

Statement of Purpose
Shared Care Services (Fostering Division)
119 Eastern Avenue, Redbridge,
Ilford, Essex - IG4 5AN



... a specialist fostering agency for children and young people with disabilities and complex medical needs

March 2023

Company information – status & constitution

Legal Status: Shared Care Services Ltd is a Private Limited Company

Registration No: 4704680

Year of Registration: 2003

Registered Manager: Mohammad Alam Siddiqui, BA(H) Social Work, MA in Social Work, NVQ Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care and Children and Young People Services, Specialist Post Qualifying Graduate Diploma In Social Work With Children And Families

Responsible Individual: Owais Ur Rehman Khan, BA (Hons) in Social Work, MA in Social Work, Post Qualifying Award in Social Work- (PQ) Part I & Registered Manager Award (RMA)

Organisation details

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1. Introduction

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, that each fostering agency produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided.

This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements and also how the service is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved for all children in its care. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise, and support foster carers.

The Statement of Purpose also links with the Children's Guide, which is provided to all children, subject to the child's age and understanding at the point of placement. This Statement of Purpose is available to all members of staff, foster carers, children, and birth parents. A copy of this Statement of Purpose is also provided to Ofsted. The information contained is regularly updated and will be amended annually.

It should be: The Statement of Purpose also links with the Children's Guide, which is provided to all children, subject to the child's age and understanding at the point of placement. This Statement of Purpose is available to all members of staff, foster carers, or prospective foster carers of the fostering service, any child placed with a foster carer by the fostering service, and the parent of any such child. A copy of this Statement of Purpose is also provided to Ofsted's Chief Inspector.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) will keep this Statement of Purpose under review and will revise this Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide when appropriate. The Agency notifies the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days.

2. National Legislative and Policy Framework

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) operates within the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 made under sections 22 and 48 of the Care Standard Act (CSA) 2000 and the powers under the Children Act 1989 (s59).

As an independent fostering provider, we are governed by and committed to ensuring we meet the National Minimum Standards laid down by the Department for Education under sections 23 and 49 of the CSA 2000. However, as a specialist agency keen to achieve and maintain best practices, it is our expressed goal to exceed them wherever possible.

Following is a non-exhaustive list of relevant and applicable legislation, regulation and

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guidance. Relevant legislation, regulation and guidance

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Care Leavers Regulations 2010
- The Children & Social Work Act 2017
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Disability & Equality Act 2010
- Race Relations Act 1976 and amendment 2000
- The Immigration, Asylum & Nationality Act 2006
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Fostering Service Regulations 2011 & 2013 amendments.
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- The Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care 2006
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families DoH 2000
- Children's Safeguarding Boards Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for the area in which any child/young person resides
- Training, Support & Development Standards for Foster Care DfE 2012
- The Equal Opportunities Code of Practice
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement & Case Review
- National Minimum Fostering Allowance & Fostering Payment Systems: Good Practice Guidance
- IRO Handbook: Statutory Guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and Local authorities on their Functions in Relation to Case Management and review for Looked After Children 2010
- Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children
- Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers
- Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health & Well-being of Looked-After Children
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care 2014
- The Children & Families Act 2014
- Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption & Fostering) Regulations 2009
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Safeguarding Disabled Children. Practice Guidance DfE 2009

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3. Policy Statement

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) believes that every child Looked After should be able to enjoy the same quality of life and opportunities as all children. One of Shared Care Services (Fostering Division)'s core values is the 'promotion of equality, diversity, mutual respect, and understanding'. Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) works to make sure that every child and the young person placed in its care have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and have the chance to succeed regardless of their race, ethnic origin, nationality, gender, disability, age, religion or social/economic group. We want to make sure that every young person has the highest hopes for their future and the support to fulfill them.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) recognises that a child's needs are best met by a nurturing family and is committed to placing children who are in need of an appropriate foster home.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) is committed to placing children and young people with our approved foster carers and has developed and invested in a dedicated and comprehensive Fostering Service that actively works to meet the quality standards required and the diverse needs of the children who become looked after. We are also committed to placing children and young people with local foster carers in order for them to maintain contact with families and friends, to continue at the same school and thrive within their community wherever possible.

Each child/young person will have access to a service which recognises and address their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability, and sexuality. Placement decisions will consider the child /young person's assessed racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, religion, culture, and language of the foster carer.

