



Family Works Fostering Statement of Purpose

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About this document

Title	Statement of Purpose
Purpose	Details Family Works Fostering's aims and objectives, services provided, staffing and management structure.
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Introduction

Family Works Fostering (FWF) is a child-focused, young and efficiently managed Independent Fostering Agency, that is established to meet the needs of children and young people, who require quality foster placements, between the ages of 0 - 18 years of any gender. FWF strives to provide safe, stable and nurturing foster care placements, where children and young people are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate statute law and regulations, including:

- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) Regulations 2009
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 (2013)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care 2014
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2015
- Children Act 1989 Regulations and Guidance Volume 2: Care planning, Placement and Case Review 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 2018

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed at least annually by the Management team and is intended to provide information to a wide audience including:

- Family Works Fostering staff
- Foster carers and prospective foster carers (including foster carers' birth children)
- Children and young people placed with Family Works Fostering
- Local Authorities which are considering placing children and young people with Family Works Fostering
- General public and OFSTED.

Section 1

Our Vision

The vision for Family Works Fostering is to:

- Provide caring, stable and child focused foster families where children and young people are safe and can develop secure attachments.
- To ensure that every child is welcome, accepted for who they are and given the opportunity to express themselves and reach their full potential.
- To deliver care and support that is based on empathy, kindness, transparency, respect and collaborative working.
- To consistently strive to improve quality and outcomes for children and young people in our care.
- To continue valuing contribution and participation from foster carers, children and young people, placing local authorities and other agencies in shaping our fostering service.
- To ensure that placements are well matched to children's individual needs and that they promote stability and make real and meaningful difference in their lives.
- To ensure that foster carers and their families receive professional guidance, support and training as appropriate to help them fulfil their roles as effectively as possible .
- To establish positive relationships with local authorities and other agencies and become a preferred provider that has a good reputation around quality and partnership working.

Our vision places equality at the heart of our approach to service delivery and employment. We want all children and young people in our placements, our foster carers and staff to feel valued and treated equally and fairly. Our goal is to ensure our values are embedded in our day to day working practices. Our foster carers provide positive support to children and young people to enable them to respect differences, value diversity and empower them to take control of their lives.

We seek to operate within a framework of fairness, openness, integrity, accountability and expect the same of those providing services for or on behalf of Family Works Fostering. Our key values and principles are set down to ensure that:

- All employment and service delivery policies and practices reflect a positive value for human difference and diversity.
- All staff and foster carers are aware of and understand Family Works Fostering's commitment to equality of opportunity and their responsibilities in relation to this.
- Our workforce has the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide high quality services within a clear framework of anti-discriminatory practice.
- Our services are responsive, accessible, sensitive and appropriate to those who need and may benefit from them.

We are committed to identifying, understanding and eliminating barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment. There is a commitment to challenging individuals or groups who discriminate against any of our young people in any way and diversity is celebrated through daily living experiences and educational programmes.

We pride ourselves on being a small fostering agency that provides a personal touch and support to our foster carers and children and young people in our care.

Aims and Objectives

- To continue to improve outcomes for children and young people by providing child focused care plans with emphasis on placement stability, educational achievement, social development and health.
- To promote permanency for children and young people placed with our foster carers whether their care plan is long term fostering or rehabilitation back to their families.
- To improve educational opportunities and achievements for children and young people in our care by enabling them to benefit from a range of educational activities.
- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of a child's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background; and to consider fully a child's gender, sexuality and any disability they may have.
- To ensure careful matching of a child's needs and wishes with the skills and qualities of a foster carer.
- To promote contact, as appropriate, with birth family and significant others, for every fostered child and young person, during their foster placement.
- To enable young people to pursue interests and hobbies and participate in a range of activities.
- To recruit, assess, support and retain foster carers from diverse backgrounds ensuring a choice of appropriate placement options for children and young people.
- To promote positively the concept of professional foster carers.
- To provide all our foster carers and their families exceptional support, training and recognition through a range of social events, support groups, supervision and visits so that they are able to provide a comprehensive service that addresses the physical, emotional, educational and health needs of the children and young people placed with them.
- To provide a responsive, supportive, professional 24-hour support service for all our foster carers, looked after children and placing local authorities.
- To develop our practice through user consultation and participation with children, young people, foster carers, staff, local authority social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) on their experiences of the service and to highlight service development needs and to implement these where possible and appropriate.
- To ensure that the fostering team is run in an effective and efficient way with qualified staff so that children are suitably safeguarded and benefit from their time in foster care.
- To constantly deliver best value and pursue continual improvement in all areas.

Section 2

Status and Constitution

Family Works Fostering is an independent fostering agency and a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985. FWF is registered and inspected as a fostering provider under the Care Standards Act 2000 / Fostering Service Regulations 2011, and therefore properly constituted to provide foster care placements for looked after children and young people on behalf of local authorities.

In accordance with the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989, we produce a memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. Copies of these are available to the government commissioners, which regulate independent fostering agencies and children's social care throughout the UK.

Family Works Fostering is an owner managed company which has grown organically since its inception and Ofsted registration in January 2017.

The Director is an owner-manager who is actively involved in the day to day business.

Company Meetings

Executive Management meetings take place every month. These meetings are attended by relevant senior staff who are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, as well as determining and reviewing the company's:

- Annual Business Plan.
- Legal Compliance.
- Strategic vision, direction and goals.
- Culture, values, vision and mission.
- Financial expenditure, management and performance.
- Organisational structure and capacity to implement strategic direction.
- Policies and Procedures.
- Quality Assurance.

Family Works Fostering also hold regular performance meetings with relevant staff, to monitor service and performance, address and coordinate the implementation of service developments, business and strategic issues and to benchmark best practice.

Management Structure

The Management Team have considerable experience in social work, management, practice and development roles. Family Works Fostering staff have the following roles:

Responsible Individual (RI)

The Responsible Individual is a qualified and experienced HCPC registered social worker with other qualifications that include ILM Level 7 Leadership and Management, Post graduate Certificate in Commissioning and Procurement in Public Care. The Responsible Individual is the Strategic Lead overseeing NMS 25 reporting, statutory compliance, procurement and tenders, contract management, Human Resources, financial management, marketing, quality assurance and performance, business continuity plan and service plan.

