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Statement of Purpose

October 2025

This statement of purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate legislation and guidance including:

- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (amended 2013) Regulation 3
- The National Minimum Standard 2011 Standard 16
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Care Standards Act 2000

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Introduction

Aspirations Fostering is a child centred Independent Fostering Agency for children and young people who, as a consequence of their early life experiences need the opportunity to be cared for in the context of a family. Aspirations Fostering have been established to provide safe, high quality, innovative, family centred care for children and young people looked after by the Local Authority.

Mission Statement

Aspirations Fostering has been established to provide high quality, safe and nurturing foster homes for children needing to be looked after. Foster carers recruited to the company will share the vision and ethos of the Director, Managers and Staff which is to have high aspirations for all children and young people and to strive to ensure the best possible outcomes for them are achieved.

“Inclusion is at the core of everything Aspirations Fostering do ensuring children and young people are given the opportunity to hold aspirations that they are supported to achieve.”

Angie Kirby, Founder Aspirations Fostering

About Aspirations Fostering

Legal Status: An Independent Fostering Agency
Company Registration No:9770803

Director: Gary Parker

Responsible Individual: Ken Johnson

Interim Registered Manager: Liana Gowen

Telephone Number: 07535 139833

Email: Liana.gowen@aspirationsfostering.co.uk

Website: www.aspirationsfostering.co.uk

Aims and Objectives

Aims

- To provide safe, nurturing, high quality family orientated care for looked after children and young people, ensuring physical and emotional health needs are met.
- To provide positive personal, social and educational opportunities for children and young people bringing about a sense of value and belonging and enjoying and achieving through inclusion in family, community and agency activities.
- To consult with children and young people ensuring they feel able to express their views, are listened to and informed about what is happening to them.
- To provide a comprehensive 24 Hour support service for foster carers and children and young people by experienced qualified workers.
- To prepare young people for independence, by offering them opportunities to learn, practically, independence skills.
- Adhere strictly to the Fostering Regulations and Standards 2011 (amended 2013)
- Continually work towards improvement, innovation and quality assurance

Objectives

Aspirations Fostering will continue to recruit child centred foster carers throughout the Eastern Region who will contribute to a team effort in meeting the needs of children and young people.

Aspirations Fostering will seek to consult with children and young people about the services provided, to listen and hear the voices of children and young people with regard to their hopes, aspirations and fears.

Aspirations Fostering will, in a responsive way, offer the children and young people the security, stability, life experiences and opportunities to enhance their quality of life.

Aspirations Fostering will offer a high level of professional training to all foster carers including accredited qualifications. In addition, post-placement Continued Professional Development and opportunities will be promoted with a view to enhancing the quality of care provided to children and young people.

To effect stability of placements, all Aspirations Foster carers are offered a maximum level of support, including respite directed to appropriate times of need.

Aspirations Fostering will, in partnership with the young person, placing Authorities and Other Agencies, work through the processes leading towards their eventual independence.

Inclusion is at the core of everything Aspirations Fostering do ensuring children and young people are given the opportunity to hold aspirations that they are supported to achieve.

Principles of care

Aspirations Fostering ensures that our main priority is always the child or young person in our care. We aim to provide children and young people with a positive, safe and nurturing experience of substitute care within a family environment.

In agreement with The Children Act 1989, we subscribe to the view that a child is best brought up in their own home with both parents playing a full part in their upbringing. Aspirations Fostering recognise that this is not always possible. Whenever it is considered to be in the child's best interest, however, Aspirations Fostering will work positively with the placing Local Authority Children's Services to return the child to her/his parents or extended family.

Aspirations Fostering key objectives are to develop services in order that children and young people can develop and grow within the five key outcomes areas of "Every Child Matters" (2003):

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

At all times Aspirations Fostering expects its staff, carers and their families to positively embrace each individual child/young person's heritage. Our values include the belief that all people, children and adults alike, are individuals who are to be respected and treated as equals, whatever their circumstances, histories or difficulties.

We at Aspirations Fostering regard foster carers as a core part of our team. Foster carers will enjoy full participation and consultation in the development of our services. A core purpose of Aspirations Fostering is to ensure that a wide range of placements are available for children and young people. In order to provide the choice of placements for children, we believe it is necessary to offer foster carers a robust package of professional Support and remuneration.

Children and young people placed with Aspirations Fostering will be encouraged to fully participate in the ongoing development and improvement of our services. There will be regular opportunity for children and young people to give their views on the care and services they receive and all comments or suggestions made will be given full consideration by Aspirations Fostering Managers and staff.

Our overall aim is to recruit a diverse team of professional, resilient and nurturing carers who can provide children and young people with a positive experience of substitute family care. Foster carers will be expected and supported to comply with the National Minimum Standards (2011) and Fostering Regulations 2011.

Foster carers will be supported to meet the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for foster carers within one year from the date of their initial approval. All staff and others working on behalf of Aspirations Fostering are required to be fully conversant with the National Minimum Standards (2011) for foster care and Fostering Regulations 2011. Aspirations Fostering have clear policies and procedures in place in respect of the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of foster carers and staff.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding legislation and government guidance says that safeguarding means:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes

The welfare of children is our responsibility. The Children Act 2004 places a clear responsibility of safeguarding children on all Agencies who have contact with children and families in their routine work. The Aspirations Fostering Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are written in accordance with The Children Acts 1989 and 2004, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011(as amended) and National Minimum Standards (2011), Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013, and the relevant Child Protection Procedures published by Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

The Registered Manager is the designated Safeguarding Officer and will liaise with Local Authority LADO's and Ofsted where there are safeguarding concerns.

Aspirations Fostering will develop a Safeguarding Group that will meet regularly or more often if specific safeguarding concerns/events deem it necessary. The group will consist of The Responsible Individual, the Registered Manager and a Social Worker.

Services Provided

Aspirations Fostering will aim to find the closest possible match when children need to be placed in foster care and will identify any additional training, support or resource required. We will work in partnership with Local Authorities and all other agencies to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children who need to be looked after. Aspirations Fostering seek to offer the following types of placements:

Emergency Foster Placements

Aspirations Fostering provide a 24 hour a day 365 day a year emergency service. Many carers choose to specialise in short term work and are able to accept unplanned and emergency placements.

Short term foster placements

Provision of short term care that could be for a few days, weeks or months, whilst plans are made for the child's future by the Local Authority.

Bridging foster placements

We can provide bridging placements for children or young people while permanency plans are being formulated. In such placements, Aspirations Fostering foster carers work with children/young people and their families toward reunification, or prepare children/young people for joining adoptive or long term/permanent fostering families, or for moving to a semi-independent or an independent living arrangement.

Respite foster placements Internal and External

External Respite placements are provided to give parents a break, or offer additional support if they do not have their own support network. In addition, Internal Respite is also offered to our own foster carers and is available in order to support placement demands and needs.

Long term foster placements

These placements are where adoption is not an option, and the foster carer will care for a child/young person up to and into adult independence.

Sibling group foster placements

Sibling placements are for brothers and sisters who are all placed together into a foster care household. Aspirations Fostering believe in keeping siblings together within a family environment, unless it is deemed inappropriate by the placing Authority.

Parent and child foster placements

Placements will be available for mothers and/or fathers and their child, where foster carers can provide support and guidance to parent(s) and help them develop parenting skills.

In addition to the above children, young people and foster carers will have access to therapeutic support to support placement stability. Aspirations Fostering will work in partnership with the placing local authority to ensure appropriate therapeutic services are identified.

Regular activities will be arranged to take place throughout the year to enable foster carers, children and young people to experience a variety of social events promoting a sense of belonging within the agency and supporting participation in services delivered and developed.

Matching

Aspirations Fostering work predominantly with Local Authorities in the Eastern Region of England, however, we do look after some children who have been referred to us by Local Authorities outside of this area.

We endeavour to ensure that all of the placements we make are carefully matched, any identified needs of the children and young people are met by foster carers who have the necessary skills and experience to meet these needs.

Each child is an individual and we work closely with referring Local Authorities to gain as much information as possible about the child/young person being referred. This enables us to match children with Foster Carers who can meet their cultural, religious and diverse needs. No placements are made without discussions between Foster Carers, children already in placement, Foster Carers own children, social Work staff and the Registered Manager. The needs of any children in the fostering household are considered and their social workers are consulted about the possibility of another placement being offered. Any identified gaps in matching are addressed at referral or placement planning meetings.

Many of our Foster Carers possess a wealth of experience caring for children and young people with diverse, complex and often challenging behaviors. These Foster Carers provide peer support and participate in training sessions sharing their experiences. In October 2025 Aspirations Fostering had 22 Foster Carer Families providing placements to 29 children and young people.

100% of school age children placed with us are in Education

Percentages of children placed by age

Children placed	0 - 5 %	6 - 10 %	11-16 15 %	16	17 %	18 + %
	17	29	54			

Percentages of children placed by ethnicity

Children placed	White British %	Any other white background %	Any other ethnic group %
	90.4	9.6	

Percentages of children placed by gender

Children placed	Male %	Female %
	69	31

Management Structure

Gary Parker Director

Gary is responsible for the Company Accounts, and also for the financial management of Aspirations Fostering. Gary also monitors strategic business development.

Ken Johnson Responsible Individual

Ken is the Responsible Individual for Aspirations Fostering. Ken has over 40 years' experience of working within social care and has held a number of senior management positions. Ken held various operational and managerial positions within Essex County Council Social Services between 1972 and 1989. In 1989 Ken became the Group Director Social Services, Essex County Council.

1972-1989 – Various operational and management positions within Essex County Council Social Services.

1989-1995 – Group Director Social Services, Essex County Council.

1995-2009 – Senior Lecturer in Management and Social Care at Anglia Ruskin University.

2000-2004 – Independent Chair for Peterborough Area Child Protection Committee.

1997 – 2015 – Fostering Panel member for an Independent Fostering Agency.

Since 1995 Ken has also worked as a counsellor and supervisor having gained his Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Ken also has qualifications in Public Relations, Social Work, Management and Education. He is a member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy and is registered with Social Care England.

Liana Gowen Interim Registered Manager

Liana completed her BA degree in Social Work in South Africa in 1992, where she was born and grew up. Her first role as social worker was in a multi-disciplinary team working in a rehabilitation unit for people with alcohol-dependency. This was in the charitable sector. In 1997 she travelled to the UK and her first role in a children's home, was the beginning of working with children and young people being Looked After in public care. Between 1998 and 2023 Liana worked for a Local Authority fostering service, as independent social worker in the fostering sector delivering training (including

preparation training), completing assessments and as a supervising social worker and later registered manager within the private sector.

Liana pursued an interest in palliative and end-of-life care by working for a local hospice as social worker for children, young people and adults between 2019 and early 2022; and again from 2023- 2025 in a community integration role. In all these areas of work, Liana has learnt about the positive impact of supportive relationships to foster resilience, promote wellbeing and encourage and enable change where needed.

Hayley Kirby Fostering Support Co-Ordinator

Hayley began her career as a childcare assistant working with a local childminder. After completing her GCSE's, she completed an NVQ Level 2 in childcare in 2004. She became a full-time Mum to her son in 2005 and then became a courier before returning to help set up Aspirations Fostering alongside her Mum Angie.

Hayley manages all administrative tasks relating to training, Foster Carer Activities and Support Groups, Children's birthdays and Children and Young People's achievements alongside other admin roles for Aspirations Fostering as well as supporting carers and arranging events for the company. Hayley has been with Aspirations Fostering since 2017.

Sarah Kinsella Administrator

Sarah began her career as a child carer at a local nursery after completing her NVQ level 2 and 3 in childcare. Sarah started this role as bank staff and over the 3 years went on to become Head Room Supervisor to 3rd in charge of the nursery.

After 3 years Sarah was offered a job as a full-time nanny caring for 3 children, she worked with this family for 8 years, only leaving to start her own family in 2015.

Since then, Sarah has completed Level 1 & 2 courses in bookkeeping and accounting and running payroll, bookwork and admin for small limited companies.

Sarah joined Aspirations Fostering in March 2020, Sarah is responsible for all aspects of Administration and is also Aspirations Fostering Panel Administrator.

Rachael Parker – Supervising Social Worker

Rachael qualified as a Social Worker in 2006 and started work in the Continuing Care Team for Essex where she carried a complex child and family workload, this included family support, child protection, children in need and looked after children. She then moved onto Fostering Recruitment Team working on the duty line taking initial enquiries, carrying out initial assessments in the home to ascertain suitability to foster as well as holding a full case load of Form F assessments which she would eventually present to panel. Rachael also helped run the 'Skills to Foster' three-day intensive training course for potential foster carers. When her daughter started school, she worked as a teaching assistant in two different primary schools where she completed an Elkan speech and language level 3 accreditation and then worked as a specialist TA with children in a group setting and on a one-to-one basis. In 2019, once her 2nd daughter was in pre-school, Rachael started working for Aspirations Fostering as a panel member as well as completing Form F assessments as an Independent Social Worker. At this time Rachael was also a Supervising Social Worker until August 2022 when she joined Aspirations Fostering team permanently as a Supervising social Worker.

Jenna Beckett – Supervising Social Worker

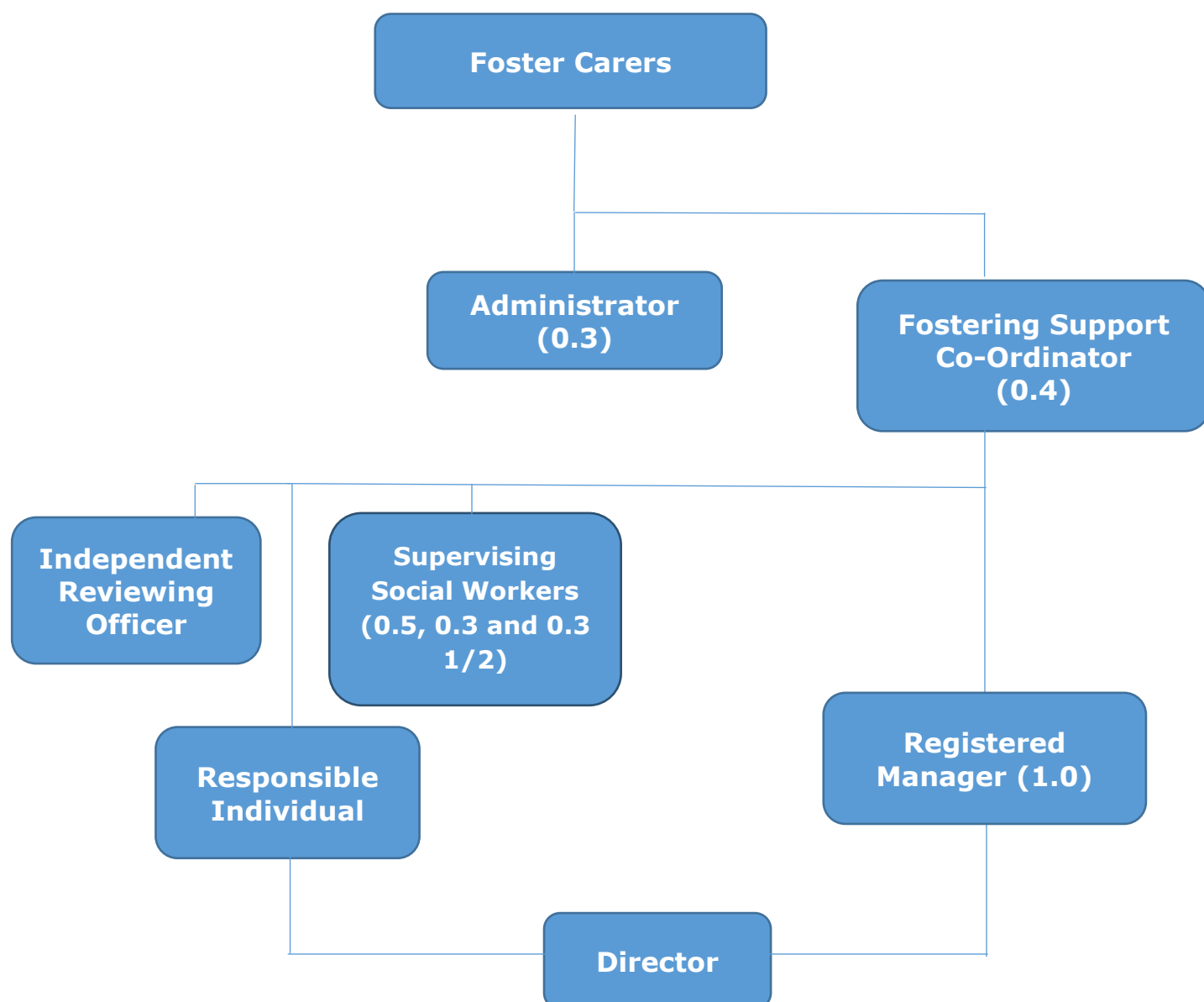
Jenna has over 18 years' experience as an administrator, beginning in 2001 at a local solicitor's firm. During her time at the solicitors, she completed an NVQ Level 2 in Administration. Prior to this she attended Seevic college studying English, French, Drama and Performing arts at A level. Jenna then spent 6 years in the motor trade as an administrator and also worked in London as a PA. She currently works with children part-

time as a character performer as well as working for a local theatre. She is married and has three daughters aged 13, 11 and 5. Jenna previously worked as an administrator for Aspirations Fostering before pursuing her university studies. She recently completed a 1st class BA(Hons) degree in social work. She is excited to begin her career as a Social Worker, following in the footsteps of her amazing Mum Angie.

Beci Johnson – Supervising Social Worker

Beci started her career working in a local primary school for 5 years as a Special Educational Needs Learning Support Assistant. Prior to this she studied A-Levels at college which included Law, Psychology, English Language and Media Studies. Beci also has experience working in the beauty industry as a Beauty Therapist. In 2012 Beci decided she wanted to follow in her father's footsteps and completed a degree in social work, achieving a First-class BA hon's degree. She then started her social work career at a mental health children's charity organisation as a Relational Therapeutic Social Worker, supporting children, young people and families. Alongside this role she also supervised a team of volunteer mentors.

Staffing Structure



Staff Training and Development

Aspirations Fostering are committed to the professional development of their staff. Each member of staff will have an Individual Development Plan which will be reviewed annually at their Appraisal but may be updated at any time.

Training will be discussed during the staff's supervision sessions. Training courses will be provided both internally and externally, leading, wherever possible to further qualification, including NVQs for Administrators, Post Qualifying Awards for Social Workers and Management Qualifications for senior staff members.

Qualified social workers will attend individual supervision by their line manager on a monthly basis or more frequently where practice requires.

When face to face training is not possible this will be delivered virtually via an online training hub.

Valuing Diversity

We ensure that children and young people live in an environment which promotes equality and diversity. We respect all individuals irrespective of their gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.

Aspirations Fostering endeavour to match children and young people with the most suitable foster carers who will be able to meet their religious and cultural needs alongside their global needs consistently.

- Aspirations Fostering place children with carers of matching racial and cultural heritage wherever possible. Where this is not possible, we work with the child, their birth family, the foster carers and social workers to ensure that every opportunity is created and embraced to support the individual child's ethnicity and culture.
- Aspirations Fostering helps and encourages foster carers and provides training which develops their ability to promote a child's confidence, self-worth and identity and their wishes and feelings.
- Foster carers provide an emotionally warm and secure home environment whilst offering the highest quality of care.
- Any safeguarding issues will be dealt with immediately following Aspirations Fostering agreed procedures for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

Aspirations Fostering Panel

In accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, Aspirations Fostering will maintain a central list of persons suitable to sit on fostering panels and will establish regular fostering panels whose overriding objectives are to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care. Panels will have a balance of gender, ethnicity and qualifications and reflect our commitment to bring together individuals from different backgrounds. Each panel has access to specialist legal and medical advice as required.

The Independent chair has many years' experience of working with children and young people in a variety of roles in Statutory Child Care Services as a Senior Practitioner and Team Manager (London Boroughs of Redbridge and Havering) for 10 years before moving into Further and Higher Education to teach on Social Work programmes. She taught on modules, which entailed ensuring others understood the effects of separation and loss on children's mental health and behaviour. The traditional theorists (Bowlby, Klein, Fahlberg, Ainsworth and Winnicott) were used as a basis for understanding attachment and loss. More recently she has used the work of Schofield and Beek (University of East Anglia) writing about the Secure Base Model, and David Shemmings work on disorganized attachment.

She also has personal experience as a foster carer for Essex County Council from approximately 1980 to 1996.

The central list of suitable panel members includes an active foster carer, a retired teacher of secondary education, a care experienced member, a counsellor and qualified social workers one who was previously a foster carer.

Recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers

We endorse the view expressed in the Fostering Network Code of Practice that the use of common, standard assessment tools, such as those produced by the Fostering Network and the Coram (BAAF)Form F, will enable fostering services to achieve uniform standards.

We therefore make full use of the above tools in the, assessment and approval stages of fostering applications.

We also seek to actively promote the Fostering Network values underpinning the competencies approach and to ensure that they are an integral part of the assessment process.

These are that:

- Child safety is paramount
- Individuals are respected
- Difference and diversity are valued
- Equality is promoted
- Discrimination is challenged
- Confidentiality is maintained
- Advice and feedback are provided in a constructive way
- Applicants are supported to demonstrate their competence
- Standards of childcare are explicit and agreed

Recruitment

"The aim of our recruitment campaign will be to attract potentially suitable people who may want to take up fostering and provide them with significant information for them to decide whether or not to make a formal application".
(Fostering Network Code of Practice)

Aspirations Fostering advertisements and other recruitment materials aim to promote the agency's selection criteria, which are as follows:

- Applicants with particular skills and experience in specific areas such as managing challenging behaviour, child care, working directly with children and young people mental health, learning difficulties, attachment, separation and loss.
- Applicants from different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds.
- Applicants who are committed to professional and personal development and can evidence this within their own career or life journey.
- Applicants with experience of previous fostering and/or close involvement with someone who has already fostered.
- An ability to reflect on life experiences and demonstrate how this may have had a positive or negative impact on the applicant's life.
- An ability to see beyond the child's or young person's behaviour and to link it to past trauma, where applicable.
- An empathy for and natural ability to nurture children.
- Applicants able to accept teenagers and manage adolescent behaviour.
- Applicants who are comfortable with working in partnership with parents and other birth family and promoting contact with those who are significant to the child/young person.

In addition to the above the following is essential:

- A spare bedroom in rented or owned property (if rented the landlord is in agreement for fostering).

- If living with a partner/ spouse, the relationship is established and stable.
- At least one carer at home full time or with reduced commitments.
- A commitment to attend training events and support groups.
- A willingness to support a child's/young person's attendance for therapy, school, hospital appointment etc- including the provision of transport where necessary and hence have a good level of flexibility.
- A valid driving licence and use of a car or the availability of excellent transport links.

All interested people who either respond directly to an advertisement or online marketing or apply to Aspirations Fostering in between recruitment campaigns, will have their enquiries recorded the Charms Database. If appropriate, we will send further information in order to help the enquirer decide whether they feel they have the necessary skills for Fostering.

Initial Home Visit

If the enquiry meets the recruitment criteria an initial home visit will be arranged. During the home visit, applicants will be given further information about fostering. The roles and responsibilities of staff will be discussed as well as the assessment process itself.

The need for all members of the household over the age of 18 to consent to a DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) and other statutory checks will be explained and information on these checks (including medicals) will also be supplied.

In addition, requirements in terms of health and safety standards in the home will be provided to ensure applicants meet certain essential criteria.

If the home visit is positive, an application form can be completed following the visit or alternately this can be completed later.

Planning the assessment

All assessments will be carried out by qualified and experienced social workers. The first assessment meeting will be to plan the assessment with the applicants. At this stage, Aspirations Fostering will provide the applicants with detailed information on the assessment process and guidance on what will be expected of them and their family. When they have the first assessment meeting with applicants the assessor will explain to them that:

1. The fostering assessment has two stages and that specified statutory and safeguarding checks are undertaken under stage 1. If it is decided not to continue with an assessment because of information collected as part of stage 1, this will be communicated formally in writing.
2. Under stage 2 of the assessment, they will be able to see any "brief report" or final report referred to as a 'Form F Assessment' and record any comments with it before this is considered by a fostering panel.
3. The assessor's report will make a recommendation to the fostering panel about their suitability to foster, including those children whom they might best be matched with, as well as their training and development needs for the future.

4. The assessor will explain the competencies required for fostering and give initial help and advice in enabling applicants to link evidence with the skills required for fostering e.g. "can you think of a time when you needed to be calm?" etc.

5. Leading on from the above, the assessor will also help the applicant identify skills or abilities they may find most difficult or need to develop.

6. All members of the household will be consulted and their views and opinions taken into account during the assessment. This will include birth children of the family.

Preparation training

Applicants will be invited to attend the Foster Carers Preparation to Foster Course along with other applicants. The course will be led by experienced social workers and foster carers over two to three days dependent on applicant numbers and we also aim for a looked after young person to present at a session. We will access specialist training where carers will be approved for children with disabilities or children with more complex emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The assessment process

Assessment of prospective foster carers is undertaken using the Corum (BAAF) Form F report which is incorporated into the Charms database.

The Aspirations Fostering assessing social worker will undertake the assessment in the following settings:

The applicant's own home.

During the Foster Carers Preparation to Foster Course.

In other relevant settings e.g. a relevant workplace, such as a playgroup etc.

A variety of techniques will be used to gather evidence or information regarding the applicants' suitability to foster.

These may include:

1. The Form F guidance to assist applicants and assessors to work out what existing skills they already possess and what new ones they need to acquire.
2. Ecomaps, family trees and/or other personal history tools to gain information on an applicant's motivation to foster and how their past history may impact on future fostering
3. Witness statements from other adults who can corroborate the applicant's ability to relate to and care for children - e.g. babysitting circle, helping out at school etc.
4. Discussion
5. Records and reports
6. Assignments and case studies
7. Observations from the Foster Carers Preparation to Foster Course.

Care will be taken by the assessor to acknowledge and assess the life history of the applicant - rather than concentrating solely on the applicant's current functioning and circumstances.

The completed assessment will include a recommendation by the assessing social worker.

Statutory checks and references

Following written consent from prospective carers and other members of the household over the age of 18 years, Aspirations Fostering will ensure that satisfactory clearance is received in relation to the following checks and references before the approval stage is reached.

- Proof of identity
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) on all household members
- Children's Services Department's record through writing to your local authority of where applicants have lived over the last ten years.
- Cafcass (if appropriate)
- Ofsted (if appropriate)
- Previous applications to foster
- Overseas check (if appropriate)
- Employer's reference (past and present if applicable)
- Health visitor (if applicable) School (if applicable of birth children).
- Voluntary work
- Companies House Check

Health report

An independent medical consultant will review the information presented and provide their comments on the applicant's suitability to foster under medical grounds. It is important that all medical history is disclosed at the time of the initial visit and during the assessment.

Health and safety inspection

This takes place within the home and also involves any vehicles that will be used to transport children.

Personal references

Personal x 3, each of whom will be visited by the assessing social worker
Ex-partner, where there have been children in common or a significant past relationship.
Following satisfactory clearance in relation to all statutory checks which are referred to as stage one checks we will undertake an assessment of the applicants (or families) suitability to foster. This information is referred to as stage 2 of the assessment and forms the content of the assessment report (Form F) and it covers all areas of life experiences ranging from childhood, parenting, employment and the applicant's own experiences of loss and separation. All household members and significant others will also be part of the assessment and we will require that they are interviewed by the assessing social worker.

Once all of the information is collated under stage one and two a recommendation regards to the families or applicant's suitability to foster is made with the assessor's views of terms of approval.

Where approval is recommended then a detailed report will be made however where a decision has been made not to continue the assessment under stage 2 of the assessment process then the report may only provide information on the concerns that has warranted in ending the assessment and ceasing the fostering application.

All reports are presented to panel whereby panel members make a recommendation regarding the applicant's suitability to foster.

Prospective foster carers will sign the assessment report prior to submission to panel and where applicants suggest changes to the report, these are negotiated with the assessing social worker. Applicants have the right to add written comments or other information to their report if they wish.

Such reports are then circulated to panel members at least five working days prior to the date of panel.

The social worker will attend the fostering panel meeting to present her/his report and it is also mandatory for applicants to attend where approval to foster is being sought.

Where checks under our stage one list are not satisfactory in terms of safeguarding and promoting the best interests of children and young people we inform the applicants in writing and verbally that their application is not continuing.

Approval

Aspirations Fostering panel makes recommendations about the approval of prospective carer/s. The Decision Maker considers the recommendations before notifying the applicants in writing after reading the form F assessment (and panel minutes).

Where the decision is to approve a letter will specify any terms of approval which will cover the following:

- Age of children
- Number of children
- Types of placements.

If, following consideration by the fostering panel, and a review of case papers and the final panel minutes, the Decision Maker considers that an applicant is not suitable to act as a foster carer the Decision Maker will write proposing not to approve them together with reasons (a "qualifying determination") and will invite them to either accept the qualifying determination, submit written representation within 28 days of the notice or to request a review by an independent review panel through the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) (further details can be provided please see our panel Policy and Procedure).

If Aspirations Fostering does not receive any representation within the above said period and there is no referral to the IRM, it may proceed to make its decision.

If Aspirations Fostering receives written representation it will refer the case to its fostering panel for further consideration; and the Decision Maker will make a decision, taking into account any fresh recommendations made by the fostering panel, and will notify their decision to the applicant in writing.

If Aspirations Fostering receives any recommendations from an independent review panel through the IRM, the Decision Maker will take these into account and then make their decision, and will notify their decision to the applicant in writing. Following approval foster carers are asked to agree and sign a Foster Carer Agreement. This agreement details the expectations the organisation places on the foster carer and the service the foster carer can expect from the organisation.

Post Approval Support

Once approved all foster carers will be allocated a designated Supervising Social Worker. Foster carers will receive a handbook which will contain all policies, procedures and guidance needed to support their role. There will be 24 hour 365 days per year out of hours support.

In the event of a UK crisis e.g. Pandemic, virtual support will be provided in line with regulation with access to face to face emergency support in the event of safeguarding concerns. Each meeting and communication will be considered on an individual basis with clear risk assessment and management oversight.

Support groups both face to face and virtual will be developed and a buddy system in place for all new foster carers. Carers will also have access to therapeutic advice and support as needed to support them in their role.

Aspirations Fostering has a private foster carers support group on Facebook which is administered by the registered manager and two approved foster carers.

Regular activities will take place throughout the year for carers, sons and daughters and children and young people placed with them. These will include day trips, activity and the development of children and young people support groups and sons and daughters support groups.

Transferring Foster Carers

Aspirations Fostering will follow the Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol England (2014). *This protocol has been developed by The Fostering Network and the joint forum of Independent Fostering Providers and is issued with the support of ADCS. It takes account of legislative changes which came into force on 1 July 2013 and recommends the good practice guidelines to be followed when an approved foster carer wishes to transfer from one fostering service to another.*

Training and Development of Foster Carers

Aspiration Fostering are committed to the development of its foster carers which will enhance and develop their skills and knowledge to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and young people. Each foster carer will have an Individual Development Plan which will identify their learning needs and interests and be reviewed annually although can be updated at any time.

Training programmes include core training which carers will be expected to update on an annual basis. Further specialist training courses will be provided to assist carers to gain the skills and knowledge needed to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people placed with our foster carers. Individual training courses, specific to the individual foster carer's skills and interests, or relating to the particular needs of any young person in placement will be arranged. Training will be available face to face and via the online training hub.

All foster carers will be supported by the agency to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards within the first twelve months of their approval. National Vocational Qualification Training will also be promoted to ensure the agency has highly trained and skilled foster carers.

When face to face training is not possible or carers are unable to attend training due to work commitments or child care alternative training will be available via the online training hub.

Review of Foster Carer Approval

A foster carer's approval will be reviewed at least annually. A review will be convened whenever there is a significant change in the foster carer's household, in their circumstances, or if allegations are made against them that are investigated. The main aims of the review are to determine whether approval should be renewed and whether changes should be made to the terms of their approval status. Reviews of foster carers will be undertaken by an Independent Reviewing Officer in the foster carers home and involve as far as possible consultation with all members in the foster carers' household including children in placement, placing Local Authorities, birth family, schools and any other involved parties or professionals.

The review provides the opportunity for both Aspirations Fostering and foster carer(s) to reflect on the past year and plan for the future. The review process will include updates of statutory and medical checks as necessary (every three years).

At each annual review the Health and Safety checklist, safe care/ risk assessment policies and pet questionnaires will be updated and reviewed. Foster carers will also be required to re-sign the foster carer agreement.

The review will consider the progress of children in their care and any complaints or allegations received in the previous year and the outcome, the record of any exemptions and all placements made in the review period.

The supervising social worker will prepare a written report and share this with the foster carers to ensure accuracy.

The review will fully record the views of foster carers in respect of the support and training they have received and which they require in the future. The review report will be submitted to the fostering panel/panel chair.

The foster carer will receive a written invitation to attend the fostering panel and where necessary attendance will be facilitated by the fostering team.

In the case of an Initial foster carer review the panel will consider the original assessment, the review report provided by the supervising social worker and discuss any issues arising with the foster carer and the social worker.

The panel will make recommendations in respect of ongoing approval and as to terms and conditions of approval.

Reviews will be triggered whenever there is a significant change in the circumstances of foster carers and the fostering panel will consider this review.

Recommendations of the fostering panel will be on the basis of a majority. In the event that panel members are not unanimous in their recommendations, this will be recorded in the panel minutes.

If the panel is tied and unable to reach a decision, the chair of the panel will make the decision.

This will be recorded in the panel minutes. Foster carers will be informed of the panel's recommendation on the same day. These recommendations will be forwarded to the agency decision-maker and his decision forwarded to foster carers within 7 days.

E-FILES

Aspirations Fostering operates a secure electronic record system for recording electronic files. Secure software is used for the system referred to as CHARMS ("CHARMS"), which is supported by a software provider. This system is used to record all information relating to foster carers and looked after children. Any references in this document to files, records, cases or data would apply to information held on E-files using CHARMS. Aspirations Fostering are registered with the Information Commissioners Office, ICO, number ZA147724.

Aspirations Fostering conforms to GDPR Legislation introduced on the 25th May 2018.

Complaints

Any child, foster carer, member of staff, family member or indeed any person who has had an involvement with Aspirations Fostering is entitled to comment about the quality of any of the services, whether positive or negative. A foster carer, relative or friend can also do so on a young person's behalf.

A comment or complaint may include such things as quality of communication, staff behaviour or attitude, decisions we have made, support for carers or children, or quality of care in the home.

If the matter is urgent e.g. a Child Protection issue, an allegation, or an incident involving the child's health and safety the foster carer should contact Aspirations Fostering immediately. Foster carers should contact the police or emergency services as appropriate.

If you wish to make a complaint or have any concerns about a child in care with Aspirations Fostering or otherwise, please contact:

Liana Gowen – Complaints Officer & Fostering Team Manager

Tel – 07535 139833

Email – liana.gowen@aspirationsfostering.co.uk

Please also see Aspirations Fostering Complaints Procedure and Children's Guides.

Safeguarding

For any Safeguarding matters, please contact our Designated Safeguarding Officer – Liana Gowen.

Tel – 07535 139833

Email – liana.gowen@aspirationsfostering.co.uk