

# TEAM FOSTERING

## What does it mean to be an ethical foster care provider?

**Foster Care is a community concern and we're here to achieve sustainable benefit for everyone involved in Team Fostering. When we describe ourselves as an ethical, not-for-profit fostering agency, what does that mean in practice?**

### **Achieving the best outcomes for children and young people**

When a child or young person is placed within our foster homes, we offer a wrap-around service, tailored to the child's individual needs and supported in a holistic way. The support we offer to foster carers and children goes well beyond what we are required to provide in our contracts with local authorities.

- Children and young people are our number one priority. Their needs are more important than the agency's.
- We provide additional education and general support to those children and young people who need it.
- All children have access to a range of organised activities during school holidays.
- We do everything we can to keep children and young people safe.
- We operate two funds to provide additional support for young people; (1) to pay for opportunities and experiences for children and young people of all ages that cannot be paid for by the local authority, and (2) for looked after young people making the transition to independence.
- Foster carers have access to 24-hour support when they need it from a social worker who is local to them.
- We pay for all our foster carers to be members of Fostering Network and offer free access to their mediation and advice service as required.

## Matching children with our foster families

We are committed to matching children and young people with the right family at the right time. We will only ever place a child with one of our foster families if it is assessed as being in their best interests. If we don't believe that a match is the right one to secure their welfare, we won't proceed.

- We never place a second child or young person alongside another child unless we have assessed that it won't have an adverse effect on that child. Children's social workers are always consulted about second placements.
- We do everything we can to promote stability and continuity within our foster homes as long as this remains in the child's best interests.



## Employment

We care about our staff and strive to be a great place to work.

- We follow good employment practices and aim to be as inclusive as possible. We try to treat everyone with dignity, which includes challenging discrimination and refusing to accept bullying or harassment.
- We offer flexible working, compassionate leave and a good working environment
- We have committed to being a Living Wage Employer.
- We invest in our employees' learning and continuous professional development as an Investors in People Employer.
- We have pledged to being a Mindful Employer.
- We have committed to being a Disability Confident Employer.
- We support employee health, safety and wellbeing by offering occupational health support and a confidential counselling service.

## Equality and Inclusion

We aim to have an action-orientated approach to challenging discrimination and promoting inclusion and diversity.

- We respect and embrace difference and aim to be inclusive.
- We make decisions based on merit and not preconceived stereotypes.
- We work together with our foster carers to enhance each individual child's sense of self-esteem and identity.
- We aim to be anti-discriminatory and anti-racist in all that we do individually and collectively and to have an understanding of the impact of discrimination and its effects.
- We have achieved the Positive About Disability mark and all of our offices are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant.

## Business Practices

- We are guided by the principle of being transparent, fair and honest in all that we do.
- Like all businesses, we have to make a surplus in order to survive, but that surplus goes back into the agency to provide stability and enhance the support we provide to children and young people.
- There are sufficient cash reserves to ensure the business can keep going even if times get difficult.
- We're a company without any shareholders, so we aren't here to meet the needs of owners.
- We keep our prices fair for local authorities and aim to provide value for money; we constantly work to improve the way we do things.
- We liaise regularly with local authorities in our footprint to build good working relationships and to discuss the provision of foster homes to meet their needs.
- We participate in the Fairer Fostering Partnership, a UK-wide consortium of voluntary and non-profit fostering agencies.



## Promoting Foster Care

We recognise that we have a responsibility in helping to address the national shortage of foster carers and we invest in people to become foster carers and always support and encourage them through the process.

- Our recruitment activities are primarily aimed at increasing the overall pool of foster carers rather than moving them around between agencies.
- We recognise that carers from other agencies who share our values may wish to apply to Team Fostering. They have the right to do this and we welcome their applications.
- When we advertise for foster carers, we do it in a truthful, responsible and non-exploitative way.
- We also make sure we're honest and accurate when we talk to prospective foster carers.
- Only those people we are confident about are taken on as foster carers. This means we will only accept an application if we think someone has shown the potential to be an excellent foster carer and what they can offer will be used by local authorities.
- We support assessing social workers throughout the assessment process through supervision, guidance and training.
- We invest in training that is relevant, purposeful, non-discriminatory and accessible. This includes a comprehensive post-approval training package that goes well beyond the minimum required.

## **Inclusion and Involvement**

Openness and dialogue are essential components of an ethical business. We listen to people because they know what's going on and because they matter to us.

We work hard to make sure children and young people's voices are heard within the agency. This includes supporting inclusion and participation projects in the North East, Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

- Wherever children need someone to speak up for them, we will either advocate for them, bring someone in to advocate for them, or support them to advocate for themselves.
- Foster carers are regularly consulted and listened to, both informally and formally through regular support meetings. We have foster carer representatives who help us to ensure two-way communication between managers and foster carers.
- We consult employees regularly through team meetings, staff surveys, focus groups and through our Employee Forum. All staff have direct access to members of the Board.
- We make sure that all children living in the fostering household have their views listened to and understood, and are able to have their say.
- As a team, we share our values and behave towards each other in a way that is respectful and constructive. The organisation's culture feels safe and promotes honest feedback between people at every level.

## **Goods and Services**

We believe it's important to treat our suppliers ethically and with respect. This includes valuing the relationships we have with suppliers who provide a high quality service rather than choosing on the basis of price alone.



- We treat all of our suppliers well, honour their terms of business and pay them on time.
- As far as possible, we use local suppliers and try to buy from ethical, responsible sources when we can, including Fair Trade products where appropriate.

## **The Environment**

We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment and minimising our carbon footprint.

- We recycle as much office waste as possible.
- We aim to minimise our energy use and be energy-efficient.
- Where possible we buy renewable energy for our offices
- Where possible we buy recycled stationary.
- We are part of a carbon off-set scheme.