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**Fostercare**



# **Statement of Purpose**

2010-2011

## Aims and Objectives

Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Department manages the legal duties in relation to placing children who need to be looked after. This service is provided through the Family Placement (fostering) team.

The service aims to meet the needs of all Hampshire's children who have been assessed as requiring a foster placement by providing a range of good quality, family-based care for children who are unable to live with their own families.

### **The aims of the service are to:**

- Support the development and welfare of looked after children.
- Provide looked after children with a safe, stable, nurturing family experience which will promote their health, educational achievement and wellbeing, and which will assist them in coming to terms with their life experience and reaching their full potential.
- Provide different types of foster placements to meet the needs of the children being looked after; including temporary, permanent, respite and short breaks.
- To retain a skilled group of foster carers who are able to meet the needs of children who are looked after.
- To recruit and assess foster carers in a consistent and transparent manner and to work closely with the fostering and adoption recruitment team to engage the right quality and number of carers to meet the needs and demands for placements.
- To offer training and support to all foster carers which will provide the necessary skills to enable them to care for looked after children and develop and enhance their potential.
- To meet the key aims of Hampshire County Council and the objectives of the Children and Young People Plan.

### ● **Children First**

All work within the Family Placement team is guided by determining and acting on what is in the best interests of each child.

### ● **Placement Matching**

Placement matching means placing children with a family that can meet their needs. This includes considering the wishes and views of the child's birth parents and significant relatives, and factors such as heritage, faith and language.

Placement matching is undertaken by the Placement Commissioning Team in consultation with the area Family Placement team.

Wherever possible a child will be placed with a foster carer who can meet their needs. If this is not possible, for example in an emergency, foster carers will be assisted by Hampshire County Council to meet the child's needs in the short term and will address the needs more appropriately in the longer term.

### ● **Types of Fostering**

Fostering is a positive option for children whose care cannot be met within their birth family. The need for care may be short term, temporary or long term. Hampshire County Council aims to provide a range of placement options to meet the needs of children who need care, including emergency placements, short term, long term, remand and intensive support placements, as well as managing placements with family or friends, a range of short breaks placements and parent and child placements.

### ● **Working Together**

The Family Placement team work with a range of other teams and departments to ensure good quality care for the children looked after by foster carers and support for foster carers. We work as partners with agencies and services in specialist fields such as children in care and children in need social workers, health and education teams as well as with children, children's parents and wider family members.

As part of the wider directorate of Children's Services, the Family Placement team also work closely with the Strategic Development team to develop robust policy, procedures and protocols to benefit looked after children, foster carers and others that we work with.

## Recruiting and Approving Foster Carers

Hampshire County Council uses a variety of approaches to recruit a diverse range of foster carers who can meet the needs of children in Hampshire.

### Assessment of Prospective Foster Carers

In assessing prospective foster carers, Hampshire County Council follows the Fostering Services Regulations (2002), National Minimum Care Standards Act (2000), The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services as well as adhering to the good practice guidance British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and Fostering Network.



Following an initial enquiry, many prospective applicants are visited at home so they can further discuss their interest in fostering with Hampshire County Council. Once a formal application is received, an assessing social worker is allocated to undertake a competency-based assessment with the prospective carer (based on the BAAF process).

This assessment involves discussion with family and others who are regular visitors to the home. Statutory and best practice checks are undertaken, these include a number of formal checks with agencies such as police, health and education. Personal references and home health and safety assessments are also undertaken. During the assessment prospective carers attend a local three day training course, Skills to Foster. This training is an essential element in the preparation of foster carers for the task of looking after children and young people.

### Approval of Foster Carers

The assessment process culminates in a written report which is then read and signed by the prospective carers and presented to an independent fostering panel for review. Hampshire's fostering panels are made up of members who have relevant personal and/or professional experience or expertise in looking after children. They review the written report and ask relevant questions to enable them to make a recommendation. The recommendation of the panel is sent to the agency decision maker for Hampshire County Council. The Agency Decision Maker has the final decision on approval of foster carers.

On approval, a supervising social worker from the area Family Placement team is allocated to support the foster carer with their role.

## Training Foster Carers

All foster carers are expected to participate in locally delivered training which is essential to undertaking the fostering task. They are required to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) workbook. A comprehensive programme of additional training is available for foster carers, providing training in issues specific to the children and young people that foster carers are looking after. The programme also offers excellent personal development opportunities. Training is delivered by staff, foster carers and specially commissioned trainers and the programme is managed by Hampshire's Workforce Development team.



