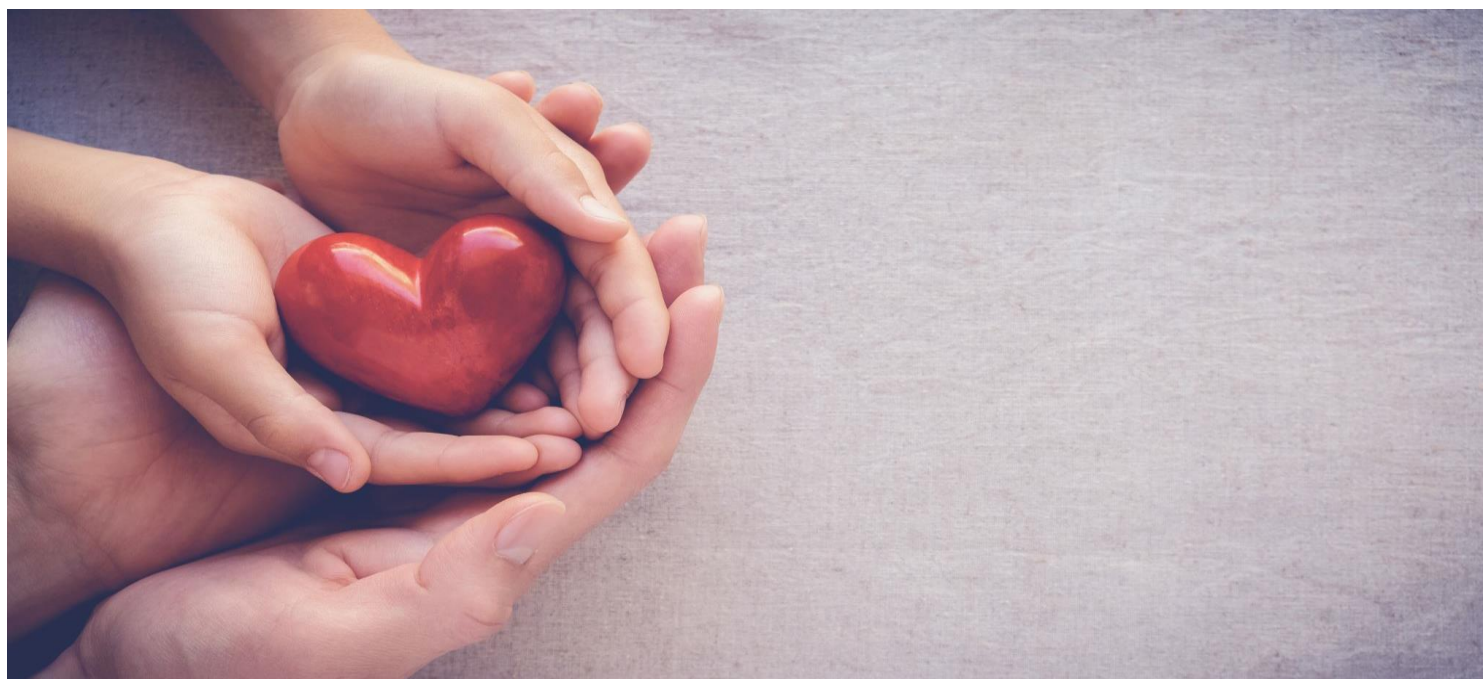


Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

Southend on Sea Borough Council



Department of Children and Public Health

Southend Fostering Service
Civic Centre Victoria Avenue
Southend on Sea Essex
December 2021
Telephone: 01702 212938
Website: www.southend.gov.uk

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Introduction

Southend Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is managed within Children's Social Work, Early Help and Youth Support and is led by Alexander Kubeyinje, Interim Director, Sara Scholey, Interim Head of Service Corporate Parenting, Placements and Resources and Jo Hines Service Manager,

Fostering and Adoption Status and Constitution

The Southend Fostering Service is part of Southend on Sea Borough Council and is a 'Local Authority Fostering Service' as recognised by The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011(as amended 2013).

Southend Fostering Service is based at: Civic Centre Victoria Avenue Southend on Sea Essex SS2 6ER
Tel No: 01702 212398

Service Values

A Southend where all children achieve success is the shared vision for children in Southend.

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.

We act to:

- Help them raise their aspiration and achievement, achieving a sense of pride and joy
- Ensure they have the opportunities they need for inclusion and prosperity
- Facilitate their participation to be active and involved in decisions that affects their lives
- Strive for excellence in the services we provide to ensure all young people are safe and well



Aims & Objectives

The agency's primary aim is to provide safe, high quality family care for children and young people who are unable to live with their parents.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy includes the following priorities that the Fostering Service contribute to. They align with Southend 2050 ambitions.

Safe and Well

- To ensure we have sufficient, high quality, local placements for children and care leavers including foster placements, residential care, supported accommodation and independent housing. To reduce use of PVI placements
- Placement stability improved so children are able to build secure and lasting relationships with their carers
- All looked after children and care leavers to access health assessments and dental checks without any delay
- All looked after children to have access to services to address the trauma they have experienced and any emerging emotional and mental health issues.

Active and Involved

- The Children in Care Council will be supported to expand their influence; increased membership with greater representation, regular sessions with leaders from across the system, joint campaigns with other youth forums on subjects of interest to them.
- The voice of care experienced children and young people will be centre at every Corporate Parenting Group meeting. Corporate parents will engage with care experienced young people to co-design services, plans and strategies
- Southend Foster Carers will be supported to expand their influence on how we provide care for looked after children.
- Care experienced young people will become involved in the commissioning of services for looked after children and care leavers

Pride and Joy

- We will celebrate the achievements of looked after children and care leaver
- Looked after children will be encouraged to explore their identity and to have pride in this. They will supported to learn about all parts of their family background, not only the reason why they become looked after
- Looked after children and care leavers will be encouraged to engage with activities that give them pride including sport, youth groups, art, performing art and community work,
- The families of looked after children will be supported to celebrate their achievements with their children
- We hold high aspirations for, and high expectations of, our looked after children and care leavers



Opportunity and Prosperity

- Looked after children will attend school or college and regularly and be able to engage with learning
- Young people will be given their savings when they leave care
- Arrangements for family time will be child and parent centred. They will not be centred on the needs of the service

Connected and Smart

- Looked after children and care leavers can engage in the digital world safely and are supported to do so
- Carers are able to use digital technology with confidence
- Looked after children develop the skills to travel round Southend safely



Actions to meet objectives

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 consider 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, including access to independent support.
- 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
- Appointed Fostering Ambassadors to support recruitment.
- Positive media coverage
- Fund raising and promotional events
- Awards for looked after children (delayed this year due to Covid-19)
- Annual celebration event for sons and daughters of foster carers (delayed this year due to Covid-19)
- 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 to deliver continuous improvement through:

- Engaging in a range of quality assurance activity including Beyond Auditing
- 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 considered at all stages
- Being vigorous in challenging poor practice and addressing problems effectively.

There is a detailed Improvement plan in place for The Fostering Service that includes progress measures against outcomes.

Management, staffing and services

Management Structure

The Fostering Service is part of Children and Public Health.

The Executive Director of Children and Public Health (DCS) is **Michael Marks**

The Interim Director of Children's Social Work, Early Help and Youth Support is **Alexander Kubeyinje**.

The Interim Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, Placements and Resources is **Sara Scholey**

Sara is a qualified social worker with over 20 years of experience across a variety of service areas including residential, adoption, fostering children who are looked after and care leavers. Sara Scholey who is also the Agency Decision Maker. Quality assurance issues are managed by this Head of Service and Head of Service for Quality, Practice & Principal Social Worker Assurance. It is also managed through the Fostering Panel.

The Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption is **Jo Hines**

Jo has worked for Southend since 2007. Jo holds a BA in social work, Dip SW and a Masters in Professional Practice including management and leadership. Jo has a particular interest in Theraplay in which she holds level 1 & 2 training, which brings an added dimension to the Team. She has level 1 & 2 Dyadic Development Psychotherapy; levels 1&2 Sensory Attachment Intervention, NPP level 1, Foundations in Attachment training, Therapeutic Life story Work, NVR and has training in facilitating The Just Right State. Her Masters focused on developing policy and practice in sibling assessment.

Team Managers

Penny Mercer (full-time) is the Registered Manager. Penny joined the service in March 2019 and has extensive experience in fostering. Penny takes the lead on placements and panel. She obtained her DipSW in 2008. In addition, Penny is trained in the use of the Adult Attachment Interview and is qualified to deliver the fostering changes programme.

Sue Benson (full time) joined the service in January 2021 and has extensive experience in fostering. Sue takes the lead on recruitment and assessment. Sue holds a BA (hons) in Sociology/Theology, DipSW and a Master's degree in Social Work. She holds a level one qualification in both Theraplay and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy. She is accredited to assess parents using the Parent Assessment Manual and has also co-facilitated the Thames Valley Programme.

Sonia Jenkins (Part Time) joined the Service in Jan 2021. Sonia brings management experience in service improvement and design, Fostering, Child Protection, Care Management, and adoption. Sonia Leads on Service Improvement, Performance and staff training across the team. She obtained her DipSW in 2007 and BA in Social Work in 2008. In addition, Sonia has MA in Psychotherapeutic Counselling and qualifications in Group Counselling, attachment and loss.

