

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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Derbyshire County Council Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2019/20

National Minimum Standards 16.1 and 16.2

'The fostering service has a clear statement of purpose which is available to, and understood by, foster carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible Authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.'

The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.'

Introduction

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards 2011 (Care Standards Act, 2000) and regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 require a fostering agency to produce a Statement of Purpose, which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 1 (14).

This Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with the above requirements and will provide a source of information to all areas of Children's Services, partner agencies, foster carers and prospective carers.

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed no less than annually.

Aims, Objectives and Principles of the Fostering Service

The primary aims of Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service are to:

- Provide high quality safe care within a family setting for children and young people who are unable to live within their own families or who need short breaks.
- Provide a range of carers able to best meet the emotional, physical, cultural and spiritual needs, and those relating to the ethnicity and background, of all the children and young people in public care, looked after by the Authority.

The primary objectives of Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service are to:

- Protect the children and young people, in their care, from abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.
- Recognise that each child in care is an individual and that their placement, support and care planning will develop their identity, self-esteem and confidence.
- Carry out an assessment of need on every child prior to accommodation. Wherever possible, a safe family member or family friend or Connected Person will be the preferred placement choice.
- Maintain sufficient foster carer placements in relation to the numbers, needs, age ranges, gender, abilities, cultural and spiritual characteristics of the children in the authorities' care, to ensure careful matching of carers against those children's assessed needs.
- Place children and young people in care in local foster placements where relationships with family, friends and community are maintained and continuity of health, education and cultural and spiritual links are ensured.

- In those instances where it is not possible or appropriate to place a child in an area local to them, the Authority will seek to find a suitable placement outside of their resources.
- Provide a safe and nurturing foster placement with every effort made to achieve good outcomes for the children or young person, within set and agreed timescales and to set and agreed standards.
- Provide placements for sibling groups to be placed together, if this is in their best interests.
- Respect the gender, abilities, ethnicity, religious and spiritual needs, culture, language and sexuality of the children and young people in the Authority's care – we promise to value and promote their identity and self-esteem, record, understand and preserve all aspects of their background and support and encourage them to develop the skills necessary to combat all forms of discrimination. Furthermore, all our staff members and foster carers are expected to undertake sufficient training in relation to valuing diversity, to prevent any possible discriminatory practice and to help children in care to achieve their full potential.
- Promote contact between the child or young person in care, with their parents, family and significant individuals in their lives, where this is consistent with their care and contact plans and placement agreements.
- Ensure that each child and young person in care has a written health care plan and receives the health services they require, to include information and education on physical and mental wellbeing, appropriate to their age.
- Ensure that each child and young person in care, of school age, has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which prioritises their educational needs.
- Ensure that each young person in care, as they approach the end of their time being looked after, has a Pathway Plan and is helped to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for independent living. Wherever possible, and appropriate, the Authority will endeavour to maintain a young person's existing placement, with foster carers, once they reach care leaving age and will provide support and guidance for as long as is necessary after being in foster care.
- Provide specific services to meet any disability needs and support to help disabled children and young people maximise their full potential.
- Provide the necessary resources, funding and encouragement for all children and young people in care to have equal access to opportunities where they can develop and pursue their talents, interests, activities and hobbies appropriate to their age and ability.
- Allow all children and young people, under the care of the Authority, to exercise their rights to participate in decisions relating to the care they receive and plans for their future, according to age, experience, understanding and ability and are provided with advocacy and independent support, where necessary, to exercise those rights. We will work with the children we look after to develop and build services and endeavour to respond to the needs and demands of our carers, in order to continually improve the service available to the children and young people they care for.
- Ensure openness and partnership working between all agencies involved and concerned with the welfare of our children and young people in care.

The main principles which underpin Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service are:

- Foster carers will be treated with respect and recognition will be given to the valuable role they play in looking after children and young people in public care. In return, foster carers will be expected to undertake their obligations as described in their Foster Carer Agreement (FS14).
- All foster carers will be required to sign Derbyshire County Council's Foster Carer Agreement (Form FS14).
- The recruitment of new foster carers and staff members, who work within the service, will comply with regulations, national standards and best practice will be regularly monitored, reviewed and updated against all changes to regulations and national standards.
- Foster carers will be assessed and trained, prior to approval, in line with national regulations and requirements.
- All placements, wherever possible, will be made to ensure that the foster carers' skills and experience match the needs of the child or young person placed with them. Carers will receive the necessary documentation to support the placement.
- All children and young people placed in foster care will be subject to the Children in Care - Care Planning process.
- All Foster carers with a child in placement will have a Foster Care Charter, signed by the supervising social worker, child's social worker and themselves
- All foster carers will have a named Supervising Social Worker.
- Children and young people, in foster care, will have a named, allocated worker.
- Foster carers will be actively involved in the service – through training and recruitment activity; involvement in the Foster Care council and many other ways.

Standards of Care to be followed by Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service

Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service aims to provide safe, secure and high quality care, within a family setting, for children who need to be looked after away from home. This will be achieved through compliance with, but not limited to, the standards, regulations and requirements below:

- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Fostering Service Regulations 2011
- National Minimum Standards 2011
- CWDC Training and Development 2008
- Equality Act 2006
- Equality Act Sexual Discrimination 2007
- Race Relations Act
- Disability Discrimination Act
- Employment Equality Act

- Human Rights Act 1998
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989.

These standards apply equally to Connected People carers and are implemented and maintained by the Fostering Service and our Performance and Quality Assurance and Management Information teams, whose functions are to improve standards of care, informed through audits, reviews, inspections and new legislature and guidance.

Status and Constitution of Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service

Derbyshire County Council is an approved fostering service provider and will be inspected against the Care Standards Act 2001.

Decision making and arrangements for the management of the service, including the appointment of a Fostering Service Manager (Regulation 10) and the approval of foster carer registrations (Regulation 28) are delegated to the Service Director (Early Help and Safeguarding Services) and Head of Children in Care Provision (Early Help and Safeguarding Services).

The fostering panel is established in accordance with Regulation 24 and is chaired by an Independent Panel Chair, separate from the fostering service.

Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People in Care in Derbyshire

Derbyshire County Council Children Services Department works in partnership with other child care agencies and professionals, across the county, to deliver a comprehensive range of services aimed at ensuring children do not become accommodated, or remain so, except where this is consistent with their assessed needs. The Children in Care and Care Leaver Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2017- 21 provides more details.

Derbyshire County Council's fostering service supports and complements this role, by remaining the largest provider of fostering provision in Derbyshire across a broad range of households specifically aimed at meeting the needs of children in the county and their families.

In particular, the service aims to:

- Enable our children in care to be the 'best they can be' through raising and supporting their aspirations.
- Support families and enable disabled children to remain at home by providing short term placements and planned short term breaks
- Provide medium term placements that enable children to be cared for whilst longer term arrangements are made for their future care.
- Prepare children for permanent placements with their birth families, extended family members or adoptive families.
- Enable foster carers to become permanent/long-term carers for children who cannot return to their birth families.

