



Luton Council

Fostering Statement of Purpose

April 2020 - March 2021

FOREWORD

Luton Council is committed to provide the best possible Fostering Service that offers safe, stable and stimulating foster care. This supportive environment will ensure that the children and young people are valued, supported and encouraged to grow, develop and maximise their potential as individuals.

We strive to comply with the principles outlined in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011, the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and other relevant legislation as outlined in the [Legislation and Policy Framework](#) section below.

To maximise the outcomes for our children and young people looked after we are investing in the training and support to our valuable foster carers, central to this is the Training, Support and Development Induction Standards for Foster Care.

This Statement of Purpose details the Councils (as corporate parents) aims and objectives; the way we recruit, approve, train and support foster carers; the rich diversity of our foster care service and the other services that support fostering and foster carers; and the staffing and management structure of the Fostering Service.

The Service monitors all aspects of the work including the Fostering Panel, all of which underpin the provision of an efficient and dynamic service.

Through the Fostering Service Luton Council aims to place children in care in families locally wherever possible where they will be supported to achieve their full potential.

The Fostering Service and its work are an integral part of the overarching Sufficiency Strategy for children looked after by Luton Council.

INTRODUCTION

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services place requirements on each Fostering Service provider to produce a written Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose should set out the aims and objectives of the service, alongside the descriptions of the services and facilities it provides. This document sets out the Statement of Purpose for Luton Council's Fostering Service. It outlines the systems and provisions in place, which aim to ensure the very best outcomes for children in foster care in our borough.

This Statement of Purpose links with the Children's Guide which is provided to all children, subject to the child's age and understanding, at the point of admission to care. This document should also be read in conjunction with the Children's Pledge, which describes the Council's commitment to its children and young people living in care.

The Statement of Purpose aims to provide information to a wide audience, including: staff members, foster carers and their families, children and young people placed with Luton Council foster carers, the children's parents' professionals from partner agencies, and the general public. A copy of the Statement of Purpose is available on the Council's tri.x procedures. The information it contains is reviewed regularly and amended at least annually.

LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Luton Council's Fostering Service meets the requirements of:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011)
- Family and Friends Guidance (2010)
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol. 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Care Planning and Fostering Regulations 2015
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers (CWDC 2007)

Alongside national legislation, Luton Council's Fostering Service also has clear operational policies and guidelines to ensure consistent and high quality standards of service delivery.

1 SECTION ONE

1.1 Background information

Luton became a Unitary Authority in 1997. According to the latest data from the Office for National Statistics, Luton's population is now 214,700¹ (in the 2011 Census this was 203,650). Of these approximately 62,100 are children and young people under the age of 19, which is 28.9% of the total population in the area. 46% of the overall population of Luton are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Origin or non-white² and there are over 100 languages and dialects are spoken in the town.

The population of Luton is projected to increase from 203,650 in 2011 to 254,050 in 2031 and to 274,250 in 2041 an increase of 35% in 30 years. The older population groups are projected to have the highest population percentage increase but all age groups population are projected to increase³.

1.2 Our vision

Luton Council is committed to provide early intervention services to support children and their families at home, endeavouring as far as possible to keep the family unit together. Should the need for alternative accommodation arise in order to protect and safeguard children, the first priority will be to explore family members and connected persons (i.e. someone the child already knows), if such an arrangement is assessed to be appropriate.

Luton Council aims to place children and young people with locally approved foster carers, whose suitability has been assessed by the Fostering Service. Over the last year Luton Council has developed and invested in a dedicated and comprehensive Fostering Service that is focused on meeting the diverse needs of children who Become Looked After (BLA) in Luton, and aims to exceed the quality standards required by statute.

¹ Luton Mid-Year Population Estimates

<https://www.luton.gov.uk/Environment/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Planning/Observatory/Mid-year-population-estimate.pdf>

² LUTON BOROUGH PROFILE 2011 CENSUS DATA

<https://www.luton.gov.uk/Environment/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Planning/Census/2011%20census%20data/LUTON%20BOROUGH%20PROFILE.pdf>

³ Luton Population Projections 2011-2041, November 2015

<https://www.luton.gov.uk/Environment/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Planning/Census/Population%20Projection%20Scenarios.pdf>

Our vision is to provide a safe, stable and caring environment which surpasses required standards in meeting the needs of all looked after children and young people, enabling them to realise their potential and to enhance their life opportunities.

We endeavour to place children and young people locally in order to facilitate contact with their birth family, preserve ties with their community and support existing friendships, as well as continuity in attending the same school.

