Introduction

This statement of purpose summarises the aims, objectives and service arrangements of Doncaster Children’s Services Trust Fostering services. It has been written to provide information to foster carers, those people interested in becoming foster carers, the staff of Children and Young People Services (CYPS), and for staff from within the range of agencies who work with the Local Authority.

The Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (3(1)). It will be reviewed annually, amended as necessary and approved by both Elected Members and the Trust’s Executive Board. It is supported by a range of more detailed information including: the on-line Foster Carers Handbook, and a range of Policies and Procedures which describe the day to day responsibilities and expectations of those involved in Fostering Services. This Statement of Purpose also links with the Children’s Guide which is provided to all children, subject to the child’s age and understanding at the point of placement.

In Doncaster all looked after children and young people have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives. We strive to make sure they have access to the services they need and the opportunity to shape how these services are planned and delivered.

Doncaster’s Children in Care Council (CiCC) is a representative group of children and young people who meet on a monthly basis. They play a vital role in ensuring children and young people with care experience have a say in their care and the issues that matter to them. They bring together passionate and dedicated young people with those who run care services to share their experiences and ideas on how to improve the support and services they receive. Their role and relationship with the Corporate Parenting Board has been subject to review and there are now two CiCC members who are now full members of the Corporate Parenting Board. The CiCC will also meet with sub groups of the board on areas of service development.

In addition to the CiCC a number of our young people in care and care leavers have a more formal role within the Trust and act as personal advisors to our Chief Executive. They provide ‘Hear me’ training to all staff and external agencies, interview for all roles in the organisation and support the development of our young CiCC. Two of our Young Advisors are also employed under the Modern Apprentice Scheme.
Doncaster Children’s Services Trust is committed to ensuring that our children and young people are provided with foster care that is of high quality and guarantees the best possible standards for care, safety and life opportunities, which meet national aspirations for the support for children and young people.

The central aim of the service is to achieve the best possible outcomes for fostered children.

We strive to ensure that our children are:
- safe and secure in nurturing homes
- that they remain healthy
- achieve to the best of their abilities
- and become positive independent adults

A child’s welfare is the paramount consideration. Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving and caring family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond. The needs and wishes, welfare and safety of the child or young person are at the centre of Doncaster Children’s Services Trust Fostering Service.

Children and young people should be brought up within their birth families wherever possible and safe to do so. Family Services along with other agencies and community groups will work to ensure that there is a comprehensive range of services available to support birth families in providing safe and appropriate care for their children.

For those children and young people where this is not possible Trust Fostering’s key priority is to recruit foster carers who can be trained and supported to provide high quality care, which meets the varied and often complex needs of the children and young people who need to be looked after.

Our target for 2018/19 is to approve 25+ new fostering families. Our ongoing priorities for recruitment are inline with the emerging needs of the children and young people needing fostering families. Our recruitment priorities are:
- Carers from diverse backgrounds, who can provide placements for children and young people from a variety of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, including carers who are able to provide placements for unaccompanied asylum seeking children/young people
- Carers for older children and teenagers
- Carers for sibling groups
- Carers for children with disabilities/complex health needs
- Carers who can offer permanent homes and long term stability for children and young people
- Specialist carers for children and young people with complex needs

Our Vision

Trust Fostering strive to improve outcomes for Doncaster’s children by providing them with:
- homes and families which allow them to feel safe and secure by creating a culture of warmth and belonging.
- a safe place where every child is welcome, accepted for who they are, and given the opportunity to express themselves and reach their full potential

Our Values

- Be Excellent
- Be Respectful
- Make a Difference

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Screening and assessing foster carers
In line with Fostering Services Regulations 2011, Trust Fostering has policies and procedures for the safe recruitment of foster carers.

Anyone interested in becoming a foster carer will be subject to an initial visit by someone from the Trust Fostering Team. The purpose of this visit is to ensure the suitability of the enquirer prior to beginning an assessment. It is at this point that the worker will share information about the assessment process and level of information that will be required before anyone can be approved as a foster carer.

All prospective carers are subject to statutory checks and personal and employment references. This includes: full DBS, and health checks.

Only those considered likely to be able to provide a safe, healthy and supportive foster home will be invited to apply. The assessment usually takes between four and six months. During this time, the assessor will visit regularly to gather the information they need to complete the assessment. Potential foster carers will also be invited to attend the two day Skills to Foster training.

Our ‘Skills to Foster’ course is jointly run with our current foster carers, which enables potential carers to find out what fostering is really like and prepare them for the journey ahead.

Once the carers assessment is complete and they are happy that the information within it is accurate it will be presented to the Fostering Panel meeting. The foster carer will be invited to attend along with their assessing Social Worker.

Fostering Panel:
Fostering panel considers the approval of all carers and foster carer reviews. Fostering panels are chaired by an independent and experienced person who has the relevant skills and experience appropriate to the role. The panel is made up of a number of professionals and independent members who will consider all of the information within the report and then make a recommendation regarding the approval to the Agency Decision Maker.

The Agency Decision Maker’s role is performed by a Senior Manager of Doncaster Children’s Service’s Trust.

Trust Fostering works hard to retain foster carers through a comprehensive training programme, development opportunities and an equitable payment scheme which recognises their value.
Placements

Foster Care Placement offer
Doncaster’s children come from a range of cultural, racial, linguistic and religious backgrounds and Trust Fostering will endeavor to recruit and retain carers who reflect this. Any foster placements made will as far as possible reflect children’s individuality, with particular attention being given to any placement offered to children and young people with a disability.

Connected Persons
Where children and young people are not able to live safely with their birth parent(s) then consideration will be given to see if they can be cared for within the extended family network. This may involve approval of family or friends as foster carers or use of appropriate legislation such as Regulation 24, or applications for a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order.

Should the initial viability assessment of an extended family or friend (Connected Person) recommend that they are approved as a foster carer, a full fostering assessment will be completed by a supervising social worker in the fostering team in partnership with the child’s social worker.

Fostering outside of the family network
Where children and young people are not able to remain with their birth family or within the wider family network then a home within a fostering family will be the first choice for the majority of children.

Trust Fostering intends:
- To provide a service that is responsive to the needs of children who require a foster placement by recruiting sufficient carers to offer placement choice, and create a culture where children and young people feel safe.
- Trust Fostering intends to provide placements that meet the requirements of children and young people’s care plans wherever possible by utilising best value, local placements which promote continuity and maintain family networks.
- All placements will take into consideration the need for the child or young person to be placed near to family and school. If at all possible siblings will be placed together unless identified needs indicate otherwise.

Short-term Placements
Carers undertaking short-term placements do so in a variety of circumstances and with a wide range of children and young people. It may be for a very short, predictable period of time whilst, for example, a child’s mother is in hospital or a carer may look after a child whilst detailed assessments and Court proceedings are undertaken 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, which takes them through to adulthood and independence.

Emergency Placements
Carers offering emergency placements can be contacted at short notice, at evening and weekends, to accept unplanned placements of children. A list of emergency carers with vacancies is updated weekly and forwarded to our out of hours social work team.

Respite Carers
The service has a small number of carers who offer sleepover care on a regular basis where a child’s care plan has indicated that such arrangements will be helping to maintain a child in his/her own family. These carers also offer placements for foster carers who require sleepovers either as part of their two week respite offer or as part of the child’s placement plan.

Specialist Placements
The service is developing a number of specialist roles for Parent and Child Placements and placements for children with highly complex needs, for example an alternative to Tier 4 CAMHS accommodation. Carers within these roles will also be expected to provide specialist support and advice for other carers.

Call 0808 129 2600
Visit www.trustfostering.co.uk
@TrustFostering
The Fostering Network’s Mockingbird programme is an innovative method of delivering foster care using the Mockingbird Family Model. This is an extended family model that provides respite care, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities. The programme improves the stability of fostering placements and strengthens the relationships between carers, children and young people, fostering services and birth families. Mockingbird was developed in the USA and uses the concept of a ‘constellation’ which is where six to ten fostering families live in close proximity to a dedicated hub home of specially recruited and trained carer’s offering respite care, peer support, regular joint planning and social activities.

How does it work for Doncaster Children’s Services Trust Fostering Families?
We are proud to be just one of twenty fostering provider services to deliver this programme within the UK.

There is a plan to extend the model for all our Trust fostering families over the next three years. Doncaster currently has four established constellations, one of these focuses on fostering families where there is a plan for the children to transfer to family or adoption. Six more constellations are planned to go live between April 2018 to March 2019.

Progress so far
We know from records, data and by listening to our carers that there is a need to improve the retention and support of our foster carers. We have built the project on successful activities that even though not Mockingbird, echo the ethos and principles of the model.

Placement Statistics 2017/18
As at 7 May 2018 there were:
- 125 registered fostering households, including 10 fully approved connected people foster carers.
- 8 Foster to Adopt placements.
- 37 connected person foster carers also had children placed with them under Regulation 24.

These households provided foster placements on behalf of Doncaster Council for 232 children.

An annual report will be provided for councillors, the Directorate Executive Board, foster carers and other interested parties which provides more detailed information about activity and performance for the Fostering Service.

Following approval, all foster carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker from within the Fostering Service. They will visit, support and supervise the carer on a monthly basis or more frequently if required. They will also liaise closely with children’s social workers.

All foster carers also have an annual review which will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. Foster Carers first review, after approval, will be presented to the Fostering Panel with a report which provides panel with an update of the progress so far. In addition, Fostering Panel will also consider the reviews of foster carers where there have been specific and significant complaints, allegations, or issues about standards of care or other major changes in circumstances. Whilst the emphasis in these circumstances is on the safety of any child involved, there will also be regard to the support and needs of the foster carers and attempts to resolve the situation satisfactorily.

All children and young people who are looked after in care have a care plan, which is reviewed regularly. The wishes of the child or young person are taken into account in drawing up the care plan, as well as that of the birth family and the foster carers.

The care plan is reviewed at every Looked After Child Review and at the four-month review the child’s plan for permanence will be addressed. This plan is based on the needs of the individual child and includes consideration of permanence being achieved by return to birth family or other means including long term foster care or adoption.

The care planning and assessment work will ensure that the child, birth family and foster carers have access to appropriate specialist services to meet particular needs such as for education and health.

The views and wishes of the child or young person are sought through a range of age appropriate means. This could also include the involvement of the children’s advocate or independent visitor.

Good child care planning and practice are essential to prevent undue delay and drift.

The care plan for the child or young person will always consider the need for children and young people to spend time with family and friends. In Doncaster we refer to this time as ‘family time’, taking into account the view of young people on the use of the term ‘contact’. It is important that our carers understand and value family time for children and young people and their role in helping this to be a positive experience.

Foster carers are trained and supported to enable them to work with members of the birth family, and to sensitively support the child or young person around this. The role may also include transporting children to visit family and supervising the family time.
Doncaster Foster Carers’ Association (DFCA)

Trust Fostering is fortunate to have Doncaster Foster Carers’ Association (DFCA) working with us to support fostering families. As an independent charity, DFCA attracts funding which it uses to provide our fostering families with a fantastic range of events and activities. These are always heavily subsidised, or even free, utilising funding from charitable sources.

DFCA is also unique in running a weekly youth club which provides a variety of activities which are suitable for toddlers and above. A new Lego Club has been established in response to identified needs of a small number of children who struggle in a social environment but benefit from small group structured activity.

A weekly remote control car club has also been developed to support male foster carer bonding with young males in their care.

Events and activities organized by the DFCA cover the entire age range from birth to 18+. They also include activities for our foster carers.

Outings have previously included: trips to theatres, theme parks, seaside and more local trips, as well as parties for the children and young people celebrating Easter, Halloween and Christmas and other celebrations throughout the year.

DFCA provides peer support to foster carers, operating a number of Facebook groups as well as the website www.dfca.org.uk - a one stop shop for information and advice.

DFCA represents our carers locally, having discussions with the Fostering team on a regular basis. It provides a forum for discussion to champion the rights of all young people being looked after and work with Doncaster Children’s Services Trust and others to enable those young people to contribute to the development of the fostering service. The DFCA management group meets monthly with the Fostering Team Manager and Head of Service. The representatives and managers bring items for discussion, the contribution is pivotal in shaping the fostering service.

DFCA has made a significant difference for our fostering families since its inception four years ago.

Foster carer forums

Foster carers are invited to attend and contribute to quarterly foster carer forums. The forum is used to disseminate information and consult on Service development. This meeting also provides a platform for carers to raise and discuss topics of interest.

Foster carer support groups

Two locally based support groups provide a monthly opportunity for foster carers to meet other carers in their locality, receive informal training and support from their supervising social workers. The carers are able to feedback on issues which require service led resolution.

The Celebration of Achievement Awards

This is an annual event which rewards the achievements and successes of our looked after children and young people. The recognition of their achievements is an important Corporate Parenting role for Family Services and a commitment embedded in the Pledge. It is essential that foster carers understand the value of such awards and support the annual event by nominating children and young people they feel deserve the recognition.

The awards ceremony is a positive example that illustrates our commitment to recognising the achievements of looked after young people in the District. A range of award categories are identified including Personal Achievement, Being Involved, Making Changes, Recreation and Educational Achievement. The number of children attending the event and receiving an award has grown over the last three years building a more positive picture of the young people in care in Doncaster and we welcome more nominations from new and current foster carers.

The day-to-day management of the Fostering Service is the responsibility of the Fostering Team Manager. The Team Manager reports to the Head of Service.

All Managers within the Fostering Service are experienced social worker practitioners and maintain currency in fostering and management practice through attendance at appropriate training courses, seminars and conferences and through research and other briefings. The trust is also a corporate member of Research in Practice and all members of the service are able to use these resources to ensure practice is evidence based and informed by research.

Staff from the Fostering Service and other appropriate services are involved in the review, planning and development of the service and contribute to service development.

Staff Qualifications and Experience

All staff in the Fostering Service have an annual appraisal and a personal Development Plan that identifies their development needs and the training, which can help them to progress and improve their skills, abilities and knowledge.
The Fostering Service is registered as an Independent Fostering Association and is inspected by Ofsted in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. These inspections take place within a three-year cycle. In the last inspection in 2015 the service was rated overall as Good. A copy of the report is available on the Ofsted website.

Ofsted can be contacted at:
Ofsted
NBU
3rd Floor, Royal Exchange Building
St Ann’s Square
Manchester
M227LA

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner
The Office of the Children’s Commissioner Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street London
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 020 7783 8330
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Useful Contacts

All young people in foster care receive information about the complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. This information is available in the Young People’s and Children’s Guides to Living in Foster Care. All complaints are dealt with through customer services. All young people in foster care have access advocacy and support from their Independent Reviewing Officer.

Foster carers are provided with complaints information in their online foster care handbook.

Any allegation about foster carers, which comes within a Child Protection remit, is investigated within the Safeguarding Procedures.

Any concerns about the Fostering Service may also be addressed to Ofsted (contact details below).

Ofsted & Inspection

Complaints & Representations
London E1 6BR
NATN 1111
Childline
Useful Contacts

Call 0808 129 2600
Visit www.trustfostering.co.uk
@TrustFostering

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15. About our staff

Registered Manager – Mark Douglas
Director of Children’s Social Care
Qualifications: BA (Hons) Sociology, Diploma in Social Work, DMS
Experience: Mark has over 23 years experience working in social work. He has worked in a variety of senior roles as is currently the Director of Children’s Social Care for Doncaster Children’s Services Trust.

Fostering Team: Qualifications and Experience
Team Manager – Heather Hollingworth
Qualifications: Social Work Diploma, Diploma in Health and social care, Diploma in higher education, Diploma in Management
Experience: 25 years’ experience in social care and 15 years post qualification. 16 years, experience of working within fostering services.

Advanced case practitioner (supervising social worker) - Sam North
Sam qualified as a social worker in 2000. She has worked in the fostering team since 2004 and has been Advanced Case Practitioner since May 2014

Fostering Supervising Social Worker - 13 social workers
Qualifications – All social workers have a social work qualification
Experience: The team has workers with a range of experience in social work and in fostering. A commitment to maintaining balance of experience is maintained. All workers have experience in statutory children’s social work. 8 workers have over 5 years’ experience in fostering. Two workers have specialist experience in work with children with a disability.

Recruitment, assessment and training social workers – 3 social workers
Qualifications – All social workers have a social work qualification and training qualifications
Experience – 2 social workers have over 5 years’ experience in fostering and all have accredited training awards.

Social Work Assistant - 2
1 has 7 years’ experience in the fostering team, prior experience in an educational environment and 1 with 2 years’ experience within the fostering service and prior experience in safeguarding & standards administration.

Administrative support team
The fostering service is supported by:
1 Senior Business Support Officer
3 Fostering Panel Business Support Officers
2 Business Support Assistants
1 Modern Apprentice

Management and Staffing
Trust Fostering will work to maintain an adequate number of appropriately qualified, skilled and trained fostering team workers in order to facilitate the running of the service.

We are committed to multi-agency working and developing partnerships with organisations with which we can progress the needs of our children. Working at all levels in partnership with Education and Health we promote the well-being of children under Doncaster Children’s Services Trust care. The Better Education for Children in Care group has representation at a senior management level from the fostering service, education service and local schools and strives to improve education outcomes for all. The team manager meets regularly with the LAC Nursing service in order to improve foster carers knowledge of and access to services provided.

Fostering Support Worker
1 Modern Apprentice
To find out more about Trust Fostering, call our friendly team 0808 129 2600 or call into our offices for a chat, at Doncaster Children's Services Trust, the Blue Building, 38-40 High Street, Doncaster.

Our doors are open between 8:30am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Trust Fostering

Call 0808 129 2600
Visit www.trustfostering.co.uk

@TrustFostering
#TrustFostering

Trust Fostering is delivered by:
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