



the
Fostering
Foundation

Laying Foundations for the Future

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2020



“I find the FF very efficient, proactive, reliable and trustworthy”

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Introduction

The Fostering Foundation's (The Foundation) Statement of Purpose has been developed and produced to meet the requirements and principles contained within the following legislation and guidance:

- The Fostering Service Regulations 2011, amended July 2013 and April 2014
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011)
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) 2015
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010
- Delegation of Authority: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010 (July 2013)
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendment to the Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 4: Fostering Services (July 2013)
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

The Statement provides information about The Foundation, including the services and facilities offered by the agency. It is available on The Fostering Foundation Website or in hard copy to:

- Any person working for or on behalf of The Foundation
- Any foster carer or prospective foster carer of The Foundation
- Children and young people living with Fostering Foundation carers
- Local authorities who place or are considering making placements with Fostering Foundation foster carers
- Professionals who work alongside the agency
- General public on request

In accordance with regulations The Foundation submits copies of this statement to Ofsted.



"Children are matched carefully, and the very small number of placement disruptions is a testament to the effectiveness of this process."

The Fostering Foundation was founded in 2000 by Geoffrey Lewis who has been the Executive Chairman and Responsible Individual since its registration. It is an independent fostering agency and a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (Company Number 06445595). The Fostering Foundation is registered and inspected by Ofsted (Ofsted Registration Number: 1378486).

The Foundation has a Board of Directors which meets regularly and has responsibility for the strategic development and all corporate and financial obligations of the company.

Aims and Objectives of our Service

From its inception, the vision and philosophy of the service has been very distinct. The Foundation has been able to create a sense of 'family' in the development of local services, ensuring children always remain at the core of its provision. The service is personalised and responsive to the needs of individual children and foster carers, and local authorities.

The aim is to ensure the provision and delivery of a high quality fostering service that focuses on achieving the best possible outcomes for children.

The Foundation strives to offer efficient and effective delivery of the daily operational systems, and to identify and modify at the earliest opportunity any operating weaknesses, so as to be able to deliver a service that is exemplified by:

- Innovation of organisation and service
- Best Practice
- Safety and security
- Care and Support
- Education and training
- Flexibility
- Reliability and best value
- Statutory and regulatory compliance

The Foundation works at all times to provide children and young people who are placed with the organisation's foster carers, the highest level of opportunity to reach their full potential. We aim to work together with, consult and involve all those associated with The Foundation: foster carers, staff members, children and young people, local authority colleagues, independent professionals and panel members in the development of our practice and services. We have open lines of communication and an openness of approach, with the ability and desire to be innovative in delivering relevant and effective services to meet identified needs.



"Support is always excellent from The Fostering Foundation and my Supervising Social Worker goes above and beyond, not only offering support but advice and where she can solutions."

The Fostering Foundation's registered office is in Tavistock, Devon and accommodates the South West team. The Foundation's objectives for service provision are:

- Child centred provision offering children and young people the opportunity to live within an environment of warmth, stability and consistency, in which they feel supported to achieve the best outcomes for their immediate and longer term futures.
- High quality individualised training and development programmes for staff and foster carers, with an ongoing commitment to identify and support new learning opportunities which lead to the achievement of best practice when supporting and looking after children and young people.
- Foster homes that provide a safe, secure and nurturing base from which children and young people can grow to become confident adults who benefit from and contribute to society.
- Recruitment of carers from a diverse background with a varied range of skills and experience in order to offer greater choice and increased opportunity for good matching.
- Provision of a reliable and responsive professional 24 hour on-call service for all who use the agency.
- An organisation that is committed to the core value of equality and valuing diversity, placing equality at the forefront of service delivery and policy making.
- An organisation that complies with the statutory and legislative remit governing fostering services, monitored and maintained through regular review of practice and policy, training and development.



Organisational Structure

Each local office provides a base for staff, foster carers and young people. Training and meeting rooms are available within the offices.

Day-to day management and development of services is vested in the **Registered Manager** who is a qualified manager with experience in social work with children and families. Reporting to the Registered Manager are a **Service Manager** and two **Team Managers**, based in their team locations. The Service Manager supports the Registered Manager in the overall operational management of the service. All the Managers and **Supervising Social Workers** (SSWs) hold social work qualifications and are registered with the HCPC/Social Work England. SSWs have a range of post qualifying experiences and are supported by The Foundation to enhance their portfolio of academic and professional qualifications to continually develop their practice. The SSWs are responsible for a small number of foster carer households (no more than 8-10) who they will visit and be in regular contact with for support and supervision.

