



# Statement of Purpose

Heath Farm

URN Number: SC060386

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# Introduction

This Statement of Purpose has been produced to provide information to all interested parties, including:

- Any person working for the purpose of the fostering service
- Any Foster Carer or prospective Foster Carer of the fostering service
- Any child placed with a Foster Carer by the fostering service, and their parents
- Local Authority partners and relevant stakeholders

The Statement of Purpose, produced in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations includes:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service
- A statement of the services and facilities provided by the fostering service.

This Statement of Purpose and the service we provide has been developed in accordance with and reflects appropriate legislation and guidance:

The agency is committed to the delivery of a service meeting the standards of care detailed below, which are compatible with statutory and regulatory requirements of:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services Regulations (England 2011) (Amendments 2013);
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England 2011)
- The Care Planning and Fostering (England) Regulations 2010 (Amendments 2013) (Miscellaneous Amendments 2015)
- Working together to Safeguard Children 2018 and other national frameworks
- National Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services

A copy of the Statement of Purpose is provided, and/or made available upon request, to:

- Ofsted/Chief Inspector
- Any person working for the purposes of the fostering service
- Any child (subject to their age and understanding) placed with a Foster Carer of the fostering service and the parent of any such child

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated at least annually by the Senior Management Team.



# Introduction

## **About Heath Farm**

Heath Farm has been in operation since 1993 and is one of the first independent fostering organisations in England. Heath Farm grew and developed the model of multi disciplinary working, operating from a single site – a wrap around service for looked after children. This can now be seen at a national level under the banner of multi dimensional foster care, or as it is known in some areas treatment foster care.

Heath Farm Fostering provides three key services for looked after children – foster care, therapy and family time. We have strong links with Heath Farm School and children may attend this school. Our wrap around model of care supports children who have complex needs whilst working closely alongside local authorities and the child's family. The organisation works closely with the key people involved in the child's care and recognises the enormously important part they play both individually and collectively in caring for the child. It is an holistic service, which seeks to promote the child's global development into early adulthood or their return to their family.

# Aims & Objectives

## The aims and objectives of the agency are:

- To provide a high quality service for looked after children and young people of all ages whose needs have been assessed by the responsible Local Authority as being best met by placement with a foster carer
- To ensure children and young people are only placed with carers who have been recruited, assessed, approved and reviewed in accordance with statutory regulation and national standards and guidance
- To support, supervise and provide on-going training to carers 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 promote positively the concept of fostering
- To bring together carers who will support, educate and inform each other and who will work in partnership with all relevant professionals, agencies and families involved in the child's life
- To continually develop and improve our services and not to compromise on standards. To this aim we seek internal and external evaluation and feedback on our work
- To provide a therapy based service for children and carers

## Objectives

- The agency in pursuit of its stated aims and objectives, will employ policies, practices and procedures which will seek at all times:
- To ensure the provision of high quality care to children and young people in a safe, healthy and nurturing family setting
- To meet the individual child's particular needs and promote their best interests, in accordance with the care plan
- To have 24 hour support for carers, children and young people
- To protect the child from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation
- 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 develop the child's sense of identity and self-worth
- To promote the child's health and wellbeing, including their physical, mental and emotional welfare
- To promote educational achievement and attainment
- To promote and support agreed contact with the child's family and friends, in accordance with the care plan
- To prepare the child for adult life through the development of relevant life skills and acquisition of the knowledge necessary to achieve this; providing opportunity for lifelong relationships
- To seek the views and opinions of children and promote participation alongside, their families and carers to inform the planning and delivery of the agency's services

# Aims & Objectives

- To recruit individuals and families from all parts of the community. With different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and life experiences, thereby offering local authorities a range of placements, reflecting the wide range of children's needs
- To achieve consistently high standards when recruiting and assessing carers
- To have a properly constituted and independent Panel to consider assessments and make recommendations to the agency regarding the award, review, rejection or termination of approvals
- To ensure consistency and continuity in the supervision, support and information carers receive
- To provide accessible training that enables carers to develop their skills and knowledge so as to better meet the needs of children placed with them
- To offer placements that carefully match the particular needs of the child to the carer's skills, experiences and circumstances
- To regularly review the stability of placements in order to ensure support packages remain relevant and resourced, minimising the potential for placement breakdown and poor outcomes for children
- To be a responsible and competent employer; recruiting and employing an adequate number of appropriately experienced and qualified staff, who are able to meet the needs of carers and children, placed with them
- To ensure the agency is organisationally sound and properly structured
- To have procedures in place to control and supervise the agency's activities
- To have arrangements in place to control and supervise the agency's finances, which are based on sound financial principles and recognised good practice
- To organise and manage the agency's resources effectively to ensure the best possible service delivery and the safety of children
- To maintain the skill and knowledge base of casual or independent staff, managers and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes
- To monitor and review agency policies, procedures and practice on a regular basis
- To implement administrative procedures and practices so that management and staff are able to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner
- To maintain secure, separate and accurate records of children, carers and staff and ensure access to such records, in line with legislation

# Status & Constitution

Heath Farm Children's Services is one of a number of fostering agencies owned and managed by the National Fostering Group having been acquired in 2017.

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Senior Management is made up from within the National Fostering Group, who meet regularly and are responsible for the strategic direction and financial management of the organisation, with day-to-day responsibility remaining with the Registered Manager.

Senior management objectives include:

- Strategic vision and direction
- A child and family centred culture, values and principles
- Quality assurance
- An annual business plan in-line with children's and service users' needs
- Developing the service in-line with best practice
- Financial management to ensure best value to local authorities
- Assimilation of new legislation and regulations into practice

The Agency is continually evolving and developing; growing in order to provide a national service whilst providing local offices throughout the UK. Our regional services are integrated into the Agency ethos, procedures and standards. Our national structure and investment enables us to continually develop, innovative, efficient and effective services for the benefit of Local Authorities and the children and young people for whom they are responsible.

## **Name and address of Registered Manager:**

**Name:** Emma Kemp

**Address:** 1st floor, Marlowe House, Markerstudy Business Park, Whitstable, CT5 3FE

**Email:** [ekemp@heathfarm.org](mailto:ekemp@heathfarm.org)

## **Name and Address of Responsible Individual:**

**Name:** Neil McCarthy

**Address:** 1st floor, Marlowe House, Markerstudy Business Park, Whitstable, CT5 3FE

**Email:** [nmccarthy@nfa.co.uk](mailto:nmccarthy@nfa.co.uk)

All the activities of Heath Farm Children's Services are inspected and regulated by Ofsted:

**Registered Number:** SC060386

**Last inspection January 2023 can be found at:** [Heath-Farm-Ofsted-Jan-23.pdf \(nfa.co.uk\)](#)

Ofsted – Can be contacted at the follow address:

**Name:** Regulatory Inspector

**Address:** Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street,  
Manchester, M1 2WD

**Telephone:** 0300 123 1231

**Email:** [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)



# Equality & Diversity

The Agency is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity and promote LGBTQ+.

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As an employer we are also committed to valuing equality and diversity within our workforce and to treating all employees and job applicants equally. Our goal is to ensure these commitments are embedded in our day to day working practices with all of our customers, colleagues and partners.

We provide equality of opportunity and do not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination. The Agency is responsive to any child's racial, cultural and linguistic background and belief systems, taking into account their age, understanding, ability, and any special needs they may have arising from physical or intellectual impairment.

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



# Safeguarding

## Working Together to Safeguard Children:

[www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk) “Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part and have a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children”.

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Heath Farm Children’s Services prides itself on being child focused in all our work. We strive to be a reflective and learning organisation, taking on learning from Serious Case Reviews.

Staff are encouraged to “think the unthinkable” to be respectful yet challenging of carers, the LA and the organisation itself.

Our starting point is to listen to children as we believe that the greatest way to keep children safe is to listen to children and to take them seriously.

On placement all children are given a copy of the children’s guide which provides them with information about who they can talk to, or how to make a complaint.

Foster carers are given clear guidance around safe carer, and along with the household safe carer, a child specific safe care is drawn up. Risk assessments are completed at the point of placement, and updated at least annually or following any significant incidence, to reflect changes. The purpose of the risk assessment is not just to highlight risk, but to identify what children, carers, staff and others can do to address those risk and work towards lowering them. Staff seek meetings with the Local Authority to discuss concerns and risk and share risk assessments.

The Registered Manager ensures the Quality Assurance Team is updated on all schedule 7 events and notifications. This allows for patterns to be explored and overview of learning to be drawn out. We strive to manage the situation, reduce the risk and learn from the situation.

Staff and carers receive mandatory training on safeguarding Team meetings are used to reflect on situations and team responses. We look to learn from research and incorporate it into our practice.

We have developed a number of champions for child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and County Lines to ensure that safeguarding remains high on all of our agendas.

Work is undertaken one to one or as part of a group. We have involved young people in the development of that package which is now being shared with foster carers in order to support the work.

# Agency & Management Structure

Heath Farm Children's Services is part of the National Fostering Group and its agency structure. The National Fostering Group provides fostering across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. There are clear defined structures of regional teams and partner agencies.

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## Company Structure:

National Fostering Group Management structure:

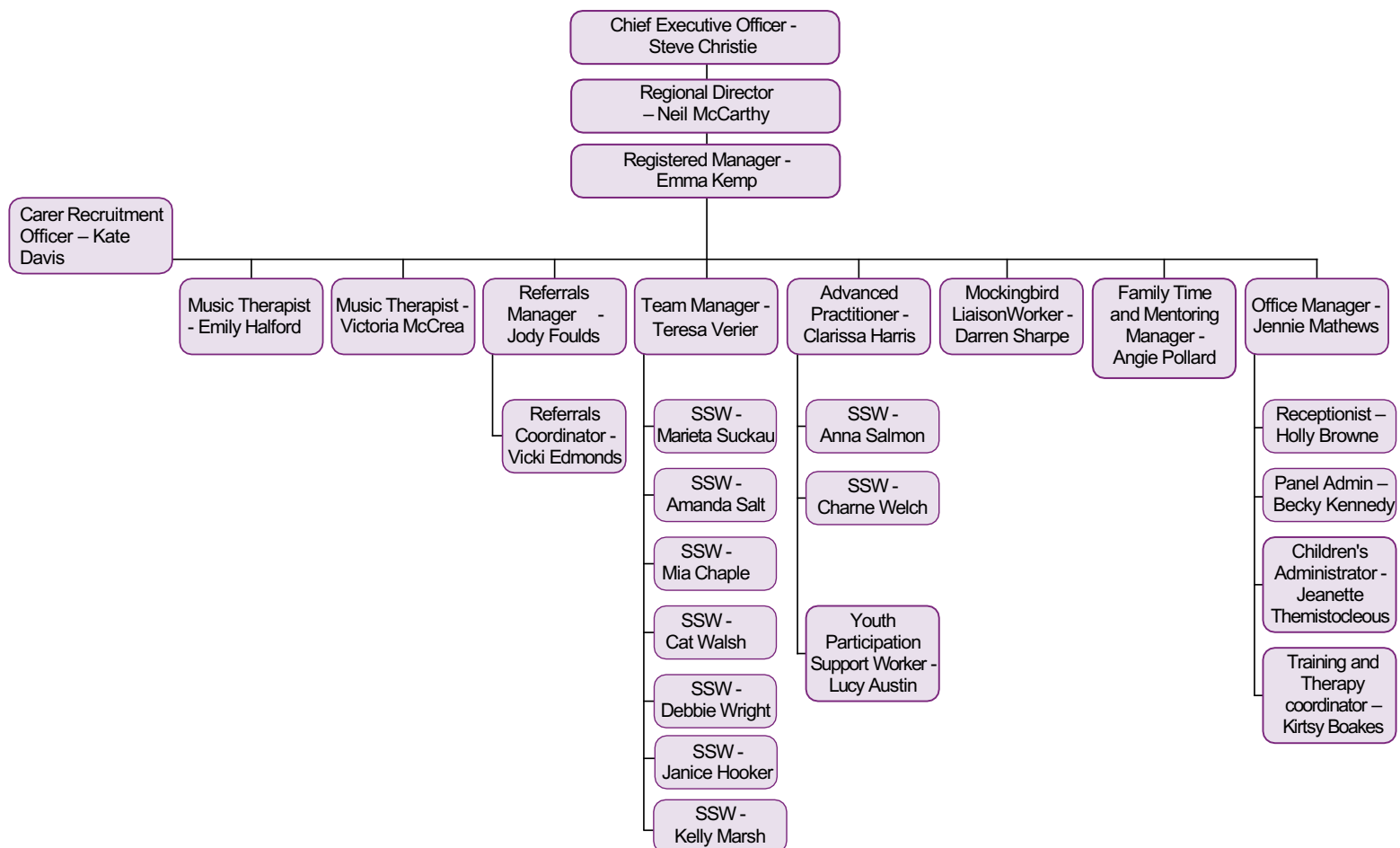


# Employees

The Senior Leadership Team includes the Director of Operations, Regional Directors and Registered Managers who are responsible for the day-to-day management and strategic direction of the organisation.

## Heath Farm Children's Services Structure

National Fostering Group senior management team have a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of fostering and social care. The Operations Director, Regional Director, Registered Manager and Social Work Team Managers are qualified social workers registered with Social Work England. The management group meet on a regular basis and are responsible for all strategic and operational aspects of the agency. The Registered Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency and the development of services to foster carers, children and young people. The Registered Manager is a qualified social worker.



# Employees

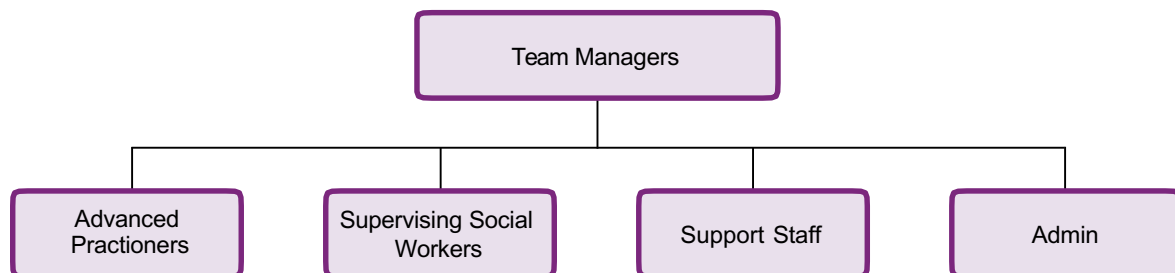
## The Social Work Team

Team Managers and Supervising Social Workers are all qualified, Social Work England registered and very experienced social workers, having worked in a wide variety of statutory social work settings. The majority of the team have further post qualifying qualifications.

The team are responsible for visiting carer households regularly, attending meetings, spending time with children and young people in placement as appropriate and making recommendations for the annual foster carer review. Our team have access to clinical support as well as therapeutic group supervision.

