

Statement of Purpose 2021



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1. Introduction

This Statement of Purpose has been compiled for Middlesbrough Fostering Service in accordance with Standard 16 of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011).

A copy of this Statement of Purpose is available on our website and copies will be made available, upon request, to children in foster care and their parents, prospective and approved Middlesbrough foster carers; staff employed by the fostering service, and other agencies and professionals who are interested in, or involved in, work relating to the fostering service.

This Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed by Middlesbrough Family Placement Management Team, whenever there is a change in the service, or at least annually.

2. Legislative Framework

The Children Act 1989 underpins the detailed framework for the provision of the service found in The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 guidance and standards, Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011, and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (England) June 2015.

The framework is designed to set out the aims and objectives of the services as a whole and the services and facilities, which are provided.

3. Aims and Objectives

The overall objective of Middlesbrough's Fostering Service is to fulfill the Local Authorities' duties and responsibilities in respect of fostering services in accordance with all relevant legislation and standards.

- Middlesbrough Fostering Service is committed to ensuring that foster care, provided for children in its care, is of the highest quality and guarantees the best possible standards of care, safety, and life opportunities.
- The aim of the service is to achieve the best possible outcomes for fostered children. We strive to ensure that our children are: safe and secure in nurturing homes; they remain healthy; achieve to the best of their abilities and become positive independent adults and are protected from abuse and neglect.
- In Middlesbrough our aim is to ensure that children feel safe and secure in their placements with carers who are appropriately trained, supported and capable of providing quality care to meet their needs and maximise their life chances.
- Middlesbrough Fostering Service is committed to working in partnership with children, parents, carers and all those involved with the child's welfare and best interests to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved.
- We aim to devise and implement effective recruitment campaigns in order to attract the range of carers identified to meet the needs of the children looked after.

- We will actively work in partnership with the child's social worker, and other appropriate professionals, to identify a suitable alternative placement from an Independent Fostering Agency, where appropriate and agreed by the Head of Service.

4. Values and Principles

The work of Middlesbrough Fostering Service is based on the following principles where the decision has been made that a child should be in foster care. It is the expectation of Middlesbrough Fostering Service that all staff, partner agencies, approved foster carers and anyone involved with the child's welfare will actively endorse and support the following principles:

- The welfare of children and young people will be paramount in all considerations in the work of the fostering service and in all our activities, the child's best interests will come first.
- Middlesbrough Fostering Service believe that wherever possible, children and young people should be cared for by their birth families, but where this is not possible, it is essential to ensure that we provide high levels of care for children and young people in stable and safe placements.
- Middlesbrough Fostering Service values working in partnership with parents and carers along with all other agencies involved with the child in order to ensure that they meet their responsibilities and achieve the best outcome for all children and young people.
- All assessments and work undertaken by Middlesbrough Fostering Service will aim to increase understanding and improve the lived experience of children and young people.
- Middlesbrough Fostering Service will respect Human Rights and will ensure that there is fair and equal access to all its services. The services it provides will be free from discrimination, prejudice and racism. All children and young people will have the same opportunities in the Fostering Service, regardless of gender, age, religion, race, culture, disability and language.
- Our records will be accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story. They will be anti-discriminatory and respect confidentiality as far as is appropriate to the safety and welfare of the child and young people.
- Children and young people are involved in decisions that affect them and we ensure that they have access to full information about what is happening to them and why in an age appropriate way.
- Children and young people will be supported to make representations and complaints and will be given guidance and assistance when required.
- Our policy of delegated authority is implemented throughout the service to ensure children looked after have the same opportunities as other children.

5. Care Planning and Review

All children and young people who are looked after in care have a care plan, which is reviewed regularly at every Child Looked After Review. The wishes of the child or young person are taken into account in drawing up of all care plans along with the views of birth family. The care plan is based on the needs of the individual child and will include consideration around achieving permanence either by returning to birth family or other means including long-term foster care or adoption. The care plan ensures that the child/young person, birth family and foster carers have access to relevant specialist services to meet their needs.