Children's safety and welfare will be actively promoted in all fostering placements and protected from abuse and other forms of significant harm.

4. Aims

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) is a specialist fostering agency for children and young people with disabilities, is part of Shared Care Services Ltd, founded in 2003. It is managed by professionally qualified Social Workers with more than 33 years of field experience in the field of disability and management. We are particularly proud of our rich working experience as Social Workers for Children with Disabilities.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) recruits, trains, and supports foster carers to meet the needs of children with disabilities and complex medical needs. We specialise primarily in providing placements for children who are on the autistic spectrum, have

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learning difficulties, physical disabilities, communication or medical needs as an alternative to residential or hospital care. Some of the children we look after require palliative care and have life-limiting or life-limited conditions.

Our Supervising Social Workers/Senior Practitioners along with other professionals involved in children's care support our approved foster carers and children in their care with complex needs; children with disabilities such as autistic spectrum disorder, mild to moderate autism, and Asperger's syndrome. There are also children with accompanying learning disabilities and/or epilepsy with or without ASD. Most of our caregivers have previous experience working in the provision of social care or education. Foster Carers receive in addition to their statutory training, autism-specific training. We endeavour to work with the child's school in order to achieve continuity in care at both home and school where behaviour management and communication strategies are matched to help the child to continue to improve.

To support children with complex medical needs we gather information in relation to every young person's medical needs to ensure that our foster carers provide appropriate medical care. All necessary medical training for our carers is undertaken prior to placement.

In some cases, Shared Care Services consider referrals for children who have mental health issues. In addition, Shared Care may also consider mainstream children referrals to place with foster carers who are caring for children with high-end caring needs, as it is considered that it will be difficult for the foster carers to care for another special need child in given circumstances.

Shared Care 'Staying Put' policy is designed to ensure young people with special needs and mental health do not experience a sudden disruption to their living arrangements, that educational achievement and continuity are promoted, and that 'vulnerable' young people can make a gradual transition from care to independence/supported living.

We are committed to providing fostering services that not only meet legislative care standards but, in some areas, exceed them. Our quality standards are reviewed continually for improvement. We work as a team to achieve the best outcomes for the children in our care. We aim to be equal to or better than the best.

The main aim of Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) is to provide safe, high-quality foster care placements for children and young people with disabilities that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals. As well as promoting their health and general well-being, the service is committed to ensuring that foster carers are encouraged to help children and young people to reach their maximum educational ability.

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SHARED CARE

Working in Partnership

Foster carers will provide good parenting for all children who are looked after, and children will be consulted and encouraged to actively participate in their care and family life.

We are committed to ensuring that the service offered is based on statutory requirements, sound principles, and good practice.

Our service is committed to multi-agency working and develops partnerships and protocols with organisations that can progress the needs of looked after children. We work in partnership with education and health services to promote the well-being of children in the care. Our service has respect for the rights and responsibilities of Looked After Children and their carers and aims to involve them in all aspects of service delivery.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) aims to provide high quality responsive child-centered service in relation to its core functions: to recruit new foster carers; to prepare applicants through training to be able to deal with the range of issues that foster carers face when looking after children; to assess each applicant comprehensively to ensure that they are suitable and able to carry out this role and supervise carers in a constructive manner that promotes the welfare of and protects and safeguards children.

5. Objectives

- ✦ To ensure that there is a choice of high-quality foster care placements available to meet the complex and diverse needs of individual children and young people. Each foster carer will have a qualified social worker and areas of particular skills and experiences will be developed and training needs identified and addressed
- ✦ To promote a safe and stable and enabling environment ensuring that children and young people are listened to and protected from abuse and neglect
- ✦ To promote the child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development by providing each child with the opportunity of developing to their full potential, through health care, education, and leisure activities that will enhance their life chances
- ✦ To have positive regard for the child or young person's racial, religious, and cultural needs.
- ✦ The individual child's needs/ wishes and feelings are paramount and taken into consideration in relation to placements
- ✦ Siblings will be accommodated together wherever possible and appropriate
- ✦ To promote contact between the child or young person and his/her birth family, throughout their placement, and to encourage and facilitate this as appropriate
- ✦ To ensure foster carers make children and young people aware of their rights and the comments, complaints, and advocacy process by passing on the relevant information

