

FCA Statement of Purpose

Thames Valley

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Introduction

This document outlines the way Foster Care Associates operates as an independent fostering agency.


We hope this document is clear and can be understood by children and young people, foster parents and staff. We welcome any comments about how we might improve the content or format. See contact details on back page.

The FCA Children's Guide and the FCA Young Person Guide contain a summary of this statement of purpose.

Foster Care Associates (FCA) Statement of Purpose is available to:

- Any person working for FCA.
- Our foster parents and prospective foster parents.
- Children and young people who are living with our foster parents and the parents and families of any such child/young person.
- Local authorities and health and social care trusts.
- Colleagues from other social care agencies.
- The general public.

Our Statement of Purpose has been developed to meet the requirements arising from:

- The Care Standards Act 2000.
 - The Children Act 1989 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.
 - The Fostering Services Regulations (England 2011).
 - The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England).
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FCA – Part of the Polaris Community

Polaris is one of the UK's largest leading communities of children's service providers. Within the community, we have independent fostering and adoption agencies who have been passionately improving the lives of young people for over 30 years, as well as Leaving Care services, Education and bespoke children's services contracts. Our nurturing community works collectively to support the very best outcomes for each and every child in our care. We're ambitious for our children and young people, families and staff, and believe in their futures.



Jo August
Chief Executive Officer

Our Mission, Vision and Values

At Polaris we have one ambition across our community – to transform the future of children and children's services.

“At the very heart of our Polaris Community is a common aim where everyone is committed to enabling every child and young person in our care to reach their full potential. We are ambitious for ourselves and our children. I am exceptionally proud that I am surrounded by an inspirational team of staff and families who are completely committed to making a difference and to achieve the best outcomes for children across the UK.”



Vision

(what we aim to achieve)

To make a difference to children, young people and families that lasts a lifetime



Mission

(purpose and what we do to achieve it)

Our mission is to provide safe and happy lives for the children who come to live with us

For children and young people

- We aspire to help our children reach their full potential
- We respect and promote a child's racial, cultural and religious background and consider their gender and sexuality when finding the right family for them
- We understand the importance of stability for our children and want them to have a sense of belonging within their foster family, birth family and community
- We strive to ensure our children are ready and equipped for the next stage of their lives. We want our children to have the ability to be independent in their thoughts and actions and make positive contributions to society as adults

For foster parents

- We take the time to understand trauma and harm and adjust our care accordingly
- We recruit, assess and train foster families in such a way that equips their journey to ensuring children are safe and happy
- We listen and empower our foster families. Through consultation, support and learning they are equipped to meet the individual needs of children

For all

- We are proactive in promoting equality and tackling all forms of racism and prejudice in order to help achieve a better society for our children and families to thrive
- We promote a learning culture wherein staff and foster parents build and maintain expertise in the field of children and fostering and work collaboratively with our professional partners
- We are compassionate and discreet in our approach to working with children and their families

Values

(core principles and ethics)

“Safe and Happy” is the core of our being

- An intelligent, compassionate, creative, loyal, and adaptable approach to the delivery of fostering
- Security, safety and autonomy for our children, fostering families, and staff
- Treating families and colleagues with respect, honesty, kindness and care with appropriate challenge where needed
- Leadership that models the vision, mission and values and behaviours to which we aspire



Aims and Objectives

FCA offers high quality foster families and related support services to children and young people who are looked after by local authorities/health and social care trusts.

Our primary aim is to give children and young people the opportunity to achieve their full potential and to live fulfilling lives in the community.

We work in partnership with local authorities/health and social care trusts, to offer community based services within national frameworks, designed to meet a wide range of needs. We provide intensive, locally based support to our foster parents, children/young people and their families via multidisciplinary teams of childcare professionals.

Our Objectives:

- To provide a child-centred and inclusive partnership based approach which embraces children/young people, their families, foster parents, local authority/health and social care trusts and other agency colleagues.
- To do everything possible to achieve stability for children and young people, free from disruption, where a child/young person's needs are understood and met.
- To respect and promote the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children/young people.
- To consider fully the gender and sexuality of fostered children/young people when finding the right fostering families
- To meet the needs of disabled children and young people. This includes those with physical and learning disabilities, neuro diverse, sensory impairment, and those who have complex health needs and are life limited.
- To recruit foster parents from a wide range of backgrounds so that we can offer appropriate care and support for children/young people.
- To provide 24 hour support for our foster parents and children/young people, 7 days a week.
- To provide ongoing training and development of our foster parents.
- To provide a workforce of managers, practitioners and support staff who are appropriately qualified and registered with their professional regulatory body, as well as being supported in continuous professional development



Status and constitution

FCA, an independent fostering agency, is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (company number 4322806). We began operating in 1994 and have consistently grown and evolved to meet the needs of looked after children and young children and young people in the UK.

