

Fostering Service



For further
information about
our services contact:

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2024-25

"Our vision is that services and support in Hertfordshire gives every child the opportunity to thrive, in their families, in their school and in their communities"

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Hertfordshire

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Looked After, Corporate Parenting panel

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1. Introduction

This statement of purpose outlines the aims, objectives and service arrangements of Hertfordshire 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 children and young people.

Children's services in Hertfordshire were rated outstanding at the most recent Ofsted ILACS inspection and highlighted the following:

- Leaders have expanded the range of homes for children, particularly so that children can continue to live in their home area. This has entailed working with motivated, child-focused foster carers and providing therapeutic training and support. There is excellent joined-up working between teams, adopters and foster carers to provide children with positive experiences that are in their best interests, underpinned by consistent and comprehensive support from professionals.
- Children live in stable, long-term homes which meet their individual needs and support them to flourish. Where possible, children live with their brothers and sisters. Arrangements for children to maintain their identity and keep in touch with people who are important to them are handled and explained sensitively.



Children's Services vision is for Hertfordshire to give every child the opportunity to thrive in their families, in their schools and in their communities. All children and young people should enjoy a happy, healthy childhood that gives them the foundations for adulthood and the opportunity to get the best out of life.

Outcomes Framework

The Fostering Service is working to improve outcomes for Hertfordshire's looked after children, providing them with a safe and secure environment in which they can thrive.

Hertfordshire has developed an Outcomes Framework, the 'Six Outcome Bees' in consultation with a wide range of people across Hertfordshire to help us measure the positive difference we, working alongside our partners, are making to the lives of our service users.

By running an effective Fostering Service, we will enable children, young people, young adults and their families to;

- **Be Happy**
- **Be Independent**
- **Be Ambitious**
- **Be Safe**
- **Be Healthy**
- **Be Resilient**
- **Be Included**

The outcomes are inter-linked with all the 'bees' being important for the child or young person.

This outcome framework will enable us to set clear and measurable targets across the six domains that are agreed with service users, their families and our partners.



Further information about the Six Bees Outcome Framework is available at:
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/outcomebees>

2. Fostering Strategy

Over the last two years, a number of actions within the strategy have been delivered including recruiting over 100 new in-house foster carers, introducing a new payment structure and support offer for foster carers and improving training, IT and opportunities to get involved in the decision-making process.

The fostering strategy has been evaluated including consultation with foster carers, service users, children and young people, social care professionals and partners/stakeholders and a new updated version has now been published so it is up to date and taking account of new and emerging issues. The key focus and themes of the new strategy are as follows

- 1. Recruitment of foster carers**
- 2. Family and Friends to become an integrated part of fostering service**
- 3. Cost of living on-going support**
- 4. Sleepovers and emergency care provision**
- 5. Retention of existing foster carers**
- 6. Supporting Children with additional needs**
- 7. Co-Production to involve foster carers further**

To read the new Fostering Strategy visit -
[List of published documents | Hertfordshire County Council](#)



3. Our Service Objectives



We put the child at the centre of all we do, and we support foster carers to do the same by:

- Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children throughout their childhood
- Supporting children through trauma informed foster care and understanding that children's behaviour is impacted by their experience of trauma.
- Working in partnership with children and their families
- Ensuring equality of opportunity
- Promoting and abiding by the 'Pledge' for children and young people who are looked after
- Ensuring all children fulfil their potential in education
- Ensuring that young people are supported to move into independence in a planned way; and
- Ensuring all children's health needs are met



The Fostering Service is responsible for a diverse range of foster care placements for children who are unable to live with their own family who are being looked after by Hertfordshire County Council.

Hertfordshire's Foster Carers provide care and support for some of the county's most vulnerable children and young people. Our aim is to provide our looked after children with a safe and secure environment in which they can thrive.

Foster care placements range from babies to teenagers, for children and young with additional needs who need a placement on their own as well as large sibling groups who need to remain together. Providing stable placements is a key priority for the service, which means finding carers who can support children and young people through to adulthood and beyond, where needed.

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 the young person's choice.



