



Statement of Purpose

Reach Out Care
August 2020



ReachOutCare
FOSTERING
Foster a child...change a life!



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Introduction

This Statement of Purpose for the Reach Out Care Fostering Service has been developed in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations
- Volume 4: fostering Services (2011)
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review **and**
- Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Assessment and Approval of foster carers:
- Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4 Fostering Services (July 2013)
- Children and Families Act 2014
- GDPR Act 2018

This Statement of Purpose is provided to and made available to employees, carers, local authorities, children and young people in placement and can be accessed by birth families via the agency website.. The statement of purpose is reviewed and agreed annually or when changes occur by the Registered Manager and Senior Management Team and submitted to Ofsted.

Reach Out Care provides a service to children and young people and their foster carers across the North East North Yorkshire and Cumbria.

Reach Out Care's Responsible Individual

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Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

We will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable children and young adults in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

Our Mission

Every day we improve the lives of those we educate and look after, their families and communities through a relentless focus on learning and caring.

Our Values

Open & Honest

- Be fair and transparent.
- Do the right thing.
- Be respectful.

Deliver Promises

- Be accountable.
- Take responsibility.
- Be committed.

Dream Big

- Make positive changes.
- Aspire and Achieve.
- Be ambitious.

Be Inclusive

- Value diversity.
- Create safe, nurturing environments.
- Care about each other and what we do.

One Team

Together we inspire trust, happiness and an infectious passion to accomplish our vision.





Company Status and Mission Statement

Reach Out Care Ltd was established in 1999 and became a registered provider in 2003. The service was acquired by the National Fostering Group in October 2018. Reach Out Care Ltd an independent fostering agency is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985. Company Registration Number: 3816191 Ofsted Registration Number: SC036188.

The Senior Management, 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-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 enable us to continually develop, innovative, efficient and effective services for the benefit of Local Authorities, the children and young people for whom they are responsible and the community.

Reach Out Care Ltd was identified as a 'GOOD' fostering service, following an inspection during 2018.

“Working together to provide an outstanding fostering service which achieves the best outcomes for children, young people, families and carers.”

Reach Out Care Mission Statement 2010







Commitment to Equality and Diversity

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

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.

Discriminatory behaviour will be robustly challenged and dealt with appropriately according to the circumstances.



Safeguarding Policy Statement

This policy seeks to ensure that Reach Out Care undertakes its responsibilities with regard to protection of all children and young people involved in the service and will respond to concerns appropriately. The policy establishes a framework to support practices and clarifies the organisation's expectations. It applies to all staff including permanent, sessional, temporary, agency, students on placement and volunteers, and foster carers.

Everybody should have an awareness that abuse and neglect may occur. They should understand that children or vulnerable adults may be abused or neglected anywhere including in their own homes, in day care, in educational and play settings, in residential settings away from home and in leisure environments. They should know that children can be abused or neglected by a wide range of people including relatives, paid carers, professionals, staff, managers and volunteers in any service or organisation and by other young people inside or outside the family home.

Reach Out Care is committed to ensuring that there are systems in place to promote and protect the welfare of all of the children and young people who use Reach Out Care's service.

Everybody has equal right to protection from abuse in all of its forms. People of all ages who have a disability or come from a different ethnic or cultural group can easily become victims of discrimination and prejudice.

All staff, volunteers and agency workers are required to read and understand the Safeguarding Policy and this will be recorded and confirmed in the individuals' personal supervision notes. Compliance with this policy is mandatory and failure to regard the policy will result in the initiation of the organisations Disciplinary Procedures.

All new staff will receive induction training which includes introductory safeguarding training. Training encompasses Managing Allegations and Complaints, Child Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Trafficked Children, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Domestic Violence and the Prevent Strategy. Refresher training is undertaken annually for all staff to ensure they remain up to date with changes in legislation and best practice issues.

Staff receive supervision in line with the Staff Supervision Policy or relevant policy.

The organisation will work in collaboration with all agencies and professionals.

The location of the Reach Out Care services offices falls within the remit of the following Local Safeguarding Children Partnership. However, services are provided over other local authority areas.

- **Fostering Services: Durham County Council**

This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in legislation relevant legislation or guidance.

