

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

Report of Corporate Director of Children & Learning

to  
**Cabinet**  
on  
8<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Report prepared by: Sue Cook  
Corporate Director Department of Children and Learning

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## Fostering Service Annual Report

Children & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee –  
Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay

*A Part 1 Public Agenda Item*

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### 1. Purpose of Report

To report on the last years activities in the Fostering Service and agree the updated Statement of Purpose in line with Stanadrd16 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Annual Report (Appendix 1) and Statement of Purpose (Appendix 2) be agreed.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The provision, standard and operations of the Fostering service is governed by:

- The Local Authority Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering minimum Standards 2011 and the
- Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 4, 2011

- 3.2 National Minimum Standard 25.7 states that the Executive side of the Local Authority

- a) receive written reports on the management and financial state of the fostering service every 3 months
- b) monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users

- c) satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.
- 3.3 The Statement of Purpose has been included as Appendix 2 in this report to provide a context for the content of the Annual Report, and includes the details of all support for foster carers. It has been updated to reflect changes in 2012.
- 3.4 The Foster Carer Charter, introduced by the Government in March 2011 has been fully adopted by Southend Fostering Service and Foster Families Council. A recent consultation went out to all carers to ascertain whether carers felt that the fostering service had fully embedded this charter in the work that they undertake. The outcome of this consultation will inform and influence further service development.
- 3.5 The Children's Pledge has also been fully integrated into the work undertaken by the Fostering Service, and the extent to which this has been embedded is monitored individually through the looked after children process and is further monitored through the quality assurance process.
- 3.6 The Fostering inspection which we were awaiting this time last year, remains outstanding, however we are clear that this will take place before the end of March 2013. An action plan was drawn up to ensure that all legislative changes which came into force in April 2011 have been fully incorporated into our practice. This action plan is now complete.
- 3.7 Standard 25.7 of the Fostering Minimum Standards stipulates that quarterly reports are presented to the portfolio holder. The service has been compliant with this requirement and the annual report covers the accumulation of this information
- 3.8 The Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection (SLAC) in June 2012 specifically noted that:
- There are good outcomes for looked after children and care leavers such as improved permanency planning, low offending and re-offending rates and increasing placement choice through more foster carers being recruited.
  - Children benefit from appropriate placements and most are placed in the authority's foster homes.
  - Parents spoken to by inspectors were positive about how they had been consulted about placement choice.
  - Fostering and adoption services are judged as 'good'.
  - Economic well-being outcomes are outstanding.

Specific recommendations from the SLAC in relation to fostering have been incorporated into the fostering action plan.

- 3.9 A report presented to the Corporate Parenting Group on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012 by the Virtual Head teacher showed that:
- With the exception of one student who came into care just before the examinations in May 2012, all children achieved a qualification in English and Maths.

- 52.9% of the cohort achieved at least 5 GCSE's (or equivalent) at A\*-C, an improvement of over 11% on the previous year.

- 3.10 15 Care Leavers are currently at University, one of the highest percentages of any Local Authority in the country.
- 3.11 A Looked after Children & Care Leavers accommodation sufficiency strategy is currently being updated to ensure that sufficient resources are identified to meet the needs of our Looked after Children with respect to placements and move on accommodation for the next five years.

#### **4. Other Options**

None

#### **5. Reasons for Recommendations**

The Fostering Statement of Purpose outlines the Fostering Service core services and the annual report outlines the activities undertaken by Southend Fostering Service during 2012 and the outcomes and impact of the service.

#### **6. Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities  
The Annual report sets out the framework for the work of the fostering Service. It directly supports the delivery of the Corporate Priority to 'Improve Outcomes for Vulnerable children'.
- 6.2 Financial Implications  
If the service does not work efficiently in the recruitment and matching of children and young people this would have the impact of the Local Authority needing to purchase more external placements at a higher cost to the Local Authority. During 2012 around 90% of placements were made with in- house foster carers.
- 6.3 Legal Implications  
None, however the Local Authority does have statutory requirement to provide reports to the executive.
- 6.4 People Implications  
None
- 6.5 Property Implications  
The fostering service moved to the Civic Centre on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The service is now for the first time, located with the other child care teams and no longer has the additional costs of maintaining a sub office.
- 6.6 Consultation  
Consultation with foster and birth families and with children and young people fostered about the work and delivery of the service takes place on a regular basis. The fostering service was inspected in 2008, prospective foster carers,

foster carers and looked after children were formally consulted at that time by inspectors.

Specific consultations have taken place during 2012 including the annual consultation for Children & Learning and wider ranging consultation about family life in Southend. A further consultation was started at the end of November 2012 and the outcome of this is currently being collated.

Quarterly meetings take place directly between the Interim Head of Children's Services and the chair of the Southend Foster Families Council.

**6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

The recruitment of a diverse range of families enables us to better meet the needs of children Looked After in Southend. Local placements ensure that where appropriate, children and young people maintain links with their families, schools and communities. The outcome of the 2012 census indicates a changing demography in Southend and our Sufficiency Strategy takes into account the need to recruit more carers who can meet the needs of children and young people from Eastern European communities. In addition we also have to prioritise carers who can support those children with challenging behaviour and those with complex additional needs.

**6.8 Risk Assessment**

The Annual reports explains the function and activity of the fostering service and does not pose a risk to the council

**6.9 Value for Money**

The provision of an internal supply of foster carers and families ensures value for money. High cost external placements are negated.

