

Fostering Service Monitoring Report Form (England) for NMS 25 and Regulation 35 reports

1. Introduction

Name of fostering service	Together for Children Fostering Sunderland
Period covered by the report	1 st April 2022 – 31 st March 2023
Name of person completing the form	Daniel Kenny
Position in the fostering service	Registered Manager
Date form was completed	23 rd May 2023

Date of last Ofsted inspection	September 2022
Overall judgement	Good

Statutory requirements for improvement (with dates)

If any of the event listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table.

Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be given in writing. (Regulation 35)

Due date – 14th October 2022

Action undertaken to meet those requirements

This requirement was fulfilled within the necessary timescale. The outstanding notifications were submitted as requested.

Recommendations for improvement (with dates)

- The registered person should ensure that they implement a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. In particular, ensure that safe care policies are reflective of children's emerging needs and known risks. Children's risk assessments should explicitly reference where risks to children reduce or increase. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, 4.5)

Safe Caring Policy's are a key document in ensuring children and young people are safely cared for. All fostering family's have a household Safe Caring Policy and individual children and young people Safe Caring Policy's are also in place. Once risks change or serious incidents occur, Safe Caring Policy's are reviewed and updated if necessary.

- The registered person should ensure that foster carer's supervisions have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure that the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and ensure they offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. Foster carers' files should include detailed records of supervisory meetings. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 21.8)

Within this reporting period the foster carer supervision template has been reviewed and updated. Consultation with The Fostering Network has been held and this was a focus of a Team Development Day in November 2022. This update is in place to ensure increased consistency across the service and to ensure that care supervision records are fully reflective of the discussion that has taken place.

- The registered person should ensure that they regularly monitor and quality assure all records kept by the service to ensure that they are compliant with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Ensure that immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 25.2)

In this reporting period the fostering service has implemented a regular dip-sampling programme of quality assurance. This programme of quality assurance is evidenced by the monitoring of an action log and documented within the foster carers electronic record.

- The registered person should ensure that the staff's supervision evaluates staff's practice and fostering activity and to ensure that it is consistent with the 2011 regulations, national minimum standards and with the agency's own policies and procedures. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 25.3)

In this reporting period greater emphasis around the recording of staff supervision has been introduced. Fostering Social Workers personal supervision template has been amended to offer the opportunity for the recording of greater evidence of reflection which the supervision session.

- The registered person should ensure that information about a child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. In particular, ensure that when tracking children's progress there is a clear evaluation of the progress that children make from their starting points. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 26.6)

The fostering service will develop a report to be shared with the child in line with their cared for review frequency. This document will be made available for children and young people and accessible to their communication needs. It is expected that this development will be rolled out from April 2023.

Action undertaken to meet those recommendations

See above

2. Summary data

Foster carers																																																													
Expressions of interest	April – June 2022 - 0 July – Sep 2022 - 5 Oct – Dec 2022 -3 Jan – March 2023 - 3																																																												
Assessments completed	There has been a total of 11 assessments completed within the reporting period.																																																												
Assessments ongoing	At the time of writing this report, May 2023, there are two assessments of mainstream carers on going.																																																												
Approvals	Connected Carers – 7 Mainstream Carers –11 Long Team Permanence at Panel – 10																																																												
Reviews completed	There have been 182 foster carer reviews completed within the reporting period.																																																												
Foster carer training	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr><td>ADHD Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Attachment And Bonding Advanced Level Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Attachment and Child Development Fostering</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Autism Spectrum Disorder Fostering</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Caring For Sexually Abused Children Advanced Level Fostering</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Caring for Sexually Abused Children Fostering</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Child Development Advanced Level Fostering</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Child Development Fostering</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Child Exploitation Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Foundation Level Fostering Mandatory</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Child Sexual Exploitation Fostering</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Connected Carer Initial Workshop</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Contact and Birth Families Fostering</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>County Lines Fostering</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Cyberbullying Advanced Level Fostering</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Cyber Security Fostering</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>De-Escalation And Young People Non-Physical Fostering</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Equality, Diversity and Cultural Competence Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Female Genital Mutilation Awareness Fostering</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>First Aid Emergency Fostering</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>First Aid Paediatric Fostering</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Food Safety And Hygiene Advanced Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Gangs And County Lines Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Health And Nutrition Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Health And Safety Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>How To Save Money In A Cost Of Living Crisis Children Services</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Impact of Abuse</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Impact of Parental Substance Abuse Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Infection Control Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Internet Safety Advanced Level Fostering</td><td>1</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	ADHD Fostering	1	Attachment And Bonding Advanced Level Fostering	1	Attachment and Child Development Fostering	2	Autism Spectrum Disorder Fostering	4	Caring For Sexually Abused Children Advanced Level Fostering	4	Caring for Sexually Abused Children Fostering	4	Child Development Advanced Level Fostering	6	Child Development Fostering	3	Child Exploitation Fostering	1	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Foundation Level Fostering Mandatory	6	Child Sexual Exploitation Fostering	3	Connected Carer Initial Workshop	2	Contact and Birth Families Fostering	6	County Lines Fostering	3	Cyberbullying Advanced Level Fostering	2	Cyber Security Fostering	2	De-Escalation And Young People Non-Physical Fostering	2	Equality, Diversity and Cultural Competence Fostering	1	Female Genital Mutilation Awareness Fostering	2	First Aid Emergency Fostering	5	First Aid Paediatric Fostering	5	Food Safety And Hygiene Advanced Fostering	1	Gangs And County Lines Fostering	1	Health And Nutrition Fostering	1	Health And Safety Fostering	1	How To Save Money In A Cost Of Living Crisis Children Services	1	Impact of Abuse	4	Impact of Parental Substance Abuse Fostering	1	Infection Control Fostering	1	Internet Safety Advanced Level Fostering	1
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	Internet Safety Fostering	1
	Life Story Work Fostering	13
	Managing Allegations Fostering	9
	Medication Advanced Fostering	2
	Medication Foundation Fostering	1
	Moving Forward With Delegated Authority Fostering	4
	Online Safety Fostering	2
	Other	8
	Reporting And Recording Advanced Level Fostering	5
	Reporting And Recording Fostering	4
	Risk Management And Safer Caring Fostering	3
	Safeguarding Adults Level 1 Fostering	2
	Safeguarding Adults Level 2 Fostering	1
	Safeguarding Children Level 1 Fostering	2
	Secure Attachment and Bonding Fostering	7
	Self-Harming Behaviours Fostering	2
	Solihull Approach	2
	Support Group	26
	Support Group - Coffee Morning	24
	Support Group – Toddler Group	8
	Support Group - Vokol	12
	Taking Care of Yourself & Each Other Fostering	1
	Using Basic Theraplay Techniques Fostering	5
Foster carer support groups	Monthly support groups, including guest speakers have taken place each month, face to face, in the reporting period. These support groups are offered in addition to various other engagement events.	
Terminations of approval	We have had 18 foster carers resign over the reporting period, 0 of these resignations were because of the agency raising standards of care concerns, and all were for a range of personal reasons.	
Number of foster carers	174 fostering households	
Comment, analysis, and any action taken		
<p>TfC have continued to invest significantly into our online training programme and the uptake on the variety of courses has been high. We have consulted our carers regarding their preference in respect of accessing training and the majority of carers have preferred a hybrid approach to online and in person training. The service has been able to respond to this feedback and whilst continuing to offer a significant number of training courses online, in person training has continued including the facilitation of paediatric first aid and Solihull Therapeutic Parenting, TfC Fostering’s behaviour management programme.</p> <p>Within the reporting period, we strengthened our relationships with Fostering Network and have been able to successfully embed two Mockingbird Family Model constellations.</p>		

In addition to this, we have continued to see the benefits of a permanent full-time consultant child psychologist, Dr Harrison, to the service which has been very well received by both carers and Social Workers alike. Dr Harrison is currently supporting the service with the roll out of enhanced training to foster carers in order to support their training and development alongside the offer of regular consultation sessions with foster carers and advice to Social Workers in respect of a range of issues.

