



Suffolk

Fostering & Adoption

Suffolk County
Council

Fostering
Statement of Purpose

2023 – 2024



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The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2023/24

What is a Statement of Purpose?

The Statement of Purpose is the means of providing information about Suffolk County Council's Fostering Service in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations (2011).

The Statement of Purpose is a source of information for prospective foster carers, foster carers registered with Suffolk County Council, Fostering Services staff and all other colleagues or professionals working within Suffolk County Council and partnership agencies.

The Office for the Standards in Children's Services & Skills (Ofsted) has the responsibility to regularly inspect the Fostering Service to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. Our most recent inspection report can be located at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Ofsted can be contacted directly by telephone 08456 404045 or by email at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or in writing to:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
MANCHESTER M1 2WD

Further information about the service can be obtained from:

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For all enquiries about becoming a foster or Link carer, call 01473 264800 or email: fosterandadopt@suffolk.gov.uk

Why foster for Suffolk County Council?

By becoming part of the Suffolk County Council Fostering Service, you will be contributing to the provision of high-quality placements, which give best value to Suffolk communities. We will provide support from our highly experienced team of staff, access to a wide range of training to develop your knowledge and expertise and a tiered payment scheme which reflects the complexity of the children who need placements and the skills you offer. We will treat you with the respect that you deserve as a professional foster carer.

Fostering is extremely rewarding. As a foster carer **you can make a real difference to a child's life**, providing them with the nurturing home life they need to give them every chance of a happy childhood and to succeed in life. It's a big commitment to become a foster carer but is extremely worthwhile. The rewards are enormous – some of our carers have been fostering for over 30 years!

The Fostering Service Vision

The Suffolk Fostering Service vision is:

To enable all children and young people in Suffolk to aspire to, and achieve their full potential, giving them the basis for a successful life as active members of their community.

The Service encourages working together to create an innovative fostering service, which provides safe and nurturing family-based care for children and young people who are unable to live within their own families. The Service continually strives to provide high quality care for children and young people, so they are able to achieve better outcomes in adult life.

The Aims & Objectives of the Fostering Service

The Suffolk County Council Fostering Service is part of the overarching corporate parenting service, which is responsible for all of Suffolk's children in care. The Fostering Service aims to achieve continuous improvements and deliver the best possible outcomes for the widest range of children looked after by our foster carers. This includes the development of the **Suffolk Signs of Safety and Wellbeing** approach to practice in all aspects of service delivery to children, families, and foster carers.

The Service is committed to ensuring that anti-discriminatory practice informs all of our work with children, colleagues, foster carers and birth family, and that placement resources provide equal opportunities of access to all

children and young people, irrespective of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality, or disability.

For more information about Children and Young People's Services in Suffolk please visit our [website](#)

Emotional Wellbeing & Health Lifestyle

- To promote healthy lifestyle choices for all foster carers linked to the health and development of children and young people.

Ensuring Safety

- To actively recruit, assess and prepare prospective foster carers that reflect the diversity of the local community and who will provide high quality, safe and flexible family care for a wide range of children including disabled children requiring a short break service (Link).
- To ensure placements with family and friends foster care, known as Connected Person Care, are rigorously assessed and fully supported to keep children safe and well in their own networks.
- To ensure good quality decision making in relation to foster carer registration through efficient, effective management of the Fostering Panel.
- To review annually foster carer registration in line with the national minimum of standards and regulations.
- To provide a responsive fostering service that best matches the demands for foster placements with available resources.
- To provide fostering placements that are stable, nurturing, and supportive for the child or young person and which will promote and value their culture, ethnicity, and identity.
- To take full regard of the child or young person's individual needs, however complex, alongside their expressed wishes and feelings when seeking to match with placement provision.
- To provide a comprehensive foster carer support service during office hours and an out of hours call service to provide support and assistance during the evening and at weekends.
- To provide regular supervision, post approval training and other opportunities for foster carer self-development in line with competencies, skills and knowledge regarding the day-to-day task.
- To work in close partnership with the Safeguarding Service to monitor placement stability and ensure effective response to any allegations made against foster carers.

Achieving Full Potential for Children & Young People

- To work in close partnership with the Suffolk Virtual School and the Suffolk Children in Care Health Team to ensure foster carers are able to promote the best educational and health outcomes for children in their care.
- To promote the best outcomes for children in placement and foster carers through care planning and promoting carers use of delegated authority.

