

## Statement of Purpose - July 2023

### Aim

The core purpose of Fostering London is to provide foster families where every child feels safe, secure and valued for who they are. Our priority is that, however long they stay, children and young people leave with the best possible outcomes.

### Objectives

To achieve this aim we will,

- Place the best interests of children and young people at the centre of all our decision-making.
- Listen and take account of the wishes and feelings of children, both in relation to their own situation and how Fostering London operates.
- Meet and exceed the standards set out in the statutory framework for fostering and seek to provide a consistently outstanding service.
- Operate robust systems to plan, monitor and review our work and to learn from experience throughout the organisation.
- Promote an organisational culture that is child-centred and committed to excellence.
- Recruit an appropriate range of diverse, high quality foster carers who can meet the identified placement needs of local authorities (LAs).
- Rigorously assess foster families so that children are cared for in safe, secure homes where their needs can be addressed.
- Provide foster carers and staff with the support, supervision and development they need to maximise the positive contribution that they can make to fostering.
- Provide tailored additional services, based on individual care plans which assist LAs in achieving permanency for children in a timely and cost effective way.
- Create a fostering community within which fostered children, fostering families, birth families, Fostering London staff and others with a commitment to children can have fun, feel supported and able to make a valued contribution to the service.

### Our Values

Everyone at Fostering London shares some important beliefs which underpin all we do.

- **The needs, rights and best interests of children must always be our central concern.** We believe that this requires us to constantly challenge ourselves and each other to actively listen to children and to test all decision-making against its impact on the child.
- **Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children.** They should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from a wide range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents so that they can go on to live independent and fulfilling lives. Children should grow up in a loving environment where they feel valued, and their individual needs are fully recognised and addressed.
- **We value diversity.** We know that children needing foster care are diverse in many respects. To achieve the best outcomes for them, we need to recruit and retain a diverse range of foster carers and staff. We want to be recognised as an organisation that values diversity.
- **Children need secure committed relationships.** We will ensure children have continuity of relationships by sustaining and nurturing their relationships with their birth family, school and community as long as this is in their best interests. We recruit foster carers with the emotional capacity to develop trustworthy relationships with children and provide carers with the support needed to achieve this. The relationship built by supervising social workers (SSWs) with their allocated foster children is central to our approach to safeguarding.
- **We value and respect our foster carers.** We recognise the central importance of the child's relationship with their foster family and respect carers as core members of the team. The commitment and growing expertise of foster carers is rewarded through our career progression scheme. Fostering families become part of our fostering community. We provide all members of the fostering household with the information, training and support that they need and value their contribution to the review and development of the service.
- **Effective partnerships with others are essential to achieve the best outcomes for children.** We value birth families and involve them in their children's foster care as much as is consistent with the care plan. We work in genuine partnership with LAs and the multi-agency network involved with the child. We listen to LAs and seek to develop our service to respond to their identified needs.
- **Providing the highest quality foster care requires everyone in the organisation to bring commitment, energy and resilience to the task.** Fostering is not easy and so we need carers and staff who are willing to do "double somersaults" when things are challenging. This requires a culture where everyone has high expectations of themselves and where we all support each other in giving our very best.

- **An outstanding service has a solid framework of clear and effective ways of working.** Our practice is rooted in the principles of childcare law, and we meet the national fostering standards. However, we strive to consistently exceed these standards, which means having sound systems for planning, monitoring and reviewing what we do.
- **Everyone in Fostering London needs to be learning.** Supporting children's learning is central to our work and we believe that learning needs to be valued throughout the organisation. We know that there will be mistakes and we are committed to putting them right and making sure that we all learn from them. We recognise the challenges and complexity of foster care and the need to provide effective, ongoing learning and development for foster carers and staff so that we are reflective, skilled and confident.
- **We work with integrity.** We are willing and able to make difficult decisions to achieve the best outcomes for children. Fostering London is run as efficiently as possible so that we have the resources needed to provide an outstanding service. We are clear about the beliefs that underpin the service and ensure a culture where everyone understands these values and challenges each other to live by them.

## Our Services

**Long term/permanent placements** - These placements are when a formal decision has been made that the best permanency plan for a child is a foster placement up to and into adult independence. The Fostering London foster carers may be matched to the child as the result of a family finding search or the permanency plan might arise from a short term placement and the attachment that has developed from this.

**Short term placements** - We provide foster homes for children from 0 to 18 who may need care for a few days, weeks or months. This might be because of a short term problem in their family or while future plans for permanency are assessed. Fostering London may help to prepare the child for reunification with their family; joining an adoptive or permanent foster family; or moving to independence.

**Enhanced placements** - Some children have very complex needs which require intensive support from their foster carers and from Fostering London staff. These needs may involve very challenging behaviour or complex disabilities/medical needs. We work closely with our specially trained foster carers and the network working with the child to provide agreed individual programmes of personalised support.

**Parent and child placements** - Fostering London has specialist skills and experience in this provision, and we fully recognise the very particular assessment, training, systems and support that are needed to prepare foster carers to be effective in this role.

We can provide placements for couples or for single parents of any gender. Staff have successful experience of such placements for parents ranging in age from young teenagers to those in their 30s.

When it has been decided that a parent and child placement is in a child's best interests, their placement together can help to sustain/nurture the attachment between them that will be necessary for reunification in the community to be successful. Living within a family home with a one-to-one relationship with an experienced foster carer facilitates opportunities for learning, change and assessment. It can reduce assessment times and provides a wealth of observation to assist LAs in making well-evidenced decisions leading to timely permanence plans for children.

**Emergency children's placements** - Sometimes a situation arises where a LA needs to place a child the same day. This might be because of an unexpected crisis in their family, a disruption of their existing foster placement or a decision by the court. This means that the information and assessment available is very limited or incomplete and so foster carers providing this service need to have particular circumstances and skills that enable them to meet this need. Fostering London has foster carers with successful experience of providing emergency placements and our 24x7 referral line means that we can respond reliably out of office hours. We recognise that to provide outstanding quality in these circumstances requires considerable input from our staff and are committed to working closely with placing authorities to achieve this.

### Short breaks

Some Fostering London carers can provide regular short breaks for children who otherwise are living with their family. This is usually because the child has a disability or because the parent has a disability or serious health problem. The purpose is to give the parent a break and to give the child positive experiences with a family that they get to know well.

### Parenting Assessments

LAs may commission a formal assessment of parenting capacity either as part of a parent and child placement or when only the child/ren are living with Fostering London carers. Comprehensive assessment reports are produced which can be used in planning meetings or court proceedings.

### Reunification support programmes

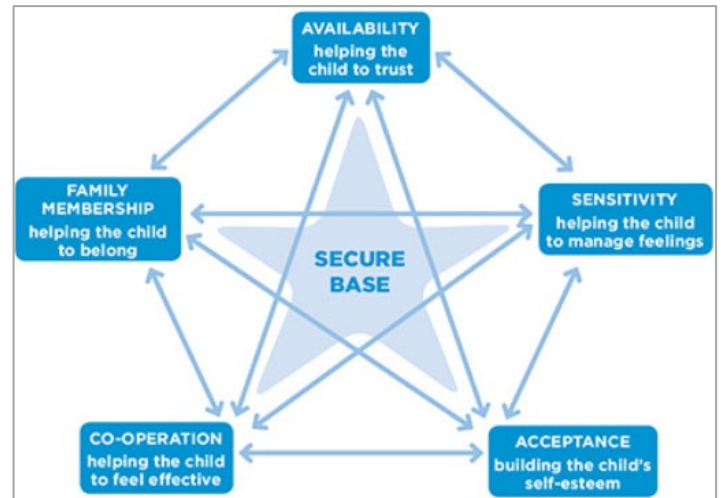
Children who have experienced loss will find even positive transitions challenging and so to secure successful reunification LAs may commission a formal support programme where the Fostering London carer and staff provide transitional support to a child and their parent/s or family member as they prepare to take over the care of a child and during the early weeks after the move.

## Achieving the best outcomes for children

We want all children to leave with positive memories of their time with their Fostering London carers and to be provided with the support and experiences that contribute to them moving on to live independent and fulfilling lives. The Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek 2014) and the “five outcomes” set out in the Children Act (2004) alongside the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011) form the basis of our care provision and how we judge the success of the service.

### The Secure Base Model

We recognise that the relationship between the child and their foster carer(s) is the primary means by which they are supported, and their development promoted. We use the Secure Base Model to help us think about what foster carers need to do in order to promote children’s security, confidence, competence and resilience.



### Five Outcomes

- **Being healthy:** enjoying good physical, mental, emotional and sexual health. We ensure that foster carers have the information they need about a child’s health so that they can access any appropriate healthcare services or medication that the child needs. We assess and train carers to ensure that they understand about healthy lifestyles and will model and promote healthy eating and exercise. Fostering London carers learn about managing stress, promoting self-esteem, and helping children understand the consequences of drugs, alcohol and smoking and can support children in making positive choices.
- **Staying safe:** feeling and being physically and emotionally safe. All our staff and carers are very clear about our safeguarding policy and their role in ensuring that children are kept safe from any form of harm or neglect. Children have a meaningful relationship with their SSW and are encouraged to share any concerns or worries. Foster carers and staff regularly check health and safety in the home to minimise the risk of accidents. We carefully check potential staff and foster carers to make sure that they can keep children safe and then provide a high level of support and supervision to monitor this effectively. Training is provided about home safety, bullying, child protection, sexual exploitation and other aspects of staying safe. Placements are well matched to ensure that the carers have the capacity to provide the security and stability the children need.
- **Enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood. We make sure that potential foster carers can provide the things children need to do well at school and to encourage and develop their talents. We recruit carers who enjoy sharing their time with children and nurturing their leisure interests. We monitor children’s school attendance and progress at school so that any problems can be identified early and acted upon. Training is provided for staff and carers about the school system, supporting children’s learning and self-esteem. We celebrate children’s achievements in all areas of their lives.
- **Making a positive contribution:** participating positively in family and community life. We help children to learn about making choices, evaluating risks and thinking about consequences in ways that are appropriate to their age. Our foster carers understand about delegated authority and encourage children’s friendships and involvement in community activities. We actively support children in understanding their rights and responsibilities and engage them in appropriate consultation and decision making. Training is provided about positive behaviour management.
- **Achieving economic well-being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life. We assess potential foster families to make sure that they can provide a secure and comfortable home. Foster carers all save regularly for fostered children and teach them about managing money. Staff and carers focus on preparing children effectively with the skills and knowledge they will need for future employment and economic independence. Fostering London promotes teamwork, self-confidence, creativity, flexibility and resilience.

## National Minimum Standards

All of our support, supervision and continuing professional development programmes are linked to the child-focused National Minimum Standards. This helps us focus on secure and positive outcomes for children, removing barriers to achievement and reducing risks to their welfare and safety.



| Standard | Aspect   |
|----------|--|
| 1        | The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them                 |
| 2        | Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care |
| 3        | Promoting positive behaviour and relationships   |
| 4        | Safeguarding children  |
| 5        | Children missing from care   |
| 6        | Promoting good health and wellbeing  |
| 7        | Leisure activities   |
| 8        | Promoting educational attainment   |
| 9        | Promoting and supporting contact   |
| 10       | Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child                             |
| 11       | Preparation for a placement  |
| 12       | Promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care                             |

## Our Operational Framework

### The Right People

In order to recruit the best foster carers, we have a rigorous recruitment and assessment procedure that meets all the regulatory requirements. Initial enquiries are followed up with a home visit to begin the process of providing enquirers with realistic information about fostering so that they can make well-informed decisions about whether they wish to be assessed. This visit also enables us to begin to assess whether they could potentially meet the needs of fostered children and, if this is the case, leads to stage one of the assessment process which starts when they formally register their interest and give permission for us to undertake the statutory checks. In this stage they will also take part in the Skills to Foster course which helps them to start to prepare for the complex task of fostering and helps them and us to further evaluate their capacity and motivation.

Enquirers who progress to stage two are allocated to an experienced assessor who continues to educate them about fostering alongside a careful assessment of the family and their network. Further checks are undertaken to contribute to triangulating the judgements that the assessor is making. The completed assessment is considered by our panel members who bring a range of perspectives to the task of testing the evidence in the report. The panel's recommendation informs our Agency Decision Maker in reaching a decision about approval.

Staff are recruited in accordance with regulation with stringent checks to safeguard children. Their knowledge, skills and ability to apply a child-centred approach to practical situations are tested.

Recruitment of staff and foster carers is undertaken within an equal opportunities framework to promote Fostering London as a diverse fostering community. We pay attention to explaining our values and ensure that new carers and staff understand and share these beliefs. Fostering London views assessment as an ongoing process. Checks are renewed and foster carer reviews and staff appraisal are used to ensure that we continue to have the right people to do the job.

### The Right Support and Development

The relationship between the child and their foster carer(s) is key to progress and development. SSWs nurture this relationship and provide skilled reflection with carers to consider the experiences a child has had that might impede relationships. Children's learning and development is systematically monitored so that areas needing particular support are identified quickly and acted upon.

SSWs spend regular time with children and form relationships with them, so that they can see the placement through the child's eyes and maximise the opportunities the child has to share any concerns or worries with a familiar adult. Through this relationship, they recognise and celebrate the child's achievements and progress.

The relationship between foster carers and their SSWs is central to ensuring carers have the support they need identified and provided. Supervision meetings are structured so that all aspects of the child's needs and the foster carers' capacity to meet them are regularly considered and the actions needed agreed. Supervisors also meet regularly with birth children and other members of the household so that they have significant relationships with all the family and their contribution to fostering is supported.

We recognise that many of the challenges of fostering occur outside of normal office hours and support is provided 24x7 by staff who know the child and the foster family. Support groups, social events, outings, newsletters, our WhatsApp group and informal meetings of foster carers and staff all contribute to helping everyone become part of the Fostering London community, so that all can benefit from the wide range of skills and experience available.

Children, carers and staff are supported by having clear information about what they can expect. Children receive either a children's or a young people's guide explaining what Fostering London does; how they can find out about their rights; and how to get help in raising a concern. Foster carers have clear written information about how the organisation's policies and procedures affect them; this includes information about allowances and fees. Staff are

given clear policies and procedures and they contribute to the ongoing improvement of these systems. Staff receive the induction, supervision, support, appraisal and development that they need. This is properly structured and recorded.

Fostering London promotes a culture where everybody's learning is valued, and models this to children. Children's learning, both in and out of school, is monitored and we work closely with schools, virtual schools and others to ensure that their learning is supported in their foster home and that they can achieve the best possible outcomes.

From our first point of contact with potential foster carers we explain that fostering requires knowledge and skills which are above and beyond that of being a good parent. During their first year of fostering, carers are helped through training and supervision to achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care alongside any other developmental needs identified during their assessment and included in their first Professional Development Plan (PDP). Their learning and development is assessed in relation to this PDP in preparation for their first review and an updated PDP is agreed as part of each review meeting. Training is provided both individually and in groups with more experienced foster carers contributing to the learning of others.

Staff undertake training and other developmental activities in accordance with their agreed learning needs. As an organisation we seek to learn through our experience by systematically examining the data about our work and using it to improve our practice.

### **The Right Systems**

A consistently high quality fostering service requires a framework of robust systems to plan, deliver, and review the work and promote continuous improvement.

Fostering London has clear policies about how we intend to conduct our services, and these are underpinned by procedures setting out how each policy will be put into action. There is a secure electronic system so that staff can read the foster carer's daily recordings and respond promptly to any issues identified; staff can share their records with each other; and the Registered Manager can monitor the key indicators through the report system.

There is a clear framework of accountabilities and communication to ensure that the agreed systems are followed in the day-to-day work of recruiting, assessing, matching, supporting, developing and supervising, staff and carers.

There is an ongoing cycle to collect feedback so that over time we can evaluate how effectively and efficiently our processes and procedures are working. This feedback includes a range of ways of hearing children's views; data monitoring key outcomes for children; feedback from carers, their family, birth parents, the LA and other professionals as part of the foster carer's review; collating the learning from complaints and compliments; internal audits; feedback from staff and panel; monitoring learning from schedule 6 and 7 reports; LA contract monitoring; and Ofsted reports.

### **Fostering London**

Fostering London is an independent fostering provider. We are a private limited company registered in England under the Companies Act; company registration number 09326663.

Our registered office is 34, Shelbourne Road, London N17 9YH. We recruit, assess, support and supervise foster carers in London and the surrounding area. Our foster carers welcome into their homes, children and young people aged 0 to 18 who are usually placed by LAs in London or the Home Counties.

DS/July 2023