- Provide care for older children for whom their placement plan is to move towards an independent living arrangement.
- Support the education, employment and training of older children in care and care leavers.
- Provide specialist placements for older children, with more complex needs, who would otherwise be placed in residential care or specialist purchased placements.
- Provide specialist placements for disabled children, with more complex needs, who would otherwise be placed in residential care or specialist purchased placements.

Myths and Assumptions

There are many myths and assumptions about fostering, such as age, single status and other lifestyle concerns, which prevent many individuals from pursuing an enquiry. Therefore, any marketing strategy must clearly demystify the myths associated with fostering and be transparent about the eligibility criteria.

Research has identified the key reasons to become foster carers as:

- Having something to offer
- Enjoying caring for children
- Own childhood experiences in care
- Awareness of need for foster carers
- Suits current family circumstances
- Option to create/extend own family
- Own children have grown up/moved away.

Research has also concluded that key reasons for continuing to foster include:

- A sense of satisfaction
- Seeing children progress
- Love for the child
- A sense of fulfilment
- Doing something worthwhile
- Making a difference to a child's life.

What Makes a Good Foster Carer?

- Individuals or couples who are flexible and resilient and who are able to adapt their parenting style according to the needs of the child.
- A positive, caring and supportive foster placement will be the most important factor in helping foster children to overcome the difficulties they have faced in their lives and to achieve good outcomes.

Why Become a Foster Carer?

- Fostering give the opportunity to help a child in need to develop and thrive.
- Fostering enables a person to work from home and to develop professional skills through the various ongoing training opportunities provided.
- An allowance to care for the child, in addition to a skills fee for the foster carer.
- Support and guidance provided and opportunities to meet and network with other foster carers for mutual support.

Recruitment Strategy, Policy and Procedure

Derbyshire County Council recruits carers through a number of methods, incorporating media advertising, internal publications and information events – it is currently managed and led jointly, through the Fostering Recruitment team and the Authority’s Communications department.

The Authority is a member of the Fostering Network led recruitment consortium, working with Leicester City, Leicestershire, Derby City, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils to share knowledge and initiatives.

Current recruitment activity includes:

- Google Ads
- Facebook campaigns
- Focussed ‘Word of Mouth’ activity.
- Liveried local Authority vehicles
- Features in Derbyshire County Council publications
- Leaflet and postcard distribution through the free press and schools
- Press interviews with foster carers and care leavers
- Open events.

Assessment of candidates is undertaken by the Fostering Recruitment Team, with a manager based centrally in Matlock and assessing social workers based within each of the area team offices. All telephone inquiries are handled through Call Derbyshire, the Authority’s contact centre and, upon receipt of a call or email, the inquiry is logged onto the Mosaic database and an information pack mailed out the same day.

Candidates are then called back, within 5 working days and, if requested and where appropriate, an initial home visit is undertaken by a Fostering Recruitment Team social worker. The Fostering Recruitment Team is responsible not only for assessing mainstream carers but also Connected People carers (under Regulation 24).

All candidates must provide the necessary information required to undertake background checks, personal references, including DBS checks for any members of the household over the age of 16, and a Youth Offending Service check for anyone between the ages of 10 and 15.

In line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, the fostering recruitment follows a two stage process;

Stage 1

The Fostering Service Provider, as soon as reasonably practicable, obtains specified information relating to the applicant and other members of their household and family.

Where, having regard to any information obtained (whether or not the Local Authority has finished obtaining all the information), the Fostering Service Provider decides that the applicant is not suitable to become a foster carer, they must notify the applicant in writing giving their reasons for that decision. The applicant has no right to make representations to the fostering service provider or to have their case reviewed under the Independent Review Mechanism. The fostering service provider has 10 working days from the date they have obtained all the specified information, to give such a notification.

Where the Fostering Service Provider have obtained all the specified information and have not given such a notification, then go on Stage 2.

The Fostering Assessment applicants then will:

- Obtain further specified information relating to the applicant and other members of their household, together with any other information they consider relevant;
- Consider whether the applicant is suitable to be a foster carer and whether the applicants' household is suitable for any child;
- Prepare a written report on the applicant;
- Notify the applicant that the case is to be referred to the Fostering Panel;
- Give the applicant a copy of the report, inviting the applicant to make any observations in writing within 10 working days beginning with the date on which the notification is sent;
- At the end of the 10 working days (or when the applicant's observations are received, whichever is sooner), send their report, the applicant's observations thereon (if any) and any other relevant information obtained by the Fostering Services Provider, to the Fostering Panel.

All applicants are made aware of the two stage assessment process and they are advised that they can make a formal complaint, if they are unhappy with their decision during the first phase. The worker will draft a report to the Agency Decision Maker, who will decide whether the assessment is to continue – all applicants are informed of this decision.

Prospective carers are assessed against the Fostering Network's Skills to Foster programme and the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. Our aim is to complete an assessment within six months, but where delays occur these are recorded on the Form F, and on Mosaic. Quarterly reports on the timeliness of assessments are submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Preparation training is delivered by both Fostering Recruitment Team social workers and experienced foster carers, covering all aspects of the responsibilities and demands that could be placed upon them by entering the service.

The Authority makes it clear that the completed Form F1 and Form C (Connected People) assessment is shared with carers, excluding references, and that they have the right to comment upon the findings which will be recorded. The completed form is then presented to the Fostering Panel. In the event that information, obtained during the assessment, means that the candidate would be unsuitable to become a foster carer, the assessing social worker must raise this with the Fostering Recruitment Team manager and the prospective carer. If the decision stands, that the candidate cannot continue with the assessment, they will be offered an explanation of the reasons the Authority felt them unsuitable to foster. If the applicant wishes to contest this decision, they can refer to the Independent Review Mechanism (see Complaints and Allegations).

The Fostering Panel consists of an independent chairperson, an independent vice chairperson, Children's Services social care staff (fostering), independent members (with experience within a health and/or education setting), an independent member who is either a carer with another agency or who has had experience of being looked after and two other independent members, with a professional advisor who cannot vote. It is the panel's role to make recommendations regarding approvals and the panel's recommendation is sent to the Agency Decision Maker for a final decision as to whether to approve.

Where approval is not given, the applicants will be informed, in writing, as soon as possible. They will be informed as to their right to make any representations on the matter to the Agency Decision Maker within 28 days. They can also, if they wish, refer to Derbyshire County Council's Children's Services complaint's process or make an application for review by the Independent Review Mechanism.

Valuing and Supporting Foster Carers

All Derbyshire County Council's foster carers have a named supervising social worker, who is their primary point of contact with the fostering service. This relationship provides carers and the children and young people they look after with support and guidance and ensures that the standards of care provided meet with the requirements of regulations and national standards. They will also assist with practical issues and the provision of equipment. Supervising social workers

are expected, alongside statutory monthly visits, to make at least one unannounced visit each year.

Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service requires that all its carers are trained across a broad range of skills, to provide the quality of care required to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care. Training is a significant aspect of the service and is provided pre approval (The Fostering Network's Skills to Foster) and post approval. The Authority introduced a new payment scheme in 2017 – the Fostering Skills Allowance. This is based on a tiered payment scheme, offered alongside the fostering allowances. This scheme means that foster carers are paid according to their skills, experience and the demands of their fostering career rather than according to the complexity of the child, or children, placed with them. The Fostering Skills Allowance is paid weekly. Additional allowances, as set out in the Derbyshire County Council Children's Services Financial Handbook are be paid where relevant.

Carers will receive the Fostering Skills Allowance, according to which band they are currently approved for;

FOUNDATION BAND

Newly approved foster carers;

- Attendance at the Foster Care Induction session
- Successful completion of the Training Support and Development (TDS) Standards for Foster Carers Year 1
- Proven interaction with a peer mentor
- Successful completion of First Aid Training

BAND A

All skills and training in Foundation Band plus;

- Fire Safety Awareness Training
- 3 training events specific to placement/s
- Operating in line with Foster Care Charter and TDS

BAND B

All skills and training in Band A plus;

- Fostered for a minimum of 1 year or equivalent work experience
- Has had child in placement for at least 3 months in 12 month period so is able to put training into practice, which is calculated proportionately for short breaks
- Has up to date First Aid Training Certificate
- Completed Difference & Diversity training
- Completed Attachment training
- Completed Online Safety Training
- Completed CSE/CRE Training
- A minimum of 3 further training events specific to placement/s

BAND C

All skills and training in Band B plus;

- (Usually) will have fostered for a minimum of 2 years or equivalent work experience of children with complex needs
- Completed Fostering Changes or has NVQ Level 3 in Foster Care
- Completed 1 day introduction to Social Pedagogy
- Worked with Horizons or equivalent professional with specialist intervention
- A minimum of 4 further training events specific to placement/s

BAND D

All skills and training in Band C plus;

- (Usually) will have fostered for a minimum of 4 years or equivalent work experience of children with a high level of complex needs and/or behaviours
- Has fostered children with a high complexity of behavioural and/or health needs in the last 2 years
- Provide mentoring role or delivered training or provided support in recruiting new foster carers or involved in service development
- Attend Fostering Changes recall days
- Worked with Horizons or equivalent professional with specialist intervention
- Completed at least one one-day therapeutic training course specific to placement
- A minimum of 4 further training events specific to placement/s

Upon approval, carers are requested to attend a central induction welcome event, which outlines all aspects of the fostering service, within the framework of the Children's Services department and the wider scope of the Authority.

Furthermore, all carers are expected to have completed training for First Aid, Behaviour Management and Valuing Diversity and Anti-Discriminatory Practice and to have completed the Children's Workforce Development Council Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care, within their first year following approval. To assist them with coursework, training, communicating with the department and to help improve the social and educational outcomes of the children in their care, carers receive a personal computer package, including funding for broadband.

All carers, upon approval, receive a Derbyshire County Council fostering service welcome pack – two identity cards, a training schedule, introductory guides for children entering foster care (provided for both teenagers and younger children), a pass for free access to leisure and sporting activities in the county and a copy of the annual financial handbook, which provides information on all fees, allowances and additional funding. The Authority also provides automatic membership of Foster Talk, which is a national carer support service, upon approval, for all Derbyshire County Council foster carers.

Post approval training is provided through an in-house training programme, and, following feedback from existing carers, available across a range of times and

venues to allow for ease of access and the Authority has begun to move towards online learning, for carers who are unable to travel or lack the time to attend due to the pressures of care provision. Topics covered include:

- Sexual health
- Substance misuse
- Attachment
- Teen pregnancy
- Child development
- Internet and Social Media safety
- Attachment
- Safeguarding
- Safeguarding children and young people with disabilities
- Child sexual abuse
- Life story work
- Improving educational outcomes
- Independent living
- Total Respect – Children’s Rights

Supervising social workers and members of training team assist with the evaluation and completion of each course. In addition, carers, staff members and co-professionals are invited to attend special interest seminars.

Carers are encouraged to attend their annual review of approval, which will incorporate the carer’s views and those of any birth children within the household and the views of children or young people they look after. The review will include reports from the supervising social worker and the child’s social worker, and strengths and areas where future learning or development may be necessary will be identified.

Derbyshire County Council ongoing aim is to continue recruiting more foster carers, increasing capacity and better supporting our existing carer community with the ultimate goal of helping improve the life chances of children in care. To this end, the Authority has sought greater involvement of carers in recruitment activity and decision making; carer led open events, improving recruitment through ‘word of mouth’ recommendations, which, research shows, create carers who remain longer with the service and consultation on recent projects, such as the Fostering Skills Allowance steering group.

Derbyshire County Council has implemented an annual foster conference open to all staff, co-professionals and carers. This is our opportunity to address specific themes, raised by carers, with an opportunity to review progress and developments the following year. This has led to the development of a regular carer council, where representatives from each area and scheme can meet with heads of service – carers can put forward topics for discussion through their representative and progress is disseminated via the regular fostering newsletter.

Any carer, who has reached a length of tenure of ten years or more with the Authority, is invited to the bi-annual Long Service Evening, where their

achievements are celebrated amongst their peers, senior managers and council members.

Each locality team will maintain regular foster carer support groups, which offer both training opportunities and the chance to raise issues with staff members and managers. Experienced carers can also act as mentors for newly approved carers and/or offer training support as part of the Skills to Foster pre-approval training.

Additional support is available through the following services:

- Named Nurses for Children in Care, who undertake health assessments and provide individual advice and information around a wide range of health and wellbeing issues e.g. smoking cessation.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS/Horizons) workers, who can assist carers to understand and meet the mental health needs of the children and young people in their care.
- Derbyshire and Derby Sexual Health Services who offer guidance on sexual health, teenage pregnancy and Derbyshire Recovery Partnership, whose service provides support around substance misuse and can offer treatment to older children in care.
- The Virtual School, which provides teachers and learner guides who can assist carers with concerns around schools, education, tutoring and can act as advocates for children in care.
- IT support for carer's personal computers.
- Children's Rapid Response Team, which provides a team of social workers available outside of office hours through the central Call Derbyshire telephone number (01629 533190).
- Children's Participation Team which incorporates Advocacy and Independent Visitors.

Depending upon the nature of the placement, most foster carers will receive a weekly allowance according to the age and circumstances of the child. All allowances are currently paid above the government's recommended minimum allowance rates. Further details are available in our annually updated 'Financial and Other Information for Foster Carers' handbook. Derbyshire County Council will also meet exceptional costs, at the discretion of District and Senior Managers and where appropriate, such as vehicle provision for those caring for children with mobility needs or sibling groups, or home extensions if carers offer to increase the number of placements above what they are currently approved for.

There will be occasions where a placement may come to an end, which was unplanned. Where there is a disruption of a fostering placement, we will convene to explore fully the factors which led to the breakdown, so as to prevent future incidents and help inform placement planning. These meetings are chaired by a manager with case responsibility for the foster carers or the manager with case responsibility for the child, or where more independence is required, the Professional Advisor. A six monthly summary report identifying learning will be shared with panel and relevant services.

