



**MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL**

Children's Services

Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2020/21

Our looked after children will be safe, happy, healthy and successful

1. Introduction

1.1 It is a requirement of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that all Fostering Services produce a 'Statement of Purpose' detailing the aims and objectives of the service and the services provided.

1.2 This document is Manchester City Council Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose. It has been endorsed by the Strategic Director for Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services in the Council.

1.3 This version of the Statement was updated in September 2020. As with previous versions, it will be forwarded to Ofsted, and it will be made available on request to all fostered children, foster carers, staff, and birth parents. It will be made available:

- In the Children's Services Electronic Manual
- In the Policy and Approval Pack for Foster Carers (Overview)
- Electronically and on Manchester City Council's website:
www.manchester.gov.uk Email: csmmessage@manchester.gov.uk
- In translated form. Manchester City Council offers a translation and interpretation service including audiotape production and a Braille service

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1.4 A summary of this statement will be provided to fostered children and young people in the 'Children's Guide to the Fostering Service'.

2. The Legislative Framework

2.1 Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards and Regulation 3 and 4 of the Regulations 2011 require all fostering services to produce a statement of purpose detailing its aims and objectives and the services and facilities provided and to keep this under review.

Fostering Services are regulated services and our service operates in compliance with the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 and Amendment to Care Planning Regulations July 2013.
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Reviews 2010.
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 – Fostering Services 2011 and its revision July 2013.
- Family and Friends Care – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

3. Aims and Objective

3.1 Manchester City's Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2020, **Our Manchester, Our Children**, sets out to ensure that for all Manchester's children, including looked after children in foster care, they are supported to be **safe, happy, healthy, and successful**.

3.2 The Plan sets out our four 'passions'. These are the four things we are passionate about delivering. These are:

- Children and young people live in stable and loving homes
- We safely reduce the number of children and young people who are in care
- Children and young people have the best start in the first years of life
- Children and young people fulfil their potential

3.3 In addition to the aims and 'passions' of the Children and Young People's Plan, the Fostering Service aims are also informed by the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and the 'Promise' to Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

3.4 Our Promise to looked after children and care leavers is that we will:

- Respect them
- Care for them
- Support them, and,
- Help them to grow

3.5 In contributing to the achievement of the aims of the Children and Young People's Plan, The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and The Promise to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, the Fostering Service aims to:

- Recruit, assess and support a range of high-quality foster carers to improve outcomes for looked after children and to make children and young people's stay in foster care a positive experience
- Maintain a sufficient number and range of foster care placements and short break carers to meet the needs, age and diversity of looked after children requiring family placements in Manchester
- Provide high-quality assessment and support to all 'connected persons foster carers' and to promote placements for children with family members wherever safe and suitable
- To provide high-quality support, supervision and training and development to all of our foster carers to ensure they are supported to offer the best possible care to looked after children
- To provide access to Staying Put and/or Supported Lodgings placements to all looked after children/care leavers who would benefit from them at age 18
- To develop and deliver services that support children to achieve and progress in education and training, and to remain healthy
- To promote and maintain/improve placement stability for looked after children placed in foster care
- To develop and deliver a service that accounts for the views, wishes and feeling of both children and young people and foster carers

4. Principles for Our Work

4.1 The Service works to the following principles for best practice:

- The voice of the child / young person in their own care plan is essential to ensure that the plan reflects their wishes and feelings and that their experience of living in the carer's home is understood and accounted for

- The child's relationship with their foster carer, their welfare, safety and needs are central to their care.
- The foster carer is a core member of the team around the child and will be involved in planning and decision-making for the child
- That children have an enjoyable childhood benefitting from positive parenting and a full experience of family life without unnecessary restriction.
- That children and young people are valued as individuals

We work to match children carefully to proposed carers as closely as possible in relation to their culture, race and religion to ensure that children and young people in foster care have a positive view of their own identity. Where this is not possible, we work to establish community links to address children's cultural and racial needs and offer training for foster carers.

- We will always strive to place siblings together unless there is an assessment that this is not consistent with their best interests
- Promotion of educational stability is paramount and this factor is taken into consideration in determining a suitable placement so that the young person can continue to attend their existing school/college where this is recommended as part of the care plan and is practicable
- Where children are placed in an emergency we monitor their progress to ensure the placement can appropriately meet the child's needs

4.2 We achieve this by:

- Working in partnership with the child or young person, carers and those with parental responsibility
- Working in partnership with the child's social worker and partner agencies such as Health and Education to support the child and the placement
- Ensuring that placements meet the assessed needs of children with complex needs and those with disabilities

- Before making any decision and throughout a child's placement, ascertaining the child's wishes and feelings in accordance with their age and understanding
- If possible, ascertaining the wishes and feelings of parents, those with parental responsibility or other relevant person
- Supporting all children to maintain contact with their families and communities where this is in their best interests
- Providing opportunities for children and young people and those supporting the child to provide views and feedback about the placement
- Placing children with foster carers who are a racial and cultural heritage match wherever possible

Management Structure

4.3 The Registered Manager of the Fostering Service is Billie Walbank – Service Lead. Billie reports to Adele Ion Service Lead.

5. The Fostering Service Structure

Fostering support - Recruited carers - Team one

Fostering support - Recruited carers - Team two

Fostering support - Connected carer - Team one

Fostering support - Connected carers -Team two

Recruitment and Assessment Team

The Service is made up of four support teams.

Two teams provide support to recruited carers and two teams provide specialist support to Connected carers.

Each of the teams has a team manager, advanced practitioner and five supervising social workers.

The recruited teams support carers with a range of approvals including short term, long term/Permanence and respite.

Connected support teams provide specialist support to connected carers as well as completing reg 24 assessments and SGO assessments.

There is a dedicated disabled children's supervising social worker and Support worker supporting the Short Break/Multi Link Service for children with disabilities bases in recruited support team one.

Each foster carer household has a named and allocated supervising social worker from one of the supervision teams. The supervising social worker makes regular home visits to offer support and formal supervision, maintains telephone contact, and supports the carer to care appropriately for children placed and to develop professionally as foster carers.

In addition foster carers have access to:

- Monthly support groups in across the city including evening groups
- Quarterly Foster carers forms
- Carer mentors
- Training and development events including e learning
- Access to Emergency Duty Service
- Independent support via Foster Talk,

6. Staffing

6.1 All staff and managers employed in the Fostering Service are recruited, selected and vetted through Manchester City Council's Equal Opportunity Recruitment and Selection Procedures. All supervising social workers and managers hold professional social work qualifications and are SWE registered. Disclosure and Barring Service checks are renewed at intervals of three years.

6.2 The Fostering Service provides an induction programme for new staff. Regular supervision is provided to all staff within the framework of the Children's Services Supervision Policy (2016).

6.3 All newly qualified staff are included in the ASYE Programme which commenced in June 2012. This is a rolling 12 month induction programme involving briefings, workshops and individual and group support from social worker consultants, advanced practitioners and

area assistant safeguarding managers. At the end of 12 months, staff attend a Panel which will make recommendations of the individual's progression to a Grade 7 social worker post. This is supported by a Consultant Social Worker, from children's services.

6.4 Annual appraisals using the Council's About You approach, are completed for all staff. Training needs are identified within the supervision and appraisal processes and identified needs are incorporated into the training plan. The training plan and training delivery are monitored and reviewed annually by the Learning and Events Service in conjunction with the Fostering Service Manager.

6.5 New and existing staff are encouraged to continue their learning and development by qualifying as practice educators and providing student placements, observing Fostering Panel and foster carer preparation groups, and attend national and regional conferences and briefings provided by e.g. Coram BAAF and the Fostering Network.

6.6 Advanced practitioners have been appointed in each of the teams to take responsibility for complex work, to develop and progress new procedures and to support and induct new team members including supervision of foster carer support workers.

7. Services Provided

7.1 The Service provides a range of different placement types to meet the needs of children aged 0 to 18 requiring foster care. These are as follows:

- Emergency out of office hours placements
- Short term and respite placements
- Permanence placements
- Specialist/therapeutic placements for children aged 4 to 14
- Short break/Multi Link placements for children with disabilities
- Connected persons placements
- Mother and baby placements

8. Foster Carer Recruitment and Assessment

8.1. The Recruitment and Assessment team is made up of one team manager, one advanced practitioner social worker, four assessing social workers, one part time recruitment support officer and one engagement communications officer.