Further information can be sought at:
www.durham-scp.org.uk



Company Structure

Reach Out Care Ltd 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 clearly defined structures of regional teams and partner agencies. The National Fostering Group Senior Management Team has a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of fostering and social care, having worked at both practitioner and management levels.

Reach Out Care 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.





Employees

Regional Director

The Regional Director ensures that operating objectives and standards of performance are understood and owned by the whole staff team. The goal is to continuously improve performance across all areas of service delivery and outcomes for children and young people.

The Registered Manager

The Registered Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency, including regulatory compliance and ensuring a high standard of quality services to children and young people. The Registered Manager is an experienced and qualified social worker, with management experience and registered with Social Work England.

Team Manager

The Team Manager supports the Registered Manager in the delivery of the service to foster carers, children and young people. The Team Manager has line management responsibility for a team of supervising social workers.

Supervising Social Workers (SSWs)

SSW's are all qualified, Social Work England registered social workers. The SSWs have responsibility for the assessment, support, supervision and annual review of foster carers.

In addition, they work in close partnership with the Looked After Children's Social Worker. SSWs are responsible for monitoring the continuous professional development and training of foster carers..

Support Workers

Support Workers provide specific support services to both foster carers and children and young people, and have experience of working with children in a variety of settings. Input is solution focussed to enable those supported to achieve personal growth and development. Support Workers also run participation groups and activities for both looked after children and children who foster which provides them with opportunities to be actively involved in the agency, socialise, share experiences and derive support from their own peer groups.

Carer Recruitment Officer (CRO)

The focus the CEO generate new enquiries from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. This is achieved by engaging with the public and existing carers raising awareness of fostering within the community. The CEO acts as an ambassador, helping to promote fostering at small, local events, planned and organised and through the use of social media.

The CEO maintains contact with potential foster carers through the journey from enquiry to approval, supporting the screening, training and assessment process undertaken by their social work colleagues.

Administration Team

The administration team work closely with the Registered Manager and the rest of the staff team to ensure the administration duties within the agency are managed efficiently. The administration team also communicate regularly with all foster carers.



Complaints

Reach Out Care is committed to the provision of high quality services to children, young people and their families. Feedback from our service users is important to us in helping to improve our services and identify gaps in service provision.

At the point of placement written and verbal guidance (relative to their understanding) will be given to the child/ young person outlining the complaints procedure and ways to access support. 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. Dissatisfied complainants can be referred to a Stage 3 - Independent Panel

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.

We always aim 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. Advocacy can be provided to support a child who wishes to make a formal complaint against the service. Reach Out Care welcomes feedback of all kinds and maintains copies of all complaints.

Reach Out Care as an 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.

Copies of our complaint's procedure can be obtained from:

Hope House
Burnhope
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 7ER

Telephone number: 01325 638110

Email: rstratton@nfa.co.uk

www.reachoutcarefosteringsservices.co.uk



Service Provision

- 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 tailored to meet their learning objectives and equip them to meet the needs of approved placement types
- 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



Recruitment, Assessment and Fostering Panel

Recruitment

The skills required of foster carers able to deliver to these plans are varied and wide-ranging; this is reflected in the diversity of people who become foster carers for Reach Out Care. The agency recruits individuals and families from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and from all parts of the community, who can bring a variety of experiences to the fostering task and aid good matching.

Who can apply?

Applications to become a foster carer are welcome from individuals who live-in North-East England.

Success in meeting the various 'suitability to foster' requirements is all about the individual person's qualities and is not based on an individual's gender, marital status, sexuality, race, disability, religion, culture or employment status.

- Anyone over the age of 21 years may apply to become a foster carer and there is no upper age limit for applications
- It is a minimum requirement that all prospective foster carers must have at least one spare bedroom available for fostering.
- Applicants must also have indefinite leave to remain in the Country.
- The criminal convictions of all applicants and household members need to be disclosed by the applicant to enable the Agency to decide whether an assessment can proceed.

Certain offences, which include crimes against children or serious violent offences, could lead to an application being closed as such offences preclude individual's being approved as a foster carer.

