



Statement of Purpose

- The safety, welfare and needs of children come first.
- The fostering service works in partnership with young people, their parents, foster carers and their families. They also work with people from other agencies such as teachers and community nurses.
- The fostering service aims to treat everyone fairly.
- The fostering service works within the law and to national standards for foster care.
- Staff in the fostering service are all properly trained and experienced.
- The fostering service is very careful about choosing and training people who want to be foster carers. This includes checking into their background, assessing their ability to be a foster carer and providing training to help them to understand what is needed.
- The fostering service provides training for people who are already foster carers. The service helps foster carers to study for NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.
- The fostering service provides practical help and support for foster carers. This includes having their own social worker, being offered respite care to let them take a break and being able to contact a member of the team in an emergency.
- Foster carers are reviewed every year to make sure they are still suited to be foster carers.

People - Who's who in the family placement service

These are the people who work in the fostering and adoption teams.

Name	Job title
Jane Wilson	Family Placement Manager
Sue Mansell	Senior Practitioner, Fostering Service
Jill Fawcett	Social Worker, Fostering Team
Lesley Farquharson	Social Worker, Fostering Team
Val Hampton	Social Worker, Fostering Team
Jane O'Toole	Social Worker, Fostering Team
Vacancy	Social Worker, Fostering Team

Tony Kerr	Senior Practitioner, Adoption Service
Jane Clarke	Social Worker, Adoption Team
Connie O'Neill	Social Worker, Adoption Team
Val Thompson	Social Worker, Adoption Team
Joyce Virth	Social Worker, Adoption Team

Judy Yelder (shared by both services)	Family Placement Development Officer
Val Scott	Support Worker
Sue Atkinson (shared by both services)	Team Clerk
Gill Bisp (shared by both services)	Team Clerk

Being 'Looked After'

- We always try to keep families together if we can. Sometimes this is not possible because the children in the family are not being looked after properly for some reason.
- There are lots of reasons why a young person is not able to live with their own parents. Those reasons are special to you. Your social worker will try to help you to understand why this has happened - it is not your fault.
- Sometimes a young person is able to stay with other members of their family or with close friends. This is called 'Family Network Care'. Sometimes a member of your family is able to become a foster carer so that they can get extra help to look after you.
- You may be 'looked after' as part of a voluntary agreement between your parents and your social worker. This is called being 'accommodated' (having somewhere to live). This can give your parents time to make things better so that you can go home.
- If your parents do not agree that you need to live away from home, your social worker has to go to court to prove that this needs to happen. This is called having a 'care order'.
- It is the job of the court to decide what is best for you. Their aim is to keep you safe and to make sure you have the best chance to grow up as a healthy and happy person.

Being Fostered

- Being in foster care means living with a foster carer as part of their family. You live in their house and join in with their family life. We try to match people up so that they will get on with each other.

"When you are having problems in your real home, it means you have someone to love you and care for you."

"It's just normal family life - a proper family."

"The best thing is if you just 'click' with your carer."

Young people in foster care in Middlesbrough, 2002

Who are the foster carers?

Foster carers come from all sorts of backgrounds and have all sorts of families. They are all different because young people are all different.

Among our foster carers we have:-

- People who are not married and live by themselves.
- People who are not married but live with a partner.
- People who are married but don't have any children of their own.
- People who are married and have children of their own.
- People who choose to look after certain kinds of children, such as

Children with disabilities

Babies

Teenagers

Children who come for a short stay - 'respite care'

Procedures - Recruiting Foster Carers

- The fostering service advertises for foster carers in the paper, on the internet (www.middlesbrough.gov.uk) and by using posters.
- An Information Pack is sent out to people.
- 2 Social Workers visit and talk about the application process, the needs of children who are looked after and the role of a foster carer.
- If the person wants to go ahead, they fill in the application form.
- References are checked and a check is made with the Criminal Records Bureau.
- The foster carer has a medical check to make sure they are fit.
- Applicants take part in a foster carer preparation group that lasts for 5 whole days.
- Foster carers then do at least 6 sessions with 2 social workers to look at their personal background, history, experience, their home and their attitudes. The social workers also talk to other people in the family.
- 2 personal referees are interviewed.
- The Family Placement Panel then considers the information and makes a recommendation about whether they think the person should be approved as a foster carer.
- The Deputy Director of Children, Families and Learning gives the final approval.

Procedures - Support, training and review

- Once a foster carer has been approved, they sign an agreement and are given a Foster Carer Handbook.
- They are visited by their social worker at least once every 8 weeks.
- The support workers can help by providing transport, babysitting and activities for children.
- They are sent a Foster Carers Newsletter to keep them up to date.
- They are given full membership of the Fostering Network and access to independent advice and mediation if they need it.
- There is a training programme for foster carers after they have been approved. Foster carers are asked what they would like to learn about.
- Foster carers are also told about other training opportunities.
- Foster carers are encouraged to study for NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People
- The approval given to foster carers is reviewed once a year. They are fully involved in that process so that the feedback goes both ways.
- The Deputy Director of Children, Families and Learning confirms their approval.

What to do if you are unhappy about anything to do with the fostering service.

➤ Talk to someone

Many problems can be sorted out quite easily if you tell someone about them. ***All our staff have a responsibility to help you to sort things out, if you ask them to.*** Talk to your social worker (or any other member of staff), a relative, your teacher, your independent visitor (if you have one) or anyone else that you trust.

➤ Contact an Independent Advocate

You can also get help from an independent advocate who can speak up on your behalf. ***The National Youth Advocacy Service will provide you with an adult (who does not work for the Council) to help you.*** You can contact the National Youth Advocacy Service by using a **freephone** number: **0800 616101** or send a **text** message to **0777 333 4555** or **e-mail** to: **help@nyas.net**

➤ Contact the Children's Rights Director for England

The Children's Rights Director is responsible for listening to the views of children who live away from home. If you wish, you have the right to complain directly to him and he will make sure your complaint is passed to the right person and taken seriously. The Children's Rights Director for England is Roger Morgan. His address is Office of the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted, 33 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE. Contact Roger Morgan by **freephone**: **0800 528 0731** or visit the web site: **www.rights4me.org.uk**

➤ **Make a complaint**

The law says that if you are unhappy about anything that we do or do not do, you have the right to complain about it. The Children's Complaints Officer is there to make sure that your complaint is dealt with properly.

The Children's Complaints Officer is based in Vancouver House:

01642 728416 Mon to Thurs 8.30 - 5.00pm, Fri 8.30 - 4.30pm

Email - voiceworthy@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Text - **07624 802273**

This is what happens when you make a complaint.....

You will get a letter saying who will look into your complaint. You should get this letter within 3 working days of us hearing from you.

Stage 1 - Local Problem-solving

A manager who is responsible for the service will talk to you about your complaint. They will try to sort it out as quickly as possible. We will try to resolve your complaint within 10 working days if we can. If your complaint has not been resolved or you have not received a response within 20 working days, you can move to.....

Stage 2 - Investigation

A different manager will look into what has happened. An Independent Person - someone who does not work for the council - will be involved too. They will make sure your complaint is dealt with fairly. We will try to complete this stage in 25 working days. If you are not happy with how your complaint has been dealt with, you can move to.....

Stage 3 - Review Panel

Your complaint will be looked at by a 'Review Panel'. The panel is made up of three independent people, who do not work for the Council. You will be asked if you would like to go and talk to the panel. This panel will decide if your complaint has been dealt with properly and fairly. The panel will say what they think should happen. We will tell you what we are going to do.

If you are still not happy, you can talk to the Local Government Ombudsman. Contact their Advisers on the Adviceline: **0845 602 1983** or **0300 061 0614** or text 'call back' to **0762 480 4299**.