

Fostering Service



Statement of Purpose

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www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk

Fostering & Adoption Service
253 Preston Road
Brighton

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Brighton and Hove City Council is committed to providing a high quality fostering service. The Statement of Purpose will detail the aims and objectives of the service, quality assurance mechanisms, and the range of services provided to children, prospective carers and foster carers including family and friends carers.
- 1.2 The Statement of Purpose includes details of the staffing and organisational structure of the service, management arrangements, complaint procedures and the details of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). It should be read in conjunction with the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose.
- 1.3 The Fostering Service is an integral part of the Fostering & Adoption service and staff within the service have as their primary role the recruitment, assessment, training, support and supervision of carers. They also provide a placement and family finding service for social work staff on behalf of children in care or children needing to come into the care system

2 Key aims and principles

- 2.1 A child's welfare is the paramount consideration. Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving and caring family, which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond. The needs and wishes, welfare and safety of the child or young person are at the centre of Brighton and Hove's Fostering Service. Children come from a wide range of cultural, racial, linguistic and religious backgrounds, therefore the Fostering Service will endeavour to recruit carers who reflect this.
- 2.2 Brighton and Hove City Council, Children and Young People's Trust, with other agencies and community groups, will work to ensure that a comprehensive range of services are provided to support birth families to provide safe and appropriate care for their children.
- 2.3 Where children or young people are not able to live safely with their birth parents then active consideration will be given to that child being cared for within the wider family or friendship network. The Children and Young People's Trust will continue to develop services provided to family and friends carers.
- 2.4 Where children or young people are not able to remain with their birth family or be placed within the wider family or friendship network a family placement with foster carers will be sought. Good

childcare planning is essential to prevent children drifting in the care system.

- 2.5 All children in care will have a care plan that will be reviewed regularly. The wishes of the child will be taken into account as appropriate in drawing up the care plan. The birth family should be fully involved in the care planning process and their views represented. Consideration should always be given to holding a Family Group Conference to enable the wider birth family to participate in planning for the child.
- 2.6 The care plan will be reviewed at every child-in-care (LAC) review and at the 4 month review the need for a plan for permanence will be addressed. This plan will be based on the needs of the individual looked after child and will include consideration of permanence being achieved by return to birth parents, placement within the wider family and friends network or through permanent foster care or adoption if that is not possible. Clear timescales will be drawn up to expedite the permanence planning.
- 2.7 Consideration will be given in the care planning and reviewing process to the need to access appropriate specialist services for looked after children and their carers. These services should be provided in a non-stigmatising and enabling manner.
- 2.8 The views and wishes of the child should be sought by a range of age appropriate means. The Children's Rights Service and Advocacy Service will continue to play a key role in promoting the wishes and views of looked after children and enabling their voice to be heard. The Independent Reviewing Officers will also ensure that a child's wishes have been sought and are included in the care planning process as appropriate. All children that are placed in foster care will be given a children's guide to fostering.
- 2.9 The Fostering Service will aim to provide a diverse and wide range of safe, caring, stable and nurturing family placements to meet the needs of Brighton and Hove's looked after children. This will include respite carers, short term and task focused carers and permanent carers. The Fostering and Adoption & Permanence team will work in collaboration with colleagues in the 16+support team, youth offending team and the Barnardos Link plus team to ensure that an appropriate range of carers are recruited to meet the range of different placements needed.
- 2.10 Foster carers will be carefully recruited and trained and given access to a range of support services to enable them to provide high quality care to the children placed with them. In line with the national agenda for work with children the Fostering Service will endeavour to work to ensure children and young people in foster care have the support they need to achieve the key aims of being

healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being.

- 2.11 Foster carers will be trained and supported to enable them to work sensitively with the child to accept the child for who they are and promote their cultural, racial and religious identity.
- 2.12 Foster carers will be supported to enable them to focus on the individual child's needs and work within the child's care plan to develop the child's full potential. Children in foster care should have access to a wide range of educational resources and facilities to provide the maximum opportunity for them to achieve and develop their skills and fulfil their aspirations.
- 2.13 Foster carers will be trained and supported to enable the child to make full use of educational, health, leisure, creative and sporting activities to develop their skills and self-esteem and work towards overcoming the possible traumas of past experiences. Foster carers will be expected to work closely with teaching and other staff to ensure close collaboration and communication between the foster home and school.
- 2.14 The care plan for children in care will always address the plans for contact with family, friends or important individuals from the child's past. Good care planning to promote and sustain appropriate contact arrangements is clearly associated with stability for the child and good outcomes. Foster carers will be trained and supported to enable them to work with the child's birth family as appropriate and deal with this issue sensitively with the child or young person.
- 2.15 Foster carers will work to provide safe, caring and appropriate boundaries for the child. This will help to promote their child's physical and emotional health and educational achievement and to encourage the child or young person to develop independence skills.
- 2.16 The Fostering service will work with others to minimise disruption for children in care and maximise their opportunity to achieve a permanent and stable family life style. Factors that are significant in achieving this will be the need for good assessment of the child's needs and careful matching with foster carers. Enhanced, specialist and multi-agency services will be provided for carers and children in care as appropriate in line with the care planning process.
- 2.17 The Fostering service will aim to ensure that full information is provided by the child's social worker about the child's background and family and placement needs, including previous and current

health history, to inform the matching process and enable the carers to work to meet the individual needs of the child in placement.

- 2.18 The Fostering Service will aim to work in partnership with foster carers in an open and reliable manner. Foster carers will be involved in planning and developing the service and kept informed about practice and policy developments. They will also be kept informed about the wider developments and encouraged to feel an integral part of the Children and Young People's Trust.

3 Recruitment

- 3.1 The Fostering Service will co-ordinate an active and inclusive recruitment campaign to meet the diverse needs of Brighton and Hove's looked after children. Enquiries from prospective carers will be welcomed from a wide range of the population including couples with or without children, single parents, single men or women, lesbians and gay men, unemployed people, people from all ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities, or older people including those with grown up children.
- 3.2 The Fostering Service will provide a range of multi-media recruitment information for prospective carers. This includes the website that provides comprehensive information for prospective carers, www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk. The recruitment information describes the whole range of fostering and adoptive placements that are needed. Staff within the service will respond to enquiries promptly and hold regular information sessions for prospective carers. These information and recruitment events will always include input from experienced carers and young people in care or care leavers as appropriate.
- 3.3 The Fostering Service will continue to place a high priority on the recruitment of carers and will regularly review the recruitment strategy and initiatives. A wider pool of carers enables the service to provide locally-based family placements for children which take a greater account of their specific matching needs. A dedicated Practice Manager oversees the recruitment and assessment work.
- 3.4 The Fostering Service also employs a dedicated Recruitment and Publicity Officer for Black and Minority Ethnic carers. This worker along with other members of the service will develop links with key black and minority ethnic groups locally and work to raise the profile of the needs of black and minority ethnic children within the care system. This worker will also offer specialist support to carers with children who are trans-racially placed.

4 Assessment and preparation of carers

- 4.1 All potential prospective carers will have an initial home assessment visit to discuss their interest in fostering in more detail. The service will run regular preparation training groups for prospective carers. These training groups will always include input from a range of experienced carers, and prospective carers will also be given the opportunity to link up with individual experienced carers as appropriate. The Service will also include input into the training from older young people in the care system and provide some preparation for the task of fostering for children within the prospective carers family.
- 4.2 The Fostering Service has comprehensive procedures in place for the assessment of prospective carers and all staff receive training and regular supervision on this aspect of the work. The assessment procedures are evidence and competency based and includes specific verification checks that comply with the requirements of Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A detailed assessment report is presented to either the Fostering or Adoption & Permanence Panel.
- 4.3 The Fostering, and Adoption & Permanence, Panels are both constituted to comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 (as amended 2009) and are both chaired by a suitably qualified and experienced independent chairperson. Both Panels have the services of agency advisors who do not have operational management responsibility within the service and play a vital quality assurance role.
- 4.4 The Fostering Panel is a jointly constituted Panel with Barnardos Link Plus and meets at least monthly, and the Adoption & Permanence Panel meets fortnightly. The Adoption & Permanence Panel considers amongst other things the approval of concurrency carers and the matches of children under the age of 9 with permanent carers. Both Panels now consider the assessment of prospective family and friends foster carers.
- 4.5 Both the Fostering, and Adoption & Permanence, Panels have written Constitutions and Terms of Reference and information booklets for prospective applicants. Both Panels encourage the prospective carers to attend Panel at the time of approval, and ensure that recommendations and decisions are communicated to the prospective carers both verbally and in writing in line with the legal requirements.
- 4.6 Both the Fostering and Adoption Services prepare annual reports to present to elected members. These reports incorporate reports on the activities of both Panels prepared by the Independent Chair of each Panel.

5 Matching and Placement of Children

- 5.1 The Fostering Service provides a daily duty service to social work staff needing an emergency or task focused placement for a child. This service is overseen by a dedicated Practice Manager. Full information is taken about the placement needs of the child and consideration is given to all appropriate in-house placements. As far as possible children will be placed locally to enable them to sustain appropriate contact with family and friends and minimise any disruption to their school and leisure pursuits. The policy in relation to the needs of black and minority ethnic children in care highlights the need to find a placement that reflects the child's ethnic, cultural and religious background if at all possible.
- 5.2 When an appropriate in-house provision is not available the Fostering service will seek a placement with a local independent fostering provider through the agency placements team. The Children & Young People's Trust has undertaken a tendering process to establish framework agreements with preferred and accredited providers. This process helps to ensure quality standards in foster care provided by Independent Fostering Agencies [IFAs] for children in care with Brighton and Hove. It also serves to streamline and improve partnership working with other agencies and more cost-effective use of IFAs when in-house placements are unavailable. All placements, and all the contractual arrangements, with the independent fostering and residential sectors are overseen by an Agency Placements Manager.
- 5.3 The Trust has a contract with Barnardo's to provide a respite link scheme and some long term fostering provision for children with disabilities. The teams collaborate as appropriate to ensure that foster carers providing placements for children with disabilities are well supported and have access to appropriate specialist services.
- 5.4 The Fostering team runs a weekly Children Awaiting Placement meeting to consider all the children that are waiting for foster placements. The Adoption & Permanence team takes referrals on children under the age of 9 needing a permanent foster or adoptive placement. Permanency Planning meetings are convened to consider the detailed matching needs and the family finding strategy. Staff in the Adoption & Permanence team take the lead role in family finding for children on referral to the team.
- 5.5 Fostering, and Adoption & Permanence team staff will work collaboratively to ensure that fostering resources are fully used to best meet the needs of looked after children. Foster carers who are caring for children who require a permanent placement will always be considered as potential permanent carers for that child if that is

their wish, and if it meets the needs of the child. Specific procedures for the re-assessment of short-term carers offering permanency have been drawn up and agreed with Adoption & Permanence Panel.

6 Training for carers

- 6.1 It is essential that all carers are given the opportunity to take up a range of training courses and access training materials to enhance their skills and abilities as carers and give them the opportunity for further development. All foster carers will be supported to undertake the work to complete the children's workforce development council's training standards for foster carers.
- 6.2 Key training courses will be mandatory following approval and foster carers will have access to a range of other core courses provided to Children & Young People's Trust (CYPT) staff plus specialist courses and events provided by the Fostering Service. A dedicated member of the training section will work with a Practice Manager within the service to take lead responsibility for foster care training and ensure full information is sent to carers about forthcoming training events. Training will need to be delivered in a variety of ways and formats to allow for maximum participation. Carers can also access training information via the new website.
- 6.3 There is a very clear expectation that foster carers take up post approval training, and work has been undertaken to support and encourage carers to access the appropriate NVQ award.
- 6.4 Supervising social workers will regularly discuss carers' training needs on their visits to carers and this will be addressed specifically post approval and at the annual review.
- 6.6 Foster carers will also be trained and supported to deliver training themselves to other carers and appropriate professionals.

7 Support services to carers

- 7.1 Foster care allowances are reviewed annually and full guidance on foster care payments and allowances will be provided to all carers and is on the website.
- 7.2 All foster carers are provided with open access to a comprehensive on-line Brighton and Hove foster carer's handbook. This handbook is updated and added to on a regular basis to ensure that it remains a key resource and guidance manual for carers and staff.
- 7.3 All foster carers will have an allocated supervising social worker (ssw) who will visit or make contact with the carer at monthly intervals or more frequently as required. They will ensure that they

are accessible and available to carers and that carers have the name of their ssw's supervisor to contact if the ssw is unavailable for any reason. The supervising social worker will liaise closely with the social worker or workers for the children in placement.

- 7.4 The supervising social worker will have responsibility for the organisation of the foster carers' annual review and ensure that all the components of the review are completed as appropriate including the reports from the carers, the carers own children and children in placement. The foster care reviews will be taken back to the Fostering Panel as necessary. The first review after approval will always go back to Panel, in addition, Panel will also consider the reviews of foster carers where there have been specific and significant complaints, allegations or standards of care issues or other major changes in circumstances.
- 7.5 The Intensive Placement Team has a key role in providing a range of enhanced support services to children in care, carers and their own children. They will work with individual children and groups of children and young people to support them in their placement, undertake life story work and provide them with an opportunity to access a range of sporting, creative and leisure activities to promote their physical and emotional well being. They will work closely with carers to ensure that children in placement are given the maximum opportunity to reach their potential and build sustainable stable relationships with their carers.
- 7.6 The Intensive Placement Team will take on responsibility for the distribution of 'listen up' cards to looked after children which are aimed at enabling looked after children to take up use of local leisure facilities.
- 7.7 Services provided by the Intensive Placement Team and the Fostering service will be kept under review to ensure that the views of children, carers and social workers and other key professionals are taken into account. The Intensive Placement Team will aim to work with carers and children to enable children in care to be supported to access local community mainstream provision where at all possible.
- 7.8 The Intensive Placement team will continue to provide a comprehensive holiday activities programme for children in care and will continue to develop the service provided to carers own children
- 7.9 Staff in the fostering service will work with carers, parents and the social worker for the child to ensure that the child or young person is fully supported within the school and pre-school environment. The fostering service will continue to work closely with other

colleagues from within the CYPT to promote the needs of children in care within the educational service.

- 7.10 The Fostering service will also work closely with the Nurse Consultant for children in care and her team to ensure carers are kept informed about health issues and are working actively to promote the health of the child or children in placement.
- 7.11 The Fostering Service will also sustain close collaboration with CAMHS to enable foster carers and children in care with particular emotional and mental health difficulties to access a fast track specialist service. The service will also work with this specialist CAMHS team to ensure that good communication about developments within both services are maintained and joint work is undertaken as appropriate to best meet the needs of children in care and their carers.
- 7.12 The Fostering Service will continue to provide an out of hours 'on call' service for carers. This supplements the service provided by the Emergency Duty Service which provides out of hours social services cover across East Sussex and Brighton and Hove. The Fostering Service's out of hours service would be the first port of call for carers needing advice or support.
- 7.13 The Fostering Service will provide and facilitate a range of support groups for carers. These services will be reviewed regularly with carers and will include the development of specific support groups as appropriate such as groups for new carers or family and friends foster carers.
- 7.14 The Fostering Service will provide dedicated training and support services to parent and baby foster carers, recognising the specific and demanding task these carers perform. A Practice Manager within the Fostering Service will take a lead role in the support and development of services for these carers.
- 7.15 The Fostering Service will continue to meet the annual cost of subscribing to the foster carers' organisation, Fostering Network, for all Brighton and Hove approved carers. This enables carers to use the advice and support services provided by Fostering Network and receive their literature.
- 7.16 The Fostering Service will support and work in collaboration with the Brighton & Hove Foster Care Association. All new foster carers automatically become members of this association once they are approved. The Fostering Service will ensure local carers are fully consulted on developments in the service.
- 7.17 The Fostering Service will work with the Children's Rights, and advocacy services, and continue to develop further ways to ensure

that young people's views on the service are taken into account and inform future developments within the service.

- 7.18 The Fostering Service will work to ensure that carers are kept fully informed about developments in the service. A regular newsletter will continue to be produced for carers and carers will also receive the Children and Young People's Trust magazine.
- 7.19 The service will continue to look at ways of improving communication. The website has a secure password accessed side which provides detailed information on a range of support services.
- 7.20 The Fostering Service also employs a part time fostering consultant and child psychotherapist on a freelance basis to provide specialist and speedy support and consultation for carers as part of the service, to enhance placement stability for children.
- 7.21 The Fostering Service recognises the significant role played by the carers' own children in the fostering task, and the pressures this can bring to the family. The team will endeavour to take account of the needs of carers' own children when planning services and will continue to provide specific services for 'children who foster'.

8 Other services within Fostering & Adoption

- 8.1 The service will also provide specialist services to meet the needs of particular groups of children in care.
- 8.2 Intensive Fostering Placements provide for an enhanced package of support to some carers offering permanency to harder-to-place children. This package includes an intensive support service provided by social workers based within the Intensive Placement Team, regular respite care, and sessional work support as appropriate.
- 8.3 Some carers are approved as concurrency carers for children aged 0 – 2 years. Concurrency carers are approved as both foster carers and adopters and initially care for children on a fostering basis. They are prepared and able to adopt the child if rehabilitation with birth family is not possible.
- 8.4 The Family and Friends Team undertakes assessments of prospective carers and supervises and supports these foster carers, and provides a range of support services to those carers who then go on to offer permanence to a child through applying for a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order. Family and friends carers receive access to mainstream foster care support services as well as additional services that reflect the specific tasks that they are undertaking Support provided includes finance, an information pack, support groups, training, access to therapeutic

consultants and assistance with contact arrangements with birth parents.

9 Fostering & Adoption service staff

9.1 The teams within the service will work collaboratively to provide an integrated and co-ordinated service to carers, looked after children and fieldwork staff.

9.2 Staff from the various teams will be involved in the review, planning and development of the service. A range of training courses will be provided across the teams to facilitate staff development and aid the ability of staff to keep updated on the changing legal framework, practice guidance and the increasing body of relevant research. Staff are appropriately qualified and supervised to enable them to carry out their tasks within the service. All social work qualified staff are registered with the General Social Care Council.

9.3 The management team, including Service Managers, Practice Managers and Fostering & Adoption Advisers within the service meet regularly with the Head of Service to discuss operational and policy matters and ensure the continued integrated development of the service.

9.4 Managers within the service are sufficiently experienced social worker practitioners and have access to managerial training courses. The Head of Service is an experienced manager and social work practitioner with appropriate management and social work qualifications. There are clear job descriptions and person specifications for all posts within the service.

9.5 The Head of Service is Sharon Donnelly and the Fostering Service Manager is Clare Smith and can they be contacted at the Fostering and Adoption Service, Brighton and Hove City Council, 253 Preston Road, Brighton BN1 6SE. Telephone number 01273 295444, email sharon.donnelly@brighton-hove.gov.uk or clare.smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk

A structure chart for the Fostering and Adoption service is appended to this statement of purpose.

10 Monitoring & Evaluation

10.1 The Fostering Service produces an annual recruitment strategy, and progress in relation to recruitment activity is reported on a monthly basis to the Fostering & Adoption Management Team. The Service Manager meets regularly with the Practice Managers to discuss allocation issues and review workloads. There is a caseload weighting system in place within the Service.

- 10.2 The Agency Adviser has a key quality assurance role and reads all the reports that are going before Panel. The Adviser has a broader role in policy development and ensuring practice issues are disseminated within the Fostering & Adoption service and fieldwork teams. The Chair of Panel is an independent and experienced manager and therefore also plays a quality assurance role. Panel regularly raises issues with the Agency Decision Maker about aspects of practice and the Chair of Panel provides a report to accompany the Annual Fostering Agency Report to Committee.
- 10.3 The Fostering & Adoption Service Management Team undertakes a regular file audit programme and ensure that all files of carers and adopters are audited regularly.
- 10.4 Regular meetings are held with lead elected members of the Children and Young People's Trust and senior Trust managers to ensure that members are kept up to date on key service developments. Issues related to the work of the Fostering & Adoption service are reported on at these meetings.
- 10.5 The Fostering & Adoption Service Management Team meets monthly and part of the remit of this meeting is to ensure that services are effective, responsive and of a high quality. All staff have access to regular supervision and there is a performance and development process in place across the authority. A Service Day for all the teams within the service is held annually to review and discuss practice developments.
- 10.6 The Service is required to produce annual service improvement objectives within the context of the Brighton and Hove Children and Young People's Plan.
- 10.7 The Annual Fostering Service report will provide detailed statistics relating to the number of foster carers and recruitment activity within the year.

11 Complaints procedure

- 11.1 Users of the Fostering Services, including children, birth families, prospective and approved carers, are provided with copies of the complaints procedure, advised how to access the procedure and encouraged to invoke it if unhappy with services provided. Foster carers are also advised about the circumstances in which they may have recourse to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) if they are in disagreement with a decision being proposed by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Service users are advised that independent sources of support are available to help them make a complaint and advocate on their behalf if they feel unconfident making a complaint by themselves. Service users are advised that the

Customer Services Manager who oversees the complaints procedure can be contacted at:

Brighton & Hove City Council
Kings House, Grand Ave, Hove

Or by writing to Standards & Complaints, Freepost SEA2560,
Brighton BN1 1ZW

The Freephone number is 0500 291229

Information about the complaints process can be found by going to the City Council website: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk or the Fostering & Adoption Service website: www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk

Complaints can also be emailed to complaints@brighton-hove.gov.uk

- 11.2 Most complaints are resolved informally and speedily by the local manager and records are kept of all complaints, compliments and representations made to the Service. There are clear procedures in place for responding to complaints. Formal Stage 1 complaints are acknowledged within 2 working days and should be responded to within 10 working days. If someone is still unhappy after the complaint has been dealt with at Stage 1 they can ask for Stage 2 investigation. The Standards and Complaints team will aim to conclude all Stage 2 investigations within 20 working days. Members of the public can complain to the local Ombudsman at any time. However the Ombudsman will usually want the Council to have chance to investigate the complaint first.
- 11.3 The Complaints procedure for Children's Services is currently being revised nationally and the Trust will produce new complaints leaflets as soon as these have been finalised. The Trust produces separate complaints leaflets for children and young people and information about how to complain is also included in the Children's Guides to Fostering.
- 11.4 The Service reports annually on complaints within the Fostering Agency Report that goes to Children & Young People's Trust Board. Corporately records of complaints, compliments and representation are reported on regularly.
- 11.5 The Management teams within the Fostering and Adoption Service regularly discuss any issues arising from complaints, standards of care, or allegations against carers to ensure any lessons learnt can be disseminated and changes in practice made.

12 Ofsted

- 12.1 The Fostering Service will be inspected by Ofsted in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations and the National Minimum Standards. Inspection reports are public documents and a copy of the current report will be available via the website, www.fosteringinbrighton-hove.gov.uk.
- 12.2 The local Ofsted office responsible for inspecting fostering services provided by Brighton and Hove City Council can be contacted at:

Ofsted South Region

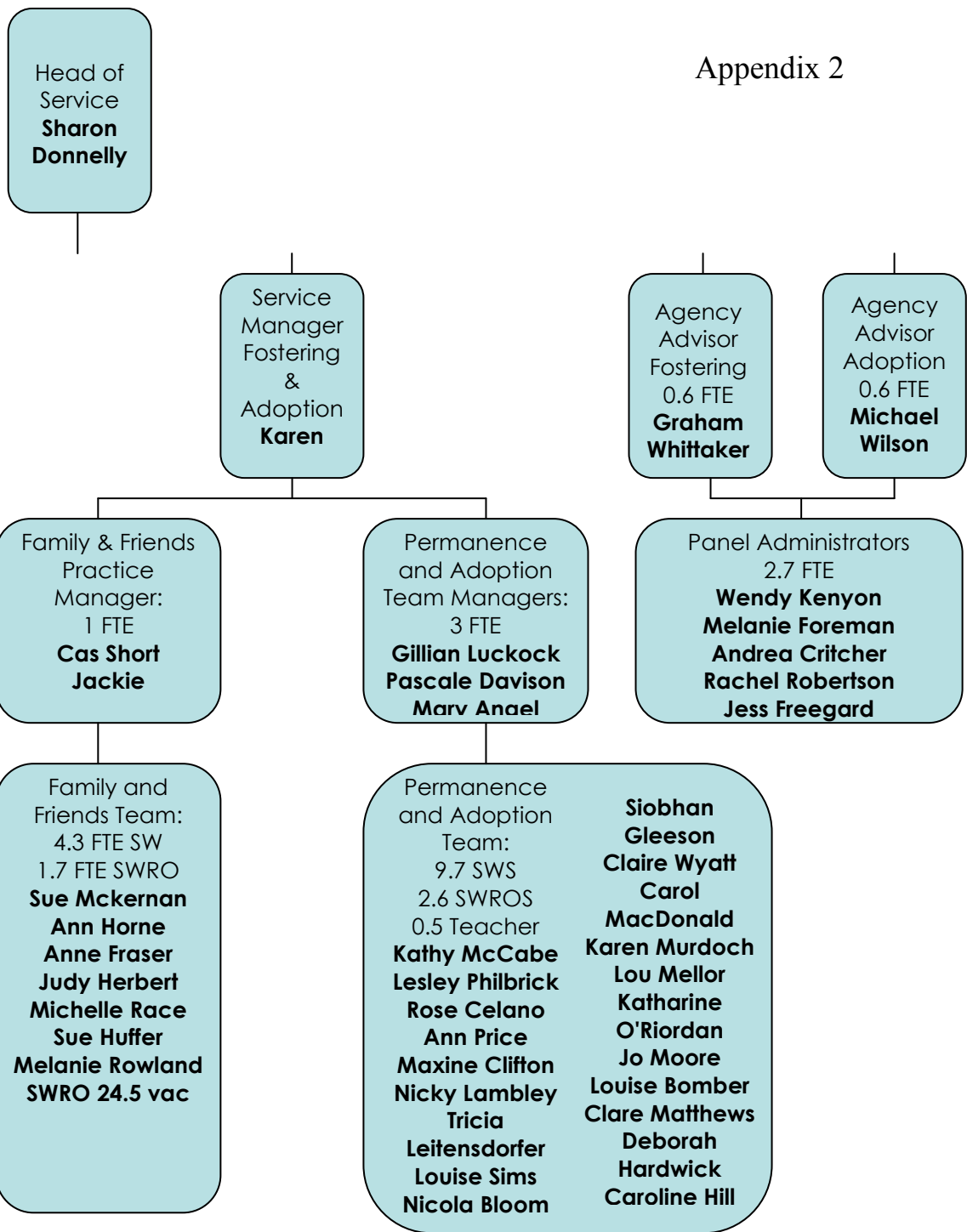
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Fostering and Adoption Service Structure Chart July 2010

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253 Preston Road



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