## Reviewing Foster Carers

Formal supervision with foster carers also includes reviews of foster carers record keeping and the outcomes they are delivering for the children in their care. A supervising social worker will undertake unannounced visits to the foster home, and there is a formal annual review of each fostering household. Alongside this, Hampshire's procedures indicate situations in which further reviews should be undertaken, for example in the case of serious complaint or if a change in approval is recommended.

## Supporting Foster Carers

### Financial Support

All foster carers receive an allowance for each child they foster, according to the age of the child. The allowance is paid per day or per week, depending how long a child is in the care of the foster family. For foster carers who are able to demonstrate their skills and experience in supporting young people with complex needs, a skills award is also possible. A formal panel-based appraisal process reviews foster carers against a set of specific criteria to assess carers competencies. Any skills fees awarded are paid per child in placement.

### Practical Support

All foster carers work with an allocated family placement social worker who has responsibility for managing and supporting them. Six-weekly supervision visits are complemented by a series of support groups, automatic membership of Hampshire's Fostering Network and access to daily and out of hours duty services.

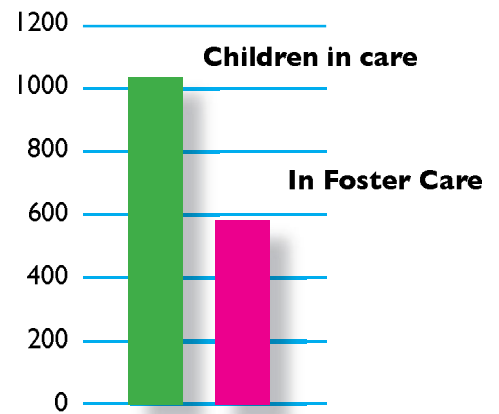
Foster carers can also directly access a range of support services for themselves and the children in their care. These services are listed in the Foster Carers Handbook and in a separate Support Directory and are known to the supervising social worker. In addition to formal support, foster carers are encouraged to participate in informal support and social activities organised by other foster carers.

## Service Statistics

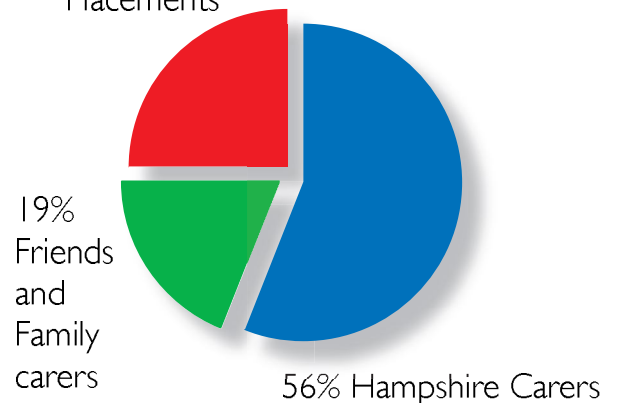
### Children living in care

At the end of 2010, there were 1074 children in the care of Hampshire County Council. On average, 578 of these children were living in foster care at any one time.

Around 56% live with Hampshire County Council carers, 25% in placements commissioned through independent agencies and 19% with Friends and Family carers.



25% Independent Placements



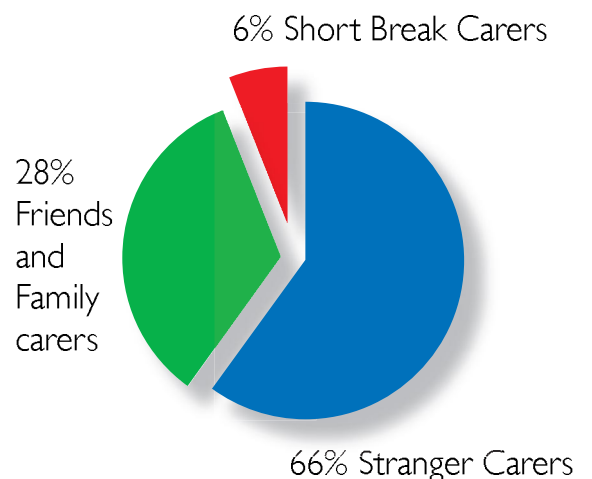
## Family Placement Service

During 2010, there were a total 813 requests for placements through the Family Placement Service. This includes multiple placement requests, for example for family groups, children who may be moving to long term placement etc.

### Foster Carers

At the end of 2010, Hampshire County Council retained a pool of 546 foster carers to support young people who require foster placements.

Of these 66% are general or stranger carers - this means that the foster carer will not be known to the child placed with them; 28% are friends and family foster carers who are approved to foster named children. 6% of foster carers support Short Breaks by offering respite care or supporting disabled children through the Family Link scheme.



## Service Feedback

Hampshire County Council operates a comments, complaints and compliments procedure, which foster carers are made aware of through the Foster Carers Handbook and other post-approval literature. Children who are living with foster carers are also provided with information about how they can make comments on, complain about or compliment the service they experience.

### Complaints about the family placement service

In 2010, ten formal complaints were received about the Family Placement service. These complaints were typically about general operational aspects of the services such as policy, procedure or service delivery.

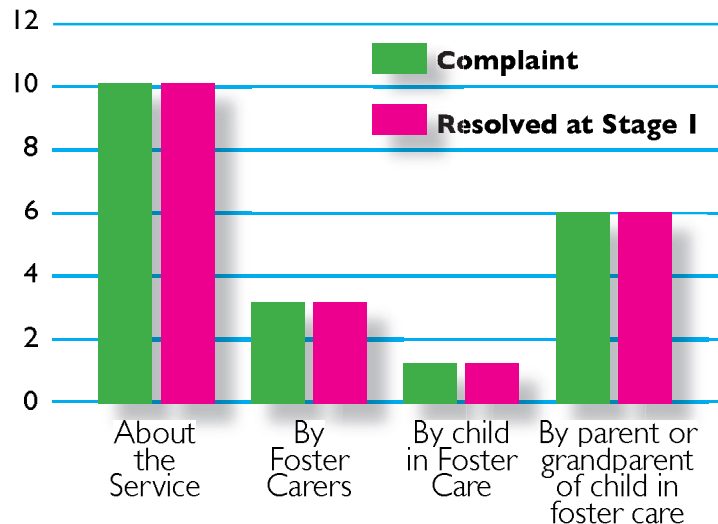
Three foster carers complained about the Service and six complaints were received from parents or grandparents of children living with foster carers.

All complaints regarding the Family Placement Service were resolved in Stage one of the formal process.

More information about the comments, complaints and compliments process can be found by visiting:

[www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/contact-cs/cs-complaints.htm](http://www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/contact-cs/cs-complaints.htm)

In addition to these formal complaints, the service also handled two formal case concerns, three "pre-complaints" (situations likely to result in a complaint) one miscellaneous enquiry and one enquiry from a Member of Parliament.



### Complaints and Allegations against foster carers

All complaints against foster carers are investigated using the Complaints and Allegations procedure which is outlined in the Foster Carers Handbook. Emphasis is placed on resolving complaints of this nature swiftly and locally where possible. In 2010, one formal complaint was made against a foster carer, and this was resolved during Stage I of the complaints procedure.

In recognition of the fact that any complaint or allegation is a stressful occurrence for a foster carer, the Family Placement service employs an independent social worker to support foster carers who are subject to investigation following a Level 2 or Level 3 complaint.

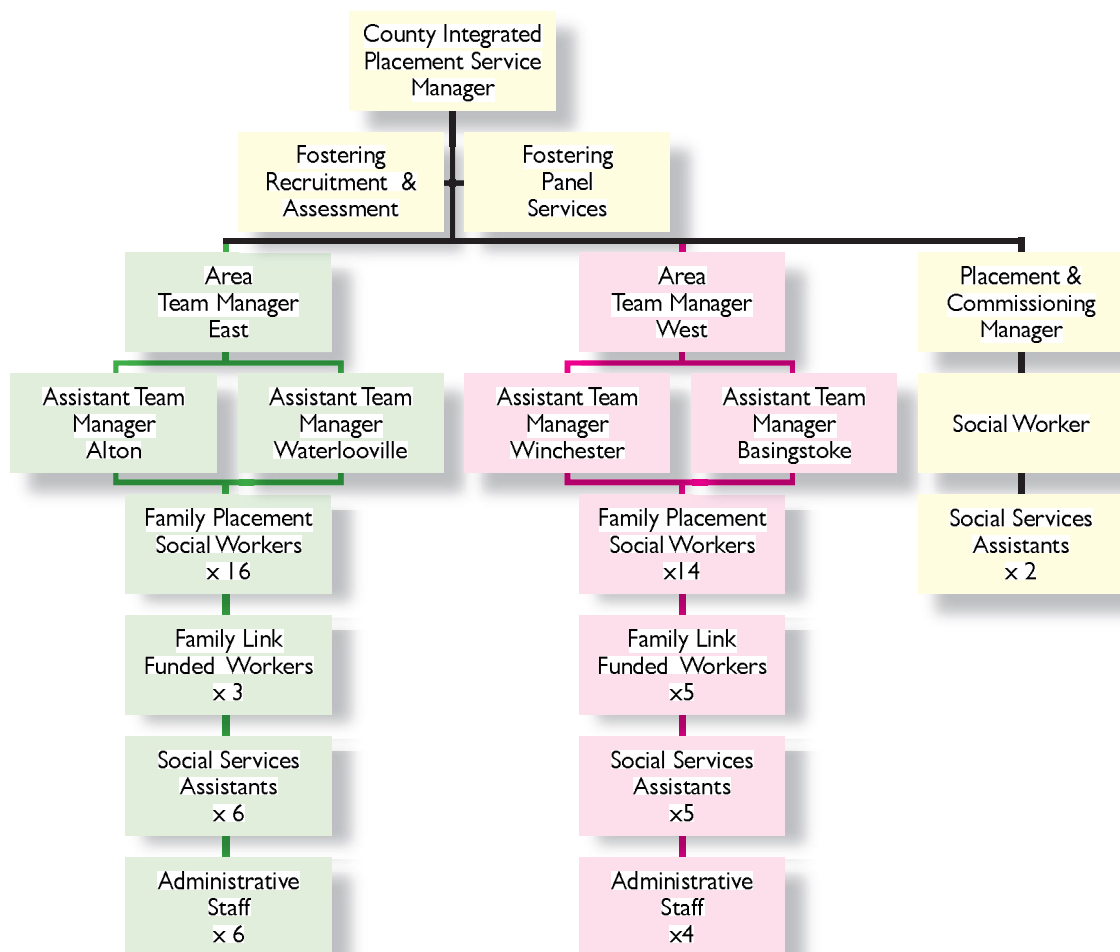
## Management Structure

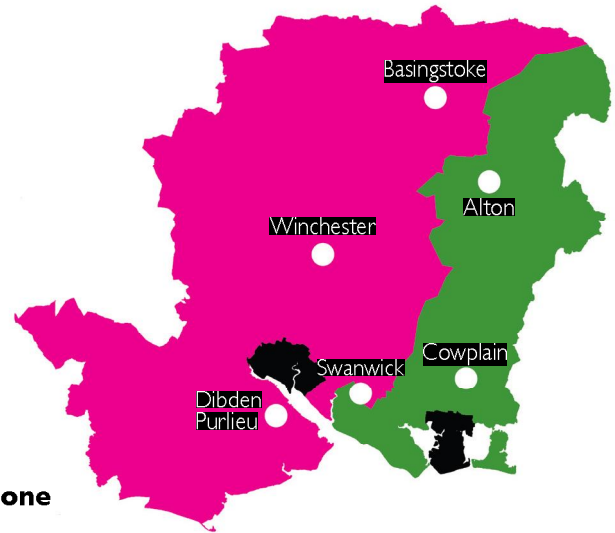
The Family Placement Service is part of Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Directorate. By April 2011, the service will have been restructured. This restructure incorporates a move from three geographic areas into two, and a change in how some services associated with the Family Placement team are managed and delivered.

Within this new structure senior management responsibility for fostering is held with the Head of County Services. Day to day operational management of the service is the responsibility of the County Service Manager, Integrated Placements and team managers appointed to cover each area.

Team managers lead the work of qualified social workers, social services assistants and the administration services to support foster carers within their geographic area of responsibility.

The Family Placement service comprises 70 members of staff, including both full and part time workers.





Area Based Services	Name	Phone
Team Manager		
Eastern Hampshire	Mike Earls	02392 256 822 01420 544 349

Team Manager		
Western Hampshire	Paula Haynes	01256 362080 01962 876 273

County-wide Services (Swanwick)	Name	Phone
Integrated Placement		
Service Manager	Cathi Hadley	01489 587017
Adoption and Integrated Recruitment Service Manager	Lyndsey Marshall	01489 587017
Fostering		
Panel Services	Liane McDonald	01489 587017

## Staff Qualifications and Experience

Service and team managers have both social work and management qualifications to support their extensive experience in providing services for children. They are registered with the General Social Care Council (GSCC).

Social workers all hold relevant professional qualifications and are registered with the GSCC, as well as having experience in supporting children in need and looking after children. Social Services assistants are not qualified social workers but have experience of working with children, young people and families gained from working with a range of services. They work under the close supervision of qualified social workers or team managers.

All Hampshire County Council employees and contractors are subject to rigorous selection, assessment and checking prior to commencing work within their teams. The recruitment process for Family Placement is also monitored by OFSTED.

## Service Highlights for 2010

**“It’s  
challenging,  
rewarding  
and massively  
positive”**

In March 2010, we launched our new fostering DVD. We named the DVD after one of the opening remarks from one of the foster carers involved in making the DVD. As well as foster carers, the DVD shows footage of social workers and young people who have lived in foster care.