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- ✦ To ensure that approved foster carers are clear about their role and that they are supported in their tasks, duties, and responsibilities, by having adequate
- ✦ support mechanisms in place, outlined in their terms and conditions and foster carer agreement
- ✦ Ensure that all practice promotes equal opportunities for all and value diversity of both foster children and carers regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religious beliefs, disability, or marital status
- ✦ To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair and that any concerns are addressed, and information about the complaints procedure is made available to all
- ✦ Promoting team and personal development and training for both staff and foster carers
- ✦ Consult regularly and learn from those that are in receipt of services through comments, compliments, or complaints, and have regular meetings with foster carers and senior managers
- ✦ Consult regularly with children who are fostered, using a variety of methods to ensure their voice is heard
- ✦ Commitment to continuous improvement through the provision of wider placement choices for children by continuing to pioneer a more innovative approach to foster care that is needs led to deliver packages of care to children in public care

Our Values:

- ✦ Exceptionally high standards of integrity and respect for all;
- ✦ Promotion of a stable and safe environment ensuring that children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect;
- ✦ Promotion of educational attainment, progress, and school attendance of all children and young people in foster care placements;
- ✦ The achievement of positive outcomes by offering high-quality foster care placements which meet the welfare and social needs of all children and young people appropriately.
- ✦ The promotion of the health, personal care, and developmental needs of all the children and young people in foster care placements.

We are committed to:

- ✦ Encouraging team and personal development for both staff and foster carers.
- ✦ Anti-discriminatory policies, promote equal opportunities for all and value diversity of

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both foster children and carers regardless of, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religious beliefs, disability, or marital status.

We are supported by our policies and procedures, which acknowledge and recognise the contribution that can be made by family and friends as carers.

6. Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

Foster carers are provided with full information about the children placed with them and are expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency, we maintain records on carers and looked-after children who are subject to National Standards and Data protection legislation. Staff, Fostering Panel members, and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

7. Principles and Standards of Care

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) is committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards and offering quality provision. It has been developed and is managed in accordance with the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and the principles outlined in the National Minimum Standards 2011.

- ✦ The welfare of the child is paramount
- ✦ Children who are looked after are consulted regarding their wishes and feelings in regard to all aspects of their care. They will be provided with a Children's Guide to Fostering (see section 8 below)
- ✦ Every child who is looked after will have a health plan and a personal education plan
- ✦ Every child looked after will be encouraged to participate appropriately in religious and cultural beliefs in accordance with their wishes and feelings and developmental understanding
- ✦ Every child looked after will be cared for in an environment free from oppression, discrimination, and prejudice, this will encourage them to develop a positive sense of their own identity
- ✦ Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) will support the identified aims and objectives of the child or young person's care plan and work alongside other professionals in the implementation of this
- ✦ Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) will work in partnership with other professionals to promote contact between looked-after children and their family and other significant persons
- ✦ Foster carers have a handbook that guides their practice and clarifies expectations and standards

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8. Children's Guide

Subject to the child's age and understanding, Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) ensures the child receives the Children's Guide at the time of placement and that the foster carer or allocated Social Worker explains the contents of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) will keep this Statement of Purpose under review and will revise this Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide when appropriate. When the children's guide is revised, Shared Care provides a copy to each approved foster carer, and each child is placed in the foster carer's carer (subject to the child's age and understanding).

The Children's Guide includes a summary of what Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern.

9. Services Provided

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) approves foster carers to look after children aged 0-18 years. Many of the children placed may have experienced difficulties, including abuse or neglect, before being fostered. Some children and young people present with challenging behaviour or may have special needs or complex health conditions.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) does the above by assessing, approving, supervising, supporting, and training a wide range of foster carers.

The differing types of approval:-

Short Term: Many children living with foster carers are in short-term placements. Some children may need the stability and care of foster carers while the child's family situation is assessed, and presented to the court, and plans are made to keep them safe. This could be for a few weeks or a few years until they move into adoption or back to their family.

Long Term: Long-term foster care is for children who cannot return home and for whom adoption is not possible. Foster Carers will help them through their childhood to adolescence and prepare them for independence. Long-term foster care will help give a child a great sense of security, stability, and confidence. Long-term doesn't necessarily mean the full period of their childhood, but in many cases, they may spend many years with their foster carers.

