

May 2018



Statement of Purpose



Alliance Foster Care™

This Statement of Purpose is made available and provided to employees, carers, local authorities, children and young people in placement and to the general public via the Alliance website www.alliancefostercare.co.uk or in hard copy when requested. This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and agreed annually, by the Senior Management Team.



Alliance Foster Care™



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Introduction

The Care Standards Act 2000 requires all Fostering Service Providers to produce a Statement of Purpose which states the range of services the agency provides.

Our Statement of Purpose has been developed and produced to meet the requirements of;

- Care Standards Act 2000
- The National Minimum Standards (2011)
- The Foster Service Regulations (2011)

It aims to provide information about the agency and the services we provide to foster carers, children, young people, parents and other professionals. Our Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually and is available to download from our website or on request.

Alliance Foster Care has a head office based in Northamptonshire where all functions of the company are coordinated to ensure high standards of service delivery. Social workers and foster care staff are locally based to enable a flexible and responsive approach.

In 2012, 2014 and 2017 we were rated Outstanding by Ofsted and strive every day to meet their exacting standards. They commented that "The agency strongly promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of children, with outstanding outcomes for children and young people being achieved."

Ofsted May 2017

- Overall: Outstanding
- Quality: Outstanding
- Leadership: Outstanding



Mission Statement

Alliance Foster Care is committed to providing high quality family placements for children who are in the care of Local Authorities.

We strive to work in effective partnership by offering professional support to Local Authorities, foster carers and children in placements. Particular emphasis is placed on making good plans and achieving required outcomes.

We offer foster carers an excellent support package including a 24-hour on call service, regular visits from qualified experienced social workers and comprehensive ongoing training.

A full range of support services are available, including sessional, educational and therapeutic services.

Alliance Foster Care values diversity and implements a stringent equal opportunities policy. We vigorously promote the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic heritage of the children and young people in our care.

Alliance Foster care was first registered as a fostering agency in 2000. In 2010 Alliance Foster care joined the National Foster Agency group. Being part of a larger organisation ensures that the agency is both financially secure and able to access the expertise that exists within the larger organisation, whilst still retaining a local presence and identity for which Alliance Foster Care is well known.



Objectives and Values

Alliance Foster Care aims to:

- Provide an effective and supportive 24 hour service for foster carers and looked after children.
- Provide foster placements for looked after children that are stable, safe, and offer consistent and caring family life.
- Promote a child centred approach throughout your practice, having the child's welfare as paramount in all our decisions that enables them to reach their full potential.
- Ensure careful matching of a child's needs and wishes with the skills and qualities of Alliance foster carers.
- Recruit and retain foster carers from a range of backgrounds to ensure appropriate matches to the needs of children being referred to us.
- Ensure the cultural and diversity needs of each child and young person are met.
- Promote and support educational achievement of young people enabling them to progress onto further education or employment.
- Increase children's life chances by encouraging children and young people to develop social interests, hobbies and take part in a range of community based activities.
- Promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure that every child's emotional and physical health needs are met.
- Promote contact with the birth family and significant others during a placement.
- Ensure that all foster carers have access to support, training and guidance from a Supervising Social Worker.
- Offer on-going learning and professional development of the agency, foster carers and staff.
- Offer a commitment to developing our practice and the services we provide through consultation with foster carers, children, young people, parents and other professionals to whom we provide a service.
- Be professional, efficient and deliver best value at all times.



Staff and Constitution of the Agency

Alliance Foster Care is registered and inspected as an Independent Fostering Agency by Ofsted in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000.

Alliance Foster Care Ltd is a private Limited Company.

Registered in England, Number 4249271.

Alliance Foster Care is a part of The National Fostering Agency Group and reports to the Board of Directors;

Iain Anderson
Group Chief Executive

Isabelle Hutchison
Managing Director

Tony Holt
Finance Director

Andrew Isaac
Corporate Affairs Director

Liz Cowling
Director of Quality Assurance, Policy and Training
and Agency Decision Maker

Julie Bailey
Director of Practice Transformation and
Compliance

Suzanne Robson
Director of Human Resources

The Registered Manager of Alliance Foster Care meets with the Directors on a monthly basis to discuss developments that have taken place in the agency and look at the progress required of the Annual Business Plan.



Management and Staffing Structure

Management Structure

Registered Manager – Maria Glover

Responsible Individual – Patricia Jarrett, Operations Director

The Alliance Foster Care senior management group have a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of fostering and social care. The Regional Manager, Registered Manager and Social Work Team Managers all hold management qualifications and are qualified social workers registered with HCPC. The senior management group meet on a monthly basis and are

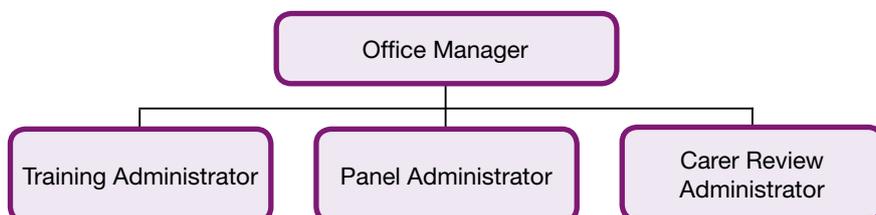
responsible for all strategic and operational aspects of the agency. The Registered Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency and the development of services to foster carers, children and young people. The Registered Manager is a qualified social worker, experienced in Statutory and Voluntary sector as well as inspection and regulation.



Operations Team

All members of the Operations team are based at the Alliance Office in Northampton. The Team works closely together to ensure all enquiries to the agency are dealt with efficiently and effectively.

The team meets together on a monthly basis to ensure excellent communication and the sharing of ideas to continually develop the services that we provide.



The Social Work Team

In 2016 Alliance Foster care was awarded the Gold Investors in People award;

“Positive evidence around recruitment and selection, with people describing processes and practice as effective, efficient and fair involvement of staff members, foster carers and looked after children.” (IIP 2016)

Supervising Social Workers are all qualified, HCPC registered and have a wealth of experience, having worked in a wide variety of statutory social work settings. The majority of the team have further post qualifying qualifications. They each have a geographical area and are responsible for visiting carer households regularly, attending meetings, spending time with children and young people in placement as appropriate and making recommendations for the annual foster carer review. They each facilitate their own Foster Carer Support groups.

Support Workers provide specific support to foster carers and children, including the independence training package, attendance at PEP meetings, liaising with schools and education provisions to support children in their educational achievements, supporting young people in identifying further education or employment

opportunities and group work on specific subjects. Support Workers are experienced in working with children in a range of settings including youth and education.

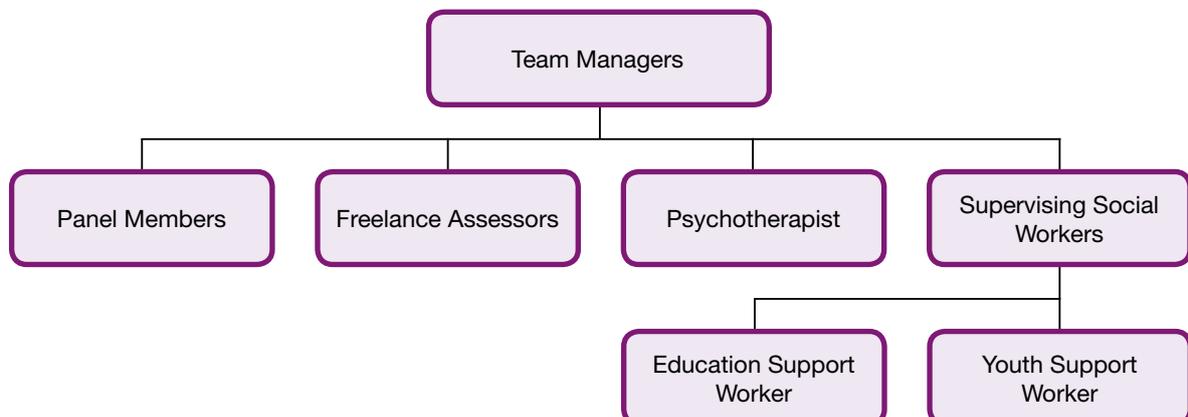
We also use the services of a number of highly qualified therapists, counsellors and social workers on a regular basis.

All members of staff, whether self-employed, casual or permanent, are suitably qualified. All permanent members of staff have training development plans specific to their area of expertise, receive monthly supervision and annual appraisals.

In addition, the social work team also receive regular clinical supervision with a psychotherapist to reflect on complex practice issues.

Alliance Foster Care carries out background checks on all staff employed or commissioned by the company in accordance with requirements of the National Care Standards Act 2000 (National Minimum Fostering Standards).

All staff undertake mandatory training in safeguarding, equality and diversity and data protection.





Placements Provided by the Agency

Alliance Foster Care works closely with a number of Local Authorities to understand their specific needs relating to foster placements in particular areas. As an agency we then look to recruit carers from a range of backgrounds who are able to provide high quality foster placements for children in the care of Local Authorities. The types of placement provided are:

Emergency

Many of our carers can provide unplanned emergency placements for individual children and sibling groups. Referrals are required to be made within office hours.

Respite/Short Breaks

We have a number of carers who provide respite placements either on a regular basis or one-off holiday breaks.

Short term

Short term placements vary in their duration and are often linked to further assessments of the child and other family members, together with court processes. Long term plans can be formulated in short term placements.

Bridging

We are able to provide placements with foster carers who are experienced in bridging children to adoption, permanence or independence. Bridging placements form part of the long-term plan for the child and usually last up to 2 years.

Long Term/Permanency

Placements are available with long term foster carers who can take individual children or sibling groups. Long term placements are matched and by the responsible local authority.

Parent and Child

We are able to provide foster care placements where young parents receive support and guidance to help develop parenting skills. Foster carers can also assist Local Authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

Solo Placements

If the placing authority requires the child to be the only child or youngest/oldest child in placement, this would need to be specified at the referral stage to enable the placement to be matched with vacancies accordingly.

Sibling Placements

Many of our foster carers are able to care for large sibling groups which ensures children remain with their brothers and sisters.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children and Young People

A number of our foster carers have experience of caring for children who arrive in the UK without a family.



Agency Standards of Care

As of March 2018, Alliance foster carers were looking after 120 children who were unable to live with their birth families for a variety of reasons. The children in placement come from a wide range of backgrounds. To ensure that high quality care is provided to the children and young people Alliance Foster care has established clear guidance for all foster carers and staff in the foster carers' manual. The foster carers manual also outlines the standards that we expect from approved foster carers and the staff working for the agency.

Physical Environment

Alliance Foster carers pride themselves on the standard of their homes providing safe, caring environments, where there is a focus on health, education, protection, continuity, diet and stimulation.

All children have their own bedrooms unless their Local Authority has given permission for them to share in the case of siblings.

Children are encouraged to individualise their rooms. A quiet area for study is identified in each home and the provision of a computer and internet access is available for use by each child.

All foster homes are assessed for a healthy and safe environment on an annual basis. Play areas are safe, enclosed and all play equipment is checked to ensure it is in good working order.

Boundary Setting

Each foster home has their own Safe Care Policy which highlights boundaries within each home. Risk assessments and strategies relating to each child's circumstances and behaviour are agreed in the child's Placement Agreement/care plan which is completed at the commencement of the placement.

Policies on sanctions control, physical intervention and complaints procedures are available to children, parents and professionals. These policies are imperative to ensure that behaviours are responded to in a consistent and fair manner.

Health Care

Alliance Foster Care, in partnership with the foster carer, Social Worker and Health Authority, establish the individual health needs of each child in our care.

If a child has been placed locally they will continue using their own health resources, if this is not possible children will be registered with a:

- GP
- Dentist
- Optician

Alliance Foster Care has established good working relationships with health care professionals in the areas where we operate. We are able to access expert advice to ensure children's individual health needs are met.

We have a stringent policy on keeping, administering and recording of medication, which each foster carer adheres to. Supervising Social Workers regularly check medication documents. Foster carers encourage children to eat a varied diet and provide opportunities for children to try foods from other cultures.

Special dietary requirements are written into the child's Placement Agreement/Care Plan and are provided.

Foster carers encourage children to participate in regular exercise to ensure the development of good physical, emotional and psychological health.



Agency Standards of Care (cont.)

Children are encouraged to attend out of school activities to enable them to widen their social circle and develop any talents and skills they may have.

Complaints/Protection

All children placed with Alliance Foster Care carers have the right to be safe, protected and listened to.

When a child is placed with a foster carer they will be given written and verbal guidance (relative to their understanding) outlining the complaints procedure and ways to access support. This will include help lines, e.g. NSPCC, Childline and the telephone number of Ofsted.

As well as statutory visits from the child's Social Worker, an Alliance Supervising Social Worker will see the children on their own on a regular basis.

Alliance Foster Care has a stringent anti-bullying policy. Foster carers are given advice and training on how to recognise signs of bullying and strategies are formulated on how to support the child and ensure they are protected.

Alliance Foster Care always aims to give the best possible service but occasionally things can go wrong. When that happens, we want to put them right and learn from our mistakes.

Contact with Friends and Relatives

Alliance Foster Care ensures that each child in our care is encouraged to maintain contact with those most important to them.

We can provide facilities by arrangement to ensure a child is able to meet with their family, friends or professionals involved with them, in privacy.

Contact arrangements form part of the child's overall Placement Agreement/Care Plan. We would expect to be informed of any changes by the child's Local Authority.

Transport to and from contact locally is the responsibility of the foster carer but needs to be negotiated to ensure each child's needs can be met by the foster carer.

Foster carers encourage children to make positive lasting friendships and will facilitate friends for tea visits and outings when appropriate.

Foster carers contribute to informal contact arrangements with siblings looked after by other foster carers.

Education

Alliance Foster Care believe children have the fundamental right to experience an appropriate education which enables them to meet their potential.

Every child placed with Alliance Foster Care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). This is monitored and reviewed at regular intervals by the child's school, social worker and carer. Carers are expected to be fully involved with this process.

Educational goals are important to build a firm foundation of academic and social learning to enable children to progress their academic achievements.

Whenever possible children are enrolled at local schools where they have the opportunity to make friends and participate in activities in the local community.

Children without school placements will be expected to be provided with teaching hours from the Local Authority they are placed in.

Additionally, Alliance Foster Care provides additional support to foster carers and children through our Educational Support Worker.

Children Missing and Absent from Home

All foster carers have access to our policy on children who go missing. If there are issues of risk relating to absconding, vulnerability or Child Sexual Exploitation then a strategy will be agreed in the Placement Agreement/Care Plan to afford appropriate supervisory levels and agreed forms of management.

Child Protection Procedures

Alliance Foster Care has safeguarding procedures which staff and foster carers are all familiar with. The procedures are based on Local Authority practice guidelines.

Any special arrangements that need to be considered to ensure that safe care is provided will be discussed with the placing authority and incorporated into the child's Placement Agreement Plan.

Consultation

Children are encouraged to contribute ideas on all aspects of the service the Agency provides. Recent consultations have resulted in:

- More age appropriate literature to children being placed in care.
- Ongoing workshops for both foster children and the children of foster carers.
- Children and young people are also involved in the agency Newsletter.

In addition, foster carers are very much involved in the development of the agency and are encouraged to highlight improvements either formally or informally.

The agency has a number of steering groups made up of foster carers and staff members:

- Training
- Recruitment
- Events and Activities



Matching Children with Foster Families

Matching children carefully to foster families is essential and although there are risks to all placements, as an Agency we endeavour to minimise these by gaining a full picture of the child's needs and sharing all this information with the potential foster carers.

Alliance Foster Care considers all the factors in terms of the child's individual needs and wishes, location, education and contact plans to ensure that families can provide the necessary support that is required.

Referral and Matching Process

The agency has a dedicated Referrals Coordinator who is available to receive referrals from local authorities during the normal office hours. The Referrals Coordinator establishes as much information as possible regarding the child/young person's circumstances then works closely with the Duty Social worker to consider any potential matches with foster families.

The issues which are considered during the Matching Process are;

- Foster carer's abilities to meet children's needs
- Foster carers approval
- Other family members or existing foster children
- Foster carers skills, knowledge and ability to meet the child's needs
- The proposed length of time and the tasks required are compatible with the Carers' experience.
- Any risks that have been identified have a management plan that the Foster carers can implement.

- If a child is placed with carers from a different ethnicity or culture to their own, there will always be an emphasis on the preservation of the child's identity and heritage through practical and emotional support.
- If the child is identified as having specific health needs consideration will be given as to whether specialist health resources are available within reasonable travelling distances of the foster carer's home.

Foster carers are provided with all information made available to the agency in order for them to decide whether they can meet the child's needs and the care plan. Carers are fully involved in the matching process and they will ultimately make the final decision as to whether they can offer the child or young person a placement in their foster home.

Information on all Alliance foster carers is made available to local authorities in the form of a family profile, together with a copy of their BAAF Form F assessment.



Support Provided to Children and Young People in Placement

When the Local Authority and the agency have agreed that an identified foster carer can meet the needs of a child, a placement contract is made agreeing the duration of the placement.

The Local Authority Social Worker, the child and their parents if considered appropriate are invited to visit the foster carer for a pre-placement meeting. This gives the opportunity to meet and create a Foster Placement Agreement Plan.

It is expected that the Social Worker will bring Looked After Children documentation to the meeting.

We will consider emergency/same day placements, but only where the placement would promote the young person's welfare.

All children and young people in placement with Alliance Foster carers will receive ongoing support from their Local Authority Social Worker. In addition to this support they will also have the opportunity to meet with the Supervising Social Worker to discuss any concerns or let them know what is going well. In addition, we also have our Education Support Worker and Youth Support Worker who meet with the children and young people on individual or group sessions.

Services available for children include:

- Support to find or pursue hobbies or interests.
- Individual or group work, including structured activities for children out of school.
- Social activities for the sons and daughters of foster carers.
- Access to national organisations for looked after children and young people.
- Supervised or unsupervised contact with families as determined by the Local Authority.
- Education & Therapeutic professionals to provide assistance directly to children or advice to our social workers.

Education

At Alliance we believe that all children have the fundamental right to experience an appropriate education which enables them to meet their potential. We have a specialist Education Support Worker who ensures appropriate education provision is found and that each child has a Personal Education Plan which is reviewed and monitored regularly. Additional support is provided to children who are at risk of exclusion in order to maintain their place in education or identify a more appropriate education provision that meets their needs.

If required we are able to provide individual tutoring packages for children who are out of school using experienced, qualified teachers. Transport to and from school locally will be provided by the foster carer unless agreed otherwise with the placing authority.

All the additional support that we provide to the children placed with our foster carers has resulted in attendance levels that exceed the national average. At the end of March 2018 all school age children were receiving education, and all young people between 16 and 18 were either in further education or training.

Health

At Alliance Foster Care we recognise that often the reason children and young people need to be looked after is that their health and development have been neglected in some way, consequently they may have health needs which must be addressed. Changes and moves often mean that looked after children and young people's health care can be disrupted. All our foster carers understand the importance of ensuring that all health needs of the children they care for are met from ensuring they have received their immunisations, to overseeing and promoting their



Support Provided to Children and Young People in Placement

general health and well-being. Foster carers and Supervising Social Workers understand that the overall physical, emotional, mental and sexual well-being of a child or young person need to be considered at regular intervals and all health checks completed.

All carers attend a First Aid training course as part of the agency's comprehensive training programme.

Therapy

We believe that children have a right to access therapeutic provision from Local Health Authorities. We have developed good working relationships with health colleagues in each local area and access local provision where possible.

If children cannot access local provision due to the time-scales involved or the complexity of their situation, we are able to provide appropriate therapeutic services through a number of fully qualified professionals who have extensive and appropriate experience.

Support Workers

Our Support Workers offer a range of support to foster carers and young people. The majority of work is focused on direct work with young people, however Support Workers will also attend PEP meetings, LAC reviews, organise events and activities, support placements and also visit young people who have recently joined Alliance (welcome visits).

Support can be provided for a range of topics and Support Workers strive to find new and inventive ways to engage with young people and address issues that may have arisen. Examples of the types of direct work undertaken are:

- Self-esteem and self-confidence building.
- Behaviour intervention and strategies.

- Exam preparation and revision sessions for SATS and GCSEs.
- Education support if a child is out of school.
- CSE awareness and appropriate behaviour.
- Safety and appropriate use of technology.
- Befriending and being a positive advocate.
- Respite and placement support for carers.
- Independence work such as cooking and managing money.

Our Support Workers complete some fantastic work with children and recently one of our young people created a beautiful dress made entirely out of newspaper. Another young person has written an Internet Safety presentation which they will hopefully be presenting to a group of children later this year.

Events

Every school holiday we hold activity days for our looked after children, foster carers and their birth children. This provides an opportunity for all the staff to meet with young people and carers in an informal setting to have some fun. Whilst having fun we also use this as an opportunity to see the carers with the children, talk to the children about how things are going for them and to see the progress they are making.

Our recent events have been fantastic and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. Our main event last year was our Alliance Awards Event which took place in September 2017. Our staff, young people and carers celebrated a wide range of achievements including swimming badges, school grades and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Our theme was Hollywood and Disney and we had a big party, disco and the fancy dress on show was fantastic.

Each year we also hold Holiday Clubs in the Summer and half term holidays. In August 2017 we had Film Clubs, Pamper Days and Craft Days.

We also held our first Halloween Party in October. In December, we have our annual Christmas Decorating morning and our young people fill the office with lots of glittery decorations, Christmassy crafts and love decorating our Christmas tree. We also hold Workshops each year that encourage young people to think and discuss issues that affect them such as, Staying Safe Online and Risk Taking.

As well as having fun, our events allow our young people to meet others who are either placed with foster carers or who are the sons and daughters of foster carers. This provides an opportunity for them to build new friendships in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

Caring Kids Group & TeenZone

At Alliance Foster Care we understand that the impact of fostering on foster carers' birth children and grandchildren can be difficult. Our Caring Kids group has been running for over ten years and provides specific support to birth children. The group meets during school holidays and spends the morning talking about different aspects of fostering, we then have lunch together and enjoy a fun activity in the afternoon. In recent years we have been Zorbing, Bowling and to a Trampoline Park.

In February 2018 a number of our Caring Kids came together to rebrand the group and think of new and different ideas for future activities. The main development was the introduction of Timothy the Turtle who will become a group mascot and part of all Alliance events. Our afternoon activity on this occasion was a tree-top adventure at Jungle Parc in Irchester. This was fun but very cold so we all enjoyed a hot chocolate to warm up afterwards.

Our TeenZone group is specifically designed for young people aged thirteen and above and is

for both looked after and birth children. The idea of this group is to get young people together to socialise and make friendships while taking part in a fun activity. Our most recent activities have been a trip to an IMAX cinema and to an Aqua Park where we had the opportunity to leap, climb and swing our way around various obstacles on a lake.

Alliance Hub

Alliance Foster care looks to recruit foster carers who can provide a high level of care to the children and young people that we care for. To better support our foster carers and provide young people with opportunities to improve educational attainment, develop life skills, preparation to adult life or receive therapeutic support we have expanded the services that we provide.

At the Hub we have a programme of additional services that run 52 weeks a year. The staff who deliver these services have a wealth of experience in working with children and young people living with foster families. The team includes a social worker, youth worker, support worker, teacher and psychotherapist. All of these professionals have experience of working in social care, education and youth services.

At the Hub we deliver a number of workshops and Group work that includes Sexual Health, Protective Behaviours, Being Healthy and Staying Safe. In addition, we invite a range of community based groups to come and talk to young people about a range of topics including Drug Awareness, Child Exploitation and Staying Safe Online. Young people receive a certificate of attendance for all our workshops which they can use to support job or further education applications.



Support Provided to Foster Carers

Each foster carer has a named Supervising Social Worker whose role is to provide them with advice and guidance in relation to a child's care plan and placement plan.

Alliance Foster Care supervising social workers have four principal functions:

- To work with foster carers in developing and supervising their skills as well as offering regular structured support.
- To represent Alliance Foster Care in our relationship with Placing Authorities and to seek to ensure that care plans are made and followed for children in placement.
- To review foster carer's skills and achievements on an annual basis.
- To promote and participate in training aimed at foster carers, their birth children and children in placement.

Support

Support is a combination of listening, understanding and helping to find practical solutions/ways of coping with challenges. A successful supervising social worker and foster carer relationship allows foster carers to talk openly and honestly to you about their own family problems as well as the difficulties or challenges they are having in caring for children they look after. The foster carer is supported in achieving the care plan for the children as part of a team.

Developing Skills

Developing skills means encouraging foster carers to attend training, helping them to put that training into practice, using resource material such as literature, guidance laid down in the Fostering Manual, and other available resources.

Supervising Carers

The relationship between supervising social workers and foster carers should be professional and aimed at achieving the best interests of the children in placement. Problems and concerns should be openly addressed with a view to reaching a satisfactory resolution in accordance with fostering regulations and agency policies.

It is important that supervising social workers see the children frequently.

Supervisory Visits

Alliance foster carers will have a supervision visit at least monthly by a qualified social worker whose role is to support the foster carers and monitor the standard of care received by a child. The focus of the visit is twofold. The first part of the visit should concentrate on the foster carer's professional development, family dynamics, safe caring and the tasks required of them by the Agency. The second part of the visit should concentrate on the child's plans, achievements and development.

Supervising social workers are required to carry out at least one unannounced visit each year and a Health and Safety Check List to be completed annually, prior to review.

Either the Registered Manager or the Social Work Team Managers carry out an additional unannounced visit each year to individually consult with foster carers about the services and support they are receiving.

Foster carers are provided with a written record of the supervision visit highlighting any action that needs to be taken by the foster carers or other professionals involved with the child.

Additional Support to Carers

Foster carers have access to a Supervising Social Worker who is training in Theraplay and has a deeper understanding of attachment and how to support healthy relationships between carers and the young people in their care. She provides training on Theraplay as well as individual consultation sessions with Foster Carers who may be experiencing challenges within placements. She can encourage carers to take an empathic approach and develop strategies which address challenging behaviours whilst maintaining their attachment and connection to their child.

Services Available to Foster Carers

We can provide additional services and support to meet the needs of children in placement, foster carers and Local Authorities. The resources available are:

- Respite (of varying duration)
- Day care
- Structured activities
- Educational activities
- Supervision of contact (between child and relatives).

Events

At Alliance we host a number of events across the year for our foster carers to meet up with one another and the staff. These range from coffee mornings, that often support Macmillan Cancer's 'World's Biggest Coffee Morning', where carers can come and enjoy coffee and cake and take a chance to win something in the raffle. This is a well-attended event with often around 30 carers coming along to raise some money. We successfully raised £209.46 at our most recent coffee morning in October 2017.

We also hold a carers Christmas lunch every year. Typically, this is held in December but this year, due to bad weather, we had to rearrange so the meal was held in January 2018. Despite the change of date our most recent Christmas lunch was attended by 90 foster carers and staff who had the opportunity to socialise with other carers and enjoy a three-course meal. There are other more informal lunches and social events taking place throughout the year, helping to further enhance carer and staff relationships.

Emergency Support

Alliance Foster care provides a 24/7, 365 days a year on-call service to foster carers staffed by an Alliance Foster Care Supervising Social Worker who has access to a senior manager.

Support Groups

Foster Carer support groups are held in each of the geographical areas. This allows foster carers to meet and socialise together; share good practice ideas, develop peer support and receive information from the agency. The meetings are attended and organised by the Supervising Social Worker for the area. The groups include guest speakers and training sessions as well as an informal lunch and catch up.

Psychotherapy

Alliance Foster care recognises the importance of understanding the attachment needs and impact of poor attachment on children and young people. When placements require more intense support, the agency can arrange for carers to have individual consultations with a qualified psychotherapist, who has experience in working with children and complex placements.



Support Provided to Foster Carers

Annual Review

All foster carers have an annual review to ensure that they continue to be suitable as approved Foster Carers. The annual review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer who is responsible for ensuring all statutory requirements are fulfilled, and that foster carers have the opportunity to evaluate their practice and development and to set new objectives and action plans for the following year. In addition to this, the Independent Reviewing Officer asks the foster carers to comment on the support that is provided to them by the agency, this feedback is passed on to the Registered Manager.

Information/Record Keeping

Foster carers have access to a comprehensive fostering manual, which is also available within the foster carers secure area of our website. The manual contains information and procedures on all aspects of the fostering task and is updated regularly to ensure it remains a relevant reference document. Foster carers are expected to maintain records of events and information pertaining to the child or young person in placement. Foster carers complete a monthly report detailing the progress made by the child or young person in achieving 5 key Every Child Matters out-comes. This report is also shared with the Local Authority Social Worker.

Fostering Network Membership

Once approved, foster carers automatically become members of The Fostering Network. The Fostering Network is able to provide carers and their families with advice and guidance including financial and legal advice.

Finance

All foster carers receive an allowance paid every week during placement. The level of this

allowance is dependent on the type of placement and experience of the foster carer. In addition, foster carers are also paid a holiday allowance equivalent to two weeks foster allowance.

Insurance

The insurance package offered to Alliance Foster Carers is fully comprehensive and is based on the standards set out by The Fostering Network and Ofsted. All Alliance Foster Carers are covered by policies arranged through Markel UK Ltd International Insurance Company.

The policies are for:

- Personal and Public Liabilities
- All Risks and Malicious Damage
- Professional Indemnity

Alliance Foster Care pays the premiums in respect of the above policies on behalf of carers. Foster carer's membership of The Fostering Network enables carers to receive insurance cover and advice. Alliance foster carers are required to have their own household contents insurance and are obliged to ensure that their insurance company is aware of their role as foster carers.

Charms

Charms is a secure online social care network which enables our carers to work online securely and paper free. They have full access to their document files and records at any time and at any location providing they have internet access.

Carer Bonus Scheme

Foster carers will be eligible for consideration of the bonus after 2 years of approval. Award will be reliant on record keeping, completion of training, and up-to-date statutory checks being in place; all of which are the standard requirements in the foster care agreement.



Alliance Foster Carers

Recruitment of Foster Carers

Alliance Foster Care is committed to recruiting foster carers who can meet the needs of children and young people by providing high quality care. All prospective foster carers who make an enquiry are subject to a rigorous assessment and vetting procedure. When prospective foster carers contact the agency we consider:

- Motivation to foster.
- Composition of their household.
- Working arrangements.
- The room available to foster.
- The age of prospective carer's own children and the effect fostering may have on them.

Following the enquiry an initial home visit is completed by our Team Managers who are able to provide information about the agency and the expectations of Alliance Foster carers. Applicants must:

- Have a spare room for the child or children placed with them.
- Agree to attend regular training and support groups.
- Actively promote anti-discriminatory practice.
- Be over 21 years of age.
- Able to keep detailed placement records and attend all relevant meetings.
- Have some IT skills.

If it is felt that the prospective carers would be suitable to become agency foster carer's an invitation to apply to become an Alliance Foster Carer is offered to suitable candidates. The assessment process includes:

- At least three personal references.
- Previous partner references (where applicable)
- 6 to 8 interviews with applicants and household members.
- Medical report.

- Identity Checks, Enhanced DBS.
- Pet assessment.
- Employment reference.
- Education reference.
- Probation reference.
- Health & Safety assessments.
- Skills to Foster preparation training for applicants takes place during the assessment process. A total of three days training which includes information about safeguarding, childcare law, safer caring, behaviour management, attachment, secure-base parenting, and Equality and Diversity. Day three is a full day's training course: 'An introduction to Attachment and Trauma' delivered by our psychotherapist. Foster carers who are transferring to Alliance from another Agency need only to complete Day 1 and Day 3.
- Full BAAF Form F assessment.
- Assessments of prospective carers are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Children Act (1989) and The Care Standards Regulations (2011). The assessment process takes 4-6 months and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay. All information obtained is held on file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations (2015) and Data Protection Act.

Panel

Once completed the assessment report is presented to Alliance Foster carer's independent Panel, which is held at the Alliance office. The Panel is made up of at least six members who have a variety of expertise and knowledge including health and education, foster carers, or having the experience of being a Looked After Child. The function of the Panel is to provide an independent quality assurance role, considering the approval of applicants and continuation of foster carer's approval.



Alliance Foster Carers

The Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker who makes the final decision to approve. The Agency's Decision Maker is the Director of Quality Assurance, Policy and Training, they are also social work qualified.

Following approval the carers are sent a Foster Care Agreement detailing their responsibilities and the commitment from the agency. If the foster carers are unhappy with the final decision they have a right to appeal. This can be made direct to the agency or direct to the Independent Review Mechanism.

Approved Foster Carers

As of March 2018, Alliance Foster Care has over 81 foster families approved to care for children and young people aged 0-18 years. This includes foster carers able to look after sibling groups, parent & child, children with disabilities and children with challenging behaviours. The agency has foster families residing in:

- Bedfordshire
- Buckinghamshire
- Luton
- Milton Keynes
- Northamptonshire
- Peterborough
- Hertfordshire
- Cambridgeshire

Our carers reflect the diverse range of racial and cultural backgrounds of the children placed with us.



Training for Foster Carers and Staff

Alliance Foster Care is committed to providing the highest quality of training to enable foster carers and staff to be confident and competent in carrying out the tasks asked of them. The protection and welfare of the children placed with our carers is our priority. This is reflected in our training programme for foster carers. Alliance Foster Care considers that placement stability is crucial to the needs of children and incorporates the Secure Base model into our training. We currently provide the following:

Pre-Approval

- Skills to Foster covering: Child Protection, Safe Caring, Child Care Law, LAC documentation, Anti-discriminatory Practice, Promoting Contact, Recording and Behavioural Management
- Introduction to Attachment and Trauma

Post Approval Year 1

- Training and Support and Development Standards (TSDS)
- First Aid – Core Training
- Safer Care/ Allegations – Core Training
- Safeguarding/ Child Protection – Core Training
- Reporting and Recording – Core Training
- Equality and Diversity – Core Training

All core training has to be updated every three years.

Year 2 Onwards

In response to foster carers' feedback our training programme comprises of face to face training events, workshops and online training modules. This ensures that our foster carers have a wide range of opportunities available to suit their preferred learning style.

All foster carers are expected to undertake two courses a year each in addition to the core training (a mixture of face to face/ online but at least 2 face to face courses per couple or per single carer per year).

The Alliance training programme for 2018/19 includes 35 face to face courses (some of which are repeated several times during the year) and over 85 online training modules plus workshops that are delivered as part of monthly support groups.

Advanced Training

Alliance Foster Care has worked with Milton Keynes College to provide opportunities for foster carers to complete the Level 3 Diploma in the Children and Young People's Workforce. An independent tutor and assessor works with carers between 9-12 months to complete the award.



Contact Information

Responsible Individual

- Patricia Jarrett
- Email: pjarrett@nfa.co.uk

Responsible Body

Alliance Foster Care Ltd is designated as a Foster Care Agency managed by:

Maria Glover, Registered Manager

Registered Address

Name

Alliance Foster Care

Address

1 Maple Court, Ash Lane, Collingtree,
Northampton NN4 0NB

Telephone

01604 879373

Email

admin@alliancefostercare.co.uk

Registered By

Name

Ofsted

Address

Midlands Regional Centre, Building C,
Cumberland Place, Nottingham NG1 6HJ

Telephone

0300 123 1231

Email

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Professional Membership

Fostering Network

Fostering Network provides high quality advice and support to foster carers, including those facing allegations, complaints and serious concerns. Alliance Foster Care purchases a membership to Fostering Network for each Alliance approved foster carer which includes the following services:

- Legal expenses Insurance Cover
- 24 Hour Legal Advice Service
- Accountancy Advice
- Counselling Helpline
- General advice and support
- Education Advisory Service
- Advice on Personal Finances
- Medical First Aid Helpline
- Arrest Interview Assistance Cover
- Website communication, including a Foster Carer's Forum
- Quarterly Magazines
- Range of discounts

www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

T: 020 7620 6400

E: info@fostering.net

A: 87 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HA

NWG

NWG is a network tackling child sexual exploitation they also provide high quality training that our staff members attend. Each staff member has a membership to NWG (purchased by NFA) so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.

www.nwgnetwork.org

T: 01332 585371





Alliance Foster Care™

Alliance Foster Care Statement of Purpose May 2018

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