Registered Manager

The Registered Manager has qualifications that include a Diploma in Social Work, Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services and various social work post qualifications and other qualifications relevant to the post. The Registered Manager receives external supervision. 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 and procedures. The Registered Manager has day to day operational management responsibilities and is the Designated Safeguarding.

Social Workers

Family Works Fostering recruited qualified and experienced social workers who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). They are responsible for supporting, advising and monitoring our foster carers, visiting carers' households regularly, attending meetings, spending time with children and young people in placement as appropriate and making recommendations to the foster carer's household review.

Administrators

Family Works Fostering has office administrators who provide vital daily administrative support by ensuring good communication, facilities, recording and minute taking, IT and statutory checks.

Independent Staff

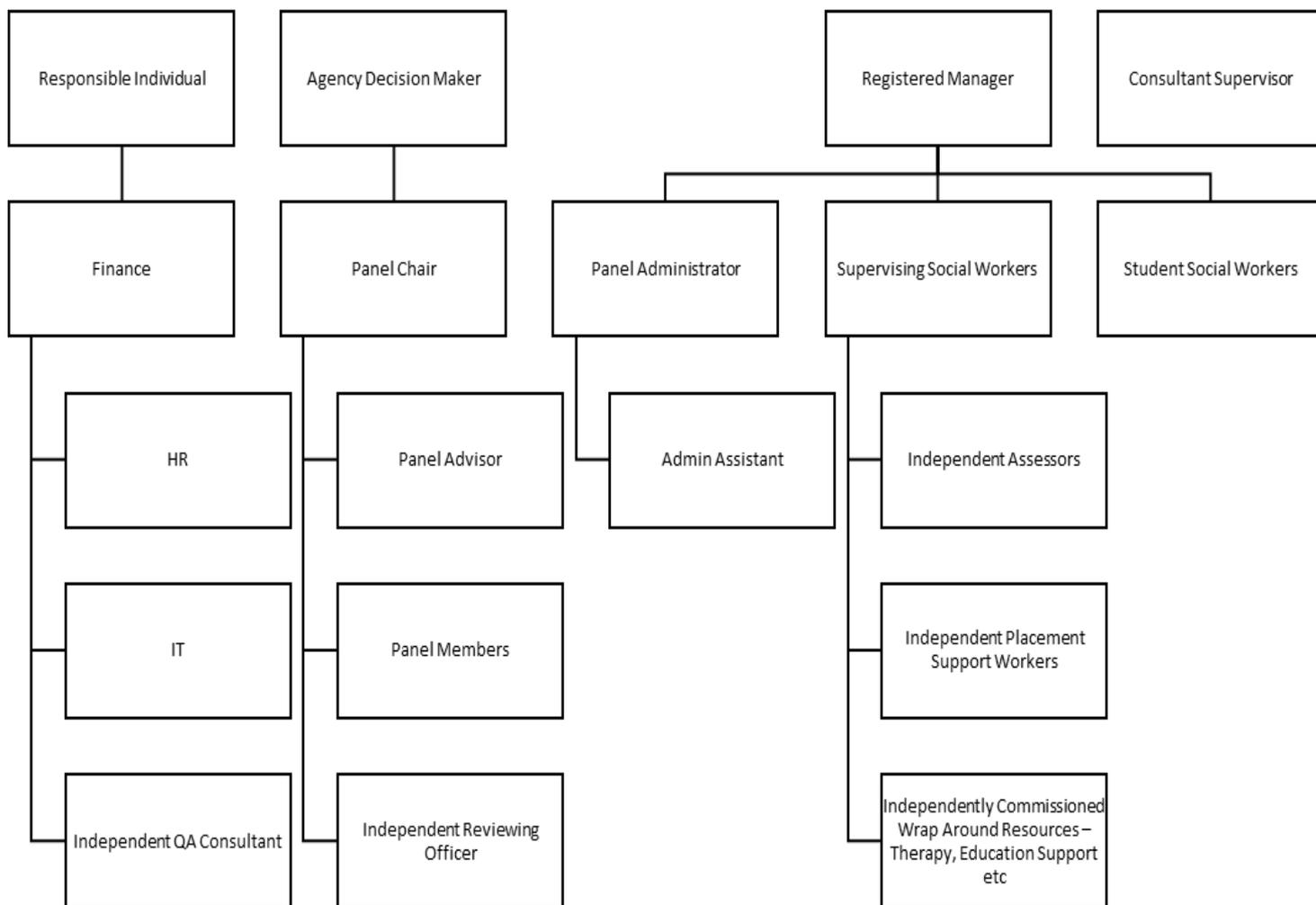
In addition to permanent staff, Family Works Fostering commissions staff who work on an independent, self-employed basis across a variety of roles in the company, such as Independent Form F Assessors, Independent panel members, Sessional Social Workers offering placement support, Independent Investigators for formal complaints, Therapeutic Support, Medical Advisers and an Education Coordinator who provides advice, support and guidance on educational issues for children looked after. FWF commissions independent staff who hold appropriate qualifications and membership of a nationally recognised organisation relevant to their work. Family Work Fostering carries out a range of pre-employment checks on all staff including references, telephone reference verification calls, verification of qualifications and enhanced DBS checks to ensure the welfare and safety of children and young people. All staff who undertake work for Family Works Fostering have contracts of employment and job descriptions or contractual briefs.

All staff receives monthly supervision with their line manager or other designated senior person and group reflective meetings. This is in accordance with Family Works Fostering's Supervision Policy. All staff including independent staff are trained via our in-house, external training and E-Learning courses. All staff are appraised within the first six months of their employment and annually thereafter and 360-degree feedback is sought for all staff appraisals.

Student Social Workers and Newly Qualified Social Workers

Family Works Fostering works with University of Essex and offers placements to student social workers. A coaching and mentoring model is adopted in supporting newly qualified social workers under the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) guidelines. Family Works Fostering has a comprehensive support package for student social workers and newly qualified social workers.

Please see below Family Works Fostering’s organisational structure.



