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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2021/22



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INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose is relevant in equal terms to UK Fostering Ltd and UK Fostering North East, which is the subsidiary of UK Fostering, covering the geographical area of the North East. Where this document refers to 'UK Fostering' it addresses in equal terms UK Fostering North East.

This document outlines the way UK Fostering operates as an Independent Fostering Agency in England.

The Statement of Purpose has been developed to meet the requirements arising from:-

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 1989 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Fostering Services Regulations (England 2011)
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England 2011)
- The Children Act 1989 (and its later amendments including CA 2004)

UK Fostering's Statement of Purpose is available online to (www.ukfostering.org.uk):-

- Ofsted
- Any person working for or within the fostering service
- Any foster carer or prospective foster carer of the service
- Any child placed with the fostering service
- Any parent or guardian of any child placed with the fostering service
- Local Authority partners and relevant stakeholders
- The public

A print version of the Statement of Purpose is also available on request.

In addition, UK Fostering provides children and young people with a welcome guide which is written and presented in an age appropriate way to reflect their level of understanding. It has been translated into several languages representing the diversity cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children placed by UK Fostering. In addition, a video has been created by a care leaver in conjunction with UK Fostering to introduce the guide in a more visual and audible way to children (ukfostering.org.uk/kids-zone/).

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually by the Senior Management Team and the board of directors.

Covid-19 and its effects and relevance to the SoP

The year 2020 has brought unprecedented challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic. UK Fostering ensured that the welfare and safety of its children remained at the centre of all assessments and decision making throughout this difficult time. It is important to note that some policy elements were amended and changed, sometimes only temporarily, in accordance with Government advice and regulations (for example lockdowns). We expect the need to adapt and react promptly and proactively continues to be a feature of the year 2021. It is important to note that references in this SoP with regards to procedures for example for

visits or assessments of foster carers have be preceded by temporary policy changes under the umbrella of management of the pandemic. For any such aspect, the Covid-19 policy is to be consulted and read in conjunction with the SoP.

OUR MISSION, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

To provide high quality and innovative fostering services for children and young people, where they can experience a safe, warm and caring family life which enhances and maximises their potential.

OUR AIMS:

We strive to have a strong and quality driven service, with a growing presence throughout the UK. The development of the organisation has been motivated by our commitment to ensuring that we provide transforming care in the lives of vulnerable children. Our aims are:

- To develop a fostering service where partnership working, professionalism, respect, integrity, and fairness are central to all aspects of the operations and provisions.
- To always apply a child-centred approach where the welfare of the child is at the centre of everyone's thinking and actions.
- To ensure that we safeguard the welfare of every child and young person that we provide with a placement or who lives within the fostering families under our service.
- To offer service users and Local Authority partner's safe, high quality, value for money fostering services with tangible, positive, measured outcomes for children.
- Have a national structure and presence that enables us to maintain our high levels of local, regional, and individual safety and support.

OBJECTIVES:

- To ensure children and young people placed with us have a stable and consistent experience of a safe, warm, and caring family life, which enhances and maximises their potential.
- To demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvements, quality assurance and the highest quality provisions.
- To assist the Local Authorities in improving the wellbeing of children in every aspect of their lives.
- To make high quality matches between children and foster families where the skills and experience of the foster family provides the foundation for the improvement of the child's life.
- To recruit, train and approve foster carers from a broad cultural, religious and ethnic background so that they can be appropriately matched against the needs of the children and young people coming into care.
- To strongly support and promote social interests and hobbies of children and young people so that they take part in a range of activities and lead an active and healthy lifestyle.
- To provide a 24-hour service to foster carers and Local Authorities which is responsive, supportive and professional.
- To regularly consult with children in care so as to monitor their wishes and feelings and make improvements, amendments and changes within the service provision where appropriate.

- To provide a diverse training programme for foster carers which mirrors the training and development needs of the foster carers in relation to the children and young people.
- A focus on continuous improvement, quality assurance and high quality service provision. To continually strive for excellence in all we do.
- To deliver best value to all stakeholders.



STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

UK Fostering Ltd, an independent fostering organisation, is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (company number 08005502). UK Fostering began operating in 2012 and has consistently grown and evolved to meet the needs of looked after children and young people in the UK. In accordance with the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989, UK Fostering has produced a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. Copies of these are available to all statutory and regulatory bodies in the UK.

The registered address is Bridge House, High Street, Dartford, DA1 1DJ. UK Fostering is registered with Ofsted. The registration number is SC448220.

A copy of the inspection report is available through the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk) and the UK Fostering website (www.ukfostering.org.uk).

UK Fostering (NE), is a subsidiary company of UK Fostering Ltd based in the Northeast, it is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (company number 10518454). The company house registered address is Bridge House, High Street, Dartford, DA1 1DJ. The registration number is 2587198.

UK Fostering Ltd (parent company) and UK Fostering (NE) (subsidiary company) share the same policies which includes this Statement of Purpose. All other documentation and print material is shared equally between these companies. In the remainder of this document, unless otherwise stated, UK Fostering also includes and is relevant for UK Fostering (NE).

UK FOSTERING and UK FOSTERING (NE) OFFICE LOCATIONS

Registered Office (South East):

Bridge House, High Street, Dartford, DA1 1DJ; T 01322 473 243

UK Fostering's Head Office performs centralised functions and is located in Dartford Kent.

Centralised functions include:

- Support, training and information for foster parents (includes supervision) (regulation 17)
- Constitution and membership of a fostering panel (regulation 23)
- Assessment of prospective foster parents (includes recruiting foster parents) (regulation 26)
- Approval of foster parents (regulation 27)
- Reviews and terminations of approval (regulation 28)
- Centralised Placement and Commissioning Team
- Centralised Finance and HR Team
- Centralised QA Team

The Agency Decision Makers and the Registered Manager are based in the Dartford office and the strategic as well as the operational decisions are taken from this location. Each regional office has a Manager or Director in place to support and/or oversee the operations of the area and a small staff team.

Regional Offices addresses:

Midlands Office

Poachers Pocket, Cole Hall Lane, Birmingham, B34 6HE T 0121 647 3538

North West Office

5 Webster Court, Carina Park, Westbrook, Warrington WA5 8WD; T: 01925 598 165

Subsidiary company with separate Ofsted registration

UK Fostering (NE)

UK Fostering Ltd (NE), Room L1, North East Business and Innovation Centre, Wearfield, Enterprise Park East, Sunderland, SR5 2TA; T01322 473 243

The Registered Manager is based in the Sunderland Office (Ms Nicky Hudson). The Agency Decision Maker s(ADM) are Amarjit Dhull and Christine Broadbent who are also the ADM's for UK Fostering Ltd.

The Office shares the following centralised functions through its parent company UK Fostering Ltd:

Functions of Regional Offices and UK Fostering (NE) include:

- Support, training, and information for foster parents (includes supervision) (regulation 17)
- assessment of prospective foster parents (includes recruiting foster parents) (regulation 26)
- foster carer reviews (regulation 28).

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

UK Fostering is committed to valuing equality and diversity within the workforce and to treating all employees and job applicants equally. The goal is to ensure these commitments are embedded in the day to day working practices with all of its customers, colleagues and partners. UK Fostering provides equality of opportunity and do not tolerate any direct or indirect discrimination.

The organisation is responsive to any child's racial, cultural and linguistic background and belief systems, taking into account their age, understanding, ability, and any special needs they may have arising from physical or intellectual impairment.

The organisation is committed to equality of opportunity for employees, Foster Carers, children and young people and will strive to ensure no individual will be disadvantaged due to race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other reason. Discriminatory behaviour will be robustly challenged and dealt with appropriately according to the circumstances.

UK Fostering monitors equality and diversity regularly through management forums and working groups. This information is used to inform policy and enhance business processes.



MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The strategic direction, service development and performance of UK Fostering is monitored by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors meets regularly and is responsible for the overall strategic direction and all corporate and financial responsibility for the company. The Board of Directors, of which the registered manager and the Agency Decision Makers are part, monitors the operational and financial performance of the company's activities, business planning and policy development.

