



Norfolk Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2018/19



Norfolk County Council

Why foster for Norfolk County Council?

Fostering is extremely rewarding. As a foster carer, you can make a real difference to a child's life, providing them with a nurturing safe home where they can have every chance of a happy secure childhood, supported to reach their aspirations and succeed in life.

It's a big commitment to become a foster carer, but extremely worthwhile. The rewards are enormous – some of our foster carers have been fostering for over 30 years!

By becoming part of Norfolk County Council's Fostering Service, you will be contributing to the provision of high quality placements, which gives best value for Norfolk communities. We will provide support and guidance from our highly experienced team of fostering staff, and access to a wide range of training to develop your skills, knowledge and expertise. There is a tiered payment scheme which reflects the complexity of the child requiring a fostering placement and the skills you offer. We will treat you with the respect that you deserve as a professional foster carer and work in partnership as a member of the Team Around the Child

Foster carers are of critical importance to Norfolk County Council. I am delighted that OFSTED, November 2017 told us that our fostering service was well resourced and managed. Fostering Panels are effective and placement stability is good. Most importantly for us, OFSTED told us "children with foster carers who are well trained, well supported and well supervised. As part of our transformation journey to good and outstanding, we are inviting new foster carers to be part of our Fostering Service this year we are looking to recruit 40 new fostering families.

This year through our collaborative work with Impower Consultants we have further invested in the Fostering Service as part of the transformation programme to improve our targeted marketing and recruitment Strategy, and in how with support we will retain our foster carers. To assist us we are working closely with our fostering ambassadors and the Fostering Advisory Partnership. We are ambitious about wanting Children who are looked after to be living in loving foster families in their communities, where they can feel safe, confident and have a sense of belonging.

Keen to know more call us on 01603 306649

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about fostering in Norfolk.



Sara Tough
Director of Children's Services

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National Legislative and Policy Framework ♥

Norfolk's Fostering Service is run in accordance with the principles and practice outlined in the:

- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2013 (Amendments to the Children Act 1989)
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and case Review Regulations 2010
- Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (Amendments) 2015
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for Foster Carers

Statement of purpose introduction ♥

This Statement of Purpose outlines the aims, objectives and service arrangements of Norfolk County Council's Fostering Service. It has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, the National Minimum Standards 2011, and amended regulations to explain how the service strives to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

Ofsted made the following observations in respect of Norfolk's Fostering Service during the Ofsted Inspection (under the Single Inspection Framework) in November 2017

'Children are placed with foster carers who are well trained, well supported and well supervised.'

This Statement of Purpose is a source of information for prospective foster carers, foster carers registered with Norfolk County Council, Fostering Services staff and all other colleagues or professionals within Norfolk County Council.

The Statement of Purpose also links with the Children's Guide that is provided to all children and young people who are placed in foster care.

The Office for Standards in Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) has the responsibility to inspect the Fostering Service regularly to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. Our most recent inspection can be located at www.ofsted.gov.uk. A copy of this statement is lodged with Ofsted. The statement is updated and amended annually.





Policy Statement♥

Norfolk Fostering Service believes that every Looked After Child should be able to enjoy the same quality of life and opportunities as all children.

Norfolk's Fostering Service recognises that children's needs are best met by their family where it is safe to do so and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in an appropriate alternative family placement wherever possible. The priority will be for children to be placed with family or friends (known as kinship carers) and supported under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning regulations where this placement is deemed suitable and the child is looked after. Other placements may include a child being placed with their parent/s within a fostering household.

Norfolk is committed to placing children and young people with Norfolk-based foster carers for them to maintain contact with families and friends, to continue at the same school and thrive within their community wherever possible.

Each child/young person will have access to services that recognises and addresses their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.

Placement decisions will consider the child/young person's assessed racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, religion, culture and language of the foster carer.

Of paramount importance is the child/young person's safety and welfare which is actively promoted within all Fostering placements. Children and young people are safeguarded against being exposed to significant harm within fostering placements through active engagement of the implementation of safer caring arrangements within the household.

Our Vision♥

To give every child the opportunity to thrive in their families, in their school and in their communities. All children should enjoy a happy, healthy childhood which promotes their self-confidence and resilience, which gives them the foundation for adulthood and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Fostering Service is working to improve outcomes for Norfolk's looked after children, providing them with safe and secure environments in which they can thrive.



The Aims of Norfolk County Council's Fostering Service ♥

The main aim of our Fostering Service is to provide safe, high-quality foster care placements for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals.

