it would not be prejudicial to the safety and welfare of the child.

3. The views and wishes of children, commensurate with their age and understanding, should always be sought and taken seriously.

4. The views of parents, people with parental responsibility, and foster carers should be sought and taken seriously.

5. Consideration must be given to the needs of children and their families and other people involved in their care with regard to race, culture, religion, disability, gender, sexuality and age.

6. All work with carers, children and their families must include a focus on their strengths.

7. All work with carers, children and their families should be conducted in a mode and style of communication that is accessible and appropriate

8. All work with carers, children and their families should include explanation of the roles and responsibilities of professionals and the agency, as well as their rights, including their right to challenge and make complaints.

9. All work with carers, children and their families should be properly recorded at each stage. Such records may also form the basis of written agreements between the agency and the child, parents and foster carers. Disagreements, when they occur, must also be recorded.

10. All work with carers, children and their families must be consistent with Council and inter-agency policies, procedures and guidelines.

11. All work with carers, children and their families should be consistent with the principles of partnership and inter-agency co-operation as specified under the Children Act 1989.

12. The welfare of the child is paramount and will be the priority whenever there is a conflict of views.

13. Any concern or allegation in relation to a carer will be investigated fully and fairly, and the outcome reported to Fostering Panel.

Policies

All services delivered by the Fostering Service are subject to the policies and procedures of Stockport Council.

The welfare of the child is paramount and staff are required to ensure that their work promotes the child's welfare and protection.

The policies of the Fostering Service have been developed jointly with foster carers through the Family Placement Policy Group whose membership has included foster carers, Fostering Service staff and representatives of the Social Work teams and the Staff Development section. Policies are subsequently regularly updated.

The Fostering Service works to policies and procedure guidance covering the following areas;

- Short Breaks Policy
- Health and Safety for foster carers and staff
- Safer Caring for children and foster carers
- Anti bullying
- Confidentiality
- Health of 'looked after' children
- Education of 'looked after' children
- Contact between children and their families
- Permanence planning
- Sex and relationships education
- Equal opportunities
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Safeguarding including professional abuse
- Recording
- Family finding and Matching
- Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Recruitment, Assessment and approval and supervision of Carers
- Missing From Home
- Staff Supervision
- Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation
- Whistle-blowing
- Smoking
- Quality & Assurance Framework/Family Placement Quality Assurance Policy
- Family and Friends Foster Carers
- Bedroom sharing and sleeping guidance
- Procedure for file maintenance
- Safe Transport

All staff employed who hold responsibility for children and to supervise foster carers are qualified social workers trained in child care work.

Standards aspired to by the Service

The staff and managers of the Service aspire to achieve the following standards for delivery of fostering services to foster carers, children placed and their families.

The standards are based on the UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999.

1. Children referred for placement with foster carers are matched with carers who will recognise, and work in partnership with others to meet, the needs of the child in respect of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.

2. Placement of a child with foster carers will be based on an assessment of the child's needs prior to placement, a plan for the child and the communicating of that assessment and plan to the foster carers and all other relevant persons.

3. Care plans are regularly updated and the role of the foster carer in achieving the objectives in that plan is clear and made in agreement with the carer.

4. Each child in placement with a foster carer has a suitably qualified responsible Social Worker whose prime role is to ensure that statutory requirements are met for the child's welfare, development and protection.

5. Each foster home is assessed and inspected with the aim of providing a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for the child.

6. Each foster carer is trained and prepared to develop and implement his/her own 'family' safer caring policy which should ensure that a child experiences a safe environment free of neglect, exploitation and abuse. This is done with assistance from the Family Placement Officer.

7. Each foster carer is supported and trained to promote appropriate contact for children with birth family members and friends, subject to the requirements of the Care Plan. In the case of short breaks carers they will be supported to maintain effective and appropriate working relationships with the families of the children they support.

8. Each foster carer is trained and supported to work in partnership with Social Work staff, Educational personnel and Health personnel to meet the education and health needs of the child placed and to provide appropriate materials and guidance to help the child to achieve his/her potential. Carers are encouraged to be ambitious in their promotion of both the education and health of looked after children.

