



Fostering Statement of Purpose

2024-2025



Norfolk County Council

norfolk
fostering





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Why foster with Norfolk County Council?

Fostering is extremely rewarding. As a foster carer, you can make a real difference to a child's life, providing them with a nurturing safe home where they can have every chance of a happy secure childhood, supported to reach their aspirations and succeed in life.

It's a big commitment to become a foster carer, but extremely worthwhile. The rewards are enormous – some of our foster carers have been fostering for over 30 years!

By becoming part of Norfolk County Council's Fostering Service, you will be contributing to the provision of high-quality placements, which gives best value for Norfolk communities. We will provide support and guidance from our highly experienced team of fostering staff, and access to a wide range of training to develop your skills, knowledge and expertise.

Foster carers are of critical importance to Norfolk County Council. Our Fostering Service is well resourced and managed, providing a community of practice where the child is central and relationships are at the heart of how we work. As part of our transformation journey we are inviting new Foster carers to be part of our Fostering Service to open their homes to the most vulnerable children in our county.

Fostering is now a corporate priority and the whole of the fostering landscape is under review, with a view to engaging public services across the County to do the same.

We continue investing in our Fostering service as part of the The New Deal by reshaping the way we support our foster carers and by investing in targeted recruitment strategies. To assist us, we are working closely with our foster carers and the communities around our children. We are ambitious about wanting children who are in care to be living in loving foster families in their communities, where they can feel safe, confident and have a sense of belonging.

Keen to know more? Call us on 01603 306649. Thank you for taking the time to find out more about fostering in Norfolk.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Tough".

Sara Tough
Director of Children's Services



Statement of purpose introduction

This Statement of Purpose outlines the aims, objectives and service arrangements of Norfolk County Council's Fostering Service. It has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, the National Minimum Standards 2011, and amended regulations to explain how the service strives to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

This Statement of Purpose is a source of information for prospective foster carers, foster carers registered with Norfolk County Council, Fostering Services staff and all other colleagues or professionals within Norfolk County Council. Encompassed within the term foster carers are supported lodgings hosts and staying put carers.

The Statement of Purpose also links with the Children's Promise and the Children's Guide that are provided to all children and young people who are placed in foster care, or alternative care such as supported lodgings.

The Office for Standards in Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) has the responsibility to inspect the Fostering Service regularly to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. Our most recent inspection can be located at www.ofsted.gov.uk. A copy of this statement is lodged with Ofsted. The statement is updated and amended annually.

National Legislative and Policy Framework

Norfolk's Fostering Service is run in accordance with the principles and practice outlined in the:

- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2013 (Amendments to the Children Act 1989)
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and case Review Regulations 2010
- Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (Amendments) 2015
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for foster carers
- Supported Accommodation Regulations 2023



Policy Statement

Norfolk Fostering Service believes that every Looked After Child should be able to enjoy the same quality of life and opportunities as all children.

Norfolk's Fostering Service recognises that children's needs are best met by their family where it is safe to do so and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in an appropriate alternative family placement wherever possible. The priority will be for children to be placed with family or friends (known as kinship carers) and supported under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations where this placement is deemed suitable, and the child is looked after.

Other placements may include a child being placed with their parent/s within a fostering household. Older children and young people may be placed within households who are approved supported lodgings providers, these young people would be between 16 and 18 years of age.

Norfolk is committed to placing children and young people with Norfolk-based foster carers for them to maintain contact with families and friends, to continue at the same school and thrive within their community wherever possible. Norfolk recognises that older young people may need a more independent approach and this can be provided by supported lodgings hosts.

Each child/young person will have access to services that recognise and address their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.

Placement decisions will consider the child's/young person's assessed racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, religion, culture and language of the foster carer/host.

Of paramount importance is the child's/young person's safety and welfare which is actively promoted within all fostering placements and supporting lodgings placements. Children and young people are safeguarded from risk of significant harm within fostering placements through active engagement of the implementation of safer caring arrangements within the household.



Our Vision

To give every child the opportunity to thrive in their families, in their school and in their communities. All children should enjoy a happy, healthy childhood which promotes their self-confidence and resilience, which gives them the foundation for adulthood and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Fostering Service is working to improve outcomes for Norfolk's Looked After Children, providing them with safe and secure environments in which they can thrive.

We believe it is vital that children:

- Are resilient and able to learn
- Build positive, long-lasting relationships
- Receive family-based care

In Norfolk, we follow a Vital Signs practice framework which is underpinned by five practice principles, based on a whole family and whole system approach that is relationship based, strengths oriented and outcome focussed:

Outcome focused

We do whatever it takes to achieve the best outcome for children, young people and families.

Relationship based

We work to build consistent and trusted relationship with children, young people and families.

Strengths orientated

We identify the strengths of children, young people and families and build on them to create positive change.

Whole family

We think about family, in the widest sense in all the work we do.

Whole system

We work in partnership to get the right support for children, young people and families regardless of organisational boundaries.



The Aims of Norfolk County Council's Fostering Service

The main aim of our Fostering Service is to provide safe, high-quality care for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals.

