

# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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*Providing quality choices for fostering solutions*



**July 2024**

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Choice Fostering

*Providing quality choices for fostering solutions*

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# INTRODUCTION

**The Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate statute law and regulations, including:**

- ★ The Care Standards Act 2000
- ★ The Children's Act 1989/2004
- ★ The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- ★ The Fostering Services Regulations England (2011)
- ★ The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011)
- ★ Care Planning, placement and case reviews (England) Regulations 2010

It aims to provide children, young people, parents, Carers, staff and other professionals with information about the agency and the services and facilities we provide, including:

- ★ A statement of the aims and objectives of Choice Fostering
- ★ Information about the services and facilities provided by Choice Fostering

A copy of the statement is sent upon each update to:

- ★ OFSTED

And made available upon request to:

- ★ Purchasers of the service
- ★ Any person working for or with the fostering service
- ★ Any child (subject to age and understanding) placed with the fostering service
- ★ Any parent or guardian of any child placed with the fostering service

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed at least annually by the Management Team.

Children and young people are also provided with age appropriate welcome guides which are in more suitable formats for them.

# OUR VISION

At Choice Fostering our aim is to become large enough to provide security and influence, but small enough to maintain the personal touch and support often missing from larger providers.

**“To make a real and measurable difference to the lives of looked after children and young people”**

## Our Values

We have a set of values which describe the way in which we want to approach everything we do. They also reflect our promise to everyone who is part of the Choice Fostering Team and are promoted daily through the actions and behaviours of the Management team.

### **Nurture**

Nurture and protect our children and young people, carers and colleagues. Make Choice Fostering a safe, welcoming and unforgettable experience.

### **Respect**

Have respect for each other, our young people in care and our suppliers. Deliver our support services flexibly, speedily and without fuss. Consult and involve Foster Carers and looked after children about how our service is run. Take pride in our reputation and remain committed to our values.

### **Grow Responsibly**

To manage our growth carefully; ensuring we retain a “family feel”, maintain strong standards, manageable caseloads and deliver on our promise.

### **Take Pride**

Enjoy our work. Embrace our teams. Let our passion for making a difference shine through. Make everyone who comes into contact with Choice Fostering feel positive about our interaction.

### **Evolve**

Adapt to change, learn from colleagues, inspire, develop, grow together and be the best that we can be.

### **Have Fun**

Recognise that fostering is serious and challenging, but ensure we have fun on the journey and celebrate our successes.

# OUR OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Provide a responsive, supportive, professional 24-hour service for Foster Carers, looked after children and purchasers.
- ✓ To deliver foster care placements that provide looked after children with a stable and consistent experience of a safe, warm and caring family life, to maximise and enhance their potential.
- ✓ Promote a child centred approach throughout our practice, having the child's welfare as paramount in all our decisions.
- ✓ Ensure careful matching of a child's needs and wishes with the skills and qualities of a foster Carer.
- ✓ Recruit and retain Foster Carers from diverse backgrounds ensuring a choice of appropriate placement options for children and young people.
- ✓ Ensure the cultural and diversity needs of each child and young person are met.
- ✓ Promote the educational achievement of young people enabling them to benefit from a range of educational activities.
- ✓ Enable young people to develop social interests, hobbies and take part in a range of activities.
- ✓ Promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure that every child's emotional and physical health needs are met.
- ✓ Promote contact with the birth family & significant others during a placement.
- ✓ To ensure that all Foster Carers have access to timely support, training and guidance from suitably qualified social workers.
- ✓ A commitment to on-going learning and professional development of the agency, Foster Carers and staff.
- ✓ A commitment to developing our practice through user consultation and participation.
- ✓ To deliver best value at all times.

# STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

Choice Fostering is a private limited company registered and inspected as a fostering provider under the Care Standards Act 2000 / Fostering Service Regulations 2011, and therefore constituted to provide foster care placements for looked after children and young people on behalf of Local Authorities.

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Management Team has responsibility for the strategic direction and day-to-day management of the organisation. Choice Fostering understands that management decisions should be made across different skill sets, qualification and experience. Understanding this, we work together with qualified social work consultants who will be growing with and supporting the development and governance of the agency.

Choice Fostering recently lost our Responsible Individual to Cancer. Choice Fostering is currently in the process with Ofsted in registering a new suitable Responsible Individual who has taken up the post under a temporary Acting position.

The Management Team which are actively involved in the day-to-day business currently includes:

- Acting - Responsible Individual
- Registered Manager
- Supervising Social Worker/Deputy Manager
- Agency Decision Maker

The Management Team meet regularly and are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, as well as determining and reviewing the following:

- Strategic Vision
- Culture, values and principles
- Quality Assurance
- Annual Business Plan
- Financial Management & Performance
- Policies & Procedures
- Legal Compliance
- Culture, Values, Vision & Mission
- Training Development programme
- Performance Targets

The Support Team consists of:

- Placements Manager
- Family Support Workers

## OUR TEAM

Choice Fostering promotes cohesion and close communication throughout the company. As a small team, we meet regularly to share opportunities to develop practice and learning as well as reflecting across the organisation.

The board consists of our Fostering Director and a Non-executive Director. The Director / Responsible individual is a Social Worker and has ultimate responsibility for the practice and business functions of the agency.

The Registered Manager has over 15 years' experience in the role and is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the agency, the development of the services to children and young people, business planning, continuity and development.

Supervising Social Workers are qualified, SWE registered and bring a variety of pre-employment experience to their roles, with some workers having further post qualifying qualifications. Senior Social Workers are required to have a minimum of 3 years relevant post qualification experience, and Deputy Managers are required to have a minimum of 5 years post qualification experience. One of our Supervising Social Workers is qualified to Practice Educator level, thereby supporting the development of the children's workforce through collaborative working with two London Universities.

Support Workers are on hand to provide additional and meaningful support to Foster Carers from day care to 1-2-1 sessions with young people as and when required.

Management is also responsible for ensuring referrals for placements are responded to efficiently, putting forward suitable matches to the Local Authority and ensuring the smooth transition of children into a Choice Fostering placement.

All of our staff have received training in Child Protection, Equality & Diversity, Risk Assessment and the Fostering Regulations.

# STANDARDS OF CARE

At Choice Fostering, we believe that every child matters and that the needs, welfare and best interests of children and young people are paramount.

Choice Fostering will define the parameters and expectations of our Standards of Care throughout all our documents, but in particular, our; Policy & Procedures Manual, Foster Carers Handbook, Foster Carers Fostering Agreement and Employee Handbook.

At Choice Fostering we believe that:

- ★ Each individual has an inherent right to develop their potential, regardless of previous life experience.
- ★ Children and young people have a right to be looked after by adults who offer respect, concern and affection.
- ★ Adults need to respect the significance of the child's birth family, their race, culture and religion.
- ★ Children and young people have the right to achieve the best possible outcomes in line with Every Child Matters.
- ★ Young people should be suitably prepared for leaving care: leaving their placement with savings, educational attainment to support their chosen career and suitable independence skills.
- ★ The agency aims to be managed in an ethical, effective and efficient manner.
- ★ All staff, Foster Carers and other adults who come into contact with children through Choice Fostering are subject to appropriate checks and vetting procedures.

In addition, Choice Fostering will:

- ✓ Comply with all the relevant legislation and strive to exceed the National Minimum Standards at all times.
- ✓ Ensure the rights of children are promoted in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child.
- ✓ Child protection procedures are followed robustly at all times to ensure children and young people are safeguarded.
- ✓ Work in partnership with the Local Authority to identify the individual needs of the child and then deliver that care.
- ✓ Foster Carers do not use corporal punishment, are skilled in behavioural management and do not do anything that demeans, degrades or humiliates the young person in their care.
- ✓ Equality & diversity is always promoted, through recruitment, assessment, matching and placement support.

# SERVICE PROVISION

Choice Fostering caters for children and young people, from unborn children (and their mothers) to the age of 18 years, of either gender and a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. We work in partnership with Local Authorities to ensure the provision of a wide range of safe, secure and appropriate foster care options for children and young people with Foster Carers.

**Mainstream Fostering Emergency Placements** are provided at short notice and supported by a 24-hour emergency response service.

**Bridging Placements** are a short term, flexible placement, focusing on ensuring the most sensitive transition for the child into and from the placement.

**Short Term Placements** provide care for a few days, weeks or months while plans are being made for the child's long-term future.

**Long Term Placements** provide permanent care for a child up to and into adult independence where adoption is not an option. Permanency is promoted and encouraged to offer a stable home for life.

**Sibling Placements** are placements where siblings are either placed together or separately, where we would facilitate contact between siblings.

**Single Placements** have highly experienced Carers looking after children and young people who have very complex needs and / or challenging behaviour.

**Respite Breaks** are where Foster Carers provide a break for parents and additional support where their own support networks are lacking. This can be an overnight stay or a couple of weeks.

**Unaccompanied Children placements** are for unaccompanied asylum seekers. Support packages include immigration; supporting religious, languages and cultural needs; integration with community and faith groups.

**Staying Put placements** enable young people who have settled into a placement to be able to stay in place upon achieving their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and beyond, if this is their wish and it is in their best interest to do so.

All our placements are monitored to secure positive outcome against our every Child Matters' Agenda:

- ✓ Be Healthy
- ✓ Be Safe
- ✓ Enjoy and Achieve
- ✓ Make a Positive Contribution
- ✓ Achieve Economic Wellbeing

# THE MATCHING PROCESS

“We recognise and respect that every child and young person is an individual.”

At Choice Fostering we ensure that all placements are carefully ‘matched’ to ensure that the needs of children and young people are best met by appropriate Foster Carers based on a combination of their level of skills and experience.

Referrals are made through close liaison with Local Authority colleagues and Foster Carers to ensure that the child’s needs are fully met through the best possible match.

All matches take into consideration a Location Risk Assessment to safeguard each young person against potential risks of Radicalisation, Gang Involvement and Child Sexual Exploitation.

At Choice Fostering, we take the decision to place a child very seriously and all decisions to place are overseen by Choice Fostering’s Registered Manager to ensure we have made the best possible match for the child and Foster Carer.

Children and young people placed with Choice Fostering are never expected to share a bedroom with another fostered child or child of the Foster Carer, other than where they are siblings and this has been agreed with the Local Authority.

# SUPPORTING CARERS TO CARE FOR CHILDREN

Choice Fostering's Supervising Social Workers are trained to recognise that despite not having case management responsibility for the child, it is their responsibility to ensure that the needs of the child are paramount.

Monthly supervision meetings take place between the Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carers, as well as additional support visits where necessary. Supervision meetings focus on positive developments for the Carers and children, as well as areas of concern. The Supervising Social Worker also has responsibility for assisting the Carer in their career development and identifying training and development needs and methods for developing the Carer's skills and knowledge. Foster Carers are supported by their supervising Social Worker in undertaking their training support and development standards Induction Portfolio.

Supervising Social Workers ensure that they regularly see and speak with children and young people alone when visiting the placement.

**Support group Meetings:** Regular Foster Carer Support Group Meetings are held to enable Foster Carers to meet and socialise together, share good practice ideas, develop peer support and receive information from the agency. These meetings are facilitated by Choice Fostering staff and Management.

**Emergency Support:** Choice Fostering provides a 24/7, 365 days a year on-call service to Foster Carers. This service also provides a family placement service for Local Authorities for the placement of children in an emergency.

**Annual Review:** All Foster Carers undergo an annual review to ensure that they continue to be suitable to hold registration and approval as a Foster Carer. The Review reports ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled and that Foster Carers have the opportunity to evaluate their practice and development and to set new goals and action plans.

**Policies & Procedures:** Foster Carers have access to a comprehensive Fostering Handbook, which is provided upon approval. The handbook contains information, policies and procedures on all aspects of the fostering task and is updated regularly to ensure it remains a relevant reference document.

**Record Keeping:** Foster Carers are expected to maintain records of events and information pertaining to the child or young person in placement. Foster Carers also contribute to a monthly report for the Local Authority detailing the progress made by the child or young person in achieving 5 key Every Child Matters outcomes.

**Fostering Network Support:** The agency is currently using 'Fostering Network', which is a confidential helpline for Foster Carers and prospective Foster Carers which provides impartial advice information and signposting on the broad range of issues and concerns with regards to foster care.

**Finance:** All registered Choice Fostering Foster Carers receive an allowance paid every week

during placement. The level of this allowance is dependent on the type of placement and experience of the Foster Carer. All Foster Carers are self-employed and as such must pay their own tax and National Insurance which is a nominal amount. Financial guidance is offered to Carers, this is found in The Fostering Handbook.

Foster Carers are entitled to 2 weeks paid respite which could be used in a situation where they do not have children or require support. The agency also contributes £350 pounds per year for holidays abroad.

**Data Protection and GDPR:** Choice Fostering take Data Protection seriously and are registered as Data Controllers with the Information Commissioner's Office and ensures that our data and information sharing systems are secure and that our data management and storage systems are compliant with our registration. With the commencement of the GDPR, we have ensured that our systems and practices are compliant.

**Having Fun:** at Choice Fostering we recognise that taking care of other people's children is a serious business and can be challenging and at times stressful. We believe that it is important to come together informally to support our Carers and de-stress.

Choice Fostering encourages Foster Carers to get together and socialise. We also organise regular social events where Carers can have fun and share experiences with like-minded people.

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Our Supervising Social Workers speak to all children and young people in a Choice Fostering placement at least quarterly. In practice, our children are seen far more frequently than this by Supervising Social Workers. This is of course in addition to the placing Social Worker's duty to visit children regularly.

Choice Fostering believes that if appropriate packages of support are available to Foster Carers, then children and young people are better supported to live in a family environment. Our Services are designed to be flexible and responsive.

The range of services which are available for children & young people include:

- ★ Assistance to pursue a hobby or interest including holiday activities
- ★ Individual or group work, including structured activities for children out of school
- ★ Access to national organisations for looked after children and young people
- ★ Practical assistance with transport or access to external services /facilities
- ★ Supervised contact with families
- ★ Life story or permanency preparation
- ★ Semi Independence Training
- ★ Working with offending behaviour
- ★ Immigration application support
- ★ Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness
- ★ Radicalization Awareness
- ★ Gender Awareness
- ★ Equal Opportunity Awareness
- ★ Educational support
- ★ We now have a training service "Training Hub" which is an online training tool that offers courses that are designed for young people. Whenever possible, young people are encouraged to engage with this facility at a pace and level that suits them.

## Participation Groups:

The voice of the young person and their participation in the agency "Steering Group" supports the development of Choice Fostering in an important way. We have facilitated a bi-annual meeting of the children who are in our care. This gives them a chance to talk to us directly about their feelings towards the agency and what we can do to improve our services.

# RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL

Choice Fostering is committed to the recruitment of Foster Carers who can meet the needs of children and young people through the provision of high-quality care. All prospective Foster Carers who make an enquiry will be subject to rigorous assessment and vetting procedures.

This includes:

- ★ Initial Home Visit
- ★ Up to three references
- ★ Previous partner references
- ★ 6-10 interviews with applicants and household members
- ★ Medical report
- ★ Identity Checks, Enhanced DBS
- ★ Health & Safety assessments
- ★ Mandatory training
- ★ Location risk assessments
- ★ Full Form F Assessment

The assessment process will take 4-9 months and every effort will be made to ensure there is no avoidable delay. All information obtained will be held on file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) and Data Protection Act.

## Choice Fostering Panel:

The assessment report is presented to Choice Fostering's Independent Panel. The Panel is made up of up to seven members who have a variety of expertise and knowledge including Medical, Education, Social Care, and Law. The function of the Panel is to provide an independent, quality assurance role to recommend whether or not the potential Carers presented to them are suitable to become Foster Carers. The Panel is also responsible for conducting reviews, and recommendations for de-registration of Foster Carers.

The final decision for approval is made by the Agency's Decision Maker who is social work qualified. If Foster Carers are unhappy with the final decision, they will have a right to appeal. This can be made direct to the agency or direct to the Independent Review Mechanism. The final decision will not be confirmed until the appeal process is completed.

Foster Care Agreements are completed following approval covering a range of contractual information and undertakings including:

- ★ The Carers approval criteria
- ★ To care appropriately for children and young people in placement, as identified in the Foster Placement Agreement.
- ★ To inform Choice Fostering of any relevant significant changes to their household or details.
- ★ Commitment to follow procedures outlined in the agency's handbook.

All Foster Carers have access to the Fostering Handbook which details:

- ★ Standards of care
- ★ Support & Training
- ★ Complaints & Appeals
- ★ Child protection procedures
- ★ Annual Carer review process
- ★ Insurance provision
- ★ Confidentiality procedures
- ★ Behaviour management policy

# TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

In order to offer children and young people a high standard of care our Foster Carers are trained and equipped to meet the demands of the task.

Our training and assessment framework, which incorporates the Training Support & Development Standard (TSD), meets the National Minimum Standards and is underpinned within a framework of equal access to training and learning, anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunity

## Preparation Training

All potential carers are offered direct 1:1 or group training in the skills and understanding needed to operate as a carer. This is delivered either in person, online or a combination of the two. Their engagement and learning in this training contributes to their final assessment.

Subjects covered include:

- ★ Why children come into care
- ★ Promoting a sense of identity
- ★ Working in partnership with birth parents and professionals
- ★ Legislative framework
- ★ Child development
- ★ Attachment and loss
- ★ Safe caring
- ★ Awareness of abuse and child protection issues
- ★ Diversity
- ★ Moving on

Carers will also complete a mandatory First Aid Course and up to four practice workshops which include:

- ★ Caring for an abused child
- ★ Getting to know Choice Fostering
- ★ Hellos & Goodbyes
- ★ Managing Challenging Behaviour
- ★ Contact Issues

## Post Approval Induction:

Following assessment, all Foster Carers receive a thorough induction. This includes ensuring that Carers are clear about policies and procedures including Child Protection, Safe Care and Health and Safety. Induction subjects will include:

- ★ Working with Choice Fostering
- ★ Support and Supervision
- ★ Training and Development
- ★ Referral and matching process
- ★ Finances

Within the first 12 months, Foster Carers will be required to complete the Training Support & Development Standards (TSD). Choice Fostering provides ongoing support via the Supervising Social Workers to assist Foster Carers in meeting these standards and developing their skills and knowledge.

After the induction process approved Foster Carers are invited to further training courses which are done through group and individual online sessions (Training Hub):

- ★ Child Protection/Safeguarding
- ★ Recording / Data Protection
- ★ Diversity & Discrimination
- ★ De-escalation
- ★ Attachment & Child Development
- ★ Safer Caring including Health & Safety
- ★ Medication
- ★ Female Genital Mutilation
- ★ Online Safety
- ★ Allegations
- ★ Drug & Alcohol Awareness
- ★ Sexually Harmful Behaviour
- ★ Autism & Asperger's
- ★ Child Sexual Exploitation
- ★ Radicalisation and Extremism
- ★ Gangs and Knife Crime

# COMPLAINTS AND OUTCOMES

Choice Fostering has a comprehensive complaints procedure which is made available in different formats suitable for children, young people, Carers, parents and professionals that use the service

For a copy of our Complaints Procedure or to make a complaint, please contact us via [info@choicefostering.com](mailto:info@choicefostering.com).

## English

Information from this document can be made available in alternative formats and in different languages. If you require further assistance, please use the contact details below.

## Arabic

يمكن توفير معلومات الوثيقة بتنسيقات بديلة وبلغات مختلفة. إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مزيد من المساعدة ، فيرجى استخدام تفاصيل الاتصال أدناه.

## French

Les informations sur les documents peuvent être mises à disposition dans des formats alternatifs et dans différentes langues. Si vous avez besoin d'aide supplémentaire, veuillez utiliser les coordonnées ci-dessous.

## Amharic

የሰነድ መረጃ በአማራጭ ቅርፀቶች እና በተለያዩ ቋንቋዎች ሊገኝ ይችላል ። ተጨማሪ እገዛ ከፈለጉ እባክዎን ከዚህ በታች ያሉትን የዕውቂያ ዝርዝሮች ይጠቀሙ።

## Portuguese

As informações do documento podem ser disponibilizadas em formatos alternativos e em diferentes idiomas. Se precisar de mais ajuda, por favor, use os detalhes de contato abaixo.

## Somali

Macluumaadka dukumeentiga waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale iyo luqado kala duwan. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawimaad dheeraad ah, fadlan isticmaal faahfaahinta xiriirka hoose.

## Spanish

La información del documento puede estar disponible en formatos alternativos y en diferentes idiomas. Si necesita más ayuda, utilice los datos de contacto a continuación.