



Diversity Foster Care

Diversity Foster Care Ltd

Statement of Purpose

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INTRODUCTION:

This Statement of Purpose has been produced, in compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011 and Regulation 3 (1) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

It sets out the aims and objectives of Diversity Foster Care Ltd and highlights details of its service provision. It describes the agency's: values, staffing, support structure, service provision and quality assurance framework. It will be made available to staff, students, volunteers, panel members, approved and prospective foster carers, children and young people placed with the agency, parents of children being looked after and all local authorities. The information provided in this document is a summary of the Agency's policies and procedures and has been approved by the Agency's Directors.

Our services embrace all cultures and religious faiths, and the agency specialises in delivering services for children and young people from Black, Asian, ethnic minority and dual heritage backgrounds.

The company was registered in April 2016 and commenced operations on 1st October 2017.

Diversity Foster Care received Ofsted registration on 16th October 2017 and was awarded an Ofsted rating of 'good' in March 2023.

Mission Statement

- **Diversity Foster Care** is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, through the provision of quality services and excellent standards of care for Looked After children and young people. The agency aims to offer 'best value' to local authorities and will assist them in meeting the identified outcomes and placement needs of Looked After Children.
- **Diversity Foster Care** strives to ensure that the individual needs of the children and young people in its care are met, through assisting them to reach their full potential and required outcomes. The agency embraces all cultures and seeks to ensure that children, their families, carers and staff are treated equally, and their individual identities are recognised and respected.
- **Diversity Foster Care** believe that all children deserve to be brought up in homes which are safe, nurturing and supportive, with carers who provide care equal to that given to their own children.
- **Diversity Foster Care** will listen to and communicate with the children in its care and ensure they are given the support needed to thrive and develop. The agency will listen to and support its foster carers and staff and make every effort to create an environment where individual and collective learning and development is continuous and readily available.

Focus on Outcomes

Diversity Foster Care recognise that the development of positive relationships between children, young people and their foster carers is one of the key foundations in achieving placement stability, positive outcomes and improved life chances. Therefore, the work delivered by the Agency is designed to ensure that this is acknowledged and supported by everyone involved.

To achieve this, the following key priority outcomes are central to our monitoring and review processes and are highlighted in the agency's **Strategic Plan**. They are also presented in line with the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, which is the focus of all work undertaken with the children and young people in our care:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Well-being

As such this Statement of Purpose reflects these key priorities.

PRINCIPLE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Diversity Foster Care will achieve the above 'Every Child Matters' outcomes and meet the requirements of The Fostering Regulation 2011, National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011, and related regulations for Looked After Children, by adhering to the principle aims and objectives as outlined below.

The Principle Aims of Diversity Foster Care are to:

- Place the welfare and safety of the children and young people at the centre of practice and decision-making and actively monitor and supervise all placements to ensure children are safe and their needs met.
- Ensure the Agency is managed ethically, effectively and efficiently and continues to deliver a service which meets the childcare-related needs of its children, by supporting carers, staff and everyone associated with the agency.
- Ensure that children are supported to achieve their holistic health and educational potential by treating each child as an individual and taking account of their specific needs and enabling them to attain optimum growth and development.
- Ensure that the diverse needs of children, their families and carers are fully met and challenge all forms of discrimination by seeing value in everyone, respecting and *embracing all cultures*.
- Deliver a high-quality fostering service, which ensures that foster carers are: appropriately assessed, trained and supervised to provide high quality care that values equality, individual identity and promotes healthy development.
- Develop a 'learning organisation' through, providing staff and foster carers with high quality training and support and promoting commitment to continuous learning and reflective practice.
- Ensure that all children and young people placed within the Agency, their foster carers and Agency staff feel valued and treated fairly and equally.
- Actively listen to the children and young people in the Agency's care, and where it is in their best interests, implement their wishes and feelings.
- Ensure that the children and their foster carers are regularly consulted, and their views considered, regarding the service and support provided by the agency.
- Work in partnership with foster carers, staff, local authorities, professionals and other stakeholders to collectively improve the life chances and outcomes of the children and young people in the Agency's care.