8.2 The team's main remit is to undertake marketing and recruitment activity to attract new mainstream/recruited carers and to then train and assess those applicant carers to the point of full approval as foster carers for the Service. This team does not undertake the assessment of connected person's foster carers (this work is undertaken by the Connected Persons Assessment Team)

8.3 The team combines general recruitment activity with specific targeted campaigns that are intended to meet the specific needs of particular groups of children. Recruitment activity for fostering operates at a number of levels as evidence informs us that regular local advertising is as effective as joining larger annual regional and national events.

8.4 Targeted recruitment is carried out based on information provided by a needs analysis and is monitored, analysed and reviewed using data provided by the Service and the Council's Media and Communications Team.

8.5 The work of the team is informed by a Recruitment and Retention Strategy that is reviewed and updated annually and the success of which is monitored on a monthly basis.

8.6 Referral Rewards Scheme - It is recognised that the most effective method of recruitment is by word of mouth from experienced carers already in the service. The service recognises and values this contribution and has worked with the Communication Team in establishing the Referral Rewards Scheme for Manchester approved foster carers who refer a friend who is then accepted as an applicant. We have recently improved the financial incentive for foster carers to recommend suitable applicants to be considered for assessments as foster carers for Manchester to £500.

9. Fostering Support Teams

The Service is made up of four support teams.

Two teams provide support to recruited carers and two teams provide specialist support to Connected carers. Each of the teams has a team manager, advanced practitioner and five supervising social workers.

The recruited teams support carers with a range of approvals including short term, long term/Permanence and respite.

Connected support teams provide specialist support to connected carers as well as completing emergency reg 24 assessments and SGO assessments.

There is a dedicated disabled children's supervising social worker and Support worker supporting the Short Break/Multi Link Service for children with disabilities

Each foster carer household has a named and allocated supervising social worker from one of the supervision teams. The supervising social worker makes regular home visits to offer support and formal supervision, maintains telephone contact, and supports the carer to care appropriately for children placed and to develop professionally as foster carers.

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9.2 In addition foster carers have access to:

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- Monthly support groups in across the city including evening groups
- Quarterly Foster carers forms
- Training and development events including e learning
- Access to Emergency Duty Service
- Independent support via Foster Talk

9.3 There is a dedicated disabled children's supervising social worker and support worker within Fostering support recruited carers team one Team 1 responsible for supervising the

Short Break and “Multi Link” scheme carers who are paid a retainer and provide regular short breaks for disabled children.

10. The Connected Person’s Assessment Team

10.1 The Connected Persons Assessment team is made up of one team manager and nine social workers.

10.2 The team’s role is to support all screening and viability assessments of connected people put forward by parents during child care proceedings and move on to complete timely evidence based full assessments within a much reduced timescale, ultimately moving to a position where assessments are deemed “court ready” prior to proceedings.

The team complete the assessment of connected people where children are in placement under a temporary approval facilitated under regulation 24.

10.3 The team is made up of one team manager and 3 social workers.

11. Assessments of Recruited Foster Carers

11.1 Potential carers who apply to the service to be approved as foster carers are allocated an assessment worker. All the workers undertaking assessments are qualified social workers. The service provides quality, evidence based assessments of foster carers within agreed timescales on BAAF Form F.

11.2 Stage 1 and Stage 2 applicants are fully involved in their assessment process and informed of the requirements in Skills to Foster preparation sessions which must be completed prior to referral for assessment.

11.3 The process of assessment is clearly set out for prospective foster carers and details are provided which define:

- The task to be undertaken
- The qualities, competences and aptitudes which are required or will need to be developed
- The standards applied in the assessment process
- Time scales and the stages in the selection process

11.4 Assessments for recruited foster carers are completed on BAAF Form F, including evidence of the applicant's competency and a portfolio compiled by the applicant evidencing the TSD, (Training, Support and Development Standards) met at the point of approval.