4. Fostering Service Aims:

The Fostering Service seeks to promote the principles and practice enshrined in the Children Act 1989, The National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011, the Care Standards Act 2001, Care Planning Regulations 2010 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

The service's aims are:

- To provide children with a safe, caring experience of living in families which meets their emotional and developmental needs;
- To listen to and consider the wishes and feelings of the children and young people we look after and encourage them to participate in decisions about their care;
- To work in partnership with professionals, carers, parents and children to return children to their own family wherever possible;
- To promote a good relationship between parents and their children, to support children to have contact with all family members in line with their care plan;
- To promote equality of opportunity, recognising and providing for each child and young person's ethnic, cultural and religious needs, as well as any needs arising from a disability, ensuring that staff and carers value diversity and difference;
- To work in partnership in an open and accessible way, treating children, young people, their families and carers with fairness and respect;
- To ensure that children and young people and their carers are provided with the services and support to meet their needs;

5. Fostering Service Aims:

The Service's Aims Are:

- to ensure applicants are not discriminated against on the grounds of gender, religion, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation. To be open and accessible, ensuring that practice complies in every respect with Hertfordshire County Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy 2016/20
- to provide a service responsive to the needs of children who require a foster home, recruiting sufficient carers to offer home choice and create a culture where children and young people feel safe;
- to provide a foster home that meets the requirement of the child's care plan and wherever possible that reflects the child's ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background;
- to place siblings together wherever possible and when it is in the best interest of the child;
- to provide best value local placements, to promote continuity and maintain family networks;
- to recognise the value of our carers by providing them with a high standard of supervision, support and guidance through individual sessions with their supervising social worker, support groups and pre and post approval training, including the Training Support and Development (TSD) standards for foster carers;
- to ensure that our carers are offered Attachment and Trauma training, alongside support to increase their understanding of the impact that trauma has on a child's behaviour;
- to continue to develop further Mockingbird Family hubs in all fostering teams to create a community of support for carers and their children, including practical and emotional support, overnight support (sleepovers), day care and activities;
- to provide a wide range of support to children and foster carers;
- to continue to improve and develop our placement support procedures. Ensure robust placement support plans are in place for children and carers at the start of placement, and these plans are regularly reviewed through Foster carer supervision and Placement Support meetings; (PSM);



- to ensure foster carers feel valued as members of the Team around the child, including improved relationships and communication between foster carers and other professionals supporting the child;
- to continue to increase the foster carer voice in the service improvements and engagement opportunities through the One Team Fostering strategy, the Café Conversations and Fostering Forum:
- Provide opportunities to bring the fostering community together by organising family events Big Event and local social activities;
- To ensure all information/records are treated confidentially and held securely;
- to ensure 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;
- to continue to work in partnership with the Children in Care Council (CHICC) to ensure children's views are considered to improve on their experiences of foster care.



Ten Top Tips for Foster Carers

Children, young people, and carers have worked together to produce 10 key recommendations for foster carers and staff to underpin their practice:

Tip

Quote

1

Be there for us

'Because we always need a helping hand'

2

Involve us in family life

'We can make lifetime memories'

'We already feel different being in care, so don't isolate us'

3

Help us to be healthy

'A healthy life makes a happy child'

'Help us to get counselling if we need it'

4

Protect and keep us safe

'Our safety should be your priority'

'So that no one can hurt me'

'It helps me to trust you'

5

Be kind, caring and patient

'Don't get angry with us really quickly we need more time to learn'

'There is always more going on behind the scenes than you think'

6

Help us to be happy

'We deserve happiness and we can't do it on our own'

'Make us feel good about ourselves'

7

Help us fulfil our dreams

'Let us be creative and don't rain on our parade'

'Light the fuse of our firework'

'We need your support'

8

Let us develop our interests

'Allow us to be adventurous'

'You always need something to look forward to'

'Children in care should get to do things like other kids'

9

Give us tasty, healthy food

'Because then you have loads of fun'

'Check our likes and dislikes'

'Italian, Mexican.....give us a variety'

10

Set a good example

'We want positive re-enforcement'

'Be a good role model'

One Team Fostering Principles

Everyone involved in fostering in Hertfordshire will work to these principles.

