



Star Fostering
Building Brighter Futures

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

STAR FOSTERING LTD

AUGUST 2020

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Statement of Purpose – Contents

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1) Introduction

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations (2011).

These regulations require fostering agencies to produce a Statement of Purpose which provides a useful source of information to staff, Foster Carers, prospective Foster Carers, children and young people who live with Star Fostering's Foster Carers, their parents and extended family, partner agencies and local authorities.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed regularly, and at least annually by the management of Star Fostering Ltd and updated versions are provided to Ofsted and available on the agency's website – www.starfostering.co.uk

Star Fostering aims to meet and exceed the requirements arising from:-

- The Children Act (1989)
- The Care Standards Act (2000)
- The Children and Young Persons Act (2008)
- The Fostering Services Regulations (2011)
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011)
- Volume 4: Fostering Services, Amendments to the Children Act 1989 (2013)
- Star Fostering Policies, Procedures and Guidance.

Star Fostering Ltd is a 'family owned agency'. It was incorporated on 17th July 2019 as an Independent Fostering Agency and registered with Ofsted on 27th November 2019 (SC2567404). The office is based at Unit 2B, Suite 4B, East Bridgford Business Park, Kneeton Road, Nottinghamshire, NG13 8PJ. The daily administration is undertaken by Julie Hackett, Office Manager. Julie also provides administration to the Agency's Fostering Panel.

Hazel Lamb, Senior Supervising Social Worker, provides support and supervision to foster carers across the East Midlands. Hazel qualified as a social worker in 2004 and worked initially as a children's social worker. From 2007 onwards, Hazel has worked for Independent Fostering Agencies, supervising foster carers and therefore has a great deal of experience in this role.

2) Vision and Mission Statement

Our Vision

Children and Young People that are unable to live with their own birth families are provided with a family life that enables them to have fun, learn and develop into adults that have the potential to create a good life for themselves and the ability to build their own stable families.

Our Mission Statement

Star Fostering fully supports and values our Foster Carers, recognising they are the foundation of the service we provide. We ensure that Foster Carers receive excellent quality support and training so that they can offer a very high level of care to children and young people, from new-born up to 18 years. Working in partnership with our Foster Carers and the child's social worker, we aim to ensure that any child placed within our agency is able to enjoy their childhood and reach their full potential.

We aim to recruit a diverse range of Foster Carers from different backgrounds, ethnicities, religions and cultures so that we can match each child to a family that can best meet their needs.

We offer a complete package of care which include therapeutic services for children and young people with complex needs.

The Directors of Star Fostering have extensive experience in fostering and adoption services, risk management and in the voluntary, public and private sectors. Social work staff have expertise in the childcare profession and support staff have a background in childcare services and/or compliance.

3) Aims and Objectives

The Agency's Aim

Star Fostering aims to provide high quality foster placements for children and young people. This is achieved by providing excellent support and training opportunities to Foster Carers so that they in turn can offer a great family life and therapeutic parenting to children who have been affected by abuse, neglect, loss and trauma. Excellent quality care, nurturing support and encouragement will enable children and young people to flourish, gain in confidence, enjoy family life and realise their full potential. Star Fostering aims to help children achieve a brighter future.

Objectives

- To safeguard children and young people at all times and ensure that Foster Carers and staff members are clear that it is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe from harm.

- To provide high levels of support to our Foster Carers so that they are resilient and can maintain excellent quality care for children and young people.
- To provide high quality training opportunities for Foster Carers to enable them to provide therapeutic care to children and young people.
- To access therapeutic interventions for children and young people in order to help them overcome the adversities that they have faced.
- To work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to ensure that the needs of every child are met in accordance with their individualised care plan.
- To establish good working relationships with Local Authority Commissioners.
- To provide children and young people with a stable, nurturing and encouraging home environment.
- To maximise educational opportunities for all children and young people so that they can develop and achieve their full potential.
- To ensure that our Foster Carers respect and value difference by providing information, advice and support that enables the Foster Carers to help the child in their care to come to terms with their past experiences and move on in a positive way, being proud of who they are.
- To provide opportunities for children and young people to remain with their siblings or where this is not appropriate or possible, to be pro-active about contact in order to maintain strong sibling relationships.
- To promote contact between the child and their parents and extended family where this is deemed appropriate.
- To assist parents in parent and child placements to learn how to parent their child safely and provide support that enables them to become effective parents.
- To provide high levels of welcome, encouragement, support and nurture to all children and young people in our care.

4) Our Ethos and Values

Star Fostering believes that a family environment is essential for the majority of children in care. We endeavour to provide foster families that offer the care, encouragement, protection and support that all children should be entitled to.

Children will be supported to maintain contact with their families and significant others and Foster Carers will encourage children to be proud of who they are, celebrating their talents and achievements.

Children and young people will be consulted with and listened to and consideration will be given to their views when decisions about their lives are being made. When it is considered not in the child or young person's best interest to act upon their wishes, they will be helped to understand why this is.

There is an ongoing commitment to safeguarding and promoting each child or young person's emotional and physical wellbeing. Each child is provided with appropriate healthcare and access to therapeutic services to enable them to deal with the impact of trauma, abuse and loss.

5) The Work of Star Fostering

Star Fostering Ltd is an Independent Fostering Agency that has been established to provide safe, high quality foster placements to children and young people who are 'looked after' by local authorities. We aim to offer an environment which enables children and young people to fulfil their potential and live positive and happy lives. The children and young people referred to the agency by the local authorities often have complex emotional needs due to their experiences of abuse, neglect and early trauma. These negative experiences result in challenging and often misunderstood behaviours which can place a great deal of pressure on Foster Carers, so it's important to us to provide high levels of support and training to our fostering families. This means offering good levels of support to the Foster Carer's own children also.

The administration of the agency takes place at the office situated at East Bridgford, Nottinghamshire.

Matching the needs of children to carers that can meet their needs is essential. We aim to identify the strongest match for a child entering our agency and provide the Foster Carers with excellent support, training opportunities and resources to help them meet the needs of each child. We work in partnership with local authority's social workers, commissioners, education professionals, therapists and other agencies to achieve the best possible outcomes for children who need to be 'looked after'. We offer the following types of placements:

Emergency

Star Fostering is able to accept unplanned emergency placements. This can be for a few days whilst a more permanent placement is sought.

Respite

Respite placements are provided to give Foster Carers or parents a break. Foster Carers within the agency are entitled to 14 nights respite each year and this respite provision is covered within the agency with the aim of children and young people spending time with people known to them in the same way that children living with their own families might spend time with extended family members

Short Term

The provision of short-term fostering can be for a few days, weeks or months, up to two years whilst the local authority makes plans for the child's future.

Long Term

Long term placements offer a stable family life for children and these placements are where adoption is not an option (usually because the child is over the age where they would be likely to get adopted or it is important that the child maintains contact with their birth family members). In long term foster care, the Foster Carer(s) will care for the child/young person up to adulthood and beyond.

Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children

Star Fostering recruits Foster Carers from diverse backgrounds who are willing to advocate, access universal services and work within the child's care plan in order to support and care for unaccompanied children and young people from outside the UK.

Sibling Placements

Star Fostering recruits carers with the skills and home environment suitable to care for sibling groups. We believe it is very important to keep siblings together wherever possible unless it has been assessed that this would be detrimental to the children.

Parent and Child Placements

Foster Carers also provide placements for mothers and/or fathers and their child/ren. These carers have undertaken specific training over 3 days to help them to provide guidance and support to parents whilst they learn how to parent their child safely. Parent and Child Foster Carers may need to provide evidence in court proceedings and their daily recordings may be presented as evidence. The training also equips them for this responsibility.

6) The Recruitment, Approval, Training and Reviewing of Foster Carers

Initial Enquiry

Initial enquiries can be made via telephone phone call to the office on 0115 671 1099 or via the enquiry form on the website www.starfostering.co.uk.

All initial enquiries are responded to within 2 working days. A 30 minute initial telephone discussion will take place. An insight into the suitability of the enquirer will be obtained and information about the assessment process and the types of children and young people requiring foster placements will be provided. At the end of the discussion, the enquirer can choose whether to request written information via email or post (they might want to share this with a partner) or an initial home visit is arranged.

Initial Home Visit

A social worker will undertake a home visit which will take approximately 1½ to 2 hours. During this visit, the Social Worker will further assess the prospective Foster Carer(s) suitability and will also ask to see the bedroom/s that would be used by foster children. They will ensure that the home environment is safe and suitable for fostering. The social worker will provide more detailed information about fostering, the assessment process, the different types of fostering and referrals being received, the training and support offered by the agency and the financial allowance. If the social worker is satisfied that the individuals are suitable to foster, an application pack will be left with the prospective Foster Carers.

Skills to Foster Training Course

Upon receipt of a completed application form, the applicants will be invited to a three day training event called 'Skills to Foster'. This training was developed by 'The Fostering Network' the UK's leading fostering charity. This training includes the following topics:-

- What do Foster Carers do?
- Understanding children in foster care
- Safeguarding
- Identity and life chances
- Working with others
- Safer caring
- The impact of fostering on birth children
- Transitions

The applicant's involvement in this training programme forms part of their Form F Assessment.

The Form F Assessment

BAAF (the British Association for Adoption and Fostering) designed the assessment tool known as the Form F Assessment. This assessment involves two stages which can be undertaken concurrently to avoid delays.

Stage one

- Verification of identity and personal history and evidence of leave to remain and work in the UK.
- Health information. Applicants are required to have a medical check by their GP.
- Information about all household members.
- An enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) on all adult members of the family and anyone who may provide back-up care. Any person that has lived overseas will require an Interpol check or a check from the country where they lived.
- Enquiries to Social Services Departments and their Child Protection Registers.
- Enquiries to the applicant's children's schools.
- Applicants are asked to identify three personal referees, of whom one can be a family member. The referees will be asked to provide written information on their view of the applicant/s suitability to foster and the Assessing Social Worker will visit the referees to discuss their responses.
- References are obtained from current employers and from previous employers where the employment has involved children or vulnerable adults
- Where applicants are renting their property, formal agreement from their landlord will be sought.
- If applicants have previously been Foster Carers or they are transferring from one agency to another, a reference will be requested from the previous/current agency and the Assessor will visit the agency to read the Foster Carer files.

Any charges in relation to health and DBS checks will be met by the agency.

Stage Two

The Assessing Social Worker visits the applicant's home on 8-10 occasions to collate information about the applicants experience of raising children and/or working with children/young people. The information gathered includes:

- Information on the applicant's accommodation and neighbourhood.
- Each applicant's family background and childhood, including education.
- Each applicant's adult life including employment and previous relationships.
- The applicants' personalities and current relationship (where the applicants are a couple).
- Information on all household members and lifestyle.
- The applicant's support network, including any adult children no longer living at home.
- A financial assessment.

- The applicants experience of caring for, encouraging and protecting children and providing boundaries and durability.
- The applicant's ability to work effectively with professionals and birth families.
- The applicant's understanding of identity and diversity.
- The applicant's motivation to foster.
- Training completed and future development needs.

Once the Assessing Social Worker has all the information, this is written into the Form F Assessment and the assessment will be shared with the applicant(s).

The Form F Assessment is then presented to Panel. The applicants are invited to the Panel meeting to answer any questions the Panel may have. This is not a statutory requirement but it is considered good practice. The Panel consists of a group of people from different backgrounds. The Panel make a recommendation on the applicants' suitability to foster. This recommendation then goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who confirms the applicants' approval as Foster Carers for Star Fostering.

The Independent Reviewing Mechanism

Should the Fostering Panel make a recommendation to not approve the applicants as Foster Carers (a qualifying determination) then the applicants have the right for that decision to be reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRM). The IRM provides independent panels that review decisions made by fostering and adoption providers, including local authorities, private agencies and charities. The IRM is run by Coram Children's Legal Centre on behalf of the Department for Education and is made up of people who have experience with children which may include Foster Carers, adopters and social workers as well as people who have been fostered or adopted.

7) Consultation with children and young people

The National Minimum Standard 1 states the following outcomes:

"Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and to know how to obtain support and make a complaint".

"The views of others with an important relationship to the child are gathered and taken into account".

The views of children and young people are very important to Star Fostering and we gather their opinions in many ways. As a developing service, it's imperative that we involve them in helping to shape the agency and can do this in the following ways:-

- Involving children in the process of their Foster Carer's review. Their feedback in their Foster Carer's annual review is essential and provides the Agency and Panel with reassurance that children are thriving in their foster homes.

- Children and Young People are spoken to on their own by the Agency's Supervising Social Workers during two unannounced visits each calendar year.
- Children and Young people are provided with a complaints form and information on how to make a complaint on their entry into placement. This is put into their welcome box along with a stamped addressed envelope so that they can keep this safe.
- Children and young people receive a Children's Guide appropriate to their age and understanding. This also includes information on how to make a complaint, how to contact the Agency Director, the Children's Rights Officer and Ofsted.
- Young people are invited to speak with prospective Foster Carers at the 3 day 'Skills to Foster' course, to present their thoughts on what makes a good Foster Carer.
- Young people attend forum groups where their views are sought and where they can assist in the development of resources such as recruitment leaflets or feedback forms.
- Children and young people are invited to family outings where they can speak informally with staff and the Directors.
- Big Star and Little Star achievement certificates are sent out twice a year to acknowledge the talents and achievements of the children and young people.
- A 'looked after' young person is included on staff interview panels. Where this might not be achievable, a previously looked after young person will be approached.

Therapeutic Services for Children, Young People and Foster Carers.

Many children and young people that are in foster care have experienced significant trauma through abuse, neglect and loss. This can impact on their emotions, development and behaviour. If children are not helped to understand and make sense of the trauma that they have experienced, then it is well known that they carry it around within them, unresolved, sometimes forever. This pre-occupation with things that they cannot get rid of, often makes it difficult for a traumatised child to function ordinarily. It is important that the right type of therapeutic intervention is sourced to enable children to deal with their past experiences in order to be able to move on to enjoy a more positive future.

Where children receive a 'holistic package of support' through the local authority agreeing a fee enhancement (holistic care package) then one of the following can be included at any one time:-

- **Theraplay** - (16 sessions including a Marschak Interaction Method (MIM) Assessment. Theraplay is a child and family therapy for building and enhancing attachment, self-esteem, trust in others and joyful engagement. It is based on the natural patterns of playful, healthy interaction between the carer and the child and is personal, physical and fun. Theraplay interactions focus on four essential qualities found in parent/carer-child relationships: Structure, Engagement, Nurture, and Challenge. Theraplay sessions create an active, emotional connection, resulting in a changed view of the child's self as worthy and lovable and of relationships as positive and rewarding.
- **Direct work** with a Support Worker to deal with issues such as increasing confidence, managing contact, navigating peer relationships, being bullied, independence skills etc
- **Counselling** from a qualified Psycho-dynamic Counsellor, including relationship counselling.
- **Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP)** - attachment focused therapy developed by Dr Daniel Hughes. This is an evidence-based treatment for complex trauma, attachment issues and other issues with attachment.
- **Therapeutic life-story work.** Different to traditional Life Story Work or Life History Work, Therapeutic Life Story Work (or TLSW) is a defined approach pioneered by Richard Rose that directly involves the child's primary carer (very often a long-term Foster Carer) from the beginning of the process to the end. Working as a triad with the TLSW practitioner, this intervention is designed to strengthen the relationship between the child and their carer through exploring the child's history together.

Foster Carers whose child is on a 'holistic care package' are considered to be Therapeutic Foster Carers and will attract an enhanced fee. There will be a requirement on these Foster Carers to undertake additional training such as therapeutic parenting. Should a child be placed on a standard care package, the Agency is able to quote on a spot purchase basis for the interventions described above. However, there may be a period of waiting until the resource is available as children on holistic packages will take priority.

Foster Carers and Secondary Trauma.

"The development of secondary traumatic stress is recognized as a common occupational hazard for professionals working with traumatized children. Studies show that from 6% to 26% of therapists working with traumatized populations, and up to 50% of child welfare workers, are at high risk for secondary traumatic stress or the related conditions of PTSD and vicarious trauma. Any professional who works

directly with traumatized children is in a position to hear the recounting of traumatic experiences, is at risk for secondary traumatic stress". That being said, risk appears to be greater among women and among individuals who are highly empathetic by nature or have unresolved personal trauma"

(The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

Caring for traumatised children on a full time basis requires resilience, understanding and empathy and Star Fostering recognises that Foster Carers are at risk of experiencing secondary traumatic stress. In order to increase Foster Carer's resilience to secondary stress, we ensure that:-

- Foster Carers have regular good quality supervision.
- Foster Carers have access to good quality training that includes therapeutic parenting and self-care.
- Foster Carers actively access their support network in order to reduce isolation. This includes regular support groups/coffee mornings, buddy system, personal supporters and back-up carers etc.
- Counselling is offered to carers who are suffering secondary trauma.

Complaints and Allegations

Complaints

Star Fostering is committed to resolving conflicts or concerns at an early stage. We ensure that complainants are kept up to date regarding the progress of how their complaint is being dealt with. A complaint may come from a child, a parent, Foster Carer or professional. It is the responsibility of Foster Carers and the agency staff to help children to deal with their complaints actively and sympathetically.

All complaints will be recorded on a complaints log and detailed on the Schedule 6 reports. Significant complaints will be notified to the Regulatory Authority under schedule 7 notifications.

The Complaint Stages

Stage 1 – this is an informal process which consists of a meeting between the complainant and the Registered Manager, Sharon North. This meeting is arranged once a complaint has been received in writing or recorded by means of other communication to the Registered Manager.

At the meeting, part of the discussion may cover whether it would be more appropriate for the complaint to be directed to the local authority who holds responsibility for the child's placement under the local authority complaints procedure.

A letter of resolution or outcome will be issued by the Registered Manager detailing how the complaint was investigated, by whom and the outcome/actions required.

Stage 2 – Individuals are able to complain at stage 2 in the first instance if they wish. Stage 2 is activated if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 or if they require the matter to be dealt with by someone who isn't employed by the agency. The complainant will be advised that they should put their complaint in writing to the Registered Manager (Sharon North) who will then contact the complainant within 5 working days to advise the name of an Independent Complaints Investigating Officer that will be dealing with the complaint and a timeframe for the investigation.

A report will be completed following the investigation, detailing how the matter was investigated, by whom and what outcome was reached with relevant evidence to support the report's conclusions.

Stage 3 – If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two investigation, they must confirm this in writing, including the reasons for their dissatisfaction to the Registered Manager, Sharon North who will arrange for the matter to be reviewed by an Independent Panel within 28 days. The Panel will be made up of:-

- A Fostering Panel Member
- The Responsible Individual
- Two independent individuals of professional standing

The Panel must be constituted in order that true independent scrutiny of the complaint can be made. Therefore, a person implicated in the complaint or a relative or association of theirs should have no involvement in the Panel or the investigation.

The Panel will consider the documentation available in relation to the complaint and any further written representations that the complainant wishes to make in relation to the investigation. The Panel's decision will be notified to the complainant within 7 days in a report format which should include any actions necessary to resolve the situation.

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 3, they may take advice from the Regulatory Authority.

Should a complaint be made against the Registered Person, Ofsted will be notified of the nature of the complaint and the outcome. This action will be undertaken by the Responsible Individual, Robert North. However, the investigation will be undertaken by an Independent Complaints Investigating Officer.

Allegations

If a complaint made to any employee of Star Fostering is of a child protection nature, then that complaint will be immediately passed on to the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding (LADO) 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 or trust, and Ofsted will be notified immediately.

Data Protection, Record Keeping and Access to Information

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities to maintain records. We treat confidentiality and data protection very seriously and ensure safe storage of records. We will only share information with other agencies with the agreement of the child and/or family members unless we have a significant concern about harm to a child when we will operate in line with government guidance on information sharing.

All requests for access to records should be made in writing to:-

Sharon North, Registered Manager
Unit 2B, Suite 4B
East Bridgford Business Park
Kneeton Road
East Bridgford
Nottinghamshire
NG13 8PJ

OFSTED

Ofsted is responsible for the registration of Star Fostering Limited as an Independent Fostering Services Provider and for the ongoing inspections of the agency.

Ofsted can be contacted at:

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Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk