

# **Salford City Council**

# **Fostering Service**

# **Statement of Purpose**

**Updated April 2010**

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

### **AIMS**

Salford City Council's mission is "to create the best possible quality of life for the people of Salford".

The Children's Services Directorate works in partnership with children, their families and our partners to continuously improve the outcomes for all children and young people across the city. The Directorate wants children growing up in Salford to see and say that their city, home community and our services are great.

The Children's Services Directorate has made a series of pledges to its Looked After Children:

- We want our looked after children to be as healthy as other children. We want them to learn how to prevent ill health and how to stay healthy. When they are sick we want them to be able to access the appropriate medical advice and services as quickly as possible
- We want our looked after children to be safe
- We want our looked after children to have opportunity to achieve to their full potential in education, leisure and sport. We want them to have ambitious dreams for themselves and we want to have high ambitions for them
- We want our looked after children to be able to make a positive contribution to their own lives and to our community
- We want our looked after children to be successful and fulfilled in adult life. We want them to have full opportunity to take part in further and higher education when they leave school and to achieve meaningful employment
- We want our looked after children to know that they belong
- We will provide for our children by seeing each of them as an individual, having regard to disability and ethnicity and we will ensure that they can reach their full potential and do not suffer from discrimination.

The Fostering Service is part of the Children's Services Directorate Looked After Children Service.

The Looked After Children Service brings together placement and support services for children in the council's care under one umbrella so that the help children need to achieve good outcomes is holistic and co-ordinated.

The Looked After Children Service aims to provide children with safe, good quality placements which meet their needs and which can lead to the permanence and stability needed to promote good outcomes for the future.

Permanence can be achieved through a return home to birth parents, placement with a family member supported by a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order or through adoption outside the family. Where legal permanence cannot be achieved, or is not appropriate, the aim is to provide stable long term foster care for as many children as possible.

The Fostering Service supports and contributes to these aims by working to provide an effective, efficiently managed, high quality foster care service within available resources, to meet the needs of children as identified through the assessment planning and review process and ensure the best possible outcomes for children looked after in foster care.

The Fostering Service has a core role in supporting the City Council as corporate parent for children who cannot live with their own families and for whom it has responsibility.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The Fostering Service will work towards the five outcomes for children set out by the government in 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' and given legal force in the Children Act 2004.

- ❑ **Be Healthy**
- ❑ **Stay Safe**
- ❑ **Enjoy and Achieve**
- ❑ **Make a Positive Contribution**
- ❑ **Achieve Economic Well – Being**

The service is a key part of the council's strategy to ensure that children who are unable to live with their birth family, whether temporarily or permanently, have security, stability and are cared for in a family setting.

The Fostering Service makes an important contribution to the Directorate's performance on indicators of progress against which children's services are measured.

## **FOSTERING SERVICE OBJECTIVES**

- ❑ To meet the requirements of the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and associated guidance.
- ❑ To meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and other good practice standards.
- ❑ To have in place a recruitment strategy which ensures that a range of foster placements is available to meet the needs of all children requiring foster care.
- ❑ To target recruitment on those prospective foster carers most likely to meet the needs of looked after children and children in need of short break care.
- ❑ To ensure that prospective foster carers from all backgrounds are welcomed without prejudice regardless of ethnic origin, age, disability, background, marital or employment status and considered on their individual merits.
- ❑ To ensure that anyone seeking to use the fostering service is treated courteously and with respect and their enquiry is dealt with in a timely efficient manner.
- ❑ To ensure that the preparation process prepares foster carers as well as possible for the task of caring for looked after children.
- ❑ To ensure that foster carers are supported in their task of caring for looked after children.
- ❑ To influence the wider Directorate to make the decision about how best to meet each child's need for permanence in a timely way and after an assessment of the child's needs to which all relevant people have contributed.
- ❑ To engage in a child centred matching, introduction and placement process.
- ❑ To work towards the targets and objectives set out within the Business Planning process.

## **PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CARE**

### **Safeguarding personal information**

#### **Data Protection**

The Children's Services Directorate has guidance for staff on the keeping, storage and handling of personal information for both electronic and manually recorded data.

#### **Confidentiality**

The Children's Services Directorate operates a Confidentiality Code of Conduct applicable to all people, including foster carers and professionals in other agencies working to effect the placement of children, who have access to personal information held by the Children's Services Directorate.

Foster carers sign a confidentiality agreement as part of the Foster Carer Agreement and the arrangements for storage of records are checked at each review.

#### **Recording Policy**

The Children's Services Directorate has a recording policy which sets out in detail the requirements for record keeping with relevant safeguards, including security protocols for electronic records.

### **Partnership**

The Fostering Service works in partnership with foster carers and young people and with other professionals in the City Council and external agencies, both statutory and voluntary, involved in the delivery of Fostering and wider Children's Services.

Family Placement Social Workers undertake a liaison role with other professionals in the Children's Services Directorate and partner agencies to offer information and consultation on fostering issues.

### **Maximising Life Chances**

#### **Education**

The Children's Services Directorate promotes and celebrates educational opportunities for looked after children with the aim of improving their educational attainments and life chances

Foster carers play a crucial role in ensuring that children receive regular education appropriate to their needs and are encouraged to access learning and development opportunities available to them. This is emphasised during the preparation and assessment process and in ongoing training, supervision and review.

A multi-agency protocol is in place to support the Education of Looked After Children. All looked after children are part of the Directorate's Virtual School under the leadership of the Virtual School Head.

### **Health**

The Children's Services Directorate is committed to ensuring that the health needs of looked after children are identified and met in partnership with the PCT and other health agencies.

Foster carers play an important role in ensuring that children in foster care receive appropriate health care including statutory medicals, access to specialist care including CAMHS services, dental checks, optical checks and health promotion information.

A multi-agency Health Protocol for Looked After Children is in place.

### **Leisure**

The Children's Services Directorate actively supports the inclusion of looked after children in leisure activities as an important means of promoting their development.

Children are encouraged to participate in extra curricular and community leisure activities which can be supported through foster care payments or Personal Educational Allowances.

Foster carers play a key role in encouraging and supporting children to participate in leisure activities and to develop their hobbies, interests and talents.

The Fostering Service also organises trips and activities for looked after children and their foster families.

### **Promoting Independence**

The Fostering Service aims to ensure that young people are provided with the best opportunity to grow into well-adjusted, healthy, adults with the ability to make relationships, take care of themselves and contribute to society.

Foster carers are encouraged to help young people develop independent living skills and move on into suitable accommodation. However, it is also acknowledged that some young people will need to remain in their foster family as young adults and support is given to foster carers to enable them to offer continuing care for young people they have cared for as fostered children.

### **Safety and Security**

#### **Safe Care**

The Fostering Service aims to provide placements for children which protect them from abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Some criminal offences such as serious/sexual crimes against children automatically debar people from becoming foster carers. Careful screening of all

prospective foster carers is an essential part of the approval process and during the assessment the Family Placement Social Worker will take up, amongst other checks, a Criminal Records Bureau check and follow up at least two personal references.

All prospective foster carers consider safe care as part of the preparation process and during the home study will focus, with their Family Placement Social Worker, on their own life experiences, strengths and vulnerabilities and how these might impact on their ability to deal with the challenges and demands of the fostering task.

A safe care policy is drawn up with each foster family on approval and reviewed regularly as part of the annual review process.

As part of the Children's Services Directorate the Fostering Service works closely with the Safeguarding Unit in ensuring the protection of children in foster care. Where allegations of abuse are made the safety and welfare of children is the paramount consideration. There is an LSCB approved procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse against foster carers which sets out the obligations of the Fostering Service to ensure that children are protected and that support is available to foster carers who are subject of complaints or allegations.

### **Control and Discipline**

Training on behaviour management is included in the preparation process and the rolling programme of training.

The Fostering Service has a clear policy that corporal punishment in any form is not permitted. Foster carers are also not permitted to deprive children of food or restrict contact as punishment and should be sensitive to the child's past experience in determining the most appropriate sanctions

### **Bullying**

Salford City Council has an anti bullying strategy which seeks to address bullying in its widest sense. The Fostering Service fully supports this strategy and is opposed to bullying in all its forms. The Fostering Service believes that it is the right of all young people to live in an environment where they feel safe and are free from humiliation, oppression and abuse.

Foster carers are expected to create an anti bullying and anti discriminatory climate in their homes and to set a positive example to young people in their attitude. They also play a key role in recognising bullying, reporting it appropriately and helping children deal with its impact, helping them develop strategies for dealing with any form of bullying or discrimination they may encounter.

### **Identity**

#### **Valuing Diversity**

The Fostering Service aims to provide placements for children that will promote equality and value diversity. The recruitment strategy aims to recruit a range of

foster carers who can address the needs of children arising from race, culture, ethnic origin, language, disability, gender and sexuality.

Wherever possible, children will be placed with foster carers of a matching racial and cultural heritage. Where this cannot be achieved, a plan will be formulated to ensure that children's needs in relation to their cultural, religious and racial identity are met, through the provision of services or appropriate support.

### **Contact**

The Fostering service is committed to ensuring that children in foster care maintain contact with family members according to their individual care plan. Training on contact and working with birth family members is included in the foster carer training programme.

### **Listening to children**

The Children's Services Directorate actively promotes the ability of young people to express their views and works to ensure that young people are included in service planning and evaluation. The Fostering Service welcomes feedback from young people and encourages foster carers to assist young people to participate in consultation opportunities.

Foster carers play a key role in encouraging young people to participate in groups and individual work that enables them to contribute to service development and council policy.

### **Children's Rights and Advocacy Project**

Young people in foster care have access to the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service delivered in partnership with The Children's Society. Some children in foster care have Independent Visitors from the project. The Project will be supporting the Directorate in forming Salford's Children in Care Council which will play a key role in ensuring children's voices are heard and their views are acted upon.

## **SERVICES PROVIDED**

The Family Placement Team provides Fostering and Adoption Services on a citywide basis for Salford City Council. The team is part of an integrated multi – disciplinary service for Looked After Children.

The following Foster Care services are provided:

- Recruitment, training and assessment of prospective foster carers
- Short term planned and emergency placements for children who need to be looked after by Salford City Council
- Short term break placements for children with disabilities and children at risk of entering the looked after system

- Long term and permanent foster care placements for children who cannot return home, where this has been identified as the most appropriate way of meeting their needs
- A Multi – dimensional Treatment Foster Care scheme for young people with complex needs aged 11 – 16 years. This is a government supported initiative with a dedicated multi-disciplinary sub team. Placements are short term and operate to strict criteria and methodology. The scheme is part of a government research project overseen by a clinical team from the Maudsley Hospital in London.
- An Intensive Fostering Scheme, Focus Foster Care, offering medium to long term placements for young people with complex needs aged 5 – 18. Placements are supported by a multi – disciplinary team.
- Family Finding for children identified as in need of long term or permanent foster placements
- A managed matching process for the placement of children with long term or permanent foster carers that ensures that the child's needs have been fully considered in relation to the placement
- Support, supervision and review of foster carers
- A comprehensive training programme for approved foster carers
- Provision of court reports in Care Proceedings on issues relating to the permanent care of children, their placement needs and the resources available to meet them
- Organisation and administration of the Directorate's Fostering Panel
- Provision of information, advice, consultation and training for other professionals on fostering issues
- Contribution to policies, procedures and practice guidance in relation to children looked after, fostering and adoption
- Commissioning of foster placements in the Independent and Voluntary sector and liaison with agencies in relation to services provided for the Directorate

## **STATISTICAL SUMMARY**

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008-2010:

| <b>Approval type</b>                                   | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2010</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Friends and family carers                              | 50 (26%)    | 45 (24%)    | 42 (23%)    |
| Short break only                                       | 29 (15%)    | 26(14%)     | 25(14%)     |
| General (short term/long term/mixed)                   | 105 (55%)   | 105 (56%)   | 99 (54%)    |
| 3D fostering (respite and short term)                  | 3 (2%)      | 5 (3%)      | 6 (3%)      |
| Focus fostering                                        | 0           | 3 (2%)      | 13 (7%)     |
| Continuing Care only                                   | 5 (2%)      | 5 (3%)      | 3           |
| De-registrations (inc F+F)                             | 20          | 18          | 18          |
| <b>Total number of approved foster carers (inc CC)</b> | <b>192</b>  | <b>189</b>  | <b>188</b>  |

| <b>Children in Foster care</b>                                        | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2010</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total children in foster care                                         | 318         | 297         | 304         |
| Children placed with foster carers – in house                         | 253         | 242         | 246         |
| Children placed with foster carers – independent and voluntary sector | 65          | 55          | 58          |

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **Business Planning**

The performance of the Fostering Service is monitored through the Directorates' Business Planning process. Statistical information on all aspects of the service is collected and analysed and contributes to service planning. An annual Business Plan is produced which evaluates the work of the team during the year and plans future development.

### **Supervision**

All staff employed in the service receive regular individual supervision in accordance with the Directorate's supervision policy.

### **Fostering Panels**

The Fostering Panel and the Adoption and Permanence Panel act as important quality control mechanisms and provide feedback about the quality of work.

The Head of Service, Looked After Children acts as Agency Decision Maker for both panels and is therefore able to monitor the quality of the team's work through reports being presented to the panel and through regular meetings with the panel chairs at which performance issues are discussed.

## **Feedback**

Feedback is also actively sought and welcomed from service users.

Evaluation forms are completed by:

- Enquirers regarding their initial contact with the agency
- Prospective foster carers following attendance at preparation groups
- Foster carers who attend post approval training

A final visit is undertaken by a Team Manager at the conclusion of the assessment process when foster carers are invited to comment on their experience of service to date.