As well as promoting their health and general well-being, we believe that children and young people in our care should:

- ✓ Be helped to grow and reach their potential
- ✓ Be given safe, nurturing experiences within a variety of caring resources which reflect need, respect difference, value diversity and promote inclusion
- ✓ Be listened to and that services we provide should take these views into consideration
- ✓ Receive high quality, relevant aftercare
- ✓ Have their rights and responsibilities respected and involve them, along with their carers, in all aspects of service delivery

We believe that children looked after by Norfolk Children's Services deserve:

- ✓ Services which help them overcome adversity and positively address disability
- ✓ Good quality and timely assessments that reflect the child/young person's needs and demonstrate how such needs are going to be met.
- ✓ Positive care planning and that as corporate parents foster carer's have high aspirations for their future
- ✓ All significant adults in their lives to be working together
- ✓ To be heard, consulted with and encouraged to participate in their care and family life

The service is also committed to:

- Ensuring that the service offered is based on statutory requirements, sound principles and good practice and works within the principles of value for money for the council.
- Multi-agency working and developing partnerships and protocols with organisations which can progress the needs of our looked after children.
- Working at all levels in partnership with Education and Health to promote the well-being of children whom we are looking after.
- Providing a high quality responsive child-centred service in relation to its core functions.
- Recruiting fostering carers from within our diverse community and from kinship networks of the looked after child, whichever best meets their needs.
- Applicants being comprehensively assessed and prepared through training to be able to deal with a range of issues that foster carers face when looking after children within a safe family home.
- Providing fostering allowances in line with government recommended rates. In addition, carers can receive a fee in line with Norfolk's Tier Alignment Scheme. All carers are aligned to a tier level and most receive a corresponding fee, in recognition of their skills and experience and the complexity of the placement they are able to offer.



Somewhere they can achieve and contribute



Our Service Objectives ♥

We put children at the centre of what we do, and we support carers to do the same by:

- Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children throughout their childhood.
- Ensuring there is a choice of high-quality foster care placements available to meet the complex and diverse needs of children.
- Working in partnership with children and their families.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity, having a positive regard for the child's racial, religious and cultural needs.
- Promoting and abiding by the Pledge for children and young people who are looked after.
- Supporting children through trauma-informed foster care (understanding that children's behaviours are impacted by their experience of trauma). Foster carers to be offered training that considers addressing the attachment needs of looked after children and trauma responses to their past experiences.
- Ensuring children reach their potential in education and employment.
- Ensuring children's health needs are met.
- Ensuring that young people are supported to move into independence in a planned way.
- Delivering regular supervision to each foster carer from a fostering supervising social worker who will assist in identifying the individual training and development needs of foster carers, so that we are able to continually develop our fostering workforce.
- Taking into consideration an individual child's needs/wishes and feelings as they relate to the foster placement.
- Accommodating siblings together wherever possible and appropriate.
- Promoting contact between the child or young person and his/her birth family throughout their placement.
- Ensuring foster carers make children and young people aware of their rights in line with the Norfolk County Council Promise to children and young people. This includes making children and young people aware of the complaints, compliments, advocacy and independent visitors processes.
- Ensuring that our foster carers feel valued by: providing regular updates on the service through the carers hub; building our carer community through events such as the Carer Awards and the Carer Conference as well as family events; and providing opportunities for foster carers to have a voice through the Fostering Advisory Partnership, focus groups and our newly appointed Foster Carer Ambassadors.



- The Payment for Skills (PFS) model ensures quality by providing a competency and skills framework with clear expectations for foster carers, together with training and personal development programme.
- Ensuring that all practice promotes equal opportunities for all and values diversity of both foster carer's, children and young people.
- Ensuring carers can take appropriate decisions relating to the children in their care by delegating authority for day-to-day decisions unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- Ensuring that any decisions are transparent and fair, any concerns are addressed, and information about complaints procedures are made available to all.
- Ensuring service performance is monitored, assessed with outcomes measured via a Quality Assurance Framework.
- Promoting a Team Around the Child approach in working with the child, young person and their birth family alongside the foster carer.
- Consult regularly and learn from those who are in receipt of services through comments, complaints or compliments and to have regular meetings and consultation with foster carers, senior managers, elected members and the foster panel, including the Panel Chair.
- Consulting regularly with children and young people who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard with active participating and encouragement for Looked After Children being part of the Norfolk In Care Council.
- Having a commitment to continuous improvement through provision of wider placement choices by pioneering more innovative approaches to foster care that are needs-led, delivering flexible packages of support to our looked after children.
- Improving relationships with the use of motivational interviewing which aims to empower children, foster carers and the work force to bring about change.
- Continuing to innovate and develop the service in co-production with our foster carers, through focus groups, workstream and carer-to-carer training.
- Using customer feedback from a range of sources including foster carers and the Children in Care Council to develop and improve our fostering service.
- Ensuring that all information/records will be treated confidentially and held securely.

The Fostering service is responsible for a diverse range of foster care placements for children who are unable to live with their own family and are being looked after by Norfolk County Council.

Foster care placements range from babies to teenagers, for children with complex needs who require a placement on their own as well as large sibling groups who need to stay together. Providing stable placements remains a key priority which means finding carers who are able to support children and young people through into adulthood and beyond. The fostering service actively promotes the option of Staying Put with our foster carers, to enable young people in their care to remain with them beyond their 18th birthday, if this is what the young person wants too.

Our Priorities for 2018/19 ♥

- Our recruitment strategy ensures that we target recruitment to meet our service priority needs. This strategy is underpinned by the three Maslow Groups (Value Modes); Pioneer, Prospector and Settler, giving us an insight into what motivates applicants. All marketing materials are designed in line with these core values.
- Develop an improved retention and support framework for foster carers which will include an annual conference (autumn) and Foster carer recognition event (spring), including welcome to our new foster carers. Tea and cake events.
- Rebranding of the fostering service which includes, complete brand refresh, posters, leaflets, a new website and other dedicated social media channels in line with our core marketing strategy.
- Refreshed marketing and recruitment strategy which targets foster carers to meet the needs of our Looked After Children; we need foster carers for teenagers, sibling groups and children with complex needs and disabilities.
- Recruit a group of Foster Carer Ambassadors to work alongside the service to drive forward recruitment initiatives and manage the information events.
- Placement stability and support remains a priority for 2018/19, with new initiatives to support stability and permanence for children in care, including the Ambassador Programme and hub-based support groups.
- Greater support offered to children and young people from their foster carers in supporting children returning home to their families and for children and young people on the edge of care.
- Develop a pool of retained highly skilled and experienced carers who can work with older children/teenagers with complex needs, providing them with a family home having stepped down from residential care.

Our target for 2018/19 is to recruit 40 new fostering households.

Our aim is to recruit foster carers who can be trained and supported to provide high quality placements which meet the varied and often complex needs of children and young people needing to be looked after.



Carers from diverse backgrounds who can provide placements for older children from a variety of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, including carers, who are able to provide for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

Carers for older children (10+) and teenagers (13+)

Carers for children with specific disabilities/complex health needs

Carers for sibling groups of all ages.

Carers who can offer permanent placements and long-term stability for children who are unable to return to their birth families

Carers for older children/teenagers with complex emotional needs

Respite carers to support carers with children and young people placed with complex needs (Short Breaks)

Parent and child foster placements

Connected Persons carers (Kinship) approved as foster carers to offer a placement to a specific child known to them.

Carers able to accommodate child and young people in an emergency often outside of the core working hours – often in the evening and at weekends, including young people subject to bail and PACE (Police And Criminal Evidence Act) conditions

How we monitor and evaluate the fostering service ♥

- The performance of the service is monitored and analysed in the Annual Report.
- Staff at all levels are provided with regular supervision by their line manager and consultation is also available for very complex cases.
- The Corporate Parenting Board receives the annual report on the performance of the fostering service.
- The professional advisor provides support, advice and quality assurance to the Fostering Panel. The advisor manages the Panel arrangements, facilitates panel training needs and supports the independent panel chairs.
- Monthly audits are undertaken to ascertain the quality of social work practice and service delivery, and to inform fostering service improvements.
- Monthly performance and quality assurance meetings to review fostering performance data and feedback from audits, compliments and complaints, to improve the quality of practice and service delivery.
- Quarterly meetings with fostering panel chairs to review quality of practice, reports and lessons for learning.
- Analysis of disruptions which take place, through disruption meetings.
- Identification and analysis of looked after children in Norfolk, which will inform and influence our recruitment strategy.
- The looked after child's review, along with the function of the Independent Reviewing Officer, has a quality assurance role.

Feedback from Service Users ♥

The views of children and young people receiving a service are sought through a variety of methods, including feedback from Advocacy Service, outcomes from complaints, lessons from disruptions, children's views expressed in statutory reviews, foster carer reviews and through the MOMO (Mind Of My Own) app. The views of children, young people and foster carers inform service planning.

Written feedback is requested from the child's social worker as part of the foster carer's review and at the end of each placement.



NiCC (Norfolk in Care Council) contribute to the Skills to Foster preparation training for applicants to foster by attending a session and taking questions. All participants attending the course find this a useful part of the preparation training.

The NiCC have been working in partnership with the fostering service and the virtual school to develop training programmes focused upon the educational requirements of looked after children and the role foster carers can play in maximising educational opportunities for the children in their care.

NiCC have also been involved in helping to train foster panel members in the importance of placement planning. Children and young people have attended sessions with foster carers in giving a child/young person's perspective on the importance and guiding principles of delegated authority.

Norfolk Fostering Service aims to gather feedback from applicants throughout their approval process and from carers and children during their fostering career.

This includes:

- Feedback requested by the fostering panel on the views of applicants on the assessment process.
- Questionnaires following the preparation course for prospective carers.
- The statutory looked after children's review ensures that the child/young persons and birth parents' views are fully explored.
- The agency places high priority on direct work with children/young people and provide the opportunity for them to explore their feelings and give their views.
- Response to issues raised at the Fostering Advisory Partnership and foster carer survey 'You said we did'.
- Feedback collated from carers attending training courses and shared through joint meetings with workforce development/ training providers to develop training programmes and individual courses as required.
- The views of foster carers are gathered during regular supervisions with the allocated Fostering Supervising Social Worker so that managers can identify any shortfalls and address this promptly.
- Foster carers are consulted on key changes of policy and service developments and general carer satisfaction through questionnaires and network meetings. We work closely with the Fostering Advisory Partnership, hold regular meetings and consultation sessions to gain feedback, working in partnership on issues and jointly organising events such as the annual conference for foster carers.

Fostering in Norfolk♥

As at 31 March 2018, we are supporting 386 approved foster carers across Norfolk. 81 of these are friends and family carers, 281 are mainstream foster carers and 24 provide short breaks. In total there are 427 looked after children living with Norfolk Foster Carers.

During 2017/18 we recruited 23 new mainstream foster carers.

Norfolk fostering Service has endorsed 97 temporary approvals of friends and family foster carers.

Norfolk is committed to co-working with fostering carers to develop the service. We are working with 25 Fostering Ambassadors to drive forward our recruitment strategy. Our foster carers are an integral part of recruitment, training, innovation and support processes. We actively listen and act upon the foster carer's voice.

Foster carers are increasingly taking the lead in the development of the fostering service, for example leading the Fostering Advisory Partnership and participating in the Ambassador Foster care recruitment project.



Open your heart and your home.♥

**Where they
can realise
their potential**



Management and Staffing

The Head of Fostering and Adoption Services is the designated lead officer and Responsible Individual for Fostering and the Agency Decision Maker for Fostering.

The Norfolk Fostering service comprises six teams, three of which are locality mainstream fostering support teams, and three countywide teams for recruitment kinship and children with disabilities. All these teams undertake the functions of assessment, approval, supervision, support, training and development, safeguarding and review.

The Fostering Recruitment Team

The Fostering Recruitment Team (FRT) have a crucial role in promoting the need for foster carers from across Norfolk and have a schedule of promotional events that are delivered by staff, and foster carers. The Recruitment team oversees marketing and advertising to recruit specific adopters and foster carers who can meet the needs of children most likely to be referred for placements.

The team is responsible for:

- Marketing, communications, advertising and publicity, using Values Modes tool kit
- Arranging regular events, open evenings & information evenings.
- Processing initial enquiries
- Undertaking initial visits
- Providing some initial training
- Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) transfers
- Assessment
- Fostering pre-stage & stage one processes, including safeguarding checks

The Recruitment Team has a dedicated Marketing Manager and Fostering Service Development Manager who are developing a series of marketing and event strategies, ensuring we are recruiting the foster carers within the specific locations that they are required. The team will be running six recruitment events per month as well as running an awareness campaign throughout Norfolk. The service works closely with Norfolk County Council's Corporate Communications Team.

The Fostering Recruit Team has a recruitment strategy which uses the Values Modes principles to appeal to the motivations of 'Pioneers' and 'Prospectors'. Foster Carers are mobilised through a 'call to action' to generate word of mouth enquiries to recruit carers to meet the needs of the looked after children and young people requiring placements. The team oversees all the Stage One processes (statutory checks) for fostering.

Members of the public who are interested fostering can enquire via the duty worker's direct line 01603 306649 or online via the web www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering and social media. An information pack can then be emailed or posted along with information about forthcoming open evenings or information sessions. The team aims to provide a seamless, efficient and responsive service to both potential adopters and foster carers.

Fostering Supervision and Support Teams

The teams offer supervision and support to foster carers. All carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker who will visit regularly, conduct an annual foster carer review, liaise with children's social workers and help to ensure appropriate placements are made. All children placed with foster carers should be in an approved placement with a carer who has the quality, skills and experience to meet their needs.

The teams supervise and support two types of foster carers:

Fostering: Offering placements to children until the conclusion of their care plan.

Connected Persons (Kinship Care): Offering a Looked After Child a placement where the child is known to them as a family member or friend.

All newly registered foster carers are approved to care for children and young people between the ages of 0 to 17, but in line with our smoking policy, some carers will not be approved for children under the age of 5 (with exceptions for connected carer approvals).

Foster carers and their families receive:

- ✓ Regular supervision visits in line with the fostering task, generally 4-8 weeks.
- ✓ Twenty-four-hour telephone support from an on-call fostering worker.
- ✓ Invitations to regular support groups held throughout the county, including educational and social events and a group specifically for the children of foster carers.
- ✓ All foster carers on approval are funded for membership of the Fostering Network which provides independent advice and mediation as well as other associated benefits.
- ✓ Ongoing training to encourage continuous development.



