



Slough Children's Service Trust Independent Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose 2016- 2017

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**SLOUGH CHILDREN’S SERVICE’S TRUST INDEPENDENT FOSTERING
SERVICE
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2016 – 2017**

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1. Introduction and Policy Context

SCST is an independent not-for-profit company that provides social care and support services to children, young people and families. The fostering service is situated within Placements and Resources in the Trust and offers placements to Slough Children, but is no longer part of Slough Borough Council. As such, and in order to continue to provide fostering services, the agency is registered as an independent fostering agency (IFA)

The adoption service is similarly now registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) and is situated also with Placements and Resources.

Slough Children's Services Trust Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000 (CSA) for the conduct of Fostering Services. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Fostering Services Regulations govern the work of fostering services throughout England and are used in inspecting and registering fostering agencies.

Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) and Regulation 3 (1) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Amended 2013) require a fostering service to produce a statement which contains the aims and objectives of the service and provides details of the range of services and facilities provided. It is intended as a useful source of information for Foster Carers, Fostering Social Workers, Childcare Social Workers, children and young people as well as birth parents. The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose should be child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children and young people.

2. Key Service Aims and Objectives

Slough Children's Services Trust's (SCST) fundamental purpose is "**Ensuring children in Slough are safe, secure and successful**". SCST aims to provide the best possible outcomes for vulnerable children and families – Ensure children and families are the focus of everything we do and also provide the best possible support to staff, to enable families to develop and flourish.

The Fostering Service is committed to providing a range of safe and secure foster placements to meet the assessed needs of children and young people in care and promote and safeguard their welfare. The service aims to provide placements that promote stability and positive outcomes for children and young people by working in partnership with young people, carer's, birth families, other professionals and the community. The service also supports children with disabilities within their families of origin when this can be achieved by regular periods of family-based short breaks.

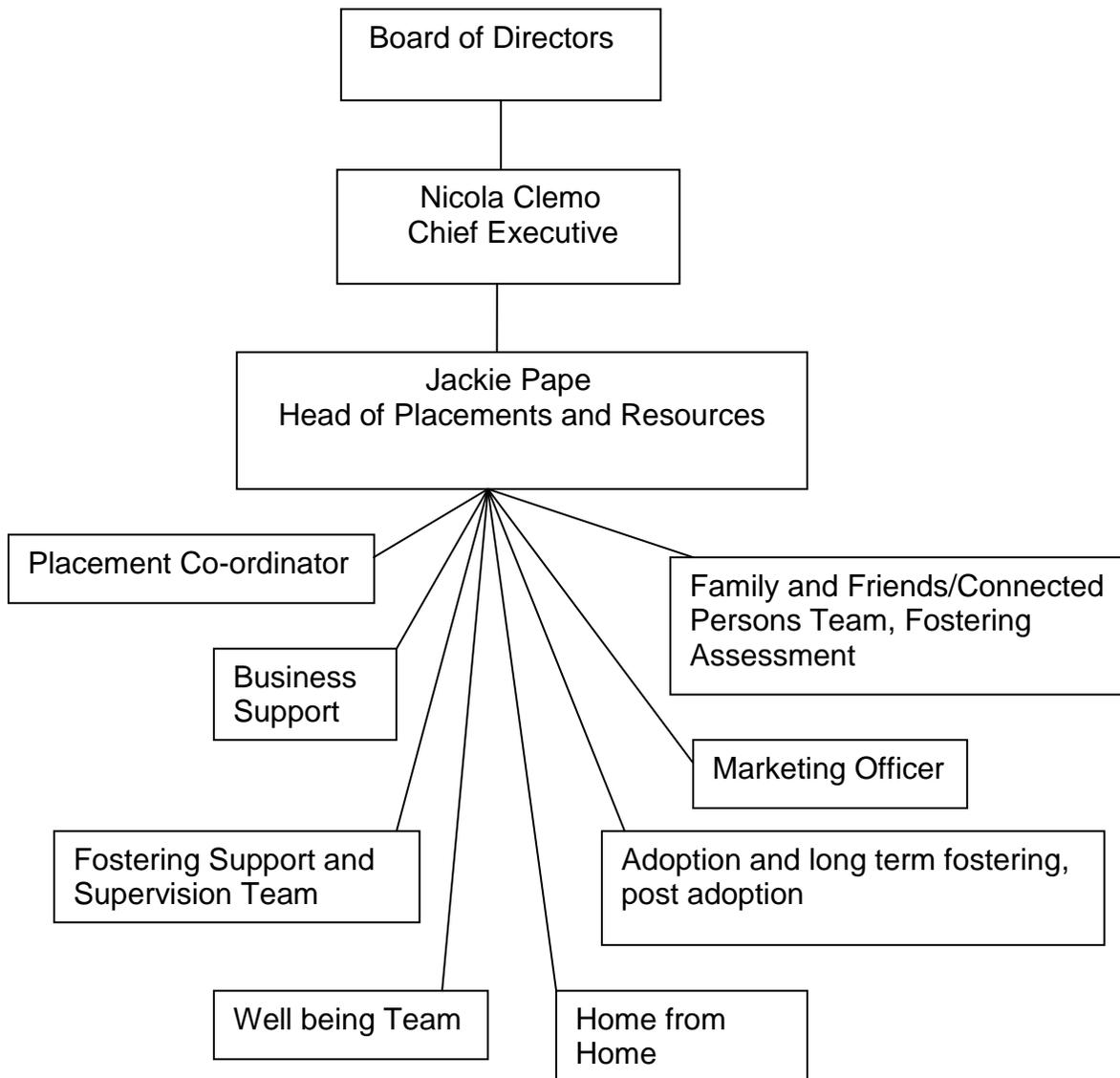
The Statement of Purpose is underpinned by the Slough Children's Services Trust Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children (2015 to 2018), SCST Vision Statement.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the service aims:

- To ensure the views of children, parents and carers are sought and are taken into account, having regard for their age and understanding, in the continuous development and improvement of the service;
- To recognise the importance of and support appropriate levels of contact with family and community as is consistent with their welfare and care plan;
- To recognise and value the diverse nature of the community it serves and proactively engage with the local community to identify potential carers;
- To ensure there is a sufficient range of safe and appropriate placements available for the Looked After Children in Slough
- To actively monitor and supervise all placements to ensure children and young people are safe, their needs are met and they are making progress to achieve positive outcomes;
- To contribute to and ensure effective multi-disciplinary and partnership working to meet the health, educational and social needs of children and young people within placements; the service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Children and young people will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality, disability or social class in terms of service provision. Wherever possible children are matched within their own cultural, racial, linguistic and religious communities, and where this is not possible, plans must be put in place to keep the child's culture alive for them;
- To ensure Children with disabilities are to be placed in an environment that recognises and caters for their disability, and at the same time promotes their social inclusion;
- To ensure staff and carers are well trained and competent in delivering a quality Fostering Service, including opportunities for continued learning and professional development.
- To ensure all staff and carers have completed safeguarding checks and have a valid DBS;
- To provide all staff and carers support and supervision with clear lines of accountability and management;
- To provide each Foster Carer a named allocated Supervising Social Worker;
- To work in partnership to support the Slough Fostering Association,
- To work in collaboration with and provide advice on Fostering issues to other colleagues in the SCST
- To operate clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service, including the maintenance of comprehensive and up-to-date records on all children placed;
- To ensure all complaints and allegations against carers/staff are investigated under departmental procedures in a timely fashion and lessons learned filter to improvements in future practice;
- To facilitate the effective operation of the Fostering and Permanence Panel which provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of Foster Carers, Family and Friends Foster Carers and foster placements? The panel will ensure the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making.

3. The Organisational Structure of SCST Fostering Service

The structure of the fostering service, reflecting its independent registration and how it relates to SCST is shown below:



4. Staffing

The registered provider of the fostering service is Slough Children's Services Trust

Nicola Clemo, Chief Executive of the Trust is the Agency Decision Maker

Jackie Pape, Head of Placements and Resources is the Responsible Individual for the fostering service

Colin Bent, Practice Manager for fostering Support and Supervision within the service is the registered manager for the fostering service

Jo Neale is Practice Manager for Family and Friends/Connected Persons, Fostering and SGO assessments

Jo Blake is the fostering and permanency panel advisor

The managers within the service are all qualified Social Workers, registered by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), with extensive experience (a minimum of 2 years post-qualifying practice) in children and families social work. All assessing and supervising social work staff within the teams are similarly professionally qualified and experienced and registered with the HCPC. Any social work assistants are supervised by qualified Social Workers.

5. Services to Children and Young People

The primary purpose of the Fostering Service is to provide high quality, safe, secure and caring foster families for children and young people who are unable to live with their parents. Whenever possible and where it is safe to do so, children and young will be placed with someone in their extended family or a close family friend. These arrangements are recognised in legislation as 'Family and Friend' or 'Connected Persons' foster placements. Where this is not possible, placements will be found with one of our approved Foster Carers or a suitable Foster Carer approved by an independent fostering agency. We aim to clearly identify the particular emotional, physical, cultural and religious needs of a child and find a foster family who can best meet those needs. Our aim is always to keep sibling groups together.