11.5 We work in an open and transparent manner in our assessment work. Applicants will see a final version of the assessment report and have an opportunity to comment on the report in writing if they wish. We aim to complete stage 2 assessments in 4 months and the whole process inclusive of stage 1 and stage 2 within six months.

11.6 Completed assessments are presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation. Applicants are invited to attend the panel meeting when their case is discussed. The final decision on approval is made by the Agency Decision Maker for Fostering, who is the Head of Service for Looked After Children.

12. Assessment and Approval of Connected Persons Foster Carers

Specialist connected persons assessment social workers based in one of three area locality offices (North, Central and South) assess potential carers with prior connection to the child/young person.

The allocation, management, supervision and support for the assessment process is provided by designated Team Managers within those districts with ongoing support and guidance provided by the connected carers support Team Managers within the family placement service.

The role of the assessment Team Managers is to support assessing social workers within the completion of screening and viability assessments of connected people put forward by parents during child care proceedings and move on to complete timely evidence based full assessments within a much reduced timescale, ultimately moving to a position where assessments are deemed “court ready” prior to proceedings.

The assessment team also completes the assessment of connected people where children move to a connected carers home in an emergency situation through the process of Reg 24 assessment.

12.1 Where such a placement is being made under Regulation 24 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 the identified connected person will become a temporary foster carer for a period of up to 16 weeks (where the intention is for the child to remain with the carer and it is within the statutory regulations), the joint initial viability assessment is undertaken by a worker in the Connected Persons Assessment Team and the child’s social worker and must be signed off by the locality Service Manager.

12.2 If appropriate and recommended, the allocated social worker completes a full foster carer assessment of their suitability as a connected person’s foster carer. The child’s social worker provides details of the child and the child’s birth family.

12.3 The Service uses the BAAF Form C Assessment Report Template for this purpose.

12.4 Where it is a planned placement and a screening assessment of the proposed carers is required, the social worker conducts a screening assessment in consultation with a duty supervising social worker. Following a positive screening a full fostering assessment is completed by the supervising social worker.

12.5 For all assessments, the social worker and supervising social worker will advise the carer on the most appropriate routes to permanency for the child in respect of an application for long-term fostering, special guardianship, a Child Arrangement, Supervision order or adoption.

12.6 All temporarily approved connected person's foster carers undergoing a full fostering assessment are invited to connected persons preparation groups prior to the completion of the assessment or early into their approval.

When assessing and approving both temporary and fully approved connected person's foster carers, Manchester Fostering Service will:

12.7 Take into account a carer's suitability to be a connected persons foster carer, the likely length of the placement, the age of the child, the wishes and feelings and concerns of the child, the capacity of the carer to meet the child's needs and, if appropriate the wider family's contribution to the child's long term care.

12.8 Potential carers are provided with information about the assessment process, how they will be assessed, what is expected of them, how issues will be addressed and what support will be offered during the assessment process, during the transition of the child into the placement and support to manage contact for the child.

12.9 Financial and other support is at a level which is equivalent to that provided to unrelated foster carers.

12.10 Training and support groups are made available to connected persons foster carers at the same level as it is provided to unrelated foster carers but it also addresses the particular needs and circumstances of family and friends foster carers.

12.11 We aim to present all full assessments to the Fostering Panel within 16 weeks of the child being placed with the carer where the child was placed at the point of temporary approval. Applicants will be invited to the panel when their case is being discussed. The panel makes a recommendation on approval. The Agency Decision Maker for Fostering, who is the Head of Service for Looked After Children, will make the final decision non approval.

13. The Fostering Panel

13.1 Manchester's Fostering Panel meets weekly and has the following functions;

- To recommend to the Agency whether applicants are suitable to be approved as foster carers
- To recommend any changes to a foster carers approval
- To discuss any serious concern about a foster carer's practice
- To recommend termination of a foster carer's approval
- To recommend permanent fostering matches for children and recommendations for matching with a specific foster carer
- Regulation 25 requests
- To consider foster carers first annual review and make a recommendation about continued suitability

13.2 The Fostering Panel has an important quality standards role; it advises on the policies and procedures of the agency, oversees the standard of assessments and provides advice. An Annual Report is completed by the Fostering Panel Chair.

13.3 Panel members are drawn from a central list of members who form a multi –disciplinary group and provide a wide range of skills and expertise. The Fostering Panel is chaired by an Independent Chairperson.

13.4 Manchester Family Placement Service has a Fostering Panel adviser. The Panel Adviser is an adviser but not a voting member of Panel and offers a quality assurance and advisory role to the Panel Chair and to Family Placement and area social workers.

13.5 All applicants and foster carers have the right to attend panel. Applicants and foster carers are strongly encouraged to attend by their allocated or assessing supervising social worker where there is any matter presented to the panel relating to them.

13.6 All applicants, including connected persons foster carers being assessed as fully approved foster carers will receive a copy of the Fostering Panel leaflet for applicants that explains the panel process. Applicants and approved foster carers are informed in writing of the venue, time and date of their Fostering Panel appointment.

13.7 All applicants and carers attending Panel are provided with a feedback form to record their view and to suggest ways in which foster carer's attendance at Panel may be improved.

13.8 If a foster carer's approval is terminated the reasons for this are made clear in the Fostering Panel minutes and constitute one of the following:

- Standards of Care
- Retirement
- Resignation

13.9 All applicants who are not approved receive written notification of the decision. Those who wish to contest aspects of the recommendation in relation to the terms of their approval have the right to a review of the decision either to the Agency Decision Maker or the Independent Review Mechanism.

13.10 Applicants and approved foster carers receive verbal notification within two working days and written notification within five working days of the decision by the Agency Decision Maker who makes a decision within seven days of receipt of the Panel minutes.

14. Foster Carer Reviews

14.1 Foster carers are reviewed annually and within six months of approval to consider their suitability to continue as approved foster carers. Foster carer reviews can be undertaken if there has been a significant change in the foster carer's circumstances or following an investigation of an allegation/complaint or if there is a strong need for a change for approval status.

14.2 The first review is presented to the Fostering Panel. This is a regulatory requirement. Subsequent reviews undertaken following an investigation of allegations/complaints or due to significant change in the carer's circumstances are presented to the fostering panel.

14.3 Foster Carer reviews are undertaken by Fostering Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Officers (based in Manchester's Safeguarding and Improving Unit). Foster carer reviews are usually held in the carer's home to give the reviewing officer a first hand real time assessment of our children's home environment. However, where it is not in our children's best interest or in the event of a public health crisis, an alternative venue or meeting method will suffice (in keeping with national policy guidelines).

14.4 There is a clear written procedure for undertaking foster carer reviews. Fostering Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Officers' monitor the timescales and dates for all foster carer reviews. Every foster carer has an allocated Fostering Independent Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Officers. New foster carers are allocated Fostering Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Officers within one month of their approval.

A new foster carer is notified of their allocated Fostering Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Officers in an introduction letter sent by SIU business admin. The introduction letter also provides the carer with information on the role of the Fostering Independent Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Officers.

14.5 The foster carer annual review includes consultation with social workers, schools, health visitors of children placed during the review period, children who are currently or have been in placement during the review period and discussion with the foster carer and household members, including birth children and children on Stay-Put about their experiences and requirements. The Mind of my own App which is made available to all our children and young people is the preferred method for obtaining this feedback from our children and young people

14.6 The review provides an opportunity for both the supervising social worker and the foster carer to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead.

14.7 The recommendation for every foster carer review is presented to the Agency Decision Maker for Fostering Service for ratification. Foster carers are supplied with copies of the completed and signed reviews.

14.8 Following the ratification of the annual review recommendations, the foster carer is sent the IRO's record of review meeting (including the ADM's ratification) and a letter of approval from SIU business admin within one week of receiving the ADM's ratification.

15. Support Services to Foster Carers

15.1 Foster carers, children and young people, social workers and partner agencies working with the child are able to contact the Fostering Service for advice and support.

Foster carers will receive support from the Fostering Service in the following ways:

- An allowance to care for the child and access to remuneration payments for the carer.
- A named, allocated supervising social worker offering regular support and regular supervision.
- A duty supervising social worker available during office hours to answer any issues or queries.
- A formal preparation and induction training process.

- Identification of areas for development and a personal professional development plan.
- Post approval training and progression to the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma Level 3.
- Secure Base training for all approved foster carers.
- Support from the child's allocated social worker.
- Support from partner agencies including health, education, child psychology, education and behaviour management.
- Annual foster carer reviews to assess progress and identify areas of development.
- Locally based foster carer support groups.
- Referral for a support worker to work on specific issues with the foster carer and/or child.
- Out of office hour's support from Manchester's Emergency Duty Service and Manchester Foster Care Association.
- General support, advice and advocacy from Foster Tal

15.2 Following approval all foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker for support. Family and friends foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker prior to temporary approval. Supervising social workers ensure that:

- Foster carers are given full information on the child and will pursue relevant information where this is not supplied.
- Foster carers are involved in the plans for the child and contribute to the Placement Plan.
- Foster carers understand which decisions about the child are delegated to them and have a signed "Delegated Authority Agreement" for each child in placement.

This was agreed and updated as part of placement plan in 2013 and Delegated Authority Policy.

- The child or young person in placement is given the opportunity to state their wishes and feelings and that these are listened to and taken into account when decisions are made. All children in placement are consulted prior to their review by their social workers, the Independent reviewing officer and prior to the foster carer's annual review, by the supervising social worker.

15.3 Foster Talk - Manchester Fostering services has commissioned Foster Talk, a not for profit organisation to provide foster carers independent support services. When foster carers face an allegation, concern or complaint, the service includes independent support from locally based, qualified advisors. The Foster Talk membership for foster carers includes, legal support, tax and personal finance advice, counselling and medical helplines, education and advisory service and general fostering advice.

15.4 Support from Children's Social Workers - The child's social worker is the first point of contact if advice is required in respect of a specific child and will support the foster carer in meeting the child's needs. The social worker's role is also to monitor the care plan and ensure all involved implement it.

15.5 As the supervising social worker shares a safeguarding role with the social worker, it is essential that both workers work closely together in order to support the placement and to discuss and respond to any issues or concerns.

15.6 Fostering Allowances - The cost of caring for a child or young person is met through fostering allowances and foster carers receive regular payment with written information on what the allowances cover. All approved foster carers receive a copy of reviewed allowances annually. Allowances are paid at the National Minimum Fostering Allowance Rate.

15.7 Payments for Skills Payments – There is a payment for skills scheme in which carers can be paid a remuneration payment based at either Band 1 or Band 2 dependent on the carers skills experiences and tasks undertaken.

15.8 Support Groups - Day-time and evening support groups on a monthly basis.

Separate support groups are held for recruited and connected carers.

The groups are run per area to enable foster carers to access local venues, facilitated by fostering team managers. There is also a quarterly city wide evening support group attended by the Fostering Service Manager. Separate support groups are arranged for connected person's foster carers and networking groups for foster carers of disabled children.

There is a quarterly foster carer review forum for all foster carers attended by managers from Fostering Service and representatives from other areas of children's services and partner agencies.

15.9 An evening awards ceremony attended by senior elected members and children's services director is held annually to celebrate foster carer achievements. Foster carers reaching between, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 years or more service or who have made a significant and valued contribution are thanked for their commitment to the children of Manchester.

16. Training and Development

16.1 Foster carers are expected to prepare for their role and invited to preparation groups prior to Fostering Panel approval.

16.2 An Annual Training Calendar with training for the forthcoming year is sent to all foster carers following full approval.

16.3 An annual Training Programme with training for the forthcoming year is sent to all foster carers following full approval. The Programme brochure explains how foster carers can apply for courses. Several courses are mandatory and foster carers are required to repeat these at repeated intervals.

16.4 Following approval all foster carers need to develop and update their practice on a regular basis. This is clearly stated in the Foster Carer Agreement.