**6.10 Community Safety Implications**

None

**6.11 Environmental Impact**

None

**7. Background Papers**

**8. Appendices**

8.1 Appendix 1: Fostering Service Annual report 2012

8.2 Appendix 2 Statement of Purpose



# Southend Fostering Service

ANNUAL REPORT FROM JANUARY - DECEMBER 2012

# Welcome from Southend Fostering Service

## **Introduction**

I am pleased to present to you Southend Fostering service Annual Report for 2012. We have continued to grow in strength during the year with carers offering excellent care and support to the young children in their care.

I said last year that we were awaiting our Fostering inspection, which is still the case, but we know that it must happen within the next 6 months. Our last inspection was in 2008 so we look forward to being able to show how the service has developed and grown since it was last inspected.

## **Our ethos**

The core of what we do continues to be to strive to provide opportunities for children and young people to thrive in foster care, whether for a few days or for a few years and to find safe, high quality adoptive placements where this is required for children who cannot return to their birth families.

I am pleased to say that throughout 2012, placement stability in foster care has been maintained in the majority of cases and the fostering team continue to work hard at putting in support to placements to help this be maintained.

The Southend Foster Families Council and the Fostering Team have worked hard again this year to arrange a number of social events for carers and Looked after Children in their care.

The team also recognised the contribution of carers own children with an awards ceremony of their own.

We also held long service awards for foster carers. For 2013 we are committed to building on the successes of 2011 and 2012. We look forward to new ideas and challenges to improve the outcomes for all Looked after Children in foster care such as:

- A support group for adolescent girls
- Development further of CAMHS support for carers to help maintain placements



Diane Keens  
Group Manager  
Young People & Family  
Support

# Southend Fostering Service

## **Purpose of this report**

The provision, standard and operations of the Fostering Service are governed by:

- The Local Authority Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering minimum Standards 2011 and the
- Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 4, 2011

The Executive side of the council has a responsibility to monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users and that they are satisfied that the service is complying with the conditions of registration.

The aim of this report is to provide the information required to enable the Executive side of the Council to fulfil its duties in this respect and builds on the quarterly reports shared with the portfolio holder.

## **Overview**

There have been several changes within the team in 2012. Angela Kirby, Team Manager left in May 2012. This vacancy was covered by Angela Deary & Michael Stephenson; both senior managers with substantial experience across children's social care. This ensured continuity for the service.

Following major surgery in January 2012, Diane Keens returned to her role as Group Manager in August 2012 and continues to be the registered manager for the service.

Emmet Perry joined the team on the 5<sup>th</sup> November as the substantive permanent Team Manager. Emmet has worked within the team in the past, met many of the carers before coming into post and is a very experienced manager. In September we were joined by Dawn Cannon, a new Marketing and Recruitment Officer to support the service in moving forward with its recruitment plans in 2013.

There are now 13 fostering households on the Southend Fostering Project, able to offer 30 placements to some of our most challenging young people.

The Project has enabled us to continue to compete with private agencies and to recruit some very experienced carers. Now that we have a new marketing and recruitment officer in post, we have begun to revitalise the advertising of Fostering for Southend and that this will ensure a growth in numbers during 2013.

The aim of the Southend Fostering Project is to ensure we develop a team of highly skilled, experienced and dedicated foster carers who will ultimately reduce the high cost of agency placements and ensure the best possible care for our most vulnerable and difficult to place children in the area in which they live.

Our current Project Carers consist of –  
6 single female carers.  
1 single male carer  
6 married couples

The Fostering Project has enabled us to place a number of young people who otherwise would likely have been placed within the private sector due to their complex needs. This has enabled us to keep the young people close to their families and support networks and to offer a high level of support.

The social worker who has managed the Project for the last 2 years left Southend in August 2012 but we have appointed Angie Wright, who has worked in Southend Children & Learning for some years and is a very experienced child care worker to run the Project. She started with the team at the beginning of September 2012.

## Statistics for past twelve months

There is an ongoing reduction in the number of children Looked after, year on year, whilst the needs of many of these young people have become more complex. This has led to a change in the type of families we need to recruit to meet the more complex needs presented.

- Number of fostering Households approved between January – December 2012 **11**
- Number of fostering households as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 - **101**
- New Family & Friends carers - **2**
- Number of applications to foster - **45**



- How many children were placed with in house foster carers at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 (rather than placed in a PVI placement)- **133**
- How many young people over 18 remained in foster care ( using our staying put policy where a young person can remain in their foster placement until the age of 21) - **9**

## Recruitment, training and assessment

It is the aim of Southend Fostering Service to have sufficient suitable placements to enable all Southend children who require foster care to be placed with its own carers, local to their families and friends. The service has noticed a drop in applicants seeking information in respect of fostering, we have recognised that we need to be using alternative methods of recruitment to revitalise our programme such as through the use of social media sites. We aim to continue to use ongoing methods such as bus back advertising and to extend this to the use of advertising on SEEH transport during 2013.

During 2012 we ran 3 Skills to Foster training programmes involving 25 households.

From this, 22 households continued to full assessment and 13 Foster carers and Friends and Family carers were approved to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. 9 Households were allocated following the October training and are currently being assessed.

From April 2011 to end December 2012, the number of beds available rose from 184 to a current figure of 210. We currently have 101 Fostering Households. The rise in numbers is due to recruitment of a number of carers able and willing to take sibling groups, whilst many of those who left the service were only available to take one child.

Of the households who proceeded to workshops, the following is the breakdown:

- 16 Joint parenting households
- 8 single applications
- 1 same sex couple

To all at the fostering team

We would like to thank you all for the support that you gave us throughout the approval process for fostering. We were helped to really understand the task that we are taking on and the support that will be there for us. We are really looking forward to working with you all.

Carers approved summer 2012

# Fostering Panel

Changes in Legislation in April 2011 changed the core membership of the panel, allowing a much greater choice where needed from a much larger central list.

In 2012 we have run 9 panels. The following statistics are available from their work:

- Form F's presented (general approval): 11
- Form F's presented (for a specific child): 1
- Children presented for long term linking: 5
- Household Reviews presented to panel: 17  
*(Annual reviews are only presented to panel after the first year and every three years thereafter)*
- Carers approval terminated (due to concerns) 0
- Carers approval terminated (retirement and resignation.) 15

Jan

Thank you for your support, kindness and guidance over the past year. Most of all thank you for securing the children's future with us.

Michelle

Family and Friends Foster carer following the making of her SGO

Jan

Thank you for helping us get through a difficult time like this.

# Activities since January 2012

The fostering service has continued to offer a range of activities including ones which are fund raising; celebratory and as an opportunity for foster families to meet. Since January 2012, Southend Fostering Service has coordinated and supported the following activities in conjunction with the Southend Foster Families Council:

- Looked After Children's Christmas Party
- Celebration Event for Sons and Daughter's of Foster Carers
- Quiz Nights
- Fundraising Meals at Indian and Chinese Restaurants
- Looked After Children's Teddy Bears Picnic in Priory Park
- Trip to the Pantomime at the Cliffs Pavilion
- Trip to Thorpe Park
- Garden Fete
- Week long sailing trip for several LAC 16+.
- Monthly Newsletter
- Monthly Coffee Morning Event held in Leigh.
- Attendance at local pantomime.

In November 2012 the Carers Long Service awards took place attended by; The worshipful the Mayor, the Portfolio Holder Cllr Courtenay; members of the Corporate Parenting Group and the Interim Head of service, Heather Flinders. This was an event to highlight the excellent work and commitment shown by Southend Carers.

# The Virtual Head Teacher

## Message from Sarah Beales, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Looked After Children

The Virtual School Headteacher's role is to co-ordinate services for looked after children and their families, so that all school-age children in the care of Southend Borough Council are receiving the best possible education. The Virtual School approach is to work with looked after children as if they were in a single school, liaising with the schools they attend, tracking the progress they make and supporting them and their carers to help them achieve the best possible outcomes.



As a Virtual School, we are enormously proud of the achievements of our children in care. We know they often succeed against the odds. Over the last two years, there have been some significant improvements in the educational attainments of our children in care and I would like to thank you all as carers for the part you have played in this.

Even so, we know from national statistics that overall the educational attainment of looked after children continues to be considerably worse than the attainment of the rest of the school-age population. With this in mind, it is my role to influence practice and the use of resources across the authority. Please help me to ensure that all of us who are involved with looked after children maintain high expectations of what they can achieve and that we are all relentless in our efforts to help them do well at school, giving them the best possible start in life.

*Sarah Beales*

To Katy

Thank you once again for your excellent work on Friday to find two adolescent girl placements very late in the day. It was fantastic that this enabled one of the young people to go to school today after a good weekend to sit her GCSE's.

Really appreciated

Ruth Baker  
Group Manager

# CAMHS support to Foster Carers

In 2012 we have been able to develop closer links with CAMHS to enable a wrap around CAMHS service for our Looked after Children in Foster Care.

Matthew Grant-Browning, Supervising Social Worker, and Lainey Hall (CAMHS worker for Looked after children) have started a group for new foster carers, and continue working with an art-therapist colleague to develop a series of time-limited group sessions for teenage girls who are looked after (6-8 weekly sessions 11-13 year olds and 14 – 18 year olds). Lainey has also been available to support individual placements where difficulties have arisen.

## **Overview of the programme of work undertaken by CAMHS in 2012**

Daily Clinical appointments in CAMHS clinic at Jasmine House, Rochford hospital

Offer advice and guidance by phone to professionals and to Foster carers

Monthly Clinical Supervision of Project Carers, 13 foster carers are currently supported directly through clinical supervision

Attendance at Corporate Parenting Meetings

Monthly meetings with Looked after Children's Nurse and Looked after Children's Education Officer

Based with the team once a week for informal consultation to colleagues etc

Offering Looked after children Forum Consultation meetings with the Team Manager every other week for professionals and foster carers

Monthly Clinical Supervision of newly approved Foster Carers started 27<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012

Talk on CAMHS/SEPT services for Looked after children at training in Oct 2012 for school nurses and other health professionals.

**Space to talk** – Emotional and mental health and wellbeing for 16-18 years olds - initially offered monthly to 16+ team from Oct 2012

**Mental Health Awareness Information session for young people** – one session with two separate groups of young people offered initially to the 16+ team from October 2012.

## **Plans for 2013**

Proposal to join meetings at Southend Looked after Children's Council, if young people agree this is what they want.

Provide training in mental health awareness in Jan 2013 to professionals and Foster Carers

Provide therapeutic group starting in Jan 2013 for looked after children with emotional/mental health difficulties

The pilots will be evaluated after approximately three months, to ascertain the views of young people in relation to the experience and to determine if it could be offered to other young people.

# Children's LAC Awards

60 of Southend's children who are living with foster carers or in residential homes were invited to an event on 27<sup>th</sup> September to acknowledge and celebrate their excellent achievements in education. 60 young people, from 7 years old to 18 years old, were awarded certificates or bursaries. The event was hosted by Shoeburyness High School and included the presentation of individual awards. The awards were presented to the children and young people by The Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Sally Carr and special guests Chris Barker, captain of Southend United Football Club and his fellow player Ryan Leonard who generously gave up their time.