Short Breaks / Respite placements: Children or young people with a disability may require extra support. The reasons can vary immensely, e.g. (a) autism, (b) cerebral palsy, (c) sensory loss, (d) learning disability, and (e) medical condition, etc. Their disability can

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make it difficult for them to enjoy activities independently from their parents than other children. Parents of children with a disability often provide intensive care around the clock and get far less time than other parents to deal with aspects of everyday life. They need regular breaks to: get some chores done, spend more time with other members of the family who have missed out on individual attention, or simply have a holiday away from the usual routine.

10. Management of the Service

The management structure for Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) is as follows:

- ✦ Director - Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) - responsible for strategic leadership and the delivery of fostering services.
- ✦ Decision Maker - The fostering service provider's decision-maker makes a considered decision that takes account of all the information available to them, including the recommendation of the fostering panel and, where applicable, the independent review panel, within seven working days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of panel minutes.

The foster carer or prospective foster carer is informed orally of the decision maker's decision within two working days and written confirmation is sent to them within five working days.

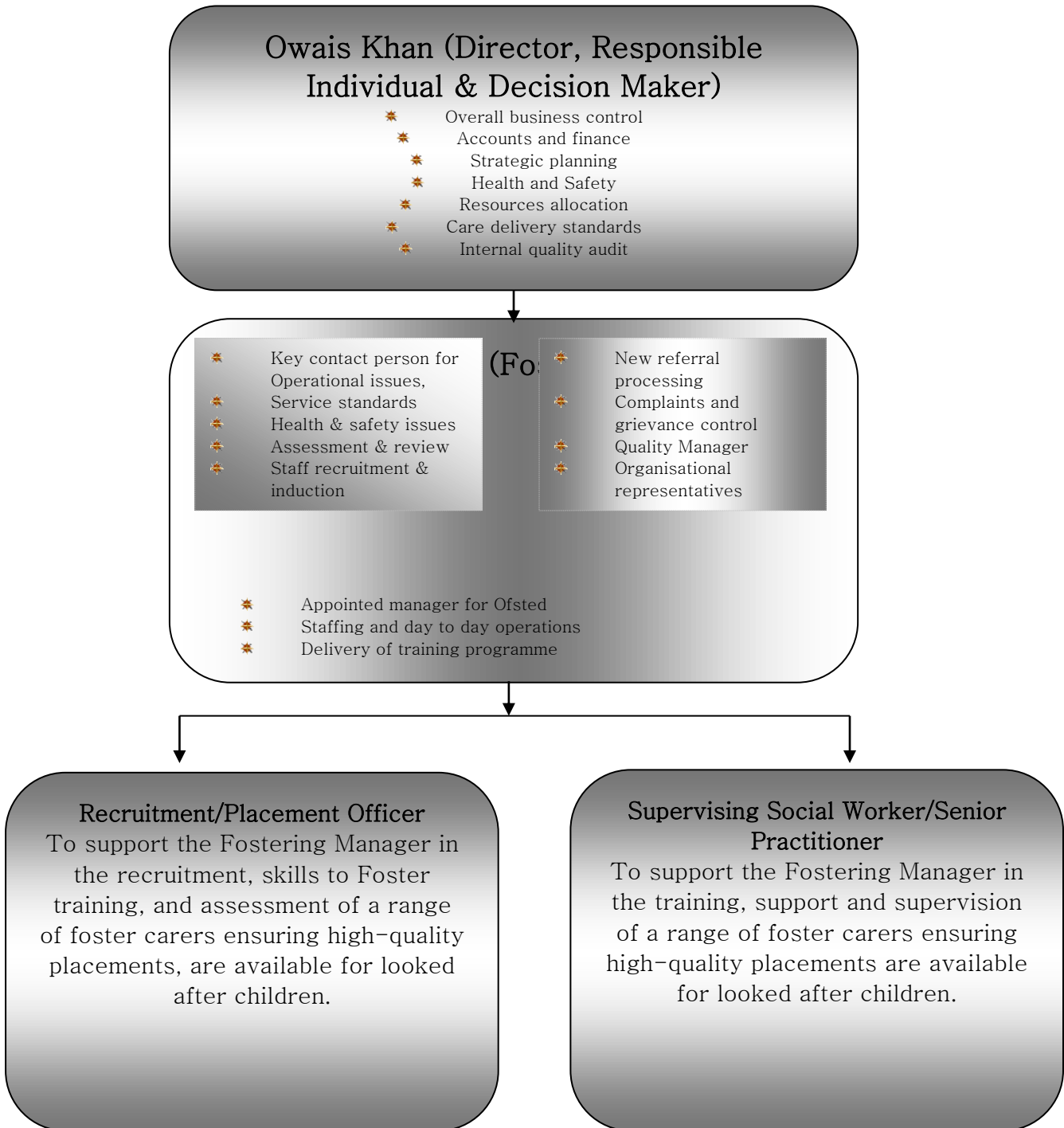
- ✦ Manager - Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) – responsible for the day-to-day operations and supervising fostering team.
- ✦ Senior Practitioner/Supervising Social Workers- who provide direct supervision and support to carers.
- ✦ Recruitment & Placement Officer- to generate enquiries that require coordination, engagement, and recruitment of Foster Carers within the Agency's targeted areas of operation.

To screen incoming referrals and identify positive matches to available foster families by identifying key information within a child's referral and comparing it to the suitability of available homes.

All of these are supported by colleagues working in clerical, finance, information and communications technology, human resources, and training and development roles.

While carers are not paid employees of Shared Care Services (Fostering Division), they share responsibility with Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) for safeguarding the health and welfare of vulnerable children and young people placed in their care.

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11. Protecting children from harm

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) operates a safe recruitment process for all staff employed by the agency. In addition, there is a rigorous vetting and assessment process undertaken with all potential carers. Enhanced DBS checks are carried out every three years for the staff, foster carers, support network, and backup carers.

As a good practice, every three years, Local Authority checks are carried out on the foster carer and their household members. Medical checks are also carried out on the foster carers every two years.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) has policy and guidance underpinning our service on safe caring; health and safety; bullying policy; management of behaviour, and foster carer agreements.

Our processes and procedures will ensure that any concern is addressed and monitored by the management team and will inform service developments, for example:

Poor quality of care/breach of foster care agreement; child protection procedures which deal with allegations of abuse against foster carers and through the complaints procedures.

Children will know about these procedures through their social worker and the Children's Guide. They also have access to a Children's rights advocacy service independent of the service.

12. Working in Partnership for the Provision of Services

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) has recently started providing Psychological Support Services to those foster carers who are caring for children who have experienced trauma. We consult with the allocated Social Workers before deciding on the services.

Shared Care Services will continue work in partnership with respective placing authority (a) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) which provide therapeutic input to children and young people, consultation to carers and other professionals (b) Health Promotion Support Services for Looked after Children and Young People for Children's Annual Health Assessments and the health promotion of Young People. Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) is committed to ensuring the health outcomes for young people looked after continually improve (c) Educational Support Services; Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) recognises the need to improve 'Looked After Children' attendance at school and work closely with the carers in addressing this issue. Foster Carers are expected to attend Personal Education Planning Meetings with the young

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people and, where appropriate, the supervising worker will also attend.

13. Provision of Leisure, Sport, Cultural, and Religious-Activity

Foster carer training and supervision promotes the importance of leisure provision for looked after children and young people and the expectation that carers will seek out and support new experiences and activities to enhance children's self-worth, social development, and independence.

Information on community play schemes, clubs, and holiday activities is provided to our carers on a regular basis through newsletters.

Shared Care organises picnics and Annual Dinners where all the foster carers and looked-after children (depending on their needs) are invited to socialise with each other.

We aim to support all young people in their religious and cultural beliefs and customs.

We ensure that information is available to provide an understanding of different cultures and religions. We will provide resources that may be needed to ensure young people are able to practice their beliefs and customs.

We are committed to directly challenging racism and ensuring that all young people who access our services are aware of our policies in relation to anti-oppressive practice and anti-racism. We will ensure that all people are treated equally, regardless of age, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, or religion. We have supervising fostering officers to help carers with issues with transracial placements.

14. Recruitment of Foster Carers

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) has a recruitment policy. All recruitment work is targeted, with specific carers recruited at different times.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) uses a variety of mediums to recruit local carers. We have a clear "brand" displayed in adverts, publicity material, leaflets, posters, etc. However, we have observed that we have managed to recruit quality foster carers mainly through 'word of mouth'.

Carer enquiries

Anyone making an enquiry is sent an information pack appropriate to the service in which they are interested. People who meet the criteria are invited to an open meeting. This provides prospective carers with an opportunity to gather further details and importantly, meet people currently working as carers.

People who wish to continue are invited to complete and return a further questionnaire. Along with their initial enquiry form and remarks recorded at the open meeting,

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applications are assessed by the Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) Team.

Foster Carer applicants

Successful applicants are visited in their own homes by a qualified social worker.

A written appraisal of the visit is viewed by the Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) Team to process the applicants' suitability, readiness, and potential to provide care.

With their consent the following statutory checks are carried out on all successful applicants:

* Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check (enhanced): for all adult members (above 16 years old) of the household and any adults who may have contact with a child being cared for; If the candidates have been living abroad before settling in the UK, we carry out Police check from abroad.	
* local authority;	* mortgage or rent;
* medical;	* school;
* employment	* health visitor (if appropriate);

Three written personal references are also asked for. Two of these referees will be visited.

Carers considering transferring their approval from any local authority or independent fostering agency are visited in their home by the fostering team manager and a Social Worker, who assess their suitability to become Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) foster carers and discuss the process and procedures involved in the transfer.

All new applicants are required to attend a preparation training course, *The Skills to Foster*, which includes:

- understanding child development and behaviour;
- the impact of abuse and discrimination;
- exploring how to care for damaged and disadvantaged children;
- safe caring;
- working with families;
- assessment based on competencies.

This training makes prospective carers aware of the:

- close monitoring of the health and educational needs of looked-after children;
- the possibility of abuse being disclosed in placement and what to do if it is;
- the impact of foster care on them and their families;
- the importance of health and safety and home safe care policies.

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Prospective carers are informed that the training will form part of their assessment in the form of written feedback given by the course leaders.

Home assessments are structured using the Coram British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (Coram BAAF) Form F competency model and are conducted by a qualified social worker who is supervised by the Fostering Manager.

The standard format is submitted to the Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) Panel which meets on a regular basis.

The report presented to the panel will provide:

- a description of the whole family;
- a description of the accommodation;
- results of the assessment interviews with the applicants;
- an assessment of group work;
- an assessment of the evidence of competencies;
- identification of the gaps in competencies;
- an overall analysis, summary, and recommendation.

15. Approval and Assessment Process

Anyone over the age of 21 may apply to become a Foster Carer, a welcoming response is given, and all initial enquiries are responded to on the same day.

There is the immediate exclusion of any applicant who has been convicted of any serious offense against a child or adult.

Applicants are welcomed by all members of the community, regardless of relationship status, employment situation, class, gender, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, or religion.

When a person contacts Shared Care Services (Fostering Division), to express an interest in fostering they will be able to have a discussion with a fostering manager/social worker who will explain the process and take some initial information about them. If the caller then wishes to proceed, they will be sent an Information Pack with an application form within 24 hours.

Returning this form triggers an appointment at their home, to complete an Initial Home Visit. At this visit, we will discuss fostering with members of the family, check the home conditions are warm and clean, and that there is space for a foster child to sleep, do homework, play, and participate as a full family member. If all parties agree that fostering could be suitable for the family, an invitation to preparatory training; The Skills to Foster is then given.

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SHARED CARE

Working in Partnership

The preparation training undertaken uses the Fostering Networks Skills to foster programme including Skills to Foster; Child Development; Separation and Loss; Working Together; Safer Care; Moving On.

The preparatory training is generally organised on weekends or occasionally on weekdays. The training is run by SSWs and experienced foster carers.

When training is completed, the applicants begin an assessment that includes the requirements laid down in Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards in Foster Care (2011), and Schedule 4 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 where children are fostered by relatives and friends. All carers are subject to a number of statutory checks and references.

- ✦ Enhanced DBS Check on all members of the household over the age of 16
- ✦ Child Protection Checks
- ✦ Children Young People's Social Care ESCR check
- ✦ Department of Health Checks
- ✦ Two personal references
- ✦ In addition, interviews are conducted with grown-up children and children living in the household
- ✦ Foster carers are additionally asked to undertake a full medical examination with their GP.
- ✦ A work reference from a present or previous employer
- ✦ Prospective foster carer to agree for Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) making contact with any schools which their children attend to ascertain the school's view on their involvement/suitability
- ✦ Prospective foster carers to agree for Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) making contact with ex-partners regarding their application to foster The majority of foster carers are subject to a competency-based assessment. The depth of this assessment will depend on the role for which the carer is being assessed, with appropriateness and proportionality being the measure of this. All potential carers are invited to be fully involved in the assessment and to use self-completion sheets as a tool to look at their competencies. Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) uses the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F foster carer assessment format for the completion of its assessments. The assessment of a foster carer would take place in the applicant's home over a period of six to eight visits, plus reference interviews and interviewing other relevant parties.

The assessing social worker would ensure that timelines, analysis of significant

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relationships, the family dynamics, and characteristics of the foster carers underpin and inform the assessment.

The assessment focuses on the individual or individuals applying to become foster carers and their families. We make a detailed assessment of their past and present experiences, the skills and competencies which they would bring to their new role, and help them to think about their reasons for applying to become foster carers.

The assessor will also use the process to assess the applicant's suitability to foster children with differing needs, including disabled children, and this is made transparent.

The assessments, together with a portfolio of evidence of experience and skills compiled by the foster carer, are presented to fostering panel. Applicants are encouraged to attend with the assessing social worker. All information gathered except references is shared with the applicant/s. The social worker's assessment is shared with them prior to the panel.

The fostering panel is an independent panel and comprises people from a variety of backgrounds. They consider and recommend the approval, or not, of all foster carers. The recommendation then goes before the Agency Decision Maker who makes a final decision. Any appeals can be made within 28 days and may either make further representation to the fostering panel or have their assessment considered by the Independent Review Mechanism which in turn will make a recommendation back to the agency.

All foster carers are subjected to an annual review of their status as foster carers.

This is a formal review of the work that they have undertaken during the year and is an opportunity to reflect on achievements and learning. These are undertaken by their own supervising fostering officer. A report is presented to the fostering panel in the case of all first reviews, significant changes to the carer's registration, or cases of concern.

16. Support, Supervision, and Training of Foster Carers

All foster carers are linked with a qualified supervising social worker who provides support and supervision:

The Supervising Social Worker (SSW) undertakes a minimum of ten supervisory visits per year, including a review of the foster carer. They also make two unannounced visits to the placement. All visits and communications with the foster carer are recorded and shared with the fostering manager.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) believes that it is important that foster carers are able to access support, at the time that they need it.

In case of national emergencies/pandemics, etc., Supervising Social Workers will carry out as many visits as possible or virtual visits using video conferencing. Supervising Social

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Workers will also make welfare check calls more frequently; at least fortnightly and support the foster carers by coordinating various services.

During office hours, each foster carer is allocated a supervising social worker. This worker will usually be the first point of contact for the foster carer and be able to offer support, advice, guidance, and supervision regarding most matters relating to fostering and the care of the child.

Additionally, each looked-after child has an allocated social worker engaged by placing authority. This person will usually be the first point of contact for the foster carer for any information and advice on issues that relate to the child.

If addition, Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year: Commissioners, Service Users, and Foster Carers are always able to make contact with us both during and outside of working hours. They can contact us during and outside of working hours by telephone at 020 82 52 52 52, Fax 020 82 20 20 20, and via e-mail: fostering@sharedcare.co.uk. After working hours, our incoming calls on the above telephone number are diverted to a mobile number (07940506999).

We operate an "on-call" rota system and can be reached during and outside working hours. All staff members on the call are fully aware of their responsibilities and the importance of providing a prompt, round-the-clock response to emergencies and other urgent requests for information.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) helps foster carers in securing independent support services where this is required for mediation purposes or to provide advocacy support for the carer during allegations.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) believes that carers should be fully reimbursed for the costs of looking after a child, and provides allowances at the nationally recognised Government recommended rates.

At times, all children can have accidents that cause damage. When such damage occurs, carers are asked to claim on their own household insurance.

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) supports foster carer group that has been established as foster carers' support groups. These meetings generally involve small numbers of geographically based carers.

17. Foster Carers Handbook

All Foster Carers have a handbook that gives factual information they need to know about the service. This includes safe, caring issues, the role of social workers, and procedures in a condensed format. The Handbook for foster carers is provided as a hard copy. Annual changes to the financial payments to foster carers are given to all foster carers who are required to sign to acknowledge their receipt of the document.

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18. Training

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) believes that a comprehensive training programme, for its staff and Carers, is the key to their personal and professional development. Training provides people with the necessary skills and knowledge necessary for providing a high-quality service. It is also key to safeguarding children, Foster Carers, and their families, by informing carers of how to care for children safely.

Training is an opportunity for, even experienced, Foster Carers to acquire new skills and an opportunity for group support and discussion. Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) has a clear training strategy, covering Pre-approval Training, for potential applicants, Induction Training for newly approved Carers which incorporates the Training, Support, and Development Standards for Foster Care (TSD) of the Department of Education. A comprehensive rolling programme of training is available; this training meets the ongoing professional development of foster carers throughout their fostering career.

Professional foster carers are required to complete a core post-approval training programme and thereafter, a minimum of 3 training courses a year. Foster carers are encouraged to undertake NVQ 3 and 4 to support their progression. Foster Carers access specialist training courses, for example, Caring for Disabled Children; Separation and Loss; Managing Difficult Behaviour; Preserving Memories; Protecting Children / Safer Care; Education Issues for Looked After Children; Building Self-Esteem; Child Protection; Child Development, etc. All training courses are evaluated with carers providing feedback. Feedback is collated and used to inform future practice.

19. Complaints Procedure

Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) has a comprehensive complaints policy and procedure. Foster Carers are given a copy of the same when they sign the Foster Carer Agreement. Policy on Complaints Procedure also includes the process if they wish to make a complaint.

Birth Parents are also given a copy of the Complaints and Complement Leaflet in the Information Pack for Parents. The child can also make their views known through the review system, and they are sent a consultation form about the placement prior to the foster carer review. Details of how to complain and how to contact Ofsted are available in the Children's Guide to Fostering. It is acknowledged that many disabled children cannot access the complaints process in this form because of their learning and communication difficulties. Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) has developed a leaflet keeping in view the special needs of children with special needs to communicate their feelings and wishes.

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20. Allegations

All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated and actioned according to Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) policies in partnership with commissioning agencies; Child Protection Service, and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Foster carers are offered independent support during this process.

21. Monitoring performance

The performance of Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) will be monitored at a number of levels and in a number of ways:

- ✦ Ofsted will regularly inspect to ensure that Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) complies with legislation and standards. This report together with any action plan arising from it will be presented to the Director of Shared Care Services (Fostering Division).
- ✦ Activity will be monitored at a strategic level against the objectives, performance indicators, and tasks as contained in Shared Care Services (Fostering Division) business plan.
- ✦ The following Key Performance Indicators will be used to monitor Shared Care Services (Fostering Division):

Performance Indicators –

- ✦ Stability of Looked After Children (LAC)
- ✦ Recruitment of new foster carers
- ✦ Further development of Fostering Division for hard-to-place children
- ✦ All Foster/ carer reviews will be held on time and a letter sent to the carer confirming the outcome
- ✦ All initial packs are to be sent to prospective carers within 4 working days
- ✦ All assessments will be completed within 5 months from the point of completion of training and within 8 months of receipt of the application to foster.
- ✦ All newly approved carers will carry out agreed induction training within the first year of approval

For any further information, please contact on 020 82 52 52 52 :

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English	For free translation phone
Albanian	Për një përkthim falas telefononi.
Arabic	للترجمة المجانية الرجاء الاتصال هاتفياً.
Bengali/Sylheti	বিনামূল্যে অনুবাদের জন্য টেলিফোন করুন
Chinese	欲索取免費譯本，請致電。
French	Pour une traduction gratuite, téléphonez
Greek	Για δωρεάν μετάφραση, τηλεφωνήστε.
Gujarati	મફત ભાષાંતર માટે ફોન કરો.
Kurdish	گیران (تەرجومە کردن) بە خۆرای، تەلەفۆن بکە.
Lithuanian	Del nemokamo vertimo skambinkinte
Malayalam	സൗജന്യമായ തർജ്ജമിനുള്ളായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുക
Polish	Po bezplatne tłumaczenia prosimy dzw.
Portuguese	Para uma tradução grátis, telefone.
Punjabi	ਮੁਫਤ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਲਈ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ
Hindi	मुफ्त अनुवाद के लिए फोन कीजिए
Russian	Перевод – бесплатно. Звоните.
Serbo-Croat	Za besplatne prevode pozovite
Somali	Turjubaan lacag la'aan ah ka soo wac tel.
Spanish	Para obtener una traducción telefónica gratuita llame al:
Tamil	இலவச மொழிபெயர்ப்புக்கு தொலைபேசி செய்யுங்கள்
Turkish	Ücretsiz çeviri için telefon edin.
Urdu	مفت ترجمے کے لئے ٹیلیفون کیجئے۔
Vietnamese	Điện thoại để được thông dịch miễn phí

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