

GATESHEAD COUNCIL



FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, that each fostering agency produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided. This Statement of purpose gives an outline of those requirements and also how the service is managed. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and outlines how we aim to achieve good outcomes for all children looked after by Gateshead Council. It also demonstrates the systems we have in place to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers.

The statement of purpose will be made available upon request to

- all members of staff
- any foster carer or prospective foster carer of the fostering service
- any child/young person placed with a foster carer by the fostering service
- the parent of any such child

It is also available on Gateshead Council's website

The Fostering Service Provider must ensure that the Fostering Service is at all times conducted in a manner that is consistent with its statement of purpose. The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed, updated and modified whenever necessary, and as a minimum this will be done annually.

The Statement of Purpose is logged with Ofsted and they will be notified within 28 days of any amendments made.

Mission Statement of the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service aims to provide safe and secure care for children and young people, to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes for life.

2. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Gateshead Council Fostering Service is run in accordance with the principles outlined in the:

Children Act 1989

Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011)

Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The Disability and Equality Act 2010

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Children's Workforce and Development Council – Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (2007)

Gateshead Council Fostering Service strives to follow the best practices outlined in the UK National Standards for Foster Care and Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment, approval training and support of Foster Carers 1999

3. **SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Fostering Service is part of Gateshead Council's Looked after Children's Service based within the Learning and Children Department. The overall aim of the Fostering Service is to safeguard and promote the welfare, safety and individual needs of looked after children, through the provision of a high quality fostering placements, where the child's health needs are met, educational achievement is promoted and by the council fulfilling its corporate parenting responsibilities each looked after child is enabled to achieve his/her full potential.

The overall aim of Gateshead Council Fostering Service is to provide, develop and deliver a comprehensive and high quality service to meet the life long needs of children and their families/usual carers.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| High Quality | Continually improving standards of practice and service in line with legislative responsibilities and National Care Standards, targets and frameworks to achieve best value and best possible outcomes for children. |
| Integrated | Developing a partnership approach delivering responsive services on a branch, interagency, voluntary, independent, locally, regionally and nationally basis. |
| Equality and Diversity | Ensuring that services are provided in a manner that promotes equal opportunities and do not discriminate against any individual on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or culture. |

The Fostering Service provides over 271 of the placements needed by Gateshead Council's children's services with its range of skilled, approved foster carers who have been trained to provide safe and nurturing care for looked after children and with an increasing number of family and friends foster carers.

The following aims and principles guide the practice of the service:-

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care
- Whenever possible children are kept within their own community, family and friendship networks.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent corporate parenting
- Every child's needs, wishes and feelings should be listened to and taken into account when decisions are being made regarding them
- Children and young people have the right to continuity in their lives in order to enable them to develop and maintain positive self esteem and identity, promote their physical and mental wellbeing and achieve their full potential.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self confidence and self worth
- Siblings will be placed together wherever possible and appropriate
- The cultural, religious, racial and linguistic identities of children, their parents and carers must be respected in the development of the foster care service and in making, supervising and supporting placements.
- Foster care is a partnership between a foster carer, a supervising social worker and the child's social worker, all working together with the child's birth family and other relevant professionals as a team to help the child to reach their full potential.
- Foster carers are expected to prepare for their role and are responsible for making use of development and training opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge.
- The purpose and goals of each placement and the responsibilities of all parties must be stated in writing and be made available to all the parties.
- Formal decisions relating to individual children in foster care should be taken in consultation with them, their parents and the foster carers.

- Foster carers, social workers, birth family members, looked after children and the children of foster carers must be given the opportunity to record their views and feedback about placements.
- Foster carers, birth family members, children and young people should be able to challenge decisions and plans proposed by the Fostering Service and are made aware of how to make a complaint.
- Young people leaving care must be offered agency support that recognises that all young people need preparation and support into adulthood.
- Consult regularly and learn from those that are in receipt of services through comments, compliments or complaints and have regular meetings with foster carers, senior managers and elected members.
- Consult regularly with children who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard.
- Promote team and personal development and training for both staff and foster carers.
- Ensure all practice promotes equal opportunities for all.

In addition to the above we aim to ensure that the content and spirit of the Foster Carer Charter is embedded in service delivery and in doing so our foster carers will be engaged, supported and fully consulted at every stage of a child's placement with them, to enable them to achieve best outcomes for each and every child in their care.