16.5 Foster carers are encouraged by their supervising social workers to take advantage of training and development opportunities. The foster carer's training history, current learning and identified training needs are recorded on their Personal Professional Development Plan. Their development is monitored during supervision sessions and recorded in the foster carer's annual review.

16.6 Manchester has two Secure Base training programmes, based on the copyrighted University of East Anglia Secure Base model; the six week Secure Base support programme and the sixteen week Secure Base Plus bespoke parenting programme. These are available to all Manchester foster carers post approval.

17. Training, Support and Development Standards

17.1 The DfE has set out the required induction standards for all newly approved foster carers in the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011 make it a requirement that all recruited foster carers complete the seven standards within a year of approval and that family and friends complete the six standards for family and friend foster carers within 18 months of approval.

17.2 All existing foster carers are expected to show they meet the standards, whether they are family and friend foster carers, short break carers, long-term or short-term foster carers.

17.3 Manchester offers a programme of training courses based on the seven TSD Standards, with seven individual courses covering each of the areas of skills and knowledge required. This training is available to all newly approved foster carers, as well as to experienced foster carers who wish to refresh their knowledge. Supervising social workers also offer one to one support in order to help foster carers to complete their portfolio and achieve the Standards within timescales.

18. Collaborative Working

18.1 The Fostering Service maintains links with:

- The Locality social work teams in relation to requests for foster placements for looked after children and joint assessments for Regulation 24 placements
- The RAA Adoption service in respect of foster carers whose children are moving onto adoption or for those children where there is a dual search is for both fostering and adoption.
- The Coram Voice/NYAS to ensure that the views of children and young people are listened to and taken into account when planning the service
- Health, Education, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Barnardo's Leaving Care Service, in planning and delivery of foster carer training

19. Promoting Leisure activities

19.1 A free time leisure pass is given to all Manchester Looked after Children, Foster carers foster carers children. The scheme allows the fostering family to have free access to sporting and leisure opportunities within the city.

Family Time

19.2 Foster carers are expected to promote and support family time between children and their birth families including half-siblings and grandparents, where appropriate, in line with each child's individual care plan and placement plan following guidance included in the Service's Contact Policy for foster carers.

19.3 Foster carers are expected to record the child's reaction before and after each contact visit in the child's weekly record sheet.

19.4 We provide foster carers during their preparation training, with information on the importance of family and their role in the facilitation of contact. This is contained in the Foster Care Agreement which is signed by all newly approved foster carers. The supervising social worker ensures that the carer receives advice and support in relation to any difficult issues that arise.

20. Education Support

Education Support

20.1 The Manchester Virtual School plays a pivotal role in ensuring Manchester's Looked After Children are fully supported to attend, make good progress, achieve well in their education, employment and training and to progress to positive destinations. The Virtual School provides advice, training and guidance to all of the adults, including foster carers, involved in the care and education of children and young people to ensure they are well equipped to provide good educational support. Their Virtual School Team is always available to provide foster carers with advice and support via telephone or email.

20.2 The Virtual School has the duty to ensure that all children and young people from being in pre-school to the age of 18, have a good quality, termly Personal Education Plan. Foster carers are expected to attend all Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. Foster carers should work with the young person's social worker and the Designated Teacher to support the young person to participate in their PEP meeting and to share their views, wishes and feelings.

20.3 Foster carers and social workers should work together to promote the educational placement stability of every young person and to avoid any unnecessary education placement moves that will disrupt their learning. Everything should be to avoid any school moves for all children and especially those in Year 6 and in Years 10 and 11 so that they can be given the best opportunity to achieve as well as possible in their end of Key Stage 2 and 4 tests and exams.

21. Safeguarding

21.1 The safety of children is central to the delivery of the Fostering Service and underpins the recruitment, preparation, assessment and continuing development of foster carers as well as the support and monitoring of placements.

21.2 We aim to provide a fostering service, which protects children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. We commit to place children with carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. Safe care guidelines are provided to all foster carers and the permissible forms of behaviour management and sanctions are explicitly stated.

21.3 Manchester Safeguarding Partnership Child Protection Procedures provide a comprehensive framework for safeguarding the welfare of children and contain specific procedures for dealing with children missing from care, and allegations of abuse made against foster carers.

21.4 There is a separate procedure for dealing with complaints against foster carers contained in “Complaints Against Foster Carers and Prospective Adopters.”

21.5 Foster carers may only use control and discipline measures as outlined in the Foster carer’s “Safe Care Policy” and “Behaviour Management Policy”.

22. Missing From Foster Care and Absent

22.1 In circumstances where a child is absent from the foster home, the foster carer will follow the procedures in the “Missing from Foster Care Policy” and the “Notification of Significant Events Guidance.” Schedule 7.

23. Complaints by Children and Young People

23.1 All children and young people in care are given a copy of the Children’s Services leaflet, “How to Make a Complaint 5 –19 year olds” which outlines how and where to make a complaint. Advice about making a complaint is also contained in the Children’s Guide given to all children and young people on placement in foster care.

23.2 An advocacy role and support is available from a Children’s Rights Worker throughout the process.

24. Manchester Children's Rights Service

24.1 The Children's Rights service in Manchester is run by National Youth Advisory Service NYAS and is staffed by a small team who work for Manchester children who are looked after or live at home and have a social worker. They make sure that the people making choices for those children listen to them and let them get involved. They also train the independent visitors. **They can be contacted on a Freephone number, 0808 8081001.** Children and young people are encouraged to make contact themselves but foster carers, key workers, social workers, or other trusted adults can call on their behalf.

24.2 Children's Rights workers can help with issues such as, children feeling that nobody is listening to them, choices being made that children are not happy with or children wanting something in their life to change but not knowing where to start.

25. Independent Visitors Scheme

25.1 Independent Visitors is provided by national youth advisory service NYAS. The workers are volunteers recruited and trained to visit, assist and befriend looked after children and young people who may have little or no contact with birth relatives or are feeling isolated. Foster carers and young people can request independent visitors via the child's social workers.

26. Children's Guides

Update required

26.1 Two Children's Guides, one for children aged 4-10 years and one for young people aged 11 years or over, have been produced by the Fostering Service and recently updated.

26.2 The guides are made available to children and young people of sufficient age and understanding by the allocated supervising social worker but if a child requires support and assistance to read the guide, either the foster carer or the child's Social Worker will explain the contents. Also, an advocate can be provided for national youth advisory service, with whom Manchester City Council Children's Services have a service agreement.

26.3 The guides explain what children and young people can expect in foster care, how they should be treated, bed-times and arrangements for pocket money and clothing, who they can approach for advice and support and advise on how to make representations and complaints, in accordance with their age and understanding.

27. Complaints and Representations

27.1 We take all representations made to us seriously. We recognise the importance of being open to feedback and challenge. However we also understand how difficult the process of complaint investigation can be for foster carers.

27.2 We therefore deal with all representations seriously using procedures that have been shared with carers in advance. We endeavour on all occasions to do this in as prompt and as timely manner as possible.

27.3 Foster carers are able to raise any complaints with the Council's Complaints Team. They can email their concerns to csfeedback@manchester.gov.uk, or telephone 0161 234 3012, or write to Corporate Complaints Team, Manchester City Council, PO Box 532, 3rd Floor, Town Hall, Manchester, M60 2LA. Foster carers may also raise their concerns with their councillor or MP and responses to these representations are monitored by the Corporate Complaints Team.

- Complaints in relation to staff in the Fostering Service are dealt with within the framework of the City Council's Complaints Procedure
- Complaints by foster carers are also dealt with within the framework of the City Council's Complaints procedure
- Complaints in relation to the conduct of or care provided by foster carers are investigated within the framework of the procedures for Investigation of

- Complaints Concerning foster carers. Complaints are investigated by an appointed investigating officer either manager or experienced supervising social worker.

Fostering Service Address:

Children and Families Directorate

Manchester City Council

Wythenshawe District Office

Etrop Court

Rowlandsway

Wythenshawe

Manchester

M22 5RG

Telephone- 0800 988 8931

Registered Provider Address:

Children's Services

PO Box 536, Town Hall Extension

Manchester, M60 2AF

Ofsted:

Ofsted National Business Centre

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester