



**Southend Borough Council
Statement of Purpose**

Southend Fostering Service

Civic Centre
Victoria Avenue
Southend on Sea
Essex

December 2019

Telephone: 01702 212004
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Introduction

Southend Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is managed within the remit of the Executive Director for Children & Public Health and is led by John O'Loughlin, Director of Children's 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(amend 2013).

Southend Fostering Service is based at:

Civic Centre
Victoria Avenue
Southend on Sea
Essex
SS2 6ER
Tel No: 01702 212398

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

We believe 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. We have 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's 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 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 Community in partnership, which plays a key role in the strategic and operational development of the service.
- Provide a grant to the Southend Foster Families Community.
- 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 called Skilled to Foster
- 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. De-escalation and Behaviour Management and Valuing Diversity 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 identify 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
- Annual Foster Carers Conference

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's services 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 within the remit of the Executive Director for Children and Public Health. The Director of Children's Services is John O'Loughlin who is also the Decision Maker. The Fostering Service is part of Placements & Resources which is managed by the Head of Service Placements & Resources Diane Keens who is also the Registered Manager. – currently off long term sick interim managed by Chris Sandercombe.

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 Service Manager** - Jo Hines (Full time)
 - **1 Team Manager** - Penny Mercer (full-time) who is also the Registered Manager
 - **4 Senior Practitioners** - Martelize Kinnear (full time)
 - Toni Bisaccia (full-time)
 - Jodie Wessell (Full-time)
 - Sue Snoxell (Full time senior fostering worker for SGO and Private Fostering)
 - Karen Eves (full time) Mental Health worker
 - **3 Placements Commissioning Officers** - Howard Cecil (full-time)
 - Marion Wilson (secondment)
 - Magdalena Wach-Sowa (full time)
 - **8 Supervising Social Workers**
 - Gabriela Zaharii (full-time)
 - Nikki Seaden (full-time)
 - Caroline Dolby (full-time)
 - Catherine Sturrock (part-time maternity cover)
 - Suz Sawtell (part time - maternity leave)
 - Caleb Dube- (full-time)
 - Eunice Charangwa (Part-time)
 - Vacancy (full time)
 - **1.5 Fostering Administrators** - Sally Andrews (part-time)
 - Loraine Little (full-time)
- Marketing and Recruitment Officer** - Dawn Webb (part time)
- **1 Senior MH worker** – Karen Eves (Full 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 support is obtained from Fostering Network.

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

Staying Put

Duration : 18-25 years

Purpose: To provide ongoing support post 18 for care leavers within their foster placement



Services Provided

Southend Fostering Service offers a therapeutic service for children and young people through the Marigold Assessment +, the Southend Emotional wellbeing Mental Health service (EWMHS) services, and where needed, with adjoining EWMHS services e.g. where carers live outside the boundaries of Southend on Sea.

We have a senior mental health worker, working directly with the fostering service, to support the emotional health and wellbeing of Looked after Children in Southend.

Specialist education support is available through the Virtual Head Teacher and Advisory Teacher for Looked after Children, who are based within the Civic Centre. 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.

The Edge of Care Team has dedicated workers to support foster carers to prevent placement breakdown.

Children Placed

The majority of children are placed with in-house foster carers. The remaining children in foster placements are largely placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) that have an agreement with Southend Borough Council and provide local placements. Southend will usually only place with independent providers deemed 'good' or 'outstanding' by OFSTED.

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

Carer Households

The Fostering Service currently has 113 approved carer households across all the categories. Whilst several new Foster Carers have been approved, others have resigned or retired over the past year, however we continue to successfully recruit locally. 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. These figures are reviewed annually.

The Southend Fostering Team continues to carry out foster care and Family and Friends assessments and to assess and formally support and supervise all Connected Person's placements.

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.

The target date for presentation to the Fostering Panel is within 6 months from the date of the initial enquiry. 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 Director of Children's 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 specialist, experienced 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. These figures are reviewed annually.

Ongoing Learning and Development

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

- Fostering Challenge
- 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
- Transition
- TSD

Southend Fostering Service has full membership of CoramBAAF 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 (updated 2013).
- 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

There is a clear audit programme for all foster care files.

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.
- Awareness raising within the local community

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 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
Children & Public Health
Civic Centre
Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex SS2 6ER

Telephone 01702 215085 or by email childrenscomplaints@southend.gov.uk

Comments and Complaints can also be made to Ofsted:

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
03001231231

Anne Longfield Children's Commissioner for England 0800 528 071 Advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

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:

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Civic Offices
Victoria Road
Southend on Sea
Essex SS2 6ER
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