Professional Development for Foster Carers

It is recognised that fostering has become increasingly demanding and complex. We are committed to providing good quality training that is accessible and relevant to all our foster carers. Training and learning are viewed as an important element of our support to foster carers and comprehensive pre approval and post approval training and learning are provided.

As part of the professional development of foster carers, the Authority provides training to;

- Help foster carers develop and refine the skills they need for their job;
- Improve knowledge;
- Establish an explicit, positive framework of values, which promotes equality of opportunity;
- Encourage foster carers to reflect and look at the effects of discrimination in all parts of the community, recognising that they care for children in the context of wider society, and that for many children discrimination is a fact of everyday life;
- Ensure that all foster carers are competent and confident in safe caring and in protecting children from harm;
- Encourage foster carers to take responsibility for their own professional
- Development through the creation of individual training profiles;
- Enable foster carers to fulfil the expectations agreed in their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Foster Carer Charter

Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service is committed to providing and promoting safe, secure and stable placements, for all children in care, to improve their outcomes as they move toward adulthood and ensure success, wherever possible, in later life. In order to achieve this, the Authority has worked closely with staff, from across all aspects of Children's Services, partnership agencies and co-professionals, carers, carer's own children and children in care, to create the best possible working relationship.

The Foster Carer Charter outlines fully the roles and responsibilities of not only carers, but also the service that supports them to work towards the best outcomes for the children we look after – it is made available following the placement of each child within a fostering household and is only valid once signed by the carer, the carer's supervising social worker and the child's social worker. The charter is very much a 'living' document and undergoes continual review and assessment.

Foster Carer Handbook

All approved Foster Carers are advised to refer to the Foster Carer Handbook, held within the our Procedures Online pages (see below), which contains all policies, procedures, guidance and examples of best practice, relating to fostering for Derbyshire County Council, as well as additional information on child care and additional resources. Hard copies are available, upon request. We are in the process of establishing a working group that will continually review and update the Handbook ensuring that it remains an up to date 'living' manual.

Policies and Procedures

Our policies and procedures can be accessed at;
<http://derbyshirecaya.proceduresonline.com/>

Improving Outcomes for Children in Care

Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service is committed to achieving the outcomes that children and young people tell us are key to their wellbeing, both in childhood and as they move towards independence. Carers are encouraged to consider these outcomes for the children they care for (Children in Care and Care Leaver Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2017-21):

- Enjoy good physical and emotional health
- Feel safe
- Have fun
- Do well at school, college or work
- Stay out of trouble
- Contribute to their communities
- Achieve well as adults

Alongside *the Care Matters* White Paper (November 2008), the Authority acknowledges that the best way to meet the needs of children and young people, in public care, is through working jointly with their foster carers and co-professionals, in partnership organisations. The above legislation, alongside that of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (April 2011), Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, Statutory Guidance for the Children Act 1989 Vol. 4 (Revised 2011) and the Foster Carers' Charter (2011), creates a framework where Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service can guarantee that these objectives will be met. Local, stable placements in which children and young people can reach adulthood and prepare for independence, where they can maintain and promote relationships with family, friends and people significant to them and have an active role in deciding their future alongside foster carers who are trained, informed and able to inform freely within their role, are key factors in implementing this legislation.

Where a child is likely to need an adoptive family, but face delays due to the court process, Derbyshire County Council may consider placing the child on a fostering basis with a family who have been approved to both foster and

adopt. This avoids the need for an additional, potentially upsetting move for the child and can help develop forming an attachment – specialist training and support will be made available to carers in these circumstances, by the regional adoption agency AEM (Adoption East Midlands).

Enjoy good physical and emotional health

All children and young people in care are registered with a GP and dentist. These registrations are reviewed by the team managers who are required to submit a fortnightly return, confirming that the child has had an annual health assessment (or six monthly for children for under the age of 5) and dental check. All children and young people in foster care will have an initial health assessment and are encouraged to have an annual health review – details are logged in a carer held file which accompanies the child across any and all placements, to ensure continuity of assessments.

All carers have access to a wide range of additional in house support, to include teenage pregnancy, sexual health, substance misuse and CAMHS/Horizons. All foster carers have to undertake first aid training, as part of their mandatory post approval training, and further training is available, promoting the health needs of children and young people in care, including specialist preparation with regards disabled children – guidance is also available, within the Foster Carers Handbook, around smoking cessation and healthy eating.

All foster carer households will receive a pass that will provide access to all local Authority leisure facilities within the county, for carers, carer's own children and the children they look after.

Feel safe

Derbyshire County Council's Children's Services department, including the fostering service, fall under the auspices of the Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) – any suspected abuse or maltreatment of a child or young person in foster care will be investigated under DSCB procedures.

All foster carers, during assessment, will have to reveal full employment and accommodation histories, alongside a Criminal Records Bureau (DBS) check on every member of the household over the age of 16 and a Youth Offending Service check, for every member of the household aged between 10 and 15 – these checks are renewed every three years, post approval. A range of referees are contacted and visited, including, where applicable, previous partners. Safe caring is a crucial part of foster carer training, both before and after approval and is covered in detail within the Foster Carer Handbook.

All carers will undertake a Safer Caring Assessment, prior to approval which is then reviewed to acknowledge the demands of the placement made within that household - Derbyshire County Council makes every effort to ensure that the assessed needs of the child or young person placed are matched to the skills and capabilities of the carers. The Authority will also provide regular supervision from a dedicated supervising social worker and a wide range of training

opportunities are available, to establish safeguarding as a crucial part of their care plan, including safe care online.

All children are given information and guidance about how best to report abuse and carers are given the necessary preparation to manage disclosure and prevent allegations and episodes of misconduct arising within placement – children and young people have ready access to independent advocates and our Children's Services Participation team maintains strong links with all children in care, informing them of their rights and methods of reporting concerns. Should a carer be investigated in response to an allegation, this will be carried out through our established procedure, in which all allegations and episodes of misconduct are considered by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). All carers are offered independent support and, through membership of Foster Talk can access additional advice and legal protection insurance.

Derbyshire County Council seeks to strike a balance between a child in care being well cared for, within a safe, secure and loving home but still being able to live within similar boundaries, that their non-Looked After peers would enjoy, to provide them with as full a life as possible and allow them the independence they need, as they move towards leaving care. The Foster Carer Handbook provides comprehensive guidance for carers in working with the children and young people in their care, to establish how long they can stay out, when and where they can contact family and friends, sharing bedrooms and spending nights away from the home and having friends to stay. Individual plans are made at the delegate responsibility/placement planning meeting. If necessary, further guidance is available regarding children who go missing from care and the processes used in locating them and the child's rights service providing an independent person, to speak to, upon their return. The handbook, which is regularly updated, is now available, in an easy to read format, through the derbyshire.proceduresonline.com website. This is an open site, available to staff and carers, which allows us to update online rather than reprint.

