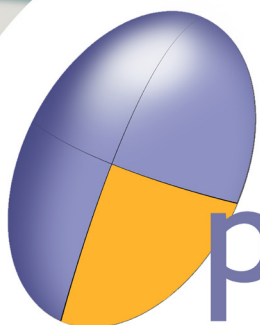


Statement Of Purpose



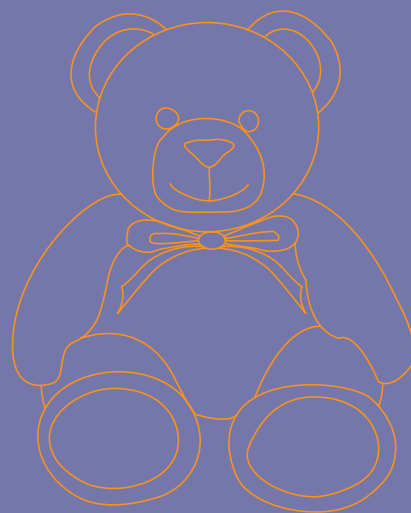
fostering
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...Built By Those Who Know Fostering Best



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Company Information

Legal Status:	An Independent Fostering Agency Company Registration No: 4356133
Director:	Nicholas Barnsby - B.A. Philosophy and Psychology, M.A. Social Work, CQSW, Diploma in Pastoral Care, Guidance and Counselling and CCETSW post qualification course in Management in the Public Sector
Responsible Individual:	Nicholas Barnsby
Office Address:	The Master's House College Road Maidstone ME15 6YQ
Telephone Number	01622 760600
E mail:	nickbarnsby@futures-for-children.org
Web site	www.fostering-options.org
Registered Manager:	Laura Gray

Regulations

Ofsted Ref Number:	SC063551
Date of last Inspection:	03 October 2022
Overall Rating:	Good



“ My school attendance has improved massively and also my grades and behaviour, I have more confidence... I love being here and I class my [carers] as my family.

Fostered Young Person

”



Mission Statement

Fostering Options provides, through a flexible, caring and imaginative foster care service, an opportunity for all our children and young people to become valued members of tomorrow's society.

Looked after children represent the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our community. At Fostering Options, it is our objective to provide support and conditions in which these most vulnerable young people can thrive and achieve a positive outcome from the time spent in foster care.

There is much work to be done to redress the disadvantages these children have experienced and little time to do this before they become independent young adults.

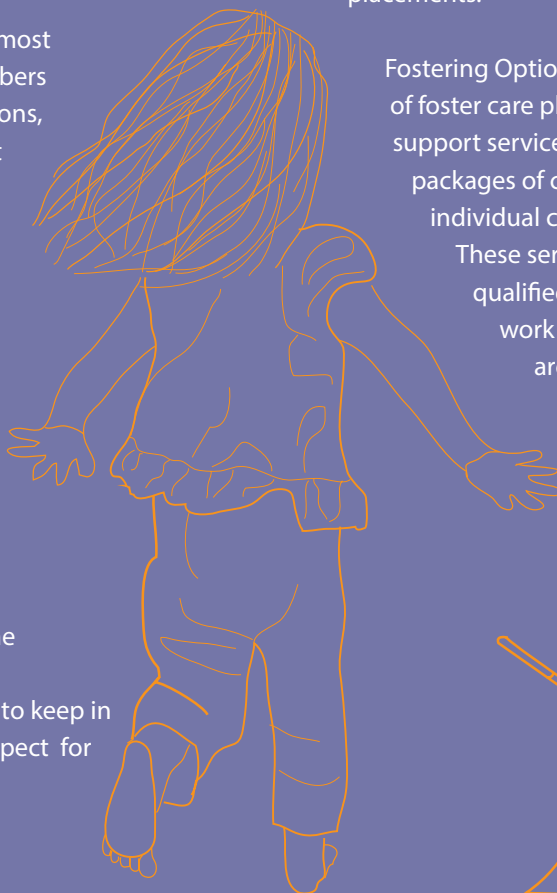
For many children a positive outcome may be a return to their parents or extended family. Enabling the child to keep in touch and working with genuine respect for

child's family is crucial for keeping these options available.

Other children may succeed best in long term alternative families including permanent foster care placements.

Fostering Options can provide a wide range of foster care placements and professional support services to provide specific packages of care to meet the needs of individual children and young people.

These services are delivered by qualified and experienced social work staff and foster carers who are valued as full members of our professional team.



Agency Details

Fostering Options

Milton Keynes Registered Office:

Fostering Options
Threshing House
Hayfield Business Park
Aspley Guise
Milton Keynes
MK17 8HS

Tel No: 01908 587666

Head Office:

The Master's House
College Road
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 6YQ

Tel No: 01622 760600

Referrals: foduty@fostering-options.org

Website: www.fostering-options.org

Fostering Options is part of a group of companies owned by Futures for Children.

Futures for Children	Essex, Kent, London
Foster Care Solutions	Durham



Aims & Objectives

Fostering Options recognises that the children and young people it is asked to provide placements for will have experienced trauma in their lives, either through neglect, physical injury, emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse. It also acknowledges that these young people are often overwhelmed by these events and, unable to find appropriate ways of dealing with them, will inevitably present a wide range of behaviours.

At Fostering Options we acknowledge that, along with these more challenging behaviours, every young person will also have acquired many skills and strengths which have enabled them to survive their experiences thus far. Whilst we do not believe that it is the child's responsibility to solve the problem, it is our aim to assist them in building on these strengths and skills to find acceptable solutions to their own particular circumstances.

Therefore, at Fostering Options we aim to equip foster carers with the appropriate skills and training to work with the child in such a way that it facilitates joint growth and solutions which will eventually enable young people to return home successfully, move on to a more permanent placement or achieve independent living, whichever is in accordance with their Care Plan.

PHILOSOPHY OF CARE

We believe that children in our care have a right to expect the following regardless of gender, colour, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability:

- A safe family environment
- To be heard
- To be valued

- To be involved in decision making
- Access to high quality education
- Access to family and/or significant others

We believe that the adults responsible for their care should treat all children and young people with respect and, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability, should:

- Recognise the child's potential
- Provide opportunities for self-realisation
- Recognise and respect the child as an individual
- Assist young people to build solutions

We believe that the agency:

- Should actively involve children in all aspects of service delivery
- Should encourage and facilitate feedback, ideas and suggestions from foster carers, staff and those involved in the service
- Should provide an environment that promotes equality and does not discriminate against any individual in any way
- Should recognise and acknowledge the achievements of all members of the agency
- Should encourage enthusiasm, imagination and individual contributions to the team effort
- Should put in place systems and structures, training and consultation, which enable the delivery of childcare to a high standard

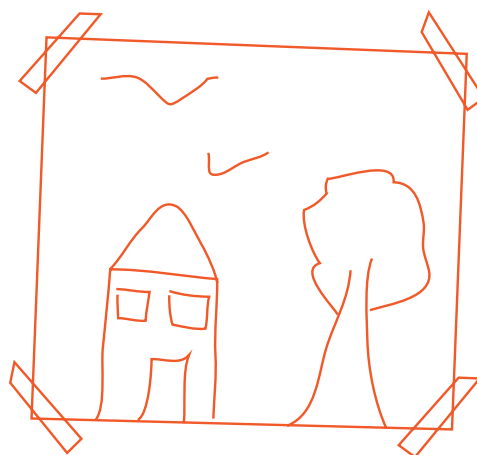




Placement Categories

The agency provides a wide range of placements for children and young people of all ages and needs, these include:

- Short Breaks care for children who need one-off or regular breaks from their families
- Emergency placements for children who need a safe place to stay for a few nights
- Short term placements for children who need to be away from their families for a longer period
- Long term or permanent placements – where carers commit to care for children until they are eighteen (and beyond)
- Children with disabilities - for children who need increased support and care
- Remand placements – for young people remanded into care by the courts following alleged criminal activity or requiring a bail address
- Unaccompanied Minors - for young people who have left their country of origin with no parents or guardian in England
- Parent and Child placements
- Assessment Arrangements
- Support Arrangements
- Holding Arrangements



Services Provided

EDUCATION

Fostering Options holds the belief that educational achievement is crucial to the future life chances of our most vulnerable young people and should therefore be afforded a priority within the development of high-quality fostering services. All Fostering Options carers are required to participate fully and take an active role in the education of all looked after children, encouraging and enabling the children to enjoy and benefit from their educational experiences.