The team provides supervision and support to enable foster carers to work to a child/young persons care plans. We aim to provide foster placements offering therapeutic care by promoting a Team Around the Child approach, with the focus on the foster carer providing 'therapeutic re-parenting'. We actively manage the placement to ensure that outcomes for the children are our primary focus.

Foster carers need the following to 'therapeutically re-parent' young people:

- To be seen as a key part of the Team Around the Child.
- A heightened sense of self-awareness, including being emotionally grounded and evidencing the ability to be reflective in their practice
- To possess a good working knowledge of theoretical models to use as a framework for understanding young people's behaviour
- Access to good quality wrap-around services.

Partnership Working

- The Fostering Advisory Partnership, which consists of foster carers and staff, has become the group that drives our service over seeing training and improving team around the child working.
- All carers are required to work closely alongside the families of looked after children, with sensitivity and an understanding of the responsibility attached to looking after another person's child. This can be complex and demanding, both for the carers and the child, and requires an emphasis to be placed on joint working with social workers and colleagues in all relevant agencies.
- All carers are required to record details of the child's life in their care and contribute to effective assessments.
- In addition to the basic allowance, in Norfolk we operate an accreditation scheme, based on the Task Skills Profile which is used by the social worker and carer to determine whether a carer has the skills required to be accredited at a higher level.
- All carers can access the LAC CAMHS Service (A Primary Mental Health Service for Looked After Children and Adopted Children in Norfolk). This service provides consultation and guidance to foster carers and professionals working with looked after children. Each child's situation will be considered individually.

Annual Foster Carer Review

- Annual reviews of carers ensure that we keep in the forefront our aims and objectives for the children in our care. The views of all those involved are sought to contribute to the review. It is particularly important that the child or young person's voice is heard.
- It is at the review that decisions are made regarding the carers' continued suitability. Their terms of approval are reconsidered, and support and training needs identified. The first annual review is presented to Fostering Panel for consideration. The second annual review where carers may, subject to meeting level 2 competencies, progress from level 1 to level 2. This review is presented to the Fostering Team Manager for consideration and a decision is made on progression. Reviews may be presented to the fostering panel as required.



- The supervision teams have developed the way in which reviews are carried out to ensure that foster carer reviews are reflective of continual practice and support the continuous professional development of all foster carers.
- Respite care is an important source of support to foster placements. When considering respite arrangements, consideration is always given to the needs of both the child and the carers.
- Norfolk County Council funds individual membership of the Fostering Network for all approved foster carers. This provides a holistic package of support for foster carers, helpline and includes legal insurance.
- If a foster carer is subject of a child protection allegation against them, foster carers have access to independent support from Foster Network Independent Support Service (FISS) and Independent Counselling Services.
- The Fostering Service works closely with the Placements Team to identify fostering placements, working as one service to provide the best possible matched placements for children and young people.

Safeguarding checks

- Every carer must have an annual review. Disclosure and Barring Service and medical checks must be completed as part of the foster carer's assessment and at intervals of three years. The family safe caring policy is updated at every review. Health and safety checks are reviewed annually.
- In the event of a child protection investigation because of an allegation of abuse against a foster carer, the foster care review will take place immediately after the conclusion of the investigation. They are presented to Fostering Panel for consideration.
- Every carer review will include feedback from the looked after child, their parents and social workers as well as the carers' own children.



Children with Disabilities

Linked Families Team

The Linked Families Team supports a county wide scheme with supervising social workers based in Marshfields in King's Lynn and Applewood in Norwich. The Linked Team are responsible for the recruitment and assessment of prospective Linked Families who are then approved, supervised, supported, reviewed and trained in line with all other foster carers in the broader fostering service. The Linked Families Team are responsible for the matching and placing children and ensure the carers are fully involved in the matching process.

Linked Families Fostering Scheme

As a countywide scheme, the Linked Families carers are located across the county. The scheme provides a series of planned short breaks for children and young people with complex disabilities who are referred by the CWD fieldwork teams. The children primarily live at home with their parents and/or carers and can receive sitting, day care or overnight stays with a Linked Families foster carer.

Carers can have a variety of experience in working with children with disabilities, most have a background in Health, Social Care or Education. Each will be able to offer a unique experience due to their family composition, living environment, background, availability to offer care and personal interests. Alongside providing short breaks, Linked Families carers have also supported parents in addressing challenging behaviours or developing a child's skills, for instance personal care or independence skills. There have been occasions when carers have undertaken task-centred, time limited, work with the child and their family to benefit the child's well-being; this could include support within the family home through sitting or within the community. Requests for this support are made by the child's social worker in consultation with parents. Linked Families carers have at times also been able to provide emergency and unplanned care for children in response to parental ill health or safeguarding concerns. These requests would be made by the child's social worker in consultation with parents.

When children are matched to carers for short breaks, the Linked Families practitioner will identify any training needs associated with the placement in consultation with the family, carers and other professionals involved in the child's care. This could include Moving and Handling, Epilepsy Awareness, Administering Medication, Gastrostomy training, Steps On, Sign-a-long, Autism Awareness or any other course required to provide safe care for that child or young person.