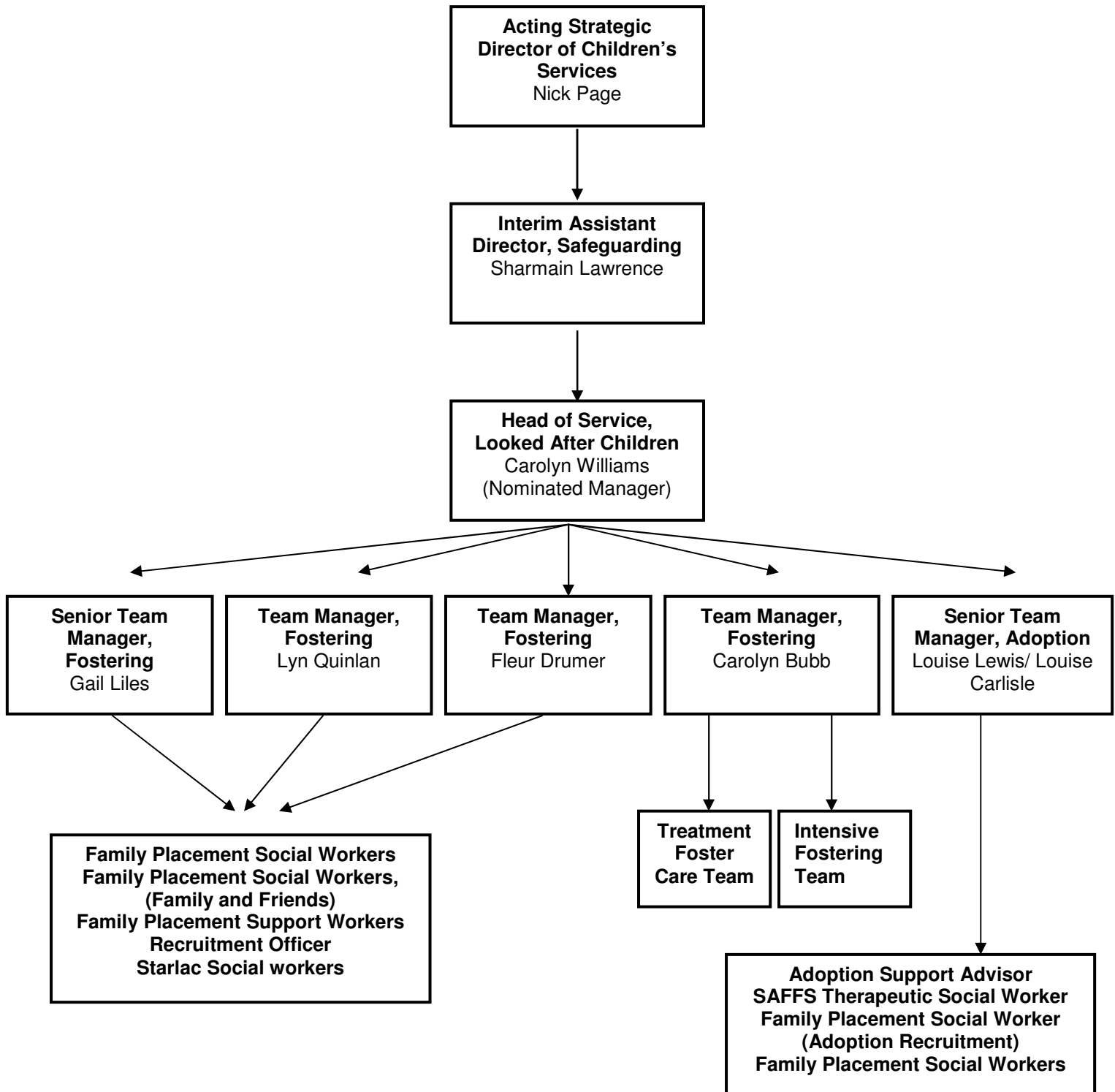
Foster carers complete a detailed feedback document as part of the annual review process to enable them to comment on the service.

Social workers who have had children placed with foster carers are asked to complete a feedback document on the individual placement which contributes to the annual review process.

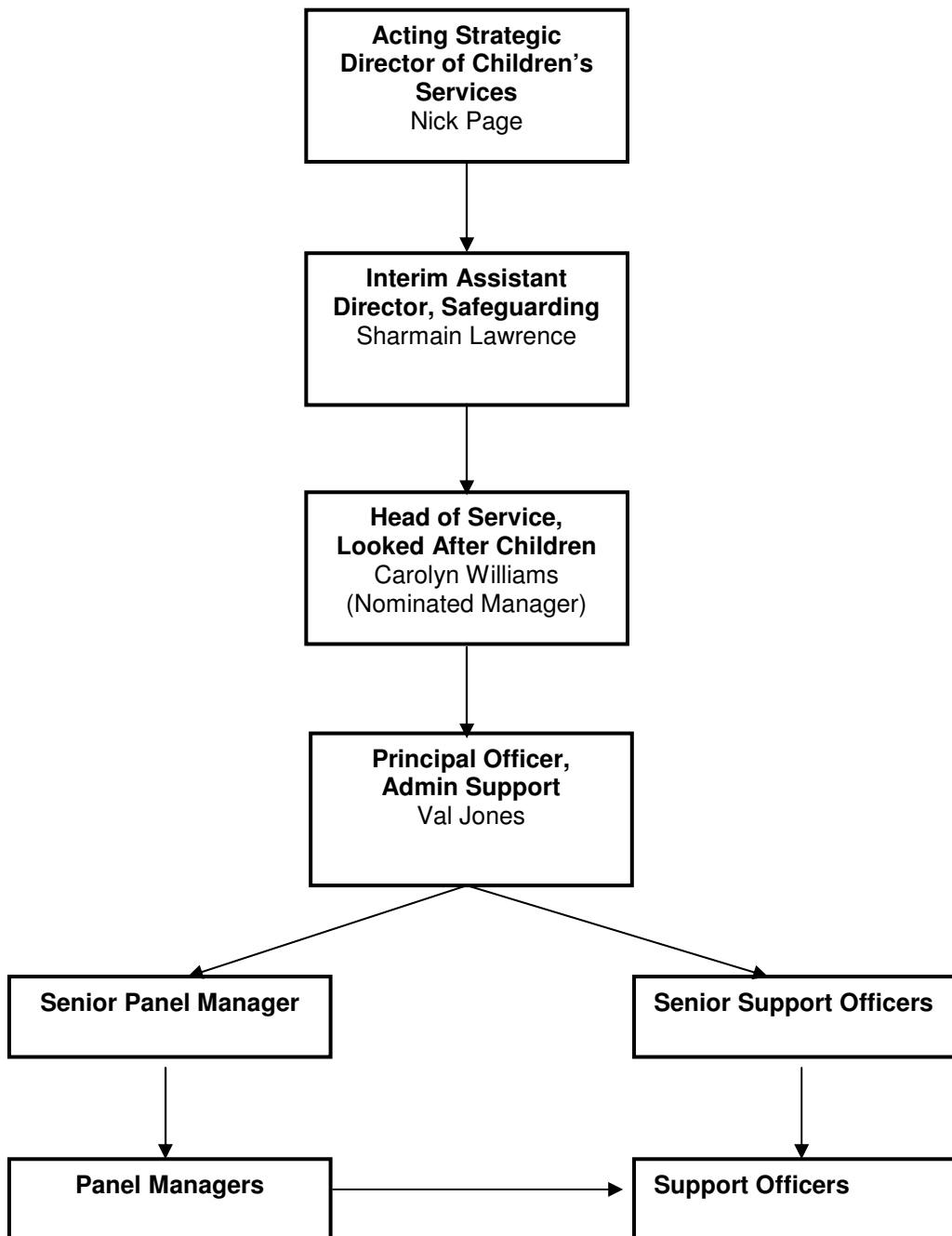
Young people in foster care complete a feedback form as part of their foster carers' annual review.

# MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURE

## Operational Staff



**Administrative Staff**



## **STAFFING**

The Family Placement Team comprises:

### **Operational Staff**

#### **Head of Service, Looked After Children**

The post holder is the nominated manager for both the Fostering and Adoption Services and is responsible for the strategic planning and development of Family Placement services and the operational work of the team. The postholder also has strategic responsibility for the Residential Service, the Looked After Children Social Work Team and the overall service for Looked after Children.

The current postholder is Carolyn Williams. Ms. Williams has been a qualified social worker since 1979 and has worked in the Family Placement service since 1988. She has extensive experience of children and families social work, fostering and adoption. Ms. Williams was Principal Manager of the Family Placement Service from April 1999 to October 2005 when she was pointed to her current post. Ms. Williams holds an NVQ Level 5 in Strategic Management and is registered with the GSCC as a social worker.

#### **2 Senior Team Managers**

1 post is primarily within the Fostering Service, 1 post is primarily within the Adoption Service. Senior Team Managers are Team Managers with additional responsibilities for overall development of their designated service and performance management. Senior Team Managers are experienced Team Managers with NVQ Level 5 in Management.

#### **3 Team Managers**

There are 3 Team Manager posts within the Fostering Service. Team Managers are responsible for the day to day work of the team and also carry developmental responsibilities in relation to the service.

Each Team Manager carries a portfolio of responsibilities relating to specific areas of work.

One Team manager also acts as the programme manager for the multi dimensional treatment foster care team and is responsible for the overall management of the project and its strategic development.

All Team Managers are qualified social workers with experience in children and families social work, fostering and adoption and are registered with the GSCC.

#### **Family Placement Social Worker (Adoption Recruitment and Family Finding)**

In the addition to adoption responsibilities this post also carries some responsibility for finding permanent foster placements for children under 10 years

old and contributes to fostering recruitment. This is a qualified social work post with a requirement for registration with the GSCC.

### **Recruitment Officer**

The Recruitment Officer is primarily responsible for foster carer recruitment including advertising and publicity and initial visits to prospective foster carers.

### **18 Family Placement Social Workers**

12 Family Placement Social Work posts are primarily within the Fostering Service, 6 primarily within the Adoption Service. However, all carry a mixed caseload including recruitment, training, assessment, support and supervision of foster carers. Staff recruited to the team are qualified social workers with experience as children and families social workers and are registered with the GSCC. There are currently 8 vacancies.

### **4 Family Placement Social Workers (Focus Fostering)**

4 posts have been created to work specifically within the Intensive Fostering Scheme. The work includes recruitment, assessment, training, support and supervision of foster carers for the scheme. Staff recruited to the team are qualified social workers with experience as children and families social workers and are registered with the GSCC.

### **5 Family Placement Social Workers (Family and Friends Foster Care)**

5 Family Placement Social worker posts have been created within the Fostering Service to work specifically with Family and Friends Foster Carers. The work includes viability assessments of prospective family and friends foster carers (including those where children are placed under Regulation 38), assessment, supervision, support and training of family and friends foster carers. Staff recruited to the team are qualified social workers with experience as children and families social workers and are registered with the GSCC.

### **1 Special Guardianship Support Co-ordinator**

This post has been created specifically to develop special guardianship support arrangements, to review support plans and ensure children and families with Special Guardianship Orders are adequately supported.

### **7 Family Placement Support Workers**

The role of Family Placement Support Workers is to provide practical and emotional support to foster carers and some adoptive parents. Family Placement Support Workers are not social work qualified but have experience in working with children.

2 support workers work specifically within the Focus Fostering Team and assist in providing a multi-disciplinary support packages to support foster carers caring for children with complex needs.

## **Treatment Foster Care Team (3D Fostering)**

The Treatment Foster Care Team comprises:

### **Team Manager/Programme manager (see above)**

#### **Programme Supervisor** (employed by the CAMHS Service)

The Programme supervisor is responsible for the clinical management of the project and for designing and overseeing the individual treatment packages. The postholder is a qualified social worker and a mental health practitioner with therapeutic experience.

#### **Family Placement Social Worker**

The Family Placement Social Worker is responsible for the recruitment, training, assessment, support and supervision of Treatment foster carers. The postholder is a qualified social worker with experience as children and families social workers and is registered with the GSCC.

#### **Individual Therapist** (employed by the CAMHS Service)

The individual therapist provides individual therapy for the young person to support the treatment model. The postholder is a mental health practitioner.

#### **Education Officer**

The Education Officer is a qualified teacher whose role is to liaise with schools on education issues and provide 1:1 support to young people in school where necessary.

#### **Skills Trainer**

The role of the skills trainer is to support the young person's progress in the community, in leisure activities or at school. The post has no specific qualification requirements but requires experience in working with children.

#### **Birth Family Therapist** (employed by the CAMHS Service)

The role of the Birth Family Therapist is to assess and support family contact for young people placed within the project and to assist birth families with understanding and developing parenting skills.

#### **Administrative Officer**

The Administrative Officer provides administrative support for the team including gathering daily information from foster carers and providing information for the research project associated with the model.

### **Administrative Staff**

#### **Principal Officer, Admin Support**

The Principal Officer, Admin Support is responsible for the day to day management of the administrative team and provides administrative support to the Head of Service.

#### **Senior Panel Manager**

The Senior Panel Manager is responsible for the organisation and minuting of the Adoption and Permanence Panel and for the compiling of statistical information in relation to the panels' work. The postholder also has supervisory responsibility for the Panel Manager to the Fostering Panel.

### **Panel Managers**

The panel managers are responsible for the organisation and minuting of the Fostering Panel and the Review Sub Panel and the Directorate's Access to Care Resources Panel and other clerical duties in relation to the Fostering Service.

### **2 Senior Support Officers**

1 Senior Support Officer is primarily responsible for supporting the Recruitment and Training of Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents. 1 Senior Support Officer works primarily within the Adoption Service.

### **6 Support Officers**

6 Support Officers work within the Fostering and Adoption Services each carrying out designated functions.

### **Qualifications and Hours of Work**

| <b>Family Placement Team<br/>Turnpike House, 631 Eccles New Road, Salford, M50 1SW</b> |                                                        |              |                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Position</b>                                                                        | <b>Name/s of postholder/s</b>                          | <b>Hours</b> | <b>Relevant Qualifications</b>                                                                                                        |
| <b>Head of service, Looked After children</b>                                          | Carolyn Williams                                       | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>Postgraduate Diploma in Economic and Social Studies<br>CQSW / Diploma in Social Work<br>NVQ Level 5 Strategic Management |
| <b>Senior team manager (Fostering)</b>                                                 | Gail Liles                                             | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>CQSW<br>PQ Child Care Award<br>NVQ Level 5 Strategic Management                                                          |
| <b>Senior team managers (Adoption and Permanence) (job share)</b>                      | Louise Lewis                                           | 22.2         | BA (Hons)<br>CQSW<br>NVQ Level 5 Operational Management                                                                               |
|                                                                                        | Louise Carlisle                                        | 25.2         | BA (Hons)<br>CQSW<br>NVQ Level 5 Operational Management                                                                               |
| <b>Team managers, Fostering</b>                                                        | Lyn Quinlan                                            | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>CSS<br>NVQ Level 5 Strategic Management                                                                                  |
|                                                                                        | Fleur Drumer                                           | 36           | DIPSW<br>PQ Child Care Award                                                                                                          |
|                                                                                        | Carolyn Bubb (Treatment Foster Care and Focus schemes) | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>Youth and Community Work Diploma<br>DIPSW<br>PQ Child Care Award                                                         |
| <b>Family Placement Worker (Adoption Recruitment and Family Finding)</b>               | Pat Grigg                                              | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>CQSW<br>PQ Child Care Award                                                                                              |