All permanent members of staff have training development plans specific to their area of expertise, receive monthly supervision and annual appraisals. In addition staff have access to associate therapists to reflect on complex practice issues. Heath Farm Children's Services carries out background checks on all staff employed or commissioned by the company in accordance with requirements of the National Care Standards Act 2000 (National Minimum Fostering Standards).

All staff undertake mandatory training in safeguarding, equality and diversity and data protection.



# The Voice of the Child at Heath farm Fostering

Children and Young people are at the heart of everything we do at Heath Farm and as such we have a dedicated Youth Participation Support Worker.

The Youth Participation worker is managed by the Advanced Practitioner and organizationally, the role sits within the social work team.

This is a unique role to Heath Farm created to ensure that children and young people are heard and represented.

The role of the Youth Participation Support Worker is to hear and represent children voices, views, wishes, feelings, experiences and opinions and to amplify those within the agency and within the wider community, such as with Local authorities and other professionals and to ensure that children and young people are represented and heard in meaningful ways. The aim is for all of our children and young people will feel heard, valued and of importance. This builds self-esteem, self-worth, a feeling of being cared about and leads to better outcomes for children.

The Youth Participation Support Worker cares about how our children and young people feel and how they experience their care they receive and the wider fostering agency. For this reason each child and young person is personally welcomed into the agency by the Youth Participation Support Worker.

This ensures that when children and young people come to us they know they are represented and that there is someone there that is just for them, to hear them and in some cases speak for them when needed through acting as an advocate. The support provided by the Youth Participation Support Worker and the Participation Service extends to birth children of foster carers as well as Children looked after.

As well as one to one support of children and young people through welcome visits, one to one support as needed and advocacy the Youth Participation Support Worker facilitates groups and activities for Heath Farm children and Young People. We aim to provide events and activities across a range of geographical areas in each school holiday.

There is also a youth Forum named "Young Minds" which exists in order for young people to share their opinions and experience of being looked after in order to positively impact upon the service provided for young people by Heath Farm. This can range from big issues that affect our young people's daily lives like racism, prejudice and climate change to smaller scale issue like how they would like the office decorated and what events and activities they would like to have. The Youth forum also acts as a space for sharing and peer support which builds self-esteem, confidence and self-worth.

# Complaints & Outcomes

## The Agency has a comprehensive complaints procedure.

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All children placed with Heath Farm Children's Services carers have the right to be safe, protected and listened to. When a child is placed with a foster carer they will be given written and verbal guidance (relative to their understanding) outlining the complaints procedure and ways to access support. This will include help lines, e.g. NSPCC, Childline and the telephone number of Ofsted. As well as statutory visits from the child's Social Worker, a Children's Rights Worker will see the children on their own on a regular basis. Heath Farm Children's Services always aims to give the best possible service but occasionally things can go wrong. When that happens we want to put them right and learn from our mistakes. National Fostering Group welcomes feedback of all kinds and maintains copies of all complaints.

Heath Farm Children's Services has a stringent anti-bullying policy. Foster carers are given advice and training on how to recognise signs of bullying and strategies are formulated on how to support the child. The complaints procedure is available to children, Foster Carers and all stakeholders and is reviewed annually to check its satisfactory operation. The review is undertaken to identify any patterns and to review the actions taken on individual complaints.

The Agency's complaints procedure places a strong emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and an early stage. All complaints are investigated and recommendations for consideration, resolution and action are addressed. We take a 'lessons learned' approach from all complaints to improve our agency.

All complaints are dealt with in accordance with our policy and procedures and, where appropriate, an independent investigation is held.

The Agency, where appropriate, reflects upon and takes appropriate action to improve policies, practices and procedures in order to address complaints promptly and resolve the matters identified.

Dissatisfied complainants can be referred to a Stage 3 Independent Panel.

For a copy of our complaints procedure or to make a complaint, please contact the Registered Manager on 01227 931778.

# Service Provision

## The principles and purpose of the Agency with regard to service provision are:

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- To be fully compliant with the Fostering Service Regulations and other relevant statutes, laws and guidance
- To ensure the delivery of safe, child-centred care with comprehensive and robust safeguarding systems
- To recruit, train and assess a diverse Foster Carer population, enabling them to meet the complex and diverse needs of individual children referred
  - To ensure that all fostering assessments are undertaken by experienced, social work qualified staff, with active participation by the applicants. The agency to provide a buddy (experienced Foster Carer) to applicants
- To ensure that all new fostering applicants complete Skills to Foster Training, as part of the assessment and approval process
- To ensure that all of our Foster Carers are fully supported and trained in order to meet the needs of children we look after, including appropriate responses to their behaviour
- To ensure that children and young people are matched to fostering families that can meet their individual needs, including, as far as is possible, their ethnic, cultural and religious need
- To ensure that all of our Foster Carers are committed to meeting the objectives of a child's placement plan and care plan, including the promotion of appropriate contact
- To promote educational participation and attainment for all children and young people in our care, in line with objectives identified by the Department for Education (DfE)
- To maintain comprehensive and accurate records on the children and young people in our care, tracking progress and outcomes
- To ensure that all of the information held by the Agency is managed in accordance with data protection guidance and legislation in order to promote safety whilst safeguarding dignity and privacy
- To ensure that all our Foster Carers and their homes are fully compliant with health and safety risk assessment requirements
- To provide all Foster Carers with regular supervision and support through an allocated Supervising Social Worker and to make clear that the frequency of visits, telephone and email contact can be increased, as necessary, in line with the needs of an individual child or young person in placement
- To provide and maintain a 24 hour Out of Hours telephone support service, provided by a qualified social worker, and supported by an experienced, social work qualified manager, ensuring Foster Carers have access to appropriate advice and guidance at all times
- To provide all Foster Carers with a Personal and Professional Development Plan and Learning and Development Record (PPDPLDR) tailored to meet their learning objectives and equip them to meet the needs of approved placement types
- To provide a contact service
- 23 nights paid respite (accrued pro rata)
- Access to professional counselling
- Participation in the Mocking Bird Project in conjunction with the Fostering Network (subject to space)
- To provide all Foster Carers with access to Carer Support Groups for networking, information sharing, skills development and peer mentoring opportunities
- To ensure that all of our Foster Carers are reviewed annually or earlier if required, and that the terms of approval are consistent with their assessed skills and ability
- To deliver a high quality fostering service, open and responsive to feedback and complaints, and pro-active in reviewing service provision to meet changing sector requirements
  - The provision of a mentoring service to support young people who need practical support, this is a needs led service. Young people are allocated a mentor for a period of 6 sessions. This is reviewed and another set of sessions offered or the work is concluded. All our mentors are DBS checked and trained. The focus of the sessions can be:
    - Independent travel to college, school or contact
    - Online certificate in Food Hygiene to get a job in fast food.
    - CSCS cards for young people who want to work on building sites on apprenticeships or work experience
    - Personal hygiene
    - Relationships
    - Sexual health
    - Interview skills
    - Self-awareness
    - Semi independence skills
    - Identity awareness



# Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel is made up of members largely independent of the Agency. They come from different backgrounds such as Education, Health and Social Care. Members also include Foster Carers, an employee of the Agency and those who have had previous experience of being Looked After. The Fostering Panel has access to medical and legal advice.

The Fostering Panel provides an independent overview and makes recommendations to the Agency on matters that are brought to it. It is child-focussed and aims to ensure that any new foster carers that the Agency recruit will care well for children and keep them safe.

The Fostering Panel has important functions:

- To recommend to the Agency whether applicants are suitable to be approved as foster carers
- To recommend any changes to a foster carer's approval
- To discuss any serious concerns about a foster carer's practice
- To recommend termination of a foster carer's approval

The Fostering Panel members will consider the application to see if it meets the Agency's fostering requirements. The Panel will then make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Applicants are not required to meet with the Agency Decision Maker.

# Mockingbird Family Model

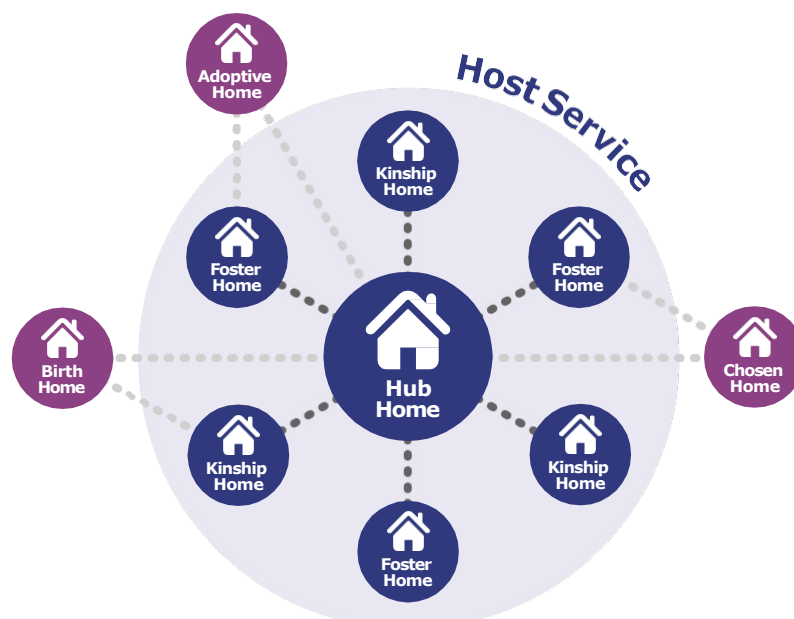
The Mockingbird programme is an alternative method of delivering foster care with the potential to improve placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care.

Heath Farm in conjunction with The Fostering Network have been working to the Mockingbird Family Model since the pilot started in 2015, the first Independent Fostering Provider in the UK.

Heath Farm were one of the sites monitored for a three-year evaluation of the model. The evaluation found that participants were very positive about the model, reporting that it enabled foster carers and children and young people placed with them to:

- The Mockingbird programme was perceived to bring normality to children and young people in care and their foster families (including kinship carers) by creating an “extended family” environment and reducing experiences of bureaucracy.

- Mockingbird gave children and young people opportunities to take part in a broad range of social activities and to develop friendships with their peers and other adults. Time and again, foster carers, children and young people spoke in interviews about children and young people having the opportunity and encouragement to do activities that they would not have otherwise done.
- Foster carers who were participating in Mockingbird were less likely to de-register than those who were not participating. In interviews with foster carers and staff, this improved retention of foster carers was attributed to the support, friendships and sense of community created through Mockingbird.



# Mockingbird Family Model

- There was also evidence that foster carers who participated in Mockingbird had higher levels of wellbeing than other foster carers.

The success of Mockingbird in terms of improved outcomes for foster carers, children and young people was attributed to the whole programme of activities, rather than specific aspects.

In interviews, feeling well supported, like part of an extended family and connected to the community were frequently mentioned by staff and foster carers as having had a positive impact on the experiences and outcomes of Mockingbird participants.

Mockingbird improved foster carer retention and there was qualitative evidence that the programme may improve transitions and wellbeing for children and young people and improve placement stability.

Mockingbird also showed promising findings around improving wellbeing for foster carers, improving foster carer support, improving friendships for children and young people and improving relationships between siblings.

# Heath Farm Family Centre

At Heath Farm, we promote and maintain a very busy high quality family time service that reflects the needs of children and their families. This ensures that children get the best opportunity to spend quality time with family members

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Quality family time offers additional support to carers and young people with the outcome of increasing stability of placements.

The family centre is situated within a two-minute walk to the lovely old town centre of Faversham, six-minute walk to Faversham train station, and the M2 motorway is a five-minute car journey away.

The Family room has recently been furnished with the provision of:

- Privacy and confidentiality to Children and their family within a safe and secure Environment.
- Air conditioning
- TV, Dvd's and Games Console- Family games, books, toys for all ages
- Microwave
- Refreshments: Tea, coffee, Juice • Sitting room area and dining area • Secluded garden with patio.
- First aid kit

Our Family time supervisors are fully trained and work very hard to make each session a positive experience for the young people and their family.

Risk assessments are required before any family time sessions can commence.

All family time reports are received within five working days, and QA checked by the Contact Co-ordinator.

Heath Farm have an Enhanced Accreditation with NACCC. If you are interested in making use of our service, please call Kay Ashe on 07901 248376.



# Therapy

## Heath Farm employ two full time psychotherapists and a Hub of therapists on a consultancy basis

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We have a multi-disciplinary therapy service at Heath Farm which enables us to provide a range of therapeutic services tailored to each individual child and their foster carers. At present our therapy team includes our Clinical Lead 2 full time therapists and 6 or 8 therapists employed on a consultancy basis. Our disciplines and services include individual therapy and counselling for children (including directive and non-directive approaches), play therapy, systemic and family therapy, relational therapy, attachment-based therapies, NVR, O.T, music therapy and life work.

We aim for our therapy services to be timely and responsive to ensure we best support and positively promote children and young people's emotional wellbeing. The modality, match of therapist and child, duration and frequency of therapy is based around the child's therapeutic needs.

All of our therapists work closely alongside children, foster carers, social workers and the wider professional network to ensure that therapy is well planned and based on a child's needs; with discussions focused on areas of therapeutic need, a child's early history, their current presentation and their future hopes, identifying areas of concern and area of strengths and resilience. Therapy is regularly reviewed and themes and

progress within therapy is shared and communicated within these review meetings. Therapy reviews are recorded and shared with key professionals.

It is also integral to our service that the therapists are able to work proactively to support Heath Farm foster carers either through direct therapeutic work for the carers or when working alongside them around a child. Therapeutic work with foster carers is also well planned and regularly reviewed alongside carers and their Supervising Social Worker.

The therapy team's ethos and work is underpinned by up to date knowledge and research. We ensure all therapists recruited to Heath Farm have sound knowledge and understanding of attachment and in working with children who have experienced trauma, separation and loss. We also ensure that all therapists have experience in working alongside children in care and their wider systems. We ensure that all therapists are accessing regular supervision, CPD training and are compliant with the expectations of their relevant governing bodies. Information regarding therapists' qualifications and training is held at Heath Farm and is available on request. For more details on therapy services please speak directly with our Clinical Lead.

# Placement Types

The Agency is able to provide family placements through a number of specialist care services for a wide range of children, including those who are deemed difficult to place due to behavioural, disability or language needs.

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Our focus is always on delivering the best possible outcomes for children whilst ensuring they stay in the mainstream of society. The Agency believes that with the right Foster Carers and the right 'match' all Children can benefit from the experience of a placement with a foster family.

## Solo/Complex Needs and Enhanced Placements

Every child is an individual with individual needs and in some circumstances these needs can be complex. The Agency is able to offer a number of placement packages to meet needs that are identified by the placing Local Authority as requiring additional support. In such circumstances a personalised package of support can be provided which will add additional resources to the placement and provide a greater likelihood of achieving successful outcomes for the child.

Additional support may come in the form of extra input from a qualified Social Worker or Support Worker or through guidance and consultation to the Foster Carer.

## Specialist Placements

### Step Down Placements or bridge to foster

Our Step Down scheme represents an intensely resourced package of foster care designed to support young people who are ready for a transition from residential to foster care or who are experiencing a period of significant instability in their care placements.

