



Statement of Purpose

Celebrating Achievements

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September 2017

OUTLOOK FOSTERING

Celebrate what you want to see more off"

Outlook Fostering's Vision

"At Outlook Fostering our vision is for children to be cared for by committed foster families, where happy and fun memories are made. To achieve this we will recruit, assess and support people who are safe and able to understand the importance of a child's history, their uniqueness and their potential. At Outlook Fostering we value our foster carers as part of the professional team and together will make a difference."

Introduction

Outlook Fostering was set in January 2002, since then the agency has developed over time to adapt its services to the ever changing needs within the fostering field. In 2010 Outlook Fostering was purchased by the Care Tech Company. Care Tech owns 4 other Fostering Agencies throughout the UK. Outlook Fostering remains independent in its provision of Fostering Services; retaining the professional and personalised service to the foster carers and children it supports, with the strength of position due to the backing of the Care Tech Company.

In the last 4 years Outlook Fostering has made numerous changes to ensure that the business remains competitive and responsive to the needs of children, foster carers and the Local Authorities it works with. Outlook Fostering's reputation remains secure within the field due to the high standards of care provided by Outlook Foster Carers. Outlook Fostering believe in quality provision of child care and support. To this end, staff invest time and energy delivering innovative solutions, tailor made for foster carers and looked after children who are supported.

Outlook Fostering is well respected within the field and has a reputation as a quality service provider. We work in partnership with numerous Local Authorities across the United Kingdom. Outlook Fostering are mindful of the changing needs of Local Authorities and the children who are fostered. Outlook Fostering is a learning agency, always looking for innovative ways of improving our service and being creative to meet the needs of the children we care for.

Outlook Fostering understands the vast needs of Looked After Children; we are well suited to meeting these with diverse, experienced Foster Carers and Staff with significant experience.

Many of the staff working for Outlook Fostering have themselves been foster carers. This insight provides a significant insight into ensuring that Outlook Fostering staff are providing the right kind of support to our Foster Carers. Outlook Fostering are also keen to hear from our Foster Carers how we can better meet their support needs and are developing Foster Carer Representatives across the service to ensure that their voice is heard.

Outlook Fostering has an experienced and qualified team of professionals as the foundation. This strong foundation ensures the foster carers and children of the service, receive a professional and supportive service.



The Aims of Outlook Fostering – a child focussed service

Outlook Fostering is committed to providing caring, nurturing homes for children unable to live with their birth families. We are committed to supporting children to achieve their potential and develop resilience, by overcoming the loss and trauma which they may have previously experienced.



The Objectives of Outlook Fostering

Outlook Fostering takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously, ensuring rigorous recruitment of staff and foster carers, and involves statutory agencies appropriately when issues of concern come to light with staff or foster carers. At Outlook Fostering we adopt a collaborative approach to care planning with the responsible authority, supporting the development of an up-to-date and child-focussed care plan for each child, ensuring a clear pathway to permanence is achieved as quickly as possible.

We aim to provide:

- A service where children come first in our thinking, planning and delivery and one which listens to and allows children to contribute to its development;
- Foster homes which are carefully matched with the needs of the child and where children feel like they belong to a family;
- Foster carers who are fully prepared, supported, supervised, trained and who actively engage with the service;
- Foster homes which provide stability and security to children and promote a child's positive sense of their own identity - including their culture, religion and ethnicity – respecting the child's origins in every aspect of the care provided;
- Foster homes which promote contact when appropriate for the foster child and where children are supported to make sense of their past;
- Foster homes which actively promote the child's education and learning, including celebrating and developing their talents and hobbies;
- Foster homes which actively promote the child's health, including mental health;
- Foster homes which actively prepare the young person for adulthood, at a pace and style that the young person can absorb and where foster carers help children understand and manage risks for themselves;
- Foster homes which children leave, whenever possible, in a planned way or, when this is not possible, which help foster children to understand why they had to leave unexpectedly;
- Social worker supervision of foster carers that, although supportive and mindful of the challenging role played by foster carers, takes a robust approach to poor practice, challenging foster carers to provide the high quality care that children deserve.

Meet the Outlook Fostering Team

- **Safeguarding & Policy Manager/ADM/Responsible Individual:** Sheila Hall qualified as a social worker in 1984 and has considerable experience in managing fostering and adoption services for local authorities and the largest children's charity.
- **Registered Manager (pending):** Bev Senior has 28 years of disability and fostering experience in the private and public sector. She has been a Registered Manager, and was a Regional Manager across the Midlands and Wales, and Agency Decision Maker with a national IFA before taking up her post at Outlook Fostering.
- **Team Manager:** Marie Barker is a qualified social worker and has worked at Outlook in a Supervising Social Worker capacity, a Senior Social Worker and more recently a Team Manager.
- **Business Development Coordinator:** Sarah James has wealth of fostering experience having undertaken a number of roles within Outlook Fostering; administrator, placements, contract bidding.
- **Administrator:** Has a wealth of fostering knowledge having been an approved foster carer.



Quality Assurance and Outcomes

To monitor the quality of the services outlined above Outlook Fostering uses the following elements:

- *Case records:* All foster carer records are signed off and monitored through regular supervision provided by a Supervising Social Worker. Sample case records are monitored by the Team Manager with action taken to address any shortfalls.
- *The independent fostering panel:* It is the role of the fostering panel to make recommendations about the approval status of foster carers. Outlook Fostering is committed to ensuring that fostering panel takes a balanced but robust approach to its independent scrutiny role, and that the panel provides independent feedback on the quality of all the reports it considers.
- *The Voice of the Child:* the voice of child is carefully listened to as evidenced in the Looked after Child Review, the Foster Carer Review, at regular consultation events and through questionnaires developed by children placed with Outlook Fostering.

In addition to the methods outlined above, outcomes for the service as a whole are measured in the following areas:

- Compliance
- Quality Assurance
- Educational attainment and attendance
- Placement stability
- Number of complaints and allegations
- Number of incidents of children going missing from care
- Number of accidents or other noteworthy incidents involving foster children
- Number of children with an up-to-date care plan and placement plan

Quarterly Regulation 35 Reports are completed to monitor Schedule 6 and 7 Matters.

This Statement of Purpose can be made available in another language or format, please let us know.



Services Provided by Outlook Fostering

In order to meet these aims and objectives Outlook Fostering provides the following services:

- Foster homes across the Kent and Essex area providing care for children of different ages and abilities;
- Foster homes able to keep siblings together when needed;
- Foster homes where the child is the only child when needed (sometimes known as solo placements);
- Foster carers able to contribute towards the ongoing assessment of each foster child, supporting the development and review of the child's care plan as appropriate;
- Foster carers specifically trained to care for children with complex health needs;
- Foster carers specifically and intensively trained to provide Parent and Child Arrangements (the term 'arrangements' is the one preferred by the Department for Education)
- Respite from Residential placements where young people get the chance to experience 'family life' over a weekend or short holiday period.
- Foster carers able to support a young person move on from residential care, also known as Step-Down Foster Placements. These often require additional planning and support packages tailored to the needs of the young person and skills and requirements of the foster family.

Learning and Development at Outlook Fostering



Outlook Fostering is committed to supporting its staff and foster carers to play an active role in their own learning and development. Outlook Fostering provides local venues and expects foster carers to use these opportunities as a platform for learning which requires involvement, energy and commitment to support carers to evolve as practitioners.

Outlook Fostering will;

- Provide Skills to Foster Training to applicants;
- Provide Induction Training for newly approved foster carers, which will also be available to existing foster carers who wish to 'refresh';
- Support will be provided with completing Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care;
- Provide mandatory 6 core training sessions, the details of which are outlined in this programme: Safeguarding & Safer Caring 1 day, Valuing Diversity 1 day, Write Enough, Reporting and Serious Case Reviews 1 day, Promoting Fostered Children & Young People's Health & Healthy Living or LAC & Health 1 day, Education 1 day, Preparing for Independence 1 day, Child Sexual Exploitation 1 day;
- There will then be available courses that maintain your learning and refresh your knowledge on an annual basis, this is a requirement under the legislation. Outlook Fostering will collate learning and development need through the foster carer review process which will shape the training programme;
- In addition we will hold monthly (but not in August) foster carer support groups which will include a reflective practice session;
- First Aid Training is a mandatory requirement for all foster carers, training will be provided by Outlook Fostering;

- We will provide additional advanced courses, which will reflect the needs of the foster carer group and themes emerging in children services;
- Outlook Fostering will provide each foster carer with a personalised training plan, which they are expected to attend, unless there are exceptional circumstances and they must inform the training administrator and their supervising social worker.

Outlook Fostering expects:

- Foster carers to attend all mandatory training sessions in their first eighteen months of approval;
- Foster carers to develop their networks through attendance at foster carer fora;
- Foster carers to actively take responsibility for transfer their learning into practice;
- Foster carers to take responsibility for their learning needs by identifying and discussing them with their supervising social worker;
- Foster carers to have completed their TSD within twelve months of approval.

In addition to formal courses there are many other ways to develop learning;

- Learning from supervision sessions;
- Watching TV documentaries;
- Reading journals and books;
- Using videos and audio tapes;
- Visiting internet sites and using CD's;
- Using open learning packs (e.g. Open University);
- Learning from mentors/coaches;
- Reflecting on your work;
- Joining in formal discussions with other carers;
- Attending and contributing to foster carer support groups;
- Attending reflective practice/parenting forums;

Foundation Courses

- Skills to Foster;
- Induction Day;
- Safeguarding & Safer Caring;
- First Aid;
- Valuing Diversity;

- LAC and Health;
- Park's Parenting Approach;
- Preparing For Independence;
- LAC & Education: Inclusion/Exclusion;
- Child Sexual Exploitation.

Advanced Courses

- Write Enough, Reporting & Serious Case Reviews;
- Promoting Fostered Children & Young People's Health & Healthy Living;
- Attachment;
- Attachment & Teenagers;
- Special Educational Needs;
- Domestic Violence & Neglect;
- Supporting Children with Contact.

Specialist Courses

- Young People & Offending Behaviour;
- Young people & Sexualized Behaviour;

Placing Children and Young People

All placements of children and young people are made and monitored in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. All Foster Carers are appropriately approved, reviewed and have a signed Foster Carer Agreement. Wherever possible, a pre-placement planning meeting is undertaken, including introductions between the Foster Carer and the child/young person. Risk Assessments are started prior to placement and reviewed along with the Safe Care Agreement. Care Plans and other essential information is requested prior to placement and chased up where necessary post placement.

Matching

All placements are carefully matched to ensure that the needs of children and young people can be best met by the foster carers with relevant skills and experience. Matching documentation is completed by the Placement Coordinator to evidence matching. Once a

referral is received liaison takes place between Outlook Fostering, local authority professionals and our foster carers.

Decisions to place are overseen by the Team Manager to ensure that we make the best possible match for the child and foster carer. Children and young people will never be expected to share a bedroom with another fostered child or child of the foster carers, other than if they are siblings and it is appropriate to do so.

Recruitment, Assessment & Approval

Outlook Fostering monitors information relating to referrals of children to ensure we target foster carer recruitment in the location, with the right skills and able to offer the right resource to meet local demand. The recruitment strategy will take account of the age, ethnicity, disability, location and other patterns of needs (e.g. asylum seeking children, parent and child placements) that emerge through this analysis. This strategy informs future recruitment activities.

Initial Enquiry - All prospective foster carers who make an enquiry are subject to rigorous assessment and vetting procedures. When there is an enquiry from a potential foster carer, Outlook Fostering makes contact by telephone and information gathering commences. If the enquirer meets the initial set of criteria an information pack is sent out.

Telephone Discussion - Telephone contact will then be made with the prospective foster carer within one working day to book a home visit.

Initial Visit - An initial visit takes place in the home of the prospective foster carer(s). Outlook Fostering aims to book this within five working days from initial contact. If the Initial Visit is successful and both parties wish to proceed, the relevant documentation is discussed and application form is then able to be completed. An Initial Visit Report is completed.

Application Paperwork - The prospective Foster Carer(s) must complete an application form, giving detailed information about themselves and their family and consent to undertaking further checks and enquiries to determine their suitability to foster.

Applicant Preparation – Applicants are involved in their assessment with an emphasis on this being a two way process. A Preparation to Foster Pack is sent out for applicants to start

completing their chronology, eco-map, life-story and support network details. This information is then discussed and explored during home visits.

Medical Check - The applicants are required to have a full medical assessment completed by their GP and the report is made available to our Agency Medical Adviser for comment about their health and any impact this may have on their fostering potential.

References - The applicants are asked to identify three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. One of these must be a relative of the applicants. When applicants have had previous partners the agency requires their details as well: it is likely references will be sought from them, particularly when there are children from the relationship. References may also be taken up from previous employers.

References are taken in confidence but may not remain so: there may be a need to disclose the contents of a reference if it forms the basis of an agency decision not to approve a prospective carer.

Training - All applicant(s) are invited to Skills to Foster Training which is mandatory learning, covering the responsibilities of being a foster carer for Outlook Fostering.

Form F Assessment

Outlook Fostering use the BAAF Form F assessment tool. Following the Initial Visit an Assessor will be allocated to the prospective foster carers and a Panel date tentatively set in 16 weeks. The Assessor will visit the applicants' home, approximately 8-10 times, to meet and collect the information about all members of the household and the applicants' skills and experiences in relation to fostering.

With the exception of private references, the completed Form F is shared with the prospective foster carers prior to being presented to the Fostering Panel. The report is quality assured and signed off by the Team Manager. The Team Manager will complete a Second Opinion Visit, once the assessment has been completed. This allows the applicants to verify they have read and agree with the content of the assessment, and for them to be able to feedback on the assessment process. A report must only be signed by the applicants, Assessor and Team Manager when all parties are happy with its content.

Information obtained about prospective foster carers is held on file in line with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Data Protection Act 1998. Some of this information can be viewed, however references from external agencies and personal references, which are given in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and the relevant referee(s).

Foster Carer Agreements

A Foster Carer Agreement is completed following approval, covering a range of contractual information and undertakings, including:

- To care appropriately for children and young people in placement;
- To inform Outlook Fostering of any significant changes to their household or details;
- To follow the procedures laid down in Outlook Fostering's Handbook.

Reviews of Foster Carers

Outlook Fostering has adopted the BAAF Care Review format which replaces the Form F update. Foster carers continue to be required to evidence the core competences a Foster Carer must demonstrate, in accordance with BAAF Form F.

The Foster Carer Review provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that the quality of Care provided meets the standards demanded by Outlook Fostering. To be effective, the review has to be based upon reliable evidence regarding the standard of Care that has been provided. The Foster Carer Review should be seen as a process, considering a fresh the Foster Carer's approval and any significant changes in the household and support network. The Foster Carer Review is a key part of Outlook's approach to quality assurance.

The Foster Carer Review also provides an opportunity for the foster carer to provide feedback upon the quality of supervision and support they have received, and to reflect upon the learning and development needs of foster carers and their individual training profiles. Such information is analysed to develop the training strategy of the service as a whole.

Reviews take place in line with regulatory requirements of a Foster Carer (Regulation 28(2)). A first review must take place not more than a year after approval. Subsequent reviews take place within twelve months of the previous review, and every twelve months thereafter.

Outlook must be satisfied that the foster carers continue to meet the required Standards (as set out in Regulation 28 (4)) and as a result of this reviews may be held within the 12 month period, for the following reasons;

- Following a serious complaint, allegation of abuse, or other matters of serious concern;
- In response to significant change of circumstances, such as a carer's adult child returning home, relationship problems or separations, significant health issues, pregnancy, etc.);
- At the request of the Fostering Panel;
- At the Foster Carer's request;
- Where the Foster Carer is taking on a new type of fostering (e.g. parent and child placements, or changing significantly the age range they will be fostering) thus requiring a change in their terms of approval.

Prior to the Review consultation and feedback will be required from the following:

- The Foster Carer;
- Any child currently placed with the Foster Carer or having lived with them during the previous 12 months – subject to their age and understanding;
- Any placing local authority which has, within the preceding year placed a child with the Foster Carer;
- Birth children. All members of the fostering household;
- Birth parents of any fostered child, if appropriate;
- Any other enquiries will also be made to ensure that Outlook Fostering obtain all relevant information as they consider necessary in order to review whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable;

The Supervising Social Worker prepares a report for the Review which must evaluate and weigh up the evidence gathered from formal supervisions undertaken during the period under review. A Foster Carer Review meeting takes place to consider the evidence gathered from the consultation / feedback. This meeting is attended by the Supervising Social Worker,

Reviewing Officer and foster carers. The subsequent report completed by the Chair is considered by the ADM and, where appropriate, Fostering Panel.

If, having considered the Annual Review, the Agency Decision Maker decides that approval should continue they will write to the Foster Carer(s) informing them of the decision and the terms of approval (Regulation 28 (6)). All first reviews are required by the regulations to be considered by the Fostering Panel.

Supporting Foster Carers to Care for Children

Outlook Fostering values the work foster carers do and the contributions they make to the lives of looked after children. It is vitally important to provide appropriate levels of support to foster care families to ensure a positive and successful placement. A creative and flexible package of support is available to foster carers and the children and young people in their care. Identifying and arranging the necessary level of support required takes place when a foster carer and child/young person are “matched” at the placement planning stages. Support is monitored and tailored accordingly, during the course of the placement.

All foster carers have a named, qualified and experienced Supervising Social Worker allocated to them.

The following is provided to all foster carers:

Supervising Social Worker

- Monthly supervision visits;
- Frequent contact with foster carers and children in placement through support, visits and telephone calls;
- Provide guidance and advice to the foster carer in relation to their care of the children and young people;
- Liaise with other professionals who may be involved in the care of the child or young person and contribute to formal Care Plans;
- Identify and help respond to foster carers’ training needs;
- Maintain accurate records of the progress of all matters relating to the foster carer and the child/young person placed, including outcomes.

Support Groups: Regular Support Groups take place to enable foster carers to meet, socialise, share good practice, develop peer support and receive training and information.

Emergency Support: Support is provided 24/7, 365 days a year through our on-call service and support to our foster carers. This service is staffed by a Supervising Social Worker who also has access to a social work qualified manager.

Policies and Procedures: All foster carers have access to a Foster Carer Handbook which provides access to Policies and Procedures, together with information and guidance on all aspects of fostering. All information is regularly updated to comply with standards and regulations.

Foster Talk Membership: All foster carers are signed up to annual membership of the Foster Talk, paid for by Outlook Fostering, which provides advice and guidance as well as access to legal advice, mediation and insurance.

Finance: All Foster Carers receive an allowance and are entitled to 2 weeks paid respite and receive a mileage allowance for excessive mileage undertaken.

Tax and National Insurance: All Foster Carers are self-employed and therefore responsible for paying their own tax and National Insurance. Foster Talk have a service which offers tax advice.

Unannounced Visits: All foster carers receive two unannounced visits a year.

Family Events: Family Events occur throughout the year and are an opportunity to:

- Meet and Socialise;
- Make new friends;
- Have fun.

Supporting Children and Young People: Supervising Social Workers visit all children and young people in placement as part of the role of the Supervising Social Worker. Where hard to place children are referred individual support packages of support for foster carers and children and young people are agreed to enable such children to live in a family environment.

Examples of generic support includes:

- Support from the allocated Social Worker from the Placing Authority;

- Supervising Social Workers support which may include additional tasks where requested and funded appropriately by the Placing Authority;
- In some cases it is appropriate that foster carers supervise contact with families;
- Support to follow a hobby or interest;
- Life/Memory work;
- Young Persons' Guide;
- Permanency planning;
- Consultation events during school holidays;
- Attachment Support as agreed with the Placing Local Authority.

Outcomes: To support children to develop to their potential Outlook Fostering is committed to ensuring:

- Children and young people are suitably matched into a foster family;
- Children and young people are healthy and supported to access leisure and health services;
- Any health needs are understood and monitored;
- Children and young people are safe;
- Foster Carers are appropriately recruited, trained, monitored and supervised;
- All children in care enjoy their experiences which promotes their development of self-confidence;
- All children in care attend education and thrive to the best of their ability;
- The recruitment of staff and foster carers is focused on children and young people;
- Children and young people in care are involved in decisions regarding their life.

Complaints and Compliments

Outlook Fostering considers complaints to be a form of consultation. At their worst complaints raise safeguarding concerns that are likely to require immediate statutory investigation. At a lower level, complaints provide helpful feedback about how services provided by Outlook Fostering can be improved. Outlook Fostering promise to treat all complaints are seriously and proportionately. We expect complaints to be reported and

recorded clearly, quickly and passed on to the relevant manager for their urgent consideration at the first opportunity.

Who can make a complaint?

Outlook Fostering will accept complaints from:

- Any child or young person who is, or has been, a foster child;
- The parent of a child or young person who is, or has been, a foster child;
- Any Outlook Fostering foster carer;
- Any placing authority, school or external agency involved with a looked after child or young person;
- Any independent worker commissioned by Outlook Fostering

When a complaint is received from a person not listed above, the Head of Service will decide whether it should be accepted. Anonymous complaints are difficult to investigate however they may be accepted if the Head of Service feels that it is appropriate to do so.

Outlook Fostering recognises it can be very difficult for a young person to make a complaint about a service when they are placed. Young people may not feel confident enough to speak out for the, or may be worried about reprisals. It may be the case that they have had a poor experience of making complaints or raising concerns in the past. We are aware children and young people are more likely to complain once they have left the care arrangements that they have a complaint about.

For these reasons, Outlook Fostering is committed to the following principles to respond to and investigate complaints:

- Quality of care concerns will be regarded as complaints;
- All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly;
- All children and young people making complaints will be supported by the agency;
- All complaints will be investigated in a timely way, with appropriate feedback about the progress of the investigation provided to the complainant in a format of their choosing.

Outlook Fostering will seek to resolve complaints at an informal level where appropriate i.e.

Stage One – Informal Resolution.

Children and young people placed with Outlook Fostering are made aware of the Complaints Procedure by the Supervising Social Worker at the start of placement, and provided with a Children's Guide giving contact details of who to contact about any aspect of their care.

Foster Carers, Staff and Placing Authority Social Workers are provided with information about Outlook Fostering's Complaints Policy through documentation, induction and placement agreements.

It is not always possible to resolve a complaint at Stage One. On occasions a complaint may be serious enough that a person may elect to invoke **Stage Two** – Formal Investigation. This stage will be dealt with by the Team Manager who will undertake a formal investigation. Where a complainant is not satisfied with the response received at Stage Two then the matter is referred to **Stage Three** – Review, of the procedure. At Stage Three the complaint will be passed to the Registered Manager who will address the matter with sensitivity.

Outlook Fostering reserves the right to decide which level the complaint should be investigated and may, in the interests of the parties involved, pass the matter immediately to CareTech's Safeguarding and Policy Manager for the matter to be investigated using Stage Three of the Complaints Procedure.

Carer Allegations/ Whistle-Blowing: All allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children by a professional, staff member, foster carer, or any other person in contact with children will be taken seriously by Outlook Fostering and treated in accordance with current procedures.

All staff and Foster Carers are made aware of the organisation's whistle-blowing policy and should feel confident to voice concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

Compliments: All compliments received from children, young people, Foster Carers, Local Authorities and any other body, are recorded by Outlook Fostering on an electronic system and monitored on a regular basis.

Outlook Fostering Details:

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