Children and young people	
Referrals	155
New placements	95
Placements ended	52
Unplanned endings	12
Number of children	155
Comment, analysis, and any action taken	
<p>Demand upon the service remains high with the requests for older children and sibling groups remaining challenging to find homes for. Performance colleagues are able to provide us with detailed breakdowns of unplanned endings and disruptions will allow us to monitor these closely and learn from each event. The number of children and young people received for referral within this reporting period are from Together for Children Sunderland as the placing authority.</p>	

3. Detailed data

Compliance with care plan

Within the reporting period, the Foster Carer Supervision template has been further updated to allow for greater reflection between FSW (Fostering Social Worker) and the foster care to reflect a Signs of Safety/Success/Wellbeing approach and learning from our most recent Ofsted inspection in September 2022. This should ensure, that the carer is clear about the care plan for each child, and that the child is aware, subject to their age and understanding within this model of working which is the model of practice within the TfC wider organisation. It also considers if the carer is supporting each child to contribute their views, and know their plan as well as identifying if the carer contributes to the care planning process via attendance at meeting's etc.

The Fostering Service has continued to work closely with the IRO service to ensure compliance with care plans, the IRO manager and Fostering Registered Manager are in regular contact and any issues/concerns are raised and addressed. The Fostering Service currently manually collates data on unplanned endings; however, this information is also monitored via Foster Carer Reviews with a report by the FSW having managerial oversight within the FSW's report.

During the reporting period 5 young people have moved on to access 'staying put' arrangements and 31 children have moved on to live with prospective adopters.

Accidents, injuries and illnesses

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding death of a child, serious illness or accident, or outbreak of infectious disease

Within the annual reporting period, there have been 16 schedule 7 notifications regarding serious illness or accident or outbreak of infectious disease. All notifications relate to instances of self-harm, broken bones or hospitalisation.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Foster Carers are continued to be supported to ensure that any serious incidents are reported without delay to the Fostering Service.

Medication, medical treatment and first aid administered

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

The Foster Carer Supervision template includes prompts for discussion around medication, medical treatment and first aid. Together for Children has maintained its relationship with The Big Initiative training provider and carers, Fostering Social Workers and Panel Members can now access a range of training programmes via this tool.

Mandatory Paediatric First Aid training is held and repeated every three years for all carers and can be extended to adult household members should the need arise. Within *The Big Initiative*, our online training platform, a significant increase in the online training offer to support carers understanding of these issues, including the safe handling and storage of medication has been provided. Carers have welcomed this addition to our training offer and the return of in person training to cover paediatric first aid.

Measures of control, restraint or discipline

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

In addition to the training programmes available via The Big Initiative, we have continued in the roll out of the Solihull Parenting Programme having now trained over 200 carers within this approach.

TfC have embedded Mockingbird Family Model within our work delivering foster care, this now includes 15 fostering families and over 35 children and young people with an aim of providing a high level of peer support to the carers and normalising the care experience for those children and young people. We have recently received our first annual data analysis report from Fostering Network which will provide the summary of the costs saved, avoided and overall impact of the model which is currently being considered. We expect to launch our third constellation within the second part of 2023.

Complaints in relation to children/about foster carers, and their outcomes	
Summary	<p>There have been no schedule 7 notifications regarding a serious complaint about a foster carer.</p> <p>During the reporting period there have been 31 compliments submitted to Together for Children's Compliments and Complaints Department.</p>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding any serious complaint about a foster carer, or information being provided to the Disclosure and Barring Service	
<p>Within the current reporting period we have submitted no notifications to the DBS service.</p>	

Allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect, and investigation outcomes	
Evidence	<p>There have been 11 foster carers referred to the Designated Officer within the reporting period. 9 of these related to mainstream foster carers and 2 to Connected Carers. Of those 11, 4 cases met the threshold for Designated Officer involvement and 7 were recorded advice given only and did not meet threshold.</p> <p>Of the 4 cases that were accepted, all were closed and there are currently no cases being investigated.</p>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding instigation and outcome of any child protection inquiry, or suspicion/involvement of child in "prostitution"	
<p>There have been 13 schedule 7 notifications submitted due to 'instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry.'</p>	
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
<p>As a service we continue to embed relationships with the Designated Officer and are introducing regular monitoring and information sharing meetings. This has allowed us to monitor trends and develop an appropriate action plan as required.</p>	

Children missing without permission
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a child missing from placement
There have been no notifications in this regard.
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided
Our ability to report using our social care system allows us to receive information in relation to children that go missing, this includes data around the child and the carer with whom they are living. This data is included within the agenda within the monthly management meetings. This data will allow us to identify any themes or trends that may emerge. Additional training from colleagues who work within the Emergency Duty Team is also provided to carers to assist in their understanding of these issues.

Allegations that a child has committed a serious offence
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding allegations that a child has committed a serious offence
There have been no incidences within the reporting year whereby a child has committed a serious offence and as such no notifications of this regard have been made to Ofsted.

Serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home
There have been 10 notifications made to this regard.

4. Staffing

<p>Summary of staffing position</p> <p>Registered Manager – Full time Assistant Team Managers – 2 FT Fostering Social Workers – 12 Assistant Fostering Officer – 1FT</p> <p>During the reporting period there have been some staffing changes, however the staff team is currently stable and with full compliment. Any vacancies are immediately advertised and recruited using safer recruitment guidance.</p>
<p>Recruitment of new staff</p> <p>Recruitment of new staff is undertaken with the support and guidance of the Human Resources Department within Together for Children. HR ensures that appropriate checks are in place and saved on file prior to appointment.</p>
<p>Staff supervision</p> <p>All staff have a named supervisor and receive monthly personal and case supervision. The TM undertakes ad hoc dip sampling of the supervision records for all staff. The monthly management meeting has a standing agenda item of ‘staffing’ and key points relating to individual staff members are explored within this.</p>
<p>Staff training</p> <p>The current team plan was developed in September 2022. The plan incorporates a section on staff training and allows team members to influence training that is identified. Within the reporting year staff have also had access to training on Foster Care Supervision, the social care system, signs of safety, Train the trainers in relation to Solihull Parenting Programme (not whole staff team), Mental Health First Aid and Robust Analysis and an Evidence Based Approach Assessment. We have also supported Social Workers within the team to complete their Practice Educator Award’s to support their development and with an aim to further compliment the availability of Social Workers skilled in delivering Theraplay.</p>
<p>Staff appraisals</p> <p>Staff appraisals are completed annually, and the development of a personal development plan is used throughout the following year. Together for Children have launched Goal Setting targets for all staff, with regular reviews to ensure that these are being maintained and staff development supported.</p>
<p>Staff meetings</p> <p>Team meetings are held monthly, they are chaired by the TM or an ATM in his absence and minutes are taken on a rota basis by members of the team. Within the</p>

reporting period, team meetings have been held in person to support colleagues as is their preference.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Staff enjoy having areas of responsibility which they can 'own' and develop. They also appreciate their regular supervision and accessibility of both assistant team managers and the team manager. We work with a whole team approach which is supportive to all. The further established Connected Carer team within the reporting period has continued to expand the benefits of this specialised service and these are continuing to feed into the wider service.

5. Fostering panel

Summary of panel

The Fostering Panel has continued to function at full capacity during the reporting year. The Panel Chair, Panel Advisor and Panel Members have remained committed to their roles during this time and therefore as a panel the meetings have been quorate with a least 5 members in attendance at each panel, despite the changes to the regulations for quoracy.

Additional panels have been facilitated to meet the increased demand for cases to be heard, alongside the panel's planned introduction of Permanence Panels to consider the permanence planning for children 13 years and under. Fostering Panel are currently exploring how the use of alternative platforms such as Microsoft Forms can be utilised to increase the frequency of panel feedback received to further develop the panel experience for Social Workers and applicants.

Panel meetings

There has been 22 Fostering Panels held during the reporting period.

Cases considered and recommendations

- Connected Carers – 8 Cases considered, recommendation to approve 7 cases and not approve 1.
- Mainstream Foster Carers – 11, recommendation to approve all 11 carers
- Regulation 25's – 31, recommendation to approve 29, 2 deferred
- First Reviews – 9, recommendation on-going approval for all 9 carers
- Mainstream resignations – 18

Panel feedback

Evaluation forms completed by the applicants, the assessing Social Workers and where appropriate the child's allocated Social Worker in respect of their attendance at the Fostering Panel continues to be requested and the responses are collated and to date this has been largely positive. Applicants refer to being made to feel at ease by a professional but friendly panel, where time is taken to listen to their views.

Training and appraisals

Panel Members appraisals have taken place virtually and all Panel Members have engaged in their appraisals by August 2022. Panel business meetings have been held to inform the panel development, as has Panel Members training.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

In respect of actions taken to improve care, any concerns in respect of safeguarding have been reported to senior managers and ADM. Panel have monitored that the Safer Care Policy for children living with Regulation 24 carers has been child specific and not generic, within the documents provided to panel. This has been a focus in terms of safeguarding and when considering the Voice of the Child. Finally, for further development to feedback to panel the outcome of any case reviews as identified by panel members.

6. Consultation with children and young people

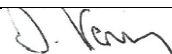
Evidence	<p>An online survey using 'survey monkey' is completed annually with both carers and children living with our foster carers. The feedback is used to inform decisions relating to service development.</p> <p>We have been able to further embed our children and young people's group, VOKOL (Voice of Kids Our Lives) children and young people group within this reporting period. The group, who meet twice monthly, is a combination of cared for children and carers birth children. The group offers them a shared activity space to come together for fun activities and to highlight ways in which the service can be influenced, particularly in relation to recruitment activities and the group has taken a particular lead in this area. The group have recently designed recruitment adverts for carers along with lending their voices to a new marketing campaign to highlight children's experiences of being cared for.</p>
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
See below, along with consultation with foster carers	

7. Consultation with foster carers

Evidence	<p>We have continued to hold monthly coffee mornings for carers which is an opportunity for them to chat informally both with staff and each other due within the reporting period. Monthly support groups have also continued to be held, these are more ‘formal’ and usually include guest speakers on a range of topics.</p> <p>We have an established consultative group which meets regularly, the Registered Manager chairs this group and over the reporting year I have seen the group change and attendance begin to increase. Carers advise they feel supported and listened to, they are empowered to raise issues as they know their concerns will be listened to and acted upon.</p> <p>We have plans to recognise the length of service of all carers within Foster Care Fortnight in May 2023.</p>
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
<p>Participation and engagement within the reporting period has posed additional challenges due to the restrictions placed upon on us however despite this, the service has continued to hold regular support groups, children’s events and embed two Mockingbird constellation. Within our team plan we recognised that we wanted to really engage with children and carers at an informal and supportive level before enhancing this further with more formal routes of engagement.</p> <p>Carers report that they are listened to, they have direct contact details for the Registered Manager and are also able to meet with him/raise issues both at informal and formal meetings. Our training, support and fee scheme is a transparent way of financially supporting foster carers and has ensured that an unprecedented level of commitment to developing their own learning and in turn improving the level of care afforded.</p>	

8. Financial information

Comment				
1.1 The table below provides summary financial information relating to the Fostering Service for 2022/2023.				
	Actual	Realigned Budget	Variance	Notes
Category	£		£	
Employees (inc Agency)	796,083	860,187	64,104	
Premises (Room Hire)	4,383	2,000	(2,383)	
Car Mileage (Employee)	33,161	25,500	(7,661)	
DBS / Medical Reports	42,925	50,500	7,575	
Equipment (Foster Carers)	1,612	2,000	388	
Publicity	67,931	51,136	(16,795)	
Other Running Expenses	26,256	29,897	3,641	
Foster Care Payments	5,635,075	6,105,000	469,925	
IFAs				
	6,607,426	7,126,220	518,794	
1.2 Key priorities for the agency remain the retention of its excellent carers and the recruitment of more foster carers. A major focus is on recruiting carers who will care for older children and teenagers, or children with complex needs, or large sibling groups and target younger carers who will provide longer term stability for younger children entering care.				

Signed	
Name	Daniel Kenny
Position	Registered Manager
Date	31 st May 2023