

Fostering Service Quality Assurance Framework

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1 Introduction

The Dorset Fostering Quality Assurance Framework is for the provision of Dorset's Fostering Service and is intended to be read with The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011: Volume 4; Fostering Services 2011 Statutory Guidance; and the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care. It should also be read in conjunction with Dorset's Quality Assurance Framework.

The Fostering Service provides a permanent and safe family life for children and young people who cannot live with their own families and for children and young people who may be able to return home whilst we work with their parents to help resolve their difficulties and challenges.

2 Key Values

Children and young people come first.

Children and young people in foster care will experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving family with carers who can make everyday decisions as they would their own child and without the child or young person feeling that they 'stand out' as a looked after child.

Children and young people will be given every support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to promote their talent and skills. Above all, they should be listened to.

The key values which underpin the Fostering Service are:

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.

- The significance of contact for looked after children, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents, wider family and other significant people for the child, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised, as is the foster carer's role in this.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions.
- The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- Foster carers have a right to full information about the child.
- It is essential that foster carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.
- Genuine partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, fostering service providers and foster carers.

(Fostering Service National Minimum Standards 2011, Department for Education)

3. Performance Management and Quality Assurance

Achieving positive outcomes for children and young people is essential to the success of Dorset Fostering Service. Assurance that this is being achieved will be provided from a range of different activities described below. A quarterly Fostering Quality Assurance Report will be produced by the Service Manager for Corporate Parenting and Permanence and submitted to the Quality Assurance and Partnerships Team for discussion at Extended Children's Services Leadership Team (xCSLT). This will ensure all Quality Assurance work is brought into one place, so key learning is identified, and the impact of agreed actions are monitored and highlighted to Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to ensure accountability.

The Quality Assurance and Partnerships Team will oversee and monitor the impact of this framework and a calendar of quality assurance activity will be agreed with the fostering service.

Quality Assurance will be evidenced by the following sources:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audits – core and thematic • Performance data • National and local inspections • Peer Reviews • Serious Case Reviews and Internal Learning Reviews • Appreciative Inquiries • Feedback from independent Reviewing Officers, Fostering Reviewing Officers • Fostering Panel Processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from children, parents and carers • LADO • Complaints and compliments • Children in Care Council – CLiCC • Employer Health checks • Staff Feedback – Exit Interviews, Keep in Touch Meetings • Supervision, probation and appraisal • Multi agency partner feedback gained in LAC reviews/annual foster carer reviews • Practice Observations
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Dorset Children’s services is a relationship - based organisation and we are designing our Fostering Service audit tools and learning framework to reflect this. The Fostering Quality Assurance Framework is an addition to the existing documents and processes which underpin the Dorset Quality Assurance Framework:

1. Children’s Services Plan
2. Audit Schedule
3. Audit tools
4. Practice Standards
5. The performance cycle.

The annual schedule of fostering audit activity will routinely contribute to measuring the following core areas of practice:

Children and Young People

1. How do we ensure that foster care is provided as set out in the child’s care plan?
2. How well do children progress in their learning, health and social development?
3. How do we ensure that the fostering service contributes to promoting good outcomes for children and young people?
4. What do children and young people say about Dorset Fostering Services and how do they contribute to its development?

Working with foster carers

1. How does recruitment, assessment and training and supervision of foster carers promote positive outcomes for children and young people?
2. How are foster carers involved in: Plans for moving children and young people, planning for placements, reviewing placements, delegated authority, leaving care and educational placements?
3. What do foster carers say about Dorset Fostering Services?
4. How do we involve staff in the development of Dorset Fostering Service?
5. What plans for improvement and development are currently in place?

In addition to the above there will be specific areas that will periodically require an in-depth review. These areas might be identified as a result of analysis of patterns and themes emerging from annex A child level data, regular auditing activity, notable issues and/or changes raised through performance data triggered by a complaint, a management review or changes in legislation and regulations. These reviews will be undertaken by established study groups.

4. Roles, Responsibilities and Frequency within Fostering Service

Role	Activity	Frequency
Corporate Director Care and Protection, Heads of Service, Service and Operational Managers and representatives from Quality Assurance and Partnerships	Attendance at Performance Quality and Action (PQA) Meetings	Monthly
Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Permanence	Quarterly report to the PQA meeting Annual report to Corporate Parenting Board	Quarterly Annual
Corporate Director, Heads of Service, Service, Service and Team Managers across Children's Services	Directly observing practitioners carrying out direct work with foster carers including the views of the child who should be seen and spoken to alone	Monthly

	Thematic and 'deep dive' audits on specific areas of practice within a study group	Periodic according to need
Independent Reviewing Officers	Moderation of fostering case file audits and evidencing children's views within Fostering Service audit process	Monthly
Fostering Team Managers	Routine schedule of case file auditing across Children's Services	Monthly
	Checking and authorising a range of reports and activities on foster carer's electronic record on Mosaic	Daily
	Notification to Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Permanence, Corporate Director Care and Protection and Executive Director re allegations against foster carers, exemptions and exceptions.	Monthly
LADO	LADO Highlight Report to include allegations report (fostering) to Quality Assurance and Partnerships and Executive Director – presented at the PQA Meeting.	Monthly
IRO Manager	Collate and report on IRO escalations relating to the care received by children from their foster carers.	Monthly in the PQA Meeting

	Collate themes from IRO engagement with children and young people	
Fostering Reviewing Officer	Quality Assurance audit to be completed at the time of the Foster Carer Annual Reviews	Collated monthly and submitted to Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Permanence as part of quarterly reporting to the PQA Meeting.
Fostering Panel Chair and Panel Adviser	Bi -annual report on quality of reports, officer presentation to panel and feedback from ADM regarding quality of the work.	Submitted to Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Permanence to present as part of routine submission to the PQA Meeting.
Fostering Social Worker	Report to inform Fostering Review and be included in Fostering Audit process.	Ongoing
Chief Executive, Executive Director and Corporate Directors	A programme of activities observing different areas of practice and case audits	In conjunction with other parts of children's services.

5. Data set

<i>How much do you do? (Activity information)</i>	<i>How well do you do it? (Quality)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring information as required for the Standard Ofsted Dataset (Appendix 2) – quarterly/annually Number of children /young people referred for placements Number of new foster carers approved Number of placements available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number / % of children/young people referred for placement and offered placements within timescales (standard and emergency) Number / % of children and young people placed in requested location Number / % of children and young people placed close to home (within 20 miles) Number/% children who are referred for a foster placement who are placed with Dorset Carers. Number / % placements success

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number / % placements disruption • Number / % children and young people contributing to foster carer reviews • Number / % foster carer reviews that happen on time • Number / % complaints and allegations against carers • Number/% exemptions and exceptions • Number/% of children who have been permanently matched with in house carers
<p><i>Is anyone better off? (Outcomes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of children and young people who remain with their siblings, where that is the plan • % of individual placement outcomes achieved • % of children and young people who report improved self-esteem and confidence • % improved attendance and attainment 	<p><i>Is it cost effective? (Value for money)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average unit cost per night of foster care provision in the period (fully inclusive with no separate management costs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For all placements ○ For placements by type of placement

6. Audit Process - see Appendix 1 Flow Chart

The expectation is that all case file auditing is undertaken collaboratively with staff and feedback from children and carers are actively sought as part of each case file audit.

The audit programme aims to:

Provide assurance that practice positively influences outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people;

Take into account the requirements of inspection bodies;

Involve all children's services staff in continuously seeking to improve their practice;

Ensure consistency of practice and specifically the use of relationship-based approaches;

Embed a culture of learning, confident practice and feedback;

Identifying areas of practice improvement to inform the performance conversation and appraisal process.

7. How the audit process works?

Fostering Reviewing Officers will undertake a collaborative audit alongside the fostering social worker as part of the annual review using the Dorset Fostering Audit Tool. In preparation for the fostering review the fostering social worker will be expected to complete a report which includes an assessment of the quality of the work. This will then be used to inform the Fostering Review and discussion in the collaborative audit following the review.

Unless otherwise specified, the period of the case file audit should cover is the last 12 months.

Social worker and foster carer feedback will be sought by the Fostering Reviewing Officer and young person's feedback will be sought by the Independent Reviewing Officer and recorded on the Dorset Fostering Audit Tool. Feedback provided by young people should be returned to Quality Assurance and Partnerships. Observation of Practice will also be undertaken each month and any required action necessary to improve standard of expected practice will be recorded and shared with the social worker to progress. Completed audits will be sent to Quality Assurance and Partnerships who will then forward them to the assigned IRO for Moderation. The completed Dorset Fostering Audit Tools will also be shared with the relevant Fostering Team Managers and Service Managers who are responsible for reviewing the full audit findings and recommendations and outlining actions to be completed to ensure there is impact in improving outcomes for the child and that the case record meets expected practice standards.

Service Managers are also responsible for reviewing the audit findings and recommendations of any audit graded inadequate or requires improvement and must be satisfied the actions outlined by the Team Manager are sufficient and undertaken within a reasonable time frame.

The audit finding will also be shared with the Corporate Parenting and Permanence for collation of themes and completion of the monthly Highlight Report.

Fostering highlight reports will contribute to a quarterly Quality Assurance report will be provided by the Quality Assurance and Partnerships Team to xCSLT and shared with Service and Team Manager in the process of the performance cycle.

The highlights and overall themes will be shared with key stakeholders e.g. Corporate Parenting Board, Councillors and the Chief Executive.

8. Where will the information go and how will it be used?

Performance, Quality and Action (PQA) Meeting - monthly

This meeting will take place monthly and will be chaired by the Corporate Director Care and Protection to drive forward improvements in practice that have been identified through the monthly audit cycle. The meeting will be attended by Service Managers, Safeguarding Leads, Complaints Officer and Heads of Service. Fostering Quality Assurance Report will be submitted to the PQA Meeting on a quarterly basis.

Extended Children's Services Leadership Team (xCSLT)

The Fostering Quality Assurance report will be shared with Children's Services Senior Leadership Team at xCSLT quarterly to inform Strengthening Services for Children and Families Plan and the senior leadership team will identify what needs to be implemented strategically to strengthen practice, who will take the lead and the timescale for implementation.

Workforce Development

Once a quarter the Fostering Service will have extended team meetings for learning and development. Team Meetings and supervision will be used to ensure that identified learning from the Quality Assurance process can be swiftly disseminated to staff. The Safeguarding and Standards Lead will work closely with the Workforce Development Team to contribute to the Learning and Development Strategy.