

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2019 - 2020



Changing children's lives



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Our family roots

Safehouses was established in 1997, offering provision for looked after children and has been providing high quality Fostering services ever since - promoting positive experiences and nurturing journeys for all its young people. Safehouses became part of the Next Step Fostering Group in 2014. Foster Carers are provided with professional support, monitoring and training that is creative, comprehensive and personalised. Safehouses aims to provide a complete Fostering service, attuned to both the needs of children and their Foster families.

Safehouses is a child-centred agency and only promotes those individuals who have a child's interest firmly at heart, to be Foster Carers. We continue to ask that our Carers have the insight and skills to develop their Foster Care standards, to exceed those required of professional excellence.

Teamwork

There is a strong culture of teamwork and collaboration throughout the Next Step Fostering Group. Every member of staff plays a part in the overall performance of the service. Every role matters and managers aim to be motivational and lead by example.





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Our vision

To give looked after children the stable and nurturing childhood they deserve, so they may grow into confident, positive and valued members of society.

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Our objectives

Recruiting, training and supporting professional Foster Carers who are committed to providing young people with positive, nurturing family homes and positive childhood experiences.

Our values

- Working with honesty, respect, understanding, integrity, dedication and compassion.
- All children should be treated as individuals and supported to achieve their full potential.
- Each child is unique and their welfare paramount.
- There is no compromise in the provision of high quality individualised care.
- Children have a right to feel safe; be protected; be treated with respect and dignity; be encouraged, nurtured, supported, helped and looked after; have their heritage promoted; be consulted and considered; and be helped towards a personal sense of worth, wellbeing and independence.
- The parents, Carers and relatives of looked after children have a right to be kept informed, involved and consulted as appropriate. They have the right to be treated as individuals with respect and without prejudice.
- Individual care planning is imperative at the outset of each placement, followed by regular reviews to ensure that all the needs of the child are being met.
- Children have a right to expect the very best professional care from Foster Carers. Agencies in the Next Step Fostering Group are committed to the provision of quality support, supervision, advice, consultation and training - to enable Carers to meet each child's needs. In addition there is 24-hour support available to Carers from staff and a Manager to cover on-call decisions.
- The Next Step Fostering Group (see pages 10 & 16 for more information about the companies that comprise The Group) actively self-regulates its work and maintains openness to ongoing critical evaluation. It welcomes comment from the young people, Carers, staff, independent workers, placing authorities, panel members and any who have a contribution to make.
- The Group has a commitment to remain appraised of developments in Fostering so that appropriate changes are regularly made to ensure the continual improvement of the service.

Company registration and legal position

Safehouses Fostering is a preferred provider to a wide range of placing authorities and we are regularly involved in local steering groups, national forums and working parties - undertaking government and Local Authority consultations to contribute to the ongoing development of children's services.

Next Step Fostering is the parent Agency within the Next Step Fostering Group and holds the lead in some key organisational areas.

The Next Step Fostering Group Senior Management Team meet regularly to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities:

- To review the company's position in the sector and ensure Best Practice Standards are met;
- To review the *Statement of Purpose*;
- To review critical policies such as safeguarding;
- To conduct business planning and development strategies;
- To review and approve company-wide policy developments;
- To review the company's financial position.

Safehouses Fostering are Members of the Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP) and The Fostering Network.

Safehouses Fostering is registered with Ofsted under the URN number: SC036888.

Safehouses Fostering is registered as a Private Limited Company known as Safehouses Ltd. Registration number: 03402034.

Equality & diversity



We believe in equality and diversity in the work place, in Fostering and in our communities and society. No employee, Foster Carer, child or young person or anyone who comes into contact with our service will be placed in a position of disadvantage as a consequence of their race, gender, disability, sexuality or any other reason.

We embrace diversity and believe that all employees and the Fostering households benefit from it. The Next Step Fostering Group is committed to its *Equal Opportunities Policy* and to working in a manner that is anti-discriminatory in practice. Any discriminatory behaviour will be challenged and dealt with appropriately.



Services offered to Local Authorities

Safehouses Fostering works with a number of Local Authorities across Essex and East Anglia and has a growing number of Carers in all areas, ethnically and culturally reflective of the local population.

Tendering and commissioning

The Next Step Fostering Group is committed to entering into any commissioning process that it deems commercially viable and falls within its geographical area.



