



MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2011

Issued in Sept 2011 by
Middlesbrough Fostering Service
Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre
Cargo Fleet Lane
Middlesbrough TS3 8PE



Principles

The work of Middlesbrough Fostering Service is based on the following principles:

- (1) Child focussed
The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the fostering process.
- (2) Partnership
The Fostering Service will work in partnership with parents and children, foster carers and their families, and social work staff and other professionals when delivering the service.
- (3) Anti-discriminatory practice
The Fostering Service will respect Human Rights and will ensure that there is fair and equal access to all its services. The services it provides will be free from discrimination, prejudice and racism.

Aims and objectives

The main aim of the Fostering Service provided by Middlesbrough Council is:

- ◆ to provide suitable foster care placements for children who are looked after by Middlesbrough Council.

The Fostering Service will achieve this by:

- ◆ recruiting, preparing and assessing prospective foster carers and their families
- ◆ supporting, developing and retaining approved foster carers and their families
- ◆ working in partnership with the child's social worker to identify a suitable placement when it has been agreed that the child's assessed needs will be met by placement in foster care
- ◆ working in partnership with the child's social worker and other appropriate professionals to identify a suitable alternative placement from an Independent Fostering Agency, where appropriate and agreed by Middlesbrough Children's Panel.

Standards of care

The work of Middlesbrough Fostering Service is delivered in accordance with the following standards:

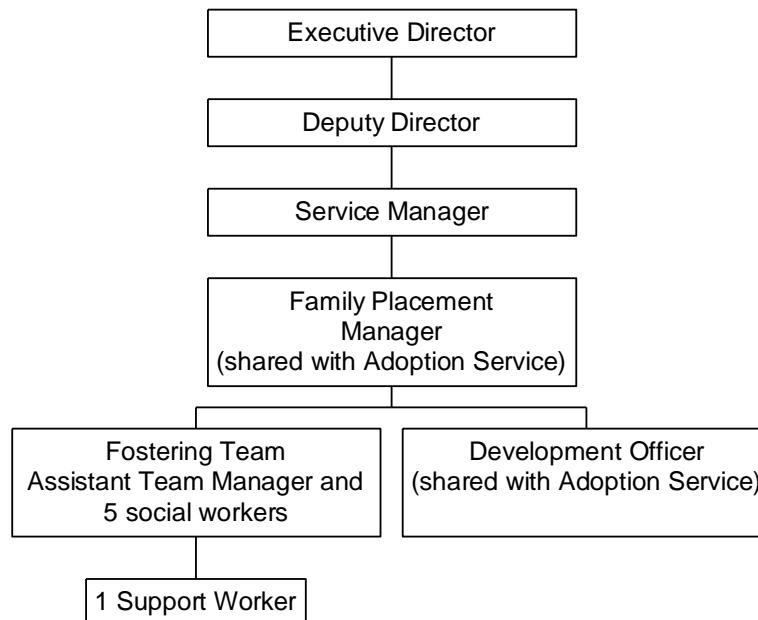
- ◆ UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- ◆ The Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of foster carers 1999
- ◆ The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011

In addition to the national standards, Middlesbrough Fostering Service has adopted local standards which underpin its approach to service delivery. These include:

- ◆ responding to enquiries from potential foster carers in a positive and welcoming manner and sending them an information pack within 5 working days of receiving the enquiry
- ◆ a requirement for social workers who join the team to be Grade K workers with a minimum of 2 years experience of Children & Families work
- ◆ a commitment to the use of co-working by 2 social workers during the assessment process, in the belief that this leads to a high quality, thorough assessment
- ◆ the use of a banded payments system which recognises the valuable contribution made by foster carers as they develop skills and experience and relates the payment received to the skills and experience they have developed

The Organisational Structure of the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service of Middlesbrough Council is provided by workers from the Fostering Team who are based within the Children, Families & Learning Department of Middlesbrough Council. The management structure as at 1st July 2011 is shown in the diagram below.



Details of the Manager of the Fostering Service

The manager of Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service is:

Lynn Woodhouse
Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre
Cargo Fleet Lane
Middlesbrough
TS3 8PE
Phone 01642 - 201960
Fax 01642 - 201973
Email lynn_woodhouse@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Details of staff as at 1st July 2011

Name	Job title	Qualifications	Experience
Lynn Woodhouse	Family Placement Manager	GSCC registered DipSW 1998 PQ1 2002 Child care award 2004 CMS 2000 DMS 2001	With Social Services from 1998-2004 With The Fostering Network 2004-2011 With Social Services 2011 ongoing
Sue Mansell	Assistant Team Manager	CQSW – 1990 Post Qualifying Award in Family Placement – 2007	With Social Services since 1990. With Fostering Service since 2008.
Jane O'Toole	Social Worker, Fostering Team	DipSW – 1998	With Social Services since 1998. With Fostering Service since 2002.
Val Hampton	Social Worker, Fostering Team	CQSW – 1986	With Social Services since 1986. With Fostering Service since 2001.
Jill Fawcett	Social Worker, Fostering Team	DipSW – 2000 PQ Child Care Award 2009	With Social Services since 2000. With Fostering Service since 2003.
Janet Docherty	Social Worker, Fostering Team	BA (Hons) in Social Work – 1999 PQ1 – 2004	With Social Services since 1999. With Fostering Service since 2009.
Claire Gibbon	Social Worker, Fostering Team	BA (Hons) in Business Administration 2001 DipSW – 2004 BA in Specialist Social Worker with children, young people, their families and carers - 2011	With Social Services since 2004. With Fostering Service since February 2011
Carole Tonner	Recruitment Training & Development Officer	BA HONS Degree Learning Research Technology – in CPD for Educational Support Staff	With Education since 1994 to Jan 2011. With Fostering Service since Jan 2011

Stacey Walker	Support Worker	Bsc in Sociology	With education from 2002-2006, moved to Social Services in 2006.
Gill Bisp	Team Clerk, Mouchel Business Services (shared with Adoption Service)	NVQ Business Admin. Level 2 – 1995 Level 3 – 1997 Level 3 Key Skills – 1997	With Social Services since 1981. With Fostering Service since 1996.
Sue Atkinson	Team Clerk, Mouchel Business Services (shared with Adoption Service)	B.T.E.C Business Admin – 1996	With Social Services since 1998. With Fostering Service since 2000.

Number of foster carers

The number of foster carers approved by Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service on 31st March 2011 was 79.

Number of children placed

The number of children placed in foster care by Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service on 31st March 2011 was 110.

Numbers of complaints and their outcomes

There were 0 complaints in the year ending 31st March 2011.

The Services and Facilities provided by the Fostering Service

The services and facilities provided by Middlesbrough Fostering Service fall into 3 main areas:

(a) Those provided to prospective foster carers:

- Information and advice about fostering
- Initial visits to people expressing an interest in becoming foster carers
- Preparation training for applicants
- Competency-based assessment of applicants using BAAF Form F
- The opportunity to attend the Family Placement Panel when their application is presented

(b) Those provided to foster carers registered with Middlesbrough Fostering Service

- Supervision and support from a named social worker from the Fostering Service
- Practical support (such as transport and activities for children) from a Support Worker, according to need
- A regular newsletter specifically for foster carers registered with Middlesbrough Fostering Service
- Membership of Fostering Network
- Support groups and social events for foster carers
- A foster carers handbook containing information on policies, procedures and practice guidance

- Access to independent advice and mediation when necessary
- A programme of induction training for newly approved foster carers
- A programme of post-approval training specifically for foster carers.
- Financial support for placements, using a banded payments scheme
- Loan of essential equipment or household items to support specific placements
- A peer mentoring scheme, provided by foster carers who have had relevant training

(c) Those provided to social work staff who need a placement for a child looked after by the Council.

These consist of:

- ◆ A duty social worker available during office hours Monday – Friday
- ◆ Provision of a range of foster care placements for children looked after by Middlesbrough Council
- ◆ Provision of carers for use by the Emergency Duty Team for placements at evenings, weekends and bank holidays.