Bursaries were donated by political Groups within the Council, Essex Police, The University of Essex, The Shrimpers Trust, Westcliff Rotary Club, Southend Lions, Southend Virtual School for Looked after Children and Caroline Donnison. They were awarded for a variety of achievements including Fashion Design, Sporting Achievement and Academic Progress.

Councillor James Courtenay, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning, stated 'it was an inspiring evening and I was delighted to be part of an event which recognised the educational achievements of our Looked After Children. These young people have demonstrated commitment, hard work and resilience and represent the very best attributes of young people and we are pleased that we can support them to reach their goals'

Many of the children and young people were accompanied by their foster carers or family. Foster Carers, Gary and Carol Cockrill attended and said "We all had a great time at the award ceremony. We have been fostering with Southend Borough Council for three years and have cared for seven children on a long term basis plus a few on respite. This is now the second time we have had the privilege of seeing children we have fostered be recognised and awarded for their efforts and progress. It is a pleasure to see the pride and joy on the children's faces as they are collecting their awards. For some it may be the first acknowledged achievement of their lives. For us as carers it is very rewarding to see how the children grow in confidence and self esteem as

we invest time and patience with the support of the excellent team at Southend. Having previously spent three years at a private agency we really appreciate the different approach employed by Southend Fostering which offers sound relevant training, a common sense approach to problems and open lines of communication.”

Foster Carers Ellen and Mike O'Brien, who have cared for many Southend children over the last five years, also attended and said that 'We really enjoy fostering and find it very rewarding, I am very proud that the two children we look after were nominated and received an award at The LAC Educational Achievements Awards Evening on 27<sup>th</sup> September. It is good that we can show them that when you work hard and apply yourself people recognise your hard work. For us as foster carers we can see the positive impact on the whole family, apart from a really enjoyable evening the awards help us to reinforce the message that hard work and good behaviour reaps dividends.'

# Consultation with Carers

We have continued throughout 2012 to consult with carers on all aspects of the service.

In the annual participation survey, of those who replied:

80% of carers reported receiving good or very good support from the fostering service. An increase of 4% from the previous year.

We were able to identify areas for improvement over the next year; particularly in relation to communication with children's social workers and foster carers where we saw a slight drop in satisfaction.

When asked whether they are listened to during reviews, 55% (18) felt that they were, with only one carer feeling they were not.

When asked "are you consulted about important decisions in your foster children's lives, 39% said yes, a huge increase of 10% on the previous year, but again an area we want to improve further.

When looking at whether the supervising social worker and child's social worker meet up enough; we have seen a rise of 13% in the past year reporting positively to this question. Again this is an area which we will continue to work on to ensure that regular three way meetings take place.

In recent months we have been consulting with carers on updating our fee paid schemes so that there is a clear system in place to move from one project to another and to ensure that expectations for each are clearly stated

in each contract. This consultation will continue into early 2013 when it is expected that we can fully update all schemes.

All carers were contacted over the summer as a part of a much wider Southend Consultation to see what we could improve for families. As a result of this we are working with sports services in Southend to update and improve opportunities for fitness activities for all Southend Foster Families, their children and the children in their care, through an improved leisure pass offer.

In late November 2012 a further consultation was undertaken and the results from this will be collated early in 2013.

# Southend Foster Families Council

The Foster Families Council has continued to meet on a monthly basis and have supported a number of activities for Looked after Children and their foster families, as listed above. We have been able to use these meetings to consult with carers about their views on the development of the service and continue to do so. The SFFC has fully adopted the Foster Carer Charter and Looked after Children's Pledge.

Regular quarterly meetings have also taken place between Heather Flinders, Interim Head of Children's services and Dean Trotter, chair of the SFFC. The Council has been used to consult with carers to ensure that they are fully a part of any development of the service.

"The foster families' council exists to promote the needs of foster carer's and to help where we can in that task. We fund raise to provide days out and experiences for fostered children and the birth children of foster carer's. This year we have worked hard to raise funds and we have enjoyed some great nights out, we've been for Indian and Chinese meals, we've had quiz nights and we've had donations from businesses that support us, we've even been supported by a foster carer's son who kindly undertook a sponsored event for us

Due to our fund raising efforts we have put on a range of activities for foster families ranging from a teddy bears picnic to a full day out at Thorpe Park for the older children, we've spent some money maintaining our beach hut, which is enjoyed by many foster families over the summer and in December we will be offering subsidised pantomime tickets to foster families and we'll be holding our annual Christmas party where we'll be giving a present to all the younger children who attend and providing a children's entertainer. In addition to that, at our meetings, we discuss matters that concern foster carers, matters that are brought to the meeting by foster carers and we



represent foster carers thoughts to the service managers both at the meetings and separate to the meetings when we collectively feel there is a need  
It's been a busy year, and a successful one. We're looking forward to another successful year in 2013"

Kind regards

Dean Trotter  
Chair – Foster Families Council

# Staying Put

During 2012 we have continued to develop the use of "staying put". This enables Looked after Children to remain with their foster carers not only post 16, but up to 21. This is encouraging our young people to remain in education as they have the stability and support of the family with whom they have often lived for many years.

Our priority in 2013 is to develop an active Supported Lodgings scheme to give more options for appropriate housing to care leavers.

We currently have 9 young people who have remained in their foster placement post 18 and have a further 6 who turn 18 in the next year where discussions are taking place with their carers to enable them to remain post 18.