Foster carers play a significant role in helping a child prepare to fully partake in their looked-after review and are required to bring to the meeting all up-to-date information about the child's development in health, education and social interaction.

The views and wishes of the child or young person are sought through a range of age-appropriate means; from speaking with the child, the foster carer or via the child's Independent Reviewing Officer or the children's independent advocate.

6. Contact and Relationships with Family and Friends

Every child or young person will have a care plan that always considers the need for time with family and friends where it is appropriate and safe to do so. Our carers are fully trained and supported to ensure they are well prepared to work with members of the birth family and deal with this sensitively with the child or young person.

Where a plan for permanence through adoption is established our foster carers will work closely with the child's social worker in gathering age-appropriate information for the child's life story work.

7. Connected Persons

Where children and young people are not able to live safely with their birth parent(s) then consideration will be given to that child or young person being cared for within their extended family network.

This may involve the approval of family or friends as temporary foster carers under Regulations 24. A referral for a regulation 24 assessment will only be considered upon receipt of the appropriate referral with completed local authority checks and a copy of the PNC of those household members aged 18 years or older.

Should the regulation 24 assessment recommend that the Connected Persons are approved as temporary foster carers a full fostering assessment will be completed by a social worker in the fostering team in conjunction with the child's social worker.

Within 10 days of temporary approval being granted a meeting will take place between the fostering service and the child(ren)s team to consider assessments required to secure permanence for the child(ren) either in the form of a full Connected Carers Assessment (reg 26) or a Special Guardianship Order. An assessment under regulation 26 will take no longer than 16 weeks from temporary approval being granted.

Connected Persons are eligible for the same entitlements as approved foster carers such as allowances, support, training and involvement of a supervising social worker.

8. Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings is a form of supported accommodation that is a resource for Looked after Young People and Care Leavers aged between 16–21yrs, (24yrs if in education) who are assessed via the Pathway Planning Process as needing this resource. The scheme will provide housing and support to young people with a wide variety of support needs.

Supported Lodgings are provided by private individuals/family households who offer a room in their home and varying levels of support to the young person to develop their independent living skills. A support plan will be put in place that stipulates the type and level of support to be provided.

The provision will be coordinated and monitored by the Middlesbrough Fostering Service. All potential young people wishing to access supported lodgings provision must have been assessed by their allocated social worker as requiring 'support' not 'care'; a 'Support vs Care' tool will be used and included as part of the referral process.

The scheme is suitable for young people who are willing to comply with house rules and expectations of living in a family home, engage with the support provided and work towards developing their independent living skills including engaging with education and/or employment and working towards economic stability into adulthood.

The aims of the Supported Lodgings Scheme

- The scheme seeks to enable young people to make a smooth transition from a care situation to independent living by offering a 'stepping stone' of semi-supported living and promoting positive planning and preparation for independence in line with the Pathway Plan for each young person.
- The aim is to support young people to gain the practical and emotional skills that they will require to achieve success when living independently.
- The scheme is designed to help young people mature and develop by enabling them to experience being part of a supportive living environment. The aim is to provide young people with a level of freedom and responsibility whilst still sharing a home and time with an adult/s who are positive role model/s providing guidance, advice and support in a consistent and positive manner.

A robust assessment process is in place to ensure that our supported lodgings providers are able to meet the support needs of young people with whom an arrangement has been made. The assessment process follows the same guiding principles followed when recruiting and assessing mainstream and connected foster carers for the service.

Applicants cannot be approved with the Middlesbrough Supported Lodgings Scheme if they are already registered with another agency or service.

9. Foster Carer Recruitment

Foster carers will be carefully recruited, trained and given access to a wide range of support and training to enable them to provide high-quality care for the children and young people placed with them. This will include support to enable the child or young person to make use of education, health, leisure and , creative and sporting activities to develop self-esteem and life opportunities. They will also work to provide safe, caring and appropriate boundaries for the child or young person.

