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## Foster with Bury

# Statement of Purpose



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**Bury**  
COUNCIL

**September 2019**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

**BURY FOSTERING SERVICE**

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The Statement of Purpose is a useful source of information to members of the Council, staff, foster carers, prospective foster carers and children and young people who are placed with Bury carers.

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated regularly, at least annually, and modified as necessary.

**1. MISSION STATEMENT**

- 1.1** To provide a sufficient range of safe and secure foster placements to meet the assessed needs of children in care and to promote and safeguard their welfare.
- 1.2** To ensure that placements promote stability and positive outcomes for children and young people by working in partnership with young people, carers, birth families, other professionals and communities
- 1.3** The fostering service operates within equal opportunities legislation and, relevant departmental policies and does not discriminate in any way on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or age, in relation to staff, carers or Service Users.

## **2. PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CARE**

The principles and standards guiding the Fostering Service are:

- To recruit carers from a wide variety of backgrounds, the majority from the local community or within reasonable travelling distance who have the potential to meet the diverse needs of the Children in Care in Bury
- To reward foster carers financially for their skills, competency and experience.
- To offer a range of training and support services before and after approval to carers that will maintain the stability of placements
- To provide appropriate and timely placements for all children who are in need of fostering provision and to offer placement choice
- To support permanency planning for all children in care
- To consider the specific needs of the child/young person to be placed by age, ethnicity, gender, disability and sexual orientation and as far as possible match these needs with the skills of the approved carers
- The welfare of children is paramount and this will be reflected in all aspects of the work
- Children in Care will be regularly consulted with in all aspects of their placement and their wishes and feelings will be taken into consideration.
- The wishes and feelings of birth children in fostering households will be sought and taken into consideration
- All work will be undertaken in partnership with Children in Care , their parents, birth families, foster carers, Social workers and all relevant agencies and disciplines
- The service will operate in a manner that promotes equality, values diversity and challenges any form of discrimination
- The safety and protection of Children in Care will be an overriding priority
- Children will be supported and encouraged to develop independence skills in accordance with age and ability and to pursue leisure interest in line with their wishes
- To promote the physical and emotional health of children in foster care by encouraging a healthy lifestyle and working in partnership with health professionals

- To enable the children it cares for to reach their full potential, socially and educationally and enable them to make a positive contribution to the community and to recognise their achievements and progress
- Contact will be promoted with the birth family and others of significance to the child where this is consistent with the child's care plan
- Whenever possible siblings will be placed together if this is in their best interest and is consistent with their care plans
- The Service will be regularly monitored and reviewed for quality performance and delivery and service improvements
- The Fostering Service will contribute to the placement stability of children in the care of Bury council by providing placements that meet Children's needs and will identify support for the placement
- Children, their birth families and foster carers are encouraged to provide feedback which will be used to inform Service Planning. Children, their families and carers will be given access to the complaints procedures
- Children will be given a copy of the Children's Guide, "Being Looked After in Bury" and details of how to access the Children's Rights Service.

### **3. BURY'S FOSTERING PROVISION**

- Short term foster care to support families through crisis, family breakdown or to protect a child from harm on a time limited basis
- 
- Permanent substitute family care through long term fostering for children who cannot return to live with their birth family
- 
- Approved foster care placements with family & friends or connected people
- 
- Home from Home foster scheme for children with a disability who are provided with respite care
- Supported Lodgings Scheme for young people aged 16+.

#### **4. RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER CARERS**

What does the Service look for in foster carers?

Many of the qualities looked for in prospective foster carers are the same as those asked of any good parent but we also look for a little bit more. This could be defined as an ability to offer good quality parenting and the capacity to 're-parent' children who have been abused or neglected, and would be central to the application.

Foster children will have experienced trauma and separation from their birth family and will display many different types of behaviour to express their upset or distress. Some will also have had many different carers and will be looking for confident people who can offer stability, safety, consistency and reliability.

The assessment process itself covers the following areas:

- Motivation, experiences, skills and abilities essential in a foster carer to safeguard a child
- Provision of a safe, healthy and nurturing home for children
- Personal warmth to adults and children
- Ability to work with the Department to implement the plan for the child. This is likely to involve contact with birth parent(s) and others important to the child
- The capacity to positively encourage a child's understanding of their origins, religion and culture.
- Understanding of others' points of view and feelings
- Ability to 'stand back' from problems. Flexibility in resolving problems
- Ability to enable a child who is moving on to do so in a positive manner
- Knowledge of normal child development, ability to listen and communicate with children
- Ability to manage a child's behaviours using boundaries but without physical or other inappropriate forms of punishment
- Appreciation of how experiences affect families and the impact fostering may have on carer's own family
- Evidence of ability to sustain supportive relationships with family, friends and the community
- Ability to adhere to the Fostering Standards through attending training and the use of supervision to improve skills and knowledge

- Ability to understand own limitations and to ask for help and support
- Appreciation of how a child's past may affect their current and future behaviour/needs
- Appreciation of the importance of education and health for young people and the ability to promote these

Foster carers are recruited by various methods including regular advertising campaigns through the local press and radio and the recent addition of our Fostering Ambassadors. The overall aim is to increase placement choice and enable the Fostering Service to place children with local foster carers who can best meet their particular individual needs.

Applications are welcomed from all sectors of the community irrespective of gender, marital status, ethnicity or sexual orientation, as long as they have a spare bedroom and are over 21 years of age.

Applicants are encouraged to apply who could meet the needs of disabled children and young people and applicants who are able to care for older children or sibling groups are also needed.

Wherever possible, foster carers are encouraged, and financially supported, to offer staying put/continuing care to young people beyond the age of 18. Staying Put will support the young adults and carers at this point.

Detailed information about fostering is also available on the Council website. Enquirers receive an information pack within 2 days of their enquiry. Interested people, who fit the Service criteria, are subsequently visited in their home and if they appear to fit the criteria of the service they are then invited to attend preparation sessions prior to a full assessment being undertaken.

A thorough assessment of the applicants' suitability and skills are undertaken in accordance with current legislation and guidance, including the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards. Two personal references and a support reference are obtained, a medical report, enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check and checks are also made with statutory agencies.

The assessment is based on a 2 stage process, which can run concurrently. Stage 1 considers the statutory checks and personal references, as discussed below. Stage 2 is the home study, when the assessing social worker will need to visit the home a minimum of eight visits or sixteen hours (approximately) to spend time working with the applicants on their assessment and portfolio. The assessment is a joint project and needs full participation from applicants and their family.

During the assessment, Bury Fostering Team will undertake a variety of statutory checks (Stage 1), which include;

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check

- Local authority checks
- Employer and/or current fostering organisation references
- School/health visitor reports
- Medical Reports
- 2 personal references
- 1 support reference
- Particulars of all people living in home, previous partners and children to that relationship

A Home and Safety check will also be carried out alongside a risk assessment on any pets in the home.

Completed assessments are considered by the Fostering Panel.

If any of the Stage 1 checks are returned indicating that the applicant is unsuitable to foster the assessment, the Agency Decision Maker will make the decision whether to continue or terminate the assessment. Explanation will be given to the applicant about this decision.

If during the Stage 2 home study assessment concerns are raised about the applicant's suitability to foster and the assessor wishes to terminate the assessment, a brief report will be completed and presented to foster panel. A recommendation will be made by the foster panel regarding continuing or ending the assessment.

The Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision about terminating the assessment based on the brief report and recommendation by foster panel.

## **5. ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY AND FRIEND FOSTER CARERS**

Family and friends foster carers will usually come into foster care because they want to make sure that the children they are being assessed to care for can remain within the extended family.

Assessments may be undertaken in an emergency to enable children to be placed immediately or over a period of time so that children can be placed promptly after this approval. The assessment is for specific named children only and therefore focuses on the circumstances of the prospective carers and the children. However assessments are undertaken in accordance with the same legislation and guidance as general foster carers so Family and Friend foster carers will undergo the checks and medicals outlined above and their full assessment will be presented to the Fostering Panel.

## **6. FOSTERING PANEL**

Fostering panels have a crucial role to play in the provision and monitoring of foster care for children. Fostering panels are necessary to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of carers, in line with the overall objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

### Membership of the Panel

Panel members come from a range of professional backgrounds that supports good decision-making, based on sound knowledge and experience. The commitment shown by Panel members to regular attendance enhances the consistency of recommendations. The Panel includes a Councillor, independent members, a foster carer from another Local Authority and professionals from other agencies. The Fostering Panel also includes an independent chair who has considerable and varied child care experience.

The Panel is supported by the Fostering Team Manager, who is the Panel Advisor, this position can also be covered by the Assistant Team Manager if the team manager is unavailable.

The panel has several very important functions, although its primary one is to make recommendations about the approval of foster carers. This includes all new assessments of foster carers. Additionally the panel can make recommendations as to whether a person remains suitable to act as a foster carer and whether or not the terms of the approval remain appropriate. The panel also monitors any variation in the foster carer's approval status, which has been made for an agreed period of time to allow a child to be placed who is outside of the carers agreed age range for approval. Sometimes it is necessary for the fostering service/agency to grant an exemption over the normal fostering limit of children so that more children can be placed. This exemption should only be agreed for a short period of time and should be monitored by the fostering panel.

The fostering panel is required to consider the first annual review of all foster carers.

Occasionally it will be necessary for the fostering team to take action to alter the terms of the approval of carers, including terminating their approval. This can be due to a range of circumstances, including situations where there have been serious allegations made about the carers. These cases will be referred to the fostering panel that will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.

The Agency Decision Maker will give written notice to the foster carer that it is intended to propose to terminate or revise the terms of approval (a qualifying determination) together with the reasons for this decision. If the carer does not agree with this decision there are two routes that they can choose to have the decision reviewed. The foster carer can apply to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) for a review of the fostering service's qualifying determination, or the foster carer can make representations, within 28 days to the fostering service and the case will be reconsidered at the fostering panel.

The following web link provides detailed information about the Independent Review Mechanism:-  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-review-mechanism>

Foster carers are required to attend the fostering panel at approval stage, and sometimes for annual reviews. Foster carers will also be invited to attend when de-registration is being considered.

Bury's Fostering Panel meets for a full day once per month to conduct its business.

Bury's Fostering Panel Independent Chair, and Independent Vice Chair, ensure that panel members are enabled to reach a recommendation about the approval of foster carers or any of the other panel business that panel members are asked to consider.

For further information regarding fostering panels a useful reference site is:-  
[www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)

## **7. BURY FOSTERING SERVICE STRUCTURE**

The Fostering Service comprises of:

- Team Manager
- Assistant Team Manager
- 2 full time Advanced Practitioners
- 12 full time equivalent fostering social workers
- 1 full time social worker who co-ordinates the Home from Home Scheme to provide short planned breaks to disabled children and young people

- 1.5 social worker posts on the Special Guardianship Team
- 2 full time Children and Family Support Workers
- 1 Recruitment Officer
- 1 Media/Marketing Manager
- 1 Business Intelligence officer

The Fostering Social Workers have a wide range of experience of children and families social work and fostering. They are supported by family support workers. Internal and external training is provided to all social workers, any specialist training, pertaining to fostering is provided by national organisation e.g. Fostering Network and Coram-BAAF. Staff are expected to keep their skills and knowledge updated this is in line with the requirements for their registration with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC)

The Fostering Team is supported by a business intelligence officer. The business intelligence officer is responsible for the payment of allowances and fees to the foster carers, along with collating data and information required for the service.

## **8. COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS**

Wherever possible complaints are dealt with informally and where appropriate, in the first instance, any complaint by or against a foster carer will be dealt with on a problem solving basis. Foster carers are given a written procedure regarding complaints. Bury Council has a Complaints Co-ordinator for Children's Services and the formal complaints procedures will be implemented if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved at an informal level.

When a complaint against a foster carer raises safeguarding issues it is referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and may be investigated under Child Protection procedures.

The role of the LADO is set out in the HM Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006, 2018). Appendix 5 outlines the procedures for managing allegations against people who work with children. The LADO works within Children's Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has: behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child, possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child, behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The LADO provides advice, guidance and help to determine whether the allegation sits within the scope of the procedures, and help to co-ordinate information-sharing and will also monitor and track any investigation, with the aim to resolve it as quickly as possible.

Bury Council has clear policies and procedures regarding allegations against professionals and investigations are dealt with promptly and transparently.

There is a leaflet specifically designed for Children and Young People advising what to do if they have a complaint and all complaints are taken seriously, with outcomes shared with the complainant.

There is an anti – bullying leaflet specifically designed for children and young people which is included the information they are given when they become cared for by Bury Children's Services

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 there were **222** children in placement with foster carers, of which **62** were placed with kinship carers and **54** with carers approved by independent agencies (IFA). **17** Young Adults (over 18) were placed in continuing care arrangements with their former foster carers.

#### **Numbers of foster carers.**

<b>Number of carers</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Role</b>
66	General Foster Carers	Provide temporary and permanent placements to unrelated children
43	Family and friend foster carers (also called kinship carers or Connected persons)	Provide temporary and permanent care to children related or previously known to them
6	Home from Home scheme	Part time carers who offer short breaks for disabled children on a part time basis
4	Multilink carers	Full time carers who offer regular respite for a number of disabled children
9	Short Break carers	Offer short breaks to children who live in families who are under pressure
3	Supported Lodgings	Older teenagers
<b>131</b>	<b>Total number of approved carers</b>	

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Team structure**