THERAPY

Fostering Options employs the services of Rain Hawkriver an Adult, Adolescent and Child Psychotherapist - RMBACP (Snr. Accred.) - who is able to provide consultation and guidance on therapeutic support to foster carers in the midst of challenging situations.

FAMILY TIME / FAMILY WORK

Fostering Options is committed to the promotion of family time with those who are significant to the child or young person, believing that it is essential for their emotional and physical well being. Fostering Options can also offer to complete specific pieces of work aimed at promoting family relationships for the child. These could include:

- The supervision of family time
- Life story work

HEALTH

All young people will, wherever possible, remain registered with their own GP and dental services. Where this is not possible, the child or young person will be registered with the health provision local to the foster placement. Fostering Options believes that by promoting health and providing education on related issues, e.g. smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, diet, etc, this will improve the outcomes for young people placed within the agency.

LEISURE AND RECREATION

At Fostering Options leisure and recreational pursuits are considered to be an important part of a child's social education, as well as important in the holistic development of "self". Whether the leisure pursuit is just for enjoyment or, indeed, one where a young person is particularly gifted, participation in such activities will be encouraged in line with the child's wishes and potential. Involvement in activities will be monitored, as with the rest of our service, and health and safety issues considered as necessary.

STAFF EMPLOYMENT

Fostering Options recognises the importance of child-centred, empathetic staff who have a good understanding of the difficulties and conflicts affecting foster carers and their families. We seek to employ people who are able to demonstrate the skills to work professionally with carers and children and who can give a commitment to work within the child-centred ethos of the agency. Social work staff will be qualified to CQSW, CSS, DipSW or degree level, and must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. Other staff, such as support staff or administration, will be selected on qualifications, experience and merit. All staff will be subject to a rigorous selection process which includes an interview based on the safer recruitment process, checks from the Disclosure and Barring Service, Ofsted, Local Authority, employment and personal references. All references are followed up by telephone.





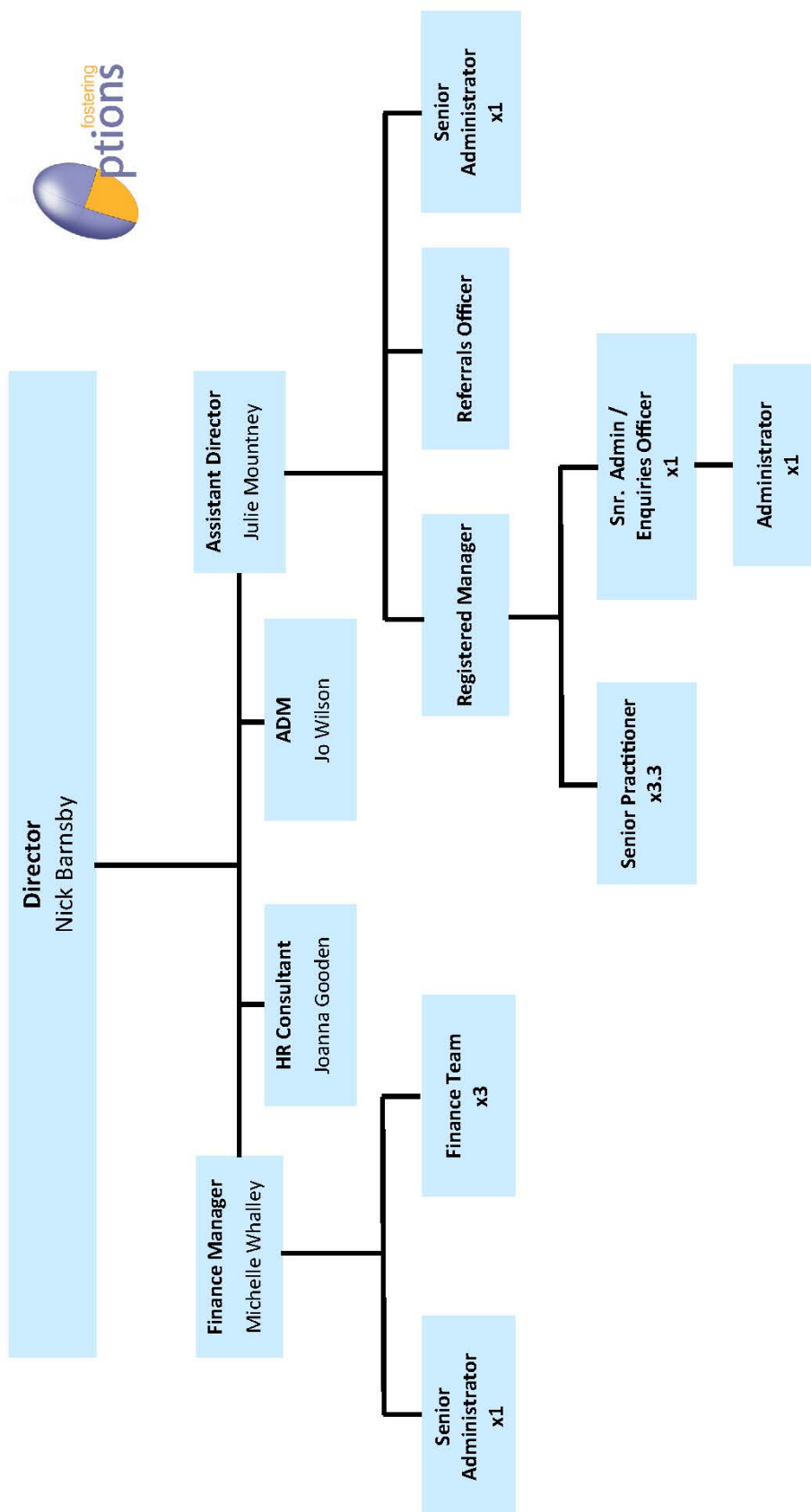
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Fostering Options is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applications from ethnic groups and people with disabilities and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, age, marital status, religion or disability....

”



MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



“ I feel very supported by all the staff and indeed many of the carers too, there are plenty of people to talk to and gain help should I need it. ”

Diane, Foster Carer since 2011

Staffing

The Registered Manager is responsible for overseeing compliance with the National Minimum Standards, Fostering Regulations and other relevant legal obligations as well as internal policies for their registration, supported by the Senior Management Team. They have day to day operational management responsibilities for their registered office. Supervising Social Workers are qualified and experienced social workers who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). They are responsible for supporting, advising and monitoring foster carers, visiting carer households regularly, attending meetings, spending time with children and young people in placement as appropriate and making recommendations on the ongoing suitability of foster carers. Administrators provide vital administrative day to day support by ensuring good communication, facilities, recording, IT and general administrative support.

CENTRALISED SERVICES

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM- Ensures the agency is managed in line with legislation and good practice. They regularly assess the financial viability of the agency and that it is working effectively in achieving good outcomes for children.

FINANCE TEAM- Manage all day to day finance, which includes invoicing out for placements, payments to foster carers, paying creditors, processing staff mileage and expenses. The Senior Finance Administrator processes salaries and related tasks.

THE HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTANT- Ensures all new staff have the appropriate checks and references, manages HR processes relating to staff including financial and personal.

THE RECRUITMENT AND MARKETING OFFICER- Develops ways in which the agency can reach out to people who may be thinking about or who are interested in a fostering career, supporting the agency's recruitment strategy.

INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING CONSULTANT- Our Safeguarding Consultant has a legal and safeguarding professional background dating back to 1988, managing the risks posed to vulnerable people, including children and young people. This included being a Lead Investigative Detective, Sex Offender Manager, Risk Management of Sex Offenders as well as being trained in ABE interviewing. Since 2015, they have been working as an Independent Safeguarding Consultant. They are an accredited NSPCC, Children's Safeguarding Training Designer/Trainer. They also have been a foster Panel member since 2008 and a Panel Chair since 2011, for several independent fostering agencies.





Recruitment and Approval Process

Fostering Options will use various methods of advertising in an effort to continue development, including magazine and newspaper advertising, website, posters and specialist publications. The aim is to support Local Authorities to meet their sufficiency targets.

Following an enquiry or response to an advertisement, a member of the Enquiries Team will contact the prospective applicant(s). They will complete an Initial Enquiry Form, obtaining basic information, and will be able to answer any queries about fostering or the agency. An information pack will be sent to applicants, containing a brochure detailing information about the agency, its services, the assessment process, fees and allowances.

Should the decision be made to proceed, a visit to the applicants at their home will be arranged. Following this visit, if the applicants wish to proceed and the agency considers that they are able to meet the placement needs of the agency, then a recommendation will be made to proceed to the next stage and an application form provided for

completion.

All applicants will be invited to attend an induction course 'Skills to Foster' as part of their assessment. This will give them some insight into the fostering task and provide the agency with evidence of their skills and abilities and any areas that may need to be explored further as part of the assessment.

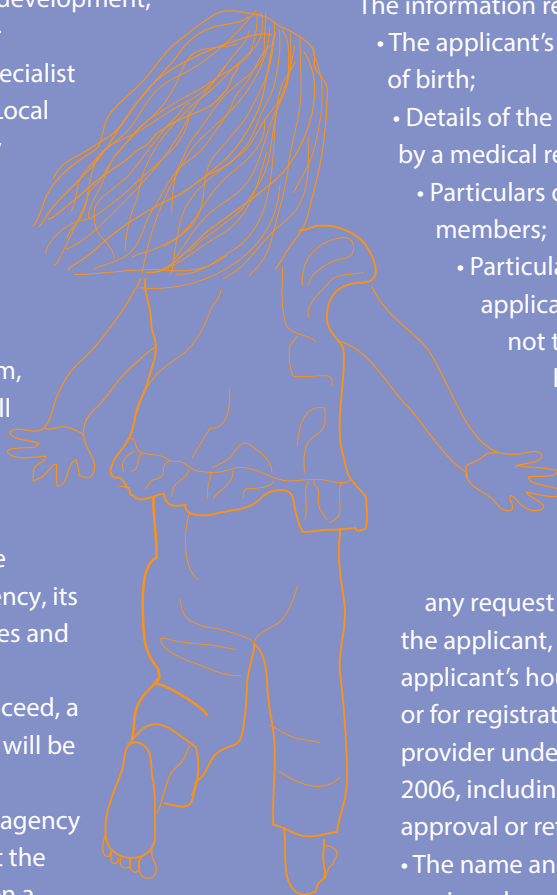
STAGE ONE

The information required at this stage:

- The applicant's full name, address and date of birth;
- Details of the applicant's health, supported by a medical report;
- Particulars of other adult household members;
- Particulars of children in the applicant's family (whether or not they are members of the household) and any other children in the household;
- Particulars of the household's accommodation;
- The outcome of

any request or application made by the applicant, or any member of the applicant's household, to foster children or for registration as an early or later years provider under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006, including particulars of any previous approval or refusal of approval;

- The name and address of any fostering service where the applicant has been an approved foster carer in the preceding 12 months;
- Names and addresses of at least two persons who will provide personal references for the applicant;



- In relation to the applicant and each member of their household aged 17 or over, an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificate;
- Details of any current and any previous marriage, civil partnership or similar relationship;
- Consult the Local Authority in whose area the applicant lives, if this is different to the fostering service;
- Interview at least two personal referees and prepare written reports of the interviews; or, if the person has been an approved foster carer for another fostering service in the preceding twelve months, request a written reference from that fostering service.
- Where applicants have school age children in the household, a consultation with their school will be undertaken;
- Where applicants have had children with an ex-partner, the ex-partner will be contacted and asked whether they know of any reason why the applicant should not be approved as a foster carer;
- Where applicants are transferring from another agency or Local Authority the Fostering Network Protocol process will be adhered to (including, if appropriate, a visit to the agency/Local Authority to read the applicant's fostering file);
- Adult children of the applicant(s), living away from home, will be contacted for consultation;
- Any relevant training undertaken that the applicants can evidence (i.e. certificates).

At any point during stage one of the assessment process, if the fostering service's Agency Decision Maker decides that the applicant is not suitable to foster, they will write to the applicant informing them of this decision, giving full reasons, within 10 working days of all the stage one information being received.

The applicants will also be informed that they may complain if they are unhappy with the way in which their case has been handled via the fostering service's complaints process. The complaints process should address whether or not the applicant's case has been handled in a reasonable way, rather than the question of the applicant's suitability to foster.

N.B. Stage one and two can run concurrently. However, if the decision maker determines that an applicant is unsuitable to foster more than 10 working days after the information required by stage one has been received, or as a result of information required by stage two, then the provider must follow the stage two procedure and the determination must take account of a fostering panel recommendation informed by either a brief report or a full assessment report.

STAGE TWO

Additional information which forms part of the assessment process:

- Details of personality;
- Religious persuasion and capacity to care for a child from any particular religious persuasion;
- Racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and capacity to care for a child from any particular racial origin or cultural or religious background;
- Past and present employment or occupation, standard of living, leisure activity and interests;
- Previous experience (if any) of caring for their own and other children;
- Skills, competence and potential relevant to their capacity to care effectively for a child placed with them;
- Confirmation of financial stability, including mortgage/rent is not in arrears;
- Employer references in current or latest position as well as for all roles where the applicants have worked with children or vulnerable adults;

Before the assessment is complete, if information comes to light indicating that the applicant is unlikely to be suitable to foster, a 'brief report' can be compiled setting out details of the assessment completed and the reasons for considering the applicant unsuitable.

The applicant will be:

- Notified that the brief report is to be sent to the Fostering Panel;
- Provided with a copy of the brief report;
- Given 10 working days from the date of the notification to send their observations to the fostering service provider.

The brief report will then be presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration, along with any observations submitted by the applicant and any other relevant information. The Agency Decision Maker's determination about whether to terminate the assessment following a brief report will take account of the recommendations of the Fostering Panel.

A stage 2 assessment that has been started must be completed, unless:

- The assessment is terminated following a brief report;
- The applicant withdraws from the process;
- The applicant is deemed unsuitable as a result of stage 1 of the assessment (where stages 1 and 2 have been carried out in parallel);
- It becomes apparent that the applicant or an adult member of their household has been convicted of, or cautioned for, a specified offence.

Assessments & Foster Agreements

When all the information has been collated and the assessment has been completed the assessing social worker together with the applicant(s) will make a decision as to the age range, gender, placement type, and number of children that would best meet their household, their skills and abilities.

FOSTERING PANEL

- On completion of the assessment, the applicants and their assessing social worker will be invited to attend the next available Fostering Panel
- Fostering Options' Fostering Panel will determine the suitability of applicants and the circumstances of their approval as foster carers and make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker
- The Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision within 7 working days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of minutes, taking into account all of the information available to them, including the recommendation of the Fostering Panel as to the applicant's approval status, adding his/her comments and signature to the Panel Approval Form
- If the decision is that they consider the applicants to be unsuitable to foster then the applicants will be informed of this decision and the reasons why the Agency Decision Maker is proposing not to approve (qualifying determination) and they will be provided with information on the appeals process
- Applicants will be informed verbally within 2 days of the decision and within 5 days in writing
- Following approval as foster carers for the agency, carers are required to attend a Foundation Course (Child Protection, Safe Caring and Record Keeping)

N.B. Fostering Options aims to complete all assessments, in line with regulations, within 8 months.

FOSTER CARE AGREEMENTS

Following approval foster carers are asked to agree and sign a Foster Care Agreement. This agreement details the expectations the agency places on the foster carer and the service the foster carer can expect from the agency.

FOSTER CARER ANNUAL HOME REVIEWS

All foster carers approved by the agency are reviewed annually, or earlier should this be appropriate. As part of this process the following people will be consulted on the foster carer's ability to meet the needs of the children placed:

- Children placed (or previously placed during this Review period)
- The school or college of children placed
- Child's social worker from the Local Authority
- Children of foster carers who live in the household
- Foster carers
- Foster carer's supervising social worker
- Any person whose contribution will add value i.e. IRO/therapist/YOTs

The first annual review will be referred to the Fostering Panel for consideration and their recommendation will go to the Agency Decision Maker. Reviews may be brought forward at any time, for example if there has been a complaint on standard of care or an allegation made against a member of the fostering household. As a quality assurance measure all reviews which do not go to the Fostering Panel will be presented to the Fostering Panel Chair before going to the Agency Decision Maker.

“ I think it is nice to live in a household that cares for children. It makes me feel happy to help children who have been less fortunate than me... ”

Deeanna, Birth Child of a Carer

Training and Development

FOSTER CARERS

Fostering Options is committed to the development of its foster carers which will enhance and develop their skills and knowledge. The landscape of childcare is changing all the time and new thinking, research and practice developments are constantly becoming available. Our service is committed to reflect this in our training programme and ensures it becomes fluid and dynamic to capture these opportunities. This will ensure foster carers have the skills and knowledge they need and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

PRE-APPROVAL TRAINING

There is an expectation that all applicants will attend a preparation course, Skills to Foster, as part of the assessment process.

NEWLY APPROVED FOSTER CARERS

Newly approved foster carers will be supported by the agency to achieve the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care within 12 months of approval.

FOSTER CARER DEVELOPMENT

All foster carers have an Individual Development Plan which will be reviewed regularly. This plan is designed for supervising social workers to identify with foster carers their individual training and developmental needs and to address any support that may be required for this plan to be facilitated. Training and development is discussed as a regular part of foster carers' supervision.

METHODS OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The agency recognises that there are different ways in which people can develop their skills and knowledge and by making as many methods as possible available to foster carers, it will provide opportunities for all to access learning.

Learning can be facilitated through various media such as:

- One to One
- E-Learning
- Shadowing
- Supervision
- Family Training
- Support Groups
- Internal Training Courses
- External Training Courses
- Individual learning through reading material/media/DVD



Complaints & Representation

Fostering Options believes personal development through training and experience is fundamental in supporting staff to increase knowledge, skills and abilities and therefore contributes to a high-quality service for children, young people and foster carers. Each member of staff will have an Individual Development Plan which will be reviewed regularly. Training will form part of the staff's supervision sessions. Training courses will be provided both internally and externally, leading, wherever possible, to further qualification, including NVQs for Administrators, Post Qualifying Awards for Social Workers and Management Qualifications for senior staff members.

COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATION

Fostering Options endeavours at all times to promote positive communication and partnership between all those involved in foster care. The agency therefore hopes that any concerns and representations can be expressed easily, with confidence and in the expectation that they can be responded to quickly and informally. Our primary aim is to listen to and attempt to resolve problems and difficulties between ourselves in an atmosphere of mutual care and respect. A complaint may be generally defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of the agency which requires a response". The following principles guide the Complaints Procedure:

- Complaints and representations are welcomed as an important part of improving our service and ensuring quality
- There is a commitment to making changes to our services where a complaint or representation shows a need for change
- We are committed to ensuring that our complaints system is accessible and available to everyone
- Establishing what the complaint is, together

with the desired outcome at an early stage, can lead to a better resolution for all involved

- We are committed to responding to complaints speedily and, wherever possible, to achieving an outcome which is agreeable to the complainant
- We aim to achieve the easiest, least stressful way to involve the complainant in the complaints process
- We are committed to assisting and supporting children and young people to make a complaint or representation to the agency and ensuring that they have a clear understanding that they will not be subject to any reprisals for doing so.

WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT OR REPRESENTATION?

Anyone who has come into contact with our agency including, but not exclusively, children and young people, parents, foster carers, social workers, local authorities, education, health, staff and independent workers. Where a complaint is received from a representative acting on behalf of a child or young person, the agency will, if appropriate, confirm where possible that the child or young person is happy, and that the complaint submitted reflects their views.

REPRESENTATIONS

Representations can be made in writing or verbally by anyone who has an interest in the fostering service. Ideally this should be through a face to face meeting. A written record of the discussion should be completed and sent to the Assistant Director/Registered Manager for consideration and if appropriate forwarded on to the Director of the agency. A written response should be sent to the person making the representation as soon as the information has been considered and any appropriate action taken. Should the response not be felt to be satisfactory to them then consideration can be made to evoke the Complaints Procedure.



THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage One

The expectation is that the majority of complaints should be considered (and resolved) at Stage One. At Stage One, we will discuss with the complainant their concerns and attempt to address the complaint as quickly as possible and find a way forward. Most Stage One complaints should ideally be concluded within 10 working days, however, this may not always be possible and therefore the aim will be for a conclusion to be reached within a maximum of 20 working days. If the matter is resolved, the agency will write confirming the agreed resolution. Where the matter is not resolved locally, the complainant has the right to request consideration of the complaint at Stage Two. This request should ideally be received by the agency within 20 working days so that momentum in resolving the complaint is not lost.

Stage Two

Consideration of complaints at Stage Two is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an Investigating Officer. The investigation should be completed, and the response sent to the complainant ideally within 25 working days. However, this may be impractical in some cases, e.g. where the complaint

involves several agencies, all or some of the matters are the subject of a concurrent investigation (such as a disciplinary process), if the complaint is particularly complicated or if a key witness is unavailable for part of the time. Where it is not possible to complete the investigation within 25 working days, Stage Two may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. Where a response in 25 working days is not feasible, the agency will inform the complainant as soon as possible in writing of:

- The reason for the delay
- The date by which a response should be received.

After the Investigating Officer has produced their report the agency will write to the complainant with their response to the report. The response will contain details of the right to have the complaint submitted to a Review Panel should the complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome.



Stage Three – Review Panel

Review Panels are designed to:

- Listen to all parties;
- Consider the adequacy of the Stage Two investigation;
- Obtain any further information and advice that may help resolve the complaint to all parties' satisfaction;
- Focus on achieving resolution for the complainant by addressing clearly the defined complaints and desired outcomes;
- Reach findings on each of the complaints being reviewed;
- Make recommendations that provide practical remedies and creative solutions to complex situations;
- Support local solutions where the opportunity for resolution between the complainant and the agency exist;
- To identify any consequent injustice to the complainant where complaints are upheld, and to recommend appropriate redress;
- Recommend any service improvements for action by the agency.

The Review Panel will not reinvestigate the complaints, nor will it be able to consider any substantively new complaints that have not been first considered at Stage Two.

Complainants have the right to bring a representative to the Panel to speak on their behalf.

After the Panel, the agency must endeavour to send its response to the Panel's recommendations to the complainant (and other participants as necessary) within 15 days of receiving the Panel's report.

If following Panel, the complainant remains dissatisfied they will be advised of their rights to contact the agency's inspection body:

Ofsted

National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



“

I feel very supported by all the staff and indeed many of the carers too, there are plenty of people to talk to and gain help should I need it.

Diane, Foster Carer since 2011

”





FOSTERING OPTIONS

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MK17 8HS

Tel: 01908 587666

www.fostering-options.org

Registered Company Number: 04356133

