



**THERAPEUTIC
FOSTERING**
supporting our carers to care

Statement of Purpose

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INTRODUCTION

This statement of purpose outlines the aims, objectives, and service arrangements of Therapeutic Fostering. It has been written in accordance with the requirements of:

- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2 Care Planning Placement and Case Review 2010, 'Care Matters-Time to Deliver Change'
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Service 2011
- Fostering Service: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Miscellaneous Amendments 2013
- Children and Families Act 2014

The placement of children in foster homes is also governed by the Children Act 1989/2004, the Care Standards Act 2000, Every Child Matters Agenda 2003/2012, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2004, The Human Rights Act 1998 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

Therapeutic Fostering has been set up to meet the identified need of providing children and young people with safe, stable and secure family placement experiences. Such placements are extremely well supported through a variety of mechanisms ranging from outreach support and respite care to structured psychological and/or therapeutic interventions.

OUR VISION

Our vision is to give every child and young person the opportunity to thrive in their foster families, in their schools and in their communities. All children and young people should enjoy a happy healthy childhood that gives them the foundations to transition into adulthood and the opportunity to achieve the best possible outcomes in life.



At Therapeutic Fostering, the interests of children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. By working closely with our carers, we aim to give children and young people access to stable foster carers with whom they can form strong, meaningful relationships which can ground them and prepare them for adult life.

We set up our service to meet the specific needs of children and young people who would benefit from foster carers who had support and training packages placed around them.

The provision of a therapeutic model to us isn't simply about using complex psychological models and therapies but also about working in a more holistic way alongside our carers, children and young people, offering a high level of support along with clear, constant safe boundaries for which all can explore. This is underpinned by our intensive support to our carers.

Therapeutic Fostering strives to ensure:

- The right placement is found quickly for children and young people in foster care
- Children and young people are placed with carers who can meet their needs well and who are supported by the team
- Staff and carers are extremely able and focused on ensuring excellent outcomes for children young people and the foster families who care for them
- Young people feel confident and empowered to drive changes to the service provision
- Children and young people feel welcome by their foster families
- Staff and carers are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children and young people
- Our staff and carers are passionate about the service they provide and have a clear ambition for children and young people in their care.

OUR PRIORITIES

Established in 2016, Therapeutic Fostering was designed to meet the clear needs of children and young people who would benefit from being placed with foster carers who have a more intensive support and training packages placed around them, where appropriate.



We accept that supporting foster carers is key to sustaining stability and positive outcomes for children and young and we are able to do this by having positive and meaningful relationships with both carers and the children and young people that they care for.

OUR SERVICE

This Statement of Purpose aims to provide the children and young people, birth parents, foster carers, staff and other professionals with information about Therapeutic Fostering and the services and support we provide.

This may also include

- Local Authorities purchasing a placement
- Foster carers
- Prospective foster carers
- Children and young people placed with Therapeutic Fostering
- Therapeutic partners
- Colleagues from other Social Care Agencies
- Staff or persons working for, or with the Fostering Service
- Any parent or guardian of a child placed within the fostering service
- Ofsted

We believe that by putting child or young person at the centre of everything that we do is essential, and we support foster carers to do the same by:

- Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children throughout their childhood
- Working in partnership with children, young people and their families
- Ensuring equality of opportunity
- Promoting positive outcomes for children and young people in respect of all aspects of their lives
- Promoting and abiding by our Pledge for children and young people who are looked after and care leavers
- Ensuring all children achieve their full potential in education
- Ensuring that young people are supported to transition to independence
- Ensuring all children's health needs are met



Therapeutic Fostering provides vital care and support for some of the most neglected and abused children and young people. Our aim is to ensure that these children and young people are placed in a safe and secure environment in which they have the opportunity to thrive. This is achieved through the model of intensive, structured support we provide to foster carers and contact with the children and young people that they care for.

Such children and young people may have experienced developmental trauma and have difficulty with attachment; they may display a range of emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties including inappropriate sexual behaviour; they may have a mild to moderate learning disability; they may be at risk of child sexual exploitation.

With intensive support from the social work team and outreach packages we are able to provide individual tailored packages of support for children and young people (and their families, when appropriate), directly commissioned by local authorities and/or local health commissioners. It is this support that we believe stands Therapeutic Fostering apart from other independent fostering providers and reviews from our approved carers demonstrates this.

We have foster care placements suitable for children and young people of all ages. We have solo placements for children with complex needs and placements for large sibling groups who need to remain together. Placements therefore range from emergency or short-term through to long-term, providing care for children and young people throughout their childhood and the transition into adulthood.

OUR AIMS

Therapeutic Fostering seeks to promote the principles and practice enshrined in the Children Act 1989, The National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011, the Care Standards Act 2000, Care Planning Regulations 2010 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

Therapeutic Fostering is driven by values, with an aim to provide the best care possible for children and young people by working in partnership with all stakeholders through our structured model of support.

Our families receive the highest level of support on an on-going basis as standard. This enables us to provide stable, secure placements for a growing



number of children and young people who should and could be managed in a family environment with the appropriate level of professional intervention.

We believe that the best chance a child or young person has if removed from birth family is to continue to experience a family environment. The skills of the foster carers and the support they and the child or young person receive are intrinsic to the success and placement stability.

We aim to:

- Assist children and young people's individual need for belonging and permanency in a family environment, through tailored support and outreach.
- Support children and young people to make sense of past trauma and achieve their full potential in childhood and then later in adult life
- Support children and young people to exceed expectations in physical, emotional, social, educational and psychological spheres to increase their life chances
- To provide children and young people with a safe and caring experience of living in families, which meets their emotional and developmental needs
- To actively listen and consider the wishes and feelings of the children and young people we look after and encourage them to participate in decisions about their care
- To promote equality of opportunity, recognising and providing for each child and young person's identity including their ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic and disability needs whilst ensuring that stakeholders and foster carers value diversity and difference
- To work in partnership in an open and accessible way, treating children, young people, their families and foster carers with fairness and respect
- To ensure that children and young people and their foster carers are provided with the services and support to meet their needs
- To ensure that applicants are not discriminated against on the grounds of gender, religion, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, nationality, disability or sexual orientation
- To provide a placement that meets the requirement of the child or young person's care plan and wherever possible that reflects the child or young person's ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background using clear matching criteria
- To recognise the value of our foster carers by providing them with a high standard of supervision, support and guidance through individual



sessions with their supervising social worker, attendance at support and reflective practice groups and pre and post approval training

- To provide a range of respite and outreach care to support a child or young person living with their foster carers

The safety of children and young people is paramount and at the centre of what we do. Foster families are our most valuable asset and make a major contribution to the service's success and the lives of the children and young people that we support.

Our foster carers receive training and support On-Line and face to face to ensure that the training we provide is accessible for all. This ensures carers are prepared to complete the vital role of securing children's futures.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

The senior management team comprises of the Director who is also the Responsible Individual, the Agency Decision Maker, the Registered Manager who is also the Panel Advisor.

Therapeutic Fostering has a range of qualified social workers with post qualifying experience in local authority, especially child protection, health service and private/voluntary sector. All social workers hold a recognised social work qualification and are registered with Social Work England.

It is the supervising social worker's responsibility to manage and support foster carers in their role. Supervising social workers understand their responsibility for ensuring that a child or young person's placement needs are paramount, even if they do not have case responsibility.

Supervising social workers visit carers regularly both whilst a child or young person is in placement and when they have vacancies. It is also expected they will speak with the child or young person in placement on a regular basis to ascertain their wishes, feelings and views around their care.

All staff receive regular formal and informal supervision and appraisal and have access to regular training in both social and psychological areas. This ensures that they are up to date with new developments in areas relevant to their role of fully supporting our foster carers.



During evenings, weekends, and bank holidays foster carers are offered an on-call service which is staffed by qualified social workers who are in turn supported by a Senior Manager.

Therapeutic Fostering also offer a 24-hour family placement service available for local authorities/social service departments for the emergency placement of children/young people.

Supervisory and Support visits

All foster carers receive regular supervision with their social worker. These meetings are an opportunity to discuss positive developments and any issues for concern. These meetings may include the Registered Manager who also undertakes annual Welfare visits to carers to speak to them about the agency and support needs.

Social workers also have primary responsibility for assisting foster carers in their development and establishing training needs which will be identified through supervision and annual review.

