



# **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2007**

**BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FOSTERING SERVICE**

## Statement of Purpose

### Contents

- 1) Mission Statement and Values
- 2) Aims and Objectives
- 3) Management Structure
- 4) Numbers, relevant qualification and experience of staff
- 5) Services Provided
- 6) Recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing foster carers
- 7) Numbers of foster carers
- 8) Numbers of children placed
- 9) Complaints and outcomes

## 1) **Mission Statement**

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service is committed to providing high quality foster placements which improve outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People .

### Values

In compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and childcare legislation as well as the National Foster Care Standards and the National Minimum Care Standards, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service will promote: -

- high quality care in a family setting for all children and young people who need it.
- the return of children and young people to the care of their birth families where appropriate by actively working in partnership with partner agencies, including birth parents.
- where a return to birth family is not appropriate, the development and implementation of permanence plans for children that avoid unnecessary delay.
- priority for the needs of the child or young person in determining each foster placement.
- respect for and advancement of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children and young people, and their families and foster carers in the planning and provision of the service and of each individual placement.
- consideration of the gender, sexuality and any disability of children and young people in the planning and provision of the service and in each individual placement.
- continuity in the lives of children and young people, so their identity and education can be maintained and developed, their physical and mental well-being promoted and their full potential achieved.
- a partnership approach embracing parents and children, carers and social work staff, all planning and working in the best interest of the child.
- continuity and consistency in training, support and information for foster carers and social work staff to enable them to best meet the needs of looked after children.

- respect for foster carers as significant partners alongside all other professionals involved with the child or young person.
- Increased consultation and involvement on service development and delivery for children and young people and foster carers.
- Increased choice for children and young people in foster care.

## 2) **Aims and Objectives**

### Aims

The Fostering Service's overarching aims are: -

- to provide a safe, stable and secure family environment for all children and young people who require a foster placement, by increasing placement choice and placement stability.
- To meet all our varying customer needs in a manner that offers value for money.
- to work alongside partner agencies to ensure that fostered children and young people achieve positive outcomes in the following areas:
  - i. Staying safe
  - ii. Being healthy
  - iii. Enjoying and achieving
  - iv. Making a positive contribution
  - v. Achieving economic well-being

### Objectives

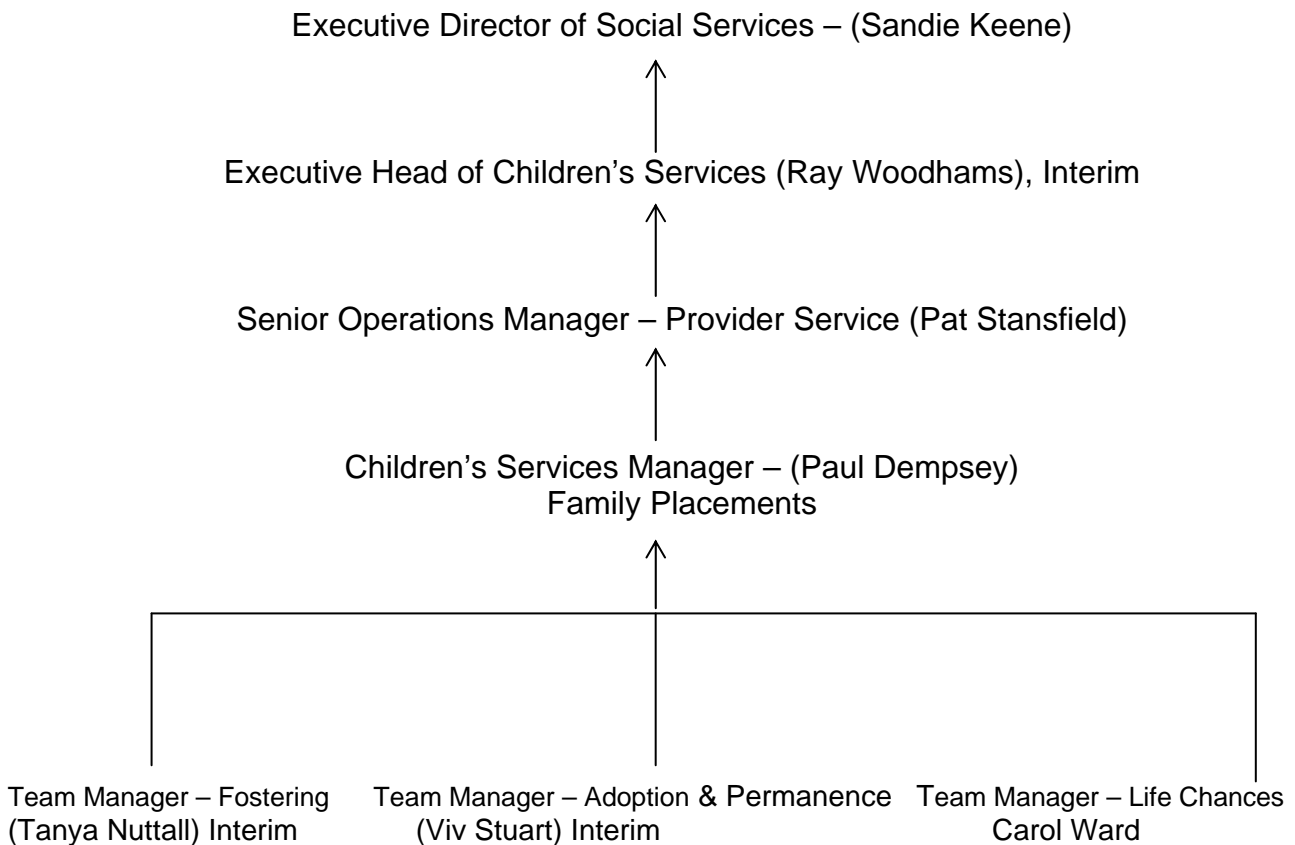
The Fostering Service objectives are: -

- to ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of childhood, either through returning children to their families, moving them on for adoption, or through providing permanence in a foster placement.
- to reduce the number of 'Looked After' children who have 3 or more placements in 1 year.
- to increase the number of foster care placements and therefore placement choice.
- to retain foster carers through training and carer development opportunities, and an equitable payment scheme.

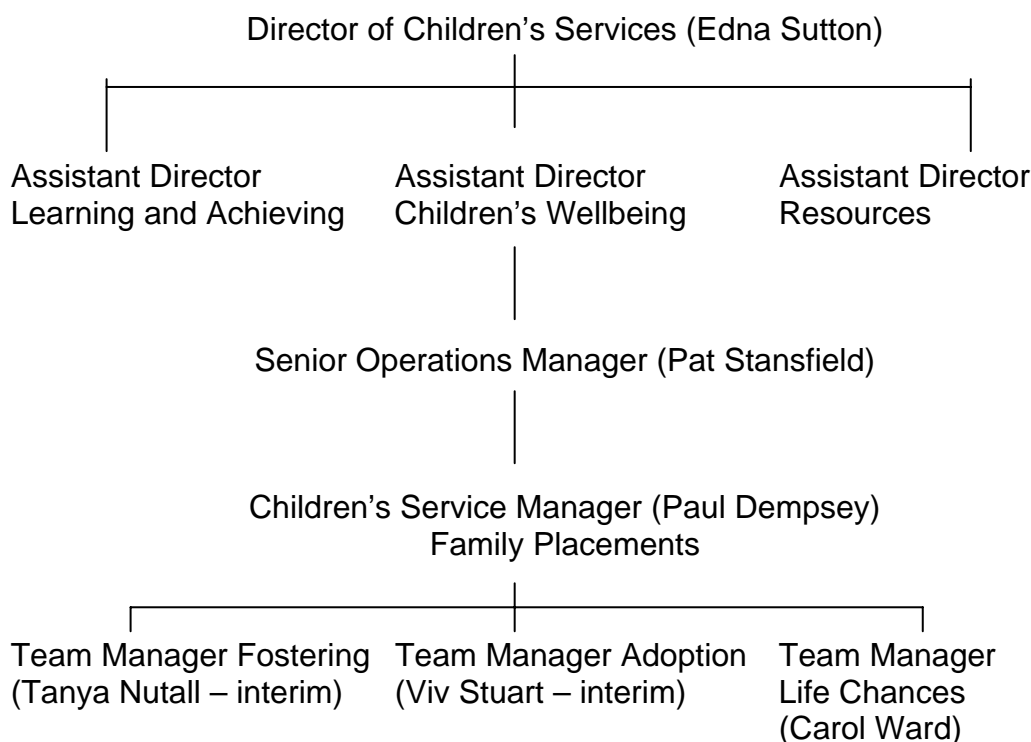
- to work with colleagues and other agencies to ensure that looked after children benefit from educational, health and social care opportunities and ensure that young people leaving the looked after system are adequately supported and able to maintain contact with carers and social workers.
- to maintain an adequate number of appropriately qualified, skilled and trained Fostering Team workers in order to facilitate the running of the service.

### 3) Management Structure

Pre-1<sup>st</sup> April 2007:



Anticipated Structure post April 2007 following the merging of Children's Social Services with Local Education Authority to form a Children's Services Directorate.



#### 4) **Services Provided**

##### Foster Care Placements

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's fostering service aims to provide a range of foster care placements to meet all the needs of children and young people in Barnsley who cannot live with their birth families and covers ages from birth to 18 and beyond if a young person is in full time education.

The following details the range of foster placements the service provides: -

##### Short-term Placements

Carers undertaking short-term placements do so in a variety of circumstances and with a variety of children and young people. It may be for a very short, predictable period of time whilst for example a child's mother is in hospital or a carer may look after a child whilst detailed assessments and court proceedings are undertaken, and until an agreed permanence plan can be implemented for the child.

##### Long-term/Permanent Placements

Carers offering long-term/permanent placements commit to caring for a child or young person whose 'permanence' care plan indicates that their needs will best be met in a foster placement that takes them through to and beyond

adulthood. Where appropriate and in the best interests of the child long term foster carers will be supported to achieve permanence for the child through an alternative court order e.g. Residence Order, Special Guardianship, Adoption.

### Emergency Placements

Carers offering emergency placements within a limited approval range are able to be contacted at short notice, at evenings and weekends, to accept unplanned placements of children. A list of emergency carers with vacancies is updated weekly and forwarded to the Emergency Duty Team.

### Respite Carers

The service has a number of carers who offer respite care on a regular basis, normally weekends, where a child's care plan has indicated that such arrangements will be beneficial.

### Short Breaks for children with disabilities

The service has a small number of respite carers offering respite/short breaks for children with disabilities. The service is currently developing plans to expand this service.

### Befriending Service

Some foster carers have been involved in befriending and supporting birth parents in order to prevent children having to come into care.

### Care Plus Specialist Fostering

The service has sought to widen placement choice through the development of the Care Plus specialist foster care scheme. The concept of the Care Plus scheme is to provide foster carers with more advanced skills and experiences, in relation to work with children and young people, to provide placements for children with the more difficult to meet needs.

The scheme aims to provide placements in the following areas:

#### Children with complex needs or significant disability

A number of placements have been created to cater for children and young people with particularly complex needs or disabilities. These placements cater for adolescents, children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, those with significant attachment problems, or children with significant disabilities.

#### Mother and baby placements

This service offers placements for young mothers and their babies.

## Emergency Fostering

This is a service which provides dedicated emergency carers who have the skills and experience to care for young people placed in a crisis, often in the early hours at weekends. The carers work in partnership with the service and birth family to move the young person on.

## Social Work/Support Services

Social workers for children and young people visit children in foster placements on a regular basis and within the statutory requirements.

In addition to this, each foster carer has a named professional social work qualified supervising social worker who visits and supervises the carer in accordance with National Foster Care Standards requirements. The range of support services include:-

- Day to day support and guidance to maintain placements
- Out of hours peer support phone line staffed by carers for carers
- Access to 24 hour support through the social services Emergency Duty Team
- Help with transport for looked after children and foster carers
- Supervision of contact between a child/young person and birth family members
- Local support group meetings
- Financial support in the form of allowances, expenses payments and fee payments under our Payments for Skills Scheme and Care Plus Scheme
- Access to consultancy sessions with therapeutic professionals

## Training

The Social Services Department's training section provides a rolling programme each year of relevant training for foster carers, assisting in their personal and professional development, and equipping them with the skills and knowledge to undertake the fostering task. The training section has a worker dedicated to training regarding Looked After Children. Some carers have had the opportunity to undertake NVQ's in foster care and gain accredited qualifications. The service is currently striving to widen access to the NVQ qualifications so that more carers can benefit.

