



Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Fostering Service **Statement of Purpose April 2007– March 2008**

1. Context

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Fostering Service is an integral part of Windsor and Maidenhead Learning and Care Directorate and sits within the Safeguarding and Specialist Services. It operates within the legislative requirements of:

- The Children Act 1989 and accompanying regulations.
- The Care Standards Act 2000 and accompanying National Minimum Standards for fostering services.
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2002
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Other relevant legislation and Dfes (and DoH) guidance, circulars and letters.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Fostering Service also operates in line with the requirements and expectations of:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The United Kingdom National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- The Code of Practice on the Recruitment, Assessment, Approval, Training, Management and Support of Foster Carers 1999
- The current Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Children's Services Plan
- Other relevant interagency local strategies and plans required by statute
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's internal policies and procedures, including the key policy priorities of promoting Development and Equal Opportunities.

2. Key Service Aims

1. Where it meets their needs the service aims to place children and young people in care within their extended family with caregivers who are relatives or with people already known to them.

2. The fostering service works to provide high quality substitute family care, on either a short or long term basis, to meet the needs of those children and young people who are unable to live within their families of origin. The service also supports children within their families by providing regular periods of relief care.
3. The service aims to provide (directly or via work with partner agencies) services which meet the specific or individual needs of looked after children, as identified through the assessment, care planning and reviewing process. This will include the identification and provision of necessary additional services/support e.g. education, health, and therapeutic input. The service will maximise young people's life chances by providing them with positive childhood experiences and the opportunity to reach their full potential as they move on into adulthood.
4. The service is committed to consulting with children, young people, their parents and foster carers, and to ensuring that their views are taken into account in both individual care planning and in service development.
5. The service regards foster carers as members of the professional care team. It is committed to providing carers with the support and training necessary to enable them to offer high quality care to all children and young people who receive its family placement services.

3. Services Provided

The Fostering Service currently offers:

- a) A general fostering scheme, providing planned and emergency foster care for individual children and sibling groups of all ages, across the full range of short term, longer term and relief care provisions.
- b) A specialist family based overnight respite care scheme to support disabled children and young people and their families.
- c) A Supported Lodgings Scheme for looked after young people aged 16 – 18, in conjunction with the Leaving Care Team.

The Fostering Service supports these schemes by providing:

- i) Close links with the Directorate's Children and Families Social Work Teams to ensure integrated planning and provision for individual service users and to ensure effective targeting of service development work.
- ii) A clearly defined and effectively administered payments scheme, which was updated in 2007.
Fostering payments meet the full maintenance costs of caring for children and young people the level being determined by the age of the child. No distinction is made between the amount paid to stranger

carers and to relative caregivers. There is an additional skills payment to carers who have an NVQ qualification.

- iii) An experienced family placement team with a wide range of skills, including specialist workers with skills relevant to developing and supporting services for children with special needs, to ensure that family placement services are appropriate for and accessible to all potential users.
- iv) Ongoing support and training for new and existing carers, including an active NVQ programme.
- v) A recruitment and retention strategy to attract and maintain a sufficient number and range of carers to ensure appropriate placement choice.
- vi) Assessments of prospective carers in line with national standards, including group preparation and individual assessments.
- vii) A joint fostering panel with Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Family Placement.com, an independent fostering provider, constituted and administered in line with regulatory requirements. This panel considers and makes recommendations about the approval of all prospective new carers (and their continuing approval following the first review), agrees “best interests” for children needing long term fostering, matches children to long term placements and advises on service development. It also considers private fostering situations and arrangements for supported lodgings.
- viii) Appropriately trained and experienced social work and support staff to provide all carers with a named supervising worker. These workers provide ongoing support, information and advice. They also have regard to carers’ professional development and are responsible for supervising and monitoring the care provided.
- ix) Annual reviews of the terms of approval and the registration and performance of all approved carers undertaken by an independent reviewing officer.
- x) Access for carers to a specialist 24-hour support service from Norfolk House Resource Centre.

4. Standards of Care

The service has, for the fourth time, been inspected by the CSCI, against the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2002). The inspection reports have been positive; this year there has been an overall outcome of “excellent”. The requirements and recommendations have been implemented. These are public documents and are available to service users, prospective service users, carers, children, parents of children placing authorities and any

other interested party on request either directly from this office or via the CSCI. A hard copy of the latest inspection report is available.

As from April 2007 the responsibility for inspecting the fostering service lies with OFSTED.

The service has developed local consultation with parents, children and young people through the work of the Children and Families Consultation Officer and with foster carers via the Foster Carer Professional and the Foster Carers' Support Group.

5. Management Structure

The Service Manager, Permanency and Placements takes overall responsibility for the service and its strategic direction. The Team Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Respite Service, reports to the Service Manager.