Our commitment is that our Fostering Service will always be outcome focused, strengths orientated, and relationship based, and that we will have a whole system and whole family approach.

We remain focused on aspirational practice and care at the heart of our work with Looked After Children, with the intention of being the very best Corporate Parents that we can be.

As well as promoting their health and general well-being, we believe that children and young people in our care should:

- Have access to a range of high-quality care placements within Norfolk to meet the needs of children coming into care. Where the need is identified, we aim to provide the right placement at the right time.
- Have stability and the opportunity to maintain relationships with family and friends; we aim to place the majority of children with well-matched foster families within Norfolk. We will proactively recruit foster carers who can accommodate specific children such as brothers and sisters, children with disabilities, older children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Therefore, our vision is for the children and young people to:
 - Be helped to grow and reach their potential.
 - Be given safe, nurturing experiences within a variety of caring resources which reflect need, respect difference, value diversity and promote inclusion.
 - Be listened to and ensure that services we provide should take these views into consideration.
 - Receive high quality, relevant aftercare.
 - Have their rights and responsibilities respected and involve them, along with their carers, in all aspects of service delivery.

We believe that children looked after by Norfolk Children's Services deserve:

- Services which help them overcome adversity and positively address disability.
- Good quality and timely assessments that reflect the child's/young person's needs and demonstrate how such needs are going to be met.
- Positive care planning and that, as corporate parents, foster carers have high aspirations for their future.
- All significant adults in their lives to be working together, in a community of practice way.
- To be heard, consulted with and encouraged to participate in their care and family life.



The service is also committed to:

- Ensuring that the service offered is based on statutory requirements, sound principles and good practice and works within the principles of value for money for the council.
- Multi-agency working and developing partnerships and protocols with organisations which can progress the needs of our Looked After Children.
- Working at all levels in partnership with Education and Health to promote the well-being of children whom we are looking after.
- Providing a high-quality responsive child-centred service in relation to its core functions.
- Recruiting fostering carers from within our diverse community and from the Looked After Child's kinship networks, whichever best meets their needs.
- Supporting temporarily approved foster carers in the same way we support any other foster placement by providing enhanced support, access to tailored training and access to wellbeing support.
- Applicants being comprehensively assessed and prepared through training to be able to deal with a range of issues that foster carers face when looking after children within a safe family home. The buddy system ensures that newly approved carers are already linked with buddies who have supported them through the application journey and welcomed them into the community of Norfolk Foster carers.
- Norfolk Fostering Service has also looked at innovative ways to prepare applicants or temporarily approved carers for the role by piloting Virtual Reality headsets which create reflective platforms for having dialogues regarding the children's experiences. These headsets are also being used with approved foster carers and we have trained a high number of Fostering Practitioners in the usage, so that we can maximise the experience for our carers.
- Providing fostering allowances that are in line with government recommended rates. In addition, we remain high child focused in our approach, thus foster carers receive allowances defined by the need of the child and on the carer's capacity to meet those needs. The allowances and fees reflect the skills and experience carers have to meet the needs of the children placed with them.



Our Service Objectives

We put children at the centre of what we do, and we support carers to do the same by:

- Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children throughout their childhood.
- Ensuring there is a choice of high-quality foster care placements available to meet the complex and diverse needs of children.
- Working in partnership with children and their families.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity, having a positive regard for the child's racial, religious and cultural needs.
- Promoting and abiding by the Promise to the children and young people who are looked after and listening when children and young people think we have broken our Promise.
- Supporting children through trauma-informed foster care (understanding that children's behaviours are impacted by their experience of trauma). Foster carers to be offered training that considers addressing the attachment needs of Looked After Children and trauma responses to their past experiences.
- Ensuring children reach their potential in education and employment.
- Ensuring children's health needs are met.
- Ensuring that young people are supported to move into independence in a planned way.
- Delivering regular supervision to each foster carer and supported lodgings host from a fostering Supervising Social Worker who will assist in identifying the individual training and development needs of carers, so that we are able to continually develop our fostering workforce.
- Taking into consideration an individual child's needs/wishes and feelings as they relate to the foster placement.
- Accommodating siblings together, wherever possible and appropriate.
- Promoting contact/family time between the child or young person and their birth family throughout their placement.
- Ensuring foster carers make children and young people aware of their rights in line with the Norfolk County Council Promise to children and young people. This includes making children and young people aware of the complaints, compliments, advocacy and independent visitor processes.
- Ensuring that our carers feel valued by providing regular service updates through the carers email communication, building our carer community through events such as support groups, children and family activities, recognition schemes, birth children birthday vouchers.

- Ensuring that all practice promotes equal opportunities for all and values diversity of both foster carers, children and young people.
- Ensuring carers can take appropriate decisions relating to the children in their care by delegating authority for day-to-day decisions unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- Ensuring that any decisions are transparent and fair, any concerns are addressed, and information about complaints procedures are made available to all.
- Ensuring service performance is monitored, assessed with outcomes measured via a Quality Assurance Framework.
- Promoting a Community of Practice approach in working with the child, young person and their birth family alongside the carer.
- Consulting regularly with children and young people who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard with active participation and engagement.
- Having a commitment to continuous improvement through provision of wider placement choices by pioneering more innovative approaches to foster care that are needs-led, delivering flexible packages of support to our Looked After Children.
- Using feedback from a range of sources including carers, children, young people and partner agencies to develop and improve our Fostering Service.
- Ensuring that all information/records will be treated confidentially and held securely.
- Supporting our foster carers to manage children in a way that is mindful of the trauma they have experienced and supportive of our therapeutic parenting approach.
- Looking after our carers' wellbeing by accessing the Norfolk Support Line and wellbeing service.
- Looking after our carers' children by providing direct work via our highly skilled Supporting Resilience Practitioners.



Foster care placements range from babies to teenagers, for children with complex needs who require a placement on their own as well as large sibling groups who need to stay together, and parents who need support in caring for their babies. Placements also include Supported Lodging accommodation whereby 16 to 18 year olds can be supported to move on in line with their age and needs. Providing stable placements remains a key priority which means finding carers who can support children and young people into adulthood and beyond.

- Successful matching and placement stability is achieved through the continued communication between the dedicated duty team and our foster carers by providing increased knowledge to support matching the developmental needs of the child with the caregiving required to meet them.
- Supporting placements from the outset is guaranteed throughout: Placement Planning Meetings, Placement Planning Reviews, ongoing review of the carers' resilience via regular supervisions and training as well as through direct support offered by the Supporting Resilience Team, Signs of Stability Meetings, Team Around the Child Supervisions and Reflection and Learning meetings.
- Supporting our foster carers after hours is achieved by tailored advice and dynamic response and this is strengthened by having a clear line of communication between our day duty team and the on-call service.
- The Fostering Service is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Assistant Director. This supports the service to focus on ensuring our core ways of working are embedded and central to our practice, supporting children and young people to maintain and develop positive, reparative relationships with their family and supporting their ties with their network and their local community.
- Commitment to our children's Norfolk Story by innovating the way foster carers log their written accounts of the lives of the children directly into the children's records by using the recording Portal.
- The Fostering Service actively promotes the option of Staying Put with our foster carers, to enable young people in their care to remain with them beyond their 18th birthday, if this is what the young person wants too.

Our Priorities in 2024/25

- Placement stability and support remains a priority for 2024/25, with new initiatives to support stability and permanence for children in care, through the provision of the New Deal for our foster carers.
- Increase the number of enquiries to foster with a view to securing a high number of newly approved foster carers and supported lodgings hosts.
- Continue the relationship-based model of delivering the new training offer, which has been updated and revised for 2024/2025.
- Ongoing planning and sufficiency monitoring by continuing to innovate ways to prepare foster carers for the task (i.e. using Virtual Reality experiences that aim to enhance the carers and professionals' understanding of children's lived experiences).
- Support fostering households by providing a holistic approach to stability.
- Increase number of family-based care arrangements provided by the children's connected networks, with a particular focus of supporting the families to achieve permanence for children through either gaining Special Guardianship or through progressing onto being full time Kinship Foster Carers.
- Continue to engage Foster Carers by reinforcing a partnership approach which promotes working together effectively in achieving positive outcomes for children. This includes, based on feedback from our foster carers, the ongoing delivery of a Foster Carer forum to provide opportunities for all foster carers to communicate with the service, Virtual school, Participation Team and Health professionals.
- Finalise the new version of the foster carer's handbook and the new agency website.
- Facilitate the Foster Carers' Conference in September 2025, including the provision of a Q&A session with members of the senior leadership team.
- Develop further the Clinical Psychology offer to the service and foster carers, including the recruitment of a Clinical Psychologist and Fostering Clinician.
- Implement innovative support models and targeted areas of practice development to increase the stability and quality of care for children, young people and their carers, in line with their individual needs. This includes implementation of the Mockingbird model to strengthen peer support and retention. It also includes strengthening our offer and processes around step-downs from residential care for adolescents and Children with Disabilities.
- Continued leadership in the Eastern Regional Hub, including the launch of the Foster East recruitment hub in May 2024 and ongoing dedication to driving forward shared learning and innovation in the recruitment and retention of carers both locally and across the region.

- Continue on the high-level recruitment activity that brings a while Council approach, including;
 - Promoting and expanding ‘fostering friendly status’ spreading out across other public services in the county and local businesses to make fostering a Norfolk-wide priority linked to Flourish campaign.
 - More focused work on our recruitment and marketing strategy to ensure that we are targeting a cohort of carers to meet priority need through a dynamic and tailored response to any opportunities that aim at promoting and raising awareness around fostering.
 - Ensure that our offer to foster carers is more visible and to continually build and improve on this.



How we monitor and evaluate the fostering service

- The performance of the service is monitored and analysed in the Annual Report.
- The Fostering Service monitors its performance, quality of practice through monthly performance clinics when data provided through dashboards are subjected to a high level of scrutiny by the fostering management group. This way of practicing and understanding ourselves enables team managers to closely monitor compliance, performance indicators, areas of development or share excellent practice.
- This information is shared with the front door recruitment advisers to inform sufficiency needs.
- Staff at all levels are provided with regular individual and group supervision by their line manager and consultation is also available for very complex cases.
- Cabinet receives the Annual Report on the performance of the Fostering Service.
- The professional advisor provides support, advice and quality assurance to the Fostering Panel. The advisor manages the Panel arrangements, facilitates Panel training needs and supports the independent Panel Chairs.
- Monthly audits are undertaken to ascertain the quality of social work practice and service delivery, and to inform Fostering Service improvements.
- Regular meetings with Agency Decision Maker and Senior Managers with Fostering Panel Chairs to review quality of practice, reports and lessons for learning.
- Feedback provided from and to the Fostering Panel as a way of monitoring the quality of reports and work undertaken by the fostering service.
- The findings provided by the Reflection and Learning Meetings (which are held when a placement breaks down unexpectedly) are captured in a way that allows us to identify and review themes to further improve placement stability and holistic working to provide stability throughout a child's life.
- The Looked After Child's review, along with the function of the Independent Reviewing Officer, has a quality assurance role in respect of the child's placement.
- The Fostering Panel Professional Advisors and their twice yearly reports also highlight any learning points raised by the Fostering Panel.

Feedback from Service Users

The views of children and young people receiving a service are sought through a variety of methods, including feedback, from the Participation Service, outcomes from complaints, reflection and learning meetings, children's views expressed in statutory reviews, Foster Carer reviews, Bright Spots, Placement Planning and Placement Planning review meetings. The views of children, young people and foster carers inform service planning as well as improvements in their individual placements.

Written feedback is requested from the child's Social Worker as part of the foster carers' review and at the end of each placement.

Newly approved foster carers are requested to provide regular feedback regarding the assessment, transition and support process.

NiCC (Norfolk in Care Council) contribute to the Skills to Foster preparation training for fostering applicants by attending a session and taking questions. All participants attending the course find this a useful part of the preparation training.

NiCC have also been involved in preparing the Foster Carer ambassadors when attending recruitment events.

Norfolk Fostering Service aims to gather feedback from applicants throughout their approval process and from carers and children during their fostering career by seeking regular feedback throughout the year on various aspects of their experience as foster carers.

This includes:

- Feedback requested by the Fostering Panel on the views of applicants on the assessment process.
- Questionnaires following the preparation course for prospective carers.
- The statutory Looked After Children's review ensures that the child's/young person's and birth parents' views are fully explored.
- The agency places high priority on direct work with children/young people and provide the opportunity for them to explore their feelings and give their views.
- Feedback collated from carers attending training courses and shared through joint meetings with workforce development/training providers to develop training programmes and individual courses as required.
- The views of foster carers are gathered during regular supervisions with the allocated Fostering Supervising Social Worker so that managers can identify any shortfalls and address this promptly.
- Team managers also request feedback as part of the case auditing process.



Overview of Fostering in Norfolk

- Since May 2021, the Fostering Service became an integral part of the overall Corporate Parenting function under one Assistant Director to oversee strategic direction for our looked after children and care leaver population.
- This supported the service to focus on ensuring Norfolk Children's Services core ways of working are embedded and central to our practice, ensuring a community of practice for looked after children and supporting children and young people to maintain and develop positive, reparative relationships with their family and supporting their ties with their network and their local community.
- We offer a variety of support groups for our foster carers. The kinship support groups had been set up as a result of feedback received from carers requesting to liaise with each other and these continue. The Supporting Resilience Team also continues to support temporarily approved kinship carers.
- Through Meet and Greet events for carers with our Supporting Resilience Practitioners, feedback around peer support has been acted on to form a mixture of events which will continue through 2024/2025. These will vary as listed:
 - Supporting Resilience groups - Listening Circles
 - Summer Activities
 - Autumn activities
 - Winter seasonal card competition and activities
 - Network meetings
 - Resilience monthly newsletter
 - Christmas and Halloween activities

Norfolk Fostering Service also provides an Advice and Mediation service commissioned from the Fostering Network. The Advice and Mediation service offers confidential and independent advice and support to foster carers and agency staff as well as mediation between foster carers and agencies. Norfolk Fostering Service recognises that foster carers are an essential part of the team around the child and foster carers are uniquely vulnerable and may, at times, require additional independent support. This offer assists Norfolk Fostering Service in retaining foster carers in these times of a national shortage of foster carers.

Ongoing engagement events will be held to regularly seek the foster carers' feedback on their lived experiences and any developmental service need.

Children Who Foster Group

- The children who foster group will be meeting every three months with the hope to enjoy some fun activities together as well as being able to share our thoughts, feelings, worries and advice.
- The group is also instrumental in the training of applicants by delivering a session about impact of fostering on own children.
- Foster carers' children are being celebrated by having a voucher sent to them on their birthdays.





Management and Staffing

The Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting is the designated Lead Officer, Responsible Individual and the Agency Decision Maker for the Fostering Service.

The Norfolk Fostering Service comprises seven teams:

- **Recruitment Team:** this team incorporates the mainstream assessment activity as well as Private Fostering services and Supported Lodgings carers.
- **Supervision Teams (x3):** these teams supervise registered foster carers regardless of type of fostering and this includes temporarily and fully approved kinship foster carers. Foster carers and their Supervising Social Workers can build long-lasting, safe and resilient relationships.
- **Duty Team** that oversees the matching and placement requests activity.
- **Supporting Resilience Team** includes Supporting Resilience Practitioners, an Enhanced Fostering Practitioner as well as CWD support. The Supporting Resilience Practitioners will be available to any foster carer requiring additional support, either due to their own circumstances or because they need additional support in caring for the child(ren) in their care. CWD support is achieved via our introduction of an Occupational Therapist Assistant Practitioner for advice and guidance on a range of challenges faced by disabled children and those who care for them.
- **Fostering Panel Advisers** who in addition to advising panel, have a role in further developing the service and practice across Children's Social Care. They are directly supervised by the Head of Fostering Services.

The Fostering Recruitment Team

The Fostering Recruitment Team have a crucial role in promoting the need for foster carers from across Norfolk and have a schedule of promotional events that are delivered by staff and foster carers.

Recruitment Practice

As of May 2024, Enquiry Forms are triaged by our Recruitment Advisors who are now working within the Foster East regional recruitment hub. The Recruitment Advisors promptly follow-up enquiries with visits and this sets the platform for trusting relationships throughout the fostering assessment journey. The Recruitment Advisors continue to work closely with the Recruitment Team, which uses a range of resources to enrich and ensure robust understanding of the applicants' families' fostering capacity.

By linking with the supervision and duty teams, the social workers inform their appreciative inquiry by sharing case studies, valuing care needs assessment tool, exploring adult attachments and triggers of trauma. Age-appropriate direct work tools are being extensively used when relating to the applicants' own children.



Applicants are also linked to foster carer buddies. The buddy system is currently being coordinated by three members of the Fostering Service who are responsible for the recruitment and matching of the buddies with applicants and foster carers. The coordinators work very closely with the Recruitment Advisers.

Pre-approval training- Skills to Foster is being provided 7 times a year. The course comprises six sessions run over 3 to 4 weeks. We run this jointly with foster carers on all sessions. We keep groups small and as interactive as possible with a combination of face to face and virtual sessions using a hybrid approach.

The Skills to Foster training strengthens our message about trauma informed, therapeutic approach to parenting.

- Session 1: How children come into care
- Session 2: Identity & Life changes
- Session 3: Working Together
- Session 4: Understanding & caring for children
- Session 5: Safer Caring
- Session 6: Transitions (Introducing My Norfolk Life Story Work, Transition to Supervision and Support Teams)

All applicants in Stage 2 are expected to have completed the First Aid course. Homework tasks, linked to the Training, Support and Development Standards, are set up at the end of each session and will be included and referred to in the assessment report.

Emphasis is on training and learning and presenters will provide feedback at the end of the course, which forms part of applicants' assessment. All attendees complete a Feedback Form which informs future sessions. Once approved, carers are encouraged to provide feedback regarding their fostering experience after the first 6 months.

Fostering Supervision Teams

The teams offer supervision and support to foster carers. All carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker who will visit regularly, conduct an annual foster carer review, liaise with children's Social Workers and help to ensure appropriate placements are made. All children placed with foster carers should be in an approved placement with a carer who has the quality, skills and experience to meet their needs.

The teams supervise:

Mainstream foster carers: Offering a variety of placements ranging from short term, emergency, respite, long term, PACE bed.

Linked families:

Foster carers provide a series of planned short breaks for children and young people with complex disabilities who are referred by the CWD fieldwork teams. The children primarily live at home with their parents and/or carers and can receive sitting, day- care or overnight stays with a Linked Families Foster Carer. When children are matched to carers for short breaks, the Supervising Social workers will identify any training needs associated with the placement in consultation with the family, carers and other professionals involved in the child's care. This could include Moving and Handling, Epilepsy Awareness, Administering Medication, Gastrostomy training, Steps On, Sign-along, Autism Awareness or any other course required to provide safe care for that child or young person.

Connected Persons (Kinship Care):

Offering a Looked After Child a placement where the child is known to them as a family member, friend or another member of the child's network.

All newly registered foster carers are approved to care for children and young people between the ages of 0 to 17.

Supported Lodgings accommodation and hosts:

Offering looked after young people or non-looked after young people a placement whereby they are provided care, but the main focus is independence and assisting the young person to meet identified needs.

Foster carers, supported lodgings hosts and their families receive:

- Regular supervision visits in line with the fostering task, generally 4-8 weeks.
- 24-hour telephone support from an on-call fostering worker.
- Invitations to regular support groups held throughout the county, including educational and social events and a group specifically for the children of foster carers.
- All Foster carers on approval are funded for membership of the Fostering Network which provides independent advice and mediation as well as other associated benefits. Norfolk County Council funds individual membership of the Fostering Network for all approved foster carers. This provides a holistic package of support for foster carers, helpline and includes legal insurance.
- All foster carers benefit from an insurance scheme.
- Ongoing training to encourage continuous development.

The team provides supervision and support to enable foster carers to work to a child's/young person's care plans. We aim to provide foster placements offering therapeutic care by promoting a community of practice approach, with the focus on the Foster Carer providing 'therapeutic re-parenting'. We actively manage the placement to ensure that outcomes for the children are our primary focus.

Foster carers need the following to 'therapeutically re-parent' young people:

- To be seen as a key part of the Team Around the Child.
- A heightened sense of self-awareness, including being emotionally grounded and evidencing the ability to be reflective in their practice.
- To possess a good working knowledge of theoretical models to use as a framework for understanding young people's behaviour.
- Access to good quality wrap-around services.

Partnership Working

- All carers are required to work closely alongside the families of Looked After Children, with sensitivity and an understanding of the responsibility attached to looking after another person's child. This can be complex and demanding, both for the carers and the child and requires an emphasis to be placed on joint working with Social Workers and colleagues in all relevant agencies.
- All carers are required to record details of the child's life in their care and contribute to effective assessments.
- Respite care is an important source of support to foster placements. When considering respite arrangements, consideration is always given to the needs of both the child and the carers.

Annual Foster Carer Review

- Annual reviews of carers ensure that we keep in the forefront our aims and objectives for the children in our care. The views of all those involved are sought to contribute to the review. It is particularly important that the child's or young person's voice is heard.
- It is at the review that decisions are made regarding the carers' continued suitability. Their terms of approval are reconsidered, and support and training needs identified. The first annual review following a foster carer's approval panel, is presented to Fostering Panel for consideration. Any subsequent reviews are presented to the Fostering Team Manager for consideration and a decision is made on progression. Reviews may be presented to the Fostering Panel and Supported Lodgings Panel as required.
- Fostering households and Supported Lodgings households approved over 3 years ago are presented to the Best Practice panels.
- Changes in the carers' circumstances as well as requests to change foster carers' terms of approval are also presented to the Fostering and Supported Lodgings Panels. The supervision teams have developed the way in which reviews are carried out to ensure that Foster Carer reviews are reflective of continual practice and support the continuous professional development of all carers. This is being further developed to ensure that the voice of the child is clearly captured.
- The Fostering Service works closely with the Access to Resource Team to identify fostering placements, working as one service to provide the best possible matched placements for children and young people.

Safeguarding checks

- Every carer must have an annual review. Disclosure and Barring Service and medical checks must be completed as part of the Foster Carer's assessment and at intervals of three years. The family safe caring policy is updated at every review or/and new placement. Health and safety checks are reviewed annually.
- Foster carers also get at least one unannounced visit throughout the year.
- In the event of a child protection investigation because of an allegation of abuse against a carer, the review will take place immediately after the conclusion of the investigation and presented to Fostering or Supported Lodgings Panel for consideration.
- Every carer review will include feedback from the Looked After Child, their parents and Social Workers as well as the carers' own children.

Work of the Kinship Assessment Team (KAT)

Family and Friends wishing to be approved as foster carers (connected persons).

Once temporary approval has been granted, the temporarily approved placement will be supervised and supported while further assessments are underway.

A Social Worker will assess the carers in accordance with the child's care plan while ensuring that support is prompt and supervision afforded in the same way mainstream carers are able to access support and training.

The KAT also undertakes fostering assessments (viability assessments) where specific children have been identified but not yet placed.



Learning and Development

Central to the Norfolk Fostering Service’s ability to provide the best possible service to children, training is of vital importance in supporting carers and helping them to develop therapeutic parenting skills to face the many challenges that foster caring brings.

We offer a variety of courses designed to cover the diverse nature of foster care. We want to support carers to offer therapeutic re-parenting to our foster children to help them recover from their difficult start in life. We have put plans in place to ensure that training can be accessed in different locations or virtually and at different times, including full day and half day courses, daytime, weekend and evening times to meet their needs. Attending courses also gives carers the opportunity to meet with and talk to other carers.

The learning and development plan is updated each year. The development of our training programme is annually informed by course evaluations, feedback from foster carers, findings of the reflection and learning meetings, audit themes, requests from carers and Social Workers for specific training, and national and local drivers.

The training and development programme for carers has been reshaped and strengthened for 2024/2025. There is a particular focus on training to support carers to develop new strategies to care for more complex and harder to place young people and draws upon expertise across Children’s Social Care to promote relationships between carers and different parts of the service. In line with feedback from carers, this year’s training and development programme also distinguishes between essential and recommended training for main and second carers, acknowledging differences in their training needs.

Courses range from Essential (mandatory) and Core and are collated into a Foster Carer Learning and Development Programme. Some essential courses are to be completed once or renewed 3x yearly, either by the main carer only or by both main and second carers. Foster carers can sign up to this training by joining the MyOracle platform. Additionally, carers can access further training opportunities provided by the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership, and a wealth of evidence-based information and resources across the spectrum of social care via the Care Knowledge professional development platform. Virtual Reality Headset training is also facilitated by our Supporting Resilience Practitioners.

Essential (mandatory) courses, dependent on age of child/children in care and main or secondary carer role:

- Child Exploitation
- Diversity and Intercultural Awareness
- First Aid for Foster Carers
- Prevent E-Learning
- Initial Safeguarding (newly approved carers only)
- Updating Safeguarding Practice

Core courses:

- A Brief Introduction to Restorative Approaches for Foster Carers & Children’s Residential
- Adolescent Development
- Attachment Theory
- Autism Awareness E-Learning
- Child Development
- Children and Young People Online Protection
- Developmental Trauma
- Domestic Abuse Awareness E-Learning
- Epilepsy Awareness
- Family Network Approach Briefing
- Healthier Lifestyles and Self-Compassion
- Introduction to Signs of Safety and Family Networking E-Learning
- Life Beyond Care Workshop
- Moving to Adoption
- My Norfolk Story: Life Story Approach
- Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) – Overview for Foster Carers/Special Guardians
- Non-Violent Resistance Support Group (held quarterly)
- Nurturing Resilience
- Substance and Alcohol Misuse/Drug Paraphernalia
- Supporting Children and Young People’s Mental Health
- Tools to Support Children and Adults with Communication Differences
- Trauma Informed Care for Foster Families
- Understanding Autism for Childrens Services & Adult Social Services
- Understanding Self Harm & Suicide Prevention in Children and Young People
- Working with Teenagers (formerly Teenage Challenging Behaviours)
- Stepping Stones (seven week course)

The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Panel

The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Panel considers the approval of all new carers and existing carers' reviews. The Panel will make recommendations on foster carers' terms of approval including:

- Type of fostering
- Age of child(ren)
- Gender of child(ren)
- Number of children

Approvals and first year reviews are considered by the Fostering and Supported Lodgings Panel. The Panel's recommendations are considered by the Agency Decision Maker who makes the final decision.

The 1989 Children Act sets the 'usual fostering limit' to three children unless the children are siblings to each other.

In certain circumstances, the Fostering Service may consider placing children outside the usual fostering limit on exemption. With the carers' agreement, whenever this applies, the exemption will be formally recorded, and consideration will be given to what additional support the carer may require.

Temporary changes of approvals (in emergency) are risk-assessed to ensure the needs of all the children in the household are met. A return to Panel will be actioned if required.

Fostering Panel minutes are recorded, and decisions are confirmed in writing to the carer. The Panel hears all cases where there have been significant concerns in terms of safeguarding, quality of care or allegations made. A full fostering review will be completed and presented to Panel.

A carers' review following a change of circumstances, or a request to increase their approval status, will be referred to the Panel. They will also recommend, as appropriate, the termination of an approval. Panel will consider appeals to recommendations as well.

Recording and Access to Records

The Fostering Service has a responsibility to maintain accurate records on all foster carers and supported lodgings hosts and to ensure that information is shared with the carer wherever possible. There is a statutory requirement to retain files for 10 years following closure. Carers have a right to access their record and can approach the Information Governance Unit for advice.

How to Complain or Challenge a Decision

Comments, Dissatisfactions and Complaints

Comments, complaints and compliments are received in the spirit of open communication. It is hoped that any problems can be dealt with quickly and at a local level. Formal complaints are dealt with in accordance with the Children's Services Complaints Procedure. Carers are made aware of the complaint's procedure in relation to children in their care and also how to complain in their own right. The complaints procedure has three stages. Complainants are advised at each stage of their right to request that their complaint be referred to the next stage if they are not satisfied that it has been resolved.

The Complaints Procedure

Norfolk County Council has a designated Compliments & Complaints Team which coordinates the investigation of complaints made by prospective and approved foster carers. All complaints are logged by the team. Children, young people or their representative can make a complaint by using the local rate number 0344 800 8020 or accessing the Norfolk County Council website www.norfolk.gov.uk.

The key features of this complaints procedure are:

- Most issues can be resolved informally by the manager responsible for the service within 10 working days.
- If the case is not resolved, an independent person completes an investigation within a further 25 working days.
- If the issue remains contentious, the Complaints Department commissions a Panel of three independent people to consider the matter who will make recommendations.
- Children and young people wishing to make a complaint must either be receiving or seeking a service from Norfolk County Council Children's Services.



Challenges to Decisions Regarding Suitability to Foster/care

If prospective fostering enquirers/supported lodgings enquirers are assessed as unsuitable to be carers before having a formal application accepted, they can ask for a Team Manager to review the decision.

If the Team Manager upholds the decision, the enquirer(s) can ask to refer the decision not to proceed with the process to the Head of Fostering Services for final adjudication. If this reviewing officer upholds the original decision, there are no further grounds for appeal.

If a formal application to foster/host is accepted by the fostering agency, and doubts regarding suitability subsequently arise, the applicants are able to insist that their assessment as carers is presented to the Panel.

If the Panel recommends that the applicants are unsuitable, and this is supported by the Agency Decision Maker then this can be raised with the Carers' Independent Review Mechanism for Fostering, which reviews decisions made by Norfolk's fostering agency.

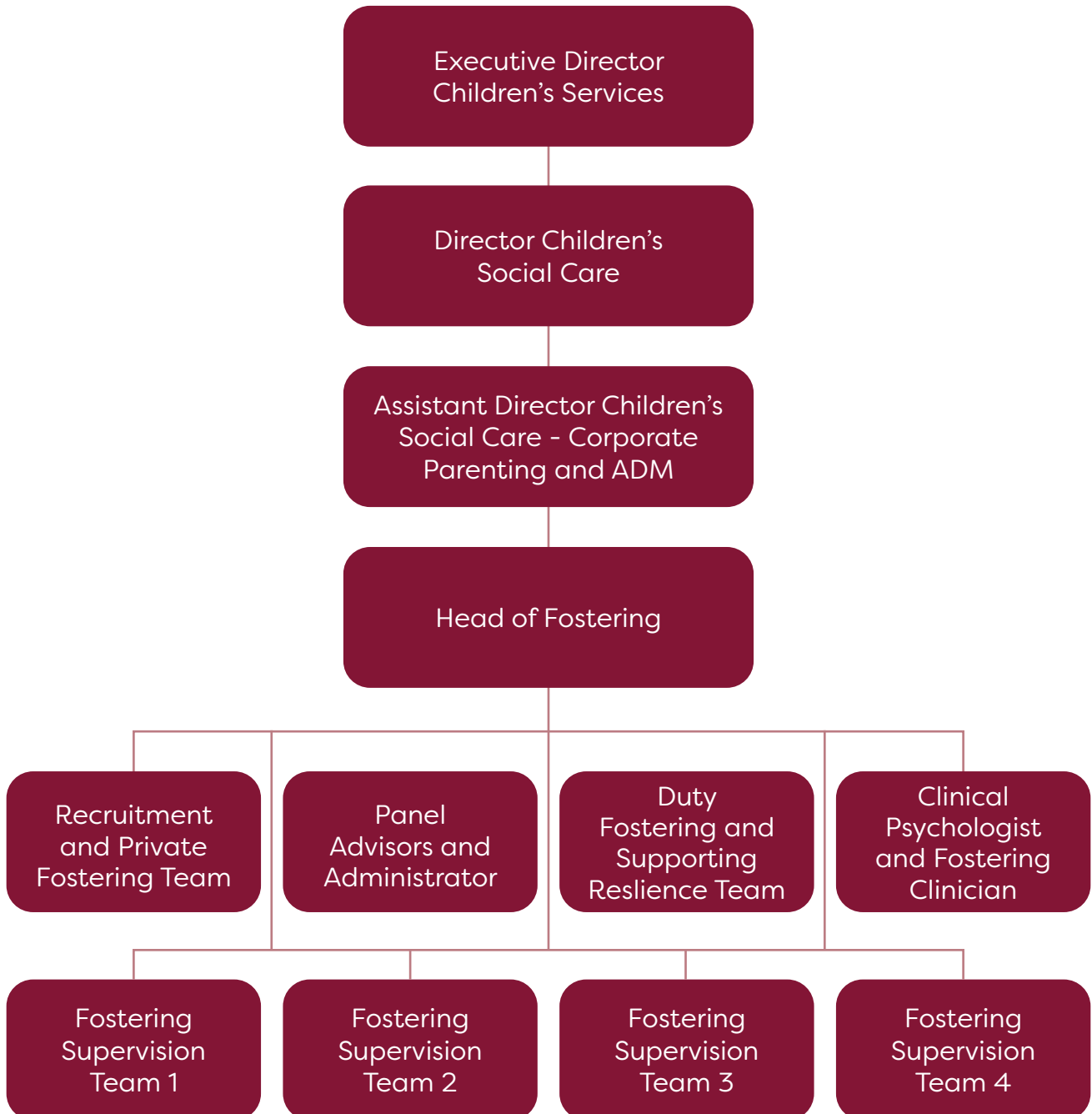
Allegations

All allegations in relation to foster carers and supported lodgings hosts are investigated and actioned through Norfolk's integrated safeguarding unit (Children's Advice and Duty Service – CADS), reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board under the procedures for Investigation Allegations Against Adults Caring for Children.

How to contact the Fostering Service

- You can access the website on - [Fostering - Norfolk County Council](#)
- Fostering Service Recruitment number **01603 306649**.
- Day time Fostering Duty number **01603 306338**: NFSduty@norfolk.gov.uk This is the number for registered foster carers to ring for out of hours support.
- Emergency Duty number for the Out of hours service **0344 800 8020**.
- Norfolk Support Line for registered foster carers and their family members: **0800 169 7676**.

The structure of the Fostering Service





Contact Details for OFSTED and the Children's Commissioner

Any serious concerns regarding the Fostering Service practice can be referred to the OFSTED inspectorate. The main office for the OFSTED fostering inspectorate service is:

The main office for the OFSTED fostering inspectorate service is:



OFSTED National Business Unit

Royal Exchange Buildings

St Anne's Square

Manchester

M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 40 40 40 e-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

If a child has any serious concerns relating to the Fostering Service, they can contact the Children's Commissioner for England. The details are:



Office of the Children's Commissioner

Children's Commissioner for

England Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street London

SW1P 3BT

norfolk
fostering



Norfolk County Council
