

Version 1.3



# **CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION**

## **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **KENT FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

### **POLICY & PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**

**Document Owner:** Policy and Performance Manager (LAC)

**Authorised:** June 2008

**Review Date:** June 2012

**Date of Equalities Impact Assessment:**

**Review Date:**

## **POLICY AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**

### **Introduction**

This Statement of Purpose sets out the commissioning framework for Kent's Fostering Service. The document is organised as follows:

- Part 1 – Policy & Performance framework
- Part 2 – Recruitment, assessment and management of carers
- Part 3 – Referral, placement and support of LAC
- Part 4 – Placement Terms and Conditions
- Part 5 – Fostering Panel Terms of Reference

### **National legislative and policy framework**

Kent's Fostering Service is run in accordance with the principles outlined in the:

- Children Act 1989
- Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991
- The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards,
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Service Regulations 2002

Kent's Fostering Service also strives to follow the best practices outlined in the UK National Standards for Foster care and Code of Practice on the Recruitment, Assessment, Approval, Training and Support of Foster Carers 1999. KCC fostering service complies with the main beliefs and values as described in this document.

### **Kent Policy statement**

Kent recognises that a child's needs are best met by a nurturing family and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain within their own family in an appropriate alternative family placement wherever possible.

Kent is committed to placing children and young people with Kent County Council approved foster families and has developed and invested in a dedicated and comprehensive Fostering Service that actively works to meet the quality standards required and the diverse needs of the children who become looked after by Kent County Council and their families.

Kent is also committed to placing children and young people with local foster families in order to allow them to maintain contact with families and friends, continue at the same school and thrive within their own community.

Each child/young person will have access to foster care services which recognise and address their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. Placement decisions will consider the child's assessed racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic

origin, race, religion, culture and language of the foster family (Culturally Competent Care Policy)

Kent Social Services believes that every Looked After child should be able to enjoy the same quality of life and opportunities as all children and has adopted the Healthy Care standards in order to promote their well being. It recognises that to achieve these standards it must address the 4 Ps:

- Policy – identify services that meet the needs of Looked after Children;
- Partnership – work with appropriate multi-agency partners at a strategic level to plan and commission those services;
- Practice – ensure that both practitioners and carers are committed to promoting the well being of Looked after Children and are well trained and supported to do so;
- Participation – respect for the rights and responsibilities of Looked after Children and their carers and involve them in all aspects of service delivery.

In addition, the Fostering Service, as a local authority provision, offers care placements subject to KCC and Children's Social Service's policies and procedures. These encompass a range of areas and are accessible in a variety of formats.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of Kent's Fostering Service is to provide stable and high quality foster care placements for children of all ages that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals.

In addition to promoting their health and general well being the service is also committed to ensuring that every foster carer recognises the importance of the educational achievement of LAC and works with the directorate in raising the academic attainment for all LAC children. The Service also recognises that a small number of children will not achieve formal academic qualifications but will encourage foster carers to help children and young people to reach their maximum educational ability.

## **Services provided by Kent Fostering Service**

KCC Fostering Service is committed to developing specialist schemes for children who need them:

- Individual and sibling group placements
- Bridging placements
- Emergency placements
- Short term and long term placements
- Therapeutic Re-parenting Scheme (TRP)
- Treatment Foster Care (TFC)
- Remand Foster Care
- Parent and child placements
- Respite placements
- Short breaks for disabled children

## **Service Principles and Values**

Kent's Children, Families and Education Directorate is committed to:

- Putting the child first
- Delivering high quality services
- Valuing, developing and supporting staff
- Working in partnership
- Making the best use of its resources

## **The Fostering Service Values:**

- Exceptionally high standards of integrity and respect for all;
- Promotion of a stable and safe environment ensuring that children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect;
- Promotion of educational attainment, progress and school attendance of all children and young people in foster care placements;
- The achievement of positive outcomes by offering high quality foster care placements which meet the welfare and social needs of all children and young people appropriately.
- The promotion of the health, personal care and developmental needs including identity of all the children and young people in foster care placements.
- Positive regard for the child's racial, religious and cultural needs. Children should have equal access to local family based care regardless of race, religion & belief, sexual orientation, mental health needs, transgender issues, ability or disability.
- The individual child's needs/wishes/feelings/abilities and inherent potential are paramount and are taken into account in relation to placements.
- Anti- discriminatory practices that promote 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.
- Encouraging team and personal development for both staff and foster carers.
- Acknowledgment and recognition of the contribution that can be made by family and friends as carers.
- Commitment to continuous improvement through the provision of wider placement choices for children by continuing pioneering a more innovative approach to foster care that is needs led to deliver special care and support packages aimed at providing positive life experiences for children whilst looked after with the aim of helping them to become fulfilled as adult members of our community.

- Involvement of children, young people, carers, staff and other partner agencies in helping to shape a new and better service for our looked after children and children in need living at home in line with '*Working towards quality and excellence in foster care*'.

## **Recruitment of carers**

The recruitment of Kent foster carers is subject to policy and procedure agreed by Children's Social Services management team as set out in Section 2 of this document. Foster carers are assessed by experienced and qualified social workers, using recognised British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) procedures and competency framework and are approved by a KCC Foster Panel (Section 5) under the terms of the Fostering Service Regulations.

Foster carers receive preparation, induction and further development up to NVQ level 3 or the Diploma for foster care and can continue to the foundation degree. Kent's Fostering Service has introduced the national Children's Workforce Development Council requirements which include a national framework for Training, support and development standards for foster care.

Kent's Fostering Service has an expectation that carers will participate in training and has appointed a dedicated training manager to develop appropriate training and development opportunities that are aimed at enhancing both child and carers knowledge of strategies for successfully ensuring a positive and successful experience for all concerned.

In addition, focused training opportunities have been developed to ensure that specialists fostering schemes are resourced by highly trained and skilled foster carers.

The service will promote the professionalism of the fostering service by the Payment for Skills which concentrates on carers skill levels by evidencing learning and formal qualification.

This is underpinned by a Competency Assessment Framework that identifies 'key' areas of foster carer competence linking them to the proposed Reward for Skills payment levels. Foster Carers will need the pre-requisite competencies alongside the additional competencies to progress at each level. Attendance at training/completion of NVQ etc should not be seen as automatic achievement of the competencies – competency would need to be assessed on an on-going basis.

The Competency Framework breaks the competencies down into seven standards laid down by the Children's Workforce Development Council for Foster Care:

- Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people
- Understand your role as a foster carer
- Understand health and safety
- Know how to communicate effectively Own Development
- Understand the development of children and young people
- Keep children and young people safe fro harm
- Develop yourself

The framework breaks these competency standards into specific sub-sections to include, for example, basic care, emotional and behavioural development, working with other professionals. The competencies are wide ranging, some of which are general to all carers and others more specific to the carers fostering approval and registration.

In addition carers receive regular support throughout their fostering career and the effectiveness of this is evaluated in their annual review. An emergency out of hours service is available to all foster carers.

## **Placement of children**

The placement of children in Kent Fostering Service placements is subject to policy and procedure that has been approved by Children's Social Services and is set out in Section 3 of this document.

The main priority is the child's welfare and their individual needs and placements are carefully considered ensuring that these are best suited to those needs. The KCC fostering resource provides positive and consistent responses to their needs. The KCC fostering provision endeavours to match placements with families who have an interest in or are particularly experienced in a specific child related need.

Children and young people are placed in foster care for a wide range of reasons. The Fostering Service recognises the need to offer consistently high standards of care in a variety of settings. These will include mutual support, diverse choice of specialist placements, rehabilitation, and preparation for independence and integration in the local community.

The complexity of the child's/young person's family background is taken into account when making a placement, in order to ensure an appropriate match. The main priority is the child's welfare and their individual needs. The KCC Fostering Service provides positive and consistent responses to these needs. It endeavours to match children with families who have an interest in, or who have experience in a specific child – related need.

## **Placement terms and conditions**

The terms and conditions that form the basis of Kent foster carer service agreement are set out Section 4 of this document. It is important to note that this Section contains commitments by both the Fostering Service and front line social workers.

## **Standards of care**

Kent's Fostering Service is committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards and offering quality provision. It has been developed and is managed in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the principles outlined in the National Minimum Standards. The Minimum standards do not mean standardisation of provision. The standards are designed to be applicable to the wide variety of different types of fostering services providers, and to enable, rather than prevent, individual providers to develop their

own particular ethos and approach to care for children with different needs. The 25 standards for Foster Care set out in appendix 1.

In addition Kent has adopted Healthy Care which has identified the following 6 key standards that the Fostering Service will contribute to achieving. Looked after Children should:

- Feel safe, protected and valued. They should be able to develop a sustained committed relationship to at least one carer;
- Live in a caring, healthy and learning environment;
- Feel respected and supported in their cultural beliefs and personal identity;
- Have priority access to excellent and effective health care;
- Have opportunities to develop personal and social skills and talents and abilities and to have free time to spend as they choose on play, culture or leisure;
- Be prepared for leaving care by being supported to live, care and provide for him/herself in the future.

### **Commissioning process**

Commissioning (planning, target setting, service development, budget setting and performance monitoring) will be undertaken both locally and at county level:

**CSSMT Commissioning Sub-Group** – with membership made up of key managers from front line Children and Families teams, Disabled Children's Service, 16Plus, Finance and BPMU will be held twice a year (in March and October). The sub-group will have both a planning and performance monitoring role and should enable the services to work closely together, develop partnerships and to improve ownership.

- **Planning** - the sub-group will identify areas of need to inform recruitment targets and to facilitate this in each District, Disability Teams and 16 plus should provide the Fostering Service with the following information for the March meeting:
  - Number of LAC and number of predicted LAC coming in [not a snap shot]
  - Current age profile and predicted age profile
  - Number of children moving on to adoption/ SGO - this target is set as % of LAC
  - Number of children who require long term foster care – new demand can only be accurately predicted as part of Care Proceedings
  - Number of children requiring respite placement – this and 6. below are directly related to CP numbers and long term foster placements
  - Number of children requiring day placements
  - Number of children requiring TRP
  - Number of children requiring TFC

- Number of children requiring Disability Respite Fostering based on bed nights
- Number of long term placements for disabled children - this should be a quantifiable number, with an analysis of the past 3 years being used as the basis for the forecast, plus input from DCS District Managers
- Number of children and young people requiring emergency bed placements – an analysis of past business usage should form a basis of the forecast and this item is likely to be subject to seasonality and peaks of demand throughout the year – usually when we have foster carers going on their planned holidays and the respite provision is already over-subscribed, so this needs to be built into the system of response.
- Number of parent/child placement
- Number of young people requiring single supplement placements – we should consider the link between children requiring TRP/TFC placements – the lead time and use this as a proxy indicator for this likely demand.
- Number of new carers required by Districts/Areas to avoid cross boundary placements by identifying a baseline and then setting targets.
- Any other type of placements that are not provided.
- Number of relative/friend assessments – there is an increased demand for mother/father/next relative foster placements as part of CP/Care proceedings. The new Public Law outline means that the local authority should do more of this before going to court and not as part of Court Proceedings. Projections should be based on numbers of all care proceedings over the past 3-5 years together with a list of those children currently in care proceedings.

The Fostering Service will collate the information provided but before targets for recruitment can be set there should be dialogue about the possible implications of these requirements for the Fostering Service.

- **Monitoring** – the meeting will also review information provided by the Fostering Service for the previous year. The information reported might differ from year to year but as a baseline should include:
  - Districts' usage of commissioned beds or services
  - Districts' completion of carer payments
  - The quality of information about LAC provided to carers on placement
  - Support available to avoid placement breakdown
  - The Fostering Service's activity against agreed targets.

This process is intended not only to monitor the fostering Service's performance but also to determine whether commissioning processes need sharpening in relation to estimating need.

- **Service development** - this sub-group will also need to ensure that other targets/objectives are picked up that promote and secure the delivery of high quality services for Children who are looked after. Key service developments would include:
  - Any funding requirements of Fostering Service to meet identified needs
  - Training and support needs of foster carers
  - Role of carers in promoting the health and education of LAC
  - Development and review of specialist fostering provision
  - Effectiveness of District Forums
  - Partnership working and links to local partnership boards
  - Information and systems issues
  - User and carer involvement
  - Modernisation of fostering practices
  - Recruitment & retention of carers
  - Complaints and compliments
- **Monitoring performance** - the performance of Kent's Fostering Service will be monitored at a number of levels and in a number of ways:
  - Ofsted will inspect regularly to ensure that Kent's Fostering Service complies with legislation and standards (this may be annually or every 3 years dependant on compliance). This report together with any action plan arising from it will be presented to the County Forum.
  - The County forum will also monitor activity at a strategic level against the objectives, performance indicators and tasks as contained in the Fostering Business Plan.
  - In addition to involvement in the above, SP&P Policy and Performance Unit will also monitor performance through its activities

The following Key Performance Indicators will be used to monitor the Fostering Service:

### **Performance Indicators**

- PAF Indicator B7 percentage of children looked after in foster care and adoption.
- BVPI – A1 – Stability of LAC (3 or placements in a year).
- National PSA target (April 2008) – Placement Stability (% of children under 16 years looked after for 2.5 years or more in the same placement for at least 2 years)
- All new LAC to be placed within home district
- County teams will recruit new foster carers and increase the number of carers for BME children (target as agreed)
- Further Development of new specialist Fostering Schemes for hard to place children
- Placement Information Record will be completed for each child placed with foster carers within 10 working days of placement.

- All Foster/ carer reviews will be held on time and letter sent to carer confirming outcome
- All initial packs to be sent to prospective carers within 3 working days
- Carer registration to be in line with placements
- Successful Ofsted inspection resulting in scores of no less than 3
- All assessments will be completed within 4 months from the point of completion of training
- All newly approved carers will carry out agreed pathway training within first year of approval
- All NVQ candidates to complete within 1 yr of registration
- Decrease the number of main stream carers leaving the service by 5%
- All carer reviews to be carried out in line with P4S
- Panel membership in line with Regulations

**Business plan** – these processes will inform the Fostering Service 3 year business plan which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

### **Complaints procedure**

Any complaints about Kent's Fostering Service will be dealt with under the Children, Families and Education Directorate Complaint Procedures. Further information can be obtained from the leaflet entitled ' If you wish to complain about Kent Services'. A copy of this leaflet together with an alternative version 'How to Complain', is enclosed in the Service User Guide.

Carers or families can also contact the Ofsted at:

## National Minimum Standards

### Children and young people:

- Children and young people in foster care are encouraged and facilitated to maintain and develop family relationships and friendships
- Children and young people are treated with dignity, their privacy is respected, they make choices based on information provided to them in an age-appropriate manner, and have their views, including complaints, heard when decisions are made which affect them or the care they receive.
- Children and young people are provided with foster care services that take account of their age, stage of development, individual assessed needs, illness or disability, gender, family background, culture and ethnicity (including membership of the Traveller community), religion and sexual identity.
- There is a designated social worker for each child and young person in foster care
- An assessment of the child's or young person's needs is made prior to any placement, or in the case of emergencies, as soon as possible thereafter.
- Each child and young person in foster care has a written care plan. The child or young person and his or her family participate in the preparation of the care plan.
- Children and young people are placed with carers who are chosen for their capacity to meet the assessed needs of the children or young people.
- Foster carers' homes provide a safe, healthy and maturing environment for the children or young people.
- Children and young people in foster care are protected from abuse and neglect.
- The health and developmental needs of children and young people in foster care are assessed and met. They are given information, guidance and support to make appropriate choices in relation to their health and development.
- The educational needs of children and young people in foster care are given high priority and they are encouraged to attain their full potential. Education is understood to include the development of social and life skills.
- Children and young people in foster care are helped to develop the skills, knowledge and competence necessary for adult living. They are given support and guidance to help them attain independence on leaving care.

### Foster carers:

- Foster care applicants participate in a comprehensive assessment of their ability to carry out the fostering task and are formally approved prior to any child or young person being placed with them.
- Relatives who apply, or are requested to apply, to care for a child or young person under S.36 of the Child Care Act 1991 participate in a comprehensive assessment of their ability to care for the child or young person and are formally approved.
- Approved foster carers are supervised by a professionally qualified social worker. This person ensures that foster carers have access to the information, advice and professional support necessary to enable them to provide high quality care.

- Foster carers participate in the training necessary to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to provide high quality care.
- Foster carers participate in regular reviews of their continuing capacity to provide high quality care and to assist with the identification of gaps in the fostering service.

**Local authorities:**

- Have up-to-date effective policies and plans in place to promote the provision of high quality foster care for children and young people who require it.
- Have effective structures in place for the management and monitoring of foster care services.
- Ensure that the staff employed to work with children and young people their families and foster carers are professionally qualified and suitably trained.
- Are actively involved in recruiting and retaining an appropriate range of foster carers to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people in their care.
- Provide for a special foster care service for children and young people with serious behavioural difficulties.
- Have foster care committees to make recommendations regarding foster carer applications and to approve long-term placements. The committees contribute to the development of policies, procedures and practice.
- Placing children or young people with a foster carer through a non-statutory agency are responsible for satisfying themselves that the statutory requirements are met and that the children or young people receive a high quality service.
- Have policies and procedures designed to ensure that children and young people, their families, foster carers and others with a bona fide interest in their welfare can make effective representations, including complaints, about any aspect of the fostering service.

Appendix 2

## Staffing and structure

### Name and address of Manager

Teresa Vickers, County Fostering Manager

Social Services, Kroner House, Ashford  
Tel No 01622 671411

Senior management (J and above)	-
Management (I and below)	1 County Fostering Manager
H/I Grade	5 Team leaders & 1 Programme Manager
H Grade	5 Practice supervisors & 1

CGSW	training manager	36.86FTE
Fostering Asst.		18.12
Foster Carer Support workers grade D		5
Education Assistants grade 4	KS6	4
Senior SSA grade C		4
SSA career grade		9
CRIS Co-ordinator/Gateway Coordinator	E/F	1
Fost & Adopt Training Managers grade H		1
Recruitment Coordinator grade E		.5
Training administrator grade C		1

## Structure chart

*This section is also important for clarifying delegations. The structure chart need not show all posts and names individually but should be in enough detail to show all generic posts and names of senior officers who will be asked to carry out actions on behalf of the County officer and Unit manager.*

### County Fostering Manager

	Recruitment Co-ord		Gateway Co-ord - Gateway advisor		
<b>Training Mgr</b>	<b>Team Ldr West</b>	<b>Team Ldr Mid</b>	<b>Team Ldr EK1</b>	<b>Team Ldr EK2</b>	<b>Programme Mgr</b>
Administrator	Prac. Sup Snr. SW	Prac. Sup Snr. SW	Prac. Sup Snr. SW	Prac. Sup Snr Sup	SW Multi agency team
	CGSW	CGSW	CGSW	CGSW	

Kent Fostering Service  
Statement of Purpose (Part 1)

FSWA	FSWA	FSWA	FSWA
FCSupWkr AO	FCSupWkr AO	FCSupWkr AO	FCSupWkr AO