



**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CHILD AND ADULT SERVICES**

**FOSTERING SERVICE**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

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FOSTERING SERVICE**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

This Statement of Purpose was initially approved by the Elected Members of Hartlepool Borough Council on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

It was signed on behalf of the Elected Members by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

This Statement of Purpose was reviewed and up dated in April 2013 and is to be approved by the Elected Members of Hartlepool Borough Council.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and revised as appropriate by the Team Manager of the Fostering Service no later than April 2014.

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## **Introduction**

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services England Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, that each fostering agency produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided. This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements and also how the services is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved for all children in its care. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers.

This statement is available to all members of staff, foster carers, children and birth parents and is available on our Practice Guidance site fostering microsite. A copy of this statement is also to be lodged with Ofsted. The information contained is regularly updated, and will be amended annually.

A separate Children's Guide to the Fostering Service is given to all young people who are to be placed with foster carers. This is also available on the micro site.

## **Children's Guide**

Subject to the child's age and understanding, the fostering service ensures the child received the Children's guide at the point of placement and that the foster carer explains the contents of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible. The Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern. The fostering service will update this guide as required on an annual basis to ensure that information is current and reflects developments in the service. The service would seek to ensure that the guide was available in a format appropriate to the communication needs of the child concerned and would access council resources such as language translation to achieve this.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARDS OF CARE**

### **AIMS**

The main aim of Hartlepool 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 the service is committed to ensuring that foster carers and family friends or Connected Persons carers are encouraged to help children and young people to reach their maximum educational ability.

Foster carers will provide good parenting for all children who are looked after and children will be consulted and encouraged to actively participate in their care and family life.

The Fostering Service will ensure that foster carers are provided with the skills, knowledge and support to enable them to meet the assessed needs of children placed.

Our service is committed to multi-agency working and develops partnerships and protocols with organisations which can progress the needs of our looked after children. We work at all levels in partnership with Education and Health to promote the well being of children in public care in Hartlepool.

To ensure foster carers make children and young people aware of their rights and the comments, complaints and advocacy process by passing on the relevant information.

Ensure that all practice promotes equal opportunities for all and value diversity of both foster children and carers regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religious beliefs, disability or marital status.

To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair and that any concerns are addressed and information about the complaints procedure is made available to all.

The service will consult regularly and learn from those that are in receipt of services through comments, compliments or complaints and have regular meetings with foster carers, senior managers and elected members.

The service will consult regularly with children who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard.

The service will also undertake the assessment and support to family and friends or Connected Persons carers to ensure they are equipped to provide the high quality of care aspired to for all children who are looked after. The process including timescales and responsibilities for undertaking a Connected

Person assessment are detailed within the Hartlepool Borough Council Connected Persons Policy and Procedure document.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To plan and implement effective recruitment campaigns and strategies in order to attract the number and range of carers identified to meet the complex and diverse needs of the looked after population of Hartlepool and to ensure a choice of high quality foster placements.
- To ensure that wherever possible and appropriate siblings will be accommodated together.
- The individual child's needs/wishes and feelings are paramount and taken into consideration in relation to placements.
- To undertake effective assessments of prospective carers including Connected Persons carers within specified timescales to ensure that children are afforded safe and effective placements.
- To maintain and support an Adoption and Fostering Panel to consider Foster Carer and Connected Persons assessments and make recommendations for approval of prospective Foster Carers, children's plans for long term foster care, plans for Special Guardianship and approval of the match of Named children with Foster Carers. The panel also considers the first reviews of Foster carers and subsequent reviews where category changes are being agreed or there have been issues regarding placements
- To provide pre and post approval training for applicants and carers, equipping them to meet the diverse needs of this group of children and young people.
- To provide regular recorded supervision and support contacts with carers by suitably qualified and experienced staff.
- To ensure that additional and flexible support is available to carers to underpin placement stability and improve outcomes for children in placement.
- To protect children and young people from abuse and neglect through safer recruitment practices and adherence to safeguarding policy and procedures in all areas of the service including for staff, carers and panel members.
- To create stability for children and young people in foster care through robust matching processes and a good standard of consistent and effective support.