Quality Standards

At Family Works Fostering, we believe that:

- Each child and young person has an inherent right to develop their true potential, regardless of their previous life experiences.
- Children and young people have a right to be looked after by adults who offer them positive support, respect, reassurance and affection.
- All adults and professionals supporting the young person must respect the significance of their birth family, their race, culture and religion.
- Young people must be appropriately prepared for leaving care. They should have savings, educational attainment to support their chosen career and suitable independence skills.
- FWF will be managed in an ethical, effective and efficient manner.
- All staff, foster carers and other adults who come into contact with the children fostered by FWF will be subject to appropriate checks and vetting procedures.

In addition, Family Works Fostering will:

- Strive to comply fully with all relevant childcare legislation, fostering regulations and minimum standards exceed the National Minimum Standards at all times.
- Ensure that child protection procedures are followed robustly at all times to ensure that young people placed with us are safeguarded.
- Work in partnership with local authorities to identify the individual needs of the child placed and then to deliver the care required.
- Ensure that foster carers are trained in behavioural management and do not demean, degrade or humiliate a young person in their care.
- Every effort will be made to match children with families that reflect their religious and cultural needs.
- School attendance and academic achievement will be promoted for all children and young people.
- Daily written records on each child or young person will be provided by foster carers.
- Corporal punishment will NOT be used in any circumstances. Guidance will be provided on behaviour management strategies.
- Assessments will be completed by qualified and experienced staff with active participation by applicants.
- All foster carers will complete Skills to Foster training.
- Foster carers will have continuing training in line with the DfE Training, Support and Development Standards.
- Each foster carer and foster home fulfils all health and safety requirements, is risk assessed and has a safe caring plan.
- Foster carers work to an agreed individual child and young person's care plan and within the terms of the Placement Agreement.
- Foster carers will promote contact with the children's families unless this is not possible due to safeguarding factors.
- Foster carers will receive regular support visits from supervising social workers and regular telephone contact.
- 24-hour telephone support will be provided to foster carers by an experienced, qualified social worker.
- Foster carers will have an annual review.

Section 3

Services

Family Works Fostering works in partnership with placing local authorities to ensure the provision of a wide range of safe, secure and appropriate foster care placements for children and young people of all ages, with appropriately matched and approved foster carers who are able to meet the individual needs of the young person. All referrals are received through a dedicated placements inbox – placements@fw-fostering.co.uk

All placements are negotiated between the placing authority and the Registered Manager to ensure that the appropriate placement resources are offered to the placing authority in respect of the young person. This ensures that the young person is placed with our foster carers who have the right experience and training appropriate to meet their individual needs or specialised areas such as managing challenging behaviour, caring for those who have been sexually abused or parent and child placements.

Placement Regulations

Family Works Fostering placements are made and monitored in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

This means that:

- All foster carers are appropriately approved, reviewed and have signed their Foster Carer Agreement.
- Wherever possible, a pre-placement planning meeting is undertaken, including introductions between the foster carer and the child / young person.
- Either before, or at the point of placement, essential professional information is shared including Care Plans, Placement Plans, medical consent and clarity around delegation to the foster carer.
- Prior to any placement being made a full risk assessment is undertaken by FWF Supervising Social Worker in conjunction with the local authority Social Worker and the Social Worker of any child already in placement.
- In the event of an emergency placement, immediate placement planning receives priority.

Matching

All Family Works Fostering placements are carefully matched to ensure that the needs of the child or young person can be best met by the foster carer put forward and their level of skills and experience. Once a referral is received, close communication takes place between our dedicated FWF staff, local authority colleagues and our foster carers, to ensure that the child's needs will be fully met through the best possible match.

Family Works Fostering takes the decision to place a child extremely seriously and all decisions to place are overseen by the Registered Manager to ensure that we make the best possible match for the child and foster carer.

Children and young people placed with Family Works Fostering will never be expected to share a bedroom with another fostered child or child of the foster carers, other than if they are siblings and it is appropriate to do so.

Types of Placements

Family Works Fostering offers a range of foster placements, which includes planned, emergency and respite care. Family Works Fostering recognises that placing authorities are looking for different types of placements to meet the needs of children and young people needing foster care.

Emergency placements

For same day placements (within 24 hours), FWF should receive a referral with a brief synopsis of the young person's background, placement history and information of any behavioural concerns and this should be accompanied by a recent report/assessment either from the Social Worker or the last placement. This is important in ensuring that the right care and support will be provided to the child/young person from the beginning of the placement.

Short and medium-term placements

A child or young person is expected to return home or move onto a permanent adoptive placement or foster home.

- Short-term placement will be between 1 week to 3 months depending on the child/young person's care plan.
- Medium – term placement will be 3 months to six months.

Long-term placements

Where the child/young person is expected to remain in foster placement until independence

Respite placements

Where the family is supported by a regular break or due to crises within the family. This is usually from 2 days up to 6 weeks.

PACE placements

These are placements for young people with challenging behaviours or those with offending behaviours, going through the criminal justice system subject to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Foster carers will have gained experience of working with young people with challenging behaviour and have received appropriate training.

Parent and child placements

This type of placement is for young people or adults who need support and guidance in caring for their own child. Often the placements are used to assess parenting skills and the ability of the parents to keep their child safe and properly cared for in both short and long term.

Sibling placements

Sibling placements are for brothers and sisters who are placed together in a foster care household. Family Works Fostering advocates keeping siblings together within a family environment, unless it is deemed inappropriate by the placing authority.

Cultural-matched placements

In general, Family Works Fostering promotes and encourages placements reflective of a child's cultural, ethnic and religious background. Family Works Fostering pays attention to the needs of children and young people who have been in trans-racial placements who may have developed a poor self-image or negative attitude. This ensures that their placements will be reflective of their needs with a clear plan on how to meet them.

Specialist placements for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking minors

Family Works Fostering recruits foster carers to offer care to arriving unaccompanied children and young people and provide a service that would ensure that their language, cultural and emotional well-being needs are met.

Children with special needs and disability placements (short breaks/respite)

Family Works Fostering recruits experienced foster carers with skills and experience in caring for children and young people who are disabled and or require specialist care in a family setting.

