

people like you

Fostercare

Statement of Purpose



Hampshire
County Council

*“ I enjoy fostering as I enjoy caring,
especially for children and love being a mum.
The rewards are huge when you see
improvements in the child ”*

JP 09/2009

Aims and Objectives

Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Department undertakes its legal duties in relation to placing children through the Family Placement Service.

The aims of the service are to:

- Meet the needs of all Hampshire's children who have been assessed as requiring a foster placement
- Provide a range of good quality family-based care for children who are unable to stay with their own families

The objectives of the service are to:

- Provide looked after children with a safe, stable, nurturing family experience which will promote their health, educational achievement and wellbeing, and which will assist them in coming to terms with their life experiences and reaching their full potential.
- Provide a variety of foster placements types to meet the needs of the children being looked after, including temporary, permanent and respite foster care.
- To recruit and assess foster carers in a consistent and transparent manner and to retain a skilled group of foster carers to meet the needs of children who are looked after.
- To offer training and support to all foster carers which will provide the necessary skills to enable them to care for looked after children and develop and enhance their potential.
- To meet the key aims of Hampshire County Council and the objectives of the Children and Young People Plan, and support the development and welfare of looked after children in line with the Every Child Matters agenda.

“ The rewards are when the placement is happy and has a successful outcome, either to return to family or to stay with you – and to see them blossom and to get on well at school and with their peers ”

JM 10/09”

Service Provision

● **Children First**

All work within the Family Placement Service is guided by the imperative to determine and act upon what is in the best interests of the child.

● **Placement Matching**

Wherever possible, a child will be placed with a foster carer who can meet their needs. If this is not possible, for example in an emergency, foster carers will be assisted and supported by other staff within Hampshire County Council to meet those needs in the short term and for those needs to be addressed more appropriately in the longer term. Placement matching includes considering the wishes and feelings of the children’s birth parents and significant relatives, as well as factors such as heritage, faith and language.

● **Types of Fostering**

Fostering is a positive option for children whose care cannot be met within their birth family. The needs of these children can be met through a range of planned and emergency fostering placements, which include: short term, long term or emergency fostering, remand, and intensive support placements, as well as placements with family or friends, respite care or parent and child placements. Hampshire’s Family Link scheme offers children with disabilities and their families regular planned breaks.

● **Working Together**

The Family Placement Service is set within a wider context. To achieve our objectives of looking after children and supporting families, we depend on working as partners with agencies and services in other specialist fields, including children in care and children in need social workers, health and education teams as well as with the children’s parents and wider family members.

● **Continuous Development**

The Family Placement Service is part of a wider directorate of Children’s Services. We work closely with the strategic development team to develop robust policy, procedures and protocols which benefit looked after children, foster carers and others who we work with.

Management Structure

The Family Placement Service is part of Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Directorate. Senior management responsibility within this structure is held with the County Service Manager. Day-to-day operational management of the Service is the responsibility of the Operational County Service Manager and Team Managers appointed to cover each area.

The Family Placement Service has 80 members of staff (full and part time).

County Operational Service Manager

Recruitment Team Manager	Family Placement Team Managers			Commissioning Officer – Panel Advisor
County-wide	North & East	South East	Western	County-wide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Senior Practitioner ● Assessing Social Workers ● Social Services Assistants ● Foster Care Support Worker ● Marketing and Communication Officer ● Administrative Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Senior Practitioner ● Family Placement Social Workers ● Social Services Assistants ● Family Link Coordinators ● Foster Care Support Worker ● Administrative Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Senior Practitioner ● Family Placement Social Workers ● Social Services Assistants ● Family Link Coordinators ● Foster Care Support Worker ● Administrative Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Senior Practitioner ● Family Placement Social Workers ● Social Services Assistants ● Family Link Coordinators ● Foster Care Support Worker ● Administrative Support 	

*“It is great to have someone
you can turn to, to ask
advice and get support.”*

JM 10/09

Staff Qualifications and Experience

Service and Team Managers hold social work and management qualifications to support their role, as well as having significant experience in providing children services.

Social Workers in the Family Placement Service all hold relevant professional qualifications and GSCC registrations, and have the experience in supporting children in need and looked after children.

Social Services Assistants are not qualified social workers but have experience of working with children, young people and families gained through working in a range of services. They work closely under the supervision of qualified social workers.

Hampshire County Council Family Placement Service also works with a pool of people who work on a casual or self employed basis. These temporary workers have the necessary qualifications, experience and statutory checks relevant to the work that they are undertaking on behalf of the local authority.

All Hampshire County Council employees and contractors are subject to rigorous selection, assessment and checking prior to commencing work within their teams.

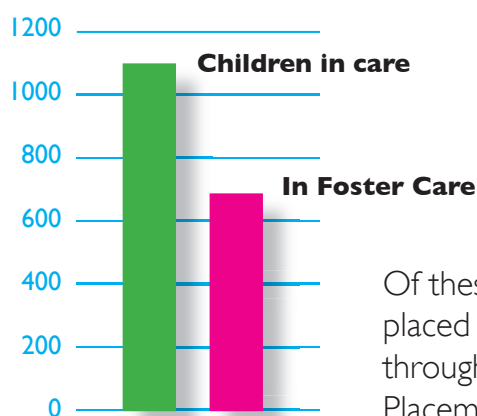
The recruitment process of Hampshire County Council is monitored by Ofsted.



Service Statistics

Children living in Foster Care

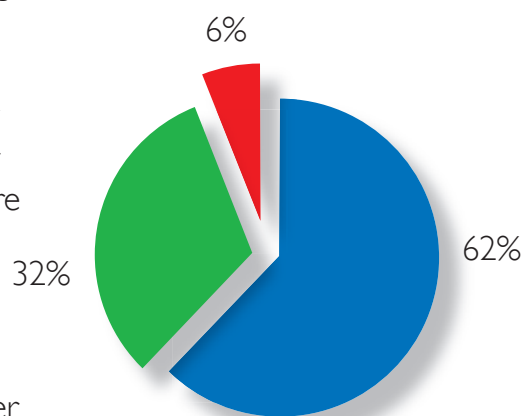
At the end of 2009, 1,101 children were in the care of Hampshire County Council.



Of these, 634 were placed in foster care through the Family Placement Service.

About Hampshire's Foster Carers

At the end of 2009, Hampshire County Council retained a pool of 610 foster carers to support young people who are placed in foster families.



Of these, 62% are general or stranger carers – this means that the foster carer will not be known to a child placed with them.

Some 32% of current carers are friends and family foster carers, who are approved to foster named children. Forty-one of Hampshire's foster carers offer a respite service, in particular for children with disabilities, who are supported by the Hampshire Family Link scheme.



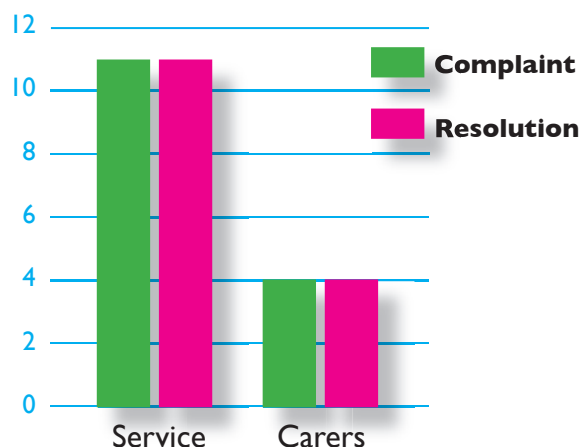
Feedback about the Family Placement Service

Hampshire County Council operates a Comments, Complaints and Compliments Procedure. All Foster Carers are advised of this procedure through the Foster Carers Handbook and in post-approval literature. Children who are living with Hampshire foster carers are also provided with information about how to comment, complaint about, or compliment, the service.

All Complaints relating to the Family Placement Service

In 2009, 11 complaints were received about the Family Placement Service. All of these were resolved at stage one of Hampshire County Council's procedure. These complaints were typically about general operational aspects of the service, such as policy, procedure or service delivery.

4 Foster Carers complained, with all of these complaints resolved in the first stage.



Complaints against Foster Carers

All complaints against foster carers are investigated using the Complaints and Allegations procedure which is outlined in the Foster Carers Handbook, with emphasis being placed on resolving any complaints swiftly and locally where possible.

In 2009, 69 complaints were made against foster carers. In recognition of the fact that this can be a stressful time for any foster carer, the Family Placement Service employs an Independent Support Worker to work with foster carers during the investigation of any complaint or allegation. Fifteen foster carers used this service in 2009.

“It was something that we had always wanted to do and now that we were settled in our new home and our son was that bit older we thought that now was the right time to do it. We saw an advert in our local paper”
SB & V – 10/09

Recruiting and Approving Foster Carers

Hampshire County Council uses varying marketing approaches to recruit a diverse range of foster carers to meet the individual needs of Hampshire's children.

Assessment of Prospective Foster Carers

In assessing prospective foster carers, Hampshire County Council follows the Fostering Services Regulations, England (2002), National Minimum Care Standards Act (2000), The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and BAAF and Fostering Network good practice guidance.

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

This assessment involves discussion with family and others who are regular visitors to the home. Statutory and best practice checks are undertaken, these include a number of formal checks with agencies such as the police, health and education. Personal references and home health and safety assessments are also undertaken.

During the assessment, prospective carers attend a local 3 day training course, Skills to Foster. This training is an essential element in the preparation of foster carers for the task of looking after children and young people.

Approval of Foster Carers

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

On approval, a supervising social worker from the Family Placement Service is allocated to support the new foster carer with their task

“The people on the panel were friendly and supportive.”
CA 11/09

“I felt my son had a nice life and we could share that with another child. I also felt he was mature enough to understand the difficulties of bringing another child into our family”

MP 09/09

Training Foster Carers

All foster carers are expected to participate in locally-delivered core training which is essential to undertaking the fostering task, and are required to complete their Children's Workforce Development Council Workbooks. A comprehensive programme of additional training is also available for foster carers. This provides training in issues specific to the young people foster carers may be supporting as well as offering excellent personal development opportunities.

Training is delivered in partnership with Hampshire County Council Children's Services Workforce Development Team.

“super training”

L&EB 09/09

Supporting Foster Carers

Financial Support

All foster carers receive an allowance for each child they foster. The allowance varies according to the age of the child and is paid per day or per week, depending how long the child is in the care of the foster family. There is a skills-appraisal process available for foster carers who are able to demonstrate that they meet specific criteria in being able to support children and young people with complex needs. Any skills awards are agreed during a formal panel process.

Practical Support

All foster carers are allocated a supervising family placement social worker, who has the responsibility of managing and supporting the foster carer. Six-weekly formal supervision is complemented by a series of support groups, automatic membership of Hampshire's Fostering Network and access to daily duty and out of hours services.

Foster carers can also access a range of other services to support themselves and the children in placement. These services are listed in the foster carers Handbook and in a separate support directory and are known to the supervising social worker. In addition, foster carers are encouraged to participate in informal support and social opportunities organised by other foster carers.

“All of the social workers and family support workers have been great. Whenever a situation has arisen they have only been a phone call away.”

CA 11/09

“Reviews feel awfully frequent, but are obviously for very good reasons – we want the children we have living with us to know they are safe and feel safe, so we are happy to be reviewed as often as necessary”