- To achieve better life chances for looked after children particularly in relation to health, education and employment and leisure activities through promoting the development of skills and expertise within the fostering community and engendering and supporting a culture of aspiration for our looked after children.
- To maintain and promote contact with family members where appropriate.
- To prepare young people adequately for when they eventually leave their foster placement.
- To create lifelong attachments with carers in order that children and young people continue to be supported into adulthood.
- To work in partnership with children and young people, their parents and carers and social workers.
- Provide an environment where each child and young person is helped to make the best of his or her abilities emotionally, physically, educationally and socially.

## **PRINCIPLES**

The work of Hartlepool Fostering Service is based on the following principles:

1. **Child focussed** – the child’s welfare and needs are at the centre of the fostering process and their wishes and feelings are sought and taken into account in all aspects of their care.
2. **Partnership** – the Fostering Service will work in partnership with children and their parents, foster carers and their families, and social work staff and other professionals when delivering the service.
3. **Anti-discriminatory practice** – the Fostering Service will respect human rights and will ensure that there is fair and equal access to all its services. The services it provides will be free from discrimination, prejudice and racism. The service will value diversity and promote equality.

## **THE STANDARDS OF CARE**

The Fostering Service will in its delivery support Hartlepool Child and Adult Services in meeting the child focussed standards which set out what children in foster care need as detailed in the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011:

### **Standard 1: The child’s wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them**

- Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint.
- The views of others with an important relationship to the child are gathered and taken into account.

**Standard 2: Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care**

- Children have a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

**Standard 3: Promoting positive behaviour and relationships**

- Children enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately.

**Standard 4: Safeguarding Children**

- Children feel safe and are safe. Children understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm, including neglect, abuse and accident.

**Standard 5: Children Missing from Care**

- Children rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly
- Children who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return

**Standard 6: Promoting good health and wellbeing**

- Children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs.

**Standard 7: Education, employment and leisure activities**

- Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities
- Children are able to make a positive contributing to the foster home and their wider community

**Standard 8: Promoting educational achievement**

- The education and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.

**Standard 9: Promoting and supporting contact**

- Children have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and people who play a significant role in their lives.

### **Standard 10: Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child**

- Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.

### **Standard 11: Preparation for a placement**

- Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued.
- Children feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household. The child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement.

### **Standard 12: Promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care**

- Children are prepared for, and supported into, adulthood so that they can reach their full potential and achieve economic well-being.

### **Children Looked After Strategy**

In addition to the national standards, Hartlepool Fostering Service has adopted the visions or aspirations for Looked after children detailed in the Children Looked After Strategy which underpin its approach to service delivery. These include:

- The vision is to ensure that every looked after child in Hartlepool experiences high quality care and stable relationships, is nurtured and grows up with a sense of identity and belonging.
- When a child becomes looked after, there must be sufficient range of accommodation options available to be able to match the child to a placement that will meet his/her needs.

## **THE SERVICES PROVIDED**

The services provided specifically by the Fostering service fall into two main areas:

- 1) those provided to registered foster carers and potential foster carers including Connected persons carers
  - initial visits to people expressing an interest in becoming foster carers
  - preparation training for applicants
  - competency based assessments of applicants
  - support systems for approved foster carers and Connected Persons carers including allocated Supervising Social Worker and regular supervisions
  - post-approval training and development for foster carers and Connected Persons carers
  - consultation with carers over the development of the service
  
- 2) those provided to children requiring a foster placement
  - a duty social worker available during office hours Monday to Friday
  - provision of a range of foster care placements for children looked after by Hartlepool Borough Council
  - the provision of carers for use by the Emergency Duty Team for placements at evenings, weekends and bank holidays.
  - Consultation with looked after children on all aspects of the service.

The Fostering service also works in conjunction with a number of other agencies and professionals to ensure a cohesive and effective package of support is available to children who become looked after. The Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership provides a valuable forum for the review of progress and service effectiveness and to plan the implementation of work projects. The agencies and partners involved with looked after children and young people including carers and young people are represented on this forum and are fully involved in its activities. The Child in Care Council plays a critical role in service development and has a valuable contribution to make in terms of feedback. The authority is committed to learning from the experiences of its children in care and to seek improvements.

### **Provision of Therapeutic Services**

The Fostering Service has a discreet service the Therapeutic Social Work team (ACORN) and commission a discreet service from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), who provide therapeutic input to children and young people in foster placement, consultation to carers and other professionals. CAMHS comprises of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, child and adolescent mental health practitioners and social workers with expertise in children's mental health. A worker from CAMHS is now co-located with the team in the church street premises.

In addition the members of the Therapeutic Social Work Team (ACORN) work closely with carers and often work directly with them in conjunction with the child in placement. The key objectives of the work is to provide a regular, easy to use guidance and support service to all foster carers and to improve placement stability for children in care. They also provide training to foster carers, Connected Persons carers, social workers and other professionals.

### **Provision of Health Promotion Support Services**

There is a Designated Nurse for Looked after Children and Young People who oversees Children's Annual Health Assessments and has a proactive input into the health promotion of Young People. She will provide support to foster carers in addressing the range of health issues which may present with looked after children. She also provides advice and support to young people on an individual basis on issues such as contraception.

A dedicated consultant paediatrician advises the Adoption and Fostering panel on medical issues for applications to foster and children with a plan for long term fostering.

### **Provision of Educational Support Services**

The Fostering service has strong links to the educational support services for Looked after children and in particular works closely with the Inclusion Co-ordinator (Looked After children/young offenders), the Head of Social and Education Inclusion - Child and Adult services who have a strong commitment to the looked after population.

### **Provision of Leisure, Sport, Cultural and Religious Activity**

Foster carer training and supervision promotes the importance of leisure provision for looked after children and young people, and the expectation that carers will seek out and support new experiences and activities to enhance children's self-worth, social development and independence.

Looked After Children and their carers in Hartlepool are able to access the MAX card which gives free access or reduced cost access to a range of leisure activities throughout the local area. Information on community play schemes, clubs and holiday activities are provided to our carers on a regular basis through newsletters.

We aim to support all young people in their religious and cultural beliefs and customs. We ensure that information is available to provide understanding of different cultures and religions. We provide resources that may be needed to ensure young people are able to practice their beliefs and customs.

We are committed to directly challenging racism and ensure that all young people who access our services are aware of our policies in relation to anti-oppressive practice and anti-racism. We will ensure that all people are

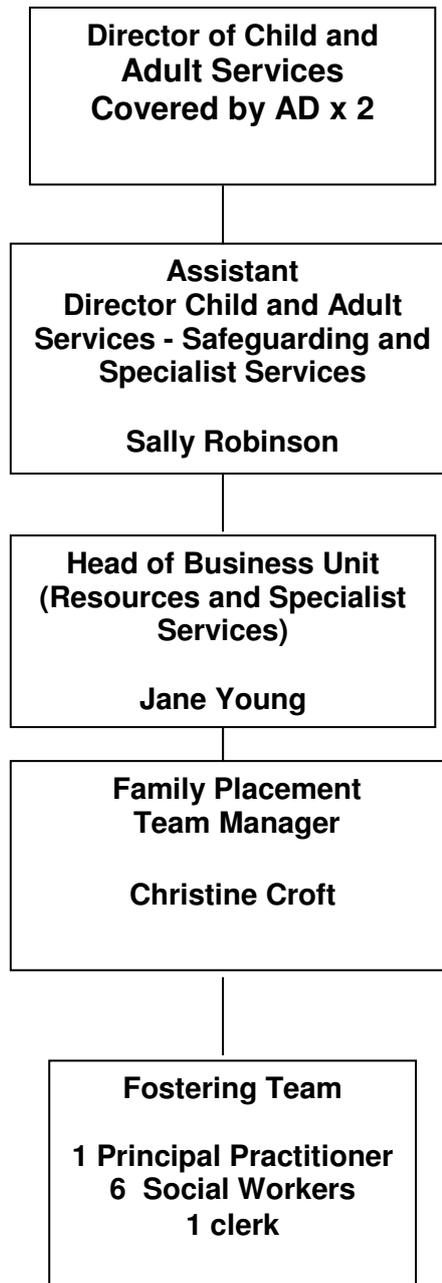
treated equally, regardless of age, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or religion. We have supervising fostering social workers to help carers with issues with trans-racial placements.

### **Preparation for Adulthood/Pathway Planning**

The Through Care Team and the Fostering Service work closely with other professionals to provide a holistic approach to meeting young peoples needs. Hartlepool is committed to supporting care leavers and ensuring that they are able to build the skills and ability to eventually live independently. The service is committed to the ethos of 'Staying Put'. We acknowledge that young people mature at different rates and we will support where possible young people to remain in their foster placement beyond 18 years of age in order to experience normal family life if this supports them more effectively.

