

Greater London Fostering Statement of Purpose

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) that each fostering agency produces a Statement of Purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the services it provides, the facilities that are provided, and how outcomes for children and young people will be achieved.

This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements, how the service is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and demonstrates how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise and support Foster Carers. Greater London Fostering is run in accordance with the principles outlined in the following legislative and policy framework:

- Children Act 1989
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- Children & Families Act 2014
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, amended July 2013 and April 2014
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010)
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children - a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2020)
- Assessment and approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations. Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013
- Delegation of Authority to Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 (July 2013)

- Promoting the Education of Looked After Children – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2014 Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care (revised January 2014)
- Statutory Guidance on promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children March 2015
- Children’s Bill 2013
- UN Rights of the Child
- Disability Equality Act 2010

Greater London Fostering is an independent fostering agency, part of the Positive Aspirations Group. The agency provides fostering services for looked after children and young people. We believe that that children should be brought up with the birth family. However, this is not always possible as some children and young people are not able to grow up with their birth family. We recruit and train Foster Carers to care for these children until they reach an age where they can look after themselves. Our Foster Carers reflect the spectrum of families in our society and may be single, married or in a relationship, have a disability, may be of any culture or ethnicity, have children of their own, step children or no children at all; some are people of religious faith and some who do not practise a faith.

The agency recruits Foster Carers from different backgrounds, cultures and religions to ensure that choice is available to local authorities when seeking suitable placements. The agency also recruits Foster Carers who are employed and ensure there are necessary support systems in place to ensure carers are able to balance work with meeting the needs of the child. A strong emphasis is placed on supporting Foster Carers so that they can undertake their responsibilities to a high standard and ensure children and young people are safeguarded.

We believe that every individual has the intrinsic right to have his or her basic needs met in a respectful and supportive manner. Families deserve every reasonable opportunity to preserve their family unit and we recognise that the family is the foundation of our community. We believe that children living in nurturing, stable environments will mature into healthy productive members of society. The agency seeks to deliver and develop further a fostering service where there is respect and recognition of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language of children and young people, their families and Foster Carers.

Aims, Objectives and Principles of Greater London Fostering

Through diversity and inclusion, we aim to build a community based on a foundation of trust and respect where young people can enjoy stability and achievement in their lives, be confident and proud of their achievements and flourish and thrive.

The agency believes that children’s needs are best met in the context of a nurturing family and that with appropriate support all children can benefit from a family life.

Although set up to recruit, train and support Foster Carers the organisation's paramount concern will always be to meet the needs of those children referred to it for services. Our core aim is to provide safe, high quality foster care placements for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals. As well as promoting their health and general well-being, the agency is committed to ensuring that Foster Carers are encouraged to help children and young people to reach their full potential and maximum academic ability.

We believe that every child or young person should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and follow their dreams, and that neither should be impeded by being a looked after child. We therefore actively promote the ideal of positive aspirations across all aspects of our care to ensure that our children and young people are fully supported, and encouraged to believe that they can be successful and to be aspirational with their vision for their future.

It is our expectation that Foster Carers will work in partnership with us to encourage our children and young people to be the best that they can be by nurturing them in an aspirational environment whereby the child or young person is empowered to fully explore opportunities, engage in education and extra-curricular activities which will build the self-confidence, self-belief and identify talents and interests. Our supervising social worker will work with Foster Carers to ensure that a positive aspirations ethos is promoted.

Foster carers will have safe caring policy to support them to provide good safe parenting for all children and young people who are looked after. Children and young people will be consulted and encouraged to actively participate in their care and family life. We are committed to ensuring that the service offered is based on statutory requirements, sound principles and good practice. Our core objectives are:

- To develop an overall fostering service where there is respect for and recognition of the importance of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language of children and young people and their families and Foster Carers.
- To promote effective working partnership with other agencies, local authorities / health and social services, parents, Foster Carers, to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children. Foster Carers, Supervising Social Workers and other professionals involved will work together to implement a child/young person care plan as directed by the placing local authority.
- When matching foster placements, consideration is given to the gender, religion, ethnicity and disability of young people prior to any placement being made with the agency Foster Carers.

- To respect and promote the racial, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Foster Carers and the children and young people. To provide a sensitive approach and respect for other cultures and diversity in promoting the needs of such individuals within our agency and community.
- To promote effective partnerships between all key parties in the childcare team and in particular to ensure that all planning and collaborative working is in the best interests of the child/young person who is fostered.
- To provide stability in the lives of children and young people in our care and enable them to fulfil their potential and aspirations.
- Commitment and focus on continuous service improvement, quality assurance and high-quality service provision.
- To value diversity by aiming to recruit and retain a wide range of carers from diverse backgrounds so that the agency can offer appropriate placements for children and young people.
- To promote a child-centred approach where the child or young person's safety and welfare comes first.
- To ensure that the views of children and young people placed with our Foster Carers are regularly sought and given due consideration, irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability etc.
- To ensure that all Foster Carers have access to and attend regular, on-going training and support groups and encourage them to comply with national standards. To acknowledge the hard work, skills and knowledge of our Foster Carers and provide them with a high level of support, training and encouragement.
- To support all Foster Carers in remaining child focused whilst working with and alongside birth families.
- To provide all Foster Carers with regular supervision (at least every 4 weeks), monitoring and support in order that the child/young person's aspirations and opportunities are maximised and that the Foster Carers are constantly meeting the

child/young person's emotional/achieving outcomes. The Foster Carers are provided guidance and are supported by a fully qualified designated supervising social worker (SSW).

- To guarantee a commitment to support ongoing plans for fostered children by supporting transitional stages, such as reunification with birth families or on to semi-independent living or Staying Put.
- To guarantee a commitment to working in partnership with all those involved in planning and providing for each child or young person's care. This includes local authorities, birth families, the children or young people, Foster Carers, health professionals, education providers and other relevant professionals, individuals or organisations.
- To ensure that children and young people are regularly seen and spoken to by the SSW (at least every 8 weeks)
- To provide 24-hour support for Foster Carers and the children or young people in their care, 7 days a week.

The agency strongly believe that education is critical to the future of all young people. Every effort will be made to help them fulfil their educational potential. In support of education attainment and attendance, the agency has an Education Consultant and Children's Advocate, who is able to support Foster Carers with any educational concerns that may arise.

The agency staff and Foster Carers will promote the best possible quality of contact between children and families. The agency will (whenever it is consistent with a child's care plan) work in partnership with the placing local authority and the child's family towards maintaining and strengthening the child's family relationships with a view to rehabilitation.

Children who move on, whether they are returning to their birth family or to another placement should be able to take with them the memory of a positive experience whilst living with their Foster Carers.

The standards of are to be followed by the agency

Each Foster Carer is allocated to a supervising social worker to share responsibility for the work of each of its Foster Carer. Foster Carers have access to telephone advice twenty-four hours a day 365 days of the year. Social workers and/or a manager is permanently available

to provide support to the twenty-four-hour service. There is a dedicated team for out of hours referrals.

Children in placement are seen regularly by the Foster Carer's supervisor. Their right to complain is explained to them in an age appropriate way at an early stage of their placement. When age appropriate they are given a copy of the agency Children's or Young Persons Guide, when there is a need identified it will be translated to other languages.

Foster Carers are expected to maintain clean and comfortable accommodation and to provide appropriate food at all times. They must ensure that the children in their care have adequate pocket money, clothing, toys and other personal possessions.

Foster Carers must do everything they can to support the child's cultural identity, preserve pre-existing religious affiliations and promote the child's general self-esteem.

Foster Carers must promote regular school attendance whenever possible and take positive steps to achieve educational continuity and achievement for the children in their care. They should where appropriate assist the child's social worker in arranging local education and should always encourage children to fulfil their potential.

Foster Carers must ensure that children are registered with a local GP and dentist within one week of placement. They are responsible for identifying and following up health concerns in consultation with their supervising social worker, the child's social worker and if appropriate the child's family.

All Foster Carers are responsible for identifying and arranging suitable leisure activities for the children they care for.

Foster Carers are responsible for children's safety whilst in their care. They attend training on the subject and regularly check their homes for health and safety risks and take remedial action where necessary. They are responsible for implementing the recommendations of their supervisor.

Foster Carers are responsible for ensuring that foster children only travel in properly maintained and insured vehicles and always wear seat belts whilst traveling by car. They should ensure that their fostering activities are compatible with their domestic and motor insurance policies.

Foster children should not normally be left alone in the home unless this has been agreed with the young person's social worker or the Foster Carer has been given delegated authority to make this decision. They should not stay with friends away from the foster home overnight without the permission of their social worker unless the Foster Carer has been given delegated authority to agree such stays.

Foster Carers must not agree to any plan which might involve significant risk. Any such plan must be agreed in advance by the child's social worker, unless the Foster Carer has been given delegated authority to agree such activities.

Foster Carers should identify regular Support Network/Enhanced Support who can be checked by the Disclosure Barring Service and vetted by the agency. Foster children should not be left with people who have not been checked by the agency.

As a general rule all children or young people placed with the agency Foster Carers are expected to be included in plans for family holidays. Where this is inappropriate or where planned breaks are agreed as necessary the agency will make alternative plans in cooperation with the placing authority.

Foster Carers should not arrange holidays or overnight stays away from home without prior consultation with and the agreement of the foster child's social worker unless they have delegated authority to arrange such stays.

The agency wants to promote positive parenting. Foster Carers should always concentrate on the importance of rewarding good behaviour rather than simply reacting to misbehaviour.

Foster Carers must not in any circumstances use any form of physical chastisement, or use any sanctions which includes any form of humiliation to the children in their care. Foster Carers must refrain from using any measure of control, restraint or discipline which could be considered excessive or unreasonable. Our directive is dialogue at all times with children and young people with the aim to de-escalate and defuse any situation.

Where the use of physical restraint is used as the last resort, to prevent immediate serious risk or harm of the child or another person, the Foster Carers should make a written record of the circumstances and tell their supervising social worker what has happened immediately.

Foster Carers should expect to be questioned about and advised on any or all their domestic arrangements which impact on children, both by their supervising social worker and representatives of the placing local authority.

Foster Carers and staff will seek to work in cooperation with the placing authority.

Within the framework of the child's care plan, Foster Carers must be prepared to promote to the best possible quality of contact between children and their families.

All Foster Carers are required to attend mandatory training which consists of Paediatric First Aid; Safeguarding and Allegations; Positive Parenting & De-Escalation; Safer Caring; Health, Safety and Hygiene training, every three years.

The services and facilities to be provided by the fostering service

The agency can offer the following: -

1. Emergency, short, medium- and long-term placements
2. Assessment and bridging placements
3. Respite and holiday placements
4. Placements for sibling groups
5. Ethnic diversity in placement
6. Parent and child placements
7. Placements which prepare children for independence
8. Enhanced fostering
9. Remand Fostering Arrangements

The agency offers Foster Carers:

1. Twenty-four-hour telephone access to their supervisor
2. Regular visits and supervision by their supervisor
3. Efficient financial systems
4. On-going training and development in line with a regularly agreed individual plan.
5. Regular agency social activities.

The status and constitution of the agency

Greater London Fostering is a conventional limited company set up in 2002.

The management structure of the agency

The agency has two Directors, Linda Norwood and Richard Norwood. Rahima Kadir is the Interim Registered Manager. Melanie Yearwood is the Operations Manager and Responsible Individual.

A description of the agency's Foster Carers, their number and the numbers recruited

The agency currently has 104 (June 2024) Foster Carer families.

The agency has recruited 424 (Sept 2024) Foster Carer families since setting up in 2002.

The number of children placed by the agency

The agency has 123 (Sept 2024) children in placement at the time of writing this statement.

The process for recruiting and approving Foster Carers

Foster Carers are recruited by personal recommendation and direct advertising. When the agency is approached by a prospective applicant they are contacted by a member of staff to discuss with the applicant/s the feasibility of them becoming Foster Carers.

Prospective applicants are also invited to attend Information Sessions organised by the agency to provide applicants information about fostering and answer any questions they may have. Positive Aspirations Group seek to recruit applicants who have suitable or transferable core skills, which can be nurtured and supported into the role of approved Foster Carers.

Applicants who wish to continue with their application are then invited to complete and return our application form and attend our Skills to Foster training course. Preparatory training runs on a regular basis. The Skills to Foster training course are jointly facilitated by a social worker or manager and where possible one of the agencies more experienced Foster Carers. As part of the training applicants are given the opportunity to meet other Foster Carers and are encouraged to attend further Foster Carer training to develop their knowledge during the assessment process.

Full assessments are undertaken on applicants by experienced, qualified social workers, using the BAAF Form F format. Applicants and their families are visited in their homes as well as in virtual sessions on at least six occasions and each individual in the application is separately interviewed. Applicants are expected to contribute written material towards their assessment and third-party evidence of their child care experience is obtained. In addition to providing written references, some personal referees are visited or interviewed virtually by the assessing social worker.

Photo Evidence of the applicant's identity is required e.g. passport, driving licence. Enhanced DBS and other statutory checks are undertaken on all applicants. The agency is registered to undertake its own DBS checks.

All applicants who are felt to be unsuitable during the assessment to become Foster Carers, are told in writing the reasons for the discontinuation of the assessment process.

Applicants who successfully complete the assessment and training and preparation are presented to our fostering panel with a recommendation for approval as a Foster Carer.

Following approval, the Foster Carer signs our foster care agreement which commits the Foster Carer and the agency to certain ways of working which include:

1. Adherence to the agency philosophy and working practices
2. A learning and development programme which includes regular attendance at training events and support meetings.
3. Annual review and appraisal.
4. Comply with all safeguarding and Health and Safety Requirements.
5. To proactively support the care planning of children and optimise the 'life chances' for all children.

Greater London Fostering services is registered at the following
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