

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2023/2024

Barnsley Council Fostering Service

Updated
August 2023



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

LIST OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK
3. MISSION STATEMENT AND VALUES
4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
5. FOSTERING MANAGEMENT
6. STAFFING
7. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
8. SERVICES PROVIDED
9. RECRUITING, APPROVING, TRAINING, SUPPORTING AND REVIEWING FOSTER CARERS
10. SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE
11. COMPLAINTS AND OUTCOMES
12. OFSTED

1. Introduction

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require all fostering services to provide a written Statement of Purpose setting out the aims and objectives of the service and the services and facilities provided.

This document is made available, upon request, to staff, foster carers and prospective foster carers, any child placed by the service and the parent of any child placed. It is complemented by the Children's Guide which is provided to all children in care.

2. National Legislative and Policy framework

Barnsley Fostering Service is run in accordance with the principles 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 (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

3. Mission Statement and Values

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service is committed to providing high quality foster placements which improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

Values

In compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and childcare legislation as well as the National Foster Care Standards and the National Minimum Care Standards, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service will promote:

- High quality care in a family setting for all children and young people who need it.
- The return of children and young people to the care of their birth families where appropriate by actively working in partnership with partner agencies, including birth parents, or close family and friends.

- Where a return to birth family is not appropriate, the development and implementation of permanence plans for children that avoid unnecessary delay.
- Priority for the needs of the child or young person in determining each foster placement.
- Respect for and advancement of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children and young people, and their families and foster carers in the planning and provision of the service and of each individual placement.
- Consideration of the gender, sexuality and, of children and young people with a disability in the planning and provision of the service and in each individual placement.
- Continuity in the lives of children and young people, so their identity and education can be maintained and developed, their physical and mental well-being promoted, and their full potential achieved.
- A partnership approach embracing parents and children, family and friends, carers and social work staff, all planning and working in the best interest of the child and as a 'Team around the Child'.
- Continuity and consistency in training, support and information for foster carers and social work staff to enable them to best meet the needs of children in care.
- Respect for foster carers as significant partners alongside all other professionals involved with the child or young person. Emphasis on the 'Team around the Child' and the foster carers having an integral role in the team decision making.
- Increased consultation and involvement on service development and delivery for children and young people and foster carers.
- The wishes and feelings of children and young people will be actively sought and considered at all stages.
- Increased choice of placement for children and young people in foster care. Increased opportunities for matching the foster carers skills, knowledge, and experience to meet the needs of the child.

Barnsley's Fostering Service is also committed to BMBC's Equality Policies and will strive to ensure that its services are delivered equally to everyone, whatever their gender, race, ethnicity, cultural background, sexuality, age, marital status, religion, or disability.

Barnsley Fostering Service adheres to the principles of the Barnsley Pledge to Children and Young People in Care.

4. Aims and Objectives

Aims

The Fostering Service's overarching aim is:

To provide high quality foster placements for all children in care in Barnsley who need them and to ensure that such placements support improved outcomes for children in care and value for money for the Council.

In doing this the service will work alongside partner agencies to ensure that fostered children and young people have the same opportunities as all children within the Borough and achieve positive outcomes in all the areas identified in the Barnsley Pledge to Children and Young People in Care. The Service seeks to achieve these aims through the delivery of services which will result in children and young people in foster care:

- Being healthy and well
- Being safe and able to look after themselves.
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Having the capacity to achieve economic wellbeing on reaching independence.

To deliver these outcomes, the Fostering Service recognises that children and young people in care very often start from a position of increased vulnerability and will need additional help to overcome the factors which have contributed to this. In line with the Council's aspirations for all children in the community, the Fostering Service recognises that these outcomes can be achieved in partnership with all those involved in the lives of children and young people in care – their families, carers, peers, school, health and any additional services or agencies with which individual young people may be involved or required.

Objectives

The Fostering Service objectives are:

- To ensure that the care population is made up only of children who need to be in care.
- To maintain the safety of children in care with a specific focus on improving short term and long-term placement options and stability.
- To improve the health of children in care, with a specific focus on their emotional wellbeing.
- Strive to narrow the gap in educational achievement between children in care and their peers.
- To increase the number of care leavers on the path to success.