Do well at school, college or work

All children and young people in care, of school age, are expected to attend school and every consideration is given to the benefits of maintaining children, where appropriate, within their existing schools. Where a child is unable to attend school, alternative educational provision is available, up to and including, home tuition. Each child in care will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and, where appropriate, a leaving care Pathway Plan. We ensure that every foster carer and child in placement has access within the home a personal computer, with broadband access, upon approval and will provide further IT support to children, if necessary, during key stages of their education. All children in foster care are able to access the Virtual School. The Virtual School acts as a team to work alongside schools and settings in order ensure they provide the best possible provision for children and young people in our care and care leavers. Children and young people will remain enrolled at their existing school or setting with the Virtual School offering support, guidance and training, to ensure that

educational services are effectively coordinated and that children in care get the best opportunities to reach their fullest potential.

Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service seeks to promote the educational attainment of children placed with its carers, and seek the best outcomes possible for those children. It is unacceptable for carers to take a child out of school time for holidays and the Authority pays an additional one week holiday allowance, to cover any additional costs of taking a child away out of term time. Foster carers are expected to encourage, as any good parent would, the child or young person in their care with their education by maintaining a satisfactory level of attendance, assist in homework and attend relevant meetings e.g. parent's evenings. If necessary, additional support can be provided through the Virtual School who can assist, alongside direct working with the child, carers directly with regards school transfers, locating resources and act as an advocate within a scholastic environment on behalf of the young person.

Derbyshire County Council further promotes the importance of accessing higher education to children in care, through mentoring and event visits and further mentoring is available to those children and young people aged between 8 and 18, who are at risk of exclusion, through the Buddy Plus project.

Every school in Derbyshire has a designated teacher, with responsibilities for liaison, educational monitoring and pastoral care for children who are looked after and this is reciprocated with other local authorities, should a child be placed outside Derbyshire. We have a Virtual Head, as part of a virtual school project, with teaching staff whose focus is to support young people in care with the intent of helping them achieve better, outside the margins of traditional school environments. Derbyshire County Council also offers assistance, in certain circumstances, with driving lessons for care leavers, to enable them to access either further education or employment. Further details are in the Care leaver offer at

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/children-we-look-after/leaving-care/improving-the-care-leavers-service

Projects, both over the past year and ongoing, include;

- Resilience research, into improving education outcomes for looked after children, in Derbyshire. Findings have shown that the next challenge should be working with foster carers towards greater involvement in the child's education, Life Planning and goal setting over the short, medium and long term, more awareness amongst Designated Teachers, in the skills and talents of their looked after pupils and raising the 'sense of hope' in looked after pupils and building belief.
- Attachment Awareness to find ways of effective working with children and young people with attachment difficulties and keeping them in education – the aim is to reduce fixed term exclusions, raise awareness of attachment and trauma and encourage new way of working, through social pedagogy.

- Virtual School Foster Carer Support – establishing ways of how foster carers can best support the children they care for, across all ages, to focus on literacy, better engagement, PEPs, exam preparation and learning through play.

Have fun

As part of this commitment, all foster carers receive sufficient fees and allowance, to succeed in interests and pursuits, outside of school.

All fostering support teams will have a miscellaneous budget which can fund activities for children within a fostering household. Partnership organisations, within the Authority, and the Children's Rights service regularly provide a number of events to broaden the experiences of the looked after children (e.g. outward bound courses, music and drama workshops), of which carers are kept regularly informed through our newsletter.

Contribute to their communities

Derbyshire County Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people within the Authority's care are able to 'be the best they can be' and so play their part in society.

We support the Children in Care Council which meets regularly, and the bi-annual Big Conversation.

Children in care who have made progress beyond the initial terms of their Care Plan (e.g. successful reintegration into school), or have contributed to the greater good of the community (e.g. volunteering projects or mentoring) can be nominated for Derbyshire County Council's annual Derbyshire Believes In Me awards, which acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of children looked after by the Authority. This runs alongside a number of events, which seeks to promote learning amongst children in care, celebrate their achievements and involve more closely carers and carer's own children with helping raise their academic standards and expectations. Foster carers can also, through the Derbyshire libraries service, borrow books for an indefinite period with no charge or fine.

Making sure children and young people in care can make a positive contribution is reflected in Derbyshire County Council's pledge to children in care, drawn up annually by the Children's Services Participation Team, following consultation with the young people we look after, to meet and exceed their expectations of the service we should deliver.

Stay out of trouble

As an Authority, we are fully aware that children who are looked after may be more vulnerable and in need of increased support during their time in care. Children thrive and grow best in safe, secure and stable placements, where they

can develop the skills to live not only independently but to also contribute to their community and society at large.

We understand that some children in care will go missing from their placement. We are still reviewing our Missing from Care protocol and have transferred coordination and oversight of missing children to the Police Central Referral Unit, to ensure a cohesive, seamless approach.

Following briefings regarding Children at Risk of Exploitation (CRE) to staff members, foster carers too have been alerted to the need to remain vigilant to the signs of possible exploitative behaviour shown towards children in their care.

Achieving well as adults

Derbyshire County Council's foster carers should meet the needs of all children being cared by them up to the age of 18 years and beyond. The Authority therefore makes sure that there are no barriers, financial or otherwise, to prevent foster carers becoming permanent carers be they adopters, residence order holders or special guardians, where that is in the best interests of both the child and the fostering household. Similarly, foster carers can become Staying Put carers, Supported Lodgings providers or carers under the Shared Lives to enable former foster children aged 18 years and above, to remain with them and continue to be supported – this has been assisted by matching the rates paid to supported lodgings providers to those of carers of teenagers in care and there are usually has between 20 and 30 care leavers at any one time living with Staying Put carers.

Our aftercare service provides a range of support policies, to include finding employment, sponsored employment, accommodation provision and access and fund towards higher education.

Children's Guide

Subject to the child's age and understanding, the Fostering Service ensures the child receives the Children's Guide at the point of placement and that the foster carer explains the contents of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible. The Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate.

Where a child requires it, the guide is can be made available, where appropriate, through suitable alternative methods of communication, e.g. Makaton, pictures, tape recording or translation into another language

Management structure

Strategic Director

The responsible individual for the Fostering Service is Jane Parfremment, Strategic Director of Children's Services.

Jane qualified as a social worker in 1992 with a CQSW and a BA (Hons) degree in Applied Social Studies. Jane also holds a post-graduate diploma in health and social services management.

Jane has held a number of management positions, including senior management positions, over the past 21 years in children's services including senior management positions in three Local Authorities. Jane's previous roles have included being Agency Decision Maker for fostering services and Responsible Individual for the full range of regulated social care services.

Derbyshire County Council Children's Services commissions and provides a full range of social work, placement and early help services alongside education services and has strong partnerships with other providers of education, health, criminal justice, the local family courts, other LA's and third sector services.