We pledge to work in an open and accessible way: treating children and young people, their families and fostering families with fairness and respect, as well as promoting equality.

We are committed to working in partnership with children and young people and foster carers: actively seeking their views through the young people's panel and carers consultation.

We apply a partnership approach to providing services to foster carers, children and young people and their families; which includes health, education and other agencies.

1.3 Aims of the service

To provide:

- a skilled and flexible service that is responsive to the wide range of assessed needs of children and young people who require foster placements
- a variety of assessment options (including general, connected person, SGO) to secure suitable placements responsive to the children and young people's care plan
- high standards of care in a nurturing family environment for all children and young people, where their individuality is recognised and valued, and these needs are meeting a positive manner
- children and young people with stable placements that allow them to fulfil their potential in every aspect of their lives; whilst giving respect to and promoting their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds
- children in Private Fostering arrangements that are safeguarded and supported
- consideration for the gender, sexuality, disability and heritage of children and young people when considering making placements
- a multi-agency partnership approach that can progress the needs of children in care and their foster carers, and includes education authorities, health and social care trusts and other agencies
- a service consisting of managers, practitioners and support staff who are appropriately qualified, DBS checked, registered with their professional regulatory councils, and supported in all areas of professional development

- a recruitment strategy for foster carers which encompasses and promotes a diversity of backgrounds thus allowing the service to appropriately match placements for children and young people not just with general carers a commitment to develop and provide ongoing training, learning and development opportunities to all foster carers and their family members
- a service which offers continued support to foster carers balanced with appropriate safeguarding and quality assurance, values and respects the work they do and actively promotes retention

1.4 Objectives of the Service

- To ensure the Fostering Service has a detailed knowledge of the needs profile of looked after children such as age, disability, ethnicity and location that will inform a targeted foster carer recruitment strategy.
- To ensure there is a choice of high quality foster placements available to meet the complex and diverse needs of children and young people in care.
- To raise awareness in the community about Private Fostering, have robust assessments of suitability of such arrangements and offer appropriate level of guidance and support.
- To ensure foster carers are supported and supervised regularly by a suitably qualified social worker; and receive suitable preparation through training that enables them to respond positively to the needs of children placed with them.
- To ensure all approved foster carers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and know how to seek advice or support if needed.
- To have clear processes and procedures in place to ensure consistency across the service and promote equality.
- To have clear processes and procedures in place that safeguards against radicalisation and sexual exploitation of children and young people.
- To create a skilled workforce by promoting team and personal development and training for both staff and foster carers.
- Placement decisions that take into account the following (whenever possible): identified needs of the child and young person (including race, language, culture, religion, gender orientation) and carers ability to meet them, as well as the children and young person's views, wishes and feelings.
- Siblings will be placed together whenever possible and appropriate.
- To facilitate good communication and development of effective working relationships between all parties in the child's life; in order to promote his/her physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.

- To ensure there is meaningful consultation with children and young people, carers and staff, using a variety of methods to encourage participation.
- To agree and implement strategies that will ensure the retention and continued support of foster carers and connected persons carers. This will include working in partnership with social work teams, therapeutic services, Health and Education
- To implement a flexible staffing strategy to explore the use of suitably qualified staff to ensure continued support to foster carers. This strategy also includes the professional development and supervision of staff within the Fostering Service.
- To develop strategies to improve collective responsibility for the placement of Luton children and ensure all parts of the Children and Learning Directorate and other partner agencies understand the core function of the Fostering Service and how they can contribute to achieving this. All staff have a clear role which ensures an effective delivery of the Fostering Service regulations and standards with the aim of achieving good outcomes for children and young people.
- To review the structure of the Fostering Service when necessary to ensure services are provided in the most efficient and timely way.

2 SECTION TWO

2.1 Structure of the service

The Fostering Service sits within the Corporate Parenting Department of Luton Council and is made up of 2 key teams:

- Fostering Support and Development team
- Marketing Recruitment and Assessment team

Each Team is managed by a Team Manager and Deputy Team Manager who have the responsibility for the day to day running of each team and the Strategic Management lead is with the Service Manager, Corporate Parenting.

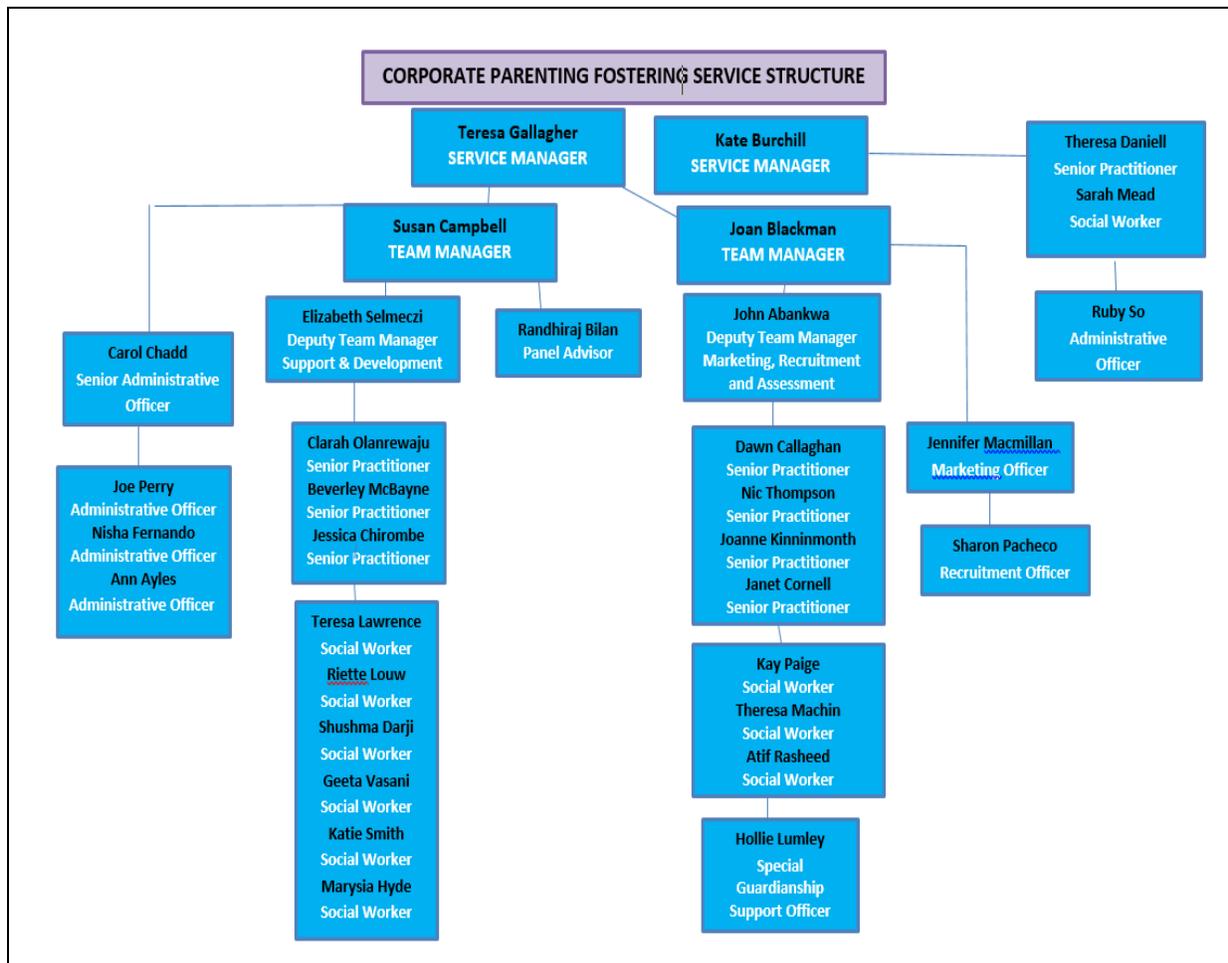


Figure 1: Current Structure of the Fostering Service and associated teams

2.1.1 The Fostering Support and Development Team

The Fostering Support and Development team consists of 1 Deputy Team Manager, 3 Senior Practitioners and 6 Social Workers. The Fostering Support and Development team provide guidance and support to Luton Council’s foster carers and ensure foster carers receive suitable training that enables them to respond positively to the needs of children placed in their care.

The key function of the work is to provide regular supervision and support to foster carers and their family. This includes , completing unannounced visits and foster carers’ household reviews yearly, liaising with other professionals and attend/participate in meetings regarding the children in placements, completing Personal Development Plans with each fostering household and deliver some of the fostering training courses. They facilitate support groups for the fostering households and co-ordinate special events for foster carers and their families. They also provide support to foster carers’ own children in the form of a ‘Children Who Foster’ group.

2.1.2 The Marketing, Recruitment and Assessment Team

The Marketing Recruitment and Assessment team consists of 1 Team Manager, 1 Deputy Team Manager, 4 Senior Practitioners, 3 Social Workers and 1 SGO Support Officer. This team undertakes all assessments of applicants wishing to be foster carers of any type and also facilitates the skills to foster carer training programmes for new applicants.

The primary functions of the team are to raise awareness of fostering in the community including Private Fostering, recruit both prospective foster carers, deliver 'Skills to Foster' preparation course for prospective foster carers, assess suitability of prospective carers General, PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence), Contract and Connected Persons and present the assessment report to the Fostering Panel and/ or court . The team also manages Private Fostering, completes assessments for Special Guardianship Orders and provides Post Order Support to approved Special Guardians.

The team also holds operational responsibility for Private Fostering and a dedicated senior social worker provides key focus and supervision in this area, raising awareness in the community, undertaking Private Fostering assessments of potential private foster carers, supervising and providing support as required and in line with Private Fostering Child Care guidance (CA 1989).

2.1.3 Fostering Service Key Supporting Roles

The Fostering Service also has key roles supporting these teams who report directly into the Fostering Service, 1 Fostering Panel Advisor (0.4 FTE), supervised by the Support & Development Team Manager, 1 Marketing Officer, supervised by the Marketing, Recruitment & Assessment Team Manager, 1 part-time Recruitment Officer, supervised by the Marketing Recruitment & Assessment Team Manager, 1 dedicated Senior Administrator and 3 administrators, supervised by the Support & Development Team Manager.

The roles all have key functions including managing the formal Panel process from start to finish, supporting the recruitment process as described above and supporting with the day-to day administration functions.

2.1.4 The Shared Care Team

The Shared Care team is based within the Children with Disabilities service based at London Road. The Shared Care Service is made up of 1 Senior Practitioner and Supervising Social Worker, 1 Supervising Social Worker and 1 Recruitment and Assessing Social Worker. All three posts report directly to the Children with Disabilities Service Manager and work closely with the Fostering teams.

The Shared Care Team recruits, assess and supports Carers to provide short break care to disabled children in Luton. This care can range from a few hours day care, to several overnights a week.

The carers are trained to meet the needs of the individual children by the Short Breaks Nurse and are provided with on going support and supervision by the Shared Care Team. The service works well and we currently have 18 carers supporting 40 children.

2.2 Service Provision

The Fostering Service provides family based placements with assessed and approved foster carers for children and young people who are not able to remain living with their birth family. Foster placements are primarily for children aged 0-18. Some young people who become adults at 18 may continue to live within a family placement under the 'Staying Put' scheme if their assessment recommends that they require support post 18 years.

The service offers foster placements for children and young people from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds with varying needs including: babies, young children persistent offenders, children with challenging behaviours, children with disabilities, unaccompanied asylum seekers, young mothers and their babies and those who have been arrested for a criminal offence under PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence act (1984)).The service also monitors and supports Private Fostering arrangements, when children and young people live outside of immediate family with parental agreement. These arrangements are made privately and without the involvement of the Local Authority. However, legislation places a duty on the Local Authority to safeguard and support.

The Fostering Service is based on the third floor of the Town Hall Extension, Upper George Street, Luton, LU1 2BQ. The main reception is located at the Town Hall and it is open to the public. Opening times are: 8.45am-5pm. on Monday to Thursday, 8.45am-4.30pm on Fridays.

The Shared Care team is based at London Road Resource Centre, 111 London Road, Luton, LU1 3RH. Operating hours for the social work team are 8.45am to 5.20pm and 8.45 am to 4.30pm Fridays. The team provide family based short breaks placements for disabled children and their families in Luton who have been assessed as meeting the criteria for the Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT). Referrals to the Shared Care Team are made via the multi-agency Resource Allocation Panel.

Short breaks are provided for the purpose of family support, to give parents a break from caring and to provide children from 0-18 years with a range of fun activities and social interaction which they would not otherwise be able to access. Shared Carers are assessed and approved under fostering regulations. Shared Care Plus carers have specialist skills and experience to provide short breaks for children with more complex needs and behaviours. Short breaks can be provided in the form of a tea visit after school, day-care on the weekends or overnight care on either a weekend or a school night.

2.3 Range of placements provided:

- **Emergency placements:** provided at short notice initially for up to 5 working days, with a view of children and young people returning home or their previous or alternative placement.

