



Family Works Fostering Statement of Purpose

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About this document

Title	Statement of Purpose
Purpose	Details Family Works Fostering's aims and objectives, services provided, staffing and management structure.
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Introduction

Family Works Fostering (FWF) is a child-focused, enthusiastically and efficiently managed Independent Fostering Agency, that is established to meet the needs of children and young people, who require quality foster placements, between the ages of 0 - 18 years of any gender. FWF strives to provide safe, stable and nurturing foster care placements, where children and young people are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. This Statement of Purpose is produced in compliance with relevant regulations, including:

- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) Regulations 2009
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 (2013)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care 2014
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2015
- Children Act 1989 Regulations and Guidance Volume 2: Care planning, Placement and Case Review 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 2018

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed at least annually by the Management team and is intended to provide information to a wide audience including:

- Family Works Fostering staff
- Foster carers and prospective foster carers (including foster carers' birth children)
- Children and young people placed with Family Works Fostering
- Local Authorities which are considering placing children and young people with Family Works Fostering
- General public and OFSTED.

Section 1

Our Vision

Family Works Fostering vision is to:

- Provide caring, stable and child focused foster families where children and young people's safety is promoted, and they are supported to develop secure and positive attachments.
- Provide culturally sensitive and matched placements, encouraging the recruitment of carers from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds to meet the cultural and identity needs of children and young people.
- Ensure that every child is welcomed, accepted for who they are and given the opportunity to express themselves and reach their full potential.
- Deliver care and support that is based on empathy, kindness, transparency, respect and collaborative working.
- Consistently strive to improve quality and positive outcomes for children and young people in our care.
- Value contributions and participation from foster carers, children and young people, placing local authorities and other agencies, in shaping our fostering service.
- Ensure that placements are matched to children's individual needs, to promote stability, and make real and meaningful differences in their lives.
- Ensure that foster carers and their families receive professional guidance, support and training, to help them fulfil their roles as effectively as possible.
- Establish positive, beneficial relationships with local authorities and other agencies by being a preferred provider, with a sound reputation for quality and effective partnership working.
- To provide high quality theory to practice input and support to carers to develop them and the service as therapeutically informed"

Our vision also places equality at the heart of our approach to service delivery and employment. We want all children and young people in our care, our foster carers and our staff to feel valued and treated equally and fairly. Our goal is to ensure that our values are embedded in our working practices. Our foster carers provide positive support to children and young people which enables them to respect differences, value diversity and empower them to take control of their lives.

We seek to operate within a practice framework of fairness, openness, integrity, accountability and expect the same of those providing services for or on behalf of Family Works Fostering. Our key values and principles are set down to ensure that:

- All employment and service delivery policies and practices reflect a positive value for human differences and diversity.
- All staff and foster carers are aware of, understand, and are committed to Family Works Fostering's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- All staff and foster carers have the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide high quality services within a clear framework of anti-discriminatory practice.
- All services are responsive, accessible, sensitive and appropriate to those who need and benefit from them.

We are committed to identifying, understanding and eliminating barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment. We are committed to challenging individuals or groups who discriminate

against any of our children and young people. We will also continue to ensure that our diversity is celebrated through daily living experiences and educational programmes.

We pride ourselves on being a small fostering agency that provides individualised personal service and support to our foster carers, children and young people in our care.

Aims and Objectives are:

- To improve the outcomes for children and young people by providing child focused care plans, with emphasis on placement stability, educational achievements, social development and good health.
- To promote permanency for children and young people placed with our foster carers by supporting rehabilitation back to their families where this is the plan.
- To assist in promoting the educational opportunities and achievements for children and young people in our care, by enabling them to benefit from a range of educational activities.
- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of each child's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background. We will also consider fully each child's gender, sexuality and disability needs.
- To ensure that there is careful matching of each child's needs and wishes, with the skills and ability of foster carers to meet them.
- To promote positive and safe contact with birth families and significant others, for every fostered child and young person in our care.
- To provide appropriate support that enables children and young people to pursue interests and hobbies and participate in a range of social and cultural activities.
- To continue our recruitment, assessment, support and retention of foster carers from diverse backgrounds, and ensuring a choice of appropriate placement options for children and young people.
- To promote positively the concept of professional foster carers.
- To provide our foster carers and their families reliable and consistent support, training and recognition through a range of social events, support groups, supervision and visits that ensure they can provide holistic services that address the physical, emotional, educational and health needs of the children and young people in our care.
- To provide a responsive, supportive, professional 24-hour support service for our foster carers, looked after children, young people and partner agencies.
- To develop and review our services through user consultation and participation involving children, young people, foster carers, staff, local authority social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO).

- To ensure that our fostering team is operated efficiently and effectively with qualified staff, ensuring that children are safeguarded and benefit from a positive experience in foster care.

Section 2

Status and Constitution

Family Works Fostering (FWF) is an independent fostering agency registered with the Companies Act 1985 and registered with Ofsted in 2017. FWF is also registered and inspected as a fostering provider under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 to provide foster care for looked after children and young people on behalf of local authority children services.

FWF produces a memorandum of Association and Articles of Association that complies with the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989. Copies of these are available to statutory bodies such as Ofsted which regulate and inspect Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and children's social care throughout the UK.

The Director is owner-registered manager of FWF and is actively involved in the operation of the business.

Company Meetings

Executive Management Meetings take place every 3 months or sooner if needed. These meetings are attended by senior staff who are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, including:

- Annual Business Plan.
- Legal Compliance.
- Strategic vision, values, direction and objectives.
- Financial expenditure, management and performance.
- Organisational structure and capacity to implement strategic direction.
- Policies and Procedures.
- Quality Assurance, consultation and review

Family Works Fostering holds regular performance meetings with staff to monitor service delivery and performance, identify and coordinate the implementation of service development, business and strategic issues towards achieving the best practice benchmark.

Management Structure

The Management Team includes professionals with a range of skills, expertise and experience in social work, management, business and developmental roles. These include our staff who hold the following roles and responsibilities:

Responsible Individual (RI)

The Responsible Individual (RI), **Mrs Wendy Edward-Tsuro**, is a qualified and experienced Social Work England registered social worker. Her other professional qualifications include-Diploma in Social Work, Master of Arts in Applied Social Studies, ILM Level 7 Leadership and Management and Postgraduate Certificate in Commissioning and Procurement in Public Care. The Responsible Individual is the Strategic Lead overseeing NMS25 reporting, statutory compliance, procurement and tenders, contract management, Human Resources, financial management, marketing, quality assurance and performance, business viability and service development plan.

Registered Manager

The Registered Manager, **Mr Tafa Dzinoruma** is also a qualified and experienced Social Work England registered social worker. He has professional qualifications that include a Diploma in Social Work, Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services and a Post Graduate Diploma in Public Health. He also achieved various post social work qualifications relevant to his role and responsibilities. The Registered Manager receives regular supervision from an independent external professional. He is responsible for the daily management and operation of the service, compliance with the National Minimum Standards (NMS), Fostering Regulations and all other relevant regulatory obligations, as well as internal policies and procedures. He is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead for FWF.

Social Workers

Family Works Fostering Social Workers are registered with Social Work England (December 2019). They are responsible for supervising, advising, supporting and monitoring the work our foster carers do in caring for children and young people placed in their care. This includes, visiting foster carers' homes regularly, including unannounced visits, attending relevant meetings, spending time with children and young people in the foster care placements as appropriate and making recommendations to the foster carers' supervisory and annual review process.

Administrators

Family Works Fostering administrators provide vital administrative support by ensuring effective communication, managing the day-to-day business of the office, recording and minute taking, IT and undertaking statutory checks ensuring they are in place and compliant with relevant statutory requirements and FWF policies and procedures.

Independent Staff

Family Works Fostering employs professionals who work as independent, across a variety of roles in the company. These include Form F Assessors, panel members, Sessional Support Workers offering placement support, Independent Investigators for formal complaints, Therapeutic Support, Medical Advisers and an Educational Expert Coordinator. All FWF's independent staff hold appropriate qualifications, relevant experience and membership of nationally appropriate bodies.

FWF carries out a range of pre-employment checks on all staff working for the Agency, including employment and character references, telephone/email reference verification, verification of qualifications and enhanced DBS checks. These checks help to ensure the welfare and safety of children and young people are adequately safeguarded. All staff who undertake work for Family Works Fostering have contracts of employment and job descriptions or work contractual briefs.

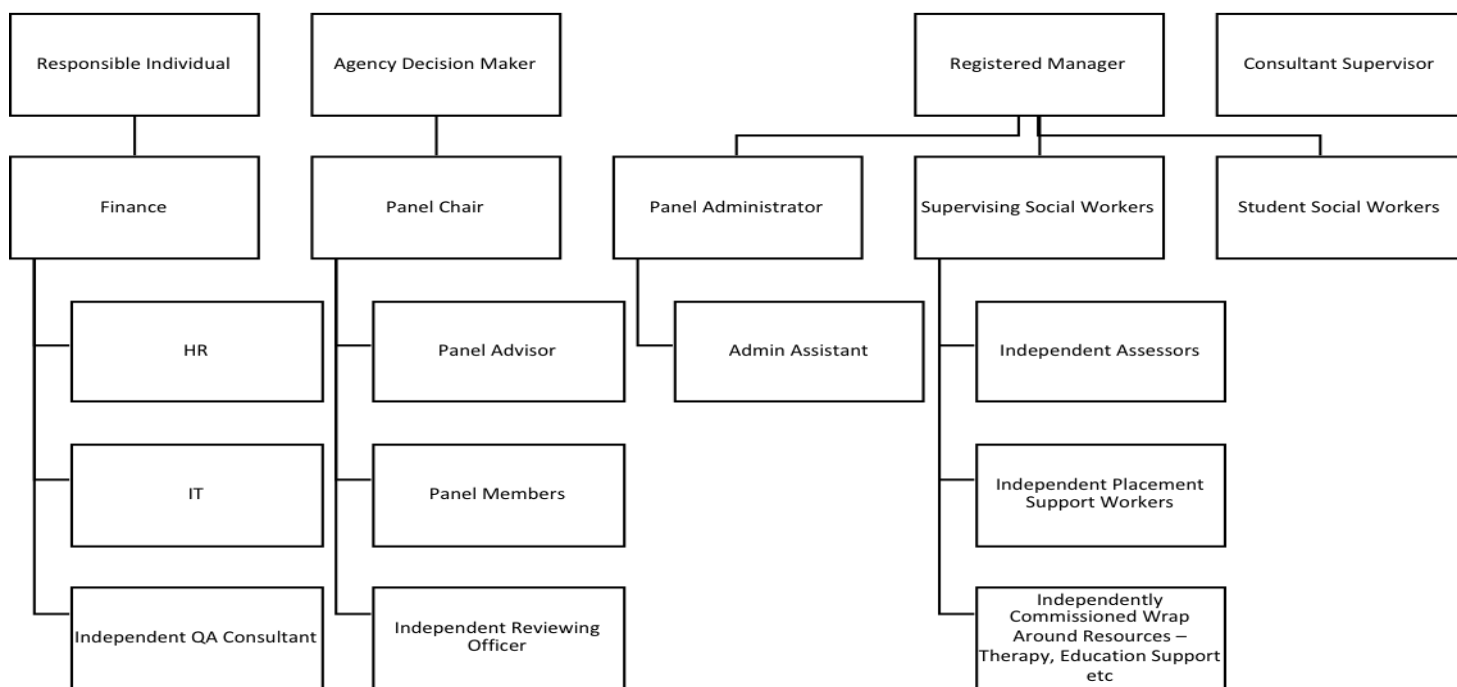
All FWF staff receives monthly supervision with their line manager or other designated senior person. The staff also benefit from group reflective supervision and case consultation and personal check-ins with a therapeutic practitioner. This is in accordance with Family Works Fostering's Supervision Policy. Independent staff are offered relevant in-house and external training, including E-Learning courses. FWF staff are appraised within the first six months of their employment and annually thereafter, including a 360-degree feedback for all staff appraised.

Student Social Workers and Newly Qualified Social Workers

Family Works Fostering works with the University of Essex by offering work related experience to student social workers. A coaching and mentoring model is adopted in supporting newly qualified social

workers under the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) guidelines. Family Works Fostering also has a comprehensive support package for student social workers and newly qualified social workers.

Please see below Family Works Fostering’s organisational structure.



Quality Standards

At Family Works Fostering, we promote our responsibility by ensuring that:

- Whilst recognising the potential impact of their previous life and family experiences, each child and young person is supported to develop their true potential.
- Children and young people are cared for by adults who have the appropriate skills, abilities and experience to offer them positive support, respect, reassurance, affection and positive parental nurturing.
- All adults and professionals supporting our children and young person, respect the significance of their birth families, racial backgrounds, culture and religion.
- Our young people are appropriately prepared for leaving care. This should include savings, good educational achievement to support their chosen career, and suitable independent living skills.
- Our business operation is managed ethically, efficiently and effectively.
- All staff, foster carers and other adults who come into contact with the children and young people fostered through FWF, will be subject to appropriate statutory and background checks and vetting procedures.

In addition, Family Works Fostering will continue to:

- Comply fully with all relevant childcare and fostering regulations, including the national Minimum Standards (NMS)
- Ensure that child protection procedures are followed robustly to help ensure that the welfare and persons of children and young people placed with our foster carers are adequately protected and safeguarded.
- Work in partnership with local authorities to identify the individual needs and appropriate care and support needed for each child and young person placed with our foster carers
- Ensure that foster carers are trained in behavioural management techniques, utilising parental strategies that do not demean, degrade or humiliate the children and young person in their care.
- Ensure that effort is made to match children with families that reflect their religious and cultural needs.
- Ensure that school attendance and academic achievements are supported and promoted for all children and young people in our care.
- Ensure that daily written records are maintained for each child or young person by our foster carers.
- Ensure that corporal punishment is never used on any fostered child or young person in any circumstances. Guidance will be provided on behaviour management strategies.
- Ensure that all assessments are completed by qualified and experienced staff with active participation by applicants.
- Ensure that all our foster carers complete the Skills to Foster training within the nationally agreed timescale.
- Ensure that our foster carers will have access to continuing training in line with the DfE Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) within the national agreed timescale.
- Ensure that each foster carer and foster home fulfils all health and safety requirements, including risk assessment and safe caring procedures and plans.
- Ensure that our foster carers work to an agreed individual child and young person's care plan, within the terms and conditions of the Placement Agreement.
- Ensure that our foster carers continue to promote safe and appropriate contact between the children, young people and their birth families

- Ensure that our foster carers receive regular support, supervisory visits and telephone contact from their supervising social workers (SSW).
- Ensure that our 24-hour telephone support is provided to foster carers by qualified and experienced social workers.
- Ensure that all our foster carers receive their annual reviews within the agreed timescales.

Section 3

Services

Family Works Fostering works in partnership with various local authority children social care services to identify the provision of safe, secure and appropriate foster care placements for children and young people. We will continue to ensure that we fully and carefully support the appropriate matching of children and young people with approved foster carers who are able to meet their individual needs. All referrals are received through a dedicated placements inbox: placements@fw-fostering.co.uk

Placement Regulations

Family Works Fostering placements are made and monitored in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

This means that:

- All our foster carers are appropriately approved, reviewed and signed the FWF Foster Carer's Agreement.
- Wherever possible, a pre-placement planning meeting is undertaken, including introductions between the foster carer and the child / young person.
- We seek to get essential information about each child/young person-including care plans, placement plans, Personal Education Plans (PEP), Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) medical information, and consent, delegated authority agreement-either before, or at the point of placement.
- A full placement matching form is completed for each child being considered for placement with our carers
- A risk assessment is undertaken before placement by a FWF Supervising Social Worker in conjunction with the local authority social worker and the social worker of any child already in placement.
- Immediate placement planning receives priority in the event of an emergency placement

Matching

All Family Works Fostering placements are carefully matched to ensure that the needs of the child or young person can be met appropriately by the foster carer with the relevant skills and experience.

We ensure that close communication takes place between our dedicated FWF staff, local authority colleagues and our foster carers during all placements being made. All decisions to place children and young people in our foster care are overseen by the Registered Manager. This helps ensure that we make the best possible matching between each child and our foster carers.

Children and young people placed with Family Works Fostering foster carers, will never be expected to share a bedroom with another fostered child or child of the foster carer family, except where appropriate sibling placements have been made.

Types of Placements

Family Works Fostering offers a range of foster placements that includes planned, emergency and respite care, to meet the needs of children and young people needing foster care.

Emergency placements

In circumstances where same day placements (within 24 hours) are required, FWF requests that referrals should be submitted with a summary of the child or young persons' background, placement history, and information about any significant behavioural concerns. FWF also expects such referrals to be accompanied by a recent social care report/assessment from the Social Worker or the last placement. This is important in ensuring that the right care and support is provided to the child/young person by our foster carers.

Short and medium-term placements

FWF also provides short-term and medium-term foster care placements- where a child or young person is expected to return home or move onto a permanent placement, foster home or adoptive placement.

- We consider short-term placement to be 1 week to 3 months depending on the child/young persons' needs and care plan.
- Medium – term placement will be 3 months to six months.

Long-term placements

This is where a child/young person is expected to remain in foster care until they reach adulthood with the ability and preparation to move to independent living.

Respite placements

We consider this to be where a child/young persons' family is supported with periodic short breaks to help relieve crises or stresses within the family. This is usually from 2 days up to 6 weeks. FWF recognizes that the term respite is the professional language used for children and young people in care. However, we are working to ensure that these are recognized as stays, visits or sleep overs to make them more child friendly.

PACE placements

We support local authorities with finding appropriate placements for young people with challenging or offending behaviours, including those going through the criminal justice system or subject to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Our foster carers who look after these children/young people will have sound experience and training to work effectively with them.

Parent and child placements

We offer this type of placement to young people or adults who need parental support and guidance in caring for their own child. These placements are also used to assess the parenting skills, ability and capacity of birth parents to safely parent their children and be able to do so independently in the community when they move out of a foster placement.

Sibling placements

Sibling placements are for brothers and sisters who are placed together in foster care households. Family Works Fostering advocates keeping siblings together within a family environment unless it is deemed inappropriate or unsafe by the placing authority.

Cultural-matched placements

Family Works Fostering, promotes and encourages placements that are reflective of a child's cultural, ethnic and religious background. FWF pays attention to the needs of children and young people who have been in trans-racial placements and who may have developed a poor self-image or negative attitudes. This ensures that their placements will be reflective of their needs with a clear plan on how to meet them.

Specialist placements for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking minors

Family Works Fostering recruits foster carers to offer care to arriving unaccompanied children and young people (UASC) and provide a service that would ensure that their language, cultural and emotional well-being needs are met.

Children with special needs and disability placements (short breaks/respites)

Family Works Fostering recruits experienced foster carers with skills and experience in caring for children and young people who are disabled or require specialist care in a family home setting.

Therapeutically Informed Placements

Family Works Fostering believes that all children and young people placed in foster care benefit from therapeutically informed placements. We have therefore instigated a whole system programme of therapeutically informed development for staff and carers working in partnership with Orb8 an external organisation specialising in theory to practice therapeutically informed foster care development and input. This programme includes staff and carer training and courses, therapeutic support sessions, and consultation. This allows us to better meet the needs of children and young people with complex presentations that require specialist and skilled intervention and support in their foster care placements.

Family Works Fostering carers are offered therapeutically-centered training that helps them gain an in-depth understanding of emotional trauma, neurodevelopment and attachment disorders, loss and rejection, bereavement, gender and identity, self-harm, working with children with learning difficulties and attachment. Family Works Fostering carers also receive regular consultation and reflective supervision and practice group, reflective case discussion from qualified therapists and clinicians.

This specialist therapeutic foster care training equips our foster carers with the relevant parenting, therapeutic knowledge and skills to undertake their fostering tasks. The training provides carers with several different opportunities to develop their reflective capacities. They are provided with a wide range of knowledge and input in relation to complex presentations to enable them to feel more confident in addressing a wide range of difficulties shown by children and young people in their care.

The courses help carers to develop a capacity to use and develop a relationship-based approach, going beyond behaviour management to consider the complex interplay of thoughts, feelings, experience and relationships characterised by previous traumatic experiences of children and young people they are caring for.

Placement Referrals

Family Works Fostering values the importance of getting placement arrangements right from the start. We therefore always request from the placing local authority, as much information as possible about the child or young person. This should include background/historical information, completed assessments, health and medical needs, additional needs, education and learning needs and information about any previous placements.

Family Works Fostering provides each child or young person with a foster carer Welcome Book before the placement starts. This is to ensure that children and young people know the families they will be living with, their family routines, including their social activities, food choices, accommodation and household arrangements.

Family Works Fostering will not allow children and young people to share a room in foster homes unless this has been recommended with reasons/or agreed with the child/young person's social Worker(s) in writing.

Placement Statistics

Family Works Fostering was registered by Ofsted in January 2017.

Family Works Fostering has a foster carer recruitment strategy and marketing plan which sets out our annual marketing activities and targets.

The number of referrals of children and young people needing foster placements, outweighs the number of approved foster carers with suitable vacancies. Our Business Plan has the flexibility to respond to changing trends in the recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers. Family Works Fostering recruitment target is for an organic steady growth of 5 to 10 approved foster carers each year, with a target of a net gain of about 10 children/young people placed with foster carers each year.

Feedback from Service users:

We seek the views of our services users including children, young people and our foster carers by asking them to complete a Feedback Questionnaire each year.

Local authority social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers also provide their feedback through feedback forms, provided to them at statutory Looked After Child review meetings.

Our panel members provide feedback at each panel meeting as part of their quality assurance remit to help improve the quality of reports presented to the panel, the panel process and an overview of the services provided by FWF.

We also ensure that as part of our performance review and service development, the feedback and views of prospective foster carers are sought about their experience of their fostering assessment and attendance at the panel meeting. In addition, we actively seek feedback and views from people who attend the training courses and workshops we deliver throughout the year.

Section 4

Supporting Outcomes for Children and Young People

Family Works Fostering believes that, with appropriate and targeted packages of support for foster carers, children and young people will have the opportunity to live in safe and stable family environment. FWF also provides additional targeted support and creative activities to help maintain and improve the quality and stability of placements.

We also undertake specific roles and tasks where requested by the Placing Authority. The range of services available for children & young people include:

- Individual or group work, including structured activities
- Access to national organisations for looked after children and young people.
- Practical assistance with transport and access to contact, external facilities and services.
- Supervised contact with families.
- Life story work.
- Memory box
- Permanency planning.
- Assistance to pursue a hobby or interest including holiday activities
- Individual or group therapeutic activities
- Talent Showcase which includes artwork, poems, stories, music, drama and acting etc
- Social activities for the birth children of foster carers.

All children and young people in our foster care placements are visited regularly as part of the role of our Supervising Social Worker (SSW). Family Works Fostering also commissions Support Workers who ensure that a complete need led and coordinated package of support is made available.

Family Works Fostering is committed to ensuring that:

- Children and young people are encouraged to be involved in decision making regarding their life.
- Children and young people's safety is promoted and adequately safeguarded at all times
- Children and young people are appropriately matched with suitable foster families.
- Children and young people are supported to enjoy their experiences and develop their self-confidence.
- Children and young people are healthy and have access to leisure and health care services, and that their health needs are understood by their foster carers, who, in turn, is supported and monitored by their SSW.
- Children and young people are supported to attend education and thrive to the best of their ability.
- Children and young people are supported to achieve their full potential.
- Children and young people are fully supported and prepared for their future independent living.
- Foster carers are appropriately recruited, trained, monitored and supervised and that their recruitment, is focused on the needs of children and young people.

At Family Works Fostering, we endeavor to remain flexible, responsive and forward thinking in our service planning, development delivery and review. We therefore ensure that there is regular consultation with children and young people about their experiences in foster care. We also plan to set up a consultation/participation group for young people. The group will be trained and become involved in the recruitment of both foster carers and staff.

Contact

Our foster carers are supported in promoting positive contact between children in placement and their birth families in line with their care plan where appropriate and safe. Supervised Contact can also be offered if requested by the placing local authority.

Education

Family Works Fostering gives priority to ensuring that children have access to and are supported in education and learning opportunities that are appropriate to their needs. Family Works Fostering has an attainment performance target that is linked to supporting educational stability and achievements. Our foster carers and their supervising social workers build up close working relationships with local schools and colleges to ensure that children and young people placed receive the most effective service.

Family Works Fostering also commissions additional specialist education support that provides extra practical and learning opportunities, advice, emotional support, training and guidance to our staff and foster carers. These include:

- Support for young people with access to education and learning opportunities
- Guidance on PEPs, annual reviews and strategy meetings
- Termly collection of 'Attendance and Achievement' for those of school age
- Reward vouchers for young people achieving 95% term time attendance
- Congratulation letters and postcards for education achievements
- Liaison with local authorities regarding identified educational needs, including school admission and attendance
- Training and additional support around education and current trends for foster carers
- Experiential education support for young people out of school, education or training
- Advice and guidance for young people aged 16 plus for transition into college / apprenticeships

Health

We work with our foster carers in helping to prioritise the health care needs of the children placed with them and promote the development of a healthy lifestyle, including diet and exercise. All the children and young people placed with Family Works Fostering are registered with GPs and dentists. Medication, appointments and health checks are recorded on foster carer's daily, weekly and monthly logs, which allows health issues to be carefully monitored. Family Works Fostering is developing a personal health passport for each child which will be given at the start of each placement.

Behaviour Management

Family Works Fostering is committed to a holistic approach to the management of behaviour by promoting a safe, secure and stable caring home environment. We believe that effective parenting, positive child development, support and learning can only take place in an atmosphere that is purposeful, secure and calm. It is one of our key aims to promote positive behaviour from everyone who works, lives and shares in the services we offer. This encourages everyone to interact with each other in a consistent and appropriate manner built on mutual respect and understanding.

Family Works Fostering utilises positive approach techniques to behaviour management, through recognition, rewards, relational and emotional strategies and interventions in responding to and dealing with challenging behaviours. Our foster carers create and maintain home environment, which is consistent, fair and predictable and enables positive relationships to develop. FWF ensures that each child has a risk assessment and that children exhibiting challenging behaviours have a clear behavior management plan. FWF also commissions behavioural consultancy services where appropriate.

Transport

Daily transport requirements within the local area of the foster care home is the responsibility of the foster carer, this includes transport to local schools. We try to provide transport for other situations if the carer is unable to do so, example: contact meetings away from the foster home or attendance at a non-local catchment school, for which a charge will be made.

Section 5

Recruitment

Family Works Fostering has a comprehensive recruitment policy relating to our foster carers. This help ensure that all our carers are treated equally and fairly. It also provides clarity of the relationship and recruitment process that should enable prospective foster carers to decide if they wish to proceed to become approved foster carers.

Our rigorous recruitment process helps ensure that all prospective foster carers complete all the required statutory checks that help in the drive to protect children and young people. Family Works Fostering provides an informative website and a special recruitment telephone contact number and email address. FWF ensures it operates rolling advertising and marketing campaigns, recruitment events and the Skills to Foster training.

Assessment Process

When we receive an enquiry from a potential foster carer/s, FWF completes an **Initial Enquiry Form** and requests basic information about the applicant and their family. We provide each applicant with an Information Pack that provides details about Family Works Fostering and guidance of how to proceed with an application to becoming a foster carer.

The enquiry is followed up by a telephone call from a FWF Social Worker to the potential foster carer/s. If the applicant wishes to proceed, an initial home visit is arranged. The application completed by the applicant, includes a signed consent for FWF to carry out a range of statutory checks and enquiries in line with data protection and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This enables FWF to assess the applicant's potential suitability to become foster carer/s. The formal process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two stages. These can be carried out concurrently, but the information required within stage 1, must be sought and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed stage 1 must be made within 10 days, once all the information has been received.

If prospective foster carer/s indicates a wish to proceed, they will be invited to attend the Skills to Foster training. FWF will then process the following safeguarding checks on the applicants:

- **Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** checks on all members of the household aged 18 or over and regular visitors to the household. This will involve disclosure of information about any criminal convictions or cautions and information that is held by the police or government agencies relevant to the protection and safeguarding of children.
- **The applicant/s will also be required to have a medical examination by their GP** and the report will be made available to Family Works Fostering Medical Adviser for his/her comments about the health of the applicant/s and any impact this may have on their application to foster.

Further safeguarding checks will be undertaken at this stage which includes:

- Verification of identity and personal history
- Local authority checks spanning a period of 10 years including Social Care Departments and Child Protection Register
- Enquiries to other agencies including NSPCC and Probation where appropriate
- Enquiries and references from other fostering agencies if an applicant has previously fostered or is currently fostering for another agency.

The applicant/s will be required to provide details of at least three people prepared to provide personal references including interview verification as part of the assessment process. Employer references will be sought for applicants who are in employment. Education references will be requested relating to applicants who have children in schools/educational establishments. References from external agencies and personal references, (**third parties**) which are provided in confidence, cannot be accessed without permission of both the subject and the relevant referee.

Form F Assessment

The applicants will be assigned a FWF assessing social worker to undertake a full competence-based assessment. The applicants will begin their assessment by giving detailed information about themselves and their family composition.

The FWF assessing social will visit the home of the applicant/s up to eight occasions (but more if deemed necessary) to meet and collect information about all members of the household, plus assess the knowledge, skills and experience of the applicants in relation to becoming a foster carer. The information obtained will form the basis of an assessment report for the FWF Fostering Panel.

Family Works Fostering uses the CoramBAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) Form F assessment report which takes into account that the assessment of confidential references is shared with the applicant/s with consent. During the assessment process, prospective foster carers will be helped to compile a portfolio of written material evidencing relevant skills and experiences. FWF believes that prospective foster carers have the right to be treated fairly, openly and with respect.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Assessment

In accordance with The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, which amended the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; FWF follows the following process when assessing a person's suitability to become a foster carer. The assessment process has two stages. These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information required for Stage 1, as defined in Schedule 3 Part 1 of the 2013 Regulations, must be sought as soon as possible. The decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required and received in that stage.

If it is decided during Stage 1 that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the independent Review Mechanism (IRM) or make representations to FWF. However, if in Stage 2 a decision is made that the applicant is not suitable to foster, then a brief report must be completed, the applicant advised about this and their comments sought within 10 working days.

After the 10-day period, or following receipt of the applicants' comments, whichever is the sooner, FWF must send the report, any comments from the applicant and any other relevant information to the Fostering Panel. The applicant may, within 28 days, seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to FWF.

Following the completion of an assessment, with the exception of private references, the completed Form F is shared with the prospective foster carers prior to being presented to the FWF Panel. The report should be signed by a Registered Manager, who confirms it distinguishes appropriately between fact and opinion, and complies with legislation and the expectation of robust evidence gathering and analysis outlined in the policy document.

When the Form F has been completed, the Registered Manager may visit the applicants, to verify the assessment report and ensure the applicants have had a positive experience during the assessment process.

Before being submitted to the Fostering Panel, the completed Form F report must be accurate, complete and signed by the applicant(s), the Assessor and the Registered Manager. A report must only be signed when all parties are happy with its contents.

All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held on FWF secure data file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Data Protection Act 1998. A request can be made for information to be viewed by the applicant(s). References from external agencies and personal references, which are given in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and the relevant referee(s).

Fostering Panel and Approval

The completed and signed assessment report is then presented to FWF Panel. There is an expectation that all prospective foster carers attend the Panel Meeting with their Assessing Social Worker. Fostering Panel Members are selected from a diverse group of people with a variety of expertise and knowledge including education, health, social care, fostering, and experience of being in care. Family Works Fostering implements written policies and procedures regarding the recruitment of suitable persons to become members of the Fostering Panel Central List.

The Fostering Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of applicant(s) to be approved as foster carer(s) and terms with FWF, and reasons for their recommendation linked to the National

Minimum Standards (NMS) for fostering. The final decision for approval is made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who takes account of the Panel's recommendations. The ADM's decision must be made within seven working days of receipt of the Final Minutes and recommendation from the Panel.

The ADM should also record the reasons for their approval or non-approval. The ADM can also request for additional information from the Agency before making the final decision. Once the decision is made the prospective foster carer should be informed orally within two working days and in writing within 5 working days. If the foster care applicant does not agree with the ADM's decision, they have a right to make representations to the Agency or IRM.

Foster Carer Agreements

A Foster Carer Agreement is completed following approval by the ADM. This is arranged by FWF administration and covers a range of contractual information and undertakings, including conditions and expectations of how:

- To Care appropriately and safely for children and young people in placement.
- To inform FWF of any significant changes to their household or family members
- To follow Family Works Fostering policies and procedures and all relevant fostering regulations and procedures

All FWF foster carers have access to our Foster Carer's Handbook and a copy of this is provided to them during induction.

Quality Assurance

Family Works Fostering operates a transparent quality assurance and improvement framework. Performance and objectives across the organisation are standardised, recorded, monitored and evaluated through evidenced data collection and analysis. This helps ensure that we operate a robust and clear evaluation of working, best practices, standardisation and towards the achievement of positive outcomes for everyone.

The promotion of an improvement culture is embedded in all aspects of the FWF services. This includes promotion of quality assurance by our staff and foster carers. This is helping to ensure that the children placed with Family Works Fostering, are supported to achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

In relation to the Fostering Panel, our assessors follow a robust and transparent process that ensures every Form F achieves the standard required in analysis and satisfactory receipt of all statutory checks. The Form F's and all documents for the Panel Meeting is checked by the Registered Manager to ensure completeness, accuracy and statutory compliance. It is then approved for presentation to the Panel by Chair and Panel Advisor before being circulated to Panel Members.

All Panel Members are required to complete a Summary Sheet on all new assessments and reviews presented to Panel and forward this to the Panel Chair. The Summary Sheets help us monitor the quality of work submitted to Panel. Panel Members also record on the Summary Sheets questions they would like to ask the applicants at the Panel Meeting. The Panel Chair collates this information prior to Panel to ensure a smooth, efficient, timely, transparent and effective process.

Family Works Fostering also undertakes an annual quality assurance and practice review that identifies strengths and areas for development within the service.

Section 6

Professional Development of Foster Carers

Family Works Fostering is committed to providing good quality training that is accessible and relevant to the professional development needs of our foster carers. Training and learning are an important element of Family Works Fostering's support to our foster carers. Our foster carers are supported to have the skills and knowledge they need, and to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

Our core aims are to: -

- Offer continuous professional development through training events that are credible, relevant and connect directly with the fostering tasks
- Include our foster carers in the development of our training plans that reflect their needs, areas of interests and offers opportunities for relevant recognised qualifications
- Keep our foster carers updated in relation to legislative and policy changes, new guidance and best practice developments
- Differentiate the training to reflect diversity, levels of ability, learning styles and experiences
- Make training accessible and available in different forms including direct, E-Learning and additional personal reading
- Provide our foster carers with individual continuous professional development plan that aligns to their fostering career
- Offer opportunities for individual, shared and group learning in environments that are educative, empowering and compliment past experiences.

FWF have an expectation that foster carers will:

- Be prepared to develop their professional skills throughout their fostering career
- Attend relevant core training on offer
- Inform Family Works Fostering if they are unable to attend training events and contribute to support groups.

Pre-Approval Training

All prospective foster carers must attend the Skills To Foster Training (STF) which covers the expectations and responsibilities of being a foster carer and working with Family Works Fostering. STF is an initial two-day course which leads into the conclusion of the foster carer assessment process. The Skills to Foster training includes the following aspects of fostering:

- What foster carers do
- Identity and life chances
- Working together with others
- Understanding and caring for children, including understanding behaviours
- Safer caring
- Transitions/Moving On

Post Approval Training

Family Works Fostering is committed to a range of post approval training programmes for our foster carers. Following approval by the ADM, our foster carers receive a comprehensive induction facilitated by the Supervising Social Worker. The Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards workbook is introduced and initial planning for completion is initiated. Each foster carer household should evidence through the workbook how the TSD for foster care has been achieved within a year of approval.

All newly approved foster carers are required to complete all the core training within the first twelve months of their approval, in line with national guidelines and our training policy. Our training programme includes modules that are part of the initial induction programmes for newly approved foster carers. In addition, we provide advanced courses supporting foster carers to receive formal recognition of their skills, knowledge and experience. There are 13 core modules that primary carers are expected to undertake within the first 12 months of approval and secondary carers are expected to complete five of these:

- First Aid for foster carers
- Attachment, Separation and Loss
- Record Keeping
- Managing and promoting positive behaviour
- Achieving Health and Wellbeing of Children in Care
- Health and Safety-to assist prospective carers and approved carers to develop knowledge and awareness on health and safety within their homes, be aware of home hazards, understand home conditions and know home procedures
- Handling Medication within foster homes
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Gangs and gang culture
- Knife Crime Prevention
- Safeguarding Children at Risk by Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Children Missing From Care
- Child Development
- ADHD And Autism Advanced Level Fostering
- Guide to Education
- Prevent
- Equality and Diversity
- Understanding the Control of Substances that are Hazardous to Health(COSHH) Fostering

FWF also provides training in response to lessons learnt from our service delivery and as part of our ongoing quality review. Following the first annual review, foster carers will be expected to continue with their professional development planning through monthly supervision. In addition to this, Family Works Fostering has continuous training sessions that covers areas identified by the carers and supervising social workers and these are delivered on a one-to-one basis. There are also other opportunities for foster carers to develop and gain knowledge and skills through involvement at training events, information evenings, and support groups.

FWF has a whole system approach to develop the service and carers as therapeutically informed which includes both introductory and more advanced courses.

FWF also has E-Learning available to all carers. This module offers the core training alongside refresher courses. The aim of all training programmes is to provide foster carers with the skills and knowledge to become the catalyst through which the child / young person can grow and meet their full potential. It provides foster carers with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to help children when they are at their most challenging.

Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards

The Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards provide guidance for foster carers on the requirements for their training, development and continuous professional development. FWF ensures that all foster carers use TSD induction workbooks. All new foster carers have 12 months to complete their TSD when they are approved as foster carers. Workshops are available for foster carers who wish to have some additional input into the completion of these books, but most of this is done by their Supervising Social Workers. Foster carer development programmes are also linked with the TSD standards although there is an expectation that carers need to evidence their learning in addition to attending a course.

Close referencing grids are completed by assessing social workers for all new carers to show which outcomes have been met through the assessment process. There is a grid for each TSD workbook and the appropriate one should be signed off to show that the carers have fully evidenced the applicable outcomes through that process. Family Works Fostering provides advice and support to foster carers and staff regarding the completion of the books. The Registered Manager has the quality assurance role and is also the person responsible for signing off the TSD workbooks.

Section 7

Reviews of Foster Carers

All foster carers have an annual performance review, to ensure that they continue to meet the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for fostering and FWF standards. This review also evidences foster carers suitability to maintain their registration and approval status. The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) ensures that all statutory requirements are fulfilled and that foster carers have the opportunity to evaluate their practice and development. The IRO overview also sets new goals and action plans to be undertaken and achieved during the following year. FWF also make relevant information enquiries as part of the review process.

The Review process involves, consultation and feedback from the following:

- The foster carer.
- Any child/young person currently placed with the foster carer or having lived with them during the previous 12 months – subject to their age and understanding.
- Any placing local authority which has, within the preceding year placed a child/young person with the foster carer.
- Foster carers birth children.
- All adult members of the fostering household.

- Birth parents of any fostered child/young person, if appropriate.

Foster carers are invited to give regular written feedback prior to their annual review on the quality of supervision and support they have received from FWF. They are also invited to reflect on their learning and development needs, including their Personal Development Plan (PDP). This feedback is monitored by the Registered Manager and the Fostering Panel.

All reviews are conducted in line with regulatory requirements of Fostering Regulation 28(2). This also means that a first review must take place not more than a year after approval. Subsequent reviews should take place within twelve months of the previous review, and every twelve months thereafter.

Family Works Fostering must be satisfied that the foster carers continue to meet the required Standards as set out in Regulation 28 (4). Household Reviews are undertaken annually on each fostering household or more frequently, where there is a change of circumstances or following

- A serious complaint, allegation of abuse, or other matters of serious concern.
- A significant change of circumstances, such as a carer's adult child returning home, relationship problems or separations, significant health issues, pregnancy, etc.
- A request of the Fostering Panel.
- A request from the foster carer
- A request of the supervising social worker
- A request of the child/young person's school or college
- A request to amend the foster carer's approval for example, an increase in the number of children in placement.

The Supervising Social Worker prepares a report for the Review which must evaluate and weigh up the evidence gathered from formal supervisions undertaken during the period under review. A Household Review Meeting takes place to consider the evidence gathered from the consultation / feedback. This Review is attended by the Supervising Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer and foster carers. The subsequent report completed by the Independent Reviewing Officer is considered together with other reports by the Fostering Panel and the ADM.

If, having considered the Review, the Agency Decision Maker decides that approval should continue they will write to the foster carer(s) informing them of the decision and the terms of approval (Regulation 28 (6)). All first reviews are required by the regulations to be considered by the Fostering Panel. It is Family Works Fostering's practice that subsequent household reviews are also considered and scrutinised by the Fostering Panel and approved by the ADM.

The Annual Household Review considers:

- Current household members
- Changes of Circumstances since previous review
- Placements during the last year
- Status of statutory checks
- Visits including unannounced visit
- Significant incidents including Child Protection and/or Standards of Care concerns, complaints and allegations
- Health and Safety

- Comments on foster carer's log
- Support needs of foster carer household
- Supervising social worker's overall report
- Training and Development
- Consideration of approval and future use

If the terms of a foster carer's approval need to change, the report is considered by the Fostering Panel and the carer is invited to attend.

Refusal or termination of approval

When the Agency Decision Maker proposes not to approve the prospective foster carers following recommendations by the Fostering Panel, prospective foster carers have the right to challenge this. When termination or a change of approval is proposed by the Agency Decision Maker, this can be done through representations to Family Works Fostering or through requesting an independent review of their case. Family Works Fostering has a leaflet for carers and prospective carers attending Fostering Panel that explains the processes available. Applicants can ask the Fostering Panel to reconsider their case or alternatively can ask for an independent review from the independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

Section 8

Support for Foster Carers

Family Works Fostering values the work foster carers do and the contributions they make to the lives of fostered children and young people. We recognised that it is important to provide appropriate levels of support to foster care families to ensure positive and successful placements. Family Works Fostering provides a creative and flexible package of support to foster carers and the children and young people in their care. Identifying and arranging the necessary level of support required takes place when a foster carer and child/young person are "matched" at the placement planning stages. Support is then monitored and tailored accordingly. FWF provides the following support to all our foster carers:

Qualified and experienced Supervising Social Workers

Each foster carer is supported and supervised by an allocated Supervising Social Worker whose role includes support, supervision, monitoring and liaison with the placing local authorities. Supervising Social Workers visit foster carers regularly dependent on the level of need.

Supervising Social Workers (SSW) will also be aware of any health and safety, child protection and standards of care issues during their home visits. The SSWs will offer support when foster carers have difficulties within their own lives which may impact on the fostering tasks. The Supervising Social Worker is also mandated to undertake at least one unannounced visit to foster carers each year.

Supervisions also enable the foster carer to ensure that the child's assessed needs are being met and the Care Plan is being compiled with. A record of supervision is provided to the foster carer and placed on their file following the supervision visit that covers:

- Ongoing support and contact with foster carers and children in placement through visits and telephone calls.
- Guidance and advice to the foster carer in relation to the care of the children and young people.
- Identifying training and development needs and methods of developing the carer's skills and knowledge – as evidenced in the Carers Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- Liaising with other professionals who may be involved in the Care of the child or young person and contribute to formal Care Plans
- Identify and responding to foster carers' training needs
- Maintain accurate records of the progress of all matters relating to the foster carer and the child/young person placed, including outcomes.

Foster Carer Support Groups

Foster carer support groups take place regularly to socialise, share good practice, develop peer support, receive informal training, listen to guest speakers and have fun. Family Works Fostering has started to offer carers Reflective Support Groups which are facilitated by a therapist to help carers share experiences of any challenges they are facing with their foster children and young people in a reflective case discussion that provides opportunities for them to get advice and alternative strategies to use to support their children and young people. Family Works Fostering is in the process of developing a Foster Carer's Forum.

Emergency Support

Family Works Fostering provides a 24/7, 365 days a year on-call support service to our foster carers. This service is staffed by qualified and experienced Supervising Social Workers with access to the Registered Manager for additional professional advice and support.

Buddy Support

Family Works Fostering has established a 'Buddy Support' where experienced foster carers provide support to newly approved foster carers. Buddies offer support to foster carers requiring additional assistance for example, during an allegation or difficult periods when a child is going missing, at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), gang's affiliation. All experienced foster carers who are Buddies receive appropriate training for their role.

Policies and Procedures

Our foster carers have access to FWF's Policies and Procedures, together with information and guidance on all aspects of fostering. All information is regularly updated to comply with Standards and Regulations.

Family Works Fostering Website

Our foster carers have access to a secure section of our website, where they can view vital information, including the Foster Carer's Handbook, policies and procedures, practice guidance, relevant forms and information on all aspects of fostering.

Record Keeping

Foster Carers are expected to maintain records of events and information relating to the child or young person in their care. Foster carers are obligated to complete weekly or monthly reports on the child or young person in their care. This must support the compilation of regular reports for the placing local authority social workers. Foster carers are also expected to provide incident reports about children in their care and immediately report to the agency any Notifiable Events about a child in their care. FWF is

now using a new data management software CHARMS, which has ensured that the security of our confidential records and that our record keeping is streamlined. Our carers will be trained to use CHARMS and will be able to securely and efficiently complete their logs on the system.

Supporting Birth Children

Family Works Fostering recognises the significant contribution that birth children play in making successful placements. We provide events and opportunities for birth children to meet and discuss with FWF staff regarding the impact (positives and negatives) of sharing their home and family with a fostered child. Birth children are also invited to activities events FWF holds for foster children and young people.

Fostering Network Membership

All our foster carers are entitled to an annual membership of the Fostering Network, paid for by Family Works Fostering. This membership provides advice and guidance as well as access to legal advice, mediation and insurance.

Finance

All foster carers receive an allowance paid monthly in arrears. Foster carers are entitled to one week's paid respite and receive a mileage allowance for excessive mileage undertaken on any foster care activity.

Tax and NI

All our foster carers are self-employed and as such must pay their own tax and NI. Fostering Network provides all our foster carers with updated tax information. FWF also provides updated information from HMRC about tax issues and encourages foster carers to always check with HMRC if they are not clear about their tax status.

Unannounced Visit

All foster carers receive at least two unannounced visits each year from their supervising social worker.

Therapeutic Support

Family Works Fostering commission qualified and experienced therapists who work locally through an organisation called Orb8. All foster carers with children and young people in placement will be offered advice and support by an independent therapist and consideration is given as to how their placement can meet a child's emotional needs. The focus of attention is to make placements more successful by assisting and supporting foster carers to better understand and manage the presenting behaviours of the children and young people. This has been emphasised as a significant area of support for foster carers during the 2020-21 Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period. Foster carers are offered Introduction to Therapeutic Foster Care after their first household review. If individual therapy for a child or young person would be beneficial to meeting their needs, funding approval should be obtained from the placing authority.

Additional support

Additional support may include frequent visits and telephone calls from a Supervising Social Worker and additional respite offered on a needs-led basis. Family Works Fostering will endeavour, with the help and support of carers, to ensure that all carers have a Back-Up carer in place as well as:

- Target of 4 activities for carers and children, e.g. BBQ, family days out etc.

- Independent allegation support services to carers
- Social Worker attendance at placement admissions, meetings, looked after child reviews, etc

Support Network

All foster carers are encouraged to identify a member of their family or close friends who can be available when needed to provide care to children and young people when carers require any period of respite/break, as this means the child / young person in placement is cared for by a member of the carer's extended family who may already have a relationship with them. We will undertake a home visit and complete a short assessment of any named support carer network. If this is not possible, we aim to link them with a specific carer for any period of respite.

Section 9

Sufficiency strategies and recovery plans in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Family Works Fostering has been proactive in establishing and regularly monitoring its Business Continuity Plan and Covid-19 Strategic Risk Management Plan as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which has brought in restrictions and lockdowns in 2020-2021. The coronavirus has brought significant impact on everyday life, for our children and young people, our foster carers and members of staff and independent panel members. Although we appreciate that these are unsettling, unprecedented and challenging times for everyone, we responded adequately to the challenges brought in by the Covid-19 pandemic and ensured that the service continue to run smoothly and robustly, providing support, certainty and stability to children and young people in our care and supporting our foster carers to continue to provide care and respond adequately to the needs of the children placed with them.

FWF achieved this by:

- Reviewing and amending our policies and procedures to reflect Covid-19 changes-recruitment and assessment policy, health and safety policy, infection control policy etc.
- There has been no impact on staff recruitment as FWF employed staff during the Covid-19 pandemic which ensured adequate staffing levels are in place. We also provided a service through ORB8 that supported staff wellbeing, through regular meetings, individual check in sessions and reflective groups.
- We have maintained our liaison and working relationship with placing local authorities through virtual meetings. FWF has been part of local authority forums on discussions and planning around Covid-19 responses.
- Providing information and updates to foster carers and staff since the pandemic started in February 2020 about Covid-19, how it is transmitted, symptoms and preventative measures that needed to be taken to prevent infections. Carers and staff are also updated on a weekly basis with current information on the government guidelines related to Covid-19, with emphasis to make use of the government and the National Health Service (NHS) websites: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>; <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- FWF has provided on an ongoing basis information to staff and foster carers on understanding the new rules the routinely changing and updated government guidance
- FWF has introduced a Covid-19 Newsletter Briefing for staff and foster carers
- FWF has introduced weekly Huddles for staff as a strategy to maintain ongoing staff contact and check ins. This has helped to provide weekly updates on fostering households and children and young people in their care and the advice and support being provided to manage the changes brought in by the lockdown. This helped in tracking unstable placements and offering the support needed by both the child and the carers.

- Children and young people are given information on Covid-19 to improve their knowledge and understanding of the virus, how it is spread and the actions they have to take individually to prevent getting the virus or passing it on to others. Children are given the Covid-19 Social Story which explains in simple terms what they need to know about the virus. Children are also provided with Covid-19 Guidance in different languages. FWF also provides children and young people with a Coronavirus Workbook, Coronavirus Handwash Posters and Coronavirus Poster-Photo symbols as part of our information sharing strategy in providing the Guidance on the Covid-19 virus and associated illnesses spreading across the country and in the world how to avoid catching or spreading Coronavirus (Covid-19) and staying safe.
- FWF has continued to accept new children placements, with the necessary risk assessments completed on Covid-19. FWF staff and carers will frequently come into contact with newly arrived children and young people to the UK. Government guidance will be followed for those UASC's who have come from affected areas with or without symptoms of Covid-19. Key information will be gathered as part of risk assessments including travel routes, duration of travel and nationality of the person who has entered the UK and information shared with the foster carers. FWF will continue to source translated information for those whose first language is not English. Guidance will be sought from the respective local authority's Children Looked After Nurse about registering the new arrival with a doctor/dentist/optician and if there are any immediate health concerns that need to be addressed.
- Children and young people's Individual safe caring plans have been updated and are regularly reviewed to reflect the challenges of Covid-19 and how children are being supported within their foster homes and when in the community to be safe.
- Children and young people supported by their foster carers to attend health and medical appointments remotely
- Face to face contact for children and young people was restricted due to Covid-19 lockdown. FWF ensured that contact between children and their families would still happen via alternative methods, preferably involving "live" methods such as ZOOM, MS Teams, Facetime and Skype. FWF and local authorities discussed each planned contact to agree how to conduct the contact, aiming on making this as creative, fun, meaningful and participative as possible for the child.
- Our carers have also supported supervised face to face contact taking place within Family Centres, with a safe distance maintained between the carers, contact worker and the parent(s).
- For the period of the Covid-19 lockdown, most children not able to attend school were supported to access learning remotely. FWF worked closely with local authority social workers to ensure that children and young people have laptops to use for remote learning. Our children have resumed school during the Covid-19 restrictions and older children in secondary schools have been encouraged to wear a face mask when on public transport and within the school premises and to always have a bottle of hand sanitizer with them so that they can clean their hands to reduce the risk of contracting the Covid-19 infection. Carer have continued to provide their children with the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs).
- Virtual activities were provided to children and young people via ZOOM as most places of leisure and interest remained closed during the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- Weekly coffee mornings for foster carers during the Covid-19 lockdown period has helped foster carers to continue to network with their colleagues and share experiences of the lockdown and how they are supporting children and young people most of whom were staying at home due to school closures. Maintaining social networks for the carers is significant in preventing social isolation.
- A WhatsApp group for Family Works Fostering foster carers has been created and guidance on use provided. Carers have been using the WhatsApp group as a forum to share ideas on activities to do with children, cooking, baking challenges and general information on Covid-19.

- Family Works Fostering commission qualified and experienced therapists who work locally through an organisation called Orb8. All foster carers with children and young people in placement will be offered advice and support by an independent therapist and consideration is given as to how their placement can meet a child's emotional needs. The focus of attention is to make placements more successful by assisting and supporting foster carers to better understand and manage the presenting behaviours of the children and young people. This has been emphasised as a significant area of support for foster carers during the 2020-21 Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period.
- Training for foster carers, staff and panel members has been conducted remotely and online during the pandemic lockdown. In preparing new fostering applicants as part of their assessment, FWF made use of The Digital edition of The Skills to Foster-newly developed by the Fostering Network in response to fostering services training moving to online delivery during the Coronavirus pandemic
- FWF continue to recruit the right foster carers who can meet the diverse needs of children and young people. Stage 1 assessments are being progressed as usual. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, FWF undertook virtual/digital Stage 2 assessments through the use of video apps. This aligned to the strategic risk assessment outcome that the business is still operating and there is no impact on service delivery due to Covid-19.
- Due to Covid-19 pandemic, fostering panels are being held virtually via ZOOM. FWF has continued to conduct its panels with a full quoracy of five panel members despite the temporary regulation review suggesting that potential changes to the way providers would conduct panels in response to Covid-19. Panel efficiency has been improved by ensuring that panel member questions are sent to the Panel Chair prior to panel as this helps to coordinate panel member contributions and make panel processes more efficient. Part of our recovery plan is to ensure that when it is safe to do so subject to government guidelines, face to face panels will resume in 2021.
- Supervising social workers having weekly contact with the foster carers
- FWF has introduced Coronavirus (Covid-19)-Risk Assessment for Foster Carers and Employees in a High-Risk Category to help in taking the measures necessary for the safety and health protection of our workforce
- FWF staff have been working remotely to reduce non-essential contact and unnecessary travel.
- Visits to foster carers and children and young people have been virtual via Zoom with Supervising Social Workers conducting face to face visits when needed. We at FWF know that risks to children are not static and it is critical that we continue to re-assess risks, needs and resources in the present context for all children and young people informed by observation, direct work and assessments. As the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown eases out, we have now increased our direct working and home visiting with foster carers and children and young people in their care, doing this safely following government guidance and through the use of Personal Protection Equipments (PPEs).
- FWF has encouraged participation to the Covid-19 testing programme for key workers (including foster carers), which the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) announced in April 2020 that all essential workers in England and members of their households who are showing symptoms of Coronavirus will now be able to get tested.
- Support was provided to self-isolating households where a carer or a child tested positive to Covid-19, through information, advice and guidance, the offer to do household shopping for the carers including provision of PPEs when needed.
- FWF has offered bereavement support for carers and children and young people.

- As part of contingency planning, FWF ensured that there are respite placements available internally to use in the event that foster carers become unwell with Covid-19 and are not able to provide care to the children in their care.
- FWF has provided up to date notifications to Ofsted on Covid-19 infections within fostering households or of the approved foster carers.
- FWF continues to work closely with our partners to plan and coordinate our visits to children and maximise our collective opportunity to support our carers and monitor children placed in their care which is our duty of care to safeguard and support the most vulnerable children and young people.
- FWF has an up-to-date Business Continuity Plan which identifies essential key areas of the organisation and planning how to maintain these if an incident occurs. It is recognised that in the vast majority of situations occurring, services disruptions will be minimal and manageable within our usual management structure.
- FWF continues to have ongoing risk assessments-staff, foster carers, children and young people to inform our recovery response and preparation for resuming normal operations, when the Covid-19 lockdown ends.

Section 10

Complaints and Representations

Family Works Fostering believes that children and young people, their families and foster carers, have the right to express their views including: compliments, complaints, suggestions or representations about the services planned and delivered. We believe this cooperative and transparent working relationship, helps improve the quality and effectiveness of our services. FWF has a complaints procedure which is available in different formats suitable for children, young people, carers, parents and professionals.

The complaints procedure is also provided to all persons working for and on behalf of Family Works Fostering. We provide copies of Children's Guide or Young Person's Handbook to each child and young person when they move into their foster care home. These guides/handbooks also have details of the Complaints Procedure, the foster care home rules and their rights to complain. The Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) details are also listed in the guides.

Family Works Fostering view suggestions and complaints received as positive means of ensuring the quality of our services is measured and critique by everyone affected by our fostering decisions and plans.

Family Works Fostering complies fully with the National Minimum Standards (NMS) by commissioning an independent social worker to investigate all complaints further if the complainant continues to be unhappy following the informal problem-solving stage.

Complaint Monitoring

The Complaints Officer and Registered Manager also keep a record of all complaints received and the outcomes. Details of any investigation into a complaint or representation regarding a foster carer are also shared and updated with the Fostering Panel.

Carer Allegation

Children can sometimes be subjected to abuse by those who work with them. All allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children by a staff member, foster carer, or any other person in contact with children on our behalf, will be taken seriously and treated in accordance with current fostering procedures. Family Works Fostering also has a Carer Allegation Support System in place.

Whistleblowing

We aim to provide a nurturing environment for children, young people, foster carers and staff that enables them to raise issues or highlight gaps in our service provisions without fear of reprisal. Family Works Fostering has a Whistleblowing Policy for reporting circumstances that may arise and where foster carers or employees; can be assured that any concerns raised will be dealt with sufficiently and transparently.

Compliments

All compliments received from children, young people, foster carers, local authorities and any other agencies, are recorded and monitored by FWF as part of our quality assurance procedure.

We encourage complaints to be raised initially with FWF Registered Manager by email:

admin@fw-fostering.co.uk or to the foster parent, the placing authority social worker or FWF Supervising Social Worker.

Alternatively, complaints can be directed to the following external agencies:

Ofsted

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Voice of the Child in Care (VCC) /Independent Advocate:

Telephone: 0808 800 5792

Children's Commissioner for England

Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London

SW1P 3BT

Telephone: 020 7783 8330

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Childline:

Freephone: 0800 1111
Web: www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London
EC2A 3NH
Freephone: 08088005000
Freetext: 88858
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

The Who Cares? Trust

15-18 White Lion Street
London
N1 9PG
Telephone: 020 7251 3117
Email: advice@thewhocarestrust.org.uk
Website: www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

Section 11**Useful contacts**

Further information about services that support fostering and foster carers can be found at the following websites:

CoramBAAF

Coram Campus
41 Brunswick Square
London, WC1N 1AZ
Telephone: 02075200300
Email: advice@corambaaf.org.uk
Website: www.coram.org.uk

Fosterline

Language Line facilities are available.
Oak Tree House
Waterside
Hanbury Road
Stoke Prior
Bromsgrove
B60 4FD
Telephone: 0800 040 7675
Email: enquiries@fosterline.info
Website: www.fosterline.info

Family Works Fostering Support Line

Suite 19-20, Business Centre
8 Madeira Avenue
Leigh on Sea
Essex
SS9 3EB

Mobile: 07415841254, 07554011516

This is a 24/7 service to ensure that foster carers have access to out of hours help, information, advice and support. Our supervising social workers are also available to support respective foster carers they supervise during out of hours on any emergency issues.

Fostering Network Support Line

Telephone: 020 7620 6400
email: info@fostering.net
Website: www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

HMRC Tax issues

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>

Financial Advice

Telephone: 0800 138 7777
Email: enquiries@moneyadvice.service.org.uk
Website: www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk