



## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE - FOSTER CARE (June 2021)

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*ADOPTED DECEMBER 2003*

*UPDATED JUNE 2021*

This Statement of Purpose replaces the Agency and Foster Care Service Specification Document. It complies with the National Minimum Standards for fostering and Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Care Standards Act 2000. This document will be reviewed and updated annually.

The Children's guide will be made available to all children and young people in a Caritas Care foster placement.

A copy of this document will be provided/made available upon request to:

- The parents of all children within a Caritas Care placement.
- Ofsted
- Any person working for the purpose of the fostering service
- Any child (subject to their age and understanding) placed with a foster carer approved by Caritas Care
- All foster carers approved through Caritas Care.
- Placing Authorities will be issued with a copy of the document immediately when a child is placed.

Our practice is also informed by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, associated child protection guidance and Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Lancaster first established a childcare agency in 1934. Approved as an Adoption Agency in 1943, the Lancaster Diocesan Protection and Rescue Society directed its energies primarily towards the adoption of infants. As broader childcare activities evolved the Agency became the Lancaster Diocesan Catholic Children's Society.

By the mid 1980's the Diocese was keen to extend the range of social welfare activities. The childcare work became progressively specialised and continues to be at the core of the Agency's activities. Since 1987 a range of services within the community and for adults with disabilities has developed and this diversification was reflected in the change of the Agency's name to Catholic Caring Services. These changes brought with them more robust management structures and central support systems. In March 2009 and as a celebration of its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Agency decided to refresh the identity of the Charity by changing its name to **Caritas Care**.

## STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

**Caritas Care** is an autonomous Registered Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, and founded in 1934 is one of the longest established independent charities in the North West. Caritas Care provides a wide range of services across the North West operating from sites in Lancashire, Cumbria and Greater Manchester.

As a Registered Charity the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association prohibit the distribution of profits and we are therefore recognised as a voluntary organisation as defined within Section 105 of the Children Act 1989. **Caritas Care** is therefore properly constituted to have the care of children delegated to it by Local Authorities as detailed in the Local Authority Circular (98)2.

**Caritas Care** is a specialist adoption agency and independent fostering provider which operates in the North West of England. It has office bases in Preston, Carlisle and Manchester. The agency is registered with Ofsted as an adoption agency and fostering provider. With 80 years experience as an adoption agency and 20 years experience in providing foster care, **Caritas Care** maintains the welfare of the child as paramount in the on going development and innovative approach to the delivery of services for children.

## THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

A Board of Trustees governs **Caritas Care**. The charity was born out of the Church and our vision is still informed by the social teaching of the Church. We work with people of any faith or none across the region, to enable, empower, encourage, inspire and support them to overcome barriers and transform their lives.



The work of the agency is now structured into two operational areas; Children's Services where the principal purpose is to provide security and permanence for children and young people in need. This is achieved through foster care, adoption or concurrent planning. Our Adult and Community Services includes day service provision for adults with physical and/or learning difficulties, services to people with sensory impairment and a range of community development services across the North West of England.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the direction of the Agency, for defining policy and approving annual budgets. The officers of the agency are accountable to the Board; strategic and operational management is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, Director of Operations and Community Services and Director of Finance and Disability Services.

Details of the Management Structure appear in Appendix 1

## CARITAS CARE – POLICY FOR CHILDREN

In all its practices concerning the placement of children, *Caritas Care* is first and foremost dedicated to the well being of the child; based upon the belief that it is within the family that a child's needs are primarily satisfied and their rights secured. This should be the principal focus with applicants who wish to foster children.

The agency has for many years pioneered good practice in the field of childcare and is committed to providing secure placements for children seeing these as the fundamental pre-requisite of healthy emotional growth, stability, security and sense of identity, thus enabling the formation of meaningful relationships, which will hopefully endure. A child also needs a full understanding of past events. *Caritas Care* is particularly concerned about children who have lost or are at risk of losing some or all of these rights.

## PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE SERVICE

To ensure the child is safeguarded and their rights promoted, our work is informed and underpinned by the following principles expressed through professional practice of a high standard which:

- Meets the needs of children and young people, by upholding as paramount their welfare.
- Provides children looked after with safe, secure and life enriching experiences.
- Enables children, young people and adults to have increased responsibility for their own lives.
- Respects confidentiality and privacy of information about individuals who use our service and those whom we employ.
- Provides those who are socially excluded or discriminated against because of a disability, difference or disadvantage with real chances and opportunities to exercise choice and achieve their full potential.



- Works in partnership and collaboration with other agencies, groups and individuals committed to the best interests of those children and young people with whom we work.
- Allows the child, parent(s), carers and other people of significance to participate in decision-making processes, which challenge unfairness or injustice.
- Allows the involvement of all parties in determining and encouraging the child's welfare through consultation, working in partnership and co-operation in order to achieve the best outcomes for the child.
- Explains and advises the child and parent(s) of the powers, responsibilities and duties of all individuals involved in the provision of care for the child.
- Takes care to recruit and develop people who have appropriate professional qualifications and experience and who are committed to our mission and values.

The mission, values and ethos of the agency, together with the principles embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child guide our work, and we have a proven track record of our ability to meet the needs of children. The foster care service alongside the adoption service has the commitment of a skilled workforce to develop and sustain a service that will continue to deliver the highest standards of foster care to aid the longer term plans and outcomes for children in public care.

The foster care service within **Caritas Care** was developed following substantial research and consultation, which confirmed the need for a 'not-for-profit' service which would increase placement choices for children who are Looked After.

Since the inception of the foster care service in April 1998, **Caritas Care** has been instrumental in providing alternative family placements for an average of 40 children in need each year (including Concurrent Planning placements). We strive to build upon our reputation as providers of a quality foster care service based upon the secure foundations of the Agency.

The principles which underpin the policies and practice of the fostering service are consistent with the mission, vision and values of the agency, the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the principles of the Human Rights Act 1998, that all individuals have the right to family life. All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

The foster care service also aims to provide placements for children and young people which promote the five outcomes described in Every Child Matters, initially promoted by the DCSF. The outcomes are;

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

To achieve their potential, children need to feel loved, valued, and supported by a network of reliable and nurturing relationships. If they are denied the opportunity and support to achieve these outcomes, children are at increased risk of disadvantage and social exclusion in both childhood and adulthood.

## THE SERVICES OFFERED

At *Caritas Care* the foster care service currently offers a range of placement options for children of all age groups, which are non-denominational. These are:

- **Long term:** for children who cannot return to their parents, and the Care Plan is for a permanent substitute foster family.
- **Short term:** the placement of children needing care for brief periods providing relief and support at times of significant stress in families, though primarily where children are subject to care proceedings.
- **Pre-adoption:** placements for infants where adoption may be the long-term plan.
- **Bridging placements:** such placements form part of a long term plan for children and can last up to two years in duration. Our foster carers offering such placements will work with children to prepare them for either adoption, a move into a long term foster placement, independent living, or through work with birth parents towards reunification.
- **Task centred:** these will be time-limited placements with a specific focus such as parental assessment, bridging from one placement to another or to facilitate direct work or therapeutic input.
- **Respite Care:** a support resource for carers of children in need.
- **Parent and child:** a limited number of placements are available where the foster carers will provide support and guidance to both parent and child.
- **Enhanced Placement:** for older children with additional or more complex needs who need a higher level of support from their foster carer and therapeutic input.
- **Concurrent Planning;** combines fostering and adoption for babies and young children whilst their future is being decided by the courts. Initially placed in foster care, the child will be looked after by carers who are formally trained and approved as both foster carers and adopters. In the event that the court decision is not to return the child to their birth family, their placement will convert to adoption and so avoid the need for the child to be moved to a new placement at a vulnerable stage in their lives. This is a project delivered in Partnership with Adoption Matters.
- **Dual Approval:** for older children who may have previously had a care plan of adoption but for whatever reason has not been achieved – this placement option combines fostering and adoption for those children, giving them a second chance of permanence, ideally through adoption, but if not, through long term foster care with the same carers, without them having to experience the disruption of a placement move.



Many children arrive in their foster home feeling unhappy, confused, isolated, and sometimes rejected. It is important to address such feelings through the provision of a supportive, caring and secure environment with consistent boundaries. Some children have additional needs or display very challenging behaviour, and consequently require a high level of supervision and support. In such circumstances **Caritas Care** are able to access therapeutic or psychological consultancy support for foster carers. If through the process of consultancy a need is identified for a particular type of specialist input or therapy for the child, a referral for such can be facilitated by the Agency on behalf of the Local Authority.

All children placed within a **Caritas Care** foster placement will be supported in accessing appropriate education through the involvement of our Education Officer, whose role is to work with families and children to promote their learning and overall achievement.

Whilst **Caritas Care** is concerned to respond to need, and indeed has established this service as a consequence of perceived need, it expects its service to be a planned intervention wherever possible. The agency does not offer emergency placements out of office hours.

