

# Fostering Service - OPG

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# Foster Care



**Foster with Bury**  
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# Bury Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is located within Children's Social Care Placements/Corporate Parenting Service together with the Children & Young People in Care Team and the Through Care Team.

All Foster Carers go through a robust assessment process to consider if they meet the required standard to be a foster carer, this includes BDS checks, references and compulsory training. This process is regulated in legislation, guidance and standards. (*Fostering Service Regulations England 2011 and Fostering Service Regulations England 2011 amended by the Care Planning, Placement and case Review Fostering Regulations 2013 and Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (2015)*).

All approved Foster Carers who are assessed and approved at the Bury Fostering panel are supported, monitored and reviewed by an allocated Supervising Social Worker.

# Fostering Panel

- The Fostering Panel is an independent body which is required under Fostering Regulations and makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). The ADM has the final agreement/ endorsement as to whether prospective carers are approved as Foster Carers.
- The panel considers all applications to foster both general and family and friends.
- The panel also has oversight over emergency approvals made under Regulation 24 of the Fostering Regulations
- The panel provides a quality assurance and safeguarding role to the Fostering Service. The panel has an Independent Chair and Vice Chair with several other independent panel members who are experienced in working with children and young people, they consider and scrutinizes information and assessments presented. The Fostering Panel is crucial in ensuring placements are safe and appropriate for children and that the fostering service meets and maintains statutory requirements.
- Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

# Team Structure

- The service is led by a Team Manager supported by an Assistant Team Manager and two Advanced Practitioners
- 13 Supervising Social Workers
- 2 SGO Social Workers
- 1 Communications and Marketing Officer
- 1 Recruitment Officer who responds to telephone enquiries about the fostering role, processes applications and undertake all initial home visits
- 1 Business Intelligence Officer
- 2 Family/Fostering Support Workers who offer practical support to carers and undertake direct work with children and young people.

# Bury Data

The Fostering Service is the largest resource in terms of placements for Bury's Children in Care.

We currently have **343** Children in Care with **233** placed with Foster Carers.

- 105 are placed with Bury Foster Carers
- 67 with Family and Friend Foster Carers
- 61 with Independent Foster Agencies (IFA's)
  
- **71 General Foster Carers**
  
- **48 Family and Friend Foster Carers**

# Bury Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is responsible for the overall recruitment, training, support and development of all Bury's foster carers.

The Fostering Service (assisted by the Performance, Planning and Commissioning PPC Team) also searches for independent foster placements (IFA) through North West Placements if it is unable to find a placement for a child with Bury's foster carers.

In addition the Fostering Service undertakes work with Family and Friend foster carers, these are extended family members and other connected people who have an existing or prior relationship with a child. This can bring demands made by the courts following the implementation of the 26 week time scale for dealing with care proceedings.

The recruitment and assessment process differs slightly from that of general foster carers but still requires compliance with the Fostering Regulations 2011.

# Bury Fostering Service

- Emergency placements made under Regulation 24 of the Fostering Regulations 2011 can be a challenge to resources. Staff members on duty undertake prompt assessments in order to determine the viability of any potential family and friends' placement.
- The Fostering Service has a crucial role in keeping children within their own family settings and keeping children in local permanent placements.

# Bury Fostering Service

The Fostering Service makes an overall contribution to care planning for Bury's Children in Care. All foster carers are subject to regular supervision from a qualified and experienced supervising social worker to ensure care plans are being met effectively and children are safeguarded. All foster carers are subject to an annual review process to assess their ongoing suitability to continue to foster.

Complaints and feedback from young people are also an important element of oversight and review of Foster Carers.

Allegations against carers are promptly responded to by investigations by the Fostering service and also referrals to the Local Area Designated Offer (LADO)

Bury Children Rights Service also play a key role in supporting and advocating for young people if they have an issue in foster placement.

# Home from Home Scheme

- These are carers who are part of the fostering service who offer respite to families who are caring for children with disabilities.
- The respite offered can range from a tea time break once or twice a week to a fixed respite period for two weeks. Foster carers working on the Home from Home scheme will offer care to a variety of children with a range of additional needs, and physical disabilities.
- The foster carer's working on this scheme receive additional support to allow them to care for a wide range of children with a wide range of needs.

# Service Developments

- Rebranding the service



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- As part of a recognition as to the value of the Fostering Service the Council agreed to increase the Community Parent fee.
- From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 the fee paid to Bury Carers increased to:
  - £130 per week for children aged 0 to 10 years
  - £140 per week for children aged 11 and over
  - The Council also agreed to remove a deduction for additional children from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019. This was deemed a barrier to recruitment when competing in a challenging market against IFAs and neighbouring authorities.

# Foster Care Ambassadors

- In February we formally launched the Foster Care Ambassador scheme
- This gives the opportunities for 9 trained Bury Carers to promote and recruit in our communities for Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings
- Ambassador Helen says: "We are proud to foster because we are given opportunities to share ourselves, our home, our family, with young people who are in need, through no fault of their own, and to provide a safe, caring, non-judgemental environment for them to achieve and thrive.
- Joining the ambassador scheme gives us the opportunity to share our experience and encourage other families in Bury to come forward and help keep the children and young people local in Bury."



# Community Events

Increasing Bury foster carers means that there will be a reduction of placements made outside of the Bury area with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) but more importantly will enable children to be placed within their local community ensuring they are able to maintain local links with family, friends and school.



# Supported Lodgings

- The Fostering Service is also assess and oversee Supported Lodging hosts who provide homes for Children In Care who have an appropriate level of semi-independent skills and also Care Leavers.
- We need to increase the number of Supported Lodging providers to create capacity and improve placement choice.
- The fostering service is working closely with the Through Care Team in order to develop the supported lodging service as part of the Care Leaver Offer.
- There has been an increase in payments to Bury's supported Lodgings to improve recruitment.

# Service Developments

- Develop and launch a bespoke Bury Fostering website – currently under construction
- Progress a Business case for a therapeutic Foster Care Scheme – increase wrap around support to carers to be able to care for more complex children, adopt a therapeutic approach in the care provided, improve the training offer and in turn increase carers skills and resilience.
- Increase the number of Bury Foster Placement and Supported Lodging hosts and to provide good placements that achieve permanence.
- Increase the number of Family and Friend Carers seeking SGOs.
- Provide sufficient and good quality placements for our care leavers
- Support children and young people to remain within their foster placement post age 18 whenever possible – Staying Put