



**FOSTERING  
AGENCY  
STATEMENT OF  
PURPOSE  
2010 - 2011**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement of Purpose has been produced to meet Southampton's Fostering Services obligations under the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and National Minimum Standards 2002.

1.2 Southampton Foster Care Services seeks to ensure that there is a range and choice of high quality family placements available to meet the individual needs of children looked after who are unable to live with their own families. The service seeks to ensure safe, supportive and successful care for all children in family placements including those placed with family and friends and to maximise quality of care by offering support and training to all carers – **see Appendix 1 Philosophy and Policy.**

1.3 The statement provides details of:

- The services provided
- The management structure
- The fostering service staffing structure
- The aims and objectives, principles and standards of care
- The numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff
- Numbers of foster carers
- Numbers of children placed
- Numbers of complaints and their outcomes
- The procedures and processes for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing carers

1.4 The Fostering Service operates within the framework of Equal Opportunities legislation and Southampton City Council's Equal Opportunities Policy - the agency does not discriminate in any way on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or age in relation to staff and service users.

1.5 The Fostering Service complies with the following legislation, standards and associated regulations:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Care Standards Act 2002
- Fostering Services Regulations 2002
- Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2002

## **2 OBJECTIVES OF FOSTER CARE SERVICES**

- 2.1 To ensure that there is a choice of high quality placements available to meet the needs of each child and young person who cannot live with his/her own family.
- 2.2 To ensure that all possibilities of placements with families and friends are considered before a stranger foster placement is made available.
- 2.3 To ensure that placements provide care that is safe, healthy, nurturing and responsive to children's needs.
- 2.4 To ensure that placements promote the racial, cultural, linguistic, religious backgrounds of children and young people and that placement choice takes account of the gender, sexuality and abilities of children and young people.
- 2.5 To ensure that the individual needs of children and young people can be met through the recruitment of carers from diverse backgrounds.
- 2.6 To ensure that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child and young person placed in their care.
- 2.7 To provide support and supervision of foster carers to enhance their skills and ensure safe care of children and young people.
- 2.8 To ensure those foster placements offer age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for promoting the learning of independence skills.
- 2.9 To ensure that foster carers promote educational opportunities for children and young people in their care.
- 2.10 To ensure that the fostering service, including foster carers, takes a partnership approach to working with children, young people and their families.
- 2.11 To ensure that foster carers promote the health of Children Looked After.
- 2.12 To ensure that the contribution of the children of foster carers is recognised and that they receive appropriate training and support.
- 2.13 To promote continuity of care for care leavers.
- 2.14 Southampton Foster Care Services seeks to meet the Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2002

### 3

### PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Children should become looked after only if it is in their best interests and there is no alternative placement within the family or with friends, or when it is seen as the most appropriate way of supporting the family.
- 3.2 All plans and decisions will be made in partnership with parents whenever this is possible and will take the child's wishes into account.
- 3.3 The emphasis in planning will be a consideration of the child's return home.
- 3.4 Placements of first choice will always be with family and friends if possible.
- 3.5 Children who do require to be looked after by Southampton City Council should, wherever possible, be cared for within their own communities.
- 3.6 Children who need to be looked after are generally best placed in substitute family care.
- 3.7 Residential care should be available as the specialist placement of choice to meet the needs of children and young people in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.8 Initial placements and placement moves will be a planned response to children's needs except in emergency situations.
- 3.9 Permanent separation from a birth family will be considered if there is evidence ratified by the court that the child will continue to suffer significant harm to their health and development by continuing to live with their birth family.
- 3.10 Early identification of those children for whom legal permanence away from their birth family is the best option is a priority for the fostering service. The fostering service will work jointly with the adoption and permanency service to secure legally permanent placements for children, minimising delay and placement moves for this grouping of children.
- 3.11 Contact between Children Looked After and their parents and families will be actively encouraged and promoted.
- 3.12 Wherever possible siblings will be placed together except where a decision is made following an assessment, which recommends that children's needs are best met in different placements.
- 3.13 Foster carers will be recognised as providing a professional service and will be treated with dignity and respect and offered professional support.