Step Down enables local authorities to place young people in the confidence that they will receive the support required to achieve stability in foster care. The support 'steps down' over the duration of the placement ensuring that this becomes a viable long-term option for the young person and the placing Local Authority.

## Staying Put

The Agency is able to offer 'Staying Put' for the benefit of both young people and Local Authorities. Our Staying Put scheme provides the option for young people to remain with their Foster Carers past their 18th birthday in circumstances where this is deemed to be in the young adults' best interests and where this is a plan supported by the Local Authority. This can have many benefits for the young person and remove some of the pressure on local authorities in finding alternative living arrangements. Our Foster Carers are able to continue their support and provide valuable expertise, enabling young people to develop to a stage where they feel able to live more independently. Our Staying Put scheme is available for young adults over the age of eighteen.

Placements are reviewed regularly with a focus on supporting young adults to gain all the skills that they need to move on.

## Additional services

The Agency is committed to providing the highest quality of placements together with 'added value' support services for Local Authorities.

# Learning & Development

## Learning and Development for Foster Carers

Our Foster Carers and Employees have a vital role to play in providing support and security to many vulnerable children and young people. It is a challenging and rewarding job to help them manage the impact of abuse and family difficulties whilst beginning the transition to stability and independence. Effective and safe foster care requires knowledge, skill and dedication on the part of everyone concerned.

We provide a comprehensive range of learning and development opportunities to Foster Carers and Employees focussed on the promotion of safety, security and professional practice. Our Safeguarding training encompasses Basic Awareness, Safer Caring, Managing Allegations and Complaints, Child Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Trafficked Children, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Domestic Violence and the Prevent Strategy.

## Foster Carer Training

We expect all of our Foster Carers to take part in learning and development activities. These include internal and external group training sessions facilitated by social workers and subject experts, online sessions accessible at home, support groups focussed on particular practice areas, and reading and learning conducted in the carer's own home.

We have a very clear expectation that all of our Foster Carers complete the learning activity outlined in their Personal and Professional Development Plan. This now includes a comprehensive training package of therapeutic and advanced?

## Learning and Development after Approval – Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

### Induction

After being approved, Foster Carers complete an induction. This is a one-to one session with the Supervising Social Worker.

### Employee Learning and Development

The Agency provides a monthly supervision and annual appraisal process for all employees. In addition we offer both internal and external training opportunities linked to specific roles. Our social work employees have a career development path that starts, if required, with our ASYE Programme and embraces Safeguarding, Practice Learning, Foster Carer Supervision and Assessment Skills. Other job roles also have access to role specific training.

### Employee Learning and Development

Heath Farm Children's Services welcome the placement of students in its region. Supervising Social Workers are supported to undertake training in becoming Practice Teachers. The whole team support the students on placement by offering them a wide range of learning opportunities.



# Management & Support

The key to successful foster placements is the management and support system available to our Foster Carers.

- All Foster Carers have an allocated, qualified Supervising Social Worker (SSW)
- All Foster Carers have access to our emergency out of hours support service, which is staffed by a qualified social worker, and supported by a qualified manager
- Agency Managers are accessible to Foster Carers, ensuring open communication and a prompt and responsive service
- We provide all of our Foster Carers with Fostering Network membership. This provides them with a range of independent support services, including legal services and insurance

## Supervision

Each Foster Carer has an allocated SSW, with a manageable caseload of fostering households, to ensure carers are provided with appropriate professional support and supervision.

It is the SSW's responsibility to manage and support the Foster Carer in the fostering task; ensuring the needs of children and young people are paramount, and each is afforded opportunities to progress and excel.

The SSW maintains telephone contact and undertakes professional supervision with the carers. The frequency of supervision may increase if the demands of a particular child or young person require it. Supervision is an opportunity to discuss the needs of children and young people placed, and consider how best to achieve progress and desired outcomes.

The SSW will provide professional advice, guidance and support to ensure Foster Carers are maintaining the high quality of care expected, and that placements are fully compliant with Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

Supervision visits must take place irrespective of whether there are children in placement, ensuring Agency and Foster Carers remain connected and fully apprised of all matters.

Supervision also provides the opportunity for reflection and learning, and enables the SSW to work collaboratively with the Foster Carer to assess skills, competence and abilities and formulate a tailored Personal & Professional Development Plan that will add to the Foster Carer's Learning and Development Record (PPDPLDR).

Additional support is provided by our Support Workers that can include individual interventions with children according to assessed needs, or crisis support to Foster Carers.

## Emergency Support (On-Call Service)

All Foster Carers have access to our emergency out of hours support service which is staffed by a qualified social worker and supported by a qualified manager at all times. This is available outside office hours every evening, weekend and Bank Holiday, ensuring our Foster Carers have 24 hour support and advice at all times, and that safeguarding concerns and placement challenges are responded to in a timely manner.

## Foster Carer Reviews

All Foster Carers are reviewed each year, and the process is consistent with Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards. The review system incorporates a comprehensive range of consultation to ensure the views of everyone involved are incorporated, and the performance of Foster Carers is evaluated effectively. The annual review is an opportunity to appraise the carers' past year of fostering, to assess and review training needs, and set any specific objectives.

# Management & Support

In addition, the annual review monitors the Foster Carer's satisfaction with the service they receive from the Agency. Any issues that are identified are fed back to Registered Managers.

When concerns arise about a carer's practice, or their ongoing commitment to professional development they will be addressed as part of the Foster Carer review, and can include a review of their approval at the Fostering Panel.

## Unannounced Visits

In accordance with Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards, the Agency conducts unannounced visits a minimum of one Unannounced Visit to each foster home annually. We strive to complete 2, particularly where there have been significant concerns.

The purpose of the visits is to assess the home circumstances and care provided, ensuring the high standards that the Agency requires are maintained at all times.

## Support Groups

Regular support groups are held across the Agency, in locations accessible to Foster Carers. The groups are led and facilitated by SSWs, with Foster Carers actively contributing to the agenda and participating in the groups.

These groups provide an opportunity for carers to network with one another, to share skills and experiences, and to provide peer support. In addition, it enables the Agency to stay closely connected to carers and keep them informed of Agency developments, the changing world of foster care, changes in fostering legislation, new research and best practice.

## Foster Carer Quality Group Consultation

Foster Carer Quality Group provide an arena for Foster Carers to comment on Agency policy, practice, service delivery and service development. They also promote the sharing of ideas on best practice. Regional Foster Carer Representatives meet several times a year with Senior Agency Managers.

## Independent Support

Foster Carers receive support from various professionals including independent experts. All Foster Carers are registered members of Fostering Network who provide support to Foster Carer households. This includes high quality specialist support, advice and information, legal expenses insurance, and rewards for Foster Carers with access to a huge range of discounts.

The Agency also commissions – an independent, advocacy support service to Foster Carers, provided on a needs led basis. This provides our carers with professional, independent support during difficult situations, including allegations.

The service provides a 24 hour response and an allocated Independent Advisor who provides impartial, objective information, enabling carers to make informed decisions when in difficult or stressful circumstances.

## Policies & Procedures

The Agency has a comprehensive and easy to understand Foster Carer Handbook. This is accessible online to all of our approved Foster Carers, along with additional resource material, to guide and aid them in the fostering task. The Handbook contains information on fostering legislation, guidance, finance, access to records, safeguarding, health and safety matters, health, education, managing behaviours and a plethora of other subjects relevant to the fostering task.

# Contact Details for Other Agencies

## Children's Commissioner

Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner  
Office of Children's Commissioner for England,  
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street,  
London, SW1P 3BT

T: 020 7783 8330

E: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

Freephone for children and young people

T: 0800 5288330

## Voice

Voice is a national children's charity that empowers children and young people in care and in need, and campaigns for change to improve their lives.

320 City Road, London, EC1V 2NZ

T: 020 7833 5792

[www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)

E: [info@voiceyp.org](mailto:info@voiceyp.org)

## Ofsted

All the activities of National Fostering Group are inspected and regulated by Ofsted who can be contacted at the following address:

Regulatory Inspector, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate,  
Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Youth Advocacy Services

Provides independent and confidential social and legal advice, information and advocates

0800616101

[help@nys.net](mailto:help@nys.net)

## A National Voice

Run for and by young people who are or have been in care in England.

0161 2375577

[www.anationalvoice.org](http://www.anationalvoice.org)

## ChildLine

A free helpline for children to talk about any problems.

08001111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

# Professional Membership

## **The Fostering Network**

The Heath Farm Children's Services has a corporate membership with The Fostering Network which is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering. This means that they are uniquely placed to bring people and organisations together to improve the lives of children in foster care.

The Fostering Network works to raise the profile of foster care through lobbying and campaigning for improvements in foster care at UK, national and local level.

## **NWG**

Heath Farm Children's Services has a corporate membership with NWG which is a network tackling child sexual exploitation they also provide high quality training that our staff members attend.

Each staff member has a membership to NWG so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.

## **NAFP – National Association of Fostering Providers**

Heath Farm are proud members of NAFP who campaign on behalf of Independent Fostering Providers.

# Accredited Standards

## **Leading Improvements for Looked After Children**

This innovative and ground-breaking inspection body was set up to ensure that young people who have experienced care can influence and shape accommodation services for looked after children. Inspectors are trained young adults and young people who inspect a fostering service or care home on standards that the young people themselves, as an organisation, have devised. Services that meet an agreed criterion will be awarded the LILAC kite mark for good practice. A particular emphasis agreed by LILAC is on the participation and engagement of young people in any given service. Heath Farm Fostering is proud to have achieved the LILAC award.



## **Investors in People**

The National Fostering Group is recognised as an Investor in People and has held the Award since 2004. In October 2013 the National Fostering Group achieved the Investors in People Gold Award. National Fostering Group will continue to be an investor in people.



**“We are part of National Fostering Group. By supporting foster parents to create safe, secure, nurturing environments, we help vulnerable children and young people to thrive and settle into education, giving them the great start in life they deserve.”**

## **Heath Farm**

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