The service recognises the differing needs of children and young people in the looked after system and therefore includes a post for an Assistant Team Manager whose present responsibility is for the training of foster carers and for extending and developing identified resources.

6. Staffing Structure

Senior Management arrangements

Heather Andrews is the Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services. Sheila McKeand is the interim Service Manager Permanency and Placements and she has the overall management of the Fostering service.

Fostering, Adoption and Respite Care Team (see appendix 1)

Team Manager	Ros Whittaker
Assistant Team Manager	Marion Smalley
Social Workers	6 full time establishment posts
Adoption Support Worker	22 hours
Sessional Workers	.38 of a post for discrete pieces of work
Support Worker	1 full time post

7. Foster Carers 2006/07

The service is actively recruiting and assessing new foster carers. During the period April 2006 to March 2007 4 approvals were recommended by the Joint Foster Panel. In addition the panel recommended 1 in family situation.

At 1st April 07 the service had the capacity to provide:

- a) A general fostering scheme (including short term, long term and kinship care i.e. "in family" situations) with **34** foster families and **58** children in placement.

b) A family based support scheme for disabled children with 7 families offering respite care, some overnight, some daytime care

c) A supported lodgings scheme with 4 providers offering 5 placements

(Information about new appointments and departures will be found in Appendix 2 and included in annual reviews of the statement of purpose.)

8. Children Placed

The in-house fostering service is currently (1st April 2007) providing placements to:

a) Children

53 children and young people plus **5** who are the responsibility of other local authorities

b) Family based respite scheme for disabled children and young people

3 overnight respite, **4** daytime respite

b) Supported Lodgings

0 placements currently

Information about placement changes will be included in annual reviews of the statement of purpose.

9. Complaints and representation

All foster carers, children and young people in care are encouraged to make effective representations about any aspect of the fostering service. They are provided with written information about complaints procedures, including contact details for the Customer Services Officer and, as from April 1st, Ofsted. Additionally the Fostering Service Team Manager monitors complaints and will produce an annual summary for inclusion in the statement of purpose.

The Royal Borough's Independent Visitor's scheme is available to all young people at their own or their social worker's request, as appropriate. The Children's Guide to the fostering service is issued to all children and young people in placement. This includes contact details of our advocacy service commissioned through "Voice" which provides individual advocacy support as well as information on how to make a complaint.

10. Recruiting Carers

The service has a carer recruitment and retention strategy designed to maximise capacity and meet identified needs to ensure maximum impact of recruitment effort which, in 2007/8 will include:

- a) Use of statistical information to further investigate the needs of children and young people requiring care.
- b) Updated recruitment information brochures, leaflets and posters, plus a plan of recruitment events and media publicity.
- c) Recruitment targeted at the ethnic minority community and ensuring information is available in Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu and available in appropriate locations.

The service aims to be responsive and to adapt its services and recruitment activity to meet newly identified needs and priorities as these arise.

11. Supporting and retaining carers

Carer support and retention is a fundamental element of the service's recruitment strategy.

Current foster carers are a key resource in the recruitment of future carers. They participate in the "preparing to care" groups and contribute to the Royal Borough's carer conference.

A foster carer professional undertakes a range of activities to support carers including responsibility for the operation of the support group.

2007/8 retention activities include:

- a) Additional support to that provided by supervising social workers via the foster carer professional
- b) Dedicated training events for carers, including child care provision
- c) The annual carers' awards ceremony and foster carers 'supper, where long service awards are made to carers in recognition of their commitment and dedication to the service
- d) The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead foster carers' monthly newsletter
- e) Encouragement and support to carers to attend the Fostering Support Group to enable them to contribute more effectively to the development of the fostering services and to offer support to each other
- f) Full membership of the Fostering Network
- g) A babysitting service
- h) 10 days paid relief care
- i) Access for carers to the out of hours support available through the Children in Care Team at Norfolk House

- j) A handbook for foster carers containing essential information, guidance and policies
- k) A variety of social events
- l) Access to the emergency duty system for the county
- m) Plans to re-develop the service's website to include a restricted access section for carers where confidential information can be posted

12. Approving Carers

Foster Carers are approved in line with the standards set out in the UK Standards for Foster Care. These include expectations that, in all cases:

- a) Each applicant will receive clear information about the process of assessment.
- b) Assessments of foster carers will follow the British Association of Adoption and Fostering's recommended Form F format.
- c) Carers' competencies will be assessed, with a view to determining their ability to provide appropriate care for children and young people who are looked after by Social Services.
- d) Prospective carers will all receive the fostering allowances document, which explains the payments scheme along with the other support provided to, and the expectation and anti-discriminatory practice required of, registered foster carers.
- e) The assessment and approval process will involve and consider all members of the applicant's household.
- f) We aim to complete assessments within six months of application. In 2007/8 we will again be looking at the process, timing and frequency of preparation groups (which normally precede individual assessments) to increase our capacity to meet this target.
- g) Each assessment of a potential carer will be carried out by an appropriately qualified social worker.
- h) A range of verified employment, health and personal written references will be obtained on the applicant's suitability as a foster carer and appropriate police, government and authority checks will be carried out.
- i) An assessment report will be prepared by the assessing social worker, including recommendation on the applicant's suitability as a foster carer and recommendations as to appropriate types of placements for the applicant's abilities, experience, training and support needs.

