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TEAM FOSTERING

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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Introduction

Our Mission Statement

“Putting Children’s Futures First”

We want our children and young people to be happy, safe, and confident, to be ambitious to reach their potential, valued for who they are, and supported to be fulfilled in their future lives.

Our Team Fostering Impact Statement:

“Driven by an unwavering determination to be ambitious for children and young people, for over 20 years we have been investing our time and resources to make a difference to their lives now and in the future, ensuring that any surplus we make supports and enhances our social purpose to provide them with loving homes and enduring relationships.”

Our Team Fostering Vision and Values:

- One agency, championing our values of child focused care, respect, dependability, being ethical and working together to ensure our children are at the centre of all we do.
- An action-oriented approach to challenging discrimination and promoting inclusion and diversity.
- Our ethical approach and social purpose drive us individually and collectively.
- Children are supported to recover from past trauma and develop enduring and fulfilling relationships.
- Our approach is responsive and consistent to support and develop foster carers to ensure an excellent and personalised experience of care giving.
- High performance is recognised as key to achieving the best outcomes for children and young people.
- Our people are supported and engaged to maximise their talents, contribution and well-being.
- Core services, operated under a single line management structure, deliver effective and high-quality support for children and their foster families.
- Locally managed offices, within our existing footprint, provide flexible workspaces and places for engagement with children, young people and our foster carers.

Team Fostering is an independent, not-for-profit fostering agency established in 2001 to provide safe, high quality, family-based care for children and young people.

The agency recruits, trains, assesses, and supports foster carers who welcome children and young people, aged 0-18, into their homes. Our foster families provide them with a loving,

stable, and enabling family life and aim to build up enduring and fulfilling relationships with the children and young people they are caring for. We work together to help children and young people experience a happy and fulfilling childhood and achieve positive and long-lasting outcomes that support them into their adulthood. Team Fostering supports our foster carers who live in the North East, Yorkshire and East Midlands regions. We also support 'staying put' arrangements for young people between the ages of 18 -21 so they can continue to be part of a family home as they move towards independence in their early adulthood.

Team Fostering was founded in the North East of England in 2001. Following a successful period of growth, the company expanded in 2003 with the development of an office base in Sheffield, and in 2006 a further North East office was opened. In 2012, we extended our activity to cover West Yorkshire and the East Midlands. The footprint of the agency now covers the North East, Yorkshire, and East Midlands. The offices continued to increase their capacity and provide comprehensive, local support services resulting in high quality care for children and young people referred to us by local authorities.

This Statement of Purpose includes:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service
- A statement as to the services and facilities provided by the fostering service

We make our Statement of Purpose available on our website and on an internal intranet. A copy of our Statement of Purpose is sent to Ofsted and made available to local authority partners. Our Children's Guide explains what our Statement of Purpose is about in child friendly language. Birth families are able to be provided with a copy of the Statement of Purpose as required.

Who Team Fostering Are

Operating as a Not-for-Profit Agency

Team Fostering is a not-for-profit fostering agency, as defined under the Care Standards Act 2000, and is inspected by Ofsted. The agency is a voluntary agency, as defined by the 1989 Children's Act and operates as a company limited by guarantee. This means that we do not have shareholders or other beneficiaries and that all our resources are invested into better quality care and services for children and foster carers, giving the best value for money to local authorities. We are a social enterprise, operating with the primary purpose being to achieve our social objectives, underpinned by our ethos to promote diversity and high-quality care. Our goals are to provide the best possible care and support to help vulnerable children and young people who are living away from their birth families, to encourage good outcomes and offer them a good start in life. In 2018, Team Fostering took steps to further protect its not-for-profit status by meeting with solicitors and agreeing a set of measures that would make it almost impossible for anyone to seize the agency's assets for their own personal gain. The agency's constitution, referred to as its 'Memorandum and Articles of Association' was amended and agreed to, safeguarding Team Fostering into the future as an ethical, not-for-profit organisation.

Our Team

Our foster carers and staff work with great determination to promote children's wellbeing, recognising the needs of individual children and young people. We truly work as a team and value the contribution of everyone within the agency, working together to achieve the best for children and young people, establishing a good family life where they are safe and well cared for, while maintaining appropriate links with their own families. There are many different roles within the agency, and all foster carers and staff are valued for their contribution in promoting the best for children, working as a professional, friendly team. We are proud and committed to operate as an ethical and not for profit fostering agency.

Our Vision, Values and Behaviours

Our Vision

Team Fostering was founded to operate as a not-for-profit, ethical agency that would put children's futures first. Our vision is to achieve this by continuing to work as one agency, with our values and behaviours informing all that we do. We remain ethical and aware of our social purpose which drives us individually and collectively, delivering our services from locally managed offices in the communities in which we operate. Foster carers and staff at Team Fostering are well trained and comprehensively supported to manage the individual needs of children and young people. Our service runs with staff under single line management, enabling the front-line staff and foster carers to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

Our Values and Behaviours:

In every aspect of the work that we do to support children, young people, and their foster carers, Team Fostering operates within its core values and behaviours and we aim for these to be incorporated into our everyday practice. Young people, foster carers and staff helped define the values and behaviours and these include:

- Child focused
- Respect
- Dependable
- Being Ethical
- Working Together

Aims and Objectives

Team Fostering operates with clear aims and objectives that help shape our strategic plan and operational goals.

Making a positive difference for children:

We aim to achieve and demonstrate improved outcomes for children and young people living with Team Fostering foster carers.

To deliver this, we will support stable and nurturing relationships for children and young people, use data and feedback to inform service delivery and prioritisation, and identify innovative ways to further engage children and young people in our care.

Keeping our foster families at the heart of our agency:

We aim to ensure the fostering experience is fulfilling; support is tailored to meet our foster families' needs; and our carers' voices influence our future priorities.

With a commitment to safeguarding as central to how we support our foster families, we will also train and develop our foster carers with a focus on therapeutic parenting as fundamental to enabling sensitive and resilient care giving. We aim for our foster carers to be empowered to make day to day and influence broader decisions about the children they know best.

Supporting and developing our staff to deliver effective and high-quality fostering services:

We are committed to ensuring our staff are enabled to be the best they can be, and that their contribution is recognised and celebrated. We will achieve this through providing staff learning and development opportunities, and by demonstrating our commitment to staff well-being and personal and professional fulfilment and challenge at work.

We remain committed to our Investors in People status and operate with a transparent performance management framework that will maximise staff retention and develop their potential. We operate as a learning organisation with clear processes in place to respond to new initiatives and to be adaptable and flexible.

Connecting more children with foster families:

We aim to maximise our retention and recruitment of foster carers who can meet the needs of children. We will continue to demonstrate careful matching and provide support and training to ensure children and young people experience secure, stable, and nurturing relationships. By improving retention, we will have skilled foster carers and staff who are able to care for children and young people, and we aspire to continue to increase our number of carer households so we can provide more foster homes to those children and young people in need of family-based care.

Being ethical and sustainable:

We aim to stand out as a financially strong, not for profit company which operates in a transparent, fair, and forward - thinking way. We aspire to do this by embedding our values and behaviours into all aspects of Team Fostering's activity and culture; becoming an agency of choice for staff, foster carers, and commissioners. We will explore new ways to respond to commissioner requirements for social value and operate our business in an ethical way. We aim to stay a financially strong organisation by generating pre-tax 2 % surplus, holding cash reserves of no less than six months running costs. All surpluses will be invested to increase support for children and young people.

Achieving high performance to make a lasting difference:

We aim to ensure that our ways of working support quality caregiving, are efficient, effective, and get results; capitalising on the knowledge, skills and experience of staff and carers. We will maximise economies of scale and maintain the correct balance of job roles, workloads, and resources to meet all agency requirements and respond to external and internal developments. Continuous improvement will be central, utilising clearly defined project-planning in line with identified priorities and timescales.

We will achieve high performance by complying with regulations, contractual requirements, and agency policies, and be inspection-ready for Ofsted, where we aim to achieve Outstanding or Good ratings.

Our Foster Homes

At Team Fostering we aspire to provide safe and loving homes to children and young people through a careful matching process, innovative foster carer training and comprehensive support services.

This allows us to offer the following foster homes for children and young people:

Short Term

These foster homes, which include 'emergency arrangements,' last while plans are made for the child's future. The child or young person may be placed short-term for days, weeks or months.

Long Term

In these instances, the foster carer will care for the child or young person until adulthood.

Short Break Care

These will be planned arrangements that allow foster carers to have a break or offer additional support to a child.

We provide a range of well-supported specialist foster families for children with additional needs. This currently includes:

Parent and Child Arrangements

Parent and child fostering provides a safe and supportive environment for a parent, usually a young or vulnerable individual, and their child to live together. This specialised type of fostering focuses on offering guidance, stability, and practical support to help the parent develop the skills and confidence needed to care for their child independently.

The primary aim of parent and child fostering is to promote the welfare and well-being of both the parent and the child, while the Local Authority undertakes the relevant assessments relating to the parent's ability to provide safe and effective care. Foster carers play a pivotal role in creating a nurturing space that supports the parent-child bond and facilitates positive parenting practices.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

UASC foster care provides a nurturing and supportive home for children and young people under the age of 18 who arrive in the UK without the presence of a parent or guardian. These children, referred to as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), often come from conflict-affected regions or areas experiencing persecution, human rights abuses, or environmental disasters. They may have endured significant hardship during their journey and face uncertainty about their future.

The role of UASC foster care is to ensure that these vulnerable young people are safeguarded, supported, and empowered to adapt to life in the UK. Foster carers provide a

stable and welcoming environment that meets the child's practical, emotional, and developmental needs while respecting their cultural, linguistic, and religious identity.

Bridge to Belonging

Our Bridge to Belonging fostering model was introduced to Team Fostering in April 2024. This model, which has been named by one of our young people, supports children and young people who are living in residential provision to make a planned and supported transition into family foster care with a Team fostering family. The Bridge to Belonging model is inclusive of a comprehensive and robust one year package of support which includes the support of our Clinical Psychologist Dr Berit Ritchie, and intensive family and supervising social worker support to the young person and fostering family.

Staying Put arrangements

We will promote and support young people to remain with their foster families after they reach the age of 18 where this is in their interests and this can be facilitated by the foster family, recognising that for many young people the opportunity to remain living with their former foster carers supports them in their journey towards independence.

Alongside our Core training offer, we offer specialised and bespoke training for our foster carers where additional support may be needed in their care of children.

Further information on our models of fostering families can be found on our website :

<https://teamfostering.co.uk/could-you-foster/types-of-fostering/>

We aim for all foster carers to be approved for children 0-18 years old, rather than for more specific age groups

This is in line with the diversity of children and young people that are referred to us by local authorities and to support our ethos of putting children's futures first regardless of background, behaviours, or age.

We offer specialised and bespoke training for our foster carers where additional support may be needed in their care of children.

Our Children and Young People

Matching

We work with local authorities across the North East, Yorkshire and East Midlands, and sometimes we look after children and young people referred to us from authorities outside of these areas.

We work collaboratively with local authority partners to ensure that children and young people's needs will be met by our foster carers with the necessary approach, skills, and experience.

We have dedicated Family Finding Teams in each region whose staff work closely with local authorities that refer children and young people. They gain as much information as possible to allow an understanding of each child's needs and background, as well as personal information, that will allow the matching process to be as successful as possible. Full discussions take place between staff within Team Fostering, including the Family Finding Team, foster carers, supervising social workers and, if necessary, their team managers before children go to live with the fostering family. This is to ensure that we find the right family to meet both the child's and the fostering family's needs. This includes full consideration of any other children living in the household.

Any gaps in the information for a child or young person are identified and appropriately addressed, either at the time of the initial referral or via a plan made at the placement meeting.

Where Parent and Child Arrangements are being considered, careful matching takes place and includes a risk assessment that will ensure their needs are met. Team Fostering will not place more than one parent and child in the foster home and would not place a parent and child alongside any other care experienced children unless there was a reason for doing so that was agreed by the child's social worker.

At Team Fostering, our foster carers have a wealth of experience in looking after children and young people who have a range of challenging and complex behaviours, specific needs related to their past experiences or cultural issues with regards to health, diet, and personal care. Our carers willingly offer peer support or participate in training, sharing their experiences through our Support Tree and helping others to learn.

Supporting our Foster Carers

Our commitment is to give foster carers the very best support possible to help them provide quality care to children, ensuring they have a better future.

Supervision

Foster carers receive regular and appropriate visits and online and in person support that includes supervision from their allocated supervising social worker as well as opportunities for group sessions with other foster carers. These visits and contacts provide foster carers with the opportunity to discuss the needs of children, raise any issues of concern, discuss training and development needs and receive general support. Caseloads for supervising social workers at Team Fostering are designed to be manageable so that the high level of support from the agency is delivered.

Foster carers are expected to complete written reports regarding children in the home, and monthly recording which is forwarded to children's social workers. This is an important part of the foster carer's role as it forms an important part of a child's journey in care and helps to maintain a clear focus on their needs and vulnerabilities. We provide training to help foster carers complete their recordings to ensure that they are accurate and unbiased while containing all relevant information.

Duty System

A duty system is operated daily in both regional offices to ensure that any foster carer can contact a supervising social worker and/or manager in the event of an emergency, or if they need to speak to somebody but are unable to get in touch with their own supervising social worker.

Out of Hours Support

We have an 'out of hours' support and advice service for foster carers, provided by Team Fostering qualified social workers which ensures that foster carers receive 24-hour support, 365 days a year. In exceptional cases, the duty social worker may visit the foster carer.

There is a senior duty rota operated by the agency's social work managers to ensure that all supervising social workers have access to a manager in the event of an emergency.

The out of hours telephone service is also a referral service for local authorities. This operates within specific times when an emergency foster home can be requested.

Foster Carer Support Group

Support groups form an important part of our service for foster carers and are promoted within the teams. They provide informal support between foster carers and staff, as well as information sharing and the chance to discuss any areas of concern, learning from each other. These take place monthly, during the day and avoiding school holiday dates as carers

may not be able to attend. Support group meetings can be face to face, or potentially through remote platforms, offering additional flexibility and engagement.

Therapeutic consultation and services

Team Fostering has consistently ensured that our secure base model is complimented by the provision of externally commissioned psychological and therapeutic support. Our therapeutic services are delivered by highly skilled, experienced and qualified Clinical Psychologist and include the following :

- One to One consultation consultations accessible by all Foster Carers, and where appropriate their Supervising Social Worker as required.
- Team Fostering will , in partnership with the Local Authority, commission further bespoke consultation according to the specific needs of the child and/or fostering family where additional support needs are identified.
- Foster Carer group psychology workshops covering key topics and subject areas, providing foster carers with a space to reflect, learn and develop together.
- Reflective staff workshops to ensure that the staff team are supported within their own wellbeing, reflection, learning and development which in turn promotes and enhances the support they offer to our fostering families and young people.

Within our Yorkshire and East Midlands region, our Clinical Psychologist is also included as part of the specialist support package in place for all Bridge to Belonging placements.

Our North East psychology support services are provided by Dr Gemma Gates and our Yorkshire and East Midlands psychology services are provided by Dr Berit Ritchie and further information can be found at : <https://teamfostering.co.uk/why-us/psychology-service/>.

Annual Review

All foster carers undergo an annual review chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer who is not a member of staff at the agency. The purpose of the review is to confirm ongoing suitability of a foster carer and their household and whether their terms of approval remain appropriate. The views of other people are sought in contributing to the review, including the views of children in the foster home and their social workers. During the review meeting, which the foster carers attend, their progress over the past year is discussed together with future training and development needs, and recommendations are made for future work to be completed. The reviews discuss positive achievements and strengths, offering the opportunity to reflect on the past 12 months. Foster carers first review is presented to our fostering panel as required by regulation and also if there have been safeguarding concerns or significant changes to the foster carer household.

Foster Carer Handbook

We provide all our foster carers with access to a Team Fostering Foster Carer Handbook via our internal intranet, Team Talk. The handbook contains links to our policies and procedures, and all relevant information on the fostering task.

Children's Guide

We provide an age appropriate children's guide to tell children and young people in a child friendly way about what they can expect from Team Fostering and have important information at their fingertips. These can and will be translated into relevant languages, as required.

Education and Support Service

Our Education and Support Service is a package of support designed to promote the best outcomes for children and young people. The service is split into four main areas:

1. Education

We help children through education support and advocacy, with the staff in the team helping to ensure that children and young people have a place in school by negotiating on their behalf.

If problems arise, the team seeks to work together with schools, foster carers, and the young person to resolve these as quickly as possible. At times, children are provided with direct support on a time-limited basis to help them meet their potential in school and enjoy school life. This 1:1 support may be based on a specific educational need, or to promote the social and personal development needed to help children feel better about school in general.

The team know that moving between schools or into college can be a significant change for children. They focus on supporting children through normal key stage changes as well when there is a need to move schools. The agency also offers support to young people that move on to college, training, or employment.

2. Participation

We offer an action-packed activity programme during each of the school holidays. This can include arts and crafts projects, trips, outdoor pursuits, picnics, and pantomimes. We also organise annual Celebration of Achievements events where we highlight key achievements that children and young people at Team Fostering have made. All activities are planned in consultation with foster carers who give us feedback and suggestions for future events.

The agency organises an annual holiday that brings all children and foster carers together for fun and relaxation, a great opportunity to get to know other foster carers and for children and young people to make new friends. We ensure that there are lots of things to do and offer opportunities for children and young people to try new things.

Our Teamies and Project Listen Groups

Children and young people in care with Team Fostering have designed a suite of information that details what a young person can expect during their time in the care of our foster carers, including our 'Children's Guide to Fostering'.

It contains information about how to access the agency's complaints procedure and answers to frequently asked questions and is accompanied with a voucher as a welcome present.

We have participation groups for young people at the agency, 'Teamies' in the North East and 'Project Listen' in Yorkshire and the East Midlands. These groups develop consultation and participation with children and young people and results in improved services in everything the agency does. Through these groups we are able to gain insight from young people about the agency and its services, and their inclusion in agency development includes:

- Involvement in the recruitment of staff
- Development of foster carer profiles
- Creation of questions to put to foster carer applicants that attend our fostering panel
- Involvement in foster carer training
- Reviewing how we give information to children about how to complain

Children from the agency's consultation groups 'Teamies' and 'Team Fantastic' spoke about how the team-building activities that they do, including canoeing and archery, help them with building their confidence and self-esteem. (OFSTED 2023)

3. Life Skills

Each region engages in life skills work, planning opportunities and events for young people to come together in a relaxed, informative, and safe place to consider issues that are important to them as they approach 18.

We plan these activities on an individual and group basis and, each summer, a programme of activities is planned to support the development of life skills. This might include exploring the challenges of working as part of a group, developing communication and skills for future independence. This includes activities that our young people feel are important to them, such as practising cooking, upcycling, and physical outdoor challenges.

4. Support in Foster Homes

The teams can offer 1:1 targeted support if required. This could focus on several different areas including relationship building, anger management, grief and loss, or support with bullying. This work is strengthened by our programme of foster carer training.

The Education and Support Service focus upon helping children and young people to achieve their individual potential. Support is planned, delivered, and reviewed to ensure that it is meaningful for our young people and that it promotes their overall wellbeing and stability.

In addition to the above, following successful trial, the role of Fostering Family Support Worker's (FFSW) was embedded as a permanent addition to the Team Fostering support tree

in March 2024. The FFSW service was established to enhance the quality of care provided to foster children by supporting foster families through direct, solution-focused interventions and comprehensive support mechanisms. Complimenting the existing services provided by our Supervising Social Workers and Education and Support Services Teams, our FFSW's offer a bespoke and specialised 6 module support package to children and families who require a higher and more intensive level of intervention and support with the purpose and aims of supporting fostering family relationships and stability.

Foster Carer Training and Development

Skills to Foster

Team Fostering provides foster carers with professional training through their career. Learning and development opportunities are designed to maintain competence in the fostering task and provide a framework for continuous professional development. We consider attendance and participation at training as essential to foster carers' development, and as such we offer a choice of venues and times, including training at weekends and evenings where appropriate.

Our 'Skills to Foster' training is delivered over three and half days during the foster carer assessment process, where three of the days have been designed by The Fostering Network and the final half day runs as 'Team Training' so that applicants can learn about our tailored support service, even meeting some of our children and young people. Additional preparatory training can be arranged for any birth children of the prospective foster carers, to introduce them to the fostering task.

Subjects covered include:

- An introduction to Team Fostering
- Why children come into care
- An introduction to safeguarding
- An introduction to separation and loss
- Behavioural consequences and how to manage these
- An introduction to attachment
- Promoting a positive identity, equality, and diversity
- Anti-discriminatory practice
- Safe caring principles
- Working together with professionals and birth families
- Promoting contact

Post Approval Training

Foster carers are supported to complete the 'Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care' (TSDS). Under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, these Standards should be completed within the foster carer's first year post approval. Carers are also expected to attend the following mandatory induction courses.

- Safeguarding Children
- Equality and Diversity in Practice
- 'Write Enough' Recording and Reporting

- Working in Partnership
- Emergency First Aid
- Understanding and Managing Behaviour
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Safe Handling Techniques and Physical Intervention and De-Escalation
- Childcare Legislation
- Intermediate Attachment
- Education and the Looked After Child
- Fire Safety

After the first year of approval, foster carers continue to undertake training as set out in the agency's core training programme and courses can be offered both online, face to face or through printed portfolios, depending on the nature of the training and the needs of our foster carers. All training is regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with the latest research and childcare practice and through feedback and contributions from foster carers.

Bespoke training is designed to meet the individual needs of children/young people. Foster carers who have successfully completed the TSDS Standards, and are committed to further training, are encouraged to access further qualifications on matters related to fostering. The agency has a strong focus upon therapeutic parenting and promotes this approach throughout all aspects of our work and post approval training.

Memorial Funds

The Peter Richardson Fund

The Peter Richardson Fund was set up in 2009 to pay for opportunities and experiences for children and young people of all ages that cannot be paid for by local authorities. Examples of opportunities provided for within this last year have included supporting two young people to attend Youth Activity camps of their choice; provision of a specialist car seat; supporting a young person to visit America and another to visit Prague and horse-riding lessons.

The Helen Middleton Fund

The Helen Middleton Fund was set up in 2007 with a £15,000 donation from Team Fostering and this amount is topped up periodically with regular support from the Agency surplus. This money supports children and young people making the transition into independence and can cover things like training and education to support employment, driving lessons or laptops, as well as furniture for a new home and equipment to meet the requirements of a new job. We also fund some additional staff time to provide life skills training to young people in preparation for their future independence.

Team Fostering is proud of the people who have brought their own special contributions to the agency and who are sadly no longer with us. The memories, passion, and belief that they brought to young people's lives are continued through these in-house funds, set aside to help make a difference to young people who need a helping hand.

Foster Carer Recruitment

Who we look for:

Team Fostering foster carers come from all walks of life and backgrounds. They have had a diverse range of experiences before they come to us, so we don't have a 'perfect image' of a foster carer. We value the fact that no two foster families are the same and we encourage and support applications from people of different age, race, gender, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

To apply to be a foster carer at Team Fostering, enquirers must meet the following criteria:

- You have a spare bedroom
- You are available to care for a child or young person 24/7 (we do consider applications from those who are self-employed or whose employment allows them the flexibility to be fully available to respond to the needs of the child in their care)
- You live within the North- East, Yorkshire, or East Midlands.
- If in a relationship, you and your partner have been together for a minimum of two years
- You are over 21 years of age
- You have access to regular, reliable transport to take children or young people to school, appointments, activities or visits to friends and family, and to attend training and meetings as required.
- You own your own property or have permission from your landlord to foster in a rented property
- If you have your own children, we would welcome an enquiry and would discuss this further depending on your individual circumstances.

In addition, you should also

- Be committed to making a positive difference in a child's life
- Be able to provide a child or young person with a nurturing family environment, where they are valued, nurtured, loved and encouraged to achieve their full potential
- Enjoy looking after children and young people, able to meet their needs and adapt well to different situations.
- While it is not essential to be a parent, it is important to have some relevant experience that may have prepared you for fostering
- Promote a zero-tolerance attitude towards discrimination and enjoy working as part of a team
- Understand the challenges of being a foster carer and be prepared for the hard work that is required
- Be patient, resourceful, flexible and able to use your own initiative

- Be able to work as part of a team

The Recruitment Process

In line with Fostering Services Regulations 2011, the agency implements policies and procedures that deliver the safe recruitment of foster carers. All those who enquire are screened and visited during initial stages, and their motivation and suitability to foster are assessed prior to the agency inviting them to begin the application process. Home visits are conducted by qualified social workers or managers that are experienced and skilled in the foster carer recruitment task. Those enquiring about becoming a foster carer are given information about the recruitment and assessment process, and we are transparent about the level of detail that is required in the process.

Application and Assessment

Only those considered to be likely to provide safe, healthy and supportive foster homes for children or young people are invited to apply. The assessment process generally takes 4-6 months.

Once an application has been made, the applicant/s will be allocated a qualified assessor to conduct a comprehensive fostering assessment, following CoramBAAF's Form F Guidelines. The assessor will meet with the applicant/s regularly to get to know the applicant/s and compile the information needed. This includes individual applicant profiles, previous relationships, support networks, other people in the household and any adult children living independently, their family life, values of diversity, motivation to foster and any relevant parenting skills or experience, as well as any other information that indicates anything about suitability for fostering.

Alongside this, our team will carry out statutory checks and references to establish suitability to foster, including a full medical and enhanced police check. The birth children of any applicants are fully involved in the assessment and will be interviewed, along with consideration given to the home, any pets, the wider family and community ties.

Applicant/s will participate in our three day 'Skills to Foster' training during their assessment, which is delivered by qualified and experienced social work staff. This will support applicant/s to develop their understanding of fostering. Our foster carers are also available on these training days; so applicant/s can start to build connections with foster carers and learn about their experience of fostering and being part of the agency. There is then an additional training session which provides applicant/s an opportunity to connect with staff from the Education Support Team and the Family Finding Team, and our young people attend to talk about their experience of being fostered.

Once the fostering assessment is completed, the applicants are given the opportunity to read the report and they can suggest possible amendments.

Following approval of the report, it is sent to the panel members in preparation for the applicant/s' allocated panel meeting, which they will attend with their assessor. The Fostering Panel will then make a recommendation as to whether the applicant/s should be

approved as foster carers. This recommendation is passed on to the Agency Decision Maker who will make a decision as to whether or not to approve the applicant/s, who will then become foster carers.

The Team Fostering Panel and Quality Standards

Panel

In line with Fostering Services Regulations 2011, Team Fostering has two foster panels; one based in the North East and one for our Yorkshire and East Midlands region. The panels consider new foster carer applications in addition to foster carer reviews and any other agency business.

Fostering Panels are chaired by an independent and experienced Chair, who has the relevant skills and experience for the role. The rest of the panel consists of several professionals and independent members that all have relevant experience of working with care experienced children. At Team Fostering, panels are held monthly at both our North Shields and Sheffield offices, but we also have the facility to operate these virtually, as required.

For foster carer applications panel members consider all the information presented to them including the fostering assessment, information provided by the Fostering Assessor and further details given by the applicant/s, using this to make a recommendation on approval and terms of approval to the Agency Decision Maker. We have a dedicated agency decision maker in the agency, performed by a suitably experienced senior manager.

Developing Our Practice and Improving Quality

We aim to continuously improve our services. To make sure that we focus our efforts in the right areas we have a robust Quality Standards framework reflective of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, which ensures that managers monitor the work we do and make changes for improvement where required.

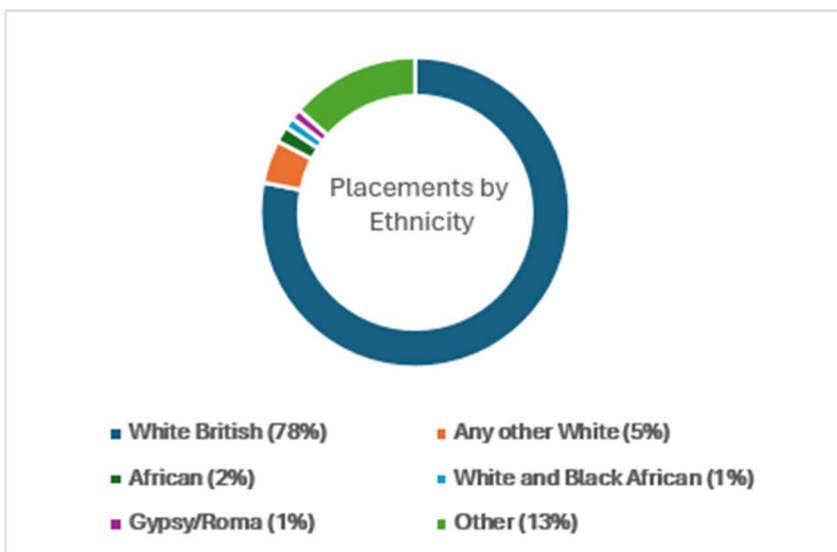
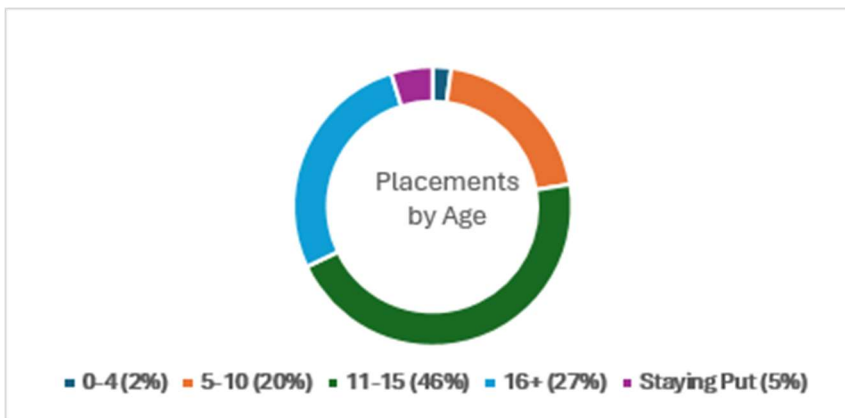
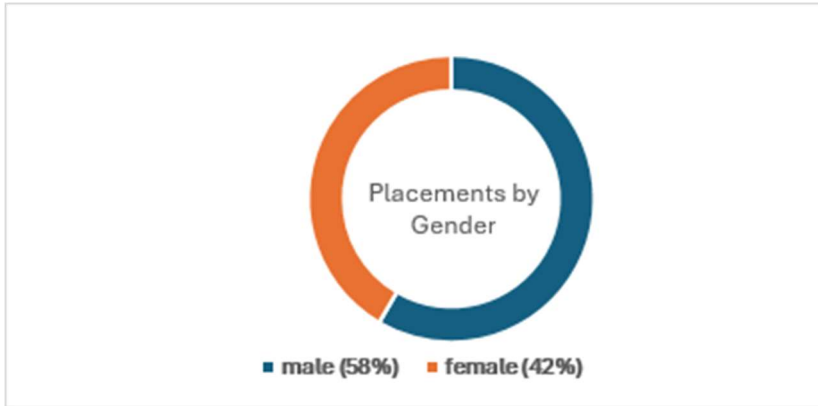
Our staff, foster carers and managers are accountable for the work that they do. The Board of Directors, Responsible Individual and CEO, Assistant Directors, Registered Managers, HR Partner, supported by other managers and staff, all participate in our quality assurance processes via auditing information, monitoring operational practice and management information, as well as regularly reviewing policies and procedures.

External to the agency, each Fostering Panel has a key role in quality assurance. We also have Independent Reviewing Officers who chair foster carer reviews, and mechanisms established for independent investigations.

Foster carers have access to an independent support service when they are under investigation of any allegations of abuse or misconduct. This is provided by Foster Talk.

Team Fostering is a member of The Fostering Network, CoramBAAF, The Fairer Fostering Partnership, and the Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers. This means we work together with other agencies to network and help us be informed about current issues and research in fostering.

Our April 2023 – March 2024 Figures



At the end of March 2024, the agency had 61 approved fostering households in Yorkshire and the East Midlands, looking after 74 children and young people.

At the end of March 2024, the agency had 71 approved fostering households in the North East, looking after 104 children and young people (and 9 Young People in Staying Put arrangements).

In total we have 132 approved fostering families, caring for 178 children and young people.

Management Structure

Board of Directors:

Kathryn Hayes, Chief Executive Officer and Responsible Individual

Kathryn is our CEO and Responsible Individual. Her qualifications include a BA Honours in Social Work and Diploma in Leadership and Management. Kathryn brings over 20 years of social care experience working with children and young people to the role, 13 of which have been within fostering. Prior to joining Team Fostering, Kathryn held the consecutive posts of Registered Manager within 2 North East based independent fostering agencies between 2015 -2022.

Julie Bailey, Non-Executive Director

Julie joined Team Fostering in the role of Non-Executive Director in January 2021. Her qualifications include a BA Honours in Social Work, a Diploma in Management and a Master's in Business Administration. Julie has over 30 years social work experience in the public and independent sectors, working in child protection, fostering and adoption, training, and recruitment. Julie also has a wealth of experience of inspection of children's services as a Childcare Regulatory Inspector.

Mark Alden, Non-Executive Director

Mark joined Team Fostering in 2018 in the role of a Non-Executive Director with foster carer experience. This ensures that direct experience of caring for children and young people is at the heart of the Board's decision making. Mark's employment background lies within the banking and financial sector. He retired from his full-time role in October 2019.

Chris Cook , Non-Executive Director

Chris joined Team Fostering in 2024. Chris is an Olympian who competed at the highest level of sports for almost ten years. He now runs a highly successful swimming academy and works as a motivational speaker and coach, inspiring future Olympians and businesses across the United Kingdom. His extensive experience includes supporting children and young people in achieving success in sports, as well as working with hard-to-reach children in Young Offenders Institutions, Residential Care, Alternative Education settings, and communities affected by poverty and deprivation. Chris is passionate about helping our children and young people enjoy and achieve in every aspect of their lives.

Senior Leadership Team:

Martin Johnson, Company Secretary and Financial Controller

Martin began working with Team Fostering in 2021 to project manager the move of our finance service from our external accountants to an in-house department, then stayed on to run the service. Martin qualified as a chartered accountant in 1996 and has always worked in service-based businesses. Since 2009 he has worked with several small to medium sized

independent fostering agencies implementing fit for purpose finance systems and processes and partnering with registered managers and directors in financial decision making and support.

Sandra Kennedy, Assistant Director (Fostering Services)

Sandra joined Team Fostering in 2020 as the Assistant Director and Registered Manager for the Yorkshire and East Midlands region, successfully moving into the role of Assistant Director for Fostering Services in October 2023. Sandra qualified as a Social Worker in 2000 and has worked extensively within Children's Social Care in the public sector, including a management role in preventative care services in Scotland. Sandra previously held the post of Team Manager in a local authority fostering service for over 15 years and has a Diploma in Social Work and a Leadership and Management diploma.

Liam Phillips, Assistant Director (Marketing and Recruitment)

Liam joined Team Fostering in 2021 as the Assistant Director specialising in Marketing and Recruitment. Liam qualified with a degree in Marketing from Newcastle University in 2004 and gained his CIM Professional Diploma in Marketing in 2012. Since graduating, Liam has spent time in a broad variety of marketing and recruitment related roles in both the public and private sector, leading teams to improve processes, and meet challenging targets, most recently as Marketing & Recruitment Manager at Northumbria University.

Registered Managers:

Martin Hanson, Registered Manager for the North East

Martin joined Team Fostering in 2023 as Registered Manager for the North-East region. Martin has a BA honours degree in Management, and a Social Work Master's degree. Martin has spent the last 15 years working within social work, leading on family support programmes, and supporting children in care. Prior to joining Team Fostering, Martin spent 5 years managing Local Authority Fostering Services

Jubilee Chikosi, Registered Manager for the Yorkshire and East Midlands

Jubilee Chikosi is the Registered Manager for Team Fostering for the Yorkshire and East Midlands region. She qualified as a Social Worker in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Social Work and a Post Qualification of a Master of Arts in Professional practice in Children and Families. Jubilee has sixteen years of post-qualifying Social Work experience in Management and Social Work practice within the Children and Families sector. Upon qualifying Jubilee worked as a front-line Child Protection social worker later specialising and becoming the Lead UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) and Senior Social Work Practitioner in the Looked After Children's Team. In 2014 Jubilee moved to Team Fostering and has worked various roles including that of the East Midlands Team Manager then moving into her current role in November 2023.

Agency Decision Maker:

Christine Broadbent, Agency Decision Maker

Christine joined the Team Fostering Family in October 2023. During her career as a Social Worker spanning thirty-five years Christine has worked within the local authority, voluntary and independent sectors. Christine has substantial experience working at Senior Manager level, she has for the past 20 years focused on fostering and adoption. Prior to joining Team Fostering Christine held panel Chair and ADM positions for other agencies. Christine has also been part of a fostering family.

Staffing Structure:

In both our Northeast and our Yorkshire and East Midlands bases we have:

- A Registered Manager
- 2 x Team Managers and 2 x teams of Supervising Social Workers
- An Education and Support Service Manager and team of Education and Support Service Workers
- A Family Finding and Contracts Manager and team of Family Finder Officers
- A Recruitment and Engagement Officer
- A Marketing Officer
- A team of Business Support Officers
- A Finance officer, supported by our Financial Controller

The agency also has staff who operate as part of its central services who cover all offices, including:

- A Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors
- An Assistant Director specialising in marketing and recruitment
- An Assistant Director for Fostering Services specialising in safeguarding and practice development.
- A Financial Controller/ Company Secretary who sits alongside the Assistant Directors on our Senior Leadership team
- An Agency Decision Maker
- A Business Support Manager
- A Training Manager and Training Officer
- A Recruitment Manager
- An HR Partner and HR Co-ordinator
- A Recruitment, Retention and Development Social Worker
- A Data Officer
- An IT Lead

Agency Management Group

As well as the CEO, Assistant Directors and Registered Managers, the Agency Management Group includes four Team Managers, a Training Manager, a Recruitment Manager, two

Education and Support Service Managers, two Family Finder and Contracts Managers, a Financial Controller, and a Business Support Manager. The Agency Decision Maker sits outside of this operational management team to ensure independence from the day- to -day decision making of the agency.

Our Social Work Team Managers are qualified and experienced Social Workers who have a wealth of experience in working with care experienced children and supporting trauma informed practice. They are responsible for the supervision and management of supervising social workers, ensuring that foster carers are provided with a high level of support, and that children and young people placed with our foster carers receive a high standard of care that meets their needs.

The Board and Senior Leadership team meet monthly to ensure full strategic and operational oversight of all functions within Team Fostering. Additionally, our Registered Managers meet with their regional management teams monthly to ensure that all managers within the service are aware of current developments and can contribute to service initiatives. In addition, quarterly agency-wide management meetings take place as well as social work meetings and regional staff meetings.

Staff Recruitment

Team Fostering operates with policies and procedures that promote safe, ethical practice among staff. We have robust recruitment policies that promote equality and diversity to recruit staff suitable to work at Team Fostering as an ethical, not-for-profit fostering agency. Operating within regulatory frameworks, we carry out a range of statutory checks on all staff, including written references and telephone author confirmation and enhanced police checks.

All social work staff hold recognised social work qualifications and the agency ensures they maintain regulatory body registration. Our sessional staff are required to hold qualifications relevant to the work they are undertaking.

Team Fostering is accredited under the Disability Confident employer's scheme, actively promoting the recruitment and employment practices that support applicants and staff with disabilities.

All staff receive regular supervision, an annual appraisal and ongoing training and development opportunities to ensure that they are up to date with new legislation; that their practice is compliant with requirements and that they are equipped to deliver services to children and young people. We were initially awarded the Investors in People Award (IIP) in 2006 and this accreditation was maintained in our latest 2024 inspection. We also have achieved gold level in the Better Health at Work Awards.

Submitting Feedback

We have a Complaints and Representations Policy and Procedure, in line with Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The policy is available to all service users.

Between April 2023 and April 2024, we received 7 complaints in the North East region and 2 in the Yorkshire and East Midlands service. For a copy of any of our policies or procedures, or to make a complaint, please contact either Jubilee Chikosi, Registered Manager (Yorkshire and East Midlands) on 01142 617 762 or Martin Hanson, Registered Manager (North East) on 0191 257 6806.

We view complaints about our service very seriously and provide a transparent process in which complaints can be dealt with. We learn from any complaints and feedback, using feedback to improve our service.

At Team Fostering, we also record our compliments and use these to continue to strengthen our service and to acknowledge staff and teams whose work have generated these. Between April 2023 and April 2024, there were 60 compliments received across both regions. The Yorkshire and East Midlands received 36 ; the North East received 24.