



Statement of Purpose

Fostering Relations
March 2019

FOSTERING RELATIONS



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The statement outlines the aims and objectives of Fostering Relations and the services and resources provided.

It is made available to staff of the organisation, foster carers, children and young people, parents and other professionals. It is reviewed on an annual basis and revised to reflect any changes as necessary.



Contents

Vision, Mission and Values	4
Objectives of the Fostering Service	5
Types of Fostering Provided	6
Fostering Panel and Recruitment	7
Complaints, Monitoring and Supervision	9
Legislative and Regulatory Background	11
Aims and Principles	12



Vision, Mission and Values

children are the heart of everything we do®

Our Vision

We will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable young people in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

Our Mission

Every day we improve the lives of thousands of young people, their families and communities through a relentless focus on caring and learning.

Our Values

Deliver Promises

- Be accountable.
- Take responsibility.
- Focus on outcomes.

Inclusive Spaces

- Create safe, nurturing environments.
- Care about what we do and each other.
- Value diversity.

Open & Honest

- Be fair and transparent.
- Do the right thing.
- Act respectfully.

Dream Big

- Believe you can.
- Make positive changes.
- Inspire and innovate.

OneTeam

Together we inspire trust, happiness and an infectious passion to accomplish our vision.

nfagroup



Objectives of the Fostering Service

Our aims are underpinned by the National Standards for fostering to provide looked after children with appropriate foster placement provision.

- To ensure the views of children, parents and carers are sought and taken into account, having regard for their age and understanding, in the continuous development and improvement of the service.
- To take the wishes and views of children and young people seriously and to enable them to be part of any decision making process that affects them.
- To recognise the importance of and support appropriate levels of contact with family and community as is consistent with their welfare and care plan.
- To recognise and value the diverse nature of the community it serves and proactively engage with the local community to identify potential carers.
- To ensure there is a sufficient range of safe and appropriate placements available for the Looked After Children.
- To actively monitor and supervise all placements to ensure children are safe, their needs are met and they are making progress to achieve positive outcomes.
- To contribute to and ensure effective multi-disciplinary and partnership working to meet the health, educational and social needs of children within placements.
- The service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Children will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality, disability or social class in terms of service provision. Wherever possible children are matched within their own cultural, racial, linguistic and religious communities, and where this is not possible, plans must be put in place to keep the child's culture alive for them.
- Children with disabilities are to be placed in an environment that recognises and caters for their disability, and at the same time promotes their social inclusion.
- To ensure staff and carers are well trained and competent in delivering a quality Fostering Service, including opportunities for continued learning and professional development. To ensure all staff and carers have completed safeguarding checks.
- To provide all staff and carers support and supervision with clear lines of accountability and management.
- We will ensure that where appropriate continuing care placements are provided encompassing necessary supports and training for carers offering this continuity of care provision to young people in order to take forward this innovative and highly welcome new provision.
- To provide each Foster Carer a named allocated Supervising Social Worker.
- To operate clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service, including the maintenance of comprehensive and up-to-date records on all children placed.
- To ensure all complaints and allegations against carers/staff are investigated under agency procedures in a timely fashion and lessons learned leading to improvements in future practice.
- The Agency operates a Fostering Panel that provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of Foster Carers and Foster placements. The panel will ensure the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making.
- Through the recruitment programme, specific training and supervision, foster carers are expected, with support, to give each child placed the best life chances available to them and an opportunity to be safe and secure, achieve in education, health, relationships and transitions to independence or moves back home to birth families.
- In tandem with our Education Staff we will ensure the maximisation of educational opportunities for all children in placement working to secure appropriate educational provision.



Types of Fostering Provided

Permanent

A placement secured by a Permanence Order. For a child this means that the care planning process has concluded that they will thrive best if they are cared for away from home on a permanent basis. A Permanence Order, which is applied for by the local authority through the courts, can provide the local authority, child and their carer with the legal security, the stability and the time for strong relationship bonds and a sense of belonging to develop.

Long-Term

A placement which has been in place for longer than 24 months not secured by a Permanence Order. (This should be an exceptional situation and an indicator that the placement requires close scrutiny) Agencies must differentiate between long-term placements where:

- An Adoption order is being sought
- A Permanence Order with authority to adopt is being sought.
- A Permanence Order is being sought
- Child's care plan indicates that the placement will be maintained into adulthood (18+ years of age) without a Permanence Order being sought
- Child's care plan indicates that alternative placements are being sought (with birth family)
- The child's care plan gives no indication of the placement's objective or expected duration and therefore requires close scrutiny

Interim

A placement which has been in place for less than 24 months, not secured by a Permanence Order. Agencies must differentiate between interim placements which are:

- Part of a concurrency plan
- Working towards rehabilitation with birth parents or other carers (not part of a concurrency plan)
- Working towards Permanence Order with a different foster carer

- Working towards Adoption Order or Permanence Order with current carer (see definition above)

For a child this means that the care planning process has concluded that they will benefit from spending some time being cared for away from home and there is a time-linked plan for rehabilitation with parents or an alternative care placement is being sought.

Emergency

An unplanned placement made in an emergency, where no other placement type has been identified by the local authority. (Under the Looked After Children Regulations 2009 an emergency placement must be reviewed by a local authority within 3 days, and may be extended for a period not exceeding 12 weeks.)

For a child this will mean that there are immediate concerns for their safety and wellbeing and they require to be removed from their home environment as quickly as possible while the care planning process establishes the best option for the child.



Fostering Panel and Recruitment

The Fostering Panel

Fostering Relations operates its own Fostering Panel for the approval, review, registration and deregistration of carers.

The Duty Service

A Duty Social Worker is available throughout office hours. The purpose of this service is to identify placements for looked after children and support carers in times of crisis when their own supervising social worker is not available.

The Recruitment Service

The Carer Recruitment Officer is responsible for providing a recruitment strategy to respond to service needs and ensure we have sufficient placements for those children in need of Foster placements. This service involves marketing and advertising for foster carers at events and using websites and social media resources. Following a successful screening process an initial visit is undertaken by a Social Worker who if appropriate may leave an application form for completion by the enquirers.

As a new development once we have received this completed application form the national assessment service will take forward the assessment process.

Training

The agency provides training for foster carers, both prior to and post, their approval.

Preparation training is carried out over three full days by way of the Skills to Foster course and covers basic underpinning knowledge and experiential learning relevant to the task of fostering.

In addition the applicants are expected to complete 3 core courses online.

Carers are expected to meet with their supervising social worker within 2 weeks of approval and develop their Personal Development Plan. It is at this stage that carers will discuss with their supervising

social worker what they need to do to meet the standards within the first year of their approval.

There is a programme of training for carers.

The training programme currently offers the following workshops:

- Diversity
- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Education
- Attachment
- Record Keeping and Reflective practices
- Safe Caring
- Behaviour Management
- Working as part of a team
- Life story work and Memory box
- Contact
- Drug awareness
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome disorder
- ADHD and Autistic Spectrum – when available from partner agencies
- Social Networking
- Parent and Child Placements
- Alcohol Awareness
- Sex Education and relationships
- Positive Handling
- Impact of Domestic Violence
- Sexual Abuse.
- Pathway planning for older teens
- Attachment in teens
- Appropriate adult training

Carers are expected to undertake Child Protection and First Aid as Mandatory courses and will be expected to attend a refresher course at least once every three years for them.

Support Groups for Carers

The agency provides carers with the opportunity to attend support groups which is facilitated by a social worker and provides a forum for debate, guest speakers and informal support.

Support to Approved Carers

Approved carers are allocated to a supervising social worker who supports and supervises the carer and their family. This supervision is underpinned by relevant legislation, National Standards and the Fostering Regulations.

Carers are supported and assisted by supervising social workers to manage the complexities of caring for a looked after child which includes support to attend any professional meetings, advice and guidance on attachment issues, managing difficult behaviour and placement issues. Supervising social workers will help carers to manage contact issues with birth families and support any contact where appropriate.

Formal supervision will take place with every approved carer at least monthly and a record will be kept on their file, signed by the carer, social worker and team manager. Regulations require an unannounced visit is undertaken annually. Throughout the carers career reports and progress is recorded: an annual report is prepared by the supervising social worker which is presented to the Panel/ Independent Reviewing Officer for consideration.

Education

All children Looked After by the agency are encouraged to access educational opportunities and develop to their maximum potential. The Education support Coordinators provide advice, guidance and additional curriculum support to all foster carers and children. All children in foster care should have access to a home computer and relevant educational software.

Health

The physical health needs of children are monitored by the Carers and the allocated Social Worker. Each child placed is registered with a General Practitioner, Dentist and appropriate medical provision.



Complaints, Monitoring and Supervision

Complaints, Compliments and Comments

We want everyone to be satisfied with the service they receive from Fostering Relations and the complaints procedure in this agency can be instigated by anyone who is dissatisfied with the service they receive. Young people can also enlist the assistance of a Children's Rights and Advocacy Worker.

The Agency has a complaints procedure, which is communicated to all service users and to Foster Carers, Looked After Children and their families.

Allegations

All allegations of abuse made by children against foster carers or members of a foster carer family will be thoroughly investigated. The investigation of allegations against foster carers will be evidence-based and the decision of how best to proceed will be made in the best interests of the child. An independent Advice and Conciliation worker from Fostering Network is made available to support foster carers throughout the process. All foster carers receive the ongoing support of their social worker. A clear distinction is made between an allegation of harm and a concern regarding standards of care.

Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

Foster carers are provided with information about the children placed with them and expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on both foster carers and Looked After Children who are subject to National Standards and Data Protection legislation. Staff and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

Foster Carer Forum

Over the last 2 years we have developed the provision of Foster carer Representatives to meet with the Team Manager and Registered Manager on a regular basis to liaise over key issues and improve communication between the fostering service and all foster carers.

The Fostering Service is subject to formal inspection by the Care Inspectorate.

Bullying

Bullying can disrupt an individual's personal, social and educational achievements. It is recognised that Looked After Children, because of their circumstances, are particularly vulnerable and the Agency requires that steps are taken to prevent bullying by ensuring that foster carers and social workers understand what bullying is and the impact it can have on a child / young person's life. It provides advice and guidance on how best to deal with situations where bullying is occurring in order to help everyone involved with the child / young person remain alert to bullying behaviour both inside and outside the foster home.

Behaviour Management

Guidance on managing behaviour is made available to all foster carers through training, and ongoing supervision. No form of corporal punishment is permitted to be used on any child placed with a foster parent. No child placed with foster parents is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable. Physical restraint is used on a child only when it is a last resort and is necessary to prevent likely injury to the child or other persons or likely serious damage to property. All carers are to be trained in de-escalation

Recruitment, Pre-Approval Training and Support of Prospective Foster Carers

The Agency provides a range of services to people who enquire about becoming foster carers.

The following is a summary of the recruitment, assessment and approval process:

- Publicity and promotion of foster care to attract new foster carers is continuous throughout the year.
- Prospective carers are provided with information about foster care within a short timescale of making the request.
- Prospective carers who wish to have further information will be visited by a Fostering Social Worker within 10 days.
- Full statutory checks and references are undertaken on all applicants and on any other adult in the household over the age of 16 years.
- All applicants complete a full medical questionnaire (British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form AH), which is made available to the agency Medical Advisor for comment.
- Applicants are enrolled in pre-approval training, which occurs prior to or concurrently with the Form F assessment, whichever provides the timeliest service.
- Assessments are undertaken by a qualified Social Worker in accordance with fostering service regulations and are completed using BAAF Form F.
- All applicants are invited to attend the Fostering Panel, which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker on the terms of their approval.

Support and Supervision

- All foster carers are supervised by a Supervising Social Worker.
- All foster carers have access to support groups.
- All Carers are visited at least on a fortnightly basis as well as by phone and text.
- Foster carers are able to access the Foster Carers' Handbook online covering all aspects of fostering, together with a diary and the equipment required to record and store confidential records about individual children.
- Annually, a Participation Day is convened to celebrate and inform the work of Fostering Relations.

Ongoing Reviews of Foster Carers

All carers are reviewed annually and their continued registration is considered by the Fostering Panel, which makes recommendation to the agency decision maker as to the terms of their continued registration.



Legislative and Regulatory Background

Partnership and Consultation

Fostering Relations Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers strive to work in close partnership with the Child, Social Worker, Parent(s) and all other Individuals and Agencies involved in the Child's care.

The Agency believes that children's wishes and feelings should be taken into account and included in all care planning and review meetings.

We recognise that within such planning Safe Caring is imperative.

Investors in People

Fostering Relations is recognised as an Investor in People and has held the Award since 2013.

In October 2013 the NFA achieved the Investors in People Gold Award.

Customer Services Excellence Award

Fostering Relations has successfully achieved and maintained the Customer Service Excellence Award, this new Government Standard for Customer Excellence builds on the legacy of the Charter Mark and concentrates on the detailed experience of customers and actions taken by organisations to recognise and understand their customers, to give them a voice, to show how customers are listened to, and how their views shape the service.

We believe that NFA Group are one of the first independent fostering organisations to achieve the award.

Leading Improvements for Looked After Children

Fostering Relations has successfully achieved LILAC – 'Leading Improvements for Looked After Children', with the key objective of developing a quality framework for involvement policy and practice targeting young people in care. The young people will make use of this framework to carry out assessments of local authority or agency services.

Policies and Procedures

The Agency seeks to ensure that its policies, procedures and practice comply with the following:

- Children Act 2004.
- The Principles inherent within The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- The Regulation of Care Act 2001.
- Children and Young Person (Scotland) Act 2014.
- National Care Standards Foster Care Family Placement 2005.



Aims and Principles

The Fostering Service:

- Seeks to provide a sufficient choice of placements for all Looked After children wherever possible.
- Seeks to provide placements with foster carers for all Looked After children who require placements in a family setting.
- Respects the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children and foster carers.
- Seeks to work in partnership with all those involved in the care of Looked After children, including children, their families, foster carers and Social Workers.
- Recognises that children with disabilities may have additional special needs for placement.
- Recognises and seeks resources and specialist provisions for those children who need it.
- The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own child/ren and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible without unnecessary restrictions.
- Seeks the views and opinions of young people and carers when planning and reviewing services.
- Seeks to recruit, train and assess carers to the highest standard in order to meet the needs of children for local placements.

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