**Medway Fostering Service**

**Statement of Purpose 2017-2018**

**What is a Statement of Purpose?**

The Statement of Purpose is the means of providing information about Medway Council’s Fostering Service in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations (2011).

The Statement of Purpose is a source of information for prospective foster carers, foster carers registered with Medway Council, Fostering Services staff and all other colleagues or professionals working within Medway Council and partner agencies. A booklet entitled *A Children and Young People’s Guide to Foster Care* is provided for all children and young people being cared for by the Fostering Service.

The Office for the Standards in Children’s Services & Skills (Ofsted) has the responsibility to regularly inspect the Fostering Service within to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. Our recent inspection report can be located at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Ofsted can be contacted directly by telephone 08456 404045 or by email at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or in writing to:

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

MANCHESTER M1 2WD

Further information about the service can be obtained from:

Jackie Wood

Head of Provider Services

Medway Council

Gun Wharf

Dock Road

CHATHAM

Kent

ME4 4TR

Email: jackie.wood@medway.gov.uk

For all enquiries about becoming a foster carer call 01634 335726 or email: fostering@medway.gov.uk

**Why foster for Medway?**

By becoming part of the Medway Council Fostering Service carers will be contributing to the provision of high quality placements, which give best value to Medway communities. Carers are provided with support from our highly experienced team of staff, access to a wide range of training to develop knowledge and expertise and a payment scheme which reflects the complexity of the children who need placements.

**Service Vision**

To enable all children and young people in Medway to aspire to, and achieve their full potential, giving them the basis for a successful life as active members of their community.

**The Fostering Service Mission**

Medway Fostering Service mission is one of working together, creating an innovative fostering service, working towards being an outstanding fostering agency, which provides safe and nurturing family-based care for children and young people who are unable to live within their own families. The Service continually strives to be a fostering service that provides outstanding care for children and young people so they are able to achieve better outcomes in adult life.

**The Aims & Objectives of the Fostering Service**

Medway Council Fostering Service is part of the overarching Corporate Parenting Board, which takes the lead for all of Medway’s children in care. The Fostering Service aims to achieve continuous improvements and deliver the best possible outcomes for the widest range of children looked after by our foster carers.

The Service is committed to ensuring that anti-discriminatory practice informs all aspect of our work with children, colleagues, foster carers and birth family, and that the placement resources provide equal opportunities of access to all children and young people, irrespective of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality or disability.

**Key service objectives:**

* Maintain, support and develop an effective and efficient community based carer resource able to flexibly respond to the needs of children and families within the Medway Towns.
* To facilitate a flexible and integrated resource structure that maximises the abilities, skills and potential of Medway Council carers.
* To establish, promote and protect an outstanding level of standards to all processes and practices associated in the services offered to children and their families.
* To optimise the opportunity for choice in placement and resources.
* To positively seek to develop services for children and young people from all background, difficulties and disabilities.
* To actively pursue a team culture that mutually supports:
* a clear focus on the needs, wishes and welfare of the child. This will involve actively listening to comments, feedback and contributions from children and young people, parents, placing social workers and any other persons involved with the care of children.
* promotion of the health of all Looked After Children and to actively help children and young people to reach their full potential within their education.
* to support the facilitation of children and young people’s interests and leisure activities.
* to create the circumstances that allow a child placed in foster care to feel a part of the family environment.
* work to provide measurable outcomes that achieve, or exceed National Standards.
* anti-discriminatory practice within the Fostering Team and carer group.
* an on-going appraisal and review of all systems and procedures.
* the creativity, vision and confidence to develop new ideas and services for children.
* a team, that together, maximises individual member skills and contributions in an environment which is respectful of challenge and responsive to change.

**The key service aims are:**

* That all children and young people are entitled to grow up in a safe, secure, caring family environment in which they are protected from abuse and neglect and that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
* Positive regard to be shown for a child/young person’s racial, religious, linguistic and cultural needs. The Fostering Service will endeavour to recruit carers to reflect these needs.
* New foster carers will be carefully recruited and made subject to vigorous checks and assessments to adjudge their suitability to offer care. Once recommended by the Medway Fostering Panel, and approved by the Fostering Services Decision Maker, new carers will be allocated a named fostering social worker, a foster carer mentor and provided with an induction to Medway Foster Care.
* New foster carers will be required to complete the Children’s Workforce Development Council fostering standards workbook (CWDC) within one year of their approval as a foster carer.
* All Medway Council foster carers will be supervised by a qualified social worker and supported and reviewed to ensure they fully meet the requirements that they and their family continue to be suitable to foster.
* Foster carers will be trained, supervised and supported to enable a child to maximise their opportunities towards education, health, personal care, leisure and sporting activities and employment, in order to develop their skills, confidence and self esteem and work towards addressing their past, negative experiences and promote resilience.
* The Medway Foster Carer training programme is available to all carers working within the Service, including foster carers who offer short breaks, link, parent/child and connected person’s placements. Outside the general programme of events, specific courses and workshops are arranged to address the training needs of specialised placements or carer groups.
* Regular training is provided to help foster carers understand and positively address the child care behaviours, which in conjunction with fostering social worker supervision, is aimed to stabilise placements and avoid breakdowns.
* Foster carers will be regularly supervised to ensure they provide safe, caring and appropriate boundaries for the child.
* The Fostering Service will work to achieve positive outcomes by developing high quality standards of foster care which meet the safety, welfare and social needs of all children appropriately.
* The Fostering Service is committed to maintaining and raising the standards for its provision of care by listening to feedback from children and young people, parents, foster carers, social workers and other professionals and persons who may interact with the service.
* With the agreement of the child’s parent(s) and social worker, the child’s foster carer(s) will be given delegated responsibilities to make decisions on day to day matters as a means of helping them to feel more integrated into that family setting and routine. Such delegated authority will be agreed and written up in the child/young person’s Placement Plan.
* The welfare and needs of children and their families will remain central to all the provisions and functions introduced or carried out by the Fostering Service.
* To work in close partnership with the Leaving Care Service for Medway Council to ensure that foster carers are able to support fully the young people in their care as they make the transition to further or higher education or employment and independent living where appropriate.
* To work alongside partner agencies to ensure Medway’s Looked After Children are prepared for independent living and have access to a wide range of accommodation to meet their individual needs.

**Foster Carer Charter**

Medway Council have drawn up an agreed Medway Foster Carer Charter that sets out the expectations and responsibilities of foster carers, the Fostering Team, social workers and other persons involved with looking after the care of children. A copy of the Charter is available on the Fostering Website.



**The Fostering Service –Structure**



**Management Structure**

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**How we monitor and evaluate our services**

Medway Fostering Service strives to constantly improve and develop, with the key aim to improve outcomes for children and families. Priority is placed on monitoring and evaluation of the service and gaining service user feedback to use in service development.

* All existing foster carers have completed or are working towards the CWDC Foster Carer Standards workbook (new carers are required to complete this within a year or 18 months if they are Connected Carers).
* Foster carers are provided with a comprehensive training programme and qualified social worker supervision to enable them to understand and meet the needs of children and young people placed in their care.
* The needs of fostered children are closely monitored by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at all Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews, which are attended by foster carers and fostering social workers.
* The Fostering Service monitors and supervises the child care plan with each individual carer during their home visits. Both the carer supervision recording format and Carer Annual Review reflect the child focussed elements contained in the Child’s Plan as determined by the National Minimum Standards 2011.
* The performance of the service is monitored and analysed in the Annual Report.
* An Annual Private Fostering Report is produced.
* Staff at all levels are provided with regular supervision by their line manager and consultation is also available for complex cases.
* The Corporate Parenting Board receives reports on the performance of the Fostering Service.
* Analysis of disruptions, which take place through a disruption meeting.
* A member of the Fostering Service monitors the performance tracker and planning for all children in care.
* The child’s statutory review along with the function of the Independent Reviewing Officer has a quality assurance role.
* An Independent Fostering Household Reviewing Officer appointed in January 2017, undertakes all Foster Carer Reviews and Standards of Care Reviews.

**Feedback from service users**

Medway Fostering Service aims to gain feedback from applicants throughout their approval process and from carers and children during their fostering career. This includes:

* Feedback requested by fostering panel on the views of applicants on the assessment process.
* Questionnaires following the preparation course for prospective carers.
* The statutory looked after child review ensures that the child and birth parent’s views are fully explored.
* The Agency places a high priority on direct work with children and provides the opportunity for them to explore their feelings and give their views.
* Feedback relating to the experience of coming to panel for all attendees.
* Feedback from child’s social worker, child, IRO and carers at least annually for each carers review.
* Feedback collated from carers attending training courses and shared through joint meetings with workforce development/training providers to develop training programmes and individual courses.
* Online questionnaires sent out, and forums held with foster carers to consult on service developments and general carer satisfaction.
* The views of foster carers are gathered during regular supervisions with an allocated Fostering Social Worker, and fed through to Team Managers.
* We are improving the foster carers feedback sheet on the initial stages of placement so that managers can identify shortfalls and address this promptly.
* We have strengthened our consultation with the recently formed Medway Positive Action Group
* We actively consult with and involve the Participation Apprentice and CIC Council to help develop the service.

**Principles and Standards of Care**

The Fostering Service seeks to deliver an outstanding service for the children, young people, foster carers and their families that complies with the relevant legislation, regulations and good practice guidance regarding children in foster care. The Fostering Service is committed to the best outcomes for children in care and the service works in close partnership with all Medway Council services with responsibility for children in care.

**Numbers of Children/Young People in Care and Details of Carer Approval (March 2017)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No of LAC | Residential | IFA’s | In house |
| 390 | 31 | 90 | 215 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Total No of carers | Connected Households | Generic Households |
| 164 | 20 | 144 (incl. 1 Foster to Adopt) |

The table below compares the performance of the Medway Council’s Fostering Agency to the National Picture.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| All figures are % of **Total LAC** (as at 31 March 2016) | Medway | England |
| Fostered (including connected care | 79% | 74% |
| Fostered with a connected carer (all in house provision) | 11% | 12% |
| Own provision (all types of placement) | 59% | 55% |
| In own provision fostering (including connected care) | 56% | 49% |
| In own provision fostering (excluding connected care) | 45% | 37% |
| Placed within 20 miles of home (all types of placement) | 77% | 75% |
| Foster placements (including connected carer) within 20 miles of home | 70% | 59% |
| Placed within LA boundary (all types of placement) | 49% | 60% |
| Foster placements (including connected care) within LA boundary | 43% | 44% |
| Own provision foster placements within LA boundary | 36% | 37% |
| External provision foster placements within LA boundary | 7% | 7% |

**Foster Care Placements**

The Fostering Service provides for children in the care of Medway Council, a range of fostering options that meet a diverse range of needs, circumstances, and backgrounds of children who are not able to live with their own families. There are circumstances where a relative or a friend of the child in care may also be assessed as a foster carer and this service is referred to as Connected Carers.

1. **Short Term / Short Breaks Time Limited Placements**

Short term or short break placements are provided in a variety of different situations, in an emergency where an acute crisis may have occurred in a family, in a more planned way to provide regular short breaks for a parent or carer, or where an assessment of the child or young person and their family situation is required before longer term decisions are made. Foster carers involved in such placements often have to consider children being cared for by them at short notice. Foster carers providing short term placements often care for children who may be moving on to live with new families through adoption or permanent fostering.

1. **Permanent Foster Placements**

Permanent placements are for children or young people who need an alternative family to provide them with care, stability and support throughout the time they are in care. The matching of children to such families is undertaken in a careful and planned way.

1. **Foster to Adopt**

When we know it is highly likely that a child will need an adoptive family but the court proceedings are still in progress, we sometimes place the child on a fostering basis with a family who have been approved to both foster and adopt. This avoids a potentially upsetting move for the child and can be helpful in forming attachment but it may initially be a less certain situation for the carers.

1. **Connected Person Foster Carers**

Family and Friends care is where a child or young person in care lives with a relative or another adult known to them. In Medway, Connected Person foster carers are assessed and presented to Fostering Panel for approval they received the same allowances and have access to the range of post approval training and learning opportunities.

These foster carers provide both short term care and permanent foster care. Connected Foster Carers often consider making an application for a Special Guardianship Order once the child in their care is settled.

Once approved, the Fostering Service works alongside the child’s social worker to provide Connected Carers with ongoing supervision and support. As with generic foster carers, they are subject to an Annual Foster Carer Review and are encouraged to attend specific and general training courses to enhance the care and welfare of their child or young person.

1. **Fostering Plus**

The Fostering Plus Scheme is an in house provision that matches carers with children and young people who are more complex and have challenging needs. The carers within this scheme are provided with extra supervision, support and training and a dedicated out of hours telephone contact to help and enable to care for their placements.

**Child Care Support Services**

Medway has a range of services available for the care, support and guidance of children and their families. These include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The Old Vicarage: | An eight bedded residual unit for young people aged 14 to 18 yearsThe unit is developing a service that will provide an outreach service to foster carers. |
|  |  |
| Wayfield Contact Centre: | Day centre for children and family contact etc. |
|  |  |
| Sunlight Centre: | Centre that provides community based assessment for parents and children living within their own homes. The Centre also incorporates a doctors’ surgery, pharmacy, voluntary projects, community café and computers for general use. |
|  |  |
| Parklands: | A respite day care centre for children with a disability. |
|  |  |
| Aut Even: | A residential multi-agency respite centre for children with a disability. |
|  |  |
| Canada House: | A joint Health and Social Services centre that provides a range of therapeutic services for children and young people. |
|  |  |
| Children in Care Council: | A voice for young people in and leaving care.A group of young people in and leaving the care of Medway Children’s Services who work to ensure that the services being offered are as good as they should be and whose views are shared with Medway Council. |
|  |  |
| Medway Challengers: | A group for, and run with, looked after young people and care leavers to provide them with an active voice in the policies and practices affecting all aspects of the care system. |
|  |  |
| Education: | The Fostering Team have close links with the Education Department and looked after children’s virtual head. |
|  |  |
| Health: | The Fostering Team have very close links with the looked after children’s health team |
|  |  |
| Children’s Team: | The Fostering Team works closely with the 4 Children’s Area Teams.Each area is made up of up to 4 pods each with it’s own Practice Manager and a maximum of 5 social workers each and one Area manager overall |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Foster Carer Support**

Medway offers the following terms and conditions for foster carers:

* Weekly allowance and, where applicable, a fee payment
* Loan of essential equipment
* Regular high quality support and supervision with a fostering social worker through a local support team
* Access to specialist advice via CAMHS
* Membership of the Medway Positive Action for Fostering
* 24 hour support via an out of hours service
* Free membership of Fostertalk
* Support to achieve permanent placements
* Training and development opportunities from short one-day courses to Diplomas
* Access to a comprehensive training programme through Medway Council’s Children Workforce Development Team
* Extra allowance each year to cover birthdays, holidays and religious festivals
* Part of wider professional multi-agency team

**Key Principles in the Recruitment and Assessment Process**

* The Fostering Service welcomes all applicants regardless of their ethnicity, background, faith, sexual orientation or marital status. Applicants may be disabled, responsible for dependents, working full-time, part-time or unemployed.
* The Fostering Service has a no smoking household policy, and will not place children under the age of 5 where any members of the household smoke. (This may be reviewed in the case of connected person foster carers, but there would still be an expectation that these carers do not smoke in the home and take steps to stop smoking as soon as possible).
* The Fostering Service is committed to working in a way that does not discriminate.
* The Fostering Service aims to work transparently and openly with applicants at every stage of the process.
* The Fostering Service makes information regarding the formal complaints procedure available to all applicants.
* The process is designed to ensure enquirers have sufficient time and information to make an informed decision about whether fostering is right for them and their family at this time.

**Stages of Fostering Approval Process**

The process of approving a foster carer usually takes up to 6 months from application to approval or up to 4 months for applicants who have previously fostered or are transferring from another fostering provider.

Following the initial enquiry, the process is divided into 2 stages, initial checks followed by assessment and Stage 2. Where appropriate, parts of these stages may be completed in parallel.

**Home Assessment (Form F)**

In summary, this assessment is completed with the applicants and the assessing social worker during visits to the applicants’ home. This assessment is presented to Fostering Panel for a recommendation, from which the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will make a final decision on whether to approve the applicants as Foster Carers. This part of the process will generally take about 4 months.

**The Fostering Panel**

Once the assessment is complete, applicants and the assessing social worker are invited to attend a fostering panel meeting. The Fostering Panel has a statutory role and responsibility to formally recommend approval of foster carer applicants to the Agency Decision Maker following the assessment. Panel also considers assessments from applicants to become connected carers.

The Fostering Panel is made up of social workers, foster carers, a councillor, professionals involved in child health or education services and independent panel members. All panels are chaired by an Independent Chair.

Unfortunately, sometimes foster placements do break down. Where there is a disruption of a permanent placement the Service convenes a *Disruption Meeting* in order to try to understand the factors that led to the breakdown of the placement which helps in planning future placements. The meetings are chaired by a Manager who does not have case responsibility for the foster carers.

A summary of the conclusions of the meeting are sent to the Fostering Management Team and the relevant fostering panel to inform future practice.

**Procedures for the investigation of allegations or complaints made against foster carers**

Medway Council has the responsibility for ensuring that children are protected from significant harm as defined by the Children Act 1989 and for the investigation of any allegation or report of harm in accordance with the current safeguarding procedures. Children who are fostered are also vulnerable children and where allegations are made regarding foster carers, these are investigated in line with the Working Together procedures.

The Fostering Service in partnership with the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service has established procedures for the speedy and thorough investigation of concerns. For more information visit the Medway Safeguarding site <http://www.mscb.org.uk/> and independent support, as well as advice and guidance from Fostertalk is available to all carers.

**Learning and Development**

The training programme for approved foster carers in Medway offers an ever-increasing and comprehensive range of courses, ensuring that foster carers have the very best opportunity to be trained in the skills required to provide high quality care for children and young people. All foster carers including connected carers are required to achieve the training, support and development standards (TSD) within the first 12 months of placement (18 months for connected foster carers. All foster carers will receive support and guidance to achieve this from their supervising worker and support groups. Learning and development opportunities are offered at introductory and intermediate levels allowing for the ongoing development of foster carers’ skills and knowledge base. Core course subject areas include Diversity, Attachment, Safeguarding, First Aid, Behaviour Management and Recording.

The Fostering Service wishes to “know itself”, to understand what it does well and what aspects could be improved. It actively seeks the views of its foster carers in a variety of ways. For example, via assessment and annual review processes, with surveys, and direct feedback at supervision visits.

**Complaints**

When things go wrong it is really important to us that we respond quickly and fairly to put them right. We will always try to resolve any areas of disagreement or concerns informally in the first instance. We will also respond promptly to formal complaints about the fostering service through Medway Council’s Complaints Procedure.

This can be found at:

By email: sccm@medway.gov.uk - or by telephoning: 01634 333036

Our complaints procedure plays an important role in improving our service and Medway Council Complaints Policy commits us to:

* Give a full and clear response to a complaint within 20 working days. If this is not possible, we advise complainants when an answer will be given.
* Look into complaints thoroughly and fairly.
* Be honest and polite, and keep information confidential.
* Apologise if we have made a mistake.
* Tell complainants about what we are doing to put things right.

Concerns, complaints and allegations about registered services including fostering agencies can be directed to Ofsted particularly where it is not possible for them to be resolved directly with the agency.

For advice and information on how Ofsted can help, they can be contacted at:

**OFSTED**

National Business Unit

Royal Exchange Buildings

St. Ann’s Square

Manchester, M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404040

Email: **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk** or via the website at [**www.ofsted.gov.uk**](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Details of the Children’s Commissioner for England are:**

Maggie Atkinson

Children’s Commissioner for England

The Office of the Children’s Commission

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London, SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330 Email: **info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk**

Our Children’s Safeguarding Service always deals with complaints that involve concerns for the safety or welfare of children in foster care. Information on this service can be found at the Medway Safeguarding Children Board website: <http://www.mscb.org.uk>

**Children**

Medway has developed a children’s Pledge to Looked After Children, which can be found here.

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**Advocacy**

Looked after children and young people are entitled to the support of an advocate if they wish to make representations or complain about the service they receive. Child and young people are able to access an independent advocate via the Young Lives Foundation.

**Participation**

Children and young people are kept safest when their voice is heard and services are most effectively provided when they have had a say in their development and delivery. Using the principles of “You said….We did” children and young people are invited to participate in activities across the country.

During 2017-18 children and young people will continue to be involved in talking about their experiences of foster care and how well Medway is delivering its Pledge to children in care.

**Fostering Staff**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Professional Qualification and date received** | **HCPC Reg No:** | **Role in Team** | **Length of Service** |
| Suzan Ahmet (Djouma) | Diploma in SW - 2000 | SW76646 | Senior Supervising Social Worker - Connected | 7 Years |
| Michelle Louise Milner  | BA (Hons) in Social Work – Nov 2008 | SW60148 | Senior Supervising Social Worker - Generic | Appointed Nov 2016 |
| Yewande Ojo  | Post Graduate Diploma in SW - June 2010 | SW57876 | Supported Lodgings Coordinator | 1 Year, 2 months |
| Isabella (Lisa) Villiers | Degree in Social Work 2006  | SW64648 | Supervising Social Worker | 6 Years  |
| Diane Elliot  | Studies CQSW - 1982 | SW76577 | Social Worker for Private Fostering | 10 years |
| Jabeen Sethi  | Diploma in SW/MSc Social Work | SW65697 | Social Worker for Fostering | 28 years |
| Monira Khanom  | Social Worker MA - Masters Degree Nov 2016 | SW108488 | Supervising Social Worker | 1 Year, 2 months |
| Camilla Jarvis  | Bachelors of Science in Social Work and Applied Social Sciences - June 2014 | SW102247 | Supervising Social Worker | Newly appointed 2017 |
| Marie Marroquin  | Bachelors of Science in Social Work Eastern Michigan University - June 2002 | SW81586 | Connected Carers Assessor | Appointed Nov 2016 |
| Rachel Shields | BA (Hons) in Social Work - July 2015 | SW106282 | Connected Carers Social Worker | 1 Year, 7 months |
| Aleena Nasreen Khan | BA (Hons) in Social Work - 2005 | SW51994 | Senior Social Worker | 5 Years, 5 months |
| Jomon Varghese | Masters in Social Work - April 2011 | SW98470 | Senior Social Worker | 2 Years, 8 Months |

**FOSTERING LOCATION**

Medway Council

Gun Wharf

Dock Road

Chatham

Kent

ME4 4TR

Contact Number: 01634 335600

Signed: …………………………………………………………………. Date: ……………………

 (Head of Provider Services)

Signed: …………………………………………………………………. Date: ……………………

 (Interim Deputy Director, Children & Adults)

Signed: …………………………………………………………………. Date: ……………………

 (Lead Member for Children’s Services)