

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES  
DIRECTORATE OF LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**FOSTERING SERVICE**  
**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

This Statement of Purpose relates to the Fostering Service provided by Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Prevention and Safeguarding Services. It is a requirement under The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Statement of Purpose is formally approved by the elected members. Furthermore, it should be reviewed, updated and modified, where necessary, at least annually.

**1. Aims and Objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the Fostering Service**

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (RBK) aims to provide a full and comprehensive Fostering Service that is consistent with best practice and national and departmental standards and requirements.

The primary aim is to provide a range of family placements suitable for meeting the diverse needs of looked after children and young people whose needs and wishes, welfare and safety are at the heart of the fostering service. The ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children and young people in care and the particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when placement decisions are made.

The secondary aim is to provide consistently high quality services and support to Kingston foster carers by employing sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.

To achieve these aims the Fostering Service has the following objectives:

- To have in place an ongoing, monitored recruitment strategy to recruit foster carers. Recruitment campaigns are targeted to attract carers who can meet the needs of children and young people of all ages, including those with disabilities or other specific needs.
- To deliver planned initial and further training courses that meet the requirements of the Children's Workforce Development Council. Foster carers are required to undertake training to develop the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.
- To maintain a carer retention strategy ensuring that a wide range of support services are in place such that approved foster carers feel valued as part of the Fostering Service and their services as carers are retained.
- To achieve an annual net increase in the number of approved RBK foster carers to reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agency placements, as a proportion of the care population..
- To expand fostering placements to cater for young people with challenging behaviour who might otherwise be placed in residential placements.

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- Developing foster placements that can offer a placement for a teenage mother and babies needing placements together.
- To promote the educational achievement of looked after children and young people by ensuring that Kingston foster carers provide them with every opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.
- To promote good health and fulfilling personal relationships of looked after children and young people by ensuring that foster carers help children and young people placed with them maintain good health and make productive use of their leisure time.
- To ensure that Kingston foster carers have access to specialist workers in the fields of education, substance abuse, health (including sexual health) and mental health for advice and support in managing the particular needs of looked after children and young people in their care.
- To maintain a competitive, annually reviewed fostering fees and allowance structure, based on nationally recommended rates, ensuring all payments are paid on time.
- To ensure that staff employed by the Borough have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to meet the demands of the work they do. All staff are given regular opportunities for training and developing their skills and are regularly supervised, monitored and appraised.

## **2. Principles and Standards of Care**

As a service provided by RBK Prevention and Safeguarding Services, the principles upon which the Fostering Service operates are based on the five Every Child Matters outcomes for all children enshrined in the Children Act 2004 and the Council's six Strategic Aims as set out in the Policy Programme.

The five outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well-being

The Strategic Aims are:

- Working in Partnership
- Investing in Children and Young People
- Caring for the Environment
- Enhancing Quality of Life
- Putting People First
- Delivering Improvement

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The Council expects its foster carers to comply with the requirements of the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards (Section 23, Care Standards Act 2000). In summary the Council requires carers:

- To provide every opportunity for children and young people in their care to achieve their maximum potential in terms of educational achievement, maintaining good health, experiencing fulfilling personal relationships and making productive use of their leisure time.
- To ensure that young people who have been looked after by foster carers enter the adult world as socially responsible and economically active citizens.
- To provide a secure home for children and young people in their care, endeavouring to make it an enjoyable experience with sufficient choices and challenges on offer designed to equip children to manage their own lives as age appropriate.
- To take positive steps to promote and value children's cultural heritage.

The Foster Carer Handbook is supplied to each carer and is regularly reviewed. It provides a full description of the Fostering Service, summaries of local policies and practical advice about how to provide care of the highest quality. Carers are given updates on policy and practice as they are implemented.

### **3. The Services and Facilities provided by the Fostering Service**

#### **3.1 Management Structure**

The Royal Borough of Kingston Fostering Service is located within the Adoption and Fostering Service. The Team is managed, on a day-to-day basis, by the Adoption and Fostering Service Manager. A Practice Supervisor deputises for the Manager, oversees the Fostering Duty service and supervises all the fostering supervising social workers.

- The Adoption and Fostering Service is located within the Looked After Children's Services section.
- The Looked After Children's Services Section is a service group within Prevention and Safeguarding Services, managed by the Interim Head of Safeguarding Services who is also the named Fostering Provider.
- Safeguarding currently forms part of the Learning and Children's Services Directorate, managed by the Interim Strategic Director of Learning and Children's Services.
- The Overview Commission of elected members examines and reviews the activity of the Service through receiving the appropriate reports.
- As a department of the Local Authority, Learning and Children's Services operate within the framework of regulation and statutory guidance that applies to all Local Authorities. Prevention and Safeguarding Services also make annual returns to

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the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required by the Annual Performance Assessment.

### 3.2 The Services it provides

The Council's policy is that for children and young people who cannot remain with their own family and come into their care, the preferred option is a substitute family.

The Fostering Service actively recruits, trains, assesses, supervises, supports and reviews RBK foster carers and maintains the fostering service for the Borough.

Foster placements are provided for children and young people with RBK approved foster carers wherever possible. If no suitable placement is identified, placements with neighbouring boroughs or Independent Fostering Agencies may be commissioned.

Where a child or young person needs to be taken "into care" in an emergency and family or friends come forward to undertake this task, then the Fostering Service will advise and, if appropriate, undertake a viability assessment to consider the proposed placement. The service monitors the placement under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Services Regulations and carries out an emergency assessment if the length of the placement requires this. The Service aims to support kinship carers and subject to on-going development is a range of support for them.

The Fostering Service provides the following types of placements:

- **Emergency placements**

This service provides emergency care, immediate safety, security and comfort when there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances and no suitable arrangements can be made with relatives or family friends.

- **Task Centred Fostering**

These placements are usually planned periods of care to enable desired changes in family circumstances to occur. They include:

- ◇ Looking after a child when a parent is ill or imprisoned.
- ◇ Providing a holiday placement for a child attending a residential school.
- ◇ Assessment of a child's needs to assist longer-term planning.
- ◇ Rehabilitating a child to his/her family following a breakdown in relationships at home.
- ◇ Helping to prepare a child for long-term fostering or adoption.
- ◇ Pre-adoption baby placements.

- **Short Term Break (Respite) Foster Care**

A series of planned short break care arrangements to provide relief to the birth family and /or quality experiences meeting the needs of disabled children and other vulnerable children is a particular feature of this service. Short break

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arrangements also provide foster carers with a break when either looking after a child in a long-term placement or circumstances require.

- **Permanent / Long Term Fostering** (in RBK the terms are used interchangeably)

When children cannot return home and when adoption is not the right option, permanent fostering provides an alternative form of permanent substitute care for the duration of childhood. (These arrangements are considered by the Fostering Panel.)

### 4. Number, Relevant Qualifications and Experience of Staff on 30 September 2009

The Adoption and Fostering Service has a staffing equivalent of 11.1 full-time, permanent qualified Social Workers, including the Team Manager. On the 30 September there were 9.1 full-time equivalent social workers employed. A permanent full time Adoption Practice Supervisor joins the Team on 1 October 2009.

The Team is supported by a staffing equivalent of 3.7 full time business support staff. A full time Publicity and Recruitment Officer, a 0.7 full time equivalent Finance Officer, a half time Adoption and Fostering Panels Administrator and 1.5 full time equivalent administrative officers. On the 30 September 2009 a locum administrative officer was covering a full time vacancy.

The Fostering Service comprises a full time Fostering Practice Supervisor and 4.4 full time equivalent fostering supervising social workers. Present staff are all at Senior Practitioner level. On the 30 September 2009 there is a full time fostering social worker vacancy and interviews have been set up to recruit to this post.

The Adoption and Fostering Service also employs 2 named sessional qualified fostering Social Workers as required. Qualified Agency workers may be engaged to cover vacancies as necessary.

All social work staff, including sessional staff, are qualified social workers and are registered social workers with the GSCC.

The Team Manager has a social work qualification and a Diploma in Management Studies level 4.

The Fostering Practice Supervisor holds PQ 1 and PQ Childcare. One full time and a part time Fostering Senior Practitioner hold PQ1, the 0.8 FTE Fostering Senior Practitioner holds the PQ Consolidation award,

Consideration is still being given to the best way to provide more short breaks for children with disabilities. Consideration is being given to either a new post sited in the Disabled Children's Team, devoted to recruiting, assessing foster carers and acting as supervising social worker for carers providing short breaks for children with disabilities or to commissioning an Independent Fostering Agency to undertake this recruiting and managing this provision for Kingston.

Staff are regularly supervised. All social work staff are suitably experienced in the fields of Childcare social work and Family Placement work.

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### 5. Number of Foster Carers

On 30 September 2009 there were 42 approved RBK foster carer households including 10 Regulation 38 (kinship) foster carer households. In addition there were 2 Regulation 38 (kinship) foster carer households under assessment, where 4 children were in placement.

### 6. Number of Children placed

On 30 September 2009 there were 65 children and young people placed in RBK foster homes, of whom 16 had been placed under Regulation 38 with family or friends carers, (including the 4 above) and with 7 ongoing respite series of placements but with children not necessarily in placement on that day. A further 22 young people were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies. No children were placed with foster carers approved by another Local Authority.

### 7. Complaints

**7.1** Wherever possible complaints are dealt with informally. Where appropriate, in the first instance, any complaint by or against a foster carer will be dealt with on a problem-solving basis. There is a written procedure given to all foster carers included in the Foster Carer Handbook. The Council has both corporate and Children's Services complaints procedures that operate if no resolution can be achieved at the problem solving stage.

**7.2** **Where a complaint against a foster carer constitutes a child protection allegation this is dealt with as a child protection enquiry and is investigated under the procedures of the Local Authority where the carer lives.**

**7.3** The Council has a system for monitoring any incident involving verbal threats, aggression or violence to foster carers. Foster carers are advised to notify their Supervising Social Worker, or Team Manager in their absence, if they experience such an incident. This is written in the Foster Carer Handbook.

**7.4** There is a leaflet specifically designed for children and young people in care which advises them what to do if they have a complaint.

**7.5** There is a leaflet 'A Guide for Service Users to Guildhall 2' the Fostering Service is sited in Guildhall 2. This advises service users how to complain and signposts to information on the complaints procedure (see 7.6).

**7.6** There is a Complaints leaflet specifically designed, which is given to service users at prescribed times and information available on the website; [www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk)

**7.7** RBK employs a Participation and Development Officer, who provides an advocacy service for Kingston looked after children and children and young people living in the Borough.

**7.8** Complaints are logged/monitored in the Fostering Service Complaints Log.

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7.9 During the year 2008/09 the Fostering Service received the following numbers of complaints:

- Informal (stage 1) 0
- Formal (stage 2) 0
- Review Panel (stage 3) 0

7.10 Informal – the outcomes of the informal complaints received were:

- Closed after satisfactory conclusion 0
- Ongoing 0

7.11 Formal

No formal complaints were made

7.12 Review Panel

No review Panels took place

## 8. The Procedures and Processes for Recruiting, Approving, Training, Supporting and Reviewing Carers

### Recruiting and Approving

8.1 The Fostering Service employs a full time Recruitment and Publicity Officer who is responsible for co-ordinating campaigns to recruit foster carers. A variety of recruitment methods are used including the Kingston website, articles and advertisements in local newspapers, posters in the town centre, publicity leaflets and local radio adverts.

There are information stands at community events and public venues and the recruitment and publicity officer visit community groups.

8.2 As well as responding to targeted campaigns, some people refer themselves directly throughout the year. Information and a foster carer application form is also available on our website

8.3 The Fostering Service Regulations 2002 (Reg 20, 6 and 7) states that anyone working for the fostering provider is precluded from being a foster carer. For RBK this means anyone working in Prevention and Safeguarding Services and anyone that trains Kingston foster carers.

8.4 The Kingston website enables those interested to respond on line. The Fostering Duty Officer then contacts them to discuss further.

8.5 Following a telephone discussion with the Duty Officer a fostering information pack is sent.

8.6 A home visit by the Recruitment Officer, or on occasion an office interview with a fostering worker, then if appropriate an invitation to attend the initial training course, "Skills to Foster" are the next steps.

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- 8.7** Usually after successful completion of the initial training course prospective foster carers are invited to meet with the Team manager and Fostering Practice Supervisor. If invited to make a formal application once this is received a fostering worker is allocated to undertake the Home Study assessment report. Occasionally an application will be accepted at the time of attending Skills to Foster course and the home study started in parallel.
- 8.8** The service aims to complete assessments within 4-6 months. The Home Study report is then considered by RBK's Fostering Panel. The Panel makes a recommendation to the Fostering Service Decision Maker (the Interim Directorate Head of Safeguarding Services) as to the suitability to foster and the approval status.

### **Supporting, Training and Reviewing Post Approval**

- 8.9** On approval foster carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker (SSW) from the fostering workers in the Adoption and Fostering Team. The Supervising Social Worker monitors the foster carer's performance and current placements, advises on training, during the first year of fostering advises on learning and training undertaken in order to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's workbook and provides advice, information and support. As well as regular home visits and meetings, the SSW undertakes at least one unannounced visit annually. A comprehensive Annual Review of the foster carer is undertaken and is taken back to panel after the first year and then triennially.
- 8.9** Fostering workers organise various support groups for foster carers and their families including a monthly day time support group and a group that meets at least three times a year for 'children who foster', the Fostizzles Group. An approved foster carer can also be referred to the Buddy Scheme where they are linked with an existing carer to support them. They also become members of the Fostering Network.
- 8.10** The Publicity and Recruitment Officer organises regular retention events for foster carers and fostering staff, some involving the fostering family, such as meals. A boat trip, several discos and line dancing.
- 8.11** Shortly after approval or during assessment foster carers are required to undertake basic Child Protection Training. Groups of 3 or 4 attend an induction session with the Adoption and Fostering Service and a meeting with the Team Manager is arranged.
- 8.12** There is a robust training programme for foster carers and full time carers are required to complete foundation training, hopefully within the first year of a fostering career (longer for respite foster carers). This has been reviewed to comply with the Children's Workforce Development requirements. Training sessions are held on a rolling programme at a variety of times to suit all circumstances. There is some joint training with fostering workers and social workers.
- 8.13** Further training includes supporting carers to undertake NVQ and specific courses, some alongside Learning and Children's Services social workers.

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**8.14** Out-of-Hours Foster Carer telephone support is available via the children's emergency team social worker or one of the children and young people's service social care managers.

This Statement of Purpose is subject to annual review and endorsement by the Lead Member for Children and Young People. It is also reflected in the Team Plan of the Fostering Service.

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**Approval Sheet  
Fostering Service Statement of Purpose**

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**Duncan Clark**  
Interim Strategic Director  
Learning and Children's Services - the Registered Fostering Provider

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Date

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**Councillor Patricia Bamford**  
Executive Member for  
Children and Young People's Services

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Date