## **ADDITIONAL SERVICES**

As a long established charity, **Caritas Care** has developed a range of additional services for children, and undertakes specific pieces of work, on request, to assist Local Authorities in the placement of children, including:

- Partner adoption applications
- Membership of adoption/permanence/ fostering panels
- Independent Chairing of Disruption Review meetings
- Life story or therapeutic life story work
- Supervision of contact
- Independent support for foster carers during allegations.
- Training for panel members, second time adopters, SGO's etc

A professional fee is charged for these additional services.

## **THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE**

The foster care service is committed to:

- Recruiting a broad range of foster carers who are able to demonstrate through assessment their suitability for the task.
- A child centred approach.
- Providing high quality care in an alternative family setting.



- Delivering a locally based service within a national framework, leading to a greater choice of placements, so increasing the possibility of meeting the needs of a wider range of children.
- Anti-discriminatory practice and equality of chances, choices and opportunity.
- Recognising the importance of a child's racial, religious, cultural and linguistic needs including the provision of continuity in a child's life, wherever possible.
- Consideration of the gender, sexuality, special needs and any disability of children and young people.
- Continuous monitoring, improvement, quality assurance and the delivery of a high quality service.
- Providing robust and effective support for foster carers.

**Caritas Care** through the provision of foster care aims to provide placements which:

- Meet the child's needs in an environment which positively promotes their emotional, physical and psychological well being.
- Encourage a healthy, stimulating and active lifestyle.
- Helps a child to develop some understanding, acceptance and resolution of past events.
- Helps a child to build a positive sense of identity and self worth.
- Enables children to achieve their educational potential.
- Protect children from emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
- Encourage children to develop their own personal resources, resilience and strengths in preparation for independence.
- Provide stability, security and a safe, caring environment in which children can positively thrive.
- Meet the cultural and diverse individual needs of each child.
- Seek the views of children in relation to the development of the foster care service they receive.
- Safeguard children's welfare, by ensuring that foster carers are rigorously assessed and subject to Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks, references and medicals.
- Promote a child's health and development.
- Are carefully matched to meet the individual needs of children placed.
- Enable partnership working between carers, social workers, parents and others.
- Promote and encourage contact with a child's birth family and significant others if this is deemed appropriate.

In order to achieve these aims **Caritas Care** offers to all its foster carers:

- A service which values carers through the provision of positive, structured support and supervision.
- A designated social worker to advise, support and guide in relation to the child/ren in placement.



- Regular visits and telephone contact from their social worker.
- Careful matching of children, in line with the identified skills and approval categories of carers.
- Out of hours access to, and support from a qualified social worker.
- A programme of preparation and post approval training.
- Access to therapeutic and psychological support.
- Access to an education consultant with specialist knowledge in SEN.
- Foster Carers support group meetings.
- Annual Reviews which include consultation with carers, social workers and children placed.
- Allowances and expenses relating to the children placed in their care.
- Support from a Social Work Assistant
- Appropriate insurance cover via The Fostering Network Insurance Scheme and Caritas Care.
- A comprehensive handbook detailing their responsibilities, entitlements, advice and guidance on issues which may arise in the course of caring for children.
- A copy of the Statement of Purpose in relation to the Foster Care service.
- A service with sound, robust policies and procedural guidance in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
- Access to a complaints procedure.

## THE STAFFING STRUCTURE

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CARITAS CARE BOARD OF TRUSTEES</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chief Executive Officer(Responsible Individual)</b> Susan Swarbrick</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Director of Finance and Disability Services</b> Christine Briggs</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Director of Operations and Community Services</b> Dale Tomlinson</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Service Manager - Foster Care (Registered Manager)</b> Rebecca Hughes</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Practice Managers</b> Kate Knowles – Concurrent Planning Julie Hogan – Concurrent Planning (<i>employed by Adoption Matters</i>) Louise Young – Panel Advisor and Reviewing Officer</p>

**Senior Social Work Practitioners**

Bernie Finlay – Foster Care  
Sylvia Whight – Concurrent Planning  
Colette Perry-Edwards – Foster Care  
Lucy Doughty – Foster Care

**Social Workers**

Stephanie Stavert – Foster Care  
Helen Cheetham – Concurrent Planning (*employed by Adoption Matters*)  
John McEvoy – Concurrent Planning (*employed by Adoption Matters*)  
Carmel Murphy – Concurrent Planning (*employed by Adoption Matters*)  
Katie Cooke – Concurrent Planning (*employed by Adoption Matters*)

**Social Work Assistants**

Sharon Bassa – Foster Care  
Claire Lilly – Concurrent Planning  
Charlotte Davies – Concurrent Planning (*employed by Adoption Matters*)

**Contact Co-ordinator – Concurrent Planning**

Lynda McAllister

**Recruitment and Placement Officer**

Ashleigh Robinson

The Chief Executive Officer has direct line management responsibility for the Service Manager, who is delegated with line management responsibility for Social Work practitioners, Social Work assistants and Recruitment Officer. The Practice Managers in Concurrent Planning are delegated with line management responsibility for the Social Work Practitioners, Contact Co-ordinator and Contact Supervisor. In the absence of the Service/Practice Managers, the Chief Executive Officer will deputise.

The staff employed by the agency foster care and concurrent planning services are selected with care through an equal opportunities process and in recognition of the guidance contained within the *Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People* document 2007 published by the DSCF and are required to subscribe to the mission, vision, values and ethos of **Caritas Care**. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are undertaken for all newly appointed staff and renewed at the required intervals of 3 years for existing employees.

All staff members receive a contract of employment detailing the conditions of service surrounding their appointment and take part in a thorough process of induction in relation to the Agency, foster care and concurrent planning services. All professionally qualified social work members of the foster care team are registered with Social Work England.

The social work assistants have appropriate experience of working with children and families; they undertake their duties under the supervision of qualified staff.

Details of the staffing structure appear in Appendix 1.

**Caritas Care** is committed to enabling all staff to achieve an acceptable and healthy work/life balance. Policies and procedures encourage the retention of salaried staff by offering flexibility in working patterns, regular structured supervision and annual appraisal, commitment to on going training, manageable workloads and a regard for staff welfare. Personal and professional development is important.

The work of the Foster Care and Concurrent Planning Services are effectively and efficiently supported by well established administrative and finance departments.

## **THE FOSTER CARE PANEL**

The Agency Foster Care Panel, established in April 1998, is supported by clear policies and procedures, which meet the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2011 and The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) Regulations 2009 amended by the 2010 Regulations.

**Due to COVID 19, all of our Panel activity currently takes place on line and remotely. This approach will be kept under review.**

The role and function of the Panel appointed by **Caritas Care** is to:

- Ensure that the assessment process has been adequately carried out and the requirements of the law and agency policy have been fully adhered to.
- Examine applications thoroughly and consider whether there is evidence of the applicant's abilities and suitability to foster. (Applications where there is a disclosure, through the DBS process where a person is considered to pose a risk to children, are automatically considered unsuitable and will not therefore be presented to Panel for consideration.)
- Make recommendations in relation to the approval, review and termination of foster carers.
- Advise on professional standards and practice, and any other issue which the Chief Executive Officer wishes them to consider,
- Monitor activity and the quality of work undertaken by the Fostering Service.



Membership of the Foster Care Panel is coterminous with **Caritas Care** Adoption Panel. Members are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service checks and required to sign a ‘Statement of Confidentiality’. The Panel membership comprises people with complimentary experience within the professional arena of child care and lay members with relevant personal life experience. Medical and Legal advisors are also appointed and effectively serve the Panel.

The Central List for the Foster Care Panel is as follows:

Chair	Sue Westwood	Former Head of a Regional Agency Adoption and ADM
Vice Chair- Independent Member	Karyn Brand	Local authority Advanced Practitioner
Vice Chair – Social Worker	Alison Taylor Farrell	Senior Practitioner – Adoption
Social Worker	Lucy Doughty	Senior Practitioner – Fostering
Social Worker	Colette Perry-Edwards	Senior Practitioner – Fostering
Social Worker	Bernie Finlay	Senior Practitioner – Fostering
Social Worker	Kate Knowles	Practice Manager - Concurrent Planning
Social Worker	Barbara Hitchcock	Senior Practitioner - Adoption
Social Worker	Sandra Williams	Senior Practitioner – Adoption
Social Worker	Sylvia Whight	Senior Practitioner – CCP
Independent Member	Ann Barrett	Adopted Adult / Former Teacher in Prisons
Independent Member	Steve Barsby	Former LA Adoption Manager/Independent member
Independent Member	Julie Gorrie	Former Health Visitor
Independent Member	Sandra Davies	Adoptive parent and Foster Carer
Independent Member	Pippa Davies	Adopted young person and former looked after child
Independent Member – Vice Chair	Vincent Ryan	Adoptive Parent and former Foster carer (CCP)
Independent Member	Gill Stephensen	Adoptive Parent and former Foster carer (CCP)
Independent Member	Elizabeth Ibeziako	Foster Carer



Independent Member	Barry Hunt	Ex Local Authority Social Worker
Independent Member	Amreen Riaz	Social Work Practice Manager
Independent Member	Andrew Wren	Adoptive Parent
Independent Member	Richard Ellis	Former Foster Carer
Member	Christine Sutherland	Member of the Board of Trustees
Panel Adviser	Louise Young	Panel Adviser
	Rebecca Hughes	Fostering Service Manager
	Kate Knowles	Practice Manager - Concurrent Planning
Agency Decision Maker	Susan Swarbrick	Chief Executive Officer
	Rebecca Hughes	Fostering Service Manager

- An accurate account of the business and proceedings of each Panel meeting is documented.
- The minutes of each Panel meeting detail the reasons for all Panel recommendations.
- The Foster Care Panel recommendations will be made within the meeting and recorded.
- Written notifications of decisions are issued to applicants and social workers.
- Statistical records are maintained for performance monitoring, service development and the annual report.

## THE RECRUITMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS

**Due to COVID 19, all of our recruitment and training activities take place online currently. Assessment sessions are completed both virtually and in person, with a risk assessment in place. This approach will be kept under review.**

The Children Act 1989 requires that Agencies recruit foster carers who reflect the geographic and ethnic mix of the community. In this respect the recruitment process undertaken by **Caritas Care** is currently operational within the North West of England with bases for Children’s Services in Lancashire, Cumbria and Greater Manchester. We recruit potential carers using local media/press coverage/social media, open/information sessions and as an on going process by word of mouth, based upon our reputation.

Applications for assessment to become a foster carer are welcomed from people regardless of gender, marital status, sexuality, race, disability, religion, and culture or employment status. Anyone over the age of 21 years of age may apply and there is no upper age limit, but the applicant must be healthy and active to enable them to care appropriately for a child placed with them.

**Caritas Care** will respond to every enquiry by providing the enquirer with the opportunity to discuss the fostering task with a qualified social worker. In so doing the Agency then subsequently follows the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services by;

- Undertaking a competence based assessment of potential carers as recommended by BAAF now CoramBaaf.
- A professionally qualified Social Work Practitioner undertaking the assessment.
- Obtaining authorisation for and carrying out statutory checks and references, DBS and Local Authority checks on all adults over 18, resident within the household.
- Obtaining written consent from applicants for a health assessment to be undertaken.
- Requesting a minimum of two personal references and subsequently endorsing these through interview.
- Seeking employers' references particularly where an applicant has worked directly with children or vulnerable adults.
- Verifying the identity of each applicant.
- Considering the necessity of checking any adult non-household member who may have regular contact with any child placed.
- Seeing the applicants together and on an individual basis as part of the assessment process, all other relevant parties will also be seen, particularly any children of the applicants.
- Completing the CoramBaaf Prospective Foster Carers Report, this will be shared upon completion with the applicants (excluding confidential references).
- Where applicants are being assessed as Concurrent Carers, the Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR) will be completed and this will incorporate an addendum in respect of the fostering task for the purposes of Concurrency.
- Where applicants are being assessed for Dual Approval, the Prospective Adopter's Report, amended for the purpose of Dual Approval (PAR) will be completed.
- Inviting all applicants who are being assessed and prepared to become approved as foster carers to undertake the 'Skills to Foster' training programme hosted by **Caritas Care**.
- Inviting all applicants who are being assessed and prepared to become approved as either Concurrent or Dual Approval carers to undertake the Adoption Preparation and Skills to Foster training hosted by **Caritas Care**, with additional modules as appropriate and relating to their approval status.
- Inviting applicants to attend Panel when their application is being considered.

- Presenting the application to the Agency Foster Care Panel either upon completion of the assessment or for early consideration, if appropriate. The Agency Decision Maker subsequently considers the recommendation from the panel, after which the applicants are informed of the outcome in writing within 7 working days.

## FOSTER CARER TRAINING

Throughout the application process, the aim of the foster care service is to empower applicants to make their own decisions based on accurate and honest information. We believe that training plays an important part in carer's development. As part of our training and assessment framework, which incorporates the Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers (TSD), all prospective foster carers are required to attend the preparation training programme. Training continues throughout a foster carer's career on a variety of core topics pertinent to the carer and the demands of their placements. An additional module day is provided for applicants being assessed as concurrent carers, this focusses upon the fostering task and the fostering phase of concurrent placements.

