



**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL
FOSTERING SERVICE**

**STATEMENT OF
PURPOSE**

Reviewed 1 June 2011

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1. Aim

The fostering service is an integral part of North Somerset Council's resource service. We provide multi-agency universal services around children and young people in care.

Our approach is holistic, child friendly and promotes positive outcomes for all.

The fostering service aims to promote the best possible outcomes for children and young people looked after by North Somerset Council, through the provision of a high quality foster care service.

2. Objectives

- To provide the opportunity for all looked-after children and young people to experience positive family life through the provision of high-quality substitute family care.
- To safeguard, protect, and promote the well being of children and young people placed with North Somerset foster carers.
- To identify suitable foster placements and match children to carers who can meet their identified needs. This includes seeking independent placements where necessary.
- To work together with the placement team, resource service and agencies involved with looked-after children and young people, to meet their needs and achieve their care plans.
- To improve the life chances of looked-after children by meeting their emotional, social, physical, health and educational needs.
- To promote and ensure the well-being and safety of looked-after children and enable them to make a positive contribution in the community.
- To provide services that are flexible, responsive and supportive of foster carers and their families, including high quality support, training and supervision.
- To improve service delivery by actively involving children, young people and carers.
- To encourage the whole organisation to value and respect the contribution of children, young people and foster carers, and work in partnership with them.
- To regularly monitor placements and ensure the standard of care through reviews and consultations with children, young people, carers and social workers.
- To provide a range of fostering resources to meet the individual needs of children and young people requiring placement, through comprehensive policies on the recruitment, training, assessment and review of foster carers.

- To provide a consultation and support service to the placement team to optimise use of foster carers.
- To work within the overall policies and procedures of North Somerset Council for looked-after children, and contribute to the development of these where appropriate.
- To promote the foster care service in the wider community within North Somerset.
- To recruit, retain and increase the number of foster carers for North Somerset Council.
- To reduce the numbers of children and young people placed with independent agencies and maximise the use of North Somerset foster carer placements.

3. Principles and standards of care

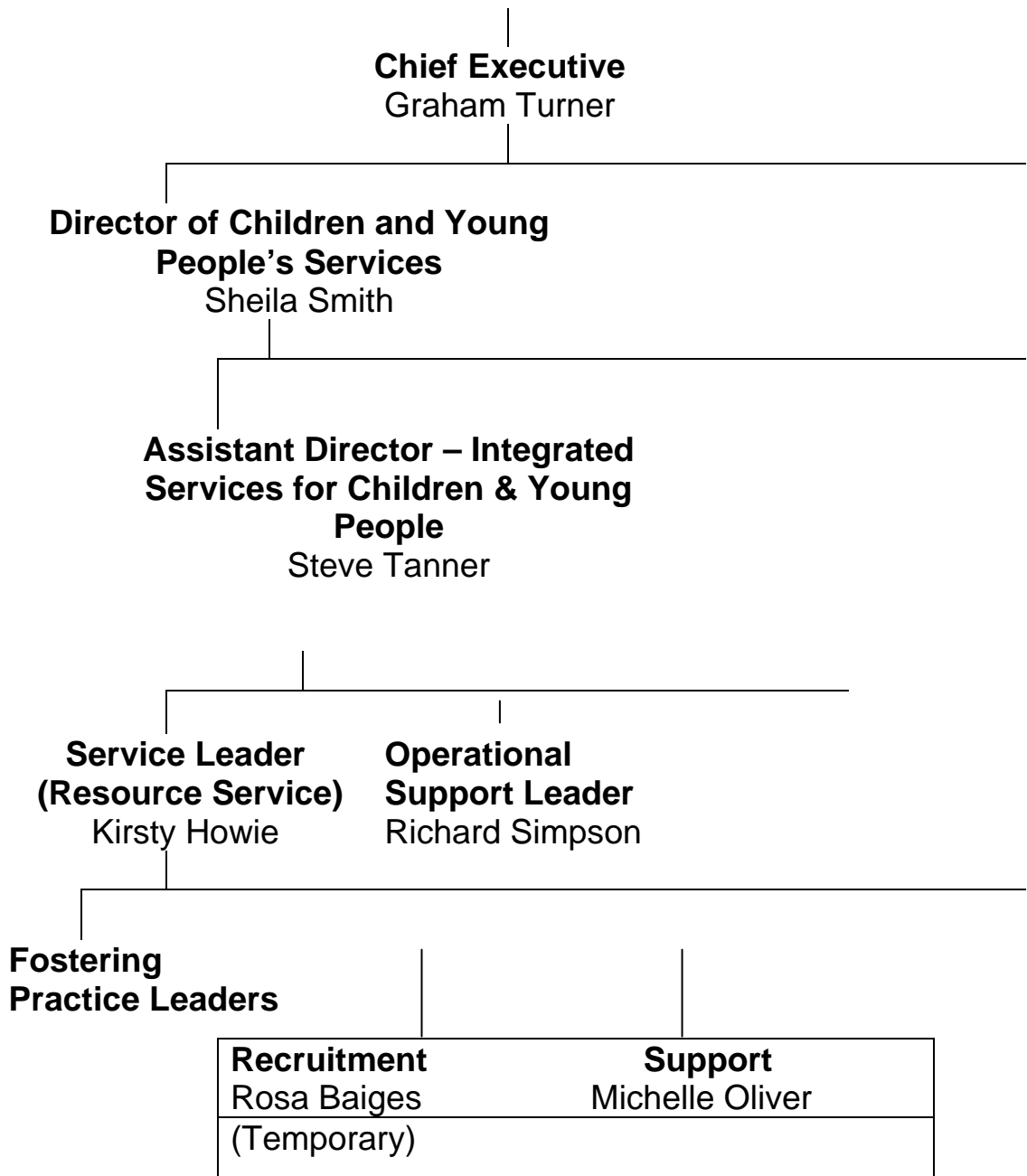
- The fostering service aims to comply with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011. The service also aims to follow the best practice guidelines of the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care 2008.
- The fostering service pursues best practice reflected in the UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999 and Code of Practice for Fostering 1999.
- The fostering service aims to comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 and promote the five outcomes listed in Every Child Matters 2004.
- The fostering service complies with the guidelines as laid out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010.
- The safety and welfare of the child will be the paramount consideration, in decision making, planning and day-to-day work.
- All professionals involved with children and young people, including staff and foster carers, will record actions in a Pathway Plan to help them in their successful transition into adulthood.
- The fostering service will respect the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children, young people and foster carers.
- The fostering service works within the council's integrated equal opportunities policy in relation to staff, carers and service users.
- Foster carers and prospective foster carers will be treated with respect and consideration, and staff will work in partnership with them to deliver the best provision of care.
- Practice in relation to the recruitment, training, assessment, supervision support and reviews of foster carers will underpin the maintenance of high standards of care for children and the meeting of individual needs.
- The views of foster families, parents, children, young people, child social care teams and independent reviewing officers will be sought and taken into account in monitoring, reviewing and developing the service.