Services are consistent with the councils priorities as set out in the council plan in particular the stated priority to 'Be a good corporate parent', these high level priorities form the basis for the councils Children's Services Plan and individual service plans. The corporate parenting committee provides strategic oversight and challenge.

Registered Manager

The Service Director - Safeguarding and Specialist Services is the Registered Manager with OfSTED. The Registered Manager has overall responsibility for the performance of the fostering service. The registered manager is:

Alison Noble
Service Director - Safeguarding and Specialist Services,
Children's Services Department.
County Hall
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 3AG

Alison has worked in Children's Services for around 32 years, beginning her career in residential care for children. She qualified as a social worker in 1997, holding a Diploma in Social Work, Post Qualifying Child Care Award in Social Work and a BTEC level 7 Advanced Professional Diploma in Leadership and Management. Post qualification positions have included child protection social worker, Senior Practitioner, Team Manager and subsequent senior leadership roles; Alison is currently responsible for case work decision making for individual children and key strategic service delivery to help and protect children in Derbyshire.

Responsibilities include:

- Maintaining the overall quality of case planning and decision making for children and young people in the care of the Authority.
- Maintaining the focus on safeguarding through line management.

Agency Decision Maker

The Head of Children in Care Provision is responsible for fostering panel decisions and provides independent oversight of panel business including approvals, incidents, complaints, allegations, resignations and de-registrations. The Agency Decision Maker is our Head of Children in Care Provision: Mary Wilton (B.A. (Econ); C.Q.S.W.; M.A. (A.S.S.); Diploma in Mgt studies) Children's Services Department, County Hall, Matlock DE4 3AG

Other Agency Decision Makers are;

- Service Director - Early Help & Safeguarding, Children's Services Department, Alison Noble
- Assistant Director – Early Help & Safeguarding, Children's Services, Peter Lambert
- Assistant Director – Specialist Services, Smruti Mehta.

Adoption & Fostering Manager

The Operations Manager, Adoption and Fostering is responsible for the day to day duties of the area fostering teams and oversight of all fostering recruitment. The Adoption and Fostering Operations Manager is Gwen Roe (BA in Applied Social Science: MA in Applied Social Studies. CQSW).

Responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the overall fostering budget.
- Management of the Fostering Service
- Providing service performance reports to the Director and Deputy Director.
- Ensuring equity of resources and budgets across districts and specialist teams.
- Liaison with Locality Managers on local performance and policy issues.
- Chairing the county fostering managers group and maintaining all aspects of performance.
- The development of policy in line with national standards and developments.
- The organisation and preparation of inspections and reviews.
- Accountable for all recruitment and retention matters and direct line management to the Recruitment Service Manager.

Panel Advisor

The Panel Advisor (Fostering) provides the non-voting advisory role on fostering panels, covering all regulatory functions relating to the appointment of foster

panel members, panel business and provides recommendations to the agency decision maker. Responsibilities include:

- Developing Quality Assurance systems, undertaking periodic service reviews and maintaining quality through the development of policy and procedures.
- Compliance with regulations on matters relating to approvals, incidents, complaints, allegations, resignations and de-registrations.
- The efficient running of all fostering panel business.
- The recruitment and training of panel members.
- Providing advice on all matters relating to regulation and standards.
- Managing requests for temporary variations to approvals.
- Advising on OFSTED schedule 7/8 notifications.

Service Support Managers

The Service Support Managers are responsible for implementing the Authority's Recruitment and Retention strategy and a range of project work. Responsibilities include:

- Direct communication with foster carers to achieve feedback on practice issues.
- The production of newsletters and promotional events e.g. the Long Service Events.
- Benchmarking the fostering service against other best performing services.
- Liaison with other local authorities.
- The provision of performance data.
- The provision and review of procedural guidance to carers.
- Delivering training and induction to carers.
- Oversight of projects e.g. Fostering Skills Allowance, events coordination

Team Manager - Recruitment

The Recruitment Manager is responsible for managing a team of dispersed recruitment social workers who are located in localities. Responsibilities include:

- Managing the recruitment workflow (expressions of interest, initial visits and assessments).
- Maintaining safe recruitment practice in line with national standards.
- The development of recruitment strategy including communication, advertising and promotions.
- Provide advice on recruitment practice to other Fostering Support Team Service Managers.
- The coordination of pre-approval training.
- The provision of performance data and setting of recruitment targets.

Team Manager – Support Team

Fostering Support Team Service Managers have the responsibility for the day to day operational running of the fostering service. Responsibilities include:

- The recruitment and retention of Fostering Support team staff.
- Maintaining regulatory standards on all matter relating to the performance of approved foster carers.
- Quality Assuring work of fostering staff through supervision and other mechanisms.
- Ensuring the quality of written work/ reports presented to panel and annual review.
- Ensure systems are in place to match children appropriately to vacancies.
- Ensure systems are in place for the induction, support and training of foster carers.
- Ensure the effective management of all complaints, incidents and allegations, in line with fostering procedures and Derbyshire safeguarding procedures.
- Oversight of local fostering budgets.

Supervising Social Workers

Supervising social workers provide the main day to day contact with all foster carers. Responsibilities include:

- Undertaking the role of supervising social worker as laid down in regulations, including the provision of health and safety audits, safe care plans, and other regulatory/administrative functions.
- Achieving safe care through good matching and good supervision and support.
- Ensuring the support and personal development needs of foster carers are met through good induction and support.
- Updating foster carer Annual Training and Development Plans.
- Delivering training to pre approvals and post approval groups, to include training for appropriate safer care practice and behaviour management.
- The preparation of reports for panels and annual reviews.
- Arranging for the support of foster carers through other allied professionals e.g. CAMHS, Virtual School
- Undertaking assessment of foster carers partners
- Provide appropriate monitoring and feedback on the foster carer's work to ensure that the Training, Support and Development Standards and National Minimum Standards are met.
- Discuss how the child in placement's health needs can be achieved and to encourage a healthy lifestyle choices for carers and the children in their care.
- Help carers plan breaks from caring, as appropriate, which must meet the needs of the placed child.

- Discuss, where appropriate, with carers, any strategies which will assist the young person in their care as move towards independence.

Community Care Worker

Community care workers/ unqualified practitioners provide additional support to foster carers under the direction and supervision of the Team Manager or Supervising Social Worker. Responsibilities include:

- Direct work with foster carers under the direction of the supervising social worker.
- Coordination of local support groups and training activity.
- Specific administrative functions as directed by the Service Manager for example the organisation of DBS processes, health and safety audit and delivery of essential equipment.

Central Placement Team

Holds the primary aims of increasing in-house utilisation and the DCC placement share of the fostered children. Comprising of a part-time Senior Practitioner and three Community Care workers, the team is managed by the team manager for the Disabled Children's Fostering team though during 2019/20 this will move to the Operations' Manager, Adoption and Fostering.

Training Section

The training team lead on coordinating and delivering post approval training to foster carers. Foster carers also have access to a wide range of learning and developmental provision, including direct learning, targeted learning resources and general social care appropriate provision.