Therapeutic placements

Family Works Fostering offers therapeutically-informed placements to meet the needs of those children and young people who cannot manage or thrive in a mainstream placement. Often these children and young people present with complex needs that require intensive support for them and their foster carers. Family Works Fostering carers are offered therapeutically-informed training in order to gain an in-depth understanding of trauma, neurodevelopment, attachment based parenting and therapeutic parenting models. Family Works Fostering carers receive regular consultation from commissioned qualified therapists and skilled clinical psychologists.

Placement Referrals

Family Works Fostering values the importance of getting things right from the start hence we always request local authorities making the referrals for foster placements to provide as much information as possible about the child or young person requiring a placement. This needs to include background/historical information, completed assessments, health and medical needs, special needs and information of previous placements.

Family Works Fostering will provide each child or young person with a foster carer welcome book before the placement is done to ensure that children and young people know the families they will be staying with, their routines, including their typical weekly menu.

Family Works Fostering will not allow children and young people to share a room in foster homes unless this has been recommended and/or agreed with the child/young person's social Worker(s) in writing.

Placement Statistics

Family Works Fostering was registered by Ofsted in January 2017.

In 2017/18 Family Works Fostering had:

10 registered Foster Carers approved for a range of placements aged 0 – 18 years.
11 young people placed with our Foster Carers.

In 2018/19 Family Works Fostering had:

18 registered Foster Carers approved for a range of placements aged 0 – 18 years.
23 young people placed with our Foster Carers.
(as at 1st of January 2019)

Demographics of children living with Family Works Fostering carers

Below demographics table shows data as at 1st of January 2019:

		Placements
Age	Age 0	0
	Aged 1- 4	1
	Aged 5- 9	5
	Aged 10-15	11
	Aged 16-17	6
Gender	Female	11
	Male	12
Ethnicity	White British	5
	White European	4
	Black African	4
	Black/Black British	7
	Mixed	2
	Other Ethnic Groups	1
Disability	Global Developmental Delay	1
	Dyspraxia	1

As the number of referrals of children and young people needing foster placements outweighs the number of approved foster carers with suitable vacancies, Family Works Fostering Business Plan is continually active in relation to the recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers. Family Works Fostering targets a steady growth of 5 to 10 approved foster carers a year and an additional of at least 10 children/young people placed with foster carers in a year. Family Works Fostering has a carer recruitment strategy and marketing plan which sets out annual marketing activities for prospective foster carers.

Feedback

Views are collected using Consultation Questionnaires sent to children and young people and from foster carers on an annual basis.

Local authority social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers provide their feedback through feedback forms provided to them at statutory Looked After Child review meetings

Panel members provide feedback during each and every panel meeting as part of their quality assurance to improve the quality of reports and how panels are conducted.

Views are also collected from prospective foster carers about the experience of their fostering assessment and panel to help in improving the process

Feedback is also sought on training events provided to carers

Section 4

Supporting Outcomes for Children and Young People

Family Works Fostering believes that, with appropriate and targeted packages of support for foster carers, children and young people can live more naturally, in a family environment. FWF provides additional, targeted support and constructive activities to maintain and improve the quality and stability of placements. We may undertake specific roles where requested to by the Placing Authority. The range of services available for children & young people include:

- Individual or group work, including structured activities
- Social activities for the birth children of foster carers.
- Access to national organisations for looked after children and young people.
- Practical assistance with transport and access to external facilities and services.
- Supervised contact with families.
- Life story work.
- Memory box
- Permanency planning.
- Assistance to pursue a hobby or interest including holiday activities
- Individual or group therapeutic activities
- Talent Showcase which includes artwork, poems, stories etc

All children and young people in our placements are visited regularly as part of the role of the Supervising Social Worker. Family Works Fostering commissions specialist Support Workers who ensure that a complete needs led and joined up professional package of support is made available.

Family Works Fostering is dedicated to ensure that:

- Children and young people are appropriately matched into a suitable foster family.
- Children and young people are healthy and access leisure and health services.
- Any health needs are understood and monitored.
- Children and young people are safe.
- Foster Carers are appropriately recruited, trained, monitored and supervised.
- Children and young people achieve their full potential.
- All children in Care enjoy their experiences and develop self-confidence.
- All children in Care attend education and thrive to the best of their ability.
- The recruitment of staff and Foster Carers is focused on children and young people.
- Children and young people in Care are involved in decisions regarding their life.
- Children and young people are prepared for their future.

At Family Works Fostering, we believe that it is important to remain flexible, responsive and forward thinking and we endeavour to ensure that the following are in place for children and young people in our care. FWF arrange regular consultation for young people and plans to set up a consultation/participation group for young people. The group will be trained and become involved in the recruitment of both foster carers and staff.

Contact

Our foster carers are supported in facilitating contact between the child in placement and their birth family in accordance with their care plan if this is appropriate. Supervised Contact is offered if requested by the placing local authority.

Education

Family Works Fostering gives priority to ensuring that children receive full-time education appropriate to their needs and any disruption is kept to a minimum. Family Works Fostering has a performance target around increase of educational stability and achievements. Our foster carers and their supervising social workers build up close working relationships with their local schools and colleges to ensure that children placed receive the most effective service. Family Works Fostering commissions additional specialist education support to provide practical advice and emotional support, training and guidance to our staff and foster carers on:

- Support for young people in school
- Guidance on PEPs, annual reviews and strategy meetings
- Termly collection of 'Attendance and Achievement' for those of school age
- Reward vouchers for young people achieving 100% term time attendance
- Congratulations letters and postcards for education achievement
- Liaison with local authorities regarding all educational needs including school admission
- Education training for foster carers
- Experiential education support for young people out of school
- Advice and guidance for 16 plus for transition into college / apprenticeships

Health

Our foster carers prioritise the health of the children placed with them and promote the development of a healthy lifestyle, including diet and exercise. All the children and young people placed with Family Works Fostering are registered with a GP and dentist. Medication, appointments and health checks are recorded on foster carer's daily logs which allows health issues to be monitored regularly. Family Works Fostering is developing a personal health passport for each child which will be given to each child at the commencement of a placement.

Behaviour Management

Family Works Fostering is committed to a holistic approach to behaviour, promoting a safe, secure and stable caring environment. Family Works Fostering believes that effective parenting, development, support and learning can only take place in an atmosphere that is purposeful and calm. It is a central aim to promote positive behaviour from everyone who works, lives and shares in the service offered. This encourages everyone to interact with each other in a consistent and appropriate manner built on mutual respect and understanding. Family Works Fostering utilises positive approaches to behaviour management, through positive recognition and reward, coupled with clear and consistent systems and procedures for dealing with more challenging behaviour, which has proved effective. Our foster carers create and maintain an environment which is consistent, fair and predictable and where positive relationships develop. FWF ensures that each child has a risk assessment and behavior management plan. FWF also commissions behavioural consultancy services where appropriate.

Transport

Day to day transport requirements within the local area are the responsibility of the foster carer, this includes transport to the local school. We try to provide transport for other situations if the carer is unable to do so, e.g. contact away from the foster home or attendance at a non-local catchment school, for which a charge will be made

Section 5

Recruitment

Family Works Fostering has a comprehensive recruitment policy in regard to foster carers. This is to ensure that all carers are treated equally and fairly and that there is a clear process that will enable all prospective foster carers to decide if they wish to proceed to become approved foster carers.

There is a rigorous recruitment process to ensure that all prospective foster carers have all the checks required completed to protect children and young people and that the assessment undertaken is a robust and comprehensive one. Family Works Fostering provides an informative website and a dedicated recruitment line and email address. FWF ensures it operates rolling advertising and marketing campaigns, recruitment events and Skills to Foster training.

Assessment Process

On receiving an enquiry from a potential foster carer/s, FWF completes an Initial Enquiry Form and requests basic information about the applicant and their family. Appropriate literature (Information Pack) is forwarded to the potential foster carers and this provides details about Family Works Fostering and information on how to proceed with an application to become a foster carer.

The enquiry is followed up by a telephone call by FWF Social Worker and if the potential foster carer/s wishes to proceed then an initial home visit is arranged by FWF social worker. At this point, the potential carer/s will complete an application form to foster if they wish. Signed consent will be taken to complete checks and enquiries to assess their initial suitability to become foster carer/s. The process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two parts. These can be carried out concurrently, but the information required within stage 1 must be sought as soon as possible and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed stage 1 must be made within 10 days once all of the information in that stage has been received.

Once prospective carer/s indicates a wish to proceed they will be invited to attend Skills to Foster training. FWF will then process the following safeguarding checks on the applicants:

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on all members of the household aged 18 or over and regular visitors to the household. This will involve disclosure of information about any criminal convictions or cautions and other information which may be held by the police or government agencies relevant to the protection and safeguarding of children. The applicant/s will also be required to have a medical examination by their GP and the report will be made available to Family Works Fostering Medical Adviser for his/her comments about the health of the applicant/s and any impact this may have on their application to foster.

Further safeguarding checks will be undertaken at this stage which includes:

- Verification of identity and personal history
- Local authority checks – Social Care Departments and Child Protection Register
- Enquiries to other agencies including NSPCC and Probation where appropriate

- Enquiries and references from other fostering agencies if an applicant has fostered before or is currently fostering for another agency.

The applicant/s will be required to identify at least three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. Employer references will be sought for applicants who are in employment. Education references will be requested for the applicants' children in school or college. References from external agencies and personal references, which are provided in confidence, cannot be accessed without permission of both the subject and the relevant referee.

Form F Assessment

The applicants will be assigned FWF assessing social worker to undertake a full competence-based assessment. The applicants will begin their assessment by giving detailed information about themselves and their family composition.

The FWF assessing social worker will carry out a full assessment. This will consist of the social worker visiting the home of the applicant/s generally on six to eight occasions to meet and collect information about all members of the household and the knowledge, skills and experience of the applicants in relation to fostering. The information obtained will form the basis of an assessment report.

Family Works Fostering uses the CoramBAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) Form F assessment report which takes into account that the assessment of confidential references is shared with the applicant/s. During the assessment process prospective foster carers will be helped to compile a portfolio of written material evidencing relevant skills and experience. FWF has a robust recruitment and assessment process and believes that prospective foster carers have the right to be treated fairly, openly and with respect.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Assessment

In accordance with The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, which amended the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the process FWF follow for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two stages. These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information required for Stage 1, as defined in Schedule 3 Part 1 of the 2013 Regulations, must be sought as soon as possible, and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received.

If during Stage 1 it is decided that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the IRM, nor to make representations to FWF. However, if in Stage 2 a decision is made that the applicant is not suitable to foster then a brief report must be completed, the applicant advised and their comments sought within 10 working days.

After the 10 days, or following receipt of the applicants' comments, whichever is the sooner, FWF must send the report, any comments from the applicant and any other relevant information to the Fostering Panel. The applicant may, within 28 days, seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to FWF.

Following the completion of an assessment, with the exception of private references, the completed Form F is shared with the prospective foster carers prior to being presented to the FWF Panel. The report should be signed by a Registered Manager, who confirms it distinguishes appropriately between fact and opinion, and complies with legislation and the expectation of robust evidence gathering and analysis outlined in the policy document.

When the Form F has been completed, the Registered Manager may visit the applicants to verify the assessment report and ensure the applicants feel they have had a satisfactory experience during the assessment process.

Before being submitted to Panel the completed Form F report must be accurate, complete and signed by the applicants, the Assessor and the Registered Manager. A report must only be signed when all parties are happy with its content.

All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held on file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Data Protection Act 1998. Upon request some of this information can be viewed. References from external agencies and personal references, which are given in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and the relevant referee(s).

Fostering Panel and Approval

The finalised assessment report is presented to FWF Panel. There is an expectation that all prospective foster carers attend Panel with their Assessing Social Worker. Fostering Panel consists of members with a variety of expertise and knowledge including education, health, foster carers and experience of being in care. Family Works Fostering implements clear written policies and procedures on the recruitment to the Central List of persons considered to be suitable members of a Fostering Panel.

Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of applicant(s) to be approved as foster carer(s) with FWF, and reasons for their recommendation. The final decision for approval is made by the appropriate Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who takes account of the Panel's recommendations before deciding whether or not to approve a person as a foster carer, and on what terms. Their decision must be made within seven working days of receipt of the Panel's recommendation via the minutes.

The ADM should also record the reasons for their recommendation. Once the decision is made the prospective foster carer should be informed orally within two working days and confirmation sent in writing to them within 5 working days. If the foster carers are unhappy with the final decision, they have a right to make representations.

Foster Carer Agreements

A Foster Carer Agreement is completed following approval, covering a range of contractual information and undertakings, including:

- To Care appropriately for children and young people in placement.
- To inform FWF of any significant changes to their household or details.
- To follow Family Works Fostering policies and procedures.

All FWF foster carers have access to our Foster Carer Handbook.

Quality Assurance

Family Works Fostering operates a dynamic quality assurance and continual improvement framework. Performance and objectives across the organisation are standardised, recorded, monitored and evaluated through evidenced data collection and analysis. This results in a robust and clear evaluation of working, best practice, standardisation and the achievement of positive outcomes.

The promotion of continual improvement throughout all aspects of the service increases quality awareness within our staff and dedicated foster carers and children placed with Family Works Fostering, who are supported to achieve positive outcomes.

In relation to Fostering Panels, there is a robust process for assessors to follow, to ensure every Form F achieves the standard required, with robust analysis, detailed information and all necessary completed checks. Form F's and all Panel paperwork is checked by the Registered Manager to ensure completeness, accuracy and compliance. It is then approved for panel acceptance by liaison between the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor in advance of circulation to Panel Members.

All Panel members are required to complete a Summary Sheet on all new assessments and reviews presented to Panel and forward this to the Panel Chair. The Summary Sheets help to monitor the quality of work submitted to Panel and Panels continual development. They also ensure that any issues, concerns and positives are identified prior to Panel and raised with the Chair, ADM and Panel Advisor as necessary. Panel Members also record on the Summary Sheets questions they would like to ask at Panel and the Chair will collate this information prior to Panel to ensure a smooth, efficient, effective and transparent process.

Family Works Fostering also undertakes an annual quality assurance and practice review that identifies strengths and areas of development which are incorporated in the service plan.

Section 6

Professional Development of Foster Carers

Family Works Fostering is committed to providing good quality training that is accessible and relevant to all our foster carers. Training and learning are viewed as an important element of Family Works Fostering's support to foster carers and comprehensive pre-approval and post-approval training and learning are provided. We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. Our foster carers are supported to have the skills and knowledge they need, and to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

Our core aims are to:-

- Offer continuous professional development through training events that are credible, relevant and that connect directly with the fostering task
- Include our foster carers in the development of our training, in forming a partnership that commissions events that reflect their needs, areas of interest and affords opportunities for sector recognised qualifications
- Keep our foster carers updated in relation to legislative and policy changes, new guidance and best practice developments
- Differentiate the training to reflect diversity, levels of ability, learning styles and experience
- Make training accessible and available in different forms including face to face, e-learning and additional reading
- Provide our foster carers with an individual continuous professional development plan that aligns to their developing fostering career
- Offer opportunities for individual, shared and group learning in environments that are educative, empowering and value past experience.

FWF have an expectation that foster carers will:

- Be prepared to develop their skills throughout their fostering career
- Attend relevant training
- Take up opportunities offered
- Inform the Family Works Fostering if they are unable to attend training events and contribute to support groups.

Pre-Approval Training

All prospective foster carers must attend Skills To Foster Training which covers the responsibilities of being a foster carer and working with Family Works Fostering. This is an initial two day course which leads into the conclusion of the foster carer assessment process. The Skills to Foster training covers the following aspects of fostering:

- What foster carers do?
- Identity and life chances
- Working together with others
- Understanding and caring for children, including understanding behaviours
- Safer caring
- Transitions/Moving On

Post Approval Training

Family Works Fostering is committed to a wide-ranging post approval training programme for our foster carers. Following approval by the ADM all foster carers receive a thorough induction undertaken by the Supervising Social Worker. The Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards workbook is introduced and initial planning for completion is started. Each foster carer household should be able to evidence through the workbook how the TSD for foster care has been achieved within a year of approval.

All newly approved foster carers are required as part of their approval to complete all the core training within the first twelve months of approval, in line with the Training Policy. There will be training available for all foster carers throughout the year. Our training programme includes modules that are part of the initial induction of foster carers as well as more advanced courses supporting foster carers to receive formal recognition of their skills, knowledge and experience. There are thirteen core modules that primary carers are expected to undertake within the first 12 months of approval and secondary carers are expected to complete five of these:

- First Aid for foster carers
- Attachment, Separation and Loss
- Record Keeping
- Managing and promoting positive behaviour
- Achieving Health and Wellbeing of Children in Care
- Health and Safety
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Gangs and gang culture
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Children missing from care
- Child Development
- Guide to Education
- Prevent

Following the first annual review Carers will be expected to continue with their professional development through supervision every month and by attending training. In addition to this, Family Works Fostering has on-going training that covers training identified by the carers and supervising social worker. There is an expectation that all carers will attend training on a regular basis. There are other opportunities for foster carers to develop and gain skills through involvement at training events, information evenings, and support groups.

FWF has e-learning available to all carers which offers the core training alongside refresher courses on other titles. The aim of the training programme is to provide foster carers with the skills and knowledge to become the catalyst through which the child / young person can grow and meet their full potential. It provides foster carers with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to help children when they are at their most challenging.

Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards

The Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards provide guidance for foster carers on the requirements for their training and development and continuous professional development. FWF ensures that all foster carers use TSD induction workbooks. All new foster carers have 12 months to complete their TSD when they are approved as foster carers. Workshops are available for foster carers who wish to have some additional input into the completion of these books, but most of this is done by their Supervising Social Workers. Foster carer development programmes are also linked with the TSD standards although there is an expectation that carers need to evidence their learning in addition to attending a course.

Close referencing grids are completed by assessing social workers for all new carers to show which outcomes have been met through the assessment process. There is a grid for each TSD workbook and the appropriate one should be signed off to show that the carers have fully evidenced the applicable outcomes through that process. Family Works Fostering provides advice and support to foster carers and staff regarding the completion of the books. The Registered Manager has the quality assurance role and is also the responsible person for signing off the TSD workbooks.

Section 7

Reviews of Foster Carers

All foster carers have an annual review to ensure that they continue to meet the standards demanded by FWF, to be suitable to hold registration and approval as a foster carer. The Independent Reviewing Officer ensures that all statutory requirements are fulfilled and that foster carers have the opportunity to evaluate their practice and development, and to set new goals and action plans for the following year. FWF obtain all relevant information and makes relevant enquiries as they consider necessary in order to review whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable.

Prior to the Review, consultation and feedback will be required from the following:

- The foster carer.
- Any child currently placed with the foster carer or having lived with them during the previous 12 months – subject to their age and understanding.
- Any placing local authority which has, within the preceding year placed a child with the foster carer.
- Birth children.
- All members of the fostering household.
- Birth parents of any fostered child, if appropriate.

Foster carers are invited to give regular written feedback and prior to their annual household review on the quality of supervision and support they have received and to reflect upon the learning and development needs of foster carers and their Personal Development Plan (PDP). This feedback is monitored by the Registered Manager and the Fostering Panel.

All reviews are conducted in line with regulatory requirements of a Foster Carer Regulation 28(2). A first review must take place not more than a year after approval and subsequent reviews take place within twelve months of the previous review, and every twelve months thereafter. Family Works Fostering must be satisfied that the foster carers continue to meet the required Standards as set out in Regulation 28 (4). Household Reviews are undertaken annually on each fostering household or more frequently where there is a change of circumstances or the following reasons;

- Following a serious complaint, allegation of abuse, or other matters of serious concern;
- In response to significant change of circumstances, such as a carer's adult child returning home, relationship problems or separations, significant health issues, pregnancy, etc.);
- At the request of the Fostering Panel;
- At the foster carer's request;
- Where the foster carer is taking on a new type of fostering (e.g. parent and child placements or changing the age range they will be fostering) thus requiring a change in their terms of approval.
- Supervising social worker
- Child/young person's school or college

The Supervising Social Worker prepares a report for the Review which must evaluate and weigh up the evidence gathered from formal supervisions undertaken during the period under review. A Household Review takes place to consider the evidence gathered from the consultation / feedback. This Review is attended by the Supervising Social Worker, Reviewing Officer and foster carers. The subsequent report completed by the Chair is considered by the ADM and, where appropriate, Fostering Panel.

If, having considered the Review, the Agency Decision Maker decides that approval should continue they will write to the foster carer(s) informing them of the decision and the terms of approval (Regulation 28 (6)). All first reviews are required by the regulations to be considered by the Fostering Panel.

The Annual Household Review considers:

- Current household members
- Changes of Circumstances since previous review
- Placements during the last year
- Status of statutory checks
- Visits including unannounced visit
- Significant incidents including Child Protection and/or Standards of Care concerns, complaints and allegations
- Health and Safety
- Comments on foster carer's log
- Support needs of foster carer household
- Supervising social worker's overall report
- Training and Development
- Consideration of approval and future use

If the terms of a foster carer's approval need to change, the report is considered by the Fostering Panel and the carer is invited to attend.

Refusal or termination of approval

When the Agency Decision Maker proposes not to approve prospective foster carers following recommendations by the fostering panel, prospective foster carers have the right to challenge this. When termination or a change of approval is proposed by the Agency Decision Maker this can be done through representations to Family Works Fostering or through requesting an independent review of their case. Family Works Fostering has a leaflet for carers and prospective carers attending fostering panel that explains the processes available. Applicants can ask the fostering panel to reconsider their case or alternatively can ask for an independent review from the national Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

Section 8

Support for Foster Carers

Family Works Fostering values the work foster carers do and the contributions they make to looked after children's lives. It is vitally important to provide appropriate levels of support to foster care families to ensure a positive and successful placement. Family Works Fostering provides a creative and flexible package of support to foster carers and the children and young people in their care. Identifying and arranging the necessary level of support required takes place when a foster carer and child/young person are "matched" at the placement planning stages. Support is then monitored and tailored accordingly, during the course of the placement. FWF provides the following support to all our foster carers:

Qualified and experienced Supervising Social Worker

Each foster carer is supported and supervised by an allocated Supervising Social Worker whose role includes support, supervision and liaison with the placing local authorities. Supervising Social Workers visit foster carers regularly dependent on the level of need.

During such visits, the Supervising Social Workers will also be aware of any health and safety, child protection and standards of care issues which need to be addressed. Supervising Social Workers offer support when foster carers have difficulties within their own lives which may impinge on the fostering task. Part of the role of the Supervising Social Worker is also to undertake at least one unannounced visit to foster carers each year.

Supervisions also enable the foster carer to ensure that the child's assessed needs are being met and the Care Plan is being adhered to. A record of supervision is provided to the foster carer and placed on their file following the supervision which cover;

- Ongoing support and contact with foster carers and children in placement through visits and telephone calls.
- Guidance and advice to the foster carer in relation to the care of the children and young people.
- Identifying training and development needs and methods of developing the carer's skills and knowledge – as evidenced in the Carers Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- Liaising with other professionals who may be involved in the Care of the child or young person and contribute to formal Care Plans
- Identify and help respond to foster carers' training needs
- Maintain accurate records of the progress of all matters relating to the foster carer and the child/young person placed, including outcomes.

Foster Carer Support Groups

Foster carer support groups take place on a monthly basis and foster carers meet, socialise, share good practice, develop peer support, receive informal training, listen to guest speakers and have fun. Family Works Fostering is in the process of developing a foster carer forum.

Emergency Support

Family Works Fostering provides 24/7, 365 days a year, on-call support service to our foster carers. This service is staffed by a qualified and experienced Supervising Social Worker with open access to a Registered Manager.

Buddy Support

Family Works Fostering has established a 'Buddy Support' where experienced foster carers provide support to newly approved foster carers for a period of three months (this can be extended if required). 'Buddies' offer support to foster carers requiring additional assistance for example, during an allegation. All 'Buddies' receive appropriate training for their role.

Policies and Procedures

Our foster carers have access to Policies and Procedures, together with information and guidance on all aspects of fostering. All information is regularly updated to comply with standards and regulations.

Family Works Fostering Website

Our foster carers have access to a secure section of the website, where they can access vital information, including the Foster Carer Handbook, policies and procedures, guidance, forms and information on all aspects of fostering.

Record Keeping

Foster Carers are expected to maintain records of events and information pertaining to the child or young person in placement. Foster carers are also duty bound to complete weekly or monthly reports on the child or young person in placement which support the compilation of regular reports for placing local authority Social Workers.

Supporting Birth Children

Family Works Fostering recognise the significant contribution that birth children play in successful placements. Events and opportunities are provided for birth children to come together to discuss with the staff, and other birth children the impact (positives and negatives) of sharing their home and family with a fostered child.

Fostering Network Membership

All our foster carers are entitled to an annual membership of the Fostering Network, paid for by Family Works Fostering, which provides advice and guidance as well as access to legal advice, mediation and insurance.

Finance

All foster carers receive an allowance paid monthly in arrears. Foster carers are entitled to one week paid respite and receive a mileage allowance for excessive mileage undertaken.

Tax and NI

All our foster carers are self-employed and as such must pay their own tax and NI. Fostering Network provides all our foster carers up to date tax information.

Unannounced Visit

All foster carers receive two unannounced visits a year.

Therapeutic Support

Family Works Fostering commissions qualified and experienced therapists who work locally through an organisation called Orb8. All foster carers with children and young people in placement will be offered advice and support by a commissioned therapist and consideration is given as to ways that their placement can meet a child's emotional needs. The focus of attention is to make placements more

successful by assisting and supporting foster carers to better understand and manage the presenting behaviours of the children and young people. Foster carers are offered Introduction to Therapeutic Foster Care after their first household review. If individual therapy for a child or young person would be beneficial to meeting their needs, funding approval should be obtained from the placing authority.

Additional support

Additional support may include frequent visits and telephone calls from a Supervising Social Worker and additional respite offered on a needs-led basis. Family Works Fostering will endeavour, with the help and support of carers, to ensure that all carers have a Back-Up carer in place as well as:

- Target of 4 activities for carers and children, e.g. BBQ, etc.
- Independent allegation support services to carers
- Social Worker attendance at meetings, conferences, reviews, etc

Support Network

All foster carers are encouraged to identify a member of their family or close friends who be their providing care to children and young people if ever the carers require any period of respite, as this means the child / young person in placement is cared for by a member of the carer's extended family who may already have a relationship with them. We will undertake a home visit and complete a short assessment of any named support cover network. If this is not possible, we aim to link them with a specific carer for any period of respite.

Section 9

Complaints and Representations

Family Works Fostering believes that children and young people, their families, and foster carers, have the right to express their views including: compliments, complaints, suggestions or representations about the services that are arranged and delivered, and that by doing so, we can improve quality and effectiveness. FWF has a comprehensive complaints procedure, which is made widely available in different formats suitable for children, young people, carers, parents and professionals.

The complaints procedure is provided to all staff and foster carers. On admission at the placement, each child or young person is given a copy of the "Children's Guide or Young Person's Handbook" (depending on age) which has details of the "children/Young Person's Complaints Procedure", the foster home rules and their rights to complain. The Independent Reviewing Officer's details will also be given to the child.

Suggestions and complaints are viewed as a positive means of ensuring the quality of service is reviewed, both at a local level and through the formal complaints' procedure. Representations include enquiries, suggestions and statements about such matters as the availability, delivery and nature of services and will not necessarily be critical.

Family Works Fostering exceeds the National Minimum Standards by commissioning an independent social worker to investigate the complaint further, if the complainant continues to be unhappy following the informal problem solving stage.

Complaint Monitoring

The Complaints Officer and Registered Manager shall keep a register of all complaints that records details of complaints and their resolutions. Details of any investigation into a complaint or representation regarding a foster carer will be made available for information to the Fostering Panel.

Carer Allegation

Children can be subjected to abuse by those who work with them in any and every setting. All allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children by a professional, staff member, foster carer, or any other person in contact with children will be taken seriously and treated in accordance with current procedures. Family Works Fostering has a clear Carer Allegation support system.

Whistle-Blowing

We aim to provide a nurturing environment for children, young people, foster carers and staff to feel able to raise issues and draw attention to gaps in service provision without fear of reprisal. Family Works Fostering has a Whistleblowing Policy for reporting circumstances that may arise where foster carers or employees feel unable to raise concerns because they feel there is reasonable doubt that these would be dealt with sufficiently.

Compliments

All compliments received from children, young people, foster carers, Local Authorities and any other body, are recorded and monitored on a regular basis.

Complaints can be brought to the attention of Family Works Fostering registered manager by email: admin@fw-fostering.co.uk or to the foster parent, or the placing authority social worker or FWF Supervising Social Worker.

Alternatively, complaints can be directed to the organisations below:

Ofsted

By post: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
By Telephone: 0300 123 1231
By email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Voice of the Child in Care (VCC) /Independent Advocate:

Telephone: 0808 800 5792

Children's Commissioner for England

Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3BT

Telephone: 020 7783 8330

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Childline:

Freephone: 0800 1111

Web: www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

Freephone: 08088005000

Freetext: 88858

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

The Who Cares? Trust

15-18 White Lion Street

London

N1 9PG

Telephone: 020 7251 3117

Email: advice@thewhocaretrust.org.uk

Website: www.thewhocaretrust.org.uk

Section 10

Useful contacts

Further information about services that support fostering and foster carers can be found at the following websites:

CoramBAAF

Telephone: 02075200300
Email: advice@corambaaf.org.uk
Website: www.coram.org.uk

Fosterline

Language Line facilities are available.

Telephone: 0800 040 7675
Email: enquiries@fosterline.info
Website: www.fosterline.info

Family Works Fostering Support Line

This is a 24/7 service to ensure that foster carers have access to out of hours help, information, advice and support

Mobile: 07554011516 and 01702 597 797
Address: Suite 18, Business Centre, 8 Madeira Avenue, Leigh on Sea, Essex, SS9 3AW

Fostering Network Support Line

Telephone: 020 7620 6400
email: info@fostering.net
Website: www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

HMRC Tax issues

Website: www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering

Financial Advice

Telephone: 0800 138 7777
Email: enquiries@moneyadvice.service.org.uk
Website: www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk