



Statement of Purpose

NFA London South

URN Number: 2688691

Contents

Introduction

Status

Aims and Objectives

Commitment to Equality and Diversity

Management and Regional Team Structure

Services Provided by the Agency

Matching

National Fostering Group Children's Pledge

Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

Carer Recruitment, Assessment and Approval

Annual Reviews

Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

Training and Development

Finance

Complaints

Professional Membership

Contact Details

Introduction

This Statement of Purpose for **NFA London South** has been developed and produced to meet the requirements of the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance & 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 & Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Assessment & Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations, Volume 4 Fostering Services (July 2013)
- Children and Families Act 2014

This Statement of Purpose is submitted to Ofsted. It is provided and made available to employees, foster parents, local authorities, children and young people placed and their parents via our website

A hard copy can be provided if requested. The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and agreed upon annually by the Registered/Agency Manager and the Senior Management Team.

National Fostering Agency London South provides a service to children and young people and their foster carers across London and the South East.

We look after over 140 children across over 115 families. There are also a number of Parent and Child Placements as well as former LAC children who remain on a Staying Put arrangement with their foster carers.

Name and Address of Responsible Individual:
Neil McCarthy

National Fostering Group |
Atria | Spa Road | Bolton |
BL1 4AG

Name and Address of Registered Manager:
POST VACANT

Interim Agency Manager: Natalie Gelly
NFA London South
National Fostering Agency London South 127 Addington
Rd Selsdon South Croydon CR2 8LH



Company Status

NFA London South reports to the National Fostering Group Executive Team and Senior Management Teams.

Senior Management Team (SMT) Objectives

The Senior Management Team (SMT) are responsible for strategic planning for the company. This involves business planning which is in line with service user needs, the company aims and objectives, financial commitments, organisational structure, policy and procedure (which incorporates any new legislation), guidance and regulations. Our financial management ensures the very best value for our stakeholders.

The SMT is also responsible for setting performance targets and subsequent monitoring, in addition to ensuring the legal compliance of the organisation.

The Interim Agency Manager, Natalie Gelly meets with the Area Manager/Responsible Individual on a monthly basis to discuss the performance and quality of the agency and review the business objectives in line with the agency's annual development and business plans.

Central support services within the National Fostering Group include Human Resources, Finance, Training, Quality Assurance, Compliance, Fostering Enquiry Centre & National Assessment Service, and contribute to the effective operations of the agency on a day-to-day basis.



Aims and Objectives

“Putting children at the heart of everything we do”

Aims and Objectives

We strive to deliver high standards of quality care and the best possible outcomes for the children and young people placed with us.

The agency is committed to the delivery of a service that exceeds the standards of care compatible with statutory and regulatory requirements. The agency is inspected regularly by Ofsted and copies of inspection reports are available via the Ofsted website. In addition, a number of the local authorities that we work with carry out checks to ensure we are meeting our mutual contractual requirements and obligations.

Primary aims:

- To provide high-quality service and the best possible outcomes for fostered children and young people of all ages, whose needs have been assessed by the Responsible Local Authority as being best met by them living with a foster family
- To ensure fostered children are only placed with foster parents who have been recruited, assessed, approved and reviewed in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance
- To support, supervise, and provide ongoing training to parents to enable them to meet the individual needs of the fostered children placed with them
- To continually strive to develop and improve our services through evaluation and feedback on our work

Objectives:

- To ensure the provision of the highest possible quality care and outcomes to fostered children in a physically safe and emotionally secure family home
- To meet the fostered child's individual needs and enable the best possible outcomes, in accordance with their care plan
- To have 24-hour support for foster parents and fostered children 365 days a year

- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of fostered children's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background; and to consider fully their gender, sexuality and any disability they may have
- To develop the fostered child's sense of identity and self-worth
- To promote the fostered child's health and well-being, including their physical, mental and emotional welfare
- To promote the fostered child's educational attendance, achievement, and attainment, with the aim of their potential being reached
- To promote and support the fostered child's important relationships, to include agreed contact with their family and friends, in accordance with their care plan
- To prepare fostered children for age-appropriate independence
- To seek the views, wishes, opinions, and aspirations, of fostered children and to promote participation alongside, their families and foster parents
- To facilitate learning opportunities to foster parents that enable them to develop their skills, knowledge, and understanding to better meet the needs of the fostered children they are caring for
- To offer foster placements that carefully consider and match the needs of the fostered child to the foster parent's skills and experience
- To support the stability of foster placements and minimising the damaging effects of unplanned endings for fostered children and foster families
- To maintain the skill and knowledge base of staff, managers and foster panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes
- To monitor and review agency policies, procedures and practices on a regular basis
- To use experience, best practice, and research to inform practice

