



statement of purpose

2020- 2021

Family FosterCare North



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Coronavirus Update:

During the Covid-19 outbreak, Family Fostercare has initiated its Business Continuity Plan which outlines the measures taken to limit risk and exposure to Covid-19 for its staff, foster carers and their families, children in care, prospective carers and all other persons that we would normally come into contact with in our day-to-day operations.

This plan has required the agency to temporarily close its office and for all staff to work from home. Staff have been equipped with the necessary tools and technology to enable home working and where our Statement of Purpose refers to in-person meetings such as Supervisions, Initial Visits, LA Meetings etc, we are currently conducting these by video and/or telephone conference.

This policy is under constant review and we will update this section as and when required.

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Introduction

This document tells you about the legal status of Family Fostercare and about the work it does, how it does it and how it is going to do it better in the future. It gives information about foster carers and the people who work for the company and their qualifications. The statement of purpose is updated annually or as required.

Family Fostercare has produced the statement of purpose on its website and it can be requested in different formats as required.

Children will get their own version of this document when they are placed with our foster carers and their booklet is called the 'Children's Guide.' There are two versions of the Children's Guide, one for younger children and one for the more grown up child. We also provide younger children with a special booklet about being in foster care.

Family Fostercare's main business is to provide local authorities with a range of fostering households that can meet individual children's needs in their own community. The company does this by recruiting, approving, training and supporting foster carers.

Family Fostercare foster carers offer placements that are: short or longer term; task centered; for siblings' groups; from birth to 18 years; in an emergency or for a planned placement for asylum seekers or children in trouble with the police and courts; for parent and child assessments or for those children at risk of sexual exploitation.

Our mission

“to give every looked after child, regardless of their individual characteristics, a safe and welcoming family fostering home that values, supports and encourages them to develop through play, study or work.”



Our vision

“our vision is to be a ‘family feel’ organisation that is renowned and respected by everyone coming into contact with us or using our services.”



Our aims

1

provide services

that improve the life chances of looked after children by raising their educational and social achievements, promoting their health and leisure opportunities, by giving them aspirations and placement stability

2

drive-up quality

of our service through participant, consultation, compliance and performance

3

work closely

with local authorities by designing and providing services that meet local need and promote children's integration into their local communities and networks



Our objectives

keep the 'family feel' by having a maximum number of fostering households to a dedicated staff group

expand our services further geographically, matching the needs of local authorities and children to our provision

continue to improve outcomes for children in terms of their individual care plans with particular emphasis on placement stability, educational achievement, social development and healthy living.

provide safe fostering households for looked after children by careful matching, placement and care planning, individual safe care plans and risk assessments and through independent foster carer reviews

support staff in maintaining their registration with Social Work England

provide a first-class service to all our foster carers,

through the provision of high levels of support and training.

further develop our specialist placements, including

parent and child – our philosophy is to give parents opportunities that can help them care for their children

solo placements – our philosophy is to offer the most troubled children a placement on their own so they can have dedicated care and supervision

sibling groups - our philosophy is to keep brothers and sisters together whenever it is in their best interest to do so

children waiting for adoption or placed through adoption breakdown – our philosophy is that every child should have the support and opportunity to have a forever family

children at risk of sexual exploitation - these children are vulnerable and may need to be placed away from their community for their own protection.



Family Fostercare Principles

Equality & Diversity

The Agency is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. As an employer we are also committed to valuing equality and diversity within our workforce and to treating all employees and job applicants equally. Our goal is to ensure these commitments are embedded in our day to day working practices with all of our customers, colleagues and partners. We provide equality of opportunity and do not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination. The Agency is responsive to any child's racial, cultural and linguistic background and belief systems, taking into account their age, understanding, ability, and any special needs they may have arising from physical or intellectual impairment. The Agency is committed to equality of opportunity for employees, Foster Carers, children and young people and will strive to ensure no individual will be disadvantaged due to race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other reason. Discriminatory behaviour will be robustly challenged and dealt with appropriately according to the circumstances.



Children's individuality

There is an on-going commitment to promoting and safeguarding each child/young person's emotional and physical well-being and protecting them from all forms of abuse; to do this the views and feelings of each child are sought and they are involved in the decisions being made about them.

All children will be provided with appropriate health care and an opportunity to participate in any decisions about their health and will have full access to educational resources, promoting achievement and independence.

All children will have appropriate support in preparing them for long-term fostering or adoption, or developing their skills for independent living and where possible, on-going assistance is made available, as agreed by the local authority, to children and their families in the event they return to their care.

When considered appropriate, Family Fostercare will encourage ongoing contact for children who leave placement with Family Fostercare as we recognise that Carers are an important part of these children's lives.

Partnership working

Family Fostercare is committed to fair, open and transparent business arrangements with local authority commissioning teams. Foster carers and staff will work closely with all other agencies, and people who come into contact with the agency. Family Fostercare benefits from membership and attendance at forums with organisations such as Fostertalk, and the Fostering Network.

Consultation

Family Fostercare strives to be a responsive service that is continuously improving outcomes for, children looked after and foster carers, and staff. Foster Carer Support Groups are held regularly to listen to views put forward by our foster carers. Each foster carer has the contact details of the Registered Manager and Foster carers are encouraged and supported to talk directly to them. Notes from all Support Groups are distributed to foster carers who attended the meeting and those who were unable to do so, so that themes from the Support Groups help us shape our services. We hold regular consultation events for birth children and looked after children.

Status and constitution

Family Fostercare is an independent fostering agency, and is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (company number 065511819).

In accordance with the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989, there is a memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. Copies of these are available to the fostering regulatory body Ofsted. In compliance with the Acts there is a board of directors that meets on a regular basis to look at strategic, operational and regulatory performance indicators.

Responsibilities of the board

Development of the organisation's vision, aims and objectives and the prioritisation of action

Approval of the statement of purpose

Review and development of the organisation's structure

Review of performance and compliance

Monitoring of quality through quarterly management reporting

Review, development and approval of organisation-wide policy

Foster Carers

Recruitment

Family Fostercare looks specifically for families who have the home space, motivation, time, resilience and energy to look after a child and who have a commitment to undertake all training. Applicants are encouraged from diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

Family Fostercare is committed to recruiting foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children in the child's own community and so the agency has a structure of small regional offices and satellite premises. Family Fostercare uses its website and social media as the main recruitment.

The agency advertises to targeted audiences across the major online search networks, and maintains an active identity on social networking channels. It also regularly trials new advertising channels and mediums and closely monitors return in terms of enquiries generated before adding any new media to the blend.

A small marketing budget is available to regional offices to avail of ad hoc marketing activities, typically press advertising in special community features, in community newsletters. Regional offices also hold occasional open days, wrapped by local press advertising and media press releases, and offices display prominent window advertising.

Applications to become a foster carer are welcomed regardless of the applicants' individual characteristics. People over the age of 25 years may apply to become a foster carer. There is no upper age limit for fostering. Every applicant must have a medical undertaken by their GP to ensure there are no health or lifestyle issues that would prevent them from fostering.

Assessments

It is a minimum requirement that a foster carer has a spare room available for a looked after child. Family Fostercare uses social work staff and commissioned assessors to undertake assessments. Family Fostercare is compliant with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, the Care Planning, Placement & Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 and the Fostering Network Transfer Protocol. The timescale from assessment to approval is approximately 5 to 6 months.

All prospective foster carers who make an enquiry to foster are dealt with by the company sending them the Introduction to Fostering Brochure. This is done by email and by post. Should the applicant wish to proceed then an initial interest form is completed and a decision made about undertaking an initial visit at the applicant's home.

Upon registration of interest, prospective applicants will be invited to our Skills to Foster training program. Once prospective Carers have made a successful application, Family Fostercare will begin the assessment process. The assessment is based on the 2-stage process which can run individually or concurrently.

Assessment Stage 1

For new applicants, stage 1 considers the statutory checks and personal references, and includes:

- enhanced disclosure and barring service check (DBS) on the applicants and any adults in the household over the age of 18
- local authority check
- employer references
- school/health visitor reports
- medical reports
- details of applicants own children in the household or not
- at least 2 personal references for each applicant
- name and address of any other fostering agency the applicants have been approved by in the preceding 12 months

- details of any current and any previous marriage, civil partnership or similar relationship

(If the applicant is a foster carer transferring from another agency, stage 1 is slightly different as a reference is requested from their current fostering agency too.)

Family Fostercare will also undertake the following, as good practice, in Stage 1:

- a household Health & Safety check including caravans, mobile homes etc.
- a risk assessment on any pets in the home
- financial assessment
- landlord references
- an enhanced DBS on people nominated to act as support

If any of the Stage 1 checks are returned indicating that the applicant is unsuitable to foster the Agency Decision Maker will make the decision whether to continue or terminate the assessment. Explanation will be given to the applicant in writing about this decision.



Assessment Stage 2

Stage 2 is the home study, when the assessing social worker is completing the assessment.

If during Stage 2 the assessor raises any concerns about the applicant's suitability to foster and the assessor wishes to terminate the assessment, a brief report will be completed and presented to the Fostering Panel.

A recommendation will be made by the Fostering Panel regarding continuing or ending the assessment.

The Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision about terminating the assessment based on the brief report and recommendation by the Fostering Panel.

The assigned assessor will be a qualified social worker who will undertake a comprehensive assessment with the prospective foster carer and their family. This will form the basis of a report which will be presented to fostering panel.

The assessing social worker will visit the home a minimum of eight visits to spend time working with the applicants on their assessment. The assessment is a joint project and will require full participation from applicants and their family.

Once the assessment report has been completed and signed by the prospective foster carers and their checks are satisfactory then the application is discussed by the fostering panel

Fostering panel

Panel membership

An Independent Fostering Panel has been formulated for the agency's sole use. This comprises Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and panel members from a variety of appropriate backgrounds and experience such as Police, Child Protection, Health, Education and Local Authority Foster Carers as well as, where possible, an ex-care leaver.

Each member of the Fostering Panel Central List is Enhanced DBS checked and have current references from previous employers. The agency will undertake annual appraisals and training with each member and continue to recruit new members ensuring a diverse group of people from various backgrounds are available.

Each panel sitting will be documented by the Panel minute taker and paperwork agreed by all members prior to sending to the Agency Decision Maker. ADM decisions will be verbally given, within two days of making, and in writing within five days.

Supervising Social Workers will present any reviews to panel, along with the fostering family. Our panel has access to specialist legal and medical advice as required.

Panel support roles

Panel Coordinator: responsible for the Panel calendar and agenda; collating and distributing Panel documentation.

Panel Advisor: A Manager or Senior Social Worker who gives advice at Panel when requested; organises Panel schedules and training.

Medical Advisor: reports on the health and lifestyle of applicants in terms of their suitability to foster.

Legal Advisor: could be called upon for their expertise in legal matters, e.g. fostering, family law, human rights, data protection.

Agency Decision Maker: makes a decision to approve new applicants and decides if foster carers remain suitable (following their foster carer reviews) or writes to the foster carers telling them if they are subject to a qualifying determination.

The role and function of panel

Fostering Panels have to be properly constituted and they must act with independence from Family Fostercare. The Panel cannot make decisions; its purpose is to advise the agency in relation to the issues listed below. As part of this function, the Panel oversees

the conduct of assessments, advises on any relevant matters in relation to services that are provided and makes recommendations about quality issues and performance standards. In particular, the Panel makes recommendations as to the following:

Consider

applications for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to act as a foster carer, and if so the terms on which they should be approved

first review of newly approved foster carers, and any subsequent reviews referred to it, and recommend whether or not the foster carers remain suitable and terms of approval remain appropriate

review of carers who have been the subject of an allegation **representations** from applicants who have been deemed not suitable to approve

Oversee

conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service; **receive information** from the manager in relation to the quality assurance functions of the Panel

Advise

review procedures : advise on, and monitor, the effectiveness of, the procedures for undertaking reviews of foster carers

cases referred : give advice and make recommendations on any other matters or cases referred to the Panel by the fostering service

performance : give advice and monitor the range of foster carers being approved in comparison to the needs of the children referred to the agency; to monitor how quickly applications are brought to Panel, quality of preparation for applicants and opportunities for post approval training

Report

provide an annual report of its work; the report will be available to agency staff, placing authorities, children's parents and Ofsted



Approval Process

Approval

The Panel members read all of the reports before Panel sits and at Panel they have further discussions. They will form a view about the applicants and ask questions to the presenting social worker. They will make recommendations for approval or they can defer making a recommendation for further information to be provided.

The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will use the Hofstetter guidelines and principles to make the final decision about approval. This means that the Agency Decision Maker will consider a wide range of information as well as the Panel minutes before making a decision. Upon approval the foster carer will be advised in writing by the ADM, allocated a supervising social worker and they will sign a Foster Carer Agreement. Their names will be entered onto the Family Fostercare foster carers register. Family Fostercare will advise local authorities of the approved foster carer's availability and inform the applicant's GP that they have been approved as foster carers.

Pre-approval training

This is when applicants are invited to Skills to Foster and they begin the Training, Support, Development and Standards (TSDS) workbook.

Post-approval training

Every approved foster carer has to undertake training as per our training policy. Foster carers can access online training in addition to our face to face training courses. Some of the courses on offer are mandatory but cover a wide range of topics including:

- Behaviour
- Child Management
- Sexual Exploitation
- Radicalisation
- De-escalation of behaviour and physical intervention
- First aid
- Administration of medication
- Safeguarding children
- Health, food and hygiene
- Diversity and equality
- Promoting children's education
- Missing from care

Training

All foster carers are supported to attend training and they must gain their TSDS certificate within the twelve-month timescale of approval.

Training delivery is done by: individual sessions; group sessions; home learning; day and evening sessions; tutorials and workshops. The Social Care Training Hub allows carers to access online training. The annual training programme includes the mandatory training for all foster carers and dedicated training, such as Parent and Child Placements, for the more experienced foster carers.

Training programs and workshops are reviewed in response to legislation and practice developments and changing placement needs, alongside individual carer needs.

Supervising social workers provide support, supervision and allow our carers to explore the impact of training in their households.

Therapeutic groups are also run and new and experienced foster carers are able to attend these sessions which are facilitated by a Family Fostercare therapist. The sessions provide carers with a safe and knowledgeable environment in which to explore any concerns they may have relating to a particular child's behaviour or their response to it. Foster carers can also access 1-to-1 therapist support.

Foster carer reviews

All foster carers have an annual review which is an opportunity to appraise the last year of their foster care and set new goals and actions for the year ahead. Training needs are also assessed and identified.

Family Fostercare presents the carers first annual review and every third subsequent review thereafter to Panel. Foster carer reviews being presented to Panel, are undertaken by independent fostering reviewing officers (IFROs).

The Agency Decision Maker makes a decision after each review and a new Fostercare agreement is issued to carers as required

Supporting & managing carers

Every approved Family Fostercare foster carer, at their induction, is given access to our Foster Carers Handbook and agency Policies and procedures. Every foster carer has an allocated supervising social worker. It is the supervising social worker's role to manage and support the foster carer in the fostering task.

Family Fostercare offers support 24 hours a day and 365 days a year through qualified staff being on an on-call duty system. Staff have access to a live database from which they can extract relevant information during normal and out of office hours.

Family Fostercare provides free membership to Foster Talk for all foster carers. Additionally, all carers registered with the agency are provided with a MAX card offering free and discounted activities for children and young people.

The supervising social workers will always support foster carers through regular home visits and their personal attendance at placement planning meetings, looked after children reviews, foster carer reviews and at Fostering Panel.

Family Fostercare is committed to the 'family feel' approach and as such offers a wide range of activities for the birth children of foster carers. Supervising social workers meet with birth children on a regular basis.

There will be occasions where complaints or allegations are made against foster carers or members of the household. Family Fostercare has a clear policy for managing allegations and support will be ongoing via the agency and independent advice by FosterTalk when required.



Quality Standards

Family Fostercare aims to improve the quality of its services year on year. A number of quality standards and quality assurance processes are in place to make sure that:

Children are **safe**

Children are **healthy** and **achieving**

Children are in **well maintained homes**

There are **sufficient numbers of foster carers** with the right approval status to meet the needs of local authorities

There are **sufficient staff** to recruit, train and support foster carers

Complaints are handled swiftly and objectively

New staff are inducted using a corporate and specific role-related framework.



Quality Standards

Assessments

Assessments will be completed by qualified and experienced staff within prescribed timescales.

Training

Foster carers will undertake the 'Skills to Foster' training and will complete the Training, Support and Development Standards within twelve months.

Each approved foster carer will attend the mandatory training. Transferring foster carers will have to demonstrate their training by way of certification.

Matching

Children will be matched with families that can meet their primary needs and reflect their religion and culture.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and child protection will be dealt with swiftly in line with Local Children's Safeguarding Board procedures.

Children Who Go Missing

There will be a joint protocol between Family Fostercare, the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB) and police authority for children who go missing from care or who are absent without permission.

Placement planning

Placement planning will include individual Safer Care plans for each child and a child specific risk assessment. These will be reviewed by the supervising social worker on a regular basis.

Transferring foster carers with children in placement will have revised risk assessments and safe care plans completed.



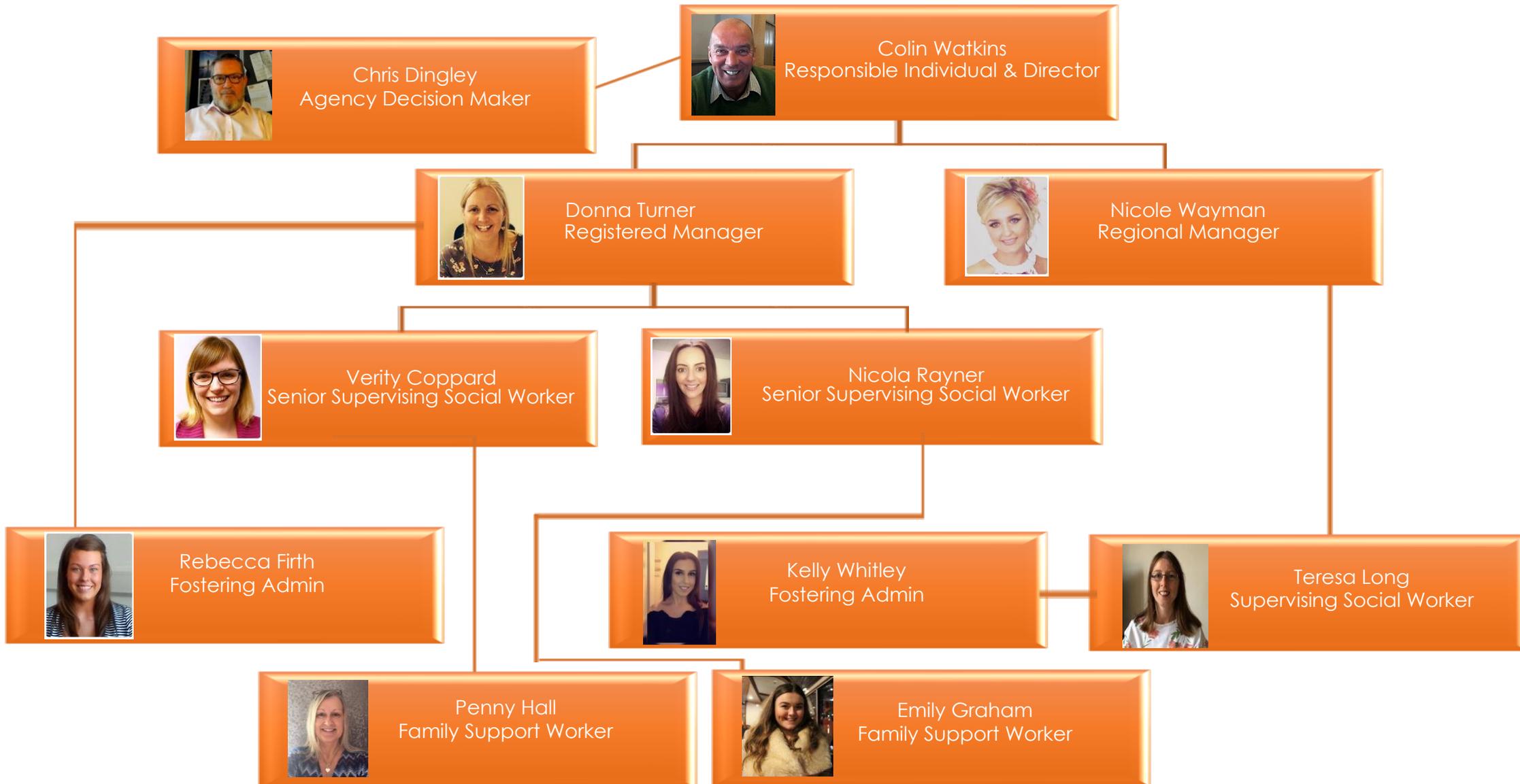
Foster Carer Support Groups

Support groups are held in a range of venues and during the daytime or on an evening. Support groups are used for foster carer support, training workshops, social purposes and for giving out information.

Foster Carer Respite

To reduce the opportunity for a placement breakdown or to give foster carers time to themselves, Family Fostercare offers foster carers up to 14 nights respite annually and normally this would be with a fostering family member or another foster carer known to the looked after child.

Family Fostercare North



Complaints & Compliments

Complaints

Family Fostercare takes all complaints very seriously and uses the outcomes of complaints to continually improve services. There is a complaints procedure in place that puts an emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and at an early stage. Family Fostercare complaints procedure is shared with foster carers and children and young people in the children's guides.



summary of the complaint's procedure

STAGE ONE

Local informal resolution - complaints will generally be raised and resolved directly between the parties concerned with the registered manager being kept informed



STAGE TWO

The complainant wishes to go to this stage at the beginning of the process or is unsatisfied with stage one - it is conducted by the registered manager



STAGE THREE

Independent investigation - the Responsible Individual will arrange for an independent person to carry out the investigation

Compliments

All compliments are recorded. Here is a selection of comments made about our staff and the services that Family Fostercare offers:

"I can hang out with my friends."

"There has been lots of different activities that we have done."

"Had a fun day at the picnic and running around."

Children and Young People Placed with Family Fostercare In Regards To Activities and Support

"We couldn't have been happier with the level of training and support we have been given. There is always someone to help with advice." **Foster Carer**

"I would just like to show my appreciation of the fantastic support I have received from my social worker and the phone calls she has made to me every day over the weekend. I feel I am getting the support I need."
Foster Carer

"I have been a social worker for 9 years and I have never come across such committed and nurturing foster carers." **Child's Social Worker**

"The children are fully integrated into the family and the carers are highly attuned to the children's needs." **Looked After Children Nurse**

Contact details

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