



#### ADOPTED DECEMBER 2003

#### **UPDATED JUNE 2025**

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:

- All Caritas Care foster carers.
- 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.
- Local Authorities.

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 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, 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, a homeless hostel and Community Centre. 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 Adult Services and Director of Finance and HR.

#### **Details of the Responsible Individual:**

Susan Swarbrick susanswarbrick@caritascare.org.uk Qualifications: Dip SW PG Dip – Higher Education Approved Practice Teacher Award NVQ4-ILM Management Award

#### **Details of the Registered Manager:**

Rebecca Hughes
rebeccahughes@caritascare.org.uk
Qualifications:
BSC(Hons) Psychology
MA Social Work
PG Dip - Leadership and Management
CMI Level 7 in Strategic Management and Leadership

#### 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 relevant legislation guide our work. The foster care service alongside the adoption service has the commitment of a skilled workforce to 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 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

#### 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 placements: such placements form part of a long term planning 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.
- 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 or Solo Placement:** for children with additional or more complex needs who need a higher level of support from their foster carer and the service.



All children placed within a *Caritas Care* foster placement, their foster carers are able to access a Trauma Therapist through referral and in agreement with the responsible local authority to support their emotional and psychological wellbeing. An Education Consultant can also be accessed to offer advice and guidance regarding matters of education and special educational need to promote their learning and overall achievement.

#### **ADDITIONAL SERVICES**

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

- Membership of adoption/ fostering panels.
- Independent support for foster carers during allegations.
- Training for panel members.
- Therapeutic life story work.

A professional fee is charged for these additional services, though not where the child is in placement with *Caritas Care* foster carers.

#### 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 support via the Therapeutic Intervention Service and trauma therapist.
- 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

### CARITAS CARE BOARD OF TRUSTEES SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

### Chief Executive Officer(Responsible Individual)

Susan Swarbrick

#### **Director of Finance and HR**

**Christine Briggs** 

#### **Director of Operations and Adult Services**

James Haigh

#### **Head of Children's Services**

**Kate Knowles** 

Service Manager - Foster Care (Registered Manager)

Rebecca Hughes

#### **Senior Social Work and Social Work Practitioners**

Foster Care x 3

#### **Therapeutic Intervention Service**

Team leader Social Work Assistants x3

In the absence of the Registered Manager the Head of Childrens services will deputise.

The staff employed by the agency foster care service 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* (2007) DSCF.



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 service are registered with Social Work England. The non-social work practitioners have appropriate experience of working with children and families.

*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 Service is 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.

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 childcare and lay members with relevant personal life experience. Medical and Legal advisors are also appointed and effectively serve the Panel.

#### **PANEL PROCESS**

- 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

The recruitment process undertaken by *Caritas Care* is currently operational within the North West of England. We recruit potential foster carers using local media/press coverage/social media, open/information sessions and as an ongoing 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 him or her to care appropriately for a child placed with them.

Caritas Care 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 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.
- 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 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. The training programme is devised and coordinated by the Therapeutic Intervention Service.

#### Training is provided to:

- Enable foster carers to deliver the best possible care for children and ensure they are safeguarded.
- 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 the potential impact upon 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
- The birth parent perspective
- Attachment
- Valuing heritage, equality and diversity



- Types of fostering
- Working together
- Supporting family time
- Introduction to Therapeutic Parenting
- Safer care
- Allegations
- Recording
- Delegated Authority
- Foster carer reviews and panel

Prior to caring for children all carers are also expected to complete the following:

- Paediatric First Aid (then renewed every 3 years)
- Safeguarding level 1
- Safeguarding level 2 (further safeguarding training to take place a minimum of every 3 years)
- Food Hygiene
- All carers will complete the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care work book within 12 months from approval as well as Therapeutic Parenting training.

Within the first 12 months of approval one carer in each household is required to complete the following additional mandatory training:

- Contextual Safeguarding
- Equality and Diversity
- Administering Medication
- Prevent Supporting people susceptible to radicalisation
- GDPR

Ongoing post approval training for carers is a varied programme that is tailored to the needs of individual carers and includes topics such as:

- Parenting with PACE
- Therapeutic Life story work
- De-escalation and breakaway techniques
- Keeping children safe online
- Sensory processing
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Autism
- Parenting children who have been sexually abused
- Drug/Alcohol Awareness



Foster Carers' attendance at post approval training is a requirement and becomes an integral part of their Annual Foster Care Review. Training is facilitated through a mix of online and in person methods. Foster carers unable to attend training events will receive all necessary information via their social worker. The training offered by *Caritas Care* is subject to continual evaluation and review.

#### **FINANCES**

Foster carers receive generous allowances, which vary dependent upon the age of the child, 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 their allowance.

Membership fees to the Fostering Network are paid by Caritas Care.

#### **FOSTER CARER SUPERVISION**

We believe that openness, honesty, thoroughness, professionalism in planning and recognition of foster 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 support foster carers.
- To monitor the quality of care being offered by foster carers.
- To assist in the foster carer's learning and development.
- To consult with foster carers and children regarding the on-going development of the service.
- To establish training needs.
- To ensure that foster carers are apprised of developments within the service and Agency.
- To provide continuity.
- To assist and enable foster carers to develop effective problem solving skills and techniques.
- To advise on behaviour support 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 the supervision and support provided.
- 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 a substantiated allegation is made against them.
- Where there is a significant change in circumstances.
- Death of a child in their care.
- At the carer's request.

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 will incorporate 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 person's 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 are presented to *Caritas Care* Foster Care Panel for their consideration and any subsequent recommendations in the following circumstances:

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

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 children'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 in accordance with the agencies Complaints Policy. This procedure is to enable users of the fostering service, 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 formal processes.

- 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 Head of Children's Services or the Chief Executive Officer.
- 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
Website: 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 SERVCIES

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Regular reports to the Board of Trustees regarding service delivery.
- Regular supervision and annual appraisal of staff.
- The annual review of the service under Regulation 35 and Balanced Scorecard.
- Ofsted inspections.

### NUMBER OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE FOSTER CARE SERVICE 01.04.2024 - 31.03.2025

Foster Care - 0

Number of approved Households at 31.03.25	Number of children placed at 31.03.25
18	24