

Nottingham City Council

Fostering and Adoption Service

Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose 2017- 2018
(Updated October 2017)



Nottingham
City Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

Service Contact Details

Fostering Service Address:

Fostering and Adoption Team, 3rd Floor, 3 Isabella Street, Nottingham NG1 6AT.
The main telephone number is 0115 8762696.

Registered Providers Address:

Fostering and Adoption Service, Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham NG2 3NG.

Electronically and on Nottingham City Council Website: www.Nottingham.gov.uk

The Fostering and Adoption Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted whose contact details are:

Ofsted, Office for Standards in education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231 (8.00am – 6.45pm Mon-Fri)
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

THE MANAGER

The Responsible Individual for the Fostering & Adoption Service is:

Name: Steve Comb (Head of Service)

Address: 2 - 6 Isabella Street, 3rd Floor, Nottingham NG1 6AT

Responsible Individual

Steve Comb Head of Children in Care

Steve joined Nottingham City Council in January 2015, a HCPC Registered Social Worker, with over twenty years' experience in looked after children's services in four different local authorities. He has held the posts of Registered Manager, Team Manager, Service Manager, and Head of Service. Steve covers the operational areas of residential care, leaving care, fostering, adoption, family contact, and edge of care services. In previous roles Steve has also had responsibility as lead council officer for children missing from home or care, and as chair of placement panels for single and multiple agency funded commissioned placements.

Qualifications

Master Business Administration Nottingham Business School
Diploma in Social Work Leeds Metropolitan University
Diploma in Combined Social Policy, University of Leeds
Certificate in Criminology, University of Leeds
Local Government Association peer challenge trained
Social Worker Registration HCPC number SW 22475

The day to day management of the fostering service is undertaken by Sonia Cain, Service Manager. The overall responsibility for the management of the Fostering and Adoption Service lies with Helen Blackman, Director of Children's Integrated Services.

The Registered Manager for Nottingham City's Fostering and Adoption Service is:

Name: Sonia Cain (Service Manager)

Address: 2 - 6 Isabella Street, 3rd Floor, Nottingham NG1 6AT

Relevant Qualifications: Diploma in Management Studies, Nottingham Trent University
M.A in Social Work and Certificate of Qualification in Social Work
Nottingham University
B.A Social Studies Hull University
Social Worker Registration HCPC SW74360

Relevant Experience: Sonia has held posts as a Social Worker, Team Manager and Service Manager in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire with over 30 year's experience.
She was first appointed as Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption in the City in 1992 as the Registered Manager. In 2010 she was appointed as Fieldwork Service Manager for the North of the City and spent four years in that post
Sonia returned to Fostering and Adoption in 2014
In previous roles Sonia has chaired the Fostering Panel and been the lead for the Independent Visiting and Advocacy Service

The Statement of Purpose is available online at www.Nottingham.gov.uk and distributed to all foster carers.

Nottingham City Children's Services Fostering provision is governed by the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Regulations 2011, updated 2013, issued by the Secretary of State under Sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

A Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service has been developed to meet the requirements of Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3 (1) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2013. The Statement of Purpose is available in alternative formats, by request to the Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption.

The Statement of Purpose includes:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service
- A statement of the services and facilities provided by the Fostering Service.

Nottingham's Fostering Service Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually. It will help to inform:-

- Children and young people who are in foster care
- Birth families of children and young people who are in foster care
- Councillors
- Children's Services Departmental Management Team
- Foster Carers and prospective carers

- Foster Care Social Workers
- Child Care workers
- Fostering workers
- Partner agencies
- Ofsted

2. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In determining its aims and objectives, Nottingham City Fostering Service had adhered to the following:-

KEY LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE WORK OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards and Regulation 3 and 4 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, requires all Fostering Services to produce a statement of purpose detailing its aims and objectives, the services and facilities provided and to keep this under review.

- The Children Act 1989
- Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: National minimum standards 2011
- 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
- Family and Friends Care – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

Nottingham's Statement of Purpose has been written to meet the requirements of the regulations and standards and will be regularly reviewed.

Nottingham City Council firmly believes that a family placement is appropriate for the majority of children in care. The Fostering Service endeavours to place the child/young person at the centre of its activity. Its primary aim is to provide the highest quality of substitute family care. It works in partnership with other agencies, parents, local authorities and the independent sector.

Nottingham 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.

We aim to maintain a sufficient range of foster carer placements and short break carers to meet the needs, age and diversity of looked after children requiring family placement in Nottingham by regularly reviewing requirements in conjunction with agreed targets for recruitment and retention of foster carers.

We aim to continue to increase the number of foster carers approved and trained by Nottingham City, whilst decreasing the number of external placements so that the majority of the council's looked after children are placed locally with Nottingham approved foster carers, including family and friend carers. Supporting a strong, committed local service is a priority, maintaining children's family friendship and education relationships wherever possible. The city has a range of excellent support service including CAMHS, health, housing and virtual school services available to support our children in care and foster carers.

Nottingham is committed to children in care living with loving foster homes wherever possible.

The objectives of the Fostering Service are as follows:

- To recruit carers from a wide variety of backgrounds, the majority from the local community or within reasonable travelling distance of the City of Nottingham boundaries, who have the potential to meet the needs of children in care.

- To offer a range of training and support services before and after approval to carers that will maintain the stability of placements.
- To provide appropriate and timely placements for all children who are in need of fostering provision and to offer placement choice.
- To support permanency planning for all children.
- To consider the specific needs of the child/young person to be placed, by age, ethnicity, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, and as far as possible match these needs with the skills of approved carers.
- To promote the physical and emotional health of children in foster care by encouraging a healthy lifestyle and working in partnership with health professionals.
- To provide a safe and caring environment in which children and young people will thrive and learn to make positive choices.
- To enable the children we care for to reach their full potential, socially and educationally and enable them to make a positive contribution to the community, and to recognise their achievements and progress.
- To actively seek and to listen to the views of children in foster care, using this to inform change and service development.
- To teach children and young people to manage their finances and prepare them for independence.
- Where returning home or adoption is not an option to encourage carers to look after children on a long term or permanent basis, thus giving children and young people security, consistency and a sense of belonging, enabling them to establish themselves in the community and succeed in education and with future endeavours.
- To promote contact with the child or young person's birth family and significant others during a placement and encourage and facilitate this as appropriate to the child or young person's needs.
- All carers will be provided with contact numbers and email addresses for their supervising social workers and the service operates a daily duty line for urgent queries. The City's Emergency Duty Team will provide advice and support outside of office hours during evenings, weekends and bank holidays.
- To reward foster carers financially for their skills, competency and experience. (Nottingham City's fostering allowances are in excess of the government's national minimum rates, and the council gives enhanced payments to carers who demonstrate skill and ability and offer long term or permanent placements to older children.)
- Through our partners, we provide access to specialist support on health, education, disability, finance and other issues.
- To focus on maintaining continuous improvement and high quality service provision.
- To carry out annual independent reviews of all foster carers.

3. CONTEXT OF THE FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICE

The Fostering and Adoption Service is located within the Safeguarding Directorate, closely aligned to social work services for children in need and in care.

The Fostering and Adoption Service comes within the responsibilities of the Head of Service for Children in Care.

Children in need of Safeguarding and potential care are referred to a Central Duty point and then into locality social worker teams. Dedicated support services focus on helping families to care for their children at home wherever possible, but for those who need greater care or protection, the placement service will match them to a good foster home or small group home. For some children they may be in care for a longer period focusing on finding permanent homes. Many of our foster carers also adopt children the children they have previously fostered.

There is a dedicated Children in Care Social Work Service for Children in the Care of the Local Authority also managed by the Head of Service, Children in Care. There is also a Leaving Care Service to work with older children, care leavers, and asylum seekers.