4. TYPES OF PLACEMENTS PROVIDED

The fostering service recruits and approves carers to look after children aged 0 – 18years. Many of the children placed have experienced difficulties including abuse or neglect before being fostered. Some children present with very challenging behaviour, special needs or complex health conditions, and therefore the agency needs to provide a range of placement types to meet these diverse needs. The following types of placement are offered:

- Short term - Foster carers are approved as short term carers with a focus on the task centred nature of their work. These placements are not intended to be long term or permanent. Most children will return home or move to a permanent fostering placement or adoption. Occasionally a short term placement can be re-assessed and approved as a suitable long term placement to support the best interests of a child.
- Long term - For children who are unable to live with their birth family and adoption is not in their best interest long term fostering may be the right placement choice. Foster carers are approved at panel and then matched by the service to a particular child/children.

- Home from Home – Foster carers are assessed and approved to provide short breaks for disabled children. Following approval they are matched and linked to named children.
- Parent and child assessment – the fostering service looks to provide this service with experienced carers. The assessment period is generally 12 weeks, with the foster carer directly contributing to the parenting assessment. As placements are made with foster carers the age of the parent is generally restricted to 18 years or under, however this can be negotiated with the foster carer.
- Springboard – this service was initially part of the national Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care (England) implementation programme. Since 2010 the service became autonomous and is no longer part of the national contract. It is still based on the MTFC social learning theory model, with a dedicated team of staff supporting the child and the foster carer. The placements offered by the foster carer are single occupancy, and carers work intensely with the team to provide an individual treatment programme for the child.
- Contract – these carers have the skills and experience to manage the behaviour of children with complex needs.
- Specialist 1:1 placements – There are a number of carers offering 1:1 placements for children who have been assessed as needing a single occupancy placement. The carers will have skills, knowledge and experience of managing risk and challenging behaviour.
- Short break – Carers are assessed as being able to offer time limited placements to support other foster carers with planned short breaks. This might be required to meet the particular needs of the child and/or the fostering family
- Family, Friends or connected persons – These placements occur when people who are connected to a child or young person put themselves forward to care for a looked after child. The Fostering Service undertakes an assessment of the suitability of the carer to continue to provide care for a named child/children.

All carers receive a fostering allowance, which is greater than the recommended national minimum allowances published by the Government, and they are comparable to those published by the Fostering Network. These allowances are for the everyday expenses of looking after a child or young person. Other payments relating to meeting the child's individual needs are met by the service and this information is provided to all foster carers and re-circulated after any amendments or annually if no amendments have been made.

Contract carers, Springboard carers and carers offering specialist 1:1 placements receive a fee, which relates to the task they are undertaking and the competency and skill levels necessary to undertake the task.

During 2011 the service will be looking to review the current payments to carers, with the aim of implementing a payment for skills model in 2012. This will primarily be a task, skill and competency based model, with the opportunity for all carers to progress within the model and be paid proportionately for the task they undertake.

Support Services

The fostering service maintains the following links in order to provide relevant support to foster carers, children, young people and their families, with the aim of achieving best outcomes for looked after children in Gateshead.

- The Referral and Assessment team and Safeguarding and Care Planning teams, in relation to requests for foster placements and making Regulation 24 placements.
- The Looked After Children's under 15 team for children who have plans to remain looked after
- The Looked After Children's over 15 team, who provide pathway planning for children, transitions to independence and the supported lodgings scheme.
- The Adoption Service in relation to foster carers whose children are moving on to adoption and for children who have been unable to achieve adoption and need long term fostering placements.
- Children with Disabilities team who provide social work support for children and young people aged 0 - 18years. Close links are maintained with this team as a number of children and families are linked to the home from home scheme.
- The Children's Rights Officer, independent advocacy support and independent visitor provision to ensure views of children and young people are requested, listened to and used to assist in service planning.
- The contact service works with our foster carers and children to support parental contact.
- Health - to promote the health care needs of looked after children and assessing the health of foster carers for initial and continued approval.
- We have a range of dedicated health professionals to meet the needs of looked after children (LAC health team), who provide an annual report in relation to the work they undertake.