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Fostering Service of Hartlepool Borough Council is provided by designated workers from the Family Placement Team who are based within the Resources and Specialist Services section of the Child and Adult Services Department.



## **SPECIFIC SERVICE INFORMATION**

### **NUMBERS OF FOSTER CARERS**

The number of Foster Carer approvals achieved 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013 comprised approvals of mainstream carers and 0 approvals of Connected Person carers. In the period 2012 - 2013 the fostering service accepted the resignation of mainstream carers, and Connected Persons carers.

The total number of Foster Carers approved by Hartlepool Borough Council on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 was . This number includes 2 approved as Short Break Carers, 1 as a Remand Carer.

### **NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PLACED**

The total number of Looked After children at 31 March 2013 was (prev. 181). The number of children placed in foster care placements provided by Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 was (prev. 141).

### **DESIGNATION OF CARERS**

The majority of carers are mainstream offering either short or longer term care to children and young people up to the age of 18 years.

A banded payment scheme is in place ranging from band 1 to band 4. Progression is based on experience, competencies and training. This scheme also includes the potential to make the payment of a Specialist fee for placements for children with more complex needs.

Of the carers approved, the Fostering Service had, as of 31 March 2013, 13 foster carers who were designated Specialist Carers due to the complex needs of the children placed.

2 Carers approved are designated as a 'Short Break Carer' (previously Sharing the Caring). They provide short break care for children and young people with disabilities to provide them and their carers with some respite. However one carer is currently on hold while she gives consideration to her personal circumstances.

Hartlepool also has 1 Remand Carer who was recruited specifically to look after young people who have been remanded in care by the Courts. However this carer is on long term sick. It is proposed that the remit of Specialist carers will include remand provision although the demand for such a provision has not been evident over the past 12 months. Additional training is to be provided to ensure that this service is available.

Hartlepool currently has one carer whose remit is to specifically provide 'parent and child' placements but also have carers who have the capacity to provide such placements in very specific circumstances. This is an area which still requires attention so that our resources are able to meet the demand for these placements in the most effective manner.

## **SAFEGUARDING, COMPLAINTS & ALLEGATIONS**

### **Protecting Children from Harm**

Hartlepool Fostering Services operates a safe recruitment process for all staff employed by the agency and panel members. In addition, there is a rigorous vetting and assessment process undertaken with all potential carers. Enhanced CRB checks are repeated every 3 years for all carers, staff and panel members.

Hartlepool Fostering Service has policy and guidance underpinning our service on safe caring, health and safety, bullying, management of behaviour and foster carer agreements.

Our processes and procedures will ensure that any concern is addressed and monitored by the management team and will inform service developments, for example:

Poor quality of care/breach of foster care agreement, child protection procedures which deal with allegations of abuse against foster carers and through the complaints procedures.

Children will know about these procedures through their social worker and the Children's Guide. They also have had access to a children's rights and advocacy service independent of the service currently provided by Barnadoes.

### **Complaints Procedure**

Hartlepool Borough Council Child and Adult Services operates a complaints service which is independent of the Fostering Service.

Foster Carers are given a Complaints and Compliments Leaflet at the outset of the assessment, detailing the process if they wish to make a complaint, and also when they sign the Foster Carer Agreement.

## **NUMBERS OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES**

In the year 1 April 2012 to 31<sup>ST</sup> March 2013 there were complaints made against a foster Carer in respect of the standard of care provided.

## **Allegations**

All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated and actioned through Hartlepool Child Protection Service reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Hartlepool Safeguarding Children's Board under the procedures for Managing Allegations against people who work with children or who are in a position of trust. Foster carers are offered independent support during this process which can be accessed via their fostering Social worker.

## **NUMBERS OF ALLEGATIONS AND THEIR OUTCOMES**

There were child protection referrals made in respect of allegations by looked after children against their carers. These resulted in ? section 47 enquiries being conducted. Both concluded that was that there was no further action to be taken. Both fostering households were offered independent support at the time of the allegations being made but chose not to access this.