- **Short-term placements:** an initial placement which provides a safe and nurturing environment to the children and are young person whilst rehabilitation to home is explored, long-term needs assessed and plans for their future are formulated.
- **Long-term/Permanent Matched Placements:** a provision which offers long-term stability and continuity with the same foster family for children and young people until they reach adulthood, and if appropriate beyond.
- **Connected Person placement:** a provision which enables a child or young person to live with extended family members or connected persons in line with Fostering Regulations.
- **Contract Care placements:** this service is provided to children and young people who require an intensive level of support. Such placements are considered and agreed by the External Resource Panel for children and young people, based on assessed needs. The contract carers are self-employed and are provided with a written agreement for each child/young person placed with them. The Contract Care scheme is currently under review by the service manager to address the increasing need for young people in this category to be permanently matched with their contract carer when they are unable to settle in alternative placement choices.
- **Mother and baby placement:** a safeguarding fostering provision for young mothers and their babies, in order to help mothers develop sound parenting skills whilst assessing their ability to care for their baby independently.
- **'Staying Put' placements:** a service provision which enables young people who reach 18 years to remain living with their foster carers whose role changes as they become an adult, if that is considered a suitable arrangement.
- **Respite placement:** a service which supports foster carers and their families by providing time-limited overnight stays for children in placement with another foster carer. This is a provision to promote placement stability, agreed on an individual basis.
- **Day-care:** a support provision, if/when foster carers engaged in activity which is not suitable for children and other members of the foster family are unable to help i.e. carer attending training.
- **Shared Care Team Services** – i.e. overnight care (for example, one night a week, every second week or a month), day care on the weekend or a tea visit after school and day care during the school holidays.
- **PACE:** a service provision that provides overnight placements to young people under the age of 18 years who have been charged with a criminal offence.

3.1 Recruitment and approval of foster carers

- Foster carers are approved in accordance with standards set out in the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Regulations 2011
- Foster carers' assessments follow an adaptation of the Coram BAAF Form F format. The authority also incorporates the use of competencies drawn up by Coram BAAF and by the Children's Workforce Development Council.
- In accordance with the standards and regulations all relevant statutory checks are made, including enhanced Disclosure and Baring Scheme checks for all adults in the household.
- The applicant's birth, marriage, divorce, naturalisation certificates and passports where applicable are seen.
- Employers' references are obtained and three personal referees are interviewed in person however referees may be interviewed via the telephone if it is not possible to visit in person. References are also obtained from ex partners and every attempt is made to acquire these particularly in instances where there is acrimony between ex partners. Any decision not to pursue a reference in the instance of significant acrimony is carefully considered by the Service Manager.
- Each applicant receives clear information about the process of assessment along with details about fostering allowances.
- The assessment and approval process involves all members of the applicant's household.
- The assessment is carried out by a qualified social worker.
- The assessment report is prepared by the social worker; it includes a clearly evidenced recommendation on the applicant(s) suitability as a foster carer and the types of placement appropriate to the applicant(s).
- Each applicant sees a copy of the non-confidential sections of the assessment report before going to Panel and has the opportunity to make written comments if they wish to do so. They sign the paperwork as agreement to its content.
- The Fostering Assessment Team aims to complete assessments and the approval process within six months of the application being received.
- All applications are considered by the Luton Fostering Panel. Prospective carers are invited to attend the panel that considers their application.
- The recommendations of the Fostering Panel are considered by Luton's Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who makes the decision on behalf of the Council. The

assessing social worker verbally informs the applicants of the ADM decision. The ADM then writes to the applicants within 7 days to inform them of the decision formally.

- On approval the applicants are required to sign a Foster Carer Agreement with the Council. They are also provided with a handbook that is accessible on line and any necessary equipment in line with the assessment.
- Where the Fostering Service decides not to proceed with an application (at stage 1 of the assessment process), the reasons will be discussed with the applicant, along with any other options available to them. The decision and reasons will be confirmed in writing by the Team Manager. Applicants will be given information about the complaints process.
- Where applicant's and (at stage 2 of the assessment process) and current foster carers are given a qualifying determination concerning their approval as foster carers, which they disagree with, they have the option of applying to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) or making 'written representations' within 28 days of the Agency Decision Maker's (ADM) decision. This would only occur if the information about the prospective or current carers has been presented to Fostering Panel or, in relation to prospective foster carers, if stage one has been completed Applicants and current foster carers will be assisted through the process if they wish to pursue this. Access to independent advice is available from Fostering Network.