Linked Families Short Breaks Plus Scheme (Fee paid)

The Short Breaks Plus Scheme also has fee paid carers. This service was commissioned to provide a service for children and young people with complex health needs, autism and/or challenging behaviour who were 'hard to place'. Fee paid (or contract) carers provide up to four nights planned care per week. High levels of support, more in-depth training and an expectation to take 'hard to place' Another word for this? children distinguish these carers from the non-fee paid scheme.

Linked Families carers are provided with necessary furniture and equipment to meet the needs of the child and adhere to safety standards. This can include mobile hoists or toys to promote children's development and skills and those that record or capture a child's experience of their short breaks.

Current and future equipment needs are identified at the start of each placement and will be reviewed on a regular basis to promote positive and suitable, lasting links. Carers are encouraged to raise any aids and adaptations needs with their supervising social worker as and when the need arises.

Work of the Kinship Care Team

Family and Friends wishing to be approved as foster carers (connected persons)

Regulations require that children who are looked after by the local authority can only be placed with either an approved foster carer or, for a period not exceeding 16 weeks, with a relative or friend of the child who has been approved as a temporary foster carer by an appropriate senior manager within Children's Services.

The Kinship Care Team offers consultation to the child's social care team and any practitioner where connected persons assessments may be required, and when temporary approval has been given.

Once temporary approval has been granted a Social Worker will undertake an initial visit to complete the necessary paperwork required under the regulations. If suitable for assessment by the Kinship Care Team an assessment plan will be agreed and reviewed. The Assessing Social Worker, together with the child's social worker, will complete a Fostering Network Form C assessment and present it to the Fostering Panel. The Agency Decision Maker will make the final recommendation. The Kinship Care Team also undertake fostering assessments where specific children have been identified but not yet placed. Once approved the Friends and Family carer will receive support and access to training from the Fostering support team.



Learning and Development

Central to the County Council's ability to provide the best possible service to children; training is of central importance in supporting carers and helping them to develop therapeutic parenting skills to face the many challenges that foster caring brings.

We offer a variety of courses designed to cover the diverse nature of foster care. We want to support carers to offer therapeutic re-parenting to our foster children to help them to recover from their difficult start in life. We have also tried to ensure that training can be accessed in different locations and at different times, including full-day and half-day courses to meet your needs. Attending courses also give you the opportunity to meet with and talk to other carers.

Integral to all our training is valuing difference, diversity and challenging discrimination. Anyone who delivers training for Norfolk County Council is expected to sign a tutor agreement form which clarifies our anti-discriminatory practice.

Some training is written, and delivered, by a cohort of trained, and experienced foster carers, this enhances the foster care training package. Training for foster carers ensures the following:

- Training meets the needs of foster carers, the requirements of National Minimum Standards for the Fostering Service, and the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care.
- The training provided enables foster carers to provide high quality care which meets the diverse and complex needs of the children placed with them.
- The training promotes the recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- The training ensures that carers are an integral part of Children's Services.
- The training is delivered within existing and planned resources.
- All training promotes partnership working.

The service offers foster carer buddies who work with carers to help them achieve the Fostering Training Standards and all aspects of the fostering task.

The learning and development plan is updated each year. The development of our training programme is annually informed by course evaluations, an annual questionnaire to foster carers, requests from carers and social workers for specific training, and national and local drivers.

Every carer is expected to gain the knowledge required from the mandatory training courses, which include: skills training, first aid for foster carers, safeguarding children and Child Sexual Exploitation and missing from care.

Following the mandatory courses, carers can choose from a range of further opportunities. We offer a range of long and short courses, as well as e-learning, individual mentoring and other learning opportunities. These are a sample of the courses available.

Core Courses:

- De-escalation training
- Equality and Diversity
- Restorative Approaches
- Signs of Safety Briefings
- Stepping Stones (all you need to know about fostering)

Specialist courses:

- Anti- and Cyber Bullying
- Arts Therapy
- Moving to Adoption
- Developmental trauma
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder
- PATHS (Promoting alternative thinking strategies)

Longer Courses:

- Fostering Attachments
- Solihull Training
- Fostering Changes

Foster carers are expected to maintain a continual professional development portfolio to evidence their learning and development. Supervising Social Workers will work with the foster carer to help develop their portfolio.



The Fostering Panel ♥

The Fostering Panel considers the approval of all new carers and existing carers' reviews. The panel will make recommendations on foster carers' terms of approval including:

- Type of fostering
- Age of child(ren)
- Gender of child(ren)
- Number of children to a maximum of three

Approval and matches for long-term fostering are considered by the Fostering Panel. The Fostering Panel's recommendations are considered by the Agency Decision Maker who makes the final decision.