Process

Prospective foster carers can enquire online – requesting an information pack or call back. They can also

Application Process

The Reach Out Care website provides potential carers with information and real life case examples to help them make informed choices about fostering for this agency. Enquiries can be made online, by telephone or dedicated text. All applicants will be contacted initially by a Carer Recruitment Officer who will discuss their interest, arrange to send out an information pack and if appropriate arrange an initial visit.

Initial Visits

All Initial Visits are undertaken by a local qualified Social Worker in the prospective carer's home. Accurate and realistic information about the fostering task needs of children in the local area and support provided by the agency is shared. The Social Worker will consider with the potential applicant through discussion their skills and motivation, alongside practical requirements to foster.

Transferring Carers

The NFA recognises that carers have choices and that in some instances decisions are made to move between approving agencies. In these circumstances the Fostering Network Protocols are followed, and the agency work closely with responsible Local Authorities to ensure that the care experiences of any children in placement are not detrimentally affected by the transfer.

Assessment of Prospective Carers

All assessments are conducted by qualified, registered Social Workers in accordance with the Fostering Regulations 2011 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (miscellaneous amendments) Regulations 2013.

All candidates must:

- Complete a standard application form, providing comprehensive details about themselves and members of their household
- Give agreement for the required statutory checks to be undertaken
- Agree to undertake a medical with their GP, the results of which are viewed by our medical advisor prior to making a recommendation regarding fitness to foster



Recruitment, Assessment and Fostering Panel

- Provide the names of three referees who can provide an independent view of the applicant's abilities and suitability of the household
- Provide details of any ex-partners with whom they have jointly parented a child unless there are exceptional circumstances to indicate this is inappropriate. The agency is required to interview any ex-partners as part of the assessment process
- Provide details of all children/adult children, of the applicants who will need to be interviewed through
- Give their agreement to an employer's reference being sought by the agency

Should sufficient concern be raised by any of these enquiries then the decision not to proceed with the assessment may be reached. In such cases appropriate manager will write to the applicants outlining the reasons for this decision and providing detail of the agency's complaints procedure.

As part of the assessment process applicants are required to attend a 3 day Skills to Foster Training programme which will inform their preparation to foster.

During this time they will begin to complete a Training Standards Portfolio which they should complete in their first year of fostering.

In addition evidence based written report covers:

- The applicants motivation to be a foster carer
- 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 made on the applicant
- Recommendations in terms of matching alongside the family

Approval

Following completion of all statutory enquiries, all assessments are considered by a properly constituted and independent Panel, which makes recommendations to the agency regarding the suitability of the applicant to be a foster carer. This may include any additional terms that the panel considers should apply. The agency decision maker takes full account of the panel's recommendations when reaching decisions.

Prospective carers are asked to attend the panel alongside their assessing Social Worker. Should the agency not recommend approval, the applicant will be written to outlining reasons for this decision and provided with information regarding their right to appeal, or to access the Independent Review Mechanism.

All successful applicants are provided with a Foster Carer Agreement, confirming their appointment as an agency carer. It gives details about their terms of approval, and outlines expectations of both carer and agency.





Assessment Stage 1

Statutory checks including:

- Enhanced DBS
- Local authority checks
- Current or previous fostering organisation references
- School / Health Visitor reports (on own child, if appropriate)
- Medical reports
- Current employment references
- References from all previous employment involving children and vulnerable adults
- Personal references (minimum of 2) who will also be visited by a social worker
- Overseas check (where appropriate)
- Health and Safety inspection
- Ex-partners and children of an appropriate age from a previous relationship will also need to be interviewed.

If only Assessment Stage 1 has been undertaken, once these checks are complete, a decision will be made regarding progression to Stage 2 or not.



Assessment Stage 1 and 2

Statutory checks as above and home study assessment:

The Agency will assign a qualified Social Worker to undertake a comprehensive assessment with the prospective carer and their family. They will produce a report, known as the Form F (the BAAF Adoption and Fostering – Prospective foster carer Report). This report will include all Assessment Stage 1 checks as well as a full assessment of an applicant's family background, childhood, education, employment, health, any previous and current relationships, applicant's personality, children or adult children and household members, experience of caring for children, working effectively with others, understanding identity and diversity, safer caring, motivation to foster, understanding the fostering role, impact of fostering and the applicant's future training needs.

The Social Worker usually undertakes a minimum of eight home visits to spend time working with the applicants and, if applicable, their family, on the assessment. The assessment is a joint project and requires full participation from the applicants and relevant household/family members.

Preparation Training

During the assessment the applicants will be required to attend a three day training course called 'Skills to Foster' and complete an online child and data protection course. The course is designed to help applicants prepare for the fostering experience. The training forms part of the assessment process and the Course Trainer will produce a report for the Assessing Social worker to incorporate into the Form F report.

Assessment complete/Presentation at Fostering Panel/Agency Decision Maker

Once the Form F assessment is completed, the applicants will have the opportunity to read the report and discuss and agree any potential amendments. The report will then be presented to the Agency's Independent Fostering Panel, which the applicants are required to attend.

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 include 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.

Foster Carer Approval

The Agency will advise the applicants in writing of approval by issuing a foster carer Agreement. The Agency will also assign a supervising social worker to supervise and support the foster carer in the fostering task. We will then advise Local Authorities of the approved foster carer's availability.



Assessment Stage 1 and 2

Agency decisions to terminate assessments

If at any point during Stage 1 of the assessment process, the Agency decides that the applicant is not suitable to foster, the Agency will write to the applicant informing them of this decision and give the reason for it. Applicants will be given 10 working days from the date of the notification to send their observations to the agency. The applicant will also be informed that they can complain via the Agency's complaints process if they are unhappy with the way in which their application has been handled but not the question of their suitability.

If information comes to light in Stage 2 (not just as a result of Stage 1 checks) that raises concerns about suitability to foster the Agency must present a Brief Report outlining the reasons for considering the applicants unsuitability to the Fostering Panel. The Fostering Panel can either recommend that the applicants are not suitable to foster or that a full report should be completed.

Timescales

The Agency aims to undertake the assessment and approval of foster carers as quickly as possible. This generally takes around 4 months from the start of Stage 2 assessments, unless there are exceptional circumstances. National Minimum Standards state that assessments should be completed within 8 months



Placement Types

Reach Out Care works closely with a number of Local Authorities to understand their specific needs relating to foster placements in particular areas. As an agency we then look to recruit foster carers from a range of backgrounds who are able to provide high quality foster placements for children in the care of Local Authorities. The types of placement provided are:

Emergency

Many of our carers can provide unplanned emergency placements for individual children or sibling groups. Referrals can be made both within office hours, and through our Out of Hours service.

Respite

We have a number of carers who provide respite placements either on a regular basis or one off holiday breaks.

Short term

Short term placements vary in duration but can be up to two years as they are often linked to further assessments of the child, family or connected persons, and involve court processes. Long term plans are often formulated whilst the child remains in short term placements.

Bridging

We are able to provide placements with foster carers who are experienced in bridging children to adoption, permanence or independence. Bridging placements form part of the long-term plan for the child and usually last up to 2 years.

Long Term/Permanence

Placements are available with long term foster carers who can take individual children or sibling groups. Long term placements are matched in accordance with the placing authority procedures.

Parent and Child

We are able to provide foster care placements where young parents receive support and guidance to help develop parenting skills. Foster carers can also assist Local Authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

Solo Placements

If the placing authority requires the child/young person to be the only placement, this would need to be clearly identified and discussed at the referral stage to enable appropriate matching with appropriate vacant carers.

Sibling Placements

Many of our foster carers have the skill, experience and accommodation to care for large sibling groups, enabling children to stay together. This is always undertaken in line with matching considerations and the care plan for sibling groups.

Unaccompanied Children and Young People

Several of our foster carers have developed the skills and experience for providing placements to children and young people who are unaccompanied from overseas, enabling these children to settle and engage in education and positive family experiences.

Specialist Fostering

Provides placements to children who have complex needs relating to disability, health or behaviours that adults can find challenging. These Placements usually include enhanced packages of support or additionally purchased services.

Staying Put

Refers to the arrangements whereby Young People aged 18 and older that were previously looked after remain living with their former foster carers.



Matching

The Agency believes that a rigorous approach to matching children referred for placement with potential foster carers is fundamental to achieving placement success.

We obtain as much information as is possible during the referral stage so that we can fully understand the child or young person's individual circumstances and the desired outcomes for a foster placement. Any information we receive is shared with our foster carers and we ensure there is a transparent process of information exchange before any child or young person is placed.

The Agency does not make placements based merely on vacancy information but rather we seek to place children with foster carers whom we consider best able to provide positive outcomes for specific children.

The referrals co-ordinator and social work team are the local authority's first point of contact.

The referrals co-ordinator liaises with the local authority, the carers supervising social worker and the foster carer in order to understand the child's precise needs.

Once suitability is confirmed carer profiles are shared with the local authority.



Financial

Finance

All foster carers receive a weekly allowance paid monthly into their bank account via BACS during placement. The level of this allowance is dependent on the type of placement and experience of the foster carer.

Insurance

Reach Out Care has an insurance package which is fully comprehensive and covers all the agency's activities. It is based on Fostering Network standards and covers both carers and the agency,

Fostering Network Membership

Once approved, foster carers automatically become members of Fostering Network.

Fostering Network is able to provide carers and their families with advice and guidance including financial and legal advice.

- Legal expenses insurance cover
- 24 Hour legal advice service
- Accountancy advice
- Counselling helpline
- General advice and support
- Education advisory service
- Advice on personal finances
- Medical first aid helpline
- Arrest interview assistance cover
- Website communication,
- Including a foster carer's forum
- Quarterly magazines
- Range of discounts



Learning and 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. If for any reason carers do not meet the PPDP expectations it is discussed in both Supervision and Annual Review. Clear expectations are then reinforced through discussion with the Independent Reviewing Officer and/or Fostering Panel.

Learning and Development in Assessment

When foster carers have completed the Skills to Foster course we'll expect them to complete our online child and data protection training before they attend panel for approval.

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.



Management and 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. 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. 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.

Foster Carer Reviews

All foster carers are reviewed each year, and the process is consistent with Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards. 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.

In addition, the annual review monitors the foster carer's satisfaction with the service they receive from the Agency. When concerns arise about a carers 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.

Foster Carer Forum

Regular support groups are held across the Agency, in locations accessible to foster carers. 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.

Regional Foster Carer Forum

Regional Foster Carer Forums 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.



Management and Support

Independent Support

All foster carers are registered members of Fostering Network who provide support to foster carer households in terms of complaints or allegations. Advice and guidance is also available alongside, legal expenses insurance, and rewards for foster carers with access to a huge range of discounts.

Policies and 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

Name: Anne Longfield,

Address:

Office Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Telephone: 020 7783 8330

Email: Info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Free phone: 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.

Address:

320 City Road
London
EC1V 2NZ

Telephone: 020 7833 5792

Email: info@voiceyp.org

www.voiceyp.org

Ofsted

Regulatory Inspector,

Address:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Youth Advocacy Services

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

Telephone: 0800616101

Email: help@nyas.net

Become

The Charity for Children in Care and Young Care Leavers

Telephone: 0800 023 2033

Email: advice@becomecharity.org.uk

www.becomecharity.org.uk

A National Voice

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

Telephone: 0161 2375577

www.anationalvoice.org

ChildLine

A free helpline for children to talk about any problems.

Telephone: 08001111

www.childline.org.uk



Accredited Standards

Leading Improvements for Looked After Children

National Fostering Group has successfully achieved LILAC – ‘Leading Improvements for Looked after Children’, with the key objective of developing a quality framework for involvement policy and practice targeting young people in care. The young people will make use of this framework to carry out assessments of local authority or agency services.



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 NFA achieved the Investors in People Gold Award. NFA will continue to be an investor in people.





Professional Membership

The Fostering Network

Reach Out Care 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

The NFA 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 (purchased by Reach Out Care) so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.

CoramBAAF

Reach Out Care has a corporate membership with CoramBAAF. CoramBAAF is the UK's leading membership organisation for all those agencies and individuals dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people in care. They support their members to provide high quality information and advice, expert knowledge, cutting edge training and resources to their members.



Reach Out Care Statement of Purpose August 2020