In addition to supporting foster carers each SSW participates in recruitment activity, undertakes assessments of prospective foster carers and, together with the whole team, organises support groups as well as activities and events for children and foster carers.

The social work staff on 01 September 2019 comprised:

- X 1 Registered Manager
- X 1 Service Manager
- X 2 Team Managers
- X1 Senior Practitioner
- X 8 Supervising Social Workers
- X 1 Therapeutic Practitioner
- X 1 Recruitment and Participation Officer

The Foundation also has a complement of specialised support staff, either contracted or independent. These individuals are qualified within their own field and work alongside the SSWs to support and enhance the provision of the service offered to foster carers and to children and young people. Each team is supported by admin staff who also hold agency wide lead responsibilities.



“The agency is very supportive, there is always someone there to help and I would not leave to go anywhere else”

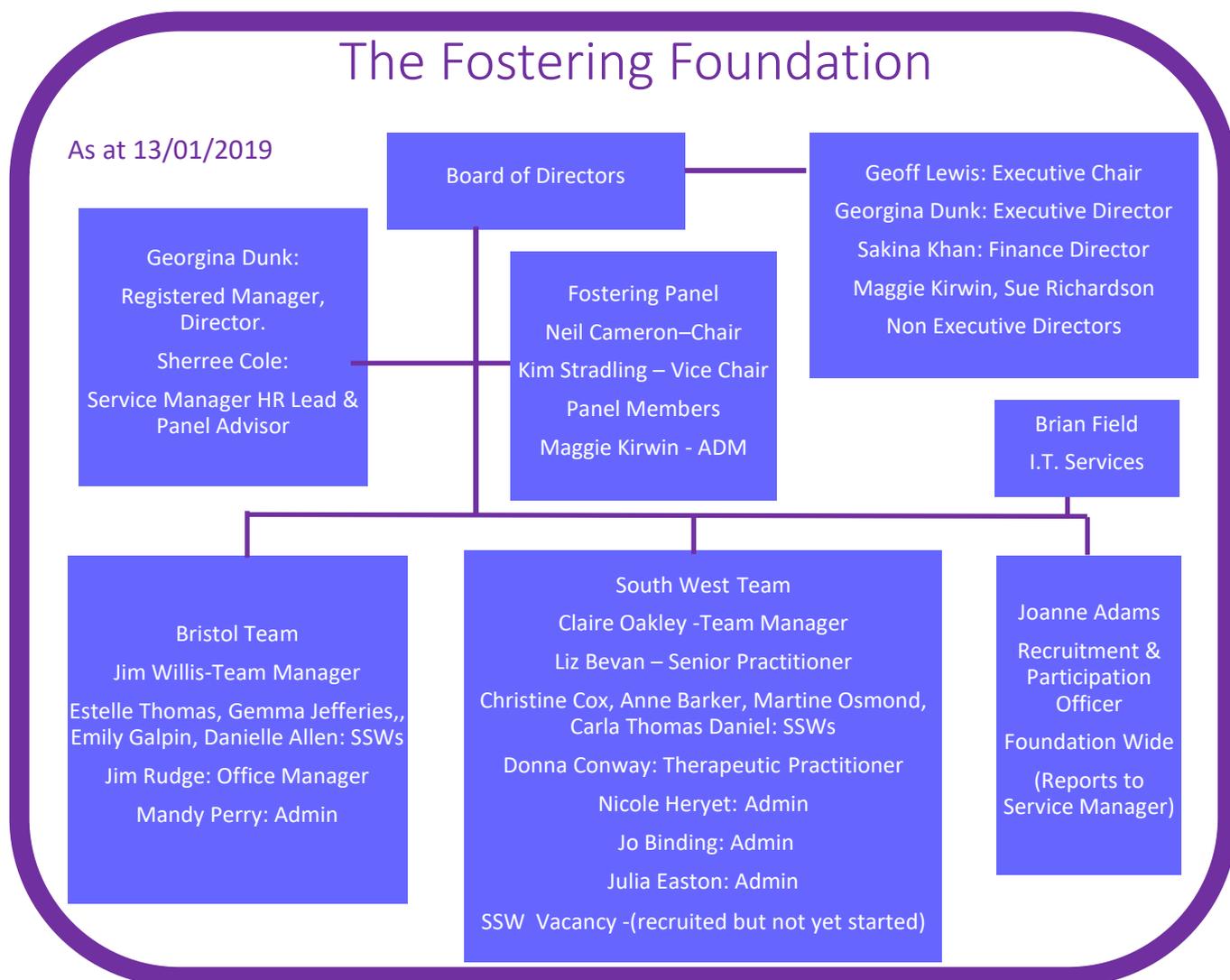
Recruitment of foster carers is the responsibility of the Recruitment and Participation officer who works closely with the whole staff team to ensure a steady but managed growth of the agency.

The Foundation has its own Fostering Panel that meets regularly to make recommendations for the approval of foster carer candidates as well as to receive annual reviews. The panel also consider other matters that are brought to them by the social work team.

The Foundation employs independent reviewing social workers (IRSWs) to review the continued approval of all foster carers.

Staff training is co-ordinated centrally and delivered by a mixture of internal training courses and specialised external courses. The Foundation has several qualified and experienced Practice Educators, and works with a number of universities to offer social work placements for students.

All financial payment matters are outsourced and dealt with by an accountancy that has worked together with the Fostering Foundation for nearly twenty years.



Services we provide

By working in partnership with local authorities The Foundation can be responsive to the needs of the local community. We endeavour to provide a varied range of placement types that meet the needs of children and young people inclusive of the following:

Emergency Fostering Placements

Specific carers are able to offer a foster home at short notice and varying amounts of time. This service provision is available 24 hours a day.

Short Term Fostering Placements

Children and young people are matched with a foster carer who looks after them for a short period of time lasting up to two years whilst decisions are made in respect of the child or young person's longer term future.

Long Term/Permanent Placements

Permanent foster placements can offer security and stability for those children who are not able to return home, but for whom other options such as adoption are not available. Foster carers make a long term commitment to a child, and the care plan is for them to stay for the rest of their childhood and into adulthood.

Bridging Placements

Children and young people live short term with foster carers with experience of supporting them to move to their permanent placements: foster care, adoption or to independence.

Parent and Child Placements

Foster carers with specific training to offer placements for a parent or parents with child/ren. Parents, who may be under or over 18 years old, receive support and guidance to develop parenting skills within a family setting. The foster carers can provide information for local authority parenting assessments.

Placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

Foster carers with skills and experience to look after and support unaccompanied children and young people to settle and participate in family life and education in a new country.



"My carers are amazing"

Sibling placements

Foster carers who have the skills, the physical accommodation and support within the home to offer placements for sibling groups of two or more.

Specialist placements

Placements for children with complex needs in relation to disability, additional special health needs or behaviours which are particularly challenging.

Staying Put Placements

Young people aged 18 and older are able to remain living with their former foster carers providing all parties – the young person, the carer and the local authority - agree this formal arrangement.

The age range catered for by The Foundation covers the whole spectrum from birth up to 18 years, inclusive of parent and baby placements where the parent maybe either older or younger than 18 years of age.

Matching

For all placements we place great importance on careful pre-placement matching of children and foster carers who are best able to meet their assessed needs. The following are considered during the matching process:

In relation to the child:

- Safeguarding
- Education
- Contact
- Health
- Child's presenting behaviours
- Risk Assessment
- Cultural, religious, linguistic and identity needs
- Outcomes and any other issues identified in the Care Plan



“Our SSW genuinely cares deeply about the children’s welfare and well-being whilst still delivering the level of support we require as foster carers”

In relation to the carers:

- Availability and Approval criteria
- Skills and experience
- Knowledge and training
- Location and ability to provide transport for school, contact, activities
- Household composition and impact on other foster children and own children, and other members of the household

In relation to the agency and the local authority:

- Additional staff available for the provision of therapeutic support, day care, transport, respite etc. as required to support the placement
- Additional support offered by the local authority
- Consideration of how any gaps could be met

Foster carer profiles are available to local authorities with further more detailed information as the potential for a match becomes more apparent.

All information available to the agency is shared with the foster carers who are fully involved in the matching process and make the decision about the viability of a placement in their home.

Foster Carer Recruitment, Assessment, Approval and Reviews

Recruitment

The Fostering Foundation is committed to ensuring that our recruitment process enables us to attract prospective carers who, with support and ongoing training, are able to offer the highest levels of care and nurture to children and young people. We recruit foster carers from a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnicities, geographical locations and family composition.

Different avenues are used for recruitment including our website, social media, participating at local events and shows, letter box drops, and by any other means that are deemed effective. The Foundation has foster carers who represent diversity in class, race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, culture, family composition and geographical location.



“it has been challenging to balance fostering with the needs of our own children, but we value the agency input and support and are glad that we are with this agency”

Assessment

The Foundation is rigorous in its assessment of prospective foster carers to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children placed in our foster homes.

The two stage assessment process adheres to the Fostering Regulations and, from initial enquiry to approval, is expected to take a maximum of five to six months.

The initial enquiry, if not received by phone, is followed up very quickly with a phone conversation which would include answering the potential applicant's questions about fostering, and the completion of an enquiry form to establish initial suitability for fostering. If it is agreed to proceed the potential applicant is offered a home visit by a member of the fostering team. This offers the potential applicant further opportunity to ask questions, to hear information about the realities of fostering in more detail, and to discuss whether fostering is right for them. It enables the agency to view the accommodation, to consider their motivation, their experience, any practical considerations, and to discuss whether they are ready to apply to foster. If appropriate, an application form will be left with the applicant, or the link provided for an online application.

Stage 1 comprises of all the formal checks – DBS checks on applicant/s and any members of the household aged over 18, Local Authority checks, health including an assessment by the applicant's GP – and references from former partners, employers, children's schools, and three personal references.

Once all the checks and references are returned a formal decision is made regarding successful completion and whether the assessment proceeds to Stage 2.

In Stage 2 an in-depth assessment, based on the CoramBAAF Form F, is undertaken by a qualified, registered social worker. A series of home visits are arranged with the applicant/s in order to complete a comprehensive report covering family background, education and employment, past and present relationships, interviews with all other members of the household, support networks, experience, attitude and approach regarding the care of children, ability to work as part of a team, understanding of identity and diversity, and motivation and preparation for fostering.

The applicant/s are required to participate in a two day Skills to Foster training course, feedback from which is included in the assessment report.



"We enjoyed the Skills to Foster course and learned a lot"

At the end of the assessment the completed report is presented to the Fostering Foundation Panel. The applicant/s, accompanied by the assessing social worker, are required to attend Panel to meet with panel members. The Panel is made up of Foundation staff and independent members with backgrounds in health, education, the law, fostering, being part of the care system and social care.

The Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), which is normally shared immediately with the applicant/s. The final decision about the applicant/s' approval as a foster carer is made by the ADM. If an applicant is unhappy about the decision they have a right of appeal which can be made direct to the Independent Review Mechanism or to the agency within 28 days.

Approval

Once approved by the ADM newly approved foster carers receive a letter confirming their approval status and the terms of their approval.

The appropriate Team Manager ensures that each new fostering household is allocated a Supervising Social Worker who is responsible for their induction, training, support and supervision. Foster carers are required to complete their Training, Support and Development Standards within the first twelve months.

Reviews

Foster carer approval is reviewed annually in accordance with Fostering Regulations and Standards. In certain situations, a review may be conducted sooner. These could include:

- Serious concerns regarding a foster carer's practice
- The occurrence of a serious incident or allegation
- A change in the foster carer's circumstances such as relationship breakdown, a new relationship, significant changes to their lifestyle, a death,



The review is undertaken by an independent reviewing social worker (IRSW) who, in compiling their report, will refer to feedback and reports from:

- the foster carers
- the children placed
- the placing local authority
- the supervising social worker
- other members of the household including foster carers' own children
- the birth family if available
- any other relevant professionals

The review process considers the foster carers training and development, how they have looked after the children in their care, met their needs and progressed their outcomes. It is an opportunity for foster carers and the agency to reflect together on the past year's fostering and to look forward and plan for the year ahead.

The IRSW makes a recommendation about continued approval and includes any changes to the terms of approval. The foster carer's first and subsequent third annual review reports are presented to Panel for their recommendation. The final decisions are always made by the ADM.

Support and Supervision

Each foster carer household is allocated their own supervising social worker (SSW) who will:

1. Build a supportive relationship with the foster carers, their children and the children placed with them.
2. Be the first point of contact for the foster carers. SSWs are in regular contact via phone, email, visits; the frequency is determined by the needs of the family and the children in placement. No foster carer should feel alone dealing with difficult issues or isolated from the agency or other sources of support.
3. Be available to support carers with day to day issues through listening and understanding, as well as finding practical solutions or ways of coping with the challenges of fostering. They will help foster carers with implementing the placement plan and achieve the outcomes identified in the care plan.



"We Value the agency input and support and are glad we are with this agency"

4. Routinely attend placement planning meetings, placement review meetings, Looked After Children's reviews, and other meetings to support foster carers as required.
5. Undertake formal monthly supervision which will include a focus on:
 - i. The foster carers: family dynamics; the carers' training and development; their ability to fulfil all the tasks required of them such as completing reports on time; adhering to their safer caring plan and the placement plan; contact arrangements; making savings for the child etc.
 - ii. The child/ren placed: their physical health and emotional wellbeing; education and participation in extra-curricular and community based activities; their growth and development towards independence; progress and achievement of each child's specific outcomes.
6. Ensure that all statutory checks, such as DBS, medicals, health and safety, are up-to-date and unannounced visits have been undertaken.
7. Maintain regular contact with local authority children's social workers and liaise with other professionals offering services to the children or foster carers.
8. Regularly see the child/ren placed and ascertain their views, as part of monitor the standard of care being offered to any child placed.
9. Contribute to the foster carers' annual review.

As well as individual SSWs foster carers and children have access to the support of a whole staff group with a breadth of experience and specialisms, for example, parent and child placements, working with trauma, play therapy, life story work, preparation for adoption, court proceedings. The agency has an external network, which includes a clinical psychologist who specialises in working with looked after children, DDP therapists, education consultants, support workers, to draw on when additional needs are identified and agreed by the local authority. The South West office has a permanent creative therapy room which is used with children of all ages.

Foster carers have access to 24 hour support and guidance provided by The Foundation team of qualified staff.



"It's an ongoing learning curve... It was helpful to hear another foster carer at the support group going through similar stuff with her young person."

Support groups are organised in various locations on different days to make them more easily accessible to all carers. The Male Carers group encourages attendance by men who seem less inclined to participate other support groups. The Parent and Child carers groups allow for more focussed discussion and information exchange reflecting the additional dimension of parent and child fostering. All support groups offer foster carers the opportunity to meet other carers, to share experiences, to give and receive support, learn from each other and keep abreast of new information and changing practice.

Children’s groups and special events, arranged around school calendars, run throughout the year, catering for different age ranges and interests. The Sons and Daughters group offers children who foster a safe space to come together and share their specific experiences, and to have acknowledged their valuable contribution to fostering.

Foster carers receive two weeks’ paid holiday and financial payment that values and respects their skills, learning and commitment. Detailed financial information and guidance around expectations are made available to each foster carer.

Once approved foster carers become members of the Fostering Network which gives them access to information, independent advice and legal protection insurance.

Training and development

Foster carers begin their journey of training and professional development during the approval process, and then they formally build on this initial learning as they complete the Training, Support and Development Standards(TSDS). They are supported to do so within the first year of approval with workshops specifically for new carers and through individual development activity. They receive full induction to understand and fulfil the expectations of their new role, the principles and values essential for looking after children, and to be aware and committed to their own development, training and support.

Foster carers undertake mandatory training on Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Paediatric First Aid, De-escalation and Positive Intervention., and additional courses as identified in their personal development plans (PDP) or annual reviews.

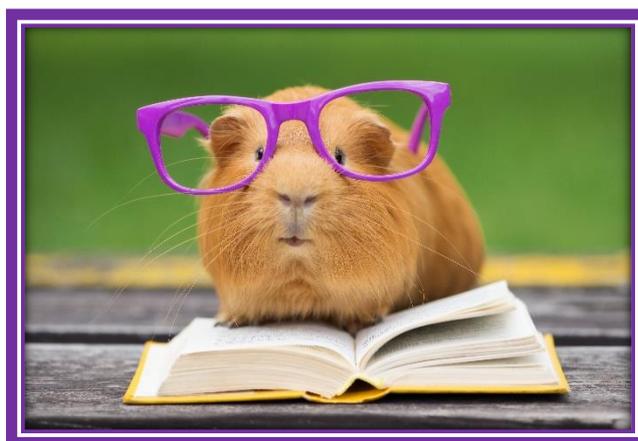
Training programmes are developed annually, based on the needs of the foster carer cohort, and to reflect changes in legislation and practice guidance. Training may be delivered face-to-face or online through a combination of internal and external training providers.



“Superb training”

This year's training programme includes the following topics:

- Attachment
- Building resilience to stress
- Child protection
- Child sexual exploitation
- Digital wellbeing
- Equality and diversity
- Education of children in care
- First aid
- Gender identity
- Health care
- Introduction to therapeutic parenting
- Looking after children with harmful behaviours
- Managing allegations
- Managing feelings
- Managing oppositional and controlling behaviours
- PACE
- Parent and child fostering
- Positive intervention and de-escalation
- Promoting positive behaviours
- Promoting and managing contact
- Record keeping
- Safer caring
- Safeguarding
- Self-harm and good mental health
- Sexual health and relationships
- Substance misuse



These training and learning opportunities enable carers to increase and refine their skills and knowledge, to develop professional competence and confidence.

We offer training directly to our children and young people, either as part of a group activity session, or to address a specific learning need.

Staff are similarly supported, encouraged and required to undertake development activities to enhance skills and knowledge, and maintain continuing professional development. Any newly qualified social workers are supported to achieve their ASYE (assessed and supported year in employment) qualification. Individual learning needs based on areas of special interest or career development are discussed in supervision and detailed plans are formally recorded in annual appraisals.

Consultation and Participation

The services of The Fostering Foundation are organised to meet the needs of its foster families. Their views, and those of the children they foster, inform current practice and service reviews, and are an essential component of future service planning.

Foster carers share their views about any aspect of The Foundation's work at formal consultation meetings, in support groups, or individually during their annual review process, in supervision with their SSW, or by speaking with, writing or emailing a manager, or any other member of staff.

Children are formally consulted about their placements and The Fostering Foundation during their reviews and their foster carer's annual reviews. Their views are heard during children's events, activity groups, during home visits by SSWs, or via feedback from birth family, foster carers, other children, their social workers and other professionals. By whatever means they reach the Foundation, children's voices are an integral part in the development of services.

Examples of children and carer participation in the work of the Foundation include:

- The Children's Panel. Children and young people are trained and supported to assess through group activity and individual interview foster carer candidates. Their views are discussed with staff responsible for the children's panel, and fed back in writing to the 'adult' panel along with the candidates Form F.
- Training courses. Foster carers and children share their expertise and experience of fostering and foster care as co-trainers or for specific sections of a course.
- Staff recruitment. Foster carers act as members of interview panels for staff recruitment.
- Support groups. Foster carers host support groups, or lead on a topic in a support group.
- Mentoring. Foster carers and their children act as mentors for foster carers and children new to fostering.
- Peer support. Foster carers are 'buddied up' for support through specific shared experiences.
- Carer recruitment. Foster carers help with recruitment activity.
- Events. Adult members of foster families contribute skills at children's events.



"Support is always excellent from The Fostering Foundation and my Supervising Social Worker goes above and beyond, not only offering support but advice and where she can solutions."

Complaints and Representations

Concerns and complaints are taken seriously, and dealt with promptly in a manner that is fair, thorough and respectful of the complainant. The process is flexible, dependent on the nature of the complaint, the views of the complainant and potential consequences. It is an open and transparent process, easy to access and use.

The Fostering Foundation aims to respond promptly to all complaints and resolve issues informally where possible. When this is not possible, the formal complaints procedure is triggered. The policy gives clear timescales and areas of responsibility so that both complainant and person who is the subject of the complaint know what to expect by when.

Records of investigations and outcomes of complaints are deliberated by the Panel, by the Board and within teams to learn from and to improve the service.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

The Fostering Foundation aims to provide excellent care for children. To ensure that our expectations are achieved, we have rigorous quality assurance systems in place.

The Fostering Foundation Board receives detailed monthly reports from the Registered Manager informing them of placement numbers and type, nature of any vacancies, recruitment activity, Schedule 7 events and notifications, and outcomes, any other placement or carer issues, staffing matters, team challenges and strengths, training and development, and targets and plans for the following month.

The fostering panel receives similarly detailed reports with information relevant to the functions of a panel. The panel provides invaluable feedback to the agency in relation to the quality of assessments, approvals, de-registrations and other relevant issues of practice.

Compliance with policies and procedures is monitored by managers in supervision and routine file audits. All staff receive regular supervision, the frequency agreed according to their role, experience and need. The registered manager also receives external supervision. Staff training and development needs are addressed in supervision and annual appraisals.

This year we are investing in a new data base to improve our internal monitoring systems. The new data base which will enable more efficient monitoring and retrieval of information, and accelerate the process of tracking and monitoring the progress of each child throughout their placement.



"We have days out, we go to the beach, my carers help me with my homework"

Contact details

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“Such a great service, we couldn’t ask for anything more...”