



# **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The fostering company is a North East based Independent Fostering Agency specialising in the provision of high quality, child focused and well supported fostering families.

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## Introduction

**the fostering company** is an independent fostering agency based exclusively in the North East of England. The company was established in 2013 to provide safe, high quality, child-focussed, family-based care for children and young people who are looked after by Local Authorities.

We recruit, train, assess, approve and support foster carers to promote a positive family life and achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

This Statement of Purpose has been written in accordance with

- The Children Act 1989;
- The Care Standards Act 2000;
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; and
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Data Protection Act (2018)

**the fostering company** Statement of Purpose is designed for a wide readership including:

- Children and young people who are placed with our foster carers
- The agency's staff and consultants
- Foster families and prospective foster families
- Local Authorities who place, or are considering placing, with **the fostering company**
- Colleagues from other social care agencies
- Any parent or guardian of any child placed with the fostering service
- Ofsted

This Statement of Purpose provides children, young people, parents, carers, staff and other professionals with information about us and the services and facilities we provide, including:

- The aims and objectives of the fostering company
- Information about the services and facilities provided by the fostering company

**Our Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually by the Director and the Registered Manager.**

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*To create safe, nurturing and child centred family environments where children are respected and listened to as individuals and encouraged to be the best they can.*

## STATUS & CONSTITUTION

the fostering company, an independent fostering provider [IFP], is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 2006

the fostering company is owned by Five Rivers Childcare Ltd. Who has a Board of Directors. The Directors meet every month and are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, as well as determining and reviewing the company's:

- Strategic vision and direction
- Culture, values and principles
- Annual business plan
- Training and development programmes
- Performance targets
- Policies and procedures
- Financial management
- Legal compliance
- Quality assurance

In doing so, the Board fulfils the statutory duties and responsibilities for directors of a registered company and ensures that all matters are reviewed regularly and in a planned way.

## OUR TEAM & OUR VALUES

We are a socially conscious company; working within an ethos of equality and diversity based on clear goals and aims. We actively work towards countering bullying and creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour. At the fostering company, we aim to provide the best possible care and support to children and young people who are living away from their families. Together with our foster carers, we work with great determination to promote wellbeing, safety and positive outcomes in a culture of participation and engagement.

### Our team

At **the fostering company**, we work as a team and value the contributions of all of our staff, young people and foster carers. Everyone works together to achieve the best for children and young people and to help them establish a good family life where they can be safe and well cared for, whilst maintaining appropriate links and relationships with their family of origin. Although there may be many different roles in the team, all are valued for the contribution they make to children's lives.

*Our principles are traditional and simple - good quality family placements based on careful matching between foster carers and young people. Our services are modern, creative and innovative and built around best practice models.*

### Our values

Above all, we value a transparent, open minded and child focused approach to foster care. We work with respect and support for others in all we do and are professional and accountable at all times in our practice.

## **OUR AIMS**

### **We aim to:**

- Place the child at the centre of decision making and support in foster care.
- Ensure that children and young people express their views, are listened to and are informed about what is happening to them.
- Provide safe, high quality family care, where physical and emotional health needs are met.
- Provide positive personal, social and educational opportunities for children and young people, enabling a sense of belonging and value through inclusion in family, agency and community activities.
- Prepare young people for transitions at key milestones by providing opportunities to learn independence skills and help them plan their future needs.
- Provide a comprehensive 24-hour support service for carers and young people.
- Offer value for money.
- Work in partnership with Local Authorities to develop service user and stakeholder participation.
- Maintain a cycle of continuous improvement, quality assurance and creativity in all our activities.
- Operate transparently in everything we do.
- Apply strict adherence to all Fostering Regulations and Standards.

## **OUR OBJECTIVES**

- Ensure that children are listened to and remain the focus of the agency.
- Provide a range of foster carers with diverse skills and enable them to deliver the best possible care for children and young people.
- Match each child and young person with foster carers who are able to meet their needs.
- Provide safe, well supported foster care placements for children and young people - warm caring environments in which children and young people can thrive.
- Work to the child's care plan and placement agreement within timescales.
- Make sure our staff and foster carers are working to help children reach their potential in all aspects of their development and achieve the best possible outcomes now and in the future.
- Strengthen partnership working with children and others important to the child - foster carers, Local Authorities and other Agencies.
- Promote agreed contact and facilitate the best outcomes and family life for children.
- Inspire equality and celebrate difference in all of our work with children, young people, foster carers and staff.
- Seek to continually improve our services through review and consultation.

the fostering company is committed to the highest possible standards of care and ensure that our practices comply with:

- The Care Standards Act 2000;
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; and
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011

## **PLACEMENTS**

We offer a range of placement options for children in line with their identified needs and plans.

Placements can be:

- Short term – lasting for a few days, weeks or months while plans are made for the child's future
- Long term – in which the child is cared for until adulthood
- Planned short break placements – to enable parents or foster carers to have a break or offer additional support
- Parent and child placements – supporting the parent to care for their child in a safe and nurturing environment
- Bespoke placements- developed around and focussed on the individual and presenting needs of the child

## **MATCHING**

We work hard to ensure that our placements are carefully matched so that the identified needs of each child and young person will be met by a foster carer with the necessary skills and experience to meet those needs. We carefully ensure that we take a child's identity into account and match this with foster carers who can help the child celebrate their uniqueness.

In depth discussion takes place to ensure an appropriate match is made. Wherever possible, the wishes of the child are sought and information about the fostering family is given to them. The needs of any other children placed or living in the household are considered and their social workers are consulted about the possibility of the placement. An introductory visit to further inform the potential placement would then be ideal. Any perceivable gaps in the match between child and fostering family are addressed at the earliest opportunity.

The fostering company recognises that the best outcomes for children are achieved through a careful matching process and enduring placement stability. We do not, therefore, make any emergency or unplanned placements.



## CHILDREN'S INFORMATION

the fostering company has developed a Children's Guide with details of what a young person can expect during their time with our fostering families. The Children's Guide also informs of the complaints procedure and how to access an independent advocate. We aim to continue to develop dialogue and participation with children and young people as we recognise their importance in helping us to shape our services.

We involve children and young people in:

- the recruitment of staff
- the planning of agency activities
- the recruitment and training of fostering families
- the Annual General Board meeting

## SUPPORT FOR FOSTERING FAMILIES

Our commitment is to provide fostering families with the very best support possible enabling them in turn to give the finest care and the most promising life chances to children.

Our support to foster carers includes:

- Supervisory visits – support is provided on a regular fortnightly basis and formal supervision on a monthly basis. Supervision is carried out by a qualified, experienced supervising social worker. The visits provide the carer with the time to discuss the placement, issues of concern and identify their own learning and developmental needs.
- Foster Carer Guide – we provide our foster carers with a copy of our Guide containing our policies, procedures and all the relevant information related to their fostering role.
- A 'My Fostering Family' guide for all children and young people who are part of the household.
- Duty system – a duty system operates from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm in the regional office enabling foster carers to speak to a social worker and/or a manager in the event of an emergency.
- Out of hours' support – we have an out of hours' support and advice service provided by the fostering company social workers and managers. This means that foster carers receive 24 hour/365 days per year advice and support from a qualified, experienced social worker.
- Foster family support groups – these separate groups offer informal support between foster carers/children and young people as well as information sharing and the chance to discuss any issues of concern and to learn from each other.
- Annual reviews of foster carers – all foster carers are reviewed at least annually. The views of others in relation to each placement are sought and contribute to the review, especially the views of the children in placement.

Foster families attend their reviews and participate in discussions about their past year and future training and development needs.

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR FOSTER CARERS

the fostering company provides foster carers with professional training throughout their career with us. This is designed to meet carers' specific needs and learning styles and provides a framework for continuous development. We are passionate about learning and development and we expect our carers to be too.

All foster carers will be supported to complete:

- Preparing to Foster Information training sessions
- Induction and TSD standards
- Agency training sessions and workshops – post approval training
- Bespoke training to meet the special and individual needs of the children in placement

## Foster Carer Recruitment

the fostering company is committed to the recruitment of foster carers who can meet the diverse needs of children and young people, through the provision of high quality care. All prospective foster carers who make an enquiry are subject to the following process:

- a) the fostering company gives information about the work and the ethos of the agency so that enquirers can make an informed choice to foster with this agency.
- b) On receipt of a completed enquiry form and subject to management review, two agency social workers undertake an initial visit to their home. The Registered Manager then decides whether the enquiry should progress to application and/or training.
- c) The families interested in fostering (including the children, where appropriate) are invited to attend a three-day initial information training.
- d) If still interested, the enquirers are then invited to complete an application form, giving detailed information. This is Stage 1 of a two-stage process in which statutory checks and enquiries are sought.

These include:

- Identity checks
- Disclosure and Barring Service – checks on all members of the fostering family over 16 years of age
- Social Services departments and their child protection registers
- Other agencies [e.g. NSPCC, probation, health and education] where appropriate.
- Ex partners
- Employers
- Personal references

The applicant(s) is/are also required to have a medical examination completed by their GP and the report is forwarded to **the fostering company** Medical Advisor for comments about the applicant(s) health and any possible implications for the fostering task.

- The applicant(s) is/are asked to provide at least two personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. The references will be confidential. The references will include one for each person (if a couple) and two for a single applicant.
- As the process is in two stages, the successful conclusion of the first stage is dependent on the above checks being positive.
- A qualified social worker carries out a full and comprehensive assessment, visiting the applicant(s) home on a number of occasions to meet and collect information about all members of the household, to assess the applicant(s) experience and skills in relation to fostering. This second stage of the process can run alongside the gathering of information from all the checks.
- During the assessment process, applicant(s) will be encouraged to provide written material giving examples of their relevant experience and skills.
- The Assessment Report [without references] is shared with the applicant(s) and the full version is presented to the fostering company Fostering Panel.
- Applicants are invited to attend the Panel meeting to assist with the decision-making process.
- The Panel makes a recommendation about the suitability of applicants to be approved as foster carers with **the fostering company**.
- Applicants are informed verbally of the recommendation of the Panel
- The Agency Decision maker takes this recommendation into account before making a formal decision. This decision is conveyed verbally, and then in writing within statutory timescales.
- The assessment process takes 6 months on average and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay.
- All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held on file and stored electronically in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations [2011] and General Data Protection Regulations {2018}. On request, some of this can be viewed.
- References from external agencies/individuals, which are provided in confidence, cannot be processed without the consent of both the applicant and relevant referee.

## The Fostering Panel

the fostering company has a fostering panel with agency representatives and independent members in its central list who meet to consider all applications from prospective foster carers:

- A full assessment is presented to the Panel.
- A full health and safety assessment is made available to Panel

Applicants are invited to attend the Panel meeting.

The Panel makes recommendations that are confirmed, or not, by the Independent Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

The Panel strives to see all foster carer annual reviews, however, first and forth foster carer annual reviews are always presented to the Panel. Foster carers are invited to attend the Panel when their annual review is presented to ensure feedback on the fostering task and to answer any questions the Panel may have with regard to agency support/systems and foster carer competence issues.

The Fostering Panel also advises on the policies and procedures of the agency, oversees the standard of assessments and provides advice and information on broader, subject related, matters.

An annual report is compiled by the Panel Advisor and a Panel Profile is available for foster carers, applicants and young people.

## Complaints and Representations

the fostering company Representations and Complaints Procedure places an emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level. Stage 1 is informal problem solving. Records of investigations and outcomes of complaints resolved informally are held on file for inspection by Ofsted and other regulatory bodies.

All children/young people placed with the fostering company foster carers are informed of the organisation's Complaints Procedure via a Children's Guide and an individual Complaints Form, which sets out a clear diagram/process of how to complain.

All foster carers, staff and children's/young persons' social workers are also provided with information about the fostering company complaints procedures.

**Stage 2** complaints are those where resolution at **Stage 1** has not been possible, or where a complainant has elected to invoke **Stage 2** of the procedure direct. Complaints of this nature are dealt with by the Registered Manager and if appropriate, independent Social Workers are appointed to carry out formal investigations.

The fostering company Representations and Complaints Procedure has scope for a complainant, if dissatisfied by the response in **Stage 2**, to request that the matter be referred to the Responsible Individual – **Stage 3**.

Summary details of complaints and their outcomes are filed confidentially and can be provided upon request.

## **Management Structure and Staffing**

There is 1 Director of **the fostering company**. She forms part of the Board of Directors. The Board meets on a quarterly basis to consider Agency management, development, and finance and strategy issues.

### **Martin Leitch: Responsible Individual**

Jan is responsible for the strategic and business management and the overall development of the Agency. She is responsible for the day-to-day operations, overseeing: HR, data protection, staff recruitment and development. She is also the Agency Decision Maker.

### **Camilla Hunter: Registered Manager**

Camilla is responsible for managing the social work services, support services and foster carer development including the recruitment, assessment and training of foster carers and for the development of services to children and young people. She ensures that the company adheres to regulatory and statutory requirements. Camilla is also the Panel Advisor.

### **Administration Manager**

Who is responsible for the set up and running of administration at the Agency. She ensures that a high standard of communication and administrative support is maintained at all times.

### **Supervising Social Workers x 2**

The Supervising Social Workers are responsible for the supervision and support of foster carers, ensuring they are provided with a high level of support and that children and young people placed with our Agency are receiving an exemplary standard of care

### **Fostering Support Worker**

Who works with the Registered Manager and the Supervising Social Workers in providing support which is tailored to meet the additional needs of the fostering families and providing direct work with children and young people

## **Additional sessional staff**

### Independent IRO

Who is responsible for monitoring, appraising and reviewing how the agency promotes best possible outcomes for children; that policies and procedures are consistent and cover statutory responsibilities, meet Fostering Standards and reflect best practice.

### Trainer

Who is responsible for the coordination and delivery of the learning and development needs of the staff and carers.

As an Agency which is passionate about learning and development, we also offer placements for final year Social Work students and are proud of our close links to the local Universities.

In addition to the team, the fostering company commissions work through service level agreements with retained specialist providers of:

- Business support and advice and full accountancy and financial services, including the preparation of monthly management accounts, annual updating of budgets and end of year accounts.
- Legal advice on employment matters.
- Design, marketing, printing and recruitment campaigns.
- Educational advice and consultancy.
- Health and wellbeing advice
- Independent psychological and consultancy services for the carers of children and young people.
- Post approval training, in line with current guidelines and training to Diploma level.

### Staff recruitment

the fostering company has robust recruitment policies ensuring equality and diversity, compliant with LSCB procedures and Working Together 2018. We recruit staff suitable to work in a fostering agency.

All social work staff hold a recognised social work qualification and maintain their HCPC registration.

All staff, whether directly employed on a service contract or providing services under a service agreement, are subject to the full range of enquiries including:

- Disclosure and Barring Service
- Verbal and written references from previous and current employers
- Copies of qualifications

- Health and identity checks

All staff working for the fostering company are provided with a staff handbook and a tailored induction to their post.

All staff working for the fostering company, on a permanent, part-time or self-employed basis are covered by appropriate professional indemnity insurance and all have role profiles, access to a pension scheme and contracts of employment.

the fostering company insurance liabilities cover is in line with Local Authority contractual requirements.

## Quality Standards

the fostering company continuously improves its services.

To make sure there is a robust quality standards framework reflective of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, the Fostering Director, Quality Assurance Manager and the Registered Manager monitor the work done and make changes for improvement where they are required.

The following mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the service:

- Carer(s) Annual Reviews.
- Carers Consultation Forms (sent prior to review).
- Annual staff appraisals.
- Monthly supervision of carer(s)
- Regular supervision of staff.
- Quarterly board meetings
- Feedback from carers regarding training.
- Feedback from parents using the Service.
- Feedback from other professionals.
- Feedback from Local Authority workers at children's Looked After Children or Children in Need reviews.
- Feedback from Local Authority workers prior to carer(s) reviews.
- Regular monitoring of the service by the partner agencies
- Evaluation of carers by trainers.
- Feedback from panel members.
- Panel Attendees Form.