Staff and Team Structure

Derbyshire is a large shire county comprising of a broad and diverse range of communities, rural and urban. The fostering service is organised to provide a mix of local and countywide services.

- Local teams provide mainstream placements and support to foster carers
- Centrally teams undertake the recruitment and approval of applicants to foster and the provision of specialist placements for disabled children and teenagers with complex needs

The central recruitment team covers the whole county, and sometimes beyond, and is responsible for fostering publicity and recruitment of new foster carers. The team comprises of one manager, based at Matlock, and a team of social workers who are co-located with the support teams across the county. Together, they plan recruitment campaigns, undertake all initial visits and assessments of new carers and, jointly with volunteer carers, provide pre-approval training.

Three local fostering teams support and supervise approved foster carers within given area of the county. Each team has a manager and social workers and are of different sizes according to the numbers of carers for whom they are responsible. They are based in:

- Ilkeston covering the south of the county - Amber Valley, Erewash and Swadlincote
- Chesterfield covering the north of the county - Chesterfield borough, Staveley, North – East Derbyshire and Bolsover
- Buxton covering High Peak, North Derbyshire Dales and Glossopdale areas

The Contract Care team supports foster carers specifically recruited to provide (short and longer term) placements for teenagers who would otherwise be placed in residential or specialist agency care. The team comprises of a manager, social workers and Family resource workers.

The Disabled Children's Fostering team works closely with the Disabled Children's social work team to provide short term breaks and longer term placements for disabled children. It provides supervision and support to those carers who have placements for disabled children only but also supports (and shares this role with the local fostering teams, where) foster carers who provide a mix of disability and mainstream fostering. It also provides a specialist, intensive care scheme, a Contract Care scheme for disabled children, whereby carers provide round the clock care for children with disabilities with a range of complex needs who would otherwise be in residential care.

Monitoring

As outlined in the Fostering Minimum Standards 2011, Derbyshire County Council prepares a report, for the Corporate Parenting Committee, on a quarterly basis, to provide the executive of the Authority with relevant data informing them of service activity and performance.

Further monitoring is provided by regular staff supervision, visits (both planned and unplanned) to carer households, Annual Reviews, the Fostering Panel and feedback (following training, team meetings, the Foster Carer Conference and exit surveys). All fostering teams will record and monitor incidents of concern, to include restraint, allegations, unauthorised hospital visits and any disputes (which have not yet escalated to a formal complaint), with which to inform the annual OfSTED Fostering return. Carers are asked to complete an annual fostering questionnaire; this provides additional feedback on all aspects of the service, from recruitment and approval, support and finances to the role and function of their team, supervising social worker, child's social worker and support staff which is then summarised and presented to both the Corporate Parents Committee and carers, through the newsletter and carer council.

Evaluation

All information gathered on the performance of the Fostering service, through quarterly reports, annual returns, audit, inspections and staff and carer feedback is routinely evaluated, at the Fostering Manager's meeting to monitor effectiveness and suggest/implement changes where necessary.

Review

The Derbyshire Fostering Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually - the Registered Manager is responsible for the annual revision of the Statement of Purpose; it may be revised at any time throughout the year and staff and carers will be advised and consulted with regards proposed revisions where appropriate and applicable.

Any revisions to the Statement of Purpose will be presented to the Fostering Panel for their consideration, prior to annual review.

The Statement of Purpose will be made available to OfSTED annually and, when any significant changes have been made, within 28 days of approval, by the Registered Manager.

The Statement of Purpose is freely available to all staff, carers and members of the public via the www.derbyshire.gov.uk fostering webpage – hard copies can be made available upon request'

Complaints and Allegations

Derbyshire County Council maintains a statutory complaints service, details of which can be found in the Foster Carer Handbook. The complaints process is a three stage process whereby in stage 1, the Authority and the carer seeks to resolve the complaint with either the child's social worker or the supervising social worker within ten days.

If the carer is unhappy with these findings, they can go to stage 2, where the Quality Assurance department will appoint an investigating officer and an independent person to respond to any concerns. If this is unsatisfactory, the carer may be entitled to an Independent Complaints Panel.

All complainants have the right to involve a friend or advocate and all staff members must ensure that carers know how to and whom to complain. At any stage, a complainant may contact their Councillor, MP or consult with a solicitor. Carers should refer complaints to the Complaints Administrator (Children's Services Quality Assurance) through Call Derbyshire on 01629 533190 or email CS.Complaints@derbyshire.gov.uk. If a carer is still dissatisfied with the findings, they can contact the Commissioner for Local Administration in England (The Ombudsman) at:

The Commissioner for Local Administration in England
PO Box 4771

Coventry
CV4 0EH
Telephone; 0300 061 0614
<https://www.lgo.org.uk/contact-us>

All foster carers have access to support and information, regarding the complaints procedures, and at any point of the investigation, support can also be accessed through their membership of Foster Talk. Any and all reasonable costs will be met by Derbyshire County Council. If a carer has any concerns about the service, which they feel it is in the public interest to make known, the Authority provides complete guidance on confidential reporting (also known as 'Whistle Blowing') in the Foster Carer Handbook.

Foster carers may be the subject of an allegation, during their time of care for a child or young person. The Fostering Handbook outlines the procedures for handling allegations, and all such incidences will be investigated in accord with the Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection procedures, managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer. All allegations are monitored by the Independent Review Officer (fostering) who ensures that the appropriate notifications to OfSTED and other relevant and associated agencies are made.

If a carer, or prospective carer, is unhappy with a decision made by the Fostering Panel, the applicants have the right to appeal within 28 days of receiving notification. The appeal has to be made in writing to the Agency Decision Maker. Alternatively, they may apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), again, within 28 days of receiving notification. The IRM can be contacted at;

The Contract Manager,
Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)
Unit 4,
Pavilion Business Park,
Royds Hall Road,
Wortley,
LEEDS
LS12 6AJ

Telephone: 0845 450 3956
Fax: 0845 450 3957
Email: irm@irm.org.uk

<https://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk/?q=contact-us>

Derbyshire County Council actively monitors and reviews all complaints, incidents and allegations to identify patterns and trends within fostering, which it may then seek to address within a wider context and so improve the quality of service for both children and young people looked after and for foster carers.

Advocacy and Children's Rights

Derbyshire County Council's Children's Rights service can be contacted on 01629 532029 or at children's.rights@derbyshire.gov.uk. Part of this role is to make sure that the Authority's fostering service fulfils its obligations to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children and young people looked after by its carers. The Children's Participation team offer an Independent Visitor for all children in care, who have little or no contact with their families – further information can be found in the Foster Carer Handbook, and also assists our Advocates, whose role it is to act independently upon behalf of children and young people who are Looked After, ensuring that they are fully aware of the processes that affect their time in care, helping them plan for their future and above all, seeing that their voice is heard. There is a statutory obligation, under the Adoption Act 2002, that all children in care must be offered the services of an Advocate, if they are making or are intending to make a complaint.