## **THE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR RECRUITING, APPROVING, TRAINING, SUPPORTING AND REVIEWING CARERS.**

## **1. RECRUITMENT:**

### **Publicity**

- 1.1 Hartlepool's recruitment strategy is reviewed annually. All enquirers are asked where they obtained the contact details of the service and this information is analysed in order to target specific campaigns. From information regarding the previous years' enquiries there again appears to be greatest response to adverts in the local press and from people known to current carers.
- 1.2 Methods currently used include leaflets being displayed in council and public buildings in the town, local advertising in the Hartlepool Mail including the Mail website and related guides such as the Parenting Guide. Advertisements are also regularly placed in 'Hartbeat' and we have recently advertised within the Primary Times. The publicity materials reflect the brand which we hope will assist in our efforts to attract new carers.
- 1.3 There are also regional efforts orchestrated through the Regional Marketing Forum to attract new foster carers such as a regional radio advertising campaign. Advertisements for carers for specific children can be placed in the local media.
- 1.4 We also have access to the Hartlepool Borough Council Press Office who are able to help us promote the service to the press through editorials and we have a page on Hartlepool Borough Council website and a micro-site for fostering and adoption information where potential carers can register interest in becoming a foster carer. Features on radio, newspaper articles, community meetings and briefings are all undertaken regularly.

### **Response to Enquiries**

- 1.5 Enquiries regarding fostering are responded to quickly. An Information pack is normally sent out within one day of the enquiry being received. Once the return slip is received from the enquirer a joint home visit is normally made within five working days. Information about the assessment process is given and information about the family is gathered, including their motivation to foster. They are asked to consider and indicate if they wish to proceed by returning the form provided. If no response is received within 8 weeks then a further contact is made to ascertain their wishes and reason for delaying or withdrawing. If the potential applicants do not respond in a further 4 weeks then the file will be closed.

## **2. ASSESSMENT:**

- 2.1 The process for assessment leading to presentation to the Adoption and Fostering Panel for approval is clearly explained and keeping applicants informed of the progress of statutory checks etc, is considered important.
- 2.2 All applicants are normally required to attend a 4 day preparation course. The preparation training undertaken uses the Fostering Networks Skills to foster programme including, Skills to Foster, Child Development, Separation and Loss, Working Together, Safer Care, Moving On. There is an evaluation at the end of the course and applicants are requested to feedback.
- 2.3 Medical examinations are carried out by the applicant's doctor using the BAAF medical form and returned to the Hartlepool Medical Adviser for comments and a recommendation regarding suitability to foster. The applicants are required to undergo a number of statutory checks including an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check, local authority checks, current employer and NSPCC checks. The purpose of these checks is to safeguard the children to be placed.
- 2.4 The allocated workers undertaking the home study make an agreement with the applicants for the completion of the assessment including agreeing dates and times of visits and the target for completion of the home study. The applicants are required to view the assessment report and give written feedback prior to the Panel consideration of their application.

### **3 APPROVAL:**

- 3.1 The applicants will be invited to attend the Adoption and Fostering Panel that is held every second and fourth Thursday in the month. They will be given the opportunity to answer questions put by the Panel members and to make any additional comments they may wish to make. Applicants are to be informed verbally of the Agency Decision Maker's decision within two working days and are to receive confirmation in writing five working days of the Agency Decision Maker's confirming or otherwise the Panel recommendation. The Applicant will be asked for their comments regarding the process and evaluation forms are to be used to achieve this.
- 3.2 Applicants who are not deemed suitable to foster may access the review procedure or seek an independent review through the Independent Review Mechanism.

### **4. SUPPORT:**

- 4.1 Once a foster carer has been approved by Panel they complete a foster carer agreement and are provided either with the paper copy of or information to access the Foster Carer Handbook electronically. All foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker from the Fostering Service. This person will visit the foster carers, provide formal supervision on a monthly basis or at an agreed level dependent upon current placement and carer capability. They will also provide directly, or facilitate access to, any practical, emotional or professional support required.
- 4.2 Foster carers are provided with equipment to enable them to care for a child in placement.
- 4.3 Foster carers will be invited to attend a monthly support group that is facilitated by two members of staff from the team. The group is an opportunity to build networks of support amongst other carers, exchange ideas about fostering and to have the opportunity to hear guest speakers on a variety of relevant subjects. This provides a valuable forum for carers to be updated regarding service developments and to network with other professionals.
- 4.4 The Fostering Service operates a duty system within office hours which is staffed by a fostering service worker. Foster carers can access support and advice from this worker if their allocated worker is not available. An out of hours telephone support service is also provided additional to the Emergency Duty Team arrangements which are in place. This telephone support is provided by the Heads of Business Unit within Child and Adult Services.
- 4.5 All foster carers receive full membership of Fostering Network and access to an independent advice and mediation service should an allegation be made against them.
- 4.6 The agency also provides financial support to the Hartlepool Foster Carers Association which arranges a number of social events throughout the year. Members of the team also meet with representatives of the Foster carers Association to be kept informed of any issues they wish to raise
- 4.7 Fostering Service arrange a yearly Celebration evening event to commemorate the efforts of the longest serving foster carers initially those that have been approved for ten years or more and more importantly to demonstrate our gratitude to all our carers for the care that they provide to the looked after children of Hartlepool.
- 4.8 The fostering service has worked alongside some of our foster carers to produce a Foster carer Charter and this sets out the local authority's role detailing what the department will provide for its carers including in terms of support and information. It also sets out the Foster Carers' role detailing their commitment to such concepts as working in partnership and their learning and development.