5. Fostering Management

The Fostering Team Managers are:

Team 1: Joanne McIntyre: Responsible for the Kinship Team (Reg 24/ SGO Assessments/ Private Fostering.

Qualifications:

- BA Hons in Social Work Studies 2006.
- PQ 1 and Specialist Award
- Practice Teaching
- Supervision and Safeguarding Module
- NAAS Accredited Child and Family Practice Supervisor

Experience: 14 years post qualifying experience

Warren Enright (interim): Responsible for Recruitment and Assessment of mainstream foster carers.

Qualifications:

- BSc Hons in Psychology and Counselling 2009
- Master's degree in Social Work 2011
- PGCE In Critical Analysis 2015
- Practice Educator 2016
- Registered with Social Work England

Experience: Registered social worker since November 2011 and has worked in various areas of Children's service since during time.

Team 2 (Supervisory and Support): TBC

Team 3 (Mockingbird/Supervisory and Support): Suzanne Cassidy:
Responsible for the management and oversight of The Mockingbird Family Model

Qualifications:

- 1993-BA joint honours degree in Psychology and Sociology-University of Liverpool.
- 1994 Certificate in youth and community work from the South Yorkshire Open College, qualified youth worker.
- 1997- Diploma in Higher Education, DipSW, from Leeds Metropolitan University.
- 1999- Practice Teacher Award SYNEM
- 2013- MA in Professional Practice with Children and their families-University of Sheffield.

Experience: Qualified as a Social Worker for 26 years and has worked in a social work settings for 30 years.

SGO Support Service: Lexi Preston (Interim): Responsible for the management and oversight of all children requiring Special Guardianship Support Services.

Qualifications:

- Ba Hons Health and Social Care 2014.
- MA Social Work 2016.
- South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership Social Worker of the Year 2020.
- Derbyshire County Council, duty, assessment and fieldwork child protection team 2016-2018.
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council fieldwork child protection team 2018-2023. Team Manager since February 2021.

Experience: 7 years post qualifying experience.

6. Staffing

The Fostering Team is part of Children in Care Services and works alongside the Children in Care Team and Future Directions. The Fostering Team also work alongside the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency. The Service is led by the Head of Service for Children in Care.

The Fostering Service has 5 Team Managers.

Team 1:

Kinship Team

- 1 Fulltime Fostering Team Manager
- 6 Assessing Social Workers (Agency)

Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team

- 1 Fulltime Fostering Team Manager (Interim)
- 3 Fulltime Social Workers (Permanent Staff)
- 1 Family Support Worker (Vacant)

Team 2:

- 1 Full time Fostering Team Manager
- 3 Fulltime Social Workers (Permanent Staff)
- 3 Part Time Social Workers
- 1 Agency Social worker

Team 3:

- 1 Full time Fostering Team Manager
- 4 Fulltime Social Workers (Permanent Staff)
- 1 Part Time Social Worker

SGO Support Service:

- 1 Full time Team Manager (Interim)
- 3 Full time Social Workers (Permanent Staff)

The Fostering Team Managers and all Qualified Social Workers hold professional Social Work qualifications and have substantial relevant experience and skills in work with children and families.

The three workers in the Placement Team work collectively to ensure a consistent approach is taken to any request for placement finding across both internal fostering and external providers.

All staff are encouraged to attend training to refresh their skills and to maintain their professional registration with Social Work England. The staff group has a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience and is committed to pursuing professional development to promote service improvement. All staff have annual Performance and Development Reviews to inform their future training and development.

7. Management Structure

Executive Director – Children’s Services

Carly Speechley

Service Director, Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding

Matthew Boud

Head of Children in Care Services

Lisa Vaux

Service Manager, Fostering

Anne- Marie Banks

Fostering Team Managers:

Joanne McIntyre (Team 1- Kinship)

Warren Enright (Interim) (Team 1- Fostering Recruitment and Assessment)

TBC- (Team 2- Supervisory and Support)

Suzanne Cassidy (Team 3- Mockingbird/ Supervisory and Support)

Lexi Preston (Interim) (SGO Support Services)

Panel Adviser

Raheeda Inayat (Interim)

8. Services Provided

Foster Care Placements

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's Fostering Service aims to provide a range of foster care placements to meet all the needs of children and young people in Barnsley who cannot live with their birth families and covers ages from birth to 18 and beyond until such time as independence.