Derbyshire County Council is committed to giving children and young people in care, and care leavers, the best opportunities they can have in life by putting them at the centre of all our processes. By consulting with the children we look after and the fostering households who care for them, we are looking to constantly improve the service and provide the best possible outcomes.

OfSTED

OfSTED is the single, independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting fostering services, including Derbyshire County Council, under the provisions of the Care Standards Act (2000). Should a carer need to contact the service, with questions, queries or complaints, they can be reached on 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or in writing to;

OfSTED,
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-form>

Valuing Diversity and Anti-Discriminatory Code of Conduct

Derbyshire County Council is committed to challenging any form of discriminatory conduct – carers are advised of this in the Foster Carer Handbook (Section 1) and through mandatory Valuing Diversity training.

We will endeavour to treat all candidates fairly, openly and with respect throughout the fostering enquiry and assessment process and applicants may be approved as carers, irrespective of ethnicity, spirituality, faith, gender, sexual

orientation or ability, providing the fostering service considers that they can safely meet the needs of children in care and will, in turn respect their needs. The minimum age for a candidate to apply to foster in Derbyshire is 21 years of age.

We will make every attempt to find a placement which meets the needs of the child or young person, taking into account their ethnicity, spirituality, faith, language, culture, gender and ability and we recognise that no child in care should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement.

Appendix 2 – Fostering Teams

The Recruitment Team

Team Manager	Kathryn Thompson
Address	County Hall Matlock DE4 3AG
Telephone	01629 532455
Email	Kathryn.Thompson@derbyshire.gov.uk

The recruitment team plans and implements an ongoing recruitment strategy to ensure a regular supply of new foster carers, to meet the needs of children within the county, for foster care. It aims to achieve a level of recruitment that leads to a year on year increase in the numbers of approved foster carers.

The team works closely with the Authority's Communications team and local media to provide public information about fostering and becoming a foster carer and provides a timely and consistent response to any enquires that are generated. The team undertakes all initial visits to those persons who want to discuss, in more detail, what becoming a foster carer entails. When a person applies to foster, a team member will undertake a comprehensive assessment, including pre-approval training, and takes up essential references and other checks to determine their suitability before presenting their report to a Fostering Panel.

The team also works closely with the local Fostering Support Teams, e.g. by involving them in the training group, to ensure that any newly approved carers will match local demand for foster placements.

The manager is based at Matlock DCC HQ and the team members are locally based with other fostering workers in Buxton, Chesterfield, Clay Cross, Ilkeston and Swadlincote.

Local Area Fostering Support Teams

High Peak and North Dales

Team Manager	Jacqui Redfern
Address	Buxton Area Children's Services Office, Kents Bank Road, Buxton, SK17 9HR
Telephone	01629 531027
Email	Jacqui.Redfern@derbyshire.gov.uk

South Derbyshire and South Dales, Amber Valley and Erewash

Team Manager Jackie Lovelock
Address Mercian Close
Ilkeston
DE7 8HG
Telephone 01629 531603
Email Jackie.Lovelock@derbyshire.gov.uk

Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire and Bolsover

Interim Team Manager Jane Wojciechowska
Address NE Derbyshire Area Children's Services,
High Street,
Clay Cross,
S45 9JB
Telephone 01629 537210
Email Jane.Wojciechowska@derbyshire.gov.uk

The support teams provide and maintain a high quality fostering service for children in care, looked after by Derbyshire County Council, which is able to meet a wide range of needs and promote the principles of safe care.

The teams provide effective support to carers through:

- A responsive and effective duty system
- Close liaison with children's social workers
- Attending foster children's reviews and planning meetings
- Ensuring comprehensive documentation is provided to carers
- Ensuring payments are made on time
- Ensuring carers have the necessary levels of equipment to meet foster children's needs
- Providing support to carers in relation to their own children
- Organising local support groups and arranging social activities
- Providing personal support at times of stress, including following disruptions, complaints or allegations
- Initiating and arranging local support groups/networks and assisting with TSD
- Enabling experienced mentor carers to meet the needs of newly-approved ones
- Identifying and meeting carers' training needs, including promoting training

The quality of foster care and the safety of foster children are assured through home visits, undertaken at least monthly. A written record of each visit is made and a copy given to the foster carer. All approved foster carers are reviewed annually.

Specialist Foster Carer Support Team

The Contract Care Team

Team Manager Julie Brown
Address Gernon Manor
Dagnall Gardens
Bakewell
DE451EN
Telephone 01629 532368
Email Julie.Brown@derbyshire.gov.uk

The Contract Care Team is Derbyshire's specialist fostering scheme for young people aged between 12 -18 years. It provides placements for older children who would otherwise be placed in residential care or specialist agency placements. The team operates across the whole county, and beyond, and is currently based at Gernon Manor in Bakewell.

The team matches young people with carers who are self-employed and available on a full time, round the clock basis, to look after a young person who may not be in school. The team's supervising social workers offer intensive support to help contract carers meet the high levels of need of young people in placement. They are assisted by the scheme's family resource workers who engage the young people in activities and assist with contact arrangements. The workers and carers meet on a regular basis to provide mutual support and training.

Referrals for Contract Care are made via a countywide panel which determines whether a young person meets the criteria for the scheme and their priority for placement.

Placements may be long or short term and may continue post 18 in exceptional circumstances.

The Disability Fostering Team

Team Manager Jane Davis
Address County Hall
Smedley Street
Matlock
DE4 3AG
Telephone 01629 531789
Email Jane.davis@derbyshire.gov.uk

The disability fostering team works closely with the disabled children's teams who are effectively the commissioners of the service. Together they maintain an overview of;

- The needs of disabled children and their families in the county
- The level of fostering resources available to meet them
- The priorities necessary for future development.

The team members are co-located with foster carer support teams, across the county, in order that a balance can be maintained across a countywide specialist service and the need to provide a locally-based service.

The foster homes with whom the team work are either approved exclusively for placements of disabled children or have dual disability/mainstream approval status. Foster homes in this latter group may be supervised primarily by the local support team or the disability team, according to their preference or the overall needs of the children who are placed with them.

The main service provided by the team is short term break care for which there is the highest demand. They also support long term foster carers and provide a specialist, intensive care scheme, similar in aspect to the Contract Care scheme, whereby carers provide care for children with disabilities with a range of complex needs.

Central Placement Team and Commissioning and Contract Support Team

The Central Placement Team holds the primary aims of ensuring in house utilisation and the DCC placement share of the fostered children. The team is comprised of a full-time Senior Practitioner and three Community Care workers. This team, based in Matlock, seek placements for children amongst Derbyshire County Council's foster homes, in order to keep as many children as possible placed with LA carers rather than place with Independent Fostering Agencies.

Derbyshire County Council will commission external placements for children and young people with independent residential homes or independent fostering agencies, where a suitable placement with a carer approved by the Authority cannot be found. The Commissioning and Contract Support Team maintain the quality assurance function, with regards external providers, including evaluation and monitoring visits to suppliers. They are also responsible for negotiating financial contracts with external providers.