

## Statement of Purpose



### **This statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with Standard 1 of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011) and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011**

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations (2011) and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) that each fostering agency will have a statement of purpose, including their aims and objectives, description of services it provides and how these support the outcome for children and young people.

This Statement of Purpose is linked with our Children & Young People's Guide to Fostering, a copy of which is provided to all children and young people, taking into account their age and understanding at the time of placement and again following any updates to the guide.

As an agency we are committed to meeting, and where it is possible, exceeding the requirements arising from:

- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Service: National Minimum Standards (2011)
- Care planning, placement and case review (England) regulations 2010
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- UK National Standards for Foster Care (1999)
- The Children Act 1989
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010

A copy of our Statement of Purpose is available online, via our website [www.fosteringpeopletoo.org.uk](http://www.fosteringpeopletoo.org.uk) and is sent to Ofsted.

### **Constitution of the Agency**

Fostering People Too Limited is an independent fostering service and is a private limited company and was incorporated under the Companies Act 1985 on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005. The Company is registered in England and Wales - Number 5430202. The Company's registered office is at 1422-4 London Road, Leigh on Sea, Essex SS9 2UL.

The Company has three Directors: Peter Turner, Andi Warner and Brendan Warner.

The Directors meet regularly, are responsible for the governance of the agency, as well as determining and ensuring all matters as listed below are reviewed in a planned way.

- Values, principles and culture
- Strategic direction, vision and forward planning
- Annual business plan
- Performance Targets
- Training & Development programme
- Policies & Procedures
- Financial management
- Quality assurance
- Legal compliance

Fostering People Too has organisational membership with:

- Foster Talk
- Coram/BAAF
- National Association of Fostering Providers
- Information Commissioners Office

## **Our vision**

The Agency provides a high quality fostering service to local authorities in London and the East of England. We provide a range of suitable family placements for children and young people. We also provide placements for parent and child(ren) to facilitate assessment of and try to improve parenting skills. The Agency is committed to building and maintaining strong relationships with its foster carers and providing a high level of support in recognition of the essential role they play in children and young people's lives. We will also provide a range of complementary services with a view to enhancing the lives of looked after children and ensuring stability of placement. We are also keen to help prepare young people in the transition to adult life.

We want to ensure that every young person has the highest hopes for their future and the support to fulfil them. We recognise that a child's needs are best met by a nurturing family and are committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in an appropriate and well matched family placement.

We want all children and young people that are placed with our foster carers to be happy, safe, healthy, engaged in education and have the opportunity to pursue social activities.

## **Our underlying values**

We operate within a clear framework of integrity, honesty, fairness and openness and expect the same of our staff and foster carers.

The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care. We believe children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefitting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills, leading to a successful adult life.

Children Looked After will be treated as any good parent would treat their own children and will have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions.

We believe that children are entitled to grow up in a caring and loving environment that can meet their emotional and physical development needs.

Every child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self confidence and self esteem. Every child will have his/her wishes or feelings listened to and taken into account.

Disabled children and those with complex needs will be treated as children first, but we will take into account their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

We recognise the importance of safe, positive contact for looked after children, to develop and maintain relationships with birth parents, siblings and the wider family.

We operate an inclusive partnership based approach, which embraces children/young people, families, foster carers, Local Authority, Education and Health colleagues.

We have a strong belief that, by working together, we can make a positive contribution to providing opportunities for children/young people to maximise their potential and lead fulfilling lives.

Our foster carers have the right to full information about the child they are caring for and also receive appropriate support, training and development opportunities to help increase their skills, understand and be able to meet the needs of the children they are caring for.

We are committed to equality of opportunity and this is demonstrated in our policies, procedures and practice.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- Our core aim is to provide safe, high quality foster care placements for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals. We strive to develop our services in order that children and young people can develop and grow in line with the five **Every Child Matters** outcomes:
  - **Be Healthy**

- **Stay Safe**
  - **Enjoy and Achieve**
  - **Make a Positive Contribution**
  - **Achieve Economic Wellbeing**
- Recruitment of foster carers from diverse backgrounds, in order to offer appropriate placements to children and young people taking into account their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion & language.
  - Consideration of the gender, disability and sexuality needs of looked after children and young people.
  - To prepare, support and train foster carers to enable them to provide high quality fostering placements.
  - To continuously monitor our services to develop the provision according to identified need.
  - To support children and young people within their family placement to optimise their potential in all areas, including: educational, social, psychological, emotional and physical development.
  - To actively safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including protecting them from abuse and other forms of significant harm through a range of policies, monitoring tools, risk assessments, training and support packages.
  - To ensure that a Care Plan for the child's future is acted upon within the timescales and parameters established at each case review.
  - To work in close partnership with Local Authorities to promote and safeguard the best interests and welfare of the child/young person.
  - To provide foster care placements and support packages that offer a stable and consistent experience of family life, enhancing and maximising opportunities.
  - To promote and expect a child/young person centred approach.
  - To support young people to ensure that they are prepared for adulthood.
  - To establish, review and maintain policies and procedures that will comply with and, where possible, exceed legislative and statutory requirements and expectations.
  - To provide 24 hour support for foster carers, their families and the children/young people placed with them.

- To retain foster carers and staff through a strategy that ensures they are appropriately; supervised, supported, rewarded and offered training opportunities to assist their development.

### **Management structure**

The Agency will maintain a flat management structure, keeping lines of accountability and communication as simple and effective as possible. Each of the four Directors has taken responsibility for key aspects of the business:

- **Peter Turner** - Responsible Individual - Quality assurance and oversight and supervision of management team and agency functioning. Agency decision maker.
- **Andi Warner** - Recruitment, assessment, development, training and support to foster carers and staff. Agency policies and procedures.
- **Brendan Warner** – Registered Manager. Operational management of the fostering service. Finance and strategic management, marketing, recruitment, assessment, development, training, fostering panel advisor and support to foster carers and staff.

The effectiveness of this working relationship is underpinned by a formal operational agreement.

### **Staff**

The Agency will continue to recruit an experienced and suitably qualified staff team together with a range of independent consultants to provide specialist advice and support. Supervising Social Workers are supervised and supported by a Senior Practitioner or Fostering Manager.

Foster carers are responsible for providing a safe, caring and nurturing environment and promoting the welfare of children and young people placed in their care.

We employ administrators to conduct statutory enquiries regarding foster carers, maintain policies and procedures, establish systems to maintain full information and records regarding foster carers and children in placement. Appropriately experienced financial personnel also undertake financial services, including invoices and payments.

The Agency will aim for a maximum number of ten foster carers to each supervising social worker.

The Agency has already recruited and approved over thirty sets of fostering households and provides a range of placements including emergency, short term, long term, bridging, respite and parent and child arrangements to a number of children with a wide range of needs.

## **General Principles of the Agency**

This Agency supports the ideal that all children are brought up by the family into which they were born.

Before considering a referral, this agency will satisfy itself that, where it is considered safe to do so, all efforts will be made to support a child **to remain** with his or her birth parents or placement within the wider family.

Where a child needs to be accommodated or becomes the subject of a Care Order, this Agency supports the principle that an alternative substitute family placement is considered to be the next best option.

In all planning and social work practice with children, their welfare is the paramount consideration. Proper account will be taken of their wishes and feelings, having regard to their age and level of understanding.

When children are referred by a local authority, the Agency will seek as much information as possible, in order to identify a placement based on an assessment of their needs. Every effort must be made to identify the most suitable foster placement.

Wherever possible, siblings should not be separated unless there are clear and specific reasons for doing so. This Agency will strive to keep sibling groups together when at all possible, in recognition of the importance of the sibling relationship.

