

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

January 2019

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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The Fostering Team is regulated and inspected by Ofsted against the Fostering Regulations 2011 and Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. The Statement of Purpose is a requirement under the Standards and it is written as a description of fostering arrangements for children looked after by Blackpool Council. The Statement of Purpose is intended to provide a clear guide of the work undertaken by the Fostering Team to birth parents, professionals, the public, council members, foster carers and external organisations. Information contained in the Statement of Purpose is updated and a new version produced each year.

To obtain a copy of the Statement of Purpose, please contact the Fostering Team at Bickerstaffe House, Talbot Road, Blackpool, FY1 3AH. Arrangements can be made for the document to be produced in larger print or in a different language or format.

Any comments or enquiries regarding the contents of the Statement of Purpose should be made to Claire Samuels Fostering Team Manager by phone 01253 477888 or email claire.samuels@blackpool.gov.uk

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1.1 Introduction

As a local authority, Blackpool Borough Council holds statutory powers and responsibilities in relation to fostering provision for looked after children. Acting on behalf of the local authority, the Fostering Team actively endeavours to ensure that equality and diversity is incorporated into all aspects of service delivery. All prospective foster carers are recruited and supported on the basis of their ability to undertake the fostering task, and the needs of the service regardless of their individual characteristics that may include their age, race, religion, class, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

1.2 Fostering Service Principles

The following set of principles guide the day-to-day practice of the Fostering Team:

1. Whenever possible the child is kept within his or her community, family and friendship network.
2. Foster care is a partnership between the foster carers, supervising social workers and the child's social worker all working together with the child, their nuclear and extended family whenever possible. The focus will always be to achieve what is in the best interests of the child.
3. The cultural, racial, linguistic and religious identities of children, their parents and foster carers will be respected in the development of the foster care service and in making and supporting individual placements.
4. Children have the right to continuity in their lives in order to enable them to develop and maintain positive self-esteem and identity and to promote their physical and mental wellbeing and for them to achieve their full potential.
5. Foster carers should be consulted at every opportunity in order to develop and improve services to foster carers, their children, looked after children and their families.

1.3 Fostering Service Aims

Blackpool Borough Council's Fostering Team has four broad aims which are:

1. To ensure there is sufficient safe, high quality substitute family care for children looked after.
2. That there is an ongoing recruitment strategy objective, which focuses on inviting applications from all sectors of the community and responding to each enquiry in a professional and timely manner.
3. That foster carers receive regular visits and communication by fostering supervising social workers and fostering support officers.
4. That family finding for children who require foster families to care for them into adulthood remains a priority.

1.4 Fostering Service Standards of Care

1. The true cost of caring for a foster child must be met and foster carers given the opportunity to receive payment for their time, experience and skills.
2. Foster carers and social workers have a right to prepare for their role and a responsibility to use training opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills.
3. Foster carers, social workers, looked after children and their parents must be able to call upon the placing agency for support.
4. The responsibility of the placing agency to the foster carers, the purpose and goals of each placement and the responsibilities of all parties must be stated in writing.
5. Formal decisions relating to an individual child's foster care should be taken in full consultation with them, their parents, and the foster carers.
6. Foster carers, children and their parents should be able to challenge decisions and plans proposed by the fostering service and to be informed about how to make a complaint or representation.

1.5 The Fostering Team

The Fostering Team is committed to working in partnership with the community, the child and their family, the child's social worker and all other agencies in order to provide a high level of quality foster care to children looked after by Blackpool. The needs of children are central to the Fostering Team's activities and in line with legislation and government guidance.

The Fostering Team is responsible for ensuring that foster carers have practical and emotional support, information, advice and training to provide a safe home and nurturing environment for children looked after. Records of Decisions to accept or refuse applicants are maintained by the Fostering Manager and decisions are based on clear eligibility criteria.

The Fostering Team places high importance on the training and support of foster carers, regarding them as part of the professional team entrusted to provide and advocate for the physical, emotional and educational needs of children. The Fostering Team will assist all foster carers in completing the essential training required for the fostering task.

Qualified social workers within the Fostering Team are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council, and all staff are subject to three yearly DBS checks. The Fostering Team Manager is suitably qualified and has the relevant experience and knowledge. Ongoing workforce development is a priority within Blackpool Borough Council.

The Fostering Team has a single point of referral and a duty office system that provides advice on all fostering enquiries, fostering placement issues regarding children aged 0 – 18 and for support to foster carers. The staff team keeps up-to-date information on in-house foster care capacity and availability. The Duty Officer is available from 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Thursday and 9.00am to 4.30pm Friday. There is other 24 hour support, 365 days a year to foster carers provided by the Blackpool Emergency Duty Service on T: 01253 477600.

1.6 Organisational Arrangements and Management Structure

The Fostering Team is located within Children's Services Department. There is a senior management structure within the directorate for the management of the Fostering Team.

The Fostering Team and Fostering Panel are adequately supported by administrative staff. Recruitment of foster carers is overseen by the Fostering Manager.

1.7 Services Provided

The Fostering Team is made up of qualified and unqualified staff. Qualified staff undertake foster carer recruitment, assessment, training, support, professional development and reviews. They are also responsible for assessing and supporting family and friends as carers. Unqualified staff are fully involved in supporting foster carers and also in facilitating support groups and consultation groups for foster carers.

Once foster carers are approved they are allocated to a supervising social worker (a social work qualified post). Supervising social workers provide physical, financial and practical support to foster carers by offering information, advice, and access to foster carer support groups, training opportunities and equipment. They are also responsible for supervising the foster carers work and ensuring that the foster carer is meeting the child's needs.

The Fostering Team delivers specific and general training and also commissions training from other agencies. As well as delivering formal training for foster carers the supervising social workers take on the role of supporting foster carers with their professional development through the annual foster carer review.

Supervising social workers also ensure children are safe and being cared for properly in terms of their health, education, access to leisure and, where appropriate, having contact with their family. Thus, supervising social workers have a safeguarding role as well as a supporting role.

Foster carer's performance is monitored throughout the year by supervised, planned and unannounced visits and through an annual review.

1.8 Support to Foster Carers

Foster carers are supported by qualified supervising social workers from the Fostering Team. The supervising social worker's role covers a variety of activities including advice, training, practicalities of equipment and finance and assisting foster carers to carry out their task appropriately. The supervising social worker also has a responsibility to ensure that children are safeguarded whilst they are placed with foster carers and as such supervising social workers will monitor and check compliance against the foster carer's written agreement.

All foster carers are encouraged to attend support groups, which enable them to share experiences of fostering and for them to have a forum to network, socialise or raise any issues or good ideas.

We are looking to further develop the group for foster carers' sons and daughters in 2018, which will be facilitated by workers from the Fostering Team.

Foster carers and the children placed with them are able to receive support from: Independent Visitors Scheme: Children's Rights Service: Children's Participation Officer: Virtual Schools Officer: Children in Public Care Team (Education): and nurses for Looked After Children (Health).

The Fostering Team has access to a Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who provide a service for children. In addition to CAMHS, we have access to a Psychologist for Looked After Children and an Educational Psychologist.

Foster Carer Forums are held three times each year, where foster carers are invited to contribute to agenda items which affect the delivery of fostering provision. The Forums are also used as a means for consultation.

Support groups are held in each locality of Blackpool once each month. All foster carers are welcome at each group for discussion and consultation. Foster carers in each area are encouraged to attend with the aim of developing support networks with one another in their local community.

Peer mentoring is encouraged where newly registered foster carers are introduced to established foster carers who are able to provide support and guidance from the foster carers' perspective.

Awards are presented to carers in recognition of long standing commitment to fostering for Blackpool Council.

Foster carers achieving Blackpool Borough Council's Fostering Services Basic Essential Training Award (BETA) are invited to an annual awards ceremony.

The Fostering Team provides new European Standard Approved equipment to all carers specific to the requirements of children in placement.

If a foster carer has had a complaint made against them, the Fostering Team can arrange support from an Independent Support Consultant and there is also a helpline available to foster carers at Fostering Network. The Fostering Team has corporate and individual memberships with Fostering Network.

Carers are paid a weekly allowance based on central government guidelines. In addition to the basic fostering allowance they also receive a payment for skills element. For full details on the fee payment structure contact can be made to the Fostering Manager on 01253 477888.

1.9 Support to Prevent a Child's Placement Breaking Down

Placement Support meetings should be convened where foster placements which are otherwise considered to be suitable for a child are at risk of breaking down. They should be called only after other options such as informal meetings between workers and carers have been exhausted and produced no noticeable improvement in the quality of the child's foster placement.

If a Placement Support meeting is appropriate the child social worker or any other worker with a legitimate interest in the well-being of the child, for example, from health or education, should ask the child's social worker to convene a Placement Support meeting and identify a team manager to chair the meeting.

All Placement Support meetings must be formally noted with a record of key issues of concern and actions identified at the meeting with names of workers allocated tasks, timescales for tasks to be completed and identifying how all parties will evaluate when desired outcomes have been achieved.

The minutes will be circulated to all attendees and any other parties who need to be updated on the plan for the child and always including the foster carer.

Consideration must always be given as to whether it is in the child's best interest and appropriate to be invited to attend the meeting. This is to ensure that their wishes and feelings are fully considered and taken into account in respect of any proposed decision which will affect them directly.

All attendees must be well prepared to attend the meeting so that they are able to contribute appropriately and secure the best possible outcome for the child.

Key activities in the meeting will be:-

- a) To focus on the factors that are causing stress to the placement with the attendant risk of disruption. These may be related to activities or all behaviours of the child, foster carers or other members of the Foster carer's household.
- b) To consider the strengths of the placement that need to be acknowledged and built on including the robustness of the professional and other support networks.
- c) To seek solutions to support the child and carers to avoid breakdown by identifying the necessary resources required to make the placement stable. Or
- d) To clarify in a planned disruption is in the child's best interest.

The outcomes of the meeting, specifying what actions have been agreed and who will implement them and within what timescale, should be recorded in writing.

The Placement Support meeting should be seen as a positive response to the emergent crisis and not as a blaming or negatively critical analysis of the placement. The ultimate aim is to restore stability and support the carers so that they can continue to offer a foster home to the child or young person.

1.10 Support to Foster Families where an Exemption Certificate is in place

In circumstances where foster carers are caring for more than three children who are not all related to one another and are therefore 'over the usual fostering limit' of caring for three children, additional support is considered. Domestic assistance to allow foster carers more time to spend with the children in their care is an example of one option. Other options include respite care if this is considered in the best interests of the child. In all circumstances, where an Exemption Certificate is in place, the fostering household can expect to receive visits from the support workers from the fostering team at intervals of not more than once each month. Foster carers can also expect additional visits from the support workers in the Fostering Team at least once each month in addition to the social worker visits they receive.

1.11 Types of Placement

The Fostering Recruitment and Marketing Plan will help to inform how foster carers will be recruited. Currently, there are the following types of fostering provision:

Short Term, Time Limited and Bridging Placements

Duration: Up to two years

Purpose: Provide substitute care whilst Care Plans are formulated or a specific piece of work is carried out e.g. parental assessment

Long Term or Continuing Care

Duration: Beyond two years

Purpose: Stable placement until leaving full time education and into adulthood

Short Term, Time Limited and Bridging Placements

Duration: 1-28 days, may be one off, or a planned series of placements
Purpose: Provide short break for full time carers. Most commonly used for children with additional needs

Foster Carer Day/Respite Support

Duration: Variable hours per day or for a period of days or weeks
Purpose: To support foster carers who need extra help with the placement or who are requiring a break from the fostering task

Emergency

Duration: Up to 14 days
Purpose: Unplanned admission into care where a bridging placement is required for a foster placement

Family Friend Carers

Duration: Ongoing
Purpose: These carers are part of a child's extended family or friendship network and as such are able to provide continuity of care and promote their family identity

1.12 Numbers of Foster Carers and Children

At 1st January 2019, there were 171 Blackpool registered fostering households looking after a total of 300 children in three separate categories as follows:

Foster Carers = 125 households caring for 225 children.
Connected Persons = 36 households caring for 60 children.
Temporary Foster Carers = 10 households caring for 15 children.

2.1 Foster Carer Recruitment and Marketing

Between January 2018 and December 2018, twenty nine households were approved as foster carers, which includes 20 family and friend foster carers. There were a total of five terminations of registration where fostering households resigned.

Generally, recruitment campaigns build on existing links with the local community to ensure the service recruits carers from a wide range of backgrounds. Throughout the year the service has run carefully co-ordinated campaigns which were linked to Digital Marketing and also included a wide range of media such as poster sites, leaflet-drops, community events, information sessions, press and radio advertising. The service was also part of the North West Regional, "You Can Foster" Campaign which brings together initiatives and combined advertising from 23 Local Authorities in the North West of England.

The Fostering Team has developed a range of materials in order to aid the recruitment of foster carers. The website provides a comprehensive and wide range of information for potential foster carers including a questions and answers page and it has an on-line application registration link. www.blackpool.gov.uk/fostering

2.2 Enquiry, Preparation, Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers

Enquiry

Following an initial enquiry, applicants will first speak to a qualified social worker on the telephone who will collect basic information including details about accommodation, family composition and motivation. If both the enquirer and the social worker are in agreement that a home visit should take place to gather and/or share more information a designated fostering worker will undertake this task within 7 working days. If a decision is made to continue with a full assessment, the applicant will be invited to attend the preparation group to learn more about the fostering task.

Preparation Groups

All applicants are required to undertake an initial training preparation course. This may begin before, at the same time or after the assessment has begun. The purposes of this are:

- To ensure that applicants are well informed about fostering generally.
- To train and prepare applicants for the tasks involved in fostering.
- To help applicants make appropriate decisions in relation to their application.
- Written feedback concerning the applicant's participation in preparation groups is provided by the trainers and incorporated into the assessment.

Course trainers include at least one qualified social worker with substantial experience of foster care training, who possesses in-depth knowledge of the agency and one experienced foster carer. There is a multi-disciplinary approach to this course, where education and health are invited to lead sessions. The course content is constantly evaluated, improved and updated. As a minimum standard, training always includes the following topics: Safe caring: Attachment: Separation and Loss: Child Development: Understanding the Effects of Child Abuse: Introduction to Child Protection: Understanding and Managing difficult behaviour: Identity: Discrimination: Routes into Public Care: Diversity: Nutrition: and Education.

Assessment

On successful completion of the Preparation Group, applicants will meet with the social worker over a period of time to work together gathering evidence about their skills and knowledge which are relevant to fostering and to offer them advice.

The social worker prepares a report that will be shared with the applicants before being submitted to the Fostering Panel with a recommendation for approval. The Panel will make a recommendation after considering the report and talking with the social worker and the applicants who are always invited and supported to attend Panel. The Agency Decision Maker makes the final decision regarding the applicants' suitability to become a registered foster carer for Blackpool Council. There is an appeals process in the circumstances where applicants may not agree with the decision.

2.3 Annual Reviews

The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 require that foster carers are reviewed annually to consider their continuing suitability. Additional reviews can be completed at any time if there is a change in circumstances or an issue of concern.

The review is a two way process in which the foster carers can express their views about the Fostering Team or other services provided from within Children's Social Care and where the supervising officer can address any area of concern about the foster carer. Children living in the

foster family, of appropriate age and understanding at the time of the Review, will be consulted for their views.

A report of the First Annual Review is presented to Fostering Panel for consideration about the foster carers' suitability to remain registered foster carers. The Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision on their approval and registration

Each foster carer's annual review includes an appraisal of training and development needs, which is documented in the Review Report. If a foster carer fails to consistently complete training they will be non-compliant with their Foster Care Agreement and their circumstances may be presented to Fostering Panel as part of the review and quality assurance process.

2.4 Foster Carer Training

Training is an integral part of a foster carer's role and begins during the preparation and assessment process. The Fostering Team has implemented the Department of Education's "Training, Development and Support Standards for Foster Carers." Every foster carer must complete the Induction Programme.

Foster carer training is integrated within the Children's Workforce Development Unit Training Programme and includes opportunities for joint training with social workers, children's homes staff and other agencies. An 'E' programme is available on line for foster carers and many foster carers access this resource.

Each foster carer has a written training profile referred to as their Personal Development Plan (PDP), detailing all training undertaken and future training needs. All training fits within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. Where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers, both are required to complete all mandatory training.

Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers have been involved in the development of the way in which monitoring and evaluation of training will be considered in the future. During 2019 the focus on the training element of supervision visits to foster carers, will be the day to day impact of their learning experience. Foster carers will be expected to record their learning experience and impact on their PDPs which will be monitored by supervising social workers.

PDPs will continue to be considered at each foster carers review. In their revised format, the PDPs will assist further in the identification of future learning with the aim of complementing the foster carers' role in improving outcomes for children. Information recorded and collated in the revised PDPs will also assist in informing the Training Programme for 2020.

2.5 Family and Friends Care/Connected Persons Care

If a child is looked after by the local authority, placements may only be made with a relative or friend if they have been assessed and approved as foster carers under the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

An assessment of the friends/relatives capacity to care for the child will be completed by the Fostering Team. This is a process that involves a number of home visits, and the completion of a CORAM BAAF Form C. This goes into detail about the applicants' background and childhood, previous and current relationships/marriage, support networks, experience as a parent(s), their relationship with the child's family and other relevant issues. Health references and DBS checks are required for each applicant who will need to provide details of their income and names of people who are prepared to act as referees for them.

On completion of the assessment, the fostering worker will make a recommendation to the Fostering Panel with a written report. Prospective foster carers will be invited to attend the Fostering Panel. The Fostering Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker who has the final decision about whether or not someone is approved as a foster carer.

Family/Friend foster carers will be supported by a supervising social worker who will visit on a regular basis. Carers will be required to attend training courses and will be offered the opportunity to attend support groups.

3.0 Numbers, Relevant Qualifications, Vetting and Experience of Staff

The Fostering Team has a complement of full and part time staff and has two designated administration support posts. The Fostering Service aspires to be a learning environment and encourages continuous accredited professional development for all staff. The Fostering Team promotes the understanding of the Social Model of Disability and aims to ensure that every child placed has access to a full range of appropriate community based experiences, services and facilities. There are the equivalent of 10 full time established posts made up of qualified supervising social workers and unqualified family support workers. Supervising Social Workers in the Fostering Team hold professional qualifications DipSW, CQSW, CSS social work qualifications and they are all registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. All staff have DBS checks that are renewed on a three yearly basis and references are held on file with recent photographs.

The Fostering Manager holds a relevant management and professional qualification, NVQ Level 4 in Management, ILM Level 5 in Management and CQSW.

4.0 The Fostering Panel

Blackpool's Fostering Panel meets at least monthly and includes people on the Central List with a wide range of experience and interests. The Panel is constituted according to the Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards (2011). There is an Independent Chairperson, and Deputy Chairperson; both of whom are suitably qualified and experienced to undertake their role. The Panel has core representatives from education, an elected member, two social workers, and a foster carer from another fostering agency. Legal and medical advice is available through legal services and the medical advisor.

The Panel considers new approval applications for foster carers, family and friend foster carers and the annual review of existing foster carers. Once approved by Blackpool, foster carers can only work for this authority. We encourage and support applicants and existing foster carers to attend the Panel to which their report is presented. The Panel can only make a recommendation about:

- Approval of the applicants as foster carers according to the assessing social worker's recommendations.
- Approval of the applicants as foster carers, but specify more restrictive matching criteria.
- Non-approval and reasons.
- Further work to be undertaken and for the matter to be brought back to Panel once this has happened.

If a foster carer decides to resign, a brief report will be made to the Fostering Panel and their approval will be terminated and their name removed from Blackpool's Register of Foster Carers. If the Panel considers that a foster carer is no longer suitable, the Panel can recommend to the Agency

Decision Maker that they are de-registered.

Panel meetings have a written record with discussions on each set of applicants or foster carers recorded separately in order that they can be placed on individual files. The Fostering Panel also has a quality assurance function.

The Fostering Panel met on 15 occasions between January 2018 and December 2018.

4.1 Numbers of Complaints and Outcomes

Between 1st January 2018 and 31st December 2018 the number of complaints made about the Fostering Service were as follows:

From	Number of Complaints	Number Upheld	Number Resolved in 28 Days
Children/Young People	7	4	7
Foster Carers	2	0	0
Other Professionals			
Children & Young Peoples Parents	3	0	3
Other, For Example: Members of the Public, Members of Parliament			

This Statement of Purpose was approved by:

Title

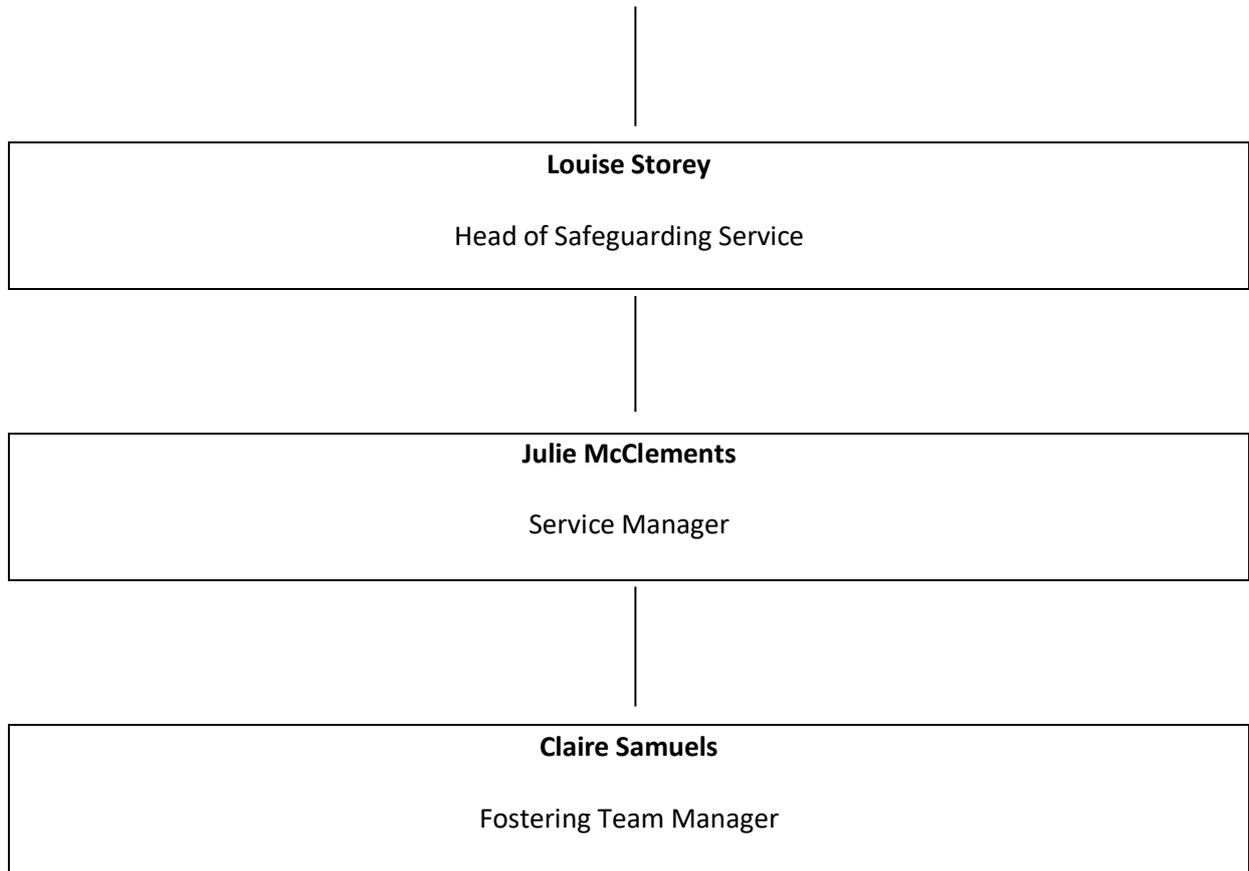
Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX 1

FOSTERING SERVICE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



APPENDIX 2

FOSTERING SERVICE STAFFING STRUCTURE

<p>Kathryn Pettigrew Advanced Practitioner</p>

<p>Yvonne Jones Supervising Social Worker</p>
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<p>Laura Carr Supervising Social Worker</p>
--

<p>Gail Davies Supervising Social Worker</p>

<p>Shirley Meredith Supervising Social Worker</p>
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<p>Tanya Dos Santos Supervising Social Worker</p>
--

<p>Helen Hubert Supervising Social Worker</p>
--

<p>Joanne Jameson Supervising Social Worker</p>
--

<p>Janet Jenkinson Supervising Social Worker</p>

<p>Claire Greenwood Supervising Social Worker</p>
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<p>Christine Napier Support Worker</p>

<p>Joanne Walch Support Worker</p>

<p>Debbie Harrison Panel Administrator</p>

<p>Joanne Thompson Team Administrator</p>
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APPENDIX 3

Regulation

Blackpool Fostering Team is regulated by Ofsted and our inspection reports can be accessed on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Their contact details are below:

NBU
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Free Phone: 08456 404040
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Rights

Office of the Children's Rights Director
Ofsted
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE
Free Phone: 0800 528 0731
Website: www.rights4me.org

Fostering Team Responsible Individual

Claire Samuels
Fostering Team Manager

Fostering Team's Location

Bickerstaffe House, Talbot Road, Blackpool, FY1 3AH
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Website: www.blackpool.gov.uk/fostering