|                                                                       |                                      |      |                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Family placement social workers (Fostering)</b>                    | Janice Lees<br>(Senior Practitioner) | 36   | CSS<br>NVQ Level 4 Training and Development<br>NVQ Level 5 Operational Management<br>D32/33 NVQ Assessor Award<br>D34 Internal Verifier Award |
|                                                                       | Julie Brown<br>(starting May 2010)   | 36   | BA (Hons) Social work studies                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                       | Sue Cash                             | 36   | BA (Hons) Social work studies                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                       | Fitzroy Osborne                      | 36   | DIPSW<br>NEBS Management NVQ3                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                       | Janette Poole                        | 29   | CSS                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                                       | Michelle Sullivan                    | 36   | BA (Hons)<br>DIPSW<br>Diploma in Counselling<br>PQ Child Care Award                                                                           |
|                                                                       | Jackie Tillotson                     | 29.6 | DIPSW<br>BTEC Care Management<br>Counselling Cert                                                                                             |
|                                                                       | Marina Wright                        | 36   | BA (Hons) in Social work studies<br>Diploma in counselling                                                                                    |
|                                                                       | Marie Gibbons<br>(maternity leave)   | 36   |                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                                       | Vacancy                              |      |                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                                       | Vacancy                              |      |                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                                       | Vacancy                              |      |                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Family placement social workers (Focus Fostering)</b>              | Annie Wood                           | 36   | BA (Hons)<br>MA<br>DIPSW                                                                                                                      |
|                                                                       | Sarah Egerton                        | 36   | BA (Hons) Social work studies<br>Diploma in social work<br>PQ2-6                                                                              |
|                                                                       | Vacancy                              | 36   |                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                                       | Vacancy                              | 36   |                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Family placement social workers (family and friends fostering)</b> | Asiya Malik-Brown                    | 36   | BA (Hons)<br>DIPSW<br>MA in SW<br>Counselling Cert<br>PQ1                                                                                     |
|                                                                       | Euley Heron                          | 36   | BA Hons Applied community studies<br>Masters in Social work                                                                                   |
|                                                                       | Janette Toland                       | 36   | BA (Hons) Social work studies<br>PQ1                                                                                                          |
|                                                                       | Sheena Warmisham                     | 36   | B Ed (Hons)<br>DIPSW<br>PQ1                                                                                                                   |
|                                                                       | Vacancy                              | 36   |                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Special Guardianship Support Co-ordinator</b>                      | Vacancy                              | 36   |                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Family Placement Social Workers (Adoption and Permanence)</b>      | Sheila Daly                          | 28.8 | DIPSW<br>PQ1                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                                       | Kristen Rumsey                       | 36   | BA (Hons)<br>DIPSW,<br>PQ1                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                       | Mark Tobin                           | 36   | DIPSW<br>PQ1                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                             |                                        |      |                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                             | Dawn Tunnicliffe                       | 36   | BA (Hons)<br>DIPSW<br>PQ Child Care Award                                                                                      |
|                                                             | Ian Williams                           | 36   | BA (Hons)<br>DIPSW<br>PQ Child Care Award<br>BSL Level 1                                                                       |
|                                                             | Temporary vacancy                      | 36   |                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Family placement support workers</b>                     | Janice Boulger                         | 36   | NVQ 4 in health & social care<br>City and Guilds in community care<br>NVQ 2 Mentoring                                          |
|                                                             | Viv Hoy                                | 36   | Diploma in counselling<br>NVQ                                                                                                  |
|                                                             | Katrina Jackson                        | 22   | NNEB<br>CPQS                                                                                                                   |
|                                                             | Tracey Morris                          | 29   | NNEB<br>Currently progressing NVQ level 4 in health & social care                                                              |
|                                                             | Judith Whittleworth                    | 18.5 | NNEB<br>CPQS                                                                                                                   |
|                                                             | Sam Chapman (Focus)                    | 36   | NVQ 3 early years care and education<br>NVQ 3 in health & social care<br>NVQ 4 in health & social care                         |
|                                                             | Vicky Steele (maternity leave) (Focus) | 36   |                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Recruitment officer</b>                                  | Emma Harris                            | 36   | BA (Hons)                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Principal officer, Admin Support</b>                     | Val Jones                              | 36   | HNC Public Administration<br>ECDL<br>NVQ Level 4 Operational Management<br>NVQ A1 Assessors Award                              |
| <b>Senior panel Manager (Adoption and Permanence Panel)</b> | Helen Perry                            | 36   | NVQ 2 Business and Administration                                                                                              |
| <b>Panel Manager</b>                                        | Karen Lever                            | 36   | NEBSM<br>RSA 1,2<br>WP101<br>NVQ Level 2 Team Leader                                                                           |
|                                                             | Sophie Beccera-Adams (maternity Leave) | 36   |                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Senior Support officer (Recruitment and Training)</b>    | Catherine McCormick                    | 36   | NEBSM<br>D32/D33 assessor<br>IPD                                                                                               |
| <b>Senior Support officer (Adoption)</b>                    | Christine Edwards                      | 36   | RSA1 Typing                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Support officers</b>                                     | Mary Cameron                           | 36   | HNC Business<br>RSAs<br>WP101                                                                                                  |
|                                                             | Kate Dickson                           | 36   | GCSEs<br>Currently progressing NVQ in Business and Administration                                                              |
|                                                             | Hannah Brierly (Focus)                 | 36   | NVQ Level 2 Business Administration Apprenticeship<br>Currently progressing NVQ Level 3 Business Administration Apprenticeship |

|  |                                                    |    |                                                        |
|--|----------------------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Stacey Hughes<br>(Agency staff<br>filling vacancy) | 36 | GCSEs<br>A Level<br>Currently progressing ECDL         |
|  | Sharon Gresty<br>(Agency staff<br>filling vacancy) | 36 | CSEs<br>City and Guilds<br>Diploma in Business Studies |
|  | Vacancy                                            | 36 |                                                        |

| <b>Multi – Dimensional Treatment Foster Care Project</b> |                               |              |                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Position</b>                                          | <b>Name/s of postholder/s</b> | <b>Hours</b> | <b>Relevant Qualifications</b>                                                                                            |
| <b>Team Manager / Programme manager</b>                  | Carolyn Bubb                  | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>Youth and Community Work Diploma<br>DIPSW<br>PQ Child Care Award                                             |
| <b>Programme supervisor (CAMHS employee)</b>             | Amanda McLeod                 | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>CQSW<br>PQ Child Care Award<br>Cert in Child Protection<br>Counselling Cert<br>Cert in First Line Management |
| <b>Family placement social worker</b>                    | Yasmin Robinson               | 36           | BA (Hons)<br>DIPSW<br>PQ 1                                                                                                |
| <b>Skills trainer</b>                                    | Michelle Steel                | 36           | Foundation degree in Youth and Community Work<br>British Sign Language Level 1                                            |
| <b>Education worker</b>                                  | Richard Moody                 | 36           | BA (Hons) Combined and Education studies QTS                                                                              |
| <b>Birth family therapist (CAMHS employee)</b>           | Vacancy                       | 18           |                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Individual therapist (CAMHS employee)</b>             | Vacancy                       | 18           |                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Administrative officer</b>                            | Jane Younge                   | 20           | GCSEs<br>BTEC payroll and administration                                                                                  |

All staff are recruited in accordance with the council's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and procedures.

### **RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER CARERS**

Recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval practice is underpinned by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002, the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the recommendations of the UK Joint Working Party on Foster Care 'Code of Practice on the Recruitment, Assessment, Approval, Training, Management and Support of Foster Carers' (1999). The service aims to promote a positive view of the Directorate, the benefits of foster care for children and rewards of fostering.

The Directorate's aim is to have a choice of placements to meet the individual needs of every child and recruitment of foster carers is a major priority for the Family Placement Service.

The recruitment strategy is based on an understanding of the needs of the foster care service including the profile of existing carers and the needs of children requiring family placements. The service currently needs to recruit more foster carers for children of all ages. However, there are particular shortages of all types of foster carers able to take sibling groups, teenagers, boys aged 5+, disabled children and children with challenging behaviour. More foster carers are needed to care for children on a long term or permanent basis and to provide short term breaks for children with more serious disabilities and challenging behaviour. The service is also keen to increase to recruit foster carers from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds to meet the racial, ethnic and cultural needs of children who need foster placements.

Recruitment activity is continually monitored to ensure that resources are used as effectively as possible and that every effort is made to ensure there is sufficient number of high quality placements available to meet the needs of children who cannot live with their own families.

The recruitment of foster carers is a continuous activity. Specific or targeted campaigns also take place as appropriate.

Foster carers are recruited through a variety of means including advertising, editorial and features in newspapers, magazines and specialist journals, leaflets and fliers, posters, bus advertising, yellow pages, television and radio, car parking tickets, promotional materials and personal recommendation. Images used in advertising and publicity try to reflect the range of foster carers who need to be recruited.

The Fostering Service recognises and values the contribution of existing foster carers to the recruitment process and actively supports their involvement in recruitment activity.

The Fostering Service is also committed to taking advantage of opportunities for collaborative working with other local authorities and voluntary agencies in the recruitment of foster carers and actively supports regional and national recruitment initiatives.

Applications are welcome from individuals and families from all parts of the community and all cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, regardless of marital status, employment, gender, sexuality or disability. Applicants must be over 18 years old and in reasonable health to provide care for a child. A criminal record is not a barrier to application but anyone who has been convicted of an offence against a child and some serious offences against adults is excluded from becoming a foster carer.

The purpose of the recruitment process is to provide information about the need for foster carers, the tasks involved in looking after children on behalf of the

Directorate and the support available, so that members of the public are enabled to make an informed decision whether to apply to foster. It is also an opportunity for unsuitable applicants to be screened or counselled out.