Objectives

- The Agency will develop and maintain a recruitment strategy which supports the placement requirements of the local authorities that contract with us. The Agency will offer a range of high quality, carefully matched placement options for Looked After Children and young people, with carers that have the relevant skills and abilities to meet their individual needs. Recruitment will be in line with each local authority's strategy to meet the sufficiency duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and The Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010.
- The Agency will support foster carers to ensure that the assessed needs of each child in their care are met. Emphasis will be placed on promoting the holistic, growth, development and progress of each child/ young person. Special attention will be paid to their emotional and social wellbeing, which includes the development of a positive self-image and sense of identity, positive relationships with their foster carers and peers and optimum educational outcomes.
- The views wishes and feelings of the children and young people in our care will be sought and documented, in all decisions concerning their daily lives and futures. Their views regarding the Agency's current and future services will also be obtained and where possible acted upon. Where decisions are not made in line with their wishes, clear explanations will be given. Dependent upon their age and understanding, children will be encouraged to take part in planning meetings, LAC reviews and the reviews of their foster carers.
- Foster carers will be supported through training and supervision to develop the appropriate skills, to meet the needs of the children in their care. This will include skills relating to the development of a secure base, meeting and promoting identity needs, positive parenting and assisting and responding to the views of the children in their care. In addition, a range of mandatory training courses will be delivered through tutor-led and online training. To achieve this, each carer will agree an Annual Personal Development Plan, in consultation with their Supervising Social Worker and Training Manager, which will outline a comprehensive program of training and support. This document will be monitored and reviewed throughout the year.
- All foster carers and children, where age appropriate, will have knowledge and understanding of the Agency's complaints procedure. All complaints against foster carers will be investigated in a thorough and timely manner and all parties will be informed of the outcome, which will be clearly recorded. All children will be given a copy of the agency's Children's Guide, which contains information about the agency, their rights, who to speak to if they need help and information about being in foster care. The agency also publishes a Children's Newsletter to highlight the children's achievements.
- The Agency will implement a rigorous matching system for the placement of children with carers. Foster carers will receive full information about each child, together with the Agency's and placing local authorities' expectations regarding the expected outcomes to be achieved. Carers will also receive information about the weekly remuneration for each child prior to each placement. Payments to foster carers will be made in a timely fashion on or before the 28th of each month and at a level of allowance for each child, which meets the government's national recommendations.
- The Agency will positively promote educational attainment and as such, foster carers will support this through; following the Agency's policy, which includes; advocating on behalf of children where additional educational assistance is required, ensuring regular school attendance, active school liaison, assistance with homework and attendance at Personal Education Plan and other educational related meetings.

- The Agency will support carers to meet the holistic health needs of the children in their care. In pursuit of this, foster carers will also be assisted to focus on supporting the emotional and social development of each child to promote the building of resilience. To achieve this, children will be supported and encouraged by their foster carers to develop and pursue their talents, interests and hobbies. As such it is the Agency's expectation that all children should be actively engaged in at least one extracurricular activity.
- Foster carers will be given the opportunity through carers support groups, consultation events and meetings with Directors, managers Supervising Social Workers and other staff to contribute to the direction and development of the Agency. This includes the completion of the Agency's Foster Carers Annual Service Review Form, the results of which will be evaluated independently, to ensure that recommendations and suggestions received are fully documented and considered. Where possible these suggestions will be implemented in order to continually improve the services and support offered by the Agency.
- The Agency will actively seek to challenge all forms of discrimination and will ensure that the children and young people placed with us, our carers, staff and those associated with the agency, are treating fairly and equally as outlined in our Equalities Policy.
- The services provided by the Agency will be managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively, and who are suitable to work with children. Individual roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined in the job descriptions of permanent and independent staff, students and volunteers involved with the Agency.
- The Agency will regularly monitor and review its policies and procedures for the assessment, approval, support, supervision and training of applicants and foster carers. .
- The Agency recognise the importance of confidentiality and will maintain a clear and transparent policy, which relates to foster carers and the children in our care. This will be acknowledged and respected throughout the children's and carers involvement with the Agency, and their privacy will always be respected.
- The Agency's Fostering panel will be organised efficiently and effectively to contribute towards good quality decision making and are required to regularly comment on the quality of the service. Panel members will be appropriately vetted, inducted, regularly appraised and trained and will be kept informed of Agency developments.

Values

The values which guide the Agency are as follows, and reflect the principles embedded in the National Minimum Standards for fostering:

- The welfare, safety and needs of children and young people are at the centre of our practice.
- We actively promote anti-discriminatory practice and implement a robust Equal Opportunities policy which fully promotes the gender, sexual orientation, racial, cultural, religious and linguistic heritage of children and young people placed in our care.
- Children and young people should have an enjoyable childhood, benefit from excellent parenting and education, and enjoy a wide range of opportunities which promote their resilience and enable them to develop their confidence, talents and skills.
- All children and young people should be given the opportunity to experience a full and stable childhood and a secure family life. Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving

family that meets their holistic needs and deserve to be treated as 'good' birth parents would treat their own children.

- All child's wishes and feelings should be actively sought, listened to and considered when decisions and plans are being made about their future.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given support, which is specifically designed to meet their individual needs.
- The needs of children with disabilities and complex behaviour will be fully recognised, assessed and considered.
- We recognise the importance of contact for looked after children, including maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, such as siblings, half-siblings, grandparents and other significant people.
- Foster carers should be recognised as key members of the professional network and the importance of a child's relationship with their foster carers should be acknowledged.
- Foster carers have a right to receive full information about the child/ren that they care for.
- We are committed to ensuring that our staff and carers are appropriately supported and supervised and as a 'learning organisation' we are similarly committed to the promotion of continuous individual reflective learning and development.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF CONSTITUTION

Diversity Foster Care has two Directors as outlined below, both of whom are qualified social workers, and have many years' experiences of working in and managing children's social care teams, both in local authorities and independent fostering agencies.

Rosemarie Ross

Director/ Responsible Individual

Rosemarie has lead responsibility for: Placements, Quality Assurance, Fostering Panel, Foster Carers Training, Marketing & Advertising, and Contracts. She is also the Agency's Responsible Individual, Panel Advisor and co-manages the Team Manager.

Rosemarie shares joint lead responsibility with Rosa Simpson for Safeguarding, Finance GDPR and Complaints, in respect of foster carers and children assigned to the Supervising Social Worker that she line manages at service management level.

Rosemarie is a qualified Children & Families Social worker and holds a Diploma and a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work which she obtained in 1998. During this time she has worked within several local authorities at social work, Team and Senior Service Management levels, in the field of Children's Social Care. A substantial part of her experience has involved working in safeguarding and managing local authority Looked After Children's, Access to Resources and Commissioning Teams, in South London. Prior to joining the agency Rosemarie managed another independent fostering agency.

Rosa Simpson

Director /Registered Manager

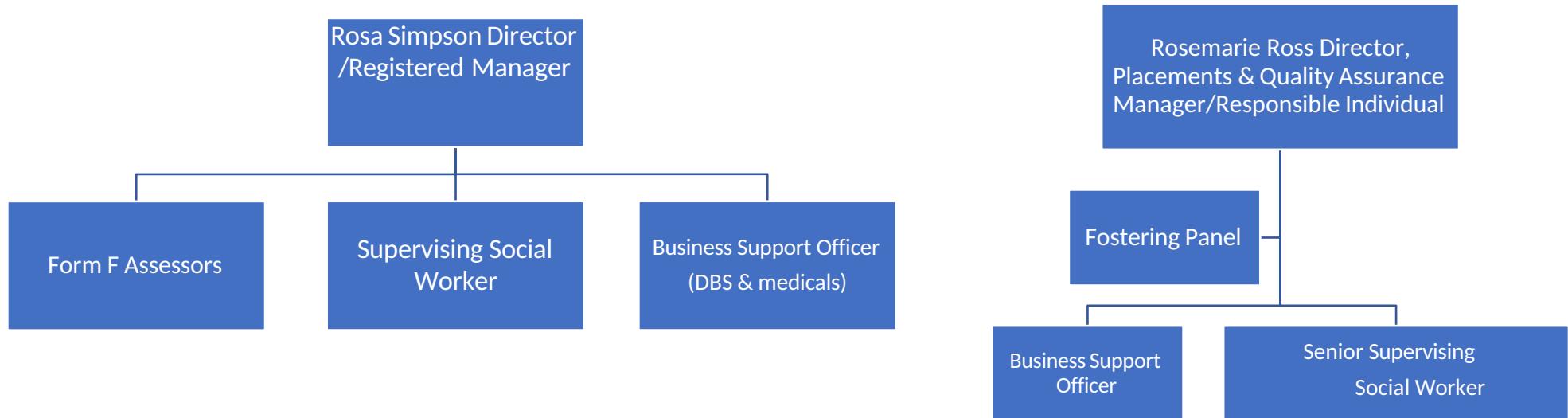
As Director and Registered Manager, Rosa has lead responsibility for the effective management of the Agency's overall operations, which includes, the completion of Regulation 35 Reports, Ofsted Returns, Carers Support Services, the management of Independent Form F Assessors and the quality assurance of applicant and carer related assessments/reviews including DBS, Medical and Health and Safety checks. Rosa shares joint responsibility for social work staff and currently manages one of the agency's Supervising Social Workers.

Rosa also shares joint lead responsibility with Rosemarie Ross for Safeguarding, GDPR, Complaints in relation to the foster carers and children that she manages, HR & the recruitment of foster carers.

Rosa qualified as a Social Worker in 1995 and obtained a Diploma and a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work. Prior to this, Rosa worked in the NHS as a Registered Nurse and subsequently a Midwife. As such, her experience of Children's Social Care and the Health sectors provide the agency with a valuable range of skills, knowledge and childcare related expertise.

Rosa qualified in 1987 and has several years management experience, seven of which was in the position of Deputy Group Manager in a Looked After Children's team and five years as a manager in local authority Fostering teams. Rosa also spent four years working as a manager in two independent fostering agencies. Her range of fostering related management experience includes: safeguarding, recruitment, assessment, training support and development of foster carers and staff, coordinating marketing campaigns, acting as a Registered Manager and Fostering Panel Adviser.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



SERVICE PROVISION

Types of Foster Care Placements Offered

The Agency offers many different types of fostering placements aimed at maximising the Agency's flexibility, in responding to the needs of individual children. They are outlined as follows:

- **Standard Placements:**

These placements are for looked after children whose needs do not require a more developed knowledge or level of skill. However, because they are no longer living with their parent/s, children in this category will invariably be experiencing issues relating to separation and loss.

- **Enhanced Placements:**

These placements are for looked after children with a greater level of need and who may present with challenging behaviours. Some children may exhibit the behavioural issues associated with emotional and attachment issues.

Enhanced support is defined as a child needing additional support in any area. Carers will usually have some experience of caring for children with additional identified needs. Foster carers who care for children with enhanced needs should be able to work as part of a team and communicate well for a solution focused approach to be achieved. These foster carers must also be stringent and skilled in completing regular recordings and analysis which assists in planning appropriate support for these looked after children.

Some enhanced placements will comprise greater expectations of the foster carer around contact, which could be more than 3 days a week or extended travel to another local authority borough.

- **Complex Needs Placements:**

Complex needs placements are designed to cater for those children who pose a higher level of risk and/or require a high level of individually tailored management and supervision. Carers are required to be available on a full-time basis, and able to manage a higher level of risk. Depending upon the requirements of each individual local authority, carers will often work directly with therapists, psychologists, and other professionals. Such children will have issues relating to; challenging behaviour, self-harm, criminal activity, gang affiliation, substance abuse

- **Parent and Child placements/arrangements:**

These are placements for parent(s) and their children for the purposes of assessment and support. These placements are usually time limited

and involve offering supervision, guidance and safe care to parent/s and their babies/children to explore and assist their ability to parent. The assessment might be undertaken by a social worker or independent assessor. Any such arrangements will be subject to the requirements, guidance and regulations of Annex B of the Children's Act 1989 Volume 4.

- **Therapeutic placements:**

The Agency offered a range of specialist therapeutic placements for children with complex and challenging behaviour upon request. These placements are offered by carers who have had previous work-related experience of working with children and young people with complex behaviour. These carers will be given additional therapeutic training and support by a qualified child therapist.

SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS

Diversity Foster Care will ensure that foster carers receive the following support:

- **Supervising Social Workers:**

Each Foster Carer will have a named social worker who is responsible for their supervision, support and development. Contact will be maintained through home visits, telephone calls and e-mails. Supervision visits will be undertaken at least every six weeks and support will also be extended to the birth children of foster carers.

- **Out of Hours Emergency Support:**

Carers will be supported on a 24-hour basis and will have access to an emergency Out of Hours service from 5.30 pm until 9.30am throughout the week, including bank holidays and weekends.

- **Access to the Directors.**

Foster Carers will be expected to liaise with their supervising social workers for day-to-day advice and support. However, the Directors of Diversity Foster Care will operate an open-door policy and carers will be given direct access to them should they need to do so.

- **Foster Carers' Support Group:**

This group is open to all carers on a bi-monthly basis and provides carers with an opportunity to meet and discuss a variety of issues. Some sessions are themed and will also include guest speakers and discussions around Agency developments. This group will also provide opportunities for carers to share experiences and information, and to share their views, ideas and opinions regarding the Agency's current and future service provisions.

- **Foster Talk:**

All approved fostering households will be given paid membership to Foster 9

Talk. The services offered by this organisation include, support, if allegations are made, on tax matters, claiming benefits etc.

- **Foster Talk:**

This is a confidential helpline provided by Foster Talk for all approved Foster families, to give telephone advice and support in cases of need. This can be used for support and guidance when a foster carer is undergoing an allegation or a complaint about their practice.

- **Independent Support for Carers if allegations or complaints are made:**

This is also provided by Foster Talk and carers will be given access to professional staff who can respond within 24 hours of referral.

- **Monthly allowances:**

The agency offers a competitive Fostering Allowance which is paid on the 28th of every month.

- **Childs Holiday Allowance:**

The Agency will ensure that all children who remain in placement with their Foster Carers for 52 weeks consecutively each year, will receive an additional week's fostering allowance which will be used to take the children on holiday.

- **Tax and Financial Advice:**

Advice on tax and financial advice will be given by Foster Talk.

- **The Secure Base Model:**

As the foundation of the agency's work is based on the Secure Base Model of behaviour management, all foster carers receive regular training and induction on how to implement this. The aim of this is to enhance the skills and knowledge of our foster carers and staff, thereby promoting enhanced levels of security, confidence, and resilience in the children that we care for. As such, this contributes toward achieving our aim to strengthen placement stability.

Training:

A comprehensive package of training is available to all carers as a rolling program. This is reviewed in line with the Training, Support and Development Standards and each carer is given a Personal Development Plan, following approval and thereafter annually, following their annual reviews.

Individual Personal Development Plans will be completed either by a Form F Assessor as part of the prospective carer's assessment (Form F) or a Supervising Social Worker, in partnership with approved foster carers. In line with their Personal Development Plans, carers will apply for training via their

supervising social workers and these plans will be evaluated on an ongoing basis within the supervision structure.

As well as having access to high quality training courses, delivered by specialist childcare professionals, foster carers will be offered a range of training options including: shadowing, observation, e learning and guided reading.

Following completion of The Skills to Foster course and approval, carers will be expected to complete a set of mandatory core training courses, alongside a range of other training modules which will be offered throughout the year.

The Agency will publish an annual training schedule outlining dates for the courses scheduled to enable carers to forward plan.

Mandatory Core Training Courses

1. Induction:

The induction includes; Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) Module 1 Understanding The Principles and Values Essential for Fostering and TSDS Module 2 The Role of the Foster Carer which includes Safeguarding, Safe Caring, Delegated Authority, Recording and Reporting & Effective Communication, Preparing for a Placement and Promoting placement stability.

Induction courses are delivered a part of a group or individually and are conducted by Supervising Social Workers and/or a manager.

Other Mandatory Courses

2. Safeguarding (held at least annually in different formats including Managing allegations, Gangs and Gang Culture, Safer Caring, Child Sexual Exploitation etc.)
3. First Aid (Every three years)
4. Managing Behaviour (held at least annually in various formats)
5. Training, Support and Development Standards (first year post panel)
6. Equality, Diversity & Identity
7. Attachment & Building a Secure Base
8. Effective Communication/Recording and Reporting
9. Child Development
10. Prevent/Signs of Radicalisation
- 11: Communicating with Children & Young People

Other Training Courses:

1. Parent & Child Arrangements
2. Caring for Unaccompanied Minors and Asylum-Seeking Children
3. Education and Looked After Children
4. Health and Looked After Children
5. Managing Children with Sexualised Behavior
6. Sexual Health and Relationships
7. Preparation for Independence and Staying Put
8. Diversity; Anti-discriminatory practice and managing discrimination and bullying
9. Life Story Work
10. Promoting Placement Stability
11. Managing Trauma

Some of these courses will be in the form of "e" learning opportunities.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

All children placed with **Diversity Foster Care** will receive the following services:

- **Membership to the Diversity Foster Care Children's Group:**

This group has been designed for those children over 8 years of age. This will give children the opportunity to meet, socialise, undertake activities and provide the Agency with their views regarding their placements and the services offered.

- **Placement Feedback Forms:**

These forms have been designed to obtain regular feedback from our children to obtain their views about their respective placements. These are subsequently evaluated on an individual and collective basis and remedial action taken if required.

- **Holiday activities and outings:**

Activities and outings are organised for the children on a regular basis during school holidays.

- **Children's Support:**

All children are visited by their carers Supervising Social workers on

at least on a 10-weekly basis where direct work is carried out.

- **Children's Guides:**

A children's guide has been produced to ensure that children are aware of their rights, where to go for independent and confidential advice, how to make a complaint, the Agency's staff and services, and information about being in foster care.

Supervision and Support

Allocation of a Supervising Social Worker

All foster carers have a named supervising social worker who is responsible for their supervision, support and development. Contact will be maintained through home visits, telephone calls and emails.

Each carer will be visited at least once every 6 weeks; however, this will be dependent upon the needs of the children in their care and the experience of the carer. Support will also be extended to the birth children of foster carers. At least one unannounced inspection visit will be made each year to all carers and a full record of the visit will be completed. All visits will be recorded on the Diversity Foster Care IT recording system, Jelly Baby, in report format and carers will be asked to agree the content.

Carers Support Group:

All carers are invited to attend regular two monthly Carers' Support Group meetings. This provides carers with an opportunity to meet, socialise and discuss a variety of issues. It also enables carers to influence the direction of the Agency by providing service-related feedback.

The Support Group will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair every two years (or sooner, if an appointee decides to stand down before the end of their term). Some sessions will be themed and include guest speakers. All meetings will include discussions around Agency developments and opportunities, and provide carers with an opportunity to share experiences, views and information regarding the children in their care, the direction of the agency and planned developments.

Out of Hours Service:

Carers have access to Out of Hours support provided by our Out of Hours Service, which can be reached by contacting the relevant worker on duty.

Reviews

Annual reviews of the suitability and the terms of approval of all carers are conducted by the Agency. Unless the Fostering Panel specifies an early review after 6 months of becoming approved, all carers will be subject to a review of approval within one year from the date of first approval and annually thereafter. Every third year DBS checks, all statutory checks and references are renewed.

There may also be ad hoc reviews where issues of concern or significant changes have arisen, and a further review is felt to be necessary.

All first and third yearly reviews will be presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation regarding continued suitability to be foster carers. Carers will be required to attend these reviews.

Reviews following allegations or complaints will always be presented to Panel for a recommendation.

Allegations

Where foster carers become the subject of allegations of abuse or neglect, there is an agreed procedure drawn up with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to investigate all such allegations. This will involve the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) and due process will be followed in all cases. In these situations, foster carers will be able to access an independent support service from Foster Talk, which can be activated within 24 hours. This provides both telephone and face-to-face support and advice.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Supervision of Staff

All staff receive regular supervision at least once every four weeks, which is recorded on the Agency's IT system. Outside of formal sessions, staff are encouraged to approach the Registered Manager or The Placement and Quality Assurance Manager for advice, decisions and/or guidance regarding issues arising in foster placements or proposed placements.

All staff receive a structured induction course and are required to undergo a six-month probation period. Once this period is successfully completed, staff are subject to annual appraisals, which reviews and examines, the quality and effectiveness of their work and sets targets for the coming year. An individual training plan for continuing professional development is agreed each year to ensure that learning is ongoing.

Monthly Quality Assurance Reports

Monthly Quality Assurance Meeting are held where reports are formulated on a range of the agency's key performance indicators and other matters requiring regular attention are monitored and reviewed. These includes; complaints and compliments, current exemptions, incidents and accidents, school exclusions and absences, as well as progression of enquiries and assessments. Renewals of DBS checks, medicals, completion of annual unannounced visits, health and safety checks, carers reviews and timeliness for the registration of new children in placement with GP's, Optician and Dentists will also be tracked.

