

FOSTER CARE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Revised February 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Registered Charity No: 222533



CANW

Child Action Northwest

HELLO, WELCOME TO CANW

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INTRODUCTION

CANW is a not for profit independent fostering agency, registered with the charities commission. Any financial surplus that the service generates is reinvested to promote better opportunities for children, young people and families who need CANW's services within the charity.

This statement of purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate legislation and guidance including:

- Children Act 1989
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Amendments 2013)
- Children and Young People Act 2008
- Children Act 2004
- Children Act 2014
- Children Leaving Care Act 2000
- The Fostering Services Care Standards Act 2000
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- Care planning, placement and case review and fostering services (England) Regulations 2010(2013)(2015)
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering services 2011
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Safeguarding Children in Education 2020

These form the basis of the regulatory framework for the provision of fostering services, and provide the framework of the National Minimum standards used by Ofsted to inspect all fostering services. Ofsted has responsibility for the regulation and inspection of Children's Social Care Services in England. Contact details can be found in the section Complaints and Allegations.

All policies, procedures and guidance relating to Child Action Northwest (CANW) are designed to complement the above primary legislation and reflect and support the key elements of this statement of purpose.

The Statement of purpose is produced in accordance with the above legislation and guidance and includes:

- Statement of the Aims and Objectives of CANW's fostering service; and
- Statement as to the services and facilities provided by the fostering service.

This statement of purpose is provided to and made available to employees, carers, local authorities, children and young people in placement and can be accessed by birth families via the CANW website. It is reviewed and agreed annually by senior management and agreed by CANW Board of Trustees.

The Statement of Purpose describes how the fostering service ensures best outcomes for children in foster care. It includes details of the staffing and organisational structure of the service, management arrangements, monitoring and evaluation of services, complaints procedures and the details of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). It also details the aims and objectives of the service, the quality assurance mechanisms utilised, and the range of services provided to children, prospective foster carers and foster carers and birth families.

CANW's Fostering Service operates within the framework of Equal Opportunities and Equalities Legislation and CANW's Equality and Diversity Policy.

CANW's Fostering Service has agreed a Foster Carers' Charter and a Pledge to all children who are looked after from the Board of Trustees and Chief Executive.

The fostering service is currently providing placements to the Local Authorities throughout Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and Cumbria.

CANW is registered with Ofsted as follows:

Head office: CANW, Whalley Road, Wilpshire, Blackburn BB1 9LL

CANW is a member of the Fostering Network and Coram Baff. All our foster carers are individual members of FosterTalk.

CANW's values place the welfare of the child at the centre of any decision making when providing placements for children and young people.

It is CANW's practice to engage and work closely with the local authorities responsible for placing children and young people with the agency. CANW is also committed to work in respectful partnership with birth families who play a central role in promoting a child's identity and making sense of a child's life story.

We evidence this through our awards:

- Investors in people
- The Foster Carers Charter
- Trusted Charity Quality Standard

AIMS

The principles which underpin the policies and practices of CANW are consistent with the mission, vision and values of the organisation. CANW fully embraces the basic premise of the Human Rights Act 1998 that all individuals have the right to a full and private family life.

When children and young people need alternative care CANW's fostering service aims to provide:

- Safe, stable and nurturing families where children and young people can reach their full potential.
- Significant relationships to promote all aspects of life that matter to each individual child and young person.
- A commitment to enable a child/young person to develop resilience, engage in the decisions that affect their lives, experience success and reach their potential.
- Planned and supported family contact as appropriate to promote a sense of personal and family identity.
- Life opportunities in local communities for children/young people being looked after.
- Respect to promote the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children/young people accessing the service.
- Consideration of diversity the gender, sexuality, disability of looked after children when making placement decisions.
- Consideration and commitment to placing sibling groups together if appropriate.
- Assistance is given to young people to be integrated community members citizens, support them through to independence and be an organisation which maintains an open and genuine welcome to young people through life after CANW.

We aim to achieve this by providing:

- Resilient foster carers and skilled workers who are committed to supporting children and young people by adopting the necessary parenting style to promote nurturing relationships and change.
- A commitment to robust recruitment, assessment and approval of potential foster carers, so that CANW can offer placements which meet and exceed the complex needs of children in care.
- A tailored support package to foster carers and children/young people.
- A workforce of staff and managers who are qualified, developed, motivated and committed to each child and young person in placement.
- A commitment to ongoing training and mentoring of foster carers through regular monitoring and investment in a foster carer's personal development plan.
- A close working relationship with local authorities to assist with planning and service provision.
- A commitment to continual improvement in all aspects of the service with an overarching aim to achieve the best outcomes for children.



OBJECTIVES

Our objective is to understand and nurture a child whilst cared for so CANW can make a long lasting positive impact upon them and their lives.

This is achieved by recruiting, assessing and supporting foster carers who are child focused and able to provide a range of well-matched and well supported family placements which provide children with the opportunity to attain positive outcomes so that children and young people:

- develop emotionally, physically and socially so that they grow into healthy and happy individuals.
- experience a stable family environment that is safe, secure and nurturing.
- develop the skills and confidence needed to move into adult life in a way which enables them to reach their potential, achieve economic wellbeing and become integrated members of their resident community.
- develop a positive view of themselves, emotional resilience, and an understanding of their background so they feel valued for who they are, and a full member of the fostering household and community.
- be encouraged and supported in accessing education, learning and health provision, in order that they can achieve their potential by contributing to the making of informed decisions, setting their own goals and managing risk.
- create meaningful and safe relationships so they can achieve stability in their lives and make realistic plans for adulthood.
- participate in leisure and other activities, make friendships and be happy.

VALUES

Young people, Foster carers and staff wrote of their shared vision for the service.

To inspire a safe journey of happiness, success, ambition and hope for everyone within the CANW family.

Our Mission is to inspire lives and change futures through the services we deliver and the values we hold.

Living our core values:

- **Never Give Up** – We believe in the potential of ourselves and those we support and will do all we can to promote the ability in every individual for positive growth and change.
- **Caring** – We will always demonstrate kindness, consideration and concern for those around us.
- **Empowerment** – We will ensure that those we support and engage with are able to take more control of what happens in their lives and can become stronger, more independent and confident.

CANW is really proud that over 9% of CANW fostering families have been approved in excess of 15 years (February 2024), and a further 12% between 10 and 14 years. 26% have been approved between 5 and 10 years. 4 families were approved in 2023, with a further 3 families in assessment at the time of writing.

We reward carers every five years post approval with a presentation and payment in recognition of commitment and loyalty to CANW. In June 2022 one family received £500 for 5 years of service, and in June 2023 one family received £1500 for 15 years of service.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The CANW fostering service has a clear management structure and clarity about roles, responsibilities and reporting arrangements. The wider CANW management structure is also included to give information about management arrangements across the organisation. All managers aspire to be accessible leaders who work in a transparent and open way to instil confidence, vision and service viability.

STAFFING

The Fostering Service is made up of:

- The Fostering Social Work Team
- The Support Team
- The Business Support Team

The Fostering Social Work Team consists of:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Registered Manager | FT |
| Supervising Social Workers | FT x 4 |
| Psychologist services | Freelance |

The Support Team consists of:

Senior Support & Engagement Officer PT
who oversees a bank of sessional support staff

Foster Carer Development Worker (Training) PT

The Business Support Team consists of:

| | |
|--|----|
| Senior Placement Officer | FT |
| Panel Administrator | PT |
| Business Support and Recruitment Officer | FT |

A personal connection with the team can be made by meeting all the members on our CANW website and viewing the service in action on the CANW Facebook page.

Equality and Diversity: As an employer CANW is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. Our goal is to ensure these commitments are embedded in our day to day working practices with all individuals connected with CANW. It is explicitly understood within the organisation that CANW does not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination.



Ali Stathers-Tracey
Responsible Individual and
Chief Executive of CANW



Ian Charnock
Registered Manager
'Under Application'

SERVICES PROVIDED

The Fostering Service approves foster carers to look after children aged 0-18 years of age.

The Fostering Service offers a wide range of placements to meet the variety of needs of children and young people.

The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, trains, supervise and support foster carers in order for them to help looked after children achieve the best possible outcomes. The emotional health and wellbeing of carers and staff is monitored and supported to prevent 'Compassion fatigue', stress and burn out.

CANW has a commitment to caring for children post 18 years through Staying Put arrangements, Supported Lodging hosts and providing specialist packages of aftercare support to Care Leavers. CANW always offers a period of care to the young people when they make the transition to independence at no cost to the Local Authority. Young people are constantly reminded that post placement CANW is a safe place for them where they will be welcomed, guided and supported.

Young people from 2019-2021 were supported to prepare them for independence through funding received from Children in Need. In 2022-23 CANW have been continuing this work through the National Lottery Community Fund. Blackburn Chemicals have very kindly chosen the fostering service as a local charity for investment



RANGE OF PLACEMENTS OFFERED

Task Centred/short term Placements – Usually placements for children and young people aged 0-18 whilst their situation is being considered by the court so the decision could be to return to their birth family/significant person or to move to a placement which can offer permanency.

Long Term – Decision has been made for the child or young person to live within foster care until they reach maturity and go on to live independently. Young People and foster carers can request to continue living together post-18 through 'Staying Put' arrangements in conjunction with the placing Local Authority.

Respite – A short stay offered to children to support main placement stability. Some carers offer other types of placement alongside respite placements.

Parent and Child – Where a carer offer a placement to a baby and their parent(s) in order for the parent(s) to be able to care for their child in a safe and supportive environment. Some of these parents may be looked after themselves if under the age of 18. Assessing the ability of the parent in the care of their baby may be part of this arrangement or carer may be tasked with supervising the care of the baby and keeping it safe.

Emergency – Responsive foster carers who can offer a placement at short notice with often very little information about the child or young person. This is until a suitable placement is identified or the child returns home. These carers on occasion accept children needing placements out of normal working hours and may be contacted by the on call service between 5pm and 9am.

Therapeutic Placement – These are intensive fostering placements requiring highly skilled foster carers to care for the children and young people following an approach based on attachment, resilience and strengths based. Foster carers and staff are supported by CANW's Consultant Clinical Psychologist and other related professionals.

Children with Disability – Placements for children with a physical disability or learning need who require foster carers who can offer higher levels of supervision, appropriate communicate and knowledge through having accessed additional training.

Step Down - These are placements whereby foster carers work with young people who are in residential care but wish to return to living in a family. There are three define areas to this model. Introduction: The foster carers and social workers meet the young person and the significant people in their lives. Through the building of these relationships the young person slowly becomes introduced to the fostering household and has planned introductions which steadily build up until the young person moves into foster care. Stabilisation: Family life and independence skills taught to assist the young person to reach their potential. Moving On: The foster carer works with the Local authority Personal Adviser to ensure that the young person is engaged in the planning and decision making to enable a smooth transition from being in care to becoming independent or they remain with the carers.

RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION & ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

Recruitment

Fostering recruitment is a key priority for the Fostering Service. In recognition of this the Service has a clear process to provide good 'customer care' for foster carers from application to retirement.