The film explains the process of fostering and helps those interested in becoming foster carers to understand why children need their help and support as well as explaining the process of becoming a foster carer.

We have also launched a new information news-sheet which explains the fostering recruitment process through short, accessible and easy to read articles.

### **Fostering Fortnight**

We were delighted to receive extensive media coverage throughout fostering fortnight (17-30 May 2010) which helped significantly in recruitment but also affords some well deserved recognition to our foster carers. Coverage included features in local papers as well as radio interviews.

### **Foster Carers Honours**

Four Hampshire County Council foster carers were honoured with the MBE for their services to children and young people. Between them, Eric and Mary Snook, Felicity Brown and Christine Gubbins, have provided over 180 years of fostering support to the children and young people they have looked after.



## Share a break

Hampshire County Council needs part-time carers to help disabled children and their families by offering them a short break. If you can commit a weekend every month (plus the odd overnight here and there) and feel you could help a child or teenager enjoy a break, we can offer training, allowances and support to make it happen.

Find out more about being a Shortbreaks carer.

people like you

**Fostercare**

Talk to us  
today or ask  
for more  
information.

0845 6035620

[www.fostering.hampshire.gov.uk](http://www.fostering.hampshire.gov.uk)

 Hampshire  
County Council



### **Short Breaks Scheme**

We have re-launched our Family Link scheme under the wider banner of Short Breaks. To support disabled children and their families, we need more “part-time” foster carers who can offer a regular or flexible commitment of time - such as a weekend a month and the odd night here and there, perhaps in school holidays.

# Shortbreaks

## Our plans for the year ahead include . . .

### Introducing Foster e-Comms

Foster e-Comms will bring together into one place a wide range of resources, tasks and processes which a foster carer needs - a secure, online website. As well as offering 'touch of a button' access to information, the portal will connect foster carers across the county, enable improved service consultation and feedback as well as offering social benefits to foster carers.

### Foster carers training pathway

Hampshire's Workforce Development team have re-developed the structure and delivery approach for foster carers training. Offering a clearer pathway for foster carers to develop their own learning and access training they need to support children in their care, the pathway incorporates specialist provision with training delivered by foster carers, family placement staff and professionals across Hampshire County Council.

# Foster e-Comms



## The Last Word



*“Being listened to, having boundaries set for you, knowing people care about you - all that makes you feel safe, secure and loved. That’s what a good foster placement is all about,”* says Ricky Harding and he should know.

Ricky has spent ten years in the care of Hampshire County Council, for eight of those he lived with foster carers Wendy and Peter Richardson in Waterlooville. He credits the care he received from the entire Richardson family as making him the young man he is now and says he cannot thank them enough. “They’ve been there for me,” he said. “From the moment I arrived in their home they made me feel part of the family. I was never made to feel different. They helped me become who I am now. Before I lived with them I wasn’t paying attention at school, I wasn’t doing very well, I was all over the place. Wendy helped and supported me, she did my homework with me, she was there for me. I became more interested in my school work. They helped me improve as a person.”

Wendy and Peter provided what he says he needed to help him thrive and grow into the confident young man he is now. Without that he says he doesn’t know where he would be now. “Children need boundaries, for me routine was important it helped make me feel safe. If you don’t have boundaries you get more and more out of control. Good foster carers are people who can bond with children, can give them that security, structure, that care and support. I’m not saying it’s easy - children who come into care can be difficult, it can be challenging but all children have a good side and good foster carers can bring that side out, allowing children to develop and gain in confidence,” said Ricky.

Ricky lives independently in supported lodgings now but he’s still very much a part of Wendy’s family. “I play cricket with her nephew and her grandson and I see Wendy and Peter every weekend. I love her Sunday roasts, her roast lamb is my favourite – it’s the best and I wouldn’t miss it for the world!”

### Foster Care Statement of Purpose

## OFSTED

Hampshire County Council is inspected by Ofsted. You can contact Ofsted to ask more about their inspection of children's services, make a complaint or raise a concern about a service that Ofsted inspects or regulates, or you can view inspection reports online.

Enquiries Mail Address: Royal Exchange Buildings,  
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Enquiries Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

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[www.fostering.hampshire.gov.uk](http://www.fostering.hampshire.gov.uk)

This information is available in alternative formats on request

For further information contact 01489 587017

Produced by Hampshire County Council's  
Children's Services Department, Family Placement Service

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Design by [johnwoodhead.design@ntlworld.com](mailto:johnwoodhead.design@ntlworld.com)

Photography by Martin Lewis. Photographs posed by models to protect confidentiality

Printed by Hampshire Printing Services on recycled paper