## **5. TRAINING:**

- 5.1 A training plan details and supports the provision of sufficient and regular training opportunities for foster carers through the approval process and throughout their career in fostering.
- 5.2 All foster carers will attend a preparation training course incorporating the Skills to Foster materials during their preparation and assessment.
- 5.3 An Induction programme involving the completion of the Children's Workforce Development Council workbook has been developed and all new foster carers will be required to undertake this piece of work within the first twelve months. Foster carers will have the opportunity to be supported on an individual basis to complete the workbooks by their Link Workers or dependent upon numbers will be able to access group sessions which have taken place over a seven week period. There is also the opportunity for carers to be mentored by more experienced carers if they wish.
- 5.4 Foster Carers are required to complete a training portfolio and their Supervising Social Workers are to support each carer to ensure they have a Personal Development Plan which is reviewed as part of the Foster Carers annual review.
- 5.5 Foster carers are given support and encouragement to attend all training events that are relevant to their role. Any places available on relevant staff training events are offered to foster carers to increase their sense of working in partnership with the professional team and to ensure the best care is offered to children and young people. Carers are provided with information regarding training provided corporately, through Child and Adult Services and through the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All carers are provided with a training portfolio to record their training and development activity which in turn is used to inform and create their personal development plan.
- 5.6 Where possible Foster Carer representatives are supported to attend specialist training events by external providers such as BAAF and the expectation is that they will then cascade the information to the other carers.

## **6 REVIEW:**

- 6.1 The registration of all foster carers is reviewed on a regular basis. The views of the foster carer are sought, together with the views of children and placing Social workers via end of placement reports and within the review documentation. The supervising social worker is responsible for

collating the information and adding their own views based on the placements that have taken place and their observations of the carer during visits and supervision

- 6.2 The first review is held after six months and then annually thereafter. Reviews are chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers who are independent of the Fostering Service. The review report is presented to the Fostering Panel by the supervising social worker for consideration after the first review and if there is a proposal to change the approval category or recommend de-registration. Foster carers have the option to attend panel if they wish.
- 6.3 The registration of foster carers may be reviewed by Panel at any time if there are changes of circumstances or events indicate that foster carers are no longer suitable to care for children.

### **Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest**

Foster carers are provided with full information about the children placed with them and are expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on carers and looked after children, who are subject to National Standards and Data Protection legislation. Staff and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest, as are panel members.

### **7. DE-REGISTRATION:**

- 7.1 Most foster carers voluntarily withdraw from the fostering task. The details of their resignation are placed before the Fostering Panel and their de-registration is formally recorded.
- 7.2 There are occasions when the registration of a foster carer is reviewed with a view to considering the options available, i.e. changes to approval or de- registration. Foster carers are offered the opportunity to submit a response attend the Fostering Panel in these circumstances. Also if unhappy with the decision reached they are also able to request a review of the decision or to have their case addressed by the Independent Review Mechanism.

### **8. THE ADOPTION AND FOSTERING PANEL:**

- 8.1 The fostering agency is required by the Fostering Services Regulations to establish a Fostering Panel. The membership, role and functions of the panel are prescribed within the Regulations. Hartlepool have moved away from separate panels for Adoption and Fostering matters and have now amalgamated the panel and hold a joint 'Adoption and Fostering panel. This is in order to ensure quoracy and to allow for flexibility

regarding the presentation of cases. Panel membership is now drawn from a central list of members and quoracy dictates that at least five members are present. These members must comprise the chair or vice chair, a social worker representative and an independent member. Panels must have access to medical and legal advice as required.