# Private Fostering

All private fostering assessments are conducted in line with the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*. In addition to the assessment, a CRB Enhanced Disclosure is obtained for all relevant adults in the households and local authority checks and medical information (where deemed necessary) are obtained. The completed assessment is then presented to the Private Fostering Panel for consideration; the recommendation to confirm and support the arrangement is ratified by the chair of the Private Fostering Panel.

Over the period from January 2012, significant efforts have been made to raise awareness of Private Fostering within Southend. This has included:

- Promotional material being distributed throughout the borough
- Additional publicity during Private Fostering Awareness week February 2012
- Update on Council Website
- Southend Radio advertisement
- Newspaper article/advert in Outlook Magazine
- Meeting with Designated Teachers
- Attended Team Meetings with Care Management 1 & Care Management 2 (re-arranging meetings with First Contact & Care Management 3)
- Attended Youth Offending Service Team Meeting
- Informal meeting with personal advisors/Connexions
- Continued Radio advertising
- Continued Website information

During the course of January 2012 to December 2012, Southend Borough Council Children and Learning Department has received 9 new notifications. The outcomes of these notifications are listed below.

- 2 placements confirmed as private fostering arrangements.
- 1 child became Looked After.
- 4 children living with close family therefore not private fostering.
- 2 new referrals recently notified.

To date, 3 private fostering arrangements have been confirmed at the Private Fostering Panel and continue.

The presenting of private fostering assessments to Private Fostering Panel is not a requirement of the Minimum Standards. However, the Fostering Service has decided that this will serve to further promote the safeguarding practices within Southend.

#### Issues and recommendations

We need over the next year to continue to raise the profile of Private Fostering by specific advertising in the local press as anecdotally, in line with national trends there are likely to be more children in informal arrangements than we are made aware of. In the past most of the young people in such arrangements were Nigerian children in white households; however this has changed over the past few years and most arrangements are now in relation to adolescent children living with friends or distant relatives due to family issues. We have therefore identified a need to link in more closely with Education establishments who are likely to be where such arrangements are identified early on.

## Action Plan 2013

- Attend the Head Teachers forums for both Primary & Secondary Schools
- Improved involvement with Health services.
- Regular advertising in local papers
- Direct contact with all local schools  
Posters & leaflets sent to all churches; libraries; GP surgeries and health centres.
- Regular attendance at LSCB
- Continued radio advertising

The worker who undertook this work left in November 2012. The work will be covered by a senior practitioner within the fostering team whilst the post is recruited to.

# Inspections

In June 2012 Southend had their Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children services. The Councils capacity for improvement was judged outstanding with a very clear, well understood vision for children in Southend.

The effectiveness of services to ensure that children and young people are safe and feel safe was judged as outstanding.

Inspectors reported that Fostering and Adoption services were judged "good". Effective and robust commissioning arrangements were in place to ensure that private, voluntary and independent sector placements are suitably vetted and performance managed to ensure that children placed have a high quality experience.

They reported that Looked after Children and young people are encouraged to express their wishes and feelings, and children regularly attend and contribute to their reviews. It was noted that Looked after Children are not routinely involved in shaping service delivery or in the recruitment of staff. Since that inspection, the Voice4all group has been formally re-launched and a number of young people have taken an active role in interviews for new members of staff.

In addition they felt that there were good outcomes for looked after children and care leavers such as improved permanency planning, low offending and re-offending rates and increasing placement choice through more foster carers being recruited.

It was noted that care leavers received some information about their health history, but that it had been identified that this needed to improve. Since the inspection, considerable work has been done through the Corporate Parenting Group and Health services to develop and introduce a Health Passport for care leavers. There is currently a working group of young people looking at this and developing further the information to be provided.

Improving and sustaining placement stability was identified as a key priority. Overall long term stability figures are improving. Monthly permanency tracking meetings ensure that permanency plans are progressed for children under 10 years of age.

### Conclusion

The past year has been a time of great change in the Fostering Service, but we look forward to making good progress in 2013 with a new Fostering Manager; a change of premises, to for the first time be in the same building as the Social Work Teams. Plans for 2013 include:

- New initiatives to support the children with disabilities team
- To develop career progression for Foster Carers
- Recruit new carers specifically to support challenging and complex children
- Improve processes to help in monitoring and reporting on the work of the Fostering Service which will enable us to be clear on undertaking all statutory requirements for the service and identify areas for development in future years.
- Develop further the use of risk assessments to improve safeguarding

### Final thoughts

Together with my colleagues and staff across the whole of Children's services, I would like to reiterate my thanks to all foster carers, their children and wider families for your work here in Southend.



## **Southend Borough Council Statement of Purpose**

### **Southend Fostering Service**

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**December 2012**

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## Introduction

### **Southend Fostering Service**

The Fostering Service is managed within the Department of Children and Learning and is led by Heather Flinders, Interim Head of Children's Specialist Services.