Referrals staffing

All members of the Referrals Team are experienced in communicating effectively with Local Authorities, Foster Carers and key professionals, in order to make well informed matches, which is fundamental in enabling positive starts and stability in children's lives.

Assessments

The Next Step Fostering Group can undertake a range of assessments as directed by the Courts or requested by the Local Authority including parent and child assessments. Safehouses Fostering has specialists within our in-house assessment team and access to third party professionals where required.

Where we Foster

The Next Step Fostering Group has a number of offices across the South East of England. Our Carers look after children across a number of Local Authority districts, from Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire, to London, Surrey, Sussex, Kent and East Anglia.





Recruitment & assessment

Recruitment

The Next Step Fostering Group runs targeted recruitment campaigns for each group agency and individual office, to respond to specific Local Authority needs, across all catchment areas.

Assessment

Safehouses Fostering recruits suitable Foster Carers within the context of its *Equal Opportunities Policy* and subject to consideration by the Agency's independent panel.

Safehouses operates a robust assessment process with multiple review points, to ensure high quality practice and effective decision making.

The Fostering journey

Panel and review

The Next Step Fostering Group's independent Panel is constituted of a diverse cohort of members from a wide range of backgrounds.

Safehouses regularly reviews the work, practice and training of all Carers and this forms part of their Annual Review, presented to Panel on a regular basis.

Fostering specialisms

Standard Fostering

The Next Step Fostering Group works with young people from many Local Authorities across Norfolk, London and the South East offering high quality Foster homes with a firm focus on placement stability.

Children with disabilities (CWD)

The Next Step Fostering Group provides a number of placements to children with disabilities and provides a range of specialist support services for these families.



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Thank you for always supporting me and wishing me to do new things every day. I have grown up so much as a person thanks to your help. ”

Parent and child services

In addition to the close supervision that all our families receive, The Next Step Fostering Group has developed a Parent and Child Fostering service - designed to provide even more regular support and supervision. Foster Carers who receive the specialist Parent and Child training provide weekly reports and a package of care that has been tailored to the parent and their child's individual care plan.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UAS)

Safehouses recognises that this is a specialist type of Fostering, so offers specific training, guidance and expertise to our families, working with UAS and UASC.

High-needs Fostering

Foster Carers are equipped to provide therapeutic Fostering for young people who display challenging behaviour. They receive professional support and supervision to manage these challenges and help children manage their own.

Company structure

Safehouses Fostering is a small sized independent agency that operates from its Norfolk-based office with a full team of Administrators, Supervising Social Workers and a Registered Manager. Safehouses is part of the Next Step Fostering Group which has its Head Office in Kent. Some of the necessary tasks for Safehouses are carried out by the staff team at the Group Head Office, including:

- Business Manager;
- Quality Assurance;
- HR Manager;
- Admin Systems Manager;
- Finance Manager;
- Referrals;
- Assessment of prospective Carers;
- Strategic Planning and Recruitment;
- Commissioning and Tendering.

There are two other agencies in the Group both under separate Ofsted Registrations; Ryancare Fostering Ltd and Next Step Fostering Services Ltd. This Statement of Purpose is applicable only to Safehouses Professional Fostering Services Ltd.

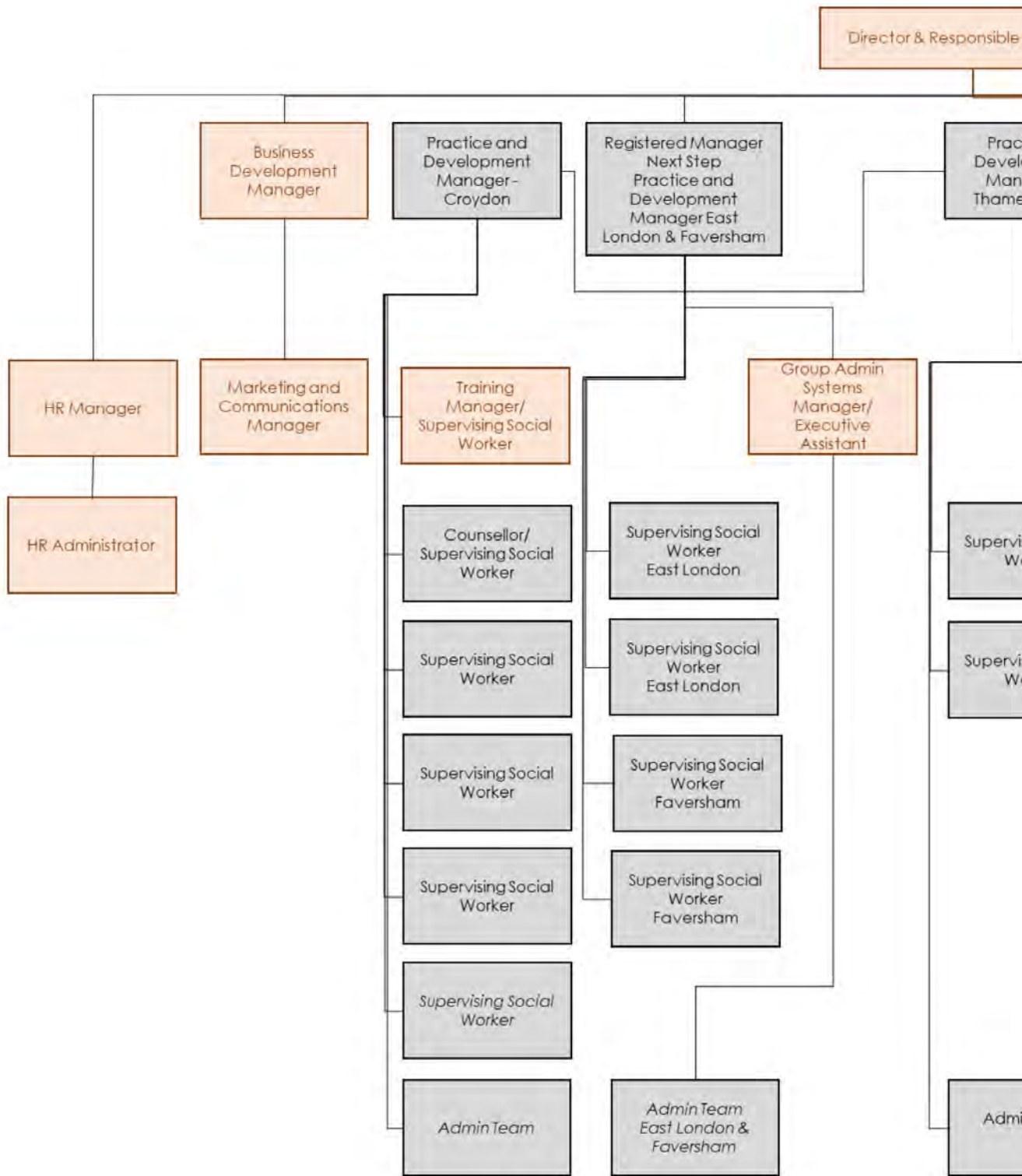
Management of the Next Step Fostering Group

The Next Step Fostering Group has a Strategic Group Leadership Team which meets regularly to determine the direction of the businesses as a Group. Decisions on recruitment, growth, and business related issues such as contracts, services, logistics and utilities are dealt with at this level.

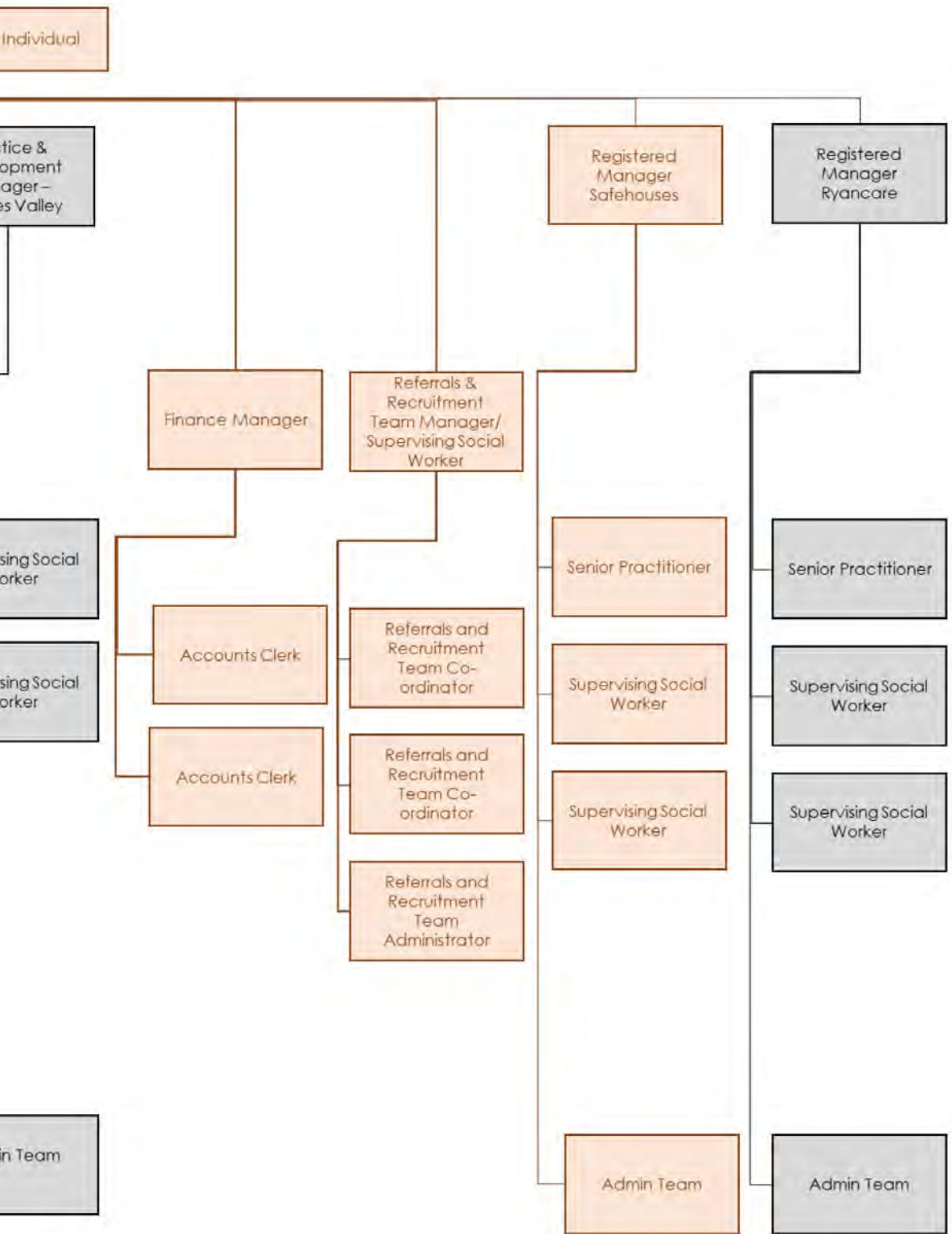
The Next Step Fostering Group's Senior Management Team directs the company in terms of Social Work Practice, achieving the recruitment goals and resolving practice or systems issues. Meetings have a full agenda which takes into consideration feedback from staff, children, Foster Carers and customers. The Panel Chair is also invited to give feedback bi-annually to the Senior Management Team.



The Next Step Fostering Group



- Organisation chart



Services offered to Foster Carers

Training to Foster Carers

Safehouses Fostering provides a comprehensive training schedule of statutory courses in years 1 and 2 for all Foster Carers and training up to equivalent diploma level is provided as part of the service. The training matrix used in the Group offers second Carers access to courses through e-learning as well as weekend and evening opportunities.

Supervision and support to Foster Carers

Considered the core element of the business, Foster Carers receive regular personalised and comprehensive support from experienced Supervising Social Workers (SSWs). SSWs work closely with the Local Authority to provide reports and communication regarding their young people. Unannounced visits are carried out to obtain a good insight into the dynamics of our households and ensure compliance and safeguarding are maintained.

Foster Carers' Charter

The Next Step Fostering Group subscribes to the Foster Carers' Charter.

Therapeutic support

Safehouses offers a therapeutic approach to Fostering as well as providing access to Counselling, to all Carers. Where needed, child-centred therapy can be sourced from a range of qualified external therapists.

Respite provision

All families are entitled to paid respite. This provision is in place to provide families with time when children's needs or behaviour present a significant challenge for the family. As an agency that values normal family life, Safehouses regards taking respite as an emergency precaution and places a high value on a family remaining together, where possible Safehouses encourages our Carers to use their own support network.



Consultation groups

Foster Carers have access to supervision groups and nominated members can report to the quarterly consultation group. Direct access to the Director and Senior Management Team allows our Foster Carers across the Group to have a voice in how the company is run and where improvements can be made.

Other standard services offered include:

- 24 hour Support for Foster Carers;
- Membership to Fostering Network;
- Travel allowances.



Services offered to young people

Safehouses Fostering provides Fostering services to young people from 0-18 years old and from any cultural or ethnic background. This age range is further widened by the addition of Parent and Child placements and our determination to embrace the 'Staying Put' principles (The Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance 2010 and the Fostering Regulations and Guidance 2011 (Children Act 1989)).

The services provided to Foster Carers are supplemented by services provided directly to children and young people across the Agency

Welcome pack

Every child who joins Safehouses Fostering receives a pack containing our Welcome Guide, individual Safer Caring Policy and useful information on their rights and health matters; and other publications and information aimed at young people.

Additional children's support

Safehouses provides additional support for children and young people, to have their voices heard and another person to offer appropriate advocacy where required.

Safehouses obtains feedback from the children, through a variety of consultation groups and forums, for review at Senior Management Level.

Sessional staff support

Children and young people who are not in mainstream education or who are embarking on their first steps to independence may be provided with additional daytime support by one of our sessional staff. This support is aimed at the 8-16 years age group, although tailor-made support packages are available to children and young people of all ages.

Holiday activities

Safehouses arranges activities for young people during the school holidays. These are open to birth children too and provide an opportunity for all young people to mix and enjoy fun activities led by our staff team.

Young people's finances

Pocket money, clothing and other allowances as well as savings are provided to every child and young person. The distribution of this money is determined by the young person's age and understanding.

Educational Achievement Award (EAA)

Young people who either make significant personal achievements in school or make positive efforts in education can receive awards from the agency. Awards are in the form of vouchers and a certificate.



Social work management & quality standards

Safehouses' Senior Supervising Social Workers provide regular, planned supervision to the Supervising Social Workers in respect of all social work matters with additional support given by the Registered Manager. Professional support, advice and consultation is provided where required.

Theoretical models and guiding principals

Safehouses looks towards new and innovative approaches to social care and embraces creative approaches to achieve positive outcomes.

Safehouses employs a range of theoretical models in order to achieve the best outcomes for young people.

The Therapeutic Approach

All Safehouses Carers receive the training support and supervision to provide this specialised approach in a nurturing environment. Safehouses considers every family who Foster with us to be providing a therapeutic environment. To support this approach Safehouses provides many of the key characteristics often associated with therapeutic social care.

- Specialised training.
- Small caseloads for our Social Work staff
- Comprehensive matching process.
- Regular supervision and access to therapeutic consultation.
- Facilitation of access to therapeutic services for children.
- Co-ordination of all required services by Supervising Social Worker.





Best Practice and steering groups

The Next Step Fostering Group's employees are regularly involved in steering groups, through NAFPP and The Fostering Network, local, joint and national forums and working parties, undertaking government and Local Authority consultations; all to contribute to the ongoing development of children's services as a whole.

Delegated Authority

The Next Step Fostering Group fully embraces the statutory right for Foster Carers to be given the required *Delegated Authority* to make decisions regarding aspects of care and decision making for young people in their care.

Safeguarding

Safehouses Fostering is committed to the highest standards of child protection and safe care. The Agency keeps its *Safeguarding Policy* under review to ensure it is maintaining Best Practice. The Agencies have effective and established procedures around safeguarding, with key members of staff in positions of responsibility. Foster Carers and staff are provided with the agencies' *Safeguarding Policy and Procedures* as part of their induction and when there are updates.

Complaints & compliments

Records of all complaints made against Safehouses; other associated professionals; and its own service are kept in the database system and used to develop Best Practice and improve our quality of service.

The complaints procedure is clear and robust and the company is in a strong position to investigate any complaints made. Liaison with the LADOs and safeguarding boards is maintained throughout these processes, as appropriate.

Children are supported when they need to make a complaint by their Carer, the SSW, the Children's Champion or an independent member of staff. We have a child-friendly *Complaints Policy* which is made available, to support children in understanding the process of making a complaint.

Complaints are monitored and assessed and used to inform developments to help improve the Agency. Compliments are celebrated and also contribute to the continuous development of the Next Step Fostering Group.





The Next Step Fostering Group is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and Foster Carers to share this commitment. All information correct at time of going to print.
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