Except in emergencies, we plan introduction meetings between the child and the Foster Carers in an effort to lessen the anxiety for the child or young person of moving to a new family. Where a child or young person is placed in an emergency the Child's Social Worker or the Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker will give the child as much information about the Foster Carers and their household as possible.

Children will be seen in placement by both their own Social Worker and the Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker. Children will be encouraged to express their wishes and views about their foster placement and they will be invited to contribute in writing to their Foster Carer's Annual Review. The children of Foster Carers also contribute to their parents' Foster Carer's Annual Review.

Placement of Children

The Placements Co-ordinator identifies foster Carers who have vacancies and works with the Fostering Support Team to assess if this is a potentially appropriate placement for the child or young person. Wherever possible, profiles of foster carers and their households are shared with children and young people as well as their social workers. If they agree, the match is proposed to the Foster Carer/s and the Child's Social Worker who will further consider the match, involving the child or young person as appropriate, and makes the arrangements for placement if agreed.

The fostering service has a set of standards for use when commissioning services from external fostering agencies. These include a requirement that agencies are accredited, provide geographically appropriate placements (i.e. generally within 20 miles of Slough), provide adequate support to carers, have systems and services in place to ensure that children and young people have access to appropriate education, health and therapeutic provision and that they constitute a cost-effective use of financial resources. Those agencies all need to have an Ofsted rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding' from their most recent inspections

Children's Guide

Members of the Children in Care Council have been instrumental in producing and appearing in the Slough Children's Services Trust Children's Guide to Fostering DVD, which is available to all children in the Trust's care. There is also a leaflet to accompany the video.

The aim is to provide information about what it means to be fostered, what Social Workers do and what children and young people can do if they are not happy in their foster home or if they have any worries or concerns.

The Guide is reviewed annually and a copy is sent to Ofsted and all of the service's foster carers.

6. Services Provided

The Fostering Service currently provides:

- (a) A duty system for managing requests for fostering, residential and specialist placements from Slough Children's Services Trust's care planning and transitions teams.
- a) A general fostering scheme, consisting of a pool of registered foster carers, providing planned and emergency foster care for individual children, young people and sibling groups of all ages, across the full range of short term, longer term placements. There are 2 tiers to this scheme, which recognises the need for a particular skill set for older and more challenging children.
- b) A specialist family-based short break scheme to support children and young people with a range of disabilities and their families, offering breaks during the day/evening and overnight stays.
- c) A supported lodgings scheme offering transitional semi-independent accommodation to young people over the age of sixteen where carers support them to gain practical skills to enable them to move on to full independence.
- d) A 'Staying Put' provision for young people in care and care leavers aged 16–21 to remain with their previous foster carers.
- e) A recruitment and assessment service for prospective foster carers
- f) Assessment, support and supervision of Family and Friends/Connected Person's Foster Carers and placements.
- g) Support to private foster carers, known to the service and the delivery of awareness-raising campaigns for carers or parents considering entering into a private fostering arrangement.

- i. A Fostering Panel constituted and administered in line with regulatory requirements, which considers and makes recommendations about the approval of all prospective new carers, reviews of foster carers and matches children to long-term placements.

7. How SCST Fostering Services Operate

The Family and Friends/Connected Person's, Fostering assessment Teams.

These teams are responsible for recruiting foster carers for the SCST service, assessing all Connected Person(s) and Family and Friends Foster Carers

Carer Assessment and Recruitment

Slough has a widely diverse community; recruitment activity and assessment processes respond positively to the diversity and differences in child rearing practices, family values and attitudes in order to recruit from a wide pool of carers across the different spectrums of racial, cultural, religious and social classes living in the borough

The team has a rolling programme of recruitment activity, managed by a Marketing Officer, including on-going publicity, special marketing campaigns and special events during national fostering week as well as word of mouth from other approved Foster Carers.

All applicants are assessed, trained and prepared to care for children and young people. Assessments of prospective carers are in line with national minimum standards and regulations, including preparation group work and competency based individual assessments.

Foster Carers are approved to care for children as either short term or long term carers. Any specialist skills they may have, for example in caring for particularly challenging children, or children with a disability, are considered at the matching stage.

The team operates a duty system, from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, to ensure that any potential applicant is able to have an immediate response to their enquiry and to answer any general queries they may have.

Family and Friends/Connected Persons assessments

These assessments are undertaken after referrals are received by the Practice Manager for this service. Referrals are responded to regardless of whether they are directed as part of public care proceedings or private applications. The Team works collaboratively with other social work teams within the department and professionals involved in a child's network. Family and Friends and Connected

Person(s) Foster Carers are encouraged to attend the training courses available for all SCST carers.

Structure of the teams

1 x Practice Manager

Family and Friends/Connected Persons Assessments - 1X Senior Social worker and 2 X Social workers

Recruitment and assessment of prospective carers x 2 social workers and short break carers x1 social worker (one part-time) and 1x assistant social worker

1 x Marketing Co-ordinator

1x Well-being Therapist

Fostering Support and Supervision

The main remit of the Fostering Support and supervision Team is to supervise, review, train and support all SCST approved Foster Carers.

The team works closely with the Trust's placement co-ordinator, Children Looked After (Care Planning) and Transitions teams in identifying appropriate placements for Slough's looked after children. All Foster Carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker. The role of this worker is to monitor the placement and offer carers support, advice and guidance.

Children and young people in the care of Slough and their carers have access to specialist support, including Pathways Education Support; the Wellbeing Service which is now situated within the placement service and local CAMHS which includes the provision of counselling, art therapy and play therapy for children in care.

The support team has a role in ensuring that SCST is able to fulfil its statutory duty in relation to Private Fostering arrangements, under the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. The receipt of notifications and the assessment of private foster carers are undertaken by the child in Need service, with a lead manager taking responsibility. Private Fostering visits are completed by a Social Worker in the support team, in accordance with the requirements as outlined in the Private Fostering procedures.

Structure of the Team

1 x Practice Manager

1X Consultant Practitioner - see home from scheme

4 X Supervising social workers (1 of these part-time)

1X Well-being therapist

1X Assistant Social Worker

Home from Home (short breaks scheme) Team

This team manages specialist family-based short break arrangements to support children and young people with a range of disabilities and their families, offering breaks during the day/evening and overnight stays.

Referrals for potential links are received by the team, the majority of these originating from the LDD service in the trust.

Carers within this scheme are supported by a carer co-ordinator. The co-ordinator promotes potential links between carers and families and attends meetings with social workers and families in order to establish and review links.

Carers within the scheme receive specialist training, but also have access to the general fostering service training programme.

Structure of the team

Consultant Practitioner – manages the service, overseen by the Practice Manager
2X part-time carer co-ordinators

Placements Duty Service

There is a dedicated Placements Co-ordinator post managing fostering placements requests. All placements service staff are required to serve as duty workers on a rota during the working week. The staff work closely together to provide a consistent, coherent and flexible service, which benefits from ring-fenced areas of specialist provision and management.

The placements co-ordinator also finds placements for children and young people in residential units, semi-accommodation services for 16 plus children or with Independent Fostering Services carers (if a suitable slough alternative cannot be identified).

The placement co-ordinator is managed by the practice manager, fostering support and supervision.

The development of a small 'access to resources' team is currently being considered.

8. Supporting Services

The Fostering Service operates a duty system during office hours (9am – 5pm) Monday to Friday, providing advice and support to Foster and Carers and Family and Friends Foster Carers when their allocated Supervising Social Workers are unavailable.

An Out of Hours telephone advice service to carers will be maintained by the staff of Slough Family Placements Service, Slough Children's Services Trust. The Advice Line will be operational from 5.00 p.m. until 11.00 p.m. Monday to Friday, and from 12 midday until 11.00 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The aim of the service is to offer carers an advice line where they can seek advice and guidance from social workers. The social workers will not be in a position to undertake any house calls during the hours of this service. Should there be a need for a more direct intervention this will be discussed with the Emergency Duty Team.

Berkshire Emergency Duty Team provides advice and support to looked after children and Foster Carers where there is a situation that requires an immediate response out of normal office hours (5pm – 9am). The Emergency Duty Team also deals with emergency admissions of children to care.

The work of the Fostering Service is well supported by a wide range of internal services such as Slough council Legal Services, SCST Virtual School, SCST Finance and Human Resources, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and LAC Health provision. Dedicated well being professionals are physically located with the Placement Service to provide timely support to Foster Carers, Family and Friends Foster Carers when required.

9. Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare

The Berkshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board provide the procedural framework for safeguarding children in Slough and the Fostering Service ensures that staff and managers attend child protection training and comply with good practice and guidance. There is a joint annual service and panel training offered which incorporates safeguarding,

10. SCST Fostering Panel

The Fostering Service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (amended 2013) The service maintains a 'central list' of Panel members. The Panel Chair is independent with professional experience of fostering. Other panel members on the central list include a Social Worker with more than three years relevant post-qualifying experience, a Slough Councillor, independent members. The Panel meets on the second Tuesday of every month. Detailed minutes are kept of all Panel meetings.

The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a Foster Carer, Connected Person(s) (Family and Friends Foster Carer) and the terms of their approval
- The first annual review of each approved carer and any other review as requested by the fostering service
- The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a Foster Carer.
- Permanent fostering plans for children.

New applicants and existing Foster Carers are invited and encouraged to attend Panel when their application or review is presented to Panel.

The Panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and feeds back any issues or concerns to the Registered Manager. The Panel makes recommendations to the Fostering Service and these recommendations are referred to the 'Agency Decision Maker' for a decision.

If the Panel or the Agency Decision Maker is minded not to recommend approval or recommends termination of approval, applicants are advised that they can request that their case is reconsidered by the Panel or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for a review of their case.

11. Capacity and Demand

The Fostering Service responds to planned and unplanned admissions. The structure of the Service recognises that unplanned admissions will occur and seeks to proactively address this need. Carers are specifically recruited and approved on the basis of the service they will provide. During the assessment process and final approval, consideration is given to the impact placements will have and the capabilities/skills of carers. Thus emergency and unplanned admissions are directed towards carers with appropriate skills and capabilities.

Where the Fostering Service is unable to meet the placement needs of a child, the commissioning of placements from independent fostering agencies is managed by the placement co-ordinator.

12. Complaints

All Foster Carers and Children and Young People in Care using the Service are provided with written information about complaints procedures, including contact details if they wish to make a complaint. The Children's Guide to the Fostering Service is issued to all children and young people in placement and includes contact details. The Practice Manager of the Family Placement Service, along with the Head of Service, Placements and Resources monitors all complaints received in respect of any aspect of the work undertaken by the Family Placement Service.

13. The Foster Carer Charter

SCST Foster Carer Charter – Getting it right for Slough's Children and Young people"

SCST Placements' service is committed to providing and promoting safe, stable and nurturing placements where the outcomes and life chances are positive for looked after children. In order to achieve this it is important to have a working relationship which is based on trust and respect among all children services that are involved in the care of the child.

The Service has worked in partnership with Foster Carers to achieve the charter, which was launched in 2015. The charter explains what the roles and responsibilities of the Service and the Carers towards each other and the children we care for.

14. Foster Carers' Handbook

All approved Foster Carers are provided with a Foster Carer Handbook, which contains all the policies and procedures relating to Foster Carers, as well as useful information about child care issues and resources. (Currently being updated)

15. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

A report is written for the Corporate Parenting Committee on a quarterly basis by the Head of Service, Placements, providing the executive of the council with statistical data in relation to the agency's activity.

Other monitoring includes staff supervision linked to the appraisal system, monthly recorded visits to Foster Carers, Annual Reviews, the Fostering Panel and feedback from training sessions and case recording and practice audits. The Practice Manager monitors data about incidents of concern in foster care, including: restraint; allegations; complaints; unauthorised absence. The Registered Manager monitors the Schedule 6 and 7 requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

Evaluating the Service

The information gathered through quarterly and annual reports, audit, inspections and customer feedback is constantly evaluated by the managers of the Fostering service, to judge its on-going effectiveness and make changes where necessary. The Fostering Service is also subject to formal inspection by Ofsted and inspections usually take place every three years.

16. Arrangements for the Revision and Circulation of the Statement of Purpose

The Registered Manager is responsible for the annual revision of the Statement of Purpose. Revisions may occur at other times if necessary. Staff and Foster Carers will be consulted on proposed revisions as appropriate.

The revised Statement of Purpose will be presented to the Fostering Panel annually for their consideration.

The revised Statement of Purpose will be sent to Ofsted annually and when any significant changes have been made, within 28 days of approval by the Registered Provider.

The Statement of Purpose will be available to all staff via the Trusts Intranet and to members of the public via SCST website. Paper copies can be provided to looked after children and their parents on request.

17. Details of Registration

Registered as and Independent Fostering Agency – No: 1183495
Slough Children’s Services Trust Limited – no: 09487106
of 1 Glass Wharf, Bristol, BS2 0ZX

18. Details of Children’s Rights Director

Anne Longfield
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 020 7783 8330
<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/contact-us>