The 1989 Children Act sets the 'usual fostering limit' to three children, unless the children are siblings to each other. In certain circumstances, the Fostering Service may consider placing children outside the usual fostering limit on exemption. With the carers' agreement, whenever this applies, the exemption will be formally recorded, and consideration will be given to what additional support the carer may require.

Variations of approvals are risk assessed to ensure the needs of all the children in the household are met. A return to panel will be actioned where necessary. If the plan is for the child to remain with carers on a long-term basis, a matching meeting is held where the needs of the children are identified, and a report written identifying how the proposed carers can meet these needs. This report, together with the carers' long-term review and Child's Permanency Report, are presented to panel for approval.

Fostering Panel minutes are recorded, and decisions are confirmed in writing to the carer. The panel hears all cases where there have been significant concerns in terms of safeguarding, quality of care or allegations made. An Independent Reviewing Officer review will be completed and presented to panel.

A foster carers' review following a change of circumstances, or a request to increase their approval status, will be referred to the Fostering Panel. They will also recommend, as appropriate, the termination of an approval. Panel will also consider appeals to recommendations

Recording and Access to Records ♥

The Fostering Service has a responsibility to maintain accurate records on all foster carers and to ensure that information is shared with the carer wherever possible. There is a statutory requirement to retain files for 10 years following closure. However, in accordance with Norfolk's County Council policy, the practice is to retain for 35 years. Carers have a right to access their record and can approach the Information Governance Unit for advice.



How to Complain or Challenge a Decision ♥

Comments, Dissatisfactions and Complaints

Comments, complaints and compliments are received in the spirit of open communication. It is hoped that any problems can be dealt with quickly and at a local level. Formal complaints are dealt with in accordance with the Children's Services Complaints Procedure. Carers are made aware of the complaints procedure in relation to children in their care and also how to complain in their own right. The complaints procedure has three stages. Complainants are advised at each stage of their right to request that their complaint be referred to the next stage if they are not satisfied that it has been resolved.

The Complaints Procedure

Norfolk County Council has a designated Compliments & Complaints Team which coordinates the investigation of complaints made by prospective and approved foster carers. All complaints are logged by the team. Children, young people or their representative can make a complaint by using the local rate number 0344 800 8020 or accessing the Norfolk County Council website www.norfolk.gov.uk.

The key features of this complaints procedure are:

- ✓ Most issues can be sorted out informally by the manager responsible for the service within 10 working days.
- ✓ If the case is not resolved, an independent person completes an investigation within a further 25 working days.
- ✓ If the issue remains contentious, the Managing Directors Department commissions another investigation to make recommendations to be considered by a Panel of three independent people.
- ✓ Children and young people wishing to make a complaint must either be receiving or seeking a service from Norfolk County Council Children's Services.

Challenges to Decisions Regarding Suitability to Foster

If prospective fostering enquirers are assessed as unsuitable as foster carers before having a formal application accepted, they can ask for a Team Manager to review the decision.

If the Team Manager upholds the decision, the enquirer(s) can ask to refer the decision not to proceed with the process to the Head of Fostering and Adoption for final adjudication. If this reviewing officer upholds the original decision, there are no further grounds for appeal.

If a formal application to foster is accepted by the fostering agency, and doubts regarding suitability subsequently arise, the applicants are able to insist that their assessment as foster carers is presented to the Fostering Panel.



If the panel recommends that the applicants are unsuitable, and this is supported by the Agency Decision Maker then this can be raised with the Carers' Independent Review Mechanism for Fostering, which reviews decisions made by Norfolk's fostering agency.

Allegations

All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated and actioned through Norfolk's integrated safeguarding unit (Children's Advice and Duty Service – CADS), reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board under the procedures for Investigation Allegations Against Adults Caring for Children.

Contact Details for OFSTED and the Children's Commissioner ♥

Any serious concerns regarding the Fostering Service practice can be referred to the OFSTED inspectorate. The main office for the OFSTED fostering inspectorate service is:



OFSTED National Business Unit
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Anne's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA
Tel: 08456 40 40 40
e-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



If a child has any serious concerns relating to the Fostering Service, they can contact the Children's Commissioner for England. The details are:

Office of the Children's Commissioner

Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Norfolk County Council Contacts ♥

Tracy Collins – Interim Head of Fostering and Adoption Services

Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
Norfolk NR1 2DH
Tel: 01603 222574
E: tracy.collins@norfolk.gov.uk

Sheila English – Team Manager, Fostering Recruitment Team

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Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
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Norfolk NR1 2DH
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E: sheila.english@norfolk.gov.uk

Mike Woodward – Team Manager, Norfolk Fostering Service Team 1

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Suzy Holman – Team Manager, Norfolk Fostering Service Team 2

Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
Priory House
9 Austin Street
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Norfolk PE30 1EB
Tel: 01553 669631