9. Each foster carer has a suitably qualified and experienced supervising Social Worker (Family Placement Officer) whose role is to provide support, training opportunities, guidance and advice to the carer to enable him/her to provide a consistent and good standard of care to children.

10. Each foster carer has the opportunity to access the extra support from a fostering outreach support worker, subject to assessment of need.

11. The training and development needs of each carer are assessed and the carer is provided with training courses to further develop his/her skills.

12. Each foster carer is subject to a review of his/her approval at least once a year. This review is undertaken jointly with the carer and is recorded. The carer will receive a copy of the review document and its recommendations.

13. The Fostering Service provides each carer with a weekly allowance to enable him/her to meet the financial costs of providing a good standard of care for a child. The allowances are reviewed annually. Allowances also cover the additional expenses incurred in being a foster carer and a recompense to recognise the skills of the carer. In the case of short breaks carers payments will be made on a sessional basis.

14. The Fostering Service has a set of policies and procedures, a management structure, systems and a staffing establishment to ensure the proper delivery of services to foster carers and children placed with them.

15. Training and development programmes are available to assist staff in identifying and responding to the diverse needs of those who use the foster care service.

16. The Fostering Service has a 'pool' of foster carers who are able to meet the needs of children for local foster placements. The Service has a recruitment and retention strategy, which is based on an assessment of the range of needs of the children in its area, and the demand for placements.

17. Foster carers are assessed on their ability to meet the required competencies appropriate to meet children's needs and approval is based on the recommendation of a Fostering Panel constituted under the required standards and Regulations.

18. Foster Carers and children are informed of their right to make a complaint against the Service if they are dissatisfied with the quality of the service provided to them. Foster Carers are encouraged to be supported in this by an Independent person, and children are supported by the Children's Rights Service.

Compliance with the above standards is monitored through a number of 'mechanisms' within the Fostering Service:

- Supervision of foster carer practice
- Supervision of Placement Officer/Children's Social Worker
- Supervision of Team Managers
- Foster care service management meetings
- Fostering Panel Business meetings

- Statutory review process of both carers and children
- Case record audit as set out in the Quality Audit framework
- Monitoring related to Schedule 6 and Schedule 7
- Quality Assurance role of Fostering Panel
- Quarterly reporting to the Executive

Aim and Objectives

The Service aim is to continue to deliver to an outstanding level in all its activities and, for the year 2013/14, to meet or exceed all the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards in Foster Care 2011.

The Service objectives are:

- Provide a range of high quality foster placements suitable for meeting the diverse needs of looked after children and young people; and in particular to work to expand the foster carer workforce to care for children who are more difficult to place

- Good quality support to foster carers

- 'Best Value' in its service delivery

- the creation of an organisational culture which promotes value of people partnership and clear objective setting

- compliance with all national and local requirements

- to promote the co-operation of all those people of significance to a child in order to improve the standard of care experienced by the child

- to consult with carers, children and their families and Staff interacting with the service

- to value diversity and promote equal opportunity by recognising and respecting the diverse backgrounds and life experiences of children and young people; and by ensuring that workers and carers promote anti-discriminatory and anti-depressive practise.

- To continue to develop multi-agency working to achieve best outcomes for children within the Service.

- To ensure the voice of the child is **central** to continually improving the quality of foster care in Stockport.

- To help looked after children achieve across the five outcomes of:

    - Staying safe – children should be safe and protected
    - Being healthy - children have the opportunity and support to make healthy choices and to lead active lives
    - Enjoying and achieving – children should be supported and encouraged to reach their potential and achieve in education
    - Making a positive contribution – all children should have the opportunity to participate in positive activities which challenge and develop them
    - Achieving economic well-being – all children are given help with skills and opportunities to help them have a secure and independent future

Business Planning

The Fostering Service has a business plan 2012/14 which sets out the priorities for service development.

This plan stems from the Council's Priority Outcomes for Children and Young People.

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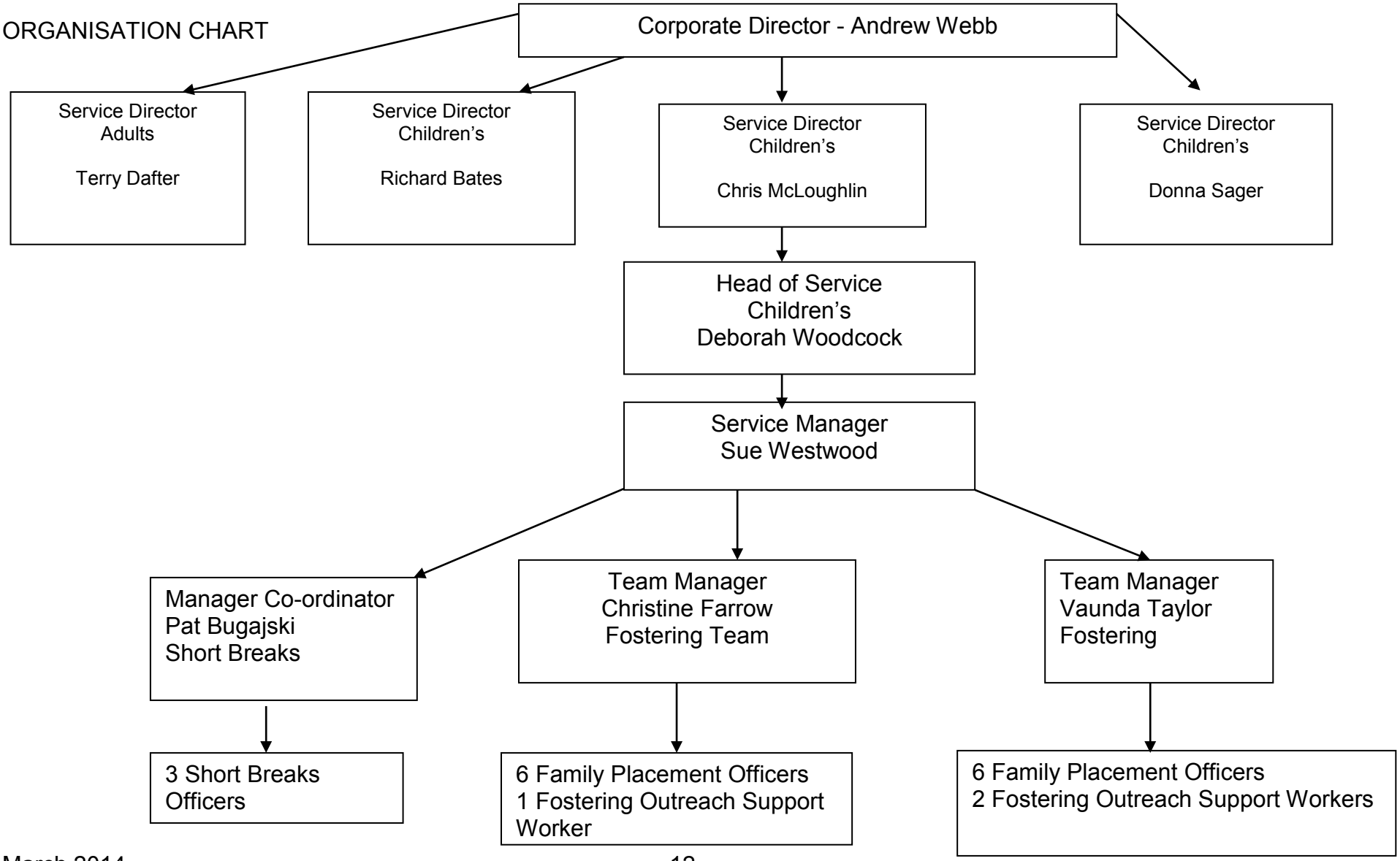
MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

ORGANISATION CHART



Management Structure

The Service is managed by Sue Westwood, Service Manager for Family Placement Services who is accountable to the Head of Service Manager, Deborah Woodcock, directly accountable to the Service Director of Social Care and Health, Chris McLoughlin.

The 'short break' project has been relocated to sit within the Family Placement Service, and the Manager/Coordinator is managed by Sue Westwood.

Team Management

The Fostering Service has 2 Team Managers, with individually allocated Family Placement Officers for supervision, and some individual lead responsibilities.

The Managers work jointly with the Service Manager in relation to recruitment and assessment.

Staffing

All supervising Social Workers are required to be professionally qualified Social Workers. They are all recruited and appointed within the Council's Recruitment and Selection policies and procedures with clear Job Descriptions and Person Specifications.

Fostering Team

Service Manager, Sue Westwood	Appointed November 2002 Professionally qualified 1981 Over 20 year's child care experience in variety of fieldwork and management settings. NVQ5 Strategic Management
Team Manager, Christine Farrow	Appointed August 2004 Professional Social Work qualification 1979 PQCCA; NVQ 4 Over 20 years' child care experience including over 22 years of experience within Family Placement settings
Team Manager, Vaunda Taylor	Appointed February 2007. Professional qualification 1999 PQ CCA 2004; NVQ 4 Worked in Family Placement 7 yrs and within a variety of child care setting over the last 14 years, including residential and family placement

Family Placement Officers:

1. Carole Poulson	Appointed February 1990 as Family Placement Officer Professionally qualified 1985 Holds post qualifying Child Care Award
2. Alexis Mackenzie	Appointed October 1995 as Family Placement Officer Professionally qualified 1988 Holds certificate in family placement
3. Debbie Boardman	Appointed as Family Placement Officer March 2002 Professionally qualified in Social Work
4. Caroline Bickley	Appointed August 1998 Professionally qualified 1994
5. Lindsey Malley Agency worker	Recruiting and supervisory Social worker Qualified 2006
6. Maria McCotter	Appointed March 2003 Professionally qualified in October 1982 Many years of child care experience

7. Jackie Gould Marketing Officer	Appointed August 2009 CIM qualified in 2000 Extensive marketing and communications in both public and private sector
8. Pauline Stringer	Agency worker and supervising social worker
9. Zoe Knipe	Appointed June 2006. Professionally qualified with significant child care experience
10. Margaret Manya	Appointed August 2007. Professionally qualified 1983 in Social Work
11. Tracy Lally	Appointed September 2010 DIPSW 2005
12. Jane Parsons – 18.5hrs	Appointed September 2008. BA Hons in Humanities – Polytechnic of Wales 1985 MA in Social Work University of Salford 2006 3 years' post qualifying experience
13. Janice Wilson – 12 hrs	Appointed September 2004 Professionally qualified 1987

Short Breaks Project

Manager/Practitioner Pat Bugajski	Appointed April 2002 as project worker Professionally qualified 1991 Involved in Children's Support Services since 1984 Appointed August 2005 as Co-coordinator/Manager
Short Breaks Co-ordinator Marie Bullock	Appointed July 2009 Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work BA in Education Studies Joined SMBC in July 2004 as Social Worker in Children's Disability Team
Short Breaks Co-ordinator Richard Foster	Appointed October 2006 Qualified December 2004 Worked with Community Outreach Team. Stockport Parenting Co-Coordinator.

Short Breaks Co-ordinator
Wendy Delag

Short Breaks Co-ordinator
Lesley O'Donnell

Fostering Outreach Workers

Anne Grogan	Appointed December 2008 NVQ 4 in Child & Health and Young People in Social Care 8 years experience of working in residential homes as Residential Care Worker Key Worker at Cheshire House.
Jane McManus	Appointed September 2007 BTec Diploma in Health and Social Care NVQ3 in health and social care Worked as Residential Social Care Worker since June 2006 with Together Trust
Joanne Marsh	Appointed October 2008 BTEC Level 3 Health and Social care NVQ 3 Health and Social care Worked as Family Support Worker since May 2006 with Advanced Childcare

Services Provided by the Fostering Service for Children and/or their Carers

Being Healthy

- The Family Placement Team liaises closely with the designated nurse for 'Looked After Children' to ensure children's health needs are met, to advise young people on health care and to provide guidance to foster carers on meeting children's health needs.

- The designated nurse is a member of the Fostering Panel.

- Children and young people have an initial health assessment when first looked after and are then encouraged to have an annual health review.

- Foster Carers are committed to obtaining dental checks for children in their care, and the uptake of medical, optician and dental checks is rigorously monitored.

- A range of community CAHMS and Core CAHMS services are available with priority access for looked after children. The team offer direct work, consultation and training.

- The Fostering Service has prioritised access to community and education psychologists who provide both direct work and consultancy to foster carers and/or children in placement.

- Drug and alcohol awareness training is available to carers and services are directly available to children and young people as required.

- Foster Carers or Short Breaks carers offering care to children with special needs are offered specialist training to meet the needs of individual children.

- Teenage Pregnancy Service is available to provide advice to carers and young people

- First Aid training rolled out to all carers.

- Healthy Eating Advice

Staying Safe

- Any suspected abuse or ill treatment of a foster child is investigated under LSCB procedures and the outcome reported to Fostering Panel.

  Independent support is provided to any carer subject to a complaint or allegation.

- Foster carers are supported and supervised by a supervising Social Worker (Family Placement Officer) whose role is to provide emotional and practical support, professional advice and guidance to carers in relation to the fostering task and policy, planning and procedural requirements. They will also supervise the carer to ensure that the carer is undertaking their role in an appropriate manner, which promotes the welfare of children placed.

  The Family Placement Officers are based in the Fostering Service office and carers are able to ring or 'call in' to seek immediate support and guidance or practical support, in the absence of their own Family Placement Officer, from other Family Placement staff. A Family Placement duty service exists
  8.30 am – 5.00 pm

  The short breaks officers are based with field work staff. In the absence of their own short breaks officer carers can receive support from another short breaks officer or the team manager. If this is not possible they are directed to speak to a manager from the family placement team.

  Each foster carer has a Supervision Agreement with their Family Placement Officer, which sets out the support arrangements, training and development responsibilities and management accountability.

  Foster family members are able to seek the support and guidance of the Family Placement Officer and the Officer should regularly consult with them.

- Foster carers are also encouraged to join a Support Group for carers in order to meet with and earn from and actively involve themselves in mutual support with other carers. Each foster carer is also encouraged to meet with other foster carers informally and to build up solid links with other carers. The short breaks team provides a support group specific to this group of carers.

- Foster carers can call on the support of the Out of Hours service in times of crisis, and in addition, in cases where planned involvement by the Out of Hours team has been agreed. There is a formal Service Level Agreement available.

- All carers have a Safer Caring Policy which takes into account the particular needs of children placed and the impact on other children who may be in placement. This is in addition to the general Family Placement Safer Caring policy all carers develop at approval.

- Support for foster carers is the main remit of the Stockport Foster Care Association. The Association is supported by the Council and has a Consultative Committee which meets with Senior Managers twice yearly and communicates regularly with fostering service staff.

- All foster carers are members of Fostering Network, paid for by the Fostering Service.

- The Service Manager for Fostering chairs a multi-agency support group responsible for the overarching strategy of carer support and specific service developments have arisen.

- Foster Carers are also provided with respite services to enable them to spend time with their own families at times of stress, and to participate in social activities.

- Placement support is provided to both carers and children via the Fostering Outreach Service on a flexible basis including evenings and planned weekends.

- Individual placement support plans in relation to children over 8 and all long term placements

- Support to birth children of foster carers is provided via a range of activities organised by the Fostering Outreach Support Team.

Enjoying and Achieving

- Access to Leisure Services via Leisure Key Scheme.

- Carers, children and young people have access to a wide range of support services in relation to educational needs, co-ordinated or delivered by the Virtual School Team.

- All looked after children are provided with access to a computer/laptop.

- All young people have a PEP and Personal Education allowances are available to fund private tutoring or other agreed inputs.

- Carers, children and young people have access to a study support advisor and to the Education Psychology Service.

- The ‘celebrating achievement’ event takes place annually to recognise the achievements of looked after children.

- Liaison between the head of Virtual School Team and Family Placement to raise aspirations of carers in relation to education for all children.

Making a Positive Contribution

- Access to the Children's Rights Service
- Children/Young People's feedback form for Annual Foster Carer Reviews
- Children in Care Council – the children's pledge has been agreed ad signed.
- Support groups run by the Fostering Outreach Service.
- Opportunities for young people to be involved in Skills to Foster and post approval training.
- Financial Support can be given to enable children or young people to succeed in hobbies, sports or special interests.
- Young people are individually consulted by IRO's as part of their statutory review. In addition an annual 'Have your say' survey takes place and findings have been incorporated into the ongoing development of the fostering service
- Fostering groups for primary/secondary age children

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

- Each child will have an allowance, paid to their carer, which is above that of the Government recommended minimum, and will in addition receive birthday, festival and holiday allowances.
- Young people are encouraged to attend further education or training having left school.
- Foster Carers who are willing to have young people stay beyond 18 are encouraged to do so by conversion to Supported Lodgings.
- Foster Carers are offered training and support around 'transition to adulthood'

Family & Friend Carers

- When a Family and Friend Carer is given temporary approval under Regulation 24, the timescales for full approval are met.
- When a full assessment is undertaken, the factors to be taken into account include the likely length of the placement, the age of the child, the wishes and feelings of the child and any support or contingency plans available

with the wider family network to support the placement to care for the child in the long term.

- Potential Family and Friends Carers will be provided with information about the assessment process, the expectations and how issues will be addressed and support available.

- Family and Friends carers will be asked to contribute their knowledge and information about the child and family as well as information being shared with them by the Social Worker.

- With regards to contact, the views of the child, carer and family will be taken into account and appropriate risk assessments undertaken to ensure that contact is child centred, safe and appropriately supported.

- Support will be given to the Family and Friends carer any planned moved particularly in relation to the change of roles.

Training Services for Foster Carers

Training services for foster carers are run jointly by the Fostering Service staff and the Staff Development section of Social Care C&YP. The bulk of the training, post approval, is organised by the Staff Development section and is run in conjunction with social worker training. TSDS training standards are implemented and the service works with carers and Staff Development to ensure carers are supported in meeting these standards. A series of workshops are held to support the carers.

All foster carers undertake pre-approval training as part of the assessment process and are expected to attend an 'Essential' training programme of courses within the first two years. Foster Carer training and development is monitored through the carer's review of approval.

Foster carer training is planned and developed through a multi-agency Foster Carer Training Group, which also includes foster carers. This group also monitors training effectiveness and informs the Staff Development Business Plan.

Carers can develop their skills in training through the 'Training for Trainers' training programme and the Fostering Service has its own group of foster carer trainers who assist in the delivery of training to foster carers and Social Work staff.

Foster carers can further their own development through attaining Level 3 Diploma (QCF) in children and young people's workforce in working with children and young people. The Staff Development section has an active annual programme for carers. All carers who achieve Diploma level are awarded a single payment of £500. Carers also have access to specialist courses, seminars

and conferences run by ‘outside’ agencies and specialists on a local and national basis.

Finance

- Each carer will receive an allowance which is in excess of that recommended as the minimum by Government
- Each carer will receive a birthday, Xmas or festival allowance, and a holiday allowance where applicable.
- Each carer who completes pre-approval training and commits to post approval and ongoing training and completion of TSDS standards, will receive a recompense payment as a fee for skills acquired.

Profile of Stockport Fostering Service

In March 2013, Stockport had 156 registered carers, of which 128 were mainstream carers and 19 were family and friends carers and 9 were short breaks carers. At this time there were 305 children in care, 61.3% of whom i.e. 187 children, were in placement with Stockport foster carers.

Complaints – Fostering Service

Stockport Council has a complaints procedure used by the fostering service. The procedure is made available to all children, parents and foster carers. A guide is also available for children in foster carer. The young people also have access to the Children's Rights Service.

All complaints and allegations against foster carers are investigated in line with the Stockport Safeguarding policies. Foster carers who are the subject of complaints and allegations have the right to support from the Independent Support Worker, Fostering Network.

A report with an annual review will be presented to the Fostering Panel and all complaints and allegations are monitored by the Fostering Service.

Recruitment Strategy for Fostering

SMBC recruitment strategy is underpinned by Standard 17.5, which seeks to "recruit a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service".