Enquiries are welcomed from a wide range of prospective carers including couples with or without children, single parents, single men or women, lesbians and gay men, bi or transgender, people from all ethnic backgrounds, different religious beliefs, people with a disability and older people. Prospective applicants need to be aged over 21 years old.

Middlesbrough Fostering Service follows the two stage assessment process set out by The Department for Education in July 2013.

Enquiry Stage

A key element of the recruitment strategy is that of responding to enquiries in a positive but realistic way. All enquiries are taken by a qualified social worker within the Fostering Service who will carry out an Initial Telephone Screening call at a mutually convenient time.

The screening call provides an opportunity for the enquirer to ask any questions and for the social worker to gather further background information so an informed decision can be made as to whether the enquirer can proceed. If the enquirer does not meet the criteria for fostering advice will be offered at this stage.

If the enquirer proceeds then an initial visit will be arranged. The allocated social worker will visit applicants in their home and provide information on the application process, its requirements, the needs of children who are looked after and the role of the carer. They will also find out about the families circumstances and their motivation to foster.

Following the initial home visit a decision will be made as to whether applicants can progress to stage one of the assessment process. In order for applicants to progress to Stage One then an application form will need to be completed by the prospective foster carers and submitted to the fostering service.

Stage 1

Stage 1 of the process to become an approved foster carer will officially begin from the point at which the completed application is received by the fostering service and will last approximately 8 weeks. The application form is signed to give consent to proceed and for statutory checks to be completed for all relevant members of the household over the age of 18.

Once the form has been completed and returned, references are taken up with the Disclosure and Barring Service and all relevant statutory agencies. This includes contact with the relevant embassy if the applicant has worked abroad and the records of the RAF/Navy/Army if the applicant has been a member of the Armed Forces.

References from the applicant's current employer are sought along with references from any previous paid/voluntary work with vulnerable children and adults. A minimum of three personal

references (of which only one must be a family member) are required and referees must have known the applicants for a minimum of three years. Ex-partner references will be required for all previous significant relationships.

Medical examinations are carried out by the applicant's doctor using the BAAF Medical Form and returned to Middlesbrough Medical Adviser for comments and a recommendation.

The prospective foster carer/s are notified of the dates for the Skills to Foster Training and are advised that the training is an important part of the application process and they are expected to attend each session. The Skills to Foster training normally runs for three full days and includes the children of the family if they are of an appropriate age. There is evaluation and feedback opportunities at the end of the group.

If an applicant has been a foster carer in the previous 12 months, a written reference from their previous fostering service is obtained; there is no additional requirement to also interview personal referees. However, the fostering service can choose to seek verbal and/or written references from personal referees, in addition to the fostering service's reference. If the previous fostering service does not provide a reference, for whatever reason, interviews with two personal referees must be conducted.

Where an applicant has been approved previously, or is currently approved, as a foster carer regulation 26(1A) gives the fostering service undertaking the current assessment the power to request access to records about the applicant held by the fostering service which granted the approval (provided that the applicant consents). That service must provide access within 15 working days of a request being received. Records compiled by another fostering service, can be used to inform the new assessment of the applicant's suitability to foster. For instance, if previous partners have been interviewed in the previous assessment, and the current assessing social worker is satisfied with the records in respect of these interviews, it should not be necessary to repeat the interviews if no further information is required. The assessing social worker should, however, satisfy themselves as to the quality and continuing relevance of the information before using it to inform the current assessment.

If the fostering service decides that the applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant will be written to informing them of this decision and giving full reasons for the decision. This will occur within 10 working days of all the stage 1 information being received.

Once all statutory checks and references are completed and no issues have arisen Stage Two of the assessment process will begin. Stage 2 of the process to become approved foster carers last approximately four months.

Once a foster carer commits to an assessment by a fostering service, they cannot be assessed by another service or agency. Once a foster carer has been approved by a fostering service, they cannot be approved by another service until their original approval has been terminated.

Stage 2

The Stage Two assessment is completed using the BAAF Form F template. The assessment is carried out by an allocated social worker overseen by the Assistant Team manager.