- j) Each applicant will have access to a copy of the non-confidential sections of his/her assessment report before the recommendation and decision on approval is made and will have the opportunity to make a written comment if they wish to do so. The confidential section of the report is currently confined to third party information (e.g. references). The service is reviewing the practice of offering confidentiality to referees.
- k) A second opinion visit will be carried out by a manager
- l) The Joint Fostering Panel will consider all applications and applicants will be informed of outcomes both verbally and in writing.
- m) Prospective carers will be offered the opportunity to represent themselves at the foster panel meeting, which considers their application.

13. The Joint Foster Panel

This Panel was established in June 2002. The Panel considers and makes recommendations about the approval of foster carers, matches children to long-term placement and generally advises upon and oversees the assessment and review of the service's carers. It meets monthly. Membership and practice conforms to regulatory requirements. The panel has no more than 11 members. Currently it is made up of:

An Independent Chair

1 RBWM Elected member

1 Bracknell Elected member

The Director of the partner IFP

3 social work members employed by the service providers

2 Independent members

1 independent member, who has been a foster carer for another agency. The independent members have been selected to ensure that the panel provides the necessary range of expertise and experience to fulfil its functions.

The panel provides an information leaflet for applicants, including details of panel processes, complaint procedures and other relevant information.

14. Additional Documentation

The fostering service periodically reviews its documentation to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2002). The following will be provided to all prospective and registered carers and can be made available to others on request:

- Statement of Purpose (reviewed annually)
- Children's Guide to the Service
- Written Information and Guidance for Foster Carers i.e. the Foster Carers' Handbook
- A annual booklet on the Fostering Allowances Scheme
- Foster Panel Leaflet

Appendix 1

Staffing Position as at April 2005

Name	Job Title
Ros Whittaker	Team Manager
Marion Smalley	Assistant Team Manager
Gill Black	Senior Practitioner
Joanne Madden	Senior Practitioner
Sarah Taylor	Social Worker
Christine Burton	Social Worker
Sam Watson	Social Worker
Chris Palme	Social Worker
Liz James	Adoption Support Worker (SWkr)
Jenny Dean	Support Worker
Barbara Wilsher	Sessional Worker
Full Time Vacancy	Social Worker

Each team member, with the exception of the admin. support workers and the team support worker, is social work trained and qualified. They all have childcare experience. No one is newly qualified.

Appendix 2

New Carers and Carers Leaving the Service

Overall there were 4 new approvals providing an additional 7 new placements.

Breakdown of new carers

- 4 mainstream foster carers have been recommended and approved
- 1 kinship carer

Two de-registrations

- 2 carers resigned, one because of a change in personal circumstances and the other to become an adult carer

Appendix 3

Complaints and Allegations

- Last year's allegation of sexual abuse against a male foster carer was concluded during the year. This was unsubstantiated
- A member of a foster carers' family was alleged to have threatened a foster child's boyfriend
- An anonymous complaint was made about a foster carer who was alleged to have held a noisy party. This was unsubstantiated
- A carer expressed her disquiet at the offer of a yoga session. This offended her religious principles
- A young person complained about his care in a previous placement. This matter was unresolved at stage 1 and will now go to stage 2

With the exception of the last item all matters were resolved at stage 1.

In addition there have been a number of standards of care investigations which have all been resolved.

Appendix 4 **Compliments**

- Mrs T, foster carer thanked the team for the theatre trip which her children went on. She also said she was impressed by the support given by the Foster Carer Professional
- NCH complimented the team on the “phenomenal” family finding service we had provided
- Social worker complimented foster carers on their acceptance of and empathy shown to a particularly challenging young person
- Foster Career DL described the Foster Carers’ Conference as one of the best training days he had ever attended. Several carers expressed their appreciation of the event
- Daughter of a foster carer said how much she had enjoyed the Legoland trip
- Letter of appreciation received from foster carers for Christmas vouchers
- Carers expressed their enjoyment of the awards evening
- CC, foster carer, sent a message of appreciation for the support received during her illness
- Various expressions of thanks received from carers for social events

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