

FOSTERWITHUS

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One Team Built around the child

Hertfordshire's In-house Fostering Strategy
2023 – 2025



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Hertfordshire

We are One Team built around the child

Adoption Teams

We help to find permanent families for children and ensure children moving from foster care to adoption have a smooth transition

Child Social Workers: Family Safeguarding Service, Children Looked After Service, Assessment, and 0-25 Service

We are here to look after the needs of the child, and we do that by working closely with all members of the team

CAMHS Targeted Team We support everyone in the team to help children with their emotional wellbeing and mental health needs

Fostering Recruitment Team

We recruit new foster carers to Hertfordshire

Looked after Children and Care Leavers Team in Herts Community NHS Trust

We ensure that all children coming into care receive health assessments, and we also give advice and signposting on health issues.

Care Leavers Service

We help to ensure that young people reaching the age of 18 have a smooth transition into adulthood as they leave care

Independent Reviewing Officers

We oversee the care plans of all children in foster care, working closely with other members of the team

CHICC (Children and young people in Care Council)

We listen to the views of young people and help to make being in care better

Residential Teams

We provide support where children are moving from residential homes into foster care or the other way round

Foster Carers

There are 363 fostering households. We provide different types of homes to a range of children including emergency, short term, long term, sibling groups and sleepovers



Parents and Children's families

We want to have a good relationships with our children and everyone looking after them.

ARC Team

We are a small team providing advice and training to everyone in the team on trauma informed practice.

Quality Assurance

We ensure that all parts of Children's Services operate effectively, using audits and other tools to monitor performance.

Children's Guardian

We act on behalf of the child in Family Court proceedings, with the duty of safeguarding the interests of the child

Supervising Social Workers and Children's Practitioners

We support foster carers and make sure they have what they need to care for children, and that everyone is safe

Brokerage Team

We help to match children with carers, including with in-house foster carers

Business Delivery Service

We support all the social work teams and make sure meetings and communication run smoothly. We also help to gather data and support the foster carer email system

Virtual School

We support everyone in the team to help all children looked after and care leavers with their educational needs to enable them realise their full potential. We work with all schools and settings that Hertfordshire foster children attend

Corporate Parenting Board

We have the Council's responsibilities for looked after children as the corporate parent, and we regularly review reports on how fostering is working in Hertfordshire

Mockingbird Hub Carers

There are 7 of us and we each support a Hub of Foster carers in a local area

Lifelong Links

We ensure children have a positive connection to their past, present and future through their families.

Family Group Conferencing

We bring families together to make sustainable plans to look after our children

** Note that not every child will have all these roles involved in their care*

Our Commitment to Fostering

[Please see this video foreword from the Head of Fostering and Adoption, Lynn Knowles](#)



Working as [One Team](#), we will grow and improve fostering in Hertfordshire.

By doing this well:

- We will have more skilled in-house foster carers through increased recruitment and retention, who are able to meet the needs of the children and young people in our care
- Children in Hertfordshire will be looked after by a more diverse range of fostering households leading to better placement matching and be able to achieve good outcomes in a local family environment, in line with Hertfordshire's Outcome Bee's framework.



Our Strategy



Working as [One Team](#)

- We will ensure that everyone involved in fostering in Hertfordshire feels and behaves as One Team with the child as their focus, by following our new [Fostering Principles](#)

Evaluation of 2020 Fostering Strategy

- In November 2020, Hertfordshire County Council produced its first Fostering Strategy 'One Team built around the child' with the aim for all teams, departments and organisations to working together as One Team to grow and improve fostering in Hertfordshire.
- By doing this well there would be more skilled in-house foster carers, who are able to meet the needs of the children and young people in our care and more options for children who are looked after in Hertfordshire helping them to achieve good outcomes in a local family environment.
- The strategy has been evaluated through a number of different mechanisms including consultation with foster carers, staff and partners through an annual survey; focus groups with children and young people and presentations at governance meetings.