1. We all work as **one team** around the individual needs of the **child**
2. We build **trusting relationships** with the children we are looking after and each other.
3. We all work with **passion, pride** and **kindness** and take **responsibility** for our individual roles in looking after the children in our care
4. We **communicate** with each other in an **effective** way that is **timely, open** and **honest and** uses jargon as little as possible when talking to young people
5. We treat each other as **equals**, **respecting** one another and making an effort to **understand** our different roles and perspectives
6. We do what we say we will do, or we **explain why** if we cannot do it in the time agreed
7. We **agree decisions as a team** in a **timely** way to best meets the **needs of children**, and we balance the need for **consistent** decisions across the Service whilst being **flexible** to meet individual children's needs
8. We are always **listening** to each other and we have a passion for looking at **new ideas** and **different ways** of doing things to keep on improving the way we support our children
9. We take time to **explain** honestly the reasons why we do things, and we ensure that everyone **understands** the policies, processes and decisions made
10. We are all committed to **developing ourselves** through personal development and all team members completing the same regular training, so that we get the best outcomes for our children
11. We **celebrate** our successes and when mistakes are made, we **learn** from them



6. Management and Staffing

The Head of Adoption and Fostering is the designated departmental lead officer and the Responsible Individual for Fostering. The Fostering Service Manager is the Registered Manager.

The Adoption and Fostering Service has Service Managers for each of the 3 following areas; Adoption, Family & Friends and Fostering.

Fostering Teams

4 locality Fostering teams: East, North, South and West

The four mainstream teams oversee the provision of all fostering resources and placements: emergency, short term, long term, Mockingbird hubs, sleepover and Parent and Child placements.

Each locality mainstream fostering team consists of:

- 1 F/T Team Manager
- 1 Consultant Social worker
- 6.5 (Whole time equivalent) Supervising Social Workers/Senior Practitioners
- 1 Children's Practitioner
- 1 Support Officer



The Teams are responsible for:

- Recruitment of prospective carers.
- Assessment of carers
- Training of carers
- Support & supervision of carers
- Support to carers' birth children
- Family Finding for long term placements
- Identifying well matched placement options for children and young people
- Advice to colleagues on all fostering and placement matters
- Support Groups for carers and children
- Events for foster carers and children
- Involvement in One Team workstreams.
- Develop and support Mockingbird hubs linked to the teams.

The Trauma focused fostering support team

The team consists of:

- 1 Consultant Social worker
- 1 F/T ARC SSW Fostering Senior Practitioners
- 2 P/T ARC SSW Fostering Senior Practitioner.

The team is responsible for:

- Main aim is to embed trauma informed practice within Fostering
- Delivery of ARC (Attachment, Regulation and competency) Training and ongoing workshops to inhouse foster carers and workforce (Fostering and Children Social work teams)
- Offer bespoke support to inhouse foster carers and Team around the child via ARC fostering support consultations.
- Children's practitioners in each of the fostering teams offer bespoke ARC fostering support to children and foster carers.

The Adoption & Fostering Recruitment Team (AFRT)

The team consists of:

- 1 F/T Team Manager
- 1.5 Social workers
- 1 FTE Marketing & Communications Officer Post

- 3 Children's Practitioners
- 3 Recruitment Officers
- 3 FTE Support Workers.

The AFRT have a crucial role in promoting the need for foster carers and adopters from across Hertfordshire and have a schedule of promotional events that are delivered by staff, foster carers and adopters. The Recruitment team oversees marketing and advertising to recruit specific adopters and foster carers who can meet the needs of children most likely to require placements.

The team is responsible for:

- The recruitment strategy, marketing, communications, advertising and publicity, using Values Modes, behavioural models to underpin the strategy & campaigns.
- Arranging regular promotional events, open evenings & information evenings
- Processing initial enquiries
- Undertaking initial visits
- Providing some initial training
- Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) transfers
- Assessment
- Fostering & Adoption pre-stage & stage one processes, including stage one safeguarding checks

The Recruitment Team work closely with the Corporate Communications Team to promote marketing and communications, specifically in relation to Fostering & Adoption.

The AFRT has a recruitment strategy which uses the Values Modes principles to appeal to the motivations of 'Pioneers' and 'Prospectors'. Foster Carers are mobilised through a 'call to action' to

Members of the public who are interested in either adopting or fostering can telephone on 0800917 0925, or online via the web or social media:
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/childrens-social-care.aspx>

An information pack can then be emailed or posted along with details about forthcoming open evenings.

Supported Lodgings Team

The team consists of:

2 Supervising Social Workers
Support Officer

The team is based and managed within the Fostering West team and is responsible for:

- Placements for 16 and 17 years olds who are children looked after.
- Placements for care leavers aged 18+

The Shared Care Team

The Shared Care team is centrally managed from within the 0-25 Together Service of Hertfordshire County Council and provides:

- Respite placements for disabled children
- Day care placements for disabled children
- A Sitting Service for disabled children in their own home
- Shared care plus carers who provide care for several disabled children

Family and Friends Teams

The 2 teams consist of:

2 F/T Team Managers
12 (FT equivalent) Supervising Social Workers,
2 Consultant social workers.
4 Children's Practitioners
2 (FT equivalent) Support Officers

The teams are responsible for:

- Assessment of Family and Friends and Connected Persons Assessments and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO).
- Support & supervision of approved carers
- Training for carers
- Support to children of Foster carers and special guardians,
- Provide annual family fun days
- Attend key meetings and contribute to the care planning and safeguarding of children looked after

- Support to carers to apply for a permanent order for children in placement, i.e. Adoption, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO)
- Provide reports for court proceedings as requested and give evidence
- Ongoing post order support provided by Family and Friends 2
- Undertake and promote awareness of Private Fostering Assessments provided by Family and Friends 2

All social work staff are required to have the Diploma in Social Work or equivalent on appointment and have current Health and Care Professions Council registration.

All Team Managers are qualified social workers and are required to hold or are working towards a management qualification.

The Fostering Services works closely with the Brokerage Accommodation team to identify fostering placements, working as one service to provide the best possible matched placements for children and young people.

The Fostering Service works closely with two Independent Reviewing Officers who carry out Independent reviews where there have been allegations and/or quality of care concerns.

Families and Friends foster care:

Children's needs, wishes and feelings are always taken into account when seeking alternative care and when assessed as safe, we will always seek arrangements for family members to look after children from within their family network. Children are encouraged to achieve their potential in school and supported to ensure good health. Families are given support to enable children to maintain contact with family members. Family and Friends care can provide a commitment to family heritage and family values.

Hertfordshire have two dedicated Family and Friends teams who are supporting 75 (as of 31.03.22) Approved Family and Friends carer households and also hold temporary approved carers under Regulation 24 who are in the process of being assessed as Foster carers or have parallel

plan of Special guardianship orders. Carers are provided with training opportunities to assist them in developing their new role and are encouraged to attend support groups which provide information and advice and peer support. All Family and Friends foster carers have a Supervising social worker who provides support, supervision, and review.

Fostering in Hertfordshire

As of 31st March 2024, there were 322 mainstream and 81 Family and friends fostering households, with a total of 453 children placed with them.

The Service has an ambitious recruitment target to ensure we can offer placements to a higher number of Hertfordshire looked after children.

A particular focus for this year is to ensure that new and existing foster carers are sufficiently supported to meet the needs of Hertfordshire's looked after children.

Hertfordshire Fostering Service needs a diverse team of foster carers who are committed to providing safe, secure and supportive placements for Hertfordshire's looked after children.

Co-production with foster carers is high on the agenda in Hertfordshire and foster Carers are an integral part of our recruitment, training, innovation and support processes. We actively listen and act upon the Foster Carer's voice.

Foster Carers are increasingly taking a lead in the development of the Fostering Service, for example by leading the Fostering Forum and through participation in the One Team Board and delivery workstream groups such as Support to foster carers, Allowances and fees etc. Foster Carers are key partners in generating new ideas to improve the fostering service.

Our existing foster carers are important and valued ambassadors for Hertfordshire Fostering particularly supporting new foster carers to the Service.

Foster carers inform us about the personal satisfaction they receive from fostering, taking great pride in knowing that they are making a difference to a child's life.

In 2022 we launched the Emergency fostering scheme to offer foster homes for children entering care in emergencies.

New Foster carers are supported by experienced foster carers through peer support, buddies and ambassadors to ensure they are confident and comfortable in undertaking the role.

Our foster carers and recruitment champions regularly hold promotional recruitment events, virtual and face to face across Hertfordshire, to help us recruit more foster carers. We have a team of Foster carer recruitment ambassadors who support the recruitment of foster carers.

Word of mouth is a positive recruitment method, and the service offers incentives to carers to recommend friends and family members to foster. Regular open evenings are held on a monthly basis. A comprehensive information pack is available for anyone interested in fostering and this is followed up with an initial home visit.

Assessing Carers

The aim of a Fostering assessment is to identify whether an applicant is suitable to be approved as a foster carer. The assessment will consider what type of fostering the applicant is suitable for and to consider any terms of approval.

All applicants are assessed by social workers using Coram BAAF Form F assessment and the completed assessment is presented to the Fostering Panel.

All prospective carers are subject to statutory checks, such as Disclosure and Barring (DBS), medicals, local authority, personal and employment references.

Our 'Skills to Foster' course is jointly run with our foster carers which enables potential carers to find out what fostering is really like and prepares them for the journey ahead.

7. The Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel considers the approval of all new carers and existing carers' reviews.



Hertfordshire Fostering Panel is constituted to meet the requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations, 2011. The Panel consists of a central list of members with a diverse range of personal and professional backgrounds, relevant to fostering. New panel members are provided with induction information and annual appraisals are undertaken with all panel members. Regular training is also provided. The Fostering Panel has an independent Chair and vice chairs who provide Independent scrutiny. The Panel collectively provides a key quality assurance function in relation to the local authority. The Fostering Panel strongly encourages all prospective and approved foster carers to attend when their cases are being presented as, Panel believes, this symbolises the importance of partnership working.

Hertfordshire panel hears all applications for approval as foster carers. This includes applications to act as mainstream foster carers as well as those who are family and friends of those requiring care. In addition to hearing all new applications, first annual reviews must be presented to the Fostering Panel. Subsequent reviews are considered by Panel, as part of a regular 3-year review cycle.

If the plan is for the child to remain with carers on a long-term basis, a matching meeting is held where the needs of the children are identified, and a report written on how the proposed carers

can meet these needs. This report with the carers' review and matching paper work are presented to panel for approval. The panel hears all cases where there have been significant concerns in terms of safe Practice, Standards of Care or Allegations. A review will be completed and presented Panel. A foster carer's review following a change of circumstances, or a request to increase their approval status will be referred to the Fostering Panel. They will also recommend as appropriate, the termination of approval. Panel will hear Appeals as appropriate.

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 and with the carer's agreement, whenever this applies, the exemption will be formally recorded, and consideration will be given to what additional support the carer may require. Variations of approvals are risk assessed to ensure the needs of all the children in the household are met. A return to panel will be actioned.

Fostering Panel business is recorded and confirmed in writing to the carer. Panel recommendations are passed to the Agency Decision Maker and letters then sent out according to prescribed timescales, setting out the decision

8. Foster carer training offer

The Fostering Service provides Foster Carers with a wide range of training opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to help our looked after children thrive. A comprehensive learning & development offer is in place and use of online training portal Ilearn for bite sized lite bite training..

The service has a comprehensive pre-approval and post- approval training programme which is reviewed annually and updated. All carers are expected to complete core training during their first year. Carers receive details of the training programme and are encouraged to attend courses to meet their development needs as carers.

The Fostering Service expects all foster carers to complete the Training Support and Development Standards (TSD) within 12 months of approval (18 months for Family and friends carers). All foster carers have a Personal Development Plan which is reviewed annually. This plan should include all of the mandatory training. Each foster carer can access the opportunity to complete any specific training that relates to the children they are caring for.

The Fostering Service specifically promotes the Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency Therapeutic (ARC) training and workshops, with the aim of enabling carers to increase their understanding of how trauma impacts on children's behaviour.

The Fostering Service training programme is supported by Children's Services Learning and Development(L&D) Team. We continue to find new ways to provide learning & development for foster carers including the use of online training programmes. We continue to develop carers' skills in the areas of safe caring, safeguarding, attachment, trauma, resilience, and self-regulation through supervision and working with partner agencies.



The Fostering training programme is co-delivered by staff and foster carers. The importance of foster carers in co-delivering courses is recognised by remuneration.

Here is a link to Hertfordshire's Foster carer Learning and development programme:
[Foster Carer programme \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/foster-carer-programme)



9. Supporting and Supervising

Each foster carer has an allocated supervising social worker (SSW) responsible for ensuring that the foster carer is well supported to meet the needs of the children they care for.

Regular formal supervision takes place in accordance with the National Minimum Standards. Foster carer supervision provides a space for foster carers to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children. During the assessment process, assessing social workers will draw up a Personal Development Plan (PDP) with applicants to identify training needs and once approved foster carers will be supported to complete their first -year portfolio in order to meet the TSD Standards for foster care. This PDP will be reviewed each year as part of the carer's annual review.

Foster carers will receive at least one/although most will receive two unannounced visits per year to improve safe practice and ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded.

On approval, all foster carers will be allocated an experienced carer as a buddy. Each team runs a variety of support groups or at any time during their fostering journey,

The supervising social worker is available for help and advice. At other times, and when the SSW is not available, each Fostering Team operates a duty system for calls. Children's Service Out of Hours continues to be available for emergency calls and Hertfordshire also offers a Fostering out of hours support line which gives foster carers access to advice seven evenings per week 5.30pm– 11pm.

Hertfordshire offers a high level of foster carer peer support with a number of experienced foster carers offering emotional and practical support to foster carers and children who in periods may need additional support.

The Trauma focused support team offers attachment and trauma training to foster carers as well as bespoke therapeutic parenting support for foster carers upon referral.

Hertfordshire offers support to a number of foster families via the Mockingbird family programme where families are offered practical and emotional support as well as building lasting relationships with other fostering families. We currently have 5 Mockingbird hubs in Hertfordshire offering.

In addition to Mockingbird, we have also developed other community hubs based on a similar principle. We currently have 2 hubs for young children (Under 7s and Under 5s) and our aim for the next year is to increase this support offer to other groups of carers and children.

In recognition of the foster carers' professional role, Hertfordshire provides foster carers with staff ID badges.

The Fostering Service is responsible for ensuring that foster carers receive prompt payment. Payment rates are reviewed annually, and the comprehensive payments document is available to all foster carers via the below link:
Foster carer payments | Hertfordshire County Council

The Fostering Service works closely with the Virtual School to help children reach their full potential in education and help carers to support their children.



The Virtual School provide excellent additional training opportunities for foster carers to support the achievement of positive educational outcomes for looked after children.

The designated nurse for looked after children provides advice to foster carers on a full range of health issues, supporting access to specialist medical advice where appropriate and developing policies and procedures to meet the needs of children and foster carers.

The Fostering Service recognises that providing high quality support is critical in ensuring placement stability for children & young people in care. The service has developed a Foster Carer Support Offer, which outlines the range of support options available.

[Our Foster Carer Support Offer \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

All foster carers have direct access to consultation with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, (CAMHS) which has dedicated staff to prioritise the needs of looked after children.

Sleepover support can be an important source of support to foster placements. When considering sleepover arrangements, consideration is always given to the needs of both the child and the carers. As fully as possible we try to ensure that sleepovers are offered by familiar foster carers for the child.

Hertfordshire 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.

If a foster carer is subject of a child protection allegation against them, foster carers have access to independent support from Foster Talk Independent Support Service (FISS) and Independent Counselling Services.



10. Safeguarding checks

Every carer must have an annual Foster care review. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) 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 least once per year through the annual Foster care review and when there has been a change of circumstance in the fostering household (ie when a child has moved in to the foster home). Health and safety checks are reviewed at least once per year.

The first annual review is presented to Fostering Panel for consideration. Further annual reviews receive quality assurance through the Fostering Team Manager's endorsement.

Reviews may be presented to the fostering panel at regular intervals or when there are specific changes to the household or approval.

In the event of an allegation of abuse perpetrated by a foster carer, a referral will be made to LADO (Local authority designated officer) where a decision is made whether an investigation should be carried out. A foster care review will take place immediately after the conclusion of the investigation. These reviews will be conducted jointly between an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the Supervising Social Worker and will be presented to Fostering Panel for consideration.

Where there has been a quality of care concern raised about the fostering household, a review may be carried out with the oversight of an IRO.



11. Diversity and inclusion

The Fostering Service as part of Hertfordshire County Council is committed to making inclusion part of our DNA, both as a large employer of people and as a provider and commissioner of services. We strive to positively promote diversity and inclusion within our workforce and our services. We want everyone at work, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances to have a sense of belonging to the organisation.

The service operates a Children's Services Diversity and Inclusion Board, which aligns to Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC's) Internal Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2022, and HCC's External Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024 (Services, Communities, and Partnerships).

The Fostering Service is opposed to both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion. We aim to provide culturally sensitive services and ensure that all people are treated with equal respect and receive equal access to services.

All training carried out by the Fostering Service workers will reflect anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice and any expressed discrimination will be challenged.

Anti-discriminatory practice features in preparation, assessment, training and ongoing support of carers and staff. Carers will be expected to develop the skills to identify and challenge discriminatory practice where it exists. We have a Foster carer Diversity and Inclusion working group that meet bimonthly to discuss how we can develop the diversity and inclusion support and training offer.

12. Views of children and service partners

The views of children and young people receiving a service are sought through a variety of methods, including feedback from the Advocacy Service, outcomes of complaints, lessons from placement disruptions, children's views expressed in statutory reviews and foster carer reviews and surveys.

The Bright Spots survey is completed annually and provides comparative data. The views of children, young people and foster carers are used to inform service planning.

Our care-experienced young people support the development of our foster carers by co-delivering our Skills to Foster training and presenting at a variety of fostering events. Written feedback is requested from the child's social worker as part of the foster carer's review and at the end of each placement.

The Fostering Service aims to seek views from a range of service users, including representatives from other agencies, carers and from young people.

Hertfordshire has a vibrant Children in Care Council who organise a full calendar of social events for children & young people, who are encouraged to participate in events and activities.

13. Recording and Access to Records

The Fostering Service has a responsibility to maintain accurate records on all foster carers 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. However, in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council policy, the practice is to retain for 35 years. Carers have a right to have access to their records and are able to approach the HCC Information Governance Unit for advice and guidance.



14. Matching

The Fostering Service is committed to approving carers who can meet the identified needs of children in need of foster placements.

If there are gaps in the carer's ability to meet the specific needs of a child, these must be recorded with reference to how those needs can be met from elsewhere, and appropriate support provided.

The Fostering Service works closely with the Brokerage accommodation team to ensure placement choice and matching.

Prior to approval, each foster carer is supported to complete a Child friendly profile with information about their family for a child to read and in addition to this the Fostering service is responsible for

making sure each fostering household who is available for a match has an up to date profile for professionals in order for a match to be considered by the child's social worker and the Brokerage team.

Brokerage is responsible for reviewing requests for placements from the area teams and setting up placements with carers in collaboration with the appropriate fostering team.

Long term matches will be presented to the Fostering Panel for approval, following the process outlined in the long-term fostering procedures

A Matching Co-ordinator has been appointed to oversee this area of work and to develop and transition an action plan to enhance the matching process.

15. 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 Children's Services Complaints Procedure. Carers are made aware of the procedure in relation to children in their care and how to complain. 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 Children's Services procedures can be accessed via Hertfordshire County Council's website at <https://tinyurl.com/yb22xwdn>



16. Contacts

Head of Adoption and Fostering:
Lynn Knowles

Fostering Service Managers:

Grete Lund – Fostering

Chris Cooper – Family and Friends Team and
Adoption and Fostering Panel

**The North, East, ARC Fostering Teams along with
The Adoption & Fostering Recruitment Team and
Family & Friends 2**

Teams are based at:
First Floor, Farnham House, Six Hills Way,
Stevenage SG1 2FQ

**The South and West Fostering Teams, Family &
Friends 1, Shared Care & Supported Lodgings**

Teams are based at:
Apsley Two, Brindley Way,
Hemel Hempstead HP3 9BF



Children's Services

Director of Children's Services
Jo Fisher

Director of Specialist Services
Miranda Gittos

Head of Adoption and Fostering
Lynn Knowles

**Fostering
Service Manager**
Grete Lund

**Service Manager Family
and friends and Adoption
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Chris Cooper

**Adoption
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Claire Frampton

**Fostering East
Team manager**
Jo Merry

**Fostering North
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Erin Lill

**Fostering South
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Gemma Moloney

**Fostering West
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Rakhee Rollinson

**Supported lodgings
Team manager**
Erin Lill

**Family and Friends 1
Team manager**
Sharrone Rogers

**Family and Friends 2
Team manager**
Zoe Tubb

**Fostering and
Adoption panels**

**Adoption and
Fostering recruitment
team**

Team manager
Michelle McLaughlin

**Adoption assessment
team West**

**Adoption assessment
team East**

**Adoption Support
team**

Family Finding team





For further information about our services contact:

0800 917 0925