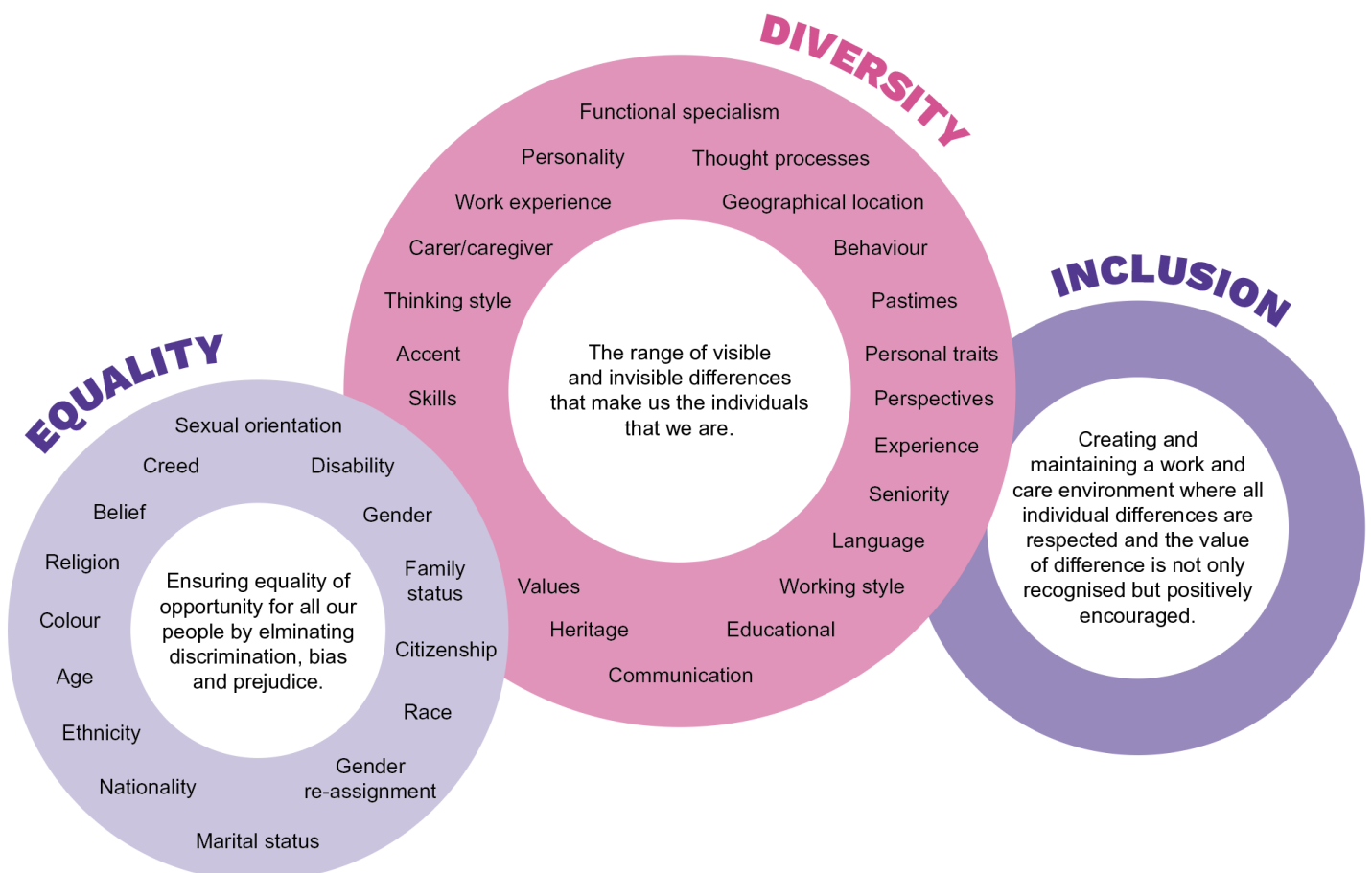
Commitment to Equality and Diversity

At **NFA London South** we recognise the diverse society and communities in which we all live and work. We embrace and celebrate diversity, respect differences and promote equality of opportunity. We aim to recruit staff and carers from all backgrounds to reflect the demographics of the regions in which we operate and to meet the diverse needs of the fostered children we care for.

We are aware that discrimination, prejudice, unfairness and oppression can exist in every aspect of daily living, including education, employment, health and social care.

We are committed to enabling all fostered children, foster parents and their children, and employees to reach their full potential as individuals, unimpeded by discrimination, unfairness or oppressive behaviour within the organisation.

At **NFA London South** we want all fostered children in our care, our foster carers and employees to feel valued and treated equally and fairly. Our goal is to ensure our values are embedded in our day-to-day working practices with all our stakeholders and service user groups.



Management and Regional Team Structure

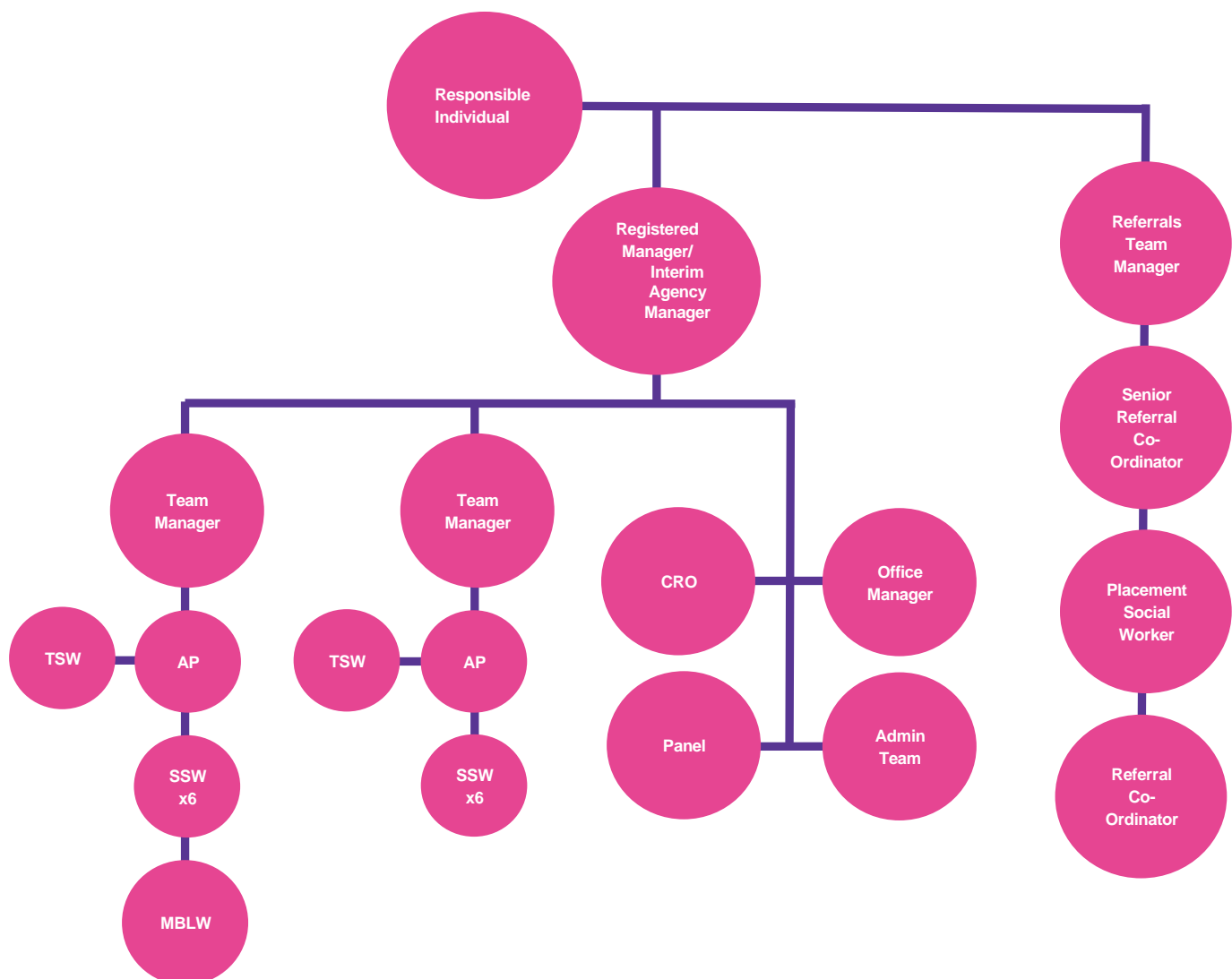
Management and Team Structure

The Interim Agency Manager, Natalie Gelly, will work in a hybrid position utilising a local office base in Croydon. The Agency Manager works closely with the Referrals Team Manager and Referrals Coordinators based in the South-East and the agency administrative team. The RI, Area Managers, Practice Managers, Team Managers, Supervising Social Workers and Team Support workers, work remotely.

Team Managers hold monthly team meetings and region-wide management meetings on a monthly basis, with weekly (HRMM) safeguarding reviews. There are weekly placement and referral meetings. Assessment meetings are held with recruitment staff to review carer pipeline activities. Regional

conference calls are held regularly. The whole region meets quarterly to develop and review business plans. There is also a monthly meeting with Senior Directors which the Area Managers, Regional Director and Practice Managers all attend. This structure facilitates excellent communication across the staff and management teams enabling the regular review of agency progress and practice as well as the sharing of ideas or service improvement and development.

- AP: Advanced Practitioner
- TSW: Team Support Worker
- SSW: Supervising Social Worker
- SW: Social Worker
- CRO: Carer Recruitment Officer
- MBLW: Mockingbird Liaison Worker



Management and Regional Team Structure

The Staff Team

The registered office is based in Croydon covering a wide geographical area across South London.

The Supervising Social Workers & Support Team, and Carer Recruitment Officer can work remotely to ensure that we meet the needs of our foster carers and children and young people. All our Social Workers hold recognised professional social work qualifications and are registered with Social Work England.

The Responsible Individual

The Responsible Individual is responsible for overall oversight of the agency and works in partnership with the RM to ensure regulatory compliance. The RI has regular day to day contact with the RM and also regular supervision.

The Interim Agency Manager

The Interim Agency Manager, Natalie Gelly is responsible for the overall operation of the agency, including the supervision of the Team Managers and the Carer Recruitment Officer.

The Interim Agency Manager, Natalie Gelly is responsible for producing the agency's business plan, achieving business objectives and maintaining budgetary control of the agency. They are also involved with the development and implementation of the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation and meet monthly with Senior Managers and Directors. The Interim Agency Manager, Natalie Gelly ensures that all practice is in accordance with agency policy and procedures and contributes to the review and updating of these.

The Interim Agency Manager oversees the completion of ongoing auditing and monitoring of the service to ensure the fostering service is of the highest standard. The Interim Agency Manager, Natalie Gelly monitors and advises on serious complaints and allegations and ensures the appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place.

The Team Manager

The Team Manager has line management and supervisory responsibility for the agency's Supervising Social Workers/Advanced Practitioners. The Team Manager oversees the day-to-day support offered to the agency's foster carers and fostered children and makes case decisions accordingly as part of this. The Team Manager oversees the matches undertaken on fostered children referred to the agency, along with supporting positive outcomes being achieved for all children placed. In conjunction with the Interim Agency Manager, the Team Manager undertakes auditing, ensures compliance with the Fostering Regulations and Guidance, and strives to achieve good outcomes for children. The Team Manager oversees the assessment and review of the agency's prospective and existing foster carers.

Advanced Practitioners and Supervising Social Workers (SSWs)

The Advanced Practitioners add an extra layer of practice oversight, taking on smaller caseloads and supervision of SSWs. 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 and will attend Looked After Reviews and Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings with the foster carer to ensure the very best outcomes are achieved for children placed with our carers.

SSWs are responsible for monitoring the continuous professional development and training of foster carers. They ensure that all foster carers complete the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) and maintain an ongoing portfolio, working closely with the Learning and Development Team to facilitate this. In addition, SSWs co-ordinate and deliver support groups for foster carers and provide the frontline delivery of Out of Hours Services to carers.



Management and Regional Team Structure

Team Support Workers

Team Support Workers provide specific support services to both foster carers and children and young people and have experience working with children in a variety of settings. Input is time-limited and solution- focussed to enable those supported to achieve personal growth and development. Support services can include occasional transporting, supervising contact and undertaking direct work with children and young people. Direct work covers areas such as the development of independence skills, educational support and preparation for employment and further education, self-protection, and risk reduction skills, and improving self-confidence and self-esteem. This list is not exhaustive, and all packages of work are bespoke to the individual needs of the child or young person, enabling them to aspire and achieve their best potential. Support Workers also run groups and activities for both looked-after children which provides them with opportunities to socialise, share experiences and derive support from their own peer groups.

Carer Recruitment Officers (CROs)

The CRO is responsible for implementing the recruitment and marketing strategy, organising carer recruitment and retention activities/events and the initial screening of prospective foster carers. The CRO works closely with the regional management team, referral coordinators and panel administrator and more widely across the NFA group with the Head of Carer Recruitment to ensure the 'carer journey' is personal, timely and effective in recruiting and retaining foster carers.

Referral Coordinators

The Referral Coordinators manage all incoming referrals and develop key working relationships with Local Authority placements teams to identify potential placements for looked-after children. They consult with foster carers and work closely with social workers and managers to ensure that good matching takes place by qualified social work staff, coordinating all arrangements through to placement. The Referral Coordinators have responsibility for the collation and initial analysis of referral and placement data and work closely with The Interim Agency Manager, Natalie Gelly, to agree on contracts and finance for placements.

Referrals coordinators are managed by the Referral Managers.

Administrators

The administration team consists of an Admin Manager who has supervisory responsibility for all the administrators, and lead responsibility for office Health and

Safety. The administration team works closely with all foster carers and staff to ensure all administrative functions are managed efficiently managing all incoming calls and correspondence.

They have responsibility for maintaining the relevant checks for foster carers, adult household members and their support network e.g. DBS, Medicals, LA checks. They also have responsibility for the collation and distribution of all Annual Review and Fostering Panel paperwork, and for room bookings, food, and refreshments. The team collates data for reporting on auditing and compliance, and for the completion of LA data returns.

Safe Recruitment & Supervision

The agency is fully supported by the Human Resources Department to ensure that safer recruitment processes are strictly adhered to, and all staff, independent roles and volunteers have the relevant qualifications and background checks prior to commencement in employment, in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and National Minimum Standards 2011.

All staff receive regular support and supervision appropriate to their role, and an annual appraisal of performance and objectives. In addition, Supervising Social Workers have group practice workshops for further critical reflection, which can be case specific, or focussed on complex practice issues and serious case reviews. Supervision and appraisals review staff professional development, ensuring that training and development needs specific to their area of responsibility are promoted. All staff undertake mandatory training in Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, and Data Protection.