The Board of Directors is supported by a Senior Management Team which meets monthly to direct and monitor the operational performance the company's activities, business planning and policy development. This team is supported by the area managers and departmental heads of service.

The Senior Management Team is responsible for:

- Ensuring that continuous improvement initiatives are implemented and that day-to-day activities are undertaken in a timely and appropriate manner to the high standards required in meeting the needs of children in its care.
- Ensuring that these activities are in line with the vision and direction set by the board.
- Maintaining regular liaison with foster carers and staff to ensure an accurate flow of information in both directions and responsiveness to any change in circumstances.
- The Senior Management Team is supported by a workforce of appropriately qualified managers, practitioners and support staff within each region, all of whom are committed to a programme of continuous professional development. The Senior Management Team is committed to even greater evidencing of outcomes as the real measure of the quality it delivers.

Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team is comprised of the Directors who are responsible for the day-to-day management and strategic development of the organisation. The top two directors (Amarjit Dhull and Urs Biemann) are qualified social workers with many years of frontline experience in children and families and child protection, and over 35 years of combined experience in the fostering sector.

All members of the senior management have considerable expertise in their field and their management qualifications include MSW, DPM, LAW, and NVQ4 in leadership and management in care services, Diploma in Management level 5 and Diploma in Strategic Leadership and Management level 7.

All social workers and their managers are professionally qualified and registered individually with 'Social Work England'. Many have post qualifying specialist awards and experience related to working with children and young people in foster care. All staff receive regular supervision and yearly appraisals as well as access to regular training.

Each region has a pool of professionals who work for the organisation on an independent, self-employed basis across a variety of roles. For both casual and self-employed workers verification of any necessary formal qualifications in relation to the work undertaken is

obtained. All relevant checks and enquiries, for permanent staff, are carried out to ensure that the welfare of children and young people is safeguarded.

All staff who undertake work for UK Fostering on a permanent, casual, and self-employed basis, are covered by appropriate professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY UK FOSTERING

Fostering Placements

All requests for fostering placements are subject to a matching process to ensure that the skills and experience of the foster carers meet the needs of each child/young person placed with.

UK Fostering recognises the importance of carefully matching placement referrals for children and young people with its foster families. UK Fostering works closely and in partnership with the referring Local Authority to ensure that the proposed placement supports the following:

- Meeting the child's physical, educational, emotional, health, cultural, religious and social needs
- Meeting the requirement for contact with members of the birth family
- Meeting the expressed wishes of the child/children
- Considering the wishes of the child's family where appropriate
- Effective safeguarding of the foster family taking into consideration their experience, skills and family dynamic.

Placements Types

The types of fostering offered at UK Fostering range from emergency placements to planned placements, as well as more specialised types of foster care such as therapeutic fostering and youth offending fostering. The type of fostering provided varies from case to case, depending on the needs of the individual child. UK Fostering provides a range of placement types as defined by the local authorities which commission the services. These include:

Emergency Placements - This is a placement that is made within 24 hours of it being requested, and where there has been no prior plan. UK Fostering provides a 24-hour emergency service for urgent cases such as these.

Short-term fostering & bridging placements - This is one of the shorter term types of fostering. A child or young person in a bridging placement may be awaiting a more permanent placement such as a long term foster family, or a family assessment centre. The period of this type of fostering placement could be anything from a few days to weeks or months, whilst plans are made for the future of the child with the relevant Local Authorities or social services departments.

Sibling Placements - are placements where siblings are either placed together or separately with us facilitating contact between siblings.

Solo Placements are placements for children and young people who are unable to be placed alongside other children due to their very complex needs and/or challenging behaviour.