Short-term Placements

Carers undertaking short-term placements do so in a variety of circumstances and with a variety of children and young people. It may be for a short period of time; a predictable period whilst for example a child's parent is in hospital; whilst detailed assessments and court proceedings are undertaken and until an agreed permanence plan can be implemented for the child.

Long-term/Permanent Placements

Carers offering long-term/permanent placements commit to caring for a child or young person whose permanence care plan indicates that their needs will best be met in a foster placement that takes them through to and beyond adulthood. Where appropriate and in the best interests of the child long term foster carers will be supported to achieve permanence for the child through an alternative court order for example, Child Arrangement Order; Special Guardianship; Adoption.

Emergency Placements

Carers offering emergency placements within a limited approval range can be contacted at short notice, at evenings and weekends, to accept unplanned placements of children. A list of emergency carers with vacancies is updated weekly and forwarded to the Emergency Duty Team at the close of business on a Friday afternoon. An updated list of vacancies for in-house foster carers is prepared weekly Senior Managers.

Respite Carers

The service has several carers who offer respite care on a regular basis, where a child's care plan has indicated that such arrangements will be beneficial.

Short Breaks for children with disabilities

The service has a small number of respite carers offering respite/short breaks for children with disabilities. The service is currently developing plans to expand this service soon to be able to operate a wider choice of carers to accommodate individual children's needs which require matching to foster carer's skills, abilities, and knowledge of areas of disability.

Mockingbird

Barnsley Fostering is invested in the Mockingbird Model and currently has 3 constellations with plans for a 4th constellation by the end of 2023.

The Mockingbird Family Model has been designed as a model of support for foster carers aiming to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people as well as the foster carers themselves. The idea was developed and put into practice in the USA by The Mockingbird Society who wanted to replicate the concept of the extended family by creating a peer support system.

The model works by having a 'hub home' comprising of experienced foster carers who can provide respite care, around which 6-10 'satellite homes' are placed who will benefit from the experience and support of the 'hub home'. As well as providing informal support, constellation meetings and activity days feature in the model in order to facilitate the feeling of an extended family and peer support that goes beyond just the satellite carer and hub carer relationship.

The main objectives of The Mockingbird Family Model can be divided into outcomes for the young people and outcomes for the foster carers themselves. These outcomes have been outlined by The Mockingbird Society as the main objectives for measuring the success of the model.

The primary outcomes for the children and young people are:

- Improved placement stability
- Strong birth family and sibling relationships
- More successful, early reunifications with birth family
- Increased successful transitions to other permanence options
- More opportunities for the development of strong and lasting relationships with adults and within communities

The primary outcomes for the foster carers are:

- Improved peer support
- Opportunities for sleepovers for children and young people with consistent carers
- Reduction in stress
- Improved retention rates

Potential areas for cost savings have been identified as being:

- The avoidance of placement breakdowns
- A reduction in the use of residential placements and IFA placements
- Improved carer retention
- Improved rates of successful reunification of children with their families.

The main areas where the Mockingbird Family Model has made positive contributions to improved outcomes for looked after children and young people and their foster carers are:

- Foster carer retention positivity and motivation
- Improved placement stability and reduced the risks of some placements disrupting resulting in high-cost placements or IFA's
- High level of training provided to up-skill foster carers
- Foster carers' well-being
- Peer support

- Children and young people are seeing the benefits of having access to other children on a regular basis who are placed with the satellite carers believing that socialising with other children and young people in a similar situation has been beneficial.
- Cost effectiveness

Skill Based Payment Scheme

The service has a Skills based payment Scheme which enables all foster carers to progress as they develop in skills and experience.

The further up the ladder of the Skill Based Fee Scheme the foster carers are the more advanced are their skills and experience in relation to working with children and young people particularly those with more complex needs.

