



# Statement of Purpose

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<b>Date</b>	15/10/2009
<b>Approved by</b>	Olga Karazanova, Director
<b>Review date</b>	15/04/2011; 15/01/2013; 03/02/2016; 28/12/2016; 13/09/2017; 13/11/2017; 21/05/2018; 18/11/2018; 02/12/2019
<b>By</b>	Jai Batra, Fostering Manager
<b>Updates made</b>	Reference to The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 Organisational Structure Social Work England Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for Foster Care
<b>Next Review date</b>	annually

## 1. Introduction

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards require all fostering services to produce a written statement of purpose setting out the aims and objectives of the service and the services and facilities provided.

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually or more regularly if appropriate.

Each time it is reviewed a copy will be sent to the Chief Inspector and all approved foster carers and foster children. A copy of the Statement of Purpose will also be made available on request to any staff member, prospective foster carer, parent of a child placed in foster care, any child placed and other professionals; and is reflected in the Agency policies, procedures and any written guidance to staff, foster carers and children and young people.

The Statement of Purpose sets out the framework for Be My Family Fostering Agency (BMFFA).

It is intended to provide an overall view of this fostering service, details of which are available in the Agency comprehensive Policies and Procedures manual.

The fostering service seeks to promote the principles and practice outlined in the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989.

## 2. Principles

The principles and standards guiding this fostering service are based on the Every Child Matters framework:

- Being healthy;
- Staying safe;
- Enjoying and achieving;
- Making a positive contribution;
- Achieving economic well-being;

and are the following:

- The safety and protection of looked after children and young people will be an overriding priority for the fostering service.
- The needs of looked after children and young people will be met in respect of health, including mental health, and this will be achieved by working closely with other professionals including the specialist nurse for looked after children and young people and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- The needs of looked after children and young people will be met in respect of education, and this will be achieved by working closely with other professionals. The Agency will aim to ensure that children and young people have stable school placements, Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and educational support necessary to meet their needs.
- Children and young people will be supported and encouraged to develop independence skills appropriate to age and ability and friendship and leisure interests in line with their wishes and individual care plans.
- The interests and welfare of children and young people is paramount at all times and this will be reflected in all aspects of work.
- All work will be undertaken in partnership with looked after children and young people, their parents, birth families, foster carers, social workers and other relevant departments and agencies.
- The fostering service will advocate for looked after children and young people to ensure that they have access to their own social worker and any specialists and services that they need.

- The fostering service will operate in a manner that promotes equality, values diversity, challenges discrimination and aims to meet the varied needs of looked after children and young people.
- In recruiting foster carers and arranging foster placements, consideration will be given to the needs arising out of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, language and sexuality.
- Foster carers and staff will be valued and supported in a way that assists them to provide safe and effective care for looked after children and young people.

Be My Family Fostering Agency is committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards and offering quality provision. It has been developed and is managed in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the principles outlined in the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards.

The performance of the Agency will be monitored at a number of levels and in a number of ways:

- Ofsted will inspect regularly to ensure that the Agency complies with the legislation and standards. This report together with any action plan arising from it will be publicly available.
- The Director will also monitor the activity at a strategic level against the aims and objectives, performance indicators and tasks as contained in the Development Plan.
- In addition to involvement in the above, the Fostering Manager will also monitor performance through his activities.

#### **Performance Targets and Indicators**

- Placement Stability (% of children under 16 years looked after for 2.5 years or more in the same placement for at least 2 years).
- Continued recruitment of new foster carers to address diversity, and in accordance with the current needs and demands.
- All assessments to be completed in a timely manner, to high quality.
- All newly approved foster carers will carry out the agreed pathway training within the first year of their approval.
- Retention of foster carers.
- Successful Ofsted inspection aiming at “good” or “outstanding”.

We aim to put the child at the center of what we do, in accordance with the principles of the fostering services and support foster carers to do the same.

- To promote and safeguard the welfare of children throughout their childhood.
  - To promote working partnership with children and their families.
  - To ensure equality of opportunity.
  - To ensure all children fulfill their potential in education.
  - To ensure that young people are supported to move into independence in a planned way.
  - To ensure all children’s health needs are met.
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- We also aim to provide children with a caring, safe experience of living in families.
  - We will listen to children and young people and take their views into consideration.
  - We aim to promote equality of opportunity, recognising and providing for each child and young person’s ethnic, cultural and religious needs, ensuring that staff and foster carers value disability.
  - We aim to work in an open and accessible way, treating children, young people, their families and foster carers with fairness and respect.
  - Working with a range of professionals, we aim to ensure that children and young people and their foster carers are provided with the services and support to meet their needs.
  - We do not discriminate against applicants on the grounds of gender, religion, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, nationality, disability and sexual orientation.

- We recruit foster carers on the basis of the needs of the Agency and the children it looks after, setting annual targets.
- We treat our foster carers with respect, recognising that they are a core member of the professional team around the child with an important contribution to make in planning and decision making about the child.
- The fostering service is committed to improving outcomes for children and will actively promote and improve the life chances of children we look after.
- We value foster carers' own children and extended family and the support they offer to LAC.
- Be My Family Fostering Agency recognises that foster carers are valuable members of the team working with a child. As such they are involved in all aspects of caring and planning for children they are looking after.

### 3. Aims

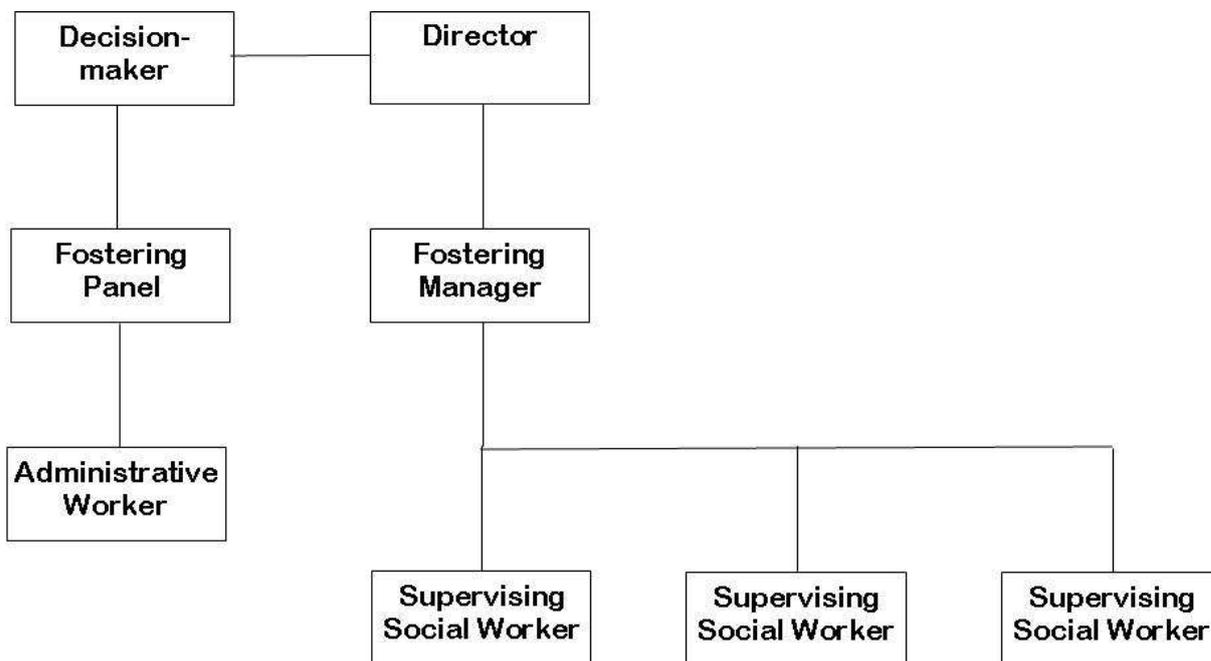
The **overall aim** of Be My Family Fostering Agency is to provide safe, healthy, stable and high quality foster placements for children and young people of all ages, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation and disability, who, for whatever reasons or period of time, need to be looked after away from their family of origin and kinship; which value, support, nurture and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals.

- To provide a service responsive to the needs of children who require a family placement, recruiting sufficient foster carers to offer placement choice and create a culture where children and young people are encouraged to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.
- To provide a placement that meets the requirement of the child's care plan and wherever possible that reflects the child's ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background.
- To fully recognise, support and take into account the particular needs of disabled children and young people and/or children and young people with complex needs.
- To value foster carers, providing them with a high standard of supervision, support and guidance through individual sessions with their supervising social worker, support groups and pre and post approval training, including the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for Foster Care.
- To be open and accessible, ensuring that practice complies in every respect with the Agency's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- To provide a high standard of care for children looked after in a warm, safe and stable environment that will meet their developmental needs.
- To provide a respite care to support a child living with his/her family or carers. (Section 31, Section 20, Section 17)
- To work in partnership with professionals, carers, parents and children to return children to their own family wherever possible.
- As a minimum standard, to promote a good relationship between parents and their children where a return home is not possible. We also support children in contact with all family members in line with their care plan.
- Wherever possible and in the best interests of each child, to place siblings together.
- To offer information and advice on all fostering matters to the general public enquiries and other professionals.
- The fostering service, including foster carers has high expectations that children in foster care will reach their full potential.
- To safeguard all children.
- To **PROTECT EACH CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON FROM ALL FORMS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT;** The foster carer **must not** administer corporal punishment to any child in their care.
- To support foster carers to provide care to children and young people that minimises the need for police involvement.

#### 4. Objectives

- Every effort will be made to find a placement that meets the young person/child’s emotional and development needs – in careful matching of the needs of the children and young people referred for foster placements with the skills of the foster carers.
- A child/young person’s wishes and feelings will be taken into account, and children/young people will be encouraged to participate in decisions about their care.
- The fostering service will work in partnership with foster carers, children/young people and their families.
- All information/records will be treated confidentially and held securely.
- Applicants who wish to become foster carers will have equality of access to the fostering service.
- Applicants are recruited in line with local identified needs and annual service targets.
- Foster carers are well prepared and supported for the fostering task.
- To enable each child to reach their full potential in all areas of their life.
- To ensure that all children are safeguarded in foster care.
- For children to move on from foster care in a planned and positive way.
- That all foster carers are suitably prepared and trained for the task.
- To recruit, train and develop professional staff in order to provide excellent support and services to children and young people looked after and foster carers.
- Delegated responsibility to be given to foster carers as defined within the placement.

#### 5. Organisational Structure



**The Responsible Individual (aka Director)** of the Agency is a qualified teacher with years of experience in teaching children and young people of various learning and social needs from diverse backgrounds. The Director has got supervision and line management experience in an educational and information management setting.

**The Registered Manager (aka Fostering Manager)** of the Agency is a qualified and Social Work England registered social worker with over 30-years experience of working as a direct practitioner as well as a middle and senior manager in statutory services in children and families and fostering. The Registered Manager has also experience of working as an independent consultant and free-lance

trainer in fostering and adoption services including membership of fostering and adoption panel and training and development of foster carers. The Fostering Manager completed Dip in Management Studies in 2006.

The Agency **Fostering Panel** is constituted in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The independent Panel Chair is a qualified and Social Work England registered social worker with over 20 years of experience in the field of statutory child care, child protection, children looked after and fostering field, both as a practitioner and a manager. The independent Panel members are suitably qualified professionals with extensive experience of working with children and young people who are looked after. One of the Panel members has also been previously in foster care of local authority. The Panel also has access to an independent medical advisor.

The Agency employs qualified and Social Work England registered social workers who are skilled to provide the necessary support and guidance to foster carers as well as monitor and supervise foster placements to ensure that children's and young people's needs are effectively met.

## 6. Services provided by the Fostering Service

The services provided by Be My Family Fostering Agency are based on the principles laid out in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters (ECM) Outcomes Framework, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

Be My Family Fostering Agency is committed to:

- Putting the child first;
- Delivering high quality services;
- Valuing diversity and promoting equality;
- Working in partnership;
- Valuing, developing and supporting children and young people, foster carers and staff;
- Making the best use of its resources.

Be My Family Fostering Agency aims to provide a range of diverse types of foster placements to ensure that individual needs and circumstances of referred looked after children are best matched with the knowledge, skills and experience of the foster carers.

Be My Family Fostering Agency will work with the placing authority right from the outset to ensure that there is an effective contribution by the foster carers and the Agency towards assessment and care planning process for the children and young people placed with us.

In order to achieve a wide range of foster placement choices and options, Be My Family Fostering Agency has a robust and wide ranging recruitment strategy to attract adults and families across the board to apply for fostering.

The Agency's target is to provide the following **Types of Foster Placements:**

### **Emergency Placements**

BMFFA provides foster placements for children and young people who require one in emergency, particularly during out of working hours. BMFFA will work with the placing authority on the next working day to ensure that effective plans are in place for the children and young people placed with us.

### **Short-term Placements**

BMFFA provides foster placements for short-term care that could be for a few days, weeks or months, whilst assessment is undertaken and care plans are made for the children's and young people's future.

### **Long-term Placements**

BMFFA provides appropriate foster placements for children and young people, where adoption or special guardianship is not an option and they require long-term care through to adulthood.

### **Permanent Placements**

BMFFA is committed to principles and process of permanency planning for children looked after and the need to achieve legal permanency within the child's timescales. Where appropriate, in accordance with permanency plans and in the best interests of children, BMFFA will encourage and support its foster carers to provide legal permanency to the children in their care. Equally, whenever required, BMFFA and its foster carers will work in partnership with relevant professionals to support the children to move to permanent foster placements.

### **Sibling Placements**

BMFFA can provide foster carers who are able to take large sibling groups. These foster carers are experienced in dealing with such foster placements and the complex dynamics they create. Their experience covers both short and long-term foster placements.

In addition, where siblings are placed separately, BMFFA will encourage and facilitate frequent contact in order for them to develop and maintain positive relationships with each other.

### **Children with Additional and Complex Needs**

BMFFA aims to provide appropriate foster placements for children and young people with additional needs arising out of specific physical / learning disabilities and/or emotional / behavioral difficulties.

BMFFA recognises that foster carers providing homes for children and young people with complex needs require additional support and training. The Agency aims to work actively with specialist services and access optimum support and provision to ensure that children's and young people's needs are effectively met including stability of foster placements. Where necessary and in agreement with the placing authority, BMFFA will commission specialist assessment and therapeutic intervention from a pool of qualified and experienced professionals for children and young people. In addition, where required, BMFFA will commission provision of ongoing therapeutic support and training for the foster carers from experienced professionals.

### **Respite Placements**

BMFFA provides foster carers who will look after children and young people for periods of respite from their main place of care, such as children and young people in residential placements or other foster placements. Because our foster carers are encouraged to get to know each other and the children in foster placements, respite can often be facilitated with the minimum disruption to the children involved.

### **Parent and Child Placements**

BMFFA seeks to provide a supportive family environment, in which a young mother/father can develop the necessary parenting skills. This is a flexible scheme designed to offer a range of options to both local authority and young parents. Detailed monitoring and assessment over a fixed time scale can be undertaken, as well as training in areas of identified needs. This may include advice, support and counseling on education, career possibilities, child care issues, issues of personal development etc.

### **Supported Lodgings Placements**

In accordance with the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and proposed Care Matters, BMFFA aims to recruit a number of foster carers to provide supported lodgings arrangements to young people for whom a family-based care remains an appropriate option. Where adequate, the scheme would also allow young people to remain with their current foster parents after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, where they continue to need support to complete their education and prepare towards independent living.

Be My Family Fostering Agency and its foster carers are committed to work in partnership with the placing authority and relevant professionals for implementation of the agreed plans for the children and young people.

## 7. Recruitment, Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers

Be My Family Fostering Agency has a strategy in place to ensure it reaches a diverse population of adults and families, provides them with the information about fostering and helps them express their interest accordingly.

The Agency Information Pack is provided to all prospective foster carers through use of various means of communication.

Once a completed application form is received, the suitable applicants are visited for initial screening and completion of essential documents for statutory checks; and then allocated for a full and competency-based assessment as per the requirements under coramBAAF Form F.

The prospective foster carers are invited to attend pre-approval training session “The Skills to Foster” according to TSDS for Foster Care.

A completed assessment report along with the satisfactory statutory checks are then presented to the Agency Independent Fostering Panel for further recommendations with the final decision to be made by the Agency Decision-maker, followed by writing to the foster carers specifying the terms of approval and entering into Foster Care Agreement as outlined in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

The Fostering Panel considers approval of new foster carers, review of existing foster carers and recommendations that foster carers’ approval should be terminated where there have been concerns about the standards of care or substantiated allegations.

The Panel will also be presented with all reviews following an allegation against foster carers irrespective of the outcomes.

Foster carers are expected to attend the Panel meetings.

The Fostering Panel recommends the terms of approval of the foster carers; for approval by the Agency Decision-maker:

- Type of fostering
- Age of child(ren)
- Gender of child(ren)
- Number of children to a maximum of 3

The 1989 Children Act sets the ‘usual fostering limit’ to three children, unless the children are siblings to each other. In certain circumstances, the fostering service may consider placing children outside the usual fostering limit on exemption and with the foster carer’s agreement. Whenever this applies, the exemption will be formally recorded and consideration will be given to what additional support the foster carer may require.

Variations of approvals are risk assessed to ensure the needs of all the children in the household are met. The expectation is that these cases will return to the Panel for a change of approval following the 28 days notice to foster carers.

The Fostering Panel business is recorded and confirmed in writing to the carer.

## 8. Training of Foster Carers

All foster carers of Be My Family Fostering Agency have access to regular training sessions and support groups arranged by the Agency.

There is an expectation that all foster carers will attend the Core Training sessions and support groups on a regular basis.

The fostering service has a comprehensive pre-approval and post-approval training programme which is reviewed annually and updated.

All foster carers receive details of the training programme and are encouraged to attend courses to meet their development needs as foster carers.

The fostering service is implementing the TSDS for Foster Care. Foster carers need to have completed this in their first year of fostering.

It is also essential for foster carers to complete a First Aid course in the first year of fostering and to update every three years.

All foster carers have a Continuous Professional Development Plan which is reviewed annually at their review.

In addition, as part of the continuous professional development, all foster carers, after successful completion of the TSDS for Foster Care programme, will be encouraged and supported to attend in-house specialist training sessions as well as external training courses such as NVQ and other qualifications in social care sector.

### 9. Support and Supervision of Foster Carers

Be My Family Fostering Agency recognises that the key to excellent care and successful outcomes for children and young people lies in the quality and level of support provided to the foster carers.

Once approved, each foster carer is allocated to a Supervising Social Worker for on-going support and supervision. The foster carers are visited by their Supervising Social Workers on a regular basis, whether they have foster placements or not. That includes at least one unannounced visit every 12 months. Supervising Social Workers will draw up a Continuous Professional Development Plan with applicants as part of the assessment and support foster carers in the completion of their portfolio in order to meet the TSDS for Foster Care standards. This CPDP will be reviewed annually at the foster carer's annual review.

The Supervising Social Worker is available for help and advice at other times and where not available, all foster carers have access to 24/7 support provided by the Agency. It is particularly designed to ensure that the foster carers have access to advice, guidance, information and support from a Duty Social Worker during out of working hours, i.e. evenings and weekends, including Bank Holidays.

The Agency runs foster care support groups and all foster carers are encouraged to attend.

The foster carers are required to keep a daily log of activities and significant events in relation to the children and young people placed with them.

All foster carers with foster placements receive fostering allowance, the details of which are available on request. The fostering service is responsible for ensuring that foster carers receive prompt payment. Payments are reviewed regularly and the comprehensive payments document sent to all foster carers.

Respite arrangements may provide an important source of support to foster placements. Consideration is always given to the needs of the child and the foster carers.

In the event that a foster carer is subject of a child protection allegation against them, they are advised of their right to access independent counselling.

## 10. Reviewing of Foster Carers

All foster carers are subject to an Annual Review as per the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 Regulation 28, and Disclosure and Barring Service and medical checks must be completed as part of that review every 3 years and health and safety checks are reviewed annually.

The process of Review examines foster carers' abilities to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care; their strengths and areas for learning; their training and development needs; and makes appropriate recommendations in relation to their on-going approval status as foster carers.

As part of the Review process, in addition to the reports from the Supervising Social Worker and foster carers, Be My Family Fostering Agency invites views from the children and young people looked after by the foster carers, their social workers and foster carers' own children to ensure the analysis takes into account a holistic view of foster carers' skills and abilities to care for children and young people, and makes appropriate recommendations.

The first annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration. The recommendations made in the Review report are presented to the Agency Fostering Panel with the final decision to be made by the Agency Decision-maker, followed by writing to the foster carers specifying the terms of approval.

A foster carer's review following a change of circumstances will be referred to the Fostering Panel, as will also any request to change their approval status.

In the event of a child protection investigation as a result of an allegation of abuse against a foster carer, the foster care review will take place immediately after the conclusion of the investigation and be presented to the Fostering Panel.

## 11. User Involvement

The views of children and young people receiving a service are sought on a regular basis, through various means of communication - outcome of complaints, lessons from disruptions, the fostering service annual review and children's views expressed in statutory and foster carer reviews.

Written feedback is requested from the child's social worker as part of the foster carer's review and at the end of each placement.

The fostering service aims to seek views from a range of service users, including representatives from other agencies, carers and from young people.

## 12. Records Management

The fostering service has a responsibility to maintain accurate records on all foster carers and to ensure that information is shared with the foster carer wherever possible.

There is a statutory requirement to retain files for 10 years following closure. Foster carers have a right to access to their record.

## 13. Matching and Placement

The fostering service is committed to providing foster carers who can meet the identified needs of the child. If there are gaps in the foster carer's ability to meet those needs these must be recorded with reference to how those needs can be met.

Matching is achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all the relevant professionals, the foster carer, the foster carer's family and any children and young people in the household.

The "relevant professionals" can include:

- Commissioning Team / the child's/young person's social worker;
- Supervising Social Worker for the foster carer;
- The foster carer;
- The Fostering Manager etc.

The extent to which any or all of the above will be involved is determined by the specific circumstances of the case, in particular, the urgency of the need for the foster placement.

The Agency consults as widely as possible, and if the matching is successful, follows the Matching and Placement Procedure, in line with the statutory requirements.

#### 14. Complaints

Be My Family Fostering Agency is committed to ensure that the children looked after and the foster carers receive excellent service from the Agency; and it continues to improve its standards through learning from the feed-back provided by the service users.

Be My Family Fostering Agency has a comprehensive procedure for considering complaints received from children looked after, foster carers and any other concerned parties. The Policies and Procedures Manual, the Foster Carer's Handbook and the Children's & the Young Person's Guides outline the process followed in the event of concern, complaint and allegation, and the procedure followed by the Agency to effectively respond to them.

In general, at first instance, all efforts will be made to resolve concerns and complaints through an informal discussion with the involved sides.

In case a resolution is not achieved, the designated professional of the Agency will undertake an investigation and present the assessment to the senior management for a decision.

On the occasion of a concern/complaint/allegation of child protection nature, the Agency will follow the Safeguarding Policy and the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation, and work in partnership with the relevant local authority under the Child Protection Procedures.