Respite placements- where foster carers provide a break for parents and additional support where their own support networks are lacking, or can be provided to other foster carers as a way of supporting complex needs placements. This can be an overnight stay or a couple of weeks

Unaccompanied Children - placements for unaccompanied asylum seekers. Support packages include immigration; supporting religious, language and cultural needs; integration with community and faith groups

Specialist Fostering - provides placements to children who have complex needs and would benefit from a more specialist service or a solo placement with an experienced carer. These usually include enhanced packages of support or additionally purchased services

Step Down Placements – As parts of our specialist fostering placements, we offer a service through which children and young people can be reintegrated to family life, after having lived in a residential setting. We liaise very closely with Local Authorities and residential providers to identify and match young people and children to foster families. A structured and well-defined step by step plan maximises the chances of success.

Youth Offending Placements - Youth offending foster carers care for children involved in offending, at risk of being involved in offending and those that are remanded into care. A remanded young person has been directed by the courts to enter the care of the local authority sometimes in the care of foster carers. Remand Foster Carers look after young people who are remanded by the courts into public care. These remand placements are usually short term and require the carer to work closely with the youth justice/offending teams to gain the best outcome for the child.

Parent and Child Placements - This type of fostering placement is for parents for whom there are concerns either in their ability to parent or their need for support at the early stages of their child's development. Support, observation and assessment work can be carried out on behalf of the Local Authority. If required, qualified staff can prepare court reports and statements.

Family and Friends Foster Placements – Provides assessment and ongoing support for families who are related or befriended to a child requiring permanency.

Social Work & Support Services

All UK Fostering foster carers are supported by an allocated supervising social worker. The supervising social workers will:

- Ensure the safety of every child through supervision, unannounced visits, training and the review process of foster carers.
- Ensure that any safeguarding concerns are raised/escalated immediately to the designated safeguarding officer in the organisation.
- Undertake monthly supervision and maintain frequent contact with the foster carer and children in placement through placement visits and telephone calls.
- Make unannounced visits to the foster home. Provide advice, guidance and out of hours support to foster carers on their care of children in placement.
- Coordinate other support services as appropriate e.g. support work, respite care and therapeutic intervention.
- Liaise with other professional service providers who may be involved and contribute to formal meetings about care plans for children and foster carer reviews.
- Identify and help respond to foster carers' training needs.
- Keep careful records of the progress of placements and achievements of children.

- Help foster carers achieve the Training Support and Development Standards during the formative stage of their fostering career.

The supervising social workers have a wide range of experience and many have specific expertise, for example in undertaking life story work, leaving care preparation and undertaking various assessment related work.

Support Service for Children and Young People

The Support Service for Children and Young People helps to support and sustain placements by identifying and meeting the needs of individual children/young people and their foster carer.

Supervising Social Workers make a significant contribution to our proactive participation strategy for children and young people by organising and supervising activities, as well as consultation, feedback and events. In addition, they provide the following services:

- Out of hours duty support in response to crisis and emergencies.
- Transport for a child/ young person to attend school, contact visits or activities.
- Supervision of contact between a child/young person and his/her birth family.
- Excursions, trips and social activities for foster children/young people.
- Social activities for the sons and daughters of foster carers.

Therapy services

UK Fostering provides individual therapy for the young person if requested or required. Any individual therapy provided will usually be arranged in consultation with the foster carers & concerned local authority.

RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL OF FOSTER CARERS

UK Fostering employs various tools and channels to recruit foster carers. Once an individual or a family contacts UK Fostering, the recruitment officer ensures that their basic details are obtained, and guides them through the initial screening. The main factors which determine whether an applicant proceeds to the next stage include aspects relating to their motivation to foster, their skills, experience, resilience and approach. Decisions are based on a large number of elements including their DBS check, medical history, references, and physical factor such as their home location and availability of at least one spare bedroom. Our recruitment and assessment process takes 4-6 months on average. Every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay.

Centralised Recruitment Team

UK Fostering operates a central recruitment team that communicates with fostering enquiries through phone, live chat and email. The experienced team provides guidance and direction to possible applicants and determines whether the enquirer is suitable for the next stage, either; receiving information by post or an Initial Visit by UK Fostering.