4. STAFF

Nottingham City Fostering Service has full time equivalent staff subdivided as follows:

Service Manager	1 Full Time
AQA Principal Manager (Fostering)	1 Full Time
Practice Manager	1 Full Time (split across Fostering and Adoption)
Fostering Reviewing Officer	0.8 Full Time
Social work staff	8 Full Time Equivalent
Customer Service Officer	1 Full Time
Business Support	6.0
Fostering Recruitment Co-ordinator	1 Full Time
Fostering Recruitment Project Officer	1 Full Time
Business Manager Residential	1 Full Time responsible for Children in Care and Residential

All Supervising Social Workers are qualified and have many years experience in fostering and child protection work. In addition to permanent staff, Nottingham City Fostering Service has commissioned a specialist agency to carry out some assessments of prospective foster carers on its behalf; all assessors employed by the contractor have the necessary qualifications and experience for the work they are undertaking. This contracted work is overseen by a Principal Manager. All social work staff and administrative staff are subject to enhanced disclosure and barring service checks, which are reviewed every 3 years.

INTEGRATED STAFFING STRUCTURE

The Corporate Director, Children and Families has overall responsibility for all Children's services which includes social care, education, family & community teams and audits social care.

There is currently an Independent staff member acting as the Agency Decision Maker who makes the decision to formally approve foster carers following panel recommendation.

The Head of Service, Children in Care is responsible for all of the Children in Care service including residential services, fostering, adoption, 15+ and leaving care provision.

The Service Manager Fostering and Adoption has day to day responsibility for the Fostering and Adoption Service and for providing line management supervision to Principal Managers. The Service Manager is appropriately qualified experienced in the field of children's social care. The Service Manager is also the Registered Manager for Nottingham City's Fostering and Adoption Service.

Assessment and Quality Assurance Principal Manager for Fostering provide supervision and support to the social workers. All hold an appropriate social work qualification (DIPSW/CQSW/CSS) and are registered with the HCPC.

The Panel Manager is responsible for managing fostering and adoption panels. They hold an appropriate social work qualification (DIPSW/CQSW) and are registered with the HCPC. The Panel Manager acts as the Panel Advisor.

Supervising Social Workers are responsible for providing supervision and support to foster carers. They are also required to undertake recruitment activities and deliver training. All supervising social workers have an appropriate social work qualification e.g. DIPSW/CQSW/CSS and are registered with the HCPC.

Records Management Officers are responsible for the oversight and control of the management of records, retrieval, archiving, and storage.

Customer Service Officers are responsible for responding to all enquiries that come through various channels, they monitor and ensure the process throughout the customer journey from enquiry to panel approval goes smoothly.

The Business Support Manager is responsible for the allocation of administrative work and supervision of admin staff.

The Business Manager has responsibility for the financial management and planning of the service areas budgets, and oversees the administrative function of the service area across the Children in Care service.

Foster Carers are responsible for providing a safe, caring and nurturing environment for children in placement and promoting the five outcomes as described in the 'aims and objectives'. They are actively encouraged to complete mandatory training within their first year of fostering and thereafter to attend ongoing internal training. Foster carers are supervised and supported by supervising social workers.

5. Recruitment of Carers

The Fostering and Adoption Service promotes awareness of the need for foster carers and adopters, provides information to prospective carers during information evenings, foster carers business meetings, newsletters, training and on line, and supports the advancement of suitable enquiries of suitable enquirers whom the service supports during the assessment process.

Enquirer's questions are answered by telephone, e-mail, letter, and in person at public events and information meetings. The main points of contact for enquiries are the Customer Services Officers. They are responsible for supporting applicants through the application process and also for providing management information about the types of applications, progress through the system and final approvals.

Enquiries are received by the Customer Services Officers via phone on 0115 876 3335, email at fostering@nottinghamcity.gov.uk through the City Council website www.fosteringnottingham.com <https://www.facebook.com/fosteringnottingham/> and by post. The contact details are widely publicised by leaflet and poster distribution, banner campaigns, local press and radio adverts and other means. Publicity materials make clear that enquiries are welcomed from all sectors of the community. Enquirers are sent an information pack and entered on to the IT system.

The Fostering and Adoption Service work closely with the Placement Service on an ongoing basis. This allows us to keep abreast of any changes or developments so that recruitment activity is adapted to focus on the areas of greatest need.

Enquirers are invited to attend an Information Meeting from which they can register an interest. These meetings are held monthly and include a PowerPoint presentation by a social worker and a question and answer session including at least one current carer. Content includes an introduction to the needs of children in care, the range of fostering tasks, contact issues, meeting minimum standards, the application and assessment process and the training & support provided.

Enquirers are given an information handbook to keep for reference and a Registration of Interest form to send back to the Customer Services Officers to progress to the next stage of the recruitment process.

Nottingham City Council has adopted a 2 stage process of assessment and approval of foster carers following statutory guidance within the Fostering Service Regulations 2013. The stages are applicant led to allow for thorough assessment, reflection by applicants and to ensure that statutory checks are completed within timescales. We aim to offer a timely responsive service at stage 1 and 2 of the fostering application.

Stage 1 takes up to 8 weeks and begins on receipt of a completed Registration of Interest form by the Customer Services Officers. Statutory check forms, comprising of Declaration of Health and Suitability forms, and forms to enable DBS checks (Disclosure and Barring Service) are sent out. There is half day training day provided in Stage 1 which includes the types of children in care, a reading list and the role of a foster carer. The training is facilitated by Fostering Supervising Social Workers.

Initial visits to applicants wishing to proceed with Stage 1 are carried out by City staff. The specialist agency undertakes the Stage 1 and 2 assessment. If assessed as initially suitable the applicants will progress to Stage 2 and the specialist agency is asked to proceed with a full Home Study assessment. The Stage 2 process takes up to 16 weeks and concludes with the Form F assessment being presented at Panel and the applicant's approval being considered.

Existing foster carers support the recruitment of applicants by helping to run recruitment stands at public events, being featured in press and radio broadcast interviews, addressing information meetings, and arranging distribution and display of promotional materials in their neighbourhood. They are also encouraged to use 'word of mouth' promotion.

Nottingham's approach to recruiting new carers is one that has localism at its heart and the needs of children in care at the centre.

6. The Homestudy Assessment

When the application has been accepted, a longer period of preparation, assessment, training, and working in partnership with the social worker will begin.

The assessing social worker will begin to analyse the applicant's suitability to foster children by building up a thorough profile of each applicant through a Homestudy. Fostering is a very demanding task and the social worker must be absolutely sure that applicants are right for the role. Equally potential carers need to feel that fostering is the right choice for them and this will be discussed at length throughout the assessment process.

Part of the Homestudy process will include an introduction to the Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers, 'Fostering Standards', which have been introduced by the Government to improve foster carer's understanding of their tasks and roles. The carer's CWDC Portfolio evidences the competence of foster carers, and must be completed within 12 months of panel approval (this is extended to 18 months for connected persons carers.) The assessing social worker will begin the process of looking at what evidence can be gathered for the portfolio from the Homestudy. However preparation for the portfolio will only officially start from when the panel approve an application.

Alongside the Homestudy, applicants attend a three-day pre-approval training course. Course content is reviewed and updated as necessary. This course is delivered by social workers and at least one experienced carer.

References and Evidencing

During the process of assessment, a number of different ways of checking a person's suitability are used. These checks are called statutory checks, and will involve a Disclosure and Barring Service check, employee check, and school check. Personal references, including those from family members and ex-partners are also obtained. Statutory and other checks apply to all adult members of the applicants' household.

DBS checks are used to get a history of any serious criminal activity. This is used to determine if anyone is barred from working with children, or has convictions which could be incompatible with looking after a child in care.

Employer references are used to help check the reliability of a candidate. Personal references, two from friends and one from a relative, are used to verify the information applicants have shared with the assessor. If the applicants have children living within their home, further references are obtained from their respective schools. If children are under 5, a reference from the Health Visitor will be sought. If the children are now adults, separate comments are sought from them.

Enquiries are also undertaken with significant previous partners, particularly if applicants have had children or parented together. This is always discussed with applicant's first, due to the sensitivities involved in carrying out these checks. If applicants work with children or vulnerable adults, a specific

reference is sought from their line manager. Applicants are also requested to complete a full medical with their General Practitioner to provide evidence of their physical and mental health.

All of these checks form part of a final written report, to offer a full and rounded appraisal of each candidate.

What does the service look for in foster carers?

Many of the qualities looked for in prospective foster carers are the same as those asked of any good parent. This could be defined as an ability to offer good quality parenting and the capacity to 're-parent' children who have been abused or neglected. Foster children will have experienced trauma and separation from their birth family and will display many different types of behaviour to express their upset or distress. Some will also have had many different carers and will be looking for confident people who can offer stability, safety, consistency, and reliability.

The assessment process itself covers the following areas:

- Experiences, skills, and abilities essential in a foster carer to safeguard a child.
- Provision of a safe, healthy, and nurturing home for children.
- Personal warmth to adults and children.
- Ability to work with the Department to implement the plan for the child. This is likely to involve contact with birth parent(s) and others important to the child(ren).
- The capacity to positively encourage child(ren)'s understanding of their origins, religion and culture.
- Understanding of others' points of views and feelings.
- Ability to 'stand back' from problems. Flexibility in resolving problems.
- Ability to enable children who are moving on to do so in a positive manner.
- Knowledge of normal child development, ability to listen to and communicate with children.
- Ability to manage children's behaviours using boundaries but without physical or other inappropriate forms of punishment.
- Appreciation of how experiences affect families and the impact fostering may have on carer's own family.
- Evidence of ability to sustain supportive relationships with family, friends, and the community.
- Ability to use training and supervision opportunities to improve skills.
- Ability to understand own limitations, and to ask for help and support.
- Appreciation of how a child's past may affect their current and future behaviour/needs.
- Appreciation of the importance of education and health for young people and the ability to promote these.

An assessment of the applicants' individual qualities and skills make up the basis of the Homestudy Report, which is written in accordance with the Coram/BAAF (British Association of Adoption & Fostering) form 'F' format and shared with applicants.

7. FOSTERING & ADOPTION PANEL

Nottingham City Council have a joint Fostering and Adoption Panel that is made up of an independent chair, independent panel members, councillor representative, social worker representative, Panel Manager, and a minute taker. Panel recommendations are considered/ratified by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), in Nottingham this role is undertaken by an Independent Consultant. In line with the regulations and guidance the ADM is “a social worker with at least three years’ post qualifying experience in child care social work and has knowledge and experience of permanency planning for children, adoption and child care law and practice”.

The main purpose of the Fostering and Adoption panel is to make recommendations about the proposed approval of prospective foster carers, adoptive parents, and connected person assessments. Other panel duties include making recommendations about adoption matches, adoption plans for relinquished babies, deregistration of carers and foster carer reviews. All prospective carers are invited to the panel and in doing so are included in the approval process.

The Agency Decision Maker will have 7 working days from the receipt of the panel minutes to make a decision with regard the Fostering and Adoption panel recommendations. The ADM will clearly state in writing why they are agreeing to ratify or not, the panel recommendation. If a negative recommendation is made the applicants are given 28 days to express dissatisfaction with the decision and can refer themselves to an IRM (Independent Review Mechanism) which would examine the decision making process.

Panel Members

Role on the Panel	Position
Panel Chair	Independent
Social Worker with experience of Children’s Services/ Vice Chair	Social Worker from Fieldwork
Social Worker with fostering experience	Social Worker from the Fostering Service
Social Care Manager with experience of older children in care	Social Care Service Manager – Residential & Children in Care Social Service Work
Independent Member	Education representative from Vulnerable Childrens Team
Independent Member	A Nottinghamshire County Council Foster Carer
Independent Member	Children’s Representative
Legal Adviser	Senior Solicitor – Nottingham City Council
Minute Taker	Administrative Assistant, Fostering Service
Professional Advisor	Manager from Fostering Service
Agency Decision Maker	Independent Consultant

Panel Activity

There are 3 panels per month, with an additional panel run every quarter.

Panel members are recruited to reflect a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds. All panel members receive an annual appraisal and regular training on pertinent issues and any changes to practice and legislation.

8. FOSTERING RESOURCES

Services Provided

The service provides a wide range of family placements:

- **Emergency and short-term placements** - This can range from a day to several months.
- **Bridging Placements** - The placement can be for up to two years while the permanence plan is brought into effect and includes preparing and helping the child move to their permanent placement.
- **Long term/permanent placements** - The child/young person is a permanent member of the foster family
- **Parent & infant placements** – Foster carer's support and assess a young parents' ability to parent their infant while both live with the foster carer.
- **Short Break Placements** - These are short break placements to support disabled children who live with their birth family.
- **'Staying Put' Placements** - This is the continuing support we give a young person over eighteen who is still living with former Foster Carers as part of their Pathway Plan. This is supported by a Personal Advisor allocated to the young person.
- **Respite/Holiday Placements** - Provision of brief time limited support to an ongoing fostering placement.
- **Connected Person Placements** - This is the placement of a child with a family member or long-term family friend.

9. SUPPORT

The service is proud of the wide range of support activities offered to all its carers. The Council works in partnership with carers and many of the initiatives have been developed in consultation with them.

- All foster carers have a named, fully qualified Supervising Social Worker allocated to them. It is this social worker's responsibility to supervise, support and develop the carer in the fostering task.
- The **Supervising Social Worker** will visit the carer regularly including at least 1 unannounced visit per annum. There would not normally be a regular programme of unannounced visits unless there were particular reasons for this. If a carer is being closely monitored for some reason, this will be made explicit to the carer.
- Supervising Social Workers are responsible for ensuring that the care offered to children in foster care is of a high standard and incorporates safe caring policies and risk assessments for each fostering family. Supervision meetings are an opportunity for all parties to raise issues of interest or concern. The supervising social workers also have a primary

responsibility for assisting in the career development of carers, establishing training needs with them and seeing that they are met..

- As set out in the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, all carers must undergo an **annual review**. This is an opportunity to look at progress in meeting targets set for the improvement of skills, to set new goals and an action plan for the next year. Training needs are assessed and commitment to further training agreed. Most carers enjoy training and attend courses which are offered. If, however, a carer is unwilling or unable to attend ongoing training then approval as a foster carer will eventually be withdrawn as the skills of the carer will not be able to reflect current practice. Foster Carer Reviews are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Foster carers are expected to keep a record of events relating to the child/ren in placement. Maintaining diaries/recordings/ medical information is considered an important part of the Foster Carer's role, and accurate factual and unbiased recording is important. These diary/recordings could, should the need arise, be used as evidence in legal proceedings.
- The physical and emotional health of children and young people is an important aspect of the Fostering Service role. The **Children in Care Health Team** regularly monitors the health of children in care and can be consulted by foster carers on any health issues. The Children in Care Health Team provides a service by visiting foster carer support groups and advising carers in any matters relating to health. The service also has links to the Children and Adults Mental Health Service (CAMHS) which provides consultation to foster carers and individual children by child psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers.
- There are regular **Foster Carer Business Meetings** open to all carers to discuss issues, share information, access training and meet with social workers and Senior Managers from the children's service. These meetings are arranged every 6 – 8 weeks and alternate between a day time and an evening meeting to meet the needs of all carers.
- Nottingham City Council has a Therapeutic Intervention Support Team, which provides specialist therapeutic support to fostering placements and will contact with all foster carers within 8 weeks of any child placed with them. This includes connected persons placements.
- Nottingham City Council facilitates a number of Carer and Children's Support Groups across the city - these are run by carers with assistance from social workers and are locality based. They meet regularly in different venues of the city to provide informal support and an opportunity to share experiences.

The service recognises that fostering is an activity that involves all members of the family, including the children of the Foster Carers. It runs an annual 'Children who Foster' event for the birth and adopted children of carers. The group meet for activities during school holidays and provide an opportunity to discuss their member's special position and share any concerns they may have.

The service pays for all our carers to be members of **Fostering Network**. As members of the Fostering Network, carers have access to information and advice services by phone, mail and online facilities and the services of an Advice & Mediation worker whom carers can approach at any time for advice and support which is independent of that offered by the Department. The Fostering Network contact details are 0115 9231209 or via e-mail sarah.furby@fostering.net.

The Fostering Network Support Officer is invited to the Foster Carers Business meetings.

Nottingham City Fostering Service has close links with the specialist **Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team**. Carers can approach the service for speedy and timely support for themselves and the children in placement through their supervising social worker or the social worker of the child they are fostering. The CAMHS Looked After Team provide regular training for Foster Carers on issues such as the strengths and difficulties questionnaire and emotional well-being.

The voluntary organisation, Childrens Society provides an independent **advocacy service** for all children and young people cared for by the Authority, and SOVA an independent **visiting service** for all children in care.

The service provides all carers with a '**Foster Carers' Handbook**' and a training manual, which gives detailed information about all areas of the fostering task.

All carers will be provided with contact numbers and email addresses for their supervising social workers and the service operates a daily duty line for urgent queries which operates from 8.30 am to 5pm. The daily duty social worker and manager are available on **0115 8762696** or via the extension for your supervising social worker, after this time the **Emergency Duty Team** are available on **0115 8761000**.

The service provides **social events**, Christmas parties, educational outings, sports and leisure events for foster carers, their own children, and children in care at no cost to the carer.

A bi-monthly newsletter is sent to all carers provides information, updates, letters, and memos about forth-coming events and developments in the service.

10. SHORT BREAKS TEAM

The Short Breaks Team consists of 2 full time equivalent social workers and is managed by the Resource Manager of the 'Short Break Services'.

The scheme offers family-based short breaks to disabled children. Its aims are:

- To provide a flexible family-based short break care service to children and young people with a physical and / or learning disability in the City of Nottingham.
- To recruit, train and support carers to provide this service.
- To offer ongoing support to new and existing carers
- To raise the profile of foster carers within the Short Breaks Scheme
- To co-ordinate existing information about the area resources to ensure that a consistent and appropriate service is offered to children/young people and their families in the City of Nottingham.
- To address Equal Opportunities issues and meet the specific needs of individual children/young people taking into account: - disability issues, gender, sexual orientation, race, and cultural needs.

The team is based at Loxley House and is an integral part of the Children's Health and Disability Service. This service offers specialist social work support and provision to disabled children in the City of Nottingham. The Short Breaks Team has a wide range of expertise, and knowledge of the fostering and placement needs of disabled children, as well as disability issues. There are effective working links with the Fostering and Adoption Service in the recruitment and pre approval training of new carers. Short Breaks Carers and Team have an additional programme of activities throughout the year as well as their own support group, but are also invited to join in with mainstream events.

The Scheme works closely with the Department's Training Team to ensure a range of specialist training workshops are provided on disability issues.

11. TRAINING

While the homestudy is being conducted, applicants are required to attend a 4 day pre-approval training course (2 evenings and 2 Saturdays.) The objectives of the training are to enable applicants to understand the nature of fostering and the role of the foster carer and to equip themselves as far as possible for the task ahead. The content of pre-approval training is as follows:

Session 1

Includes: child development; the role of the foster carer and Fostering Regulations and Standards.