### **Status and Constitution:**

The Southend Fostering Service is part of Southend Borough Council and is a 'Local Authority Fostering Service' as recognised within the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

Southend Fostering Service is based at:

Civic Centre  
Victoria Avenue  
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### **The Service's Values**

Southend's Success for All Children's Group has the following shared vision

'We aim to make sure that all children and young people who live in Southend are able to take advantage of the opportunities which are here now and to enhance these opportunities for the future. It is to

- Help them raise their aspiration and achievement
- Ensure they have the opportunities they need for inclusion
- Facilitate their participation in decision making that affects their lives
- Strive for excellence in the services we provide

The success of this will be measured against the OFSTED guidance for inspection of:

- Gaining Children & Young People's views
- Value for money
- Helping children to be healthy
- Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe
- Success for children
- Achieving economic wellbeing
- Helping children to make a positive contribution
- Promoting equality and tackling discrimination
- Helping children to achieve well and enjoy what they do

The Department of Children & Learning believes that children and young people who cannot be cared for within their own family, whether that be for a short or longer period of time, are often best served by being cared for within another family. The Department of Children & Learning has sought to develop a Fostering Service that can meet the physiological, psychological, emotional, ethnic, cultural and religious needs of children who are looked after by Southend Borough Council. The agency's primary aim is to provide safe, high quality family care for children and young people.



## Aims & Objectives

The overall aim of Children and Learning Services is to provide safe, secure and effective services that enable all children to fulfil their potential, maximise their health and live successful adult lives.

The aims of Children's Specialist Services are:

- To give all looked after children the same opportunities and benefits as other children to live in a safe, secure and stable environment.
- To enable children in care to reach their potential.
- To create a safe environment for looked after children.
- To ensure that looked after children are not disadvantaged or excluded by giving them a sense of belonging in their homes, schools and community.
- To develop and meet the emotional needs of looked after children.
- To provide looked after children with the ability to build and maintain stable relationships.
- To provide looked after children with life opportunities that will assist them to grow into autonomous healthy adults who will be responsible citizens and parents themselves.

In particular the Fostering Service's objectives are:

- To provide the best possible placements for children and young people to enable them to reach their full potential.



- To recruit, assess and support foster carers so they can provide a wide range of placements, which meet the diverse needs of looked after children and young people
- To ensure that the Children's Pledge and Foster Carer Charter are embedded into all work undertaken by the service.
- To ensure that sufficient resources are available through clear sufficiency planning, to meet the needs of our Looked after Children.

### **How will this happen?**

These outcomes will be achieved by:

- Providing placement choices that reflect equality, diversity, individual and personal needs
- Delivering local placements wherever possible to allow ongoing appropriate levels of support
- Active leadership that delivers clarity of purpose to the fostering service
- Clarity about the purpose of individual placements
- Providing access to support services (e.g. health) for children and foster carers.
- Facilitating the maintenance of contact and valued relationships
- Support Friends and Family Carers in the same way as any other Foster Carer
- Avoiding drift and working with time scales that meet the child's best interests
- Designing and managing effective processes and ways of working
- Joint working and partnership
- Ensure that there is a 'Staying Put' procedure in place so that when a young person reaches the age of 18 and they cease being looked after, they have the opportunity to remain with their current foster carer under a supported lodgings agreement.



**By working in partnership with foster carers within Southend-on-Sea to improve the quality of foster care.**

- The Agency and Fostering Families have established Southend Foster Families Council in partnership, which plays a key role in the strategic and operational development of the service.
- Provide a grant to the Southend Foster Families Council.
- Adopt and carry out our work as set out in the Foster Carer Charter and Pledge to Looked After Children

**To recruit, train, support and supervise foster carers the service organises:**

- Advertising, publicity campaigns and recruitment initiatives
- Initial visits to applicants
- Safeguard checks on applicants
- Fostering preparation courses
- BAAF Form F assessments of foster carers and Family and Friends carers
- Presentation of foster carers and Family and Friends foster carers to the Fostering Panel
- Post approval training e.g. NVQ Level 3, De-escalation and Behaviour Management, Valuing Diversity and implementing the new CWDC requirements
- Support to carers during the assessment process and post approval
- Monitoring and improvement of standards of care
- Annual Fostering Household Reviews
- Provision of adequate allowances to enable foster carers to purchase equipment and furniture required for the purpose of fostering
- Support to carers at children's reviews and in the preparation of reports
- Supervision of carers to develop and maintain good standards of practice

**To ensure the highest quality of care for Looked After Children:**

- Standards of care are monitored through regular supervision, including unannounced visits. Any concerns about standards of care are addressed by the supervising social worker.
- Annual household reviews are undertaken and take into account the views of service users.
- Unannounced visits at least annually and more frequent where concerns or difficulties arise.
- Where concerns are noted or investigations are commenced following allegations against foster carers, the Fostering Service will ensure that these are investigated and that the foster carers are supported through the process.
- Following any formal Section 47 inquiries, the Fostering Panel will consider the Fostering Service's appraisal of the foster carers continued capacity to care for children.
- Support and advice for carers is available 24 hours a day.

**To provide an in-house placement service for Looked After Children:**

- A duty worker is available during office hours to take referrals from the Fieldwork Service and match children with appropriate in-house foster placements.

- Details of carers willing to take emergency placements are provided to the emergency duty team when the office is closed.

**To promote a positive image of fostering for foster carers, the children of foster carers and children and young people placed with foster carers:**

- Build a positive sense of identity for carers and foster families
- Long Service Awards for foster carers.
- Positive media coverage
- Fund raising and promotional events
- Awards for looked after children
- Annual celebration event for sons and daughters of foster carers

**To create an environment of continuous improvement and innovation in everything we do:**

- Consult with carers and their representatives about the service and how to improve it.
- Consult with children and young people who are looked after
- Consult with foster carer's children
- Consult with service users and their representatives about the service and how to improve it.
- Consult with staff and their representative about the service and how to improve it.
- Consult with partner agencies about the service and how to improve it.
- Undertake reviews of the service.
- Ensure that staff are trained and motivated to deliver a child centred service
- Learn in order to deliver continuous improvement through:
  - The assessment and review of the service
  - Responding positively to complaints and feedback
  - Learning from any placement disruptions
  - Involving children in policy and decision making
  - Ensuring that children's wishes and feelings will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages
  - Taking corporate responsibility within Children and Learning for the effective management, quality and support of placements
  - Being vigorous in challenging poor practice and addressing problems effectively.

## **Management, Staffing & Services**

### **Management Structure**

The Fostering Service is part of the Department for Children and Learning's Specialist Services. The Interim Head of Specialist Services is Heather Flinders who is also the Decision Maker. The Fostering Service is part of Young People and Family Support Services which is managed by the Group Manager Young People and Family Support Diane Keens who is also the Registered Manager.

Quality assurance issues are managed by this Group Manager and the Group Manager Specialist Resources and Quality Assurance. It is also managed through the Fostering Panel.

### **Staffing**

- **1 Team Manager** - Emmet Perry (full-time)
- **4 Senior Practitioners** - Martelize Kinnear (Part-time)
  - Sue Benson (Part-time)
  - Angela Gray (Full Time)
  - Angie Wright (Full-time)
- **1 Placements Officer** - Howard Cecil (full-time)
- **7 Supervising Social Workers**
  - Vacancy (part-time)
  - Barbara Evans (full-time)
  - Jenni Lawton (full-time)
  - Vacant (full-time)
  - Teodora Popova (full-time)
  - Jan Wright (full-time)
  - Matthew Grant-Browning (full-time)
  
- **1.5 Fostering Administrators**
  - Sally Andrews (part-time)
  - Loraine Little (full-time)
- **Marketing and Recruitment Officer** - Dawn Cannon (part time)

The Team Manager and all supervising workers are qualified social workers, holding the Diploma/Degree in Social Work or an equivalent qualification.

### **Services provided:**

Southend Fostering Service exists in order to provide foster care for children and young people looked after by Southend Borough Council. The Fostering Service aims to recruit sufficient carers in numbers and range of skills to enable children and young people to be placed local to their families and other support networks. The agency offers placements with carers who meet National Standards and receive comprehensive support and training. There is the opportunity for career progression for foster carers through fee paid schemes. There is an arrangement in place for independent support in the case of allegations, by way of a partnership scheme between Southend and Thurrock fostering services.

## Placement Options

### Long term (permanent):

Duration: Until adulthood  
Purpose: Permanent, substitute care

### Task centred:

Duration: 1 to 2 years including preparation for independence  
Purpose: Provide substitute care where a lengthy piece of work is required, or for teenagers.

### Short term:

Duration: Up to 1 year  
Purpose: Provide substitute care while plans are formulated or a specific piece of work is carried out, e.g. assessment of parents.

### Parent and child:

Duration: Up to 1 year (occasionally longer)  
Purpose: Support parent, protect baby, and assess parenting skills.

### Respite:

Duration: 1- 28 days; may be one off, or a planned series of placements, not exceeding 110 nights per year.

### Remand and bail support:

Duration: Up to a year (very occasionally longer)  
Purpose: Provide a placement when a young person is remanded to Local Authority accommodation by the Court.

### Emergency:

Duration: Up to 28 days (may then evolve into short term or other type of placement)  
Purpose: Emergency substitute care at very short notice.

### Supported Lodgings

Duration: Ongoing until young person is able to move to independent living.  
Purpose: To provide a supportive home environment to aid transition to independent living.

### Short Breaks

Duration: No longer than 17 days in any one period and for no more than 75 days per annum  
Purpose: To provide short term care and support for CWD and children in need



## Services Provided

Southend Fostering Service offers a therapeutic service for children and young people through the Marigold Family Centre, the Southend Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) services, and where needed, with adjoining CAMHS services e.g. where carers live outside the boundaries of Southend on Sea.

We have a social worker, Lainey Hall, from the CAMHS service working directly with the fostering service, where she is based part time.

Specialist education support is available through the Advisory Teacher and Education Liaison worker for Looked after Children, who are based within the fieldwork service. Children with special educational needs are provided with services through the special educational needs service. Specialist health support is available through the agency's Lead Nurse for Looked After Children.

The Virtual School Headteacher's role is to co-ordinate services for looked after children and their families, so that all school-age children in the care of Southend Borough Council are receiving the best possible education. The Virtual School approach is to work with looked after children as if they were in a single school, liaising with the schools they attend, tracking the progress they make and supporting them and their carers to help them achieve the best possible outcomes.

## **Children Placed**

The majority of children are placed with in-house foster carers. The remaining children in foster placements are largely placed in the four preferred independent fostering agencies (IFAs) that have an agreement with Southend Borough Council and provide local placements.

The foster carer recruitment strategy, aimed at attracting local families to become foster carers, is increasing the number of available in-house placements.

## **Carer Households**

The Fostering Service currently has 101 approved carer households across all the categories. Whilst several new Foster Carers have been approved, others have resigned, retired or been deregistered over the past year, but overall numbers of Foster Carers are increasing. The recruitment campaign is in place to recruit additional carers to reflect the needs of Southend's looked after population. Foster Carers need to reflect the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the children looked after by Southend Borough Council. We are particularly seeking carers from black and minority ethnicities, carers who can offer a home to large sibling groups, carers for children with a disability and carers willing to take adolescents. Fostering Allowances are set in detail in the Fostering Allowances booklet and policy. The rates for 2011/12 are currently pegged at the Fostering Network base rate figures for 2010/11 plus 2% as a consideration for an inflation rise. These figures are reviewed annually. The service has up to 50 fee paid Foster Carers. 11 carers are now on the higher fee paid Southend Fostering Project (specialist foster care).