Application form

Potential foster carers complete an application form, giving detailed information about themselves and their family and consent to complete necessary checks and enquiries to ascertain their suitability to foster. These include:-

- Verification of identity and personal history
- Disclosure and Barring Service checks on all adult members of the household
- Enquiries to Children's Social Care Authorities and their Child Protection Registers
- Applicants are required to have medical examinations completed by their GP to ensure that there are no underlying issues that may affect their ability to foster. Reports are made available to our Agency Medical Advisor for his/her comments.
- Enquiries to other agencies as required.
- Applicants are also asked to identify at least three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. References from external agencies and personal references, which are provided in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and relevant referee(s).

Initial Visit

UK Fostering decides to visit a family based on the initial screening phone call and discussion. The Initial Visit, which is usually carried out by a manager of the fostering service, provides an opportunity for the applicants to learn more about UK Fostering, and about the requirements of foster carers. Applicants are informed of the need for health checks, DBS checks, references and training. The manager, together with the colleagues on the recruitment panel, will decide after the 'Initial Visit', whether UK Fostering proposes to commence an assessment of the applicant. Should anyone be denied at this stage they will be informed of the reasons for the decision.

The Assessment

All assessments will be carried out by qualified and experienced Social Workers using the Coram BAAF Form F template and process (Stage 1 and Stage 2). The first assessment meeting is concerned with planning and timetabling the assessment. It requires full participation by the applicant(s). She/he will visit them at their home, generally on 6-9 occasions the assessor will explain the basic process of gathering information and evidence during the assessment as well as ensuring that applicants are aware of the process of obtaining checks from the DBS service, Local Authority and the GP. UK Fostering ensures that the applicants are attending the Skills to Foster Training course prior to completion of the assessment.

During the assessment process, applicants are asked to compile a portfolio of written material giving examples of relevant experience, skills and competence. UK Fostering's 'assessing Social Worker' will undertake the assessment in the following settings: The applicants own home, at the training venue during the 'Skills to Foster' preparation course and in other relevant settings i.e. workplace if appropriate.

A variety of techniques will be used to gather evidence or information regarding the applicant's suitability to foster.

All prospective foster carers must attend Skills to Foster training during their assessment. This training provides applicants with information about the responsibilities of being a foster carer and working with UK Fostering.

Our Quality Assurance Team has an overview of the pre-panel process to ensure regulatory compliance and quality control of the assessment.

The Quality Assurance Team will read through the report and highlight any areas which may need further attention / completion by the assessor. Once completed a panel date is identified and allocated.

Prospective carers will read and sign the report prior to submission to the fostering panel. Any amendments or changes Foster Carers wish to make are discussed with the assessor and noted in the report.

The panel administrator at UK Fostering will circulate the Form F to the Panel Members (access via a secure log in to our Online Data Base) and invite the assessor and the applicants to the panel meeting.

The Panel will then make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Applicants are not required to meet with the Agency Decision Maker.



Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision within statutory timescales. All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held on file and some sections are available to view on request.

Should the applicants not be approved they will be informed in writing together with the 'qualifying determination' and the appropriate options available to them to appeal against the recommendation.

Induction

Once approved by an ADM, the foster carers are allocated a named Supervising Social Worker (SSW). The approved foster carers go through an induction which includes receiving all necessary documentation such as the foster carer handbook, complaints leaflet, foster carer diary, and an ID card.

All Foster carers receive a 'Welcome Visit' from their SSW where the intricacies of the next stage of the referral and matching process is explained to them in detail, and the foster carers are asked to sign the foster carer agreement. Also, there will be a discussion around future training courses and the clarification of any immediate questions asked by the carers about the fostering task.

FOSTERING PANEL

UK Fostering regards the Fostering Panel as a valuable and indispensable source of quality assurance, professional accountability and feedback. The Fostering Panel makes recommendations regarding the applications and assessments to become foster carers, annual reviews, re-approvals, change of approval and / or termination of new or existing Foster Carers. UK Fostering and UK Fostering (NE) share the same panel.

In accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, the members of the fostering panel consist of people from the organisation's central list. The central list includes members from various backgrounds and professions who have knowledge of the local areas for which they are considering cases and making recommendations.

The UK Fostering's fostering panel only conducts business if at least the chair or vice chair, one social worker who has at least 3 years post qualifying experience and at least three other members from the central list are present.

The vice chair would act as chair if the chair is absent or his/her office is vacant.

The term of office of members of the Panel is normally 3 years, which is renewable, but may be of any period of time that the chairperson or vice chairperson may determine on appointing the member.



MANAGEMENT & SUPERVISION OF FOSTER CARERS

(Support, Training, Finance & Review of foster carers)

Review of foster carers

In compliance with the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, all Foster Carers and their approval status is reviewed annually. The Annual Review determines whether approval of the Carers should be renewed and / or whether there should be any changes made. The review includes a detailed report completed by the SSW. Completion of feedback forms are requested from the Local Authority Social Worker, children and young people in placement, children of the household / Carers and the Foster Carers themselves.

UK Fostering conducts annual reviews on all carers, in addition also undertake additional reviews when appropriate (e.g., following a serious complaint or incident; where a change of terms of approval is proposed, where an early review is requested by the panel or the ADM). The review procedure focuses on the core competences for foster carers, which appear in the Form F assessment, and includes regular appraisal of training and development needs.

Training

UK Fostering is committed to providing ongoing quality training that is accessible and relevant to all of our foster carers. UK Fostering provides a large selection of Online trainings which complement the 'physical' training courses. The organisation is very aware that fostering is a challenging task and provides a comprehensive training programme which covers all relevant areas including behaviour management, health and safety, first aid, attachment theory, communication in a professional environment, fostering regulations and law etc. UK Fostering also support its carers to complete and achieve the standards set out by the Children's Workforce Development (TSDS).

The Training programme developed by UK Fostering is in line with National Minimum Standards and the standards recommended by TSDS (Children's Workforce Development Council), to ensure that all Foster Carers receive relevant induction and continued professional development.

In addition to the Skills to Foster course which is completed as part of the assessment, UK Fostering offers a comprehensive training programme and workshops for our foster carers. The courses include:

- Safer Caring
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- First Aid
- Health and safety
- Attachment Theory
- Welcoming children and helping them preparing to leave
- Parent and Child Foster Placements
- Remand Fostering
- Working together professionally
- Communicating and recording
- Working with sexually abused children
- And many more ...

UK Fostering also support its foster carers to complete the induction standards of the Children's Workforce Development Council (TSDS) within their first 12 months of fostering.

Support for Foster Carers

It is imperative that UK Fostering foster families receive the highest quality of support from the organisation. It is primarily the Supervising Social Worker's responsibility to manage and support the carer in the fostering task. UK Fostering's Supervising Social Workers understand that they have a responsibility for ensuring that the child in the placement's needs are paramount, even though they do not have case management responsibility for the child.

UK Fostering regards its carers as the foundation of its service. UK Fostering knows from numerous studies that poor general support to carers has been found to be closely associated with them ceasing to foster. Therefore, UK Fostering offers its Foster Carers a robust package of professional support and financial remuneration. All carers and looked after children / young people receive an exceptionally high level of support from the management and staff at UK Fostering.

The following list encompasses the main areas of support available to its foster carers:

Allocated Supervising Social Worker: Every foster family has an allocated, fully qualified supervising social worker through UK Fostering. This is the key element to the support which is provided to its carers. The supervising social worker visits the foster carer regularly, accompanies them to meetings and is in regular phone contact with them. They support, encourage, guide, train and work with the carer every step of the way.

24/7 Support: All of UK Fostering's carers have 24/7 access to a member of staff for any form of emergencies. This can be very important when carers are faced with a difficult to handle situation or indeed any form of emergency.

Training: As stated above.

Regular home visits: The allocated Supervising Social Worker visits the fostering home at least once per month, but often more frequently. The frequency of the home visits is needs lead and depends on the requirements of the foster carer and the child or young person in placement.

Telephone calls: The supervising social worker calls the foster carer regularly to keep abreast of any developments between visits.

Support group/Social meetings: UK Fostering arranges and facilitate meetings where carers can meet likeminded people and share their experiences, learn from each other, and get to know people who can become part of their support network.

Allocation of a councillor or therapist: Where appropriate, UK Fostering allocates a specialist councillor or therapist to support the foster family i.e. with a particularly complex placement, during an allegation or after a difficult experience which has a profound impact on the fostering household.

Family outings: UK Fostering organises and facilitate activity-based events for foster carers and their families e.g., a trip to a theme park, or an end of year celebration.

Support groups for Birth Children: UK Fostering organises meetings for carers' own children, where they can meet peers from other foster families.

Newsletter: UK Fostering produces a regular newsletter in which contributions from foster families, as well as children and young people feature alongside articles from staff and management.

Access to an accountant: Access for anyone living in a foster carer's family for accountancy advice.

Access to a legal advisor: Access for anyone living in a foster carer's family to a legal advisor.

Education advisor: Access to an educational advisor who can assist with advice relating to access or application to schools.

Discount scheme: Access to Hundreds of discounts through a membership card with hundreds of high street shops, theme parks and web based businesses.



FINANCE

UK Fostering's Foster Carers receive a generous weekly fostering allowance paid directly into the Foster Carer's bank account by BACS.

All Foster Carers are self-employed and must ensure they pay their own tax and national insurance. Further financial information and guidance on finances is supplied to Foster Carers within the Foster Carer Handbook.

UK Fostering ensures that all finance aspects are dealt with promptly, professionally and fairly. With regards to the fostering allowance there are certain minimum amounts of the allowance which are allocated for specific purposes, i.e.: pocket money, travel, leisure, clothes and others areas. Foster Carers are advised that the allowance has to cater for all of the children / and young people's needs and they must budget with the allowance so as to be able to cover larger expenses e.g. the purchase of a bicycle. Where carers feel that a particular need cannot be met by the allowance, carers are asked to address this with their supervising Social Worker.

Fees paid to Foster Carers vary according to the type of placement. The fostering allowance is not payable when there is no child in placement. Local Authorities can contact any office for details of our charges but confirmation of any fees will be agreed prior to any placement.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

UK Fostering has comprehensive Foster Carer policies, procedures and practice manuals in accordance with regulations. The manuals (The Foster Carer's Handbook and the Social Workers' Policy Book) contain information on law, safeguarding, behaviour management, health and safety matters, care planning, training, financial matters, meeting the needs of children and young people, education, complaints and grievances, record keeping and others.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Representation and complaints procedure

All children/young people placed with UK Fostering's foster carers are informed of the Representation and Complaints Procedure on commencement of placement by their supervising social worker. Leaflets and posters about the complaints process are available which are accessible to the wide age range of children and young people placed. All foster carers, staff and placing local authorities/health and social care trusts are provided with information about UK Fostering's Representation and Complaints Procedure.

Complaints and compliments

A summary of complaint outcomes and their impact upon service design and delivery are collated by the Complaints Lead Officer and reported to the Safeguarding Committee & Board. The Complaints Lead Officer maintains a record of all compliments received from service users/ commissioners.

Complaints can be made directly to the Complaints Officer (Ms Becky Norris, Regional Head). These can be made either in writing or verbally. However, UK Fostering will always request that formal complaints are made in writing. Contact details for any complaint are:

UK Fostering, Complaints Officer, Bridge House, High Street, Dartford, DA1 1DJ, T: 01322 473 243 E: complaints@ukfostering.org.uk

Persons entitled to have their complaints considered are:

- a) Any child who is being looked after by UK Fostering or a person acting on behalf of the child.
- b) A parent of his or hers or person with parental responsibility.
- c) Any UK Fostering Foster Carer or family member.
- d) Any UK Fostering staff member.
- e) Such other person as UK Fostering considers has sufficient interest in the child's welfare to warrant his or her representations being considered by them.

External inspection

As a registered service provider, UK Fostering's operational services are subject to regular inspection by Ofsted. UK Fostering welcome such inspections and are proud of the outcomes. These are publicly available via the websites of the inspectorates concerned and via UK Fostering's website.

Service improvement

UK Fostering promotes a culture of continuous improvement, giving careful attention to feedback about its services offered by any individuals or organisations with whom it comes into contact. Operational staff are supported by quality assurance and service improvement managers (and other specialists) who focus on quality assurance throughout the company.

UK Fostering Offices

<p>Registered Office (South East): Bridge House High Street Dartford DA1 1DJ</p> <p>T 01322 473 243 info@ukfostering.org.uk</p>	<p>Responsible Individual: Amarjit Dhull</p> <p>Registered Manager: Urs Biemann</p> <p>Agency Decision Maker: Christine Broadbent, and Amarjit Dhull</p>
<p>Midlands Office Poachers Pocket, Cole Hall Lane, Birmingham, B34 6HE T 0121 647 3538</p>	<p>Regional Head: Becky Norris</p>
<p>North West Office 5 Webster Court, Carina Park, Westbrook, Warrington WA5 8WD T: 01925 598 165</p>	<p>Fostering Manager: Udi Aymer</p>
<p>UK Fostering North East Office UK Fostering Lt (NE), Room L1, North East Business and Innovation Centre, Wearfield, Enterprise Park East, Sunderland, SR5 2TA T 0191 349 7009</p> <p>info@ukfostering.org.uk</p>	<p>Responsible Individual: Amarjit Dhull</p> <p>Registered Manager: Nicky Hudson</p> <p>Agency Decision Maker: Christine Broadbent, and Amarjit Dhull</p>
<p>Out of Hours Number:</p>	<p>03333 010 083</p>

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APPENDIX I CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

This Statement of Purpose is updated to reflect the changes to UK Fostering's service delivery in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the respective Public Health and Government guidance. The interim arrangements in place from March 2020 ensured that UK Fostering could change and adapt their model of service delivery, while promoting the support and safety of the children, young people, foster carers, and their families, as well as staff.

The agency continues to proactively employ and make full use of technology to preserve good communication throughout the service. This is to provide the best possible support and maintain the high standard of service to children, young people, foster carers, staff, and all other related parties.

Specific measures and responses include (but are not limited to):-

- Covid 19 policy completed and provided to all staff;
- Covid 19 communication strategy put in place with regular meetings and opportunities to communicate at all levels providing regular updates to staff, children and young people and carers;
- PPE equipment provided to all staff;
- Working from home arrangements implemented for all staff;
- Regular practice updates shared with foster carers and staff in line with government guidance;
- Other practice updates shared with external parties including local authorities, panel members and assessors;
- COVID-19 safety plans and risk assessment implemented for all relevant fostering households and as required specific to individual's needs;
- Tracker and recording systems implemented to monitor the progress of foster carers, their children and young people and staff who are unwell;
- Practice guidance developed ensuring that children are not placed in households where foster carers are a 'shielding' household in line with the government timescale of twelve weeks;
- Matching processes for children updated to reflect Public Health and Government guidance
- Contact arrangements for children updated to reflect the use of various communication platforms;
- Face to face support, utilising appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures, to foster carers, children, and young people in situations where it is considered necessary to preserve the stability of the placement and with the oversight and agreement of senior management;
- Recruitment strategy amended to include recruitment, initial visits, pre-approval training and fostering assessments via video conferencing;
- Interim online training plan implemented for foster carers to include induction and mandatory training;
- Participation work with children and young people, and individual targeted support where this is needed, is taking place using technology. Survey completed in terms of all children and YP who had a computer to ensure schoolwork could continue- Laptops provided as required;
- Foster carer supervision visits, unannounced visits and support groups completed via video conferencing to promote a strong, proactive culture of 'keeping connected' and ensuring carers and young people felt supported;

- Foster carer annual reviews chaired by independent reviewing officers via video conferencing;
- Virtual panel meetings implemented;
- Business continuity plan updated to reflect COVID-19 and associated government guidance;
- An interim carer training strategy to ensure training standards are met for new and existing foster carers, using available technology.