Enquirers are able to telephone a dedicated hotline, which is staffed during normal office hours. Calls are answered by a member of the administrative staff who is trained and informed in the relevant issues and is able to advise enquirers about their application. All enquirers are sent an information pack within 24 hours of their initial phone call.

Enquirers who indicate their continued interest are then visited at home by the Recruitment Officer, a Family Placement Social Worker or a Family Placement Support Worker. The aim is to carry out all initial visits within 2 weeks. The purpose of the initial visit is to:

- Provide information about the different types of fostering or adoption to assist enquirers with deciding on the most appropriate option
- Provide preliminary information about the qualities needed to foster or adopt, the expectations of foster carers and/or adoptive parents, and the support and training that is available in carrying out the role
- Explain the application, assessment and approval process
- Begin to identify potentially problematic issues that may impact on the applicant's suitability.

At the conclusion of this visit enquirers are invited to attend Preparation Groups.

All prospective foster carers also have the opportunity for a follow up visit by an approved and experienced foster carer who can provide first hand information about fostering and can act as mentor during the application process.

## **ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER CARERS**

Assessment and approval of foster carers is carried out in accordance with the Children Act 1989, Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

All prospective general foster carers must attend preparation groups held in the evenings over a 7/8 week period at intervals during the year. The overall aims of the preparation groups are to ensure that applicants have sufficient information to decide whether they have the qualities and skills needed to be a foster carer and to provide sufficient information and knowledge to allow applicants to begin to foster. Each preparation course is led by 2 Family Placement Social Workers and an experienced foster carer. A course handbook is available which details the purpose and content of the group sessions. Information about applicants' contribution in preparation groups is fed into the assessment process by the group leaders.

Towards the end of the Preparation Groups prospective foster carers are invited to make a formal written application which includes giving information to enable the required checks to be undertaken. These include a medical with the applicant's own doctor and a Criminal Bureau Records check as certain serious/sexual offences rule out taking an application further. Less serious offences are discussed and are balanced against the skills and qualities being offered. Applicants are asked to nominate 2 referees who know them well and can provide an opinion as to the applicant's suitability and competence to foster.

A full range of safeguarding checks is routinely carried out on all applicants to foster:

- Identity checks e.g. Passport, Driving License, Birth certificate, utility bills.
- Documentation to support any name changes, naturalisation etc.
- Confirmation of National Insurance Number
- Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure on each applicant, all members of their household aged 16 or over and any family members or friends with whom there will be unsupervised contact.
- Marriage and Divorce Certificates where relevant.
- Written references from 2 unrelated personal referees who know the applicant/s well and can comment on their relationships with children and other adults. These referees are then visited and their views discussed.
- Statutory references; NSPCC, Health Visiting Service, Social Services, Probation, Education.
- Employer reference from current or most recent employer and any employer where the applicant has worked with children or vulnerable adults
- Medical examination with the applicant's own G.P. with comments by the agency medical advisor.

Assessments of all prospective foster carers are carried out by qualified social workers using BAAF Form F. In addition, applicants are assisted to collect evidence in relation to the CWDC Training and Development Standards. Proof of any qualifications is obtained as part of this process.

During the assessment all members of the household, including birth children are interviewed and their views obtained. Adult children who no longer live at home are interviewed wherever practical and feedback sought about their experiences of being parented by the applicant/s. Ex partners are also interviewed unless there is explicit reason not to do so with the agreement of a Family Placement Team Manager.

Where necessary the assessing Family Placement Social Worker seeks additional information from schools, other professionals or extended family members who have knowledge of the applicant/s and their parenting abilities.

A Health and Safety checklist is completed covering all aspects of home safety.

During the course of the assessment expert advice is available from the Head of Service, Looked After Children, Family Placement Team Managers and the Safeguarding Unit. Other expert input is sought as necessary.

Subject to the requirements of legislation and guidance on the disclosure of records the Form F assessment report is shared with the applicant/s. Information given in confidence by referees is not disclosed although referees are encouraged to share this with applicants where this will assist the assessment and decision making process. Applicants are entitled and encouraged to make their own written contributions to the Form F.

At the conclusion of the assessment process a final visit is made by a Family Placement Team Manager. This visit aims to ensure the fullest information is available to the Fostering Panel particularly on any issues that may prove problematic. It also serves as a quality control and feedback mechanism for the work of individual Family Placement Social Workers.

## **APPROVAL OF FOSTER CARERS**

All completed assessments of short term long term and short break foster carers are presented to the Fostering Panel for recommendation regarding the applicants' suitability to foster for Salford City Council. Assessments of long term foster carers for younger children are presented to the Adoption and Permanence Panel.

Both panels are made up of people who have knowledge and understanding of Fostering and/or professional expertise to offer. The Panels are constituted to meet the requirements of legislation and regulation. Both panels have chairs independent of Salford's Children's Services Directorate and many of the panel members are also required to be independent of the Directorate. The role of the panel is to consider each application and to make a recommendation as to whether or not the applicant is suitable to foster and, if so, how many children and what ages.

Applicants are invited to attend panel when their approval as foster carers is being considered.

The final decision regarding approval of foster carers is made by Head of Service, Looked After Children who is the agency decision maker. Written confirmation of the agency decision is sent to the applicant.

Applicants who are not considered suitable to foster have a right of appeal either by representation to the agency for their case to be reconsidered, or to an

independent body through the Independent Review Mechanism. The Independent Review Mechanism is operated by BAAF and allows access to a further panel who will make a new recommendation back to the agency for consideration.

All successful applicants are required to sign a Foster Carer Agreement, prior to their first placement, which sets out the respective responsibilities of the foster carer and the Children's Services Directorate.

## **FOSTER CARER TRAINING**

The Fostering Service is committed to providing a comprehensive programme of high quality training for foster carers to assist and support them in the task of caring for children.

### **Preparation training**

All foster carers are required to attend preparation training as part of the assessment and approval process.

### **Rolling Programme**

All approved foster carers have access to a rolling programme of training. This is intended to build on the knowledge gained during the preparation groups and to enable foster carers to develop their skills as they gain practical experience of fostering.

The rolling programme contains 9 modules over a 2 year period. Each module comprises 2 sessions. Both sessions must be attended for the module to be completed. Priority for attendance at rolling programme sessions is given to general/recruited foster carers who have not completed the programme.

#### *Year one:*

- Current issues in Fostering Practice
- Health of looked after children
- Education of Looked after children
- Managing Behaviour
- Moving On
- Valuing Diversity

#### *Year two:*

- Contact and working with birth family
- Safe caring
- Communication and Listening

### **Additional Training**

A range of other training sessions is provided each year based on training needs information gathered through the supervision and review process.

Priority for attendance at these sessions is given to general/recruited foster carers who have completed the rolling programme modules.

Recent topics have included: Drug and Substance misuse awareness, Attachment and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

### **Specialist training**

Training is also provided at a more advanced level or to meet the needs of specific foster carers. Attendance at specialist training is by nomination or invitation and is targeted at specific foster carers for whom it is most relevant.

The STARLAC service regularly provides Positive Parenting groups for carers with children both under and over ten (Webster Stratton and Teen Triple P).

Foster carers have also had the opportunity to attend a 10 session “Speakeasy” course. This assists carers to become more comfortable in discussing sexual health and sex education matters with their birth and foster children. A numbers of these carers completed additional work which enables them to qualify for accreditation.

Foster carers on the Treatment Foster Care or Intensive Fostering Schemes are provided with specialist training prior to placement.

### **NVQ**

The Fostering Service is committed to supporting foster carers in obtaining the NVQ Level 3 in Child Care. A number of foster carers are supported through the award each year through a partnership with Stockport College. Foster carers who have completed all the rolling programme sessions and have demonstrated a continuing commitment to their own skills development are eligible to apply.

### **Directorate/City Council Training**

Foster carers are also given the opportunity to attend training or briefing sessions provided by the Directorate/City Council.

### **Individual Training**

A range of materials is available within the Family Placement Team to help foster carers expand their knowledge and develop their skills either independently or with the assistance of their Family Placement Social Worker, a family placement support worker or a more experienced foster carer.

Attendance at training is an expectation of all foster carers and forms part of the Foster Carer Agreement. The Fostering Service aims to make training accessible to all foster carers by presenting sessions at a variety of times including daytime and evening sessions. Foster carers are entitled to claim their travelling expenses.

The Directorate has a Payment for Skills scheme which links reward payments to training and ability. Details of the scheme and its criteria are contained in a separate Foster Care Allowances and Fees Guidance booklet

### **Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Standards for Foster Carers**

In May 2007 the CWDC launched the Training, Support & Development Standards for Foster Carers. Since April 2008 all fostering services are expected to be implementing the standards and must ensure that Foster Carers have access to pre-approval training, induction and continuing professional development.

The Standards and Training Framework build on the good practice that has been developed by Foster Care providers, and are being implemented as part of a national strategy to give Foster Carers better access to training and development, and to help children achieve the five outcomes in Every Child Matters.

The Standards are designed to:

- Equip Foster Carers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high quality care for the children and young people they look after.
- Ensure that all Foster Carers are given the necessary help to develop knowledge and skills to carry out their job as Foster Carers and appropriate opportunities for career development.

All new foster carers approved by any Fostering agency must demonstrate that they meet the CWDC Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards within twelve months of their approval to foster children and young people.

All existing approved Foster Carers are expected to complete the Standards and gain the CWDC Certificate of Successful Completion by April 2011.

In Salford both newly approved and existing foster carers have begun to work towards completion of the standards and receipt of the certificate. We remain on target for general carers approved from April 08 to achieve the standards within 12 to 18 months. We are committed to ensuring we provide the support and training foster carers need to gain their certificate.

### **SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS**

#### **Family Placement Social Worker**

Each general/recruited foster carers is supervised by a named, qualified Family Placement Social Worker whose role is to provide supervision and co-ordinate support.

The supervising Family Placement Social Worker visits the foster carer in their home regularly at a frequency agreed with the foster carer and in consultation

with the Family Placement Social Worker's Team Manager. The aim is for all general/recruited foster carers to be visited monthly. However, it is recognised that caseloads do not permit this in all cases. Priority is therefore given to short term foster carers, newly approved foster carers, foster carers with exemptions and any foster carers where there are difficulties within the placement.

The primary responsibility of the Family Placement Social Worker is to the welfare of the child in placement. However, the Family Placement Social Worker has a key role in assisting the foster carer to develop the skills and knowledge to provide good quality care, to express their views appropriately and to work in partnership in caring for the child and planning for the child's future. The Family Placement Social Worker acts as a link with the Directorate and will give advice on departmental policy and procedure, foster carer finance issues and the expectations of foster carers.

### **Family Placement Support Worker**

The role of the Family Placement Support Worker is to provide emotional and practical support to specific foster carers in their task of looking after children. A family placement support worker is often linked to foster carers caring for a number of children together or if a placement is in difficulty or fragile. Involvement with other foster carers is based on need and will usually be for a time limited period or a specific piece of work. Practical assistance with child care is provided when appropriate and when workloads permit.

### **Duty Family Placement Social Worker**

The Family Placement Team operates a duty system from 8.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday. A Family Placement Social Worker is available to answer calls from foster carers and deal with emergencies.

### **Child's Social worker**

Social workers for children in placements have an important role to play in supporting foster carers. They provide essential information about the child and the family background, inform the foster carer about the plans for the child and involve them in the care planning process. It is an important part of their role to represent the wishes and feelings of the child especially where the child is very young and less able to do this him/herself.

The child's social worker carries out statutory requirements in relation to the child including statutory visits, ensuring reviews and medicals take place and that the plans for the child are progressed without delay.

### **Support Groups**

The Fostering Service provides 2 area based support groups in the Walkden and Eccles areas which meet monthly during the daytime. Support groups are facilitated by Family Placement Support Workers and are available to all approved foster carers.

## **Peer support**

Foster carers are encouraged to form supportive links with one another and share their learning and experience of caring for difficult young people. Family Placement Social Workers take an active role in facilitating contact between foster carers and identifying contacts between foster carers that may prove beneficial.

There is a buddying scheme to link identified experienced foster carers with new foster carers. Experienced carers have been trained for this role and we aim to link carers together before a child arrives in placement. This link continues for a minimum of six months. Buddies provide a valuable point of contact for queries and advice.

## **STARLAC project**

The STARLAC team provide clinical psychology and therapeutic social work services for looked after children in Salford. The project works with foster carers and social workers to improve mental health and promote permanency for children and young people. Advice is available to foster carers about dealing with behavioural and attachment difficulties and to promote the stability of the placement. The STARLAC Team also provides regular training for foster carers to develop their parenting skills with follow up support groups.

## **Cornerstone**

The Cornerstone Project is a partnership between Barnardo's and the Children's Services Directorate and has been developed to provide a therapeutic service to children, their families and carers where there has been an experience of sexual abuse. Consultation and support can be offered to foster carers caring for sexually abused children or to help them deal with the impact of abuse on their family. The Project also offers training to foster carers as part of the rolling programme.

## **Brief Intervention Team (BIT)**

The Brief Intervention Team works with children aged 7-17 years together with their parents or carers in order to prevent family or placement breakdown. The team offers a crisis service aimed at resolving problems over a 6-week period. Support can be offered to foster carers to try to resolve issues that may result in a placement breakdown.

## **Education of looked after children**

The main responsibility for the education of looked after children and young people within the Children's Services Directorate lies with the Virtual School . This comprises the virtual school head who works with a wide range of other professionals and agencies to improve outcomes for LACYP and care leavers

These professionals include school staff, the Care & Education Support Team, the Principal Manager for LAC, social work teams and their managers, the Next Steps Leaving Care Team, STARLAC (mental health), the 3D Team, fostering managers and team, the family placement team carers, and the Corporate Parenting Officer. They work collaboratively to deliver the operational goals of the virtual school: to improve attendance, to raise attainment and accelerate progress, and to promote participation in positive activities in and out of school.

The attendance, attainment and progress of Looked After Children is monitored very closely to support a wide range of interventions including reading support, 1:1 tuition, additional GCSE tuition, additional vocational provision, and devising 'education other than at school' packages, and the provision of laptops. Personal Education Allowances also fund positive activities in and out of school including music, art, drama, sport, educational visits and adventure holidays. LACYP in Salford schools are able to access music tuition, including the provision of instruments, without charge.

Through the Care Matters Grant the majority of Looked After Children in the 11-18 age group have laptops with internet access. Currently the Home Access scheme is being promoted to provide laptops and internet access for the 5+ group. Safe access to the internet is provided through Safenet and e-safe solutions. Foster carers are offered training to improve their own ICT skills and to assist them in supporting their children's school work. They have also had access to e-safety training.

Looked After Children in Salford Schools are able to access music tuition without charge.

### **Health Needs Team**

Information, advice and support regarding children's health issues are available to foster carers from the Health Co-ordinator for looked after children and the Looked After Children's nurse. The Health Needs team also provides direct input on health promotion to young people who are reluctant to access health services.

A multi-agency Health Protocol for looked after children is in place.

### **Leisure activities**

Trips and activities are organised for children in foster care and their foster families by the Family Placement Support Workers e.g. theatre outings, trips to theme parks and places of interest, watersports days etc.

Foster carers are eligible for Leisure passports to allow free or reduced price access to the City Council's Leisure Centres.

In some circumstances financial or practical help is available to foster carers to support children in pursuing leisure interests.

