

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER

REVISION TO THE FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the approval for the annual revisions to the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Fostering Service is required by The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards (Fostering) 2011 - to have in place a Statement of Purpose that is reviewed on a regular basis and updated as appropriate.

3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Following the yearly review of the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service, revisions have been made which ensure they reflect current practice revised guidance and updated legislation.

- 3.2 The Statement of Purpose reflects new legislation and changes in existing legislation. The key changes are:-

- Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review, Delegation of Authority to Foster Carers published 5th July 2013,
- Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services, July 2013
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers. Revision May 2014
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The right to request flexible working to all employees.

- 3.3 The key amendments are:

- **Delegation of Authority to foster carers** has been in use in North Lincolnshire for two years. This has now been strengthened in recognition of the new legislation, the Delegation of Authority to foster carers procedures have been updated and the Delegation of Authority policy is published on North Lincolnshire website in line with the Regulations.

- **The Foster Carer assessment** and approval of foster carers has followed a two stage process since the amendments in July 2013. This has resulted in an increase in applicants reaching completion of the assessment process and being approved as foster carers.
- **The Children and Families Act 2014** gave young people in care the choice to “stay put” with their former carers once they reach 18 years of age and are no longer in care. This legislation formalises arrangements that have been available in North Lincolnshire for some years.

4 ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Fostering Services (England) Regulations require that the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually and updated to reflect any changes in staffing, practice or procedures.
- 4.2 If the Statement of Purpose is not updated and approved as above, the service will not meet its regulatory requirements.
- 4.3 To meet these requirements, the Statement of Purpose may be accepted without changes, or amendments as deemed appropriate by the cabinet member will be included in the Statement of Purpose.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Statutory - The Statement of Purpose is a requirement under The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations 2011.

6 OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.1 An integrated impact assessment has been completed and there are no unresolved issues.

7 OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED

- 7.1 Children and foster carers are regularly consulted in the delivery of the service. Their views are reflected in the Statement of Purpose.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the People Cabinet Member approves the revised Fostering Service Statement of Purpose.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Date: August 2014

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

The North Lincolnshire Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2013



North Lincolnshire Council
Children's Services

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2014 – 2015

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This information can be made available in other languages, in large print, Braille or on audiotape. Please phone 01724 297024 if you need any of these or any other help to access North Lincolnshire's service

1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 This document is produced in compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (NMS) 2011 and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
- 1.2 All information is correct as at 1st July 2014.
- 1.3 This document will be revised annually. Significant in year changes will be put in writing to the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).
- 1.4 The Fostering Services Team delivers a fostering service on behalf of North Lincolnshire Council. All involved in the planning and delivering of care, work together as a team around the child (TAC) where all views, wishes and feelings are taken into account including those of the child or young person and their parent(s) and carer(s). The Fostering Service is registered with;
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Store Street,
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Telephone 0300 123 1231
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- 1.5 North Lincolnshire Council believes that family care is the best provision of alternative care for most children or young people who become looked after by the Local Authority. It has therefore recently invested heavily in the development and expansion of its fostering provision.
- 1.6 Furthermore we are of the view that a high quality of care is best achieved by providing a foster care service that protects children, promotes their rights and maximizes their life chances. This is an exciting period of change for the fostering service and the plans for change are reflected both in our statement of purpose and development action plan.
- 1.7 North Lincolnshire Council has agreed with its partners a vision for all children and young people living in North Lincolnshire and this vision is expressed through the North Lincolnshire's Children' and Young People's Partnership, Children and Young People's Plan 2013-16 (CYPP)
- 1.8 **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN (CYPP)**
- 1.9 The North Lincolnshire Children and Young People Plan 2013 – 16 (CYPP) 2013-16 sets out the strategic direction for the transformation of services for children, young people and their families or carers in North Lincolnshire. It sets out the Children

and Young People's Partnership's vision for the future, the values and principles as well as key priorities. The vision, values and key priorities are a major component part of the golden thread running through our fostering service. The CYPP identified children in care and care leavers as priority groups for support.

1.10 North Lincolnshire Children and Young People's Partnership is a partnership of professionals from all agencies, who work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. The Children and Young People's Partnership is one of **“Safe Children, Supported Families, Transformed Lives”**

1.11 The Children and Young People's Plan identifies six priorities, and the actions, plans, priorities and progress for children in care reflects these priorities. The six priorities are:-

- **Raising Aspirations** – so that North Lincolnshire is a place where every child and young person wants to be the best they can be and they achieve their potential.
- **Children and Young People Feel Safe and are Safe** – so that North Lincolnshire is a place where every child and young person feels safe and is safe wherever they are and whatever they do.
- **Best Start** – so that North Lincolnshire is a place where every child has the best start in life and parents support themselves and their families.
- **Close the Gaps** –so that North Lincolnshire is a place where there is equality for all and no child, young person or family is disadvantaged.
- **Celebrating and Engage Children and Young People** – so that North Lincolnshire is a place where children and young people's achievements are recognized and celebrated and they are valued as part of communities.
- **One Vision One Workforce** – so that North Lincolnshire is a place where services are child centred and where they are acceptable, accessible and available in the right place at the right time.

1.12 In line with the strategic priorities, a number of improvements have been achieved and includes:-

- Children who have been in care for more than 1 year and are aged 10 years plus subject to final warnings and convictions has reduced significantly over the last 4 years. The March 2010 figure was 13%, it had reduced to 6.5% at the end of 2013 and reduced further to 1.4% at the end of March 2014.

This has been achieved through partnership working between Youth Offending Services (YOS), Children's Social Work Services, The Fostering Services Team, Kingfisher Lodge, The Family Initiative (TFI) and the Children and Family Support Service (CFSS) where a focus on preventative work has been in place. Positive identification of those at risk of offending is in place and early action to divert children and young people into positive activities has had a positive outcome. This initiative has been supported by all agencies and the corporate parenting group demonstrating the positive impact of multi agency working on an individual level and a community level.

- The number of Initial Personal Education Plan's (PEP's) completed within timescales has improved to 100% as a result of improved systems.
- Early years PEP's are now embedded and an Early Years representative attends the Better Education of Children in Care group.
- 75% (3/4) of Children in care at Key Stage 2 have made 2 levels of progress in both reading and writing.
- 100% (4/4) of children in care at Key Stage 2 achieved 2 levels of progress in mathematics.
- An increase of 15.3% for pupils in care achieving 5 or more A*-C at GCSE in 2013
- The number of care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) at 19 years of age has fallen from 42.9% to 14.3% by the end of March 2014.
- At the end of March 2014, 98.2% of all children in care had received an annual health assessment and teeth check which reflects a year on year improvement. 2/112 children declined to attend their health assessment.
- At the end of March 2014, 100% of children under the age of 5 years had received a health assessment and teeth check.
- There is now a single Access Point (SAP) in place for professionals and the public to access locality preventative/targeted services to children and families to

prevent family breakdown and entry to care and safeguarding services.

- There is a safer recruitment strategy in place which ensures that all employees are DBS checked and these are renewed every 2 years and all staff are required to undertake child protection training.
- Every child who has been missing from care is offered an interview with the Independent Advocate upon their return.
- Every child in care has access to an independent advocate and know the name of the advocate.
- Every child placed out of North Lincolnshire is visited by the Independent Advocate on a regular basis.
- Any child that has experienced a placement move is seen by the Independent Advocate and any comments made are fed back to the Child's Social Worker and Fostering Social Worker with actions required.

1.13 The key priorities set out in The Children's Services Plan and Young People's Plan are:-

- Increase Placement Choice
- Secure Improved permanence through adoption and guardianship
- Embed the early help offer
- Development of Integrated working (including The Families Initiative)
- Celebrate and Engage Young People
- Manage change and develop staff to respond to the changing needs of the care population
- Meet the new requirement to manage remands and custody
- Continuous service evaluation and inspection readiness
- Ensure Children are safe
- Improve the education and employment of children in care

The Aspirations and Actions for 2013 – 15 as detailed in the Children in Care and Care Leavers Partnership Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan are as follows and are embedded in our aims and objectives:-

Children's Services Partnership Priority	Priority Actions of Children in Care and Care Leavers Partnership Strategy	
Raise Aspirations	1	<p><i>Build on existing models to set ambitious targets for children's educational progress, ensuring all children are able to undertake recognised qualifications to the best of their ability with further opportunities to be in training and/or employment</i></p> <p>Raise standards in attainment at primary phase (KS2) and secondary phase (KS4)</p> <p>Support schools in the use of Pupil Premium money to ensure it focuses and evidences improved outcomes for individual children through discussions at the Better Education Children in Care meetings and in partnership with the school and Looked After Children's Education Service.</p> <p>Support children through life transitions, in partnerships with key professionals in the Team around the Child.</p> <p>Encourage all children in care in partnership with their carers to have high aspirations for themselves and support the carer and child to achieve those aspirations.</p>
Ensuring Children and young people feel safe and are safe	2	<p><i>There is an increasing need to focus on ensuring stability for those in the older age ranges and increase placement choice and stability over a prolonged period. This will require robust support and specialist intervention with some children to maintain them in their current placement.</i></p> <p><i>The ongoing investment in and development of accommodation options and placement choice for all children remains a priority with a focus on those children who are harder to place and the development of local placements. This includes the recruitment, training and support of Foster Carers for harder to place children, supported accommodation providers for young people and adoptive carers within the regional business model.</i></p> <p>Recruit staff and foster carers who are safe and equipped to work with children in care. Achieve legal permanency in a timely manner. Ensure children in care have stable placements and have a choice of placements available.</p> <p>Ensure children and young people are supported to remain with their former foster carers beyond the age of 18 years.</p> <p>Prioritise recruitment campaigns on children who are harder to place and Butterfly short break placements for children with a disability.</p>
Giving Children the Best Start	3	<p><i>Further develop health services to children in care ensuring there is a robust quality assurance framework to ensure health assessments meet the highest standards and ensure there is sufficient capacity of dedicated health services to meet the needs of the care population and complete the required medical assessments.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure specifications and service agreements are in place with the GP Commissioning Group as they become</i></p>

Children's Services Partnership Priority	Priority Actions of Children in Care and Care Leavers Partnership Strategy	
		<p><i>stakeholders to ensure children in care and care leavers are prioritised.</i></p> <p><i>Contribute to implementing and developing partnership assessment protocols to ensure that partners contribute to holistic, child centred assessment of children's needs.</i></p> <p><i>Work within the principles of the Early Help Safeguarding Strategy.</i></p> <p>Undertake effective early identification and robust prevention services to maintain children at home with their families, utilising foster carers as an additional resource to offer support and guidance to families where it is felt outcomes could be improved through a less formal approach.</p> <p>Where it is not possible to maintain a child within their family permanent alternative care will be secured in a timely manner.</p>
Close the gaps	4	<p><i>Ensure that educational progress is effectively monitored and actions taken to enable children to attend their provision, achieve their potential and undertake recognised qualifications for all children including those placed out of area. Ensuring all provisions and support is used consistently including Pupil Premium.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure all plans are outcome focussed.</i></p> <p><i>To provide an ongoing robust training and support programme for designated teachers, carers, social work and educational support staff.</i></p> <p><i>Recognise and celebrate the success of our children.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure young people have the training and support they need as they make the transition to adulthood.</i></p> <p>Improve the education progress/attainments of children in care through use of the pupil premium money to provide additional assistance in school to help them achieve.</p> <p>Provide early information and advice to young people to assist them in realising their aspirations.</p> <p>Encourage every child in care to participate in activities to increase their self esteem, recognise their skills and reduce the negative consequences of risky or anti-social behaviour</p>
Celebrate and engage children and young people	5	<p><i>Revise and re-launch the Corporate Parenting Pledge and ensure all partners deliver their own pledge with measurable outcomes that are monitored and reviewed.</i></p> <p><i>Develop new models of user feedback that are consistent,</i></p>

Children's Services Partnership Priority	Priority Actions of Children in Care and Care Leavers Partnership Strategy	
		<p><i>service wide and embedded in practice.</i></p> <p><i>Provide further opportunities to celebrate the successes of children in care through events, information and engagement activities.</i></p> <p>To provide children with opportunities to have their say and influence the plans that affects them.</p> <p>Support the Children in care Council to improve services for children in care.</p> <p>Celebrate achievements and success</p>
One Vision One Workforce	6	<p><i>Deliver a Social enterprise model of provision for young people who leave care and present as homeless.</i></p> <p><i>Hold the Adoption Round Table as an annual event.</i></p> <p>Continue to use safer recruitment processes, whistle blowing, codes of conduct and LADO to ensure adults are safe to work with children in care</p>

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

2.1 The services aims and objectives are underpinned by the CYPP 6 key priorities as outlined in Section 2, and the National Minimum Standards(NMS) 2011 core values as follows:-

The Values which underpin the Fostering Service are as follows:

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account.

- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self confidence and self-worth.
 - The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account
 - The significance of contact for looked after children, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised, as is the foster carer's role in this.
 - Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions.
 - The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
 - Foster carers have a right to full information about the child.
 - It is essential that foster carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.
 - Genuine partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, fostering service providers and foster carers.
- 2.2 North Lincolnshire Council is committed to providing foster care as one of a full range of accommodation options for children who need to be cared for away from home. Recruitment of foster carers will be in line with the Council's strategy to meet the sufficiency duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Sufficiency Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010.
- 2.3 The overall intention of foster care is to provide a family based alternative home to care for children and young people who:

- Are not able to live at home with their parents.
- Are not able to live with their relatives or friends (who are not approved as foster carers).
- Are not able to live independently in their own accommodation.
- Cannot be secured permanence through adoption, Special Guardianship or a Child Arrangements Order.

2.4 In general foster care should provide care, which meets the needs of children in care, for planned periods of time. In some cases, young people may stay in foster care until they move into independent accommodation.

We aim to:-

- 2.4.1 provide a safe, secure and enabling environment for children in care for varying lengths of time, including short breaks, dependent upon their assessed needs. To this end foster carers will be appropriately assessed, trained and supervised in order to provide high quality care that values diversity and individual identity as well as promoting healthy development and emotional security.
- 2.4.2 promote and safeguard the child or young person's physical and emotional welfare and therefore all applicant foster carers will be required to provide satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS's). Applications will not be considered from anyone or their household members who have committed offences specified under regulation 26(7)(b) of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011. All applicants must also have satisfactory medical reports and will not be considered to foster children less than five years of age if they smoke. Furthermore allegations of abuse or neglect against a foster carer will be investigated according to the procedures developed with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and in consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- 2.4.3 promote contact between the looked after child or young person and their birth family and friends, in line with the child's care plan. The fostering service acknowledges the importance of family and friends of a looked after child or young person and foster carers are expected to encourage and facilitate contact.
- 2.4.4 ensure that children who are admitted to our care are returned to their own family and community networks at the earliest opportunity, whenever it is safe to do so. Where reunification to the child or young person's family is not in the child's best interests, we will endeavour to work with everyone concerned to help the child or young

person move on to become part of a stable and permanent, alternative family which is maintained into adulthood.

- 2.4.5 provide each child in foster care with the opportunity, through health care, education and social and leisure activities, to have high aspirations for themselves, to develop to their full potential and achieve the five outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying life and achieving their aspirations, enjoying economic wellbeing and making a positive contribution to society.
- 2.4.6 encourage children and young people in foster care to access community resources and facilities. Foster carers will be financially supported to encourage looked after children to partake in community and out of school hours leisure activities.
- 2.4.7 ensure that all children & young people in foster care have written combined care plans which detail how the child or young person's needs are to be met. These plans are reviewed on a regular basis.
- 2.4.8 Ensure that all children who wish to remain with their former foster carers upon reaching 18 years of age are supported to do so, in a "Staying Put" arrangement, if this is agreed by both the young person and the foster carer.
- 2.5 North Lincolnshire Council believes that children are best placed within their own family and community networks whenever it is safe and possible to do so. Friends, relatives or significant people that have been approved as specific carers for children and young people will have access to the same support systems as non-relative foster carers.
- 2.6 North Lincolnshire Council celebrates diversity and will not act in a discriminatory manner in relation to issues of age, gender, sexuality, disability, race or religion. The needs of individual children are considered as paramount and each case will be considered on the basis of how individual children's needs can be most appropriately met.
- 2.7 **The Foster Carers' Charter:**
North Lincolnshire Council acknowledges the excellent care, support and commitment shown by North Lincolnshire Foster Carers. The Foster Carer's charter demonstrates and recognises the joint responsibilities to the children and young people in care, and builds on the success and achievements of fostering in North Lincolnshire.

The Government launched the Foster Carers' Charter in March 2011. It was jointly produced with fostering organisations, charities and children in care. Recognising the invaluable work of foster carers, it sets out clear principles. These are based on

the core belief that children come first, how foster carers should be treated, and the pivotal role played by carers in helping children achieve to their full potential.

North Lincolnshire has embraced the principles of the Charter and through consultation and involvement of children, young people and foster carers, developed the '**North Lincolnshire Foster Carers' Charter**' which is regularly reviewed .

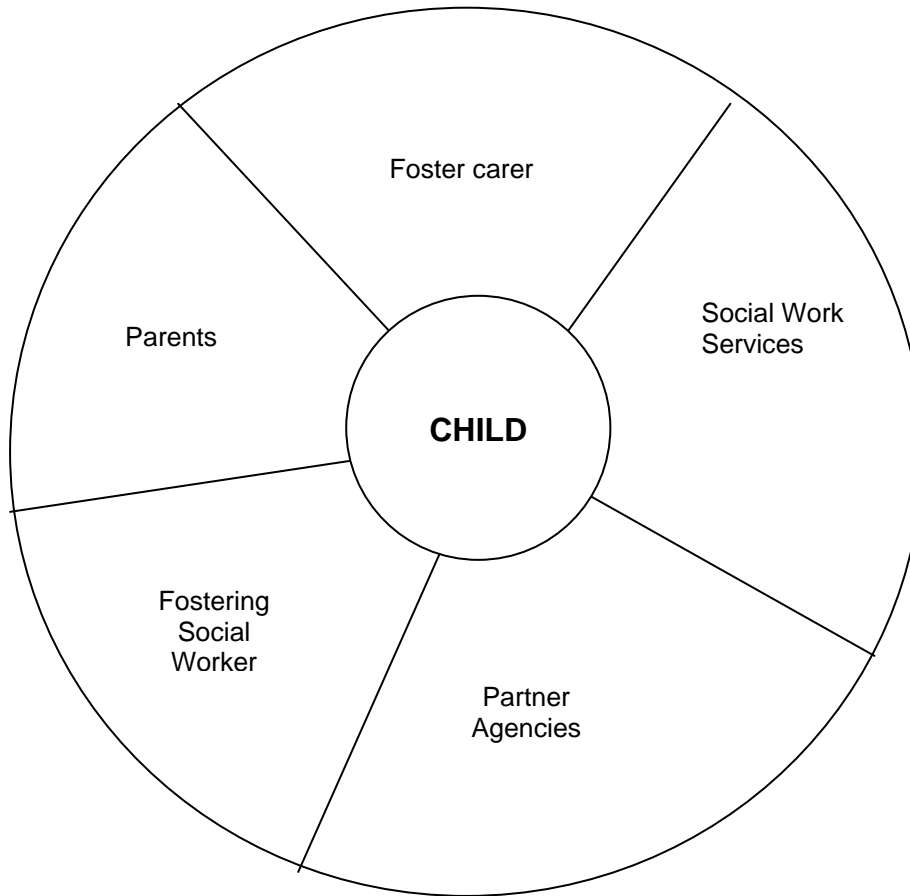
This Charter builds on the existing solid foundations and ongoing commitment by North Lincolnshire Council to its Foster Carers. This is through:

- Ensuring foster carers have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care.
- Ensuring foster carers receive day-to-day support, events and activities for foster families.
- Listening to both carers and children. Children's and young people's views will be sought on all decisions concerning their daily lives and the future. Children and young people are actively encouraged to attend planning meetings and reviews. Where decisions are made which are not taken in line with the child's or young person's wishes a clear explanation will be given.
- Treating foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child and support them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of the foster child.
- Supporting children to develop their own identities and aspirations.
- Further development and expansion of foster care in North Lincolnshire.

3 FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- 3.1 Foster carers are recognised as core members of the team around the child (TAC) with an important contribution to make in the planning and decision making about the child or young person in their care. The TAC will also include the child's parents, child care social workers and Fostering Social Workers alongside all other relevant partnership agencies, for example colleagues who work within education, health or other specialist services, as shown in the diagram below.

3.2 Team Around The Child:



3.3 To enable Foster Carers to work as equal partners as described in the diagram above, the Fostering Service aims to provide a high quality responsive child centred service in relation to its 4 core functions.

These are

3.3.1 To recruit new Foster Carer applicants from within the local community. The aims are to increase the number of foster carers in our locality to ensure that children and young people requiring foster care remain as near to their families as possible and to offer a wider foster placement choice for all children requiring alternative care provision including teenagers and children with complex care needs.

3.3.2 To prepare applicants, through training, discussion, meeting existing foster carers and children in care to be able to effectively understand and manage the fostering task in a manner that is strengths based.

- 3.3.3 To assess each applicant comprehensively, in line with the competency framework, to ensure that they are suitable and able to carry out the role.
- 3.3.4 To supervise Foster Carers on a regular basis through a minimum of monthly visits and regular telephone calls to ensure that they are supported and fully informed. To support every foster carer to be trained to the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD's), to enable them to competently, confidently and safely fulfil their role.

5. TYPES OF FOSTERING PROVISION OFFERED BY NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL:

In order to maximise the fostering services flexibility in responding to the individual needs of children requiring alternative care, there are a number of different types of foster placement available in North Lincolnshire. Foster carers can be approved for one or more of the following types of foster care placements:-

Mainstream Short Term Fostering

Provides care for children and young people - from one overnight stay up to 2 years, depending upon a child's individual circumstances and the legal situation. Short-term fostering involves working closely with social workers, other professionals, parents and extended family members. Applicants wanting to consider short-term fostering need to be able to move children on: either back to their birth families, or on to other forms of permanency such as adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangements Order or long-term fostering.

Mainstream Long Term Fostering

For children and young people who cannot return home or to birth family members but for who adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order is not appropriate. This type of fostering involves a careful matching process where the assessed needs of the child or young person are matched to an identified carer who has the abilities to meet those needs long and to prepare them for independence.

Mainstream Short Breaks Fostering

A short break for mainstream children involves caring for a child for a weekend on a regular or impromptu basis in order to offer children the opportunity to enhance their life experiences and support parents or carers to care for the child or young person on a permanent basis. Short breaks can also involve caring for a child whilst other foster carers are away on holiday.

Butterflies Short Break Scheme

This scheme provides care and support for children and young people with disabilities. This can include day-care or a limited number of overnight stays per month, consistently caring for the same child. Children are specifically matched to carers based upon the child's individual needs. This scheme has been developed through recent investment by the council to provide for children with disabilities and their families requiring additional support.

Connected Person Foster Care

Increasingly, and whenever possible, children who require alternative care are placed with friends or extended family members, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, close neighbours and so on. These placements often work well for children, as they go to live with people they already know. Friends and family foster carers are only assessed and approved when children are subject to interim or full care orders.

Specialist Foster Carers

Some of our children require more specialist care because of their more complex needs. Specialist foster carers, are foster carers who receive a fee in addition to the fostering allowance. Specialist Foster carers have previous experience of caring for complex children or adults and have the skills to meet their needs. One of the carers must be home based and there are no other vulnerable children in the home. Specialist carers are self employed.

Parent and Child Placements

Parent and Child placements are provided under the specialist foster carer scheme and receive an allowance for the child, a fee in recognition of the specialist nature of this arrangement. A fostering allowance is also received in respect of caring for a young parent under the age of 18 and an additional allowance if supporting a young parent over the age of 18. There are no other children in placement for the duration of a parent and child arrangement

Emergency/Alternative to Remand Carers

Some children need a placement in an emergency for a variety of reasons, including conflict within the family home, homelessness, missing from home or as a result of alleged criminal activity. Specialist foster carers are approved specifically to fulfill this role and have the skills and resilience to meet the needs of children in an emergency situation.

5.1 Admission Criteria and process

Children & young people will be admitted into Foster Care following an assessment that has deemed that they are:

- Unable to live with their own family.
- Unable to live with family or friends who are not Foster Carers.

Except in emergency or urgent situations, referrals for Fostering services will be made by the Child's Social Worker via the Children's Social Work Service Manager, for consideration at the weekly Placement Panel.

Following the recommendations of that meeting the Fostering Service will carry out a matching process to match the child's needs with the most appropriate Foster Carer taking into account the child's previous experiences and any risks posed identified in the Risk Analysis Form. This will be recorded on an Initial Placement Matching and Risk Assessment form. The Foster Carer will be contacted and given full information to allow them to make a decision about whether to accept the placement.

Emergency admissions are accepted, following the agreement of three Service Managers, they must agree that admission to accommodation is in the best interests of the child. Procedures require the gathering of a basic minimum of information before settling the child into the home. An emergency-planning meeting is held the next day in order to complete the normal CiC care planning process. All emergency admissions to foster care are considered at the next Placement Panel for ratification.

5.2 Post admission

Through careful planning and consultation with child's social worker, parents, foster carers and other agencies we aim to provide each child with the opportunity, through health care, education and social and leisure activities, to develop to their full potential and achieve the five outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying life and achieving their aspirations, enjoying economic wellbeing and making a positive contribution to society as follows:-

Be Healthy

5.2.1 We aim to ensure all young people receive good quality health assessment, advice and care and that they have the information they need to make informed choices regarding their health, understand positive health strategies and are able to take control of their own health needs. A joint protocol has been established between Children's Services and the Health Service outlining everyone's roles and responsibilities in ensuring that the health needs of children in care are a priority.

- 5.2.2 We ensure all young people have an identified doctor, have regular dental checks, regular optical checks and health treatment when needed. We aim to ensure that health strategies do not just concentrate on treatment, but include preventive measures and young people are empowered to take on positive attitudes to health.
- 5.2.3 All young people have an individual health assessment, carried out by the Doctor or designated nurse, and an individual health care plan is put in place with agreed strategies to meet any health care needs.
- 5.2.4 Foster Carers have direct access to the Children in Care Nurse who is available to assist with any health care or support issues.
- 5.2.5 Health Information Events are held at a local sports hall and are available to all children in care. A variety of health promotion and health information is available to young people and their carers and the Children in Care Nurse is available to offer general advice or arrange any further appointments as necessary. A sex and relationships counsellor, as well as a drugs advisor attends the event to talk to the children and young people to give advice and guidance. Young people are able to take part in sports taster sessions and have the opportunity to use the climbing wall. General 'fitness' tests are also available in a fun and relaxed manner, e.g. blood pressure tests and lung capacity tests. These events are both fun and informative.
- 5.2.6 A multi agency CAMHS action plan has been agreed to ensure that comprehensive, dedicated, integrated psychological provision is accessible for Children in Care. This includes CAMHS screening for all Children in Care, 6 years and above for any mental health issues to be highlighted (early identification). Referrals are also made in a timely manner through a structured referral process to ensure that any mental health issues identified are addressed. These referrals are monitored on a monthly basis by staff in the Fostering Service, Social Work Services Team and CAMHS. CAMHS and the Social Work Services Team have also developed psychological well-being groups for Children in Care. These groups are facilitated by staff from the Social Work Services Team alongside 2 assistant psychologists from CAMHS under the supervision of a Clinical Psychologist.
- 5.2.7 We have continued to develop with CAMHS the Tiered Fostering (TFC) model. This establishes a support network around the placement utilising the Foster Carer, the Social Worker, Fostering Social Worker, Clinical Psychologist and other relevant people (i.e. education) based on the individual needs of the child. With this approach regular meetings are held in the Foster Carer's home.

5.2.8 A monthly multi agency sub group of the Children in Care and Care Leavers partnership, the Better Health for Children in Care, works effectively to monitor the health needs individual children and ensure children in care receive the health care they require. This meeting is chaired by the Nurse for Children in Care.

Stay Safe

5.2.9 We ensure that children in foster care are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Safe Care Policies are completed for each fostering household, along with individual Safe Care Plans for each child in placement.

5.2.10 All foster carers receive a supervisory visit on a monthly basis and an unannounced visit on a quarterly basis.

5.2.11 All foster carers have nominated support persons who have been interviewed by fostering staff to ensure they understand safer caring and are suitable to care for our looked after children.

5.2.12 A Home Safety Checklist is completed with the Foster Carers annually. This includes health and safety within the home, e-safety and transport checks such as driving licences, MOT certificates and car insurance. A pet assessment is included within the home safety assessment for those carers that have pets.

5.2.13 Appropriate equipment is provided to Foster Carers to ensure children and young people are transported safely, i.e. car seats. Additional equipment is provided according to the needs of the child, i.e. stair gates, high chairs and specialist equipment for children with disabilities.

5.2.14 Information within the Foster Carer Handbook sets out policy and procedures around health and safety. We ensure that children and young people and Foster Carers are supported with advice and guidance to help them develop skills to stay safe.

5.2.15 We have in place a framework for dealing with and reducing incidents of bullying and aim to ensure children develop self-esteem to have the internal resources to avoid being bullied and can access external support.

5.2.16 Attachment and Development, Diversity, Child Protection, E-Safety, Education – a foster carer's role and First Aid training is mandatory and is offered to all foster carers as part of the annual training programme. All new carers complete the Training, Support and Development Standards within their first year and are supported in achieving this through 1:1 sessions and workshops.

Enjoy and Achieve

- 5.2.16 We aim to ensure that all young people receive good quality education, which is tailored to their individual needs. To ensure this happens we have developed joint protocols between Children's Services and Education Services to ensure that the educational needs of children in care are a priority.
- 5.2.17 We make contact with individual teachers and ensure that all young people have a Personal Education Plan which includes their educational attainment and projected attainment plus any further assessments that may be needed. Based on this, we ensure each young person can achieve his or her best-projected educational attainment. Where necessary and appropriate we will work with colleagues, with educational responsibilities, to obtain additional help and support for fostered children to help them to achieve in school. Following the publication of 'Creating Success for Children in Care' we are using the North Lincolnshire protocols, procedures and guidelines for improving the education and health of children in care
- 5.2.18 We support young people's education by attending meetings with schools, parents' evenings and events. We also promote attendance out of school activities. Foster Carers are invited to the child's Personal Education Plan meeting which takes place in line with statutory reviews within North Lincolnshire.
- 5.2.19 We ensure that there is space within the foster placement for young people to complete their homework, encourage education as a positive process and provide incentives for young people to achieve educationally. Foster carers support the children with their education and attend specific training with this in mind.
- 5.2.20 To help children achieve educationally an Education Manager for Children in Care is employed to work with all schools and agencies to ensure that the education for Children in Care is the most appropriate and the highest possible standard.
- 5.2.21 All Pre School children in care are registered with the Imagination Library and receive free books to support their early learning and children in care in years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are enrolled with the Letterbox scheme which supports their literacy and numeracy development through books and games delivered to their foster home.
- 5.2.22 Young people are encouraged to participate in sporting and recreational activities that they are interested in. In addition extra allowances are available to Foster Carers to enable young people to take part in a wide variety of hobbies and activities that meet their needs and interest.
- 5.2.23 A monthly multi agency sub group of the Children in Care and Care Leavers partnership, the Better Education for Children in

Care, works effectively to monitor progress of individual children, and to support schools in their duties to children in care including the use of Pupil Premium. This meeting is chaired by the Virtual Head.

Make a positive contribution

- 5.2.24 We ensure that children and young people in foster care have active involvement in formulating their plans, in reviewing and planning the service they receive and in commissioning new services.
- 5.2.25 We use restorative approaches in dealing with challenging behaviour and potential offending.
- 5.2.26 We consult with children and young people in foster care on issues in relation to being in care.
- 5.2.27 Foster carers promote personal, social and independence skills with the young people in their care.
- 5.2.28 Young people in care are encouraged to take an active role in delivering training to foster carers, delivering training to social work staff and to develop services for children in care.

Achieve economic well-being

- 5.2.25 We ensure plans and supports are in place to enable children and young people in foster care to continue in education, attend college, University or gain employment. We employ care leavers as apprentices within the council.
- 5.2.26 We promote independence skills with children and young people in foster care.

6. CAPACITY

6.1 Number of foster carers

As of the 1st June 2014 North Lincolnshire Council had 96 approved foster families. Of these 86 are mainstream foster carers, 4 are connected persons carers, 6 are carers offering short breaks under the Butterflies scheme. The fostering Service is also offering support to 63 carers with a Special Guardianship Order (S.G.O) and 32 carers with a Child Arrangements Order (formerly Residence Order)

6.2 Number of children looked after in foster placements

As of 1st June 2014 North Lincolnshire Council cares for 117 children in foster care placements.

It is anticipated that on average a full time Fostering Social Worker will support up to 20 foster carers or undertake approximately 3 assessments at any one time. They will also have input into the recruitment, selection and training of foster carers.

7. RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

Recent investment in the fostering service has offered increased capacity for recruitment and timely assessments. This has enabled the successful recruitment of skilled carers which in turn has prevented any new external placements in the last 12 months and a drop in agency placements by 6 children since March 2012.

An ongoing recruitment strategy and programme of events is in place to work with our partners in the community to raise the profile of the Fostering Service and to encourage members of the North Lincolnshire community to apply to become Foster Carers.

Activities that are identified within the strategy include:

- Planned recruitment drives within the local community over the year.
- Articles in the local 'Direct News'..
- A Drop In venue for the duration of Fostering Fortnight in May 2014
- Good news stories from existing Foster Carers published in the local press, to inform the public on the role of a foster carer and the rewards that it can offer.
- Attendance at community events.
- A sponsored roundabout in central Scunthorpe
- Publicised road show events at venues within the local authority.
- Stalls at Lincolnshire Show and other local agricultural shows.
- Posters in the local community, e.g. doctor's surgeries, community centres, libraries, supermarkets and other strategic points within the community etc.
- Permanent advertising displays at Scunthorpe, Crowle and Brigg libraries.
- Representatives from the team and North Lincolnshire's cohort of foster carers have appeared on local TV and local radio stations.
- The deployment of banners at key points across North Lincolnshire.
- Revamped fostering specific pages on North Lincolnshire Council's website
- Awareness raising on all North Lincolnshire Council's employee's computer desktops

Through effective management and analysis of data and performance; the Fostering Service is able to identify any shortfalls in the types of Foster Care required in order to meet the needs of the children that are assessed as needing Foster Care. The recruitment strategy is adjusted to take this into account. During this year recruitment activity will concentrate on recruiting Foster Carers who are able to provide mainstream foster care for teenagers, short breaks foster care for children with disabilities and foster care for children and young people with complex care needs as well as carers motivated to provide short term care for babies and children with alternative permanency plans including adoption or long- term care for older children.

The Fostering Service has developed timescales for responding to enquires about the service, these are displayed below

- **Telephone Enquiries**

A Duty Officer is available during normal office hours, Monday to Friday, to answer any enquiries. Enquiries will be answered during office hours on the day the enquiry is made and an electronic brochure is sent by return email or a hard copy will be dispatched by post on the same day.

- **Web Based Enquiries**

Web based enquirers can read the information about fostering online and complete an expression of interest form if they wish to have further information. There is a short film accessible on line for prospective Foster Carers to watch providing them with information from current North Lincolnshire Foster Carers.

- Follow up contact will be made within 5 working days to arrange for an initial visit at a mutually convenient time. During this visit detailed discussions take place about the benefits and implications that being a Foster Carer can have.
- If the enquirer continues to be interested, they are asked to complete consent forms to enable checks to be undertaken and are invited to attend the next Skills to Foster course.
- All fostering assessments are completed within 6 months of application and follow the two stage assessment process set out in the Assessment and Approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, July 2013.

7.1 Preparation of New Foster Carers

After an initial visit, if applicants wish to proceed, they are allocated a place on a 'Skills to Foster Course'. This course helps to prepare and equip applicants to undertake the role of a foster carer. During this

training course applicants have the opportunity to meet current Foster Carers and children in foster care, to discuss any issues with them.

A session of the course is also delivered to children of prospective carers to ensure they have as full an understanding of the role as possible and is included in all aspects of the preparation process.

North Lincolnshire Council currently facilitates monthly Skills to Foster training courses, to ensure the initial assessment stage (stage one) is completed within an 8 week period.

7.2 Assessment of Foster Carers

The initial assessment stage (stage one) ensures that all statutory checks are undertaken and if no issues arise, enquirers are invited to complete an application form for a formal assessment called the Form F assessment. North Lincolnshire Council has adopted the BAAF competency based assessment process. The assessment focuses on safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, explores different aspects of the applicants' life and asks them to explain and evidence the parenting skills that they have. The completed report is shared with the applicants and they are invited to make comments. The assessment process is thorough and detailed; regulatory timescales allows 8 months from initial enquiry to approval as foster carers.

Once the assessment has been completed the report is submitted to the Foster Panel. This independent panel comprises of people from a variety of backgrounds with various experiences of the fostering process, and is chaired by a social work consultant who is independent of North Lincolnshire Council. The Foster Panel considers and recommends the approval, or not, of all Foster Carers. Their recommendations and reasons are passed to the Principal Social Worker for Safeguarding Practice who is the Senior Officer designated as the Agency Decision-Maker and with whom the decision-making responsibility rests.

North Lincolnshire Fostering Service aims to complete stage two of the process within 16 weeks, ensuring that the full assessment is completed within 6 months.

All foster carers will receive information about expectations of them and the fostering service, remunerations and council policies and procedures and they will be expected to comply with these.

All Foster Carers are subject to an annual review of their status as Foster Carers. This is a formal review of the work that they have undertaken during the year and is an opportunity to reflect on achievements and learning. Again a report is produced that is presented to the Foster Panel and Agency Decision-Maker as above.

Feedback is gathered from a range of professionals involved in the child's care, children who have been in placement over the previous year and their parents, if appropriate. The carers children are also

asked for feedback in relation to their experience of being a family who foster.

Children who have moved placement are seen by an independent advocate, information from those meetings are fed into the foster carer review and any areas of concern are followed up immediately.

North Lincolnshire Council have recruited an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to chair Foster Carer reviews, the position is based at the Independent Review Team. The IRO will see children and young people independently as part of the Foster Carer Review.

7.1 Foster Panel

North Lincolnshire Foster Panel takes place on the third and fourth Monday of each month. It consists of an independent chairperson, local authority elected members, a social worker with fostering experience, medical advisor, former looked after child, foster carer from a neighbouring local authority, CAMHS representative, Education representative. Panel will be made up of any number of panel members, ensuring quoracy is achieved. A central list of panel members is also maintained to ensure that additional expertise can be called upon when required and that panel is always quorate by calling on additional members when required. All panel members are recruited using safer recruitment policies.

All new assessments are presented to North Lincolnshire Foster Panel for consideration. The panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). The ADM is a senior manager with no line management responsibility for the fostering service, ensuring independence is maintained. The ADM reads all of the paperwork presented to panel, minutes of the meeting and reaches a decision.

Foster panel hears all new applications, connected persons applications, long term matches, first review of foster carers, requests to change the terms of approval of a foster carer, reviews following allegations or misconduct by foster carers. Panel also has a role in monitoring the quality of the service and receives updates on management information regarding placements, stability and sufficiency. Panel members monitor the quality of paperwork presented to panel and this is fed back to the fostering service.

An additional review panel is held on a monthly basis, which hears the annual reviews of foster carers. This panel is also chaired by an independent chair, and is attended by the Fostering Team Manager and the IRO Team manager.

8. SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION OF FOSTER CARERS

8.1 Access to support and Supervision

All foster carers will receive regular supervision and support as well as access to training to enhance the quality of care given. All foster

carers will have access to a rolling programme of bespoke training as identified during supervision. North Lincolnshire Council believes that it is important that Foster Carers are able to access support, at the time when they need it. Systems have been developed to ensure that support is available 24 hours a day 365 days of the year.

- **Fostering Social Worker** – After approval each Foster Carer is allocated a Fostering Social Worker. This worker will usually be the first point of contact for the Foster Carer during working hours and will offer support, advice, guidance and supervision regarding most matters to do with fostering and the care they give to the child. The Fostering Social worker will be responsible for the foster carer's supervision, support and development. Contact is maintained through home visits and regular telephone calls, texts and emails. The Fostering social worker is required to undertake a supervisory home visit on a monthly basis minimum. Support is also offered to the children of foster carers.
- **Duty Fostering Social Worker** - If their Fostering Social Worker is not available during office hours, a Duty Officer is always available at the Fostering Services Team office to deal with any urgent problems or issues.
- **Child's Social Worker** - Every child in care has an allocated Social Worker. This person will usually be the first point of contact for the Foster Carer for any information and advice on issues that relate to the child.
- **Child's Duty Social Worker** - If the child's social worker is not available during office hours, a duty worker is always available at the Children in Care Team office to deal with any urgent problems or issues.
- **Outside Office Hours** - If additional support is required outside of these times, it can be accessed by contacting Kingfisher Lodge for general advice or the Extended Hours Team for urgent or serious matters.
- **Newsletter** - a newsletter for children in care is produced quarterly by the Participation Team and a quarterly newsletter is produced for foster carers. Both publications offer news, views, developments and celebrations.
- **Health and Specialist Clinical Psychology Advice** - Support will be offered to foster carers to ensure that they meet the health needs of the child or young person in their care. This will be through guidance and training from the fostering team and by the specialist services of the nurse for looked after Children, including the TFC service offered by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (C.A.M.H.S).
- **Looked After Children in Education Service (LACES)**- Foster carers will be supported to meet the educational

needs of children and young people in their care, by all partners including the Looked after Children in Education team, led by a virtual head teacher for looked after children.

- **Foster Carer's Association Group** - support can be accessed by attending the Foster Carer's Association group or contacting a group member.
- **Fostering Service Bi-monthly Information meetings** – all foster carers are invited to attend these meetings or have their views represented by members of the Foster Carer's Association.
- **Fostering Network membership** - All Foster Carers are given annual membership of the Fostering Network. This is an independent organisation that offers carers support advice and guidance on fostering issues including when allegations or complaints are made about a foster carer.
- **Foster Helpline** – This is provided by Fostering Network for all approved foster families to access telephone advice and support when required.
- **Children and Young People's Guide** - North Lincolnshire Council believes that children have a right to information and support throughout the fostering process. All children, allowing for age and understanding, are provided with either a copy of a 'Children's Guide to Living in a Foster Home' or 'Living in a Foster Home, a Young People's Guide' depending on their age. These guides give simple but clear information around what it is like to live in foster home.
- **Support Group for Children of Foster Carers**
- The Unit has been set up to enable children of foster carers to meet 6 times a year on a social basis. This is facilitated by a member of the Fostering Services Team.
- **Foster Carer Friendly Employers**
- North Lincolnshire Council are Foster Carer Friendly employers, we will offer additional leave and flexible working arrangements to those staff who work for the council and are also foster carers.

8.2 Allowances

North Lincolnshire Council believes that Foster Carers should be reimbursed for the costs of looking after a child and provides a range of allowances and financial incentives to enable them to do this. Payments will be made to foster carers in a timely fashion and in accordance with government guidance.

Foster Care Allowance - The Council has assessed what it believes to be the weekly cost of caring for a child and all

foster carers are paid the National Minimum Fostering Allowance to enable them to do this. The national minimum fostering allowance 2014-15 is

Babies:	£119
Pre-primary:	£122
Primary:	£134
Secondary (11 – 15):	£154
Secondary (16 – 17):	£179

Connected People receive the national minimum fostering allowance in recognition that they are caring for a child who is already known to them.

Mainstream Foster Carers receive a fee in addition to the national minimum fostering allowance which follows the recommended rates given by the Fostering Network. This additional payment is in recognition of the additional complexities of caring for a child who has not previously been known to the family and the mandatory training that is undertaken. Connected persons who have undertaken all mandatory training are also paid the recommended Fostering Network rates 2014 - 15.

The payment is as follows:

0-4:	£140.33
5-10:	£159.85
11-15:	£199.00
16+:	£242.08

Specialist Carers receive the National Minimum Fostering Allowance. They also receive an additional fee in recognition of the complexities of the child place and the additional expectations required of them. The payment is paid at two levels:-

Level 1	£200 per week
Level 2	£350 per week

The Specialist rates above are paid when a decision has been made by the Fostering Service Manager that a child meets the criteria for Specialist Care. Level 1 would usually be applied when a child has a level of complex needs that would previously have required an external placement. Level 2 would usually be applied when a child's needs would otherwise need to be met through specialist provision such

as residential care or children who are subject to Remand status.

The above payments are made to foster carers as they are required to carry out duties associated with looking after children for the Local Authority such as attending Looked After Children's (LAC) Reviews, LAC Medicals, Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, receiving statutory home visits and completing the Training, Support & Development Standards workbook.

Extra payments are made to all foster carers for special events such as holidays, birthdays and Christmas, or other religious festivals.

Foster Carers who become Special Guardians (SGO's) are paid the basic weekly allowance excluding additional task enhanced payments and child benefit.

- **Additional Allowances** - At times Foster Carers are asked to carry out tasks that are in addition to what are agreed as normal fostering tasks. When this occurs, additional fee can be paid. Foster Carers can receive up to 5 additional fees at a time. These are reviewed on a three monthly basis. This is not payable to specialist carers.
- **Interest Free Car Loans** - To enable Foster Carers to transport children safely, interest free care loans are available so that Foster Carers can purchase safe and appropriate vehicles. This does not include connected persons carers or SGO's.
- **Insurance Scheme** - At times all children can have accidents that cause damage. When such damage occurs carers are initially asked to claim on their own household insurance. Any excess payments or increase in premiums that results from this can be reclaimed through North Lincolnshire Council's scheme. In the event of the carers insurance not covering the loss or damage, a claim can be submitted for consideration by the Fostering Service insurance agents.
- In order to encourage young people to participate in sporting and recreational activities an additional payment may, in certain circumstances, be made to Foster Carers to enable the child or young person to participate in hobbies and activities such as horse riding, dancing or other sporting activities etc.

8.3 Support Events

The Fostering Service recognises the importance of facilitating support events to allow Foster Carers, children and young people to socialise and relax in an informal setting. Various events are held throughout the year, including:

- **Day out to a theme park** - This traditionally takes place in May or June and allows foster families the opportunity to meet together and experience a day out at a theme park. In recent years Flamingo Land has proved to be the favourite, as it caters for all age groups.
- **Foster Carers Achievement Event-** This is an event to recognise the hard work and commitment of our foster carers, celebrating their achievements including years of service and training. The children are entertained whilst members of the fostering services team serve the foster carers afternoon tea.
- **Funday** - This event takes place mid September and involves a wide range of activities and fun events. This may include a BBQ, disco/karaoke, various inflatables, magic show, clowns, circus skills and craft activities. Each year we have a theme and fancy dress is encouraged for all.
- **Children's Christmas Party** – This is held in December at a the school of the Virtual Head teacher. The children are entertained by very experienced high quality entertainers who engage children across the whole age range and also encourage foster carer participation. Father Christmas visits the party to deliver Christmas selection boxes to the children and young people.
- **Pantomime** - This annual event takes place at the local theatre on the morning of Christmas Eve and an additional date in the first week of January. This event is integral to our Christmas celebrations.
- **Annual Art and Literary Exhibition** – young people in care are invited to produce art using different medias to be exhibited at a local venue. This can include drama, poetry, dance and paintings. .
- **Art Workshops** – due to the success of the Art Exhibition, we now organise regular Art Workshops where the children produce works of art, cards, gifts, etc.
- **Children in Care Achievement Awards** –following the success of the Art show, an achievement award night is scheduled in October to recognise the achievement of our looked after children in the following categories; Inspiration, Learning, Sport, Contribution to Community and Creativity
- **Talent Show** – The Xmas factor is a highly popular event that and offers every child in care the opportunity to perform on stage on their own, within a group or with children from their foster carer family.
- Other workshops are run throughout the year in consultation with children and young people in care, for example recent workshops have included 'make a film in a week'.

8.4. Support Groups and Consultation activities for foster carers and looked after children

The Fostering Service recognises the importance of involving Foster Carers in the development of the service. A number of systems have been developed that enable carers to contribute to these developments, they also give and receive support from other foster carers.

- **A Foster Carer's Association** is well established in North Lincolnshire. The Association is a group of Foster Carers that elect their own Chair to represent North Lincolnshire Foster Carers. They act as a consultation, information and advice body and are able to liaise with the Fostering Service on any issues that affect foster carers. They hold regular support group meetings and social activities including a fortnightly meeting at a local soft play area.
- **Bi-monthly Information Meetings** - The Fostering Service facilitates a bi-monthly evening meeting with Senior Managers and is open to all Foster Carers. The aim of the meeting is to offer carers the opportunity of discussing issues with senior people within the organisation and to allow information and ideas to be exchanged. The evenings are also used as training events and various people such as representatives from the Looked After Children's Education Service, representatives from the Transport Team, the Contact Team, the Children's Advocate and the Children in Care Nurse have all previously been invited to talk about the work they do.
- **Foster Carer's Coffee morning.** – Foster carers hold a fortnightly coffee morning to get together to share information and have time for the children to play together. These are arranged by a foster carer and supported by the fostering team. Senior managers will be invited to these meetings on a regular basis for foster carers to ask questions, share feedback and build relationships with them.
- **Children in Care Council for younger children.** In October 2005, the Fostering Services Team developed an active consultation and participation group, 'The Garage Patch Kidz' (now known as GPK) which is a part of the Children in Care Council. The group consists of children and young people aged 8 -13 years and include children who are fostered, children who foster, privately fostered children and adopted children. The group meet fortnightly, during term time. They have been consulted on various issues that are relevant to young people living in care.
- **The Garage Patch Kidz (GPK)** have attended several national consultation events arranged by Dr Roger Morgan the Children's Rights Director for England. The theme of the

last event was young people's thoughts on key issues included in the draft – National Minimum Standards i.e. whether they are good enough and how they can be improved.

- **Children in Care Council for older children.** This group known as BIZZ was established in 2007, it is a group of children and young people who are in care or are care leavers. The government requires that every local authority establishes a Children in Care Council to act as a forum, and provide views on strategy, service delivery, life in care and specific issues. It will be the means by which children's and young people's views are presented directly to those responsible for corporate parenting, including the Director of Children's Service, lead member, elected members, the Chief Executive and senior management. The current membership includes children who are fostered, young people who live in residential homes and care leavers.
- **Creative Conversation events** - North Lincolnshire. Council has established a creative conversation forum between the Children in Care Council and Senior managers directly involved with the strategic and operational development of services for children in care. Children in Care and care leavers have the opportunity to discuss any topics relevant to their health, wellbeing and care and will shape future service delivery.
- **Annual Health Day** – Young People are encouraged to plan and participate in this event. The focus is on relevant health topics and representatives from other agencies attend to offer support and advice on a number of health related such as drug an alcohol misuse, teenage pregnancy, developing and maintaining a health lifestyle and keeping yourself safe.
- **Support Group for Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers**
A support group and a series of events has been set up which runs in the school holidays and is facilitated by a fostering social worker.

9. FOSTER CARERS TRAINING

9.1 Core Training Elements - All potential foster carers must attend the Skills to Foster course as part of their assessment and training to equip them as proficient foster carers. There are core training elements in the Course that are considered essential for a Foster Carer to undertake. These are:-

- Role of the Foster carer
- Safeguarding Children
- Health and Safety

The Skills to Foster Training has been updated in June 2014 in line with the new materials from Fostering Network.

9.2 TSD Training - All Foster Carers will be expected to complete Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) in the first year of approval, in order to demonstrate their ability to provide safe and effective foster care placements. Workshops are delivered to support this in addition to 1:1 sessions within the carers' home.

The standards support a three stage training framework for foster care.

- Pre approval – this accounts for 60% of the TSD standards and potential foster carers must complete this prior to approval.
- Induction – post approval. All new Foster Carer approvals will be expected to complete the TSD Training, Support and Development Standards within 12 months of approval. All Connected People (family, friend and/or significant person) will be expected to complete these standards within 18 months of approval.
- Foster care development – the development and maintenance of a Professional and Personal Development Plan identifies and sets timescales for undertaking any relevant training.

9.3 Other training modules offered - Foster Carers will be expected to undertake training as and when required to enable them to meet children's needs. The Fostering Services Team produces an annual training programme, in consultation with carers.

The Foster Care Training Plan for 2014-2015 includes training courses and workshops available for Foster Carers on a wide range of relevant subjects as follows:-

- Child Protection and E safety
- Paediatric First Aid
- Safer Caring
- Foster Carers role in Adoption
- Difficult and Disturbing and Dangerous Behaviour
- Razors Edge – dealing with Suicide and Self Harm
- Attachment and Child Development
- Domestic Violence – impact the on the child
- Mental Health and Resilience
- Healthier lifestyles for Children In care
- Managing Allegations Workshop
- Communicating and Direct Work With Children

- Communicating with Traumatized children
- Education for Relationships and Sex
- Makaton
- Recording Skills for Foster Carers
- Basic Food Hygiene
- Autism Awareness
- Medication Training
- Child Development and Vulnerabilities in Babies
- Carers Workshops

North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Services Team has policies and procedures for the assessment, approval, support and supervision, training & development of all foster carers. These will apply to all foster carers. However family and friends/connected persons and short breaks carers will be treated in line with specific guidance and the agreed disapplication of certain regulatory requirements.

10. SERVICE MONITORING AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

10.1 Supervision of Staff

All staff are supervised formally on a monthly basis when issues relating to individual foster carers, children in placement, fostering related matters, service delivery, training, career progression and corporate strategy & aspirations to improve service delivery are discussed. This is recorded and stored.

All staff are able to access the Team Manager or Service Manager at all other times for the purposes of seeking guidance, support and advice in relation to any fostering related issue or corporate matter.

10.2 Placement Sufficiency Planning –

Foster care recruitment drives occur regularly during the year. The frequency and focus of each drive is dictated by current as well as projected demand. The Fostering Service Manager liaises with the Service Managers for Children's Social Work services and Integrated Services for Children with a Disability to ensure that the likely short to medium terms placement requirements is predicted.

10.3 File Audit

Audits are undertaken by Grade 9 Social Workers, Team Managers and Service Managers on a monthly basis. Senior Managers also undertake audits throughout the year. Random audits are also undertaken during supervision when specific issues are identified. Ad-hoc audits of quality of recording on files and supervisory visits as well as frequency of visits and contact with carers are also undertaken.

Staff receive copies of their audits and any themes highlighted across audits are fed back to the staff group to identify positive models and highlight areas for improvement where necessary.

10.4 Observations of staff

The Service Manager, Team Manager and senior social workers undertake at least two observations of staff each, during a three month period. Staff receive feedback from the observations during supervision. Senior managers also undertake direct observations of staff and practice throughout the year including the Fostering Panel and supervision of staff.

10.5 Management Reports and Monthly Monitoring Reports

10.6 Monthly, bi monthly and quarterly monitoring statistics and reports are prepared by the Team Manager, Service Manager and the Information Team. This includes numbers of carers recruited, numbers of carers attending the skills to foster course, the number of assessments currently being undertaken by the fostering service, frequency of visits, number of foster families approved at foster panel, number of foster families de registered at foster panel, number of foster carers being annually reviewed and reasons for delay, the frequency and nature/content of the Children in Care meetings, staff vacancies, staff sickness, compliments received, agenda and issues raised from foster carer bi monthly meetings, budget reports, health and safety related incidents, allegations, complaints, number of exemptions etc.

10.7 Quality of Service

The fostering service was inspected by Ofsted in June 2012 and was graded as Outstanding.

To ensure a high quality service is maintained, the service manager monitors performance against the Ofsted grade descriptors on a quarterly basis which is presented in a report to senior managers. An annual Fostering Dataset is collated and returned to Ofsted

10.8 Panel reports

The fostering panel reports on issues of quality, timeliness and consistency through the panel advisor and written summaries prepared by the fostering panel chair and Agency Decision Maker.

Quarterly Fostering Services team Business Reports are prepared and shared with the Fostering Panel and senior management team.

11. NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE REGISTERED PROVIDER AND REGISTERED MANAGER

The Registered Provider: North Lincolnshire Council

Tracy Eaden
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8XT
01724 297024
07877 451813

The Registered Manager: North Lincolnshire Council

Annemarie Carlberg
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
01724 297024
07717 588294

12 RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS

Registered Provider: **Tracy Eaden**

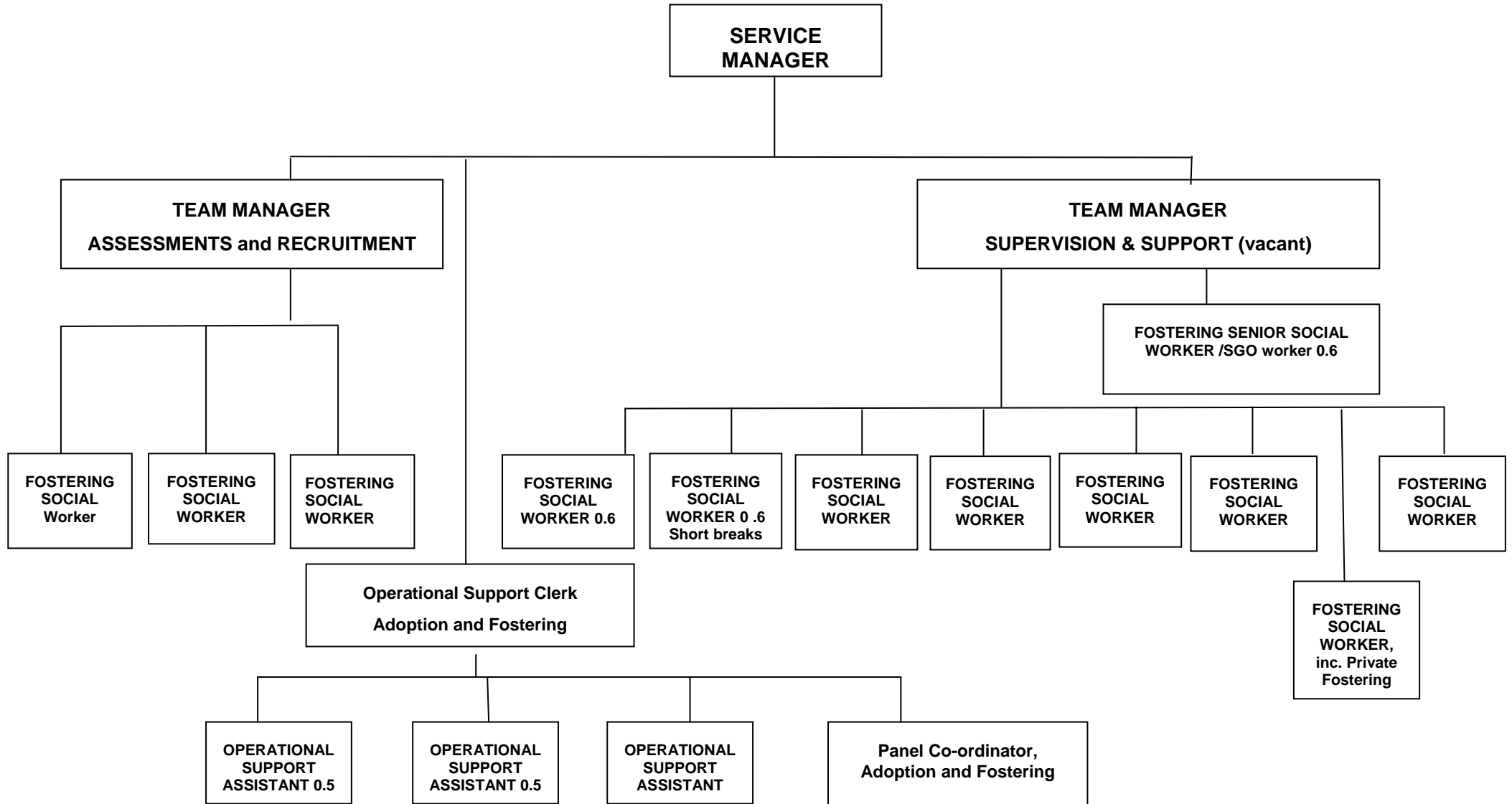
Diploma In Social Work (DIPSW)
PQ1 Post Qualifying Certificate
Post Qualifying Child Care Award (PQCCA)
Post Graduate Diploma in Child Welfare and Social Work Studies
CMI level 7 post graduate diploma in strategic leadership and management

Registered Manager: **Annemarie Carlberg**

Diploma In Social Work (DIPSW)
Post Qualifying Child Care Advanced Award (PQCCA)
Post Graduate Certificate in Supervision and Mentorship

13. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

FOSTERING SERVICES TEAM



14. STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The fostering Service is delivered and managed by staff with the appropriate skills and knowledge to do so in an efficient and effective manner. All staff are fully vetted and selected as being suitable to work with children and young people. They are managed trained, supervised and supported in order to ensure that the best possible outcomes for children in care are achieved. All employees are provided with appropriate written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service. Personnel records of those working within the Fostering Services Team are kept at the Human Resources office.

Appropriate checks are made on all colleagues in partnership agencies to ensure they are professionally qualified and appropriately trained to work with children and young people, their families and Foster Carers and have a good understanding of foster care

Where shortfalls in staffing levels occur there are contingency plans in place to resolve the situation, all members of the Fostering Services Team having a working knowledge of each other's roles. If the designated Fostering Social Worker is not available i.e. on leave, training or sickness then the duty system ensures that any issues of concern from any foster carer, social worker and other professionals are dealt with in a timely manner.

Post Title	Gender	Qualifications of Current Post holder	Post- Qualification Experience
Agency Decision Maker	Male		
Service Manager	Female	Diploma in Social Work Post Qualifying Advanced Award Post Graduate Certificate in Supervision and Mentorship	1996
Team Manager	Female	BA Hons Social Work Studies Post Qualifying Award consolidation ILM 3	2008
Senior Fostering Social Worker	Female	BA (hons) social work, PQ consolidating practice, NQSW, EPD	2010
Fostering Social Worker	Male	Diploma in Social Work Post Qualifying Award consolidation Diploma in Health and Social Welfare OU	1996

Fostering Social Worker (0.5)	Female	Diploma in Social Work BTEC Special Educational Needs	2003
Fostering Social Worker	Female	BA Honors degree in Social Work	2006
Fostering Social Worker	Male	MSC Social Work BA Hons Social Science	2013 2010
Fostering Social Worker (0.5)	Female	Diploma in Social Work NVQ level 4 Working with Children and Young People	2003
Fostering Social Worker	Female	BA hons Social Work	2013
Fostering Social Worker	Female	BA hons social work	2013
Fostering Social Worker	Female	BA Honors community Studies MA Social Work Post Qualifying Award consolidation	2010
Fostering Social Worker	Female	BA Honors Social Work Post Qualifying Award consolidation	2011
Fostering Social Worker	Male	BA Social Work (First Class Honours) NVQ III Health and Social Care NVQ Assessor Health and Social Care SKIP UK Technician delivering training for physical intervention to manage challenging and aggressive behavior.	2012

15 COMPLAINTS, REPRESENTATIONS AND IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

At times, Foster Carers and children in foster care may feel unhappy about the services they receive. The Fostering Service works within North Lincolnshire Council's complaints procedures. In the first instance it is hoped that the Fostering Service would attempt to deal with any complaint or representation, however if this is felt inappropriate all foster homes have complaints information and leaflets that show how to complain and how complaints are dealt with. There are three stages to the complaint process and complainants have a right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied following completion of stage three.

All children in foster care have direct access to the Children's Advocate:

Bev Goulding
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8XJ

Telephone Number 01724 296639
Mobile 07717586247

The independent complaints officer is:

Julie Pointon
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8XJ

Telephone Number 01724 296426

OFSTED

This is the inspecting body for Fostering. The contact point for all questions, queries and complaints to Ofsted is via the central number, or you can email them.

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone 0300 123 1231
Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Rights Director for England

In addition to the North Lincolnshire complaints and representation procedures children, or adults acting on their behalf, have access to the Children's Rights Director for England.

The Office of the Children's Rights Director, St Nicholas Building, St Nicholas Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1NB.

Free phone 0800 5280731

www.rights4me.org.uk

theteam.rights4me@csci.gov.uk

Cabinet Member for Children and Adult Services.

Rob Waltham
Conservative Group Office
Civic Centre
Ashby Road
Scunthorpe
DN16 1AB

Telephone: 01724 297614
Mobile: 07977987903
email: Rob.Waltham@northlincs.gov.uk

16 CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE FOSTERING SERVICES TEAM

North Lincolnshire Fostering Service Team
Church Square House
30 – 40 High Street
Scunthorpe
North Lincs.
DN15 6NL

Telephone 01724 297024