Sessions 2 & 3 –

Includes: the links between childhood experience; development and behaviour; separation and loss and the importance of attachment; understanding and managing behaviour; the law; working together and how children come into foster care.

Sessions 4 & 5 -

Includes: diversity, identity and disadvantage; understanding the experience of being fostered; the nature and consequences of abuse; responding to the needs of children who have been abused; risk and safer caring for families who foster. Light buffet lunch is provided.

Session 6 –

Includes; specialist health services for fostered children; working with the birth family and why and how placements come to an end.

The service has a comprehensive post-approval training programme for carers. Its aim is to improve the quality of the care provided to children in the public care system. There is a long history of involving carers and users in the design and delivery of appropriate and effective training. Some joint training between social worker and carers also takes place, helping to improve mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities, and to enhance and develop more effective communication and working practices.

The training programme takes into account the availability of carers and their other commitments. Some of the training takes place at the weekends some in the evenings and some during weekdays.

The training is modular so that carers can:

- a) Access courses/modules flexibly
- b) Develop a portfolio of skills and knowledge
- c) Link modules to appropriate qualifications
- d) Access ongoing opportunities for personal/professional development.

On April 1 2010 the Government introduced 'Training, Support and Development Standards' through which they hope to strengthen foster carers understanding of their role in working with children in care.

Currently all Nottingham City carers have completed or are working towards completion of the standards. New carers will be expected to attend workshops the service has developed.

12. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Nottingham City Council is committed to continuous improvement. For the Fostering and Adoption Service this means a number of the things. It is our responsibility to ensure that we keep pace with changes in legislation and best practice guidelines. In order to achieve this, work practices are regularly reviewed and adapted to reflect such changes. An example of this is the implementation of a Signs of Safety into our documentation and practice.

The service values the views of all members of the foster family. We recognise our responsibility to actively seek their opinion in order to verify that they are receiving the highest level of support and care, and to ensure that the service is developing in a manner that makes this possible. We are able to capture their views through regular consultation using a variety of tools and methods. These include feedback forms, annual surveys, and regular business meetings. Comments and suggestions obtained are reviewed and help guide service development.

Our service continues to develop through sustained cross-sector partnership working. Links have been developed and maintained with partners internal and external to the local authority. Work with partners has helped expand our service in terms of the help and support we are able to offer to our foster families. Partners recently worked with include the following;

- CAMHS
- NUH Sexual Health – Outreach and Health Promotion Team
- Early Help
- Children in Care Council
- The Youth Offending and Leaving Care Team
- Heart Church, The Trent Vineyard, A local Mosque
- Learning and Development

13. COMPLAINTS

The service regards a formal complaints process as an essential part of its pro-active approach to user feedback and constant improvement in service delivery to both foster carers and children in care. All carers are made aware of the complaints process which is in line with published statutory guidance called 'Getting the Best from Complaints' issued by the Department of Health.

Many of the reforms stated in the guidance were already in place in Nottingham. These included:

- a dedicated Complaints Manager in post,
- advocacy arrangements in place for children making complaints

3 complaints have been received between April 1st 2016 and March 31st 2017

14. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE REVIEW AND UPDATE

This document will be reviewed and updated on or by 1st November 2018.

Signed

Luke Impey - **Assessment and Quality Assurance Principal Manager – Fostering**

Signed

Sonia Cain – **Service Manager Fostering and Adoption (Registered Manager)**

Signed.....

Steve Comb – **Head of Service Children in Care**

Signed.....

Helen Blackman - **Director Children’s Integrated Services**

Signed.....

Alison Michalska -**Corporate Director Children & Families**

Signed.....

Councillor Mellen - **Chair of Corporate Parenting**

Fostering Team Structure