Martyn Lovett – Team Manager, Norfolk Fostering Service Team 3

Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
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Norfolk NR1 2DH
Tel: 01603 306366
E: martyn.lovett@norfolk.gov.uk

Clare Pontais – Team Manager, Kinship Care

Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
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Norfolk NR1 2DH
Tel: 01603 306876
E: clare.pontais@norfolk.gov.uk

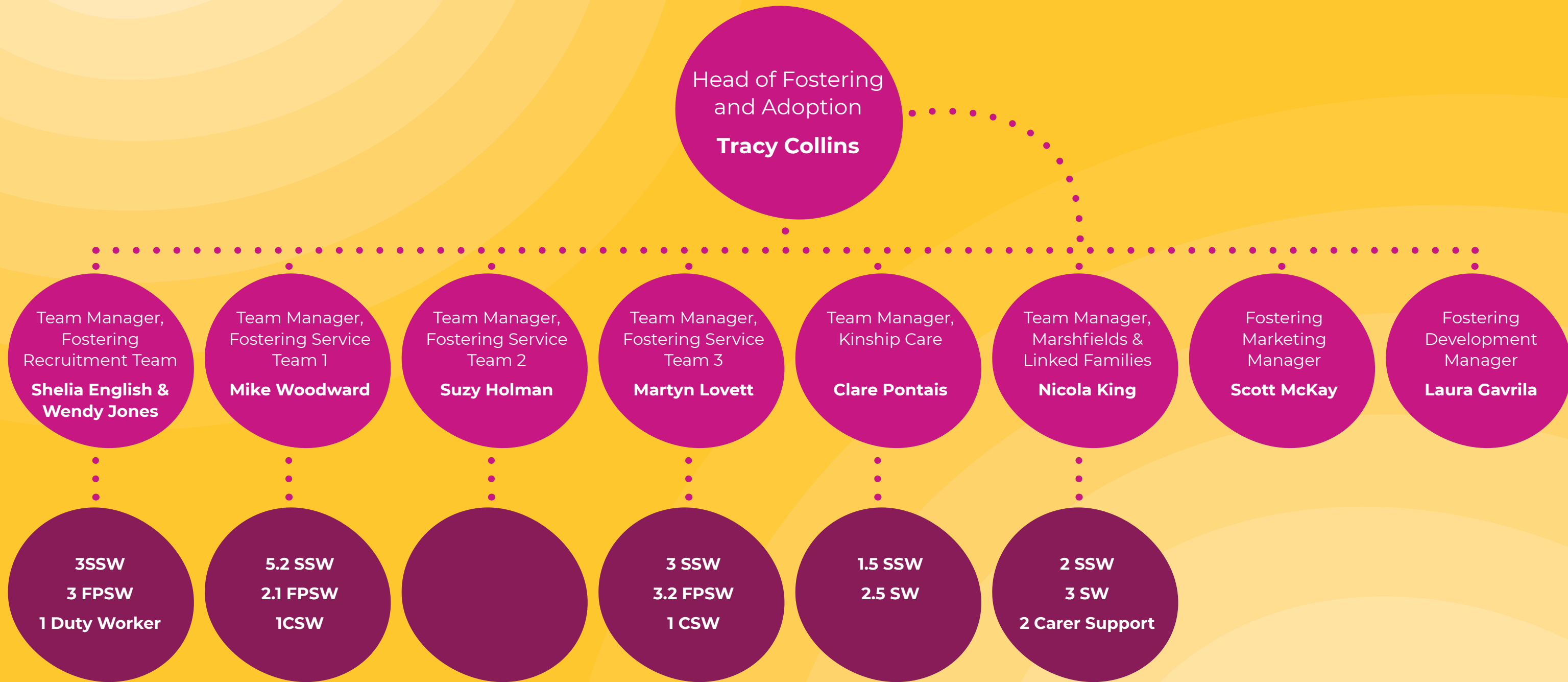
Nicola King – Team Manager, Marshfields & Linked Families

Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
Breckland Business Centre
St Withburga Lane
Dereham
Norfolk NR19 1DH
T: 01553 614980
E: nicola.king@norfolk.gov.uk

Information about our fostering
service can be accessed via:

Fostering Duty Line:
01603 306649 or visit
www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering

Appendix



All social work staff are required to have the Diploma in Social Work or equivalent on appointment and have current Health and Care Professionals Council registration. All Team Managers are qualified social workers and are required to hold or are working towards a management qualification.

Norfolk Fostering Service

Most children in care are looked after by foster carers who provide a strong, stable and secure family environment, either short-term or long-term.

Our mission at Norfolk Fostering Service is to provide Norfolk children with Norfolk families and we are currently responsible for providing care to over 1,000 children in Norfolk.

Fostering in Norfolk could be one of the most rewarding things you ever choose to do. If you're interested, please get in touch.

Call 01603 306649

Email fostering@norfolk.gov.uk

Visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering

Help a child to be a child