## Health and Education

The fostering service is supported by a number of specialist advisors in relation to both the health and education needs of 'Looked After' children and young people. These staff are part of the Life Chances Team, who are a multi-disciplinary team dedicated to promoting the life-chances of looked after children.

## Therapeutic Services

Children and young people in foster placement have access to therapeutic services through the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team and Barnsley NSPCC therapeutic services with whom Barnsley Council has a Service Level Agreement.

### **5) Numbers, Relevant Qualifications, and Experience of Staff**

Current staffing levels: - The Fostering Team is made up of a Team Manager Post, Assistant Team Manager, 3 Principal Social Worker Posts, 5 Social Worker Posts, and a Social Work Assistant Post. The service is about to commence a recruitment drive to fully staff the team.

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Qualifications</u>	<u>Experience</u>
Team Manager (interim) Tanya Nuttall	BA Honours Social Theory and CQSW	34 Post Qualifying experience
Assistant Team Manager Vacant	-	-
Principal Social Worker (Peter Rhodes)	BSc (Hons) and CQSW	29 years post qualifying experience
Principal social Worker – Specialist Fostering (Helen Cook)	BA Honours Psychology, DipSW and Masters in Social Work, Foundation Year in Family Therapy	14 years post qualifying experience
Principal Social Worker (Tanya Nuttall – currently Interim Team Manager)	See above	See above
Temporary post holder Philip Dawson	CQSW Certificate Management Studies	32 years post qualifying experience
Social Worker (Wendy Redman)	BA Honours Degree, CQSW, PQ1 and Child Care Award	20 years post qualifying experience
Social Worker (Emily Parsons)	BA Honours Degree, DipSW & PQ1	5 years post qualifying experience
Social Worker (Vacant)		
Social Worker (Vacant)		
Social Worker – Recruitment (Vacant)		
Family Support Worker (Kerry Leach)	Non qualified (social work) Diploma in Nursery Nursing	12 years experience nursery nurse and teaching assistant

## 6) Recruiting, Approving, Training & Reviewing Foster Carers

Recruitment activity is undertaken through various local media, including local newspapers and radio coverage. The service has worked alongside Barnsley Football Club in some of its activities. Regular recruitment events are staged throughout the course of a year including, for example, a roadshow.

Efforts are made to ensure that recruitment material emphasises that all sorts of people can become foster carers regardless of their age, sex, sexuality, marital status, disability, race or religion.

- On receiving an enquiry from a person or persons interested in becoming a foster carer, a worker from the Fostering Team requests certain basic information from the enquirer. In addition, the worker gives the enquirer information about the training, assessment and approval process, the need for statutory checks, the different types of fostering that can be undertaken and details about financial payments and rewards that are made to carers.
- A standard initial enquiry form is used to record this information and an information pack is sent out to the enquirer.
- Included in the information pack is a letter with a tear off reply slip inviting enquirers to send this back to us if they would like to proceed to the next stage, when a worker from the team will make an initial visit to them in their home. If enquirers return the slip requesting a visit, the manager allocates a worker to visit the enquirer. Enquirers can expect an initial visit within 2 weeks of the Fostering Team receiving their request for one.
- The initial visit is an opportunity for the worker to find out more about the enquirer and his/her/their circumstances and more fully inform them about becoming a foster carer.
- If, after an initial visit, and consultation with the manager, all parties agree that it is appropriate to proceed, enquirers will be asked to complete a formal application form and consent to statutory checks form.
- The fostering service makes statutory checks with: -
  - Criminal Records Bureau on all household members aged 16 and over
  - Social Services
  - NSPCC
  - Probation Service
  - Education
  - Barnsley Choices
  - Ofsted
  - Health
  - The Safeguarding Unit
  - Other Local Authority if appropriate

Applicants are also required to undergo a medical examination completed by their G.P., and to provide the names of three personal referees who will later be interviewed as part of the process.

### Preparation Training

All applicants are required to attend a foster carer preparation training course before being approved. The service uses the Fostering Network's Skills to Foster preparation training. This programme is made up of the following sessions held over five days: -

1. What do foster carers do?
2. Who are the children and young people?
3. Working together
4. Child Development & Attachment
5. Children's Needs
6. Child Protection
7. Safer Caring
8. Understanding Behaviour
9. Moving on
10. Support for foster carers and their families.