Family and Friends / Connected Carers

Family and Friends foster carers are approved to look after specific children with whom they already have a pre-existing relationship. They are usually family members or occasionally friends who knew the child or children before they were placed in care. Under the Fostering Regulations 2011 these arrangements are approved as the Temporary Approval of a Connected Person. The intention is that this would be a temporary arrangement with a view to a more permanent legal order such as a Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order or Adoption Order should this become the child's permanent home.

Social Work Support Services

Social workers for children and young people visit children in foster placements on a regular basis within the statutory requirements.

Each foster carer has a named professional qualified Social Worker from Fostering Team 2/ Team 3 who visits and supervises the carer in accordance with National Fostering Standards requirements and Fostering Regulations.

The range of support services include:

- Day to day support and guidance to maintain the children in placement.
- Access to out of hours support through the Local Authority Emergency Duty team
- Encourage foster carers to transport children to and from Education establishments.
- Encourage foster carers to promote contact between a child/young person and birth family members / encourage foster carers to supervise contact if it is considered low risk.
- Encourage foster carers to attend support group meetings as part of the Skill Based Fee payment expectations.
- Support foster carers' membership of the Fostering Network
- Support Mentoring arrangements for foster carers at the start of their fostering career.
- Financial support such as allowances, expenses, and fee payments.
- Training to maintain and update the carer's ability, skills, knowledge, and experience and to meet the needs of the children in placement.

- Access to consultation with therapeutic professionals and support from Health and Education Advisors

Future Directions

The Fostering Service works with Future Directions to support transitions for young people post 18. Many foster carers can offer 'Staying Home' (Staying Put) placements where care experienced young adults are able to remain with their previous foster carers until they are ready to move to their own accommodation. Future Directions is a team dedicated to improving outcomes for all Children in Care and providing an After Care Service.

The Children in Care Team

The Fostering Service works very closely with the Children in Care Teams who offer long-term support to children and young people in the Care of the Local Authority. The two services work together to ensure that the carers feel supported in caring for the children and young people and the children receive appropriate care to meet their developmental needs and grow up in strong secure placements.

Therapeutic Services

Children and young people in foster placement have access to therapeutic services through the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS). Children in care do not have to wait for a CAMHS consultation, and for our children and young people who require a CAMHS service including intervention this is timely as they are given a priority service.

CAMHS also now offer an ongoing service to our care leavers so that they do not have to transition to adult mental health services at 18 years. This benefits our care leavers in terms of consistency of mental health professional and ability to sustain their trusted relationship with their CAMHS worker.

The Principal Clinical Psychologist Clinical Lead for Children in Care Pathway, Barnsley CAMHS also offers consultation sessions for foster carers and staff as well as therapeutic training.

The annual health assessment for children in care now includes completion of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which is a tool specifically designed to measure the mental health needs of children and young people.

9. Recruiting, Approving, Training and Reviewing Foster Carers

Foster carer recruitment activity is undertaken through various local media and events; social media such as Twitter, Facebook and the BMBC Website; access to local Diversity Forums for example the LGBT network; partnership with the Area Councils through collaborative working with communities, local newspapers, the Spotlight magazine. The aim is to ensure as many potential carers as

possible are offered a one-to-one session for the service to share the information about the fostering process.

Branding of the marketing material and the continuous 'drip-drip' effect of local marketing is an ongoing focus in Fostering Barnsley.

Recruitment material emphasises the fact that all sorts of people can become foster carers regardless of their age, sex, sexuality, marital status, disability, race or religion.

- On receiving an enquiry from a person or persons interested in becoming a foster carer, a Fostering Worker responds to their enquiries in a timely manner, requests basic information; completes the necessary documents and shares information regarding the role, tasks and functions of a foster carer, training, assessment, and details of the approval process. They go on to detail requirements regarding statutory checks; the different types of fostering that can be undertaken and give details about financial payments and rewards that are made to carers.
- A standard initial enquiry form is used to record this information and those requesting information are guided to the website for the Information pack to be considered at their leisure.
- Branding of Information packs and marketing material (2023) has made an impact on the delivery of a more professional service being delivered by the Fostering Service. The use of images, colour and marketing material is now being recognised in the local community to support the "drip-drip" effect.
- Once the information has been shared about the journey through fostering there is a plan determined to arrange a home visit. The team will continue to collect further detailed information from the enquirer and to share further detailed information regarding the role and function of a foster carer.
- Following a home visit and scrutiny of the information gained from a home visit a decision is made in consultation with the Fostering Team Manager whether to proceed to an application stage. Once this decision has been agreed the application form is sent electronically to the applicant or alternatively a letter informing the applicant of the decision not to proceed is sent and recorded on file. All fostering enquirers will be asked to complete a formal application form and consent to statutory checks form.
- The Fostering Service makes statutory checks with: -
The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are completed on all household members aged 16 and over.
Local Authority Checks
Ofsted (For example if Childminding)
Education (if the applicant has children of school age)

And in some instances, there may be the need for further checks such as:-

Probation Service
Ofsted (If applicant is childminding)
Health

Applicants are also required to undergo a health assessment completed by their G.P which is then forwarded onto the Health Advisor who will consider the documentation and make reference to any issues that may affect an applicant becoming a foster carer. The enquirer is requested to provide the names of 3-4 personal referees who will later be interviewed as part of the process.

Preparation Training

All fostering applicants are required to attend a preparation training programme before being approved as foster carers. The preparation course is based on the Fostering Network's 'Skills to Foster' preparation training.

The programme covers the following sessions held over three days: -

1. What do foster carers do?
2. Who are the children and young people?
3. Working together
4. Child Development and Attachment
5. Children's Needs
6. Safeguarding
7. Safer Caring
8. Understanding Behaviour
9. Moving on
10. Support for foster carers and their families.
11. Legislation which Social Care are governed by.

The preparation course is delivered by 2 Assessing Social Workers and foster carer(s). On occasions guest speakers from within the Department who can demonstrate their role in the journey of the child through care (Children in Care Team/ Mockingbird Workers) contribute. There is also a birth child in attendance to talk about their experiences of living in a fostering family.

Barnsley Care4us Council have developed a video that can also be shown to prospective Foster Carers during the training.

It is clear from feedback over several years that applicants gain a better understanding of the task from talking to foster carers, previously Looked After Children and birth children and that they consider this a valuable part of the assessment process.

Assessment

A qualified assessing social worker carries out a detailed assessment of the applicant's suitability to become foster carers once they have completed the Skills to Foster Preparation training. The assessment is based on the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Competency Assessment format (Form F)

This involves an Assessment Plan being discussed and drawn up with the applicants, followed by a series of assessment visits to the applicant's home or by virtual (if appropriate) means. Detailed assessment visits over time draw together information about the household, potential carers' early childhood memories and experiences, relationships with their own care givers, siblings and others, education experiences, employment experiences, experiences of separation and loss and experience and skills in relation to looking after children. The assessment format evidences the journey through the life of the applicant demonstrating their potential capacity as a foster carer and considering their suitability which forms the basis of the recommendation to the Fostering Panel.

A health and safety check of the applicant's home is undertaken, and an individual Safer Care family policy is formulated. Three/ Four (single/ Couple) references are obtained in writing and through visits, two from non-relatives, and one from a family member.

Midpoint reviews can be held at the applicants home chaired by the Team Manager.

At the end of the assessment, a report is produced following the BAAF format demonstrating the applicant's suitability and competence to undertake the fostering task.

The report (excluding references) is shared with the applicant in a timely manner in advance of Fostering Panel. This enables the applicants to absorb the information they have shared throughout the preparation of the report and respond accordingly. The applicants' comments are recorded and presented to the Fostering Panel.

The report is presented to the Fostering Panel by the assessing social worker and the applicants are also invited to attend. The Supervising Social Worker is allocated prior to Panel. This creates a smooth transition for the new carer from the assessing social worker to their new supervising social worker. The Panel makes a recommendation regarding suitability which is communicated to the applicants directly after the Panel has met. The Panel's recommendations are then referred to Agency Decision Maker, Lisa Vaux, Head of Service for Children in Care who will consider the recommendations from Fostering Panel and make a final decision with regards to suitability.

Applicants are informed both verbally (within 2 working days of ADM) and in writing (within 2 weeks of the ADM) of the decision and are given specific details as to the exact approval category.

If the Service decides not to approve an applicant at this stage, the applicant is given the decision and the reasons in writing. The applicant has 28 days to make a written representation to the authority, or alternatively, to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism for an independent review of their case by an Independent Review Panel. If representation is received within this time the Fostering Panel could reconsider the application, or where the applicants apply for an Independent Review, an independent panel will be set up to consider the case separately from the Authority. Once this Independent process has been

completed the Authority would then re-consider its decision in the light of the views of the Independent Review.

Approved Foster Carers are asked to record and sign a 'Foster Carer Agreement' which is an agreement between them and the Service outlining the role and function of a foster carer.

The Barnsley Fostering Service aims to complete the assessment and approval process as quickly as possible and within 4 months wherever possible, but the length of time can vary according to individual circumstances. All Fostering Services are required by legislation to present applicant assessment reports to Fostering Panel within 8 months from the receipt of the application form.

Applications from family or friends to become foster carers under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Service Regulations are completed by Assessing Social Workers in the Fostering Team. These follow a Form C BAAF format adopted to meet the needs and allow for the special situation of Temporary Approval of a Connected Person to become foster carers in respect of a child or young person they have an existing relationship with.

Support and supervision

Following approval, the new carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker. This Social Worker takes on responsibility for both supervising and supporting the carers and social workers are expected to respond in accordance with the requirements of Standard 14 of the National Foster Care Standards, which relates to support and supervision.

New carers are advised where to access a copy of Barnsley's Foster Carer Handbook, which includes useful information about the service and is considered as a reference tool for foster carers throughout their career as foster carers.

Training

Barnsley's Fostering Service is committed to providing foster carers with a range of learning opportunities. Training is an integral part of a fostering career beginning from the preparation training and assessment process.

The Fostering Service has an annual training programme which includes course at all levels for approved foster carers. All carers are encouraged to attend training courses by their supervising social worker through reviews, personal development plans and through the links between training and progression on the Skill Based Scheme. Any training attended is entered into a training profile which is considered as part of the annual review process.

All new carers are required to complete the Training Development Standards within the first 12-18 months of approval. This piece of work is supported by the supervising social worker.

Each year suitably experienced carers are offered the opportunity to undertake Diploma qualifications. The completion of the Diploma is integral to progression on the Payment for Skills Scheme.

Barnsley Fostering has also commissioned The Foster Care Training Hub online training package which offers foster carers access to 31 mandatory training courses and 3 specialist training courses per fostering household, there are over 2000 courses to choose from.

Joint training with social workers and multi-agency training is integral to the training programme for carers and carers have told us many times about how valuable this is. Foster carers have access to training provided for social workers and other social care staff. They are invited to attend the regular social work forums which meet to consider different aspects of social work practice.

Reviews

It is a requirement that each foster carer is reviewed annually. The Service has adopted the BAAF review paperwork which is to be completed by all parties involved in the 'Team around the Child' prior to each foster carer review.

Different parts of the report are completed by the Supervising Social Worker the Child's Social Worker, the Independent Reviewing Officers, Education staff, Health professionals, foster carers themselves, the children being cared for, the children of foster carers and any other professionals with a role in the child's life. The completed report is shared with foster carers prior to the review meeting. The review meeting is agreed at an 11-month stage to allow any issues with non-attendance and is chaired by an Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer.

The review meeting ensures all core tasks are completed with regards to continued approval, ensures all actions recommended from the last review are completed, explores the events since the last review, training, finance, and any changes in the family and makes recommendations for the coming year. These include any changes to the carer's approval and their appropriate level on the payment for skills scheme.

An annually updated health and safety checklist is completed as part of the review, and the general home conditions and sleeping arrangements are examined and recorded. The foster carer's family safe caring policy is updated prior to each annual review and considered at the review.

Foster carers receive details of the review decision in writing within 28 days of the review meeting.

For a carer's first review after Initial Approval and any other review where it is felt necessary or beneficial (for example Following Concerns or Allegations and/ or Change of Circumstances), the review report will then be referred to the Fostering Panel for its consideration or notification. In these circumstances carers will receive written notice of the decisions made within 28 days of the Panel date where the report was considered. The Service aims to submit all such reviews to the next Panel meeting after the review meeting.

Allegations of Abuse Made Against Foster Carers

All allegations made against foster carers relating to possible abuse or raising concerns about the quality of care are taken seriously and are dealt with in accordance with the Service's Policy and Procedure for Managing Allegations against Foster Carers.

10. Systems In Place to Monitor and Evaluate The Quality Of The Fostering Service

Staff supervision

All staff have monthly supervision with their line manager to:

- ensure the quality and appropriateness of their work.
- ensure this work is completed in reasonable time scales.
- identify training and development needs of staff.
- monitor workloads
- ensure appropriate support for staff.

Each member of staff has a Personal Development Plan which is reviewed yearly, these are all up to date and dates have been identified for reviews of PDR's in the coming year.

Case File Audits

Individual case files are audited monthly by Fostering Team Managers. There is a case file audit procedure and process for monitoring that ensures that improvements have been made.

Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel has several key functions as follows:

- To make recommendations on the suitability of applicants to foster
- To make recommendations on the type of fostering applicants should undertake.
- To make recommendations on the first annual review of foster carers, every third review thereafter, and reviews which are referred to Panel for specific reasons such as significant change in foster carers' circumstances or following an allegation or concern.
- To undertake a quality assurance role in relation to the Fostering Service

The Fostering Panel monitors the quality of assessments and reports presented at panel in line with the service's quality assurance procedures.

The Panel keeps up to date with developments by:

- Quarterly Monitoring Meetings and Annual reports.
- Annual training of the Panel members
- Scrutiny of recommendations by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) – the Head of Children's Social Care

Corporate Parenting Steering Group

This is a group of Elected Members and Senior Managers which considers and steers policy and practice for children in care and has a role in monitoring quality and outcomes.

Elected Member Scrutiny

Annual Service Reports are made to Elected Members on the progress in fostering activity and developments in fostering.

The reports are presented to Council Cabinet the Council's Scrutiny Commission provides an additional layer of accountability.

Children's Reviews

Children's reviews which are chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers assist in monitoring plans for children in care and in monitoring the quality of care which children receive in foster placements.

Children in Care Council

This is an established group of young people who continue to play a key role in monitoring the quality of the Service as experienced by the children and young people in care, and the extent to which the Local Authority is delivering services in line with the Pledge for Children in Care.

There is work currently being undertaken to accommodate the younger age group of children in care to participate in the role and function of the Care4Us council.

11. Complaints and Outcomes

All foster carers, birth parents, children and young people have access to Barnsley's Complaints Service. Information on this service is made available in the Fostering Handbook, in leaflets given to parents and in the Children's Guide. Documentation used at statutory reviews contains a question regarding knowledge of this process.

A copy of the department's Complaints Procedure is available by request or by visiting the Department's website on the Barnsley Council website.

Complaints regarding the Fostering Service can be made to:

Customer Services
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Social Services
Westgate
Barnsley

Tel: 01226 772433

The complaints procedure has four stages:

Stage 1 – Early Resolution
Stage 2 – Formal Investigation
Stage 3 – The Review Panel
Ombudsman

12. OFSTED

Ofsted is responsible for the registration and inspection of social care services, including fostering services.

Reports on the inspection of the Barnsley fostering service are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Ofsted is responsible for the investigation of complaints about the fostering service and can be contacted as follows:

Ofsted
National Business Unit
Royal Exchange Building
St Anne's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

For translation or other formats of this document please contact:
Barnsley Fostering Team
Westgate Plaza
Barnsley

A. M. Banks

Anne- Marie Banks
Service Manager for Provider Services

LKvaux

Lisa Vaux (Head of Service for Children in Care)



Matthew Boud (Service Director- Children's Services)



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.