Successes

- Over the last two years, a number of actions within the strategy have been delivered including:

Recruiting over 100 new in-house foster carers

Increasing the number of children placed with in-house foster carers

A new payment structure to foster carers

A new support offer for foster carers

New opportunities for foster carers to get involved in the decision-making processes around fostering services

Improved training, IT access, increasing communication and information methods etc

Our Aims and objectives for the Fostering Service

Recruit more carers

- We will introduce new inclusive ways of communicating to ensure that more people know about fostering for Hertfordshire and feel motivated to find out more including working with new partners and stakeholders.
- We will use evidence and data to target our communications at those people most likely to be interested in foster care as well as those that represent the diverse communities in our county.
- We will use 'word of mouth' approaches to communication, with our existing carers and staff playing a key role in sharing positive messages about our fostering community both online and face to face.
- We will continually refresh our recruitment processes to maximise the number of people who go on to become approved carers following an initial expression of interest.
- We will set realistic targets for recruiting new approved carers to Hertfordshire and monitor these regularly at weekly target meetings, with the One Team Board taking overall accountability for our performance.
- We will re-launch the Strategy and hold events in July and August with the service and partners to continue
- We will continue to find innovative ways to attract new foster carers to Hertfordshire

Retain our existing carers

- We want to ensure that as many carers as possible continue to enjoy their role and choose to stay with us each year to achieve this, we will:
 - Strengthen our offer to carers to ensure they access the highest quality support so that they are resilient and able to offer stable placements for our children.
- Continue to look at how we can support foster carers directly through financial and other packages
- Ensure that all members of the Foster Care Team, and particularly foster carers, feel valued for the contributions that they make and the role they play in our fostering community. We will listen to everyone and improve what we do as a result.
- Regularly review what has happened when foster carers choose to leave us or experience placement breakdown, so that we can identify and quickly share learning with the Team.
- Offer more opportunities for foster carer to give their views on how to improve the service.
- We will highlight our new pay offer to existing and potential new foster carers through our recruitment campaigns.

Improving our Quality of Practice

We conducted an intensive phase of engagement as part of the development of this Strategy, which helped us to understand how well things are working and to gather ideas for improvement. We are committed to engaging with all members of the Team on an ongoing basis to continually improve our practice and will ensure as many as possible are represented on the One Team Board, we will also:

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- Continue to review our internal processes, ensuring that fostering is run efficiently and makes use of the latest technology to streamline processes for everyone on the Team
- Ensure that everyone on the Team has easy access to the highest quality training, learning and development opportunities both online and in the classroom, and feels empowered to take responsibility for continually updating their skills and knowledge. We will improve our use of data reporting to ensure that we are robustly monitoring our performance and keeping children, carers and staff safe.
- Take targeted action to ensure that the needs of children and foster carers from ethnic minority backgrounds are met, and that we are continuing to build a diverse group of foster carers.

Innovating and trying new ways of working

We will collaborate with our foster carers and partners so we continue to be innovative and to be leaders in fostering nationally. We will:

- Grow the Mockingbird Family model in Hertfordshire by setting up additional Hubs. We already have six successful Mockingbird Hubs in Hertfordshire (with another two to launch in summer 2023), which have been providing an excellent community of support for fostering families. In addition to Mockingbird, we will continue to develop other Fostering community hubs to support foster families. For example we have opened an under 7's hub and plan to open a further hub this year for children with additional needs. Our aim is to open 3 hubs (Mockingbird or other) per year on a needs led basis .
- Continue to develop our trauma informed support offer to carers through training, workshops, bespoke support and reflective groups.
- Having introduced our new email system we plan to launch a foster carer portal. The portal will provide an improved means of communication between carers and the service and will make it easier to share and store information.
- Continue to innovate utilising technology to make processes easier and information shared quicker.
- Extend our Fostering Ambassadors scheme to ensure we have advocates promoting fostering across partners, stakeholders and the wider community.
- Promote Hertfordshire County Council as a Fostering Friendly Employer
- Where it is safe to do so we aim to keep children with their birth families and to support this we will look at short break fostering options where foster carers may offer overnight short breaks that allow children and their families to have some breathing space when appropriate and to prevent family crisis and potential relationship breakdown.
- Continue to identify how we can make the fostering service more inclusive
- Ensure that coproduction with stakeholders is at the heart of our decision-making process and strategic development as a service going forwards. We will put in place specific training and support to ensure that this approach is both accessible and sustainable.
- Develop case studies of foster carers, young people and staff demonstrating their roles and increasing understanding and awareness.
- Grow our number of Emergency Foster Carers. We have already recruited 2 sets of carers and plan to recruit a further 3 in the coming months.

How we will measure our impact

We will set ourselves ambitious targets and regularly monitor these alongside other measures to ensure our actions are having an impact. These targets will be reviewed in April 2024. The full set of indicators we will use is in the Appendix, but a summary is below:

	Recruitment	Retention
Annual targets	We aim to recruit 60 new approved fostering households	We aim to ensure the number of carers who choose to de-register is less than - 41
Other measures we will monitor to ensure our actions are having an impact	<p>Numbers of enquiries for people interested in foster care – 300 25 per month</p> <p>Number of initial visits – 180 (15 per month)</p> <p>Number of invites to skills to foster – 144 (12 per month)</p> <p>The proportion of people who enquire and then go on to become approved carers (conversion rate)</p> <p>The time taken for a foster carer to be assessed and approved - % of Approvals in 90 days (ROI to Assessment completed)</p> <p>Percentage and number of children looked after in in-house foster care</p>	<p>Number of placements that end with less than 28 days' notice</p> <p>Foster carer satisfaction – I feel valued by Herts CC as a Foster Carer (aiming for an increase year on year in the annual survey) – 37% 2022</p> <p>Family and Friends carer satisfaction - I feel valued by Herts CC as a Family and Friends Carer (aiming for an increase year on year in the annual survey)- 64% in 2022</p> <p>Fostering staff satisfaction – I feel valued for my work in the fostering service (aiming for an increase year on year in the annual survey) – 71% in 2022</p> <p>Partner satisfaction – staff from different services work well together to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people (baseline set in 2022/23 survey - aiming for an increase year on year in the annual survey) – 80% in 2022</p>

Changes since the 2020 Strategy

Cost Of Living

This strategy has been developed in the current financial climate of an increase in the cost of living. Increasing energy, heating, petrol and diesel, and food prices are having an impact nationally. The Government have recently announced a 12.43% increase to the fostering allowance. In addition, we have also agreed a 9% uplift to the skills payments for foster carers. Mileage payments have been amended to allow for additional claims for particular activities related to children.

Covid-19

The first fostering strategy was published in December 2020 in the middle of the covid pandemic and lockdown. Work commitments changed during the pandemic for many people with working at home becoming a more regular practice. Some carers who felt able to put themselves forward as carers during the pandemic subsequently left due to work practices changing again back to more office-based locations. Should a future life-changing event occur we will take learning from the pandemic including lifestyle changes and the impact of home education. The positives noted were improved relationships for many children and carers who spent more time together, and a more flexible training and support offer including hybrid learning. We have adjusted the training offer to include weekends and have a mix of virtual and in person training available.

Invest to Transform (ITT) Projects

Fostering Strategy

Starting in December 2020, ITT funding was provided to develop and implement a Fostering Strategy which delivers improved recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers and increases access to quality and cost-effective local placements for children in care.

Our strategy is underpinned by Invest to Transform (ITT) projects supporting the growth and range of foster carers available to care for children.

Emergency Foster Carers support

In April 2022, the service used ITT funding to set up an emergency foster carer scheme as part of a wider Family Safeguarding Hub programme to be completed in 2025.

Due to the increasing number of children coming into care in an emergency we need experienced and available carers to support our service. Emergency foster care ensures children have somewhere safe to stay for 10 working days in a crisis whilst family members could be found, children could return home, or an alternative long-term option can be found. This empowers young people to have a safe place in crisis and support the current need for emergency care. Carers will require existing skills of managing children in a crisis and have resilience to manage emergencies.

The Hub has been designed for children who may need somewhere to stay with little warning, and because there is no way of predicting when emergency care will be needed. Children may be entering care because their home environment is unsafe, or perhaps because their parents or carers are suffering from physical or mental health. Individuals can also come into emergency foster care due to unexpected bereavements, leaving children with nowhere to go and requiring an immediate place to stay until longer term arrangements can be made. The Hub consists of one Fostering Senior Practitioner, four Hub outreach workers and five Emergency Hub foster carers.

Consultation outcomes

The updated Fostering Strategy has been developed following consultation with a range of audiences including foster carers, family and friend's carers, children looked after, fostering staff and partners and stakeholders. Consultation methods included on-line surveys, focus groups and individual and group meetings and specific results are set out in Appendix 1. Overall themes emerging from the consultation were as follows:

- More Support needed for carers – financial, training and advocacy
- Agreement on the negative impact of cost of living on retention
- Being valued and treated as professionals is really important to carers
- Reduce bureaucracy – processes need to be easier
- Better working practise between the departmental teams
- Focus on retention not just recruitment
- Supporting children with complex needs and foster carers
- Ensure Family and Friends carers are seen as foster carers not just separate
- Better IT
- More In-person training and additional flexibility e.g. weekends for foster carers
- Time taken to achieve results and complexity of processes including IT frustrate both staff and carers
- Understanding of the Fostering Strategy and individual's role in delivering the outcomes is high
- Targeted communications is critical in ensuring that everyone is aware of fostering updates
- Clarity of information during recruitment and what's involved in the assessment process and emotional impact, i.e. it's not just about having a spare room
- Staff feel more valued and listened to in 2022 both areas of concern in 2021 survey
- More sleepover care needed across all carer groups
- More continuity of social workers
- Further clarity on support groups and their role and purpose
- Fostering Coach should continue for as long as the young person needs and requires.
- Opportunity for children and young people who have been fostered to have a dedicated stand-alone support group (similar to CIC). This group could be a sub-group of CICC.
- More choice and autonomy for young people who are fostered

Priorities and focus for the updated 2023 Fostering strategy from the consultation included:

- A focus on retention and recruitment
- Increased allowances and enhanced support offer
- Better processes and systems
- Family and Friends carers being a core part of fostering offer
- More access to sleepover care across all carer groups
- More short break carers particularly for teenagers
- Focus on supporting children with high needs and complex histories

Key themes for strategy

There are seven key themes which this strategy is focused on (in no order of importance):

1. Recruitment of Foster Carers

Despite a significant amount of work by all teams in both Fostering and Children's Services, the number of new in-house foster carers joining Hertfordshire is reducing year on year following 2020/2021 high total of 54 to 42 in 2021/22 and 28 in 2022/23. Whilst this reflects a nationwide issue, it is still disappointing and lower than expected.

2. Family and Friends to become an integrated part of fostering service

There has been an increase in Family and Friend's carers since the 2020 Fostering strategy and this is the most cost-effective form of care provision for children and young people. The safety, support and views of the child are the most important considerations though that a Family and Friend's placement is the right option. Further work need is to be undertaken to ensure that Family and Friends care provision becomes an integral part of the fostering offer and that Family and Friend's carers feel fully part of the service and not an add-on.

3. Cost of living on-going support

Support for foster carers needs to be on-going with an annual review of financial allowances and overall offer to be undertaken particularly in comparison to other Local Authorities. Hertfordshire CC operates in a competitive financial market and as such needs to demonstrate and attract new carers through an attractive support offer.

4. Sleepovers and emergency care

Carers have told us of the importance to provide a clear sleepover and emergency care offer across all fostering provision to avoid burnout and build resilience. We are particularly interested in developing a new approach to providing fostering short breaks particularly for teenagers.

5. Retention

On-going work to be undertaken with carers to identify the type and extent of support that will help retain their experience and further develop the offer provided to them.

6. Children with additional needs

Further focus on delivering sustainable homes for children and young people with additional needs providing enhanced support and reducing high-cost placements.

7. Co-Production

Co-production is an approach where you bring together people who have experience of using services, HCC staff, partners and stakeholders to have their say on local services and influence how they may be delivered in the future.

In Hertfordshire it means people who use services and carers will be involved, included and work with us and our partners to influence the way that services are designed, commissioned and delivered - from the very start to the end of any project that affects them. We believe that those who use a service are best placed to help design it.

The Fostering Service will set up the necessary mechanisms to support co-production with foster carers, children in care, staff and wider partners.

One Team Fostering Principles

Everyone involved in fostering in Hertfordshire will work to these principles.

1. We all work as **one team** around the individual needs of the **child**
2. We build **trusting relationships** with the children we are looking after, their parents, and each other
3. We all work with **passion, pride** and **kindness** and take **responsibility** for our individual roles in looking after the children in our care
4. We **communicate** with each other in an **effective** way that is **timely, open** and **honest and** uses jargon as little as possible especially when talking to young people
5. We treat each other as **equals, respecting** one another and making an effort to **understand** our different roles and perspectives
6. We do what we say we will do, or we **explain why** if we cannot do it in the time agreed
7. We **agree decisions as a team** in a **timely** way to best meet the **needs of children**, and we balance the need for **consistent** decisions across the Service whilst being **flexible** to meet individual children's needs
8. We are always **listening** to each other and we have a passion for looking at **new ideas** and **different ways** of doing things to keep on improving the way we support our children
9. We take time to **explain** honestly the reasons why we do things, and we ensure that everyone **understands** the policies, processes and decisions made
10. We are all committed to **developing ourselves** through personal development and all team members completing the same regular training where appropriate, so that we get the best outcomes for our children
11. We **celebrate** our successes and when mistakes are made, we **learn** from them



Diversity and Inclusion Pledge

We are committed to ensuring our Hertfordshire foster carers will reflect the diverse community that we serve and the wide range of children that we care for.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken to ensure that this strategy reflects and promotes opportunities for all communities in Hertfordshire to take part in fostering specifically:

- Our foster carer recruitment and advertising will be targeted at busting traditional myths about who can foster through promoting positive, real-life stories from our diverse range of foster carers.
- Our training and ongoing support will be tailored to meet each foster carers individual needs.
- Our support groups for foster carers will reflect the diverse foster carer population we have at Hertfordshire.
- We will monitor our diversity data on a monthly basis to ensure we are continuing to build a diverse group of foster carers.

We will continue to equality impact assess our strategy and the service we provide to ensure we are identifying ways to promote opportunities.

We have set up a Fostering Inclusion and Diversity Board and a dedicated action plan to both monitor progress and implement improvements in our processes, approach and innovation.



You Said We Did during 2022/23

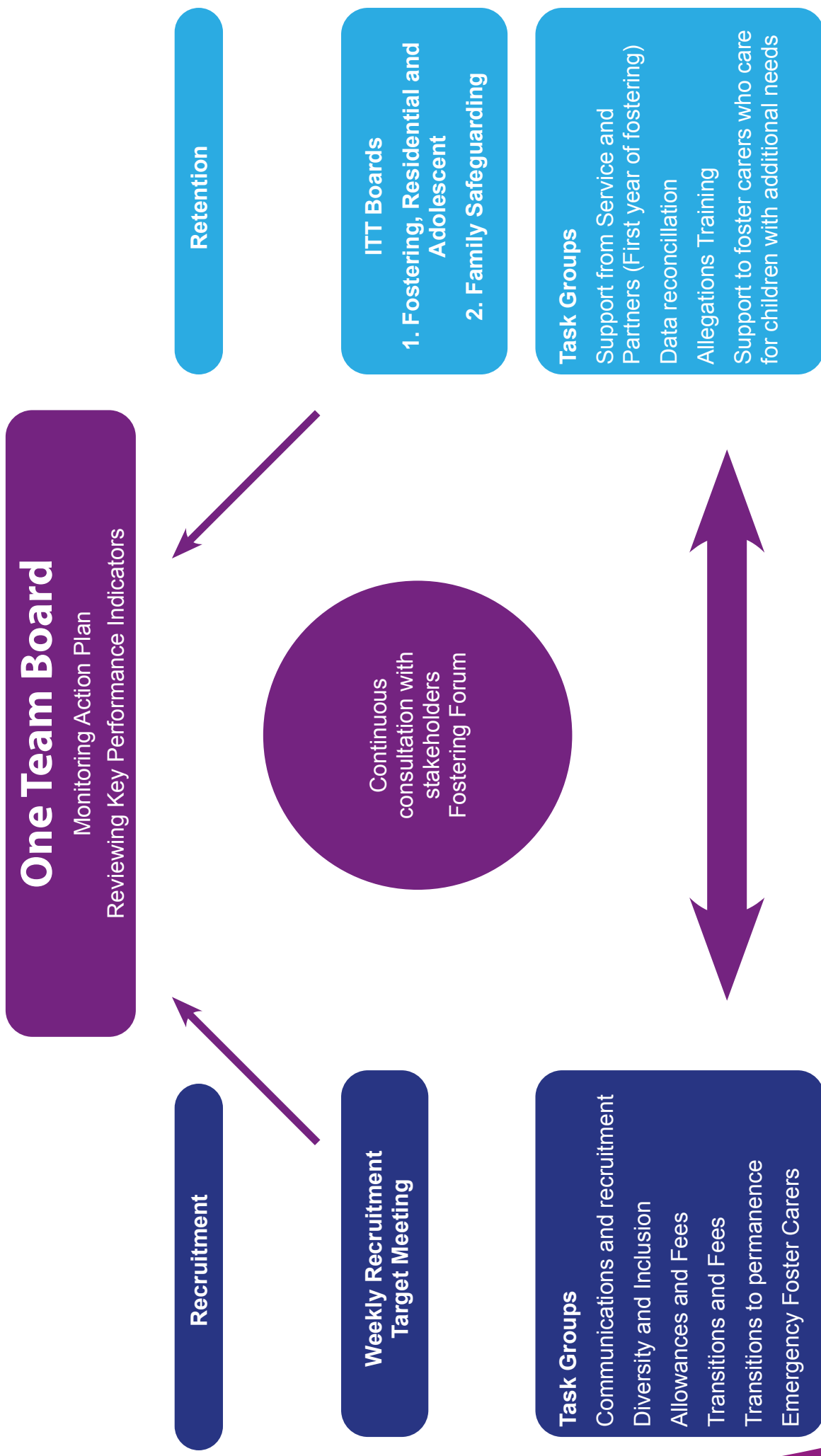
This Strategy has been several months in development, and during this time we have been listening and already starting to make changes:

- We have conducted surveys of all foster carers and staff in the Fostering Service and feedback from this has informed this Strategy. We set up a series of task and finish groups to make initial changes, with staff, partners and foster carers fully involved in each group.
- Senior Management within the Fostering Service also meet with foster carers three times a year about service changes using the You Said, We Did model.

Here are some examples of changes we have already made since 2022 and how we plan to take these further now the Strategy has launched.

You Said	We did	Now we will
Support groups and activities available We do not know what support is available for foster carers	We published an updated 'Support Offer' document in partnership with carers, clearly setting out all the current support available in January 2023	We will regularly update the support offer and communicate new changes
Payments The foster carer skills payments do not reflect the complexity of the children being looked after	We have reviewed and amended the skills payment structure.	We will annually review all foster carer allowances to ensure our offer is competitive
Recruitment We need to be able to publicise what our fostering offer is	Herts CC became a Fostering Friendly Employer in Jan 2023	We will co-ordinate and support other organisations becoming Fostering Friendly Employers in Hertfordshire
Email system The email system for foster carers is difficult to use and not all carers are able to receive emails	We have reviewed the system and provided extra support to those finding it difficult to use	We introduced the new Office 365 Email system in January 2023
Cost of Living We are concerned about our ability to continue as foster carers due to the continued cost of living increase	We produced a cost-of- living guidance document for foster carers which is updated quarterly.	Agreement to increase financial offer to all carers

Our Delivery Model



High Level Action Plan

Theme/Task group	Objectives	Impact	Key tasks May 2023 – March 2024
General	Communicate the One Team Fostering Principles	Everyone involved in fostering feels valued and part of the team, and works together effectively	<p>Publicise the One Team Fostering Principles to all key audiences</p> <p>Improve feedback loop in the Service so that foster carer, young people and staff/partners feedback is listened to and acted on</p>
Recruitment and communications	Recruit more carers to meet our recruitment target	A higher number of children in in-house placements and increased placement choice and options for children and young people	<p>Launch 'Recruiting Now' campaign three times annually</p> <p>Develop more links with partners who can advocate on our behalf and share information with their audiences</p> <p>More advertising for the different types of fostering (Short breaks)</p> <p>Review external partners we work with and identify new organisations to help promote fostering messages and campaigns</p>
Pipeline processes	Improve the conversion rate of people who enquire about foster care and then go on to become approved carers	A higher number of approved foster carers	<p>Re-launch the Fostering Ambassadors programme, to allow prospective foster carers to speak to an experienced carer at the earliest point, and ensure it is sustainable</p> <p>Virtual and in-person open days are offered across Hertfordshire</p>

Theme/Task group	Objectives	Impact	Key tasks May 2023 – March 2024
Support from the Service and Partners	Enhance the support provided to foster carers and children in care	Foster carers feel more supported and choose to stay as foster carers for Hertfordshire	<p>Carers to be informed when their social workers/points of contact are not available due to leave/sickness and who the alternative contact staff will be</p> <p>Regular activities and events to bring staff and carers together</p> <p>Review of support groups to ensure they are inclusive and safe places for carers to attend and be comfortable</p> <p>All new carers to be allocated an experienced buddy</p> <p>More activities for children 0-5 and support for carers looking after this age group</p> <p>Clear support offer for children in care who suffer bereavements</p> <p>Clear process to support carers who are under investigation</p> <p>Review of support provision (quantity, frequency and quality) for Family and Friends carers</p>
Placement breakdown and de-registration	Avoid placement breakdowns and foster carers choosing to de-register through enhanced matching	Foster carers feel more supported and choose to stay as foster carers for Hertfordshire, even when placements are difficult	<p>Good initial background information about the young person provided to the carer</p> <p>Videos sent to the young person in advance of placement showing where they will be living</p> <p>Early involvement when placements start to experience issues.</p>

Theme/Task group	Objectives	Impact	Key tasks May 2023 – March 2024
Streamlining processes	Streamline processes across fostering	Staff and foster carers feel more satisfied with their experience of fostering, and have more time to focus on relationships and supporting children	<p>Deliver a new IT system that allows foster carers to collaborate more easily with the service by sharing information and completing forms online (LCS Portal)</p> <p>Aim to reduce caseloads for social workers through innovation and trialling new ways of working</p> <p>The ability to produce more reports from LCS - e.g., named list of unavailable foster carers and reasons why they are unavailable</p>
Training	Empower carers to take ownership for their learning and development	Foster carers feel supported and are more confident and knowledgeable in looking after children	<p>Training to be provided on trauma, recognising behaviours (e.g. eating disorders, drugs), therapeutic parenting and attachment.</p> <p>Flexibility provided in terms of weekend, evening and both virtual and in-person options</p> <p>Training to include a section on foster carers emotional well-being, mental health and self-care</p> <p>Increased opportunities for training to have qualifications attached</p> <p>Additional First Aid courses to be delivered</p> <p>All or at least some training for carers to be completed before a child is placed</p>

Theme/Task group	Objectives	Impact	Key tasks May 2023 – March 2024
Data	Set up system of regular data reports for all key performance data	Every involved in fostering has the data they need to monitor how things are working and make improvements quickly if needed	<p>Monthly data reconciliation meeting to ensure one true picture of all fostering data</p> <p>Identify and develop new data reports to support other actions in this plan</p>
Cost of Living	Support all carers financially to both increase recruitment and retention rates	Hertfordshire's fostering offer is competitive with other providers leading to increased numbers of in-house foster carers	<p>Support carers to move to larger properties or extend where possible</p> <p>All fostering fees and allowances are formally reviewed annually</p>
Systems and information/Internal processes	Reduce the time Social workers spend on administration due to inefficient processes and systems at the expense of supporting foster carers	More time spent supporting foster carers leading to better placements	<p>Trial new ways of working e.g. Emergency Foster Carers programme</p> <p>On-going relationship with IT services to review barriers and system blockages</p> <p>Aim to be part of any pilots around regionalisation of foster carers recruitment</p> <p>Review forms on LCS with a view to reducing duplication and length where possible</p>
Equalities	Increase awareness of diversity	Foster carers and children in care feel they are fully supported	<p>Training on equalities and diversity to be made compulsory for all carers</p> <p>Training on unconscious bias to be provided for all fostering staff and carers</p> <p>Investigate independent mediation opportunities to resolve issues between carers and social workers/SSWs</p>

Theme/Task group	Objectives	Impact	Key tasks May 2023 – March 2024
Social workers from different teams not working well together	Increase joined up working and demonstrating One Fostering Team ambition	Carers and children are better supported	<p>Regular joint briefings on key related subjects and topics</p> <p>Joint training between teams</p> <p>Promote consistency of best practice between social work teams</p>
Feeling Valued	All carers to feel more valued and have access to peer support	Increased retention of foster carers	<p>More focus on making carers feel like professionals</p> <p>More feedback from schools on child's progress</p>
Sleepover/Emergency Care	Ensure carers are supported when breaks are needed, and emergency placements can be facilitated	Resilience and re-cooperation is built up for foster carers through regular short breaks	<p>Review of out of hours support provided at weekends and after 5p.m. weekdays</p> <p>Family and Friends carers to have access to sleepover/emergency care</p> <p>Focus on short breaks through dedicated action plan/governance approach</p> <p>New approach to providing short break carers for teenagers.</p> <p>Better communication of sleepover and emergency care provision</p>
Support for children with complex needs	Ensure foster carers have the skills and tools to support children in placement with needs	Better placements for children and more resilient better empowered foster carers	Early intervention therapeutic support to all carers, including F&F to enable a trauma informed approach to caring for children

Theme/Task group	Objectives	Impact	Key tasks May 2023 – March 2024
Assessment	Improve assessment experience and process for potential carers	Reduce drop off rate of carers during assessment	<p>Ensure potential carers understand the time and complexities of the assessment process in advance in order to reduce drop-out rate</p> <p>Ensure foster carers are aware of the different types of placements they can take on e.g. siblings, teenagers, short breaks etc</p> <p>Reduce the duplication of forms that carers have to complete during assessment</p>
Co-Production			<p>Define Fostering Service commitment towards co-production</p> <p>Develop a model of co-production</p>

Key Strategic Documents

Other strategic documents that contribute to the implementation of this Strategy can be found below:

[The Foster Carers Charter 2018](#)

[Our Foster Carer Support Offer - \(Jan 2023\)](#)

[Our Foster Carer Learning & Development Offer](#)

[The Foster Carer's handbook](#)

