

FAMILY CARE

FOSTERING



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2016 / 2017

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This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance which includes:

- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and 2014 Amendments
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act: Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011 and 2013 Amendments

Other relevant legislation includes:

- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 1989
- UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

This Statement of Purpose, in accordance with Fostering Regulation 3, gives an overview of the aims, objectives and principles of Family Care Fostering and the services and support that we provide to our staff, foster carers and the children and young people in their care, including:

- How we will achieve good outcomes for children and young people
- How we recruit, assess, train and support our foster carers
- How we are managed and how we support staff

A copy of this statement is made available to anyone who is involved with Family Care, including:

- Ofsted
- Any person working with or for Family Care
- Children & Young People looked after by Family Care (a children and young person's version of the Statement of Purpose is available)
- Parents or guardians of any children and young people placed
- Our approved and prospective Foster Carers
- Local Authorities and purchasers of our services

The Statement of Purpose is also published on our website (www.family-care.co.uk). It is reviewed and updated regularly by our Leadership Team. This Statement of Purpose was last reviewed by our Group Operations Director on 04 November 2016.

'To help children and young people achieve their full potential.'

Family Care Fostering is the foster care division of the Family Care Group, established in 1988 initially delivering 'residential childcare'. Our fostering service was set up in 2004 to provide our own pathway to a foster family for children and young people accessing care in our children's homes - those whom we believed would benefit from being part of a family. Such was the success of those placements and in light of repeated requests from Local Authorities, we soon expanded that service to enable Local Authorities to refer direct.

Our vision is to grow Family Care responsibly, to match the changing demands of our partner Local Authorities, whilst providing very high levels of support for staff, Foster Carers and the children and young people in our care.

Our fostering team works closely with our other services; residential, education, therapy and training. We are proud of the high rate of success we have in making and sustaining placements.

Family Care Fostering Aims:

- To carefully match the children and young people who are referred to us with our Foster Carers, their own children and other children or young people already in placement.
- To ensure children and young people placed with us have a stable and consistent experience of a safe, warm, family life which help them to reach their potential.
- Provide our own therapeutic service including access to regular 'drop in' sessions with one of our qualified Therapists and/or a consultant Clinical Psychologist, to ensure that Foster Carers are well advised and have the necessary skills to meet the needs of the child or young person in their care.
- To have a fostering service where partnership, professionalism, respect, integrity and fairness is central to all we do.
- To be child centred in our approach by investing heavily in the children and young people that we look after on the Local Authority's behalf.
- To demonstrate commitment and support to all our Foster Carers. This is achieved via their own allocated Supervising Social Worker and Support Worker, including regular supervision sessions, 'team around the child' meetings and 24/7 support.
- Ensure children and young people and Foster Carers' own children have access to our Support Workers who undertake direct work, group activities, holiday activities and residential holidays.
- To value diversity in all aspects of our work.
- Train all our Staff and Foster Carers well and provide a package of personal development, including a diploma level qualification for Foster Carers.

Senior Manager objectives:

- Steering strategic vision and development
- Developing the organisation in line with national requirements and best practice
- Maintaining a child focused annual business plan
- Integrating new guidance and research into practice
- Upholding our values and principles
- Ensuring legal compliance, responsibility in financial matters and quality assurance
- Monitoring outcomes
- Meeting targets

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STATUS & CONSTITUTION

We are committed to providing consistently high standards of care to all children and young people and our experience of working with children and young people in residential, education and fostering environments allows us to support a range of different, 'needs led' placements that can meet the diverse and individual, often complex needs of these children and young people.

Family Care Fostering is a family owned company and is registered under the Companies Act 1985 (Company Registration Number 7990947).

Family Care Fostering is registered with and inspected by Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education) and our Unique Reference Number is SC450903.