Procedures and processes used by Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service

Recruitment, assessment and approval

- (1) Recruitment activity is planned in accordance with the Family Placement Recruitment Strategy, which has been in place since January 2000. This uses a continuous, low-key, community development approach with a 'drip feed' of various types of publicity and information. Fostering is marketed as a way of helping a child which also has a benefit for the foster carers. Recruitment activity goes on at different levels - national (for example Foster Care Fortnight in May, inclusion of our agency details on various web-sites); and local (for example the use of adverts placed in various publications, distribution of posters and leaflets, inclusion of family placement information on Middlesbrough's web-site).
- (2) Another key element of the recruitment strategy is that of responding to enquiries in a positive but realistic way. Enquiries are taken by a member of the Fostering Service who takes basic details and answers any initial questions. An information pack is sent out within 5 days of receipt of the enquiry. If the enquirer wants to go on to the next stage, they send back a short form giving basic details of themselves and the type of fostering that interests them.
- (3) The Manager or Assistant Manager will then arrange for 2 Social Workers to visit and give information on the application process and its requirements, the needs of children who are looked after and the role of the carer. They will also find out about the family's circumstances and their motivation to foster. Following further discussion, an agreement is reached about whether it is appropriate to proceed with an application.
- (4) An application form is given to prospective carers if appropriate. This includes consent for statutory checks for all relevant people in the household. Once the application form has been completed and returned, references are taken up with Criminal Records Bureau and all relevant statutory agencies. This includes contact with the relevant embassy if the applicant has worked abroad and the records of the RAF/Navy/Army if the applicant has been a member of the Armed Forces. References from the applicant's current employer are sought if appropriate. Medical examinations are carried out by the applicant's doctor using the BAAF Medical Form and returned to Middlesbrough Medical Adviser for comments and a recommendation.

- (5) The applicants are notified of the dates of preparation group and given a clear message that the preparation group is an important part of the application process and they are expected to attend each session. The preparation group runs for 5 full days and includes the children of the family if they are of an appropriate age. There is evaluation and feedback at the end of the group, At this point some people also decide for themselves not to precede any further.
- (6) The next stage is the home study which is done using the BAAF Form F. It consists of a minimum of 6 sessions, with individual sessions with each applicant in addition. The visits are normally carried out by 2 workers. The topics covered include personal background/history/experiences, parenting experiences, birth children's views, the home environment, including dog/pet safety and applicant's own work to show absorption of material from groups. In addition to these sessions with the applicants and their family several members, 2 personal referees are interviewed, as are the ex-partners of the applicants where it has been agreed that there was a 'significant' relationship. Children of the applicants living elsewhere will also be interviewed, with the agreement of their carer.
- (7) When all the necessary material is available, the Form F is completed by the social workers using contributions from the applicants themselves at appropriate points. The Form F is read and signed by the applicants and is presented to Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel which meets every 2 weeks. Applicants are able to attend the panel meeting when the application is discussed if they wish. The Family Placement Panel considers the Form F and makes a recommendation regarding the application. This recommendation is then approved (or not) by the Deputy Director of Children, Families & Learning. Applicants are then notified in writing of the outcome of their application.
- (8) If an application is not recommended by Panel and the applicants do not accept this, they can choose either to make further representations to the Family Placement Panel or to have their application referred to an independent body known as the Independent Review Mechanism. The IRM will review the recommendation made by Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel and make its own recommendation about the applicants' suitability, which the agency must then take into account when making the decision about the application.

Support, training and review

- (1) Once a foster carer has been approved by Middlesbrough's Family Placement Panel, they will complete a foster carer agreement and be provided with a Foster Carer Handbook. They will receive ongoing support from a Supervising Social Worker who is a member of the Fostering Service. This Social Worker will visit regularly to supervise the work of the foster carer and help with training and development needs. The minimum visiting frequency is one visit every 8 weeks, but this normally only applies to long-term, stable placements and many foster carers have a much higher level of contact than this. Foster carers also have access to a support workers who provides support of a practical nature, such as transport and activities for children.
- (2) In addition to the support provided by Social Workers and Support Workers, all foster carers receive a regular newsletter which keeps them up-to-date with relevant developments within Children, Families & Learning and elsewhere. They also receive full membership of Fostering Network and access to independent advice and mediation when necessary. Support group meetings are held on a monthly basis and a guest speaker is usually invited to present a topic of interest to foster carers. There are also social events for foster carers , their children and children looked after.

- (3) As part of its commitment to the development of the foster care service and increasing the skills of foster carers, Middlesbrough Fostering Service provides a training programme specifically for foster carers. Foster carers are given support and encouragement to participate and methods of delivery include distance learning and e-learning as well as group training sessions.
- (4) Foster carers can keep up to date with training that is on offer via the website www.mgrid.org.uk Some training opportunities require the carer to apply on line other training may require a phone call or e-mail to a member of the Fostering team
- (5) In addition to the training sessions provided by the Fostering Service, other training opportunities are available through the in-house training programme provided by Middlesbrough Council; through the training provided by the Middlesbrough Local Safeguarding Children Board and through the purchase of places at external training events, which are relevant to foster care.
- (6) The Level 3 Diploma for the Children's and Young Peoples Workforce. This qualification replaces the NVQ Level 3 health & Social Care Children and Young People and the NVQ Level 3 Children's Care Learning and Development. This is now delivered from Middlesbrough College. If you have any questions you can contact Catherine Cooke after the 15th August by e-mail CJM.Cooke@mbro.ac.uk or by telephoning 01642 333242
- (7) All foster carers who are approved by Middlesbrough Fostering Service have their approval reviewed at least once a year. The review process within Middlesbrough is also used as a means of giving foster carers the chance to give some feedback on the service they receive from Children, Families & Learning and to evaluate whether the foster carers are meeting the requirements of Middlesbrough Banded Payments Scheme. Foster carers are fully involved in the review process and are given a report to complete prior to the review meeting. They are fully involved in the review meeting which is chaired by a Reviewing Officer who is independent of the Fostering Service. After the review meeting, the I.R.O completes a review report with a recommendation which is presented to Family Placement Panel for discussion and approval. Foster carers are able to attend the panel meeting when their review is discussed if they wish. The review recommendation is then approved (or not) by the Deputy Director of Children, Families & Learning and foster carers are notified in writing of the outcome of their review.

A summary of the complaints procedure

Complaints about Middlesbrough Fostering Service are dealt with using the complaints procedure of Middlesbrough Council. This procedure sets out 3 stages to dealing with a complaint.

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

The Manager of the service will attempt to address the complaint as quickly as possible. Within 3 days of receiving the complaint, the Complaints Section will acknowledge the complaint telling them who will look into the complaint and provide them with information on the complaints procedure. The Manager will contact the complainant to discuss the complaint and try and resolve the issues within 10 working days. If the Manager cannot achieve resolution initially, the Manager may take a further 10 working days but the maximum amount of time that Stage 1 should take is 20 working days.

Stage 2 – Investigation

If the person making the complaint is not happy with the outcome at Stage 1 or the timescale has elapsed at Stage 1, the complainant has the right to move onto Stage 2. A Senior Manager who does not have direct line management of the service or person whom the complaint is being made, will investigate the complaint along with an Independent Person who is appointed from outside of the local authority, whose role is to ensure that the process of investigation is open, transparent and fair.

The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will meet with the complainant to agree the elements of complaint. Once the Investigating Officer and Independent Person have completed their investigation they will both prepare a written report, which will be sent to the Department and complainant.

The Investigation should be completed within 25 working days, if this is not possible the timescale may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. The Children's Complaints Officer or the Investigating Officer will discuss any extensions to the timescale with the complainant.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

If the person making the complaint is not happy with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, they can ask for the complaint to be considered by a Review Panel. The panel will consist of an Independent Chair and two other Independent People who do not work for the local authority.

The purpose of the Review Panel is to consider the adequacy of the Stage 2 investigation and focus on achieving resolution for the complainant by addressing their clearly defined complaints and desired outcomes.

The Review Panel should take place within 30 working days of receiving the request. The person making the complaint will be informed of the recommendations of the Review Panel within 5 working days and the Director of Children, Families & Learning will send the complainant a response to the Panel's recommendations within 15 working days of the panel meeting.

The Complaints Officer will help with a complaint if:

- you are not happy with the care you get
- nobody listens to you
- you are not happy with things people do for you
- you need more help

To make a complaint the Children's Complaints Officer is based in Vancouver House, Gurney Street, Middlesbrough, TS1 1EL

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

Email – voiceworthy@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Text – 07624 802273

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

The Fostering Service of Middlesbrough Council is inspected every 3 years by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.

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Website: www.csci.org.uk