



# Rutland Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2017-2020

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**Rutland**  
County Council

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Purpose sets out the aims, objectives, principals and values of Rutland Fostering Service. It describes how the aims and objectives will be met in partnership with children, young people, their families, carers and partner agencies.
- 1.2 In doing so it sets out how the Service meets the requirement of Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 together with Regulations relevant to the placement of children in foster care, such as the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (the 2011 Regulations), which form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services
- 1.3 The Fostering Service is part of the Children and Young People's Service and its primary role is to recruit, assess, train and support in-house foster carers.
- 1.4 This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated regularly. It is available to staff, foster carers, children and young people, other professionals and the public upon request.

## 2. Aims, Objectives and Principles of the Fostering Service

### 2.1 The aims of the Rutland County Council Fostering Service are to:

- 2.1.1 Provide high quality and safe care within a family setting for local children and young people who are unable to live within their own families that would be good enough for our own children.
- 2.1.2 Provide a range of foster carers able to meet the emotional, physical, cultural, and religious, diversity and ethnicity needs of all the children in care looked after by Rutland County Council.
- 2.1.3 Rutland County Council delivers its Fostering Service through a dedicated Fostering, Adoption and Care Leaver Team, managed by a Team Manager covering the county. The Team supports carers for children placed in foster care, private fostering, with Connected People and Special Guardians.
- 2.1.4 Rutland County Council adoption work is commissioned and undertaken by Leicestershire County Council, however, we retain responsibility for our children.
- 2.1.5 This Statement of Purpose relates to the Fostering element of the service.

## **2.2 The main service objectives are to:**

- 2.2.1 Place children and young people in local foster placements where relationships with family, friends and community are maintained and continuity of education, health and cultural links and activities is ensured. In instances where it is not possible to achieve this within the Council's Foster Placements an appropriate placement outside the resources of the County Council will be sought.
- a) Maintain a sufficient number of foster care placements in relation to the location, numbers, needs, age range and characteristics of the looked after population and review this annually.
  - b) Recruit foster carers who are trained and supported in providing safe care to children who live with them.
  - c) Where possible a safe family member or friend will be the preferred placement choice, when this is assessed as being in the child or young person's best interest.
  - d) Provide a safe and nurturing foster placement with every effort made to achieve good outcomes for the children in public care within set timescales and to agreed standards.
  - e) Where possible to ensure that children meet with their prospective foster carers prior to placement and where this is not possible receive a foster carer profile.
  - f) Provide for sibling groups to be placed together when this is in their best interests. We will ensure that a sibling assessment is carried out in all cases.
  - g) Respect and promote the child's heritage, culture, diversity and identity.
  - h) Promote contact between the child and their family consistent with the care plan.
  - i) Achieve permanence (forever family) for all children who are unable to safely return to their families and promote Staying Put for those children who are secure within their foster placement.
  - j) Ensure openness and partnership working between all those involved and concerned with the child's welfare.
  - k) Involve young people and foster carers in developing services and building their feedback into service development.

## **2.3 Principles and Standards of Care**

- 2.3.1 Rutland's Fostering Service undertakes to ensure that its practices comply with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards 2011.

- 2.3.2 Rutland's policies with regard to Recruitment, Assessment, Approval, Training, Management and Support of foster carers reflect the expectations set out in the Code of Practice (1999).
- 2.3.3 Rutland Fostering Service adheres to the principles of the Children Act 1989, that the welfare of the child is paramount.
- 2.3.4 Rutland Fostering Service has procedures in place to minimise the opportunities for the abuse and exploitation of children. These include a complaints procedure for carers and children, an equal opportunities monitoring service for children looked after and a safe care policy.
- 2.3.5 Rutland Fostering Service has an Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure foster carers and children looked after are treated equally and fairly, regardless of their colour, race, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, gender, disability, marital status, sexuality, age, appearance and any other unjustified reason.
- 2.3.6 Rutland Fostering Service undertakes to respect confidentiality and only provide full relevant information to those who need to know.
- 2.3.7 Rutland Fostering Service undertakes to ensure that children looked after are enabled and encouraged to fulfil their potential in every aspect of their lives. Children are listened to and encouraged to be involved in decision making about them.
- 2.3.8 Rutland Fostering Service undertakes to safeguard and promote the health of children looked after and ensure they receive appropriate medical care and that they are protected from illness, infection and injury.
- 2.3.9 Rutland Fostering Service has full membership of the Fostering Network and Coram BAAF (British Association of Adoption and Fostering).
- 2.3.10 Fostering allowances are in line with the recommended national minimum allowances and the Fostering Network

### **3. Status and Constitution**

- 3.1 Rutland County Council is an approved fostering service provider and will be inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000.
- 3.2 Decision making and approval of foster carer registrations (Regulation 28) are delegated to the Agency Decision Maker, Children's Services.

- 3.3 A Fostering Panel has been established in accordance with Regulation 24. This is managed on behalf of Rutland County Council by Mountfields House Services Ltd.
- 3.4 Where Rutland County Council needs to use any other fostering agency for the provision of placements, these agencies must be approved and accredited under the East Midlands Fostering Consortium arrangements. No child is placed in these circumstances without the approval of the Head of Service, Children's Social Care.
- 3.5 Legislation and policy framework

Rutland County Council's Fostering Service aims to meet the requirements of:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Children Act 1989 guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Child (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers (CWDC) 2007

Alongside national legislation, Rutland County Council's Fostering Service also has clear operational policies and guidelines to ensure consistent and high quality standards of service delivery.

## 4. Structure of the Service

The fostering team are located at Rutland County Council, Catmose, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HP. The team manages the recruitment, assessment, approval, support and placement processes, which enables children in Rutland to be placed in a range of fostering settings.

Rutland Fostering Adoption & Care Leaver Service comprises of a

- Service Manager (Children's Social Care)
- Team Manager
- Two Supervising Social Workers
- Two Family Workers
- Two Personal Advisors for Care Leavers
- One Team Assistant

Staffing Structure can be found at the end of this document and updated and reissued as needed

The Fostering Panel consists of a Panel Chair and a number of Panel Members.

## 5. Work of the Fostering Service

### Rutland County Council's Vision is:

"That every child gets the right support at the right time"

### Specific to Fostering:

"That every child receives the level of care that would be good enough for our own child or young person"

"That local children have access to local families"

### 5.1 The strategic outcomes that the Council commits to are:

- a) Young people are healthy and safe
- b) Children and young people develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- c) Children and young people learn and achieve
- d) Children and young people are ready for adult life
- e) The expectations for all children looked after are enshrined within these outcomes
- f) We will champion the importance of aspiration
- g) We will promote self-esteem, self-belief, and resilience in all children
- h) We will encourage all children to be the best they can be
- i) We will use resources to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities
- j) We will work jointly with foster carers to help promote these objectives  
Rutland aims to provide sufficient local placements to enable placement choice and enable children, where appropriate to remain in their own communities
- k) Rutland delivers Staying Put opportunities to enable young people to remain in their placements post 18.
- l) The training, induction and development of new foster carers are in line with the requirements of Standard 20 (National Minimal Standards (NMS)) and carers are expected to meet the training, support and development standards within 12 months of approval.

### 5.2 Health of Children Looked After

- 5.2.1 The Fostering Service recognises that the health of Children Looked After is a key priority and, in many cases, those children may not have experienced good health prior to coming into care. This can include missed health appointments, missed immunisations and specific health problems that require specialised support.

- 5.2.2 All children and young people are registered with GPs, dentists and opticians. Children and young people placed in foster care have an initial health assessment carried out by a designated GP and an annual review by the same GP. Medical forms recommended by the British Association for Fostering and Adoption (Coram BAAF) are used to record and complete both the initial and annual review.
- 5.2.3 The health needs of children and young people are regularly monitored through the children looked after review process. We continue to support the role of a specialist CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) post to support foster carers in dealing with mental health issues.
- 5.2.4 Foster carers complete a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for all children between the ages of four and sixteen years of age. This ensures that all Children Looked After have access to professional support for any emotional difficulties they may have. The results of the SDQ's are monitored & shared with health colleagues prior to health reviews.
- 5.2.5 The Children Looked After (CLA) nurse attends regular CLA panel meetings to track health progress and also attends Fostering Support Groups to share new information and developments and offer advice where appropriate.
- 5.2.6 Part of the training programme for foster carers focuses on promoting a healthy lifestyle, good diet and exercise. All mainstream foster carers must undertake first aid training as part of their mandatory post approval training. Foster carers have training sessions as required on promoting the health of children in public care.

### **5.3 Education of Children Looked After**

- 5.3.1 The Fostering Service promotes the educational attainment of children placed with foster carers. Each child in public care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and, where appropriate, a leaving care Pathway Plan. Foster carers are expected to involve themselves in assisting children in placement to achieve satisfactory attendance, assist with homework and participate in parent/teacher events.
- 5.3.2 All Foster carers are encouraged to register with their local Children's Centre and to take up the services as part of the County's Early Help available to all children.
- 5.3.3 All children looked after are able to access the 15 hours early entitlement at the age of 2 years to access suitable nursery provision. This provision is set to increase to 30 hours per week in September 2017.
- 5.3.4 All young people are supported to attend school and efforts are made to maintain children in their existing schools. Foster carers who transport children to out of catchment schools have their transport expenses reimbursed.

- 5.3.5 All children looked after have an entitlement to the pupil premium. This is further enhanced by the Council and the nature of the provision is monitored by the PEP process.
- 5.3.6 Foster carers are aware that it is unacceptable to take children and young people out of school for family holidays.
- 5.3.7 There is a designated teacher in every Rutland school with responsibilities for liaison, educational monitoring and pastoral care for children who are in public care. There is a Social Inclusion Development Officer within Rutland County Council whose role is to ensure effective liaison with schools and to promote educational attainment and attendance of children in public care.
- 5.3.8 The children in public care education service is overseen by a virtual head-teacher who works in partnership with schools, carers and other organisations to improve the educational attainment of children in public care.
- 5.3.9 Children looked after in key stage 2, 3 & 4 receive additional tailored tuition support, when needed.
- 5.3.10 Training and guidance is available to carers to ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of the educational needs of children in care and the resources available to help meet those needs.
- 5.3.11 The opportunity for children and young people to succeed in hobbies or sports is seen as an important element of the fostering task and is supported through fostering allowance payments.
- 5.3.12 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) continues to develop Speak up Speak out (SUSO). They have supported the development of the children looked after pledges which outlines the Council's promise. Foster carers are asked to support and encourage children and young people to partake to offer us the challenge and scrutiny around the service delivery.
- 5.3.13 On an individual case basis foster carers will also have a role in helping young people acquire skills for independence by opening their own bank accounts. Carers promote a positive attitude by encouraging the use of savings accounts and pocket money for managing finances.

#### **5.4 Safeguarding Children in Foster Care**

- 5.4.1 The Fostering Service makes every effort to ensure that children are looked after by carers who care for them and keep them safe. Any concerns about foster carer practice or allegations of abuse are treated seriously and investigated under the LRSCB Child Protection Procedures.
- 5.4.2 Allegations against foster carers are investigated using an established procedure by our Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The Fostering Service funds each fostering household's membership of the Fostering Network which brings the benefit of legal protection insurance and access to

support and advice from their staff, including free legal advice and counselling service.

- 5.4.3 All placements have detailed risk assessments in place as requested. These are reviewed at regular intervals following a change in the child's or carer's circumstances.
- 5.4.4 Rutland's Fostering Service placement policy is that children have their own bedroom and this is the basis on which all placements are made. In circumstances where a child/young person may be considered to share a bedroom with a sibling, the risk assessment procedure must be followed.
- 5.4.5 The assessment of carers includes checking employment and accommodation history. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over sixteen years of age living in the household. A range of personal and professional referees are also contacted and visited.
- 5.4.6 Safe Caring is an important part of foster carer training and all carers complete a Safe Caring Handbook with the support of their Supervising Social Worker. The Safer Caring Handbook contains information including house rules, how everyone in the house communicates with each other, routine and personal safety.
- 5.4.7 The foster carers' home is also assessed to ensure that it is safe for children to live in. Assessments that are completed include comprehensive Health & Safety checks, pet assessments and fire safety plan.
- 5.4.8 All foster carers have a Professional Development Plan that identifies development needs to improve knowledge and skills, reviews the carer's performance in the fostering role against key tasks and explores the changing service needs and their implications for the carer and fostering service.
- 5.4.9 All foster carers attend mandatory training on how to provide the best care for children. This includes first aid training, safeguarding, attachment and recording. There is a full training programme available for the year 2017/18. Foster carers are required to attend the Foster Carers Support Group a minimum of three times annually.
- 5.4.10 All foster carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker who will complete a minimum monthly supervision with them to look at their practice and offer support. An unannounced visit to the foster home is made at least once each year by the Supervising Social Worker. In addition, the Team Manager completes annual review visits.
- 5.4.11 A matching policy is in place to ensure that effective matching of children to placements is undertaken to improve placement stability for children and young people. The service recognises that children's wellbeing is best met by high quality care in a stable placement where they can form positive relationships with their care givers and have a full understanding of their life story. Every effort is made to minimise moves and to work with the children and carers to consistently maintain a stable placement.

- 5.4.12 Children's care plans are reviewed every three months through the Statutory Review Process for Children Looked After. Children also have mechanisms to ensure their wishes and feelings inform their care plan. All children are given information about how to report abuse and carers are prepared in how to manage disclosure and prevent allegation arising in the placement. In addition children and young people have access to an independent advocacy service.
- 5.4.13 Rutland County Council provides an independent advocacy service to children and young people in public care through a register of advocates whose skills are appropriately matched.
- 5.4.14 As part of the assessment process, prospective foster carers have a health assessment. If there are on-going medical issues, a full medical assessment is undertaken. All carers are required to update their health assessment every five years. Foster carers who offer respite care to disabled children are, if necessary, offered specialist training to meet the needs of individual children.

## **5.5 Staying Put**

- 5.5.1 The law changed under the Children and Families Act 2014 to place a duty on local authorities to support care leavers who wished to stay with their former foster carers (staying put arrangements) until the age of 21.
- 5.5.2 Foster carers who are willing for their foster children to stay with them beyond the age of 18 are encouraged to do so under the Staying Put scheme. This gives the opportunity for young people to be prepared for the transition into independence from the stable base of their long term Foster Placement.

## **6. Supporting the Fostering Service**

The work of the Fostering Service is delivered through a number of key relationships and support:

### **6.1 Fostering Team Manager**

The Team Manager holds operational responsibility for the service. They provide direct supervision to the supervising social worker and other members of staff in the team and management oversight of the team. The Team Manager ensures that performance indicators are met. These include ensuring timescales are met for staff and foster carer supervision and foster carer reviews. The Team Manager completes an annual review visit to the foster carers. The Team Manager attends Regional Framework meetings and provides oversight of the Independent Foster Placements commissioned by Rutland.

The Management group looks to continuously improve standards of care informed by inspections, audits, new legislation and guidance and evaluates the effectiveness of service delivery.

## **6.2 Supervising Social Worker**

The role of the supervising social worker is to provide support and supervision to the foster carer. They also assist with practical difficulties and the provision of equipment. They are a crucial link between the carer and the child's social worker. There is a supervision policy for foster carers. Supervision takes place monthly and includes a focus on personal development.

Although most support visits will be prearranged, the supervising social worker has a duty to undertake at least one unannounced visit per year. They are also responsible for undertaking the annual review of approval which incorporates the carers' views and those of any birth children and fostered children. The review also includes reports from social workers and the supervising social worker who will identify strengths and future learning needs. Following completion of the review the foster carer is issued with a statement of re-approval.

## **6.3 Child's Social Worker**

The child's social worker is responsible for the overall management of the child's care plan. They have a statutory duty to visit the child within one week of placement and thereafter at a minimum of six weekly intervals until a child is confirmed as being in their permanent placement by which time a 3-monthly visiting pattern may be appropriate. In some circumstances the visiting pattern will be more frequent particularly in the early stages of a placement or when there are particular difficulties.

## **6.4 Foster Carer Support Groups**

Foster carers are required to attend a minimum of three foster carer support groups annually. Meetings take place bi-monthly. These are attended by members of the Fostering Team and the CLA nurse. Different professionals attend to provide information and support development.

All foster carers receive a handbook which details local policy, information about fostering terms and conditions and guidance the about requirements concerning care and control of children and other procedures. The handbook is regularly updated and reviewed and amended information is sent to foster carers.

There are plans to develop a buddy system to foster carers.

## **6.5 Family support worker**

The Family Support Workers supervise contact for children with their parents and other family members where a referral has been made by the children's social worker as part of the child's care plan. They work alongside the child's social worker to support life story work with looked after children and are able to support children and carers in placement where necessary.

## **6.6 Out of Hours Service - Emergency Duty Team (EDT)**

The service provides a team of social workers who are available outside office hours to offer emergency support to service users and the public. The EDT can offer telephone advice and has access to placement information and emergency

placements with foster carers. The EDT workers will pick up and address any safeguarding issues for the child which may arise out of hours.

## 6.7 Training

The Fostering Service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care to meet the needs of each child placed in their care. Training of foster carers is a significant aspect of the service and is provided both pre and post approval. There is an annual training programme in place that foster carers are expected to attend.

Training is primarily provided in-house and reflects changing practice, local experience and the national fostering agenda as well as through the local early years' service and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

The development of access to online training for foster carers is in progress.

Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan (PDP) where training and development is recorded. This is monitored to ensure it is linked to meeting the TSD competencies and the foster carers on going professional development.

Each foster carer has an allocated supervising social worker who provides monthly supervision and ongoing support. Foster carers are provided with the contact details for the team to ensure that they are able to access immediate support as required.

## 6.8 Other information/ Support for foster carers

- 6.8.1 **Foster Carers Handbook:** The Fostering Service provides all carers with a fostering handbook that gives factual information to carers about the service, roles and responsibilities. The handbook also provides information on procedures and safer caring.
- 6.8.2 **Foster Carer Agreement:** Outlines expectations of the working relationship between foster carers and the Authority.
- 6.8.3 **Scales of Foster Care Allowance booklet:** gives information about financial matters including allowances, fees any additional payments and age related pocket money.
- 6.8.4 **Guide to complaints and compliments:** Outlining procedures to making a complaint or compliment.
- 6.8.5 **Personal Development Plan:** All foster carers must complete this portfolio on approval and this is supported and monitored by the allocated Supervising Social Worker.
- 6.8.6 **Information leaflets:** The fostering service will regularly provide foster carers with information leaflets and emails relating to safe care, training and local events.

## 7. Foster Carers' Charter

Foster Carers' Charter as outlined by the Fostering Network for 2017 outlines what foster carers can expect from the fostering service:

### 7.1 Roles and commitment

The Fostering Service's role:

The Fostering Service aims to provide stable and first rate foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim, we recruit, train and approve foster carers and deliver ongoing support to them, in order to give them the skills and confidence they need to develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people they care for and provide stable and loving homes while they are part of the foster family.

The foster carer's role:

Foster carers are at the heart of the foster care service. We are assessed, trained and supported to look after children and young people by developing meaningful relationships in a family environment, providing them with stability, care, love and an opportunity to grow and develop and to reach their potential.

Our relationships with other members of the team around the child are based on mutual trust and respect. This charter explains what we expect from each other.

### 7.2 Fostering Service's commitment

**You can expect from us:**

1. Working in equal partnership
2. To be seen as a valued member of the team around the child
3. Information
4. Clarity about decisions
5. Support to increase foster carer confidence and resilience
6. Ongoing learning and development
7. Fair treatment
8. Communication and consultation.

### 7.3 Foster carers' commitment

**You can expect from us:**

1. Working in equal partnership
2. Respect for the child and the members of the team around the child
3. Information
4. Learning, development and support
5. Communication and consultation.

## 7.4 What foster carers can expect from the Fostering Service

**7.4.1 Working in partnership** - We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise and make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

We will:

- Value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- Recognise that you are the people who live with children every day and know them best
- Include you in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for
- Ensure that our Fostering Service will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance
- Treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague
- Respect confidentiality.

**7.4.2 Information** - We know that information is vital in order for foster carers to provide care that meets the child's need.

We will:

- Give you the information you need in order to care safely for the child
- Provide this information in writing prior to placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements
- Ensure that there is a placement plan drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with you in advance of placements, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements
- Provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional entitlements
- Provide you with full details of all relevant departmental policies and procedures.

**7.4.3 Clarity about decisions** - We recognise that in order for children to live a full family life foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they foster.

We will:

- Ensure that, wherever possible, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- Provide clarity about any decision you cannot take at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what.

**7.4.4 Support** - We recognise that fostering is an isolating and challenging task and appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in your care.

We will:

- Respond positively to requests for additional support
- Provide you with monthly supervision and weekly phone contact
- Give you honest and open feedback
- Pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- Pay fees that reflect the task
- Ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the Fostering Service, where you and your family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families.

**7.4.5 Learning and development** - We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure they have the skills and knowledge they need, and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

We will:

- Provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task
- Enable you to develop meaningful relationships with the children in your care and the fellow members of the team around the child
- Provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support.

**7.4.6 Fair treatment** - We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly, no matter what the circumstances.

We will:

- Consult with you before changing terms and conditions
- Ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you
- Ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should you be subject to an allegation
- Provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to our agreed timescale
- Ensure that you know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances in the event that you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation.

**7.4.7 Communication and consultation** - We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- Facilitate regular communication between you, councillors and the Director of Children's Services
- Ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you
- Give you timely feedback from consultations.

## **7.5 What Fostering Services can expect from foster carers**

### **7.5.1 Working in partnership** - We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

We will:

- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- Provide children with a positive experience of family life
- Attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- Work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments
- Show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life
- Meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures
- Respect confidentiality.

### **7.5.2 Respect for the child** - Every child and young person should be respected as an individual and be supported in meeting their needs and achieving their aspirations and potential.

We will:

- Develop a meaningful relationship with the child: understand their needs, support their growth, and become an advocate and champion for them
- Respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic and cultural heritage
- Afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child in accordance with the national minimum standards
- Ensure the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding.

### **7.5.3 Information** - We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship and we will aim to build a meaningful and collaborative relationship with our supervising social worker.

We will:

- Inform our supervising social worker about changes in our household
- Inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.

**7.5.4 Learning, development and support** - We must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need, and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster.

We will:

- Be willing and able to develop our skills throughout our fostering career
- Attend relevant training
- Take up opportunities offered to us
- Let you know if we are unable to attend
- Attend and contribute to support groups.

**7.5.5 Communication and consultation** - We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- Respond to local consultations and discussion in order to inform the development of the service
- Meet with councillors, service managers and others in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship
- Support the children in our care to do the same.

## **8. The Process of Recruiting and Approving Foster Carers**

8.1 Rutland Fostering Service has a recruitment strategy which is based on the needs of Children Looked After. The recruitment strategy is reviewed annually to reflect the placements required. The current recruitment strategy is aimed at increasing the diversity of our carers.

8.2 Foster carers are recruited and assessed in line with Rutland guidance based on the National Minimum Standards, Fostering Regulations, Code of Practice (1999) and Children Act 1989 Guidance (Volume 3).

8.3 The recruitment of carers is currently managed and effected from within the Fostering Service.

Recruitment involves:

- Newspaper advertisements
- Holding drop in sessions at County establishments
- Radio adverts and interviews
- Distribution of posters
- Word of mouth through existing carers
- Rutland County Council website

Participation in a range of County wide events

Targeted activity within specific communities in the County

Enquiries are received through the Fostering team where information is taken from prospective applicants. Further information is made available to all interested applicants.

#### **8.4 Procedure for Recruiting, Approving and Training Carers**

Applicants contact the Fostering Team.
Contact is recorded and an information pack sent out.
Applicants are invited to request a visit or informal discussion with the Assessing Social Worker.
A visit is arranged, if requested, when all the family members are present. The purpose of this visit is an initial screening and to provide more information. Applicants are advised to complete an Application form if they would like to proceed.
Applicants attend an introductory training course prior to assessment. The course takes place over 3 days. The course is based on The Fostering Networks 'The Skills to Foster' programme.
The purpose of the course is to provide prospective carers with an insight into all aspects of fostering and it also contributes towards their final assessment, if they wish to proceed and are deemed suitable.
Criminal records checks of all the residents of the household over 16 are undertaken including proof of identity.
Prospective carers provide two personal referees and one family referee all of whom are visited by the Assessor.
Employers are contacted when an applicant works directly with children. Schools of carers' children and Health Visitors are also contacted.
An individual/household assessment is undertaken - British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering Form F.
The Rutland Fostering Panel makes a recommendation, which is ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

Every foster carer is required to sign a Foster Carer Agreement (regulation 28 (5) – (5b)) and in addition a placement agreement (regulation 34) containing all the information the local authority considers is necessary to care for an individual child.

### **9. Rutland Foster Panel**

The Rutland Foster panel operates under the terms of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review.

The Foster Panel considers recommendations for the approval and status of foster carers; plans for long term fostering; the matching of children to long-term placements; Connected Person assessments and many other significant matters relating to the assessment and review of the Service's carers.

There are currently eight members of the Rutland fostering panel

The panel has an annual review day with the fostering team which includes the appraisal of the Panel Chair.

The panel has access to medical and legal advisers should this be required.

## **10. Complaints**

10.1 The Directorate has a statutory complaints service, the detail of which is contained in the guide for staff “Handling comments, compliments & complaints”. It is a three stage process

Stage 1 - Informal or problem solving

Stage 2 - Formal stage at which an independent investigating officer is appointed

Stage 3 - A formal review by a panel of independent members, chaired by an independent individual.

10.2 Staff must ensure that all carers know who to complain to.

10.3 Complainants have the right to involve a friend or an advocate.

10.4 The Named Manager monitors all complaints and liaises with the complaints officer and Rutland and Leicestershire Safeguarding Children’s board (LSCB) Business Manager. The information is available to authorised persons only. All foster carers have access to support and information through the complaints procedure at any time throughout the investigation. Support can also be accessed through membership of the Fostering network, the cost of which will be met by the agency.

## **11. Allegations Made Against Foster Carers**

11.1 There are times when allegations may be made against foster carers. Rutland Fostering Service recognises that this can be a very unsettling experience for foster carers. In England, the legal framework for investigating allegations against foster carers is set out in the Children Act 1989, Section 47 which places a duty on local authorities to investigate and make inquiries into the circumstances of children considered to be at risk of ‘significant harm’. All allegations will be managed by the LADO (Local Authority Designate Officer).

11.2 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2 sets out how foster carers should be treated and supported during investigations into allegations. This includes the provision of independent support, emotional support, information and advice about the process and, if needed, mediation between the foster carer and fostering service.

## 12. Equality and Diversity

- 12.1 The Rutland Fostering Service works to the Rutland County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy which is available on the Council's website. All policies and procedures are subject to an impact assessment.
- 12.2 The Rutland Fostering Service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the fostering approval process. Applicants wishing to be approved as foster carers will be considered irrespective of ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation or disability providing the fostering service considers they can safely meet the needs of children throughout their childhood and into independence. The minimum age for applying to be a foster carer is 21 years old.
- 12.3 Every attempt will be made to find a placement which meets a child or young person's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability. A matching process is in place to ensure that children looked after are placed with foster carers who are able to provide them with the specific care that they require.

## 13. Advocacy and Children's Rights

- 13.1 Rutland County Council have access to advocacy services through the Early Help Service within the Youth Service of our Early Help and Intervention Service based at Jules House.
- 13.2 The Children's Commissioner has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England.
- 13.3 The Children's Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. Tel 02077838330

Children's Freephone number; 0800 528 0731

## 14. Ofsted

- 14.1 Ofsted is the independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting fostering services under the provisions of the Care Standards Act, 2000.

### Questions or complaints

For information and advice about Ofsted Online please telephone the contact centre on 0300 123 1231 open 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday

Alternatively, you can email  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Or you can write to this address:  
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester  
M1 2WD

## 15. Our Contact Details

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Catmose  
Oakham  
Rutland  
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Telephone: 01572 720942  
Email: [fostering@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@rutland.gov.uk)

## Appendix A. Structure Chart within the Fostering Service