### Assessment

A qualified social worker carries out a detailed assessment of the applicant's suitability to become foster carers. The assessment is based on the BAAF Competency Assessment format. At the end of the assessment, a report is produced following this format, which demonstrates the applicant's suitability and competence to undertake the fostering task.

The report (excluding references) is shared with the applicant and they are able to add their own comments or record disagreements with the reports content if they so wish.

The report is then presented to Barnsley's Fostering Panel for a recommendation about the applicant's suitability to become approved foster carers. The report is presented by the assessing social worker and the applicants are also invited to attend. The panel only makes recommendations. It is for the Agency Decision Maker (Pat Stansfield, Senior Operations Manager) to consider panel's recommendation when making the final decision to approve or not.

Applicants are informed both verbally and in writing of the decision and are given specific details as to the exact approval category.

If the service decides not to approve an applicant at this stage, the applicant is given the decision and the reasons in writing. He or she then has 28 days to make a written representation. If representation is received within this time the fostering panel would reconsider the application.

The approved carers are then asked to record and sign a 'Foster Carer Agreement' between themselves and the service. Whilst the duration of the assessment and approval process can vary according to individual circumstances, the service aims to have applicants assessment reports

presented to fostering panel within 8 months of their initial enquiry to the service.

### Support & Supervision

Immediately following approval, new carers are allocated a named, suitably qualified supervising social worker. This worker takes on responsibility for both supervising and supporting the carers and workers are expected to go about this role in accordance with the requirements of Standard 14 of the National Foster Care Standards, which relates to support and supervision.

New carers are also given a copy of Barnsley's Foster Carer Handbook, which includes useful information about the service.

### Training

The Social Services Department run a rolling programme of training each year for approved foster carers, and has a training officer dedicated to training related to looked after children. All carers are encouraged to attend training courses by their supervising social worker through reviews, personal development plans and through the links between training and progression up the payment for skills scheme. The service also offers carers the opportunity to undertake NVQ qualifications and this is linked to the payment for skills scheme.

### Reviews

It is a requirement that each foster carer is reviewed annually. The service has a standard review report form for completion before review meetings. Different parts of the report are completed by the supervising social worker, social workers for children who have been placed with the carers since the last review, and the carers themselves as well as children and young people in placement and children of the foster carers. The completed parts of the report are shared with foster carers prior to the review meeting. The review meeting then takes place on the agreed date in the foster carers home.

Review meetings are chaired by either the Fostering or Adoption and Permanence Team Manager, or the Service Manager, Family Placements or Independent Reviewing Officers.

The review meeting explores the events since the last review and makes recommendations for the coming year for foster carers. These include recommendations about the carer's approval and the appropriate level for the carer on the payment for skills scheme.

A health and safety checklist is completed also as part of the review, and the general home conditions and sleeping arrangements would also be examined and recorded.

Foster carers receive details of the review decision in writing within 28 days of the review meeting.

For a carer's first review after initial approval and any subsequent review where it is felt necessary or beneficial, the review report will be referred to the Fostering Panel for its consideration. In these circumstances carers will receive written notice of the decisions made within 28 days of the panel date where the report was considered (which should be the next panel meeting after the review meeting.)

### Allegations of Abuse Made Against Foster Carers

All allegations made against foster carers which relate to abuse or concerns about the quality of care are taken seriously, and dealt with in accordance with the service's policy and procedure regarding allegations made against foster carers.

#### **7) Numbers of Foster Carers as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006**

Mainstream	-	66
Family and friend foster carers	-	39
Total	-	105

#### **8) Numbers of Children Placed with Foster Carers as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006**

As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006 Barnsley Social Services were responsible for 192 children and young people placed in foster care, including 143 with Barnsley local authority carers and 49 with independent carers.

#### **9) Numbers of Complaints and their Outcomes**

Between January 2006 and December 2006 the service received and investigated a total of 3 formal complaints.

	<u>Nature of Complaint</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
1.	Delay in Service	Resolved informally.
2.	Delay in Service	Resolved formally at stage one of procedure.
3.	Lack of communication	A way forward agreed at stage one of procedure.