## **Emergency Duty Team**

The Children's Services and Community, Health and Social Care Directorates jointly operate an out of hours Emergency Duty Social Work Team. This service is available to foster carers in a crisis situation where immediate intervention is necessary to ensure safety.

The Focus and 3D Treatment Foster Care Teams operates a separate 24 hour on call system for foster carers within the schemes.

## **Toy Library**

The Family Placement Team has an extensive Toy Library that can be accessed by foster carers. Family Placement Support Workers are available to identify and supply age appropriate toys for loan to foster carers.

## **Equipment**

Essential equipment to help with caring for children is supplied to foster carers on loan through the Fostering Service.

## **Financial Support**

All foster carers receive a fostering allowance intended to cover the cost of looking after the child. General/recruited foster carers also receive a reward payment based on the skills they bring to the fostering task. 3D and Focus foster carers receive a higher level of financial allowances. These include a skills payment (aimed to complete with employment), paid holidays and regular respite. A range of other allowances is available for specific purposes. Full details are contained in the Foster Care Allowances and Fees booklet issued to all foster carers on approval.

A financial package of support has been agreed for all general/recruited foster carers who are granted a special guardianship order in respect of a child previously 'looked after'. Foster carers for children aged 3 years and over, who are approved as special guardians will continue to receive the equivalent payment to the boarding out allowance and the relevant skills payment. This payment will not be means tested, and will continue for the duration of the child's minority. Full details of the financial package of support available to former foster carers is included in the leaflet 'Information for professionals and foster carers – special guardianship support services'.

## **Additional Support for 3D and Focus foster carers**

3D and Focus foster carers are required to care for children with complex needs and therefore receive additional support. This includes:

- Access to a qualified staff member on a 24 hour 7 days a week basis

- Intensive and focused support from a multi-disciplinary team, which includes a family placement social worker, teacher, psychologist and support worker.
- Regular respite
- Weekly (3D) or fortnightly (Focus) foster carer meetings to receive advice and support
- Weekly visits from a family placement social worker
- Training in behaviour management techniques

### **Information**

The Directorate is committed to ensuring foster carers receive all the relevant, available information to enable them to care for children appropriately.

### **Salford Foster Care Association**

Salford Foster Care Association is an independent body set up and run by Salford foster carers with the support of the Children's Services Directorate. The Association operates from a local office base and can also be contacted by telephone and e-mail. The aim is to ensure the views of foster carers are represented and that foster carers can act as advocates for the service they provide.

The Foster Care Association provides independent support and advice to foster carers including support where there has been a complaint or allegation. It also acts as a consultation group for service developments and feedback. The Association meets regularly with key staff in the Directorate and elected members.

The Children's Services Directorate is committed to working in partnership with the Foster Care Association in maintaining good retention of foster carers and ensuring greater inclusion of foster carers in service planning and development.

*Chair* Carmel Stott  
*Vice Chair* Chris Todd

### **Foster Care Forum**

The Foster Care Forum comprises representatives from the Foster Care Association together with managers from across Children's Services. It meets quarterly to consider issues of common concern with the aim of improving communication and consultation between foster carers and Directorate staff.

### **LONG TERM FOSTER CARE**

The Family Placement team is committed to identifying safe and appropriate long term foster placements for children with a plan for long term fostering, approved by one of Salford's panels.

Once a plan for long term fostering has been approved by panel, and agreed at Court a family finding meeting is held to draw up a profile of the individual child, and to agree the detail of the search that will be undertaken.

Every effort is made to identify a family from within our own resources, either general foster carers or Focus foster carers, as outcomes are better for children placed with in-house foster carers.

Once a family is identified a matching meeting is held, to consider the needs of the child and how the identified family is able to meet them. The potential link is then scrutinised by either fostering panel or adoption and permanence panel, depending upon the age of the child being considered.

From February 2009, for each new long term foster placement there will be a long term support plan drawn up prior to the placement being made. The support plan will be presented to panel at the point at which the link is made. The support plan will give consideration to all the child's needs and clearly identify how the needs will be met, and the additional support required. The support plan is reviewed on an annual basis.

## **FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOSTER CARERS**

The Children's Services Directorate supports the view that living with family members is the preferred option for children who cannot be cared for by their birth parents, as long as the family members are safe and appropriate, and thoroughly assessed as able to meet the child's needs.

Some looked after children placed with family members approved as Family and Friends Foster carers. Research shows that the outcomes for these children are positive when the capacity of carers to meet children's needs is assessed carefully and support is provided.

A system is in place for approval of Regulation 38 Immediate Placements with friends or relatives by the Head of Service, Looked After Children.

Viability assessments are completed by the Family Placement Social Workers (Family and Friends) with the aim of ensuring that carers are fully aware of their role and responsibilities and of the assessment process and that any unsuitable applicants are screened out at the earliest opportunity. The aim is for the viability assessment to be undertaken prior to the placement whenever possible or within the first week that the child is placed.

Assessments of Family and Friends foster carers are carried out by the Family Placement Social Workers (Family and Friends) or by social workers on Children and Families Social Work Teams based on BAAF Form F2. A full range of safeguarding checks is carried out and the assessment is presented to the Fostering Panel or the Adoption and Permanence Panel as appropriate for recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.

When the assessment is undertaken by a Children's Social Worker a Family Placement Social Worker is available to offer advice during the assessment process and to ensure that, if the placement of child will be permanent, the family have fully considered the permanence issues.

Following approval a Family Placement Social Worker or Family Placement Support Worker is allocated to supervise and/or support the family and carry out the annual review.

Family and Friends foster carers have access to the rolling programme of training for foster carers, other appropriate training and all other forms of support. Specific training and information for Family and Friends foster carers is being developed.

## **REVIEW OF FOSTER CARERS**

Reviews of foster carers are carried out annually by the supervising Family Placement Social Worker.

The review process includes:

- Consideration of all matters required by regulation and standards
- Feedback from the foster carer
- Feedback from social workers for any children who have been in placement
- Feedback from young people in placement about the care they receive
- Completion of an annual Health and Safety Checklist
- Consideration of the foster carer's evidence of meeting identified standards to support progression through the levels of the Payment for Skills scheme
- Consideration of training needs
- Consideration of the continuing appropriateness of the foster carer's terms and remit of approval

All first reviews, reviews involving a change of registration and reviews involving skill level progression are presented to the Fostering Panel for recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. All other reviews are considered by a Review Sub Panel comprising 3 members of the Fostering panel including the Chair or Vice Chair.

## **COMPLAINTS**

The Children's Services Directorate welcomes complaints, comments and suggestions about services from service users, their families, carers or

representatives. The complaints procedure recognises the vulnerability of complainants and the need to resolve complaints at the most informal level possible. Foster carers clearly entitled to use the complaints procedure if they feel they cannot resolve a difficulty with the individuals concerned or their managers.

A simplified procedure is available to children and young people who can fill in a prepaid card and send it to the Customer First Officer.

In the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 the service received 2 complaints, both of which were resolved at Stage 1.

The Customer First Officer, Diana Dawson, is based in Minerva House and can be contacted on by telephone on 0161 778 0480 or by e [mail to: diana.dawson@salford.gov.uk](mailto:diana.dawson@salford.gov.uk)

### **CHILDREN'S GUIDE**

A Children's Guide to the Fostering Service is available.

### **OFSTED**

The Fostering Service is inspected by OFSTED who are also responsible for the investigation of complaints about the Fostering Service and can be contacted as follows:

E Mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Telephone: 08456 404045

In writing: Ofsted,  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square,  
Manchester,  
M2 7LA

Reports on the Inspection of the Fostering Service are available to download from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

There is a Children's Rights Director within OFSTED whose role is to make sure that children and young people's views are heard. He can be contacted as follows:

The Office of the Children's Rights Director  
Ofsted  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

Tel: 0800 528 0731

There is an online contact form available on the website

[www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)