Family Care Fostering is also part of the Family Care Group which also has:

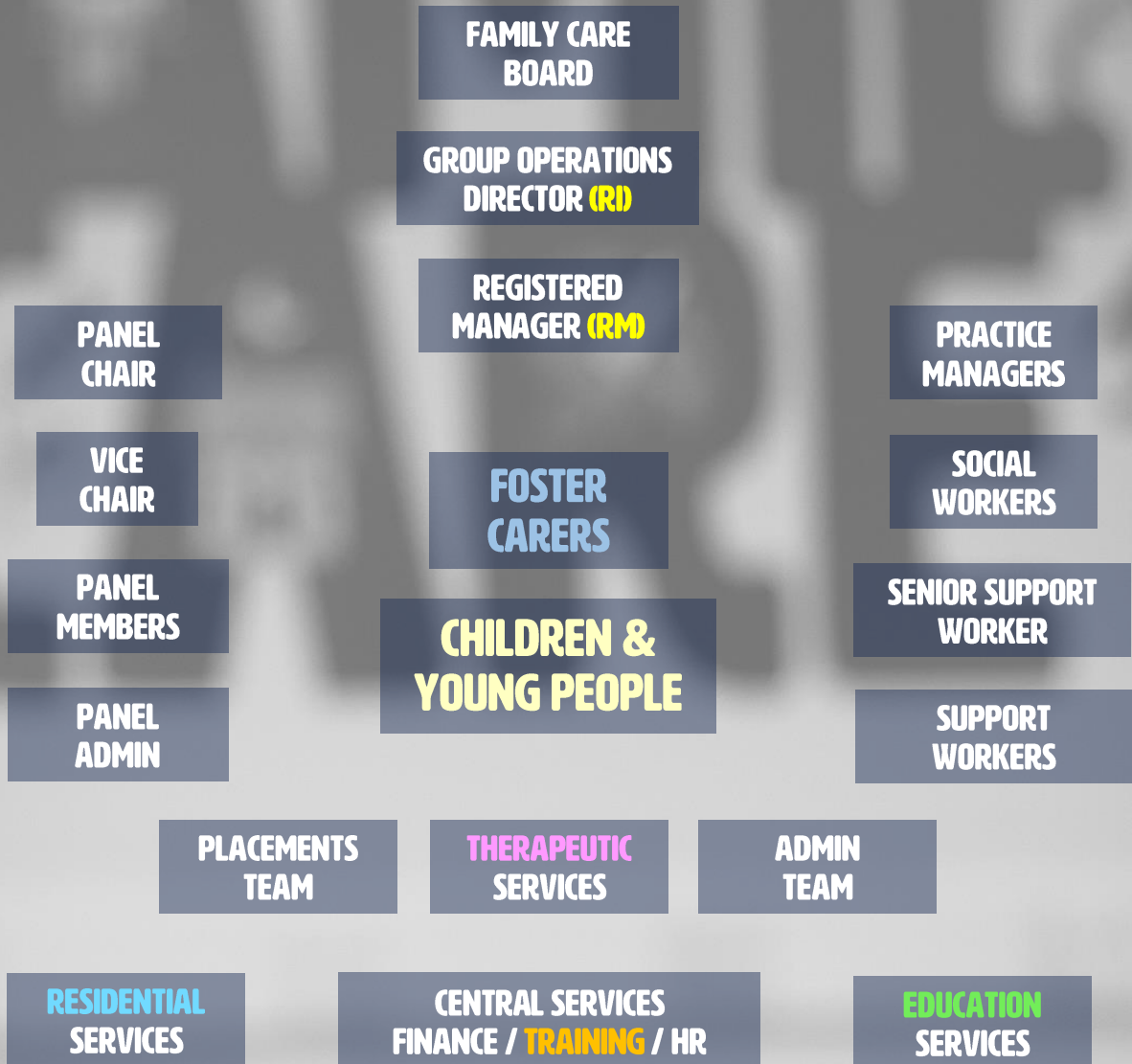
- Residential Services
- Education Services
- Therapeutic Services
- Training Services

In addition, Family Care Fostering is:

- An approved provider on fostering contracts throughout the North West, West Midlands and East Midlands providing placements for a growing number of Local Authorities
- An Investors in People organisation
- A member of The Fostering Network
- A member of Coram BAAF and Foster Talk
- A member of NAFP (Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers)

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ORGANISATION STRUCTURE



Family Care Fostering has one Registered Office which it shares with some of the Family Care Group 'Central Services'.

There is regular communication at all levels of the organisation and in particular between the Group Operations Director, the Registered Manager and the Senior management team. Regular meetings include:

- Team meetings (monthly)
- Smaller team meetings (weekly)
- Management meetings (monthly)
- Board meetings (monthly)
- Staff supervisions and appraisals
- Foster Carer Support Groups
- Children and Young Person's Council
- Children and Young Peoples Consultation Events
- Training events
- Panel meetings

Group Operations Director and Responsible Individual

In addition to his experience in residential services, Andrew O'Reilly (DipHE (SW) Open, Social Work 1999 – 2002) our 'Responsible Individual' has line managed fostering services across Derbyshire, Humberside, Gloucestershire and London.

Andrew has sound operational experience within the foster care sector, where he has experience of leading on marketing & recruitment to aid regional growth. He was also instrumental in setting up a Fostering Panel in the North and has operated as a Panel member himself.

Andrew has extensive experience in children and young people's social care, notably as National Service Manager, Regional Manager and Operations Manager in his career prior to joining Family Care.

Staff

All Family Care Fostering staff are appropriately checked in accordance with the Fostering Regulations 2011 and have the relevant and appropriately recognised qualifications and experience. In addition to this, many of our staff have specialist qualifications and experience. All our Social Work staff and therapists are registered with the HCPC and other recognised bodies. The agency deliberately employs a wide variety of individuals who have a diverse range of experiences within this and other sectors. This allows us to meet the differing needs of our Foster Carers and children and young people in placement.

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MONITORING

The quality and performance of Family Care Fostering is reviewed routinely. This includes internal and external audits, questionnaires and the regular supervision of staff and Foster Carers.

The Registered Manager and other senior managers regularly monitor the performance of staff, Foster Carers, the progress of children and young people, outcomes reached by children and young people and the effectiveness of matching and Placement Plans. Where required, action is taken and feedback is provided through different meetings and forums.

Management Reports are completed monthly, allowing regular oversight of the quality of the service in all key areas.

We hold regular consultation events with Foster Carers and children and young people in placement. The feedback from these events is shared with the Registered Manager under Schedule 6 of the Fostering Service Regulations and reports under Regulation 35 are produced.

Foster Carers produce written recordings for children and young people in their care.

School attendance and achievement is regularly reviewed by senior managers.

Local Authority monitoring requirements are fully complied with, as are Ofsted monitoring requirements.

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SAFEGUARDING & COMPLIANCE

The overarching aim of our Safeguarding policies and procedures is to keep children and young people safe and protected from abuse and harm. All staff and Foster Carers are aware of, adhere to and know their responsibilities in relation to the procedures. All safeguarding issues are dealt with promptly and in accordance with legal and locally agreed procedure.

Our safeguarding procedures are shared with Local Authorities through the tendering process and upon request. This satisfies Local Authorities that Family Care have policies and procedures are compliant and compatible with multi agency approaches to safeguarding children and young people.

All staff, volunteers and Foster Carers are vetted rigorously, in line with legal regulations and company policy and procedures.

Family Care Fostering meet all the requirements of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. Our compliance with the above

legislation and guidance is monitored by Ofsted who usually inspect Family Care Fostering once every 3-year cycle.

7 **SUPPORT & SUPERVISION**

It is essential that Foster Carers receive the highest quality of support from Family Care Fostering. Every Foster Carer is allocated a Supervising Social Worker who offers regular support and supervision to Foster Carers.

All Foster Carers receive 24-hour support from a duty and/or on-call worker who is a member of the Fostering team.

All Foster Carers receive regular training to ensure they can fulfil their role. Each Foster Carer will have their own training plan; this is specific to the child or young person they are caring for and is designed to enable Foster Carers to meet the needs of children placed.

All Foster Carers have access to Foster Carer Support Groups. Support Groups are regular opportunities to meet with other Foster Carers, share experiences and learn from each other. This often leads to an extended support network for Foster Carers.

Support Workers are available to provide one to one direct work with children and young people including Foster Carers' birth children. In addition to this, our Support Services provide activities and events for all children, including birth children during every school holiday.

Where appropriate, additional support is available from one of our therapists. The Family Care Group has a Therapeutic Services Team. Qualified therapists are allocated to each team. Our therapists advise and support staff and Foster Carers on how best to meet the individual needs of children and young people in placement.

Family Care Fostering also has access to other highly respected professionals including clinical psychologists who we use for support and guidance when needed.

Education support and advice is available from the teaching staff at Access School - Family Care's SEN School in rural Shropshire. As an organisation, we are committed to creating foster placements that provide a stable, supportive environment from which children and young people can take full advantage of educational opportunities. By working as a team, we can provide support to children and young people to gain and maintain school placements as well as being able to give advice, guidance and support to Supervising Social Worker's and Foster Carers about problems that can occur when children placed with Foster Carers access education.

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CONFIDENTIALITY & INFORMATION REQUESTS

Foster Carers are given all information about the children or young people placed with them and they receive the necessary training in matters of data protection, confidentiality and appropriate information sharing.

Staff and Foster Carers are vigilant and conscientious in their attention to data protection and confidentiality. To this end, we operate an online data management system in order that no paperwork is misplaced.

Records relating to children, young people, Foster Carers and staff are kept in accordance with the current legislative requirements. Any request for information in accordance with the guidance in the Data Protection Act 1998 is given due consideration.

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POLICIES & PROCEDURES

All policies and procedures are available online. Policies and procedures are kept up to date with legislative and regulatory changes and good practice guidance. The policies and procedures provide information for Foster Carers on matters such as safeguarding, health, education, and record keeping.

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INFO FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

In accordance with the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards, Family Care Fostering have produced a Children and Young Peoples' guide which is given to all children and young people when they enter our care (subject to their age and understanding). The guide can be made available in alternative languages & formats if needed.

Our Support Workers explain the contents of the guide along with their role when children and young people enter placement. Support Workers ensure children and young people know who they can talk to and how they can complain if they wish to do so. Relevant contact details are given in the guides.

Wherever possible, information pertaining to the fostering household is given to children and young people prior to the placement being made.

Family Care Fostering is committed to the training and development of all its staff and management. This allows staff and managers to keep abreast of regulatory changes and best practice models.

Family Care Fostering is fully committed to and supports the principles of equal opportunities in employment and practice. Family Care embraces diversity and promotes equality of opportunity for all.

Family Care opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of:

- Age
- Race
- Nationality
- Ethnic or national origins
- Religious beliefs (or non-beliefs)
- Disability
- Gender or gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Marital/Civil partnership status
- Pregnancy and maternity/paternity

Any form of discrimination or discriminatory behaviour will be challenged and dealt with appropriately.

Family Care Fostering strives to ensure that its commitment to equality of opportunity is embedded in the day to day practices of all staff who work with children, young people, Foster Carers, customers and other stakeholders.

A more detailed Equal Opportunities Policy is held within the organisation's main policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are reviewed regularly. We also ensure that this policy statement operates in practice and that all children, young people, Foster Carers and employees are given equal opportunities.

RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL

Family Care Fostering utilises various tools and channels to recruit a diverse range of Foster Carers. Once an individual or family contact us, a member of the team spends time explaining about fostering and the children and young people we care for. We also establish the individual or family's motivation to foster and we explore their relevant experience and skills. Following this, basic details are obtained to establish whether there are any factors which could prevent the individual or family proceeding to the next stage. This decision is based upon factors such as criminal record, medical history, physical factors relating to the home, references, relationships and previous employment.

Based on the initial phone call we decide whether to undertake an initial visit. An initial visit is usually carried out by a manager or senior member of staff and provides the applicant/s with the opportunity to learn more about fostering with Family Care. Following this visit, the manager will decide whether Family Care Fostering proposes to commence an assessment. Should anyone be denied at this stage they will be told of the reasons for this decision.

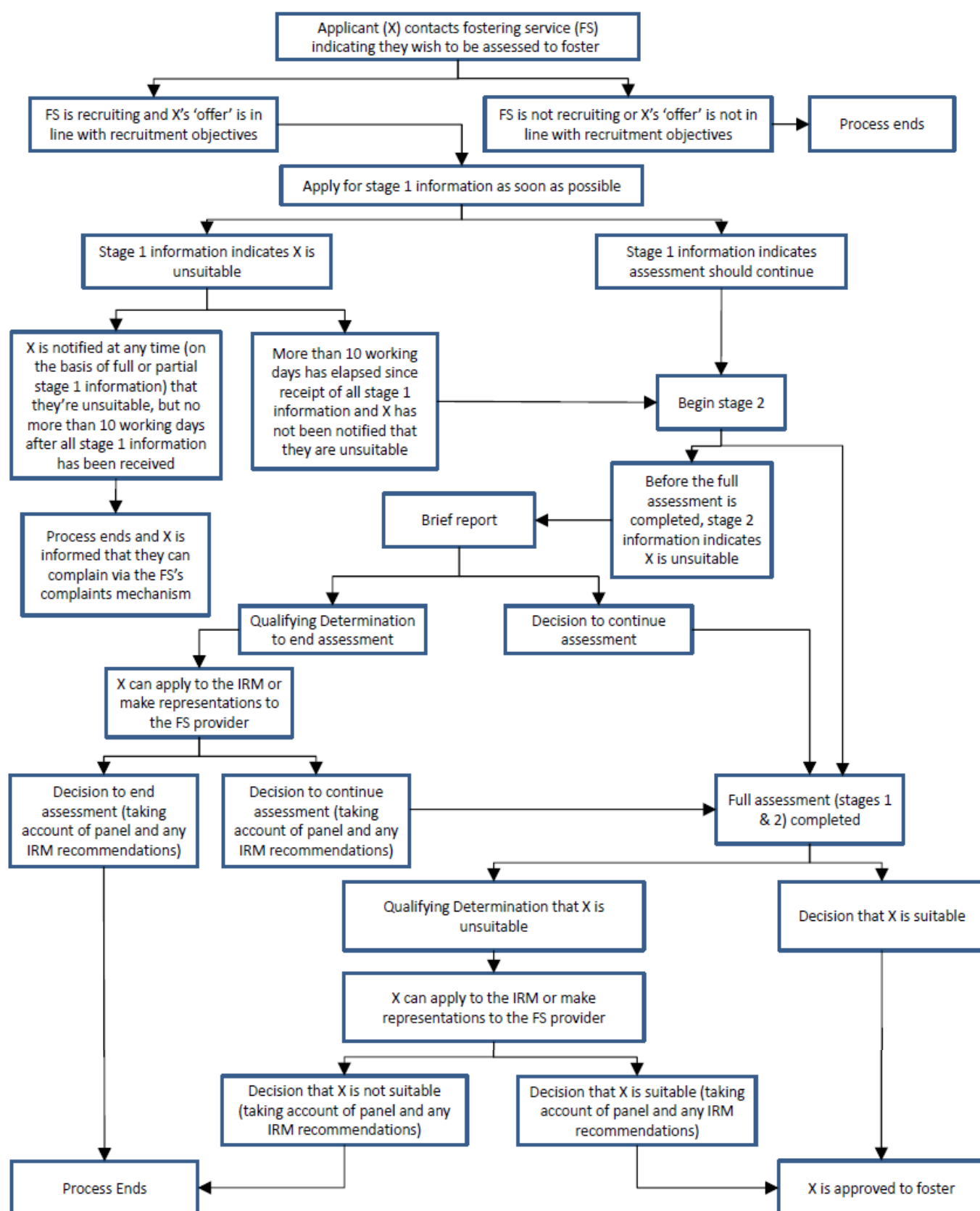
Assessments are carried out by a qualified Social Worker using the Fostering Network Form F assessment template. The assessment follows Stage 1 and Stage 2 (see flow chart on the next page). The flowchart illustrates how stages 1 & 2 of the assessment process fit together. It is not intended to cover all actions Family Care Fostering must undertake as part of the process.

During the assessment, the following checks and references will be undertaken (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check
- Local Authority Check
- Employment Check (including voluntary work and any work with children or vulnerable adults)
- School or Health Visitor Check (own children)
- Medical Report/s
- 6 Personal References (at least 2 will be interviewed by the Assessing Social Worker)
- Overseas Checks
- Ex-partner Checks
- Own children check and interviews
- Health & Safety check including pets

Once the Assessing Social Worker has completed an assessment their manager will quality assure the report and highlight any areas that need further attention. Once this is done, the prospective carers will read the report and sign prior to submission to the Fostering Panel.

STAGE 1 & STAGE 2 – FOSTER CARER ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL PROCESS



NB - This diagram illustrates how stages 1 & 2 of the assessment process fit together. It is not intended to cover all actions a FS must undertake as part of the process - FSs must refer to the regulations and statutory guidance for this information. It should be noted that at any point in the process applicants (1) can withdraw, in which case the process ends; and (2) can complain to the FS (and must be informed of their right to do so if they are turned down in stage 1).

The assessment is then circulated to Panel Members. At the Panel meeting, the information will be presented by the Assessing Social Worker. The applicants are also invited to give their views or any comments on the application process and/or the reports.

The Panel will consider the written report together with all the supporting documentation and any additional information presented verbally and make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker regarding the outcome of the assessment, including where approval is recommended, the category of fostering recommended. If a decision is made not to approve, the applicants will be advised that if they wish to challenge the decision, they have a right to submit representations within 28 days of the date of the written notice of the decision to the Agency Decision Maker. In addition, as an alternative, they may exercise the right to apply to the Secretary of State to request a review of the decision by an Independent Review Panel under the Independent Review Mechanism. Any such application must be made in writing within 28 days of the decision and supported by reasons.

Where it is decided at Stage One of the assessment process that the applicant is not suitable to become a foster carer, there is no right to have the case reviewed under the Independent Review Mechanism.

REFERRALS & MATCHING

Our referral system is designed to obtain full and accurate information about the child or young person to ensure careful matching. Information about proposed Foster Carers will be provided to the referring Local Authority to consider whether the carers can reasonably be expected to meet the child or young person's assessed needs, considering the impact of the proposed placement on existing members of the household.

The matching process considers the child or young person's needs especially regarding the following key areas:

- Education
- Expectations around contact with the child's family or significant others
- Identity/race/culture/religion
- The child's history
- The child's behaviour
- The child's health
- The aim of the placement

The matching process also considers the carer's availability and in particular:

- Their experience
- Their strengths
- Their location and the distance from the foster home to the child's school
- Any other children in placement
- The foster carers' own children and other family members

If there are any gaps identified between the needs of the child/young person and the foster carer's ability to meet them an action plan should be agreed to see if any of the outstanding issues can be resolved, such as further training, support with transportation etc.

Family Care Fostering will not propose a placement if the assessed needs of the child or young person cannot, with support, be provided by the proposed foster carers.

At the point of referral (or in the case of an emergency as soon as possible), Family Care Fostering requires:

- A completed referral form
- All Children Looked After documentation including Care Plan, Placement Plan, Medical Consent/ Delegated Authority
- Any other relevant information e.g. previous CLA reports, educational psychologist report.

Standard 15 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards requires a written Foster Placement Agreement to contain specific reference to elements of the matching which took place in agreeing the placement. An additional planning meeting should be held within 72 hours of a child/young person being placed to consider the continued appropriateness of the placement and to make detailed plans. Foster Carers are involved in devising and agreeing Placement Plans.

TYPES OF PLACEMENTS OFFERED

Short Term

This can be anything from a couple of days to a couple of years! Short term placements often occur whilst a Local Authority is making decisions about the future of a child or young person.

Long Term

Most long-term placements are made to take the child or young person through to adulthood. Most children or young people will remain with their Foster Carers up to their 18th birthday but sometimes their 16th birthday if they chose to seek independence at this time. Occasionally a Local Authority will make a placement for longer where it is appropriate to the young person's needs and the Local Authority will continue to take financial responsibility for them.

More recently 'Staying Put' has been introduced which allows young people who reach the age of 18 years to remain with their Foster Carers' under 'Staying Put' arrangements. 'Staying Put' has been introduced as Local Authorities recognised the age of leaving home among the UK population is rising and the transition to adulthood is becoming increasingly complex. Further to this, research and evidence highlights that where children in care experience an extended transition more akin to their peers, outcomes improve and the experience is more normative.

Emergency Admissions

These normally occur the same day a referral is made to Family Care Fostering. A large proportion of the referrals we receive are for same day placements either due to Court Orders or a disruption in the child's existing placement.

Parent and Child

At times, it may be necessary to provide additional support and security to new parent/s and their babies or child. Previously this has been for teenage parents but increasingly this includes slightly older parent/s. Parent's need Foster Carers who can teach and encourage them without taking over the parental responsibilities during a placement. We only consider these placements for Foster Carers who have received specific training in this area, ensuring that the Foster Carers have the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful at this complex task.

Solo Placements

There are children and young people whose needs are such that they should not be placed with another 'foster child' or often any children at all.

Sibling Placements

Brothers and sisters are often best placed together and we have many referrals for sibling placements. Siblings groups are normally 2 or 3 children.

Multiple Placements

A second (or third) unrelated child/young person can be placed with a Foster Carer. Another child or young person will not be placed where this is assessed contrary to the best interests of the child or young person already living with the Foster Carer. Consent must be given from all responsible Local Authorities for further children or young people to be placed in the household and careful matching will always take place prior to a placement being made.

Direct Work

In addition to Social Work support, Family Care Fostering also has a Support Service. Our support team play a very 'hands on' supportive role in ensuring placement stability. Our support workers complete outreach work, one to one direct work with children and young people (often under the supervision of our therapists) as well as group activities and days out.

Activity days, consultation events, and children/young people forums and councils are organised on a regular basis. Holiday events and activities are available for all foster children and young people as well as birth children up to the age of 18 years.

Contact

For many children, relationships with family members, previous carers, friends and others are valued. Contact can be very important in helping children and young people develop their sense of identity and understand their lives.

Wherever possible and appropriate, children and young people are encouraged and supported to maintain contact with their parents and siblings and anyone with 'parental responsibility' who is not a parent, siblings, any relative, friend or another person connected with the child.

Such contacts should be consistent with the child's Care Plan which must take account of any Child Protection Plan or Contact Order that may be in force.

Contact arrangements should be focused on, and shaped around, the child's needs. The child's welfare is always the paramount consideration and each child's wishes and needs for contact should be individually considered and regularly assessed. The wishes and feelings of the child should be ascertained, wherever possible, using advocacy and communication services if necessary.

Foster Carers are supported to facilitate contact for the child or young person. Where needed and when supervision of contact is required, Family Care Fostering staff can facilitate this to support the child or young person and provide security and support through what, for some children and young people, can be a difficult and emotionally challenging experience.

Independent Support for Foster Carers

All approved Foster Carers are provided with full, paid membership to Foster Talk, which provides Foster Carers with a wealth of independent advice and support about practice, legal and finance matters. Further to this, there are exclusive offers and benefits for Foster Carers.

Respite

Foster Carers are entitled to 14 days paid respite allowance each year. They may use this respite, or receive the equivalent monies if the respite is not taken. Prior to agreeing any respite Family Care will ascertain respite is in the best interests of the child or young person. Children and young people will be encouraged to go on respite to appropriately checked family members of the Foster Carers or Family Care respite carers.

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TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Our training is delivered in a group and one to one setting as well as in a classroom setting and online. This is designed to meet the individual needs of our Foster Carers. The following list is not exhaustive but gives a flavour of some of the courses we offer our Foster Carers.

Induction & Mandatory Training

- TSD Induction and Foundation Standards
- Safeguarding
- Positive care and control including de-escalation
- Safe Care
- Food Hygiene
- Health & Safety
- Fire Safety
- Handling Medication
- Recording & reporting
- Child Sexual Exploitation

- Radicalisation
- E-Safety
- Secure Base
- Valuing Diversity
- First Aid

Personal Development (a sample of)

- Child development & attachment
- Understanding & working with challenging behaviour
- Introduction to therapeutic services
- Life Story work
- Sex and relationship education
- Dealing with complaints, children's rights and advocacy
- Supporting family contact and friendships
- Transitions and endings
- Promoting good health and wellbeing
- Understand and working with self-harm and self-injurious behaviour
- Preventing bullying behaviour
- Level 3 Diploma

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COMPLAINTS

A child or young person, parent, Foster Carer or anyone else for whom Family Care Fostering has agreed to provide a service can make a complaint.

Individuals are also able to make complaints on behalf of others if it is considered they have "sufficient interest" to do so.

Children and young people will be encouraged to take up issues in the most appropriate way and they will be supported to do this. If it is possible to identify a way forward with a complaint which is informal and therefore easily resolved, this should be the best way forward.

It is the responsibility of Foster Carers' and staff to help children and young people to make their complaints sympathetically and actively, whether the complaint is about Family Care Fostering or a placing Local Authority.

Anyone making a complaint is also able to withdraw their complaint at any stage.

Family Care Fostering complaints policy and procedure is available on request. Family Care Fostering has three stages to its complaint procedure but it is committed to trying to resolve conflicts and concerns at Stage One wherever possible. However, in the interests of transparency and a commitment to individual interests/rights, individuals can complain at Stage Two in the first instance if they so wish. The agency will ensure that complainants are kept up to date regarding

the progress of their complaint. If any complainant is not satisfied at any stage, they may and should avail themselves of the right to make a complaint to the Regulatory Authority.

Stage One is an informal process which consists of a meeting between the complainant and the supervising social worker unless the complaint is about them, in which case they should proceed straight to Stage Two. This meeting will be scheduled once a complaint has been received in writing or recorded by means of other communication.

A letter of resolution or outcome will be issued in response to informal complaints by the Fostering Manager, including details of how the matter was investigated, by whom and with the relevant facts to support the outcome.

Stage Two will be activated if the complainant is not completely satisfied with the outcome of Stage One, or if at the outset they require that the matter be dealt with by someone other than an employee of Family Care Fostering. The complainant will be advised that they must put their complaint in writing to the Fostering Manager, who will then contact the complainant within five working days to advise that he/she has instructed an Independent Complaints Investigating Officer in relation to the complaint and will advise them of his/her name and the expected time frame for the investigation.

A report will be completed following the investigation, detailing how the matter was investigated, by whom and what outcome was reached with relevant evidence to support the report's conclusions.

Stage Three is the final stage of the complaints process. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two investigation, they must confirm this in writing, including reasons for their dissatisfaction, to a Senior/Manager/Director who will undertake to arrange for the case to be reviewed by an Independent Panel within 28 days.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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