

The Foster Care Co-operative

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (SCOTLAND)

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

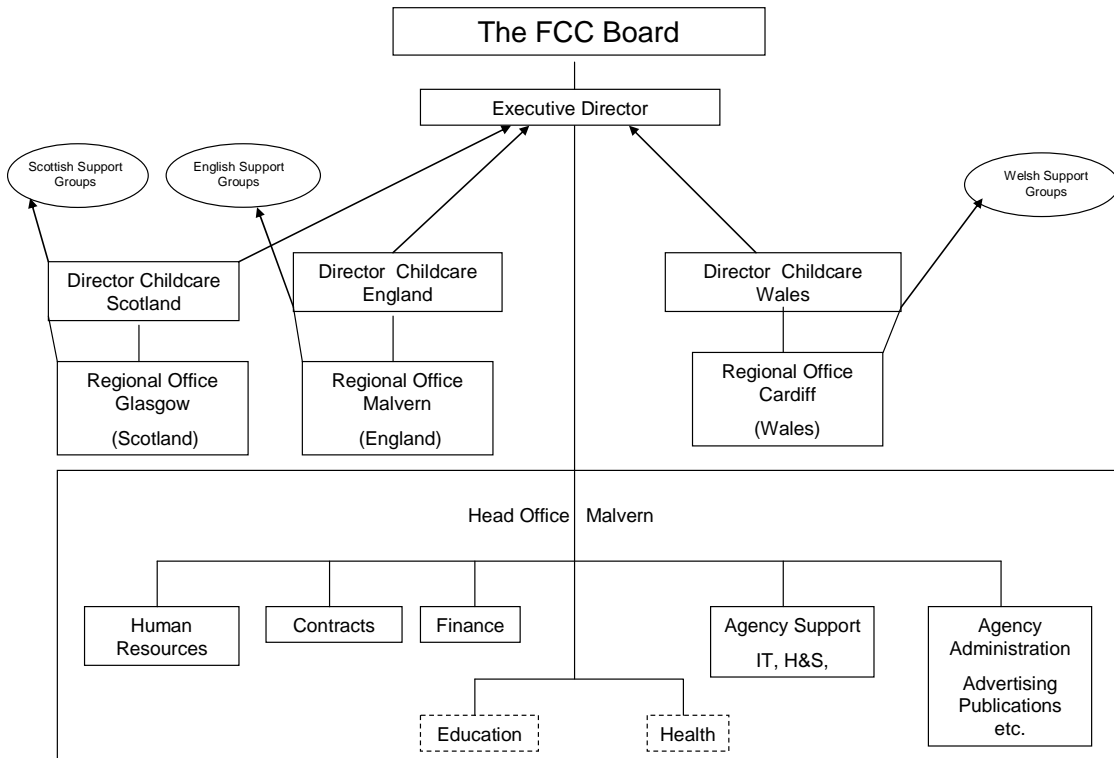
STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

1. The Foster Care Co-operative is an independent fostering agency with carers throughout England and Wales. Its co-operative status makes the agency unique amongst fostering providers and we are proud of the ethos that stems from this. As a co-operative there are certain conditions to which we must adhere.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 contained within the Foster Carers Manual and also held at Head Office.
5. In England 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

6. The current structure of the Foster Care Co-operative is represented below.

FCC STRUCTURE



The Malvern Headquarters

7. 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 staff are also based in Malvern. Management meetings rotate between Malvern and Cardiff at present.

8. At the present time, the Fostering Panel operates from Malvern and approves Foster Carers across England and Wales. In due course, it is anticipated that a separate Panel will be established for Wales and Scotland.

9. The Directors of Child Care in England, Wales and Scotland are the Registered Managers for the Fostering Service.

9. The accountability for the English arm of the Co-operative is focused upon the Director of Child Care (England) and at the Malvern Office in England. Support, through supervising social workers (qualified social workers who are based in the various regions), is provided to existing Foster Carers. Supervising

social workers are accountable primarily to the Deputy Director of Child Care and in his absence, the Director of Child Care.

The Cardiff Office

10. The day to day management of the Foster Care Co-operative activities in Wales are administered from the Office for Wales. This is based in Cardiff Bay and is located at 15/17 Harrowby Street, Cardiff CF10 5GA. Accountability is delivered identically through the Director of Child Care Wales and the deputy.

The Glasgow Office

11. An office is established in Glasgow as the hub for providing the FCC's services in Scotland and was established in February 2011 and completed full registration in September. The office is located at 4 Blair Court, North Avenue, Clydebank Business Park, Glasgow, G81 2LA.

Board Members

12. 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

13. Co-operatives^{UK}, the main constitutional advisers, continue to provide advice and guidance on our unique co-operative development. The regional support groups provide a consultation forum and the introduction of a new and wide ranging web based information structure will be at the heart of increasing consultation and visibility for all 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, Herefordshire/Worcestershire and in South and West Wales. 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. It is envisaged that support groups will operate in Glasgow and across Scotland to support carers and their families using the same model as the service develops.

THE SERVICES PROVIDED

14. The agency seeks 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.

15. FCC holds regular 'Skills to Foster' courses and places on these can be taken up by other fostering agencies.

16. The Foster Care Co-operative offers short-term placements and permanent family placements as follows:-

Short-Term

- a. Short-term or temporary placements are offered with foster carers who are skilled and suited to this type of placement. Children and young people may require a temporary placement to aid a return home or to assist them in moving to an adoptive or a permanent placement.
- b. A proportion of short-term placements commence as emergency referrals from Local Authorities and the children/young people placed invariably have a range of complex needs.

Permanency

17. The Foster Care Co-operative offers permanent family placements for children placed singly and sibling groups. The aim is to provide a home into adulthood and occasionally a supported lodgings situation for the individual funded by the Local Authority.

Parent and Child Placements

18. This Agency offers trained carers who will offer placement of parents with children. The parent does not necessarily have to be under 18 and we will place both male and female parents. Carers are not able to take such placements unless they have completed the relevant training and demonstrated that they have skills in this complex area.

Short Term Placements Under Regulation 37

19. Under Standard 31 of the National Minimum Standards and Regulation 37 of the Fostering Services Regulations In England, this agency has recently 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.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF THE FOSTER CARE CO-OPERATIVE

20. It is the overall objective of The Foster Care Co-operative (FCC) to provide an excellent child care service to Local Authorities. FCC is a co-operative designed to continually develop a reputation for delivering a quality service with integrity.

21. 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.

22. The FCC does not discriminate on grounds of gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, health, disability, race or colour. However, persons with a criminal record may be excluded from appointment subject to the nature of the conviction against them and persons with a conviction for any sexual offence against children, no matter how old the conviction, are not considered. Smokers agree to abide by our no smoking policy at our offices, at all meetings, and when in the company of children in their own home or car.

23. 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 remit of the relevant Inter-Agency Placement Contract, our Service Agreements, The Children Act 1989, The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated National Minimum Standards and Regulations.

24. 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 in England and Getting it Right for Every Child in Scotland.

25. An extensive level of support is offered to FCC foster carers in the knowledge that support has a bearing on successful outcomes for the children placed within the agency. Supervising Social workers, who are qualified social workers at Senior Practitioner level, support the carers, visiting them on a fortnightly basis (more frequently if necessary) and this has proven successful in avoiding out of office hours crises which are so detrimental to the fostered children and the carers. Supervising Social workers are available to carers 24/7 and this level of support is highly valued by the carers.

26. Placements are monitored in a number of ways, including monthly supervisions with the carer which is recorded and sent to the placing authority.

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

28. 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 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 and to children and young people via the website.

29. 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.

NUMBERS, RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF STAFF

30. The agency currently employs 15 administrative and finance staff in full and part-time positions who are based in Malvern, Worcestershire. Additional staff will be employed as social workers on a full-time, part-time and sessional basis. These workers will be based in the areas where carers are located. All social work staff are qualified and registered with the SSSC.

a. The Director for Child Care Scotland is:-

Fionna Miskelly, who has a CQSW and BA gained in 1984 plus a BSc gained via the Open University in 2004. Child Protection certificate plus Practice Teaching award and post qualifying award in social work. She has experience working across child care settings in voluntary, statutory and charitable settings. Has experience of an independent fostering agency 'set up' in NE of Scotland and independent reviewing officer role previously.

b. **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 – BA (Hons) English, A Levels in English, Biology, Ethics & Philosophy

Bryony Groves – FCC Agency, Finance 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

Pat Mitchell – FCC Agency, Contracts and Finance – HNC in Local Government and Public Administration, A-levels including English and Accounts.

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

Kate Ross – Office Manager – DipHE Sociology, Education & Urban Studies, O-levels including Maths, English and RSA Typing.

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

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

NUMBERS OF FOSTER CARERS IN SCOTLAND (SEP 2011)

31. Foster Carer recruiting and assessment has now commenced and it is anticipated that the first fully trained cohort of FCC Scotland carers will be available in April 2012.

32. The agency remains committed to widening the pool of new carers coming into fostering and recruits from a wide range of backgrounds including people who are single, married and partnered. FCC has begun to attract a growing number of foster carers representing the minority ethnic communities and encourage all regardless of religion, faith, group or sexual orientation.

33. Agency experience is based on the successful procedures linked to effective outcomes for over 160 children with FCC in England and Wales. This includes a number of sibling groups, children from the minority ethnic communities and unaccompanied asylum seekers. We also have a small number of solo placements. Ages range from newly born babies to 17+.

34. Foster carers are aware that the agency receives few referrals of children/young people aged below eight years thus our recruitment tends to focus on the older age range. We would prefer to point potential applicants towards their Local Authority should they want the younger age range only.

NUMBERS OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES (SCOTLAND)

35. Number of complaints investigated in previous calendar year:- Nil

	Number	Outcome
By foster carers	Nil	
Against foster carers	Nil	
Child Protection investigations	Nil	

36. The process of investigating complaints is set out in the Complaints policy and procedure contained within the Foster Carers' Handbook and the Staff Manual. 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.

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

THE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR RECRUITING CARERS

38. The agency focuses upon welcoming applications from persons with life experience who are completely new to fostering.

39. Advertisements are targeted geographically in a variety of newspapers, magazines etc. Targeted 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.

40. The agency does seek 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.

41. Having expressed an interest in joining the Co-operative, the applicant will have an initial visit from an FCC social worker, explaining the implications of being a foster carer for all members of the family, what types of children are referred to the Agency and the assessment process. Following this, the initial visit will be discussed by the social worker with the Director of Child Care and a decision taken as whether to proceed. If yes, an application form is sent out to the applicant(s). Should they wish to proceed, they are asked to complete the application form which will include permission to seek statutory and personal references.

THE PROCEDURE AND PROCESS FOR APPROVING CARERS

42. Each applicant must undertake induction training and a full assessment prior to registration as an approved foster carer.

43. The assessment process usually takes about six months and involves a home study with some fairly rigorous interviewing by the social worker so that the applicants are clear about the task. Social workers also undertake visits to personal referees and police checks and medicals are undertaken. The assessment uses the competency based approach and the BAAF Form F.

Fostering Panel

44. The Fostering Panel holds a crucial role in the provision and monitoring of foster care delivered by The Foster Care Co-operative. Since January 2003, this agency has had its own Fostering Panel and its role and function is set out in the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 (England), the Fostering Service (Wales) 2002 and National Care Standards (Scotland). The National Minimum Standards highlight what is expected of Panels so that the following outcome is met:-

'Fostering Panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care'

Thus, one critical task concerns the making of decisions about the approval and terms of approval of foster carers and assessing the continuing ability of foster families to meet the complex needs of children.

45. The second critical task concerns the quality assurance function:-

Fostering Panels provide a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process – in particular to monitor and review the work of the assessors: to provide feedback; to identify problems; and to ensure that there is a consistency of approach in assessment across the service, that it is fair to all applicants and that it has been completed in a thorough and vigorous way.

The Foster Care Co-operative, as an independent fostering agency, must have fair and transparent processes that enable it to balance the skills and abilities of its foster carers whilst ensuring that the child's welfare in placement is paramount.

46. There is an expectation that applicants will attend the discussion when their Form F assessment is to be presented. It is therefore incumbent on all Panel members to discharge their role in a way that will put applicants at ease and allow for positive and constructive dialogue to take place. In this way, strengths and weaknesses can be identified and, whatever the final recommendation, the applicants feel they have had a 'fair hearing'.

47. The Panel is made up of Foster Care Co-operative staff and independent members with a range of experience in the social care, health and education fields. The Panel meets on a monthly basis and every Panel member is required to sign a confidentiality statement. The Panel has access to both legal and medical advice.

48. The independence of Panel is intended to ensure that the commercial necessities of running the agency do not compromise the standards set and the efforts put in to improve the service. A Scottish Fostering Panel will be established, initially with members of the English and Welsh panel to form a quorate, whilst new panel members are recruited and trained.

THE PROCEDURE FOR REVIEWING CARERS

49. Foster carers are subject to an Annual Review involving the written views of Supervising Social Workers and the Social Worker for the child/young person on placement. We also seek the views of fostered children and birth children. The first review is presented to the Fostering Panel and thereafter every third year in full and in the intervening years, a summary of the Review by the one of the Directors is presented. Where there are exceptional issues, an early review will

be presented to Panel. Placements are subject to the statutory children's reviews which, by implication, represent a review of the performance of the foster carer(s) involved.

TRAINING FOR CARERS

50. The Foster Care Co-operative makes a major investment in training. All applicants must undertake induction training which is based on the Fostering Network's "Skills to Foster" model. Advanced training is provided in all regions through contracts with the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and other recognised training providers. Several of our foster carers have achieved the NVQ Level 3 in Child Care and all foster carers have achieved recognised good practice standards.

51. BAAF provides training to the FCC Fostering Panel members and will continue to do this on a regular basis.

52. A range of additional and specific skills training has been provided and funded as required. Similar arrangements will be made in Scotland as the service develops.

53. The Foster Care Co-operative is committed to the new Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster care and a full programme of training has started to ensure carers complete the Workbooks (England) within the timescale set by the Government. Work starts on this during the assessment and pre-approval phase. 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 both to North and South of the border.

54. 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 and National Care Standards (Scotland).

SUPPORT FOR CARERS

55. 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.

56. 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.

57. 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 at present although management keeps this arrangement under review.

58. 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.

59. 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.

60. The Foster Care Co-operative provides an online service for children who are fostered as well as birth children.

61. The Foster Care Co-operative currently produces a series of age appropriate guides for every child placed. 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 UK inspection agencies, Childline and National Advocacy Service are included. These guides are provided to all children, in booklet form on placement with FCC. Copies are also available on the children's web site.

62. 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 quarterly.