Support & Learning Opportunities

- To provide an extensive range of learning & development opportunities through the Suffolk County Council CPD online including online training (Kate Cairns Associates), training programmes (developmental trauma, first aid, safeguarding and e-safety) and more in-depth programmes including the Suffolk Fostering Toolkit, Therapeutic Fostering Course and Solihull.
- Dedicated family support practitioners to support and enable foster carers with Theraplay informed practice and parenting techniques.
- To provide a range of foster carer support groups across the county to encourage peer support and development opportunities.
- To recognise and support the role played by the carer's own children and their wider family in the task of foster care.
- To work closely with the social worker for the child, to ensure good effective communication with the foster carer regarding the care plan and contact arrangements as set out in the foster carer agreement.
- To support the role played by the Co-production advisers from the Engagement Hub in obtaining the wishes and views of children and young people fostered by Suffolk County Council.
- To work in close partnership with the Suffolk Foster Care Association and support them to extend their membership to a wider group of foster carers and to contribute to the overall development of the Fostering Service. For more information regarding the SFCA please visit [their website](#).

Finance

- To provide fostering allowances in line with government recommended rates. In addition to the allowance, carers can receive a fee in line with Suffolk's Tier Alignment Scheme. All carers are aligned to a Tier level, and most receive a corresponding fee, in recognition of their skills and experience and the complexity of the placement they are able to offer.
- For full details of Suffolk's fees and allowances, please visit Suffolk Fostering Website

Leaving Care

- To work in close partnership with Suffolk County Council's Leaving Care service to ensure that foster carers are able to fully support the young people in their care, as they make the transition to further or higher education or employment and independent living where appropriate.

How we monitor and evaluate our services

Suffolk Fostering Service strives to constantly improve and develop with the key aim to improve outcomes for children and families. High priority is placed on monitoring and evaluation of the service and gaining service user feedback to use in service development.

Monitoring of the fostering service

- The performance of the service is monitored and analysed in the Annual Report
- The Fostering Panel performs a quality assurance function to uphold best practice. An Annual Panel Report is produced.
- Staff at all levels are provided with regular supervision by a line manager and clinical consultation is also available for very complex cases.
- The Corporate Parenting Management Group receives quarterly reports on the performance of the fostering service.
- The Children and Young Peoples Quality Assurance and Performance Board provide regular monitoring and scrutiny
- The professional adviser provides support, advice, and quality assurance to the Fostering panel. The adviser manages the Panel arrangements, the Central List, facilitates learning and development for panel members and supports the Independent Panel Chair.
- Regular audits are undertaken to ascertain the quality of social work practice and service delivery and inform fostering service improvements. Analysis of disruptions to placements, via a disruption meeting.
- There is regular monitoring by the Permanence Consultation and Referral Meeting of the progress of children prior to placement to include scrutiny of family finding activity of permanent placements. The child's statutory review along with the function of the Independent Reviewing Officer has a quality assurance role.
- A member of the fostering service monitors permanence planning for all children in care.
- The child's statutory review along with the function of the Independent Reviewing Officer has a quality assurance role.

Feedback from service users

Suffolk Fostering Service aims to gain feedback from applicants throughout their approval process and from carers and children during their fostering career. This includes:

- Feedback requested by fostering panel on the views of applicants on the assessment and review process.
- Questionnaires following the preparation course for prospective carers.
- The statutory children in care review ensures that the child and birth parent's views are fully explored.
- The agency places high priority on direct work with children and provide the opportunity for them to explore their feelings and give their views.
- Chat to Change (C2C) - our older children in Care Council are a self-governing group of young people who are in care or leaving care who meet to discuss what's good about being in care, what's not so good and what could be better. They discuss many issues and work closely with the corporate parenting board to ensure their views co-produce services
- Brighter Futures links with groups of children and young people who are in care to ensure they can have their say in all matters affecting their lives.
- Feedback relating to the experience of coming to Permanence panel for those Early Permanence carers.
- Evaluation forms are completed with foster carers before and after sessions given to model and encourage the use of Theraplay based strategies.
- Feedback from child's social worker, child, IRO and carers at least annually for each carers review
- A new weekly "Inside Fostering" e-newsletter.
- Response to foster carers survey 'You Said, We Did'
- Feedback collated from carers attending training courses and shared through joint meetings with workforce development/training providers to develop training programme and individual courses
- Online questionnaires sent out, and forums held with foster carers to consult on key changes of policy and service developments, and general carer satisfaction.

- The views of foster carers are gathered during regular supervisions with an allocated Fostering Social Worker and fed through to Practice Managers/Consultant Social Workers.
- We are working closely with Suffolk Foster Care Association holding regular meetings and consultation sessions to gain feedback, working in partnership on issues and jointly organising events such as a conference for foster carers.
- Service user feedback gained from collaborative audits of cases, which are incorporated into reports analysing the performance of the service.
- Exit interviews are undertaken to gain feedback on foster carer experience, and any learning from this can be explored by the service,
- The feedback from the above sources is analysed and it is used for service improvement and development.
- We have processes for making, maintaining, monitoring, and reviewing contact plans for each fostered child.

Principles & Standards of Care

The Fostering Service seeks to deliver an excellent service for the children, young people, foster carers and their families that complies with the relevant legislation, regulations, and good practice guidance regarding children in foster care. The Fostering Service is committed to the best outcomes for children in care and the service works in close partnership with all Suffolk County Council services with responsibility for children in care.

Numbers of Children/Young People in Care & Details of Carer Approval

At the beginning of March 2023 there were 383 households approved as mainstream, Family & Friends, and Short Break Link foster carers. There were 510 children which was 52.9% of Suffolk's 964 children in care placed with in-house foster carers.

Foster Care Placements

The Fostering Service provides a range of fostering options for children in the care of Suffolk County Council. The services offered are to meet a diverse range of needs, circumstances and backgrounds of children who are not able to live with their own families. There are circumstances where a relative or a friend of the child in care may also be assessed as a foster carer and this service is referred to as Connected Persons foster care (Kinship care).

1. Short-Term Time-Limited Placements

Some Foster carers will look after children on a short-term basis, until the child can return home or moves on to a permanent placement. The time a child will spend in short term foster care can vary, though it will usually be for several months or years. These children and young people need nurturing care together with help to understand their experiences and the uncertainty of their future.

2. Short Breaks

Some foster carers will offer planned short break care, to support the main foster carers in their fostering role e.g. to enable them to take holidays or have weekend breaks.

3. PACE Scheme

Short term placements primarily overnight, caring for a young person who is on remand in police custody whilst involved in court proceedings and they cannot live at home. Foster carers will relinquish responsibility for the young person once they have taken them to court the following morning.

4. Emergency Care

Emergency foster care provides placements for children and young people at very short notice. Often this is the first placement the child will have coming into care from their birth family and little information may be known about them. The carers offer flexibility and are available at night and weekends.

5. Long Term and Permanence Foster Placements

Many children who are not able to live with their birth families will need to find permanence with a new permanent family. Some foster carers care for children into adulthood and see them as a member of their family for life. Many young people remain with their carers after they turn 18, this is known as Staying Put and is supported by the Leaving Care Service.

6. Foster to Adopt / Early Permanence Placements

When we know it is highly likely that a child will need an adoptive family, but the court proceedings are still in progress, we sometimes place the child on a fostering basis with a family who have been approved to both foster and adopt. This avoids a potentially upsetting move for the child and can be helpful in forming attachment, but it may initially be a less certain situation for the carers. We offer particular training and support to carers in these circumstances.

7. Suffolk's Therapeutic Fostering

Suffolk's Therapeutic Fostering team provides therapeutic support to foster carers who are caring for children and young people presenting with emotional distress and challenging behaviours resulting from neglect and or trauma. The team has a wide range of offers aimed at helping foster carers understand and meet the needs of vulnerable children.

This includes:

- Short term interventions, such as Theraplay Informed Practice or Positive Parenting strategies are offered to individual foster carers as well as family psychotherapy sessions with a solution-focused emphasis.
- Consultations – enabling the 'right heads' to get around the table. Consultations often involve both social workers concerned as well as the carer/s and at least one member of the Therapeutic Fostering Team. They can be 'one-offs' to discuss a formulation and identify roles and next steps, or repeated sessions monitoring change, supporting progress, and reinforcing suggestions and encouragement.
- Group programmes, such as Fostering Toolkit and Mini Toolkits (formerly KEEP) and The Therapeutic Course are run throughout the year and try to service the various regions within Suffolk fairly.
- Direct work, such as foster carer therapeutic supervisions, which are built into the Therapeutic Course as well as WAM (What a Muddle) Training are offered to foster carers and social worker working with them.
- Skills coach sessions for children looked after, the STF Coaches contribute to the therapeutic relationship between carers, children, and professionals. The aim of STF Coaching is to enable a young person to engage in a programme of coaching sessions that will lead to them developing self-coaching skills. STF Coaching involves identifying and working towards achieving goals that the young person has generated, accepted, and feels motivated by. The role of the skills coach is to guide the young person on this journey. The coaching will be goal focused, flexible, child-centred and regularly reviewed.
- Regular training modules on topics such as Developmental Trauma, Window Of Tolerance, and Dissociation etc. This training is open to foster carers, adopters and special guardians as well as CYP staff. Further training is regularly being developed in line with feedback received from both carers and social work colleagues.
- We provide training in Online safety skills called 'Think You Know' which is a comprehensive look at how to support our children and young people to avoid some of the pitfalls of the world wide web, navigate social media

and to increase awareness and strategies for protecting themselves online

- Suffolk have 3 established Mockingbird constellations. The Mockingbird Model is a licensed fostering model where groups of foster carers are brought together with a Hub Home Carer taking the lead role in supporting up to ten other carers and their placements. The model offers foster carers and children a supportive network where they take part in community and activity meetings together to develop positive and supportive relationships. The Hub carer also offers overnights and day-care to those in the Hub creating a normalized setting for children in the group.

The team aims to assess and provide appropriate support quickly to prevent placements breaking down when possible and give foster carers the confidence and skill needed to continue to care for the child/ren in placement. It intends to provide a truly 'Multi-agency support' function with clear and direct links with Suffolk Supervising Social Workers, Child Social Workers and the NHS specialist team Connect who provide therapeutic mental health interventions to children in care across Suffolk.

Connected Person/Kinship Foster Carers

Connected persons or Kinship care is where a child or young person in care lives with family, friends or another adult known to them. In Suffolk, Connected Person/Kinship foster carers are assessed and presented to Fostering Panel for approval, they receive the same allowances and have a Fostering Social Worker allocated to support them. They have access to the same range of training and learning opportunities as all of Suffolk's foster carers.

These foster carers provide both short-term care and long-term foster care for children of all ages and often care for sibling groups and complex teenagers. This team also supports the assessment of Connected Person/Kinship Foster Carers if they wish to make an application for a Special Guardianship Order once the child in their care is settled. The team provides assessment and training for all connected persons foster carers including those making an application for a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order. Once approved Special Guardians are supported by the Permanence Support team.

The team are also responsible for assessing and supporting Private Foster Carers and the children who are living in these arrangements; these children often have complex needs and may be on the edge of care.

The Link Scheme

This scheme aims to provide a flexible, culturally sensitive, and safe service that promotes the diverse needs of those children with severe learning, physical or sensory disability. It seeks to offer a range of short break options that encourage social inclusion by working in partnership with the child and their parents or carers.

The objectives of the Link Scheme are:

- To provide a 'stepping stone' for those who use the Scheme to make local friendships and join in with community activities
- To offer the child the opportunity of having someone special interested in them, in addition to their own family
- To give their parents or carers a 'breathing space' and an opportunity to spend time with the rest of their family
- To offer planned short breaks which could include home sitting, day care and overnight care in the Link Carer's home, and community-based activities
- To assess, approve, monitor and review Link Carers in accordance with the required standards
- To provide targeted ongoing training, support and supervision of Link Carers to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to provide an excellent service
- To provide any special equipment that is required to meet the care needs of any child placed
- Link Carers are supported by and supervised by their own Link Supervising Worker.

Fostering Teenagers

Over half of the children in care in Suffolk are aged 11 or over, yet fewer people come forward to offer to care for them. Therefore, many teenagers may not be living with Suffolk carers, and will be away from friends, school and their local community.

Teenagers are often portrayed negatively, and this may influence people's views about teenagers. However, caring for this age group is very rewarding because it is about supporting young people to become adults and helping them to discover their place in the world.

Foster Carer Support

As the largest fostering provider in Suffolk we offer the following terms & conditions for foster carers:

- Weekly allowance and, where applicable, a fee payment
- Loan of essential equipment
- Regular high-quality support and supervision with a fostering social worker through a local support team
- Access to specialist advice via Connect (CAMHS) and other specialist services
- Support groups and activities for carer's children in school holidays
- Annual children who foster activity day or sons and daughters of foster carers and children in care.
- Membership of the [Suffolk Foster Carer Association](#)
- 24 Hour support via a dedicated fostering out of hours service
- Free Membership of the [Fostering Network](#)
- Computer for those offering placements to school aged children
- Support to achieve permanent placements
- 21 days paid short break.
- Extensive training & development opportunities.
- Access to a comprehensive training programme through Suffolk County Council Children Workforce Development Team
- Access to reading material for adults & children which are reserved in Suffolk County Council libraries specifically for carers
- 4 weeks extra allowance each year to cover birthdays, holidays and religious festivals
- Part of wider professional multi-agency team

Key Principles in the Recruitment & Assessment Process

- The Fostering Service welcomes all applicants regardless of their ethnicity, background, faith, sexual orientation or marital status. Applicants may be disabled, working full-time, part-time or unemployed, responsible for dependents.
- Due to the medical concerns regarding passive smoking and harm to children, particularly young children, the Fostering Service will not place children under the age of 5 where any members of the household smoke. This may not be the case for connected person/kinship foster carers who would be supported to avoid exposing children to passive smoking.
- The Fostering Service is committed to working in a way that does not discriminate.
- The Fostering Service ensures information regarding the formal complaints procedures available to all applicants
- The assessment process aims to help potential foster carers to have sufficient time and information to make an informed decision about whether fostering is right for them and their family at this time.

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Stages of Fostering Approval Process

The process of approving a mainstream foster carer usually takes 6 months from acceptance of the application to full approval, or 4 months for applicants who have previously fostered or are transferring from another fostering provider.

The process of approving a Connected Person/Kinship Foster Carer is similar but with a different assessment process and shorter timescales. The process in these cases is described in detail in the *Suffolk Procedures for the Assessment of Family and Friends as Foster Carers (2016)* document.

Following the initial enquiry, the process is divided into 2 stages, initial checks followed by assessment at Stage 1 and Stage 2, a more detailed assessment. Where appropriate, parts of these stages may be completed in parallel.

Home Assessment (Form F)

In summary, this assessment is completed with the applicants and the assessing social worker during visits to the applicants' home. This assessment is presented to Fostering Panel for a recommendation, from which the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will make a final decision on whether to approve the applicants as Foster Carers.

The Fostering Panel

Once the assessment is complete, applicants and the assessing social worker are invited to attend a fostering panel meeting. The Fostering Panel has a statutory role and responsibility to formally recommend approval of foster carer applicants to the Agency Decision Maker following the assessment. Panel also considers assessments from applicants to become connected persons foster carers.

The Fostering Panel is made up of social workers, foster carers, a County Councillor, professionals involved in child health or education services, independent panel members and is chaired by an Independent Chair. Fostering Panel also considers some fostering reviews. 16

How decisions are made



The Independent Panel chair is responsible for helping the panels to reach a recommendation.

Jim Bond, the current Chair, was appointed as a Foster Carer in Essex in 1994 until 2014, and he has experienced living with more than 80 young people over the age of 13 during that time describing this as the "best job I've ever done!"

In his earlier life, Jim worked as a Deputy Head in a Comprehensive School and Director Youth Work and Training for a major national charity. Jim qualified as a counsellor and specialises in work with children in the care system as well as those who are adopted and their families. Jim was the President of the Fostering Network and he is passionate about the role of all in the childcare partnership and has first-hand experience of the impact this can have on children and young people. In addition to Chairing Suffolk Fostering Panel Jim sits as Chair on another local authority panel.

The Agency Decision Makers are El Mayhew, Fran Arnold, Codrutza Oros-Marsh, Elena Stanuta, Seb Smith, Alli Hassey and Rennie Everett



Fran Arnold joined Suffolk County Council in the year 2020, taking up the post of Head of Service for children's social care fieldwork on 1st April 2020. With over 35 years' experience Fran has worked across Adult Services, Mental Health and Children's Social Care spanning public, private and charity sectors. Fran has been a senior manager for fifteen years, 10 years of which have been as a Head of Service, for safeguarding, corporate parenting and fieldwork services. As agency decision maker Fran is committed to ensuring sound

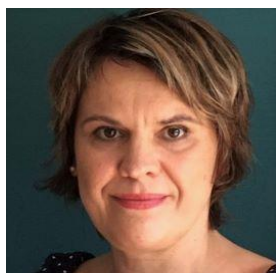
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decision making based on professional experience, attention to detail and to maintaining a knowledge of recent judgements relating to agency decision making. Decisions such as those set before an ADM are life changing events for some of society's most vulnerable children, Fran is committed to ensuring such decisions sit on quality of information, at the heart of which the voice and presence of the child must sing !



Elena Stanuta is the Principal Practice Lead for Suffolk CYPS, with a lead role for the practice development and quality assurance process in Social Care and Early Help services since September 2019. Her role also includes discharging the responsibilities of the Principal Social Worker for Suffolk CYPS. Prior to this, Elena has been a frontline practice manager of various teams for many years, including 0-19 Child in Need, 12+ Team and Leaving Care. She has been a qualified social worker

since 1997 and more recently she completed a MA in Advanced Social Work at UEA in 2016. Her earlier professional journey, prior to coming to Suffolk, has seen her working with children in residential care and leaving care. Her roles have also seen her working as a social worker in a frontline child protection team and for a while working as a practitioner in ACS, with a particular focus in mental health, where she achieved AMHP qualification.



Codrutzia Oros-Marsh is the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, Corporate Parenting, Youth Justice and Strategic Commissioning, since April 2022. Prior to this, Codrutza was the Head of Quality, Engagement and Professional Development Service across CYP and ACS, which is a role she commenced in 2018. In January 2019, Codrutza was seconded as Head of Children's Social Care Fieldwork prior to returning to her

substantive post in April 2020. Codrutza has been a qualified social worker since 1997 and subsequently completed a Masters in Advanced Social Work and Planning at UEA in 2005. Prior to joining Suffolk, Codrutza led a non-governmental organisation focusing on advocacy and lobbying services for children with disabilities. Following her move to Suffolk, Codrutza also worked in practice and service manager roles before her current position.

Disrupted Placements

We review disrupted placements, ascertaining the causes for the breakdown to aid future planning for the child and learning for all concerned.

Unfortunately, sometimes foster placements do break down. Where there is a disruption of a long-term placement the Service convenes a *Disruption Meeting* to try to understand the factors that led to the breakdown of the placement which helps in planning future placements. The meetings are chaired by a trained Signs of Safety facilitator who does not have case responsibility for the foster carers. A summary of the conclusions of the meeting are sent to the Fostering Service Manager as well as the relevant Management Team and other involved individuals to inform future practice.

Procedures for the investigation of allegations or complaints made against foster carers

Suffolk County Council has the responsibility for ensuring that children are protected from significant harm as defined by the Children Act 1989 and for the investigation of any allegation or report of harm in accordance with the current safeguarding procedures.

The Fostering Service in partnership with the Safeguarding Service has established procedures for the thorough investigation of the allegation including with oversight of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). For more information, please visit the Suffolk Safeguarding website. Independent support, as well as advice and guidance, from the Fostering Network is available to all carers.

The Service will also investigate where there are Standard of Care concerns. These may be identified where a complaint does not meet the threshold for LADO processes or where ongoing worries about care provided requires a formal response.

Safeguarding children and young people

Suffolk Fostering Agency is committed to ensuring that any safeguarding concerns are thoroughly investigated and appropriate procedures followed. Where children are placed for foster care any safeguarding concern, incident or accident, serious illness, a child who is missing, death or serious injury of children or complaints, or incidents likely to impact on the child's welfare are recorded and appropriately investigated in accordance with statutory and safeguarding guidance. It also ensures that outcomes are analysed and relevant parties notified.

All staff, panel members and others involved in the service will have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service clearance and references will be obtained and verified.

Social work staff will hold current registration with Social Work England and are expected to adhere to the standards of proficiency and the code of ethics.

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards/>

Learning and Development

The training programme for approved foster carers and Link carers in Suffolk offers an ever-increasing and comprehensive range of courses, ensuring that foster carers have the very best opportunity to be trained in the skills required to provide high quality care for children and young people.

All foster carers including family and friends carers and those offering short breaks are required to achieve the training, support and development standards (TSD) within the first 12 months of placement (or 18 months for Connected Person foster carers).

All foster carers will receive support and guidance to achieve this from their supervising worker and support groups. Learning and development opportunities are offered at introductory and intermediate levels allowing for the ongoing development of foster carer's skills and knowledge base. Core course subject areas include Diversity, Attachment, Safeguarding, First Aid, Behaviour Management and Recording.

E-learning opportunities (e.g. Health for Foster Carers) are also available and carers are supported in obtaining their Level 3 Diploma by a partnership with West Suffolk College. For full details of the Suffolk Foster Carer Training Programme please visit: www.suffolkcpd.co.uk

Complaints

When things go wrong it's really important to us that we respond quickly and fairly to put them right. We will always try to resolve any areas of disagreement or concerns informally in the first instance. We will also respond promptly to formal complaints about the fostering service through our County Council Complaints Procedure.

This can be found [here](#).

Our complaints procedure plays an important role in improving our service and our County Council Complaints Policy commits us to:

- Give a full and clear response to a complaint within 20 working days. If this is not possible, we advise complainants when an answer will be given.
- Look into complaints thoroughly and fairly.
- Be honest and polite and keep information confidential.
- Apologise if we have made a mistake.
- Tell complainants about what we are doing to put things right.

Our Children's Safeguarding Service always deals with complaints that involve concerns for the safety or welfare of children in foster care. Information on this service can be found at the Suffolk Safeguarding Children's Board Website: <http://www.suffolkscb.org.uk/>

Advocacy and Children's Participation

Suffolk has developed a children's promise to Children in Care, which can be found on <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/children-in-care-and-care-leavers/childrens-rights-for-children-and-young-people-in-care/#tab2>

Advocacy

Looked after children and young people in care are entitled to the support of an independent advocate if they wish to make representations or complain about the service they receive. They can also have an advocate to support them during meetings or to help resolve an issue. Children and young people are able to access an independent advocate provided by POhWer.

Independent Visitor

Looked after children and young people in care are also entitled to the support of an independent visitor. This is a volunteer who is independent of the child's care situation and acts as a befriender, visiting them once a month to do an activity. Independent visitors are provided by Anglia Care Trust. admin@angliacaretrust.org.uk

Participation

Children and young people are kept safest when their voice is heard and services are most effectively provided when they have had a say in their development and delivery. Using the principles of 'You said....We did' children and young people are invited to participate in Suffolk's Children in Care Councils - Brighter Futures and C2C.

During 2023-2024 children and young people will continue to be involved in talking about their experiences of foster care and how well Suffolk is delivering its Promise to children in care. **For more details of children & young people's independent advocacy, independent visiting and participation please contact the Engagement Hub on Freephone 0800 9171119.**

Where to find us



The Fostering team is countywide, based at Endeavour House.

Our Fostering Teams are based at:

Endeavour House
 8 Russell Road
 Ipswich
 Suffolk
 IP1 2BX

Riverside Campus
 4 Canning Road
 Lowestoft
 NR33 0EQ

West Suffolk House
 Western Way
 Bury St. Edmunds
 IP33 3YU

Murrayside Community Centre
 Nacton Road
 Ipswich
 IP3 9JL

Lothingland Community Unit
 4 Airey Close
 Oulton
 NR32 3AX

Our Fostering Panels are currently heard virtually, however the following locations are available:

Endeavour House
 8 Russell Road
 Ipswich
 Suffolk
 IP1 2BX

West Suffolk House
 Western Way
 Bury St. Edmunds
 IP33 3YU

For all public enquiries please call: 0845 606 6067

Additional Contacts (Agency Managers)

Sarah Ablett	Service Manager for Fostering and Sufficiency	01473 262632
Caroline Hughes	Service Manager for Adoption and Permanence	01284 758468
Gill Davies	Panel Professional Adviser	01473 264921
EI Mayhew	Interim Director of Children and Families	01473 260750
Codrutza Oros-Marsh	Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Youth Justice	01473 264167
Glynn Smith	Interim Head of Corporate Parenting	01284 758646

Agency Medical Advisers

Dr Awais Khan and Dr Moira Pinkney are based at:
 St Helen's House
 571 Foxhall Rd
 Ipswich
 IP3 8LX
 Phone: 01473 321209

Fostering Service Staff and Qualifications

Who manages the Agency?



Sarah Ablett is the Service Manager for Fostering and Sufficiency and has been in this post since February 2023. Prior to this role Sarah was the Practice Manager for the Short Term and Therapeutic Fostering Team. Sarah covered a period of time as Acting Head of Fostering and Adoption. Sarah was one of Suffolk's Graduate trainee social workers before qualifying with a Master's Degree in Social Work from the UEA in 2009. Sarah has worked across many areas of the Adoption and Fostering service since 2015. Sarah has continued her professional development with a further Master's Degree in Advanced Social Work from the UEA in 2018, and continues to be an accredited Practice Educator.



Caroline Hughes qualified as a social worker in 2006 and has worked for Suffolk County Council since then in a variety of roles including working within a Children in Care team, in DCYP, in the Safeguarding Team as an IRO and Child Protection chair, and more recently as Practice Manager for a Child In Need Team in the West of Suffolk for 5 years. Caroline was seconded into a Service Manager role for South and Central CIN and the Family Solutions Team prior to joining the Fostering and Adoption Service as the Service Manager for Adoption and Permanence in February 2023.

Caroline has lectured at the local university and continues to support students in her role as a Practice Educator and as a Practice Educator Mentor. Caroline will be supporting Suffolk's aim to modernise adoption regarding children keeping in touch with birth family members once they are adopted. Caroline is looking forward to working closely with her adoption, connected persons and fostering colleagues to support the service in moving forward.

Eve Desjardins Permanence Panel Adviser.



Eve Desjardins graduated as a Social Worker in 2008. Since this time, the focus of her professional experience has been within children's services, child protection, early intervention and permanence planning. Eve has been the Professional Advisor to Suffolk Adoption Agency since May 2021. Prior to re-joining Suffolk, Eve worked as an Independent Reviewing Officer/Child Protection Conference Chair for another local authority. Her work prior to this included independent consultancy on permanence planning (including as an adoption panel advisor) with a specific interest in embedding early permanence practices as well as undertaking a range of assessments on an independent basis for multiple authorities and IFA's.



Claire Gwatkin qualified as a Social Worker in 2007 and has worked for Suffolk Local Authority working with children with additional needs, Sensory & Communication Service, Trafficked and Separated Children, Kinship Carers, Private Foster Carers before becoming the Manager of the Recruitment, Assessment & Matching Team 5 years ago. As Practice Manager for this team Claire oversees the Recruitment strategy for the County for both Fostering & Adoption. Claire has stated *'I feel privileged to work with Fostering & Adoption and the fantastic carers that we have.'*



Catherine Biedul was appointed as Practice Manager for the Short Term and Therapeutic Fostering Team in February 2023.

Catherine first became involved in children needing alternative care arrangements 27 years ago when she became a foster carer for the Local Authority. Fourteen years later she completed her Diploma in Social Work at Suffolk College Ipswich. On qualifying as a social worker Catherine worked for two years in the child care teams before joining the Adoption Team in 2006 as a social worker, when the Adoption Support Team was created. In 2008 Catherine completed the Post Qualifying Child Care Award; she then progressed on to become the Practice Manager for the Adoption and Permanence Support Team in April 2010.



Gill Davies has been the Professional Adviser for Fostering since April 2018. She is tasked with providing information, advice and guidance to colleagues across Children & Young People's Services (CYPS) and directly to families and carers as needed. Quality assurance and practice development are also key areas of her work.

The role also incorporates the Fostering Panel Advisor and Gill is responsible for ensuring that Panel can function effectively and that both Panel and the Fostering Service receive the advice they need.

Before becoming Professional Adviser, Gill was a Practice Manager for CYPS, managing a specialist team of social workers providing services to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, trafficked children and children living in private fostering arrangements. The team also had responsibility for the assessment and support of all Kinship/Connected Foster Carers.

Gill joined Suffolk CYPS in June 2005 as a social care practitioner and qualified as a social worker in 2008 with an MA from Anglia Ruskin. Her first degree was a BSc in Behavioural Science with Human Biology. Before this, she worked for the British Refugee Council supporting adults and families seeking asylum in the UK.



Sam Lockwood qualified as a Social Worker in 2008, but has worked for Suffolk in the Fostering Service since 2004. Sam has worked across Suffolk supporting Foster Carers, before becoming more directly involved in working with Kinship Foster Carers. Sam completed the award to become accredited as a Practice Educator in 2014 and continues to be involved in supporting Social Work Students and Apprentices. Sam was appointed as Practice Manager of the Fostering Changes for Children Team which included responsibility for Kinship Foster Carers, Private Foster Carers and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. More recently, in 2020

following a re-organisation Sam became the Practice Manager for the Connected Persons Team, the new team has been able to focus on growing and developing the assessment and support of Private Foster Carers, Kinship/Connected Persons Foster Carers and Special Guardians.



Jo Smith joined the Service in 2019 as Business Support Assistant Manager and is currently on a seconded post as Business Support Manager for Corporate Parenting.

She has 25 years of administrative & financial experience, a keen interest in Health and Social care and is passionate about providing a high quality, consistent Business Support Service across Corporate Parenting to benefit the people of Suffolk.



Dr Jessica Austin, a Principle Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Lead for Suffolk's Therapeutic Fostering Team. Jessica received her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Edinburgh and has held many varied roles including over 10 years contributing to Forensic Mental Health settings.

Wishing to be part of interventions at an earlier stage in the lifecycle, she worked in Adolescent inpatient units and then broke out into community settings leading up a CAMHS service in West Norfolk, before joining Suffolk services in 2019.

Jessica's role spans health and social care. She is also the Clinical Lead for Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust's therapeutic NHS service for Children in Care across Suffolk: The Connect team. The vision for her role was to bring both Connect and the Therapeutic Fostering teams closer together, encourage more awareness of the teams' work, generate more collaboration and joint working – ultimately to improve the offer to Suffolk's Children in care and support for our Foster Carers. Jessica leads on the Clinical direction of both services, involves herself in the development and roll out of training to a wide range of audiences including Foster Carers, social workers, and residential children's home staff. She provides consultations to families, and professional networks around children and young people. Jessica is a strong advocate for both her services, representing them in strategic meetings and works to promote service development. She clinically supervises team colleagues, works alongside management, and works hard to be available and responsive despite her busy role. Jessica is passionate about Psychology and loves living in Suffolk.



Dr Hattie Bowden-Howl, a clinical psychologist, joined Suffolk's Therapeutic Fostering team in October 2020 and offers consultations to foster carers and social workers, supervision to team members as well as supporting the team's training programme. Hattie completed her Doctoral training in Clinical Psychology at the University of Plymouth in 2017. In her psychology career to date, she has worked in a range of services such as children in care, child protection, perinatal mental health, CAMHS and has also worked in an inpatient unit for deaf children. She has received

specialist additional training in video interactive guidance, a foundation in family therapy and dyadic developmental informed practice. Hattie really enjoys working in jobs that support families and thinking about the dynamics that may come into play and how this may affect how children are cared for.



Cllr Stephen Burroughes is Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board. Cllr Burroughes was first elected to Suffolk County Council in May 2013. He served as a Fostering Panel Member from 2014 until May 2021.

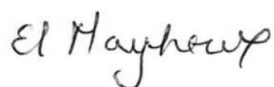
He became a member with Special Responsibility for Children in Care & Specialist Provision from May 2015 to May 2017 and then Deputy Cabinet Member for Fostering and Adoption in May 2021.

The senior managers with overall responsibility for Fostering Services in Suffolk are:

El Mayhew - Interim Director of Children and Families

Codrutza Oros-Marsh - Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Justice

Glynn Smith – Interim Head of Corporate Parenting



El Mayhew

Date: 02/11/2023

Interim Director of Children and Families



Councillor James Reeder

Date: 02/11/2023

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services