3.2 Appeals against refusal or termination of approval

Prospective foster carers who have their application turned down by the ADM following Fostering Panel, or existing foster carers who have had their approval withdrawn or altered following a review, have the right to appeal against such decisions.

The Fostering Service leaflet for carers and prospective carers attending Panel explains the appeal and independent review process. Applicants can ask panel to reconsider their case or alternatively can ask for an independent review from the IRM.

The IRM contact details are:

Contract Manager, Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park, Royds Hall Road, Wortley, LEEDS LS12 6AJ

Tel: 0845 450 3956 (charged at local rate)

Fax: 0845 450 3957

Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

3.3 The Fostering Panel

The Luton Fostering Panel operates in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The Panel considers applications from Luton Council only.

The Foster Panel considers recommendations for the approval and ongoing approval of foster carers, plans for children where the plan is long term fostering; the matching of children to long-term placements, and all other significant matters relating to the assessment and issues relating to Council approved carers.

Foster carers' annual reviews are presented to the Panel within a year of their approval and then every three years, or sooner if necessary or there is a proposed change of approval range. Reports are also sent to Panel about any significant changes in the fostering household or following an allegation or complaint regarding the carers.

3.3.1 Membership of panel

Luton Councils Fostering Panel Central List consists of the following members:

- An independent Panel Chair
- An Independent Vice Panel Chair
- Luton Council Elected Member
- A Social Worker
- An Independent Reviewing Officer (SW)
- An Adult ex care leaver
- A Virtual Schools Officer
- An independent member who is an adopter
- An independent member who is a foster carer
- An Educational Psychologist

4 SECTION FOUR

4.1 Support and Development Team

4.1.1 Supervision and support for carers

Following the approval of a foster carer, a qualified social worker (supervising social worker) is allocated from the Support and Development Team to provide supervision and support.

The supervising social worker undertakes regular supervisory visits to the foster home; which varies between 4 to 8 weeks. Factors such as length of foster placement (matched long term) and level of support to foster carers informs the frequency of visits. Although a minimum of 4 weekly visits is prescribed, this is can be changed and the frequency can increase if there are standards of care concerns or challenges within the foster placement. Supervising social workers also make unannounced visits to the placement, at least once annually. All visits are documented on a pre-designed format and stored on the carers' electronic files. Any discussions outside of the visits are recorded under Case Notes on the same electronic system.

There are two elements to supervisory visits: to facilitate information sharing and support for the carer, as well as quality assurance of the placement to ensure the standard of care is appropriate and that the carer is meeting the child's individual needs.

All foster carers are subject to an annual review, at which their continued approval is evaluated. The process is co-ordinated by the supervising social worker and the review is chaired by the Fostering Reviewing Officer who is based in the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team.

This is a formal review of the work the carer(s) have undertaken during the previous year, and is an opportunity to reflect on achievements and learning. The review reports (which include feedback from carers, child/young people in placement, his/her social worker and the child's Independent Reviewing Officer) is presented to the Fostering Panel in the case of all first reviews, every 3 years or when changes are proposed to the carer(s) registration or there are cases of concern. The Fostering Service aims to ensure carers are able to access support at the time that they need it. During office hours the allocated supervising social worker, duty worker in their absence is usually the first point of contact for the foster carer and is able to offer support, advice, guidance and supervision regarding most matters relating to fostering.

In addition, every child in placement has an allocated social worker who is able to advise the carer about issues relating to that child. In case the allocated social worker is not available the child care teams operate a duty system, whereby the social worker on duty would respond to any urgent problems or issues.

Support to foster carers outside of office hours is delivered by the Emergency Duty Team, whose contact details are 0300 300 8123. In order to provide local support to carers and EDT, a member of the Fostering Service is available for consultation over the telephone at weekends from 11am to 8pm. This service is staffed on a rota basis by senior practitioners and team managers from both teams.

Luton Fostering Service has a corporate membership with The Fostering Network, which extends to all Luton Council approved foster carers. Through this provision carers receive regular update/newsletter from The Fostering Network and are able to access mediation service and advocacy support, as well as legal advice.

Consultation and information sharing with foster carers is an integral part of a productive and positive working relationship. The Fostering Service co-ordinates regular Foster Carers' Forums every 4 months where planned changes are discussed and carer(S)' views are sought, as well as guest speakers being invited to give information or update on support services linked to fostering. The forum is followed up with a newsletter, which is sent to all foster carers.

The benefit of peer support is well recognised and valued in fostering. In Luton there are support group meetings for foster carers facilitated by the Fostering Service, and an annual Summer Event which is a fun day for all foster carers, their families and children in placement.