- 8.2 Hartlepool's Adoption and Fostering Panel currently meets every second and fourth Thursday in the month and considers assessments of prospective foster carers, annual reviews of carers, de-registrations and issues in relation to foster carers. Although not a requirement within the regulations the Adoption and Fostering Panel also considers the plan for a child for long term fostering and Special Guardianship. The business of the Panel is formally recorded.
- 8.3 The Adoption and Fostering Panel makes recommendations that are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for consideration. These decisions are recorded and notified in writing to the prospective/existing foster carers.
- 8.4 Foster carers who disagree with the Panel decision regarding their approval, de-registration or changes to category of approval will have the opportunity to request a review of the decision made by the Fostering Panel either through the agency or through the Independent Review Mechanism which is provided by BAAF.
- 8.5 The Hartlepool Borough Council Adoption and Fostering Panel policy and procedures document provides additional information regarding the constitution and running of the panel.

## **APPENDIX 1 Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards:**

The work of Hartlepool Fostering Service is delivered within the following legal framework and in accordance with the following standards:

- Fostering Service Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 from section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for local authorities 2010.

This Statement of Purpose is produced in accordance with the following standards and regulations

### **NMS 2011 Standard 16**

- 16.1** The fostering service has a clear statement of purpose which is available to and understood by foster carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.
- 16.2 The aims and objectives of the statement of purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.

### **The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)**

- 4.1 The Fostering service provider must compile a Statement of Purpose , which sets out the aims and objectives of the service as a whole, and the services and facilities which are provided (including the provision of any 'parent and child arrangements'). The statement must be reviewed and updated as necessary , but at least annually and published on the provider's website(if they have one), with a copy provided to Ofsted. Copies must also be available upon request to anyone working for the purposes of the fostering service , any foster carer or potential foster carer of the service, and to any child placed with one of the service's foster carers and their parents.
- 4.2 The Statement of purpose is a key document which sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering service . it must be consistent with relevant legislation, Regulations, NMS and statutory guidance, be child focused and show how the fostering service will help children achieve positive outcomes. The manager of the fostering service must ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose.

## APPENDIX 2

### **NUMBERS, RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF STAFF as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013**

The staff of Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service consists of:

<b>NAME &amp; STATUS</b>	<b>DATE OF APPOINTMENT</b>	<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>	<b>RELEVANT EXPERIENCE</b>
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Jane Young Head of Business Unit Resources and Specialist Services	01	10	10	CSS 1989 PQ 1 PQ Child Care Award 2004 CMS 2006 HCPC registered	Children & Families LAC Team Manager Fostering & Adoption Team Manager. Fostering & Adoption Panel member
Jacky Yeaman- Vass Team Manager	02	02	09	MSW Social work 1992 CQSW 1992 CSM DMS HCPC registered	Children & Families Fostering & Adoption Panel member Family Support Team Manager IRO
Glynis Howe Principal Practitioner	04	11	02	CQSW 1984 PQ1 CCA HCPC Registered	Children & Families Family Placement Training
Christine Croft Social Worker	02	02	09	Dip SW 1997 PQ1 CCA HCPC Registered	Children & Families Independent Fostering Agency
Julie Levitt Social Worker	02	02	07	BSc Childhood Studies Dip SW 1997 HCPC Registered	Children & Families Leaving Care Family Placement
Janet McGreevy Social Worker	10	01	05	Dip SW 1992 BA (Hons) Social Work Studies PQ1 HCPC Registered	Residential Social Work Family Support Child Protection Nominated Worker
Jacqui Dixon Social Worker	01	10	09	Dip Sw 2003 PQ1 HCPC Registered	Children & Families Resource Team manager Nominated Worker
Emma Howarth Social Worker	01	10	11	BA Early Childhood Studies BA Social Work 2010 Certificate in Counselling Children HCPC Registered	Children & Families Family Resource Worker
Keith Munro Social Worker	01	04	12	BA Hons Social Studies Dip SW work 1992 HCPC registered	Children & Families Connexions Children's Society Research and Policy

Patricia Adams Administrative Staff – shared with Adoption Services	01	11	07		Child & Adult Services Admin Children & Families
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