The Southend Fostering Team continues to carry out foster care and Family and Friends assessments.

## **Procedures for the Recruitment, Approval, Training, Support and Review of Foster Carers**

Southend Fostering Service has undertaken to ensure that its practices comply with the National Minimum Standards (2011). Furthermore the policies in relation to the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management, support and supervision of foster carers reflect the expectations set out in the preceding Code of Practice.

Southend Fostering Service undertakes all its work within the principle, set out in the 1989 Children Act, that the welfare of children is paramount. This principle is applied to the agency's decision making, planning and daily work.

All social work tasks, including the assessment, support and supervision of foster carers, are carried out by qualified and experienced social workers.

All enquiries to the agency by people expressing an interest in becoming a foster carer are responded to promptly. We aim to have formally acknowledged the enquiry within two working days by sending an acknowledgement letter and information leaflets. This will be further supported by a phone call and a home visit within 7 working days of their confirmation that they wish to proceed.

Applicants are then invited to attend the Skills to Foster course. These are run at least every 3 months. Subject to satisfactory safeguard checks and the agreement of the Team Manager, applicants are also invited to make a formal application and are immediately allocated for assessment, using the nationally recognised Form F format.

The target date for presentation to the Fostering Panel is within 6 months from the date the Form F assessment begins. Applicants are invited to read the assessment report and to attend the Fostering Panel considering their application. The Fostering Panel's recommendations are then considered by the Head of Children's Specialist Services who is the decision maker. Each foster carer is allocated a named supervising social worker, who visits them on a regular basis. The agency also provides a 24 hour on call system through their Out of Hours service, staffed by qualified social workers and foster carers. Foster carers are offered respite as required by the Care Plan and Placement Agreement for each child.

### **Foster Carer Allowances**

Fostering Allowances are set in detail in the Fostering Allowances booklet and policy. The rates for 2012/13 are currently pegged at the Fostering Network base rate figures for 2010/11 plus 2% as a consideration for an inflation rise. These figures are reviewed annually.

### **Ongoing Learning and Development**

A rolling programme of training is provided for foster carers, including courses on:

- CWDC Induction Course
- Apprentiships
- Valuing Diversity
- Managing difficult behaviour



- De-escalation
- The effects of separation and loss
- First aid
- Substance misuse
- Life story work
- Court work
- Theraplay
- Child Protection
- Health of Looked after Children
- Fostering changes

All carers are encouraged to undertake NVQ level three training which has now reverted to an apprenticeship qualification. All new carers are to undertake the CWDC programme over the coming year and many carers have completed this already.

Southend Fostering Service has full membership of BAAF and Fostering Network and all carers have membership to Fostering Network (funded by the Fostering Service) where they can gain additional support and advice.

### **Fostering Panel**

- The Fostering Panel is independently chaired.
- The Panel is compliant with the Fostering Regulations 2011.
- The Panel meets on a monthly basis
- The Panel considers recommendations for the approval of foster carers and matches between foster carers and specific children where a long term placement is planned. It also oversees Household Reviews and the de-registration of foster carers and helps with quality assurance.

### **Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning**

The Fostering Service keeps statistical records and undertakes analysis in order to inform judgement on the quality of the services offered and to provide information on which to strategically plan future placement requirements.

The Borough has a Commissioning Strategy, drafted in line with Department of Health guidance on 'Planning & Providing Good Quality Placement for Children in Care'. Information is kept and monitored on:

- The number of referrals of children/young people by age, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and disability,
- The number of enquiries to approval, number of carers by age, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and disability
- The number of Annual Foster Home Reviews conducted to timescale
- Disruption rates

## Private Fostering

The Fostering Service is responsible for:

- Information on Private Fostering within the local community together with the Local Safeguarding Board.
  - The completion of a Private Fostering Assessment to ensure that the placement can meet the child's needs.
- The maintenance of a register of people privately fostering and children placed with them
- The monitoring of standards within private foster homes.

## Complaints

Complaints leaflets are provided to foster carers. Complaints leaflets are provided to children and young people by their own social worker and the fostering service provides further copies when requested or when circumstances indicate that this is relevant. Adults and children are encouraged to discuss any concerns about the service with their social worker and/or the team manager.

### **Making a Complaint**

Southend Borough Council, Department of Children & Learning has a Complaints Manager. Complaints, or indeed general comments or compliments, about the service can be lodged. Any complaint will be acknowledged and the Complaints Manager will organise an investigation of the complaint according to the three stages of complaints (Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3).

The Complaints Manager can be contacted at  
 Department for Children and Learning  
 Civic Centre  
 Victoria Avenue  
 Southend-on-Sea  
 Essex SS2 6ER

Telephone 01702 215085 or by email [childrenscomplaints@southend.gov.uk](mailto:childrenscomplaints@southend.gov.uk)

Comments and Complaints can also be made to Ofsted:

OFSTED  
Children's Right Director  
OFSTED  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA  
08456 404045

Roger Morgan  
Children's Right Director  
OFSTED  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE  
0800 528 0731

### **Additional Copies**

Copies of this Statement are routinely given to people using the services provided by Southend Fostering Services.

A Children's Guide to our services is also available.

For a copy of this document in any other format/language, or to order more copies, please contact:

Southend Fostering Service  
Civic Offices  
Victoria Road  
Southend on Sea  
Essex SS2 6ER  
Tel No: 01702 212180