Placements must reflect the children's needs to maintain links, wherever possible, with regard to family, friendships, schools and locality. The importance of maintaining contact between children and their families is acknowledged and will at all times be encouraged, where it is safe to do so.

Ideally, children should be placed with families of the same culture, religion and language to themselves. Where this is not possible the Agency, in partnership with the local authority, must ensure that the child's foster carers are sensitive to their needs and we will seek the assistance of others in order to meet their identity needs.

Fostering People Too strongly believes that young people should be able to make the transition from childhood to adulthood against a background of stability and support. This is why the agency is willing in principle to work in partnership with the placing local authority to support "staying put arrangements" to ensure that young people can remain with their foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood. In this way they can hopefully experience a transition that is as near similar to their peers.

Fostering People Too recognises the specific risks related to parent and child arrangements. The risk is assessed throughout the entire process of recruitment and

assessment of the potential carers for this specific task, the ongoing support to the foster carers and the placement. Managing risk is an ongoing task and starts from the referral and matching procedures, the pre-placement planning process, parent's assessment process and carrying through the agency's relevant policies particularly the safer caring and child protection procedures and agreements and policies with regards to missing and absconding from care.

With parent and child placements it is vital that all concerned with the placement are clear about the nature of arrangements in a particular case as they are not always covered by the fostering regulations and national minimum standards. If the parent is under 18 years of age, and both parent and child are looked after children, both will be foster placements. However, sometimes only the child or parent is a looked after child, so is placed as a foster child. If neither the child nor parent is a looked after child the arrangements will not be covered by the fostering regulations. In any situation where the parent is aged 18 years or over they are not fostered so foster carers will need clarification about any insurance, tax or welfare benefit implications.

Whatever the situation we consider it vital to clarify the respective roles of the foster carer and the parent in relation to the child and to consider the additional skill and support needs of the foster carer.

Fostering People Too Fostering Service has as its prime consideration the best interests of children. Applicants wishing to be approved as foster or short break carers will be considered irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability, providing the Agency, following a comprehensive assessment, believes that they can provide a suitable environment for the care and nurture of a child.

The Agency acknowledges the stresses and demands placed on foster carers and we are committed to providing the support, training and back up necessary to enable them to provide a service of the highest quality to the children and young people in their care.

The Agency believes in consulting with all individuals, groups and organisations that have an interest in the Agency's fostering services. This consultation will, importantly, include the children and young people presently cared for by the Fostering Service and their parents, as well as foster carers and their families. A variety of formats will be used to encourage feedback and the Agency will be sensitive to the child's normal means of communication, to avoid discrimination.

The Agency has declared in its business plan a determination to meet the needs of children and young people in the care system. This has been influenced by research into demands on the service and our immediate goals include a service to larger sibling groups, disabled children, black and ethnic minority children and children and young people aged 12 years and over. Once these ambitions are achieved, the Agency will continue to be sensitive to the needs of children looked after in need of family placement.

The Agency will strive to develop and maintain good working relationships with referring local authorities. To this end, the Agency will be open and transparent in all relationships with local authority personnel and other key agencies and seek feedback on the effectiveness and quality of service provided. We will regularly review individual placements and the effectiveness of foster carers. The Agency became an approved Pan London Contractor on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2006 - this consortium represents all London councils and some local authorities close to the capital. The Agency became an approved Eastern Region Provider (currently Essex, Cambridgeshire, Southend and Thurrock Councils) provider on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008. The agency will aim to recruit and retain a high quality staff team, through good employment practice, access to regular support and supervision and development and training opportunities.

Likewise, the Agency will seek to recruit and retain a high quality team of foster carers, to reflect the needs, age range and diversity of children likely to be referred to the Agency.

The Agency will use its best endeavours to satisfy regulatory requirements and keep abreast of practice and service developments, through the use of external audit and membership of important networks such as local consortia, the Foster Talk, Coram/BAAF and Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP).

### **The Fostering Panel**

The Agency will recruit, administer, support and provide ongoing training of a Fostering Panel for the approval and review of foster and short breaks carers.

The agency fostering panel consists of individuals with the relevant qualities, skills and experience. They are independent and ensure a positive and rigorous contribution. Panel includes individuals with knowledge and experience of:

- Living in foster care
- Being a foster carer for a Local Authority or independent fostering service
- Care planning for looked after children
- Education of looked after children
- Health & wellbeing of looked after children
- Meeting the needs of disabled children and their carers
- Development of support services to younger children and their carers
- Assessing and supporting foster carers
- Being a son or daughter of a foster carer

### **Legal Remit of the Fostering Panel**

- To consider each application for approval of prospective foster carers having reviewed all the information gathered during the assessment, and to recommend whether or not a person(s) is suitable to be a foster carer.



- To recommend the terms of approval: for example, the age range, gender and numbers of children, and the type of fostering (short term, permanent respite etc.)
- To consider the first annual review of the foster carer's approval and subsequent reviews where there are issues of concern in relation to standards of care or safeguarding, and to make recommendations regarding whether or not the foster carers remain suitable to act as such. It should be noted that this agency has sight of all subsequent foster carers beyond the first year as a quality assurance measure.
- To consider any changes to a foster carer's approval and make recommendations.
- To make recommendations on termination of a foster carer's approval
- To consider any cases referred to it following written representations from a prospective foster carer or current foster carer subsequent to a qualifying determination issued by the decision maker, and to make any further recommendations, as appropriate

The Fostering Panel may request the agency provide any relevant information or other assistance as it considers necessary. Fostering People Too will obtain and provide the information and assistance requested, as far as reasonably practical.

The Fostering Panel shall also:

- Provide a quality assurance function in relation to the conduct of the assessment process – in particular:
  - To monitor and review the work of the assessor
  - To provide feedback to individual assessors, managers and the agency
  - To identify problems
  - To ensure there is consistency of approach in assessment across the agency, and compliance with policy and procedures
  - To ensure that the assessment process is fair to all applicants and the reports have been completed in a thorough and rigorous way.
- Advise on, and monitor the effectiveness of, the procedures for undertaking reviews of foster carers
- Monitor the matching of children to foster carers, including the range and type of foster carers available to the agency in comparison with the needs of the children and young people referred;
- Receive information about allegations, child protection investigations and complaints in relation to foster carers approved by the agency and monitor the agency's response;
- Receive management information about the outcome of foster carer's annual reviews;
- Produce an annual report covering and evaluating the fostering panel's work;
- To provide advice and make recommendations on any other matters or cases referred to the panel by the agency.

Additionally, the Fostering Panel has an important role in contributing to the development of practice and of the service as a whole.

The panel can only make recommendations; the Decision Maker makes the final decision. The Responsible Individual is a Director of the agency and social work qualified. This process takes between five to ten working days.

## **Services**

### Fostering

Our aim is to provide a range of quality family placements for children and young people. We are committed to building strong working relationships with our foster carers and providing a high level of support in recognition of the essential role they play in children's lives.

Many of the foster carers provide a welcome period of stability for children whilst their placement needs and options for their futures are being assessed. Foster carers play an important part in that assessment.

We provide:

- An experienced fostering team committed to providing a high level of support that is reflected in our low disruption rate for children.
- A diverse and experienced range of foster carers, well supported, with ongoing development and training and an independent reviewing process
- A range of foster placements for children and young people from 0-18 years and parent and child(ren). It should be noted that if the parent is over 18 years they will not be covered by the Fostering Regulations. Full 24 hour emergency advice and support.
- Speedy and efficient response to referrals of children, but always carefully planned and monitored placements.
- Staying Put arrangements for young people over 18 years who wish to remain with their carers during the transition to adulthood.
- A working contract that sets out clear expectations, roles and responsibilities.
- Agency presence at CLA reviews and planning meetings.
- Competitive fees and reductions for more than one child.

### Additional Services

We are also able to provide a range of other services, including:

- Parent and child assessments.
- Life Story Work - helping children to make some sense of their life experiences to date.
- Assessment of children's future placement needs.
- Kinship assessments - are birth families able to resume care?
- Helping children to understand what is being planned for them and preparing them for placement.

- Independent chairing of Planning, CLA Reviews and disruption meetings, for children not placed with FP2 carers.
- Supervision/transport of birth family contacts.
- Helping children to make sense of life experiences and preparing them for future placements.

Our services are cost effective and consistently child-centred.

## **Foster Carers**

### Applicants to Foster

Applicants wishing to be approved as foster or short break carers will be considered irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or marital status, providing the Agency believes that they can provide a suitable environment for the care and nurture of a child or family group.

The Agency will not discriminate against applicants on the grounds of age or marital status. The law requires that applicants be over the age of 21.

The Agency will ensure that recruitment campaigns aim to reach all groups in the community, in order to ensure that carers are recruited to meet the diverse needs of children.

The Agency does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of medical grounds, but applicants should understand that general good physical and mental health is a key requirement of the assessment and approval process.

The Agency does not exclude smokers as potential foster or short break carers; however, it has a policy of not placing babies and children under five years of age or those with medical problems that may be exacerbated by smoking with people who smoke, as it has been shown that passive smoking adversely affects children's health.

All applicants will be treated with respect and in a courteous manner. They will be included and participate in all decision making in respect of their application. They will be able to ask for and receive an honest assessment of and feedback on their ability to undertake the fostering or short breaks task.

All applicants will be encouraged to attend the Agency's Fostering Panel when their application is being considered. This provides the applicants and the Panel with the opportunity to discuss their application in greater detail

All applicants will be expected to attend preparation training prior to their assessment being presented to the Fostering Panel.

Approval categories of foster carers will most usually separate those children and young people who are being cared for on a short term basis and those who will stay with foster carers for the remainder of the childhood i.e. long term fostering. We acknowledge that some carers, who may initially be approved as short term carers, may decide they would like to offer a long term commitment to the right child. The agency would support such a plan if this was believed to be in the best interest of an individual child(ren).

Fostering People Too recognises parent and child arrangements as a highly skilled fostering task and will undertake a thorough assessment process of the carers who would consider having parent and child foster placement in order to assess their specific skills and abilities and help them reflect about the specifics of the task. It will also include discussions in the assessment phase about what risk management might entail, and whether the potential foster carer will feel able to undertake this aspect of the role as well as the increased risks and how these can best be managed.

### Post Approval Ongoing Training

Following approval, the agency will provide opportunities for foster carers to demonstrate that they reach the standards as laid out in the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers. For new carers these need to be completed within one year of approval. Supervising Social Worker will assist carers in providing the opportunities and evidence to show that they meet the standards. They will identify training and development needs and help carers in planning training for the year.

Foster carers are expected to undertake a minimum amount of core and specialist training each year in order to meet the Fostering Service Standards.

The agency is strongly committed to promoting training for foster carers and to developing more training opportunities for foster carers. An annual training programme is produced and sent regularly to all foster carers.

In addition foster carers can request alternative courses, or their Supervising Social Worker could recommend them to attend a course that would be particularly relevant for their circumstances.

A record of training is kept on the foster carer file and will form part of their annual review.

To encourage maximum attendance at training events, the agency schedules in some training days on Saturdays and provides crèche facilities and child related activities for the children and young people placed within the agency.

Courses on the training schedule include:

- First Aid
- Food Hygiene and faith foods

- Conflict resolution
- Impact of trauma on children and those caring for them
- Sex Education and exploitation
- Attachment, trauma and resilience
- Safeguarding
- Radicalisation
- Fostering Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children

### Support to Foster Carers

- Generous fees and expenses that reflect the nature and task of fostering.
- Weekly allowance for child 0-8 years of £371 and for child over 9 years £420.
- Annual holiday allowance.
- Respite allowance to help carers recharge their batteries.
- Additional travel expenses for out of the ordinary journeys.
- Regular individual supervision and support sessions with an experienced social worker who is available for support and advice at other times.
- A foster care handbook.
- Monthly support group meetings.
- Ongoing programme of training and self development - all approved carers are required to undertake ongoing training with the aim of continuing to develop their knowledge and skills.
- Where additional training needs are identified we will access and fund it.
- A social worker available to give advice and support outside normal office hours (24 hours)
- Membership of Foster Talk
- Access to a range of expert advice when necessary.
- Practical help and support with administrative tasks.
- Regular informal events with other foster carers.
- Help in completing initial post approval training.
- Foster carers annual review will generally be chaired by an independent person to enhance objectivity and ensure you have a say.

### Supervision of Foster Carers

All approved foster carers receive regular individual supervision and support sessions with an experienced social worker who is available for support and advice at other times.

All approved foster carers will be reviewed at least annually, but this may be more frequently due to changes in circumstances, in order to ensure their continued suitability and appropriate use. We use independent reviewing social workers to undertake annual household reviews.

Foster carers will receive clear guidance on household and childcare standards, as they are required for fostering. Agency staff will speedily attend to any breach of these

standards and areas of significant concern will be referred to the Fostering Panel. This may result in termination of approval of foster carers.

Whilst the safety, health and emotional well-being of children and young people is the main focus of the Agency, other areas of attention include household cleanliness and safety, the number and types of animals kept, sleeping arrangements in terms of sharing by unrelated children and by adults and children. No dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act may be kept in a foster home.

### Working in Partnership

In order to meet the needs of children, a great deal of tolerance and courtesy towards parents is required, in even the most difficult of circumstances. The Agency will encourage the local authority towards clear and concise contact plans underpinned by a written agreement.

The Agency will do their utmost to support and protect any foster carers who are harassed or harmed as a direct result of their fostering activities.

Foster carers must report any significant changes to the child's circumstances or progress to the Agency. Any child protection concerns must be notified to the Agency immediately and the relevant child protection procedures will be followed.

Foster Carers will have access to the Agency's *Complaints Policy and Procedure* and the contact number of Ofsted will be made available to them.

### Complaints & Outcomes

#### **Legislation and guidance**

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 regulation 18 sets out the statutory requirement for fostering agencies to establish a written procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children placed by the agency and foster carers approved by them. If the complaint is about a service directly provided by the agency then the Complaints and Representations Procedure should be used. National Minimum Standard 25 states that fostering services should have a written policy and procedural guidelines on considering and responding to representations and complaints.

The Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services states that everyone involved with the fostering service, including fostered children and their families, should know about the complaints and representations policy and how to use it. Children and young people will still have the right to access to, and representation by, an independent advocate through their local authority and should be advised accordingly. Information about the complaints procedure must be included in the children's guide to the fostering service.

This is in addition to the requirement under section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989 for every local authority to establish a representations and complaints procedure. The placing local authority has a legal duty to investigate any complaint about its own services – including the social worker, care plan or contact arrangements – and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 amended the Children Act 1989 to require it to make an advocacy service available to that child to assist them to make a representation. The statutory framework is set out in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and the related statutory guidance.<sup>1</sup>

## **Principles**

Fostering People Too believes that foster carers, children and young people have a fundamental right to have their views heard and to be taken notice of in the development of the service. These views may be in form of a complaint about the service, constructive ideas for how to improve the service or in the form of a compliment about how a service was delivered.

All comments, compliments and complaints provide vital information to inform the future policy, planning and development of the service as well as identifying the areas of the service which are successful and valued. They help to identify any gaps in service provision and should lead to the development of better services. When something goes particularly well, or particularly badly, we need you to let us know that we can repeat successes and correct mistakes. Your comments and complaints are an essential part of this process.

## **Who can comment, compliment or complain?**

Any child, foster carer, member of staff, family member or indeed any person who has had an involvement with Fostering People Too is entitled to comment about the quality of any of the services, whether positive or negative. A foster carer, relative or friend can also do so on a young person's behalf.

A comment or complaint may be in respect of such things as: quality of communication, staff behaviour or attitude, decisions we have made, support for carers or children, or quality of care in the home.

If the matter is urgent e.g. a Child Protection issue, an allegation, or an incident involving the child's health and safety, call the office or the Fostering People Too out of office hours number directly – 07545 973038 or 07775 330549.

## **Complaints by or on behalf of children and young persons**

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<sup>1</sup> Getting the Best from Complaints: social care complaints and representations for children, young people and others, DCSF 2006

Any looked after child or young person may complain about an aspect of their care to their placing authority, whose own complaints procedure will be available to the child via the social worker. However, if the complaint made to the placing authority relates to an aspect of the service provided by Fostering People Too, agreement will be reached with the placing authority about which agency will investigate the complaint.

When a complaint is made directly to Fostering People Too by or on behalf of a child, the placing authority social worker will be informed.

Complaints may be made by the child, foster carer, parent, social worker, friend, relative or Fostering People Too staff member. The complaint may concern any aspect of the service received from Fostering People Too. Our **Children's Guide** contains written information on how to make complaints, including the availability of independent support and advice.

Children will be assured that their complaints will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and they will receive written notification of the outcome.

Children will be reassured that by making a complaint they will not be subjected to any form of punishment or reprisal.

### **Complaints by a foster carer**

Complaints may be made to Fostering People Too about any aspect of the service received from Fostering People Too. The complainant will receive written acknowledgment of the complaint and details of the planned investigation. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Stages set out below.

No person who makes a complaint will be subject to any form of recrimination or reprisal.

All Fostering People Too foster carers are members of Foster Talk who they can approach to seek independent advice and support.

### **Informal Stage**

We hope that most things someone is concerned about can be settled by speaking to the person they normally deal with in Fostering People Too, and this is the informal route we would like people to try first.

For non-urgent matters, we would always encourage someone to talk with their Fostering People Too supervising social worker or the Team Manager about any complaint that they have and try and to try to resolve the matter with them.

### **Formal Stage 1**



If someone is not satisfied with the informal response they get, or if they wish to complain formally to Fostering People Too, they can do so at any time to our Complaints Officer, who is the Registered Manager, Brendan Warner, at the Fostering People Too address. They can put their concerns in writing if they wish, or ring the Registered Manager directly.

The Registered Manager  
Fostering People Too  
Exhibit House  
Dunmow Road  
Felsted  
Essex  
CM6 3LD

Telephone: 01371 820600

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within five working days, including an indication of whether it is planned to try to resolve the complaint via internal investigation or, in the case of potentially serious complaints, to move straight to the independent investigation stage.

The Registered Manager will ensure that the complaint is investigated and that all relevant people are interviewed. This stage of the process should be completed within 28 days of the commencement of the investigation; unless it is exceptionally agreed with the complainant that this period may be extended. The Registered Manager will ensure a written report is completed, to include findings and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint. This report will be made available to the complainant.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome they may request within 28 days of the date of the dispatch of the report to them that the matter be referred to Formal Stage 2.

### **If the complaint involves the Registered Manager**

If the complaint involves the Registered Manager, then the Formal Stage 1 complaint should be directed to the Responsible Individual, Peter Turner, at the above address.

### **Formal Stage 2 – independent investigation**

A request for an independent investigation should be made in writing either to the Registered Manager or to the Responsible Individual.

The request will be acknowledged in writing within five working days, including details of the proposed investigation.

An Independent Person will be appointed to investigate the complaint. This person will be independent of Fostering People Too i.e. will not work on Fostering People Too's

behalf in any other capacity, will hold a professional social work qualification and have substantial experience in foster care.

The Independent Person will interview persons involved in the complaint and will have access to all Fostering People Too policies and procedures and, with relevant permission, access to the foster carer's and to the child/young person's files and records. They will prepare a detailed report of their investigation, including conclusions and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint. This report should be completed within 42 days of the acknowledgement letter, unless it is agreed with the complainant that this period may be extended.

The Responsible Individual will consider the Independent Person's report and write within ten days of its receipt to the complainant setting out their proposals for resolving the complaint.

Details of the investigation/proposed resolution will be available for information to the next fostering panel.

This marks the end of the complaints process. If the complainant is not happy with the final outcome or indeed at any stage of the process, they can contact Ofsted.

## **Ofsted**

Any Fostering People Too foster carer or a child/young person may choose to contact our regulator, Ofsted, directly regarding any complaint/allegation concerning the standard of service provided by Fostering People Too or a foster carer, or about the management of our service. Fostering People Too will co-operate fully with any investigation conducted by Ofsted.

Ofsted National Business Unit  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Telephone no: 0300 1231231 – general enquiries  
0300 123 4666 – concerns  
Fax: 0300 123 3159 – complaints

The Registered Manager will automatically refer any serious complaints against foster carers to Ofsted, for information, and will advise Ofsted of the outcome of any investigation.

## **Remedies**

If we make a mistake, we will apologise and try to take some practical action to put things right. We may ask the complainant to suggest what they would like us to do. We

will always try to put them back to the position they would have been in but for our mistake. We will also try to ensure that the same mistake does not happen again.

We may decide that one or more of the following can be done to put things right:

- Provide or change a service to the complainant
- Provide an explanation or information to the complainant
- Review service user literature (leaflets, website, posters and so on)
- Review a policy or procedure
- Arrange training or guidance for employees
- Make an ex-gratia payment in appropriate circumstances

### **Monitoring and quality assurance**

All complaints, representations and allegations against foster carers are monitored by the Registered Manager and reported to the Directors of Fostering People Too. Their outcomes are annually evaluated as a basis for informing future service provision. Comments and compliments are also collated, analysed and included in management reports. Information from these processes are shared with staff and the fostering panels.

### **Whistle Blowing**

Fostering People Too has a **Whistle Blowing** Policy which outlines the procedure for reporting any circumstances within the fostering service which someone considers likely to significantly harm the safety, rights or welfare of children. Fostering People Too is an open and transparent organisation that encourages its foster carers to seek advice from outside organisations if they are not satisfied with the response to any serious complaint.

### **Representations**

Foster carers and applicants to foster are entitled to make representations, in writing, or in person, to a Fostering People Too fostering panel in relation to their approval as foster carers - in instances where the agency makes a 'qualifying determination' in relation to one of the following areas:

- The agency proposes not to approve the applicants as foster carers;
- The agency proposes to change the foster carer's terms of approval;
- The agency proposes to terminate the foster carer's approval.

In these cases, the foster carer/applicant will receive a letter containing the qualifying determination and will have 28 days in which to confirm whether they wish to make representations or to refer their case for review to an independent fostering panel. The procedures in these instances are to be found in the policies on Recruitment, Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers and Resignation and Termination of Approval.

### **Related policies and documents**

- Whistle Blowing
- Recruitment, Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers
- Resignation and Termination of Approval
- Fostering Panel Functions and membership
- Children Guide

### Ofsted

Ofsted is responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting fostering services provided by both Local Authorities and independent fostering providers, under the provisions of the Care Standards 2000. The outcome of Fostering People Too's latest Inspection under this legislation can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Contact details:  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
Tel: 0300 1231231

Review of Statement of Purpose.

This document was reviewed and updated on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017. This document will be reviewed yearly no later than 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018.