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| **Service** | Service Provided for Northampton Children’s Trust Foster Carers by Northamptonshire Foster Carers Association |
| **Commissioner Lead** | Helen Dickens, Service Manager - Fostering |
| **Provider Lead** | NFCA |
| **Period** | 1st November 2022- 31st October 2023  |

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| 1. Purpose |
| **1.1 Context and general overview** The Northamptonshire Foster Carers Association (NFCA) is a voluntary organisation which is run by foster carers for foster carers. The NFCA offer support to foster carers, their families and the children they care for. Support is offered to connected persons, resilience carers, emergency carers and other specialist carers, in addition to mainstream carers. All carers contracted by NCT automatically become members of the NFCA.The NFCA is run by a committee of volunteer carers according to their written constitution. The committee meets regularly with managers from the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) to develop strong channels of communication throughout the whole trust. The NFCA gathers the viewpoints and opinions of their carers to work in partnership with the NCT Fostering Service to seek to improve all aspects of fostering and to promote good practice. **1.2. Aims** * To raise the profile of foster carers and to ensure foster carers are viewed as fellow professionals by social workers and colleagues working within the partner agencies concerned with the care of Children in Care (CIC).
* Collecting carers views and opinions to present the ‘voice of the carer’ to the fostering service and to improve the support, service and remuneration for Northamptonshire foster carers.
* Arranging and holding regular meetings with NCT and to be involved in consultations, decision and policy making to provide the best care and service to all of its CIC.
* To have representation on the Corporate Parenting Board and the Virtual School Advisory Panel.
* Providing support to all NFCA members through face-to-face support groups and secure online social media.
* Providing networking opportunities for carers to strengthen their support network
* Providing social events and activities for the fostering family and children in care.
* Supporting the training of new Foster Carers and support existing members with their development.

**1.3 Resources**The NFCA is funded by NCT to deliver this service. The NFCA requires a minimum £5000 annual payment in order to do this. In return, NFCA will ensure:* Appropriate accounts are kept
* Budgets are monitored effectively
* Value for money is achieved
* Income and expenditure will be appropriately reported to Head of Service prior to the annual payment on 1st November.

**1.4 Expected Outcomes** NCT Fostering Service and NFCA will work together to achieve:* A high level of communication between the NFCA and NCT management
* A high level of communication between foster carers and NCT Fostering Service
* A high level of support to foster carers, their families and children they look after
* Partnership working between foster carers and NCT
* Opportunities for foster carers to strengthen their support networks
* Opportunities for children in care to socialise and normalise their experience
* Improved outcomes for children and young people in foster care
* Better retention of foster carers
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| 2. Scope |
| **2.1 Service Description** NFCA will work with the Fostering Service and NCT foster carers to deliver the aims set out above**2.2 Accessibility/acceptability**NFCA will be available to all NCT Fostering, Family Link, Connected Carers, Resilience Carers and other specialist foster carers. This includes NCT foster carers living both within the county of Northamptonshire and those outside of the county. All carers contracted by NCT automatically become members of the NFCA. Members are able opt out should they not wish to remain involved. NFCA reserves the right to remove members for inappropriate behaviour.  |
| 3. Service Delivery |
| **3.1 Service Model**The NFCA has a written constitution detailing its organisation and structure. The NFCA has a committee comprising of:* Chair Person
* Vice Chair
* Treasurer
* Secretary

These officers are responsible for the day to day running of the organisation. Elections for these positions are held annually at the NFCA Annual General Meeting (AGM). An annual report of activities of the NFCA is produced for the AGM in July and a copy sent to Head of Service.**3.2 Representation on CPB and VS Advisory Panel**The NFCA will have representation on the Corporate Parenting Board and the Virtual School Advisory Panel**3.3 Members and Committee Meetings**Monthly Members and Committee meetings are held across the north, east and west of the county on a rota basis in order to capture views of all NCT carers, irrespective of their location, within Northamptonshire. All members are invited to attend these monthly meetings.**3.4 Support Groups**NFCA will facilitate and run a monthly support group in each area of the county and coordinate with the Male Carers Support Group. Each Support Group selects a lead representative to liaise with NFCA committee and attend the monthly NFCA members meeting. Support group leaders communicate any issues arising to the Chair.**3.5 Events**There is a non-elected Events Subcommittee who liaise regularly with the core committee and report at the monthly meeting. They are responsible for organising social and networking events* Regular social events, e.g., Christmas Party, Summer Fun Day, Easter Scavenger Hunt
* Regular networking events, e.g., carers lunches, ladies’ nights
* Regular informal meet-ups, e.g., Friday breakfast clubs, summer picnics
* The NFCA offer a range of events to meet the differing ages and needs of all of our children
* The NFCA offer their events to the whole of the fostering family
* The NFCA hire venues privately, where possible, to ensure the safeguarding of our young people
* The NFCA negotiates preferential rates and subsidises ticket costs to carers. Tickets to events are sold via an online shop to ensure traceability of payments and attendees.

**3.6 Communication**Communication between Carers and NCT: NFCA acts as the main intermediary between NCT and carers. * NFCA to bring individuals’ issues to the attention of the Fostering Service Manager
* Routine issues identified via NFCA social media, support groups and monthly meetings are collated and brought for discussion at NCT/NFCA meetings. Data and information on specific topics identified by either the NFCA or NCT, may be gathered by means of a survey. Full reports and data to be shared with all members and NCT.
* NFCA to assist NCT to disseminate important information via email or secure social media
* Representatives from NCT attend monthly meetings to disseminate information and to discuss issues directly.
* NFCA to produce regular email newsletters and provide a safe and secure social media space

**3.7 Consultation*** NFCA members to be consulted inmaking recommendations regardingchanges to and**/or** shaping of new polic~~i~~**es**, procedures and service developments through foster carer forums organised by the NCT Fostering Service, or through data and information gathered and communicated via the committee to the NCT Fostering Service.
* NFCA members to have consultation on changes to policy, procedures and service development.

**3.8 Promotion of Training**NFCA to assist in the promotion of training.* Promote training through NFCA communication channels
* Courses/Workshops to be held in Support Groups where appropriate. Support Group Leads to support the organisation of the training.

**3.9 Support foster carer recruitment activity*** Provide members to attend events/give interviews to the media, where appropriate
* Support of recruitment events
* Support of courses e.g., Skills to Foster
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| 4. Access and Acceptance Criteria |
| **4.1 Geographic coverage/boundaries****4.2** **Location(s) of Service Delivery**The meetings will be delivered utilising a range of venues sourced by NFCA. All locations used will be accessible to carers in locations across Northamptonshire.**4.3** **Days and hours of operation**The NFCA support activities will be provided at a range of times to suit the needs of NCT carers, including evenings and weekends, as appropriate. |

Signed NFCA \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_21.06.2023\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_Claire Bagley -Chair\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed NCT \_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_08/06/23\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_Helen Dickens - Fostering Service Manager\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This document is to be reviewed annually in October.