- Where a child is placed with family or friends as a foster child, those carers will receive a high standard of support, including, training, supervision, and financial allowance and comparable to other North Somerset foster carers.
- The fostering service seeks to continuously evaluate and improve its services.

Organisational Structure

North Somerset Council Management Structure

Elected Representatives



4. Management and staffing

Recruitment & Assessment Team		Support Team	
Practice Leaders			
Rosa Baiges (Temporary) Recruitment Section 25 hours		Michelle Oliver Fostering Support Section 30 hours	
Social Workers			
<p><i>2 Full-time social workers</i> Sue D’Rozario (Advanced Practitioner)</p> <p>Sara Matty</p> <p>Supported Lodgings <i>1 Full-time social worker</i> Stewart Pettitt</p>		<p><i>4 Full-time social workers</i> Susannah Weeks (Advanced Practitioner)</p> <p>Phil Collins Mike Knowles Jenny Thorpe</p> <p><i>4 Part-time social workers</i> Alison Miles Melissa Staff Fiona Bell Alison Forde</p>	
Administrative Staff			
<p>David Bebbington Business Development Officer</p> <p>Denise Harris Panel Administrator (Temporary)</p> <p>Rebecca Hailstone (Temporary)</p>		<p>Nic Viney (Temporary)</p>	

The fostering practice leaders are responsible for the provision of the fostering service and are accountable to the service leader. All practice leaders are qualified social workers with extensive experience in childcare social work.

All social workers are professionally qualified and have substantial experience in a childcare setting. Most also have many years experience in the family placement field.

All social workers receive monthly supervision from one of the practice leaders. There is an annual appraisal system in operation for all staff.

The business development officer has experience in advertising, recruitment and communicating with the media.

The panel administrator organises the Foster Panel, collates and sends papers to members and takes minutes of the meetings.

Team administrative staff provides all administrative support to the team, i.e. typing, record keeping, preparing panel papers, telephone, maintaining information systems, filing systems etc.

The business development officer and administrative staff receive monthly supervision from the advanced practitioner.

The fostering service works in partnership with support services, forming a 'team around the child' that includes the looked-after children's nurse, Consult and the virtual school.

Staff profiles

Please see appendix.

5. Services provided

Overview

The fostering service recruits, assesses, trains and supports prospective foster carers and family and friends carers. Approved carers are regularly supervised and reviewed supervising social workers to ensure that foster placements meet the needs of our children and young people.

The fostering service works in partnership with childcare social workers, health and education services.

Services to looked-after children and young people

The fostering service provides a range of services to children and young people who are looked after by North Somerset Council. North Somerset has 80 (June 2011) registered foster families. The number of children placed with foster carers at any time averages 150-160.

Types of service include:

Mainstream fostering:

This refers to foster carers who are approved to look after children according to a certain type of approval. Placements can be:

Short-term – carers offer a home, often at short-notice, for children who need care for a short time, or until they have a permanent (permanence) plan in place. This includes assessment; emergency task centred work; preparation for permanence; preparation for reunification to family.

Long-term – long-term care for children who cannot return to their family or be placed for adoption.

Single Placement – carers for young people with very specific behavioural/attachment difficulties or complex health/disability needs. Carers take only one placement and make a commitment for a minimum of six months.

Parent and child – carers who provide assessment and/or development of parenting skills.

Respite – carers who provide short breaks for children to support families or other foster carers.

Youth Justice (Remand) – fee paid carers for young people remanded by the courts, already involved in crime or have complex behavioural needs. Time limited and task centred.

