Providing Quality Foster Care for Local Children

Information for Social Workers and Statement of Purpose
Welcome

Thank you for your involvement in placing a child/young person with this agency. We are very much looking forward to working with you to ensure that this placement arrangement is as positive and beneficial as possible for the child/young person and all other involved parties.

This booklet seeks to provide you with general information about how we will work to support your ongoing work with the child and their family. If you have any queries about any arrangements that have been made, please raise them with our foster carer or their fp.c supervising social worker, or directly with me, and we will do our very best to assist you.

Andy Clipson
Fostering Service Manager

Introduction

Fp.c is short for “familyplacement.com”. Fp.c operates as an independent fostering agency and social work consultancy. The agency was originally given this name to identify that we provide a wide range of fostering related services and that we strive to work in newer innovative ways to provide a low cost-high quality fostering service.

The primary aim of this agency is to provide high quality, low cost foster placements for local children in their own home area.

How we aim to assist the child’s social worker

We fully understand the day-to-day pressures on children’s social workers. We also recognise that when a child is placed in foster care, social workers have to take account of the demands and needs of a wide audience of involved parties as well as the child in placement. e.g. parents, siblings, other relatives, senior management, children’s guardians, and wider court processes.

We are also fully appreciate our role in supporting your authority to ensure that looked after children are helped to achieve the goals set out in “Every Child Matters.”

We have designed our service to help you to meet these competing demands on your time. We work to do this by requiring our foster carers and supervising social workers to take action to

- Ensure that the child’s health care needs are fully met
- Support the child’s continuing contact to significant others
- Take steps to ensure that children remain safe from harm
- Promote children and young people’s access to play and leisure
- Promote the child or young person’s self esteem
- Promote the child’s educational attainment.
- Involve parents and significant others as fully as is appropriate in the circumstances
- Assist you to develop and implement future plans

Working Together as a Team

All of our foster carers have their own supervising social worker provided by the agency.

We find the best results are achieved when the child’s social worker, our foster carer and our supervising social worker adopt a team approach and work closely together to meet the child’s needs. This obviously works best where there is effective communication between all parties. To facilitate this process, our supervising social worker will make contact with you from an early stage to agree arrangements for a placement agreement meeting and at intervals thereafter.
Case. In instances, where school is further possible. Hopefully, this will apply in this to remain in their local schools as much as child’s local area so as to enable children We aim to provide foster carers in the Education Arrangements

• Delegated authority arrangements.
• How any specific risks will be managed.
• What additional action we can take
• What action you would like us to take
• What additional action needs to be taken
• What action you would like us to take to
• How you would like us to support contact
• What additional action needs to be taken to address any special needs that the child or young person may have.
• What action you would like us to take to enable young people to develop independent living skills.
• What additional action we can take to support the implementation of the overall Care Plan.
• How any specific risks will be managed.
• Delegated specific arrangements.

Education Arrangements

We aim to provide foster carers in the child’s local area so as to enable children to remain in their local schools as much as possible. Hopefully, this will apply in this case. In instances, where school is further away, some of our foster carers will be able to help by transporting the child to school—at least for a temporary period. (Whether our carers can do this depends on a variety of factors including the level of any other child care commitments, their access to a car, etc.)

We place great emphasis on ensuring that children have full access to educational opportunities. If children need to move to a new school following placement or permanent exclusion, our foster carers and supervising social workers will work to help you to secure their admission to a new school at the earliest opportunity.

We are also happy to become involved in supporting any appeal processes when a local school refuses the child’s admission. We have experience in this field and are pleased to report that we have enjoyed past success in overcoming such obstacles—so please do not feel that you have to battle on alone with this type of difficulty!

On a similar note, we will also be keen to fully support the process of ensuring that each child in placement has a Personal Education Plan as soon as possible following placement.

In our experience, being out of school can have a detrimental impact on the child’s education and placement stability. When the child’s prompt admission or re-admission to school cannot be achieved for one reason or another, we will work to agree with you what alternative arrangements can be put in place.

Direct Work with the Child

Our fee structure seeks to keep costs to minimum by only charging for services that are actually needed and by seeking to meet needs by tapping into local community based resources. If a child needs therapeutic inputs, it is our normal practice to seek this assistance from the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. We have experience of liaising with CAHMS services across our region to facilitate looked after children’s access to this provision. If you would like our input in respect of a referral to CAHMS, please let us know and we will be happy to assist you.

Alternatively, if you would prefer or need to access other forms of provision, we will also be happy to assist you to identify a suitable alternative provider.

Independent Living Skills and Preparation for Leaving Care

We aim to enable all young people to become fully active citizens. It is clearly important for children of all ages to gradually learn to develop skills for independent living. Our foster carers should always be working to facilitate this process as they go about the general task of caring for a child and seeking to enhance the child’s sense of self-esteem. We have developed an in-house “Preparation for Leaving Care” work book to support young people with the development of independent living skills. We also run a range of workshops for small groups of young people to support them to prepare for adult life.

Promotion of Children and Young People’s Health

In the past, research has shown that looked after children’s health care needs can easily be missed - particularly if the child has the unfortunate experience of living in a series of different placements. The “Every Child Matters” Programme seeks to address these past deficits. We will assist you in ensuring each foster child’s health care needs are met by:

• Arranging for our foster carer to register the child with a GP, dentist and optician as soon as possible following placement.
• Exploring health issues at placement agreement meetings
• Raising any health concerns with you ASAP and at each statutory review
• Raising any sexual or emotional health care issues with you as necessary.
Access to play and leisure

Access to play and leisure is an important way of helping children to develop their social skills and positive sense of self-esteem. It can also play an important part in promoting placement stability by providing a normal form of respite for the carer and the child in placement. All of our foster carers are expected to take action to promote foster children’s access to play and leisure activities. How this is done obviously has to vary from child to child depending on the level of their existing interests, confidence, wishes and ability etc. If you have views on what may be important, please let us know so that this can be taken into account by our foster carers and other staff.

Development and Implementation of Care Plans

Our foster carers and social workers will be very happy to help you to develop and implement wider aspects of the Child’s Care Plan - to the extent that this is appropriate. For example, providing you with reports for fostering panel or information to assist you with permanency planning or family finding or helping with a child’s introductions to a new placement.

Supervision of the Foster placement

Fp.c supervising social workers visit each foster placement at approximately fortnightly intervals - unless the placement is long established or otherwise assessed to be very stable. These visits are designed to provide supervision and support to our foster carer to help them to provide the best quality care to the child in placement.

Supervision of the Child’s placement

It is helpful if you can provide us with a general idea of how often you will be visiting the foster placement and whether you will be seeing the child or young person at the foster placement at a different venue.

We understand that some social workers - particularly those who work with older children and teenagers - often like to see the young person away from the foster home. While this is understandable, and perfectly acceptable, in these circumstances, it will be very much appreciated if you can please ensure that there is still a good level of contact between you and our foster carer so that effective communication is maintained and our combined efforts to support the child/young person are properly “joined up”.

In practice, we find it is often very helpful if some of the visits by our supervising social worker are timed to coincide with your visits to the foster placement as this allows some opportunity for 3 way informal discussions between you, our foster carers and our social worker at intervals between formal review meetings.

If you would like a 3-way discussion at any time, please let us know and we will do our best to make the necessary arrangements. If you do not request such a meeting, we may contact you periodically to arrange one. Alternatively, our supervising social worker may arrange to meet you at your office at intervals.

Review Meetings

We will work hard to ensure that both our supervising social worker and the foster carer attend all statutory review meetings. To enable us to do this, it will be much appreciated if you can let us know as early as possible when meetings are scheduled to take place. We appreciate that often children’s social worker have limited ability to influence the time and date of such meetings due to the demands on independent reviewing officer’s diaries. We will endeavour as far as possible to prioritise such meetings over our other work. On the few occasions when we are not able to make a proposed date, we will be most grateful if you can re-negotiate a different time so that our attendance can be guaranteed/achieved.

“The many rewards of fostering”
Reports for review meetings

We will be happy to arrange for our foster carers or supervising social workers to provide a short written report or complete a standard review form in advance of review meetings. We work with a range of different local authorities and have found that each authority has different expectations about what reports are provided for review meetings. If you can forward your standard forms or let us know in advance what sort of report that you would like, we will be very pleased to assist you.

Provision of Written Information

When first contacted in respect of a referral we seek to keep our request for written information to a minimum until we are fairly certain we have a placement for the child in question. We do this to keep the demands that we place on referring social workers to a minimum. Once a placement has been identified, we require 9 referral forms to be completed so that key information is available for our carer and the child’s file at our office.

If you have not yet completed this referral form - perhaps because the placement was made in an emergency or out of hours- we would be most grateful if you could please forward the completed form without delay.

At the point of making the placement, or as soon as possible thereafter, we will also need a two copies of the following documents. (One copy for our foster carers and one copy for our office files)

- Placement Agreement Form
- Essential Information Forms
- Other LAC forms –including a copy of the Child’s Care Plan
- Personal Education Plans
- Delegated Authority Form

Diversity and Foster Care

This agency works across a wide geographic area, which has diverse population. The agency places high priority on maintaining a culture and ethos where great emphasis is given to the importance of equality and diversity. We seek to demonstrate this by signalling and reinforcing our commitment to “quality, equality and diversity” in all relevant policies, procedures and literature and within our daily social work practice.

We work to deliver on our commitment to meeting the diverse needs of children in placement and wider service users by:

- Recruiting a diverse range of foster carers in the areas to meet the identified needs of children in areas where there is a shortfall of foster carers.
- Providing diversity training for staff and carers so as to ensure that all staff and carers fully understand diversity issues and their role in promoting the best outcomes for all of the diverse, individual children in our care.
- Gathering full information about each child at the point of referral.
- Taking great care to effect a good match between each child’s needs and the carer’s skills, qualities, experience and background when matching and placing children with carers. (If we do not have a good match, we do not offer a placement).
- Ensuring that the full range of children’s needs are considered at placement agreement meetings.
- Ensuring that the full range of children’s needs are considered at review meetings.

Children’s wishes and feelings

We take great care to ensure that individual children’s plans take full account of children’s wishes and feelings and that feedback from children is taken into account during service development. We work to do this by:

- Seeking individual children’s views prior to the point of placement.
- Providing information about each foster placement in a friendly format.
- Consulting with individual children at intervals and otherwise seeking feedback on how well their needs are being met in placement.

- Consulting with children’s social workers, their parents and other service users as to how a particular placement is meeting a child’s needs.
- Ensuring that our supervising social workers see children at regular intervals during the course of supervisory visits.
- Providing our foster carers with training on “Listening to Children”.
- By seeking feedback from children’s social workers on how well each placement is meeting individual needs.
- By promoting children’s participation in service development via the provision of participation opportunities facilitated by a staff member with this lead responsibility.

Our Children’s Council

We seek to involve our young people as much as possible in the development of our service. Our Children’s Council arrangements aim to enable our young people to share their views and to socialise and have fun together.
Complaints about standards of care

Please let our supervising social worker or our fostering service manager know ASAP in the event that you become aware of any concerns by any party about the standard of care being provided for the child or young person by our foster carers. We have written procedures setting out how such matters will be followed up. In most cases, it is helpful if any such concerns are raised with our supervising social workers rather than directly with foster carers. A copy of this document will be made available on request.

Information for children

At the point of forwarding this booklet to you, we will also arrange for the child or young person in placement to receive a short information booklet. There are two different versions of this booklet - one booklet for younger children and one booklet for older children and teenagers. These booklets provide some general information about fostering, and our fostering service. They also include a section, which seeks to explain to the child how they can make complaints to various parties - to the placing authority, directly to this agency or to OFTED - with or without the use of advocacy services. It also included information on how young people can contact the Children’s Rights Director.

Safeguarding and missing children

We place highest priority on ensuring children are safeguarded from harm and exploitation. We will keep you well informed if any children go missing or other concerns arise which might indicate that they are at risk of harm or exploitation.

Information for parents

We have included a short leaflet with this pack for you to give to parents or significant others when you see them so that they understand what arrangements have been put in place for their child, how we want to work closely with them and how they can raise any concerns should they wish to do so.

Family finding and provision of long-term placements

If the child is not able to return to parents, or their extended family, and you have to look for a long term-permanent placement for a child, we will be happy to assist you with family finding. If you provide us with details of the criteria that you will use to select a long term family for a child, we will be happy to check out if any of our approved long term carers would be a good match for the child. We will also bear this information in mind whenever prospective long-term carers make enquiries with this agency.

Fees, Charges and Financial Arrangements

Our fee structure is designed to provide you with Best Value Foster Placements. Our weekly fees have been set at a very competitive level and are some of the lowest in the region. Our carers are graded according to the level of their skills and experience. Local authorities are charged different rates depending on the skills level of the identified foster carer. This means that we can provide lower cost mainstream placements whilst maintaining a career structure for our carers, which encourages them to develop their skills and thereby become able to care for children with the most complex needs. Full details of our charges will have been forwarded to your authority with our service agreement form.

The agency has been set up on a financially sound footing. Accounts have been completed for the last financial year and have been made available for inspection by OFSTED inspectors.

Staff

All of our supervising social workers have relevant social work qualifications and prior experience of working within local authority children’s services. Most of our staff also have many years of experience of working in fostering and adoption. Some of our staff work from home so that they are based near to the foster carers that they are supervising.

All fp.c managers have significant experience of managing fostering services and working within local authority children’s services.

Staying Put Placements

We have developed an inhouse Staying Put Scheme. We have significant experience in providing young people with Staying Put Placements. If you are interested in arranging for a young person to “Stay Put”, let us know and we will be happy to provide fuller details.
Location of our foster carers
We recruit foster carers over a wide area to ensure that children are placed within their local area. We currently have foster carers in Berkshire, Birmingham, Bristol, Buckinghamshire, Coventry, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Hereford, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Isle of Wight, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, Surrey, Swindon, Wiltshire, across Warwickshire, West London, the West Midlands, and Worcestershire.

Standards and Accreditation
We strive to ensure that children in our care are protected from harm and that their welfare is promoted. We fully subscribe to the UK national standards as developed by the National Foster Care Association (Fostering Network) and the National Standards for Fostering Services (2000). (See charter at appendix A)

Fp.c is fully registered with the OFSTED and inspected regularly by OFSTED inspectors.

We are Tier 1 and preferred providers for a wide range of local authorities across Central and Southern England.

We are also accredited provider of foster placements for the Pan London Consortium of Local Authorities, the West Midland Consortium of Local Authorities and Buckinghamshire County Council.

Feedback on our Performance
We want to provide you with a high quality service and will be very interested to hear from you about how our foster carers and staff are performing. To facilitate this process, we will forward feedback forms to you to complete at periodic intervals.

These forms have been designed so that we receive feedback on key aspects of our service without making large demands on your time. Your assistance in completing and returning these forms will be much appreciated.
We strive to achieve the following standards in the process of operating our fostering service.

- High quality care in a family setting - for all children and young people who need it, to aid their return to their own family wherever appropriate.
- Priority for wishes, feelings, views and interests of the child or young person in determining each foster placement - Fp.c will strive to provide a wide range of local placements to meet the diverse range of needs of looked after children, but if no suitable match is available, Fp.c will not proceed with the placement of a child or young person.
- Respect for and advancement of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children and young people, their families and foster carers - in the planning and provision of placements.
- Consideration of the gender, sexuality and any disability of fostered children and young people - so individual needs are met for every placement.
- Continuity of the lives of children and young people - so their identity and education can be maintained and developed, their physical and mental well-being promoted and their full potential achieved.
- A partnership embracing carers, all social work staff, the placing agency, parents and children - all planning and working in the best interests of the child, recruitment focused on providing placement choice in the local area in collaboration with local authority fostering service providers, respect for the views of all individuals and parties.
- Professional status for foster carers - as the equal partners of other professionals in the fostering team, receiving the full cost of caring for a child plus payment for their skills, effort and experience.
- Continuity and consistency in training, support and information for foster carers and social work staff - to enable them to meet the needs of each child.
- Preparation and support for the sons and daughters of foster carers - recognising the impact of fostering upon their lives.

A summary

- We will seek to create an ethos in which a child, parent or carer or other responsible adult, can confidently make a representation or complaint knowing that it will be dealt with promptly and with fairness.
- A full copy of Fp.c complaints procedures will be made available to children, parents and carers on request.
- Any complaint should be resolved as near to the point at which it arose as possible.
- The level at which a complaint or representation is dealt with will reflect the seriousness of the complaint or representation. This means that serious complaints and allegations will be dealt with under formal arrangements for dealing with complaints.
- Regardless of who made the complaint or representation the views of the child should be sought and taken fully into account.
- The procedures explain in what circumstances an independent person may be engaged to make enquiries into complaints and how the matter will be progressed if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their enquiries.
- The procedures direct that all representations and complaints are recorded in writing and made available to relevant individuals and bodies - including OFSTED.

Appendix A

Foster Care Charter

Appendix B

Complaints Procedures

A summary

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- The procedures direct that all representations and complaints are recorded in writing and made available to relevant individuals and bodies - including OFSTED.

The procedures also identify how children, parents and other individuals can make a complaint in relation to the registered manager of the fostering service and provide advice about other ways of making complaints or seeking redress.

The contact details for various other agencies that may be able to assist people wishing to make complaints are shown in the complaints procedure and in associated explanatory leaflets. One alternative way to make complaints is to complain directly to OFSTED. The contact details for the lead inspector for this agency are as follows:

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 1231
We will be happy to provide a copy of this booklet in a different format or language, on request.