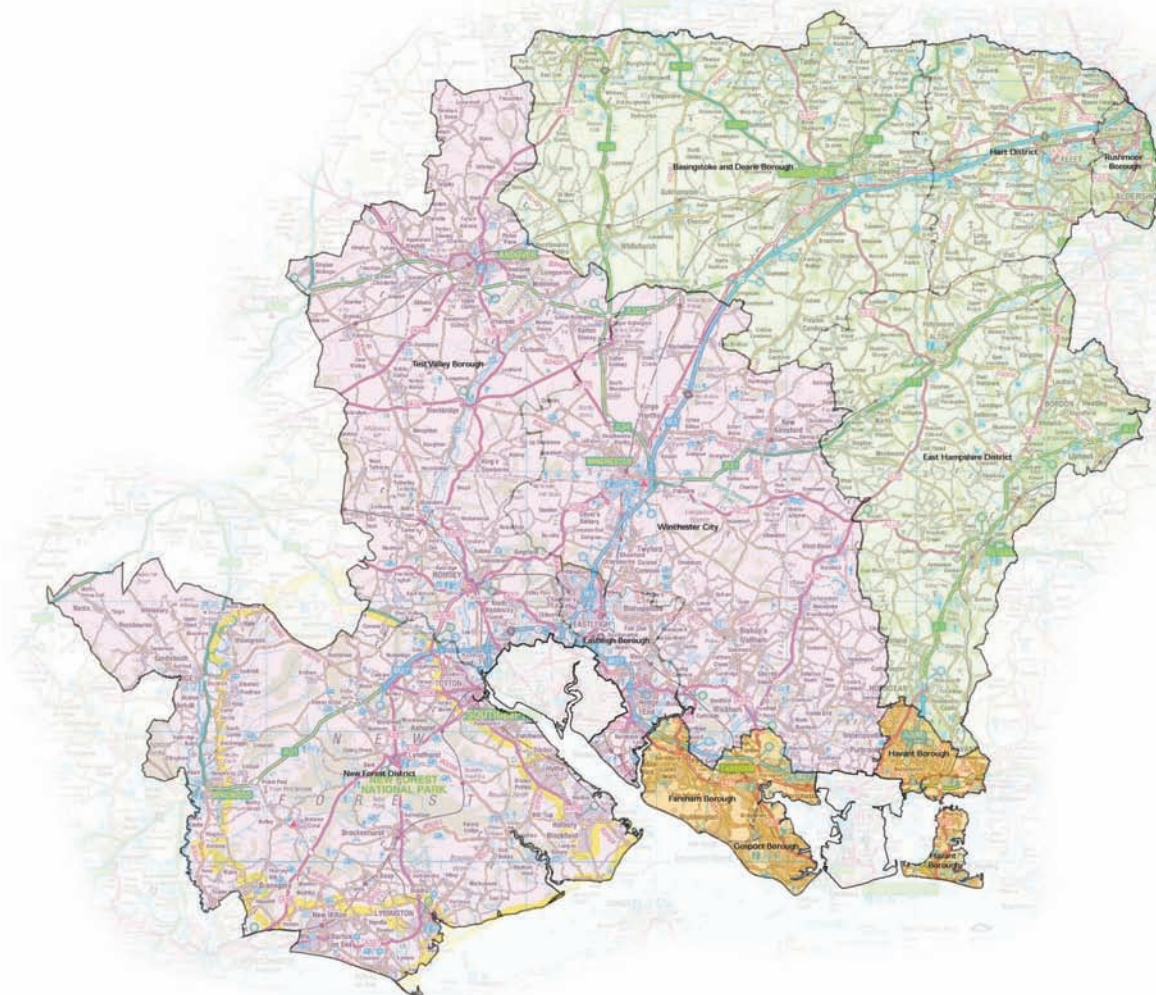
MTI 1/09

Reviewing Foster Carers

Formal supervision with foster carers and their social worker takes place a minimum of every 6 weeks and includes reviews of foster carers record keeping and the outcomes they are delivering for the children in their care.

A supervising social worker will also undertake unannounced visits to the foster home. There is a formal annual review of each fostering household. Alongside this, Hampshire's procedures indicate situations in which further reviews should be undertaken, for example, in the case of a serious complaint, or if a change in approval is recommended.





Area Managers



North & East Hampshire

Team Manager: Paula Haynes
 Offices: Alton, Basingstoke
 Tel: 01420 544 349



Western Hampshire

Team Manager: Mike Earls
 Offices: New Forest & Winchester
 Tel: 02380 877 840



South East Hampshire

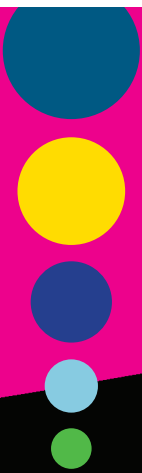
Team Manager: Ros Caley
 Office: Waterlooville
 Tel: 02392 256 822

County Fostering Recruitment Team:

Team Manager: Rachel Reynolds
 Offices: Swanwick
 Tel: 01489 587 017

Fostering Panels:

County Commissioning Officer (Panel):
 Terri Johnson
 Tel: 02392 247 377



people like you

Fostercare

0845 6011895

www.fostering.hampshire.gov.uk

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This information is available in alternative formats on request.

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Children's Services Department

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For further information please contact 01489 587017