For specific child:

Family and friends carers – these are carers connected to a child or young person and are approved to provide care specifically for them.

Private fostering – Private fostering is an arrangement that is made privately (not involving North Somerset Council), between the carer and parents or those with parental responsibility for the child. A private foster carer is someone other than a parent or close relative who looks after a child for a continuous period of 28 days or more.

For care leavers:

Supported Lodgings – this scheme is designed to bridge this gap between adolescence and adulthood. It brings care leavers aged 16-21 in North Somerset together with hosts - people who can rent them a room, give advice on life skills (such as cooking, budgeting and applying for jobs) and build their confidence.

Services to prospective carers

- Information and advice on fostering. This is provided through leaflets, telephone responses, information packs, a web-site and regular information events.
- Initial visit by a supervising social worker.
- Skills to foster preparation course.
- Full fostering assessment by a social worker.

Services to registered carers and their families

- Induction visit with starter pack that includes the fostering handbook
- Financial allowance paid according to the age of the children and an additional skills payment to mainstream carers in three levels
- Access to loaned furniture and equipment
- Monthly supervision and support from their own supervising social worker
- Annual foster carer reviews

- Individualised training and development plan, including access to Children and young people's workforce, level three diploma
- Free Fostering Network membership, including access to events and Foster Line
- Access to respite care
- Access to an independent and confidential counselling service
- Access to Consult – a team comprising of specialist social workers and clinical psychologists who work with foster carers to help them manage complex and challenging behaviours
- Foster carers newsletter
- Out-of-hours support from Emergency Duty Team (EDT)
- Award ceremonies to recognise achievement, including Looked-After Children (LAC) awards and foster carer awards
- A variety of social events and children's activities, including summer and Christmas parties
- Foster club heroes – a support club for foster carer's birth children
- Access to the Virtual School – a service that helps foster carers provide educational support and encouragement to looked-after children and young people
- Pantomime tickets at Christmas
- Free leisure key – a card that provides free, unlimited access to all North Somerset Council leisure facilities and schemes
- Foster carer coffee mornings
- Foster carer forum
- Workshops to support and encourage carers' development by completing the training, support and development standards for foster care
- Sons' and daughters' annual celebration event, for foster carers own children
- Foster carer conference with access to a variety of training workshops.

6. Procedures for the recruitment, training, support, supervision and review of foster carers

Recruitment

The introduction of a business development officer has produced a long term recruitment and retention strategy. Enquiries to become foster carers are generated in a number of ways so for a detailed overview, please see our separate recruitment strategy.

In brief, enquiries are generated through:

- Structured publicity throughout the year including press articles and advertising, local radio interviews and advertising, posters, billboards and public information events. All of these aim to raise the profile of fostering within the local community.
- Specific campaigns are organised and planned over a 12-month period. These are linked to a variety of things, including Foster Care Fortnight, start of the New Year and educational term dates. Our advertising aims to recruit a broad variety of carers who can cater for the specific needs of our looked-after children and young people, including from ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.
- We endeavour to work regularly with all of our current carers and involve them in our recruitment campaigns. They are enthusiastic ambassadors for the service and are one of our best sources of new carers.
- We also benefit from general publicity about fostering. We work in conjunction the Fostering Network and other local authorities in the South West to increase the public awareness of fostering in general.

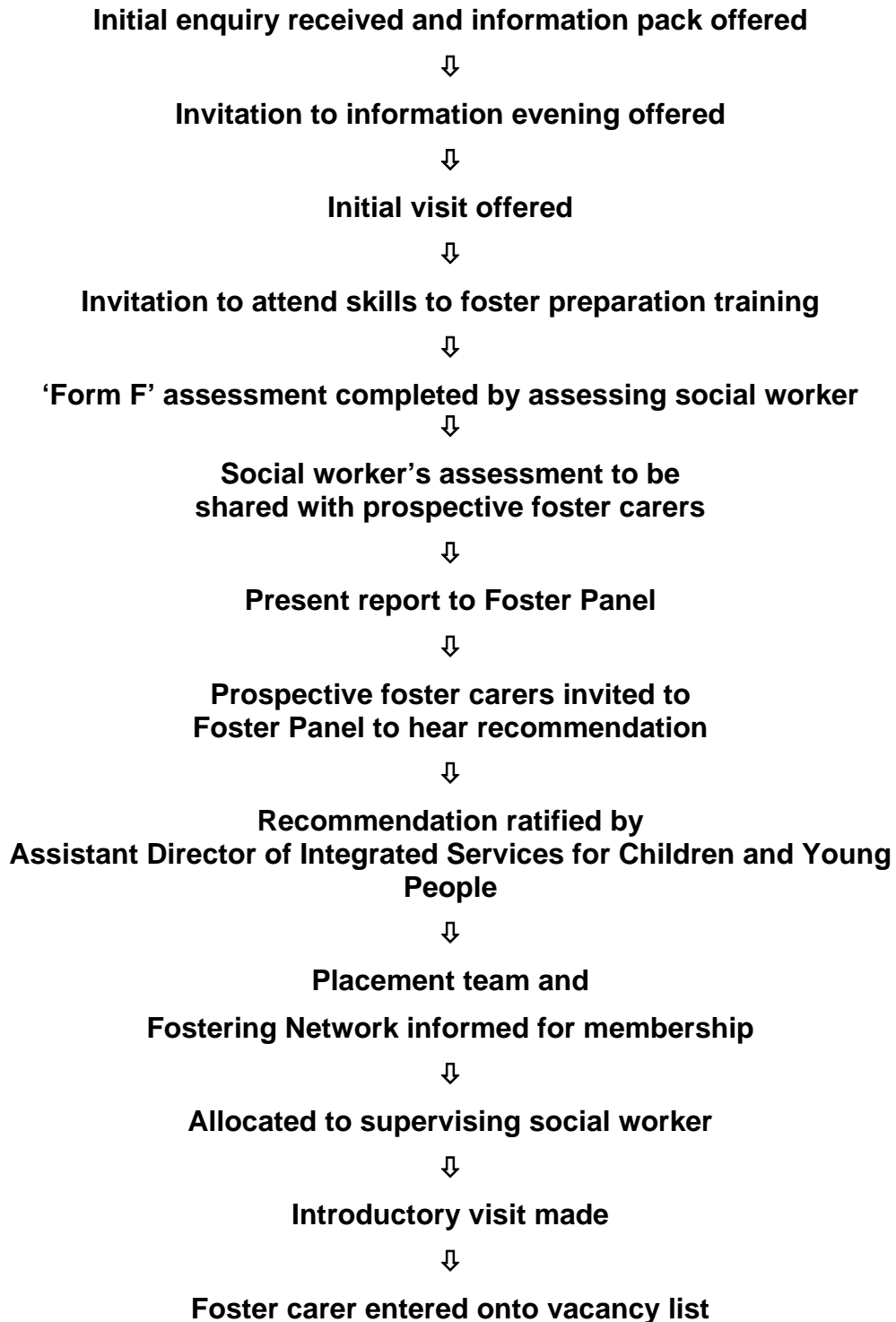
All enquiries are responded to within two working days. We complete an initial enquiry form and send information packs with basic details about the fostering process and expectations of carers.

When an expression of interest is returned from an enquirer an initial assessment visit is arranged.

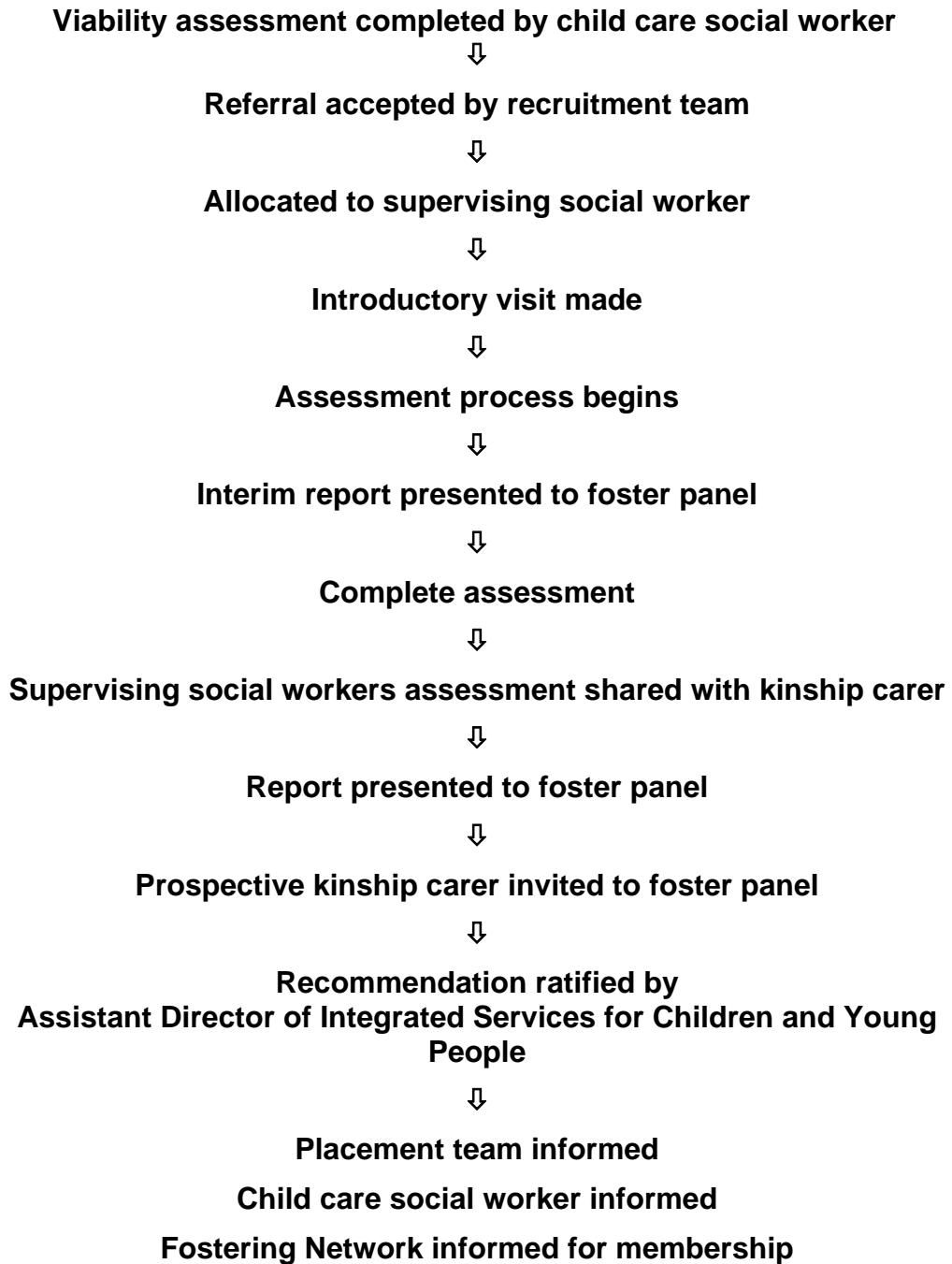
Approval

The process from enquiry to approval is shown in the flow chart overleaf.

Flowchart – Prospective foster carers



Flowchart – Family and friends carers



Training

Before approval, applicants attend 'Skills to Foster'; the Fostering Network's preparation course. We also run two additional sessions on health and education.

Qualified social workers work with experienced foster carers deliver the training, and, in addition, we also invite a care leaver, health professional and education professional also deliver additional information at specific sessions.

There are eight sessions of two-and-a-half hours, based on the following topics:

- What do foster carers do?
- Who are the children and young people?
- Working together
- Health and health promotion
- Education and health
- Safer caring
- Understanding behaviour
- Moving on

When couples apply, both applicants are expected to attend. Missed sessions are made up on the next available course or are covered by the assessing social worker.

Post approval training is organised by the fostering training officer and a programme is circulated to all foster carers. This covers all areas of training required for National Minimum Standards, and is also linked to the CWDC standards and the Children and young people's workforce diploma.

Training for foster carers is on-going and each carer is given an individual plan which is monitored by the supervising social worker and the training officer. Their training plan is reviewed at the carer's annual fostering review, and ongoing training is encouraged.

As part of the 'Payment for skills' fee structure, there is also a requirement that carers attend the mandatory training associated with their skill level. Foster carers who start on level three are expected to undertake the Children and young people's workforce diploma or have already completed equivalent training. Carers wishing to progress to level three will need to be recommended by their supervising social worker based on their experience, knowledge, skills and training. Carers must have also completed the Children and young people's workforce diploma or equivalent before applying.

We have 19 carers who are registered as level three, and one of our foster carers has achieved a BTEC level four in Caring for traumatised children.

Foster carers also have the benefit of being able to access any appropriate training available to North Somerset Council employees.

Supervision and support

All foster carers and kinship carers are linked with a supervising social worker from the fostering team, whose role is to supervise and support the household. All supervising social workers and their foster carers sign a supervision agreement that details expectations on both sides.

Foster carers receive a monthly supervision visit and more often if necessary. An unannounced visit is carried out at least once per year. There are some exceptions when less frequent visits are required, but this has to be agreed with the fostering practice leader and is included in the annual fostering review.

Carers also receive CWDC folders and are expected to complete their CWDC standards within their first year of approval, which are approved by the fostering practice leader.

Carers are provided with diaries/recording folders and have to complete safe caring policies, which are updated annually for the fostering review. Carers are expected to maintain written recordings on each child placed and these are discussed during supervisory visits. Records are kept of all visits and copies are given to foster carers.

Supervising social workers attend placement planning meetings, pre-disruption and disruption meetings, adoption introductory meetings and children in care reviews wherever possible.

During office hours, carers can contact their supervising social worker for advice, information and support whenever necessary. If the supervising social worker is unavailable the duty social worker or practice leader will respond to urgent requests.

Outside of office hours carers can contact EDT and/or the duty worker from the leaving care team, who provides an emergency advice service to carers and care leavers, including visiting if necessary.

Carers are provided with necessary equipment to meet the needs of the child and all relevant safety standards.

A float of £100 is available for EDT carers to ensure they have sufficient funds when a child or young person is placed.

An independent, confidential counselling service is provided for carers and their families, for direct and free advice on any matter. Six sessions can be accessed, with additional sessions being agreed by the fostering practice leader.

Carers can access independent support when being investigated for complaints and allegations.

Fostering allowances are in line with the National Minimum Standards, and are paid fortnightly in accordance with a published schedule. We provide all carers with written guidance on what these allowances cover and what additional expenses may be claimed.

Carers, their children, children looked-after and care leavers have unlimited, free access to North Somerset Council leisure facilities and sports centres.

We maintain a foster carer insurance policy that covers personal liability and legal expenses in the event of court action against the carer. In the case of a foster child/young person causing damage or loss to the foster carer's household, carers are expected to claim on their own house insurance. In the case of a carer being unable to make a claim on their own insurance, carers are able to make a claim through North Somerset Council's insurance policy.

Fostering allowances and skill-based payments

In addition to the weekly fostering allowances that are paid to reflect the cost of a child's food, clothing, pocket money etc., we also provide skill-based payments for our carers. The 'Payment for skills' scheme does not apply to specialist schemes or to kinship carers.

The three levels of the 'Payment for skills' scheme reflect the considerable skills that carers develop. It also creates a career structure that allows carers to progress, receiving a higher rate of payment upon achieving each level.

Most newly approved carers will start at level one. Once a carer gains more evidence-based experience, knowledge, skills and completes the mandatory training, they can then be assessed to progress to a higher skill level. This is achieved by completing the core value competencies and receiving a recommendation from their supervising social worker, which is reviewed at foster panel. The Panel approval is then ratified by the Assistant Director of Integrated Services for Children and Young People.

Level two carers will have undertaken at least one year of fostering. The fostering panel will have deemed that suitable skills have been demonstrated and specific, additional training has been undertaken to ensure they can manage more challenging placements.

Level three carers would be able to demonstrate the skills and ability to meet the most complex needs of looked-after children. They would also be expected to have achieved a Children and young people's workforce diploma or an equivalent qualification (formerly Childcare NVQ level three). Level three carers are also expected to contribute to the recruitment of prospective foster carers and the development of the service. They are also expected to mentor other carers on a needs-led basis.

Fostering reviews

Foster carers are reviewed annually by the fostering practice leader and are reviewed at Foster Panel every three years. Newly approved foster carers will be fully reviewed at Panel on the completion of their first full year.

Foster carers will be reviewed at foster panel more frequently if, for example, there is a major change in their circumstances, they are subject to a complaint or allegation, or if a request for a change of approval is made.

The annual review is completed by the supervising social worker, following discussion with all members of the foster family and is also informed by reports from all placing social workers. Child care social workers are expected to contribute to the carer's annual review by completing a feedback form. Carers also contribute to their reviews via a feedback form and attendance at the Panel.

Other professionals involved in the child's care plan such as; reviewing officer, Consult or health professional are also encouraged to provide feedback for the fostering review.

This report is presented to the fostering panel for recommendations regarding approval, de-registration or change of registration. For example, the Panel monitors the achievement of each carer's training and is responsible for deciding when carers are ready to progress to higher skill levels.

The Panel also makes the decision for a child or young person's placement becoming long-term.

The Assistant Director of Integrated Services for Children and Young People makes the final decision based on the Foster Panel's recommendation.

Independent Review Mechanism

All potential and current foster carers are given the option to request an independent review when they do not agree with decisions regarding their approval, or terms of approval, made by North Somerset Fostering Panel.

Members of the foster panel

Chair (Independent member)	Rita Roblin
Vice chair (independent member)	Robert Summers
Panel adviser	Michelle Oliver
Medical adviser and Looked-after children's nurse	Sheila Harding
Service leader – Resource service	Kirsty Howie
Practice leader – Recruitment team	Rosa Baiges
Social worker – Community childcare team	Cathy Mathieson
Councillor	Reyna Knight
Independent member	Sarah Stacey
Independent member	Margaret Morgan
Panel administrator	Denise Harris

7. Complaints and allegations

Complaints

Our complaints procedure is available to all foster carers, children and families. Foster carers may complain on behalf of a child as well as on their own account.

Complaints may be made either to the practice leader or to the complaints officer, but in either case will be initially investigated and responded to by the practice leader.

If the complainant is not satisfied then the second stage procedure is implemented by the complaints officer.

Any complainant may receive assistance on request from an independent supporter.

Complainants may also contact Ofsted.

In cases of a serious complaint or allegation regarding a foster carer, we notify Ofsted and any other responsible authorities.

Complaints received

There were seven complaints involving the fostering team between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011.

Allegations

Allegations about the standard of care provided by foster carers, or of abuse or neglect of a child by foster carers are investigated according to the North Somerset Area Child Protection Safeguarding procedure.

Allegations received

There were five complaints made against foster carers between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011.

Contact details for complaints

Michelle Oliver

Christopher Orlik

Practice Leader
The Fostering Service
The resource service CYPS
12 Clifton Road
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 1UJ

Tel: 01934 421 900

Complaints Manager
14 Fenswood Road
Long Ashton
BS41 9BS

Tel: 01275 882 171

8. The registration authority

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) is an independent, non-governmental public body responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting fostering services under the provision of the Care Standards Act 2000.

Ofsted aims to:

- Promote service improvement
- Ensure services focus on the interests of their users
- See that services are efficient, effective and promote value for money

The address for Ofsted is:

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404 040

8. Appendix

Staff profiles

Michelle Oliver:

I am the practice leader in the fostering service for North Somerset Council. I have been in post since April 2010. I hold a range of social work experience including community social work, child protection, care proceedings, adoption, assessing children and families in a residential unit and preparing court reports, emergency duty team work, working with people with mental health needs, learning difficulties and disabilities, running various groups for vulnerable adults and young parents and caring for older adults to maintain their independence in residential and in the community.

I hold the diploma in social work, a post qualifying award, a B tech national diploma in health and social care. I have attended various courses including, LAC procedures, bereavement, adoption, working with sexual offenders and managing risks, child development and attachment, communicating with children, CWDC standards, court training and joint working protocol with the police.

I worked for Bristol City Council's family placement team for seven years mainly as a senior practitioner and assisted to develop my new role. I developed and chaired pre-disruption meetings and was a foster panel member for three years. I did some research on placement disruption, breakdown and stability to help improve services to children in care. I regularly hosted the foster carers' awards with the Lord Mayor of Bristol and developed and lead the annual fostering fun day.

My aspirations are to ensure children and young people are heard and listened too, achieve the best outcomes for them and to ensure foster carers receive tailored made support packages.

Susannah Weeks:

I have a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, which I gained when completing my BA (Hons) in Applied Social Science in 1987. I also have a Post Graduate Diploma in Voluntary Sector Management (1998) and the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (2008).

I worked in London Borough of Waltham Forest as a generic, then a child care social worker, and for a while as an adoption and fostering coordinator. I spent from 1991 – 2005 working in the voluntary sector, establishing and managing a range of community based preventative, therapeutic and family support services. This included setting up, and being the registered provider for a fostering service that was supported by European money as a way of

recruiting people into caring careers. More recently I have developed and lead Sure Start children's centres within locality services in North Somerset.

I started this current role on 11 July 2011, and part of the responsibilities, and challenge, will include recruiting and supporting 'level four' foster carers to provide families for children and young people who need specialised placements.

I believe that being a parent, and a foster parent, is a divine and relentless experience!

Fiona Bell:

In January 2011 joined the fostering team at Clifton Road as supervising social worker, working 21 hours a week.

My previous experience includes working as a child care social worker, generic social worker, specialist social worker with the elderly and mentally infirm, college lecturer in social care, learning support assistant, care scheme coordinator for children with disabilities, voluntary youth leader and being a mother of four.

I'm currently on newly qualified social work scheme as return to local authority social work after twenty years.

Phil Collins:

Along with my wife, in 1998 I became a registered foster carer with North Somerset Council. By 2000 we then became 'Fostering Plus' carers, the equivalent of level three as it is now known, and were asked to provide challenging placements.

In 2001, after a career as a pipe welder for 17 years and a Police officer for two, I began working for CYPS as a support worker for care leavers. In 2002 I qualified as a Connexions PA and in 2004 I enrolled at UWE as a seconded student on the social work degree.

After qualifying in 2007 I began working in the area based teams working with children in need, looked-after children and children subject to safeguarding plans. This gave me some very good experience of the childcare services and court work.

In 2009 a vacancy became available for a supervising social worker and my attention was drawn to it. I started working as a supervising social worker in February 2010 and remain in that post.

I find the experience I have from being a foster carer and a child care social worker gives me an empathy and understanding that helps me work with both parties to ensure we are all working in a child focused way, in line with the child's care plan. This is a role I enjoy.

Alison Forde:

I have worked for North Somerset Council since October 1998, initially as a support worker for young people in foster care and providing support to foster carers by way of an on-call service. My role was to work directly with young people and provide support within their placement and develop independent living skills to enable them to move on.

Following the implementation of the children (leaving care act) 2000 in 2002 our service became the leaving care team for North Somerset and my role changed to that of a leaving care personal advisor. My role was to advise and support young people to find suitable move on accommodation and access education, training and employment.

In 2004 I was seconded to the social work degree course at the University of the West of England and I qualified as a social worker in 2007. I am registered with the General Social Care Council. After qualifying I worked within the referral and assessment team in North Somerset. My main duty was to carry out assessment of needs for children and young people and their families.

In March 2011 I joined the fostering team, based within the resource service, this is a new area of work for me and I am very much enjoying working with foster carers and working within a multi agency team who are striving for the best outcomes for children and young people who are looked after.

Mike Knowles:

All of my roles as a social worker and have included work with vulnerable children and young people and their families. These posts have involved me in child protection work, complex legal proceedings, working with 'looked after children', 'children with disabilities' 'children and families in need' and with foster carers.

As a social worker I place a lot of importance on ideas like empowerment and advocacy. I think it is important to be non-judgemental and to think about how children are raised and how their families function within their own communities, for example by being aware of the impact of poverty,

poor housing, race, ethnicity and disability, poor access and take up of services and how difficult it can be to live in single parent and reconstituted families.

I also place a great deal of emphasis on being an active team member and I am a Trade Union Rep' and I have been a practice supervisor of social work students.

I have a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and of valuing diversity. I think it is important to be aware of and be able to be constructively critical of value judgements in oneself and colleagues and in any institutional practice that impacts on service delivery.

In my role as supervising social worker I am very keen to develop the service focusing in particular on how we can retain carers and developing support groups, especially 'hard to reach' carers i.e. those male carers and those who are geographically isolated.

Alison Miles:

I qualified as a social worker in 1998 after gaining a degree in social work. I have 13 years experience and have worked as a child care social worker, a supervising social worker for an independent agency and have been working for North Somerset Council as a supervising social worker since 2005. I'm a trained practise assessor for student social workers and a qualified counsellor.

Melissa Staff:

I qualified as a social worker in 2004 from Bristol University obtaining a diploma in social work. During my social work training I successfully completed a statutory placement in North Somerset Council's referral and assessment team, gaining invaluable experience of front line child-care social work.

On qualifying as a social worker I worked for two years in a child-care case holding team with South Gloucestershire Council gaining experience working with children and families, completing assessments, working with other agencies/professionals and foster carers.

In January 2007 I took a temporary position for North Somerset Council as the duty social worker in the adoption and fostering team. I had the responsibility of finding suitable foster placements for children going into local authority care. This involved obtaining information regarding the children in advance of placements ensuring that the foster carers had the

necessary skills and experience to meet the needs of the children. I worked closely with foster carers, social workers and other professionals in this role.

In June 2007 I was appointed as a supervising social worker within North Somerset's adoption and fostering team and have been in this position to date. In this time I have supported mainstream foster carers, kinship carers and private foster carers by providing monthly supervision, yearly unannounced visits and completion of annual fostering reviews. I have also encouraged carers to attend training helping to provide the best care for the children we look after and promoting the welfare of each individual child.

In the six years I have been qualified as a social worker I have attended regular training relating to social work policy, law, theory and support which has informed my practice ensuring that I am work in a safe and professional manner.

Jenny Thorpe:

I studied at the University of the West of England from 2006 – 2009 when I graduated with a BSc (hons) in social work. I am registered with the General Social Care Council. During my degree I completed 200 days of work based placements. My first 30 days were spent at North Somerset Against Domestic Abuse which is a voluntary agency supporting women who have fled domestic abuse. My second placement of 85 days was in Children and Young Peoples Services at North Somerset Council where I worked in a childcare case holding team. This gave me great insight into childcare law and the needs of vulnerable children. My final placement of 85 days was spent in the fostering team at North Somerset Council. This is where I gained and developed my skills in assessing and supporting foster carers.

After qualifying as a social worker I worked as an agency supervising social worker in the Fostering Team at North Somerset Council from July 2009 to January 2010. In January 2010 I gained permanent employment in this role where I have continued to work.

During my time in the fostering team I have successfully completed the Newly Qualified Social Worker scheme and am currently completing the Early Professional Development scheme. I have also attended the following training:

Safeguarding Children

Court Skills

Section 47 Investigation

Making the Most of Foster Carer Reviews (BAAF)

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance

Life Story Work

Statutory Guidance and Public Law Outline

After writing my dissertation on the impact of fostering on foster carers sons and daughters this is an interest I have continued in my current role. I have set up a support group for sons and daughters that meets three times a year.

Rosa Baiges:

I qualified as a social worker in 1986 in Barcelona (Spain) with a diploma in social work. In 2008 I successfully completed an NVQ level 4 in management.

After qualifying I worked as a social worker in Spain and I have worked in different position within children services in England since August 1999. In June 2001 I started working as a supervising social worker in the London Borough of Haringey.

In January 2003, I was appointed team manager of the Kinship and Permanence team with the challenge to implement policies and procedures and to develop a newly formed team. In August 2004 I moved to the London Borough of Barnet as a team manager of the fostering recruitment and training team. I had responsibility for recruiting and assessing foster carers and to implementing an annual training programme for approved carers.

Since December 2010 I have worked with North Somerset fostering service, and in my post as a practice leader of Recruitment and assessment of carers since March 2011.

In all my social work career I have attended regular training, among others I have attended policy and child care legislation courses, LAC procedures, attachment, understanding behaviour, two years of family systemic therapy, child care, communicating with children and young people. As part of my development I have also facilitated training sessions for foster carers in fostering relating issues, such as, understanding the standards, record keeping, working with children with difficult behaviour, health and safety and safer caring.

Sue D'Rozario:

I qualified as a social worker in 1979 when I completed by CQSW at Newcastle University. For the next 26 years I worked as a probation officer, in East Sussex, Avon and Greater Manchester.

In 2005 I decided to leave the probation service as its role had changed considerably since 1979 and I worked as a project manager for a local charity. The charity's purpose was to make young people aware of the consequences of crime and the effect it would have on their later life. This project was supported by the Bristol Single Regeneration Budget and when the funds stopped in 2007 I applied to be a social worker.

From 2007 until the present time I have worked in the Family Link team in Bristol, the disabled children's team in Bristol and the Fostering and Recruitment team in Weston-super-Mare.

I have undertaken a specialist childcare award (PQ) and I have successfully passed the six modules.

Between 2007 until October 2010 I worked part-time as a main grade social worker, but in 2010 I was appointed as a full time senior practitioner in the disabled children's team. Due to restructuring this post came to an end in 2011 and as a result I commenced work with North Somerset Council as an advanced social work practitioner in February 2011.

I worked for Family Link between 2007 until 2010 assessing and supporting short break carers. Family Link matched disabled children with approved carers and their progress was monitored by regular reviews. Whilst working in the disabled children's teams I participated in reviews and assessment and liaised with a number of different professionals. Since moving to North Somerset Council I have enjoyed my work assessing potential foster carers and I use my knowledge and expertise to write comprehensive and detailed reports for Panel. It is my hope that I will continue in this role for the foreseeable future.

Sara Matty:

Stewart Pettitt:

I have been working within the social care sector in a wide variety of roles from social worker to team/ project manager spanning two decades. I became a qualified social worker in 2003 having obtained a Diploma in social work. Alongside this I have completed training in child protection, LAC, various internal database systems, first aid, risk assessments, management and leadership, communicating with children, creative therapy

level 1+2, cert in health and social care, working with attachment disorders, team teach, Makaton, understanding and communicating with children with autism, CAF training, report writing.

My career has enabled me to work within the public and private sectors as well as for charities. I have worked at differing levels within residential homes, special education settings, specialist projects, supported living services, secure accommodation services, projects for adults and children with disabilities, crisis projects, looked after children's teams, family support teams, referral and assessment teams and fostering services.

I have worked with children, families and perpetrators of abuse and the Victims of abuse. I have worked within multi discipline teams of psychologists, police, education and government. This has enabled me to have a wide and varied knowledge of the challenges that are at the forefront of social care.