



Connect Fostering Services Ltd

Connecting Children with Foster Families

STATEMENT of PURPOSE

Connect Fostering Services is a private Limited company registered under Company Act 2006 (Reg. No. No. 8392273) and was incorporated in January 2013 and registered with Ofsted in July 2013.

The Fostering Service is designed to operate within the corporate vision and values of this agency, which encompasses the five main outcomes for children and young people within the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

Aim of the Service

Connect Fostering is an organisation with resources to provide an excellent fostering service across all cultures and identified needs. The registered office is in Iver, Buckinghamshire, and provides foster carers across the Greater London area and Home Counties.

The main aim of this agency is to provide excellent placements with foster carers who are nurturing and caring, to give a child a positive family experience, safeguard children and work with a child's potential and achieve the best outcomes. This agency's approach to making a positive difference to the lives of children, regardless of their age, religion, cultural or social background is outlined below.

Objectives

Connect Fostering Services is committed to working with service users, carers, the wider community, and partner agencies to promote the welfare of the children looked after and improve their life chances by providing services that:

- Support looked after children and their families (working within care plans).



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- Provide alternative care when required by local authorities that is stable and safe, and that is responsive to individual needs, circumstances, and choice.
- Maintain the continuity of educational and health provision.
- Support in maintaining contact with their families and significant others.

In meeting these aims, and objectives *Connect Fostering* will be giving local authorities a choice of foster carers who will work to secure quality accommodation, and assisting placing authorities in securing sufficient accommodation within their boundaries to meet the needs of looked after children.

As far as is practicable, placements will:

- Reflect the child/young person's culture and religion,
- Not disrupt the child's education or training,
- Enables the child to live with accommodated siblings,
- Be located within their local area.

The key objectives in providing quality placements are:

- To provide placement choice and positive matching of a child with a placement through identification of the child's needs (written referral to be received by agency from LA) and taking account of any wishes and feelings of the child (NMS 1, 10).
- Where possible and appropriate provide a placement that is in reasonable proximity to a child's home and addresses the child's culture and heritage (NMS 2).
- Promote an environment that ensures adequate safeguarding measures are in place for the child.

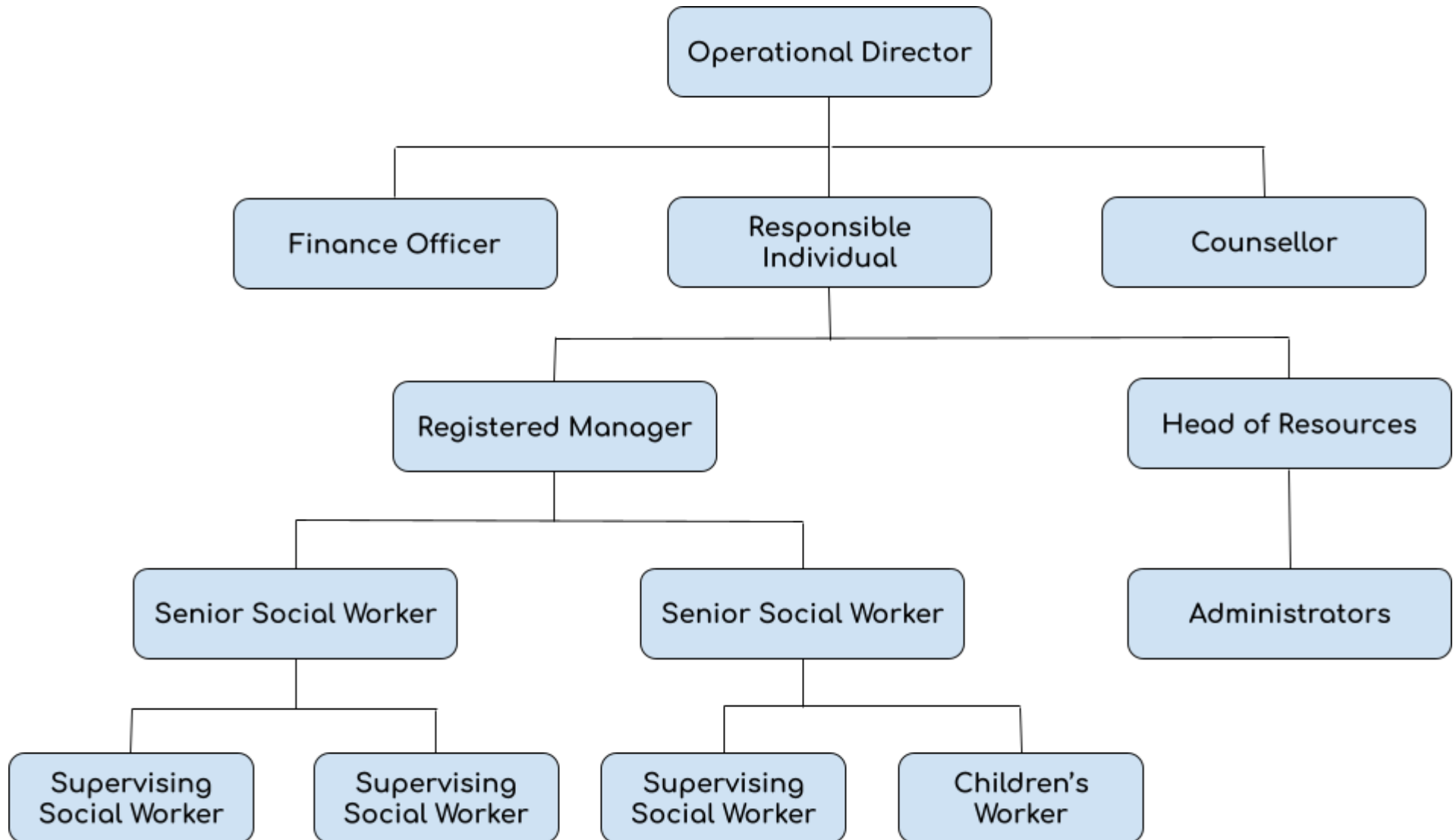


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- Promote a culture within the foster home that provides positive role models and supports positive behaviour through adherence to policies and the skills of the foster carer (NMS 3, 4, 5).
- Where possible and in the best interests of the individual children, as identified within assessed needs, siblings should be placed together (NMS 2, 9).
- To allow the promotion of proactive, positive health care and well-being thorough Safer Care policies, promotion of child interests and aptitudes, access to relevant leisure opportunities and health professionals (NMS 6,7).
- To promote the maximisation of educational opportunities and achievements for children through access to relevant support and professionals (NMS 8).
- Ensure placements wherever possible have planned beginnings and endings (NMS 11).
- Promotion of positive contact with family and friends through effective care planning in partnership with LA (NMS 9).
- Listening to the child and involvement in decision-making (NMS 1).
- Partnership with parents/carers (NMS 8).
- Minimise the number of moves for each child (NMS 11).
- Minimising the length of time between becoming a looked after child and moving to a permanent placement, if this is required. (NMS 11).
- Preparation for independence and smooth transition into adulthood (NMS 12).

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE





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STAFF

Operational Director - Agency Decision Maker

Qualification: BA (Hons) in Social Work, Management Training Award

FD has 30 years of experience in the field of social work. She has been a senior social worker, service manager and assistant Director for another IFA & Local Authority. She has experience of Children in Need, Barandos – disability project, Women's Aid, worked in Local Authority as well as private fostering agency. She has experience of setting up her own Independent Fostering Agency and successfully running it. She has the experience of being the registered Manager and the Responsible individual with Ofsted.

The Responsible Individual

WM has worked in childcare for the past 40 years, where he started out as a residential social worker. He is a qualified social worker, has an MA in Health & Social Policy, and a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care.

The WM has over 30 years of experience of work in various fostering services within both the public and private sector. This includes twenty years' experience of being a registered manager and service manager of the independent sector. He has sat on and chaired several different fostering panels.

Other skills and experience also include social work trainer and a local authority IRO. He is an NVQ assessor and has successfully developed and implemented TSD programmes for foster carers.

Registered Manager

The RM is a qualified Social Worker. He qualified in 2012 with an BA (Hons) in Social Work. He also has a Level 5 in Business Management. As a practitioner he is committed to Child Centred Practice and good outcomes for young people. Throughout his career in Social Work, he has worked in various roles. The TM



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joined Connect in 2017 initially as Head of Quality Assurance and has moved on to becoming an Assistant Team Manager with responsibilities including managing supervising social workers and overseeing safeguarding matters. YD speaks fluent Arabic and understands Punjabi & Urdu.

Supervising Social Workers

Connect Fostering will recruit supervising social workers who have social work qualification, experience in social work field, DBS checked, and Social Work England registered and who are motivated professionals who will support the foster carers as the agency grows. All staff are subject to the agency's probation policy; this will include the successful completion of induction training. Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisal which takes on views of foster carers and Looked After Children. The appraisals will evaluate and set targets for the future professional developments of each staff member. Staff will receive signed supervision and annual appraisal.

SSW 1 (senior)

He is a qualified registered Social Worker who graduated from Canterbury Christ Church University on the 28th August 2018. He is also a foster carer, counsellor, pastor, and mental health first aider with many years of working experience. The experience he gained in working with families (adults, children, and young people) in those roles, and his academic/professional training have equipped him with a lot of skills and qualities.

His roles as a foster carer and freelance social worker gave him a rich experience in caring for looked after children in line with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations, Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, and Working Together to Safeguard Children. His experience include Form-F/Back-up/Respite/Nominated Carers assessments, participated in Foster



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Carers' panel presentation/annual review, foster carers supervision using signs of safety, and completing supervision records.

He is a Licensed Facilitator of the Positive Parenting course. Furthermore, has experience in planning, arranging, and conducting specialised seminars and workshops to enhance spiritual, physical, marital, mental, and financial well-being of BME people.

SSW 2 (senior)

SSW 2 has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Essex.

She has experience of working in domiciliary care with the elderly and as a housing assistant. She has been with Connect Fostering since 2020, and has assisted the agency in developing stringent risk assessments as well as an induction guide for new social workers to the agency. She has excellent skills in working with children and young people on a one-to-one basis.

SSW 3

SSW 3 is a qualified Social Worker, graduating in 2011 with a Degree in Social Work at Robert Gordon University. She is a hard working individual who is enthusiastic, organised and efficient, as well as reliable and trustworthy. She has acquired over 30 years of experience working in the Health & Social Care industry working with adults, the elderly, and young people in both residential and community based contexts.

SSW 4

She is an assistant social worker awaiting her graduation with a Master of Arts Social Work from Brunel University. She first joined the Agency as a student social



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worker in 2021 and completed both her placements with Connect. She has been an Assistant Social Worker with Connect since 2022.

She also has a Bachelor of Law in 2019 from St Mary's University. During her undergraduate degree she completed her placement with a Family Lawyer and worked closely with a Human Rights and Immigration Barrister attending court, preparing court bundles, and liaising with other Barristers. She has experience working with digital technology and website design across multi-media platforms.

SSW 5

SSW 5 joined Connect Fostering in March 2023. She graduated with a 2:1 honours degree from the University of Nottingham in 2022. Her placements included working with *Derby City Council* in their Children & Family Care team adopting a multi-agency approach to safeguarding vulnerable children and families, carrying out assessments under the single assessment framework.

She has also worked as an adult supported living worker with *Framework Housing Association* and hence has experience of working with homelessness, mental health, and substance misuse.

Throughout she has gained invaluable experience of working directly with young people, adults, and families.

Qualified Counsellor

The QC is a support worker who works on recruitment of carers, she is the administrator for Panel and does some work with children or carers on a one-to-one basis where there are challenges. Sheista works with children/young people directly doing individual work by using her counselling skills when there are challenges within the placements such as going missing, issues of self-care, safeguarding, etc. She has been with the agency for the past 4 years. She is a



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mother with adult children and is a qualified beauty therapist. She works full time. She speaks Punjabi and Urdu.

Children's/Youth Worker

Currently this post is vacant.

Head of Resources

SD has been with the agency since 2015 and is Head of Resources who deals with local authorities who request placements. She has experience of working within the fostering field for the past 10 years. She deals with tenders and works closely with local authorities. She deals with most of the troubleshooting issues that may come up in placements and explore strategies to resolve these by putting resources in. She has previously worked with various independent fostering agencies as a duty worker. She understands Urdu & Punjabi.

Finance Officer

The FO has been a member of the team since September 2017. She has a background in finance for the past 15 years. She teaches children and adults Arabic studies part-time. She speaks Punjabi and Urdu.

Training

A comprehensive training programme for foster carers will be provided throughout the year to ensure they are trained in skills required to ensure they are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of looked after children.

Currently we have the following organisations that provide the training:

1. St John's Ambulance – staff & carers



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2. The Social Care Training Hub who provide group training and online training- staff and carers
3. West London University - staff
4. Fostering Network - staff
5. Peninsula – staff
6. Therapeutic Training for carers/staff.

The above organisations are all external and are well established companies that have been provided training for many decades.

All the training provided by the above companies has made a significant contribution in the development of agency policies and the development of the training section for staff and carers as well as Panel members.

Connect Fostering Panel

Connect Fostering has recruited a pool of independent panel members who will be available as needed. This includes a Chair with extensive social work management experience and chairing fostering panels. Other members have professional experience in education, health, foster carer and in social work & childcare. The Panel also has a member who has had personal experience of being looked after.

Connect Fostering follows the same process of recruitment as with permanent staff such as DBS check, written & telephone references taken up and verifying ID documents.

The service will have Social Workers and Administrators as the agency grows and where there is a need, staff will be recruited.

All Social Workers within the team have a social work qualification and previous experience of working with children and families and are subject to *Connect Fostering's* standards for continuous professional development.

Likewise all Managers involved in the service will hold a social work qualification and post- qualification experience in services for children.



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All staff is subject to the agency's policy on recruitment, staffing, equal opportunities, and discipline. All Social Workers are subject to the full range of regulatory checks, and administrative staff has DBS checks and references taken up.



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PLACEMENTS & SERVICES PROVIDED

Connect Fostering Services offers a comprehensive service to *Looked After Children* and Young People, approved and prospective mainstream and foster carers.

The needs, wishes, welfare and safety of *Looked After Children* are at the centre of *Connect Fostering* aims/objectives. We believe that all children and young people needing substitute care have the right to live within a safe and nurturing family environment which meets their needs throughout childhood, and which enables them to realise their full potential.

The fostering service aims to provide suitable placements for all children and young people who are *Looked After*:-

- Task centred foster placements for children of all ages needing emergency and short-term placements. These placements can last up to 2 years with a view for the child to be rehabilitated to birth family or moving on to adoptive parents or permanent carers.
- Emergency placements are for a child who has been assessed to be in danger of immediate harm and is in need of a place of safety. These placements are made with a view to a post placement plan for the child by placing authority at the earliest possible opportunity. This agency will be proactive in liaising with local authority to ensure there is no drift occurring in placement.
- Long term placements – Long term placements for children and young people who cannot return to their birth family when adoption is not the plan. These placements are where it has been agreed that a child will be cared for by a specific carer/s for the long term as this will be formalised by the placing Local Authorities permanency panel. The carer would have been assessed for long term care of the child and then matched to the child accordingly.



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- Parent and child placements – these placements will be provided by this agency when a parent is the Looked After Child, both parent & child are being Looked After or just the child is being Looked After.
- Short breaks placements, providing regular planned breaks for disabled children of all ages. These placements are to support families with disabled children who need weekend or holiday respite which can last up to several weeks in duration. These children with disabilities will be supported to have new experiences/opportunities, more independence outside their homes/families whilst their parents have a break.
- Respite care placements, offering time-limited breaks to families. These placements could be to other foster carers or families who need respite during the weekend or during holiday's periods.
- Special Needs placements – these placements are for children with special behaviour needs or various forms of disability including extreme learning difficulties. Additional services can be tailored to provide extra support that carers for these children require including specialised training. These placements will be made on the basis of a pre-placement assessment of need.
- Specialist Remand Fostering – for children and young people on remand. These placements will have a placement plan as to the task of the carers providing such as service for child/young person who is on remand and the court has requested a foster carer for such a child/young person. There is usually a crew time to be abided by and monitored. **These placements will only be offered to a Local Authority when we have experienced and trained carers for Remand Fostering.**

A person may not foster more than three children in each foster home, except where all children are siblings. Applications for exemptions will usually be made because of the following exceptional circumstances: -



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- The child concerned was previously placed with the foster carers and his or her placement elsewhere has disrupted.
- The foster carers have special skills to meet the child's needs that are not available elsewhere.
- The placement of the child over the limit is the most appropriate way of meeting the child's needs arising from disability, race, religion, language and/or culture.
- The placement is required to keep the siblings together.

The application can only be made with the agreement of the foster carers and the application initially is made to and agreed by the Agency Decision Maker. All exemptions will be reported to the next available Fostering Panel for ratification. The Fostering Panel will have responsibility for the ongoing monitoring of the exemptions. Where there are more than 3 children (unless there are sibling groups) placed with foster carers an exemption will need to be ratified by the Local Authority Fostering Panel in the council that Foster carers live in.

Foster Carers Reviews

All approved carers undergo an annual review, which is chaired by a senior manager or an Independent Reviewing Officer. The first review takes place within 12 months from approval is always presented to the Fostering Panel. Subsequent annual reviews may also be presented to the Fostering Panel in situations where termination of approval is sought, when significant changes in the terms of approval are being considered, where there are major concerns about suitability of the carer or following the investigation of any allegations against the carer.

The main aim of the annual review is to determine whether the carer's approval continues to be suitable and whether there should be any changes in the terms of the registration.



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The annual review is an opportunity to look at the progress the carer has made and to set targets and goals for the next year within the annual development plan. Training needs are also assessed and a recommendation for future approval is made by the Supervising Social Worker and reviewing officer. Feedback from placing authority is taken up as is from the foster carers themselves and current foster children & previous placements.

Quarterly meetings take place between the fostering service and the independent reviewing officers to identify any quality assurance issues and to monitor and review.

Nominated Carers Assessment

A Social Worker is identified in the Recruitment Team to undertake all nominated carers assessments. Statutory checks are carried out on these applicants as part of the assessment.

This assessment will be presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation to be made. Recommendations from the Panel are then considered by the Agency Decision Maker.

There is an identified Social Worker in the Supervising Team who supports and supervises all carers approved under the nominated carers category. Nominated carers access the foster carer support groups. In addition, there is a facility for them to attend training.

Training

A clear framework of training and development is in place and this is used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their training and development needs. Training, Learning and Development of foster carers are also key elements of this agency's main aims and objectives.

The role of the foster carer is valued by this agency; there is a strong commitment to ensure that foster carers have access to the right support and



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development opportunities. Training and development is an intrinsic part of fostering. This agency has a clear expectation that all foster carers will participate in training offered by this agency as fully as possible. There is an expectation that foster carers will complete the Training, Support & Development (TSD) portfolio and this expectation is endorsed by the Fostering Panel on approval.

Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan (PDP), drawn up in conjunction between the supervising social worker and foster carer. The PDP is reviewed annually at the Foster Carer Review by a manager/or the Independent Reviewing Officer, the foster carer and the Fostering Supervising Social Worker. All carers are expected to attend a minimum of three training events a year.

After approval the TSD Portfolio will form the basis of the foster carer's Continual Professional Development Portfolio that will be used to record evidence of training undertaken, record self-reflection on what has been learned from each developmental activity and how it affects the carer's care and practice.

These opportunities enable foster carers to meet the often-complex needs of the children and young people for whom they care and to develop skills and knowledge to keep the foster family and the fostered children in terms of safeguarding all parties concerned.

Learning and development within this agency are at three stages:

- Pre-approval – skills to foster training
- Induction – within the first 2 to 6 months
- Continual personal development – throughout the year – 3 courses for carers to attend every year.
- TSDP – to be started and completed within 12 months after approval



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The training policy details the elements contained in each of these tiers, the requirements of the Children's Workforce Development Council, the associated standards as well as outlining the variety of training methods employed. Foster carers' training needs are constantly monitored by Supervising Social Workers and formally evaluated through annual reviews of the carer's terms of approval.

Supervising Social Workers

Each foster carer is allocated a Supervising Social Worker, who visits regularly to provide support and supervision. They monitor standards of care, encourage high standards and help the carer manage problems, which arise. They are also available for telephone consultation and liaise with the Social Worker for the child at the Local Authority. Foster carers first port of contact for anything needs to be with their supervising social worker and they will advise them accordingly.

Support groups for foster carers

The support group meets on a six-weekly basis in different areas and all foster carers can attend. Several support groups are organised for carers providing expert speakers on matters of interest and an opportunity for carers to share and problem solve together. Initially there will be one support at head office in Hayes and then once we have enough carers in different areas, we will have groups in those areas as well.

In addition, newly approved foster carers are supported by being linked up with an experienced foster carer who acts as mentors to them.

The fostering service ensures that at least one manager or social worker from the Agency is present at each meeting. This forum has a number of aims: -

- The agency to update the foster carers on agency development.



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- To represent the views of the foster carers in liaison with Children and Young People's Services' representatives.
- To resolve any general issues and difficulties that arise and is involved in guidance and policy-making decisions, with a view to promoting partnerships.
- To form small working groups as and when this is necessary to increase foster carer participation.
- To ensure foster carers' views are included in any proposed departmental changes that affect foster care.
- Foster carers have a "Your Shout" session where they can share their experience of fostering so that all can learn from experience.
- To identify joint training needs.
- Discuss and agree social events for foster carers, foster children and agency staff.
- The Director for the agency will attend at least one forum meeting annually.

Independent Support

This agency pays for all foster carers to be members of Foster Talk. This allows them access to advice and support, including legal advice, independently of the service.

Currently we have been providing Coaching/mentoring/counselling sessions from Sheista for carers with complex placements/needs.

Newsletter and Website

A quarterly-monthly Newsletter for foster carers is published enabling carers to keep up-to-date with news stories and events. A website dedicated to fostering has been established and reflects current regulations, National Minimum



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Standards and local policy and procedures. It will also allow individuals to register their initial interest in becoming a foster carer.

Out of Hours Service

This agency has an Out of Hours service and foster carers can contact this team of Social Workers/managers outside of office hours, should the need arise. This service is also available to local authorities for referral on out of hours emergency placements.

Therapeutic services

Therapeutic services/advice/support can be provided by this agency, but this can only happen once the Looked After Children (LAC) social worker agrees that this service is needed. Once agreed by the agency's financial officer and LAC social worker then there is a process that needs to take place. The LAC social worker may also make a referral to CAMHS providers through a single point of access.

Education

Education is a key priority for *looked after children* by this agency. Improving educational outcomes for looked after children is actively supported by the Director. Foster Carers are expected to support and encourage children in their education and develop good working relationships with the foster child's school. Supervising social workers provide guidance and support to look after children and their carers in relation to education. This agency's Training officer provides training to foster carers on Personal Education Plans and the education of looked after children.



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Activities for Looked After Children

This agency actively supports carers in identifying leisure pursuits for looked after children and young people. This will be monitored on a monthly basis, and where appropriate support workers will be assigned in order to assist carers in meeting the leisure needs of young people in their care.

Leaving Care

Each supervising social worker is responsible for providing support and guidance to those leaving care. The training officer for leaving care will provide each looked after child training jointly with their carers, and guidance will be given on how to help/support them with semi-independence skills prior to leaving care.

Connect Fostering will liaise with external agencies such as *Action for Children* so that it can assist local authorities and carers to provide post-16 accommodation, including a supported lodging, if this is the care plan, and any additional services to support the young person's transition to independence.

Care Plan

Connect Fostering will work closely with the placing authority to achieve the objectives of the looked after child's care plan.

The foster carers will have a copy of the Care Plan and will have the opportunity to contribute to these reviews either in person or in writing.

During the design of the Care Plan, the foster carer will be made aware of all available information in relation to the child or children concerned in order to consider the suitability of the placement and the arrangements required if the placement goes ahead.



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In an emergency situation, the information may be extremely limited, but the foster carer will be given as much information as is available in order to ensure that the immediate care needs of the child are known until a fuller picture can be obtained.

Once the child is placed, the child's social worker as well as the supervising social worker will visit the child in the foster placement at regular intervals.

Placement Stability

Connect Fostering will aim to minimise the number of placement breakdowns and thus provide a high level of stability and consistency for our looked after children.

As part of a placement support package, we will provide therapeutic input from a qualified child psychotherapist for children whose placements are likely to disrupt and where it is felt that such input will reduce the likelihood of disruption.

As part of a placement support package, provide additional respite and childcare support for placements that are likely to disrupt.

Be proactive in seeking a disruption meeting, with a child's local authority social worker and other professionals, as soon as there are signs that a placement disruption is likely. The chief aim of the disruption meeting will be to agree on a strategy for preserving the placement if possible.

All carers will be provided with training in attachment theory and how children form relationships as part of their core training.

Record Keeping

A good record keeping system is very essential for good practice. The recording of the child's progress, any significant events and incidents is an important part



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of the foster carer's role in safeguarding the interests and welfare of the child. Additionally, it is an effective communication tool.

Placement Plan

A Placement Plan sets out the day-to-day arrangements for the child's care. It details out the part to be played by the foster carer in relation to the arrangements made for the child's health, education, contact with his or her family and where appropriate, the child's behaviour management.

The Placement Plan will be drawn up by the child's social worker in consultation with **Connect Fostering** and the foster carer. This will usually be drawn up before the placement but when the placement is made in an emergency, the complete plan will be expected within 7 days.

The Placement Plan will be reviewed regularly. Urgent reviews will take place as circumstances require.

In the case of an emergency placement, an emergency review will be held within 72 hours of the placement.

Keeping Children Safe

Connect Fostering will ensure that all children and young persons are kept safe from harm or abuse. To achieve this quality standard, we aim to do the following:

- I. Comply with child protection procedures.
- II. Carry out appropriate statutory checks on staff and carers such as CRB, references, ID documents etc.
- III. Ensure that all foster family and friends receive safe caring and training.
- IV. Ensure that carers understand and follow the behaviour management policy, refrain from any form of corporal punishment or inappropriate



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sanctions, and only restraining a child if it is to prevent the child from harming themselves or others, or damaging property.

- V. Ensure all foster carers understand and follow the child missing procedures.
- VI. Treat all allegations made by a child seriously and ensure they are investigated according to child protection procedures.
- VII. Ensure all carers and workers are fully conversant with the agency whistle blowing policy.

Additional financial support

The agency provided additional funding to every foster carer household towards the high cost of living crisis. This was welcomed by carers. Staff were given bonus payments as well.

Annual Events

This agency has two annual events for foster carers/staff and looked after children. The carers event is the Celebration of Achievement/Awards party for foster carers. Awards are presented to carers/staff for their contribution to a number of areas within the fostering service. During the summer we plan a BBQ for carers and children.

The event in the Children Activity for looked after children. Over the years the following are Theatre shows the children have attended: *Aladdin*, *Lion King*, *Wicked*, *Tina Turner*, *Thriller*, and *Mary Poppins* which they really enjoyed.

The main purpose of these events is to thank carers/staff for all their hard work and acknowledge their dedication to children and families. It is also an opportunity for carers to meet with one another and with Children and Young People's Services staff in a pleasant and informal setting.



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Consultation with Foster Carers/Looked after Children/Local Authority

Consultation with foster carers/looked after children takes place on a number of levels, within the Fostering Support Group Meeting, during the carers review, during supervising home visits, at training events, at social events and in surveys focusing on specific topics. Local Authority social workers and commissioning teams are also contacted for feedback on the Agency to help us improve our services. This is an important part of the quality assurance process to ensure we are listening and making the necessary changes to improve services.

Consultation with Looked after Children

The supervising social worker for every foster carer will actively seek to work directly with all LAC, they provide an individual advocacy service, facilitate involvement in voice and influence opportunities and provide information in creative and imaginative ways. Their work will involve seeking other agencies for information as necessary for the best interest of the child.

LAC entering the service receives a child guide that comprises useful information, such as who Connect fostering is, who they can contact for support, or who to contact should they want to make a complaint.

Children Guide

This agency's *Children's Guide* will be given to all children in placement or explained to them in accordance with their level of understanding. Foster carers are expected to support children with understanding the guide and gathering the information that they require from it.

The *Children's Guide* explains how children can raise any concerns or complaints that they have with an appropriate person and it explains how to access an independent advocate.

The *Children's Guide* will be translated into different languages to reflect the range of ethnicities of children placed with *Connect Fostering*.



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Complaints and Allegations Investigations

This agency will ensure all allegations of abuse made by children against foster carers, or members of the foster carer's family or others are thoroughly investigated in an unbiased way.

The complaints procedure is a useful tool for indicating where services may need adjusting. It is a positive aid to inform and influence service improvements, not a negative process to apportion blame. Wherever possible, complaints are dealt with informally and on a problem-solving basis.

The complaints procedure consists of three stages and is managed by the Social Care Complaints Manager;

Stage 1 is based on local resolution, where staff and the complainant discuss and attempt to address the complaint within ten working days with an additional ten working days for more complex cases if an advocate is required.

Stage 2 involves an investigation of the complaint. This is carried out by the Service Manager who reports their findings and recommendations to the Director. An Independent Person may be engaged (depending on the nature of complaint) to oversee the investigation to ensure that the process is transparent and fair. The Service Manager is responsible for deciding on the report recommendations. This process should take 25 working days with a permitted maximum of 65 working days.

Stage 3: A Panel may consider the complaint if matters are not resolved at Stage 4. The Panel will consist of three independent people and must be convened within 30 working days. It will have five working days to issue a finding and the Connect Fostering will respond within 15 working days.

Where a complaint against a foster carer constitutes a safeguarding allegation, this is dealt with as a safeguarding enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and is investigated under safeguarding procedures by the Local Authority.

If you think that you would like to access our services or to learn more about us, please contact Winston McKenzie, Service Manager at:



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Parsonage Farm
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