In accordance with the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989, we produce a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. Copies of these are available to the government commissions, which regulate independent fostering agencies and children's social care throughout the UK.

FCA Central Organisational Chart



OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Jo August was appointed Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in May 2019. Jo is one of the most experienced and successful leaders in the fostering sector in the UK and brings with her more than 20 years of professional experience. Jo has another interesting dimension to her profile and brings with her valuable and relevant insights from having herself grown up in a fostering family.



Management structure

The strategic direction, service development and performance of FCA is monitored by the FCA Board of Directors who meet monthly.

The Board of Directors is supported by a Senior Management Team which meets monthly to direct and monitor the performance of the company's activities, business planning and policy development. This team is supported by the Registered Manager and Heads of Service.

The Registered Managers report to one of the Operational Directors or the Managing Director who also have the role of Responsible Individual. Additional meetings take place periodically throughout the year to monitor performance, coordinate service developments and implement strategies for problem solving.

The Leader of each FCA region is the Registered Manager of the fostering service in accordance with Care Standards Legislation. They have management responsibility for service delivery within their defined geographical regions/countries. The Managing Director ensures that the Registered Managers receive effective ongoing supervision of their work.





Our Staff

Qualified and experienced staff

- A considerable number of people work for our organisation in a variety of roles including social workers, therapists, participation and education workers, and independent fostering panel members.
- All Registered Managers are professionally qualified in line with the requirements of regulations and National Minimum Standards.
- All social workers and their Fostering Service Managers are professionally qualified and registered individually with one of the four UK Social Care Bodies. Some have post qualifying specialist awards and experience related to working with children and young people in foster care.
- All our staff have appropriate experience and qualifications and have access to supervision and line management.

We value our staff

- We have a flexible working policy which means that many of our staff work from home. This reduces unnecessary travel. We have an annual employee appreciation day when we show our staff how much we appreciate their hard work to make a positive and lasting difference to so many children and families each year.

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- We have an employee forum and a staff group dedicated to providing advice and guidance about issues relating to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

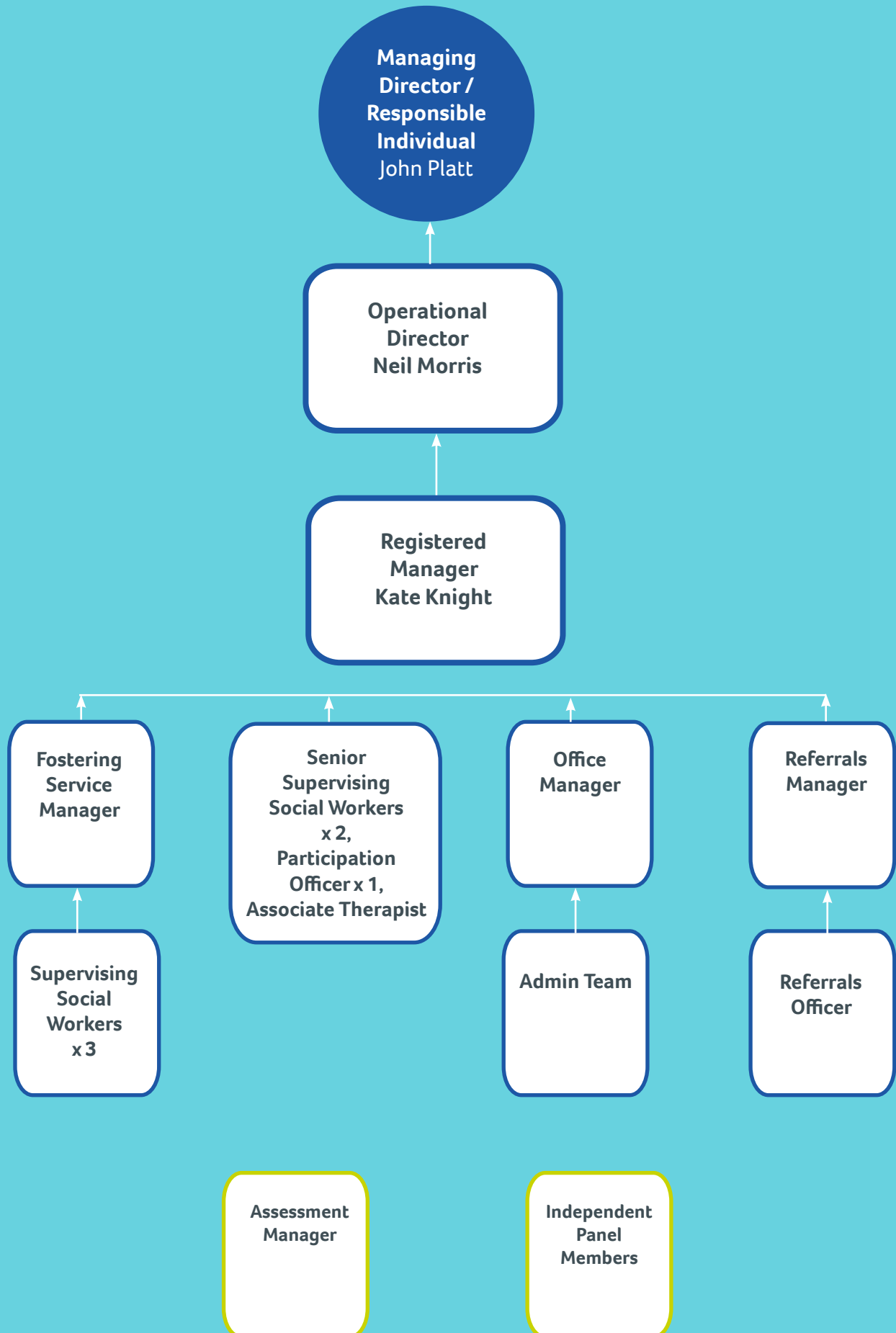
Pre-employment checks

- All of our recruiting managers receive 'safer recruitment' training.
- Required checks and enquiries are completed for all staff to ensure that the welfare of children and young people is safeguarded. For all staff including casual and self-employed staff verification of any necessary formal qualifications is obtained.

Insurance cover

- All staff who undertake work for us on a permanent, casual and self-employed basis, are covered by appropriate professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

FCA Thames Valley Organisational Chart



We value our children and families

Our purpose is to provide high quality care for children and young people, in safe, happy, secure and nurturing families.

Three key areas we believe are essential to delivering safe and happy homes for our children and young people, these are;

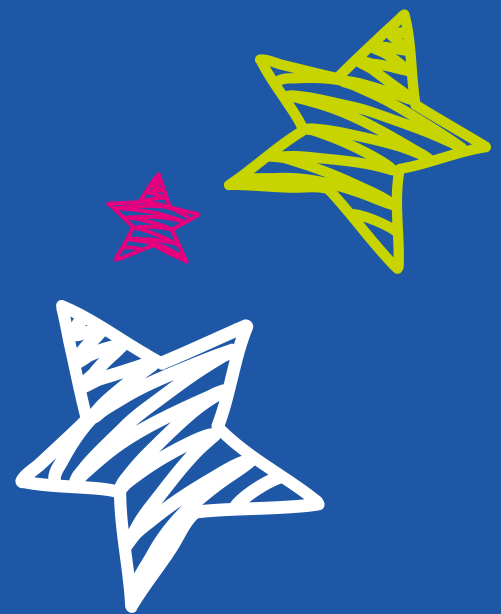
1) Safe recruitment and development of highly skilled and trained foster parents, who are supported by professional social workers, providing reflective supervision and challenging standards, all to ensure we work together to be ambitious for our children and young people, so they achieve good outcomes, are well prepared to move into independence and adulthood and maximize their life long opportunities.

2) Having a clear and robust matching framework; from referrals teams through to duty social worker and our management team. The agency Team Parenting approach allows us to look at individual care packages for those children requiring a more enhance support plan, which we discuss with the placing local authorities to look at additional services from our associate therapist.

3) The 'Voice of the Child' is integral to our work and we capture this through Child in Placement visits and engagement through our Participation Team. Participation plays a central role in our team and has many strands within the region. Participation starts from when a young person moves in to their fostering home, they will receive a 'Welcome' letter and Young Person's Guide, the team will arrange welcome visits and deliver memory boxes as well as go through the Young Person's Guide and agency's complaints procedure.

We have a strong focus on participation at FCA Thames Valley, where we truly value the opinions of our children and young people and involve them in decision-making. Listening to our children and young people is how we strive to always improve.

Our innovative and proactive Participation Team ensure that every child has their voice heard and has plenty of opportunities to gain new experiences, learn new skills and have fun.





Services we provide

Foster Families

When children are placed with foster families there is ongoing monitoring of the arrangements in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations:

We work closely with Local Authorities and Health and Social Care Trusts to understand their specific needs relating to the provision of foster families in particular areas. We then look to recruit foster parents from a range of backgrounds who are able to provide high quality experiences for children.

We aim to provide the following types of foster families:

Emergency - families who can look after children at short notice when urgently required. This may be any time including evenings and weekends.

Respite / Short breaks – families who can look after children for a break either on a regular basis or one off holidays.

Long term / Permanency – families who can look after children on a long term or permanent basis which can be for several years.

Short term - families who look after children for a few weeks, months or even years while plans are made for their future. It does not reflect the amount of time but that the arrangement is not a formal long term approved placement. The duration may be linked to further assessments of the child and other family members, together with court processes. Long term plans can be formulated in short term placements.

Bridging - families who can look after children as part of a plan for a child to move on somewhere else such as adoption, permanence or independence.



Transition – families who look after children moving from residential care.

Parent and Child – families who can look after a parent and child. This may be young parents who need support and guidance to help them develop parenting skills. Foster parents can also assist local authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

Solo Placements – families who can look after a child where the child is the only child in the household or youngest/oldest child.

Sibling Groups – Many of our foster families are able to look after large sibling groups which ensures children remain with their brothers and sisters.

Sanctuary seeking children and young people

– A number of our foster parents have experience of caring for children who arrive in the UK without a family or guardian.

Specialist fostering – some of our foster parents can look after children who have complex needs relating to disability, health needs or behaviours that other adults can find challenging. They usually receive enhanced packages of support or additionally purchased services when this is required.

Remand – Refers to a placement of a young person who has been remanded to the care of the contracting authority or remanded into custody through legal aid.

When I'm ready – Refers to the arrangements whereby young people aged 18 and older that were previously looked after remain living with their former foster parents.



Matching Process

A matching process is followed to ensure that the skills and experience of our foster parents meet the needs of each child/young person who may be looked after by them. This includes completion of risk assessments and safer caring plans which are reviewed when necessary and appropriate.

Planning to place a child

Placement Agreements/Plans are prepared and agreed with service commissioners for each child. These include essential information, care plans and clarity about delegated authority for foster parents in relation to children and young people who will be looked after by them.

Vacancy Hub

We have a Foster Family Vacancy Hub which provides a live vacancy list of foster parents who are available to offer a wide range of foster placements. This allows us to provide a convenient, efficient and easy tool for helping Local Authorities find homes for children and young people all over the UK.

- Wherever possible, planning is undertaken prior to the child moving to a new foster family. This includes introductions between foster parents and the child. We help children and young people settle in by

providing welcome booklets and video profiles where possible.

- We ensure that the racial, cultural and linguistic needs of children and young people are addressed and consideration is given to their gender and sexuality when making decisions about what may be a good foster family for them.
- We ensure the homes of our foster parents fulfil all health and safety requirements.

We support fostered children to maintain contact with friends and family, where appropriate.



Team Parenting®

The Team Parenting model offers a therapeutic way of thinking about traumatised children and their emotional needs. Beyond that the model encourages foster parents to think about the behaviours of traumatised children in a different way and use that knowledge to confidently and positively influence the child's network.

We at FCA acknowledge the need for all staff to have working knowledge of attachment difficulties, developmental trauma, abuse or neglect. Promoting the psychological wellbeing and development of children, or young people, with these complex life histories, is very important to us at Thames Valley.

Team Parenting represents an approach to fostering which acknowledges that everyone in the team around the child has a unique perspective that can influence the care a child receives. The outcome is a deeper understanding of the complex issues that impact on the child reaching their potential and foster parents that feel supported as the agents of change.

All foster parents are supported by FCA social workers, and a range of other professionals, which may include an associate therapist, a qualified integrative counsellor - who all feed into the existing child's network when this is required.

The approach is consistent with NICE Guidelines, which recommend: "For the 'team around the child' to provide effective care, professionals need to collaborate closely and share relevant and sensitive information"



The Components of Team Parenting


Team Parenting comprises of two key elements – an ethos and a menu of specific therapeutically-informed interventions, which are applied as appropriate, depending on the level of the young person's need.

For example, these may include:

- Consultations – to foster parents, social workers, and others in network if appropriate (e.g schools)
- Therapeutically-informed support and development groups for Foster parents – We run regional ADAPT / ATTUNE groups for our experienced and newly approved foster parents on top of the regional support groups
- Training – to foster parents and staff on understanding and managing challenging behaviours, attachment difficulties, child development, abuse, trauma, self-esteem and relationships.

It may be possible / necessary to commission additional services such as individual therapy, joint therapy between child/young person and foster parent, life-story work or intervention work. This would be discussed with the child's local authority considering the needs of the child and family.

The underlying principles of Team Parenting

- In Thames Valley we have an associate therapist, who works within an integrative counselling model, dual qualified as a social worker which allows the work to consider the conflicts between therapeutic approaches and social work.
 - We provide a service that focuses on the foster parent and child, or young person in placement, providing practical suggestions on how to manage challenging behaviours and respond to what may be being expressed, we are dynamic in our response and work with changing need
 - Together with learning opportunities such as foster parent training, therapeutic support groups, and one to one support, led by or in conjunction with the pre-existing team, FCA's associate therapist provides a space to support foster parents understanding of traumatised children in a deeper way, so that we can provide the right environment needed for reparative care.
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Choices and Voices of Children and Young People

Participation is the involvement of children and young people, creating opportunities for consultation and expression, and then using this information to inform practice and improve outcomes for children and young people. This underpins everything we do at FCA.

We strive to work in accordance with the following core principles:

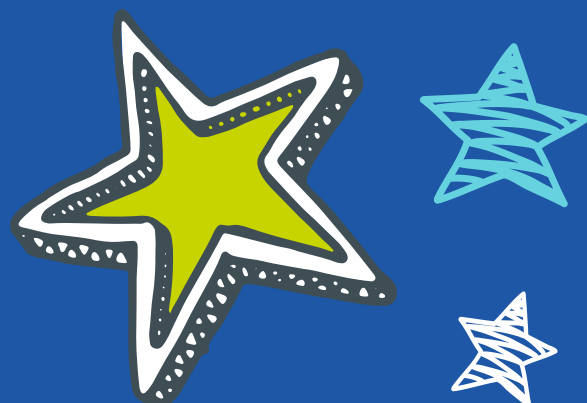
- Engage with children and young people to make a positive and lasting difference to their lives.
- Work with children and young people to help them achieve.
- Consult, listen and hear the voices of children and young people by providing them with opportunities to participate in decision-making and influence services.
- Use evidence from participation as the basis for improving standards and improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Deliver innovative and excellent opportunities to young people through a well-trained and skilled workforce that have access to sufficient resources.

We have Participation Officers to be the voice and champion of participation. A good example of participation includes the involvement of young people in interviews of staff and in Prepare to Foster training.

Children and young people are also consulted about activities and may be asked to comment on and contribute to revisions of documents used by the service.

Children and young people are also consulted about activities, and we are developing a different range of opportunities in order to create strong relationships and encourage their opinions and ideas in the development of documents used by the service.

We encourage our young people to have advocates and independent visitors and explain what they do in the Young Person's Guide.





Social Work Service

In addition to the child's social worker from the local authority/health and social care trust, all our foster parents are supported by an allocated supervising social worker.

Promoting Best Outcomes

We have an outcomes tracker which our social workers complete regularly with our foster parents to evidence the progress our children and young people are making. This is completed alongside foster parents and children and young people when they are old enough and want to be involved.

Our supervising social workers will:

- Provide supervision and support to foster parents in line with regulations and minimum standards.
- Maintain frequent contact with foster parents and children through visits and telephone calls.
- Make unannounced visits to the foster home.
- Provide advice, guidance and out of hours support to foster parents on their care of children.
- Coordinate other support services as appropriate e.g. support work and respite care provision.
- Liaise with other professional service providers who may be involved and contribute to formal meetings about care plans for children and foster parent reviews.
- Identify and help respond to foster parents' training needs.
- Keep careful records of the progress and achievements of children.
- Help foster parents achieve the Training Support and Development Standards or regional equivalent during the formative stage of their fostering career.

Our supervising social workers have a wide range of experience and many have specific expertise, for example in undertaking life story work, leaving care preparation and undertaking parent and child assessments.



Education Support

We are committed to supporting all our children and young people to achieve their educational potential.

Foster parents attend Personal Education Plan meetings and other meetings with schools to ensure they are fully aware of their child's progress, any additional needs, and how to support their learning. We are aware looked after children and young people can be particularly disadvantaged educationally. They are more likely than non-looked after pupils to have a disrupted education and additional needs that impact on progress, attainment and life chances. We recognise the significant role our foster parents and staff have in working in partnership with other professionals to promote educational achievement and positive outcomes for our children and young people.

Promoting education

Each region has a designated Lead Member of Staff for Education, who maintains an up to date understanding of legislation and advice relevant to the education of children and young people in care. Under the guidance of the Director of Education, they share information with foster parents and staff about ideas, support, and good practice in promoting education.

Foster parents promote excellent attendance at school and a positive attitude to learning, including support with homework. They also encourage their children and young people

to continue learning beyond the classroom by taking part in clubs and activities in and out of school.

Foster parents attend Personal Education Plan meetings and other meetings with schools to ensure they are fully aware of their child's progress, any additional needs, and how to support their learning at home.

Supervising social workers discuss education in supervision sessions and reviews to track progress and ensure we are being aspirational about the levels our children and young people can achieve. When there are concerns, we support foster parents to discuss these with the school and advocate for their child.

Celebrating Success

We value education in the broadest sense and acknowledge exam results are not the only measure of success. We know our children well and how they have progressed from different starting points.

We recognise their various educational achievements, academic and otherwise, and celebrate these with them.



Recruiting and Assessing Foster Parents

Our recruitment and assessment process takes 4-6 months on average. Every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay.

Recruitment:

- We operate a central Fostering Advice Hub Centre where a dedicated team request basic information from potential foster parents, answers any preliminary queries they may have about fostering and distributes literature about the work of the agency.
- A Foster Parent Recruitment Adviser undertakes an initial screening of the potential foster parents and based on the information gathered recommends whether the potential foster parent(s) should make an application.

Application Process:

- Potential foster parents complete an application form, giving detailed information about themselves and their family and consent to complete necessary checks and enquiries to ascertain their suitability to foster.
- Applicants are required to have medical examinations completed by their GP to ensure that there are no underlying issues that may affect their ability to foster. Reports are made available to our Agency Medical Advisor for his/her comments.

These checks include:

- Verification of identity and personal history
- Disclosure and Barring Service checks on all adult members of the household
- Enquiries to Children's Social Care Authorities and their Child Protection Registers
- Enquiries to other agencies as necessary

- Applicants are asked to identify at least three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. References from external agencies and personal references, which are provided in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and relevant referee(s).

Assessment

- A qualified social worker will carry out an assessment, which requires full participation by the applicant(s). She/he will visit them at their home, generally on 6-8 occasions, to collect information about all members of the household and the applicants' experience and skills in relation to fostering. This forms the basis of an assessment report. We use the Form F1 format published by Coram BAAF.
- An Assessment Manager will supervise the work of the Assessing Social Worker with day to day contact and at least 2 formal structured supervision meetings. This is to ensure regulatory compliance throughout the assessment, to ensure that the assessment remains focussed on key issues to inform an appropriate evidence based recommendation and ensure robust Quality Assurance of the assessment process and the report.
- A Recruitment Support Officer (RSO) will be allocated as an end to end administrative support person throughout the assessment to ensure that necessary checks are sought and chased and as a supportive ongoing point of contact for applicants to discuss any issues within their assessment.
- A robust approach is taken to preparing all applicants for the challenges of the fostering role throughout their assessment, primarily by using 'Next Steps to Fostering with FCA.' This is an electronic tool which supports the applicant(s) and the Assessing Social worker to work together to discuss key aspects of the role using a narrative text and links to a series of videos. The applicant is asked to complete a reflective workbook during their assessment which should evidence understanding and reflections and any areas of

further learning need. The workbook should inform aspects of the assessment report and should be available to the Supervising Social worker following approval to further inform an understanding of the applicant(s) understanding and support / learning needs.

- All prospective foster parents attend preparation training during their assessment. Our training provides further information about the responsibilities of being a Foster parent and working with FCA.
- The Form F assessment report is shared with the applicant(s) and then presented to our Fostering Panel, to assist the decision making process. Applicants are invited to attend the Panel meeting with their assessor.

Fostering Panel:

- The Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of applicants to be approved as Foster parents with FCA. Applicants will be informed of the recommendation of panel on the day of panel itself. The recommendation will inform the decision of the agency.

Approval:

- The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) reads and considers all the assessment information and taking account the recommendation of the Fostering Panel makes the decision to approve applicants or not.
- Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision. All information obtained about prospective Foster parents is held on file and some sections are available to view on request.
- Applicants are informed of their right to appeal in accordance with the regulations applying in the jurisdiction in which they are residing.
- We welcome enquiries from foster parents who wish to transfer from other agencies and aim to make the process as quick and smooth as possible



Reviews of Foster Parents

We have a detailed procedure for completing reviews of foster parents which reflects statute law, regulations, national minimum standards and good practice guidance.

In addition to the requirements to conduct annual reviews, we also undertake additional reviews when appropriate (e.g. following a serious complaint or incident or; where a change of terms of approval is proposed). Independent Reviewing Officers are used for such reviews and the review may also be presented to the Fostering Panel. In addition to making recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker the Fostering Panel provides quality assurance of the process and content of reviews to the agency.

Our review procedure focuses on core competencies for foster parents including the Training Support and Development Standards in England. We always seek external feedback from children's social workers, education providers and others involved with the child. The review also provides a forum to recognise and celebrate the achievements of children and our foster parents.

Training and Support

Training provided for foster parents and staff

We pride ourselves on being a learning organisation and are proactive in helping both employees and our foster parents to develop their skills, knowledge and experience.

In January 2023, the new and refreshed training offer from Learning & Development was launched. This offers a more consistent approach across the whole community and will provide a broader range of relevant training and development opportunities.

The new offer provides...

- A fresh, revised and consistent mandatory training pathway for all foster parents and staff across the community
- More diverse complementary training opportunities
- A more consistent trauma-informed behaviour support approach (PRICE) across the community
- A refresh of the Learnative platform
- A blended learning approach with a mix of virtual, face to face and e-learning

We are committed to providing high quality training that is accessible and relevant to all of our foster parents.

Introduction to Fostering

All of our foster parents complete pre- approval training during their assessment that explores the Next Steps on their journey to become a foster parent, what it is like to be a young person in foster care and to explore knowledge and skills required to prepare them to be foster parents such as the role of a foster parent, working together, understanding children and young people, safer caring, promoting resilience and successful outcomes, transitions - moving on.

Induction

We have an online induction course which looks at the key areas to equip foster parents with the necessary skills and confidence to take their first child/young person.

Mandatory training

- Once approved, there is a comprehensive programme of ongoing training and development available; starting with mandatory courses that all foster parents will receive.
- These include more specific training in safeguarding, emergency first aid, medication and health care, health and safety in the home, PRICE (protecting rights in a caring environment) training, training and reporting training, equality, diversity and inclusion training, and safer caring.

Complementary training

We have a wide range of courses available both online and face to face that will be discussed with foster parents and will inform their Personal Development Plan to further develop knowledge and skills in particular for those who may have specialist placements or to meet the specific needs of particular children.



These include:

- Working with children with disabilities
- Caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Children moving from residential care
- Parent and child
- Therapeutic courses
- Other Safeguarding topics such as Child sexual exploitation, County Lines, Contextual Safeguarding, E- Safety and Radicalisation
- Wellbeing topics such as menopause
- Behavioural support topics such as risky behaviours, recognising challenging behaviour, and emotional wellbeing
- Mental health topics such as suicide awareness and anxiety awareness

We actively encourage and support our staff to develop their skills, knowledge and professional qualifications.

There is an extensive catalogue of learning opportunities available for staff at all levels and in all roles within the organisation. This can include training relevant to their current role or to help them prepare for future roles.

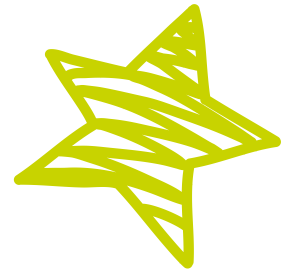
These include:

- The Social Work Academy
- Safeguarding courses
- Development opportunities for leaders and aspiring leaders (in addition to the leadership development programme)
- Apprenticeships

We believe in learning alongside peers and offer joint training sessions for both staff and foster parents to enable the sharing of best practice and experiences.

All our training is mapped to regulations and national minimum standards and cross referenced to the Training Support and Development Standards in England.

Foster parents and staff are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate ongoing personal and professional development.



Support for Foster Parents

The support package we offer values the work of our foster parents and the positive contribution they make to the lives of children/young people. We recognise that appropriate support for the families who foster is vitally important to ensure a stability and continuity of care for children and young people. .

All of our foster parents have access to the following:

- Access to a member of staff 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, 365 days a year.
- Supervision and support from a qualified and experienced supervising social worker.
- Regular visits and frequent telephone contact from a supervising social worker.
- Access to support from the agency therapeutic practitioner when required.
- Regular support group meetings.
- Access to a legal advice helpline and specialist independent support scheme.
- A level of financial support that values the skills of foster parents.
- Organised activities for children/young people.
- Membership of FosterTalk. This offers advice on fostering and educational issues as well as free legal advice, legal expenses insurance, advice on tax and personal finance issues. There is also a quarterly magazine and monthly e- newsletter to help foster parents to keep up to date on items which may be relevant to them.
- A short break package, usually up to 14 nights, which meets the needs of both the child and the foster parent.
- An exclusive online platform which gives access to regional / national news and updates, blogs to lots of shopping discounts and great deals from some of the major retailers.

The Voice of Foster Parents

We work alongside our foster parents to develop our fostering provision. This means that we have foster parent representative roles in each FCA Agency and local and national forums. The voice of foster parents is central to the continuous improvements of the service we provide. We encourage feedback at all levels, this includes consultation for foster parent reviews and other more anonymous surveys.

We value our foster parents!

We take pride in how we communicate and engage with our foster parents. We have an annual Foster Parent Appreciation Day when we show our foster parents how much we appreciate their hard work to make a positive and lasting difference to so many children and families each year.

Quality Assurance & Safeguarding



We aim to:

- Lead the sector in terms of quality
- Achieve best outcomes for the children and young people in our care.
- Create the best place to work for our foster parents and staff
- The Fostering Practice Transformation and Safeguarding Manager works closely with the Hub Operations Manager, Registered Managers and other staff in advising and supporting them to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed correctly and that the agency is a learning and constantly improving organisation. We promote a culture of continuous improvement, giving careful attention to feedback about services offered by any individuals or organisations with whom we come into contact.
- Governance is provided by the monthly Operations Board that is chaired by the CEO. The Director of Quality and Learning provides an overview report of all relevant quality and safeguarding issues for this meeting. In addition the Director of Quality and Learning chairs the quarterly Quality and Safeguarding Board (QSB) which is attended by the CEO, Managing Directors, the Head of Safeguarding and the Senior QA Lead. The QSB reports into the quarterly Quality Board which is independently chaired.
- The QSB enables a line of sight on key performance and exceptions in relation to the quality of care, performance, and learning from service and case reviews. The Quality Board provides an additional layer of scrutiny and appreciative inquiry in order to further drive up standards, quality and outcomes for children and young people.
- Our ambition is to continue to strive for excellence in all that we do and outstanding outcomes for children, young people and young adults whom remain with their fostering families.

Regulatory Inspections

As a registered provider of social care we have regular inspections of our agency. We welcome inspections as a means of monitoring the service we provide and encouraging us to strive for outstanding outcomes for the children placed with our foster parents.

Inspection reports are publicly available through the relevant inspectorate website which can be accessed via the FCA website. They are also available from the relevant regional office or from the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team at contactus@thefca.co.uk.

We have an internal service review process which provides a mechanism for oversight and scrutiny, highlighting strengths and areas for development as part of a continuous cycle of service improvement.

The Responsible Individual undertakes visits to monitor and report on the performance of the service including the following:

- **Compliance with Regulatory requirements**
- **Effectiveness of management and leadership**
- **Quality of care provided to children and young people**

RI must ensure systems are in place to provide evidence that visits have taken place and have been logged and documented.



Complaints and compliments

- We take all complaints seriously and ensure they are investigated in accordance with our complaints procedure.
- We always work to improve practice following any complaints.
- All children/young people placed with our foster parents are informed of the Representation and Complaints Procedure on commencement of placement. Information on this is also included in the guide to the service which is given to children and young people.
- Leaflets and posters about the complaints process are available which are accessible to the wide age range of children and young people placed with us.
- All foster parents, staff and placing local authorities/health and social care trusts are provided with information about our Representation and Complaints Procedure.
- Complaints are reviewed monthly by the Polaris Board, with an annual report provided to the SCB and Quality Board.
- Local Complaints analysis is included in our regional annual review of the quality of care provided by the agency.
- A record of all compliments received is also maintained and included in quality of care reviews to inform any changes to practice.



Useful contact details

FCA Central Services, Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcs B60 4AD.

T: 01527 556 480

FCA Thames Valley

FCA Thames Valley Registered Office:

Wavendon Tower,
Wavendon Business Park,
Ortensia Drive, Milton Keynes,
MK17 8LXT

T: 01296 628300

**Kate Knight,
Registered Manager**

E: Kate.Knight@thefca.co.uk

Children's Commissioner for England

64 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6QP

T: 020 7783 8330

<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/contact-us>

Regulatory Body

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

(Ofsted), Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

We maintain a wide range of publications about the services we provide to children and young people, foster parents and commissioning authorities. These provide both a national and local focus and include:

- Printed information for children placed with our foster parents.
- Summaries of surveys, projects, consultation events and other original research conducted with our customers, foster parents and service users.
- Publicity materials describing specific projects/services.
- Current charges/terms for all service provision.



**Please contact your
local FCA office.**

0800 023 4561

www.thefca.co.uk

contactus@thefca.co.uk

