

# Statement of Purpose

2024-2025



[www.fostercarematters.org.uk](http://www.fostercarematters.org.uk)



Fostering charity where children matter

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## Introduction to our agency

Welcome to Foster Care Matters. We are an independent fostering agency based in the North West of England.

We are part of Adoption Matters, a 5 times Ofsted Outstanding Adoption service which has a history of over 76 years, that has placed over 5,000 children with adoptive families and has been at the forefront of innovation in adoption development.

Adoption Matters is also registered charity (No 512892) and a company limited by guarantee (No 01617324).

This Statement of Purpose sets out the agency's aims and objectives, principles and values, the services provided and how these are monitored. It provides an overview of the structure of the agency.

## Aims & Objectives

At Foster Care Matters we believe that children's welfare and needs are at the centre of what we do and; we aim for them to grow up in a secure and loving foster family who will best meet their needs both short term and long term helping them to reach their full potential.

In order to do this Foster Care Matters recruits and trains foster parents to care for children and young people who need a loving family outside of their birth family.

We aim to provide a high-quality service that is:

- Honest, transparent and fair
- Timely and responsive
- Expert and informative
- Inclusive
- Accepting and valuing of difference
- Supportive to all users of the service

## Our Vision

Foster Care Matters strives towards a situation where children and young people growing up in the northwest, who are unable to live with their birth families, will have the security and benefit of a loving foster family.

## Mission

Our main aim is to match foster families to children and young people who, for various reasons, are no longer able to live with their birth families. We also aim to provide a high quality, comprehensive and responsive support service to potential and existing foster parents, that provides therapeutic parenting training and advice.

As we grow and develop our service increasing both scale and scope whilst maintaining quality, we aim to be the first agency of choice for those considering fostering in the area that we cover.

We seek to work closely with local authorities to place some of society's most vulnerable children with our families, and we would wish to work in partnership in order to provide high quality foster families to children and young people where we can evidence the progress they have made.

## Values & Standards of Service

Children's welfare, safety and outcomes are paramount considerations in all our work undertaken across the agency. All our activities are underpinned by a strong commitment to the following core values, principles and standards of care:

**Ethical** – We are an organisation that has its foundations in the Church of England Diocesan through our Adoption Services and thereby have regard to the principles of the Christian faith in furthering our Charitable Objectives and Fostering Service.

**Celebrating difference** - We work within a culture of respect and acceptance, treating everyone who comes to us fairly, professionally and with respect to people's right to confidentiality.

**Inclusive** - We strive to ensure equality of opportunity, both for our foster families and amongst our staff and Trustees regardless of gender, culture, ethnic background, age, disability or sexuality.

**Flexible** - We aim to continually develop and improve our services and increase engagement with our service users, using their feedback and suggestions to inform future developments.

**Honest and Fair** - We undertake to treat every situation fairly on its individual merits and to be honest and realistic in all our communications.

**Quality & Reputation** - We are committed to ensuring that quality is at the heart of all our activities and that we provide the best possible service to our foster families, taking their views and requirements into account at every stage and finding new ways to improve their experience. We have well-defined procedures for Safeguarding to ensure at all points children in care are kept as safe as possible.

**Innovation** - We aim to be a proactive, dynamic and innovative organisation that anticipates and responds to the changing environment to develop and deliver the very best in fostering service for children in our care.

**Approachable, friendly & collaborative** - We strive to be a welcoming, compassionate and inclusive service, whose ethos is based on principles of fairness, equality and respect. From the first point of contact and throughout we will work in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for children and families.

**Professional** – Foster Care Matters has a highly qualified, experienced and knowledgeable staff team. Our committed, reliable team help ensure consistency and quality throughout periods of growth and transition.

**Sustainable** - The agency operates in a financially prudent manner employing robust strategies and undertaking due diligence in all its decision making. All staff take responsibility and are aware of the need to work within defined budgets and to meet agreed objectives wherever possible. We monitor annual accounts regularly with oversight from the

Board of Trustees and the Agency's Accountant, making decisions and taking appropriate measures in a timely manner to ensure the continued operation and stability of our services and staff team.

## **Services we offer**

Recruitment, preparation, training and assessment of prospective foster parents, to meet the needs of children and young people referred to the agency needing foster families.

Matching children and young people to approved foster families.

Providing robust supervision and support to foster families by way of formal supervision, foster parent support groups and duty services that meet their needs.

Post approval training that provides opportunities for continued professional development and ensures that the individual needs of children and young people are met through enhancing foster parent's current knowledge and developing new skills.

Out of hours support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including bank holidays.

Participation events that ensure the voices of children and young people are heard.

## **Recruitment, approval and training of foster families**

Foster Care Matters recruits, prepares and trains foster parents to meet the needs of children and young people who need foster placements.

Our recruitment is open and inclusive. We welcome foster parents irrespective of age (as long as they are over 21), gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation and disability. We encourage foster parents from many different backgrounds to suit the diverse needs of children and young people requiring foster placements. Foster Parents are offered preparation training and full support to help them understand the needs and background of children in care.

The agency uses a number of recruitment methods including the agency website, social media and other media sources and has a range of literature explaining the fostering service. These can be produced in other formats and languages upon request.

## **Enquiries, Initial Screening and Home Visits.**

When a person enquires to foster, they will speak with one of our Enquiry Officers who will take information about them to ensure they meet the basic fostering criteria and we have the information needed to progress to a home visit.

If a home visit takes place this will be an opportunity to provide information and to look in more detail at the potential foster parents' family situation, children both at home and living away, work history, financial situation and understanding of diversity. Other areas will also be covered.

If it is decided that the fostering criteria has been met and that the person/ people have significant experience and potential, they will be invited to apply.

Once a fully completed application is received, they will move to Stage 1 of the assessment process.



## Stage 1

This is when all references and checks will be completed including medicals, DBS checks, personal and employment references, local authority checks and Ofsted.

## Stage 2

During this stage of the assessment applicants will receive home visits to complete a thorough assessment of their skills, experiences and attributes transferrable to the fostering task.

It is likely that where it is felt appropriate, we will begin Stage 2 of the assessment process before we have fully completed Stage 1.

During these stages the applicants will also be invited to our preparation to foster training. It is a requirement for them to attend before they attend panel for approval as this is a key part of the assessment process.

## Approval

The agency has a Fostering Panel, which meets face to face. The panel has an independent Chair. All completed assessment reports are considered by the Fostering Panel, which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker about their suitability to foster and gives advice as appropriate. Prospective foster parents are invited to attend and are told of the Panel's recommendation on the day.

If an applicant is not recommended as suitable, or following a review and Panel recommendation, the Agency proposes to withdraw their approval, the various options available to them, such as further representation to the Agency or referral to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), are explained and written notification provided.

All Foster Parents are supported by a qualified and suitably experienced social worker throughout the assessment and approval stage or, in the case of a less experienced worker; the worker would be supervised by someone who has the required experience.

## Matching

Foster Care Matters prides itself on ensuring the comprehensive assessments and training of foster parents results in matches that, where best possible, meets the needs of children and young people in need of foster placements. Having robust matching processes ensure that any gaps are identified and collaborative working with local authority colleagues will ensure that support is identified in order for foster families to best meet the needs of the children and young people placed with them.

## Support

All Foster Parents will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker who will visit their home to complete supervision. During supervision foster parents will have an opportunity to discuss their own family situation and any changes that have occurred. They will also discuss the children and young people they are caring for and the progress they are making in their care. There will also be an opportunity to speak about any concerns and what support is available. Included in the supervision meeting will be discussions on support needs, attendance at foster parent support and training & development.

At least monthly Foster Care Matters will facilitate Foster Parent Support Groups where all foster parents will attend to receive agency updates and meet with fellow foster parents.

Support will also be available from the Centre for Fostering and Adoption Support (CFAS). This will be in relation to therapeutic parenting training, consultation and support.

Foster Care Matters will have appropriately qualified social workers who will be available to speak with and support foster parenting during office hours and out of hours during the week and throughout the weekend.

The agency will also provide a comprehensive training package that meets the National Minimum Standards of Fostering and ensures that foster parents receive mandatory training which includes Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Valuing Diversity, Recording and Reporting, De-Escalation and First Aid. Training and support will be ongoing throughout a foster parent's approval. Foster parents will also be provided with support to complete their TSD portfolio.

## **Monitoring & Evaluation of Services**

The agency has a Quality Assurance Policy.

We have a continued commitment to feedback and will have mechanisms to welcome feedback from potential foster parents, approved foster parents, children and young people and local authorities.

We will also ensure that partner colleagues are supported to work collaboratively with us and given the opportunity to provide feedback to the agency on performance and working together.

Copies of the "Comments, Complaints, Compliments" leaflet are provided to anyone who approaches the agency. Service users, including children, are advised of the right to make representation and complaints and assisted to do this if required. Staff and others who work for the purposes of the agency receive training in the agency's complaints procedure.

Learning points from any complaints are considered by the Strategic Management Team and shared with staff via Team Meetings. Prospective foster parents' DBS and medical checks are updated every three years. An annual review is carried out every year and presented to the fostering panel the first year and post this when needed.

The Fostering Panel has a role in monitoring the business of the agency and the Panel Advisor will provide a report to the panel each time it takes place. The Panel Chairs complete a Quality Assurance Report to the Agency's trustees twice a year.

The Fostering Panel is kept informed of and monitors the Agency's record in meeting timescales. The Panel has a role in reviewing and recommending changes to the Agency's policies and procedures and in advising the agency on the quality of reports. Further quality assurance is provided by internal measures such as monthly supervision of staff and annual appraisals of all staff and Central List Panel members.

All sessional workers receive induction and regular supervision and are invited to staff meetings and training events as appropriate. The Registered Fostering Manager will read case files and sign off numerous documents.

Decisions are recorded in electronic case files and are signed and dated. The agency operates a case file audit system and a caseload monitoring system.

Staff and sessional workers are made aware of the agency's children's safeguarding procedures and receive training in this area. All complaints, allegations and incidents of abuse about the agency's current or previous staff are followed up promptly, referred to the appropriate agencies as necessary and details of action recorded. The agency reviews its records of complaints annually to identify any pattern of complaint against services or individuals. Contracts are monitored through annual and quarterly meetings with purchasers and reports and statistics are provided. This fashion a bespoke service and feedback enables changes to be made for service users' benefit. The Trustees receive an annual Quality Assurance Report and twice-yearly Panel Quality Assurance Reports. The Agency produces an Annual Review.

The Agency is registered with Ofsted and is inspected by them approximately every three years. Their address is:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231

The agency welcomes feedback about the contents of this Statement of Purpose: either email: [info@fostercarematters.org.uk](mailto:info@fostercarematters.org.uk)

Or contact: Foster Care Matters, 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, Cheshire, CH2 1AE Tel: 01244 390938 Fax: 01244 390067

## Staffing and Structure

**The Registered Fostering Manager and Panel Advisor: Karen Palfreyman** has been a qualified social worker for 22 years completing the DIPSW in 2001 and the BA Professional Studies and Social Work in 2002. Karen has 18 years' experience of working in fostering both within the public and private sector. Holds a level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management and also the Practice Educator Award. Karen has held the position of Registered Manager for two previous independent fostering agencies.

**The Agency Decision Maker: Jacqui Shore** is Head of Service Adoption North (Adoption Matters). Jacqui has a Diploma, and an MA in Social work has worked with children and families for over 20 years. Since 2004, Jacqui has worked specifically in adoption, recruiting, assessing and supporting adoptive families; and family finding for children who need adoptive families. Prior to joining Adoption Matters in 2015, Jacqui managed a Local Authority Adoption team.

**The Responsible Individual: Paul Dolan** is Head of Service for Adoption North (Adoption Matters). Paul has worked in the field of children's services since 1995. Paul qualified as a Social Worker in 1999 and following a short 'apprenticeship' in child protection, moved to work in adoption. Paul worked as a Social Worker and manager in a number of Local Authority Adoption teams before joining Adoption Matters in early 2012. Paul has worked with both adopters and children requiring adoptive placements extensively during this time. Paul manages the teams covering an area from Warrington/Wigan across to Yorkshire and the North East region. Paul is a Panel Adviser to the Blackburn and Durham adoption panels, and the lead for the agency's post qualifying training programme.



## The Strategic Management Team:

This includes: -

**Chief Executive Susy White** is a qualified Accountant with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and worked in practice before joining Adoption Matters in 2004. Susy has played a pivotal role in Adoption Matters growth and success working closely alongside our former CEO Norman Goodwin, CBE, in her leadership role as Finance and Operations Director. Susy was appointed as Chief Executive late 2021, officially starting the role on 1 January 2022.

**Finance & Business Service Manager Karen Davies** joined Adoption Matters in 2010. Karen is part of the Strategic Management Team and is also responsible for the Business Section of the organisation which includes Finance, HR, adoption admin and IT. Karen is currently in the process of completing her CIMA qualification.

**Business Development Manager Gaynor Richards** has over 15 years experience in Business Development roles, previously working in in the Higher Education sector where she secured significant funding for and managed a number of projects, programmes and new initiatives. Gaynor is a member of the Strategic Management Team and has an active role in developing the agency's Business Plan and Strategy. Since starting work at Adoption Matters in 2012, Gaynor has adapted her skills for a different sector and the benefit of the agency, successfully bidding for Government funding to support the work, particularly in the areas of Adoption Support and Bespoke Family Finding.

**Head of Service Fostering and Adoption Support Service Anne Fleming** has been privileged to work in the field of adoption and adoption support since 1994. Anne has worked as an Outreach Worker, Social Work Practitioner and as Practice Manager for a highly regarded local authority in Cheshire before moving to join the Centre for Adoption Support (CfAS) in 2015. The CfAS reputation for excellence was a key factor in Anne's decision to join and help develop the service.

The agency ensures that those who have responsibility for providing services shall, as far as possible, possess the necessary skills and time to do so effectively, and in accordance with regulations. All social work managers and supervising social workers are professionally qualified with a Degree or Diploma in Social Work or equivalent and are registered with Social Work England. The Registered Manager and one other Service Manager hold the NVQ level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management Children and Families.

We provide age appropriate, Children's Guides that ensure any child or young person cared for by Foster Care Matters has access to appropriate information about how they will be supported and cared for by the agency and their approved foster parents including how they can make a complaint and who they can contact for support. They will be regularly reviewed in consultation with children, young people and foster parents.

## Comments, compliments and complaints

Foster Care Matters is committed to providing a quality service which is efficient, effective, timely and conducted in an open, friendly and respectful manner.

We welcome all comments and feedback about the way we work and your views help us to make sure that we are giving the best service we can, and are important in letting us know if there are any things we could do better. Your feedback may include compliments (e.g. praise of a particular service or staff member), comments about how our services could be developed, or complaints. Compliments and comments can be shared by talking to the person working with you or a manager. We provide a leaflet to all of our foster parents as part of their information pack, which is also available on our website and contains a tear-off sheet for convenience.

We also welcome feedback by telephone, in a letter/email, or by asking to meet with us. Let us know how we are doing.

### Comments

We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have about how we could improve any aspect of our service. If you make a comment about our services, we will reply to you in writing.

### Compliments

We are always pleased to hear from people using our services who want to praise a particular member of staff or the service they receive. If you send us a compliment we will write back to you and send a copy to the staff concerned and their manager(s) so that they know their work is appreciated.

### Complaints

We realise that despite our best efforts, sometimes things can go wrong and, in such instances, we want to hear from you so that we can address this. We regard complaints as an opportunity to turn a negative experience into a positive one, as well as an opportunity for us to learn and to improve how we do things. If you wish to make a complaint, we will do all we can to investigate this fairly, confidentially, and quickly and to explain the result to you. This leaflet summarises the agency's Complaints Procedure, a copy of which is available on request.

The purpose of our procedure is to ensure that we:

- listen and are responsive to people who raise an issue with us
- respond swiftly, aiming to resolve complaints informally where possible
- are fair, consistent and transparent in our approach
- offer solutions and/or explanations
- provide appropriate support for any staff who are mentioned in complaints
- record complaints consistently and monitor what we record
- use complaints positively as an opportunity for learning and improvement.

### Who can complain?

Anyone who is receiving a service, or who has been provided with, or has been refused a service from Foster Care Matters may complain to us. Foster parents can make a complaint in their own right or on behalf of a child in their care.

We also have a separate leaflet for children “A Children’s Guide to Complaints” We can assist if your first language is not English or if you have other specialist needs.

## How to make a complaint

### The informal route Stage 1

In the vast majority of situations, we are able to deal with complaints informally and quickly and achieve a solution that is acceptable to both parties. Your first step should be to discuss the issue directly with the person with whom you have been dealing, ideally as and when the situation arises. This staff member should discuss the matter with their line manager and explain what they have done to address the complaint to ensure that it is handled effectively.

### Stage 2

If you are not happy with the response you receive from the member of staff you are working with, or you feel that they cannot help you, you should ask to speak to their line manager.

You can contact them by telephone or email to explain your concerns or alternatively you have the option of meeting with them. Sometimes people tell us “this is not a complaint but...” or raise an issue with us without stating that they wish to complain and we will treat this in the same way under our informal procedure.

When you contact the line manager, it is helpful if you are able to explain clearly:

- What the problem is
- What you would like to see happen to resolve your complaint.

The line manager will look into all aspects of your complaint and the matters you have raised and you will receive a response within 28 days.

### The formal route - Stage 3

If you are unhappy with the response from Stage 2 and feel that your complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, you can make a written complaint to the Chief Executive (CEO), outlining your reasons for remaining dissatisfied and what actions you expect to see. This instigates the formal complaints procedure. In certain circumstances, for example if your complaint is about the line manager, or if the line manager feels it is inappropriate for them to deal with it, they may recommend that your complaint be escalated to Stage 3 instead of responding to you themselves.

Your correspondence to the CEO can be made either by email or letter but must be made in writing. If you need any assistance in preparing your written complaint, for example if English is not your first language, we can provide you with support. At this stage, your complaint will be fully investigated by the agency's designated lead for complaints (DLC), a senior member of the management team who is experienced in customer service and complaints handling. They will speak to all the members of staff who have been involved or who are named in your complaint and review all previous correspondence. They will address each element of your complaint and set out all their findings, conclusions and recommendations in a report or letter, outlining any actions the agency plans to undertake. You will receive this within 28 days of your formal complaint being received by the Agency.

## Stage 4

If still not satisfied with the outcome, you have the right to appeal to the agency's Board of Trustees. You would need to write again to the CEO explaining why you are still not happy with the Agency's response and what outcome you are looking to achieve.

The CEO will appoint three Board members to an appeals panel to consider all the previous information and correspondence regarding your complaint and you will be invited to a meeting to discuss their conclusions and final decision. In certain circumstances, they may also invite an external advisor to review the complaint and report on their findings, in which event you would be informed of the reasons in advance. The CEO will write to you within 14 days of receiving the panel's written report summarising their recommendations and final decision.

This will conclude the agency's complaints procedure. A copy of our full complaints procedure is available on request. All comments, compliments and complaints should be addressed to our Head Office: Foster Care Matters, 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1AE Tel: 01244 390 938 Fax: 01244 390 067 [info@fostercarematters.org.uk](mailto:info@fostercarematters.org.uk)  
[www.fostercarematters.org.uk](http://www.fostercarematters.org.uk)

If having exhausted the agency's procedure you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you will be told of other avenues for complaint (e.g. Ofsted). Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

You may also wish to contact Ofsted with a comment, compliment or complaint. They can be contacted at: Ofsted, North Regional Office, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD Helpline: 0300 123 1231 Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Complaints about a Local Authority: Children & Young People From 1 April 2004, local authorities have a duty under section 26A of the Children Act 1989 to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy to children in need, looked after children and care leavers making or intending to make representations (including complaints) under the Children Act 1989.

Each Local Authority with responsibility for a Cared For Child should provide the child with details of their complaints procedure and details of an independent advocacy service that the child can access. You need to ensure that the child's Social Worker gives you this for the child when the child is placed in your care. Children placed outside of the authority who use alternative and augmentative forms of communication and those whose preferred language is not English are particularly vulnerable. Local authorities must make sure that the arrangements they make for providing advocacy services are able to provide an effective service to these groups of children. Foster Parents should enable children to make complaints and representations and ensure that the child is not subject to reprisals for making a complaint or representation.



Fostering charity where children matter

**Head Office:** 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, CH1 2AE.

Also offices in: Warrington, Manchester and Hale.

**Email:** [info@fostercarematters.org.uk](mailto:info@fostercarematters.org.uk)



**0300 123 1061**

**[www.fostercarematters.org.uk](http://www.fostercarematters.org.uk)**



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