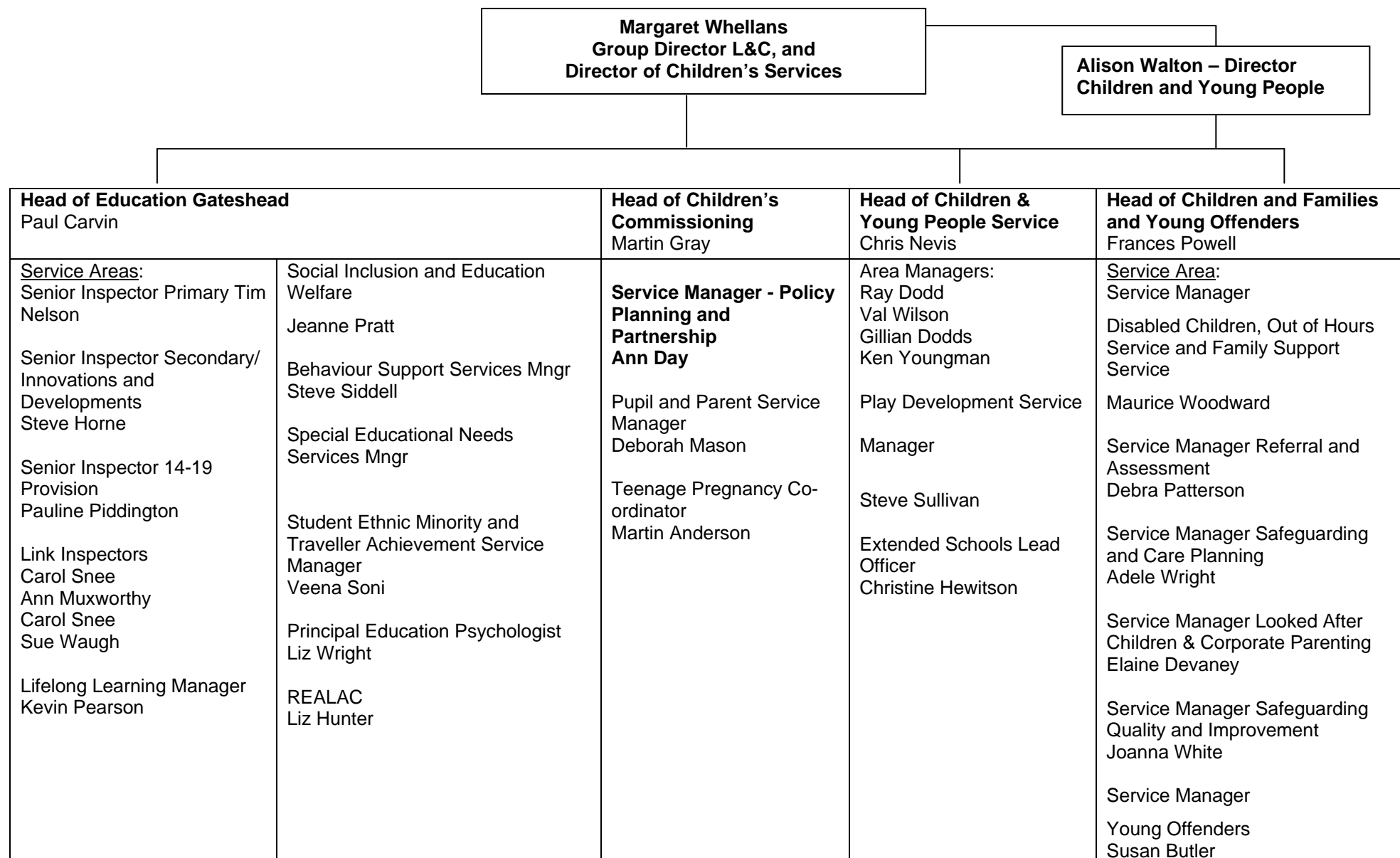
- Specialist medical advice for children and carers is available from the Consultant paediatrician, who acts as medical advisor to both the Fostering and Adoption Panel.
- Specialist psychological advice and support from the child psychologist with specific responsibility for Looked After Children. Close links are maintained with CAMHS to ensure children can access a range of services when necessary.
- The Fostering Service also has close links with the Social Work Therapy Team who take direct referrals to work with Looked After Children and their carers.
- Each looked after child has, as a minimum, an annual health assessment to ensure all health needs are managed
- The implementation of the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire has enabled the service to monitor the emotional well-being of Looked After Children.
- Education - to ensure each child has a personal education plan and to monitor the effective co-ordination and planning for education placements.
- REALAC (raising educational achievement for looked after children) are actively involved with children and foster carers to ensure all children have appropriate education provision. They also help organise and host the annual celebrating achievement awards ceremony for looked after children.
- Education Explained training is also provided to foster carers from an educational psychologist. This aims to help them get a general understanding of the education system and some of the issues Looked after children might face in school
- Emergency duty team provide telephone support outside of office hours to all foster carers.
- Corporate links, including safeguarding training, procurement, complaints, finance, marketing, press and publicity.
- Participation groups enable looked after children to raise issues, influence and shape service delivery and develop practice across all services. The Care pledge has been endorsed and implemented by the fostering service (2010)
- Elected members are part of the Looked After Overview and Scrutiny Committee and fostering report to them on an annual basis to update them on service delivery.

- Leisure services - all Looked After Children and members of foster families have Council Leisure cards and MAX cards, which provide free or reduced cost entry to museums and many other local attractions.
- Consultation and Support groups enable foster carers to be involved in developing the service as well as participating in training and peer support.
- Housing Support – There is a policy in place which includes access to services for friends and family who have housing support needs.
- The Youth and Play Service provide details of activities in the borough to increase the participation of children and young people in social activities and skills development projects. Details are circulated to foster carers to encourage children and young people to take part.
- There is a wide range of training available to carers and staff related to the developmental needs of children and the fostering task.
- Fostering Services provided by Service Level Agreements with partner Agencies are formally reviewed and take account of contractual requirements, objectives and quality issues.

5. **STRUCTURE OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE**

The fostering service is part of the Learning and Children directorate. The Assistant Director for Children & Young People is responsible for the service and the Head of Children and Families and Young Offenders has direct line management responsibility for the Service Manager – Looked after Children.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF LEARNING AND CHILDREN



Following a review of the service in 2009 a new structure was implemented in 2010. The new structure aims to provide a quality service that meets the current and projected service needs. There are now 2 elements to the service:

- Short term duty team
- Long term/permanence team which incorporates the Springboard treatment foster care team

Line Management/Delegation

There are clear line management decision making structures between the Head of Service, Service Manager and Registered Manager.

Staffing

The service is lead by a qualified social worker who also has a management qualification, which was obtained in 2009.

The majority of the staff are qualified and registered social workers with the exception of 3 staff in the Springboard team. They all have relevant qualifications associated with their roles -1 teacher, 1 occupational therapist and 1 NVQ working with children and young people

Social workers hold either a DipSw or CQSW. Copies of staff qualifications, references, and Criminal Record Bureau checks are kept on personnel files and the fostering service also maintains its own record of CRB checks.

All staff receive regular supervision and annual Performance Appraisal Reviews.

The Fostering Service Manager is responsible for the supervision and performance appraisal of the Assistant Team Managers and the marketing and recruitment officer, as well as providing group supervision in the monthly team meetings for all staff.

The Fostering Service Manager is a member of the resources panel, attending monthly meetings to review the placements of Gateshead Council looked after children, providing advice about fostering issues and the availability of in house fostering resources.

The Manager monitors, reviews and evaluates the operation of the Fostering Service and prepares strategic material, policy and procedure in accordance with legislation, statutory and departmental guidance.

The Fostering Service Manager acts as adviser to the Fostering Panel and with its member's works on the development of panel's practice.

The Assistant Team Managers support this work, leading the teams to ensure performance targets are met. They deputise in the absence of the Fostering Service Manager. Each Assistant Team Manager is responsible for the supervision and development of the social workers and staff in their teams. In addition they have responsibility for specific day-to-day practice issues, the fostering duty system, development of the permanence team, supervision of agency and sessional workers and running preparation training and other project work.

6. **COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES**

The Fostering Service will promote children's health, educational, emotional and social needs so that they develop self-confidence and a sense of self worth. This will include promoting a sense of their ethnicity and identity and meeting their cultural, religious and linguistic needs.

Children and young people will be treated with respect and dignity and will be protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation by the provision of safe placements.