Note that during Covid when restrictions were in place, some visits did not take place but supervision etc was held on-line, and carers had access to supervising social workers and the manager 24/7

Support and Reflective practice groups

Monthly support groups are held in regional locations. These are meetings where information and learning can be shared and any issues for Therapeutic Fostering discussed.

Foster carers are required to attend a minimum of three support groups during a twelve-month period as outlined in the Foster Carer Agreement, as well as complete Mandatory training and the Training and Development Standards.

Note that during Covid restrictions face to face support group meetings did not take place. However weekly support groups took place which were reduced to fortnightly in April 21.



Mentors

Therapeutic Fostering has a mentoring scheme which allows more experienced foster carers or those with experience in a specific area to support others. All mentors are supervised by a social worker.

This scheme offers informal support to foster carers and can be particularly beneficial to:

- Newly approved carers
- Carers managing a specific situation or behaviour where a peer with experience can offer support or guidance
- Foster carers in more isolated locations

Ambassadors

An Ambassador is an experienced approved foster carer who plays a role in the development of the fostering service. They are also highly involved in recruiting, mentoring and nurturing new foster carers through the challenges they inevitably face. Ambassadors are also involved in the facilitation of Skills to Foster training and play an important role in the recruitment and assessment of foster carers.

The fostering team, social workers, Manager along with Ambassador Foster Carers provide ongoing support to our foster carers and the children in our care.

This level of support means that we can make a real difference to the lives of our foster carers and the children in their care by ensuring placement stability and positive outcomes.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF OUR FOSTER CARERS

At Therapeutic Fostering we recognise the invaluable role that foster carers play in looking after children and young people. It is therefore essential that we recruit carers from across the North West of England who represent the communities that they live in, and can care for children and young people from the same or similar communities.



Therapeutic Fostering recognises that there are many kinds of families. To this aim we will ensure that families are recruited from a range of diverse backgrounds. This includes those that are married, in same sex relationships, co-habiting, or who are single.

At Therapeutic Fostering we recognise that the matching of foster carers with children and young people should be at the forefront of any placement if the foster carers and the children and young people that they care for are to achieve positive outcomes in their lives. During matching we take into account the carers approval and any matching considerations they may have. We also use comprehensive matching forms and complete an impact assessment on each child or young person which is reviewed periodically.

We recognise that relationships with our foster carers needs to be based on openness and honesty. We appreciate that foster carers can experience difficulties, however it is our aim to ensure that these difficulties are worked through together as a team of professionals providing care to children and young people.

WHAT CAN FOSTER CARERS EXPECT FROM US?

At Therapeutic Fostering we have a Foster Carer Charter which is updated annually in consultation with approved carers and outlines what our foster carers can expect from us and in turn what we will expect from them. However, all carers can expect the following as a minimum:

- High levels of support from supervising social workers twenty-four hours a day
- Excellent package of foster carer training delivered either on-line, by our team or external facilitators
- Planned respite and outreach support
- Mentoring by experienced foster carers
- Support and reflective practice groups
- Activity days/Childrens Forum
- Foster Carer Charter/Childrens Pledge/Care Leavers Pledge
- Generous allowances and fees
- Access to activities



THE FOSTERING PANEL

The Fostering Panel considers the approval of all foster carers, and foster carer's reviews where a Change of Approval is being considered. Foster carers are expected to attend all panel meetings.

The panel makes recommendations on foster carer's terms of approval including:

- Type of fostering;
- Age of child(ren);
- Gender of child(ren);
- Number of children
- Any matching considerations
- Action plan of training and support

The Fostering Panel's recommendations are considered by the Agency Decision Maker who makes the final decision.

The 1989 Children Act sets the 'usual fostering limit' to three children unless the children are siblings to each other. In certain circumstances, the Fostering Service may consider placing children outside the usual fostering limit.

Wherever this is considered an Exemption will be required which will be agreed by the foster carers, placing authority, the Agency Decision Maker and provided to the residing authority for approval and decision. Whenever this applies, the exemption will be formally recorded detailing length of exemption, childrens ages, reasons for exemption, carers experience etc, and consideration will be given to what additional support or training the carer may require in order to manage the placement.

Variations of approvals are risk assessed to ensure the needs of all the children and young people in the household are met and a brief report provided to the Agency Decision Maker and Fostering Panel giving the reasons that the variation may be required. A return to panel will be actioned where necessary, and an early review will consider if there is to be a change of approval.

If the plan is for the child to remain with their foster carers on a long-term basis, a matching meeting is held where the needs of the children and young



people are identified, and a report written on how the foster carers can meet these needs.

The Fostering Panel hears all cases where there have been significant concerns in terms of safe practice, standards of care or allegations. A review is completed and presented to the panel at the earliest opportunity.

The Fostering Panel will hear all Appeals as appropriate.

Note that Fostering Regulations were amended regarding panel quoracy during Covid to have three voting members. Therapeutic Fostering has strived to ensure that all panels held have had five voting members.

TRAINING FOR CARERS

Training is a vital part of equipping our foster carers with the skills they need to support the children and young people in their care to achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

The Fostering Service has a comprehensive pre-approval and post-approval training programme which is reviewed annually and updated with the Registered Manager and provided to carers.

Pre-approval Training

The Training and Assessment Framework, which incorporates the Training and Development Standards (TDS) outlines that all prospective foster carers are required to attend Skills to Foster Training prior to their approval. Training takes place over one or two days or via twilight sessions dependent on the needs of the group; courses are held on a regular basis throughout the year. Where there are insufficient numbers to hold a group, the skills to foster training is undertaken as part of the assessment and all applicants undergoing assessment now complete on-line training around Safer Caring and Risk Assessment, Contact with Birth Families, Fostering Regulations.

Skills to Foster training includes:

- Promoting a sense of identity
- Managing difficult behaviour



- Working in partnership with birth parents and other professionals
- Legislative framework
- Child development
- Attachment and loss
- Safe caring
- Why children come into care
- Awareness of child abuse and child protection
- Diversity - challenging discrimination
- Leaving care and transitions.

Post-approval Training

As part of on-going professional development, carers are required to complete the Training and Development Standards (TDS) workbook within 12 months of approval.

As an agency we have a responsibility and provide training courses and assist carers to attend these, by ensuring training is held at times convenient to childcare.

We commission training from The Social Care Training Hub who provide a range of courses both face to face and on-line all aimed at ensuring our Foster Carers have the necessary range of knowledge, skills and experience to undertake the role. Some training is also facilitated by the team and support groups provide additional ways of sharing information.

Training can take many forms. It is for all carers across the region and organised or delivered by us. An annual training programme for foster carers is provided each year.

We have a 'library' of books, DVDs and articles which carers can borrow, to increase their knowledge on specific issues.

Foster carers are expected to attend all training on offer identified by themselves or through supervision and review, by the matching process or their supervising social worker.

At least one carer in each family placement needs to have completed a First Aid course and Administration of Medication in the first year of fostering and to update every three years.



We have access to a paediatric nurse who can provide information on a full range of health issues, supporting access to specialist medical advice where appropriate.

Note that during Covid face to face training could not be facilitated. However on-line training was widely available to carers and offered to children and young people in placement.

SAFEGUARDING

Every foster carer has an annual review. Disclosure and Barring Service and medical checks are completed as part of the foster carer's assessment and at intervals of three years. We actively encourage approved foster carers to sign up to the annual update service. Our child specific safe caring policies are updated as and when a new situation may arise with a child or young person and at a minimum of every 12 months; health and safety checks are reviewed annually.

The first annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration within 12 months of approval; if foster carers have children and young people in placement this can often be sooner. Foster carers reviews are then brought back to Panel every three years for good practice. Any other Review is chaired by the Independent Reviewing Chair and any recommendations with regards to training or support are highlighted.

The instigation of a child protection investigation as a result of an allegation of abuse against a foster carer, or any complaint against the foster carer will invoke an early review which will be presented to the Fostering Panel.

Feedback for every foster carer review should include feedback from the foster carers, the looked after child, their social workers, IROs as well as the foster carers' own children. Where a child has moved on an End of Placement report is requested from the placing social worker and this is also included within the review.



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Therapeutic Fostering is opposed to both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, linguistic, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, or religion. We aim to provide culturally sensitive services and ensure that all are treated with equal respect and receive equal access to services. The service operates within Therapeutic Fostering Equal Opportunities and Dignity Policy and Procedures.

All training carried out by Therapeutic Fostering will reflect anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice and any expressed discrimination will be challenged.

Anti-discriminatory practice features in preparation training, assessment and within supervision of foster carers and staff. Foster carers will be expected to develop the skills to identify and challenge discriminatory practice where it exists.

USER INVOLVEMENT

The views of children and young people receiving a service are sought through a variety of methods, feedback from the Advocacy Service, Independent Visitors, outcome of complaints, lessons from disruptions, children's views expressed in statutory reviews and foster carer reviews, regular talks with supervising social workers, childrens forum. The views of children and young people and foster carers inform Therapeutic Fostering service planning.

The children and young people in our care support the development of our foster carers by assisting (where appropriate) to deliver aspects of foster carer training such as writing questions for applicants to consider at pre-approval training, and questions for the Childrens Representative who has also grown up in Foster Care to ask applicants at panel.

Therapeutic Fostering have a children and young people's forum which enables children and young people to be involved in the development of services and be able to put their views forward in shaping our services. Within the forum children and young people came together and developed a young



person's pledge which is reviewed annually and outlines what they expect of the service and what Therapeutic Fostering in turn will do to support them.

Note that during Covid the forum did not take place face to face, however children and young people were consulted with in a variety of ways and included in service development.

Foster Carer support groups and service days allow foster carers to come together to share ideas and be fully involved in the developments of the services we deliver as we recognise the valuable input that our foster carers have in shaping the Therapeutic Fostering Service. Foster carers were able to develop a Foster carer charter which like the children's pledge outlines what they expect of the service and what Therapeutic Fostering in turn will do to support them.

We aim to seek views from a range of service users, including representatives from other agencies, carers and from young people. Written feedback is requested from the child's social worker as part of the foster carer's review and at the end of each placement.

RECORDING AND ACCESS TO RECORDS

Therapeutic Fostering has a responsibility to maintain accurate records on all foster carers and to ensure that information is shared with the foster carer wherever possible. For this purpose, we use CHARMS.

There is a statutory requirement to retain information for no less than 10 years following closure. However, in accordance with Therapeutic Fostering's policy, the practice is to retain for 10 years. Carers have a right to access to their records.



PLACEMENTS AND MATCHING

Therapeutic Fostering is committed to providing foster carers who can meet the identified needs of the children and young people referred to us. If there are gaps in the foster carer's ability to meet those needs these are recorded with reference to how those needs can be met and appropriate support provided using matching forms and impact assessments, action plan.

We recognise that the matching of any child or young person with foster carers is crucial if they are to achieve and maintain successful outcomes throughout their childhoods and transition to adulthood. To this end we ensure that wherever there are gaps in matching additional support or training is put in place to enable foster carers to provide the best care and support they can to children and young people.

The Registered Manager works closely with the Supervising Social Workers to ensure placement matching takes place. We use matching forms and an impact assessment form to ensure that we make the best matches possible and to identify any areas where carers or children and young people may need additional support. We also ensure that wherever possible a pre-placement planning meeting takes place.

Therapeutic Fostering provides the following placements:

- Teenagers
- Sibling groups
- Children with specific or more complex needs
- Children who need long-term fostering as they cannot return to their birth families
- Children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Children who need respite/short break care or young people who need emergency placements
- Young people subject to bail or remand
- Young people receiving support from specialist drug and alcohol services, who need accommodation where this is deemed appropriate



COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Compliments and complaints are received in the spirit of open communication. It is hoped that any problems can be dealt with quickly and at a local level. Foster carers are provided with a Foster Carer Handbook which outlines the stages of complaint. Equally children under 10 have a complaints booklet and there is a further complaints booklet for young people which is provided to them at the time of placement and periodically thereafter to ensure that any changes to people they can contact is updated i.e. the supervising social worker contact details, their own social worker and IRO details and a range of other contacts.

Formal complaints are dealt with in accordance with Therapeutic Fostering complaints procedure. Carers are made aware of the complaints procedure in relation to children and young people in their care and also how to complain in their own right.

The complaints procedure has three stages and complainants are advised at each stage of their right to request that their complaint be referred to the next stage if they are not satisfied that it has been resolved.

We have a specific email available for children / young people and carers to make us aware of any issues of concern or compliments

tellus@therapeuticfostering.co.uk



OUR PREMISES

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