



Homefinding and Fostering
Agency

Statement of Purpose 2024



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Our focus

Our Focus is always the child or young person in our care.

Our aim is to provide safe, loving and affirming homes for children and young people.

Our objective is to provide high quality family life for children and young people living in our fostering families.

We want our families to feel supported, and our children to feel safe.

We want them to be listened to and for them to know they are heard.

The Homefinding and Fostering Agency started operating in 1996

Driven by the need to create a community of foster carers, who feel respected, supported and empowered to care for children whilst being supported by those who really understand the rewards, the achievement and the challenges of fostering, Homefinding is still run by many of the original team.

We are a private limited company registered in England and Wales under the companies act 1985 with company number 377302

We are registered as an independent fostering provider under provision of the care standards act 2000 and regulated by Ofsted under registration number SC036653

The managing director, Terry Casey is an experienced foster carer who fostered over 60 children and young people.

For over two decades we have worked in close partnership with local authorities establishing close professional relationships built on trust.



Introduction



Homefinding and Fostering agency is an independent fostering agency rated “good” by Ofsted in October 2019

Located in Maidstone, Kent, close to main train lines into London, We have been an established part of the community for over 25 years.

We work with honesty and integrity, building relationships with the community around us and every child is part of the fabric of this agency.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated whenever there is a change, and at least annually. It has been produced in accordance with the requirements set out by:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004
- The Fostering Service Regulations
- The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards
- The Care Planning and Fostering Regulations

A copy of this Statement of Purpose is available on our website and copies will be made available, upon request, to any person working with the Homefinding and Fostering Agency, any foster carer, any child or young person living with a Homefinding family, and any person with parental responsibility for a child living with one of our foster carers

Our Aims and Objectives

Since 1996 we have retained our independence as a local Kent fostering agency and have remained committed to supporting children and the families that care for them. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff to share this commitment. We aim to deliver an outstanding service, creatively and consistently strengthening families and helping every child reach their potential.

Through regular, professional support provided to our foster carers, we effectively manage trauma, build confidence and ensure that young people leave our care with the life skills they need to become secure, happy and self-supporting members of society.

We want our placements to work. This means we encourage our carers to say 'no' when they feel it is not right for them or their family. Matching is an important part of what we do. We carefully match the individual needs of children and young people with our foster carers and their family.

We want our foster carers equipped with the skills to meet the fostering task and they are respected as a co professional. We want our foster carers to have a voice within the agency.

We value and celebrate differences and diversity.

Our mission is to provide safe, loving and affirming homes for children and young people, who cannot live with their birth-families and have been entrusted into our care by local authorities.



Our Aims and Objectives

Be Healthy
Stay safe
Enjoy and Achieve
Make a positive Contribution
Achieve economic Wellbeing

“I would like to this opportunity to once again express how hard K has worked with R and all she has done, over and above what should be expected of a foster carer. Not only in sharing R’s story with him but also in supporting him through his transition “

Our objectives are to ensure our foster homes are safe, secure, and nurturing environments where good physical health and emotional wellbeing are actively encouraged.

Safeguarding underpins all that we do, and we know it is everyone’s responsibility to keep everyone safe.

We ensure that our foster carers are supported 24 hours a day

We understand, acknowledge, promote and respect individual cultural and religious difference and demonstrate and encourage a positive and healthy attitude to others.

We support the academic and learning needs of children and young people with high aspirations as a goal for all

We celebrate every achievement.

We include the views of children in the decisions made about their lives and, where appropriate, use this knowledge to improve our services.

We encourage multi agency working; working collaboratively and openly to achieve outcomes for children and young people that maximize their potential.

We aim to get to know our carers, so we can provide more creative and tailored support.



Our way of doing things

We are deeply proud of the outcomes achieved by our foster carers and members of staff. Everyone working for and with us shares a common goal; to improve the life chances of those children we look after.



At Homefinding we aim to make sure every child and every family get the support they need. This is in the form of training, qualifications, transport and contact support as well as social events and monthly supervisory visits.

Any gaps identified between the needs of the child and the carer's ability to meet them are part of an action plan from the outset.

We consistently focus on the needs of our foster carers and their families so that in turn, they can meet the needs of the children and young people they care for.

Our foster carers involvement is an important part of this process, enabling us to work collaboratively together.

We want to create a legacy that we can all be proud of.

Our way of doing things

Managing Bullying

We know that everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviours and reduces the likelihood of bullying.

We have systems in place to prevent bullying, which includes positive relationships between staff, carers children and the schools they attend.

We make decisions around careful matching of children and have clear procedures and quality assurance systems in place to monitor bullying.

Foster carers are alert to the risk of bullying and each foster home should have its own positive strategies for countering bullying or discrimination and this should be reflected in their safe caring policy.

Carers are encouraged to attend training on managing bullying.

They provide clarity to children on acceptable behaviours, having discussions about bullying and why it matters and by being good role models as foster carers.



Our People

The Management Team

The culture of challenge and accountability allows our aims and objectives to become a reality. Regular and well documented management meetings enable informed and timely decision making.

This includes regular monitoring of all complaints and the decisions made which provide us with learning opportunities. We believe in a culture of 'no failure only feedback' and encourage all carers and staff to learn and grow.

The management team consists of the managing director, agency practice advisor, responsible individual, Agency safeguarding Lead, and registered manager. The management has a responsibility for the broad strategy of the agency and oversees management effectiveness in achieving the agency's aims and objectives. The registered manager has a responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of services to children and carers.

The managing director was himself a foster carer so approaches the fostering task with a clear understanding of the challenges carers face.

The registered manager has over 19 years as a qualified social worker within the fostering sector and has been a social worker for 25 years. She cares passionately about getting the best for the children in our care.

The agency practice advisor is also the Agency Decision Maker and acts in a supervisory role to the registered manager as well as being part of the management structure providing their expertise to this process..

The responsible individual has a degree in psychology and grew up in a fostering household. She has worked in the fostering sector for 25 years.

The Safeguarding Lead has over 13 years' experience in social work and 5 years as social work team manager. She has responsibility for monitoring, advising, and training the team and foster carers on child protection and safeguarding.



Our People

“Thank you everyone for all your hard work and support last week. I felt I was part of a really great team when you all came together to help M find a new home. We appreciate all your support.”

“It is a joy to work with this agency and I value the fact that everyone works hard to achieve high standards of care and professionalism”

Panel member 2023

Staff

As well as the management team, Our permanent staff consist of 5 social workers, a reviewing officer, two youth engagement officers, an administration manager, social work assistant and support staff co-ordinator. All have a range of experience within the fostering sector and are fully committed to sharing the same goals.

Support Staff

There are six members of the support team who also receive appropriate and regular training and supervision. All hold current relevant qualifications appropriate to the role and are subject to the same checks and high expectation of working as all members of the staff team.

We are committed to providing flexible and responsive training opportunities for all staff. These needs are identified from supervision and appraisal process as well as in response to agency needs.

Panel Members

We have a large and diverse central list. Including representatives from education, health social work and the police as well as experienced foster carers. Our panel chair has over 40 years experience working with children and families. Carers find our panel to be warm, and welcoming.



“ I could not ask for a better service.”

Foster Carer, Medway
2023

Our Services

Contact and Support Service

Our support services are something we are proud of.

We offer a specialist contact service, managed by a dedicated support services co-ordinator. Our team of contact supervisors are experienced and trained in supporting children and their families in a reflective and non-judgemental way adopting the principles of safe and meaningful contact. Our staff team and support staff have had further training in promoting contact services and supporting children and families in a more therapeutic way adopting those principles. Contact is facilitated in a safe setting within our offices, and we aim to allocate one member of support staff to each family, minimising the disruption for young people, enabling them to build confident relationships of trust and understanding. Our support staff have regular group supervision and training and annual appraisals.

“Everyone makes me feel welcome. I wouldn’t change anything. I wish that I could carry on having contact here. It is really nice. I hope that we get contact here again and the next place I go to is just as good.”

Parent
2023

We have received excellent support with contact and have 100% confidence in the supervisors” Foster Carers, Canterbury 2023



Foster carers know the importance of promoting contact with birth families, and that well facilitated contact means positive wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in both the short and long term.

Contact supervisors also act as a team of drivers and can support school runs and other transport needs, particularly where children and young people may be placed with foster families some distance from their schools. This support is extended to allocating a member of support staff to specialist parent and child fostering families, who are encouraged to use the support service.

This can be task focussed pieces of work ,or simply an opportunity to relieve some of the pressures.

Our services



Supporting the whole family

Fostering impacts everyone in the home, and the children of foster carers play an essential role in welcoming new children into the family.

Many birth children report that they enjoy being part of a fostering family, but it brings its challenges to birth children and we know the expectations are high.

We have formal and informal opportunities for birth children to get together and share how they feel, giving them a safe space to relax with people who can understand and relate to each other's experiences.

Mentor Led support

This is an opportunity to have a space to talk about how the challenges of fostering impact foster carers wellbeing and what relationships have been affected. This reflective approach acts as a reminder that foster carers need to look after themselves too.

Support for foster Carers

The support we offer is something we are proud of. This is because we understand what it feels like to look after someone. We want the experience of every young person to be a positive one.

Fostering is not something anyone does alone. We want to build a network of people.

Every Supervising social worker works hard to build a positive relationship. By getting to know the family as well as the children, means they have solid understanding of what is happening for that child, and can then provide relevant advice and the best course of action.

Support for the children

Our youth participation officer visits young people's homes and builds relationships with the children and young people, giving them opportunities to share their experiences, work on independence skills and be an active part of our agency as well as ensuring they are happy and healthy.

Annually we hold at least six events to encourage our young people and foster families to get together. Almost all of our social events are inspired by what our children request and where relevant, we will try to develop the skills in our young people such as teaching baking skills for the bake sale, getting creative with junk modelling or educating them about online safety whilst hosting a gaming bus.

“Children have really enjoyed the events that have been put on, it has been amazing for our young people to be able to meet other children and to start to form new friendships”
Foster Parent 2023

Through a therapeutic Lens

"Trying to implement trauma-specific clinical practices before implementing trauma-informed organisational culture change is like throwing seeds on dry land".

As an organisation we want to use 2024 to move consistently towards adopting an organisation wide approach to trauma informed care.

We know that the therapeutic approach we adopt and the foster carers receive in training opportunities needs to be fully supported by the organisation to be transferred into daily practice.

Viewing through a therapeutic lens means we deploy consistent strategies and procedures to address and reduce traumatic stress.

Therapeutic Parenting is a nurturing parenting style developed from consistent, empathic, insightful and connected responses to a child's distress and behaviours, allowing the child to begin to self-regulate and develop an understanding of their behaviours and ultimately form secure attachments and minimise the impact of childhood trauma.

It is not a specific treatment or therapy but a set of principles that can be applied in all aspects of care, from the initial matching, throughout the placement and with ongoing and support.

In addition, where young people have specific behavioural needs our Registered Manager who delivers our de-escalation training will undertake bespoke behaviour support plans with our foster carers to assist them in feeling more confident in reacting in a trauma informed way.



Our Foster Carers

“Absolutely Outstanding Foster Carers and their hard work needs to be recognized”

Kent Social Worker

2023

Our foster carers are at the core of what we do. The needs of our foster carers are fully appreciated and are central to the way we work. The support they receive is something they tell us they value.

The core of our service is the provision of foster placements with skilled, experienced and trained carers. We believe that children should have the opportunity to live in a family where their needs are met. We take great care in the placement matching and where there are shortfalls, we ensure that we address them. We want our placements to work.

Because we acknowledge that the rewards associated with fostering are great, so sometimes are the challenges. This is why we offer an extensive support package. As well as 24 hour support line, we have membership to foster talk.

The financial support package for all carers includes a 14-night respite allowance, as well as additional monies at those expensive times of the year such as Christmas, birthdays, at the start of the summer holidays and start of a new placement.

“J has gone above and beyond to make her feel part of the family. She has advocated for her and has ensured that her voice is clear in some of the more complex decisions that are being made for her.”



Our Foster Carers

We are deeply proud of the outcomes achieved by our foster carers and members of staff. Everyone working for and with us shares a common goal; to improve the life chances of those children we look after.



Training

We feel passionately that we need to equip our carers with the support and skills to do their job. Our creative professional development provides carers with skills that are transferrable beyond fostering. All our training is within school hours, and we provide a creche when needed.

All foster carers approved by the agency have a personal development plan which gives them access to a wide variety of mandatory training as well as a variety of optional training courses, many of which are arranged in response to carers and agency needs.

We use a wide range of outside agencies, with varying approaches to suit all styles of learning. We collate the feedback provided on all our training and learn from it.

We also encourage secondary carers and members of the foster carers' support network to access the training we provide. This also includes access to online training opportunities.

We provide additional resources such as complimentary online courses and books designed to reinforce what has been learnt and be part of ongoing development after the training day.

From 2022 we also have corporate membership for our families and staff through the center of excellence in child trauma, giving them all access to therapeutic parenting webinars, workshops and programs delivered by leading experts in therapeutic parenting courses.

Access to these targeted 10-minute strategies as well as therapeutic parenting courses gives families practical solutions to challenges, they face.

A voice you recognise

Carers also have membership to foster talk, and a 24-hour telephone support service, answered by a voice that our foster carers recognize. This service is a valued part of the supported service we offer.

Types Of Fostering

Short Term Fostering

Provision of short-term care is something we offer to local authorities whilst decisions are being made for the child's future. These vary from days to up to two years. Our carers are incredibly robust, and flexible, responding sensitively to children facing transitions and all the challenges that brings.

Long Term Fostering

Children and young people are matched with approved foster carers on a long-term basis allowing them to have the benefit of stability into adulthood. We specialise in permanence, and we believe in the good quality foster care making real tangible outcomes to children's lives and futures. Every year some of our children go on to university, apprentice training programs.

Parent and Child Fostering

Placements are available for one and/or two parents and their child/ren with specialist foster carers. Our skilled carers will support them, teach them new skills and provide detailed meaningful insight into the parenting strengths and shortfalls.

Our parent and child carers receive additional training giving them the necessary skills enabling them to do this very specialist type of work.

Our Families

We specialise in permanence, investing in the relationships we build.

Homefinding and Fostering offers the following types of placements:



Types Of Fostering

Sibling Groups

We believe in keeping brothers and sisters together when it is right for them. Many of our foster carers can care for more than one child, including some who have the experience and capacity for larger sibling groups of four or five. Our social work team is experienced in contributing to together or apart assessments if required.

“ The children are thriving in this placement. They have provided a family to the children and have made this their home.”

Childrens social worker 2023

Respite

Many of our foster carers support one another by caring for children and young people for short periods. We also have foster carers who only offer respite care.

If overnight respite is too disruptive for the children, then we are able to adapt and offer day respite, building an effective and supportive network around the child.

Therapeutic Fostering

We are able to offer specialist therapeutic parenting approach when children require that little bit extra support. A lot of our carers work therapeutically after experience and specialist and ongoing training. These carers have membership to the national association of Therapeutic parents and access therapeutic resource through the trauma revolution training pass.

We are also able to access a play therapist if it is required.



Our Children and Young People

“Thank you for everything you have done for us and showing life to me and taking me on adventures with you. I couldn’t thank you enough”
Foster Child 2023



The children and young people living within our fostering families are as diverse and unique as the families caring for them. They range in age from birth to 18 years, and we also operate staying put arrangements, allowing those young people to remain with their families until they are 21.

Our social work team work closely with the children and get to know them well, meaning we can advocate for their wishes, feelings and needs, encouraging them to have the confidence to be their own advocates with their own voice and enable them to directly influence our service. We also advise them how to access external advocacy services when this is appropriate.

Our participation and youth engagement officer builds relationships with the children and young people, giving them opportunities to share their experience, work on independence skills and be an active part of our agency.

They contribute to the monthly newsletters, and we have an active “ feedback team” . Their responses about our service are fed back to carers and staff.

Our Children and Young people

Guides

We produce three children and young people guides to fostering which are made available upon placement and on our website. Our foster carers are guided to appropriately explain what fostering is to children and young people of all ages. We have also produced a short film based on one of our guides which is available to children with communication difficulties. This is a spoken guide which is also translated in BSL.

Recognition

We recognize children's achievements no matter how big or small. Foster carers and Supervising Social Workers can nominate the children for special recognition, and we regularly send out certificates and vouchers in acknowledgement of the amazing progress they make.

Many of the children and young people remain part of our lives. We often hear about their education and employment successes and watch them start their own families. They remain part of our community.

"they love the newsletters and entering the competitions"

Foster Parent 2024



Our Quality

In line with our values, we always want to do our very best for children and young people we work with and are continually seeking ways to improve our services.

All applicants go through a rigorous recruitment and assessment process

We acknowledge that people from all walks of life make excellent foster carers and we are always looking to recruit a wide range of carers, particularly those who can take teenagers, large sibling groups or children with additional needs. Our panel is made up from representatives from health and education, social work professionals, a foster carer from another independent agency, a police officer with safeguarding background and a care experienced young person. It is a dynamic panel who are not afraid to challenge.

We value diversity and welcome applications from all cultures, ethnicities and sexualities. We also welcome applicants with a disability providing they are suitably 'fit to foster'.

The input from fellow professionals is vital for the successful running of the agency as a whole.

**“ I wanted to take the opportunity to tell you what an absolute pleasure it’s been to work with you. Your professionalism and support has been unwavering and quite honestly, I don’t know how we would have managed without you and G”
Child’s Social worker 2023**

We monitor and evaluate our service regularly with a considered, methodical and pragmatic approach. The child remains at the centre, and the package of care is tailored to each child.

Gill Fewins is legally responsible for compliance with regulations and continually evaluates our service so that we deliver consistent outcomes of the highest standard.

All Annual Reviews and Assessments are routinely quality Assured by the Registered Manager.



Our Quality

Feedback forms are available at the key stages of the fostering journey, before foster carer annual reviews and at any time for a child and young person. We also encourage feedback from all children living within a fostering household, birth parents and other professionals.

Our feedback forms were created by a project which was led by a senior social worker and included collaborative working with some of our young people.

Our birth children feedback form is being developed in consultation with children growing up in a fostering family. All forms are available on our online data base as well as on our website and are age appropriate,

We look for consultation via the focus groups we arrange, giving carers an opportunity to influence decisions being made which directly impact them.

Our Youth engagement Officer individually meets with children who are unable to or are reluctant to complete feedback in a form based way to gain their views.

Whenever a child moves on from a family, we hold a reflection meeting, gaining important information from the successes and challenges which influence future matching. We also write to our foster carers to thank them for the work they have undertaken and to celebrate their achievements.

All feedback received is reviewed monthly, responded to individually and personally, if required, by the most appropriate person, giving us opportunities to see where we can develop as a service.



“We have done a lot of our firsts here. They are outstanding carers. “

Young Person

2023

Contact Us

The Homefinding and Fostering agency complaints procedure aims to deal with complaints received in a prompt manner. The registered manager is responsible for monitoring complaints and their outcomes.

All children and adults have a right to expect a quality and professional service. If they do not feel that they have received, they have a right to complain and that have complaint listened to.

Our complaints procedure is explained on our website. Allegations against staff or foster carers are covered by our safeguarding policy, which is also available on our website.

Anyone who wishes to raise concerns about our agency , or our service, including our foster carer, or you are a child or young person living with one of our foster carers, you can do so in the following ways.

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