



Foster for Knowsley Statement of Purpose

Foster
for Knowsley



Sharon Sandell
Head of Service for CLA and
Regulatory Services

Our Vision

To improve outcomes for Knowsley children by providing them with:

- Families and homes where they can feel safe and secure by creating an environment of warmth and belonging
- A safe place where every child is encouraged, accepted and given the opportunity to reach their full potential

Contents

Requirements	p4	Knowsley Foster Carers Association	p20
Aims and objectives	p6	Support groups	p20
Aims	p6	Support for friends and family foster carers	p20
Objectives	p6	Support for special guardians	p21
Recruitment of foster carers	p8	Sons and daughters group	p21
Initial enquiries and assessment of foster carers	p8	Men who foster	p21
Assessment of friends and family foster carers	p11	Family finding	p21
Fostering panel	p11	Pre-disruption meetings	p23
Placements	p14	Foster carer reviews	p23
Short term placements	p14	Newsletter	p23
Long term placements	p14	Foster carer hub	p23
Emergency placements	p14	Welcome pack	p24
Respite/Short break placements	p17	Discounts and benefits	p24
Specialist placements	p17	Independent support	p24
Service and support	p18	The celebration of achievement awards	p24
Training for foster carers	p18	Staff and organisation structure	p26
Support for foster carers	p18	Registration, complaints and appeals	p28
Out of hours support	p20	Knowsley Council complaints	p30
		Useful contacts	p30

Requirements

This statement of purpose summarises the aims, objectives and service arrangements of Knowsley Children's Social Care Fostering Service. It has been written to provide information to foster carers, those people interested in becoming foster carers, the staff of Children Social Care, and for staff from our partner agencies who work with the Local Authority. This Statement of Purpose is approved by Elected Members and reviewed regularly. It sets out the range of fostering services and information provided by and in relation to Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council's Fostering Service. These include:

- Recruitment and assessment of foster carers
- Support and training services

- Fostering Panel and other key partners
- The aims and objectives of the service
- Specific information on the management and organisation of the service
- Services provided by, or in support of, the Mainstream and Friends and Family Fostering Teams
- Assessment process and support services in relation to Special Guardians

The Statement of Purpose has been produced in compliance with Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and with Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

It also reflects the suitability of the Fostering Service to comply with the Fostering Regulations 2011 which include:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service
- A statement of the services and facilities provided by the fostering service
- Assessment and approval of Foster Carers
- Training and support for Foster Carers

The Statement of Purpose is circulated to all approved foster carers, other interested parties and upon request, are available to members of the public; alternative formats of the document can be made available or translated upon request.



Aims and objectives

Aims

1. Knowsley's Fostering Service will ensure that carers are recruited; assessed, supported and provided with opportunities for professional development order to meet the diverse needs of our looked after children and young people.
2. The Fostering Service will work with partner agencies to improve outcomes for looked after children.
3. The Fostering Service will work within the regulatory and legal framework of National Minimum Standards and Fostering Regulations 2011 in all areas by providing cost effective and high quality services.

4. The Fostering Service will ensure that there is a service development plan which will support service improvement.

To have aspirations to have opportunities to reach their full potential.

Objectives

1. The service will ensure that there are systems in place to ensure that the voice of the child is paramount. The wishes and feelings of children will be sought and recorded in the review of their carer's as well as being the primary focus in the development of the service.

2. To continue to improve outcomes for children in terms of their individual care plans with particular emphasis on placement stability, educational achievement, social development and health.

3. In most cases siblings groups will be placed together, consistent with their needs and in line with their Care Plan. The exception of this would be in line with the recommendation of a sibling assessment.

4. The service will support family and friends carers as we acknowledge they play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with adults they know and trust if they

cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents.

5. The team managers and staff will maintain appropriate links with other professionals and partners, by attending relevant meetings.

6. To maintain appropriate communication with the Knowsley Foster Carer Committee through regular meetings and involvement in service planning.

7. The service will ensure that there are systems in place to ensure that the voice of the child is heard. The wishes and feelings of children will be sought and recorded in the review of their carer's as well as being the

primary focus in the development of the service.

8. Monitoring and performance management systems will be in place to capture data regarding service activity on a regular basis and this information is used to inform service planning, strategy and procedures.

9. Clear processes in place to minimise placement disruptions.

10. The educational achievements of Looked After children and young people are promoted and foster carers enabled to call upon the support of the Virtual School in helping to improve the educational achievement of young people in their care.

11. Young people are enabled to 'stay put' in their foster carers home beyond their eighteenth birthday subject to this being in the best interests of the young person and with the full agreement of the foster carers.

Recruitment of foster carers

Foster carers will be carefully recruited and trained and given access to support services to enable them to provide high quality care for the child/ren placed with them. We welcome applications to become a foster carer regardless of gender, marital status, sexuality, race, disability, religion, and culture or employment status. Anyone over the age of 21 years may apply to become a foster carer. There is no upper age limit for fostering, although all applicants must be active and healthy in order to care for a child in their home.

This is followed by a comprehensive package of high quality training which is offered to all applicants during assessment and once they are approved. This will help them to support children and young people to

reach their full potential in all aspects of their growth. It will also contribute to the support within a safe caring home that they will be expected to provide to our children and young people.

Initial enquiries and assessment of foster carers

Knowsley Fostering Service adhere to the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, to ensure the correct policies and procedures are followed in the recruitment of foster carers.

The Fostering Recruitment and Marketing Coordinator is responsible for all enquiries and aims to respond to enquiries and applications about fostering promptly within one working

day and with high standards of customer care. Initial home visits will be offered to any applicants who have expressed an interest in fostering and are eligible for consideration. All initial home visits are completed by a social worker who will discuss with the enquirer degree of information that will be required and gathered as part of assessment before anyone can be approved as a foster carer. Due to COVID-19, there may be times when initial visits are carried out virtually. The purpose of the initial home visit is to ensure the applicant understands the role and expectations of being a foster carer, the process of assessments and to agree the suitability of the enquirer prior to starting an assessment. Following the initial home visit potential foster carers are invited to attend pre-approval

training in the form of Skills to Foster. Knowsley's Skills to Foster course includes presentations and workshops from The Virtual School, NHS and open conversation with experienced foster carers and care leavers. The training enables potential carers to find out what fostering is really like and prepare them for the journey ahead. Due to COVID-19, there may be times when the Skills to Foster course is delivered virtually.

During the assessment a Social Worker will visit regularly to gather the information they need to complete the assessment. All prospective foster carers are subject to statutory checks to ensure the suitability of applicants and ensure children are protected. These checks will include:

- Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check (DBS checks are also required for any other adult in the household aged 18 years and over)
- Local Authority checks
- Employer checks
- Education checks
- Medical checks
- Personal references (at least two)
- Overseas checks if required
- Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen Family Association (When applicant has served in the Armed Forces)
- Ex-partners and children of an appropriate age will be contacted and where possible interviewed

- A Health and Safety check of the prospective foster carer will also be undertaken

We aim to approve within 14 weeks of assessment starting.

Upon completion of the assessment, it will be presented to the Knowsley Fostering Panel meeting. The potential foster carer will be invited to attend along with their assessing Social Worker.



Assessment of friends and family foster carers

The family and friend's fostering process begins with an initial viability assessment completed by the child's social worker and a social worker from the Friends and Family Team. At this point the potential carer is provided with information on the assessment process and also outlines what their responsibilities would be if they became a connected person's carer.

If the initial viability assessment is positive this will then progress to a joint assessment considering the option of both fostering and special guardianship. The timescales for these assessments are determined by the court but from the point of starting the full assessment to the point of approval is usually within a 12 week period.

The same process is followed as with mainstream carers in that when the

assessment is completed it is then presented to Knowsley Fostering Panel. The assessing social worker and the connected person will be invited to attend.

The assessment is then shared with the court (if recommended for approval or not) as part of legal proceedings and will be circulated to all parties, the connected person's carer will have the opportunity to discuss with their assessing social worker whether they wish for certain information to be taken out.

Fostering Panel

Knowsley Fostering Panel considers the approval of both Mainstream and Friends and Family foster carers. The panel is made up of a number of professionals and independent members including the children looked after named nurse, education

advisors, an elected member of Knowsley council along with social work representatives. A panel advisor is present during panel meetings and legal advice is available from the senior solicitor in Legal Services when required. Not every panel member will be present for each panel meeting but five members are required for quoracy, which must include a social worker. Knowsley's fostering panel is chaired by an independent and experienced person who has the relevant skills and experience appropriate to the role.

The Agency Decision Maker's role is performed by the Head of Service for CLA and Regulatory Services.

There is a written fostering panel procedure and all panel members have an annual appraisal with the panel chair. The chair has his appraisal with the Agency Decision Maker. All panel members are also invited to an annual

training event which allows members to keep informed of any legislative or regulatory changes as well as best practice.

The Fostering Panel also plays a key quality assurance role by providing independent scrutiny of decision making by the Fostering Service. The panel feedback on the quality of assessments and ensure that those who are assessed have a voice in the panel process.

The Fostering Panel provides recommendations to the agency decision maker who makes the final decision following a recommendation by the Fostering Panel.

The matters which are dealt with at Fostering Panel include:

- Recommendations on the approval of foster carers

- Recommendations on terminations of foster carers' approval
- First reviews of foster carers
- Reports following allegations or significant change of circumstances

Where the Fostering Panel recommends that a foster carer applicant should not be approved, or a foster carer/s approval should be terminated, the Agency's Decision Maker will consider the Panel's recommendation and their reasons. If the ADM agrees with the recommendation, the applicant will receive written notice of this together with the reasons for the decision and a copy of the Fostering Panel recommendation. The letter will advise applicants that within 28 days they may submit any written representation to Knowsley Fostering Service or apply to the Secretary of State for a review by an Independent Review Panel.



Placements

Short term placements

Short term placements can be for children of all ages who sometimes return to their own families within a few weeks or months. It can involve providing a place for a child or young person to stay for a few nights in an emergency, or can be for up to two years. Short term foster carers provide a home for a child whilst social workers work with and support their family to make positive changes for the child's future.

During Short term foster placements it is important that everyone involved works closely to support the child until they can either return to their family safely or if this is not possible, agree a plan for permanence.

Long term placements

Foster carers who offer long term/ permanent placements commit to caring for a child or young person whose 'permanence' plan agrees that their needs will be best met within a foster care placement. Long term placements are secure and permanent placements, providing a home and the security and stability of a safe and loving home until they reach adulthood.

Emergency placements

Emergency placements offer a child a safe and welcoming home when they need to be taken care of at short notice. This can often be during unsociable hours. Foster carers who offer emergency placements and have vacancies are contacted on a weekly basis with their availability and details forward to the Emergency Duty Team (out of hours).





Respite/Short break placements

Knowsley Fostering Service have a foster carers who offer pre-planned respite care on a regular basis where a child's care plan has indicated that such arrangements will be helping to maintain a child in his/her own family or permanent fostering placement as part of the child's placement plan. This involves caring for the same child at regular intervals, for example a few hours a week or every other weekend. The short breaks provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to temporarily spend time away from their parents or carers.

Specialist placements

Knowsley have specialist parent and child placements which involves a parent and child; living with a foster carer when they need extra support and care. Our parent and baby carer's offer parental advice and guidance to the parent to enable them to learn and develop their parenting skills. This is a time limited placement to enable an assessment to be completed usually within court proceedings.



Service and support

Training for foster carers

The Fostering Service publishes an annual programme of training that is designed to be both interesting and informative. The service aims to remove any barriers to training by adopting a flexible approach to delivery. This includes training being offered during the daytime, the evening and via online forums. Knowsley Fostering Service works alongside foster carers to ensure they feel supported through a comprehensive training programme that is reviewed annually. Overall to ensure we retain our highly skilled and experienced foster carers through development opportunities and competitive payment scheme which recognises their skills and value.

Support for foster carers

The Fostering Service provides a range of services to foster carers which are designed to enable the foster carer to provide consistent and stable placements in line with children's care plans. Foster carers are supported to ensure the children placed within their care feel safe, have stability, are provided with opportunities to learn and develop as individuals and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

The fostering service ensures that each approved carer is supervised by a supervising social worker dependent upon their approval, from either the Mainstream or Friends and Family Fostering Team. Foster carers have monthly contact with their Supervising

Social Worker and this can be in the form of a telephone call, home visit or support at a meeting.

All foster carers will have a monthly contact with their supervising social worker and will receive regular supervision. The supervisory visits include looking at reflection with carers about any issues they may have had, how this was managed and how we can support them in their role. The visits also ensure the needs of any children or young people in placement are being met in relation to their health, education and safe care.



Out of hours support

In the event that foster carers require emergency social work intervention outside of normal office hours they are able to access the Emergency Duty Team. The co-ordinator will assess the situation and respond accordingly to each contact.

Knowsley Foster Carers Association

Knowsley's Foster Carers Association (KFCA) are an independent group of Knowsley foster carers who provide peer support to foster carers and meet monthly with the Head of Service to discuss issues which require service led resolution. KFCA receives funding each year from Knowsley Council to subsidise any events and activities they organise. KFCA provide a programme of social activities for foster carers and

children in their care including days out, pantomimes and holidays, they are either heavily subsidised or free for children looked after.

Support groups

Support groups are held monthly for general foster carers and Friends and Family foster carers where a variety of topics are discussed and guest speakers often attend.

Support for friends and family foster carers

There is a dedicated Friends and Family fostering team within Knowsley Fostering Service which is made up of both social workers and family support workers, to ensure all carers feel well supported in their role as a connected person's carer.

Connected carer's have an allocated supervising social worker and are also able to access training events alongside mainstream carers. There is also the option for connected carers to engage in more bespoke training with their supervising social worker.

There is a monthly support group for connected carer's to access which is currently being facilitated by a social worker from the Friends and Family Fostering team whilst it is being established. It is envisaged in the future that the group will be facilitated by carers themselves.



Support for special guardians

There is support available to special guardians via a monthly support group which is facilitated by the family support workers on the Family and Friend's Team. There is an educational element to the groups with guest speakers attending to discuss topical issues such as education and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

There is a weekly coffee morning for carers to attend in the Kirkby area. Every Monday from 9am until 10.30am. A family support worker is present to offer advice and guidance if required.

The family support workers on the team also supervise family contact sessions if the guardian is not in a position to do so.

There is a young person's group for children and young people who live

with special guardians. This takes place on a weekly basis and is activity based.

The team are also in a position to offer bespoke packages of support over a short period of time focusing on issues that may be presenting themselves. This can include weekly visits from the family support workers whilst the work is being completed and focuses on the difficulties that are present, it may also include referring to other services who may be better placed to complete the work.

Sons and daughters support group

The fostering service facilitates a support group for the children of foster carers who meet approximately four times per year.

Men who foster

There is also a support group for 'Men in Foster Care'.

Family finding

Following court proceedings where a decision has been made that a child or young person is unable to return to their birth family a clear family finding process is carried out by a Social Worker. This process will involve foster carers to ensure that all relevant information about the child is shared. Following consultation with Knowsley Children's Council Knowsley Fostering Service have created 'About me' film and profiles for foster carers. They include information about the foster carer, their families, interests and their home. The films and profiles are shared with the child prior to any long term placement move to ensure they



have been consulted and that their wishes and feelings are listened to and fully taken account of.

Placement Stability Meeting

Placement Stability meeting will be convened and chaired by a team manager to identify any issues in a timely manner which are impacting upon the stability of the placement. By working together with the Children's social Worker they establish additional support that needs to be put in place if the placement for some reason is looking fragile.



Foster carer reviews

A review of foster carers' approval takes place within a year after approval, and thereafter on an annual basis. Knowsley Council employ an Independent Reviewing Officer to complete all foster carer annual reviews. If there has been a complaint, serious incident, allegation, health issues or unplanned placement ending etc. the reviews are required go back to Fostering Panel for information and discussion and future learning to help panel retain an overview of practice. During the foster carer review the foster carers Supervising Social Worker will make a recommendation which will be authorised by a Team Manager or Senior Social Worker. This is then endorsed by the Reviewing Officer or not.

All first reviews must go to Fostering Panel.

Newsletter

A newsletter is sent out to all foster carers quarterly. This ensures all foster carers are kept up to date with changes within the team and the service, changes in legislation, forthcoming training and development opportunities and events in the community.

Foster carer hub

As part of Knowsley Fostering Service ongoing commitment to innovation and technology, our team has developed a new web-based portal to support foster carers. The Foster Carer Hub is a locked area of the Foster for Knowsley website designed exclusively for foster carers. With policies and procedures, contact information for the fostering teams and payments team, events and current news all available

within there. The main feature of Hub is the online training booking facility. Foster carers have access to all available training courses along with the facility to book online and manage their training calendar for the year.

Welcome pack

Once approved all foster carers will receive a 'Welcome Pack', which contains a variety of useful information including the Foster Carer Handbook. The Handbook is an a-z manual covering a wide range of relevant topics that will assist foster carers in their role and signpost to extra support and guidance if required.

Discounts and benefits

All Knowsley children and young people looked after are provided with a Volair Leisure pass providing free

admission to gyms, sports centres and other leisure within the borough. This pass also allows foster carers free entry to accompany the child in their care if under the age of 12.

Knowsley foster carers have access to MAX Cards. The Max Card is the UK's leading discount card for foster families and families of children with additional needs. Families can use their Max Card at venues across the UK to get free or discounted admission.

Independent support

Knowsley have an Advice and Mediation contract as members of Fostering Network. This provides the services of a worker to support foster carers who require independent support when they have issues with the agency including when allegations or complaints have been made against them.

The celebration of achievement awards

The Celebration of Achievement is a positive example that illustrates our commitment to recognising and celebrating the achievements and successes of our looked after children and young people. The recognition of their achievements forms an essential part of our Corporate Parent role and it is crucial that all foster carers understand the importance and value of the awards by both nominating children in their care they feel deserve the recognition and by also attending the annual event.





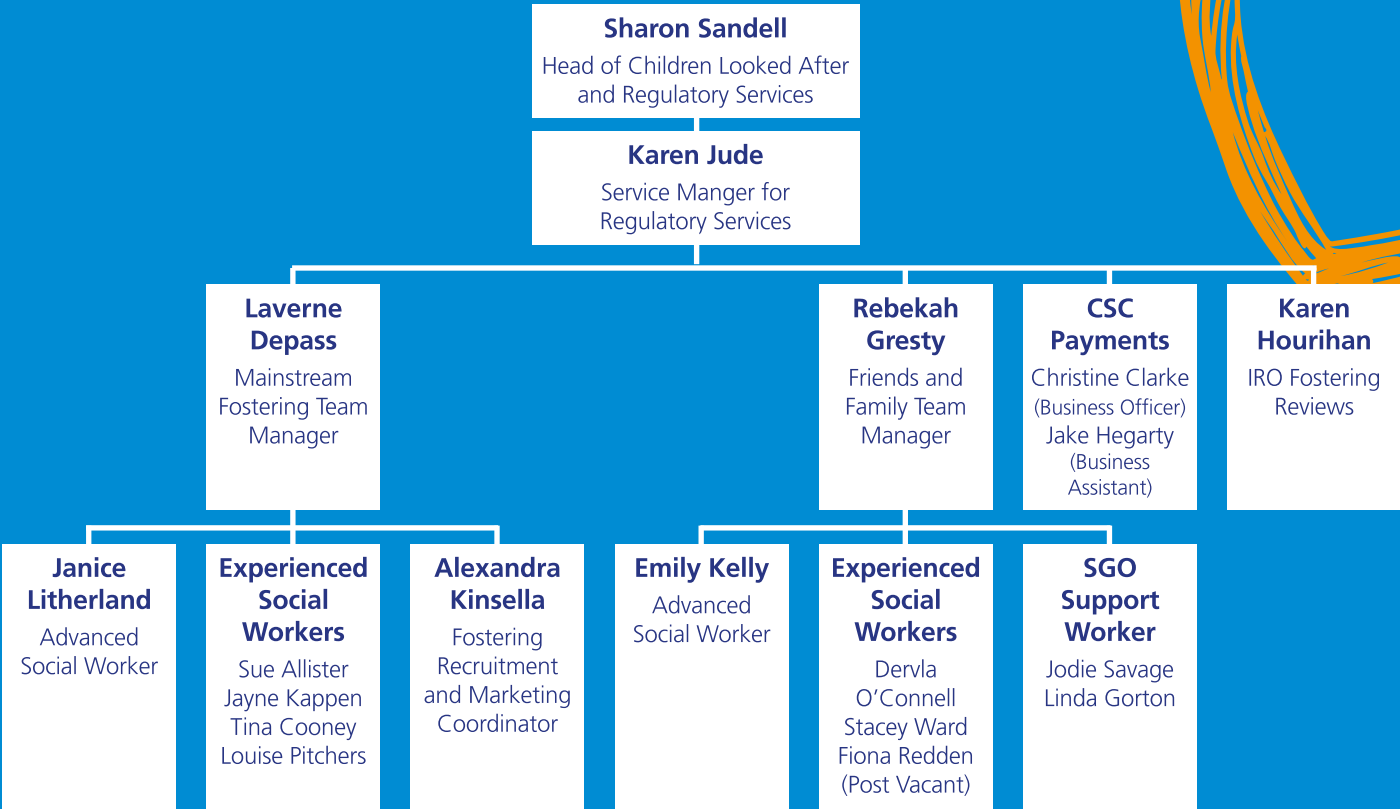
Staff and organisation structure

The Director of Children’s Service and the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services carry responsibility for services to children and young people on behalf of the Council’s Elected Members. Performance and progress against the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service are monitored by Senior Management.

Staff within the Mainstream Fostering Service are involved in the review, planning and contribute to the service development. The day-to-day management of the Fostering Service is the responsibility of the Mainstream Fostering Team Manager who reports to the Head of Service.

All staff hold a range of appropriately recognised qualifications dependent on their specific role or field of expertise

such as BSC Hons Degree, NVQ 3/4 in Accounting and Administration and that all social work staff are registered with Social Work England. All staff receive regular support, have monthly supervision, an annual appraisal and a personal Development Plan which can help them to progress and improve their skills, abilities and knowledge. Enhanced DBS Checks are undertaken and renewed on a 3 yearly cycle.



At times we may use an agency staff member within the team structure

Registration, complaints and appeals

The Fostering Service Registration Authority is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) which is the new single inspectorate for children and learners in England. Ofsted has a legal responsibility to promote improvement and to register and inspect social care services such as council fostering agencies.

Knowsley Children Social Care is inspected by Ofsted in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. Full Inspections take place within a three year cycle. In the last inspection in 2021 the Knowsley Childrens Service received an overall judgement of 'Requires improvement to be good'. Most children in foster care are living in stable placements.

The address of the National Business Unit is:

OFSTED Chief Inspector
Amanda Spielman
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk



Knowsley Council Complaints

You can report an issue directly to the Fostering service without using the formal complaints process, however If you have a comment, compliment, complaint or question about Children or Adult Services you can contact Knowsley's Customer Liaison Team:

Customer Liaison Team
Knowsley Council
Archway Road, Huyton L36 9UX
T: 0151 443 3231

W: www.knowsely.gov.uk

Foster carers are provided with complaints information in their welcome pack. If an allegation is made about a foster carer and falls within a Child Protection remit, it is investigated within the Safeguarding Procedures.

All children and young people in foster care should receive information about the complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. All young people in foster care have access to advocacy and support from their Independent Reviewing Officer and NYAS.

Useful Contacts

Children's Commissioner for England

Children and adults can contact the Commissioner to give their views about current and future services.

Dame Rachel de Souza
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Children's Advocacy Service

Knowsley Council commission NYAS (The National Youth Advocacy Service) to provide access to independent advocacy services for all looked after children:

NYAS
Tower House, 1 Tower Road,
Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 1FF
Head Office T: 0151 649 8700
E: main@nyas.net





Knowsley Fostering Service
1st Floor Nutgrove Villa
Westmorland Road Huyton L36 9YU

0151 443 3958

fostering.knowsley.gov.uk

 /fosterforknowsley