CANW's Fostering Service has a recruitment strategy which is reviewed and updated regularly to reflect current needs of children and young people and the shortage in placements: both locally and nationally.

The aim of the strategy is to provide a choice of placements to meet the individual needs of every child. A key objective is to provide placement stability through meeting the child's needs and recruiting carers who have the skills and abilities to help looked after children achieve the best possible outcomes. Recruitment takes place across the Northwest. Existing foster carers are actively engaged in recruiting new foster carers and contributing to their skills and experience to the process.

Applications are welcomed from all members of the community, regardless of relationship status, employment situation, class, gender, sexuality, culture, ethnicity or religion.

The fostering service uses a number of different tools to recruit foster carers, including drop in events, attending community events, information articles in the local press, social media, information sessions and personal

Recruitment Process (Stage 1)

Initial Contact

Potential foster carers request a Fostering Information pack which will be sent to them within 24 hours. They will also be able to speak to a member of the Fostering Service. Calls will be returned within 48 hours (if at weekend) and within 24 hours at all other times. The Business Support team responds to all calls from potential applicants.

Initial Home Visit

At this visit there is an opportunity to discuss the applicant's circumstances in more depth, meet with the family and ensure that the home conditions are suitable to foster. Applicants need to have a spare bedroom and sufficient space for play and homework. Similarly, it is an opportunity for applicants to ask questions about CANW and the fostering service.

recommendation which includes an incentive scheme. The real life experiences of approved foster carers and children and young people in care are used to provide a narrative and reality of the transformative nature of fostering on both the young people and the fostering household.

There is a clear brand image displayed in posters and adverts. The fostering service has good links with the CANW Business Development and Marketing Team to help promote the service across the North West.

An increasing amount of interest in fostering comes via the internet. www.canw.org.uk and Facebook

Some carers transfer to CANW after having an unsatisfactory experience from another fostering provider. CANW welcomes these enquiries as this prevents foster carers giving up unnecessarily. These carers are provided with a transfer fee to acknowledge the engagement needed during the transfer process. These assessments are fast tracked.

There is a thorough recruitment process aimed to reduce delay, provide a smooth journey through the assessment process and confidently ensure applicants are given sufficient information to make informed decisions.

Preparation

The fostering service runs regular preparation groups throughout the year as per demand. The preparation sessions run over 3 days and cover a wide number of topics to help prepare carers for fostering. These sessions usually take place at the convenience of the majority of the applicants. The sessions are facilitated by the team and foster carers. All staff aim to introduce themselves during the preparation days so applicants have an understanding of who is in the fostering team and their roles.

The preparation training forms part of the assessment.

Assessment Stage (Stage 1)

All checks and references are undertaken as part of Stage 1 of the assessment. CANW will undertake a variety of statutory and non-statutory safeguarding checks including Enhanced DBS, Local Authority, employer and/or current fostering organisation, ex-partner references, children of previous relationships, voluntary work references, school/health visitor reports (in relation to applicant's children), medical reports, personal references and a health and safety audit of the home.

During Stage one applicants can be informed by CANW that they are not suitable to foster or that CANW does not deem this to be the right time. Applicants cannot challenge this decision beyond the agency's complaints process. However, most applicants proceed into the next stage.

Assessment Stage (Stage 2)

The assessment is undertaken by a qualified and experienced social worker. There is a clear assessment process which is thorough and comprehensive. In partnership we seek to assess with minimum delay whilst ensuring applicants are fully prepared for the fostering task.

The assessment report highlights the applicant's strengths, vulnerabilities and any areas for additional support to inform what age and gender children and young people should be placed. It will also explore the carer's ability to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people that may have experienced abuse or trauma.

The assessment is evidence based and shaped by the information gained about the applicants by the assessing social worker over a number of sessions and by evidence from referees and from other checks to verify key information.

At the commencement of the assessment, the assessing social worker arranges to visit the applicants to outline the details of the assessment, process and timescale.

The fostering service uses the BAAFCoram (Form F) as the assessment tool.

All carers are subject to a number of statutory checks and references:

- Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check on all members of the household over the age of 18 (including the Children's Barred List)
- Child Protection/Local Authority Statutory Checks.
- Personal References (up to 4 personal references of which a minimum of 2 will be interviewed in person)
- We include testimonials from family and friends if this provides useful information.
- School or health visitor reference for applicants who have children at home.
- Employment/volunteer references where applicants have worked with children or vulnerable adults.
- A full medical examination of applicants.

- A work reference from present or previous employer.
- Interviews with adult children and children living in the household.
- Reference from ex-partners who has knowledge of the parenting ability of the applicant (if appropriate)

Other Checks:

- A home health and safety check
- A family safer caring plan
- A pet questionnaire. All dogs are assessed by the agency's designated dog assessor and paid for by CANW.

The assessment generally takes place in the applicant(s) home and takes the form of interviews. There are a number of other tools and techniques which can assist with the assessment e.g. case discussion, witness statements, visiting other carers to explore the role, discussions of relevant topics.

During the course of the assessment the assessor will discuss the applicant's approval and preferences with regard to number of children, age range and level of needs which all depend on the carer's skills, abilities and circumstances.

The assessing social worker completes a written report which is shared with the applicants (excluding the medicals and references). Applicants have opportunity to check for accuracy and add comments.

A second opinion visit and report providing information on how the applicants experienced the assessment, clarifying any issues that arose during the assessment and looking at any future matching considerations can also be completed where it assists to the completion of the report or the team manager feels that further clarification of a matter is required.

During stage two if information is gathered which results in CANW not wishing to proceed with the assessment applicants can challenge by asking their assessment to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The IRM is a body of independent members with relevant experience who look at all the information pertaining to the assessment. Members meet as a panel and give consideration and a final judgement as to where the applicants have been treated fairly. Details of the service complaints process are provided. This provision has to be made available to all applicants and is not a reflection of issues experienced within assessments at CANW. (Further information would be provided to applicants at this juncture)

The vast majority of completed assessment reports are submitted to the Fostering Panel.





FOSTERING PANEL

Applicants are considered for recommendation of approval by the Fostering Panel based on reading the report and asking questions of both applicants and the assessing social worker.

Panel's recommendation, minutes and Form F are considered by the Agency Decision Maker and a decision with regards to approval is made. The Panel chair and vice chair are suitably qualified, experienced and independent. The Agency Advisor attends and plays a vital role in providing an advisory and quality assurance role. A panel administrator has a key role in ensuring that accurate minutes are written, panel is organised effectively and functions within regulatory timescale. CANW has a central list of panel members with a wide range of skills and experience. The Panel has access to a medical advisor and legal advice. New Panel members are taken through a 'Safer recruitment' process which includes observing panel. Annual appraisals are undertaken with all Panel members. Annually, panel members are invited to attend two training days and a development day.

Child Action Northwest's panel strives to reflect the diverse nature of the community it serves and have relevant experience to promote the best outcomes for the children and young people.

The Fostering Panel meets at least every four weeks. Additional panel meetings are arranged as required.

The Fostering Panel hears all business: assessments, the majority of annual reviews and 'extraordinary reviews' if there are any issues or serious concerns and/or if termination of approval is being considered. Agency Decision Maker decisions are always made within the regulatory timescale. Again if there is any dispute applicants can seek recourse through the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM).

CANW also have Panel Liaison Meetings which bring together the panel chair, vice chair, panel advisor and agency decision maker to ensure that panel's decisions are regularly reviewed and learning influences development.

MATCHING & PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

The CANW Business Support Team provides a responsive service to referring local authorities needing a placement for a child or young person.

This service is overseen by the Registered Manager. Full information is taken about the placement needs of the child and consideration is given to all appropriate placements. As far as possible children will be placed close to areas that enable them to sustain appropriate contact with family and friends and minimise any disruption to their school and leisure pursuits. The service acknowledges that the racial and cultural needs of children in care need to be promoted to ensure that children grow up with a true sense of identity and knowledge of their cultural heritage.

The service responds promptly to all referrals. Where there is a good potential match, pen profiles of fostering families are dispatched to the referring local authorities. If the local authority wishes to pursue an interest in a foster family they are then sent the relevant Form F and the CANW Supervising Social Worker commences the formal matching process.

The Business Support team share all the available information with foster carers and seek answers from the placing local authority to any questions that may arise from this. A full CANW referral form is completed which gives opportunity for more detailed information with regard any risk indicators and specific matching criteria to be gathered about the child or young person. Wherever possible, pre-placement meetings and introductions are encouraged by CANW. When a potential match is identified, placing social workers for any current child in placement will be consulted to ensure the match is appropriate.

Once a referral is made by a Local Authority regarding a child or young person in care, the Organisation will:

- Consider the child or young persons assessed racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, race, religion, culture and language of the foster family.
- CANW endeavour's to consider the child or young person's developmental needs and match these as closely as possible with the skills, knowledge, social and personal circumstances of the carer(s). CANW will strive to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child and young person and their understanding of the need for the placement.
- A comprehensive risk assessment is undertaken to ensure that the child or young person placed, the fostering family, community and any other placed child(ren) have their needs safeguarded.
- If a trans-racial placement is made, the foster family will be provided with additional support and information to enable the child or young person to sustain a positive understanding of their heritage.

- Priority will be given to finding a placement, which will allow siblings to stay together, if this is assessed to be in the best interests of the children or young people.
- Consideration will be given to the child or young person's place of origin and we will endeavour to place as near as possible to this to promote contact with significant persons and continuation of school if this is deemed to be in the child's or young person's best interest.

To best prepare foster carers to care for the children requiring placements CANW continues to work alongside a consultant clinical psychologist who can advise prior and post placement with regards to the parenting needs of individual children.

As part of the matching process we ensure that the foster carer is given detailed information about the child both verbally and in writing. Further information is given by the placing social worker informing the foster carer directly. Foster carers are supported to refuse a placement if they do not consider they have the skill base to care appropriately for the child referred.

Placement stability is good with 3 young people reaching independence and 2 remaining with the carers under a staying put arrangement bringing a total of 4 young people remaining with carers on either a Staying Put or Shared Lives arrangement.

Family will be provided with additional support and information to enable the child or young person to sustain a positive understanding of their heritage.

Safeguarding practices are effective. Leaders and managers are committed to providing safe and secure foster homes for children. (Ofsted, Oct 2023)

100% of social workers who provided feedback for the carers annual review process were happy with the care provided to the young person placed.

Some quotes included:

“ L and M have been exceptional foster carers and they have made a significant difference in these children's lives. L and M have be amazing to work with and there is nothing I could identify that I would change. (LASW feedback received December 2023) ”

“ Very positive experience with no concerns - they have been responsive and supportive in all discussions including challenging scenarios and a notice period. (LASW feedback received December 2023) ”

Hi L & S, words cant describe how grateful I am for you both for taking care of my daughter N I just want to say thank you very much. I know its been bumps along the way but you both did it I'm so so grateful thanks alot guys stay bless wonderful family. (Text received by Fostering family from birth parent on young person's independence. July 2023) ”

FOSTER CARER SUPERVISION

The service recognises that supervision is a vital element of support and oversight of the care provided by the foster carer.

It is by developing honest and open relationships both foster carers and children are safeguarded. CANW recognise the importance of the carer's parenting style, thinking and decision making in providing the environment to enable children to heal, stabilise and make progress.

All carers have an identified Supervising Social Worker. The Supervising Social Worker visits carers regularly to monitor the standards of care provided, review the care needs of the child, assist the carer to play their part in the child's care planning and identify any training needs.

Supervising Social Workers are responsible for ensuring that the care offered to children in foster care meets and where possible exceeds the National Minimum Standards 2011. The Supervising Social Worker visits or telephones the carer regularly whilst the child is in placement.

As a reference point:

All Foster carers have formal supervision regularly throughout the year (every 4-6 weeks) and support visits in between. Formal means that the discussion is recorded on a CANW Foster carer Supervision form.

Foster carers have one visit which concentrates on preparation of the foster carers review.

Support visits can be one of the following:

- A training or study session.
- Observation of the carer with the child.
- Exploration of a specific issue experienced within the family.
- An activity with the child or children in placement.
- Consultant Clinical Psychologist (appointments available where appropriate)
- Targeted direct work – Support and Engagement officer and review.
- Exploration of 'Theraplay' techniques to assist attachment (trained SSW)

It is recognised that new carers may need a higher level of contact in the initial stages of fostering as will those carers looking after several children or with complex care needs. These visits or support interventions are increased as assessed need determines.

When a child enters placement a Placement planning meeting is called which brings together the foster carer, all key professionals to map a 'child's journey through placement'. The placing Local Authority and CANW review the needs of the child or young person and any historical, actual or potential risks indicators known. A risk management plan and tailored package of support is identified and forms the basis of the discussion at each Foster carers supervision. Placement planning are reviewed as frequently as needed to monitor progress and wellbeing of the young person and foster carers.

All supervisions and support visits will be noted on the foster carers annual review form and child's progress on the CHARMS outcome tracker.

Young people, foster carer and Supervising Social Workers must define goals and objectives to ensure that young people reach their potential and that placements are robust and stable. The education, health and emotional well-being of young people are closely monitored. Young people are asked their views through the completion of an Outcome tracker so that they are supported to meet their goals and aspirations.

As part of the monitoring of the work of foster carers, there will be at least one annual unannounced visit by the Supervising Social Worker to the foster carer's home. (See Foster carers A-Z)

FOSTER CARER ANNUAL REVIEWS

Foster Carers Reviews take place annually to consider the approval status of foster carers and their ongoing suitability to foster.

It also gives opportunity to look at the work they have undertaken during the year and is an opportunity to reflect on achievements and learning. Any training needs are considered and recommendations made for the future. Panel members also take this opportunity to celebrate achievements and thank foster carers for their contribution.

In preparation for the review meeting feedback is sought from the foster carer(s), children cared for during the review period, the placing social worker(s), the views of foster carers own children and significant others. A member of the service will meet with foster carers' own children to seek their views independent of their parents.

The review process is also an opportunity to gain feedback from carers and young people, placing local authorities and birth families to inform service development, quality assure and have safeguarding oversight of every placement.

Foster carers' first annual review is undertaken and presented to the main Fostering Panel for approval consideration as are reviews relating to significant changes for the foster carers or where there have been standards of care issues or serious concerns. Other Foster carers reviews are undertaken by the Team manager, Vice Chair of the fostering panel, foster carer and supervising social worker.

All reviews will be presented to CANW's Agency Decision Maker (ADM).



TRAINING FOR FOSTER CARERS

The importance of training for foster carers, to enhance their skills and knowledge and provide opportunity for further development is recognised by the fostering service.

A comprehensive foster carer training programme has been developed to ensure that staff and foster carers are competent to deliver the tasks asked of them. Protection and welfare of our children placed is paramount.

Skills to Foster for all applicants (Main & Second Carer) is a course written by the Fostering Network and is delivered by CANW staff and foster carers over a period of three days. Following approval foster carers will experience a thorough induction and support to complete their Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) (Regulations note that TSD have to be completed with 12 months)

All foster carers are encouraged to complete the mandatory training as quickly as possible as the training will help them in the fostering role, provide better care to the young people and also will help protect carers from allegations.

Core training modules are :

- Safeguarding and child protection
- Recording reporting and allegations
- Safer caring
- Equality and diversity
- First Aid
- Attachment and child development
- Internet safety

Additional Training

(Specialist courses to be sought on request)

- Family time and contact
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Missing from home (MFH)
- Radicalisation
- Therapeutic parenting, trauma and loss
- Parent and child placement
- Gender awareness and sexuality
- Autism
- Drug / Alcohol awareness
- County lines and gang awareness

Foster Carers mandatory training to be completed within 12 months:

| Core training modules that will be reviewed every 3 years | Main Carer | Second Carer | Delivery |
|---|------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Paediatric First Aid | Y | | Face to Face /blended |
| Paediatric First Aid Secondary carer | | Y | Online |
| Safer caring | Y | Y | Online |
| Managing Allegations | Y | Y | Online |
| Safeguarding Children (basic or advanced) | Y | Y | Online |
| Courses below to be completed in the 1st year, and thereafter, SSW to recommend as part of the PDP process | | | |
| Internet safety | Y | Y | Online |
| Secure base/ Attach-ment | Y | Y | Online |
| De-escalation | Y | Y | Online |
| Medication-fostering | Y | Y | Online |
| Child Sexual Exploitation | Y | Y | Online |
| Missing from Home | Y | Y | Online |
| Radicalisation | Y | Y | Online |
| Record Keeping | Y | Y | Online |
| Data Protection/ GDPR | Y | Y | Online |
| Equality & Diversity | Y | Y | Online |
| Mental Health - Fostering | Y | Y | Online |

Post Approval Continued Professional Development Courses (CPDC) and further learning for foster carers offering specialist placements such as Parent and child, Disability and Therapeutic and Step Down placements.

All records of training are to be held by individual foster carers and their supervising social worker via CHARMs as these are required for reference of ongoing development and to evidence during an Ofsted inspection.

Foster carers receive regular updates of courses that might be of interest to them. New courses are developed where a need is identified. Foster carers can also access the organisational core training programme.

Each carer has a personal development plan developed to outline mandatory training and to identify training needs which are tailored to the skill base required to provide maximum competence to care for the child(ren) in placement. Supervising Social Workers regularly discuss foster carers' training needs to promote competence and compliance is monitored within the manager's monthly management meetings and at the foster carers' annual review.

Where possible the times of training have been arranged to take place within school hours to make it easier for carers to attend. Training is delivered by face to face events, workshops, 1 to 1, online and through a webinar invite.

The training of foster carers is delivered by both internal CANW and external providers and full information is sent to carers about forthcoming training events through provision of a training plan and correspondence from the Foster Carers Development and Training Worker.

Carers are expected to undertake post approval training to develop their skills base. Foster carers will be invited to refresh Safeguarding every year and other learning of key mandatory areas every 3 years to ensure compliance with regulations, research and guidance. Foster carers also have access to the consultant Clinical Psychologist who can advise them with parenting strategies and assist with the understanding of the cause of behaviours and importance of resilience for both child and foster carers.

Foster carers will also be supported to share knowledge with other carers and appropriate professionals and attend external specialist developmental training.



SUPPORT SERVICES

The fostering service believes that the support of foster carers is essential in helping foster carers to provide care for children and young people.

CANW has developed a comprehensive support package. This consists of:

- An individual Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who is the foster carers' primary contact and offers advice, training, monitoring and support. If the SSW is not available the team offer a duty system or if required foster carers can speak with the team manager. The positive working relationship between the foster carer and their SSW is at the heart of the fostering service delivered by CANW.
- The SSW will consider the needs of the whole family. 4-6 weekly supervision will be defined and agreed when there are children in placement. Wherever possible a SSW or colleague will accompany the carer to significant meetings concerning the child in their care. Foster carers can request additional support if required.
- **24 hour support** - The fostering on call service is staffed by members of the fostering service. This is a telephone advice line that carers can call in an emergency for advice such as if a child is missing. The on call service operates from 5.00 p.m. until 9.00 a.m. the following day and weekends and bank holidays. Carers can also contact the Social Services Emergency Duty Teams out of hours. Management cover is also available during on call duties.
- **The foster carer development worker post has been created to help foster carers become more engaged with the agency so that they can have a direct influence on the shaping of the services and involvement in the planning of activities.** Examples of this: Wednesday morning catch up meeting, WhatsApp group and foster carer surveys.
- A fostering allowance covers all costs of caring for children looked after. There is also a professional fee which relates to the need to recruit and retain a committed and experienced pool of foster carers. These payments therefore reflect the increasing professionalism of foster care and the need to have a robust recruitment strategy within a very competitive environment. The details of the payment schemes are published in the financial booklet.
- **Membership of Foster Talk** - This national charity works to promote and improve the service provided for children in foster care and keep foster carers informed. Benefits of membership include: legal insurance, regular information on fostering events and research and specialist publications and access to four telephone advice lines: Financial assistance, Education support, General information and Legal.

All lines are manned by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel.

- New foster carers are provided with a copy of the Finance Booklet and the Foster Carer Handbook containing useful information about fostering, other services available to them and other teams within the service.
- Induction meetings for new carers are held regularly to introduce new foster carers to key personnel within the fostering service. Foster carers are also invited to attend the organisational induction day. All foster carers are fully trained to use the on line CHARMS system to help with recordings and sharing of information.
- The fostering service recognises that new carers may need higher levels of support and contact when they commence fostering and SSW's will both visit and contact new foster carers more frequently. They will also accompany foster carers to key meetings.

The fostering service facilitates a range of support groups where foster carers can come together on a regular basis to offer support to each other, to hear expert speakers and organise training and social events. Currently running are:

- Training and Development Standards Support Group (when required)
- Support group for Foster Carers x4
- Regular consultation groups
- Activity programmes for both placed & birth child
- A WhatsApp group for both foster carers and staff to stay connected and share information.

Foster carers are fully supported in their roles by a team of dedicated staff that offer timely guidance and assistance. One foster carer commented:

“ Was lovely to meet up at HAPPY MOUNT PARK thank you for all you do in arranging our holiday outings and events for our young people. (Foster carer feedback - August 2023) ”

“ Morning just wanted to say thank you for last night's visit. I feel so much better today and you always make everything make sense. Your knowledge and support is priceless. I'm so grateful, thankful to have you all around me to help me with the best support possible which I always get from you guys. (Foster carer feedback - August 2023) ”

“ S's supervising Social Worker worked very well with me and the young people, and there was constant information sharing and communication between us. (LASW feedback - December 2023) ”

- The fostering service recognises that some children placed can have complex needs and that carers can benefit from access to a range of support services that can provide specialist advice and guidance.
- Educational assessments are completed when a child is first placed and their educational needs are continually monitored to ensure all necessary support and assistance is given for each child to reach their potential. Some children who have had disrupted education now attend full time and have 100% attendance. Children are offered education that meets their individual needs, and, when needed, includes various opportunities for formal or informal learning and apprenticeships. (Ofsted, Oct 2023)
- Health needs, medication and use of First Aid is monitored monthly so changes or patterns can be noted and appropriate referrals can be instructed and reviewed to ensure that all children have the best health care possible.

Further support services include:

- Organisational events
- Independent support if a foster carer is subject to a complaint or allegation.
- Liaison and consultation with the fostering service on issues and policies affecting foster carers.
- Open Door policy to provide ease of access to managers.
- Monthly newsletters providing updates to carers.
- Finance Booklet – clarity over allowances, savings, DLA etc.
- Respite care may be helpful for carers to enable them to continue to care for children and ensure the stability of placements. This could be for emergencies or to sustain a placement. Respite should be only be used when it is in the best interests of the child and after a robust matching process.

It can be very stressful for carers to be subject to a complaint or allegation. There are a number of different routes of support open to foster carers:

- Support from their SSW (or other designated person) who should keep them informed of the progress of the complaint or allegation.
- Independent support and advice to carers subject to a serious complaint or allegation. Foster carers can contact the advice line offered by Foster Talk.
- All foster carers will be offered the opportunity to seek support from Mr Chris Nugent. Chris is a experienced family placement social worker and manager. He is commissioned to undertake this work and therefore is independent from CANW.
- If a child needs to be removed from the foster home at short notice whilst an investigation takes place there is a payment of £221.97 per week until the situation is resolved.

- The CANW Support and Engagement Team has a key role in providing a range of enhanced support services to children in care, carers and their own children. They work closely with carers to ensure that children in placement are given the maximum opportunity to reach their potential and build sustainable relationships with their carers. They provide a fun activity programme during school holiday times which allows the children and young people to develop meaningful relationships with staff. This is valuable should the children need direct work undertaken during their time in foster care. Having contact with children and young people in other placements helps with the realisation that they are not the only children living away from their birth families. 1-1 direct work can be undertaken with children when the need is identified through robust supervision.
- Participation is at the core of the support offered to young people in that both children in placement and birth children are regularly involved in sharing their views and suggesting ways that the services are improved to meet their needs. Children's views and voices are captured in records. This practice is strengthened by children having good relationships with their family's supervising social worker as children are regularly seen by them. Children recognise them as trusted adults. (Ofsted, Oct 2023)
- CANW has a Youth Council and regular sessions through an online activity calendar which all help young people to have their views heard and opportunity to shape future services.
- CANW provides two weeks respite to carers when required to maintain placement stability. Those carers who do not use this will receive payment at the end of the year to acknowledge the inclusive care they provide.
- CANW pays a retainer for up to 6 weeks between placements (excluding respite) subject to a planned, agreed placement ending and carer availability.



MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE SERVICE

The fostering service management team monitors the outcomes of the service monthly with the CEO to ensure that the service is effective and achieving good outcomes for children. The board of trustees monitor the fostering service every three months.

CANW has The Trusted Charity Quality Standard (PQASSO level 2) noting the importance of a robust framework for monitoring and evaluating the service as follows:

- SSW's foster carers and managers receive regular supervision in order to maintain the high standards expected of carers and workers.
- On all reports read and signed by managers, their signature represents a check on the quality of the information provided.
- Unannounced visits are made to all carers, a minimum of once per year.
- Tracking systems are in place to monitor timescales from initial enquiry to approval.
- Feedback is sought from applicants who do not pursue engagement with CANW.
- Monthly evaluations of fostering enquiries inform the development of our recruitment and enquiry strategy.
- Foster carers have an opportunity to attend every Fostering Panel and to return an evaluation form to provide feedback on their experience.
- Quality assurance of reports is carried out by the Fostering Panel advisor and the Deputy Team manager.
- The Fostering Panel and Review Panel scrutinises all assessments and annual reviews of foster carers.
- The Annual Panel Report provides an account and overview of recruitment, assessments and reviews presented to panel.
- When approval is ended, carers have the opportunity to complete an evaluation form which is sent to the Panel Chair. They may also request a meeting to provide feedback about their experience of being a carer. Where there is dispute, carers can seek to have the matter heard through the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

- File audits of carers and children's files are carried out by the service and senior management team.
- Carers, children, and staff are consulted regularly about the views of the service and their views are taken into account when decisions are made about changes to the service.
- The management team review outcomes and management information and present to Ofsted (Fostering Regulation 35)
- Financial information is provided on a monthly basis and analysed by the management and Trustee Board.
- The Trustee Board receive information on the progress of the service against its business plan on a quarterly basis.
- In addition, the fostering service is subject to regular inspection by Ofsted. There is good multi-agency collaboration, and staff build effective relationships with professionals external to the charity. This means that children receive holistic care. One professional said, 'Communication is excellent, and they put the children at the heart of everything they do.' (Ofsted, Oct 2023)

Trustee comment following a visit to foster carer:

“ This placement is a great example of the positive and professional wrap around support the service is capable of providing and the excellent work this staff do. ”

CANW has the following accreditation:

The Trusted Charity Quality Standard (PQASSO level 2)
Quality Assurance Externally Assessed Accreditation

GDPR Certificate of Assurance
(ISME Governance Standard Accreditation)

Cyber Essentials Certificate of Assurance for Cyber Security
(ISME Governance Standard Accreditation)

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

Users of the fostering services, including children, birth families, prospective and approved carers, are provided with copies of the complaints procedure, advised how to access the procedure and encouraged to invoke it if unhappy with services provided.

Foster carers are also advised about the circumstances in which they may have recourse to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) if they are in disagreement with a decision being proposed by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Children and young people are advised that independent sources of support are available to help them make a complaint and advocate on their behalf if they don't feel confident making a complaint by themselves. There are separate complaints leaflets for children and young people and information about how to complain is also included in the Children's welcome pack and A-Z.

Most complaints are resolved informally and speedily by the Registered Manager and records are kept of all complaints, compliments and representations made to the service. There are clear procedures in place for responding to complaints. Informal Stage 1 complaints are responded to within 7 calendar days, and ideally resolved by the SSW or their line manager. If someone is still unhappy after the complaint has been dealt with at the informal stage, they can request that the complaint be addressed formally and an investigation concluded within 28 calendar days. If still not satisfied, a complainant can request that the complaint be considered by a Review Panel.

The service reports quarterly on complaints within the fostering agency Fostering Services 2011. Reg 35 report that goes to Ofsted.

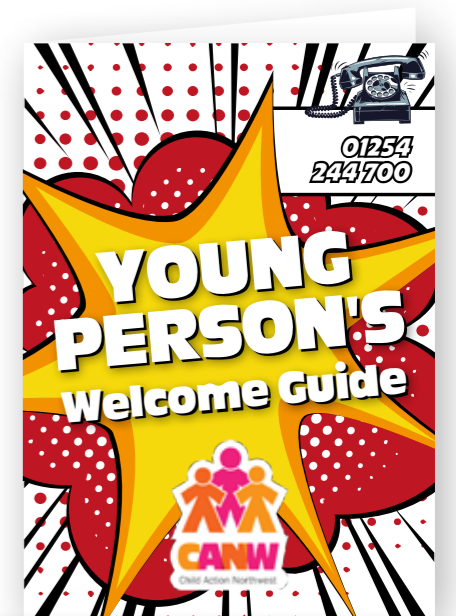
The management team within the fostering service regularly discuss any issues arising from complaints, standards of care or allegations against carers to ensure any lessons learnt can be disseminated and changes in practice made.

CHILD & YOUNG PERSON WELCOME GUIDES

Subject to a child's age and understanding the fostering service ensures that the child receives the children's Guide at the point of placement.

A member of the support and engagement team visits to explain the contents of these in an age appropriate way and share with the young person the ways they can utilise the activities and participation events. This meeting forms part of CANW's ongoing assessment of the needs of the child.

The Children's Guide includes a summary of what CANW sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, or the Children's Commissioner, or Ofsted should they wish to raise a concern.



LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Every member of staff within Child Action Northwest is committed to listening to children and young people and empowering them to have a voice and participate within the development of the organisation.

Children are regularly consulted and their views are taken into account in decision making and reviews, where they are of an age and level of understanding to be able to contribute.

Young people are always asked about the care they receive within their fostering placements:

- I wouldn't change nothing, I like living here, they make me feel welcome and loved.
- It is a brilliant place and I couldn't make anything better.

CANW has diverse ways of collating the views of young people and a commitment to ensuring that their voice influences and shapes the services that they access and experience. This commitment to listening and responding to young peoples wishes starts at the beginning of a foster placement and continues through to the listening to our Care Leavers.

Our commitment to youth participation can be demonstrated strategically and operationally through our Young Leaders programme. Young Leaders are trained and recruited to fulfil a wide variety of roles within the Care & Accommodation Service including delivering training, peer mentoring, volunteering and the recruitment of staff amongst others. During the past year young people helped in the recruitment of a Senior CANW manager (Strategic Director – Development, Innovation and Growth), Team manager and supervising social worker.

The trustees have made a pledge to the young people to keep them at the heart of decision making and this is reflected in their commitment to regularly renewing their pledges. Young people have had their wish for a dedicated space fulfilled due to the refurbishment of the Learning centre which now has a separate Young peoples space complete with kitchen, games room accessed by a separate entrance.

Where children make complaints or allegations, the starting point will be that they are telling the truth and all such matters will always be fully investigated.

INVOLVING FOSTER CARERS IN THE FOSTERING SERVICE

40

young people in placement



4 young people remaining with carers post 18

18

YOUNG PEOPLE

2 years into living with same family



5

YOUNG PEOPLE

5 years into living with same family

The fostering service believes it is important to involve foster carers in the development of the fostering service by providing them with opportunities for feedback and consulting with them about developments within the service. In 2020 this area of work was prioritised and the role of a member of staff was changed to Foster Care Development Worker.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic in 2021 there was still lots to celebrate:

“

Just an email to thank you: Again, for us it just confirms that we made the right decision in choosing CANW all those years ago when considering fostering and first starting out. A fantastic agency, fantastic people and fantastic support.

CANW Foster Carer”

“

I would like to share N's views that she loves living with foster carers L&S. N had a number of placement breakdowns before she came to live with them and she was anxious about another move, but she feels that she has fitted in really well, they have the right balance of welcoming her within their family, rules and boundaries at home, but she feels listened to and treated with respect. N is happy to remain living with L&S until she moves onto independence.

LA social worker”

2 YOUNG PEOPLE

bridged to adoption



Ofsted

The fostering service will be inspected by Ofsted in accordance with the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011

Inspection reports are public documents and a copy of the 2020 report is available via the Ofsted website.

The local Ofsted office responsible for inspecting Fostering Services provided by CANW can be contacted at:

**Ofsted,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD**

Ofsted Chief Inspector: Amanda Spielman (aspelman@ofsted.gov.uk)

General Enquiries: 0300 123 1231

About Concerns: 0300 123 4666

The helpline is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm

Contact Form: <https://contact.ofsted>

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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CANW

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