Recruitment of Carers

1. Recruitment

   Recruitment is undertaken by a recruitment officer (qualified and experienced social worker) and a marketing officer. A written recruitment strategy exists and is annually evaluated and updated. The strategy is based on assessment of need in the area and taking into account local demographics. 8% of the population of Stockport are BME with the largest ethnic group being that of Asian, or Asian British background, followed by those of mixed ethnicity and then Chinese. 63.2% of the population are Christian and a further 24.7% express no religious persuasion. The current Looked After Children population is 85% White British, with the next largest groups being mixed with White/Black Caribbean and White and Asian at 7.5%.

2. Assessment

   Approval consists of a two part process:

   a) Attendance at Skills to Foster, which is essential for all foster care applicants
   b) assessment

   Following attendance at an information evening and/or an initial visit, all potential applicants wishing to proceed are invited to a preparation group on completion of an application form. Statutory checks are then commenced with:

   - DBS
   - Stockport MBC
   - Stockport Education Service
   - NSPCC
   - Greater Manchester Probation Service
   - Stockport Health Authority
     (or appropriate agencies depending upon where the applicant lives)

   The applicants are allocated to a Family Placement Officer who will undertake the assessment

   Family and Friends Carers are encouraged to undertake Skills to Foster at the earliest opportunity.

Following the preparation group (or earlier in some exceptional circumstances) the assessment commences.

This is based on BAAF Form F assessment document.

The assessing FPO undertakes a series of interviews with the applicant(s) and will also interview all members of the household. The FPO and the applicant(s) identify the necessary evidence to meet competencies. The FPO will also interview 2 personal referees and will seek a written reference from employers. In addition, information is sought from ex-partners where appropriate; education if there are birth children of school age and from adult children who have left home.

The FPO will undertake a health and safety check on the property.

Each household will produce a Safer Caring Policy.

Each applicant will undergo a medical and the medical report will be passed to the Fostering Service Medical Adviser for comment on suitability.

The final assessment document, having been seen by the applicant(s) within timescale will be submitted to the Fostering Panel.

3. Training

All prospective carers attend 'Skills to Foster' prior to assessment. There is a schedule of post approval training; opportunity to undertake NVQ 3, and all training for staff is open to carers. In addition, carers are supported to complete the TSDS standards post approval.

4. Approval

The assessing Family Placement Officer and the applicant(s) attend Panel. The fostering panel makes a recommendation in relation to approval, to the agency decision maker (the Service Director).

The agency decision maker notifies the applicant in writing of the terms of their approval within required timescales.

5. Review

Foster carer approvals are reviewed within a 12 month period from approval or from the previous review. Reports are made to panel following any allegation, complaint or concern arising in relation to any carer.

The standard review is scheduled to be held within the 12 month period.

The review comprises a report prepared by the foster carer, the supervising Family Placement Officer and reports from Social Workers with case responsibility for children placed with the carers during the review period and feedback from the

children/young people who have lived in the foster home in the previous 12 months.

The report from the Family Placement covers the carers' practice, development and working relationship with all staff members from Social Care and other relevant Agencies.

The report from the social workers covers the carers' performance in meeting the children's needs, promoting welfare and comments from birth parents, etc.

The report from the foster carers covers the carer's views of the services provided, the quality of support, the working relationships and the carers' training and development needs.

The first Review is considered by Fostering Panel and subsequently reviews are presented to the Quality Assurance Panel Chaired by the Independent Chair of Fostering Panel for continued approval.

Any changes in approval criteria are referred to Fostering panel. All significant decisions regarding approval, eg all complaints, concerns re practise, health and safety issues are referred to panel. All matters of termination of approval, or of resignation are also referred to panel.

The completed review document is signed by foster carers, Family Placement Officer and Team Manager and a copy sent to the carers. The review document outlines decisions regarding the renewed approval criteria and any actions agreed in the review. The carers are sent notification, in addition to the review document, to confirm their approval renewal and the criteria.

6. Support

Support services are detailed on pages 20 and 21. The supervising Family Placement Officer will visit no less frequently than on a 6 weekly basis, unless authorised by a Team Manager.