All prospective foster care applicants will be subjected to stringent background checks, which include enhanced CRB, medical checks, personal references, and other statutory checks. The assessment of the skills and competencies of foster carers will be thorough to ensure appropriate motivation; personality and commitment are evident in order to ensure that children are respected and protected.

The service will assist children and young people to remain in contact with the birth families in the most appropriate way for their circumstances.

All children and young people have a right to be kept informed about what is happening in their lives and to participate in any decision making about them. The agency will inform and involve children and young people in these processes according to their level of understanding and maturity. Children and young people's wishes and feelings will be sought and taken seriously. Their age, level of understanding and maturity as well as any disabilities will be taken into account in deciding the most appropriate way to seek their views.

Commitment to Applicants

All applicants will be considered as potential foster carers. Assessment priority will be determined according to the needs of children and young people requiring placements, the current available resources and these details will be reflected in the operational plans of the recruitment strategy.

Applicants will be fully involved in their assessment process and will identify, collect and organise the evidence together with their assessing Social Worker to demonstrate that they meet the seven standards in fostering. The assessing Social Worker will ensure that the applicant(s) understand the assessment requirements and their responsibilities as foster carers.

Applicants are entitled to information about decisions made about them together with the reasons for the decisions made, subject to Gateshead Council's responsibility not to disclose confidential information about third parties. If an applicant disagrees with the recommendation of the Fostering Panel they have the right to appeal a recommendation either to the agency or the Independent Review Mechanism within 28 days. They will receive written information following a panel recommendation.

Where possible conflict of interest issues exist, the Fostering Service Manager will review such issues on a case by case basis.

Commitment to Approved Foster Carers

The experience and views of foster carers will be valued and they will be fully involved in the planning and decision making around the children and young people with whom they are working.

Foster carers will be treated with respect and consideration. Their practical needs relating to each placement will be addressed prior to or at the time of the placement. Social Workers will respect the foster carer's family life whilst undertaking their necessary supervision duties.

In the event of an allegation being made against a foster carer, the Fostering Service will carry out an investigation according to Gateshead's Child Protection procedures. Foster carers will be kept informed at each stage of the process unless it is deemed that this will interfere with the investigation. All carers will be given written confirmation of the outcome of any investigation. The Fostering Service will offer support to foster carers and provide independent support via the Fostering Network during any investigation. Any foster carer going through an investigation process will be reminded of these supports at the earliest opportunity. The Manager of the Fostering Service is responsible for ensuring that foster carers receive the support they require.

If a child's placement is ended as a result of an allegation, foster carers who are in receipt of a reward element (fee) will continue to receive this during the investigation period.

All Gateshead Council foster carers have Fostering Network membership fees paid by the Fostering Service, which entitles carers to free independent advice and legal representation. Carers can also access information through the Fostering Network Helpline.

Gateshead Council Fostering Service is committed to working in partnership with foster carers therefore foster carer representation is often requested for working parties and other planning and practice development groups.

Foster carers are provided with a range of training and development opportunities to enable them to meet with other carers, share experiences and develop their knowledge and skills. Continuous professional development training is available through an annual programme which offers training for all carers, including family and friends carers. All Gateshead Council foster carers are expected to undertake **four days** or the equivalent of training each year, which must include some face to face training. Identifying individual training needs will form part of the regular discussions between foster carers and their supervising social workers. Certificates are issued on completion of a course.

Foster carers are also able to access the Gateshead Council Safeguarding Board training and are sent this training programme annually.

All Gateshead Council foster carers have been provided with a computer to support them and children and young people in placement.

Foster Carers Association for Carers in Gateshead Council

The Foster Carers Association was set up in 2010. It has an elected chair and treasurer and members of the foster carers association. The main aim of the association is to represent the interests of foster carers. It also provides advice and guidance to all members and meets on a regular basis with the fostering service management team.

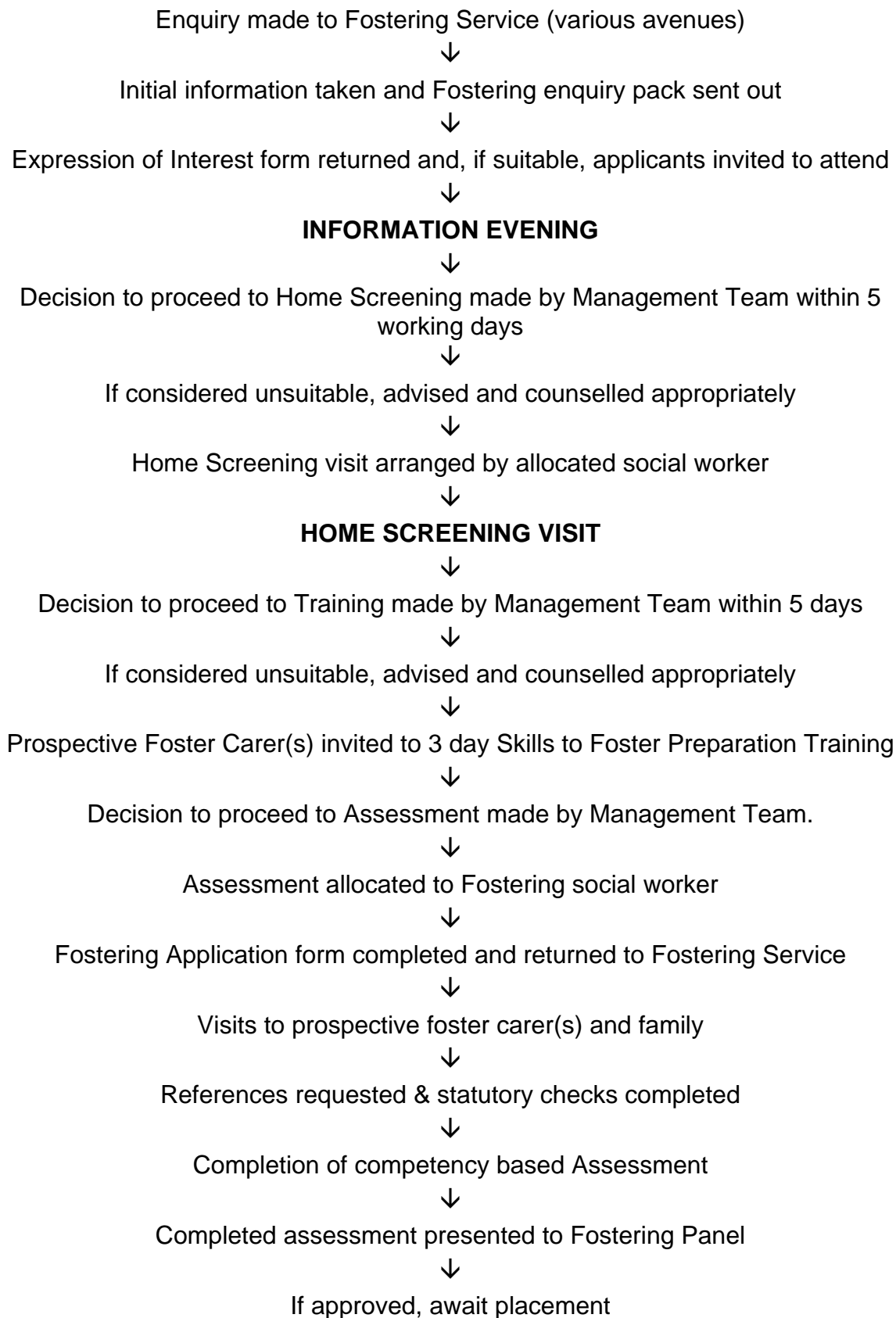
7. RECRUITMENT OF NEW FOSTER CARERS

During 2010 a new recruitment and retention foster carer strategy was implemented. The aim is to increase the pool of approved foster carers thus providing more in house foster placements for Gateshead Council's looked after children. The marketing and recruitment officer produces an ongoing campaign in the press supported by community events to maintain a high profile and alert all sectors of the community to the need for local foster carers for Gateshead Council's looked after children.

The strategy is accompanied by an annual service plan, which is amended as necessary throughout the year. The processes within the fostering service for recruitment, assessment and approval have been reviewed and streamlined during 2011

Over the last 12 months the service has worked hard to recruit new carers and progress is being made. There was a new recruitment process in January 2011, which has enabled us to track prospective carers from initial enquiry through to approval.

Foster Carer Enquiry & Recruitment Process Flow Chart



Preparation & Training

Gateshead Council requires those interested in applying for approval as foster carers to participate in a series of group preparation sessions. The course is run in a relaxed manner using the applicant's own experience alongside the training material.

Checks, References and Medicals

The assessment of prospective foster carer's suitability will take account of a range of safeguarding and checking processes designed to protect children from harm or exploitation.

All foster care applicants are required to provide proof of identity and to give written consent to a comprehensive range of enquiries, checks, reports and references being obtained by the Agency from other organisations or individuals. The requirement for Criminal Record Bureau checks applies to all residents in the prospective foster carer's household who are 16 years or over. Applicants are required to consent to medical information being provided after a medical examination.

All fostering assessments are undertaken or overseen by qualified social workers. Completed assessments are presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation prior to the Agency Decision Maker making a decision on the application.

Applicants have the opportunity to attend the Fostering Panel and are informed verbally and in writing of the outcome of their application.

Foster Carer Agreement

Foster carers complete a written agreement with the Fostering Service agreeing to comply with the terms of the agreement in adherence with statutory requirements.

Family and Friends Carers

Staff within the whole service undertake assessments of potential family and friends carers; those people who are previously connected with a looked after child or young person. Where a placement has been made under regulation 24 of the Fostering Regulations 2011 and the person is a temporary foster carer for a period of up to 16 weeks, a qualified social worker will complete a full foster carer assessment of their suitability to be approved as a family and friends foster carer. In exceptional circumstances, a further period of assessment not extending beyond a further 8 weeks will be allowed.

Some cases will require an urgent assessment to be completed within tight timescales as part of court proceedings. In these instances approved independent social workers may be commissioned by the service to undertake this work.

Family and Friends foster carers are given written information about the assessment process which will be updated during 2011 in line with new statutory guidance. On completion of a successful assessment, this is presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration of approval to care for a named child or children where there is a pre existing relationship.

Family and Friends foster carers receive the same level of support and supervision as other approved foster carers. They have equal access to all development and training opportunities, equipment and receive regular correspondence from the fostering service about different events. They receive the same level of maintenance allowance as all other foster carers.

8. **FOSTERING PANEL**

Fostering Panel

The Gateshead Council Fostering Panel includes people with a wide range of experience and skills. The panel has an independent chair and vice chair. Panel members include representatives from education, health, the Fostering Service, the looked after children service, two councillors and independent members including a foster carer from another local authority, a fostering social worker from another local authority and a previously looked after young person. The panel advisor is the Fostering Service Manager. The panel also has a legal advisor who is based within the council

The Fostering Panel has plans to implement changes during 2011 in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

The Fostering Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker on:

- The suitability of prospective foster carers/review of approval.
- Whether long term fostering is in a child's best interest.
- The suitability of placements and matching for children and carers for permanence.
- Give advice and make recommendations on such other matters or cases as the Fostering Service provider may refer to it.

The Fostering Panel fulfil their responsibilities in relation to quality assurance and monitoring of fostering cases.

Suitability of Prospective Foster Carers Assessment and Review of Approval

The Fostering Service is responsible for the assessment of prospective foster carers. A social worker from the Fostering Team will undertake a comprehensive assessment of families wishing to foster.

The assessment is considered by the fostering panels, who make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker who will then consider whether or not approval will be made. The decision can be re-evaluated through an appeals process if the applicants choose to contest the decision.

The Fostering Placements Regulations require that foster carers are annually reviewed to consider their suitability to continue as approved foster carers. Additional reviews can be completed at any time if there is a change of circumstances or as directed by the Fostering Panel or Fostering Service Manager.

There is a clear policy and procedure for undertaking foster carer reviews with a tracking system so that reviews take place within the annual time scale. Foster carer reviews collect in writing the views of everyone concerned with a placement. The papers are collated prior to the review meeting which is held in the foster carer's home. The meeting is chaired by an independent reviewing officer who is based in the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service.

All foster carers are invited to attend the panel and it is usual practice that they attend. They are sent in advance a guide to the Fostering Panel which explains the remit of panel and its processes.

Whether Long Term/Permanent alternative care is in the child's best interests

The social worker of the child undertakes the assessment work relating to the child. The fostering panel considers the social worker's assessment information of the child's background and needs which will be part of any placement considerations. This includes issues around appropriate contact with any significant people within the child's life, if it is in the child's best interest.

The fostering panel will consider all issues related to the proposed plan for the child and make a recommendation. The Agency Decision Maker will then consider the fostering panel's recommendation.

Suitability of Matching Placements

Information is provided to the Fostering Panel, indicating matching considerations of children with families. The panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker, who will consider ratifying the panel's recommendation and whether or not approval shall be given.

Panel Process

In 2010 panel revised its working to ensure good time keeping and a clear focus on cases. The panel discusses all the cases, formulating questions for applicants prior to their allocated time slot, with each panel member making a contribution to the questions.

These questions are then given to the applicants ten minutes before they are due to attend panel so that they can formulate their answers. This approach to panel business has proved successful to ensure all cases receive adequate time and attention and with the result that most applicants are seen on or close to their allocated time slot.

All social workers and carers are invited to complete an evaluation of the panel experience which is collated annually.

The panel makes recommendations which are passed to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Assistant Director of Children's Services. She will receive a final copy of panel minutes within 7 days to make her determination. All carers who attend panel are written to with the outcome of the panel meeting.

If a foster carer's approval is terminated the reason for this will be made clear in the minutes and will be for one of the following:

- Resignation
- Retirement
- Standard of Care Issues

Following a panel recommendation which proposes termination of approval the foster carers will receive written notification and will be advised of their right to appeal to either the Fostering Service or to the Independent Review Mechanism.

The panel undertakes one training day each year to ensure that members are up to date with changes in legislation, guidance and to develop their skills and knowledge.

The panel prepares an annual report of its business.

9. CHILDREN'S GUIDE TO FOSTERING

The Fostering Service has produced three Children's Guides. One for younger children 4 - 10 years and one for older children age 11 years and above, and one for carer leavers. Consultation with One Voice, the Children in Care Council in Gateshead Council took place about the design and content of the guides.

These guides explain in simple terms what fostering is and provide contact details for foster children about useful local and national organisations.

At the start of each new placement foster children are given their copy of the guide either by their social worker or foster carer

10. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

The details for 1st March 2010 – 31st April 2011 are as follows:

Numbers of foster carers and children

There were 158 approved foster carers providing 252 full time places for Looked After Children. The tables below gives a breakdown of foster carers by general type and the number of children placed (as 31/03/11).

| TYPE OF RESOURCE | NUMBER 2011 |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Short Break | 11 |
| Short Term | 43 |
| Task Centred | 52 |
| Treatment Foster Care | 5 |
| Long Term/Permanent | 11 |
| Home from Home | 19 |
| Relative and Friends | 17 |
| TOTAL | 158 |

Number of Children placed as

| TYPE OF RESOURCE | NUMBER OF CHILDREN |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Short Break | 14 |
| Short Term | 24 |
| Task Centred | 81 |
| Treatment Foster Care | 2 |
| Long Term/Permanent | 78 |
| Home from Home | 5 |
| Relative and Friends | 48 |
| TOTAL | 252 |

11. COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOME

Gateshead Council fostering service has a clear complaints, compliments and comments policy. Complaints and their outcomes are centrally held by the Fostering Service Manager. Outcomes are also recorded and held centrally.

Foster carers are actively encouraged to have a discussion with a manager from the fostering service on any issue that affects their role and functioning as a foster carer for Gateshead Council. This is available outside of the complaints procedure.

Formal complaints are dealt with through the complaints and representation procedure. These are monitored centrally and all complaints received should be responded to within 20 working days of receipt and recommendations are shared with senior managers.

12. STANDARDS

Gateshead Council Fostering Service is a Regulated Service and is inspected by OFSTED on a regular basis to ensure that standards are being met.

Staff and foster carers receive regular supervision, support and training to assist them in maintaining a high standard of foster care. This includes the annual foster carer review for all approved foster carers and performance appraisals for all staff and Fostering Panel members.

13. REVIEWING OF STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually, with the next review taking place May 2012. This will be led by the fostering service and we will review what we have done well and what areas we could improve in. We will seek the views of foster cares, children and young people, birth families, staff and other professionals. We will also use research to support us in our task of continuously improving our service in endeavouring to meet the needs of the looked after children in Gateshead.

14. INFORMATION ON REGISTRATION AUTHORITY

Website: [www@ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
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