Luton's foster carers receive a fostering allowance in respect of each child placed with them. The fostering allowance comprises of two parts: the child's allowance which is age related to the child placed, and a competency payment recognising the evidenced skills of the carers. The competence payment has 3 tier levels. All foster carers and connected person carers are entered onto the 1st tier level on approval as foster carers. They are then able to move to the next tier level by achieving specific targets attracted to each.

4.1.2 Training and Tier progression for foster carers

Training is an integral part of personal and professional development for staff and carers alike. Foster carers are required to attend training to retain their approval as Council approved foster carers. Learning for carers, which can take a variety of forms, will help carers feel better equipped and more confident in responding to the needs of vulnerable children who they are looking after.

The annual training programme for foster carers (2020/21) covers pre-approval training for potential carers, induction training for newly approved carers, as well as Training, Support and Development Standards. The comprehensive programme of training is designed to meet the changing development needs of foster carers throughout their fostering career and include; mandatory and core-training, stand-alone courses on a range of topics, training delivered by partnering agencies (education, health). In order to promote wider participation training is available not just during the day-time but in the evenings and weekends as well. There is also a wide range of on-line training available.

All training courses are evaluated by feedback from foster carers, which informs future commissioning.

Carers can progress in the tier system by meeting the competencies for the next tier level and evidencing the required learning activities. Targets for learning are identified by the foster carer and their supervising social worker, and outlined in the carers' individual Personal Development Plan (PDP). The PDP's are reviewed six monthly and updated annually. Information from the PDP's helps identify the training needs of the service for the following year.

The document on Tiered Progression Scheme for Foster Carers is available on the Council's Fostering website.

4.2 Support to foster carers from partnering agencies

Support to foster carers and children in placement is also provided by a number of local agencies/organisations.

4.2.1 Therapeutic service

The Luton Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service provide a consultation service to all children looked after that includes those in foster placement. There is also a dedicated clinician of the day available by telephone to address concerns and provide advice.

4.2.2 Health support services

The Fostering Service is committed to ensure the health outcomes for children in care continually improve. Health Professionals work with foster carers to promote healthy living and eating, as well as tracking dental and eye health.

There is a designated nurse for children in care who, with the support of other health professionals, oversee the children and young people's six monthly/annual health assessments and has input into the health promotion of children in care.

Brook sexual health service is a charity that works in partnership with Luton Council to provide free training, advice, information and support to young people and carers.

The Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service is accessible to foster carers for advice and guidance on an individual basis. They also deliver a number of training courses for foster carers.

4.2.3 Education support services

The Fostering Service recognises the importance of improving school attendance and education attainment for children in care. Foster carers are expected to attend personal Education Planning Meetings with the children and young people, and any other education meetings. There is an expectation within Children's Services that holidays are not taken in term-time, and children are not taken out of school without senior manager's approval.

There is a dedicated group of professionals in the Virtual School, who have close links with local schools and are available for consultation and support to foster carers. They are able to advise on a wide range of topics from exclusion to the use of pupil premium plus, and willing to support carers in education meetings.

There is a close working relationship between the Virtual School and Fostering Service with joint training and information events such as the foster carers forum.

4.2.4 Other information/support sources for foster carers:

- **Introduction pack:** Sent to foster carers as hard copies or on line following their approval or given to carers by the supervising social worker at the first visit. It comprises the following:
- **Foster Carers Handbook:** gives factual information to carers about the Service, roles and responsibilities. It contains information about a variety of topics: from procedures to safer caring or attachment issues. The handbook is updated regularly.
- **Foster Carers Agreement:** outlines expectation of the working relationship between carers and the Authority. Carers are given two copies to sign and they will receive one signed by the ADM to keep.
- **Allowances booklet:** gives detailed information about financial matters, including the 2 Allowances, (child and competency any additional payments and age related pocket money.
- **Information leaflets:** bite-size information pamphlets by The Fostering Network on relevant topics: benefits, tax, insurance for foster carers. Information about advocacy, independent visitors.

- **Training Programme for foster carers:** a comprehensive guide to all training available to foster carers.
- **Guide to Complaints and Compliments:** outlining procedures to making a complaint or complement.
- **Training, Support and Development Portfolio:** a folder containing the TDC workbook and guidance and access to the Services training policy and expectations

5 SECTION FIVE

5.1 Safeguarding Children and Quality Assurance

The Fostering Service operates in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board in keeping children safe and responding to concerns raised when children are thought to be at risk of abuse or exploitation.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures can be accessed through their website: <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/>

5.2 Children's Guide

At the point of entering foster care children are provided with a Children's Guide by their SW, subject to their age and understanding. Foster carers are expected to support children in understanding the contents of the Guide and make the services accessible for them.

The Children's Guide includes information about the advocacy service and independent visitors available for children in care and how they can find out more about their rights. It gives details of how children can contact their IRO or Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern.

5.3 Complaints

The Fostering Service uses Luton Council's Social Care Complaints Procedure to manage complaints made by foster carers or on behalf of the children in their care. The complaints procedure is in 3 stages.

5.3.1 Stage one – problem solving

Most problems or concerns can be resolved informally by discussion with the relevant social worker or their manager. The complaint is acknowledged within five working days and the complainant will receive written notification of the outcome within twenty eight days. Complaints made by foster carers regarding the services they receive will initially be dealt with by the team concerned i.e. if it is a complaint against one particular social work team it will go to their manager to address. If the problem or concern cannot be resolved informally by discussion with the particular team manager, the complaint will go to the relevant Service Manager to address.

5.3.2 Stage two – independent investigation

Where problems or concerns cannot be resolved informally at stage one, an independent person is appointed to investigate the complaint. They will report to an adjudicating officer within 28 days.

5.3.3 Stage three - review panel

If the complainant is not satisfied with how the investigation was carried out or the outcome at Stage two, they may request that the matter is considered by a review panel. The review panel consists of three independent people, one of whom will act as the chairperson. The panel will recommend any action that in their view needs to be taken in respect of the complaint.

5.3.4 Ombudsmen

If the complainant is not happy with the final outcome of the social care complaints procedure they will be advised how to contact the Local Authority Ombudsman.

In all circumstances allegations made against a foster carer or member of their family are investigated and responded to in accordance with the current Luton child protection procedures, in collaboration with the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) under the procedures for investigating allegations against adults caring for children.

Foster carers are required to undertake training on 'Safer Caring and Managing Allegations', this is a mandatory course and outlines the different processes depending on the nature of the allegation. The training is co-delivered by the LAD).

All foster carers, subject to an allegation or complaint are offered independent support from the Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service.

5.4 Monitoring the quality of the service

The Fostering Service is monitored by Luton Council's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service and inspected by OFSTED

- the quality of the work undertaken by Supervising Social Workers is monitored through supervision, appraisal and audit processes
- the independent Fostering Panel adviser and the Fostering Panel provide 'quality control' for foster carers' assessments and reviews
- the FAQARO provides a quality assurance function in relation to foster carers, supervising social workers, and the Fostering Service from chairing the foster carers annual reviews
- feedback is also obtained from key stakeholders via foster carers' reviews, child care reviews and the complaints procedure

- foster carers receive at least one unannounced visit annually, and four to six weekly supervisory visits by their allocated supervising social worker
- the Service Manager responsible for the overall management of the Service monitors a range of matters identified in schedule 6 of the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards to ensure the standards are met and developments of the Service are in line with regulatory requirements and national trends,
- Periodical inspections are undertaken by Ofsted.

6 SECTION SIX

6.1 Review of the Statement of Purpose

The Fostering Service reviews and updates the Statement of Purpose annually to ensure its aims and objectives remain appropriate and meet the needs of service users.

The information contained in the Statement of Purpose can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats on request.

7 SECTION SEVEN

7.1 Key contact details

OFSTED	National Business Unit Royal Exchange Building Ann's Square Manchester M2 7LA	Tel: 0300 123 1231 0845 640 4040
Fostering Service	Luton Council Town Hall Extension Upper George Street Luton LU1 2BQ	Tel: 0158 254 7644 Website: www.luton.gov.uk/fostering
NYAS Children and Young People Advocacy Service	Free Post Tower House Birkenhead Wirral CH41 1 FF	Tel: 0300 330 3131 0151 649 8700 0808 808 1001 E-mail: help@nyas.net Website: www.nyas.net
Complaints and Representation Manager	Luton Council Town Hall Extension Upper George Street Luton LU1 2BQ	Tel: 0158 254 6747 E-mail: feedback@luton.gov.uk
Mediation and	The Fostering Network	Tel: 0207 401 9582

V0.2 Fostering Statement of purpose 20/21 (updated following SMT review 15.06.20)

Advocacy Service	87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA	ext. 5004 Website: www.fostering.net
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