



Apple Fostering Services

Statement of Purpose

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Apple Fostering – Statement of Purpose

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Apple Fostering – Statement of Purpose

1 Introduction

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) that each fostering agency produces a Statement of Purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the services it provides, the facilities that are provided, and how outcomes for children and young people will be achieved.

Apple Fostering's Statement of Purpose demonstrates how we meet these requirements, it sets out our aims, and how we work to continuously improve outcomes for children.

2 Aims

Apple Fostering aims to *"Put People First"*. This is primarily children and young people in placement, followed by foster carers who are paramount in enabling this to happen.

Apple Fostering works in partnership with Local Authorities, with foster carers and their families to develop and continuously improve the outcomes for all children and young people in their care

Apple Fostering aims for children and young people placed with its foster carers to:

- Feel safe and be safe
- Be as healthy as can be
- Have the opportunity to achieve to their full potential in education, leisure and sport
- Be able to make a positive contribution to their own lives and to their community
- Be successful, fulfilled and thrive in adult life
- Know that they belong and have the sense of inclusion that they need
- Move on with support at the right time

We aim to ensure that each young person placed with our foster carers is seen as an individual having regard to disability, sexuality and ethnicity, we will ensure that they can reach their full potential and do not suffer from discrimination.

Apple Fostering aims to work closely with local authorities to provide an effective, efficient and high-quality foster care service whilst aiming to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

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3 Objectives

Our objectives are:

- To meet the requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and associated guidance in full
- To meet the National Minimum Standards 2011 for Fostering Services and other good practice standards
- To have in place a recruitment strategy to target recruitment ensuring that a range of foster placements are available to meet the needs and complexities of those requiring foster care
- To ensure that prospective foster carers from all backgrounds are welcomed without prejudice regardless of ethnic origin, religion, age or gender, disability or medical condition, sexual orientation, background, marital or employment status and are considered in respect of what they can offer a child/young person in placement
- To ensure that anyone contacting Apple Fostering Service is treated courteously and with respect and their enquiry is dealt with in a timely and efficient manner
- To ensure that the initial visit, assessment and training processes prepare foster carers for the complex task of caring for looked after children
- To ensure that foster carers are well supported with practical input as well as good quality supervision to enable them to reach their full potential
- To ensure that the matching, introduction and placement process meets the needs of the child/young person
- To ensure stability and security of placements is achieved wherever possible
- To work towards the care plans and pathway plans set out by the placing authority

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4 Principles and Standards of Care

Data Protection

Apple Fostering has guidance for staff on the keeping, storing and handling of personal information for both electronic and manually recorded data. The agency is registered under the Data Protection Act 2018 and follows its requirements.

Confidentiality

Apple Fostering has a Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy applicable to all people, including foster carers and professionals who work with children and their families and who have access to personal information.

Foster carers agree to abide by this policy as part of the Foster Carer Agreement.

Staff and foster carers cannot maintain confidentiality when it relates to the safeguarding of a child. Such information must be shared with the Local Authority and/or other agencies as required.

Recording Policy

Apple Fostering Services has a recording policy, which sets out in detail the requirements for record keeping with relevant safeguards, including security protocols for electronic records.

Partnership

Apple Fostering Services works in partnership with its foster carers, children, young people and other professionals; from both the statutory and voluntary sectors involved in caring for looked after children. This service relies on respect between all parties and everyone being prepared to listen, learn and cooperate effectively.

Education

Apple Fostering strives to support and promote the educational opportunities of looked after children with the aim of improving their attainment, progression and life opportunities.

Apple foster carers play a crucial role in ensuring that children receive regular education appropriate to their needs and abilities and are encouraged to access learning and development opportunities available to them wherever possible.

Health

Apple Fostering is committed to ensuring that the health needs of looked after children and young people placed with its foster carers are identified and met in partnership with the placing authority and other health agencies.

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Apple Foster carers play an important role in ensuring that children in their care receive appropriate health checks including statutory medicals, access to specialist care including CAMHS services, dental, optical and general health promotion information.

Leisure

Children and young people placed with Apple Foster Carers will be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular and community leisure activities which will be included in the foster care payments.

Apple Foster Carers are expected to play a key role in the encouragement and support of children and young people to participate in leisure activities to develop their hobbies, interests and talents.

Apple Fostering promotes the inclusion of looked after children and young people in sport and leisure activities as an important means of boosting their overall development.

Promoting Independence

Apple Foster Carers will help young people develop independent living skills and move on into suitable accommodation. However, it is also acknowledged that some young people will need to remain in their foster family as young adults and support will be given to foster carers to enable them to offer continuing care for young people on a post-18 basis in accordance with the young person's care plan.

Safe Care

Apple Fostering Service aims to provide a service for children/young people to protect them from abuse, neglect, radicalisation, exploitation and deprivation.

Some criminal offences such as serious sexual crimes against children or young people automatically bar people from working with children. Therefore, careful screening of all prospective foster carers is an essential part of the approval process.

All prospective foster carers learn about 'safe care' as part of the preparation process and during the home study. The assessing social worker will focus on the applicant's own life experiences, strengths and vulnerabilities and how these might impact on their ability to deal with the challenges and demands of fostering.

A Safe Care policy is drawn up with each foster family on approval and reviewed as part of the Annual Review process.

Apple Fostering staff will work with the local authority in ensuring that the protection of children and young people placed with its foster carers is paramount. Where allegations of abuse are made, the safety and welfare of children and young people will be the first consideration.

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There are procedures in place for dealing with allegations of abuse against foster carers, which set out the obligations of Apple Fostering Service in working to safeguard children and young people in their care. All foster carers are expected to complete safeguarding training.

Control and Discipline

Behaviour management is included in the preparation process and the rolling programme of training. It is made clear that corporal punishment in any form is not permitted. Foster carers are also not permitted to deprive children and young people of food or restrict contact as punishment and should be sensitive to the child's experiences in determining the most appropriate sanctions.

Bullying

Apple Fostering has an anti-bullying policy, which seeks to address bullying in foster care. Apple Fostering Service believes that it is the right of all young people to live in an environment where they feel safe and are free from humiliation, oppression and abuse.

Apple Foster Carers are expected to create an anti-bullying and anti-discriminatory atmosphere in their homes and to set a positive example to young people in their attitude. They also play a key role in recognising bullying, reporting it appropriately and helping children/young people placed in their care deal with its impact.

Valuing Diversity

Apple Fostering aims to provide placements for children/young people that will promote equality and value diversity. The recruitment strategy aims to recruit a range of foster carers who can address the needs of children and young people arising from race, culture, ethnic origin, language, disability, gender and sexuality.

Wherever possible, children and young people will be placed with foster carers of a same or similar racial and cultural heritage. Where this cannot be achieved, a plan will be formulated with the local authority to ensure that children's needs in relation to their cultural, religious and racial identity are met.

Contact

Apple Fostering is committed to ensuring that children and young people placed with their foster carers maintain contact with family members according to their individual care plan. Training on contact and working with birth family members is included in the foster carers training programme.

Listening to children/young people

Apple Fostering encourages young people to express their views and works to ensure that young people are included in service consultation. Supervising social workers welcome feedback from young people and encourage foster carers to assist

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young people to participate in consultation opportunities, to enable them to contribute to the development of the service.

Children's Rights

Apple Fostering ensures that young people in foster care are provided with information about how to access independent organisations, which can provide them with specialist help and advice or assist them in making complaints. Contact details are included in the Children's Guides.

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5 Services Provided

Apple Fostering provides the following services:

- Recruitment, initial visits, training and assessment of prospective foster carers
- Short term, planned, respite and emergency placements for children and young people looked after by local authorities.
- Long term and permanent foster care placements for children/young people who cannot return home, where this has been identified as the most appropriate way of meeting their needs
- A managed matching process for the placement of children/young people with long term or permanent foster carers that ensures that the child's needs have been fully considered in relation to the placement
- Support, supervision and review of foster carers
- Membership of FosterTalk
- A training programme for approved foster carers
- Contribution to court reports in Care Proceedings as requested

Placements Provided Include:

- Parent and Child Placements
- Sibling Groups
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children (UASC)
- Emergency
- Short Term
- Bridging
- Permanent/Long Term
- Special Needs
- Respite

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6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Apple Fostering is a regulated service, inspected by Ofsted. There are clear standards and guidance, which we are obliged to follow.

Quality Audit

A member of staff experienced in Quality Assurance will carry out regular audits on specific aspects of the service. The audit outcomes will be shared with staff as part of their ongoing development

Business Planning

A Business Plan is produced annually, which evaluates the development of the service and plans future development ensuring financial stability.

Supervision

All Apple Fostering staff receive regular individual supervision in accordance with Apple's supervision policy. They are also subject to an annual appraisal process.

Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel acts as an important quality control mechanism and provides feedback about the quality of work.

The Fostering manager meets with the panel chair at agreed intervals to receive feedback in respect of the quality of the reports being presented to the panel.

The panel membership is kept under review to ensure a spread of knowledge and experience. Panel members are appraised annually

Feedback

Feedback is actively sought and welcomed from carers, children, families and local authorities.

Consultation exercises with all concerned are carried out as part of the annual review process.

Feedback is sought after each training session and following attendance at panel.

Local authority social workers who have had children/young people placed with foster carers are asked to complete a feedback document on the individual placement which contributes to the annual review process.

In addition, the views of young people are sought as part of their foster carers' annual review and at other intervals throughout the year.

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7 Management and Staffing

The Registered Fostering Manager is Cecilia Hitchen a registered Social Worker with considerable experience in looked after children and fostering services as a social worker and as a manager.

Daniel and India Salewski are Directors of Apple Fostering. They are committed to providing a good quality service for children.

The Responsible Individual for the agency is Steve Liddicott. He is a registered social worker with many years' experience as a senior manager in local authority children's services.

The agency employs three full time supervising social workers and one senior social worker.

Karen Salewski is a senior supervising social worker with many years experience. Karen is committed to delivering positive outcomes for children and young people. Her post-qualifying experience includes children and family services, child protection, fostering, adoption and permanency teams as well as a pioneering CMHT. She has successfully worked as a Social Worker, Team Manager and Service Manager in Children's Services within the public, private and voluntary sectors. Karen's main role is the assessment and preparation of prospective foster carers.

Our supervising social workers are:

Seipone Molefi, Kerstin Rickermann and Melissa Earlington all of whom have many years' experience working in fostering services.

Additional social work staff are employed on a sessional basis to carry out specific tasks such as Form F assessments as needed

In addition to her role as Director, India Salewski is also the fostering panel minute taker, and provides support around finance.

Niall Joyce is the Agency's full time administrative officer who provides the team with invaluable support in a number of areas including training.

The staffing complement also includes a number of casual support workers who undertake a variety of tasks, to support foster carers.

Apple Fostering also on occasion offers placements to student social workers, who want to gain experience of working in a fostering service.

8 Recruitment of Foster Carers

Recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval practice is underpinned by the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

Apple Fostering aims to recruit high quality foster carers to meet the identified needs of children and young people placed in our care.

The recruitment strategy is based on an understanding of the needs of children requiring family placements and requests made by local authorities. We have recruited foster carers from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds to meet the racial, ethnic and cultural needs of children who need foster placements and aim to broaden the range of available carers in the future. We recognise that there are gaps in our provision and are actively seeking to recruit more carers from Asian and white backgrounds.

Foster carers are recruited through a variety of means including online advertising and recommendations from existing foster carers. We welcome applications from individuals and families from all parts of the community and all cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds regardless of marital status, employment, gender, sexuality or disability. Applicants must be over 21 years old and in reasonable health to provide care for a child. A criminal record is not automatically a barrier to application and each situation is assessed in the application process. However, some offences against a child and some offences against adults will preclude an applicant by law.

We provide information about the need for foster carers and the tasks involved in looking after children/young people. This will enable a potential applicant to make an informed decision whether to apply to foster. It is also an opportunity for unsuitable applicants to be screened or counselled out.

Enquirers can telephone the service between 9am and 6pm. Calls are answered by a member of staff, who will provide initial information and advice.

If appropriate this will be followed up by an initial visit to further explore their interest and provide the opportunity for the enquirer to gain more information about the fostering task.

Assessment Of Foster Carers

Assessment and approval of foster carers is carried out in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

All prospective foster carers must attend preparation training. The overall aim of the training is to ensure that applicants have sufficient information to decide whether to

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proceed and to give trainers the opportunity to identify issues to be considered in the 'Form F' Assessment.

Prospective foster carers are invited to make a formal written application which includes giving consent to enable the required checks to be undertaken. These include:

- A medical with the applicant's own doctor
- A DBS check in respect of household and regular visitors
- A Local Authority check
- An employment check if working with children or adults in any setting
- An ex-husband/wife/partner unless a specific reason not to do so
- A health and safety check

Applicants are asked to nominate three referees who know them well and can provide an opinion as to the applicant's suitability and competence to foster. A full range of safeguarding checks is also carried out with all applicants to foster:

- Identity checks e.g. passport, driving licence, birth certificate, utility bills
- Documentation to support any name changes, naturalisation etc.
- Confirmation of National Insurance Number
- Proof of qualifications
- Marriage and Divorce Certificates where relevant.

Assessments of all prospective foster carers are carried out by qualified social workers using BAAF Form F. In addition, applicants are assisted to collect evidence in relation to the CWDC Training and Development Standards

During the assessment, all members of the household including birth children are interviewed and their views obtained. Adult children who no longer live at home are interviewed wherever practical and feedback sought about their experiences of being parented by the applicant/s.

The assessing social worker also seeks additional information from schools, other professionals or extended family members who have knowledge of the applicant/s and their parenting abilities.

Subject to the requirements of legislation and guidance on the disclosure of records the Form F assessment report is shared with the applicant/s.

Information given in confidence by referees is not disclosed although referees are encouraged to share this with applicants where this will assist the assessment and decision-making process. Applicants are entitled and encouraged to make their own written contribution to the Form F.

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Approval Of Foster Carers

The agency's Fostering Panel is made up of a pool of people who have knowledge and understanding of Fostering and/or professional expertise to offer. Membership of the panel is determined by regulation ensuring a blend of experience and independence.

The role of the panel is to consider each application and to make a recommendation as to whether the applicant is suitable to foster and if so, how many children/young people and at what ages. Applicants are invited to attend panel when their approval as foster carers are being considered.

The final recommendation regarding approval of foster carers is made by the Panel Chair with the decision made by the Agency Decision Maker. Written confirmation of the agency decision is sent to the applicant.

Applicants who are not considered suitable to foster have a right of appeal either by representation to the agency for their case to be reconsidered or, to an independent body through the Independent Review Mechanism. The Independent Review Mechanism is operated by BAAF and allows access to a further panel who may make a new recommendation back to the agency for consideration.

All successful applicants are required to sign a 'Foster Carer Agreement' and to develop a 'Safe Caring Plan' and a 'Fire Safety Plan', which sets out the respective responsibilities of the foster carer and the Apple Fostering Service manager prior to their first placement.

Foster Carer Training

Apple Fostering is committed to providing a comprehensive programme of training for foster carers to assist and support them in the task of caring for children and young people.

All foster carers are required to complete preparation training as part of the assessment and approval process as well as beginning the CWDC Workbook.

All approved foster carers then have access to a programme of training which builds on the knowledge gained during the approval process and to enable foster carers to develop their skills as they gain practical experience of fostering.

The training covers a wide range of subjects including the following:

- Safeguarding and Child protection
- Safer Caring
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Current issues in Fostering Practice
- Health of Looked After Children/Young People
- Education of Looked after Children/Young People
- Managing Behaviour

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- First Aid
- Radicalisation
- Moving On
- Valuing Diversity
- Contact and Working with Birth Family
- Communication and Listening
- Working in Partnership

The programme includes both online and face-to-face training. The programme is reviewed and updated each year

Additional Training

A range of other online training sessions will be offered, based on individual needs

Attendance at training is an expectation of all foster carers and forms part of the Foster Carer Agreement. Apple Fostering aims to make training accessible to all foster carers by presenting sessions at a variety of times and through a mixture of online and face to face sessions.

Children's Workforce Development Council Standards for Foster Carers

All new foster carers must demonstrate that they meet the CWDC Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards within twelve months of their approval to foster children and young people. Apple Fostering will provide the support and training foster carers need to gain their CWDC certificate.

Supervision And Support of Foster Carers

Supervising Social Workers

Every approved foster carer will be supervised by a named qualified supervising social worker whose role is to provide supervision and support. They will visit the foster carer in their home regularly at a frequency agreed with the foster carer and in consultation with Apple Fostering Manager. This will be in the first week of placement, once every two weeks for the first two months of a first placement followed monthly, with phone calls in between.

Apple Fostering has an induction policy to be followed with new foster carers to ensure that they are fully prepared for their role

Newly approved carers will also receive an induction pack of key information

The supervisor will see the child/young person in placement on their own. They will also make unannounced visits at least once a year. The supervisor will discuss the progress of the placement, training needs, preparation for carers review, meeting the standards and all other topics relevant to the carer and children in placement.

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Apple Fostering Service provides an out of hours service with a qualified member of staff available to answer calls from foster carers and deal with emergencies that cannot wait until the next working day.

Support Groups

Apple Fostering Service runs regular support groups for its foster carers. The groups provide an opportunity for carers to discuss and reflect on topical issues and share experiences. They enable carers to come together as a group and encourage the formation of supportive relationships.

Peer support

Foster carers will be encouraged to form supportive links with one another and share their learning and experience of caring for difficult young people. Supervising social workers will take an active role in facilitating contact between foster carers and identifying contacts between foster carers that may prove beneficial.

Education of Looked After Children/Young People

The main responsibility for the education of looked after children/young people lies within the Local Authority and Apple Fostering works closely with the placing authorities ensuring the educational needs of those placed in foster care are met. We will also be creative to maintain school attendance at the optimum and endeavour to see that issues such as bullying are tackled as soon as possible.

Health Needs

Information, advice and support regarding children's health issues are available to foster carers from the placing authority. Apple Fostering will ensure that the health needs of every child placed with their foster carer are met according to their assessed needs. Where children have complex medical needs foster carers will be supported to access relevant training to ensure that the child's needs are fully understood and met.

Leisure Activities

Apple will encourage out of school activities using local facilities. Trips and activities will be organised for children in foster care and their foster families alike and might include for example, theatre outings, trips to theme parks and places of interest,

Equipment

Essential equipment to help with caring for children may be supplied to foster carers on loan through the Apple Fostering Service. Specific equipment in relation to disability will be provided by the health or local authority.

Financial Support

All foster carers receive a fostering allowance to cover the cost of looking after the

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child. Full details are provided to all foster carers on approval. Information is also available in the foster carer's manual.

Child's Information

Apple Fostering will ensure foster carers receive all the relevant available information to enable them to care for children appropriately.

Annual Review of Foster Carers

Reviews of foster carers are carried out annually and include the following processes:

- Consideration of all matters required by regulation and standards
- Report written by supervisor
- Feedback from the foster carers
- Feedback from social workers for any children who have been in placement
- Feedback from young people in placement about the care they receive
- Completion of an annual Health and Safety Checklist
- Consideration of training needs
- Consideration of the continuing appropriateness of the foster carer's terms and remit of approval

All first reviews and reviews considering a change of approval are presented to the Fostering Panel for recommendation and to the Agency Decision Maker.

Any disagreements can be appealed and ultimately referred to the independent review mechanism

9 Complaints

Apple Fostering considers complaints, comments and suggestions about services from service users, their families, carers or representatives as well as local authorities. The complaints procedure recognises the vulnerability of complainants and the need to resolve complaints at the most informal level possible.

Foster carers are entitled to use the complaints procedure if they feel they cannot resolve a difficulty with the individuals concerned or their manager. A simplified procedure is available to children and young people.

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10 Children's Guide

A Children's Guide to the Fostering Service is available for children and young people in placement. This includes information on how to make a complaint and is updated on a regular basis. The children's guides are presented in an age appropriate format dependent on the age of the child or young person.

11 OFSTED

The Fostering Service is inspected by OFSTED who are also responsible for the investigation of complaints about the Fostering Service and can be contacted as follows:

E Mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Telephone: 0300 123 1231

In writing:
Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

The Children's Commissioner for England is Dame Rachel de Souza. Her role is to promote and protect the rights of children and to stand up for their views and interests.

The Commissioner's office is based at the following address:

Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7783 8330.

12 Review Of Statement Of Purpose

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually.