

Knowsley Council Fostering Service Quality Assurance Framework

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1. Introduction

In order to improve and develop the quality of services, Knowsley Fostering Service has developed a Quality Assurance (QA) framework to outline the oversight and methods of assurance. This framework is in addition to the Children Social Care framework. Knowsley Fostering Service is committed to ensuring thorough quality assurance processes and services continually improves outcomes for children/young people and the foster carers.

We define quality assurance as ***consistently checking to see whether we meet statutory requirements as well as good practice standards, policies and procedures***. The focus should be on knowing how well our children/young people are doing and on continuous improvement.

Quality assurance is important to the improvement of the service and ensuring the Fostering Service is achieving standards of excellence. This can be measured via this framework, Fostering National Minimum Standards and Knowsley policies and procedures. Quality assurance is everyone's business and it is important that it is embedded as part of the culture of our services, and staff, foster carers and other professionals remain accountable for their role. Each member of staff and foster carer is accountable for the quality of their practice and is expected to improve the service by being transparent. Additionally, managers have specific responsibility for driving forward monitoring evaluations and practice improvement. Therefore quality assurance can be constituted in many methodologies, including appraisals, dip samples, supervision, audits, foster carer reviews, feedback surveys and Panel monitoring.

This framework is supplemented by the role of the Supervising Social Worker' document.

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 regulation 35) requires that the Registered Manager of a fostering Service must maintain a system for monitoring a range of matters set out in Schedule 6 and for improving the quality of foster care provided by the Service. This must provide for consultation with foster carers, children and placing authorities.

2. Legislation

- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011;
- Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance Volume 4;
- Care Standards Act 2000;
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011;
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous) Regulations 2013;
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015;
- Knowsley policies and procedures.

3. Key Performance Indicators

- That all foster carers meet the National Minimum Standards and any support and or gaps identified is provided by their Supervising Social Worker and the Fostering Service;
- All foster carers and household members over 18 years of age have a three yearly DBS check;
- All DBS checks that include adverse information shall have a risk assessment with Head of Service authorisation;
- All foster carers shall have a medical every three years;
- All foster carers support networks to have a DBS check in order to meet good practice;
- All foster carers have a minimum of four supervisions, two unannounced visits a year;
- All foster carers will be discussed in staff supervision on a minimum of a three monthly basis and SSWs will ensure they bring information in respect of statutory checks and visits etc
- All foster carers shall have a Personal Development Plan that is individual to the carer's skills and child or young person's needs;
- All foster carers complete the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) workbook within statutory timescales. The timescales remain as 12 months for mainstream carers and 18 months for friends and family carers. In order to do this, supervising social workers should demonstrate the support provided;
- All foster carer reviews are completed within the year, with first reviews being presented to Fostering Panel and ALL reviews will require ADM oversight;
- Following on from an initial enquiry the prospective carer should be contacted within 2 working days and the initial visit should be completed within 7 working days
- The Fostering Panel will monitor and track any requirements and or actions outlined within Panel;
- The Fostering Panel will request feedback from participants for each agenda item;
- Panel provides a quality assurance feedback to the fostering service on the quality of reports being present to Panel;
- Fostering Panel chair will provide an Annual Report on the functions of Knowsley Fostering Panel and findings. This report will include the actions requested from Panel to improve the outcomes for children looked after and the fostering service;
- Fostering Panel members will complete and provide feedback in relation to Quality of reports presented to Panel for consideration
- The Recruitment and Marketing Officer and Team Manager will prepare an annual report detailing the work of the fostering service, the profile of the foster carers and children, number of disruptions, recruitment and retention strategies, strengths and achievements of the service, performance targets and future needs for development.

4. Practice to Monitor Quality

Quality assurance monitoring will be completed in the forms of foster carer case file audits, manager and HOS dip sampling, Independent Foster carer review officer and may also include external scrutiny from other professionals such as IRO's and Team Managers.

Information from Quality Assurance should be shared with Fostering Panel and departmental performance meetings. The following is not an exhaustive list of audit activity for the service:

Type of Quality assurance	Form to be completed	Who by	Frequency (minimum)
Formal case audit	Audit tool form	HOS and Team managers	Once per month
Formal dip sampling	Dip Sampling form	HOS	Two per month
Formal dip sampling	Dip Sampling form	Team managers	Two per month
Management oversight	Case Supervision notes	Team managers	Each foster carer every three months
Management oversight	Fostering carer review	Fostering IRO	All carers to have an annual review or for first reviews completed in order to be presented to Panel, to gain ADM within the first year.
Management oversight	Annual report	Fostering IRO	Annual report on findings/themes and analysis
Management oversight	Case oversight	AED, HOS and Team managers	Every involvement or decision
Management oversight	Staff supervision trackers	Team managers	Monthly staff supervision
Foster carer feedback	Foster carer survey	Team manager	Twice a year survey on all areas of recruitment, assessment, training and support
Independent scrutiny	Chair review form and tracker	Foster carer IRO	Each foster carer review Quarterly reports on findings/tracker and annual report
Service user feedback	Feedback and membership of fostering committee	Team manager	Each committee meeting
Service overview	Performance indicators, including exemptions	Panel advisor	Each Panel
Fostering Panel scrutiny	Fostering Panel action tracker	Panel chair / admin	Each Panel and shared with HOS and managers
Fostering Panel scrutiny	Annual report	Panel chair	Annual report
Fostering Panel scrutiny	Feedback forms	All Panel participants	Each Panel attended
Fostering Panel scrutiny	Fostering Panel QA forms	All Panel members	Each item
Fostering Panel scrutiny	Foster carer reviews:	Fostering Team All Panel members	1 st foster carer review and then every 5 years. Any issues of compliance and or significant safeguarding, such as incidents whereby a LADO has been convened should also have Panel oversight.
Independent scrutiny	QAU audit framework	Audit team	Monitoring / outcome report (at minimum of once a year)

Independent scrutiny	CLA review	QAU team – IRO	Each child's review
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