- 3.14 The contribution of the children of carers, and their support needs will be recognised and met.
- 3.15 To provide specialist support to carers who are caring for children with mental health problems and/or challenging behaviours.
- 3.16 To promote and facilitate contact.

## **4 FOSTERING SERVICE STAFFING STRUCTURE- see Appendix 2**

**4.1 Registered Manger of the Fostering Service** – This is Leigh Clark.

### **4.2 Relevant qualifications and experience of the Fostering Manager**

The Team Manager has 36 years' childcare experience working within residential schools, children's homes and Foster Care Services. She has held senior residential and managerial posts within these areas for the past 29 years. She joined the Foster Care Services in August 1999 and holds a residential social work qualification, Diploma in Advanced Social Work, Certificate in Personal Social Services Management and NVQ 4 Management

**4.3 Number, relevant qualifications and experience staff** – see Appendix 3

#### **4.3.1 The Fostering Team consists of:**

- Fostering Services Team Manager 1 FTE
- Assistant Team Manager/Senior Practitioner 4.25 FTE
- Supervising Social Workers 13.09 FTE
- Birth Family Therapist .81 FTE
- Social Services Assistant 2.5 FTE
- Recruitment Officer 1 FTE
- Business Support Officers 4.81 FTE

4.3.2 Four qualified and experienced sessional social workers undertake additional assessments of foster carers in order that fostering resources are maintained at a level to ensure choice and diversity of placements. They are supervised by an Assistant Team Manager.

4.3.3 The Southampton Fostering Service is part of the Children's Services and Learning Directorate. The Head of Service for Safeguarding holds responsibility for the service with delegation to a Principal Officer.

4.3.4 The Principal Officer, Children In Care, undertakes direct line management for the team alongside residential care, "Pathways" (Children in Care and 16+ services) and "Jigsaw" (services for children with disabilities).

## **5. SERVICES PROVIDED**

**5.1** The services provided by the team include:

- Foster placements including emergency, short term, long term and respite based upon matching considerations

- Dedicated duty service
- Recruitment, selections and preparation of foster carers
- Assessment and approval of foster carers
- Assessment and approval of family and friends who offer placements
- Organisation of the Fostering Panel
- Extensive range of training opportunities for carers
- Post approval support for foster carers and of placements
- 24/7 out of hours service
- Reviews and approvals of households
- Investigations of complaints and allegations against carers
- Ensuring training for carers in skills for independence and continuity of placements for care leavers
- 'Time For Change' programme: a dedicated team providing placement/support/therapeutic intervention to children with complex needs
- Financial support for, and collaborative working with, Southampton Foster Care Association
- Group work and activities for the children of foster carers in collaboration with Southampton Foster Care Association
- Raising the profile of the contribution made by foster carers to the lives of Children Looked After
- Partnership working with an IFA to provide placements for children with complex needs
- Partnership work with Dreamwall and youth options to provide residential activity breaks for children and young people in foster care

## 5.2 Number of Foster Carers

5.3 Southampton Foster Care Services has 192 fostering households. This includes the following range of carers by approval.

- Emergency - 1
- Short term - 78
- Long term - 65
- Family and Friends - 48

## 6. ACTIVITY DATA – APRIL 2009 to MARCH 2010

### 6.1 Full Approvals

| Total | Short - term/Respite | Long-term | Friends and Family | Specific |
|-------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|
| 25    | 11                   | 0         | 13                 | 1        |

### 6.2 Termination of Registration

| Total | Retired/change of family circumstance | De-Registered | F and F Child moved | SGOs | Other |
|-------|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|------|-------|
| 14    | 7                                     | 1             | 3                   | 2    | 1     |

### 6.3 Recruitment Current Activity as of July 2010

| Enquiries | IHV | Mainstream assessment | Regulation 38 Assessments |
|-----------|-----|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 289       | 154 | 26                    | 42                        |

### 6.4 Numbers of children looked after (CLA) in foster care

6.4.1 The number of children/young people placed within foster care fluctuates month by month. The average number of children/young people placed in foster care was 243 as of July 2010.

### 6.5 Complaints and outcomes

6.5.1 Southampton City Council has clearly defined policies and procedures in place to respond to complaints.

6.5.2 Within this process, there are guidelines that must be followed when a complaint or allegation is made against a Southampton foster carer.

6.5.3 Complaints and allegations will be dealt with dependent on the seriousness of the concerns.

6.5.4 **Level 1 Complaints** will be relating to minor concerns and be dealt with by supervision or by the supervising social worker and child's social worker.

Between March 2009 and March 2010 there were two Level 1 complaints made against foster carers. Both were unsubstantiated and no further action was taken.

6.5.5 **Level 2 Complaints** are those that cause serious concerns but do not involve Child Protection Procedures.

Between March 2009 and March 2010 there were four Level 2 complaints made against foster carers. Three of the four complaints were not substantiated and no further action was taken. The fourth allegation was dealt with as a practice issue and picked up within supervision.

6.5.6 Outcomes and recommendations are presented to a Household Review.

6.5.7 **Level 3 Complaints** are those that may involve child protection procedures, e.g. where alleged abuse occurred. Outcomes and recommendations are presented to a Household Review chaired by a senior manager. Recommendations from the Household Reviews are then presented to the Foster Panel.

Between March 2009 and March 2010 there were three Level 3 complaints made against Foster carers. One of the three complaints was unsubstantiated and no further action was taken. The remaining two complaints have identified a programme of training for the foster carer.

6.5.8 A register containing all complaints and allegations is in place and includes all complaints and allegations made against foster carers since 13/4/02.

- 6.5.9 Foster Care Services makes a commitment to supervising carers throughout the investigation process.
- 6.5.10 In the event of a Level 3 investigation taking place, “Foster Talk” are approached to provide an independent support worker for the foster carer(s).

## **7 THE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR RECRUITING, APPROVING, TRAINING SUPPORTING AND REVIEWING CARERS**

- 7.1 A wide range of advertising takes place through the year in an effort to increase the numbers of foster carers within Southampton. Advertising includes the Foster Care Services website, [www.southampton.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.southampton.gov.uk/fostering), 27 high profile poster sites (5’x3’) within the city shopping centres, regular monthly advertising in the fire, police, health and SEN newspapers, posters on the sides and backs of buses, advertising on Southampton Football Club and Hampshire Cricket Club websites and within a number of glossy magazines. 93,000 flyers were distributed with Council Tax bills. We also use radio advertisements, the local newspaper (Echo) advertisements and features, advertising on all maps given out to patients at Princess Anne Hospital and Royal South Hants Hospital and posters distributed to all Southampton schools, doctors’ and dentists’ surgeries.
- 7.2 The Department believes one of the best methods of recruitment of foster carers is through foster carers and has introduced a financial incentive scheme for foster carers and SCC employees. Foster carers and staff (excluding staff who work for or line manage Fostering Services) can receive a payment of £25.00 for an initial introduction leading to an Initial Home Visit and on full approval and placement of a child will receive a further £250.
- 7.3 Within 24 hours of receiving an enquiry from a potential foster carer(s) literature is forwarded along with a letter of introduction. A tear-off slip and pre-paid envelope are enclosed for the prospective carer(s) to request an Initial Home Visit.
- 7.4 An initial discussion takes place in the home of the prospective carer(s) with a supervising social worker within seven working days.
- 7.5 Potential foster carer(s) complete(s) an application form, giving detailed information about them and their family and consent to necessary checks and enquiries to ascertain their suitability to foster.



**7.6** The following references are obtained:

- Police and DOH (CRB)
- Probation
- Primary health
- Education
- NSPCC (where criteria met)
- Housing
- OLA
- Employment
- Six personal referees

7.7 The Department's records and Child Protection Register must also be checked.

7.8 Applicant(s) require a full medical undertaken by their own GP. On completion, Medical Report(s) (BAAF 1) must be forwarded to the Medical Advisor (Fostering) for comments as to the health and suitability of the applicant(s) as a foster carer. This must take place prior to carer(s) being presented to Fostering Panel.

7.9 All applicants are made aware of the Department's policy not to place children under five years of age within smoking households.

#### **7.10 Approval process**

7.10.1 A qualified supervising social worker carries out a full assessment, in accordance with Regulation 27(1) Schedule 3, of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

7.10.2 The format of the assessment tool completed is the BAAF Form F1 Competency based assessment.

7.10.3 During the assessment process, prospective carers must attend the "Skills to Foster" pre-approval training. Carers will be assisted in compiling a portfolio of written material providing evidence of relevant experience and skills.

7.10.4 The supervising social worker makes a clear recommendation as to the suitability for a particular type of fostering placement; this must include the number of children, age range and gender of child (ren) for whom the applicant(s) could care.

7.10.5 The content of the report is shared with the prospective carer(s) except information supplied in confidence by referees or other agencies or professionals.

7.10.6 Prospective carer(s) are invited to attend the Fostering Panel to help assist the decision-making process.

7.10.7 The Fostering Panel or permanency panel makes a recommendation about the suitability of the applicant(s) to be approved as Southampton City Council foster carers.

7.10.8 The Fostering Panels and Permanency Panels recommendations are presented to the nominated senior manager by the Panel Chair and he/she makes the final decision on behalf of the Local Authority in the capacity as decision maker.

### **7.11 Notification of approval**

7.11.1 The applicants are sent written confirmation of the Panel decision to approve. The letter includes ages and numbers of child (ren) for which approval is given. It also includes the type of fostering i.e. respite, short-term, long-term.

### **7.12 Notification or non-approval**

7.12.1 The applicants are sent written notification. As far as possible this will include reasons for refusal. This will also be followed up when possible, in person.

7.12.2 Immediately after the approval of the carer(s), they will be asked to sign two completed copies of their Foster Care Agreement. This gives written information about the terms and conditions of the partnership between the Department and the carer(s). One copy will be retained on the carer(s)' file.

### **7.13 Support/supervision**

7.13.1 Southampton City Council offers the following support to all our carers:

7.13.2 Access to a member of the Foster Care Services team during office hours.

7.13.3 Dedicated Duty Team

7.13.4 Formal supervision is provided by a qualified named supervising social worker on a minimum bi-monthly basis with further support as is appropriate

7.13.5 Specialist Looked After Team including child psychologist

7.13.6 Social Services Education Team provides support for foster carers in negotiating with schools and promoting children and young people's educational needs.

7.13.7 Monthly drop-in surgeries for carers to discuss problems arising within the placement.

7.13.8 Comprehensive post-appraisal training programme, including a course run by health and education staff.

7.14.8 NVQ Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People and other training

7.14.9 Dedicated out of hours staff providing 24/7 cover

7.14.10 Variety of workshops

- 7.14.11 Joint training with social workers
- 7.14.12 Day care
- 7.14.13 Planned respite including residential activity breaks for young people 10+ throughout the summer holidays.
- 7.14.14 Southampton City Council acknowledges the contribution foster carers make to the lives of Looked After children and the enormity of the task. For foster carers to carry out this task, appropriate support is paramount.

## **7.15 Review of Foster Carers**

- 7.15.1 Foster Care Services has a comprehensive procedure for the completion of reviews of foster carers which reflects the requirements within the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2002, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the UK National Standards for Foster Care (1999).
- 7.15.2 Under the regulations the Fostering Service is required to review all types of approved households at intervals of not more than one year. The Household Review must ascertain whether a foster carer and his/her household continue to be suitable.
- 7.15.3 All first Reviews will be presented back to fostering panel and there after every three years.
- 7.15.4 Reviews may be carried out following investigations of a complaint against a foster carer. A Review must be held following a level 2 or 3 complaint or allegation against a carer or member of the carer's household.
- 7.15.5 Reviews are also necessary at any time where there is a change in circumstances within the approved household e.g. change of address, death of spouse, separation, remarriage, change of health, or following birth/adoption of a child.
- 7.15.6 A decision to hold a Review following a change in circumstances or complaint (informal or those investigated at Level 1) shall be made after a discussion between supervising social worker, team manager Foster Care Services and the carer.
- 7.15.7 Unannounced visits to carers will take place on an annual basis. This visit will be undertaken by a member of the Foster Care Services.

## **7.16 Training**

- 7.16.1 On registration carers have access to a comprehensive training/staff development programme. Each carer will have an individual training and development plan with their supervising social worker.

- 7.16.2 The foster care training pathway offers courses at induction, foundation and NVQ 3 level. These link to the National minimum standards, the CWDC standards of carers and Every Child Matters outcomes.
- 7.16.2 Southampton Foster Care Services will provide a training pathway, which will provide high quality comprehensive training to foster carers. This will ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and theoretical base to provide high quality care.
- 7.16.3 Training will be offered at a variety of times and venues to reflect the needs of the carers. Help will be given with practical arrangements to enable foster carers to attend training. This will include financial support to cover the cost of childcare and transport.
- 7.16.4 All training will reflect the Directorate's commitment to equal opportunities; foster carers will also have the opportunity to attend joint training with other Directorate staff.
- 7.16.5 Southampton Foster Care Services will provide a clear training pathway with the following stages leading to foster carers completing NVQ 3:
- Pre-approval training. This is based on the 'Skills to Foster' course developed by Fostering Network
  - Induction Training. This is based on the T.O.P.S.S. induction training and training outlined in the National Minimum Standards. It provides a standardisation of staff induction across the city and reinforces the underpinning principle of foster carers as equal partners. Examples of courses at this stage are Safe Caring and First Aid.
  - Foundation. These courses will be offered to foster carers within two years of approval. These will include First Aid for Carers, Fair Chance and Communicating with Children
  - NVQ 3. Carers are expected to complete NVQ as a culmination of the training in the other three stages. Work from previous stages can be used as accredited prior learning for this qualification.

## **7.17 Supplementary Training**

- 7.17.1 Courses will be offered in addition to those set out in the pathway to reflect changes in legislation, findings from inquiries or developments both nationally and locally. A training element will be included in support to carers through individual supervision and support groups. Carers will be encouraged to use local and national training initiatives, for example I.T. training.

## **7.18 Monitoring/ Evaluation and Review**

- 7.18.1 Individual carers will have their need for training monitored via the annual household review. The recommendations of the review will be fed into the training needs analysis for foster carers.
- 7.18.2 The training pathway will be reviewed annually by Foster Care Services and the Training and Development Section.

- 7.18.3 The Training and Development Section will maintain an individual training profile for each carer.
- 7.18.4 Each course will be evaluated by a questionnaire given to participants. The information will be used as part of the annual review of foster care training.

## **7.19 Providers**

- 7.19.1 Training will be provided by both the directorate and commissioned externally e.g. Fostering Network. Courses on which foster carers are the only participants will have an experienced foster carer as facilitator.
- 7.19.2 Foster carers' skills and training will be reflected in the financial enhancements offered to carers.

## **8 QUALITY ASSURANCE/MONITORING THE WORK OF THE AGENCY**

- 8.1 A number of mechanisms exist in order to provide a range of checks and balances to monitor the work of the service and to ensure that service delivery is consistently of a high quality and is meeting the performance targets (both national and local) and business plan outcomes in the annual Business Plan:
- Independent Chair of Fostering Panel
  - Off line Agency Decision Maker
  - Role of elected member
  - Performance data information in relation to key performance indicators
  - Monitoring and auditing of staff and carer supervision
  - Senior practitioners/ATM have lead responsibility to meet with front-line teams on a monthly basis

### **8.2 Quality of placements**

- 8.2.1 All age appropriate children are offered the opportunity to give written, verbal or videoed feedback as part of the Foster Carers' Household Review and at the child's Looked After Review
- 8.2.2 All birth parents are offered the opportunity to give written feedback as part of the Household Review
- 8.2.3 All social workers provide feedback as part of the household review

### **8.3 Training**

- 8.3.1 Participants are asked to complete evaluation forms at the end of each training session. Results are used to evaluate current sessions and suggest improvements for future training.

## **8.4 Panel**

- 8.4.1 A leaflet and evaluation form has been developed which will enable prospective foster carers and foster carers who have attended fostering panel to give their feedback.
- 8.4.2 An exit questionnaire and exit interview is offered to foster carers when their approval as foster carers is terminated.

## **9 LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- 9.1 The information contained in the Statement of Purpose is consistent with the procedures, protocols and practice guidance of the Fostering Service.
- 9.2 All information and guidance provided to staff, birth parents and carers will accurately reflect this statement.
- 9.3 The Fostering Service will work with other parts of the Council and external agencies to ensure that as far as is practicable, their services are developed in a way which is consistent with and complementary to this statement.

## **10 REVISION AND CIRCULATION OF STATEMENT**

- 10.1 This statement has been produced by managers of the service in consultation with staff and users of the service, in compliance with National Fostering Standards and the relevant fostering legislation
- 10.2 Members of the Social Services Executive have formally approved the Statement of Purpose.
- 10.3 The fostering manager is responsible for ensuring that the Statement of Purpose is updated or modified when necessary, but at least annually
- 10.4 The revised statement will be presented to Members annually for their approval
- 10.5 The statement will be provided to OfSTED. Amended statements will be provided to OfSTED within twenty-eight days of approval by Members.
- 10.6 The statement will be provided to:
- All staff including independent specialists engaged in the fostering process
  - All current and prospective foster carers
  - All key stakeholders

## APPENDIX - 1

### Philosophy and Policy

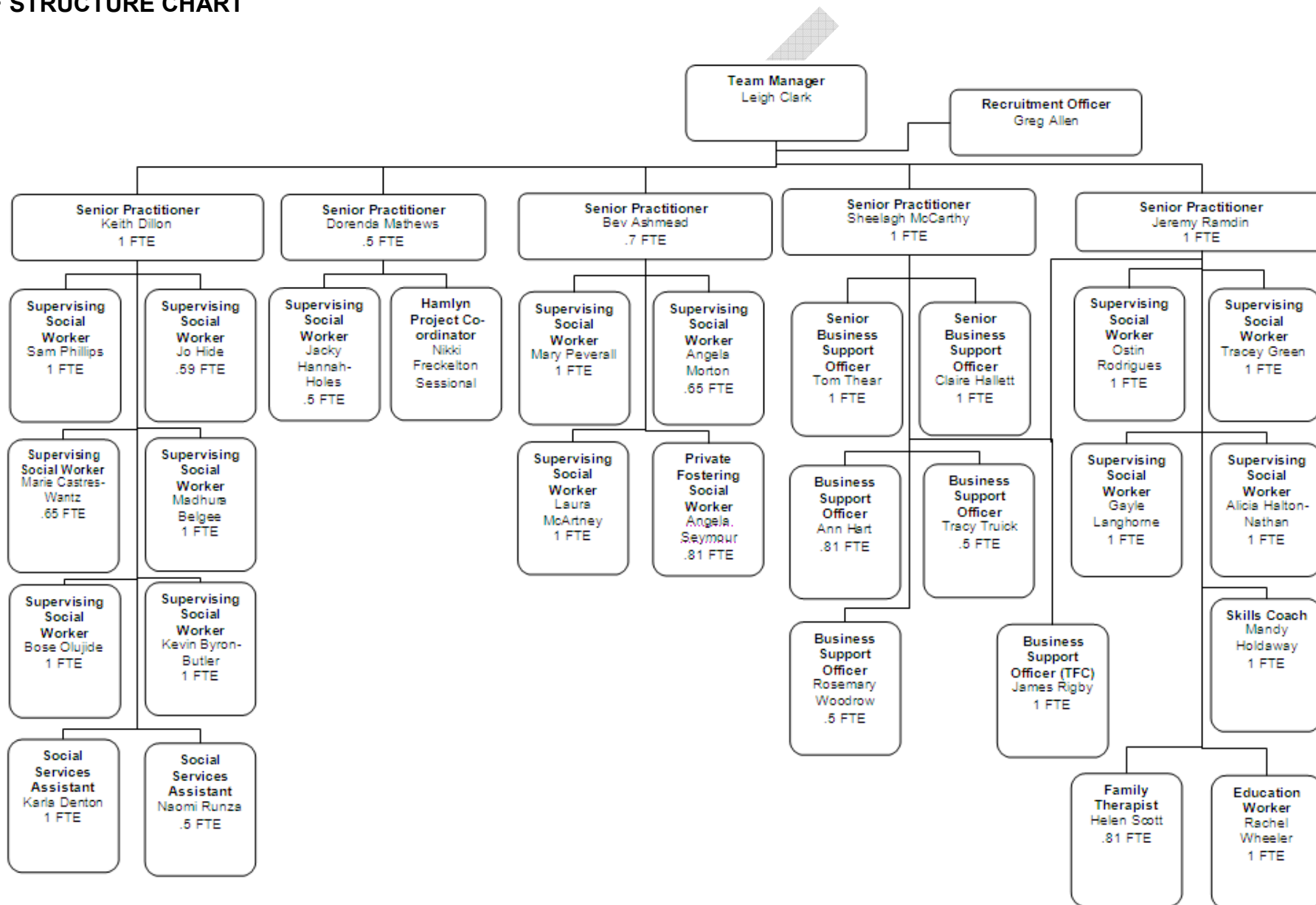
- A child is 'looked after' by the Local Authority if he or she is in their care by reason of a court order/ police protection, or is being provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by agreement with the parents and with the child if her or she is aged 16 years or over. A child may themselves request to be 'looked after'.
- In all dealings with a child and his or her family the welfare of the child is paramount. Children should be protected from neglect, abuse or exploitation.
- The child's family is the prime and best provider of care and protection. Services will work with the family to support them in fulfilling this role. Whenever possible a child should stay with his or her birth family and within his or her own community.
- Children should be looked after by the Local Authority only if it is in the child's best interests and there is no alternative, i.e. placement with friends and relatives, or when it is seen as the most appropriate way of supporting the family.
- Children who do require to be looked after by Southampton City Council should, wherever possible, be cared for within city resources.
- Substitute family care is considered the next best option for children who require to be looked after by the Local Authority.
- In a few exceptional situations residential care may best meet the needs of a particular child.
- Ideally children are looked after as part of a planned response. High priority will be given to a full assessment of the child's needs to produce a Care Plan in order to co-ordinate services to best meet the individual child's needs. This will be reviewed as laid down in The Children Act 1989.
- It is Southampton's policy to use the Department of Health's Looking After Children system which includes comprehensive documentation in the process of planning and reviewing of Looked After children.
- In an emergency a child can be placed with a person who is an approved foster carer for a period not exceeding 24 hours without all the usual necessary pre-placement planning.

## Philosophy and Policy

- Being looked after may be a temporary measure or may require longer term planning. All plans and decisions will be made in partnership with parents and will take the child's wishes into account.
- The emphasis throughout discussions will be on planning for the child's return home. Separation from a birth family will only be a long term solution if a child's welfare can only be secured this way, or development will be impaired, or harm likely if the child lives with the birth family.
- Placements will be made with approved foster carers only, except where a child can be placed with a relative or friend for a maximum period of 6 weeks while a fostering assessment is undertaken.
- Southampton City Council seeks to ensure there is an adequate choice of high quality family placements available to meet as far as possible the individual needs of each child who cannot live with their own families.
- Contact between children being looked after and their parents and families will be actively encouraged. Wherever possible siblings will be accommodated together. Where this cannot be done a high level of contact will be maintained. Children will be accommodated as near as possible to their own community, family and friends.



## APPENDIX - 2 STAFF STRUCTURE CHART



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