Fostering Panel Reports

An Annual Fostering Panel report focusing on the quality, timeliness and consistency of form F's and presentations made by independent assessor's and supervising social workers will be produced by the Panel chair.

Additional panel evaluation forms are completed by panel members following each panel presentation and written summaries of issues arising each quarter. These will be collated and evaluated. The Panel chair will have periodic meetings with the Responsible Individual and Agency Decision Maker by way of annual appraisals of the independent chair role and QA discussion meetings.

COMPLAINTS:

All service users, including children, foster carers, will be given written details of the Agency's complaints procedure. A child, parent or carer of a child, a foster carer or anyone else for whom the Agency has agreed to provide a service, can make a complaint under this policy.

Children will be encouraged to take up issues in the most appropriate way, and they will be supported to do this by their foster carer/s, social worker, independent visitor, advocate or Independent Reviewing Officer. If it is possible to identify a way forward with a complaint that is informal and therefore easily resolved, this should be the best way forward.

It is the responsibility of carers and staff to help children deal with their complaints sympathetically and actively, whether the complaint is about the Agency or placing local authority.

Anyone making a complaint is also able to withdraw their complaint at any stage.

It is hoped that most issues which arise will be resolved through discussion and negotiation at the early informal stage. However, written concerns can be presented to the Director's, Rosemarie Ross & Rosa Simpson, who will share the responsibility for complaints and deal with them on a rota basis. Decisions around which Director will manage individual complaints will be based on whether there is a conflict of interest. This will also include having line management responsibility for the person subject to the complaint. Concerns can be sent at any time by email or letter, and a response will be given within 5 working days.

Complaints will be dealt with in three stages.

- Stage One**

Stage one is an informal process which consists of a meeting between the complainant and the supervising social worker unless the complaint is about them, in which case they should proceed straight to stage two. This meeting will be scheduled once a complaint has been received in writing or recorded by means of other communication.

Part of the discussion may concern whether it would be more appropriate for the complaint to be directed to the local authority with responsibility for the child's placement under the local authority complaints procedure.

A letter of resolution or outcome will be issued in response to informal complaints by the Manager responsible, including details of how the matter was investigated, by whom, and with the relevant facts to support the outcome.

- **Stage Two**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, or if at the outset they require the matter to be dealt with by someone other than an employee of the fostering Agency. The complainant will be advised that they must put their complaint in writing to the Team Manager, who will then contact the complainant within five working days to advise that he/she has instructed an investigation to be undertaken by an Independent Complaints Officer. At this stage the complainant will be provided with the Complaints Officers name and the expected time frame for the investigation.

The aim will be to complete the investigation within 28 working days, although if the circumstances are complex, it may take longer.

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 conclusion.

- **Stage Three**

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they are entitled to request a Review Panel to consider their complaint. However, they must also confirm in writing the reasons for their dissatisfaction to the Senior Manager responsible for the complaint, who will arrange for the case to be reviewed by an Independent Panel within 28 days. This panel will be constituted by;

- A fostering panel member
- A Manager or staff member of the service.
- An independent individual of such background and experience as required
- A chairperson if none of the above can fulfil the role.

In any event, no person implicated in a complaint, or a relative or close associate of theirs, may sit on the panel or be involved in any investigation, and the panel will be constituted in such a way as to afford true independent appraisal of the complaint. The panel will consider the documentation available in relationship to the complaint, and any further written representations that the complainant wishes to make in relation to the investigation. The Panel will reach a decision within 24 hours of meeting and the complainant will be advised of the outcome in the report form to include any actions in order to resolve the situation within 7 days.

Complainants should be advised of their right to make representation to the Local Government Ombudsman if they are still not satisfied, who will make recommendations to the Directors of Diversity Foster Care. (Please refer to the Diversity Foster Care Complaints and Right to Representation Policy)

The Ombudsman

Complainants have the right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied following completion of Stage Three

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)

The inspecting body for all fostering services and fostering agencies is Ofsted. Inspections are carried out regularly to ensure that good outcomes are being achieved for all looked after children and that children are safe and well cared for by services which are compliant with the standards and regulations. Complaints may be made direct to Ofsted at the Manchester address or email contact as listed below;

Ofsted

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