Training is provided to:

- Enable foster carers to deliver the best possible care for children.
- Develop carers skills to parent therapeutically.
- Establish a comprehensive and accessible framework within which carers can operate.
- Enable carers to understand the effects of discrimination and how this impacts upon the children in their care.
- Ensure that foster carers are competent in delivering safe care for children in placement.
- Encourage carers to develop a range of skills and knowledge required in the provision of foster care.
- Enable carers to acknowledge and meet their own learning needs.
- Enable carers to work positively with birth families where required.

The preparation training programme covers the following core issues:

- Who are the children
- Child protection
- The birth parent perspective
- Attachment
- Valuing heritage, equality and diversity
- Managing behaviour
- Types of fostering
- Listening to young people
- Working together
- Fostering skills

- Supporting contact
- Safer care
- Allegations
- Moving children on/Life story work
- Recording
- Delegated Authority

Prior to placements all carers are expected to complete the following:

- Paediatric First Aid
- Safeguarding level 1
- Safeguarding level 2
- Food Hygiene

All carers will complete the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care work book within 12 months from approval.

Within the first 12 months of approval one carer in each household (for mainstream fostering not concurrent planning) is required to complete the following mandatory training:

- Behaviour Management/ Positive Parenting
- Allegations and Written records
- Safer Caring
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Equality and Diversity
- Administering Medication
- Preventing Radicalisation

Additional post approval training for carers includes:

- Nurtured Heart or Parenting with PACE
- Attachment theories and approaches
- Life story work
- Contact
- Online safety
- Sensory processing
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Autism
- Parenting children who have been sexually abused
- Drug/Alcohol Awareness
- Children's rights
- Communicating with Children
- Sex and sexuality

Carers' attendance at post approval training is a requirement and becomes an integral part of their Annual Foster Care Review.

Carers unable to attend training events will receive all necessary information via their social worker. Hard to reach carers will be offered training in their own home on a 1:1 basis. The training offered by **Caritas Care** is subject to continual evaluation and review.

The Agency supports carers to complete the TSD Standards workbook within 12 months of their approval and supports carers to undertake additional training with regard to the Children and Young People's Workforce via local colleges where possible.

## FINANCES

Foster carers receive generous allowances which vary dependent upon the age of the child. These are paid weekly in arrears directly into their bank account, via BACS transfer. An additional amount is paid for birthdays, Christmas or Religious festivals and holidays.

All carers receive a reward element within the allowance and are entitled to respite inline with the child's placement plan. Membership fees to the Fostering Network are paid by **Caritas Care**.

## FOSTER CARER SUPPORT

The Agency's investment in the Foster Care project is considerable both financially and ethically. From the outset of our relationship with carers, and at the start of a placement, we believe that openness, honesty, thoroughness, professionalism in planning and recognition of carers as partners are essential elements of foster care support. We have learned from research what can go wrong in foster care, and lead to disruptions. We recognise from this the importance and significance of offering high quality support to carers, in contributing to both the success of placements, improved outcomes for children and to carers feeling valued by the Agency.

The main tasks of the social worker in supporting carers are:

- To monitor and supervise foster carers.
- To monitor the quality of care being offered by foster carers.
- To assist in the carer's learning and development.
- To consult with carers and children regarding the on-going development of the service.
- To establish training needs.
- To ensure that carers are apprised of developments within the service and Agency.
- To provide continuity.
- To assist and enable carers to develop effective problem solving skills and techniques.
- To advise on behaviour management and child protection.
- To liaise with social workers and other professionals.
- To advise on what other support services may be available.

- To keep a written record of all contact and developments within the placement.
- To undertake unannounced visits.
- To ensure that foster carers feel valued members of *Caritas Care*.

The welfare of the child is the primary concern of the supervising social worker. The support offered to carers is therefore not unconditional. Issues of poor practice, performance, expectation or service delivery will be addressed where there appears to be a conflict or contradiction with the expectations of the service, Agency or requirements of the Fostering Standards and Regulations.

As with training, there is an expectation from the service, that foster carers will access support, as we believe that training and support are both important elements of the care task.

## **FOSTER CARER REVIEWS**

In accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, Part 5 Regulation 28, the approval of foster carers and their households will be subject to annual review.

*Caritas Care* will review carers in the following circumstances:

- On (or before) the anniversary of their initial approval and annually thereafter as required.
- If an allegation is made against them.
- Where there is a major change in circumstances.
- Death of a child in their care.
- At the carer's request.
- For CCP carers, where rehabilitation of the child to their birth parents takes place.

In all reviews, the Regulation requires that the agency seek and take into account the views of foster carers, the support worker and social workers of children placed through the review period, or children placed with the foster carers though the placement may have ended.

The Foster Care Service has incorporated contributions from children who have received the service, their birth parents and birth children of the carers into the process.

The purpose of the review, which will be conducted by an appropriate person, independent of the foster care service, is to provide an appraisal of the carer's development, abilities and experience over the year and will concentrate on the following areas:

- General standards of care.
- Health and hygiene.
- Working with the agency.
- Working with other agencies.

- Understanding of the child/young persons needs.
- Training.
- Complaints and allegations.
- Working with birth families.
- Any significant change in circumstances.
- Variations to terms of approval
- Recommendations for the future.

The review may also consider any wishes the carers may have about changes to their approved status e.g. the ages or numbers of children placed.

Reviews will be presented to **Caritas Care** Foster Care Panel for their consideration and any subsequent recommendations in the following circumstances:

- First annual review.
- A minimum of every 3<sup>rd</sup> review.
- If a change of terms of approval is recommended.
- Following an allegation.
- Following a significant change of circumstances.

Recommendations from the review will be shared with placing authorities and the review will be available with the Prospective Foster Carers Report to authorities considering placements and their Panels.

## **TERMINATION OF APPROVAL**

If on review **Caritas Care** no longer feels satisfied that a foster carer is suitable to provide care for children, a recommendation that their approved status be terminated will be presented to the Foster Care Panel. Formal notification will subsequently be issued in writing to the carers and Local Authority within 24 hours.

Foster carers in this situation will have had opportunity to discuss the recommendation of the assessing social worker, prior to the Panel meeting with their link worker and/or the Service Manager.

The social worker will ensure that the foster carers are aware of the appeal process and Complaints Procedure verbally and that they are in possession of this in writing.

Foster Carers are also provided with information regarding the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)



**Circumstance under which a foster carers registration will be terminated:**

- Where there are serious concerns with regard to a foster carer’s ability to meet the child’s needs and promote their welfare.
- In the event of a child protection investigation which identifies potential risk to children.
- Where an allegation of abuse of any description is founded in any area of a carer’s life.
- Where an offence had been committed which could pose a risk to children and disclosed within a DBS check.
- Where a carer consistently fails to work in partnership with the agency and in doing so fails to safeguard or promote the welfare of any child placed.

**COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS PROCEDURE**

Any complaint received will be treated seriously and fully investigated by an independent party.

This procedure is to enable users of the fostering service provided by the Agency, including children, to make representation including a complaint about any aspect of the service. This procedure requires agency staff to attempt to satisfy the complainant through negotiation, arbitration and mediation aimed at resolving the complaint. However, should these methods prove to be unsatisfactory the matter will be pursued through the formal processes outlined below.

<b>COMPLAINT RECEIVED</b>
<b>INFORMAL STAGE</b> Aim is resolution through negotiation, arbitration, and mediation Timescale – 7 days
<b>FORMAL STAGE</b> Independent person appointed to undertake formal investigation and response to complainant Timescale – 28 days
<b>REVIEW STAGE</b> Complainant dissatisfied 28 days to request review Review conducted by review panel of three - 1 member being independent of the agency Recommendations made to agency and complainant notified in writing Timescale – 28 days



- Information relating to Complaints and Representation is contained within the application pack issued to carers at the point of their initial interview following their enquiry to the Agency.
- Complaints will be recorded and retained on file, including the outcome and action taken.
- Complaints of a child protection nature are referred immediately to the placing authority.
- Children are provided with information relating to this process within the Children's Guide in an age appropriate accessible format.
- Complaints regarding the Service Manager (Registered Manager) should be made to the Chief Executive Officer or the Trustees.
- The complainant will be kept informed at every stage regarding the progress of the investigation of their complaint.

The complainant will be advised of their right to approach Ofsted to raise concerns regarding any aspect of the service. Ofsted can be contacted at:

**Ofsted**  
**Piccadilly Gate**  
**Store St**  
**Manchester**  
**M1 2WD**  
**Tel: 0300 123 1231**

**E-mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)**  
**Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)**

The management and resolution of informal and formal complaints will be monitored using the Balanced Scorecard Performance Management system operational within Caritas Care.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SERVICES**

The agency has a monitoring and evaluation policy. The quality and success of our service delivery is monitored and measured by:

- Monitoring the characteristics and number of prospective foster carers recruited and approved.
- Reviewing our recruitment policy and amending in line with developing trends in both fostering and adoption.
- Monitoring timescales of the approval process.
- Obtaining written feedback about the panel process from foster carers and Social Workers.



- The completion of the Panel Chairs report to the agency providing feedback on the quality of the work undertaken and timescales.
- The numbers of families matched with children each year.
- Monitoring the referrals of children referred for placement locally and nationally.
- Maintaining an overview of the needs of children matched with our approved families.
- Monitoring the numbers of and reasons for complaints.
- Monitoring the numbers and reasons for placement disruptions
- Obtaining feedback from foster carers throughout the process of engagement with the agency and children where appropriate so to do.
- Obtaining feedback following training and support events.
- Obtaining feedback from other agencies.
- Obtaining feedback following the delivery of support.
- Promoting the involvement of service users and staff members in service development.
- Quarterly Strategic monitoring of the service presented in a Balanced Scorecard (BSC) performance management system for the service.
- Quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees regarding service delivery.
- Monthly supervision and appraisal of staff.
- File audits.
- The annual review of the service under Regulation 35 and Balanced Scorecard.
- Ofsted inspections.

### **NUMBER OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE FOSTER CARE SERVICE**

**01.04.2020 - 31.03.2021**

Foster Care – 0

Concurrent Planning - 0

### **NUMBER OF CHILD PROTECTION ENQUIRIES INITIATED IN RELATION TO CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT 01.04.2020 – 31.03.2021**

Foster Care Placements – 2 (both regarding historical abuse)

Concurrent Placements - 0

<b>Number of approved Households as @ 31.03.21</b>	<b>Number of children placed as @ 31.01.21</b>
Fostering Families - 27	Foster Care – 31
Concurrent Carers - 38	Concurrent Planning fostering phase - 16
Dual Approved - 1	Dual Approval - 2



**Appendix 1 – List of Staff Members and Qualifications**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Commenced employment with Caritas Care</b>
Susan Swarbrick	Chief Executive Officer (Responsible Individual)	Dip SW. Approved Practice Teacher Award. NVQ4-ILM Management Award	August 1998 CEO as from 1.1.20
Rebecca Hughes	Service Manager (Registered Manager)	BSC(Hons) Psychology MA Social Work PG Dip - Leadership and Management	June 2015
Bernie Finlay	Senior Social Work Practitioner	Dip SW. PQ Child Care Award	November 2003
Kate Knowles	Practice Manager - Concurrent Planning	BA. PG Dip SW. PQ Child Care Award	November 2003
Sylvia Whight	Senior Social Work Practitioner – Concurrent Planning	CQSW. BA. PQ1	April 2010
Stephanie Stavert	Social Worker	NNEB HNC Early Childhood Studies BA(Hons) SW Former foster carer	March 2013
Lucy Doughty	Senior Social Work Practitioner	BA (Hons) SW NVQ 3 – Health and Social Care Counselling - level 3 Counselling Concepts – Level 2 BTEC National Diploma in Public Services	August 2014



Ashleigh Robinson	Recruitment and Placement Officer	OCR Level 2 Dip – IT NVQ 3 – Business Administration NVQ 2 – Business Administration	March 2015
Colette Perry-Edwards	Senior Social Work Practitioner –	MA SW	August 2015
Sharon Bassa	Social Work Assistant	NVQ3 Caring for Children and Young People A1 Assessors Award for NVQ 3 NVQ4 Managers Caring for Children and Young People	From March 2000 as Residential Child Care Officer prior to transferring in May 2012, to the foster care service
Claire Lily	Social Work Assistant – Concurrent Planning	Educated to A level standard	December 2016
Susan Butterworth	Education Officer Worker	NNEB BA in Primary Ed. and Children’s Development and Learning with QTS	July 2009
Lynda McAllister	Contact Co-ordinator – Concurrent Planning	NNEB	June 2014

**Staff deployed in the Concurrent Planning Service and employed by Adoption Matters**

Julie Hogan	Practice Manager – Concurrent Planning	BA (hons) Applied Social Studies & DipSW PQ1 ACCA	seconded to CCP service - Jan 2015
Helen Cheetham	Social Worker - Concurrent Planning	MA SW	March 2017
Charlotte Davies	Social Work Assistant	EDL level 3 Business Administration Advanced level apprenticeship in Business and Administration. Awareness of child abuse and neglect	November 2017

For information, visit

[www.caritascare.org.uk](http://www.caritascare.org.uk) or give us a call on

0800 652 6955



John McEvoy	Senior Social Worker – Concurrent Planning	Dip SW	February 2018
Carmel Murphy	Senior Social Worker – Concurrent Planning	Dip SW	February 2018
Katie Boniface	Social Worker – Concurrent Planning	Dip SW	February 2018