



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

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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 on 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 north-west London 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).
- 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.

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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.
- 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).



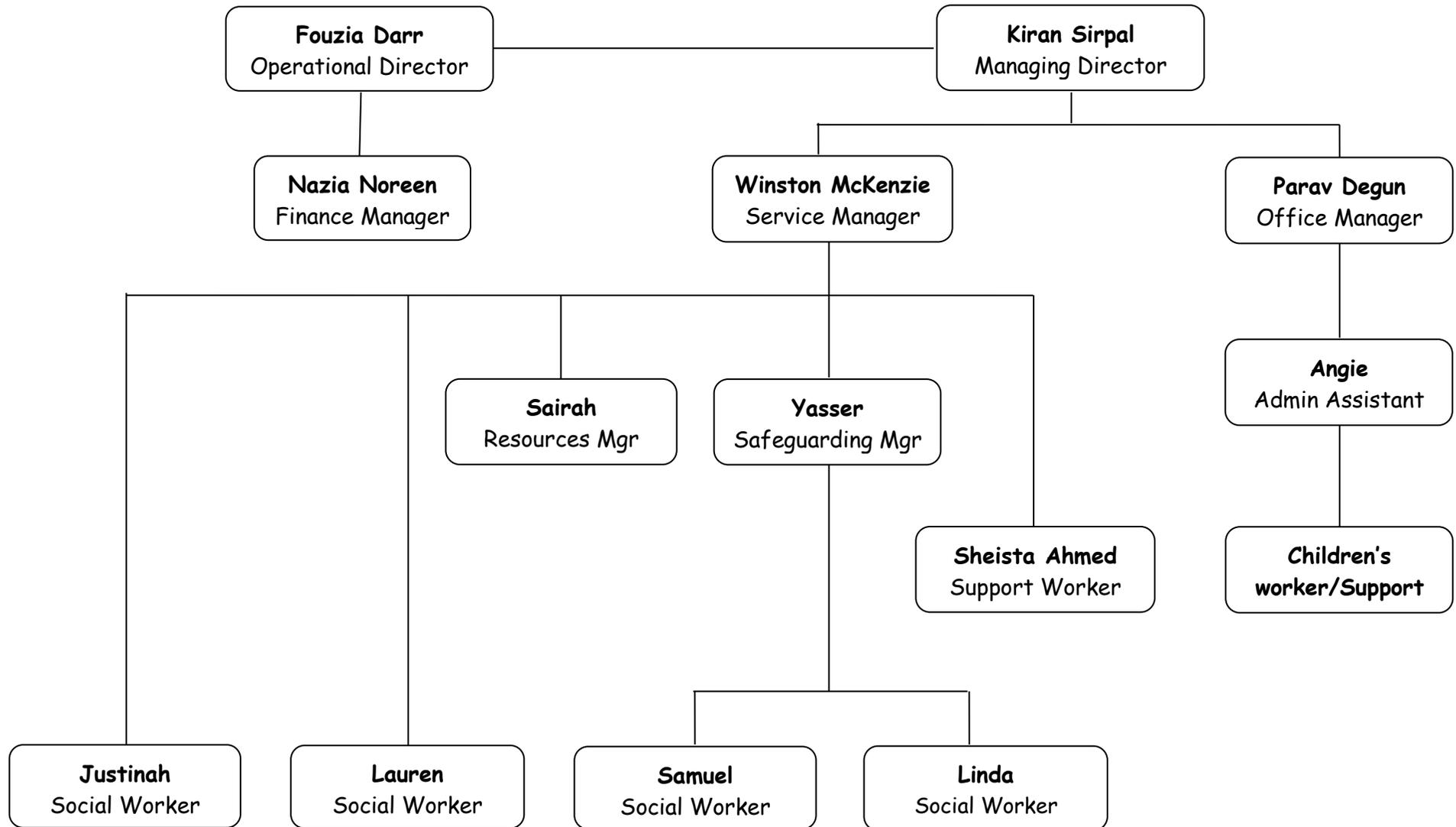
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- To promote the maximisation of educational opportunities and achievements for children through access to relevant support and professionals (NMS 8).
- Ensure placements wherever possible have planned beginnings and endings (NMS 11).
- Promotion of 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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## THE DIRECTORS

Fouzia Darr – **Operational Director** - Agency Decision Maker.

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

Fouzia 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 **Director** is Kiranjit Sirpal. She is the Responsible Individual within the agency.

Kiranjit qualified with a Diploma in Social Work in 1996. She further gained an MSc in Advanced Professional Studies - 2001 and Graduate Diploma in Work with Children and Families (with Specialist Award in Social Work) – 2011. Since qualifying Kiranjit has undertaken numerous training courses in Social Work, Regulation and Inspection to assist in delivering social work, regulation and inspection work.

Since graduating with a DipSW in 1996, Kiranjit worked for 1 year as a child protection social worker in England. She continued her career as a child protection Social Worker in Scotland for 1½ year. For 3 years worked as an Inspector for the Early Years Regulation and Inspection Team. During the same 3 year period worked part time as a generic mental health social worker. From 2002, was employed as an inspector with The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and in this post participated in various regulatory work for adult and childcare services. In June 2007 returned to England and commenced as a social worker with Ealing Social Services Adoption Support Team. From 2009 to 2012 worked as Independent Panel Chair for a private Fostering Agency.

The **Service Manager** for **Connect Fostering** is Winston McKenzie who manages the day-to-day running of the agency and manages the supervising social worker.

Winston has worked in childcare for the past 28 years, where he started out as a



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residential social worker. He is a qualified social worker, has an MA in Health & Social Policy, and has management experience of over 20 years.

Winston has 14 years' experience of work in various fostering services within both the public and private sector. This includes seven 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 CWDC programmes for foster carers.

### **Manager**

Yasser is a qualified Social Worker. He qualified in 2012 with an BA (Hons) in Social Work. 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. Yasser joined Connect in 2017 initially as Head of Quality Assurance. Currently his role is a Manager with responsibility as the safe guarding person, Quality Assurance etc. Yasser speaks Punjabi, Urdu and Arabic (basic Turkish as well).

### **Supervising Social Workers**

Connect Fostering will recruit supervising social workers who have social work qualification, experience in social work field, DBS, HCPC 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 receives regular supervision and annually 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.



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## **Samuel**

He is a qualified registered Social Worker from Canterbury Christ Church University on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018. He is also a foster carer, counsellor, pastoral carer, 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 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 Carers' panel presentation/annual review, foster carers supervision using signs of safety, and completing supervision records.

As a Family Counsellor/Pastoral Carer and Student Social Worker, He has handled complex casework featuring issues such as mental health problems, all forms of domestic abuse and its impact on children; all of which have broadened his knowledge.

He is a Licensed Facilitator, Positive Parenting Course of Care for the Family (UK). 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.

## **Lauren**

She is a qualified registered Social Worker from the University of East London with a 2:1 BA (Hons) in Social Work Studies. She graduated in July 2018 and has a BA Hons Degree I Social Work. Her work experience is from working with children as a TA and SEN TA. She has been with Connect Fostering since June 2019.

Prior to this degree she had experience of experience in working with children and young people. Having worked in an academy as a teaching assistant, special educational needs assistant and furthermore a behaviour mentor. Her last University placement was in a fostering agency and gained knowledge in holistically assessing young people in order to identify their needs to produce personalised and unique interventions which is appropriate for each individual.



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She has experience of detailed risk assessments for both the foster child and also the foster carer, progress reports on all foster children, various agencies to work in the best interest of the child.

Has worked with children and young people on a one-to-one basis, some of the most challenging young people in schools, those with a special educational need and also those with behavioural difficulties, tailoring her interventions specific to the individual and remaining sensitive and empathetic to them and their family's needs. Having worked in an establishment such as an academy and a fostering agency which are both multi-agency and multi-disciplinary settings, she has learnt relevant and important skills such a negotiation and problem solving when working with young people and their families.

### **Linda**

She is a qualified registered Social Worker. She graduated in July 2019 and has a Degree in Social Work. Her work experience is from working with Adults and Children with mental health and challenging behaviours. She has been with Connect Fostering since August 2019.

She has many years work experience in people management and special interest in social work. She has been involved in customer services and administrative work retail organisations. She has worked with North East Family Support team and gained experience and knowledge to meet the needs of individuals requiring their service. She has also worked with children and family as a family support coordinator. This enabled her to work with services users from diverse cultural background with low to medium support needs.

### **Justinah**

Justinah is a qualified Social Worker graduated in 2011 with a 3rd class Hons Degree in Social Work at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. As a social worker she values always working in a Child person - centred way. Experience for 10 years in mental health issues, substance misuse and domestic violence, also a BSc Hons Degree in Business management and MBA Degree in Marketing. She has been with Connect Fostering since 2018.



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## **Qualified Counsellor**

Sheista – is a support worker who works on recruitment of carers, she is the administer for Panel and does some work with children or carers where there are challenges on a one to one basis. Sheista works with children/Young Person directly doing individual work by using her counselling skills when there are challenges within the placements such as going missing, issues of self-care, safe guarding etc. She has been with the agency for the past 2 year. She is a mother with adult children and is a qualified beauty therapist. She works part time. Sheista Speaks Punjabi and Urdu.

## **Support Worker**

Faisal – is a support worker and works with children such as school runs, contact runs and taking child out for the day – doing an activity such as cinema, adventure park etc. He has various experience of working in the Customer care field and he owns his own business. Faisal speaks Punjabi and Urdu.

## **Head of Resources**

Sairah has been with agency since 2015 and is Head of Resources who deals with Local Authorities who request placements. Sairah has experience of working within fostering field for the past 10 years. She has previously worked with various IFA as a duty worker. Sairah speaks Punjabi and Urdu.

## **Office Manager**

Parav has been a member of the team since September 2017. She is qualified in Child Care and worked in nurseries in the past. She also has worked as an office Manager for another company so is very qualified in her role. She is BSL qualified as well. Parav speaks Punjabi.

## **Admin Assistant**

Angie joined Connect Fostering in July 2019. She has a background in Law/Administrative Law from Colombia and has experience working as a Nanny with young children. Angie speaks Spanish.



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## **Finance Officer**

Nazia 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
2. The Social Care Training Hub who provide group training and online training- staff and carers
3. Ince's Consultancy who provide group training – staff and carers
4. West London University - staff
5. Fostering Network - staff
6. Peninsula - 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 of 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.



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**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.

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.



## PLACEMENTS & SERVICES PROVIDED

The **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 Services** 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 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 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 occurs in placement.
- Long term placements – Long term placements for children and young people who cannot return to 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 child accordingly.
- 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.

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- 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 go 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 made 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 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: -

- 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.



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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 group) 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.

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.



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## **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 main aims and objectives.

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



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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

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. A number of 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 act as mentors to them.

The fostering service ensures that at 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.
- 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 arises 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 to 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.



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## **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 sessions from Lynda Ince for carers with complex placements/needs.

## **Newsletter and Website**

A six-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 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 authority 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 for this service is needed. Once agreed by agency financial officer and LAC social worker then there is 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



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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.

### **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.

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

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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 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

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



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## **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 picnic 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 and Thriller 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.

## **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 of 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.



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

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Connecting children with Foster Families

## **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**.

## **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.



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**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:

Connect Fostering Services

Connect House  
16 College Ave  
Harrow Weald  
HA3 8EX

Tel: 020 3780 3333

Email: [winstonmckenzie@connectfostering.com](mailto:winstonmckenzie@connectfostering.com)

**Fouzia Darr**  
Operational Director

**Kiran Sirpal**  
Director