



Fostering Makes a Difference

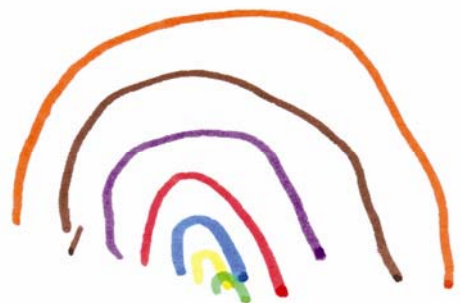
Cumbria County Council

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF

PURPOSE

2011 - 2012



CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Aims and Objectives
3. Guiding Principles
4. Services to Foster Carers
5. Services to Children and Young People
6. Structure and Personnel
7. Monitoring Evaluation and Management of the Service
8. Complaints
9. Information on how to contact the Regulator

1. Introduction

This statement has been produced in accordance with The Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations – England 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

The statement outlines Cumbria's Fostering Service our aims and objectives, principles and values. It also describes the services that are provided and how we monitor these services and manage our performance against these objectives.

This statement is reviewed annually and is ratified by our Corporate Parents.

The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the care and support they need to:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

In Cumbria we believe that all children and young people have the right to be healthy, happy and safe; to be loved, valued and respected; and to have high aspirations for their future.

In Cumbria we would wish all children to have secure relationships with family, friends and carers, be eager, excited, curious and engaged in learning, have self confidence, be able to co-operate and communicate socially and have the best possible health and development.

The Fostering Service is one of many services provided for children that help to achieve this vision. More information about Children's Services in Cumbria can be found on the Cumbria County Council website.

Cumbria's Fostering Service is child-centered and aims to provide high quality foster care placements for the children of Cumbria who cannot, for a period of time or permanently, live with their own birth family through the provision of the following services.



2. Aims and Objectives

The service aims to provide high quality foster care placements for the children of Cumbria who cannot, for a period of time or permanently live with their own family.

The key objectives in providing quality placements are:

To provide placement choice and positive matching of a child with a placement

Proximity to the child's home area and culture where appropriate

Placement within the child's extended network wherever possible

Brothers and sisters should be placed together wherever possible

Proactive positive health care

Maximisation of educational opportunities and achievement for children

Planned beginnings and endings of placements

Promotion of positive contact with family and friends

Safe Care

Promotion of the child's culture and heritage

Promotion of child's interests and aptitudes

Rehabilitation wherever possible

Listening to the child and involvement in decision making

Partnership with parents

Stability of placement – a minimum of placement moves for each child

Minimising the time delay between a child becoming Looked After and moving on to permanent placement

Preparation for independence and successful transition into adulthood

Standards of care for effective planning for the transition from care to independence, which meet or exceed the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our services users are children and their families and all plans, service delivery and practice must reflect their needs as they are central to all of our activity.

We are committed to safeguarding children in the community and understand that this will often require imaginative thinking to arrange packages of support to allow risks to be assessed and managed and maintain children with their families wherever possible.

We understand that placing a child in a Local Authority placement, either voluntarily or with a legal order, is the most serious step the Local Authority can take. The decision to do this should only be taken after full assessment and when all other options to maintain the child within their family have been fully explored and assessed.

We recognise that, for most children, removal from their family is the equivalent in terms of life stress experience to the bereavement of a parent/divorce for adults. The experience of separation and loss will have both short and long term effects on their feelings and well being, self esteem and reactions to situations.

We recognise that attachment to primary care givers is a key issue in positive child care practice and the assessment of this and the prognosis for changes in the child's life always need to be part of ongoing assessment.

We are committed, where the decision has been made to place a child away from their family, to returning that child to the care of their family wherever the assessment indicates that the child's welfare can be safeguarded and the care and circumstances are 'good enough'.

We recognise that, although the educational, employment and other outcome indicators for children adopted at a young age are improved for many children who are separated from their families, their prospects are not significantly enhanced by substitute care.

We are committed where a child cannot remain in the care of his/her parents to exploring fully the prospects for placement in the extended family and friend network. When there are people in this network willing and able to care for the child, there must be very clear reasons why such a placement is not utilised, notwithstanding the need to ensure that the carers are safe and able to meet the child's needs.

We recognise the value, skill and commitment required of foster carers and treat them, their families and homes with respect.

Our objective is to provide a range of quality placements to meet the identified needs of children who require substitute care. Educational and health progress is our highest priority aiming at good opportunities for employment, housing and social relationships in adult life.

We recognise that placement stability is the key to improving outcomes for children and the need to secure a permanent placement, preferably with legal sanction, as soon as possible if the child cannot return to the care of his/her parents, is the greatest service we can offer a child.



We are committed to maintaining siblings together wherever possible and promoting positive contact with family members.

We are committed to engaging other agencies in the assessment of the needs of children and working together to clarify roles and responsibilities in ensuring that their needs are understood and prioritised.

We recognise that many children will have had damaging experiences prior to placement in substitute care, as well as the effects of separation and loss. Their mental health needs may be complex and their need for understanding of their past and access to therapeutic input is essential.

We recognise that foster carers, caring for damaged young people will encounter unknown situations on a daily basis and their own supervision and support needs to be assessed and appropriate support systems deployed.

We recognise that foster carers caring for the majority of children are very valuable assets. Their time and commitment is worthy of a reasonable reward system based on evidence of the quality of the care they provide and their commitment to ongoing professional development.

All staff and carers involved in meeting the needs of children with complex needs require a robust commitment to training and learning opportunities.

Children experiencing disabilities are recognised as children first. The same principles of service apply, while accepting that additional support services will be required to meet all their needs.



We recognise the transition into adulthood is a major step requiring positive daily living support and enhanced connections with the adult world of opportunity and responsibility. A flexible range of accommodation and support options to meet different levels of need will be a factor in the services for young people leaving care.

We are committed to facilitating young people remaining in the foster placement into early adulthood wherever possible.

We are committed to implementing the Children's Workforce Development Council Standards for foster carers and will support carers in achieving the standards.

Services Provided

A range of placement types are provided seeking to meet the variety of assessed needs for the majority of Children Looked After by Cumbria County Council:

PLACEMENT	SERVICES
Adoption and Concurrent Placements	For those children who cannot return to their own families and where permanent legal security with a new family will promote their best life chances (adoptive placements are now recruited and assessed by the separate but closely related Adoption Service) and a number of our carers are skilled at bridging children into their adoptive placements. Fostering and Adoption are working to develop and deliver a concurrent placement option for children in 2011-2012
Legal Permanence	For those children where adoption is not appropriate but where a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order legally secure their future.
Permanent Fostering	For those children who will not be able to return to their family, but for whom Adoption, Residence or Special Guardianship may be a step too far. These are often older children, who retain loyalty to their birth family and where direct contact is in their best interests.
Short Term / Task Centered Fostering	For children where assessment of their needs is required before planning or their permanent welfare can be completed. A return home may be the outcome or a permanent placement with another family
Respite Placements	For children in the community who require a series of short-term breaks to provide support and allow them to remain at home. Some of these are children with a disability, but also children in need in other ways
Shared Care	This special placement scheme provides support to children with a disability and their family. Normally the child is linked with a carer who provides regular support e.g. one weekend a month. This gives the child positive experiences and their parents/carers a well earned opportunity to 'recharge their batteries'
Family Based Day Care	For children in the community who require monitoring, stimulation or support, which can be provided by

spending time with an approved foster carer

Specialist Placements

At the time of writing this Financial Guide, the Service is looking at revising/replacing the Specialist Foster Carer Scheme.

Friends and Family (Connected Person) Foster Carers

Many children and young people who are looked after are cared for by members of their family or friends network who have been assessed and approved as carers

Services to Foster Carers

Recruitment

Cumbria's Fostering Service has a recruitment strategy which is based upon the needs of children looked after. The recruitment strategy is reviewed annually.

Foster Carers are recruited by a variety of methods, including personal recommendation or media campaigns highlighting a particular area of need. Newspapers, TV, radio, posters, leaflets, shows, fetes, organisational groups, schools etc. are targeted at different times. Members of the public who are interested are invited to contact the area Fostering Team. The fostering link on the County Council website offers more information and an opportunity to contact the service on line.



Details of the enquirer's circumstances are taken and a brochure about the service is sent out within three days. Within two weeks contact is made offering a home visit to discuss their interest further. Appropriate prospective carers are then invited to attend a series of preparation sessions. Fostering Preparation Training is based upon the nationally recognized Skills to Foster Course developed by the British Agency of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF).

This training is evaluated and reviewed by the service annually.

Assessment of Foster Carers

Foster carers are assessed by qualified Social Workers Fostering, using the nationally recognised Form F developed by BAAF. This document requires detailed information and a wide range of evidence in respect of the carer's background, current relationships, family lifestyle, support networks and parenting capacity.

The assessing social worker has a duty to verify the information they are given and they will do this by taking up a number of references – with the Police, Probation, CAFCASS,

Health, GP, Education, as well as contacting a number of personal referees and former partners and children from previous relationships.

This process is designed to help the carers and the assessing social worker to identify the sort of caring which will fit in with their lifestyle, their own wishes and the age, gender and needs of the children they would wish to care for.

The length of this process varies and depends on a number of factors:

- The availability of the carers for the assessment work to be completed.
- The priorities within the Fostering Service in terms of the needs of children waiting for placements.
- The complexity of the assessment and issues that need further exploration.

The service aims to complete all assessments from application to the Fostering Approval Panel within eight months. Cumbria's Fostering Service is working towards the full integration of the requirements of the CWDC Standards.

Approval

In the assessment document the Fostering Social Worker, will make an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the application. The majority of Foster Carers will be approved as suitable to foster with broad terms of approval, however the Fostering Service retains the right to make a recommendation in respect of the type of caring and number of children and age range and gender and the type of placement in some circumstances.

The Fostering Panel recommends to the Agency Decision Maker if approval is appropriate or if further work is required before a decision can be recommended.

There are two Fostering Panels operating, one in the North and one in the South of the County. The Panels meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and the associated regulations. The Panels take place on a fortnightly cycle so there are two per month. Panel members are made up of professionals from Children's Services, elected members and independent members who have experiences relating to substitute care. The Panel also has access to legal, medical and educational advice.

All applicants seeking approval are invited to attend the Panel meeting. The Panel are able to put questions to them and they are able to address Panel members.

All foster carers see the complete assessment report and have the opportunity to suggest changes and make their own comments. They are then invited to sign the completed document.

The Panels are also involved in the review of carers and, on the rare occasion, when termination of approval is required.

Supervision and Support for Foster Carers

Foster carers are assessed using procedures and criteria, which are monitored, by management and the approval Panels. Positive areas are highlighted and staff trained in the field of assessing and supervising carers monitor areas for clarification and development closely.

The service acknowledges that it is reliant on the goodwill of carers' families and the professional conduct of carers and seeks to treat carers' homes and families with respect and acknowledge the demanding nature of the tasks they undertake.

The service recognises that supervision and support for carers is vital if they are to feel valued. It is important that their work is recognised as providing the major component in meeting the needs of Children Looked After in Cumbria. Carer satisfaction and retention is essential for a healthy Fostering Service.

Fostering Social Workers, visit carers regularly to look at standards of care provided, assist the carer to play their part in the child's care plan and identify any training needs. Over the next year assistance to all foster carers to achieve the CWDC Standards will be a major focus for development.

Foster carers are subject to annual review of their approval. If significant changes to their approval details are recommended, this is discussed at the Performance and Review Panel. All first and third year foster carer reviews are considered by the Fostering Panel.

Types of Support Available:

Social Workers Fostering, – Each foster carer is linked with a Social Worker Fostering, who visits regularly to provide supervision and support. They monitor standards of care, encourage high standards and help the carer manage problems arising. They are also available for telephone consultation and liaise with the Social Worker for the child.

Payments to Foster Carers – Foster Carers receive payments according to a scheme, which is reviewed annually and circulated to all carers. They are paid on a weekly basis. All approved foster carers receive a retainer payment while they are available to take placements. Carers can apply to progress on the Foster Care Career structure, which encourages carers to develop their skills.

Foster Care Associations – Each area of Cumbria is encouraged to have a Foster Care Association, representatives of which meet with managers in Children's Services on a quarterly basis to consult on policies and discuss areas of mutual interest, developments and any areas of tension. These representatives together are called the Foster Carer Steering Group.

Fostering Network – The Fostering Service enroll as members all mainstream foster carers and a contractual arrangement for independent advice and mediation is provided by this national organisation for a number authorities in the North of England of which Cumbria is one.

Insurance for Foster Carers – Foster carers are insured by the County Council in respect of death and personal injury and are able to make claims against the County Council insurance in case of damage and theft by foster children and their families.

Support Groups for Foster Carers – Each District runs support groups for groups of carers providing expert speakers on matters of interest and an opportunity for carers to share and problem solve together.

Foster Care Reviews – Foster Carers are reviewed annually where their approval details, their skill development and training needs are examined along with any issues they wish to raise. This process is the cornerstone of the relationship between carers and the Fostering Service.

Foster Care Agreement – A written agreement between foster carers and Children's Services is in place to ensure compliance with the regulations and to ensure that there is a document which sets out expectations.

Support and Outreach Service – provide support to prevent family and placement breakdown through activities with young people 11-15 years old and their carers. This is done through a contract of work. A telephone support service is available to all foster carers between 5.00pm to 10.30pm.

Out of Hours Service – At evenings and weekends foster carers can call on this service for advice and assistance.

Training for Foster Carers

All applicants attend a series of preparation sessions prior to approval, where they learn more about the fostering task, the types of children needing placements and have the opportunity to consider how fostering will fit in with their family life and what type of fostering they might be best suited to.

Following approval, carers learn more about roles and responsibilities, health and safety, promotion of education and health in children and prepare them more fully for the realities of fostering.

A rolling programme of more detailed training is offered to foster carers over a three year period to provide them with a higher skill level in line with the National Minimum Standards and to meet the expectations for progression on the foster care career structure.

Foster Care Career Structure – The Scheme allows mainstream foster carers to progress from Level 1 to 2 to 3 depending on their experience, training attended and skill development. Carers can progress through the levels by meeting and maintaining the requirements as detailed in the Mainstream Fostering Scheme. Carers at level 3 are required to have the skills and knowledge to care for children with significant and challenging needs. They act as role models for other carers, exhibiting child focused practice and assisting in recruitment and training of other carers.

In 2008 the service introduced the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers. All foster carers approved post 1 April 2008 are required to complete the induction standards within one year. For those approved pre 1 April 2008 they are required to complete the standards by 2011. Cumbria's Fostering Service has an Implementation and Action Plan in place to ensure the standards are imbedded in practice.

Review of Foster Carer Approvals

Foster Carers are reviewed on an annual basis where their progress as foster carers is discussed and feedback from Social Workers and children in their care is collated. Any changes in the carer's circumstances and training attended and training required are explored. A recommendation from the Independent Chair of the review is made in respect of their approval details and, if a significant change is indicated, this is referred to the Fostering Panel.

Performance and Review Panel

This panel is made up of managers from the fostering and child care service. Foster carers 3 yearly reviews, where there is no change of registration are considered at this panel. All requests for movement on the foster care career structure are also considered here. Any matters where there are recommendations for changes of approval are referred back to the fostering panel.

SERVICES TO CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT

Care Plans

Each child who needs to be 'Looked After' in foster placement has a Care Plan which addresses the short and long term individual needs of the child. The child's Social Worker is responsible for co-ordinating the co-operative work between the carers and the relevant agencies to ensure that the aims of the Care Plan are progressed. The Social Worker is also responsible for monitoring the welfare of the child and, within this, the standard of care and safety within the foster home. The Fostering Social Worker, Social Worker and Foster Carer work together to maximise the child's potential within the placement.



Matching

Every effort is made to match the needs of a child with the appropriate placement and the following issues are considered:

Continuity of the child's education
Nearness to home
Ease of contact arrangements with family
Health issues
Culture and ethnicity
Religion

When considering foster families, the following are considered:

Approval details – type of fostering, age and sex of children approval for
Age and needs of other children in the household
Nearness to home area and education for the child being matched
Ability to facilitate contact
Ability to meet the child's cultural background and religious needs
Ability to understand the child's past experiences and their influence on the child's behaviour and presentation.

Agreements

Foster carers, at the start of all placements, agree to care for the child appropriately and report any causes for concern to the Social Worker. The placement agreement meeting clarifies the agreed length of the placement and the expectations of all those involved.

Contact

Positive contact between the child and his or her family is seen as essential and all those involved encourage this to facilitate the child's understanding of their circumstances, minimise the feelings of loss and allow early return home where appropriate.

Social Worker Visits

Social Workers visit in line with the minimum timescales laid down by the Children Act 1989, but also over and above this to meet the needs of the child and his/her own care plan. The child is seen on his/her own regularly and their views in respect of the placement and their other needs are sought. Any concerns are explored with the Fostering Social Worker and the carers. Children should have access to the telephone in a carer's home to contact their Social Worker and are supplied with the correct number.

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

The stability of schooling and educational achievement is seen as a major objective for Looked After Children. The Fostering Service recognises that high expectations are essential to encourage children whose self-esteem may have been damaged, that they too can achieve in school and college.

Every effort is made when a child is placed with foster carers to maintain their school place until a permanency plan is implemented. No child should have a change of school at the same time as a move from their family or subsequent move of placement where this can possibly be avoided. On many occasions, school, teachers and peers can provide a level of stability, which allows the child a better chance of managing the changes, grief and loss in the other areas of their life.

Improving the educational outcomes for children looked after is a key priority. We want all children looked after to enjoy school and to achieve well. A Virtual Head for Children Looked After has been in post since 2008, to ensure all children and young people looked after have access to the best possible provision.

On some occasions other matching issues will render it impossible to maintain a child's school place but every effort is made to ease the transition and ensure that the staff of the receiving school are fully briefed on the circumstances and the child's educational and support needs.

Each child has a Personal Education Plan where their education needs are highlighted and where all those involved seek to work together to maximise progress.

Foster carers are required to take children to local schools and encouraged to provide 'good parent' type support to the school and child and to give very positive messages about the value of achievement. At child care and foster care reviews this area of practice is highlighted and any training needs identified.

Much work has been undertaken in identifying children whose educational potential is at risk and supporting the young people in the school setting and/or challenging the school in respect of the allocation of places or exclusion policies.

Government funding has allowed the purchase of computers for Children Looked After to assist with improving their education attainment and hence their life chances. A project to ensure that all children have access to a computer for education purposes has progressed in recent years.

THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

The Virtual School is led by the Virtual Head for Children Looked After. The role of the Virtual Head is to improve the provision for children looked after wherever they are educated and to ensure they are making good progress. The Virtual Head tracks the progress of all children looked after as if they were in a single school and ensures additional support is in place for child/young person if it is needed. The Virtual School includes all children/young people of statutory school age.

HEALTH OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

The health of children in foster care is another serious priority for the Fostering Service in recognition of the poor health care, which the children may have received prior to being Looked After.

Many may have missed immunisations, dental care or indeed follow up on specific health issues e.g. asthma, allergies and more serious physical difficulties.

Foster Carers are encouraged to ensure that they provide a 'good parent' approach to health care ensuring that health matters arising are attended to promptly and thoroughly and the child is given messages that his/her health is very important and that he/she is going to be well cared for. This also includes messages about healthy eating and appropriate exercise.

Each child should have a full health assessment when they become looked after, which is reviewed annually and any needs/deficits identified with a plan for action.

All children are registered with a GP and should have six monthly dental checks. All these issues are monitored at the children's statutory reviews.

The arrangements with the Health Trusts for the conducting of initial and review of health assessments are now in place in all parts of the county. The Children Looked After Health teams have dedicated administrative staff and nurses as well as access to doctors as required.

Many children who are Looked After have emotional problems which require specialist input and improvements in services provided in the field of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have occurred in recent years with some priority being given to this group of children.

The Children Looked After Teams have access to CAMHS specialists who provide training, consultation to staff and foster carers.

Cumbria has recently adopted the Health Care programme and is currently engaged in auditing multi-agency services against the standard of Children Looked After.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The Fostering Service does not discriminate between children and seeks to provide a service to meet the assessed individual needs of all children. Children with Disabilities have specialist Social Workers skilled in assessment and brokerage of service packages.

At any one time, a small but significant number of children with serious disabilities are cared for on a full time basis by foster carers. It is a credit to the foster carers involved, that many of these placements provide the highest quality of care and relationships. On occasions, foster carers have nursed terminally ill children in their own homes, providing loving care alongside medical interventions.

A variety of children who have moderate or severe learning difficulties and a growing number who are diagnosed along the Autism spectrum or with Aspergers syndrome, are cared for in foster care. In such placements, it is essential that the carers are engaged with the specialist multi-agency network, which provides the package to meet the child's health and educational needs.

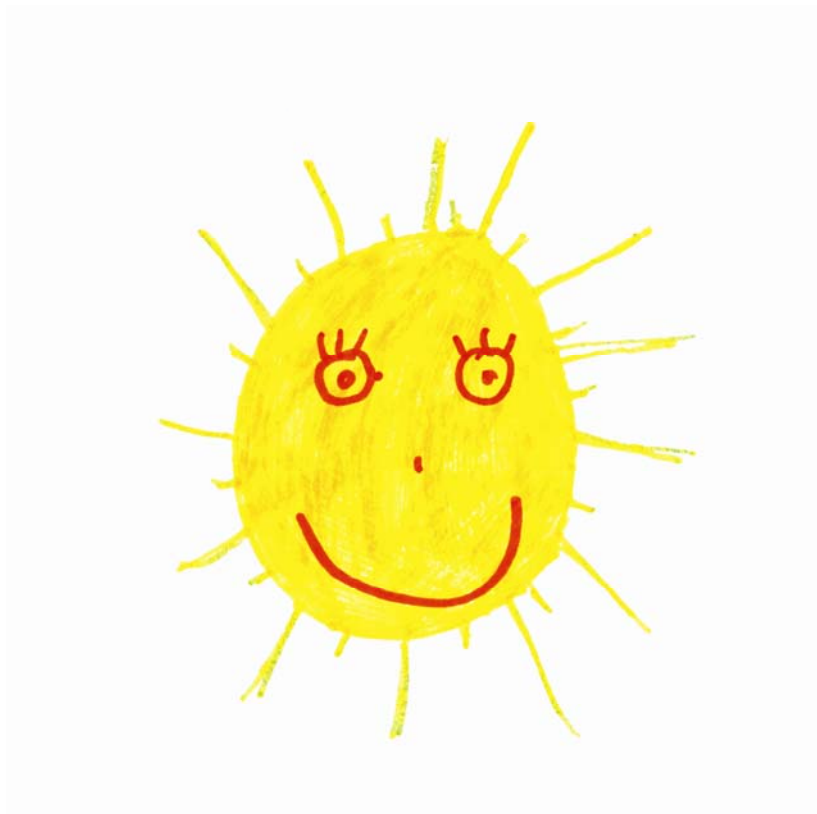
The Shared Care Scheme is targeted at maintaining children with a disability in their own homes by providing short term care or respite, to support the child's parents and give the child positive experiences.

A number of children who had some form of special needs require permanence through permanent fostering and the service seeks to identify families who have the capacity to provide a secure loving home. The demand for such placements often outstrips the supply but those carers who can do meet the needs of children with a disability are exceptional in their commitment.

CHILDREN WITH A MINORITY ETHNIC HERITAGE

Cumbria currently cares for 21 children with a black or minority ethnic heritage. The Fostering Service has recently developed a strategy to enhance its ability to provide for the needs of this group of children. This involves an action plan and a wide range of measures to ensure that each child's individual needs are identified and positive efforts made to meet them. The measures range from hair and skin care to the provision of permanent placements and support to carers.

Accessing potential carers from ethnic minority communities forms a key strand in the recruitment policy and plans.



Structure and Personnel

STAFF IN THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The staff of the Fostering Service are recruited and managed following the principles of positive selection, supervision, induction and appraisal processes of Cumbria County Council and incorporating practice dictated by the National Minimum Standards in Fostering Services 2011.

Newly recruited staff receive an induction package and an annual programme of training is designed to meet their needs for input in respect of current issues in the ever-developing field of successful child placement.

The Fostering service is delivered by three work streams which are interlinked. These are the Central Placements Team which manages placement requests for children in foster care and is the focus for foster care recruitment, the Countywide Supervision and Support Team which is split across three sites that are linked into the three districts in Cumbria. This team has responsibility for assessment, supervision and support of all of our foster carers. The third area of work is the Fostering Panel and Service Development aspect of the service responsible for ensuring that practice and procedures in the Fostering service are consistent and are of a high standard.

All staff are suitably qualified and are subject to Cumbria County Council's corporate standards for continuous professional development.

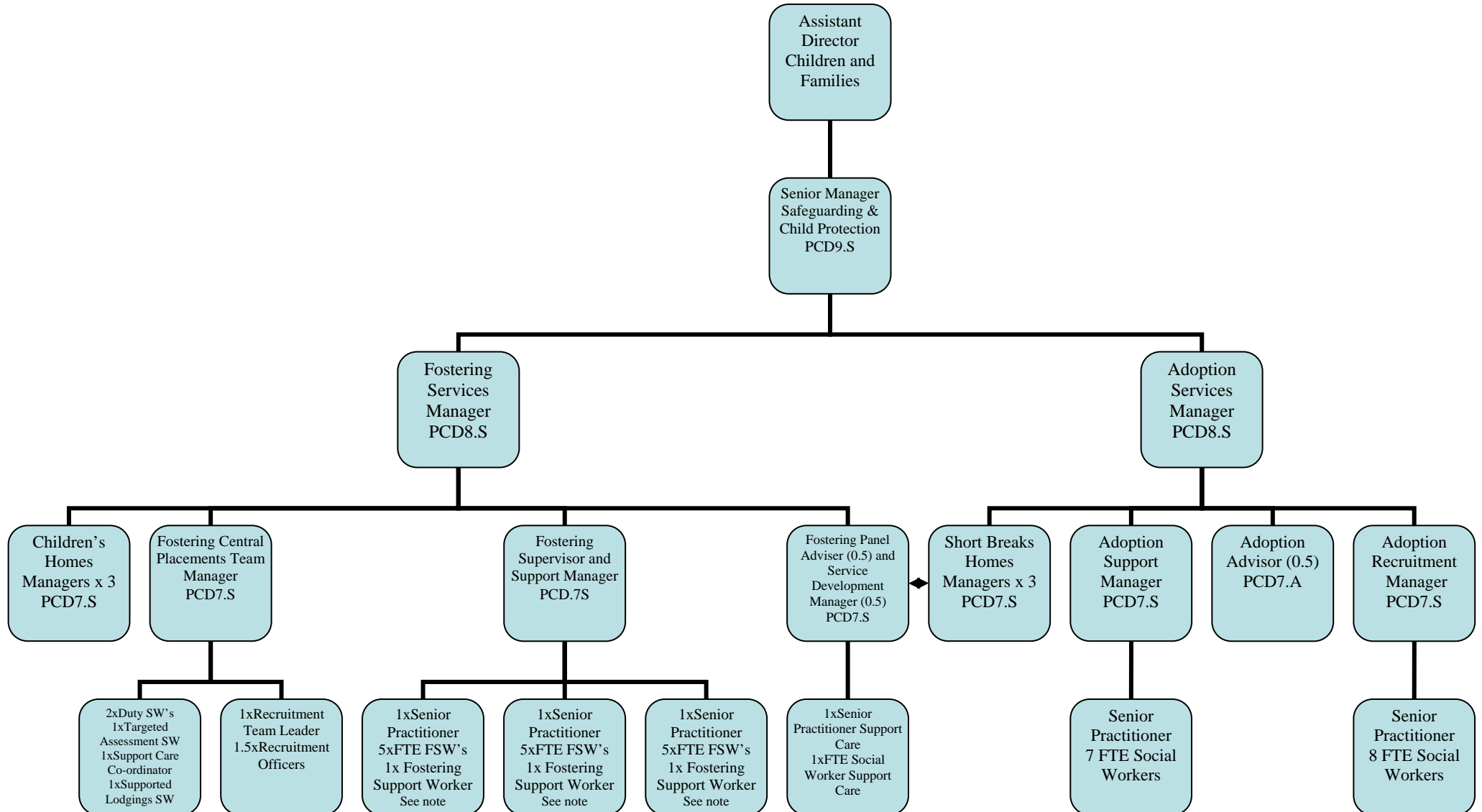
An annex to this report contains details of the qualifications and experience of all staff working in the service.

Restructuring of Fostering Service 2011-2012

Cumbria County Council's Children's Services have undergone an extensive restructuring programme in order to develop and improve service delivery to children and families. The Fostering Service has also been part of this restructuring.

Foster Carer's are kept involved and informed about the change process through Foster Carers Forum and Foster Carer's Working Group.

Fostering and Adoption Service



FOSTER CARERS AND CHILDREN PLACED

Vacancies

At any one time there are a limited number of placement vacancies and this means that placement choice is limited. The nature of a vacancy is always an area for review and discussion, as these will always depend on family circumstances and the needs of other children in the placement.

On a daily basis information is transmitted to the Out of Hours Service detailing placements available in an emergency. These are carers who feel that they can offer an emergency bed for a day or two, while a more suitable placement is found.

A number of carers care for children, either above their approval details or the normal fostering limit. These arrangements are subject to the issue of an exemption certificate following an assessment of potential risks and measures to minimise these. Exemption certificates require the authorization of senior managers in order that the appropriate safeguards are in place for any children being placed or any children currently in placement and are only made after consultation with carers and children's social workers and their managers.

Placement Moves

The service aims to ensure that moves for children are planned and to an appropriate placement, which can meet the overall aims of their care plan.

However despite everyone's best efforts placements sometimes have to be made on an emergency basis. Good matching between the needs of the child and the foster carer is always paramount, but matches for emergency placements may represent the best option available for a child or young person before a more suitable placement can be identified.

We are always mindful that placement moves need to be minimised.

Placement Stability

This is a key issue for the service as it can have a very significant impact on children's welfare and their long-term achievement and success into adult life.

Every effort is made to minimise moves and to work with the children and the carers where the placement is under stress to re-establish a positive experience for the child.

Cumbria has good performance in placement stability as identified in our performance indicators and given the high percentage of children who are looked after in foster care in the county.

Permanency

The service encourages good child care planning and recognises the need to establish every child in the placement, which is most likely to meet their needs until they are ready to become independent. For many children this will be a return home to their birth parents, for others it will be within their own extended family network for some it will be adoption and for some it will be permanent foster care.

Children's well being is best promoted by quality care in a stable placement where they have been able to form a positive attachment with their care givers and have a full understanding of their history and circumstances.

SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

The Fostering Service makes every effort to ensure that children are cared for by safe and caring people in a child-focused environment. However, it acknowledges that no method of assessment will tell us all we need to know about people who may abuse a child or how carers will react when under stress following extremes of behaviour from a child.

Concerns about foster care practice or allegations of abuse are treated very seriously and thoroughly investigated. There are detailed procedures in respect of the management of such incidents. The Fostering Service works within the Local Child Safeguarding Board framework and follows Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

Most concerns raised in respect of the care of children are investigated under the Safeguarding Children Procedures, which give guidance as to how such issues are to be dealt with. Matters which are judged to be not of a safeguarding nature but concerns about foster care practice are investigated by the Fostering Team and recommendations made.

Every serious incident has to be reported on a Safety of Children in Public Care Form which is scrutinised by the Fostering and Residential Manager and the Senior Manager, Safeguarding and Child Protection. A note of each issue is also made on the yellow 'Utting Sheet' on each carer's file so that any pattern developing can be examined. These forms also monitor children missing from their placement, episodes of restraint and violent incidents.

Ofsted are also informed of notifiable incidents in order to ensure external scrutiny of our practice and to demonstrate our compliance with regulations within the Fostering Service.

Staff have received copies of the whistle blowing procedures and have been made aware. Foster Carers are aware of the routes by which they can raise concerns about departmental practice regarding a child or themselves.

Foster carers can access independent support from Fostering Network during the course of a safeguarding enquiry.

Children in foster care also have mechanisms to ensure their wishes and feelings inform their care plans and are also advised in our range of children's guides how to and who to complain to if they have any concerns or complaints they wish to make.

MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

The Fostering Service very much recognises that it cannot meet the needs of Children Looked After without input and co-operation from other parts of the County Council and outside agencies.

The needs of children who have had damaging experiences are complex and need the combined efforts of a multi-agency framework if we are able to redress the balance and improve outcomes for children who are looked after in Cumbria.

The most important partnership arrangements are with:

Triage, Early Intervention, Safeguarding and Children Looked After Teams, which incorporates The Leaving Care Service – to process requests for placements and work together to maximise the life chances of children in placement and as they leave care.

Children's Centres – to ensure that placements of young children are supported and the potential for return to their families are maximised.

Children's Residential Units – to ensure that children are placed in the most appropriate resource for their needs.

PCT, Health Trusts and Professionals – to maximise healthy provision to improve the life chances of Children Looked After.

Schools – to maximise positive opportunities and educational achievement of Children Looked After.

Local Foster Care Associations – to maximise the quality of care in foster homes and the opportunities for Children Looked After.

Fostering Network – to promote the profile and value of fostering and adoption at a national and local level and its place in meeting the needs of most Children Looked After and offer legal support and advice. Cumbria Children's Services also commission the Fostering Network to offer independent support to foster carers subject to allegations.

British Agency for Fostering and Adoption – to promote and develop good practice in the field of Fostering and Adoption.

Independent Providers – to access provision for Children Looked After, which cannot be provided in the county.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – to help children deal with their past experiences and enable to reach their full potential.

Youth Offending Team – to work together to reduce the offending rate amongst Children Looked After in Cumbria.

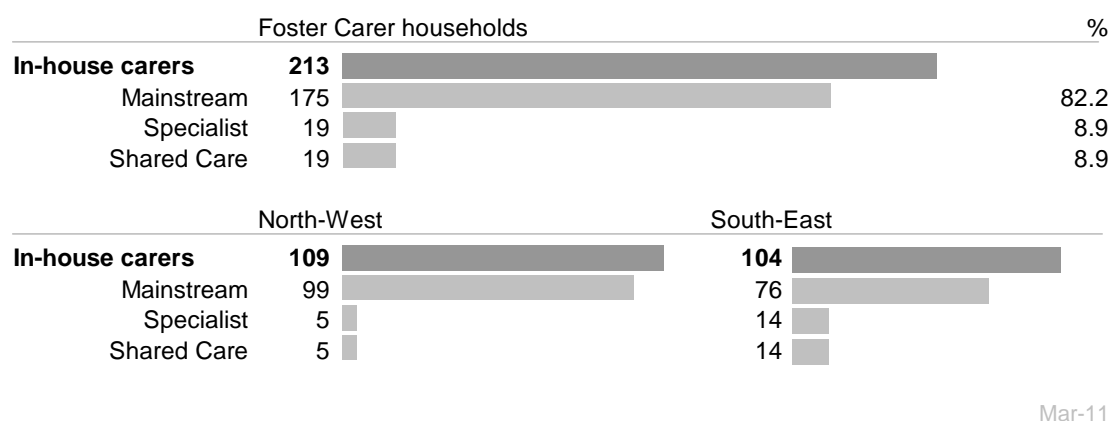
Out of Hours Team

Monitoring, Evaluation and Management of the Service

Performance and Statistical Information

As of March 2010, The Fostering Service has a total of 213 in-house carers of all specialisms. The majority of these, 175 (82%) were mainstream foster carers, with a further nineteen (9%) being approved as Specialist foster carers. Mainstream foster carers may offer a variety of placements, from permanency and long-term, to short-term and respite, or a combination of the above. There were nineteen Shared Care carers (9%) who provide short-breaks and respite care for disabled children and their families.

Figure 1.1 Foster Carer households on Fostering Service register



The Fostering Service also supports a further 43 friends and family foster carers who have been assessed and approved at fostering panel to care for specific children.

Table 1.1 Foster Carers Newly-approved at Panel, 2010-11

	North West	South East	County Total
In-house foster carers	8	8	16
Mainstream	6	6	12
Specialist	0	0	0
Shared Care	1	2	3
Bright Future	1	0	1

To 9th March 2011

During 2010-11 the Fostering Service has approved 21 friends and family foster carers, a higher number than in previous years. This is a reflection on the increase in the number and proportion of children in care who are placed with members of their family or friends network. A significant proportion of the fostering assessments undertaken by the locality teams in 2010-11 have been for friends and family foster carers.

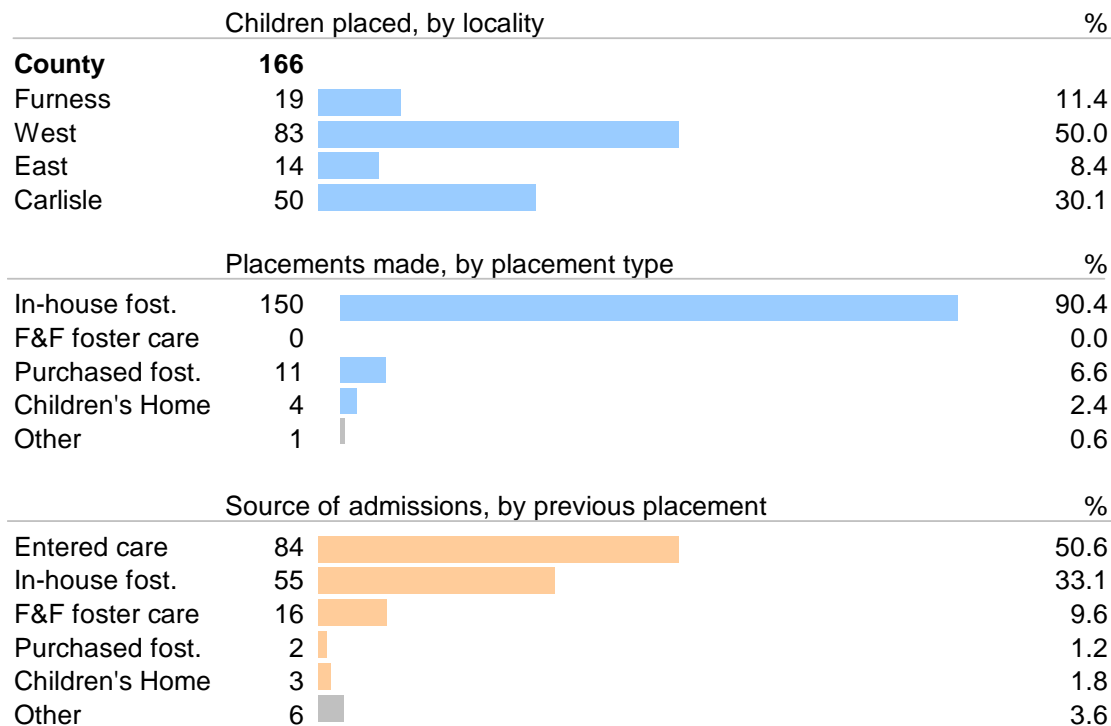
From April 2010 to March 2011 there were 16 in-house foster carers newly-approved at panel. The majority of these were mainstream foster carers. Two additional carers were approved at panel that were the partners of existing foster carers, these are not reflected in the figures above.

Figure 1.2 Foster carers newly approved at panel



Figure 2.1 Placements made by Central Placements Team

2010-11



May 2010 - Mar 2011

Annex

Fostering and Residential Care Manager – Jayne Ivory is a GSCC Registered Social Worker, with 23 years experience of working with children and families. Jayne has a Post Graduate Diploma in Health and Social Services Management from the St Martin's College gained in 2005 and has substantial management experience in Children's Service.

Business Support to Senior Managers – Carole Lomas has worked for Cumbria County Council for 5½ years, working within the Adoption, Residential and Fostering Services. Carole has gained a wide knowledge and understanding of the Services along with relevant qualifications including an NVQ3 in Business Administration.

Service Development Manager and Panel Adviser, Fostering – Anne Hood has a BA Social Work, and Certificate in Child Protection from Aberdenn university. She worked in Scotland, with children with disabilities, child protection and laterly managing a children and families team before moving to Cumbria in 2007. Anne ensures compliance with current and new legislation and standards such as The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care. It also involves developing new ways to deliver the service based on research, evidence and consultation with children, families and foster carers. As Panel Adviser the role plays an important part in ensuring reports to the Fostering Panel meet all statutory requirements. Attendance at the Fostering Panel is required providing the panel with advice on the day about such matters as regulations, policy and procedure. The majority of the work however is done before the panel date when the Panel Adviser provides advice and guidance to those presenting reports as well as overseeing the administration of the panel.

County Supervision and Support Manager - Andy Hobday qualified in 1983, since then he has worked in a wide range of statutory and voluntary child protection settings. After joining Cumbria County Council in 1997 he has worked within the current Team, for 8 years as a Fostering and Adoption Social Worker and, since 2005, as a Team Manager. Andy has a relevant Degree and holds the Child Care Award.

Senior Practitioner, Fostering, South - Helen Whittaker is a GSCC Registered Social Worker and has been in Social Work since 1971; she gained her CQSW and DipSW from Preston in 1977. After a 20 year break, during which time Helen was approved as a shared carer for Cumbria County Council, Helen joined the Fostering Team in 2001 gaining her PQ1 from The University of Cumbria in 2006. Helen has been Senior Practitioner in the South since 2007.

Senior Practitioner, Fostering Team, East - Eileen Brown is a GSCC Registered Social Worker with a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (gained 1972) and a Post Qualifying Award in Social Work Part 1. Eileen has experience in generic social work plus over 19 years Children and Families experience in Family Placement/Fostering Teams.

Senior Practitioner, Fostering, West - Claire Lloyd is a GSCC registered Social Worker with 17 years experience of working in social care. Claire has a DipSW and Masters in Applied social science from Lancaster University. Claire has completed her PQ1 in Child Care.

Social Worker, Fostering, West - Sam Chisholm is a GSCC registered Social Worker with 12 years experience of working in Children's Social Care. Sam has an MSC in Social Work Studies and DipSW from Southampton University gained in 1999 and a Graduate Diploma in Specialist Social Work from the University of Cumbria gained in 2011.

Social Worker, Fostering, South – Paula Evans qualified as a Social Worker in 1968 obtaining a certificate in social work from North West Polytechnic in London. She has worked in Mental Health Social Work and generic Social Work in Kent, Hertfordshire and Dunbartonshire (where her work included probation casework). Paula has taught Social Work on further education courses. Paula came to Cumbria in October 1986 working in the Children with Disabilities Team before involving

herself in her current field of work which is as a Social Worker responsible for Shared Care Fostering provision in the South of the County.

Social Worker, Fostering - Samantha Moffatt Qualified Ba Hons Social Work, from University of Central Lancashire in June 2009 and is GSCC registered. Sam has recently been appointed as a member of the fostering panel. Sam also holds an advanced VCE in Health & Social care and will be undertaking the Specialist Social Work Practice Award (Children Young People their Families and Carers) in September 2011. Sam recently completed her Practice Assessor training, and will be supporting and supervising social work students from September 2011. 18 months experience in Fostering, 1 year experience in Child Protection and Court team. Sam has worked for Cumbria County Council since October 2010.

Social Worker, Fostering, South - Stephanie Stavert is a GSCC registered social worker and graduated from the University of Central Lancashire in 2009. Since then she has been employed as a Parenting Worker for Action for Children and as a Targeted Services Social Worker for Blackpool Council. Prior to becoming a social worker, Steph worked in education for over 20 years and is NNEB qualified and has a HNC in Early Childhood Studies. She was also a foster carer for over five years and was a member of the Fostering Panel in Lancashire. She will be undertaking her PQ Specialist Award in Children, young people, their families and carers beginning in September. She joined Cumbria County Council in August 2010.

Fostering Social Worker, South - Elaine Webb – Qualified 2001-DIPSW Liverpool University. Her first post was Agency in a Long Term Team 2001-2003, Toxteth, Liverpool, working with Children in Need, Children on Child Protection Register, Looked After Children 0-18 years. She then moved to a permanent position in a Young Peoples Team 2003-2008 Halton Cheshire, working with young people aged 15-21 Looked After Children, Children in Need, Care Leavers asylum seeker, young mums, young offenders. Elaine then gained PQ1 qualification in 2004 at Merseyside Consortium. From there she moved to an Agency placement in the Fostering Team in 2008, initially supporting and supervising mainstream carers then reallocated to work with friends and family caseload. Elaine became a permanent member of the team in July 2010.

Social Worker, Fostering (Kendal) - Carolyn Shaw, gained a Dipsw in 2003, and BA Hons Degree in 2004 and began working for Cumbria County Council in 2004 in Safeguarding Team. Carolyn has been in the role since 2007, working 16 hours per week based in Kendal. Her role includes the support and supervision of approved Foster Carers. She has also undertaken the assessment of potential Friends & Family carer's, and mainstream carer's. Carolyn has attended appropriate training events to maintain GCSS registration and recently completed the Practice Educator Course and looking forward to having a student in January 2012.

Fostering Support Worker, West - Andrew King attained a HNC in Business with Finance from Lakes College. Andrew has a number of years experience in the Fostering Team and has gained a wealth of knowledge and experience in supervisory roles.

Social Worker, Fostering, West - Stephanie Bolger has been a qualified Social Worker since 1988. She has a BSC and a CQSW and is registered with the GSCC. Steph has worked for 8 years in Child Protection and Child Care Team and has worked in the Fostering Service since 1996, which also covered adoption work before devolving into just fostering. Steph also sat on the Adoption and Fostering Panel for two years and previously sat on the Divisional Fostering and Adoption Panel for many years and only had 1 year off from this. Prior to becoming a Social Worker she worked as a Youth and Community Worker and a Residential Care Worker for adults with cerebral Palsy. Steph also ran single handily a summer play scheme in an inner city area of Liverpool.

Fostering Support Worker, South - Wendy Wilkes has more than 20 years experience in care. Older adults in a variety of settings, hospital, home and residential care and since finishing Health and Social Care Degree in 2003 she has done teaching post 16 in various settings, including community centres and FE Colleges and has a PGCE - Post 16 Education. Wendy also has an NVQ3 Teaching Assistant Certificate and working experience in infant and nursery Schools. Wendy has worked for Cumbria County Council for 7 years, 2 of these being in the Fostering Service.

Fostering Social Worker, East – Maggie Richens, undertakes initial assessments and targeted assessments around the county.

Fostering Support Worker, East - Mariana Bouch has a NVQ4 in Management and NVQ4 in Business Admin. She has worked in the Fostering Team more than nine years. Mariana also has experience in co-ordinating, supervising and management roles.

Social Worker, Fostering, East - Tania Hopley has been a practicing social worker for 5 years. She has a 2:1 degree in sociology and social policy and a Masters in Social work. On completing her Masters degree she worked in the Safeguarding Team at Sandwell Metropolitan Council for 20 months. Tania also has experience in safeguarding prior to her degree as a support worker for Dudley Safeguarding Team. Tania joined the Fostering Team in Carlisle in November 2008.

Fostering Social Worker, West - Stephen Anderson-Bass is a GSCC registered Social Worker who has worked with children and families for 21 years. Initially for Gloucestershire County Council as a Residential Social Worker, Children's Social Worker, generic hospital Social Worker and in specialised teams working to keep teenagers with their families and also in an education team. Since 2002 he has worked for Cumbria County Council in Fostering Services. He has obtained the Post Qualifying Award 1, from St Martins College Lancaster in 2005. Stephen has also worked on numerous voluntary projects with young people in this country as well as in the United States and the Czech Republic.

Business Support, Fostering and Adoption, South (Kendal) - Deborah Stavert has worked in the Fostering and Adoption Team for 4½ years supporting Social Workers and Managers. During this time, Debbie has also completed her NVQ Level 3 in Business Studies.

Business Support, Fostering and Adoption, South (Barrow) - Deborah Beeres has worked in a variety of jobs over the last 34 years the majority of which have involved working directly with members of the public. Deborah's previous roles have included management, delivery of training, sales and professional driving. Banking, and accounts administration experience made the transition to Business Support in the Fostering and Adoption teams relatively smooth. Deborah returned to college four years ago to update her academic qualifications gaining 'A' Levels in Sociology, IT and English. Deborah also has NVQs in Transportation of Passengers by Road, Film Editing and IT. Deborah is currently pursuing an accountancy course in her own time and at work is assisting in delivering consistency in Business Support procedures for Fostering and Adoption throughout the County.

Business Support to Fostering and Adoption Panels – Claire Moorby, worked for Cumbria County Council since 2003 within the Fostering Service since 2006. Has qualifications including NVQ3 in Administration, ECDL, Diploma in IT and advanced training in Excel & Word programs. Currently specialises in the organisation and minute taking of Panels throughout Cumbria ensuring that timescales are met by professionals, an accurate record of minutes are typed and distributed along with respective agency decision forms.

Business Support, Fostering and Adoption – Lesley started in Fostering and Adoption on 1st August 2011. Her post is 18.5 hours. Lesley will be specialising in organisation and minute taking of the Panels throughout Cumbria ensuring that timescales are met by professionals, an accurate record of minutes are typed and distributed along with respective agency decision forms. Lesley has been with Social Care for 16 years during which time she has worked in the High Furness Team, the Children Looked After Team and the Older Adults Team.

Business Support, Fostering and Adoption, West (Workington) – Susan Spears has worked in Children's Services in the Advice and Access Team for 7 years, and moved to the Fostering Team in July 2011.

Business Support, Fostering and Adoption, Carlisle - Simon White has an NVQ Level 4 in Business Administration and has worked in Adoption since 2003, with responsibilities for adoption records and information.

Central Placement Team Manager, Fostering - Ian Mountford, I have an MA in Social Work from the University of East Anglia. Having worked as a social worker in a Children and Families team I moved to Cumbria as a Family Placement Officer in 1988. I now manage the Central Placements Team within the Fostering Service which is responsible for arranging all of the fostering placements across the county as well as recruiting Homestays providers.

Fostering Social Worker, Duty, Central Placement Team - Karen Rumney gained a Diploma in Social Work 2002 and previously had 6 years experience working in Children's Residential Care, working with children who had experienced significant trauma and abuse. Post Qualification work includes 18 month in Children & Families. Karen joined the fostering service in November 2003 and has been engaged in the assessment, supervision and training of foster carers. In 2005 Karen gained PQ1 award. In 2010 Karen was appointed to the role of County Duty Social Worker in the Fostering - Central Placement Team.

Recruitment Officer, Fostering - Andrew Jones recruits foster carers across Cumbria. Andrew has worked with the Fostering Service since early 2005, originally with responsibilities for management/performance information, research, project work and development of policy and procedures. Andrew has an honors degree in Economics and Politics from the University of York (2004) and has twice been seconded to the Performance Team within Children's Services.

Social Worker, Fostering, East – Chris James has 32 years experience in Children's Services, 13 years in Residential Child Care and 19 years in Adoption and Fostering. Chris has a BA (hons) in Educational Studies and a CQSW (Certificate of qualification in Social Work) 1985 and PQ1.

Social Worker, Fostering, East - Jenny Hunter is a GSCC Registered Social Worker, who has worked in the Fostering Team since June 2007. Before Jenny gained a BA hons in social work she worked for 16 years for Cumbria Care with adults with learning disabilities.

Social Worker, Fostering - Lisa Rowe graduated as Social Worker from University of Central Lancashire in April 2000 and started working in Children and Families in Workington. In June 2006 joined the Fostering Team and has been based in the West Fostering team and latterly the Central Placements Team. Lisa is the Approved Support Care Co-ordinator arranging Approved Support Care for children county-wide.

Recruitment Officer, Fostering, West - Louise Davies has been the Recruitment Officer for West Cumbria for 7 years. Louise has a degree in Chemistry and spent 7 years working at Unilever gaining experience in marketing and advertising which she has transferred to her current position in advertising for carers and publishing Fostering.

Recruitment Officer, Fostering - Central Placements Team – Susan Huntley has worked part-time as a Recruitment Officer for the fostering team since April 2005. After obtaining a BSc Sociology from Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic Susan worked for 10 years as an unqualified social worker for a local authority in the north-east of England. In the Fostering Team she works with colleagues to plan and organise advertising campaigns, take initial enquiries from members of the public, organise and deliver information sessions about fostering and help run Skills to Foster courses. Susan is currently on secondment to study for a postgraduate diploma in Social Work at the University of Cumbria.

Social Worker – Supported Lodgings - Nicki Pennington is a GSCC registered Social Worker. Nicki holds an MA and a CQSW in Social work, obtained in 1993. Since qualifying Nicki has worked in a range of statutory and voluntary organisations undertaking safeguarding work with children and families and therapeutic work. In 2008 Nicki joined the Homestays project which is a supported lodgings project for young people leaving care. Nicki has moved to the Central placements Team in July 2011 where she continues to work on the Supported lodgings scheme.

Business Support to Central Payments – Susan Wright has worked for Cumbria County Council for 19½ years and has been involved in work for children and young people within the fostering

service, adoption, residential, pathway services and other areas within children and families. Susan has recently moved over to the Central Payments Team, which will involve overseeing payments for foster carers on a county wide basis, as well as involvement with Special Guardianship Orders and Residence Orders within Adoption and Adoption Support. Also within this new role, Susan will be providing support to the Business Support staff within Fostering and Adoption on a county wide basis.

Business Support, Central Payments Team – Angela Beardsley has over 20 years secretarial and administrative experience and has worked for Children’s Services, primarily as a Senior Clerk for Pathways Service East, for the past 9 years. Angela has a Degree in Business Management, an HND in Computing/Programming and is currently working towards her AAT (Foundation Level). Angela has recently transferred to the Central Payments Team (Fostering & Adoption) in Carlisle.

Business Support, Central Payments Team - Elaine Wannop had several years of administrative experience with CCC in Payroll and Member Services before joining the Adoption Unit in November 2009. Elaine deals with financial assessments of allowances for Adopters old and new and has been involved with centralising the Special Guardianship and Residence order allowances from around the County to a Central Team. The aim being to ensure that any allowances payable are dealt with equally for all.

Business Support, Central Payments Team - Julie Harding has worked for Cumbria County Council for 7 years in finance and along side that, a secondment of 2.5 years of supervising Carlisle Business Support in Fostering, Social Care and Penrith Business Support. Julie has a NVQ 3 and 4 in Business Support and a NVQ 3 in Customer Care. Previous to working for the County Council, Julie was a store manager in retail for 15 years.

Information on how to contact the Regulator

Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Anns Square
Manchester
Lancashire
M2 7EF

Tel: 08456 404 040

Contact details for:
The Children's Rights Director
Roger Morgan
Ofsted
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC28 6SE

www.rights4me.org

We would welcome feedback about the contents of this Statement of Purpose. If you would like to share your views, comments or concerns please contact:

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Jayne Ivory
Fostering and Residential Manager

September 2011