As part of the assessment process applicants will be required to undertake a series of assessment sessions conducted in the family home; these sessions will comprise of joint and individual sessions depending on whether it is a single or joint application.

The topics covered during the assessment sessions include (but are not exclusive to):

- Family background and childhood experiences (including education)
- Adult Life (including employment and previous relationships)
- Personality and Current Relationship
- Household Members (including children) and lifestyle
- Other Children (including adults) and social support network
- Identity, Equality and Diversity
- Motivation and Capacity to Foster

In addition to the assessment sessions with the applicants and their family, at least two personal referees are interviewed, as are the ex-partners of the applicants where it has been agreed that there was a 'significant' relationship. Children of the applicants living elsewhere will also be interviewed, with the agreement of their carer or their agreement if adults.

When all sessions are complete (usually between 8 – 10 sessions) and the assessor is confident that they have all the required information, the Form F is completed by the social worker using contributions from the prospective foster carer/s.

10. Approval and Termination of Approval

The Fostering Service is responsible for recommending to the Fostering Panel the approval and termination of approval of any foster carer. The Fostering Service must also make recommendations regarding the continued approval of foster carers as part of the agreed Foster Carer Review process. If carers are no longer deemed appropriate to provide suitable care the proposed termination of approval will be discussed at a Foster Carer review and a recommendation made from this meeting for consideration at the Fostering Panel.

All foster carers who are approved by Middlesbrough Fostering Service have their approval reviewed at least once a year. The review process within Middlesbrough is also used as a means of giving foster carers the chance to give some feedback on the service they receive from Children's Care and to evaluate whether the foster carers are meeting the requirements of The National Minimum Standards ([Fostering services: national minimum standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)) and of Middlesbrough Banded Payments Scheme. Foster carers are fully involved in the review process and are given a report to complete prior to the review meeting. They are fully involved in the review meeting which is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who is independent of the Fostering Service.

All completed assessments are shared with the applicants prior to attending the Family Placement Panel. Applicants are invited to attend the fostering panel with the assessing social worker, their proposed supervising social worker and the child's social worker (when considering connected carers assessments for specific children and young people)

The prospective foster carer will be informed of the Agency Decision Maker's (ADM) decision within seven working days. Foster carers are required to notify the Fostering Service of any change in their family or household circumstances.

Following any proposed decision taken by the Agency Decision Maker, the carer has the right to appeal either through the fostering service or since April 2009 foster carers are able to use an Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) to challenge the agency's decisions with regard to their assessment and approval.

Information regarding accessing the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is available to all foster carers. Foster carers can contact the IRM via their website www.independentreviewingmechanism.org.uk or by email to www.irm@irm.org.uk or by telephone on 0845 450 3956

11. Fostering Panel

The Role of Family Placement Panel

In accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations (England) 2011, Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service maintains a central list of individuals who form our fostering panel. The panel consists of representatives from a range of professions and backgrounds including foster carers, adopters, police officers, educators, health workers, social workers and care leavers.

The panel meets regularly to consider each application for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to act as a foster carer. It also recommends the terms of approval; reviews the suitability to continue as carers, and makes recommendations on cases or matters that the service may refer. Any recommendation made by the Fostering Panel has to be approved by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM); the panel does not make decisions but makes recommendations to the fostering service's Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

The Agency Decision Maker will receive the recommendation of the panel along with panel minutes to enable them to make a considered decision within seven days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of minutes.

How Panel Works

Applicants are invited to attend the fostering panel with the assessing social worker, their proposed supervising social worker and the child's social worker (when considering connected carers assessments for specific children and young people). Written information about the panel's role and function will be available prior to attendance at panel.

Any questions asked within the family placement panel will be asked by the panel chair, however these will have been discussed by the panel members prior to prospective carers entering the meeting. The Fostering Panel monitors the range and type of foster carers available to the local authority in comparison with the needs of children, and plays a key role in the improvement of standards within the fostering service. The recommendation to panel will identify the category of placement, number and age range of children to be placed. Approval may be limited to specific children for the purposes of connected carers assessments.

The fostering panel will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicant to foster and the terms of their approval. This decision will be shared with applicants during the Family Placement Panel however, the Panel Chair will ensure that applicants are fully aware that the final decision rests with the ADM.

The prospective foster carer will be informed of the Agency Decision Maker's (ADM) decision within seven working days.

If the foster carer is approved by the ADM then a joint induction process will be carried out by the assessing social worker and the newly allocated supervising social worker. The role of the supervising social worker is to support the approved carers throughout their fostering journey; providing monthly supervisions, guidance and support along with identifying appropriate training opportunities to support carers continued professional development. During this

induction all carers will be required to sign their Foster Carer Agreement before a child or young person can be placed with them. The agreement sets out a range of terms and conditions about being a foster carer.

12. Participation/Consultation with Children and Young People

In Middlesbrough Children's Services our aim is to show Middlesbrough Children they matter. In 2020 Middlesbrough staff and young people came together to develop a new vision to support children and families across Middlesbrough.

We spent 3 months researching how to apply the vision asking one simple question: How can we communicate to children that they matter? This research informed how we embedded the Middlesbrough Children Matter campaign into children's services and how we would work to do this.

Where it all started

The logo of Middlesbrough Children Matter started with young people, we worked with 5 youth forums to develop 16 initial concepts for the logo and these went through three rounds of revisions until we only had 2 logos remaining. The final logos were sent out to a staff vote (which received 293 votes) and decided the winning logo.

As part of our research we identified 10 Priorities for our work to show Middlesbrough Children that they matter:

1. **Place:** Making Middlesbrough a place that children are proud to live in.
2. **Work:** Providing services that are fit for the children who will grow to serve Middlesbrough.
3. **Family and Relationships:** Seeing children and families as collaborators and not as clients.
4. **Community:** Making Middlesbrough a community that children are proud to belong to.
5. **People:** Understanding our role is more than visiting children because we have to; we visit them because we want to.
6. **Wellbeing:** Providing services that are focussed on developing happy and healthy communities for our children and families.
7. **Culture and Society:** Redefining the narrative of Middlesbrough.
8. **Communication and Connectivity:** Using the communication methods used by children.
9. **Learn and Achieve:** Celebrating the achievements of children and being active participants in the attainment of them.
10. **Future:** Encouraging the ambition of our children and guiding them into the future they aspire to.

The Participation Team continue to work with children and young people through the Young People's Advisory Group and the recently launched Youth Council, which had its first session on 14th January 2021.

Further information about the above can be found at [Participation Team - Middlesbrough Children Matter](#)

13. Training, Support and Development for Foster Carers

All new foster carers are expected to complete the Training, Support and Development standards within 12 months of their approval (18 months for Connected Carers). The standards are designed to support foster carers from pre-approval through their first year of fostering. They are intended to ensure that carers have the best possible training, information and support.

All Foster carers have a Personal Development Plan, which they develop with their allocated social worker during the assessment process. Within the first 12 months of approval all foster carers will be required to undertake training in Pathways through Fostering. This training has been developed by Fostering Network (the same organisation that developed STF training) and covers 6 key areas within fostering: Safer Care, Education, Health, Contact, Attachment and Behaviour.

Additional training will be identified by the carers supervising social worker to tailor the needs of the carers in line with the children placed with them. In March 2021 Middlesbrough signed up to the Training Hub which provides access to in excess of 800 online mandatory and specialist training courses for carers, social workers and managers. This comprehensive package of training is matched with additional specialist training sessions (classroom based when allowed) in Therapeutic Parenting, Secure Base and De-escalation training.

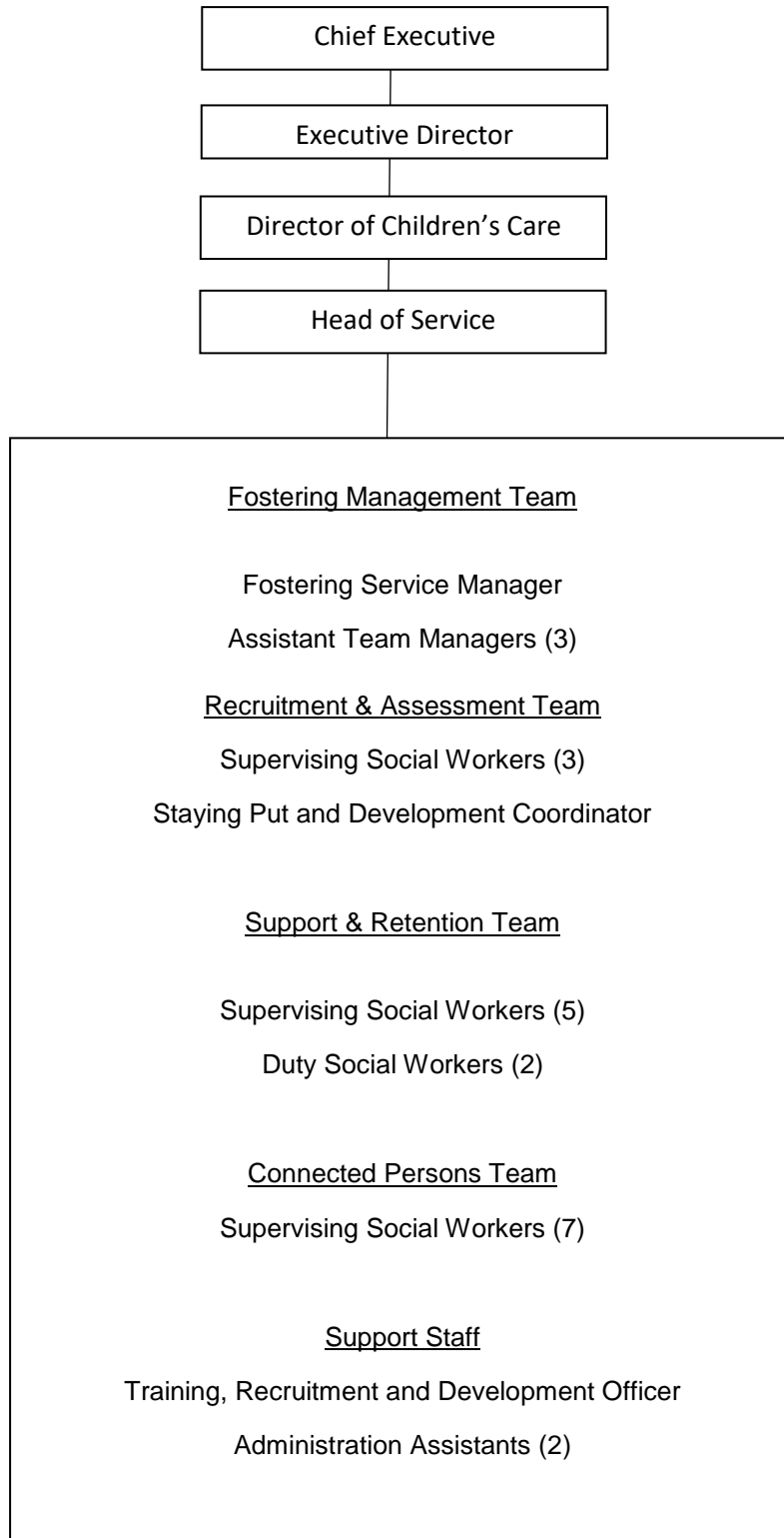
Personal Development Plans are reviewed annually and are used to ensure personal objectives; training and development are focused on service and corporate aims.

Approved carers have the opportunity to join a number of organised support and consultation sessions including a monthly Men Who Foster group, and Therapeutic Parenting Support Group.

All carers must complete mandatory training as identified in the Training Policy. This will include Paediatric First Aid, Safer Care and Safeguarding Children.

14and . Management Structure and Staffing

The Fostering Service of Middlesbrough Council is provided by workers from the Fostering Team, which is based within Children’s Care Middlesbrough Council, with additional input from four Business Support Staff. The current organisational structure is shown in the diagram below.



Name	Job title	Qualifications	Experience
Jonathan Howe	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) Social Work 2015	Employed by Middlesbrough Council since March 2015 in Assessment and Care Planning Team, moved to the Family Placement Team in January 2017.
Nicole Drake	Assistant Team Manager	BA (Hons) BA Social Work from Lancaster University in 2010.	Experience of Safeguarding, Court team, CLA and leaving care, Short breaks fostering for children with Disabilities, Connected carers and SGO assessments. Employed by Middlesbrough Council in July 2021.
Emma Allinson	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) in Social Work – 2017	With Fostering Service since October 2017.
Ruth Napier	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) Social Work 2001 BA Specialist award with children, young people, their families and carers	Experience of working in Children Looked After teams, Fostering Services both Local Authority and Independent fostering Agency as Supervising Social worker and Assistant Team Manager.
Sarah Laws	Assistant Team Manager	MA Social Work Durham University (2016)	Experience of working in Child Protection, Children with Disabilities Team and Fostering Services.
Susie Turner	Assistant Team Manager	BA Hons Social Work Sunderland University (2013)	Experience in working within child protection, leaving care, fostering and adoption.
Nicola Hockett	Supervising Social Worker/ Duty Placements	BA (Hons) in social work - 2016	Experience working in Child Protection, working with children on a 1-1 basis in primary schools and supporting CLA within an independent fostering service.

Julie Hodds	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) in Social Work – 2014	With social Services since 2014. With Fostering Service since 2015.
Donna Westmoreland	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) in Social Work – 2018	With Fostering Service since June 2018.
Katrina Gorringe	Supervising Social Worker	MA in Social Work - 2004	Experienced fostering and safeguarding senior social worker. Experience of training social workers and foster carers.
Janet Docherty	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) in Social Work – 1999 PQ1 – 2004	With Social Services since 1999. With Fostering Service since 2009.
Alison Wallace	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) in Social Work – 2013	Experienced senior fostering social worker in both Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies post qualification.
Jill Fawcett	Supervising Social Worker	DipSW – 2000 PQ Child Care Award 2009	With Social Services since 2000. With Fostering Service since 2003.
Carly Tomkins	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) Social Work – 2015	With Social Services since 2015. With Fostering Service since June 2018. (On Sabbatical)
Yasmin Afsar	Supervising Social Worker/Duty Placements	Diploma in Social Work - 1997 Level 4 NVQ Parent Support Advisor Level 4 Understanding Autism	9 years' experience working in a specialist school for children with autism. With the fostering team since January 2018.
Nicola Mason	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) Social Work – 2015	Fostering Service Since 2015.
Tracy Reed	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) Social Work 2013	With Middlesbrough Social Services from July 2013. Moved to the Fostering Team in November 2016.

Sharon Sergeant	Supervising Social Worker	Diploma in Social Work (DIPSW) and BA Hons in Social Work Studies.	I qualified in 2000 and have worked with children and families and safeguarding teams. I joined the fostering team at Middlesbrough Borough Council in August 2020
Rus Jackson	Supervising Social Worker	BSc Hons in Social Work – Northumbria University – 1st Class	Multiple years fostering experience for a number of local authorities and private fostering agencies. Started in May 2020 as an SSW for Middlesbrough.
Jane O’Toole	Supervising Social Worker	DipSW – 1998	With Social Services since 1998. With Fostering Service since 2002.
Victoria Heslop	Supervising Social Worker	BA (Hons) Social Work 2016	With Middlesbrough Social Services from May 2016. Moved to the Fostering Team in January 2017.
Andrew Winn	Recruitment, Training and Development Officer	NVQ Level 5 in Operational Management. Certificate in Management. Certificate in Education.	With Safeguarding Services since June 2007. With the Family Placement Team since November 2016.
Denise Poskett	Staying Put and Development Officer	Foundation Degree in Arts Studying Housing	With Social Services since 2006.
Gill Ward	Assistant Administrator, Middlesbrough Council	NVQ Business Admin. Level 2 – 1995 Level 3 – 1997 Level 3 Key Skills – 1997	With Social Services since 1981. With Fostering Service since 1996.
Sophie Kirby	Assistant Administrator, Middlesbrough Council	NVQ Business Admin Level 2 – 2018	With Social Services since March 2021

Sarah Young	Assistant Administrator, Middlesbrough Council	NVQ Business Admin. Level 2 – 1995 Level 3 – 1996	With Middlesbrough Council since April 2010. Commissioning Team, Admin Support in CFL, ISU, Fostering Service.
Carol Fallow	Assistant Administrator, Middlesbrough Council	29 Years' time served experience	With Middlesbrough Council since 1990. Social Services, Integrated Support Unit, Fostering Services.

15. Complaints

Complaints about Middlesbrough Fostering Service are dealt with using the complaints procedure of Middlesbrough Council. This procedure sets out 3 stages for dealing with a complaint.

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

The Manager of the service will attempt to address the complaint as quickly as possible. Within 3 days of receiving the complaint, the Complaints Section will acknowledge the complaint telling them who will look into the complaint and provide them with information on the complaints' procedure. The Manager will contact the complainant to discuss the complaint and try and resolve the issues within 10 working days. If the Manager cannot achieve resolution initially, the Manager may take a further 10 working days. The maximum amount of time that Stage 1 should take is 20 working days.

Stage 2 – Investigation

If the person making the complaint is not happy with the outcome at Stage 1 or the timescale has elapsed at Stage 1, the complainant has the right to move onto Stage 2. A Senior Manager who does not have direct line management of the service or person about whom the complaint is being made, will investigate the complaint along with an Independent Person who is appointed from outside of the local authority, whose role is to ensure that the process of investigation is open, transparent and fair.

The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will meet with the complainant to agree the elements of complaint. Once the Investigating Officer and Independent Person have completed their investigation they will both prepare a written report, which will be sent to the Department and complainant.

The Investigation should be completed within 25 working days, if this is not possible the timescale may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. The Children's Complaints Officer or the Investigating Officer will discuss any extensions to the timescale with the complainant.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

If the person making the complaint is not happy with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, they can ask for the complaint to be considered by a Review Panel. The panel will consist of

an Independent Chair and two other Independent People who do not work for the local authority.

The purpose of the Review Panel is to consider the adequacy of the Stage 2 investigation and focus on achieving resolution for the complainant by addressing their clearly defined complaints and desired outcomes.

The Review Panel should take place within 30 working days of receiving the request. The person making the complaint will be informed of the recommendations of the Review Panel within 5 working days and the Executive Director of Wellbeing Care & Learning will send the complainant a response to the Panel's recommendations within 15 working days of the panel meeting.

The Complaints Officer will help with a complaint if:

- you are not happy with the care you get
- nobody listens to you
- you are not happy with things people do for you
- you need more help

To make a complaint you can write to:

The Complaints Manager
Town Hall
Middlesbrough
TS1 9FX

Email: comps@middlesbrough.gov.uk
Tel: 01642 729707

16. Useful Contact Details

Family Placement Team

Middlesbrough Council
4th Floor Middlesbrough House
50 Corporation Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 2RH

Business Support 01642 201962
Fostering Recruitment 01642 726617
Connected Persons 01642 726616
Support and Retention 01642 726615

The Office of the Children's Commissioner

Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
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42 Curtain Road
London
EC2A 3NH
Call free on 08001111

CoramBAAF

Coram Campus
11 Brunswick Square
London
WC1N 1AZ
020 7520 0300
www.corambaaf.org.uk

The Fostering Network

87 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8HA
020 7620 6400
www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service	 MIDDLESBROUGH CHILDREN M A T T E R
Statement of Purpose	

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