Advanced Practitioners

Toni Bisaccia (full-time)

Catherine Sturrock (full time)

Abbie Osbourne (full time)

Senior Mental Health Workers

Karina O'Keefe and Claire Sarchet joined the Service in October 2021 and job share in developing mental health support service for foster carers.

Senior fostering worker for SGO and Private Fostering

Sue Snoxell

Senior Assessment Workers – completing SGO, parenting & connected persons assessments

Wendy O'Connell

Emma Pace

Rebecca Christian

Placement Social Worker – currently recruiting

Commissioning Social Worker - currently recruiting

Supervising Social Workers

Gabriela Zaharii (full-time)

Nikki Seaden (full-time)

Caroline Dolby (full-time) on maternity leave

Suz Sawtell (part time)

Eunice Charangwa (Part-time)

Nehal Eldeeb (full time)

Heather Pursue (full time)

Carolyn Jones (full time)

Fostering Administrators

Katherine Hart (part-time) Sian Bennett (part-time)

Marketing and Recruitment Officer

Donna Kerr (part time)

All the social workers have appropriate qualifications and are registered with Social Work England.

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.

Respite

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

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.

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 exists 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 support networks. The agency offers placements with carers who meet National Standards and receive comprehensive support and training. Career progression for foster carers is recognised to be a priority. The current Southend structure is under review. There is an arrangement in place for independent support in the case of allegations. Support is obtained from Fostering Network

Southend Fostering Service offers a trauma informed therapeutic service for children and young people through Family Engagement Team and 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 senior mental health workers, working directly with the fostering service, to support the emotional health and wellbeing of Looked after Children in Southend specifically through equipping our foster carers with the skills, knowledge, and strategies they need to fulfil their role.

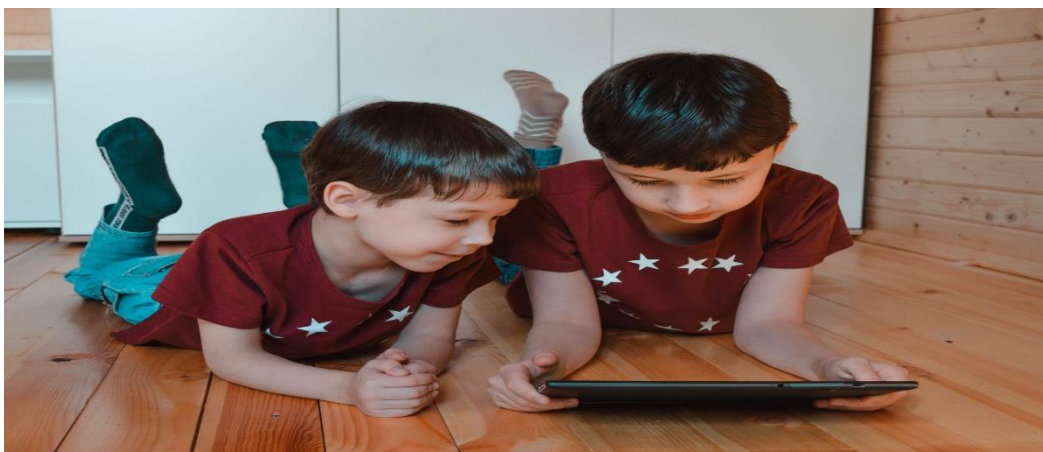
Specialist health support is available through the agency's Lead Nurse for Looked after Children.

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. 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 and Family Engagement Team has dedicated workers to support foster carers to prevent placement breakdown

Children Placed

Every effort is made for children to be placed with in-house foster carers. Where this is not possible 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 foster carer recruitment strategy, aimed at attracting local families to become foster carers, is focused on increasing the number of available in-house placements. There are currently 83 approved carer households across all the categories.

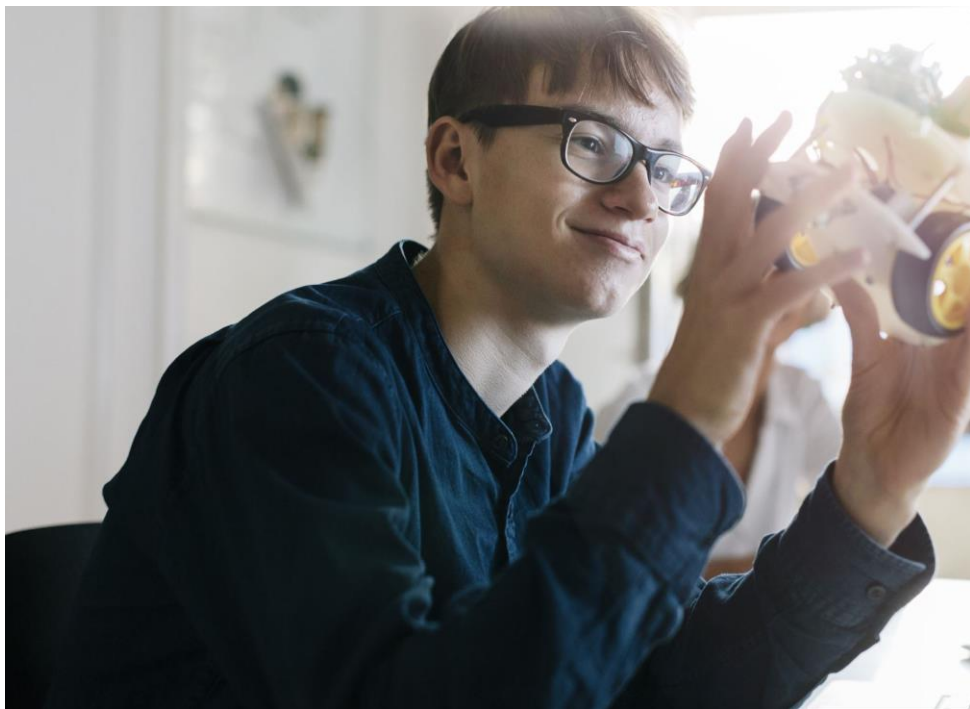
Several new Foster Carers have been approved but we have seen an increase in resignations, de-registrations, and retirements over the past year. We continue to recruit locally

The Southend Fostering Team recruit, assess and train prospective foster carers, family and friends carers and Connected Persons Carers. In addition, the Team provides supervision and support to approved foster carers.

With a new marketing officer in post a new recruitment campaign has been developed to recruit additional carers that reflect the needs of Southend's looked after population. Foster Carers need to reflect the cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds of the children looked after by Southend Borough Council. We are particularly seeking carers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, carers who can offer a home to large sibling groups, carers for children with a disability and carers willing to care for adolescents.

Fostering Allowances are set in detail in the Fostering Allowances booklet and policy. These figures are reviewed annually.

A new foster carer payment structure has been developed with the aim of introducing it on 1 April 2022.



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

Southend Fostering Service is committed to ensuring 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 via email 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 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 Agency 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 foundational training programme for all carers is a requirement and includes:

- Basic Foster Carer Skills
- Paediatric First Aid
- Understanding Trauma and Attachment
- Sexually Harmful Behaviour
- Managing Transitions

All Foster carers must complete the Statutory Training, Support and Development (TSD) programme, support groups are run to facilitate this.

Foster Carers can access the 'Building Strong Practice Programme' run by the Practice Unit and have access to a range of online learning opportunities through the 'Me Learning' portal. In addition, an extensive programme of training is provided for foster carers as and when required, including courses on:

- Managing difficult behaviour
- NVR – Non-Violent Resistance
- The Challenges of social media
- VR – Virtual Reality Trauma Training
- Life story work
- Sharing Difficult Information
- Impact of Domestic Abuse
- Theraplay
- BAME and Proud
- Health of Looked after Children
- Safeguarding Black Children
- Siblings Assessment Workshops
- The Power of Family Time and Maintaining Links

Foster Carers are encouraged to attend Sparkles, an adult and pre-school group to provide further support to foster carers to promote the formation of an attachment connection within their placement. families at the beginning of their placements.

There are a range of support groups foster carers. Connected persons and those with an SGO can also access for further support. Southend Fostering Service has full membership to Coram BAAF and the 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 at least 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 Annual Household Reviews and the de-registration of foster carers and helps with quality assurance.

There has been recruitment activity regarding the fostering panel to extend the central list of members. The current chair has recently resigned, this post is being recruited to.

Quality Assurance and Strategic planning

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

The Council has a Sufficiency Position Statement, 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
- Compliance with supervision expectations
- Announced and unannounced home visits
- Disruption rates

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

Private Fostering

The Fostering Service is currently responsible for:

- Information on Private Fostering within the local community together with the Southend Safeguarding Children Partnership
- 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 by Supervising Social workers. Information regarding complaints is also available in the Fostering Handbook.

Complaints leaflets are provided to children and young people by their allocated social worker and the fostering service provides further copies when requested or when circumstances indicate that this is relevant. All looked after children are regularly asked if they want to access independent advocacy through the commissioned advocacy service, NYAS.

Adults and children are encouraged to discuss any concerns about the service with their social worker and/or the team manager.

Making a Complaint

The Department has a Complaints Manager. Complaints, or indeed general comments or compliments, about the service can be lodged with them. 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 and 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

Or to the Children's Commissioner for England

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. 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 212938