Sessional Support Workers

Sessional Support Workers are used as an additional resource to support placements.

Services Provided by the Agency

The National Fostering Agency 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 placements provided are:

Emergency

Many of our carers can provide unplanned emergency placements for individual children or sibling groups. Referrals can be made within office hours.

Respite/Short Breaks

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.

Mockingbird

We run the Mockingbird model approved by the Fostering Network. Mockingbird is an alternative method of delivering foster care which uses the concept of a 'constellation' which is where six to ten 'satellite' families of foster carers live in close proximity to a dedicated hub home of specially recruited and trained carers who offer foster carer advice and guidance, crisis intervention, regular social events for the families and their children, support around permanence planning and both planned and emergency sleepovers (respite care), where needed. Mockingbird has the potential to improve placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care and to improve support for, and retention of, foster carers.

Matching

Matching children and young people to the right approved fostering household is a carefully considered process; getting it right is critical and will advance the progress, experience, and outcomes for children and increase placement stability and retention, and provide children, young people, and their carers with positive fostering experiences.

At the National Fostering Agency, we recognise that children and young people are individuals, with a diverse range of needs and talents, requiring fostering placements that are equally unique. Our carers have a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience, and our task is to carefully match children and young people, with those carers who have the right skill set and approach to meet their individual needs.

Our dedicated Referral Coordinators are on hand to assist Local Authorities in finding the right match for children and young people. They work closely with the Supervising Social Workers, Foster Carers and Local Authorities to ensure the best possible matches are made.



The matching process carefully considers the child's needs in relation to the following key areas:

- Safeguarding
- Personal history
- Identity/ethnicity/culture/religion
- Health, well-being, and disability
- Education/Training/Employment
- Contact
- Behaviours and risk management
- Interests and aspirations
- Overall objectives/outcomes for the placement

The matching process will also consider the following in relation to the carers:

- Their terms of approval
- Their availability
- Their knowledge, experience, and skills
- Their location and distance to school, friends, contact and LA
- Their ability to transport
- Their experience in facilitating and/or supervising contact
- Any other looked-after children in placement
- Own children and other household members

NFA London South will not propose a placement if the assessed needs of the child/young person cannot reasonably be provided by the proposed foster carers.

If a child is placed with carers from a different ethnicity or culture to their own, there will always be an emphasis on the preservation of the child's identity and heritage through practical and emotional support.

If a child is identified with specific health needs, consideration will be given as to whether specialist health resources are available within reasonable travelling distance of the foster home. The agency will source additional specialist training, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure the carer is fully competent in meeting any specific health needs.

Foster carers are provided with all information made available to the agency in order for them to make fully informed decisions about whether they can meet the individual child's needs and care plan. Carers are fully involved in the matching process throughout and will ultimately make the final decision as to whether or not they can offer the child or young person a placement in their home.

The BAAF Form F Assessment and Carer Profile is made available to the Local Authority for any placement offers made, enabling them to have detailed information on the proposed carer and fostering household.

Ofsted (July 2018) noted the following: **"Foster carers are skilled and experienced and are able to offer high-quality placements that meet the diverse needs of children. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of the needs of children placed with them and feel very much part of a team."**

National Fostering Group

Children's Pledge

Our Pledge To You. We Will:

Keep you safe and care well for you

Ensure you live in a safe and homely place
Listen to you, particularly when you raise concerns about your safety or the quality of your care
Ensure that those people who care for you are trained and supported to keep you safe
Make sure you are prepared for the next stage of your life – including managing money, looking after your health and taking care of where you live

Help you get a good education (achieve and enjoy)

Make sure your education meets your needs
Help you to attend your education provision and make good progress
Have high expectations for your potential
Celebrate your educational achievements
Help those who care for you to have the right advice to support your education

Help you be healthy and enjoy life

Help you to be physically and emotionally well
Support you to take part in clubs and/or hobbies that interest you
Support you to make healthy eating decisions and to cook healthy food
Help you to socialise with your friends (as long as this is safe)
Support you to take part in exercise and have fun

Support your future and your next adventure

Help you to take part in positive activities
Support you to undertake work experience
Help you to find employment, an apprenticeship or to study further
Support you to take part in an adventure when you reach sixteen

Small steps, big outcomes.

Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

Participation and Consultation

NFA London South is committed to the inclusion of all stakeholders in the review and development of its services. The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are vital to ensuring the services meet their needs and remain relevant in a changing environment. The consultation takes various forms either through questionnaires, online surveys, consultation events, activities and feedback forms for carer annual reviews and LAC reviews.

Support for Children in Our Care

The children placed with **NFA London South** come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences and it is imperative that they receive the highest standards of care to enable them to aspire and achieve in our care.

To this end, **NFA London South** has established a clear online manual of policies and procedures that outlines the standards expected from all foster carers and staff.

In addition, when the Local Authority and agency have agreed that an identified foster carer can meet the needs of a child; a placement contract (IPA) is made agreeing the duration and objectives of the placement. Wherever possible The Local Authority Social Worker, the child and their parents (if considered appropriate) are invited to visit the foster home for a pre-placement meeting. This gives an opportunity to meet and create a Foster Placement Agreement/Care Plan.

It is expected that the Child's Social Worker will bring documentation to the meeting.

All children and young people placed will receive a copy of the Children's Guide, and will be supported to understand the contents of this via their foster carer, or via a 1:1 session with a member of staff from the agency. Supervising Social Workers will see each child placed on a regular basis to ascertain their views about their care and placement. During these visits the Supervising Social Worker will also inspect to child's bedroom to ensure that it is as it should be and appropriate to meet their needs.

Services available for children can include:

- Support to find a hobby, sport, interest
- Support with the development of independence skills
- Bespoke individual 1:1 work to address an assessed need
- Group work to address thematic issues e.g. use of social media
- Social events and activities for both children looked after and those who foster e.g. arts and craft activities, cookery competitions, and festival celebrations.

Physical Environment

NFA London South pride themselves on the standard of their foster homes providing safe, stimulating, caring environments, where there is a focus on health, education, protection, continuity, diet and stimulation.

All children have their own bedroom unless the Placing Authority has given permission for them to share (in the case of siblings or holiday accommodation). Children are encouraged to individualise their rooms. It is a requirement that all children are provided with a quiet area for study within the foster home, and have access to a computer and the internet (where appropriate). All foster homes are assessed for a healthy and safe environment on an annual basis, which is routinely monitored through monthly supervisory visits. Play areas are safe and enclosed and all play equipment is checked to ensure it is in good working order.

Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

Boundary Setting

Each foster home has its own Family Safer Caring Plan which highlights boundaries and expectations within each home. Risk assessments and strategies relating to each child's circumstances and behaviour are agreed in the child's Placement Agreement & Care Plan, and incorporated within their risk assessment, which is completed at the commencement of the placement.

Policies on sanctions control, restraint and complaints procedures are available to children, parents and professionals as required. These policies are imperative to ensure that behaviours are responded to in a consistent and fair manner. Any form of corporal punishment is forbidden. Foster carers strive to offer a consistent environment and the role models that children require.

Healthy Care

NFA London South, in partnership with the foster carer, Social Worker and Health Authority, establishes the individual health needs of each child in our care. Wherever possible fostered children will continue using their own health resources, if this is not possible children will be:

- Registered with a GP
- Registered with a dentist
- Registered with an optician

NFA London South has policies on keeping, administering, and recording of medication which each foster carer is expected to adhere to; this is monitored by the foster parent's Supervising Social Worker and the Interim Agency Manager. Foster carers encourage children to eat a varied diet. Special dietary requirements are written into the child's Placement Plan/Care Plan. Foster carers encourage children to participate in regular exercise to ensure the development of good physical, emotional and psychological health. Children are encouraged to attend out-of-school activities to enable them to widen their social circle and develop any talents and skills they may have.

Our foster carers will:

- Encourage children to eat a varied diet – any special dietary requirements are written into the Child's Plan/Care Plan
- Encourage and enable children to participate in regular exercise to ensure good physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Ensure that fostered children attend routine and required health appointments and annual health assessments, dental and optician appointments
- Ensure that fostered children receive all required childhood immunisations
- Ensure that young people have access to sexual health information and advice to make informed decisions and choices
- Take the time to listen to young people giving them an outlet to share emotions, thoughts and feelings to promote positive emotional well-being.

Therapeutic Support Services

We believe that children and young people have a right to access therapeutic provisions from Local Health Authorities. We have developed good working relationships with health colleagues in each local area and will access local provisions wherever possible.

If children cannot access local provisions due to the timescales involved, or the complexity of the situation; the agency can commission the services of suitably qualified, experienced and accredited professionals to undertake the work e.g., play therapists, child psychologists, and art therapists.

Therapeutic support services to the agency, carers and children can be delivered on an individual basis according to need and are provided by suitably qualified, experienced, and accredited professionals commissioned to undertake the work.

Education

NFA London South believes that all children and young people have the fundamental right to experience an appropriate education which enables them to meet their potential. Our aim is to ensure that every child placed has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which is monitored and reviewed at regular intervals by the child's school, social worker and carer. Foster parents should be fully included in this review process. In addition, the agency will work with schools and placing authorities to ensure that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have been appropriately assessed to determine the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

Educational goals are important to build a firm foundation of academic and social learning to enable children to aspire and achieve their full academic potential, including formal qualifications. Where possible, children are enrolled at local schools and have the opportunity to form friendships and participate in extracurricular activities in the local community. The agency expects the Local Authority to provide teaching hours/alternative educational provisions for those children without a school placement or can source bespoke educational packages at additional costs.

Contact with Friends and Relatives

NFA London South ensures that each child in our care is encouraged to maintain contact with those most important to them. We can provide facilities, by arrangement, to ensure a child is able to meet with their family, friends, or professionals involved with them, in privacy. Contact arrangements form part of the child's overall Placement Plan/Care Plan. We would expect to be informed of any changes by the child's Local Authority. Transport to and from contact locally is the responsibility of the foster parent but needs to be negotiated to ensure each child's needs can be met by the foster carer (particularly if they have other children in placement) and that all parties remain safe.

Foster parents encourage children to make positive lasting friendships and will facilitate friends for tea visits and outings when appropriate. Foster parents contribute to informal contact arrangements with siblings looked after by other foster parents.

In accordance with applicable legislation, standards, regulations and guidance, looks to work with the fostered child's parent(s) and significant others. We understand the importance of meaningful involvement and the significant impact that this can have on the child or young person's life. Our staff members and foster parents are experienced in working with birth families in a way that positively recognises and respects their involvement.

Unauthorised Absence and Missing

All foster carers have access to the agency policy on children who go missing. If there are issues of risk, vulnerability or child sexual exploitation, then a strategy will be discussed and agreed with the Child's Social Worker, young person and foster carer. This is to ensure appropriate safeguards and supervision are in place, to further improve risk awareness and facilitate risk reduction. The agency will request the Local Authority conducts Return Home Interviews following all missing episodes.

Safeguarding Procedures

NFA London South has safeguarding procedures in place which are in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children to safeguard and protect the welfare of all children. All staff and foster carers are required to fully adhere to these procedures. Where there is a need to review any safeguarding practices to ensure safe care is provided, this will be done in consultation with the Children's Social Worker, foster parent, and fostered child (where possible).

Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

Outcomes Support – details of additional support offered to children, young people and foster families

The statistics available tell us that care-experienced children and young people are less likely to achieve well in their studies, more likely to suffer from mental health issues, and more likely to enter the criminal justice system or, as an adult, other social care systems. At the National Fostering Group, we are working hard to change this bleak picture on an individual basis for children and young people in our foster homes and have dedicated support to help boost and improve outcomes. The additional resources can be accessed at any point, and the support offered aligns with our pledge to children and young people in one of our fostering families.

Adventure Support

The National Fostering Group can support young people to undertake an award with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at the three levels of Bronze, Silver or Gold and also join an expedition adventure with the British Exploring Society

These opportunities allow young people and adults to acquire essential personal and social skills. It connects them to their communities and the great outdoors in a positive manner. These activities can help to support and boost other outcomes for young people.

Contact: Angela Golland – angela.golland@nfa.co.uk

Carer Recruitment, Assessment and Approval

Recruitment

The National Fostering Agency is committed to recruiting a diverse range of foster carers who can meet and match the needs of our children and young people. The agency recruits individuals and families from different ethnic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds and from all parts of the community who can bring a variety of skills, knowledge, and experiences to the fostering task.

Application Process

The National Fostering Agency website provides prospective carers with information, case examples and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to help them make informed choices about fostering with this agency. Enquiries can be made online or by telephone, and a Pre-Initial Visit Screening Call will be undertaken by a Carer Recruitment Officer within 2 days of enquiry and this information will enable a decision to be made about whether or not to proceed with the enquiry and send out an Enquiry Pack.

All applicants must:

- Have a spare room
- Be over 21 years of age
- Be able to provide transport for children e.g., school, contact
- Be able to keep detailed records relating to children placed
- Be able to attend all relevant meetings
- Actively promote equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Have some IT skills

Initial Visits

Following the Initial Enquiry Screening Call, a Manager will allocate the Initial Visit (IV) to a Carer Recruitment Officer or Fostering Advisors, and this will take place at the prospective applicant's home. This provides an opportunity for the agency

to share more detailed information with prospective carers around the realities of fostering, to answer any of their questions, and to view and assess the accommodation. The discussion will include an exploration of skills, knowledge, motivation to foster, and any practical requirements. If appropriate, an Application Form will be left, or a link provided to the online Application Form. All IV reports are reviewed by a manager, and outcomes are shared with the prospective applicant.

Transferring Carers

The National Fostering Agency recognizes 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 collaborates closely with responsible Local Authorities to ensure that the care experiences of any children in placement are not detrimentally affected by the transfer.

Assessment Process

All fostering assessments are based on the BAAF Form F, completed by qualified, registered social workers, and undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, guidance, and policy. The 2-stage assessment process (Stages 1 & 2) is expected to take a maximum of 4 months.

The assessment includes completion of a number of relevant statutory checks and references including DBS, Local Authority Checks, Medical, Ex-Partner References, Personal References (x3), Employer References, Health & Safety checks, and Letting Agent consent etc. The assessor will also agree on a schedule of visits to complete the assessment in a timely, focused manner.



Carer Recruitment, Assessment and Approval

The Applicants will be invited to undertake Skills to Foster Training, delivered by in-house trainers, and this feedback will form part of the assessment process.

The assessment is comprehensive and evidence-based, producing a report that covers individual profiles, past and present relationships/partnerships, support networks, interviews with children and adult members of the household, lifestyle, parenting capacity and experience, and valuing diversity. The report will make recommendations on the terms of approval e.g., number of children, age range, and placement types, and will be presented to the agency Fostering Panel. The applicants will also be required to complete a Safe Care Policy, Fire Evacuation Plan and Carer Profile.

Following completion of the assessment, the applicants are invited to attend the fostering panel with their assessor, whereby the panel will make a recommendation on approval. The fostering panel membership is made up of both agency staff and independent members, and their experience is derived from a variety of backgrounds including health, education, and social care and fostering and includes members who have experienced the care system. The function of the panel is to provide an independent quality assurance role, to consider the approval of applicants and the continuation of approval of existing carers.

Following panel presentation, the applicants will be notified immediately of the panel's recommendation in respect of their application. However, the final decision as to the applicant's approval will be made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

If applicants are unhappy with the ADM decision, they have a right of appeal, which can be made direct to the agency, or the Independent Review Mechanism within 28 days.

If, at any time during the assessment, the assessor feels the application falls short of the standards required, this will be discussed with the Team Manager immediately. Any areas of shortfall must be fully explored and where training or support will not bring the applicant up to acceptable standards, the assessment must cease. The assessor will inform applicants of this decision and the reasons within 48 hours and present a brief report for consideration by the fostering panel.

Post Approval

The applicants become known as newly approved carers and will receive written confirmation of their approval. In addition, they will receive a Foster Carer Agreement detailing their responsibilities, and the agency's responsibilities, which must be signed.

The agency will allocate a dedicated Supervising Social Worker to each fostering household, who will have responsibility for new carer induction and training plan, and for enabling the carers with completion of the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) which must be completed within the first 12 months post-approval.

Annual Reviews

Each fostering household will have an annual foster carer review (AFCR), unless there are significant changes to their circumstances in which case, an earlier review will be conducted. These circumstances could include:

- After the final strategy meeting of a Section 47 investigation involving a carer(s)
- Where serious allegations have been made regarding a carer(s) child care practice and no Section 47 investigation is pursued
- Where there has been a relationship breakdown in the approved carers' relationship resulting in one carer moving out of the household. In this instance, both carers will be subject to review except where one or both carers have given notice of an intention to resign
- Where a carer has started living with a new partner
- Where there have been significant changes to the carers' lifestyle
- Where a carer has been diagnosed with a serious illness
- Where there has been the death of a carer
- Where a carer is not working in partnership with the agency, including a lack of engagement and attendance with training and continued professional development

The Supervising Social Worker is required to prepare a detailed report for the AFCR, in consultation with the foster carers. The report will seek and take into account feedback from the child/young person, their Social Worker, school, and other professionals involved in the child's care, including the birth family (if appropriate). In addition, it should include the views of the carer's own children too. The report should cover how the carers' have met and progressed the outcomes for children, and provide a clear picture of how the carer works with children and young people in their care.

The AFCR provides an opportunity for both the agency and foster carer to reflect on the past year, and plan for the year ahead; this includes a full review of the individual carer's training and development needs, detailing any actions for the year ahead. The report makes a clear recommendation regarding continued approval, or any changes to the terms of approval, including the rationale and evidence to support those changes.

Following approval, the carers' first review report will be presented back to the Fostering Panel for their recommendations. All review recommendations are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for decisions, and carers notified, in writing, of those decisions



Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

Each foster carer has a named Supervising Social Worker whose role is to provide them with advice and guidance in relation to a child's care plan and placement plan.

NFA London South Supervising Social Workers have four principal functions:

- To work with foster carers in developing and supervising their skills as well as offering regular structured support
- To represent in our relationship with Placing Authorities and to seek to ensure that care plans are made and followed for children in placement
- To review foster carer's skills and achievements on an annual basis
- To promote and participate in training aimed at foster carers, their birth children and children in placement

Supervising Carers

The relationship between Supervising Social Workers and foster carers should be professional and aimed at achieving the best interests of the children in placement. Problems and concerns should be openly addressed with a view to reaching a satisfactory resolution in accordance with fostering regulations and agency policies. It is important that Supervising Social Workers see the children frequently.

Supervisory Visits

NFA London South foster carers will have a supervision visit at least monthly by a qualified social worker whose role is to support the foster carers and monitor the standard of care received by a child. The focus of the visit is twofold. The first part of the visit should concentrate on the foster carer's professional development, family dynamics, safe caring and the tasks required of them by the Agency. The second part of the visit should concentrate on the child's plans, achievements and development. Supervising Social Workers will carry out at least one unannounced visit each year and a Health and Safety Check List to be completed annually, prior to the foster carer's annual review.

Support

Support is a combination of listening, understanding and helping to find practical solutions/ways of coping with challenges. A successful Supervising Social Worker/foster carer relationship allows foster carers to talk openly and honestly about their own family problems as well as the difficulties/challenges they are having in caring for the children they look after. The foster carer is supported in achieving the care plan for the children as part of a team.

Supervising Social Workers work on a rota basis to provide a local Out of Hours support to foster carers on a 24/7 basis. A Duty Manager also provides back up to the Out of Hours service ensuring both staff and carers can access all the support and information they need.

Additional support services to assist in meeting the needs of children placed could include:

- Respite (of varying duration)
- Day Care
- Structured activities
- Contact between children, their family and friends.

Developing Skills

Developing skills means encouraging foster carers to attend training, helping them to put that training into practice, and using resource material such as literature, guided reading, national legislation and agency policy.

Information and Record Keeping

Foster carers have access to a comprehensive online manual of procedures. The manual contains information and procedures on all aspects of the fostering task and is updated regularly to ensure it remains a relevant reference document. Foster carers are expected to maintain records of events and information pertaining to the child or young person in placement.

Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

Events

At **NFA London South** we hold a wide variety of events to support carers in building relationships with other carers and staff, to acknowledge the achievements of carers, and to participate in charitable fundraising activities e.g. Macmillan. Our events include informal carer coffee mornings and lunches, support groups, and award & celebration events. The diversity of events allows everyone the opportunity to contribute and participate, enhancing relationships with each other, and the agency.

Support Groups

NFA London South facilitates face-to-face and virtual Carer Support Groups in several locations throughout the operating region to make them as accessible as possible to all foster carers. The groups are facilitated typically by Supervising Social Workers and provide a great opportunity for information sharing, exploring thematic issues or learning from research, discussing changes in practice, policy and legislation, and generally providing an opportunity for foster carers to interact in a social environment with other foster carers and derive peer support.

Newsletters

NFA London South produces an internal newsletter for staff, foster carers, and children that share information and celebrates achievements. All recipients are encouraged to contribute to the content of the newsletter.

The National Fostering Group also produces a quarterly newsletter for all foster carers to share information on Group-wide information and developments.

Membership

Once approved all foster carers are registered with The Fostering Network who provides 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.

Insurance

NFA London South has a comprehensive insurance package in place which fully covers all agency activities. This cover includes Personal and Public Liability, Employers Liability, and Professional Indemnity and satisfies the insurance requirements for all fostering framework contracts awarded to the agency.

Fostering Clinical Services

Clinicians working in Fostering Services are qualified Psychologists and Psychotherapists with experience working with families and with children with histories of trauma including neglect, violence, and abuse. They bring to the roles an extensive knowledge and experience of child development, trauma, and interpersonal dynamics within families, as well as an understanding of the psychology of individuals. The focus of much of the work for clinicians in fostering is on supporting Carers to use therapeutic approaches, including managing their own responses to difficult situations they are in; this is to support the child to feel safe, to develop and to flourish.

To achieve this, Clinicians offer consultations with Supervising Social Workers to develop an understanding of families and children and develop the next steps, and consultations with families. Direct work with children can also be provided where this is needed. Training is offered to both carers and to Supervising Social Workers to support their knowledge and practice in working with families. In addition, support groups with carers are offered, as well as reflective practice sessions with Supervising Social Workers. These are examples of what can be offered; at other times, a more extensive assessment may be needed for the child. What is provided will be driven by developing an understanding of what the child and the carers need, and this will be approached by working collaboratively with both Carers, Supervising Social workers and other professionals involved with the family to offer a full multi-disciplinary approach.

Training and Development

The National Fostering Agency is committed to ensuring that all foster carers are highly skilled, knowledgeable, and equipped to give children and young people placed with this agency, a positive fostering experience. The statutory framework for fostering informs the comprehensive training programme delivered to our foster carers to ensure their continual provision of high-quality care.

The agency has a dedicated Learning and Development Team and has dedicated, in-house trainers delivering the face-to-face and virtual training programme at venues throughout the region to ensure carers can easily access training. The training equips the foster carers to work with complex children and young people to ensure their quality of life is improved. The foster carers are trained to develop an understanding and knowledge of the multi-racial and disadvantaged groups in our communities.

The training programme is updated and reviewed annually to ensure the courses delivered are compliant with the latest guidance and legislation.

In response to feedback and course evaluations, our training programme comprises face-to-face training, seminar workshops, webinars, and online/e-learning training modules. This ensures that all foster carers have a wide range of opportunities available to suit their preferred learning style and availability.

Training audit data is regularly reviewed to assess regional compliance and identify any gaps. Foster carers have a Personal Development Plan which is reviewed as part of ongoing supervision and annual appraisal.

Mandatory Courses

As part of ongoing Learning and Development, there are a number of courses carers must complete, (this is subject to change imminently at the time of preparing this SoP):

- Skills To Foster
- Introduction To Therapeutic Parenting
- First Aid For Foster Carers
- Safeguarding Foundation (Children's)
- De-escalation
- Safer Use Of Medication
- Record Keeping (For Foster Carers)
- Safer Caring
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Training And Development Standards Portfolio

Essential Development Courses by Foster Carers

- FGM –An Introduction
- Online Safety and Cyberbullying
- Prevent
- Therapeutic Parenting Foundation
- Think Spot Speak Out

Further development & recommended courses to support carers in their roles are available on the SHINE platform.



Training and Development

Employees

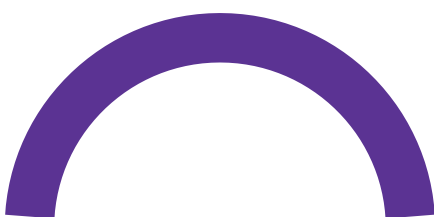
NFA London South encourages all employees to develop professionally through accessing e-learning, webinars, training courses and practice development workshops, provided both within the agency and externally, including Local Safeguarding Boards.

Employees continue their training under the guidance of their regulatory body, and each year they participate in an annual appraisal, part of which includes an audit and review of training needs and continuing professional development. Individual learning needs are tailored towards career development and areas of special interest, which adds value to the regional service. Each SSW has the opportunity to be a 'Team Champion' disseminating knowledge and sharing expertise in key areas for the benefit of the whole region e.g., CSE, Education, Health, Independence/Staying Put.

All Registered Managers are required to obtain the Diploma Level 5 in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children & Young People's Services or equivalent qualification. There is a training programme of courses for employees to attend in addition to those available via Local safeguarding boards. Employees have opportunities for secondment to other roles within the group for their development including a succession planning programme for those interested in management. Regional development days are held twice a year for all staff.

Students

The National Fostering Agency is an active and diverse learning environment and therefore welcomes the placement of students in the region from a number of neighbouring universities e.g., Brunel and Kingston.



Finance

The National Fostering Agency carers receive a weekly fostering allowance paid directly into their bank account and the level of this allowance is dependent on the type/complexity of placement provided. In addition, all carers also receive a maintenance payment covering clothing, pocket money, birthday, and seasonal allowances for the child/young person placed. Savings for children in care are deducted at source and saved in individual accounts administered by the NFA Group.

Detailed information and guidance on rates and allowances are made available to each foster carer. All foster carers are provided with an Annual Statement. Foster Carers are self-employed and must seek their own

advice on liability for Income Tax and National Insurance. This can be accessed through Fostering Network, of which membership is funded for all foster carers by the NFA Group.

Local Authorities should directly contact the agency for information pertaining to our charges for the diverse types of placements and support services offered.

The agency's finances are subject to an annual financial audit.



Complaints

NFA London South complaints procedures aim to deal with complaints received in a prompt and equitable manner. The Registered/Interim Agency Manager and the Quality Assurance Manager are responsible for monitoring complaints and their outcomes.

Complaints Policy

All children and adults with whom the company comes into contact have the right to receive quality, professional service. If they do not feel they have received such a service, they have the right to complain and have that complaint listened to. All complaints will be acknowledged within seven working days and will indicate whether it is resolvable at Stage 1 or will require Stage 2 investigation.

Stage 1 Complaints – Informal Resolution

Where possible, we aim to resolve complaints informally, at the local level, and this should be the preferred option. Complainants are encouraged to talk to the person with whom they have a complaint in the first instance as this allows the opportunity to explore the issue and seek any clarification, which often leads to an informal resolution. Where this is not possible, a meeting will be convened between the complainant and the line manager of the person/s being complained about. A letter of resolution will be issued by the Registered/Interim Agency Manager detailing how the outcome was arrived at. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, or at the outset they require the matter to be dealt with by another employee of the National Fostering Group; they will be asked to write to the Registered/Interim Agency Manager who will contact the complainant within seven working days to advise that the Quality Assurance Manager has been instructed to investigate the complaint.

Stage 2 Complaints – Formal Consideration

The QA Manager will undertake a formal investigation and provide a written response within 21 days outlining the outcome of the investigation. The Registered/Interim Agency manager will invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss the report, where necessary and appropriate.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the QA report, they must confirm the reasons for their dissatisfaction, in writing, to the Registered/Interim Agency Manager who will arrange for the complaint to be reviewed independently within 28 days.

Stage 3 Complaints – Independent Review

If the complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1 or 2, and the reasons for this are made clear in writing; the complaint will proceed to Stage 3 for independent review. This is often conducted by the Director of Quality Assurance or other Senior Directors, allowing 28 days for investigation and every effort will be made to achieve complaint resolution. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may take advice from the Regulatory Authority.

Name and Address of Inspection Body

All the activities of NFA are inspected and regulated by Ofsted who can be contacted at the following:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- General Enquiries: 0300 123 1231
- About Concerns: 0300 123 4666
- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Commissioner

Children and Young People may also make a complaint to the Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, based in England. They can do this by going to the appropriate website –

- www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk (for England)

Complaints

Support

It is the policy of the **NFA London South** to make its complaint procedures as accessible, effective, fair and independent as possible.

Sometimes children and adults need help and support to make a complaint. The child may have support from his or her parent, social worker, Independent Visitor or foster carer.

A child who wishes to make a complaint about any aspect of his or her care should receive assistance to access independent advice and support from their Independent Reviewing Officer. Any complaint made by a Looked After Child will also be referred to a recognised advocacy service if the child wishes.

Foster carers may enlist the help of a supporter or advocate or their Supervising Social Worker, as appropriate, to make a complaint about the agency under this policy or where appropriate, about the placing authority under the relevant local authority's complaints procedure.

Allegations of abuse

If any complaint is made to any employee of **NFA London South** which is clearly of a child protection nature that complaint will be immediately passed on to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the responsible authority and Ofsted will be informed.

If at any time during an investigation into a complaint, it becomes clear that there may be child protection implications, the current investigation will be halted and the relevant Local Authority LADO will be notified immediately, the responsible authority and Ofsted will be informed.

Where a complaint is made against the Registered/Interim Agency Manager, the complaint will be investigated by the Regional Director.



Professional Membership

CoramBAAF

As a partner agency of the National Fostering Group, **NFA London South** has a corporate membership with CoramBAAF. CoramBAAF promotes the highest standards of child-centred policies and services. It influences policy-makers, helps find new families for children and supports professions, adoptive parents and foster carers.

The Fostering Network

As a partner agency of the National Fostering Group, **NFA London South** 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

As a partner agency of the National Fostering Group, **NFA London South** has a corporate membership with NWG which a network tackling child sexual exploitation is they also provide high quality training that our staff members attend.

Each staff member has a membership to NWG (purchased by the National Fostering Group) so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.

Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP)

NAFP is a not-for-profit company formed in 2008 comprising of independent and voluntary sector fostering providers. This trade association acts as one voice and is therefore able to campaign and represent the sector more effectively. In addition, it allows members to share knowledge and experience within the sector and provides formal representation in national forums and sector developments.

Research in Practice

Our Social Workers and Managers have membership of Research in Practice which brings together academic research and practice expertise. This ensures our staff have access to the latest research, policy, case law, legal updates and resources to support and enhance their professional practice.

Restraint Reduction Network

We are members of the Restraint Reduction Network – the world leading restraint reduction charity. Our membership demonstrates our commitment to reducing restrictive practice. It provides staff with the opportunity to learn from sector leaders and access news, guidance and resources to inform their work with children, young people and their carers.

Contact Details

Essential Addresses and Contact Details

Children's Commissioner

Dame Rachel de Souza

Address: Children's Commissioner for England, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email:

Info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Free and confidential contact lines for children and young people:

Tel: 0800 528 0731

Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Coram VOICE

This is a national charity that enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.

Helpline: 0808 800 5792

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk

Web: www.coramvoice.org.uk

OFSTED

NFA London South is regulated and inspected by Ofsted.

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

Tel: 0300 123 1231

General Enquiries Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Agency Contact Details

NFA London South | 127 Addington Rd | Selsdon | South Croydon | CR2 8LH

NFA Day Duty (9am-5:30pm weekdays) - 08081410830

NFA Night Duty number (after 5:30pm, weekends and bank holidays) - 08001522293

Office: 01895200300



“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.”

NFA - London South

NFA London South | 127 Addington Rd | Selsdon | South Croydon
| CR2 8LH

Office: 01895200300

