

Children's Services

FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2024-2025

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1. Introduction

The Statement of Purpose outlines the aims, objectives, and service arrangements for Medway Council's Fostering Service. It has been written in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations (2011). It fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards 2011 (Care Standards Act, 2000) and regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 require a fostering agency to produce a Statement of Purpose, which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 1 (14).

This Statement of Purpose provides information about Medway Fostering Service to:

- Medway registered Foster Carers, Supported Lodgings Providers and Temporarily Approved Carers
- Prospective foster carers
- Children placed with and birth children of Medway foster carers
- Medway Council Staff and other professional partners
- Any parent or persons with parental responsibility
- Any other stakeholders.

Medway Fostering Service is run in accordance with the principles outlined in the:

- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2013 (Amendments to the Children Act 1989)
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011)
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (Amendments) 2015
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving care) Act 2000
- Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for Foster Carers
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations 2004: Fostering Services July 2013

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated every year in line with any changes in legislation or guidance and will be regularly evaluated by the senior management of Medway Children's Services to ensure that the Council's duties and functions in relation to fostering are effectively discharged.

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

Ofsted

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Further information can be obtained from:

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

2. Service vision, aims and objectives

All children should enjoy a happy, healthy childhood which promotes self-confidence and resilience, which gives them the foundation for adulthood and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Fostering Service is working to provide all our children with safe and secure homes in which they can thrive.

Medway's Fostering Service recognises that children's needs are best met by their family where it is safe to do so and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in an appropriate alternative family placement wherever possible. Our priority is for children to be placed with family or friends (known as connected carers) and supported under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning regulations where this placement is deemed suitable, and the child is in care. Other placements may include a child being placed with their parent/s within a fostering household.

Medway is committed to finding homes for children in our care wherever possible with Medway-based Foster Carers so that children can maintain contact with families and friends, continue at the same school and thrive within their community.

Each child/young person will have access to services that recognise and address their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability, and sexuality. Permanency decisions will consider the child's racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, religion, culture, and language of the Foster Carer.

Of paramount importance is the child's safety and welfare which is actively promoted within all fostering placements. Children are safeguarded from risk of significant harm within fostering placements through active engagement of the implementation of safer caring arrangements within the household.

The aims of the Fostering Service

The Medway Fostering Service aims to provide safe, high-quality foster care placements for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals.

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

As well as promoting their health and general well-being, we believe that children and young people in our care should:

- Be helped to grow and reach their potential.
- Be given safe, nurturing experiences within a variety of caring resources which reflect need, respect difference, value diversity and promote inclusion.
- Receive high quality, relevant aftercare.
- Have their rights and responsibilities respected and involve them, along with their careers, in all aspects of service delivery.

We believe that children in the care of Medway Children's Services deserve:

- Services which help them overcome adversity and positively address disability.
- Good quality and timely assessments that reflect the child's needs and demonstrate how such needs are going to be met.
- Positive care and permanency planning and that as corporate parents Foster Carers have high aspirations for their future.
- All significant adults in their lives to work together.
- To be heard, consulted with, and encouraged to participate in their care and family life.

Key objectives for the Fostering Service

- To ensure there is a choice of high-quality foster care placements available to meet the complex and diverse needs of children.
- To ensure foster placements support the child's permanency plan and promote the child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development by providing each child with the opportunity of developing their full potential, through health care, education and leisure activities that will enhance their life chance.
- To ensure equality of opportunity by having a positive regard for the child's racial, religious, linguist, cultural and gender identity needs
- The individual child's needs/ wishes and feelings are paramount and are taken into consideration in relation to where they live and who cares for them.
- To ensure best practice that is compliant with Fostering Services Regulations 2011, as amended by The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013. National Minimum Standards and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.
- Delivering regular supervision to each Foster Carer from a fostering Supervising Social Worker who will assist in identifying the individual training and development needs of Foster Carers, so that we are able to continually develop our fostering workforce.
- Ensuring that our Foster Carers feel valued by providing regular updates on the service; building our carer community and consulting regularly and learning from those who are in receipt of services.
- Ensuring service performance is monitored, assessed with outcomes measured via a Quality Assurance Framework.
- Continuing to innovate and develop the service in consultation with our children in care, Foster Carers, through groups, workstreams and carer-to-carer training.

3. Recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers

The financial year 2023-24 was a challenging year for the Fostering service in terms of recruitment and retention of foster carers. Like in previous years we have seen a net loss of 14 Generic carer households with the service approving 7 new foster households and deregistering 1.

In 2024-25 we will undertake a review of our fostering fees and will uplift these so that Medway is in line with the National Minimum Fostering allowance rates.

The Fostering Service has a recruitment sufficiency strategy which utilises current data regarding the gaps in resource provision. Currently, more places are needed for teenagers, children with disabilities and sibling groups.

Recruitment and Retention

The purpose of the fostering recruitment and retention strategy is to identify ways to recruit, support and retain foster carers so that Medway Children Services have a choice of high-quality foster care placements available to meet the complex and diverse needs of the children in our care.

Our primary objectives are to ensure that the foster carers we recruit can effectively meet the needs of children coming into care:

Objective 1 - To increase the number of in-house Foster Carers in Medway

Objective 2 - To increase our recruitment of Foster Carers from diverse backgrounds.

Objective 3 - To ensure the support offer for foster carers is competitive and attracts the right carers into our service.

Objective 4 – To expand our specialist fostering provision including the Parent and Child carers.

Our recruitment campaigns are scheduled to launch in the months of May, October, and January and our primary goal is to meet our annual recruitment target of 15 foster carers.

To achieve this, our marketing and publicity activity serves a two-fold purpose. Firstly, we aim to attract at least 150 enquiries annually for fostering, and secondly, to raise awareness amongst our target audience about the need for more foster carers, the process of fostering, and eligibility requirements. By raising awareness and encouraging more people to foster in the future, we can achieve sustainable recruitment in the long term.

Our marketing recruitment strategy is to raise our brand awareness of fostering. Therefore, the strategy will continue to be formed from a combination of PR, social and digital advertising, and partnership building with third parties to promote the service to the public, as well as utilising our own existing resources to broaden awareness.

Medway Fostering are always looking for foster carers who can take siblings and teenagers, as well as a need for more specialised carers who can look after children and young people with disabilities and those with more complex needs.

We will weight campaigns towards the female population as whilst we have a number of male foster carers, the majority of enquiries tend to be from females who tend then to pass on the information to their partners.

Launching three annual recruitment campaigns provides a consistent and ongoing effort to attract potential foster carers throughout the year. This approach can help to maintain a steady flow of applicants and increase the chances of finding suitable candidates who meet the needs of children in care.

Our clear message ensures that the target audience understands what is being offered and the benefits of becoming a foster carer. It allows the recruitment campaign to stand out among other messages competing for attention and increases the likelihood of success in attracting potential foster carers.

Medway Fostering Recruitment Team

The Service has a dedicated Recruitment and Assessment team that deals with all aspects of marketing, recruitment and assessment of new fostering households and supported lodgings providers. 2024-25 Medway has committed to be part of the Regional Fostering Hub, our cluster partner is Kent County Council. The Fostering Hub will be managing all initial screen calls for Medway before transferring to the Recruitment and Assessment Team to process with the initial enquiry stage.

We maintain a dedicated recruitment information telephone line, have an informative website which is regularly updated and a recruitment newsletter to communicate with families who have expressed an interest in becoming Foster Carers.

We engage the whole service in providing us with details of positive outcomes for children, positive feedback from household reviews, training events or case file audits to create ongoing social media content.

The Assessment Process

Our social workers manage the enquiries promptly and provide ongoing communication with potential applicants. If the enquirer wishes to proceed, a home visit by a social worker is arranged by the Recruitment Team. Following the home visit the enquirer completes their application form and must give consent for us to make relevant safeguard checks to assess their initial suitability to become a Foster Carer.

The process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two parts:

Stage 1: information required within stage 1 must be sought as soon as possible and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed stage 1 must be made within 10 days of receiving all relevant information in that stage.

During this stage we undertake safeguarding checks of applicants:

- Disclosure and Barring Service checks on all members of the household aged 18 or over and regular visitors to the household. This will involve disclosure of information about any criminal convictions or cautions and other information which may be held by the police or government agencies relevant to the protection of children.
- The applicant will also be required to have a medical examination completed by their GP and the report will be made available to the Medical Adviser who will provide their comments about the health of the applicant and any impact on their potential to foster.

Once the applicant indicates a wish to proceed, they will be invited to attend our 'Skills to Foster' training.

Stage 2: After attending the skills to foster training, applicants will be assigned an assessing Social Worker, who will begin their assessment.

Further safeguard checks will be undertaken during Stage 2 including:

- verification of identity and personal history.
- Council database checks including enquiries to all relevant Children Services records.
- enquiries to other relevant agencies including NSPCC and Probation.
- at least 3 personal referees who will provide both written references and be interviewed.
- employment referees.

During the assessment the Social Worker usually visits up to eight occasions to meet and collect information about all members of the household. The assessment will explore: the family composition; the experiences of the applicant's own upbringing; their motivation for becoming a foster carer, their skills in relation to parenting or communicating with children. The assessment especially focuses on the applicant's potential to provide emotionally attuned parenting.

All information and observations obtained from the assessment, safeguard checks, reference checks and training will form the basis of an assessment that is shared with the applicant and then presented to the Fostering Panel. The fostering service uses the CoramBAAF Form F foster carer assessment format for the completion of its assessments. Connected carers are subject to an alternative assessment considering the nature of the task and the requirements of Schedule 4 (Care Planning Regulations 2010).

Applicants are invited to attend the Fostering Panel when their application is being considered. The Fostering Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of the applicant to be approved as Foster Carers.

There are two independent Agency Decision Maker (ADM) in Medway who receive the recommendation of the Fostering Panel and on behalf of the Service makes the final decision about approval. Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of the Service's decision.

If the decision is not to approve the applicant, they will be informed verbally and in writing and will be given 28 days to make written representations asking that the decision be

reviewed. The applicants can appeal by either making further representation to a fostering panel or have their assessment considered by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) who in turn will make a recommendation back to the agency, the ADM decision is the final decision and can overrule IRM.

The full assessment process, on average, takes six to eight months. Every effort is made to ensure there are no avoidable delays. All information is held on a secure file and can be viewed by the applicant, on request. References from external agencies and personal references, which are provided in confidence, cannot be shared without permission of both the subject and the relevant referee.

4. Post approval management and development of foster carers

Foster Carer agreement (Terms and Conditions)

Following approval an agreement between Medway Children's Social Services and the foster carers will be drawn up in accordance with National Minimum Standards procedures. The agreement sets out the terms and conditions for Medway foster carers, the Fostering Service and Medway Children's Services. Fostering social workers need to ensure that newly approved foster carers understand fully the expectations of them under the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Induction

A new carer's induction meeting is held throughout the year, and this is a requirement for all new carers to attend.

Professional development for foster carers

All children in care have experienced trauma and require skilled, therapeutic parenting from emotionally resilient and reflective Foster Carers. In addition, Foster Carers must understand a wide range of issues such as the impact of discrimination; the importance of the child's ongoing relationship with their birth family; how to work effectively with others in the child's network; etc. The provision of good quality pre and post approval training for Foster Carers is, therefore, vital.

Medway recognises the very important contribution made by foster carers through provision of supervision, training, and formal recognition. These include:

- Regular contact with the Fostering teams
- Buddy/Mentor for new foster carers
- Monthly local support groups which foster carers are strongly encouraged to attend.
- Mandatory and optional training opportunities, with funding provided for childcare where necessary.

Training, Support and Development (TSD) Induction Standards

The Department for Education (DfE) have created Training, Support and Development Standards (TDS) to provide guidance for Foster Carers on the requirements for their initial training and their ongoing continuous professional development.

It is a requirement that all Fostering Agencies ensure foster carers and connected carers complete a TSDs induction workbook.

All newly approved Foster Carers have 12 months to complete these from when they are approved as Foster Carers. All new Connected Carers have 18 months to complete these from the time when they were approved as Foster Carers. The carers receive £100 reward for completing the TSDs.

Supervising Social Workers are available to support Foster Carers to complete these books and to support understanding of the expectations that Foster Carers engage in Continuous professional development.

Supervision and support for Foster Carers

Each fostering household is allocated a Supervising Social Worker (SSW). In Medway we aim for Supervising Social Workers to supervise 15 fostering households. This allows them the time to develop meaningful relationships and to respond when challenges arise. The Supervising Social Worker's role includes providing regular formal supervision; working with each member of the fostering household, including birth children, to support carers in all aspects of their fostering role; helping foster carers in their liaison with other teams within Children Services as well as with other agencies.

Supervising Social Workers visit Foster Carers regularly and have capacity to visit frequently when required. During these visits Supervising Social Workers read the notes completed by the foster carers concerning the children in placement and discuss any matters arising. During visits the Supervising Social Workers are observant of any health and safety, child protection, and standards of care issues which need to be addressed.

Annual review of approval

All foster carers engage in an annual review of their status as approved foster carers. This is a formal review of the work that they have undertaken during the year and includes an opportunity to reflect on achievements, practice, and learning. They are also held when there has been a significant change of circumstances or when an allegation or concerns raised about the care a Foster Carer has provided.

Annual reviews are undertaken by Independent Fostering Reviewing Officers and draw on contributions from the Foster Carer and family, Supervising Social worker, Child's Social Worker, Child / Young Person placed, and other professionals involved with the placement. A report is presented to the Fostering Panel in the case of all first reviews following approval, three yearly intervals following the initial annual review and for any significant changes to the carer's registration during the annual review period.

Safeguarding

The fostering service will work in partnership with other agencies concerned with safeguarding including health and education to promote the welfare of children. Children will be helped to understand how to keep themselves safe including when outside of the household or when using the internet or social media.

Prospective foster carers will complete a health and safety assessment of their home and will be expected to address any concerns before a child is placed.

Foster carers will be trained in safe care practice, and a safe care plan will be drawn up for each child placed. This will include consideration of how other members of the family and household can contribute to safe care.

Managing complaints and allegations against foster carers

Foster carers are required to meet high standards of care. They are not permitted to use any kind of physical punishment and Medway expects high standards of behaviour from them at all times, regardless of the difficulties presented by some of the children in care. Children in care are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and have the same right to protection from abuse as all other children.

All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated and actioned through the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) under the procedures for A Guide to Managing Allegations against Foster Carers.

Support arrangements for carers subject to complaint or allegations

Being the subject of a complaint or allegation can be an extremely stressful experience for foster carers. The impact of allegations and complaints on foster carers and their families will vary in relation to the nature of the allegation/complaint, potential consequences, previous experiences, and the extent of additional stress on the foster carer.

Medway has commissioned Foster Talk to offer telephone support 24/7, offering practical and legal advice. The fostering service will also offer a “buddy” to support the carer.

5. Placements and financial arrangements

Medway Fostering Service provides placements for children in care in accordance with the Children Act 1989, the Care Standards Act 2000, the National Minimum Standards 2011 for Fostering Service and the Fostering Services Regulations.

When a Medway child in care requires a placement, their social worker makes a referral to the Placement Officer in the Fostering service. The Placement Officer works to find a suitable, well matched in-house Medway foster carer for the child. When it is not possible to find an appropriately matched placement for a child with in-house foster carers the Access to Resources Team will liaise with Independent Fostering Agencies or residential providers to find a placement for the child.

An important part of the referral process will be the successful matching of carers and child. A good match will depend upon the quality of the information that is available to share with the potential carer. No information relating to the child or family should be withheld from the

fostering team or the foster carers. Where there are concerns about information sharing this needs to be reviewed with the fostering service in the context of a risk assessment in relation to the foster carer, their family and family networks.

The Fostering Service provides, a range of fostering options that meet a diverse range of needs, circumstances, and backgrounds of children who are not able to live with their own families through short term, long term, respite and early permanence placements, Connected Carers foster placements, parent and child placements, as well as supported lodgings placements which are an available option for children aged 16 to 18 years old.

Short Term Placements

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

Permanent Foster Placements

Permanent placements are for children who need an alternative family to provide them with care, stability, and support throughout the time they are in care. The matching of children to such families is undertaken in a careful and planned way. The match is presented to the Fostering Panel and is endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker.

Early Permanence Foster Carers

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

Parent and child placements

Foster carers give comprehensive support to parents and children and are available to accommodate mothers and/or fathers and their babies offering the ability to contribute to a comprehensive assessment of the parenting skills of the placed adult. In addition to the tasks that foster carers would normally undertake, the recruited carers will contribute to the assessment of the parent/child relationship and assist with the development of parenting skills at a more intensive level. It is important that the assessment is undertaken in a professional and objective manner to gain the confidence of both the courts and other professionals in the use of foster carers for this task.

Connected Person Foster Carers

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

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

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

Supported Lodgings Providers

For older children (aged 16 to 18) entering care who require support in their transition to adulthood, the service will recruit supported lodgings providers who will work with these children to support their independence. In Medway, supported lodgings providers are approved by the in-house Agency Decision Maker, Head of Provider Services.

Financial arrangements

Foster carers receive a maintenance payment for each child they care for; this should be spent on the day-to-day care of the child which includes contribution to household bills, leisure activities, transport, clothing, and pocket money. There is an element built into the maintenance to also cover birthdays, Christmas/religious holidays, and festivals as well as annual holidays.

Travel claims should be submitted no later than one month following the date of the claim. In exceptional circumstances a carer can receive an advanced payment of up to a £100 at the time that the placement commences i.e. a child placed with no belongings in an emergency.

Payments to carers are made two weeks in arrears.

The Social worker for the child will complete the paperwork to set up the payments. Any over payments should be advised to the Fostering Payments Teams immediately this is identified, and arrangements made to pay this back. Where there are underpayments, these should be reported immediately to the supervising social worker in order that this is rectified quickly.

6. How we monitor and evaluate our services

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

We monitor the quality-of-service delivery and practice in the Fostering Service in several ways. The supervising social workers monitors and supervises the child's care plan with each

individual carer during their home visits and through annual reviews. Both the carer supervision recording format and Carer Annual Review reflect the child focussed elements contained in the Child's Plan as determined by the National Minimum Standards 2011. The supervising social workers support carers to engage with training and complete the Training, Support and Development Standards in the prescribed timescales.

The Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer undertakes all Foster Carer Reviews and contributes to the Standards of Care Reviews thus providing an additional element of independent review and scrutiny.

Some annual reviews (i.e. the first annual review for every fostering household, and then every 3 years thereafter) alongside the outcome of Standards of Care Reviews are presented at the Fostering Panel for review and then to the Agency Decision Maker for final approval.

The needs of children are closely monitored by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at all Children in Care (CIC) Reviews, which are attended by foster carers, fostering supervising social workers and the child's allocated social worker.

Placement stability is monitored, and stability meetings are held for any permanent placement which disrupts to enable analysis of and to learn lessons from the disruption.

The Panel Adviser to the Fostering Panel provides support, advice and quality assurance for the reports presented to the panel. The Panel Adviser manages the Panel arrangements, facilitates Panel training needs, and supports the independent Panel Chair. Panel liaison meeting with the Fostering Panel Chair, the Fostering Service Manager and the Agency Decision Maker are held every quarter to identify areas of strength and improvement.

Staff at all levels are provided with regular supervision by their line manager and consultation is readily available for complex cases.

The performance of the service is monitored and analysed in the Annual Report. Additionally, the Corporate Parenting Board receives reports on the performance of the Fostering Service.

Feedback from service users

Medway Fostering Service seeks feedback from applicants throughout their approval process and from carers during their fostering career. Feedback from children about their experience of foster care is also key.

Medway Fostering Service gains feedback by:

- Seeking the views of applicants on the assessment process following attendance at the Fostering Panel.
- Questionnaires following attendance at preparation course for prospective carers or training courses for approved foster carers.
- Mind of My Own app gives children and young people the opportunity to feedback on all aspects of their experience in care. Direct work with children also provides the opportunity for them to explore their feelings and give their views.
- Feedback from child's social worker, the child, the child Independent Review Officers (IROs) and carers at least annually for each carers review.

- Online questionnaires sent out, and forums held with foster carers to consult on service developments and general carer satisfaction.
- Regular meetings between foster carers and senior leadership team to ensure voice of the foster carers is heard and appropriate actions are in place.

7. Management and staffing

The fostering service comprises 4 teams of social workers under a Service Manager and the Head of Service for Provider Services.

The Recruitment Team recruits and assesses new generic foster carers, recruits, assesses and supports supported lodgings carers, and assesses and supports private fostering arrangements. It comprises of a Team Manager, a senior practitioner, 4 social workers and a recruitment and marketing officer.

There are 2 support teams who support all generic and fully approved connected carers. Under 2 team managers there are 2 seniors and 10 full time positions as supervising social workers. The teams also have 1 children's champion to provide additional support to our families, and a placement officer who works closely with commissioning to identify placements for children.

The Connected Carer Team assesses all family and friends identified as potentially able to provide care to children who may not be able to live with their birth parents. They undertake viability and Special Guardian assessments and assesses them to be fully approved connected carers. They also provide support to Special Guardians after the order is made. The team comprises a team manager, 2 senior practitioners, and 5 social workers.

The Fostering Agency Decision Makers are two Independent ADMs, and, the Head of Provider Services authorises the temporary approvals of connected carers.

8. Complaints

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

We will also respond promptly to formal complaints about the private fostering service through Medway Council's Complaints Procedure which can be found online at <https://www.medway.gov.uk/complain>. Complaints can be lodged by email: sccm@medway.gov.uk or by telephoning 01634 333036.

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

- Give a full and clear response to a complaint within 20 working days. If this is not possible, we advise complainants when an answer will be given.
- Look into complaints thoroughly and fairly.

- Be honest and polite and keep information confidential.
- Apologise if we have made a mistake.
- Tell complainants about what we are doing to put things right.

Concerns, complaints, and allegations about registered services including fostering agencies can be directed to external agencies such as Ofsted or Children's Commissioner for England particularly where it is not possible for them to be resolved directly with the agency.

A complaint can be lodged with Ofsted by email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or by telephoning 0300 123 1231.

Details of the Children's Commissioner for England are, Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner for England, The Office of the Children's Commission, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT, tel: 020 7783 8330

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/contact/>

The Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership deals with complaints that involve concerns for the safety or welfare of children in foster care. Information on this service can be found at the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership website:

<https://www.medwayscp.org.uk/mscb/>

Signed: Andrada Pepenel

Date: 26 June 2024

(Head of Service, Provider Services)

Signed: Raj Bharkhada

Date: 26 June 2024

(Assistant Director, Children's Services)