

The Foster Care Co-operative

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (ENGLAND)

The National Minimum Standards require every fostering agency to have a Statement of Purpose. This is a statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of the facilities and services provided.

STATEMENT OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. It is the overall objective of The Foster Care Co-operative (FCC) to provide an excellent child care service to children and young people for whom any Local Authority requires a placement. Every placement will have a team of individuals- carers, social workers, support staff who are working to ensure every child achieves the very best outcomes in all aspects of their lives.**
- 2. The Foster Care Co-operative aims to maintain the standard of care provided by its foster carers through high quality support from supervising social workers, clear lines of responsibility and accountability, positive management and regular and robust monitoring.**
- 3. The Foster Care Co-operative aims to provide a service to every child or young person placed with its carers where their positive self view is promoted and their wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care.**
- 4. FCC is a co-operative designed to continually develop a reputation for delivering a quality service with integrity. Its co-operative status makes the agency unique amongst fostering providers and we are proud of the ethos that stems from this.**
- 5. FCC is committed to improving the life chances of all children and young people placed with its foster carers using the Every Child Matters Outcomes as the benchmark but always striving to achieve more.**
- 6. The organisation has been established in a way that encourages the foster carers and staff members to influence how the service conducts its business. This is an integral part of the co-operative ethos.**
- 7. FCC does not discriminate on grounds of gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, health, disability, race or colour.**
- 8. The agency has, as one of its objectives, to grow the number of foster carers available for children in Local Authority care requiring placement, through recruitment of individuals and couples new to the fostering task. Qualified and skilled staff recruit, assess, train and support foster carers, building strong professional relationships that promote stability in placements.**
- 9. The Foster Care Co-operative is committed to providing a service to Local Authorities which is considered to be excellent value for the fees charged, and to working with placing agencies and our carers within the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Children Act 1989 and associated legislation and guidance.**

THE SERVICES PROVIDED

10. The Foster Care Co-operative receives referrals of children and young people requiring a foster placement from Local Authorities throughout England. Referrals are dealt with by our Placement Co-ordinator who identifies potential matches and then liaises with our staff and carers and the LA to progress the referral. This agency has a robust Matching procedure which ensures that every child referred is matched to the carer who can best meet their needs.

11. The Foster Care Co-operative offers Short Term and Permanent family placements as follows:

Short term

12. The Foster Care Co-operative provides short-term placements with foster carers who are approved and have the skills for this type of placement. Short term placements can continue for 12 months or more but are temporary in that the child's future has not yet been decided. For example, children and young people may require a short term placement to aid a return home or to assist them in moving to an adoptive or a permanent placement. Foster carers will be working with the placing Authority on objectives within the child's Care Plan and ensuring that the child or young person reaches their individual potential within the Every Child Matters Outcomes, however long the placement lasts.

Permanency

13. The Foster Care Co-operative offers permanent family placements for children and young people for whom the decision that they require a permanent placement has been made. The aim is to provide a home into adulthood. Where appropriate, this agency supports carers who wish to continue to offer a place for a young person after their 18th birthday. We are an agency which will promote Special Guardianship and adoption for children placed where this is in the child's best interests and with agreement of all parties. We offer the same high standard of support and service to carers who have children placed with them permanently and every child's achievements are celebrated by the agency.

Sibling Groups

14. The agency does assess and approve foster carers who have the emotional strength and physical space to take a sibling group. We recognise the additional support that care of a sibling group requires so that each individual child achieves their maximum potential.

Parent and Child Placements

15. This Agency provides a Parent and Child placement service. Foster carers are required to have training in this type of provision as well as evidencing their ability to take on this complex task. We have carers who can work with the

placing Authority on a parenting assessment and where court reports may be required

Short Term Placements Under Regulation 42

16. Under Regulation 42 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, this agency has offered to Local Authorities, foster carers who can work alongside a parent or family member caring for a child and who will offer short breaks to enable the child to continue to live at home. This is a skilled task and this service is not yet available to all Authorities but it is one that we seek to develop. Relevant training and support will be offered to carers interested in this area of work.

ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

Status and Constitution

17. The Foster Care Co-operative is registered as a Co-operative under common ownership and this registration is listed with Co-operatives^{UK}, the National Clearing House and Representative Body for Co-operatives in the United Kingdom. In addition the Foster Care Co-operative is registered as a limited company in the UK.

18. It has been agreed that PAYE staff will be accepted as members of the Co-operative and foster carers as associate members. It is not possible for foster carers to sit on the Board. In essence, the Co-operative is collectively owned and cannot be subject to a takeover or asset stripped by a minority interest nor can the agency be sold. In the event of the business being wound up, or being subject to dissolution, any of the assets of the Co-operative remaining to be disposed of, after its liabilities are satisfied, shall not be distributed among the Members, but shall be transferred instead to some other common ownership enterprise(s), or to Co-operatives^{UK} or to some other non-profit organisation(s) promoting and supporting co-operative and common ownership enterprise, as may be decided by the Board at the time of or prior to the dissolution. In the event that for whatever reason any residual assets cannot be so transferred, they shall be given for charitable purposes.

19. The detailed rules governing the Foster Care Co-operative are contained within the Memorandum of Association and the Articles of Association, copies of which are held at Head Office.

20. The Foster Care Co-operative is currently registered as a Fostering Service under the Care Standards Act 2000. The Registration Body is Ofsted and the contact details are: Ofsted National Business Unit, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA. Telephone number 08456 40 40 40 and email address enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

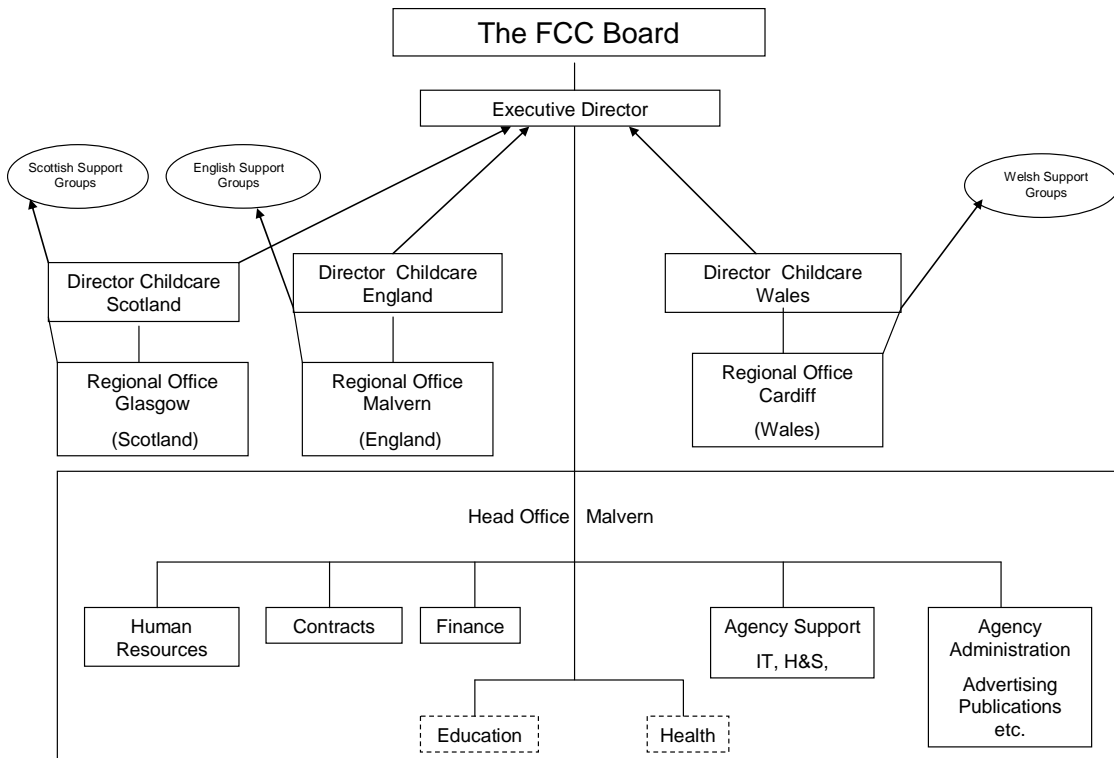
Management Structure

21. The Headquarters of the Foster Care Co-operative is based in Malvern, Worcestershire and has oversight for all the Company activities. The Finance, HR and agency management sections are based in Malvern.

22. The Director of Child Care in England is the Registered Manager for the Fostering Service.

23. The overall accountability for the fostering service in England is held by the Director of Child Care who is based at the Malvern Office. Supervising social work staff and foster carers are managed by the operational managers who cover the Northern and Southern regions of England respectively

FCC STRUCTURE



Board Members

24. The Board currently comprises the following Directors:

Laurie Gregory Chairman
 Qualified Social Worker and Manager
 31 years in Local Government Social Services Departments with experience ranging from Social Worker to Deputy Director. 4 years in international development work across a number of Central and Eastern European countries. Work

with several independent fostering agencies before founding the Foster Care Co-operative in 1999. Previously fostered a child with disabilities for a total of 13 years. Also involved in a number of charities including Citizens Advice and Crossroads Care, and Housing Associations.

Ian Brazier

Executive Director
Fellow of Chartered Management Institute
An alumnus of the Manchester Business School
34 years' service as an infantry Army Officer, serving in Northern Ireland, Germany, Falklands, Arctic, Bosnia and Kosovo. Colonel(Retired). Well versed in Public Private Partnerships, Public Finance Initiatives, change, project and Military of Defence (MoD) Budget Management. A former joint board member of the Northwood Development Project. Wide ranging experience in both Military and Family welfare issues.

Penny Gregory

Company Secretary
Qualified Social Worker and Registrar
Previously practiced Child Care as a social worker before retiring to foster and start/rear a family. Fostered a child with disabilities for a total of 13 years. Penny has now been the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for Ledbury (Herefordshire) for 23 years.

Jerry Tudge

Company Director
Qualified Building Surveyor
Work experience in the private, NHS and Local Government sectors. Previously fostered for a total 14 years.

Tony Poyner

Company Director
Specialist qualifications in the Paper Industry
Has had 30+ years in the paper industry and is a successful Company Director of a private company, who is involved in a range of community organisations and groups.

Consultation

25. The regional carer support groups provide a consultation forum and the introduction of a new and wide ranging web based information structure is at the heart of increasing consultation and visibility for all full and associate members, throughout the UK. Dedicated support, information and consultation areas are provided for staff, carers and the foster children themselves. At present Support Groups operate in Bristol, Yorkshire, East Anglia, Staffordshire, Merseyside and the West Midlands region. National and regional events are also staged to support the carers and their families and provide open access to all the managers in an informal and extended manner. Minutes of meetings and forums will be made increasingly available to all members of the co-operative.

26. Co-operatives^{UK}, the main constitutional advisers, continues to provide advice and guidance on our unique co-operative development.

NUMBERS, RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF STAFF

27. The agency currently employs 15 administrative and finance staff in full and part-time positions who are based in Malvern, Worcestershire. A further 16 staff are employed as social workers on a full-time or part-time basis. The social workers are based in the regions where carers are located. All social work staff are qualified and registered with the General Council for Social Care and have considerable experience in social work.

a. The Director of Child Care for England is:-

Anne Bard who has a CQSW and a BSc (Hons) in Sociology gained in 1977. She spent the first 27 years of her career in Local Authorities, gaining experience as a generic social worker for five years before specialising in fostering until 1995. Over the next 9 years, Anne worked as Independent Reviewing Officer and Children and Families Team Manager for a Local Authority. Whilst Team Manager, she achieved an MBA in 2004, prior to joining The Foster Care Co-operative in that year.

b. Regional Operational Manager (South):

Giles Staddon has a DipSW/DipHE gained in 1998 and the PQCCA and BPhil (Childcare) gained in 2003. He has nine years' experience in residential child care, four years' experience in Children and Families Team work and has worked in fostering since 2002. Giles has held management roles since 2007. Giles joined FCC in 2008 and is also the Designated Manager for dealing with Allegations.

c. Regional Operational Manager (North)

Angela Tobin gained her DipSW in 2000 and since that time has worked in the voluntary and statutory sector as a children and families social worker and a residential social worker. She has three years' experience as a registered manager of a unit for young people.

d. Social Work Staff and where located:-

Malvern

Debra Dallimore – Social Worker – CQSW. BA (Hons) in Social Work. HNC in Childhood Studies. Placement in Duty & Assessment Team

Sue Humphreys - Social Worker - CQSW, Certificate in Community Mental Health, ASW. Experience of working with adults with mental health difficulties, as well as fostering

Sue Pinfield - Social Worker - CQSW. ASW, BA Applied Social Science, Practice Teacher Award, Post Qualifying Award in child care. Worked in Children & Families, Duty and Permanence Planning

Bristol/Gloucester

Jane Hardingham - Social Worker - DipSW. Wide range of experience in fostering, nursery nursing and childminding prior to qualification. Experience in Children and Families work and Connexions

Tessa Molden - Social Worker - DipSW. Experience with children and other service user groups

Jo Woodyard – Social Worker - DipSW, HNC Managing Care Diploma in Basic Counselling, NNEB Nursery Nursing

Stoke/Staffordshire

Esther Laurencin – DipSW, experience in Local Authority social work and in the charity sector, including child protection, leaving care, residential care as well as fostering.

Heather Hartness – CQSW and PG Specialist Child Care Award, experience in Local Authority children's services and fostering in the independent and charity sectors including management roles

North West

Phil Young - Social Worker - DipSW. Experience in fostering and residential child care fields

Janet Clark – Social Worker – BA in Social Work, Advanced Dip in Childcare. Experience of working in Local Authorities with Children and Families

North East

Carole Elliott – Social Worker - BA in Social Work. Experience of working in Local Authorities with Children and Families. Also at one time a foster carer herself

Lynn Findlay – Social Worker - MA/DipSW. Experience in LA with Children and Families work

Jodie Hepworth – BA (Hons) Social Work Studies, experience in Local Authority children's services

East

Dawn Roberts – Social Worker – CQSW. She has worked in the field of Children and Families as well as with adults with learning difficulties

Helen Underwood - Social Worker - CQSW. Experience in working with Children with a Disability, Children and Families and fostering. Holds the PQ Award in Social Work

d. Specialist Services

Sue Farr – Health Liaison Worker – Registered and District Nurse Certificates, Managing Health Services, BT Medical Law, AEB Certificates in Supervision and Counselling Skills

Jane Herron – Education Liaison Worker – Certificate of Education, A-levels and O-levels including English and Maths, National Literacy Strategy Certificate

Pete Johnson – Leaving Care Advisor. Pete is a qualified social worker and has worked in Children's Services for over 20 years, the majority of time with Young People leaving Care. He has contributed on a national basis to the development of packages for Preparation for Adulthood. Pete also has wide experience in working with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

e. Placement Co-ordinator

Julie Steele – HNC distinction in local government administration and ECDL. Experience working for Worcestershire and Gloucestershire County Councils within fostering teams. Responsibilities included taking referrals and completing the matching process

f. Administrative and Finance Staff

Sarah Barton – FCC Agency, Head Office Administration and Marketing Co-ordinator, Editorial Experience – BA (Hons), O-levels including English and Maths

Bob Blackburn – FCC Agency, Head Office Administration and IT Co-ordinator – BSc (Hons), Post Graduate Certificate in Education and ECDL Certificate

Yvonne Clayton – FCC Agency, HR - O-levels including English, RSA Typing, Computer Literacy and Certificate in Institute of Leadership and Management

Rebecca George – Administrator/ Placement Co-ordinator – BA (Hons) English, Leadership Awards

Bryony Groves – FCC Agency Finance Officer/Contracts Officer – O-levels including Maths and English

Diane Hurdiss – FCC Agency, Finance Assistant – A level Economics, HND in Business & Finance, Accounting Technician NVQ Level 4

Shahliza Jinnah – FCC Agency, Finance Assistant - BA (Hons) Accountancy & Finance (ACCA exempt)

Penny Marriott – FCC Agency, Senior Finance Officer – O-levels including Maths and English Language

Andrea Poyner – Panel Administrator – BA (Hons), O-levels including English and Maths.

Kate Ross – Office Manager – DipHE Sociology, Education & Urban Studies.

Sam Williams – Administrator/ Panel Administrator – BTEC Diploma in Business Studies, English Certificate in British Sign Language, O-levels including Maths and English

Justin Willis – Training Co-ordinator – HND in Spatial Design and Diploma in Art & Design (experience in local government planning services), GCSEs including Maths and English.

28. The agency employs an Education Liaison Officer who offers an advisory and 'hands on' role to carers on all matters to do with education.

29. We have two consultancy posts within the agency to promote outcomes for children. There is a Health Liaison Officer who monitors the health of all children placed with us and who acts in an advisory capacity with staff and carers. We also have a Transitions/Leaving Care Advisor who can offer advice to carers of individual young people who are approaching independence and who acts as Consultant to the agency in general.

30. We employ a Placements Co-ordinator who is the point of contact for all referrals and who is able to respond promptly to requests for placements.

THE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR RECRUITING CARERS

31. The agency does not discriminate against any individual wishing to be considered as a foster carer because of gender, ethnic origin, religion, culture, language, disability or sexuality.
32. The agency focuses upon welcoming applications from persons with life experience who are completely new to fostering.
33. Advertisements are targeted geographically in a variety of newspapers, magazines etc. Local radio campaigns are also used. In addition, the FCC has a website that does attract a significant number of enquiries. 'Word of mouth' has also been effective in leading applicants to apply to the Co-operative.
34. The agency seeks to recruit persons who have a commitment to children and who will, through the quality of their child care skills, promote FCC as an agency that offers placements with carers of the highest calibre.
35. FCC holds regular 'Skills to Foster' courses which are residential and held over a weekend. The course is mandatory for all applicants. It is enhanced by being co-led by experienced social workers and foster carers and includes talks by a care leaver and the Leaving Care Advisor as well as senior management.

THE FCC SERVICE TO FOSTER CARERS

36. All applicants must complete a full assessment which is undertaken within an 8 month period and involves a home study with rigorous interviewing by the social worker. This is to ensure that the applicants are clear about the task and the social worker has obtained evidence that they have the competencies to foster. Social workers also undertake visits to personal referees and Criminal Records Bureau checks and medicals are undertaken. The assessment uses the competency based approach and the BAAF Form F.
37. The Foster Care Co-operative holds a Fostering Panel on a regular basis which is constituted of persons with the skills and experience to make competent recommendations to the agency on applicants wishing to foster.
38. Once a foster carer has been approved, s/he is reviewed on an annual basis to allow The Foster Care Co-operative to properly satisfy itself about their ongoing suitability to foster.
39. The Foster Care Co-operative makes a major investment in training. Advanced training is provided in both England and Wales through contracts with recognised training providers.

40. The Foster Care Co-operative is committed to the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care and a full programme of training has been established to ensure carers complete the Workbooks within the timescale set by the Government. Work starts on this during the assessment and pre-approval phase.

41. The agency is committed to setting and adhering to recognised established standards of good practice. Consequently, all foster carers are supported with their subscriptions to the Fostering Network.

42. Foster carers are encouraged to ensure that they are abreast of and operate to the Code of Practice for Foster Carers and the National Minimum Standards.

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PLACED IN ENGLAND (January 2012)

43. A total of 99 children/young people were on placement as of 31st January 2012. This includes solo placements, a number of sibling groups and children from the minority ethnic communities. Ages range from babies to 17 plus.

NUMBERS OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES July 2011 – January 2012)

44. Number of complaints investigated in previous six months:-

	Number	Outcome
By foster carers	0	
By a Looked After Child	0	
Against foster carers	0	
Child Protection investigations	0	

45. The process of investigating complaints is set out in the FCC Complaints policy and procedure. Initially, complaints are investigated within the Agency through arrangements established by the Executive Director. If the complainant is dissatisfied by the results of the internal process, then an Independent Person will be appointed to undertake an investigation.

46. The Foster Care Co-operative has a whistleblowing policy.

THE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR SUPPORT FOR CARERS

47. Particular emphasis is placed on providing good quality and regular support to foster carers. Each set of foster carers has a Supervising Social Worker and it is expected that fortnightly visits will be made to the home of each foster carer with visits alternating between being informal and more supervisory.

48. The agency also maintains a number of support groups for foster carers on a four to six weekly frequency. These are formal meetings with an agenda and are minuted. Very often the groups are used as training opportunities and carers welcome the input from staff and their fostering colleagues.

49. Each set of foster carers has a full list of contact names and telephone numbers of staff in the agency in order that contact can be made outside office hours. This approach seems to work well without the need for a more formal roster.

50. Foster Carers are expected to be invited to all child care reviews and conferences. They are supported by their supervising social worker or a member of FCC staff.

51. The agency makes provision for paid respite care of up to 14 nights per annum subject to this being agreeable to all concerned. All respite carers are assessed according to whether they are linked to a particular family or offering respite care to a much wider carer group. All respite carers are presented to Fostering panel and all arrangements must be subject to the prior approval of the Agency and the Placing Local Authority.

52. The Foster Care Co-operative provides an online service for children who are fostered as well as to the children of fostering families.

53. The Foster Care Co-operative produces an Information Guide for children and young people placed with FCC. These guides explain the service offered by the Agency and what to do should a child or young person have a complaint or a concern about their care. The telephone number of Ofsted, Childline and the National Advocacy Service are included. The guide also includes the name of the Independent reviewing Officer responsible for the child. These guides are web-based and every child also has a hard copy. The guides will be available to children and young people through suitable alternative methods should this be required.

54. Upon placement, every child and young person is given a memory box from the agency in which they will find a photo album, a Childrens Guide and a Memory Stick. This encourages the child and carer to start keeping photos, important certificates of achievement etc that can be taken with them whenever they move on.

55. Every Foster carer, once approved, is given password access to the web based Carer Manual which includes the policies, guidance, forms and procedures of the Agency. The current Statement of Purpose of the Foster Care Co-operative is available on our website and is reviewed on a six monthly basis.