



# FAMILY FOSTERING PARTNERS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE ENGLAND

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## 1. Introduction – About Us

### i. Our Status and Constitution

Family Fostering Partners is an Independent Fostering Provider established in February 2015. The provider has a Board of Directors that meets regularly and are responsible for the governance of the company as well as determining the company’s strategic vision and direction, and its overall quality assurance.

<b>Name of the Service</b>	Family Fostering Partners Ltd
<b>Legal Entity</b>	Family Fostering Partners is a Limited Company registered under the Companies Act 2006. Company Registration Number - 09443529
<b>Registered Company Address</b>	Office 1, Block B, Llys Y Barcud, Cross Hands Carmarthenshire SA14 6RX
<b>Responsible Individual</b>	The Responsible Individual is Judith Rees-Howells who is also an Owner/ Managing Director.
<b>Manager of Service</b>	Bernadette Millis, the Registered Manager is responsible for the day to day running of the service.
<b>Service Address</b>	Office 6, The Rural Enterprise Centre, Leominster Enterprise Park, Brunel Road Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0LX

### ii. About this Statement of Purpose

This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of Family Fostering Partners, an independent Fostering Provider whose office in England is based at Office 6, The Rural Enterprise Centre,

Leominster Enterprise Park, Leominster, Herefordshire and has been developed in accordance with appropriate statute law and regulations, including:

- The Children Act 1989 (and its later amendments including CA 2004)
- Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services
- National Minimum Standards Fostering Services (2011)
- The Fostering Service Regulations (2002 and 2011)
- The Children Act 2000
- UK ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Care Standards Act (2000)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

Family Fostering Partners' Statement of Purpose provides a range of information, which is intended for a wider audience including:

- Ofsted
- Children and young people who are placed with our Foster Parents
- The agency's staff and consultants
- Foster Parents and prospective Foster Parents
- Local Authorities and Children's Trusts, who place, or are considering placing with Family Fostering Partners Fostering Agency
- Colleagues from other social care agencies
- Health and educational establishments
- Any parent or guardian of any child placed with the fostering service
- The general public

In accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, Regulation 3, the Statement of Purpose includes:

- An outline about the services that Family Fostering Partners provides,
- A description of how it manages and supports these services,
- An explanation about where and how the services will be provided
- Evidence of its fitness to provide fostering services
- A description of how the welfare of the children within its care will be met.
- An outline of the systems in place to recruit, train and supervise Foster Parents and staff.

The Statement of Purpose is a living document and so it is updated regularly – at least annually, or more often if there are any significant changes for the organisation. Any amendments are approved by the senior management team.

A copy is also available on our website [www.familyfosteringpartners.co.uk](http://www.familyfosteringpartners.co.uk)

In addition, to the Statement of Purpose, Family Fostering Partners 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.

Alongside the Statement of Purpose, Family Fostering Partners has policies and procedures which have been developed to provide clear guidance for staff, Foster Parents, fostering applicants and Panel members. Our policies and procedures, like this Statement of Purpose, are also regularly reviewed and updated. Approved Foster Parents with Family Fostering Partners can access copies of the most current versions of our policies and procedures via the agency's secure electronic database, and copies are made available to our staff and Panel members through our internal systems.

Family Fostering Partners is committed to innovating and improving services to ensure that children's care and well-being is always central to our service delivery.

### iii. Our Aims and Objectives

Our overriding aim is to achieve the very best possible outcome for every young person placed in our care. Our services are aligned with the objectives set out in Every Child Matters and we use the secure base philosophy to ensure that children can

- Be Healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing

To this end Family Fostering Partners is driven by a commitment to provide;

- **Children in care** with an experience of a well matched, stable, and nurturing family homes in which they can grow and thrive.
- **Foster Parents** with first class support, supervision, and training to enable them to provide and maintain that stable, transforming environment

- **Local Authority partners** with high quality, value-for- money children’s services with tangible and positive wellbeing outcomes for children in every aspect of their lives including Five Outcomes as per ‘Every Child Matters’.

#### iv. Our Values

At Family Fostering Partners we have a set of core values, which describe the way in which we want to approach everything we do. We are committed to providing and developing services that address and exceed government targets for outcomes for children. These values are our promise to anyone who is part of Family Fostering Partners.

- We place children, and the importance of caring for their future at the heart of all that we do. We always apply a children-centred approach where the welfare of the child is at the centre of everyone’s thinking and actions. We vigorously support and promote the 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.
- We promote a culture that encourages candour, openness, and learning at all levels. We work in a professional partnership with our carers and respect, integrity and fairness are central to all aspects of our operations and provisions.

To this end we undertake

**To grow responsibly** - We will manage our growth carefully and ensure that we never lose our family feel, where every young person and foster family are known, valued, and supported.

**To have fun** - We want to enjoy our work and to let our passion for making a positive difference to children and young people shine through.

**To inspire** - We strive to always be the best we can, and to engage with colleagues, customers, children, and young people in a way that makes Family Fostering Partners memorable.

**To involve** - We commit to consulting with and involving Foster Parents, birth children and looked after children in shaping the way that our service is run.

**To evolve** - We will adapt to change by being creative and innovative: listening to our staff, Foster Parents, young people, and customers and developing new ways of delivering care without compromising on our high standards.

#### **v. Our Ethos - Equality and Diversity**

Family Fostering Partners seeks to operate within a framework of fairness, openness, integrity, accountability. We expect the same of those providing services for the agency, or on behalf of the agency.

Our vision places equality at the heart of our approach to policy making, service delivery and employment. We are fully committed to providing holistic services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day to day working practices with all children and young people, foster families, colleagues, customers and any other stakeholders. We provide equal opportunities for all and do not tolerate discrimination. We are committed to identifying, understanding and eliminating all barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment.

Family Fostering Partners encourages applicants from all sectors of the community and this is reflected in our recruitment activity and literature.

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 Parents are aware of and understand the agency'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.

Foster Parent training, both pre- and post-approval, encourages care provision that respects the ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic background of children and young people who are looked after through our agency. Foster Parents are provided with the necessary information, support, and training to enable them to provide the best possible care, and to promote the heritage of a fostered child or young person.

## 2. Our Structure

### i. The Location of our Service and our Staffing Arrangements

Family Fostering Partners is an Independent Fostering Agency that recruits, assesses, trains, supervises and supports Foster Parents across Wales and into Hereford, Worcester, and the West Midlands.

We operate from two office bases. Our Wales office is located at Cross Hands and is registered with CIW, and our England office is located at Leominster and will be registered with OFSTED. We have Link Workers allocated to geographical areas and/or carer specialisms to ensure all our Foster Parents, and the children in their care, have easy and timely access to professional supervision and support.

Foster Parent training and support groups are delivered in hired venues within the communities in which our Foster Parents live. This ensures a local focus to our service and supports a bespoke family feel where parents in designated geographical areas can get to know one another really well and form positive peer relationships built from attending training, support groups and foster family activity days together.

The management activities in Family Fostering Partners are undertaken by the Registered Manager/Head of Fostering, and overseen by the Responsible Individual.

The Registered Manager has responsibility for managing the day-to-day activities of the service and staff supervision; ensuring the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people looked after and all the members of the fostering households, through promoting excellent quality standards in practice. The Registered Manager is supported in this role by comprehensive and well-established systems, policies, procedures, and quality assurance models for the service.

The **Registered Manager/Head of Fostering** for Family Fostering Partners is **Bernadette Millis**. Bernadette is a qualified Social Worker of 27 years' experience. She holds a Level 5 NVQ Diploma in Management and Leadership (QCF), BETEC Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership, Post Qualifying Award in Social Work, Post Qualifying Award in Child Care, Diploma in Social Work, Diploma in Applied Social Studies, BA Hons Psychology and is NNEB trained. Bernadette is also a qualified course facilitator for the Fostering Changes Programme. During the first 14 years of her social work career Bernadette has worked in front line childcare services in England and Wales, including 4 years

as Team Manager. For the last 13 years she has worked exclusively in the field of fostering, including the last 7 years as Registered Manager for Family Fostering Partners.

The **Managing Director** and the **Responsible Individual** for Family Fostering Partners is **Judith Rees-Howells**. Judith is a member of the Family Fostering Partners Board of Directors and is a qualified Social Worker of thirty years' experience. She holds an MSc (Distinction) in Management, a BA (Hons) in Social Policy and Administration, a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, a Diploma in Applied Social Studies, and a Post Qualifying Social Work Award. During her career Judith has worked in child protection in both the public and the third sector and has twenty years of experience in fostering within the private sector. She has in the past been a Registered Manager with CIW, and a Responsible Individual with Ofsted, and has worked in senior management roles in both Wales and England.

Family Fostering Partners has **Link Workers** who provide direct support and supervision to the agency's Foster Parents.

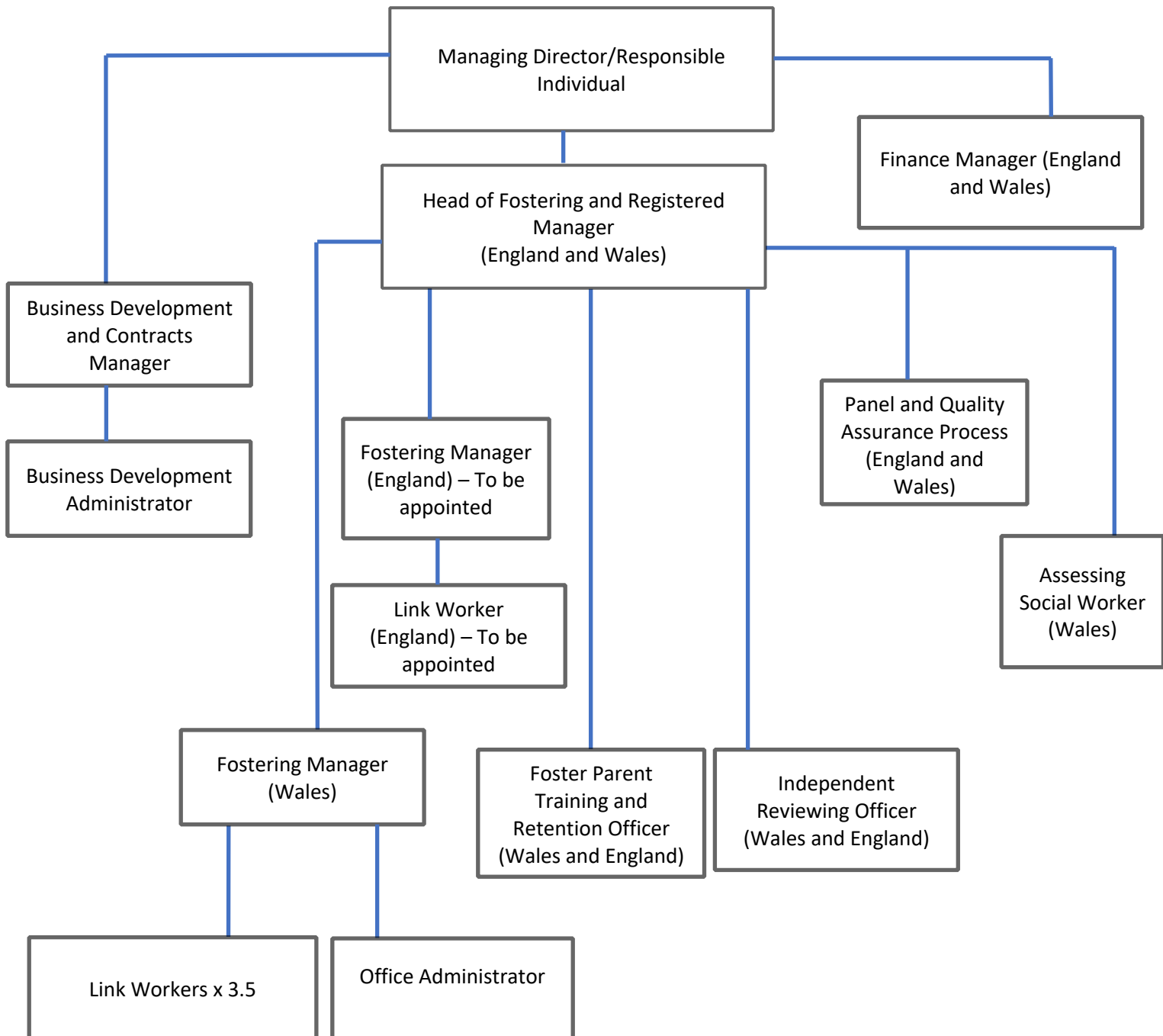
The staffing structure within Family Fostering Partners enables the agency to maintain a high level of visiting, supervision and support to our Foster Parents and is reviewed regularly in line with growth in Foster Parent numbers.

All staff, whether directly employed on a service contract or providing services under a service agreement are subject to the full range of enquiries including

- Disclosure and Barring Service checks
- Verbal and written references from previous and current employers
- Copies of qualifications
- Health and identity checks

All staff working for Family Fostering Partners, on a permanent, part-time or self-employed basis are covered by appropriate professional indemnity insurance and all have role profiles and contracts of employment. Insurance liabilities cover is in line with Local Authority contractual requirements.

**ii. The Management Structure of the Service**



### 3. Our Service Provision

Family Fostering Partners work in partnership with our Local Authority customers to provide a wide range of foster homes for children and young people from birth until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. All foster homes are matched to ensure a good fit between the needs of the young person and the skills and experience of the Foster Parent. Our focus is always on delivering good outcomes, and keeping children in family-based care.

All placements made with Foster Parents are undertaken and monitored in accordance with the Care Planning and Fostering (England) Regulations 2010 (Amendments 2013) (Miscellaneous Amendments 2015) and The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England 2011)

The child or young person is encouraged to be at the centre of the planning for the placement from the outset and their views about their placement and their lives are sought and considered.

Wherever possible, children and young people are placed with Foster Parents that match their racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic background. Their psychological, emotional, identity, educational and health care needs are always considered, met, monitored, and promoted. In every decision, the safeguarding and protection of children and young people are our primary concern

Our service provision includes:

**Short Term Placements** - where children and young people are matched with a Foster Parent who supports them for either a specific fixed term of days, weeks, or months, or on an open-ended basis until the long-term plan for the child/young person's future has been determined.

**Long Term Placements** - Foster care becomes a route to permanence for children who cannot return to their birth families, but where adoption is not an option. Our Foster Parents offer children and young people a secure base until they are old enough to live independently.

**Enhanced Need Placements** - Family Fostering Partners has Foster Parents who are skilled and experienced in working with children and young people who are defined by the commissioning Local Authority as having complex needs. Added support may be made available to such placements.

**Solo placements** - with foster cares who are skilled and experienced at working with children and young people whose needs are so complex that they prevent the placement of any other looked after children within the family. Added support is made available to such placements.

**Sibling Groups Placements** - for brothers and sisters who are all need to be placed together with Foster Parents.

**Emergency Placements** - provided at short notice by Family Fostering Partners' carers when unforeseen emergencies do not allow for any prior planning. Family Fostering Partners runs a 24-hour service, which allows emergency placements to be identified, safely matched, and where appropriate, made out of usual working hours.

**Respite Placements** - We recruit families who can provide a regular break for parents and/or other Foster Parents. Respite placements can be one off events, or may be time limited, but may also be an integral and regular feature of a child/young person's care plan.

**Parent and Child placements (PAC)**- These are time limited placements usually 12 to 16 weeks in duration, but can be longer, where parents provide a highly specialised service to a parent(s) and their baby and/or young child(ren) to support the development of their parenting capacity within a family home, and for the placing local authority to work with the parent(s) to make an assessment of their ability to meet the long term needs of their child/children. All Foster Parents offering this type of placement, must show that they have the experience, knowledge, skills, and aptitude to do so, and are required to undergo specialist training for the role.

**Transitional Placements** - Specifically designed for young people who are ready and able to move out of the residential sector into a family environment. These placements may also be suitable for young people who have experienced multiple placement breakdowns or are placing themselves at risk. All Foster Parents offering this type of placement, must show that they have the experience, knowledge, skills, and aptitude to do so. More support is made available to Foster Parents providing such placements.

## 4. Our Standards of Care

Family Fostering Partners' service is designed 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 Parents who can meet the individual needs of looked after children.

We define the parameters and expectations of those standards throughout all our documents, but in particular, our Policies, Procedures and Practice Manuals, our Foster Parents' Handbook, and our Foster Parents' Agreement.

Family Fostering Partners works in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure the maximum opportunity for children and young people to develop fully and achieve their full potential.

- We maintain a clear focus on promoting and safeguarding the physical and emotional welfare of children and young people, and protecting them from all forms of abuse.
- We ensure the provision of appropriate health care and the opportunity to participate in decisions about health.
- We encourage and support the maintenance of family contacts and friendships and promote and support educational achievement and assist young people to develop skills for independence.

Furthermore, our policies in relation to the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management, and support of Foster Parents, reflect the expectations set out in the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015.

### i. Our Care and Support

We place secure and stable relationships between children and Foster Parents at the centre of service design and provision, fostering children's inclusion and belonging, whilst supporting and empowering Foster Parents to develop strong, trusting relationships with the children they care for.

Family Fostering Partners believes that all children, including children who are looked after should expect adult support to help them develop into the best possible version of themselves. To this end we ensure that all children placed with the agency and living in our foster homes are

- Helped to be as physically safe and emotionally healthy as possible
- Involved in activities hobbies and interests

- Have access to education, learning and development opportunities
- Have control over their everyday life, and where relevant participation in work
- Can maintain their linguistic, cultural and/or religious identities
- Are supported to keep family and personal relationships
- Can develop their potential by learning and practicing life skills

The way in which we achieve this is person centred and will therefore vary depending on the specific circumstances of the child or young person, but we always operate within a framework that promotes an individual's holistic well-being. This framework includes

- A **matching process** that gives weight to a child's hobbies, interests and their linguistic, cultural, and religious identities, pair these with the interests and the cultural, linguistic, and religious background of our foster families.
- **Preparation and introductions** to our foster families whenever circumstances allow, to ensure that the child can have some control over their everyday life. To this end we produce a child friendly profile or video profile of each of our Foster Parents, which includes pictures of the home and the people who live there.
- **A Individual Safe Care Plan and a Individual Risk Assessment and Behaviour Management Plan.** These plans are reviewed as required, but as a minimum prior to the child or young person's in care review to ensure each child stays as physically and emotionally safe as possible. Whenever possible and appropriate, children and young people are involved in the completion and review of these plans.
- **Building trusting and supportive relationships between staff and children** by making staff visible and familiar to children, taking time to play with them and taking an interest in them, and changing language, for example talking to children about 'sleep overs' instead of 'respite', and foster home instead of foster placement. Supporting young people to develop their sense of identity through talents, interests, aspirations and relationships, forms part of our routine activity with parents and children. Our staff organise and take part in children's activity days and child and Foster Parent family days, and (in consultation with the placing local authority), staff carry out direct work as the familiar and trusted adult.
- All our Foster Parents maintain an **Individual Daily Log** on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Parent's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress. These recordings are shared with the local authority. Foster Parents use the agency's electronic database to allow data to be recorded, checked, and shared in a secure format.

- We have high placement visiting, with on average **fortnightly visits and supervision** from the agency Link Worker to monitor the quality of care being provided, and to ensure that children and young people are provided with opportunities to take part in hobbies and activities, are able to have contact with people who are important in their lives and have opportunities to develop life skills for the future.
- **Access to overnight /day-care** from matched respite foster parents to the child. We also proactively assess family and friends of Foster Parents to provide this support to ensure the wellbeing of foster families.
- A minimum of two **Unannounced Visits** each year to Foster Parents, during which the child is seen alone, and the child's bedroom and clothing is checked. These visits focus on the child's overall well-being and ensure that care standards are maintained.
- An **Annual Review** of each parents' registration with the agency and of their ongoing suitability to fulfil the fostering role.
- Foster Parents have **On Call** access to advice and support from one of our Link Workers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The on-call service is also backed up and supported by the Fostering Manager/Registered Manager and/or Responsible Individual.

As all children are unique, we provide tailor made support to enhance the parent's ability to meet the unique needs of the child placed with them. This may include.

- Therapeutic support from a clinical psychologist
- 1 to 1 parenting work designed to meet the needs of the individual child
- 'Gro Brain' training for Parent and Child parents and for those caring for very young children
- Pictorial childcare guides to use with parents who are placed with their children
- Pre and in-placement planning meetings
- An enhanced level of visiting and supervision with advice, guidance, and reflection on practice
- Peer mentoring and small group training with a focus on children's specific attachment needs
- Online learning

Our Children's Guides are also available in two different formats, one for younger children, which is also suitable for developmentally delayed children or those children who may have communication difficulties, and one for older children. We are We are continuing to improve these guides through the development of audio and video clips inserted into them.

## ii. Safeguarding Procedures

Family Fostering Partners' Safeguarding Procedures lay down a clear format for the reporting of any child protection matter to the appropriate people. The overriding aim of the use of the guidelines and procedures is always to ensure the protection of children.

In addition to this, we use the 'Safer Recruitment' principles for recruitment and selection of staff. We have an Office Administrator who is responsible for the co-ordination of DBS checks, local authority checks, references and all employment safeguards.

## 5. How we recruit, approve and Train our Foster Parents

### i. The Recruitment Process

Family Fostering Partners is committed to the recruitment of a diverse group of Foster Parents who can meet the needs of children and young people who are placed with the agency. In terms of outcomes for children in care, we believe that **who** we recruit as Foster Parents is at least as important as the training, support, and supervision we provide to Foster Parents once they are approved. This makes the recruitment and assessment processes crucial to us. Prospective Foster Parents have the right to be treated with dignity and respect; and young people have the right to assume that Family Fostering Partners is committed to the recruitment and approval of carers who can provide a high standard of care.

All prospective Foster Parents who make an enquiry are subject to rigorous assessment and vetting procedures. This includes the following:

#### a) An Initial Enquiry

Following an enquiry and the sharing of an information pack with a potential Foster Parent, the Agency undertakes telephone contact where information gathering is completed and detail provided about the work of the Agency and the role of a Foster Parent. If the enquirer meets the initial set of criteria then they are invited to an Initial Visit.

#### b) Initial Visit

An initial visit takes place in the home of the prospective Foster Parent(s), either virtually (when covid rules dictate), or in person, and if that visit is successful and both parties wish to proceed, the applicant is invited to complete an application form.

#### c) Application Paperwork

The prospective Foster Parent(s) must complete an application form, giving detailed information about themselves and their family and consent to Family Fostering Partners undertaking further checks and enquiries to determine their suitability to foster. These include:

- Enhanced DBS checks on applicants and each adult member of the household.
- Identity Checks and verification of personal history
- Overseas check (where appropriate)
- At least 2 personal referees and a family member referee who will provide written references and will also be interviewed (unless the applicants are currently fostering).
- Previous partner references (if applicable and appropriate)
- References and interviews with adult children (if applicable and appropriate)

- References and/or Interviews with applicants own children under the age of 18 living in the prospective foster home, or living with ex-partners (where appropriate)
- School and nursery reference
- Medical Assessment.
- Enquiries to the Local Authority in the area where the applicants live (and have lived since the age of 18).
- A health and safety assessment of the family home including a fire evacuation plan
- A financial assessment
- Current employment references
- References from all previous employment and volunteer roles involving children and vulnerable adults
- Current or previous fostering organisation references
- Pet and/or Dog Assessment

## ii. The Assessment Process

A qualified Social Worker is appointed to complete a competency-based assessment of all applicants, using the **Coram BAAF Form F**. The Form F is primarily about identifying whether an applicant or applicants are suitable to be approved as Foster Parents, to determine the kind of fostering for which they are suitable, and to consider any terms of approval. The form offers a structure for supplying evidence about these matters to fostering panels and to fostering service decision-maker. A subsidiary purpose is to capture the work that has been done with applicants to prepare them for the task of fostering and to identify the kinds of support that they might need.

The Form F is a detailed document which examines the applicant's motivation to be a Foster Parent; their capabilities and individual skills; the feelings, views, and involvement of all household members, (including applicant's children who may live away from the home); any existing demands being made on the applicant, and recommendations in terms of matching alongside the family. The assessment is a joint project and requires full participation from the applicants and their family

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 that Family Fostering partners follows 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 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 Family Fostering Partners.

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 sooner, Family Fostering Partners 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 Shining Stars Fostering Agency.

All information obtained about prospective Foster Parents is held on file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Data Protection Act 2018. 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 referees.

The assessment process includes an average of 8- 10 home visits to the applicants, and interviews with the applicants; with household members; with birth children and with referees. Throughout the assessment process applicants are helped to gather information that provides evidence of skills and experiences that are relevant to fostering.

Attendance on a **Skills to Foster** course is mandatory for all new applicants to enhance their understanding of the fostering task; to introduce them to the care standards expected by the agency and to confirm the support and training from Family Fostering Partners which will be available to assist them as they develop their skills and experience. The training forms an important part of the assessment process.

When the Form F is completed, applicants can read the report and discuss amendments. The Form F and supporting documents are presented to Family Fostering Partners' Fostering Panel. The Panel will use the Form F as a basis for evaluating the applicant's suitability to foster, alongside discussion with the assessing social worker and the applicants themselves. Applicants are always expected to attend Panel unless circumstances dictate that a video link is used.

The Panel makes recommendations to the agency whether a person is appropriate to act as a Foster Parent, and where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend the terms on which the approval is given, giving reasons for these recommendations.

The assessment process takes between 4 and 6 months, and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay.

All information obtained about prospective Foster Parents is held on file and stored electronically in accordance with The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).

### **iii. The Fostering Panel**

Our panel comprises of an Independent Chair and two Vice Chairs along with Panel Members from a variety of appropriate backgrounds and experience. Family Fostering Partners has a central list of people who may be called upon to sit on the agency's fostering Panel, comprising of agency and independent members.

The agency Panel Advisor is the Head of Fostering, and our independent members include Foster Parent representatives, health and education representatives, adoptive parent and sexual health counsellor. The chair of our Panel is an adoptive parent who retired from West Midlands Police having achieved the rank of Detective Inspector in April 2015, with an exemplary record, after having served thirty years and receiving the MBE from HM The Queen in 2016 for services towards Public Protection. Our Panel Chair has been an independent panel member for both fostering and adoption panels since 2015, and is currently Independent Chair for Adoption Central England (ACE). Our panel has access to specialist legal and medical advice as required. We currently have a vacancy for a care experienced representative.

Each member of the Fostering Panel Central List has an Enhanced DBS and references. All Panel members receive an induction and ongoing regular training, guidance and support from the agency, and are subject to annual appraisals. An annual report on Panel Function and a review of Panel business during the year is compiled by the Panel Advisor together with the panel chair.

Every Panel is documented by the Panel Administrator who prepares the minutes in which the discussion by Panel members, the reasons for recommendations and any disagreements or dissent will be fully recorded. Completed Panel minutes will be checked firstly by the Panel Adviser, and then the minutes will be sent electronically to the Chair for approval of their accuracy.

The agency will endeavour to adhere to the following timescales:

- 2 working days – for Panel minutes to be completed by the Panel Administrator
- 1 working day – for the Panel Adviser to check minutes
- 2 working days - for the Chair to verify minutes

Verified panel minutes will then be submitted to the Agency Decision Maker. The foster parent or prospective foster parent is informed orally of the decision-makers decision by their social worker or in their absence the social workers manager within 1 working day of the decision being made and written confirmation sent by the Panel administrator within five working days . Should the agency not recommend approval/reapproval, the applicant/foster parent will be written to outlining reasons for this decision, and provided with information regarding their right to appeal, including how to access the Independent Review Mechanism.

A Panel Guide is made available for Foster Parents and for applicants. This is available in both paper and video format.

Our Fostering Panels in England will be held at our office in Leominster, or at other appropriate venue; however, we also offer a live video link facility for any applicants who are unable to attend Panel, for example, due to distance (being more than an hour's drive away), disability, illness or exceptional family circumstances. Panels can also be held fully online via Microsoft Teams.

## 6. How we Learn and Improve

### i. Our Training

We are very aware that fostering is a complex and demanding task, which is why Family Fostering Partners is committed to ensuring Foster Parents and staff have access to good quality learning and development opportunities, from the pre-approval stage for carers right through to post approval.

We are committed to maintaining and developing the highest standards for all our services, and our training and development programmes are central to this. Family Fostering Partners has a Training Policy, and all carers and staff have a Personal Development Plan which is discussed monthly in supervision and formally reviewed annually.

Our Training programme is in line with National Minimum Standards to ensure that all Foster Parents receive relevant induction and continued professional development.

Training is provided to

- Safeguard children and young people
- Safeguard Foster Parents
- Support carers and staff at becoming better at their job
- Improve knowledge and skills
- Establish values and working practices which reflect the ethos and culture of Family Fostering Partners and promote equality of opportunity
- Encourage Foster Parents to take responsibility for their own professional development through the creation of individual training profiles
- Enable carers to complete their TDS training within the required timescale

#### Pre-approval

The training provided prior to panel explores and reinforces the applicant's suitability for the foster caring role and ensures that the Family Fostering Partners standards of care are fully understood.

All new Foster Parents attend a specifically tailored learning and development programme during their assessment, called "Skills to Foster." This programme is delivered by experienced Family Fostering Partners staff, whenever possible, in conjunction with an experienced Foster Parent. The course is essential to ensure that participants fully understand the agency's expectations, particularly the expectations and demands of caring for vulnerable children and of providing a professional service to

the Local Authority. All Foster Parents under assessment with us will also have access to the agency's bi-monthly support groups and all other identified relevant training along with the agency's existing approved parents.

### Post approval

Following assessment and approval all Foster Parents receive a thorough induction. This includes ensuring that foster parents are clear about the policies and procedures, including Safeguarding/Child Protection, Safer Caring and health and safety. Induction also includes the following areas:

- Working with Family Fostering Partners
- Support and Supervision
- Training and development
- Referring and matching
- Finance

All newly approved Foster Parents are given a workbook to evidence how the TSDS for foster care has been achieved within a year of approval. Routine review and support for this occurs as part of Foster Parent monthly supervision.

Family Fostering Partners offers Foster Parents a wide range of group training opportunities utilising a mix of "in house" and external training providers, supplemented with a comprehensive e-learning programme for those who wish to undertake this. Foster Parents are expected to follow a core curriculum, which is clearly linked to:

- Fostering Service Regulations
- Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Care.
- Key findings from research, government guidance and examples of best practice.

Family Fostering Partners provides a bespoke training course for Foster Parents who choose to develop their skills in the area of Parent and Child Assessment. The course enables the development of assessment skills; promotes a comprehensive understanding of baby and toddler development; emphasises the importance of attachment for a secure base; and provides specific guidance on detailed recording and report writing.

As an agency, Family Fostering Partners uses a Secure Base Model approach in working with Foster Parents and Looked After children. Its importance as a framework for understanding trauma and for helping children recover from adverse experiences is emphasised on the preparatory Skills to Foster

course as well as in all post approval training. The secure base model gives them a better understanding of the attachment issues enabling them to manage major emotional or behavioural crisis. It also considers how children’s relationship with Foster Parents can enable the child/young person to develop competence in the outside world and manage often complex relationships with birth family members.

We encourage out Foster Parents to familiarise themselves with the five dimensions of care giving to enable them to incorporate these in their daily practice to help children to move towards greater security.

Examples of training include:

Being Healthy	Staying Safe	Enjoying and Achieving (Including Economic Well-being)	Making a Positive Contribution
Paediatric First Aid	Safeguarding	Attachment Programme	Promoting Contact
Safe Care	Safe Handling and De-escalation	Fostering Attachments 5 to Thrive	Promoting Identity and Self-esteem
Promoting Health & Wellbeing	Child Sexual Exploitation	Understanding child development and Managing Behaviour	Encouraging children to be independent and overcome executive functioning difficulties
Child Development	Social Media and Internet Safety	Education for Children Looked After	Autism & Autistic spectrum Difficulties
Common Childhood Mental Health Disorders	Recording for Foster Parents	Childhood in a Digital Age	
Disability Awareness	Managing Allegations	Understanding Transitions	
Drug and Alcohol Awareness	Radicalisation	Valuing Diversity	
Talking to children about Relationships	Female Genital Mutilation/Honour Based Violence	Placement Endings	
	Asylum Seeking and Trafficked Children	Preparing for independence	

### **How we learn from each other**

To ensure that learning and communication within and across the agency is of the highest possible standard and to ensure ongoing consultation and feedback from both staff and foster parents, Family Fostering Partners holds fortnightly all staff meetings, fortnightly staff reflective sessions and management meetings, and bi-monthly foster parent support groups.

The staff meetings are chaired by the Fostering Manager and are attended by the Registered Manager and when appropriate by the Responsible Individual. Practice issues are discussed including any case management issues which may present on call. The Registered Manager also leads on sharing with the staff team, Foster Parent recruitment progress, and any strategic development plans.

Each Areas link workers facilitate bi-monthly support in person groups, using local venues. As with training we run our support groups in term time between 10 and 2 pm to support foster parents to attend. We also provide the opportunity for online area support groups, to fit in with the needs of the carer group. Support groups are also attended by other agency staff, which includes whenever possible, the Registered Manager/Head of Fostering and the Responsible Individual.

Bi-monthly Foster Parent support groups offer the opportunity for informal chat and social networking with other Foster Parents, these meetings may also have a formal training agenda, guest speakers, or fun activity. Each geographical region (fostering community) also has a foster parent closed Facebook group. These closed Facebook groups offer the opportunity for live chats/debate on a variety of topics and fostering news, as well as offering further peer support and mentoring and a forum for sharing ideas, experiences and celebrating achievements. These forums also provide the opportunity for direct consultation and feedback from foster parents on service development and agency performance.

## **7. How we look after and celebrate our Children and Young People**

### **i. Prioritising Matching and Providing a Secure Base**

Every child and young person who receive a service from Family Fostering Partners are valued as unique individuals, and we take great care before offering any placement resource.

We recruit a diverse range of foster families to ensure that we are able to be flexible and child centred in the care that we provide, and matching is integral to the way in which we deliver our services, maintain high standards of care, and promote best outcomes.

Every placement made by the agency, even those made in an emergency, are carefully matched to align the needs of children and young people with the skills, experience, and interests of our foster families. We firmly believe that a rigorous approach to matching children referred for placements with potential foster families, is fundamental to achieving placement success.

Prior to any match being offered, we access as much comprehensive information as possible during the referral stage to enable us to fully understand the child or young person's individual circumstances, their personality, likes and interests, to know their needs and what is important to them and the desired placement outcomes.

Positive relationships provide the key to increasing the emotional resilience and wellbeing of children in our care, and for that reason we put relationships at the very heart of our service. Matching the needs of children referred to the agency, with the skills and interests of our carers is a vital part of the way in which we ensure a high- quality service to children across the organisation.

Family Fostering Partners will not make placements based merely on Foster Parent vacancies, but rather will seek to place children with foster families whom we consider are well matched to them, and who therefore are able to provide positive wellbeing outcomes, supporting children to grow up happily and successfully, and to be well looked after.

All referrals are processed by the Fostering Manager in full and active consultation with the Head of Fostering and/or Managing Director (Responsible Individual), both of whom are qualified Social Workers. This is still the case when placements are made in an emergency, or out of hours. The Registered Manager or Responsible Individual is available 24/7 for consultation and are always

involved in a decision to place. Any and all information known about the child from the referral is always shared with the potential parents, verbally over the phone and/or in person and also through our secure electronic database.

Once Foster Parents have agreed to be put forward as a potential match for a particular child/children, we complete a very detailed matching document, evidencing how any potential foster placement will meet and promote a child/young persons' needs around

- Health
- Family and Social Relationships
- Emotional and Behavioural Development
- Social Presentation
- Self-Care Skills
- Education
- Identity

In addition to completing this very detailed matching document, we also provide the local authority seeking the placement with a written profile of the Foster Parents. These profiles include photographs and set out details of; the family, their home, and their experience and training. When appropriate we will also provide a Child friendly Foster Parent profile for use by the child's social worker with the child/young person, to introduce them to the foster family and bite size videos. We encourage online introductions as well as face to face in person visits, as appropriate to the needs of the child or young person and the situation.

This approach ensures we match the uniqueness of the child to a carers' qualities and strengths, and that the children, young people, and the parents of children who are supported and cared for by our service are placed with foster families who have the right attributes, skills, and knowledge to meet their needs. This may include matching with Foster Parents who are trained in specialised areas such as managing challenging behaviour, caring for those who have been sexually abused, caring for adolescents, or caring for children with disabilities. If gaps are found in the Foster Parents' experience, added support, services or training is offered.

Whenever possible, Family Fostering Partners Link Workers are present at the foster home when placements are made and use the opportunity to ensure that basic paperwork is received from the Local Authority Social Worker at the earliest opportunity. When paperwork is not immediately

available, Family Fostering Partners has tracking and escalation processes in place to ensure that this is received in the most efficient and timely manner.

## **ii. Visits and Support**

All children and young people in placement with Family Fostering Partners are visited regularly as part of the role of the Link Worker. In undertaking this, due consideration is given to the role and involvement of the local authority social worker, so that there is clarity between the roles and responsibilities of each agency and social worker. The Link Worker ensures that the best interests of the child and/or young person are being safeguarded and promoted, and identify further services that are appropriate to promote their physical, mental and emotional welfare.

We believe that with appropriate and targeted packages of support for Foster Parents, children and young people are able to live more naturally, in a family environment. We believe that it is important to remain flexible, responsive and forward thinking when working with children in care. We offer the following range of services available for children and young people in our care:

- Assistance to pursue a hobby or interest, including holiday activities
- The opportunity to participate in children's support groups
- Practical assistance with transport and access to external facilities and services as agreed with the placing local authority
- Support with contact with birth families where requested and appropriate
- Support in carrying out Life story work
- A Children and Young person's Guide
- Information on children's helplines through children and young people's guide

Family Fostering Partners also provides a Memory Box for children who are newly placed with the agency. The Memory Box is our commitment to show our children and young people that we do care about their health and wellbeing and give them a sense of feeling valued and cared for, as some young people may have never felt this in their lives before.

## **iii. How we Assess, Plan, and Review childrens' care**

When a child or young person is placed with Family Fostering Partners, their Care Plan, prepared by the Local Authority, shapes, and influences the way in which the agency plans and delivers its services. Family Fostering Partners also completes a safe care plan and risk assessment and behaviour management plan for every child who is placed with the agency. Where possible these plans are

completed before the placement begins, but in case of an urgent need for care, they are completed within 1 working day of placement and reviewed as required, but at least prior to every child's in care review. The child or young person is involved in this process in the most appropriate and child centred way.

Children are at the centre of the care they receive within Family Fostering Partners. To help children achieve wellbeing and to have a say in the things that matter to them - whether that's to take part in out of school activities, to get a job, or to see the people who are most important in their lives, we work in an open and transparent way that ensures their care and support is the best it can be.

All children and young people in our foster families are registered with a GP, Dentist and Optician and our Foster Parents ensure any child they care for are taken to routine and specialist health appointments. This ensures that any unknown or unmet health needs are identified and addressed.

We provide every child with a 'Health Passport' detailing all health information, health appointments and health outcomes for the child, and Medication Forms to detail medications given. These go with them if for example, they have a 'sleep over' (respite) with another Family Fostering Partners Foster Parent or other designated person assessed by the agency to provide this support. The Health Passport also accompanies the child or young person when they leave our care and are available to the child's Local Authority social Workers during their routine statutory visits.

When it is appropriate to do so, all efforts are made to support a child/young person to remain in the school where they are on roll, but when distance means that children who are looked after have to change schools, our foster families work in partnership with the child, their Link Worker and the Local Authority Social Worker to identify and ensure a successful transition to a suitable alternative mainstream school/ college or other education provision. This may include the Foster Parent and headteacher meeting to discuss the child's needs; the Foster Parent going with the child for introduction visits, or negotiating a part-time timetable until a child is settled and feels confident to attend fulltime. In this way we help children feel supported and to achieve success.

We support our Foster Parents to communicate with their children's class teachers - daily if required; to attend all relevant meetings; attend parents' evenings, sports days, concerts, and other events. Our Foster Parents take an interest in, and have routines set for homework completion, offering to help

children if they get stuck. They also engage in informal learning outside of school, and actively support extracurricular activities, enabling children to develop key life skills.

The progress that children make in our foster homes is reviewed during the supervision visits made to foster families by the agency's Link Workers. Our Link Workers must see and speak to children alone on at least every 3<sup>rd</sup> visit; to actively encourage children to participate in plans and meetings about them; to discuss their wellbeing outcomes and to understand on an individual level with our children what 'emotional wellbeing' means to them. This close engagement with people results in services which meet their needs.

A written record of these visits is made and shared with the Foster Parent using a secure electronic data base, and records of visits focussing on the child or young person's progress are also made available to the Local Authority Social Worker.

Our CIW report for our service in Wales verifies that young people in our care ***"have a voice and are encouraged to express their views in relation to their day to day lives and within the care planning process."*** (17<sup>th</sup> May 2018). The report confirms that the children we look after are ***"...regularly encouraged by their SSW's during visits to express their views, particularly regarding any worried they may have."*** (17<sup>th</sup> May 2018) and that children and young people are encouraged ***"to, be creative, to follow their interests, exploring new challenges and experiencing a sense of achievement."*** (17<sup>th</sup> May 2018).

Childrens' progress is reviewed externally within the Looked After Children system. A Link Worker will always attend these meetings with the Foster Parents, and we will always as appropriately support young people to attend and take an active role in these Local Authority led meetings. We provide training and supervision to enable Foster Parents and staff to be confident advocates for children in our care; to support the child's voice, to endorse their right to exercise control over their lives, and to be assisted to access formal advocacy services when required.

We also review placement outcomes and children's wellbeing internally through the Foster Parent annual review process. In addition to seeking the Foster Parent and other professionals' views, we actively and creatively seek children's views on their placement as part of this process. Depending on the needs of the child and young person this may be through discussion, through play or questionnaires, which can be completed on paper or electronically.

#### **iv. How we consult with children and young people using the Service**

Children have the right to a voice, and for their opinion to be heard and valued on matters that affect them. Listening to children and young people is something that Family Fostering Partners takes very seriously, with their feedback used to shape and improve the services offered.

The agency offers a range of opportunities for children and young people to participate and engage. These include.

- Consultation with Children Looked After and the Foster Parents own birth children routinely used to inform the Foster Parent's Annual Review.
- Home visits that provide a regular opportunity for Family Fostering Partners Link Workers to see children and young people on their own and ascertain their satisfaction with their placement.
- Activity events run by the agency that provide staff with an additional opportunity to speak directly with children and young people.
- Partnership working with young people, supporting them to be actively involved in their care planning process, listening to their views and what matters to them.
- Link Workers and Foster Parents encouraging and supporting young people to attend their Looked After Child reviews and participate as best they can, which may include making a referral to an Advocacy Service if requested or if it is felt appropriate.
- All children are presented with an age appropriate version of the agency's Children's Guide/Young Person's Handbook that has details of who to contact if they are unhappy about any element of their care.
- Foster Parents who are trained and supported to advocate on a child's behalf should a child or young person be dissatisfied with any aspect of their care plan.

## **8. Our Commitment to Data Protection**

### **i. How we Securely Store Records and Respect Privacy**

As an agency that works with vulnerable children and young people, Family Fostering Partners takes data protection very seriously and is committed to protecting and respecting privacy and confidentiality.

Family Fostering Partners maintains records in accordance with The Fostering Services Regulations (England 2011) (Amendments 2013); the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Agency has a Data Policy which offers further guidance on this issue.

We believe that everyone has rights with regards to the way in which personal information is handled and should be able to expect that any data shared with Family Fostering Partners is treated correctly and lawfully. When processing data we comply with the principles of good practice which provides that information must be

- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
- Processed for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- Is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary
- Is correct, kept up to date and held for no longer than is necessary
- Processed in a manner that ensures proper security

To this end, we have systems and processes in place to manage data security, including IT systems that are cloud based and protected with passwords and anti- virus soft-wear and a database which complies with ISO standards.

All approved Foster Parents must sign a Foster Parent Agreement which outlines the agency's expectations about confidentiality, and training is provided at the pre-approval stage to ensure this is understood.

Family Fostering Partners maintains the records held on Foster Parents and on children and young people in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Regulations and Guidance. This means that

- Records are accurate, up to date and held securely

- Records of each approved Foster Parent are held for no less than 15 years after the termination of approval
- When children and young people move on from a Family Fostering Partners foster home, all records provided by the LA and relating to that child, will be offered back to the placing Local Authority. If these documents are not required by the placing Local Authority, then we will securely remove the information from our database six months following the date of the placement end.
- Records will be made available to Ofsted on request
- Children who use our service are made aware of their right to access their records, and to have such access to their records as is allowed by the placing Local Authority

## **ii. Insurance Cover**

Family Fostering Partners is fully and comprehensively insured against risk, loss and business disruption, including but not limited to:

- Employers Liability - £10 million
- Public Liability - £10 million
- Professional Indemnity - £5 million

## **9. Quality Assurance and Monitoring arrangements**

### **i. Leadership and Management**

At Family Fostering Partners we believe that a positive culture within the agency, which in turn ensures the best possible outcomes for individuals, can only be achieved through strong and supportive leadership. To this end, the Responsible Individual and the Head of Fostering/Registered Manager play key roles in setting the ethos for the agency and for promoting high practice standards for all staff and parents.

In addition to being immersed in the day to day running of the agency, both the Registered Manager and/or the Responsible Individual attend and/or chair all staff team meetings and visit Foster Parent support groups on a regular basis. This provides them with an ongoing opportunity to maintain an oversight of management, and to respond to any issues.

### **ii. Monitoring and Checking**

The Registered Manager also has monitoring processes in place to ensure that the quality and safety of the service is maintained. These monitoring processes include

- Having line management responsibility for the Fostering Manager (when appointed), who in turn will line manage the Link Worker
- Having line management responsibility for the Training and Retention Manager, and Reviewing Officer
- Full involvement and oversight of the staff recruitment process
- Oversight of the work of the Fostering Panel and the Annual Panel Report
- Having an online data base system for Foster Parent and Child records, making records accessible, transparent and allowing real time communication.
- One line data base for staff records
- Taking the lead in reviewing the agency's Statement of Purpose, policies and procedures and childrens guides to follow up with regulatory changes. As a proactive strategy, internal policies and procedures and guides are reviewed at a minimum of once annually
- The monitoring of matters set out in schedule 6 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (as amended); which include: compliance with the child's care plan, complaints and their outcomes, allegations or suspicions of abuse, recruitment records and checks, notifications, children missing from foster parents home, use of medication, any

measures of control, restraint or discipline, records of assessments and fostering panel meetings, appraisals of employees and staff meetings.

- Monthly supervision with the Responsible Individual
- Being responsible for writing a monitoring report every three months to comply with NMS 25, and sending Ofsted an amalgamated annual report (in compliance with Regulation 35 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (as amended)). Covering: Staffing; Fostering panel; Consultation with children and young people; Consultation with foster parents; Consultation with placing authorities; Equality and diversity; Other developmental work and Financial information.

Regular staff supervision and appraisal, combined with robust team meetings, ensure that we are continually evaluating our service to staff, and the work provided by our staff to our stakeholders and service users.

Our Fostering Panel provides another important quality assurance mechanism for the agency.

With those local authorities with whom we have a number of placements, the Fostering Manager meets quarterly with the local authority Commissioning Officer to discuss the stability of those placements. During these meetings, individual placement progress is discussed, along with the placement cost, which includes any opportunity for Family Fostering Partners to decrease costs to the Local Authority, or to request additional services to promote the child's wellbeing. The continued suitability of the foster placement is evaluated in line with the child/young person's wellbeing outcomes and care plan. Family Fostering Partners also use these meetings to advise the Local Authority of any service or practice developments and to discuss carer vacancies and availability.

The Responsible Individual meets Quarterly with the Board of Directors to provide an overview of the agency's quality of care and to agree the agency's strategic development and growth.

### **iii. Foster Parent Agreement**

All successful applicants are provided with a Foster Parent Agreement. This is completed and signed following approval, and the agreements are in compliance with Fostering Services (England) Regulation 27[5] [b].

Once approved, Family Fostering Partners Foster Parents are provided with access to online resources, which includes a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures in relation to the fostering task and is reviewed and updated regularly.

#### **iv. Post approval Support and Supervision**

Every Foster Parent approved by the agency has an allocated Link Worker who is a qualified social worker and experienced and skilled in delivering high standards of care and assistance. Caseloads are kept manageable to ensure that each worker has sufficient capacity to provide a high level of visiting and support to the foster parent, and lines of work are monitored by the Registered Manager through direct supervision of the fostering manager and during team meetings.

Foster Parents, staff and Panel members are all provided with appropriate training to fulfil their roles, and this is monitored via foster parent supervision and annual reviews, staff probation, supervision and appraisals, and Panel member induction and appraisal.

Health and Safety within foster homes; including having appropriate documents and insurance in place, is monitored during foster parent supervision and annual review, with remedial action taken to address any issues of concern.

#### **v. Foster Parent Reviews**

In compliance with the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, all Foster Parents 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 Foster Parent review provides an excellent opportunity to celebrate good work and ensure that the quality of care provided meets the Standards demanded by Family Fostering Partners. To be effective, the review has to be based upon reliable evidence regarding the Standard of Care that has been provided. The Foster Parent review should be seen as a process, considering afresh the Foster Parent's approval and any significant changes in the household and support network, rather than a one-off event or a rubber- stamping exercise. In this way, the Foster Parent Review is a key part of Family Fostering Partners' approach to quality assurance.

The review provides an opportunity for the agency and Foster Parent to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead. It takes account of:

- Recommendations of the previous review

- Enquiries made, and information obtained by the agency
- Outcomes for children placed in this household since the last review
- Any significant changes in the household including to accommodation
- Training undertaken by the carer and support given
- The views of the Carer and all members of the household including children who are/have been placed during this period
- The views of placing authorities
- The views of birth children
- The views of family members of the child or children placed
- Updates on all statutory checks
- Annual updates on Health and Safety checks
- Any concerns, complaints, or compliments

Reviews take place in line with regulatory requirements of a Foster Parent (Regulations 28(2)) and so, all our Foster Parents are reviewed at least annually. The first annual review is presented to Panel with the Foster Parents in attendance, and any reviews recommending a change in approval are also presented to Panel as a Review of Approval. When approved Foster Parents return to Panel for their first annual review, and as may be required thereafter, the Foster Panel will recommend whether a person remains suitable to act as a Foster Parent, and whether the terms of the person's approval remain appropriate.

For all reviews, a written report is prepared by the agency Link Worker. Contributions from the child or young person currently in placement are sought, alongside feedback from the child's local authority Social Worker for both children currently placed, and those previously placed within the annual review year; from the child's school/nursery or other education provision; from any birth children living in the fostering household and any other household members or others significantly involved with the child; from any other professional involved with the child, and if appropriate from birth parents or other significant family members. Any areas of difference or disagreement between the contributors must be reflected within the Reviewing Officer's report indicating clearly any proposed or necessary course of action to remedy these.

In addition to the requirements to conduct annual reviews, Family Fostering Partners' procedure clearly sets out other situations in which completion of a foster care review would be appropriate. For example, following a serious concern, complaint or incident, or a significant change in circumstances.

## **vi. How we deal with complaints**

Family Fostering Partners recognises that customer feedback and stakeholder views are important, and we have several mechanisms and procedures in place for service users to provide feedback and/or to make a complaint. In accordance with NMS 2011 Standard 25 Family Fostering Partners has developed a comprehensive complaints procedure and will appoint an Independent Complaints Officer if the need arises.

The Family Fostering Partners Complaints procedure is made available to service users via the Children and Young People's Guides and for Foster Parents via online data base. Local Authority customers, parents or other interested parties are provided with a copy on request. The procedure is reviewed annually to monitor its satisfactory operation, and any child or young person who wishes to make a complaint or raise a concern will be supported to do so.

Family Fostering Partners regards complaints made as a serious matter, but also as a way to hopefully learn and improve the level of service provided. In relation to any complaints received, Family Fostering Partners will aim to reflect, and take appropriate action in order to change policies, practices and procedures, addressing the complaints and resolving matters identified in order to prevent future occurrence.

The policies and procedures have been developed to respond to issues raised by:

- The Local Authority
- Any child who is being looked after by Family Fostering Partners, or a person acting on behalf of the child.
- A child's parent, or person with parental responsibility.
- Any Family Fostering Partners Foster Parent or family member.
- Any Family Fostering Partners staff member.
- Such other person as Family Fostering Partners considers has sufficient interest in the child's welfare to warrant his or her representations being considered by them.
- Our Complaints Procedure has three levels and places emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and an early stage.

Complaints can be made about

- A specific problem
- The quality of service

- The delivery or non-delivery of a service
- The way in which the agency carries out its policies and practices.

All serious complaints will be notified to the Regulatory Authority.

## **vii. The Complaints Process**

### Stage 1: Informal Stage

We have a comprehensive complaints procedure which places an emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and at an early stage (Stage 1), but Family Fostering Partners recognises there may be times when matters cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

### Stage 2: Formal Investigation

If the problem is considered too serious for an informal approach, or if the complainant is not satisfied with the response they get at the informal level, they can complain formally at any time, to Family Fostering Partners and to the Registered Manager/Head of Fostering who is the Complaints Officer, at the address given below:

The Complaints Officer (Head of Fostering)  
Office 6,  
The Rural Enterprise Centre,  
Leominster Enterprise Park,  
Leominster,  
Herefordshire,  
HR6  
Tel: 0330 094 8816

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within 7 working days, including an indication of who the identified Investigating Officer will be.

Complaints at Stage 2 is managed through an investigation conducted by an Investigating Officer. The Investigating Officer may be an experienced manager identified from within Family Fostering Partners, who has had no previous involvement with the matter concerned, or an external contracted individual with relevant qualifications and experience. Any such appointment will be made known to and discussed with all parties prior to the commencement of the investigation. In

appropriate circumstances a child's local authority social worker will be informed of the complaint and of the progress of the investigation and outcome.

No one who is the subject of, or who has been involved in seeking to resolve the complaint informally (Stage 1) will be responsible for any investigation conducted under Stage 2.

The Complaints Officer will ensure the complaint is properly investigated. At this stage, the investigation should be completed, and the response sent to the complainant, ideally within 25 working days. However, this may be impractical in some cases, e.g. where the complaint involves several agencies, all or some of the matters are the subject of a concurrent investigation (such as a disciplinary process), if the complaint is particularly complicated, or if a key witness is unavailable for part of the time.

Where it is not possible to complete the investigation within 25 working days of the commencement of the investigation, Stage 2 may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. Where a response in 25 working days is not feasible, we will inform the complainant as soon as possible in writing of:

- the reason for the delay;
- and the date by which a response should be received

The outcome of a complaint, including findings and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint, will be sent, in writing, to the complainant, and details of the next steps should the complainant not be satisfied with the response.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2, they may request that the matter be referred to Stage 3 for a Complaints Review Panel to be established to consider the complaint investigation and its findings.

### Stage 3 – Complaints Review Panel

A request to convene a Complaints Review Panel must be made in writing to the Complaints Officer, who is the Registered Manager, and received within 28 days of the complainant receiving the outcome in writing of the Stage 2 formal investigation.

The request will be acknowledged in writing within 7 days.

The Panel will consist of a Family Fostering Partners Director, another senior Family Fostering Partners manager who has no connection with the complaint, and someone who is independent of Family Fostering Partners, i.e. a person with a relevant background and expertise who is not an employee of Family Fostering Partners.

The Review Panel will not reinvestigate the complaint, nor will it be able to consider any substantively new complaints that have not been first considered at Stage 2

Complaint Review Panels are designed to:

- listen to all parties;
- consider the adequacy of the Stage 2 investigation;
- obtain any further information and advice that may help resolve the complaint to all parties' satisfaction;
- focus on achieving resolution for the complainant by clearly addressing the defined complaints and desired outcomes;
- reach findings on each of the complaints being reviewed;
- make recommendations that provide practical remedies and creative solutions to complex situations;
- support local solutions where the opportunity for resolution between the complainant and the organisation exist;
- identify any consequent injustice to the complainant where complaints are upheld, and to recommend appropriate redress; and
- recommend any service improvements for action by the organisation.

The venue, date and time of the complaints review panel meeting will be agreed with the complainant, and the procedure and background documentation will be circulated to all parties.

The complainant makes their representations to the panel and has the right to bring a representative to the panel to speak on their behalf. After the Panel, a full written response will be provided to the complainant, (and other participants as necessary), ideally within 10 working days.

The outcome of the Complaints Review Panel is a final response from Family Fostering Partners. . If the complainant is not happy with the final outcome or indeed at any stage of the process, they can contact Ofsted.

### **viii. Important Contacts**

Any Foster Parent or a child/young person may choose to contact our regulator, Ofsted, directly regarding any complaint/allegation concerning the standard of service provided by a Foster Parent, or about the management of our service. Family Fostering Partners will co-operate fully with any investigation conducted by Ofsted.

#### **Ofsted National Business Unit**

Royal Exchange Buildings, Piccadilly Gate

Store Street, Manchester

M1 2WD, Tel: 0300 123 1231 (General Enquiries) Tel: 0300 123 4666 (About Concerns)

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) (General Enquiries) Email: [CIE@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:CIE@ofsted.gov.uk) (About Concerns)

Alternatively, a Foster Parent, child or young person may also choose to approach the Children's Commissioner for England who can be contacted at the following address.

#### **Children's Commissioner for England,**

Sanctuary Buildings,

Great Smith Street,

London, SW1P 3BT T

**Tel:** 020 7783 8330

**Freephone for children and young people - 0800 5288330**

[childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Family Fostering Partners has a whistleblowing policy in place and a copy of this is available to all staff and Foster Parents and can be made available on request to any other stakeholders.

### **ix. Finance**

In accordance with NMS 2011 Standard 28 Foster Parents will receive an allowance to provide for all the practical needs for a Looked After Child. Foster Parents are paid directly into their bank accounts via BACS transfer on a fortnightly basis. Carers are self-employed and pay their own tax and national insurance.

Detailed financial information and guidance is supplied to Foster Parents during their assessment and induction and it is also documented within the Foster Parent Handbook.