



# Statement of Purpose

Alliance Foster Care

URN: SC033794

January 2019



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](http://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

This Statement of Purpose for Alliance Foster Care has been developed and produced to meet the requirements of the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4 Fostering Services (July 2013)
- Children and Families Act 2014

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 office is based in Northamptonshire, where all functions of the company are coordinated to ensure a high standards of service delivery. Alliance is part of the NFA Group and benefits from the support of some centralised services e.g. HR, Marketing. All social workers and staff are locally based to enable a flexible and responsive approach.

As of January 2019, Alliance Foster Care has 76 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 and child, children with disabilities and children with challenging behaviours. The agency has foster families residing in:

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

We have been consistently judged as 'Outstanding' by our regulatory body, Ofsted, in 2012, 2014 and 2017, striving daily to meet their exacting standards. Ofsted reported 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 Fostering 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 our 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.
- Value diversity and promote equality by recognising the importance of a child's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background; and to consider fully a child's gender, sexuality and any disability.
- 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 and Senior Management Team.

**David Leatherbarrow**

Group Chief Executive

**Isabelle Hutchison**

Managing Director

**Tony Holt**

Finance Director

**Patricia Jarrett**

Operations 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

Our Central Support Services include: Human Resources, Finance, Training, Quality Assurance, Compliance, Fostering Enquiry Centre and National Assessment Service

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

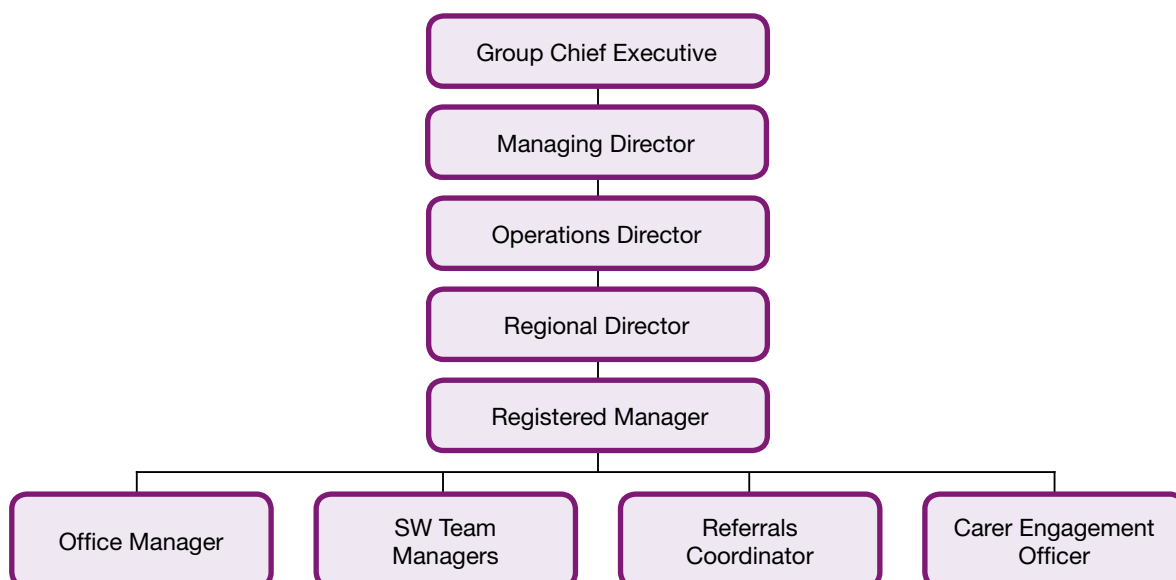
## Management Structure

**Registered Manager – New appointee commencing late February 2019**

**Responsible Individual – Patricia Jarrett, Operations Director**

The Alliance Foster Care management group have a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of fostering and social care. The Regional Director, Registered Manager and 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 planning of the company. This involves business planning which is in line with service user needs, company aims and objectives, financial commitments, organisational structure, policy, procedure, guidance and regulations. They are also responsible for setting performance targets and subsequent monitoring, in addition to ensuring the legal compliance of the organisation.

The Registered Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency and the development of the service; meeting with Directors on a monthly basis to discuss the performance and quality of the agency, and review the business objectives in line with the agency's Business Plan. The Registered Manager role is undertaken by a qualified social worker with substantial practice and management experience in the statutory and fostering sector.

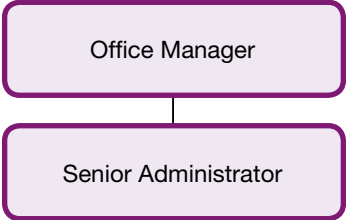




## Operations Team

All members of the Operations Team are based at the Alliance Office in Northampton, with the exception of the Referrals Co-ordinator who is based in the local Referrals Hub. The team works closely together to ensure all enquiries are dealt

with efficiently and effectively. The team meets together on a monthly basis to ensure excellent communication and the sharing of the 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.

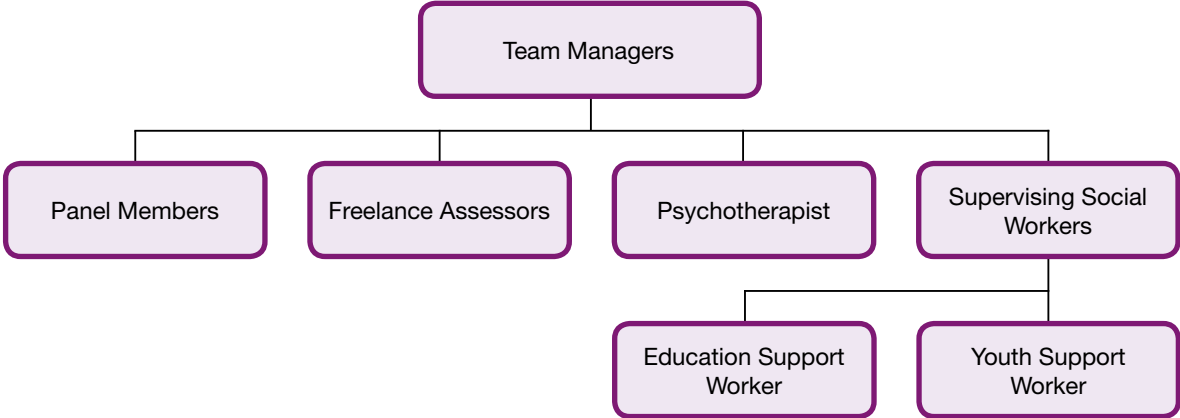
We also use the services of a number of highly qualified therapists, counsellors and social workers on a regular basis.

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**

Several of our foster carers have developed the skills and experience for providing placements to children and young people who are unaccompanied from overseas, enabling these children to settle within a family setting and engage in education.

## **Specialist Fostering**

We are able to provide placements for children who have complex needs relating to disability, health needs or challenging behaviours. These placements usually include enhanced packages of support and/or additionally purchased specialist services.

## **Staying Put**

These are arrangements whereby Young People aged 18 and over that were previously looked after remain living with their former foster carers.



# Matching Children with Foster Families

Matching children and young people to the right approved fostering household is a carefully considered process; getting it right is critical and will advance the progress, experience and outcomes for children and increase placement stability and retention, and provide children, young people and their carers with positive fostering experiences.

At Alliance Foster Care, we recognise that children and young people are individuals, with a diverse range of needs and talents, requiring fostering placements that are equally unique. Our carers have a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience, and our task is to carefully match children and young people, with those carers who have the right skill set and approach to meet their individual needs.

Our dedicated Referral Coordinators are on hand to assist Local Authorities in finding the right match for children and young people. They work closely with the Supervising Social Workers, Foster Carers and Local Authorities to ensure the best possible matches are made.

The matching process carefully considers the child's needs in relation to the following key areas:

- Safeguarding
- Personal history
- Identity/ethnicity/culture/religion
- Health, wellbeing and disability
- Education/Training/Employment
- Contact
- Behaviours and risk management
- Interests and aspirations
- Overall objectives/outcomes for the placement

The matching process will also consider the following in relation to the carers:

- Their terms of approval
- Their availability

- Their knowledge, experience and skills
- Their location and distance to school, friends, contact and LA
- Their ability to transport
- Their experience of facilitating and/or supervising contact
- Any other looked after children in placement
- Own children and other household members

Alliance Foster Care will not propose a placement if the assessed needs of the child/young person cannot reasonably be provided by the proposed foster carers.

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 a child is identified with specific health needs, consideration will be given as to whether specialist health resources are available within reasonable travelling distance of the foster home. The agency will source additional specialist training, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure the carer is fully competent in meeting any specific health needs.

Foster carers are provided with all information made available to the agency in order for them to make fully informed decisions about whether they can meet the individual child's needs and care plan. Carers are fully involved in the matching process throughout and will ultimately make the final decision as to whether or not they can offer the child or young person a placement in their home.

The BAAF Form F Assessment and Carer Profile is made available to the Local Authority for any placement offers made, enabling them to have detailed information on the proposed carer and fostering household.



# Agency Standards of Care

As of January 2019, 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.

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.

## **Unauthorised Absence and Missing**

All foster carers have access to the agency policy on children who go missing. If there are issues of risk, vulnerability or child sexual exploitation, then a strategy will be discussed and agreed with the Child's Social Worker, young person and foster carer. This is to ensure appropriate safeguards and supervision are in place, to further improve risk awareness and facilitate risk reduction. The agency will request the Local Authority conducts Return Home Interviews following all missing episodes, but if this is not carried out, the agency SSW or support worker will visit to further explore the reasons for going missing and provide appropriate support.

## **Safeguarding 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



# 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 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, included our main Alliance Awards Event. Our staff, young people and carers celebrate a wide range of achievements including swimming badges, school grades, and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Each year we also hold Holiday Clubs in the Summer and half term holidays; these have included Film Clubs, Pamper Days and Craft Days.

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 hold a wide variety of events for carers to support them in building relationships with other carers. We also participate in charitable fundraising activities e.g. Macmillan and hold events to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of our carers. We have lots of informal events and social activities throughout the year, and the diversity of events allows everyone to contribute and participate, enhancing relationships with each other, and the agency.

## 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.

## 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 by the agency, this feedback is passed 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, the agency provides all foster carers with The Fostering Network membership. The Fostering Network is able to provide carers and their families with advice and guidance, including financial and legal advice. Membership for foster carers includes:

- Monthly e-Newsletters of the latest news and events in fostering
- Digital resources

- Invitations to participate in national foster carer surveys to raise the profile of fostering and influence change.
- Access to specialist home insurance for foster carers, as well as free expert mortgage advice and discounted arrangement fees with The Mortgage Brain.
- 50% off days out at Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Blackpool Tower and Sea Life Centres
- 10% off holidays and short breaks with Haven, Hoseasons and cottages.com
- A dedicated member helpline staffed by experts who can provide advice and guidance on all fostering practice topics
- Legal Advice Service

## 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 National Fostering Agency has a comprehensive insurance package in place which fully covers all agency activities. This cover includes Personal and Public Liability, Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity and satisfies the insurance requirements for all contracts awarded to the agency. 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 Recruitment, Assessment & Approval

## 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 carers' own children and the effect fostering may have on them.

Following an enquiry, an Initial Visit (IV) is undertaken at the prospective carers' home by a qualified social worker or manager. This provides an opportunity for the agency to share more detailed information with prospective carers around the realities of fostering, to answer any of their questions, and to view and assess the accommodation. The discussion will include exploration of skills, knowledge and motivation to foster, and any practical requirements.

Applicants must:

- Be over 21 years of age
- Have a spare room for the child/children placed with them.
- Be able to provide transport for children e.g. to school and contact.
- Be able to attend all relevant meetings
- Have some IT skills to enable them to keep detailed placement records.
- Actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- Agree to attend regular training and support groups

Following the IV, if it is felt that the prospective

carer would be suitable; they will be invited to apply to become an Alliance Foster Carer. An Application Form can be left and a link to our online Application Form.

## Assessment Process

All fostering assessments are based on the BAAF Form F, completed by qualified, registered social workers, and undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, guidance and policy. The 2 stage assessment process (Stage 1 & 2) is expected to take a maximum of 4 months.

The assessment includes completion of a number of relevant statutory checks and references including: DBS, Local Authority Checks, Medical, Ex-Partner References, Personal References, Employer References, Social Media checks, Health & Safety checks and Letting Agent consent etc. The assessor will also agree a schedule of visits to complete the assessment in a timely, focussed manner.

The Applicants will be invited to undertake 3 days of Skills to Foster preparation training, delivered by in-house trainers, and this feedback will form part of the assessment process. This training includes information about safeguarding, childcare law, safer caring, behaviour management, attachment, secure-base parenting and equality and diversity. Day 3 is a full day course on 'An introduction to Attachment and Trauma' delivered by our psychotherapist.

The assessment is comprehensive and evidence-based, producing a report that covers individual profiles, past and present relationships/partnerships, support networks, interviews with children and adult members of the household, lifestyle, parenting capacity and experience, valuing diversity. The report will make recommendations on the terms of approval e.g. number of children, age range, placement types, and will be presented to the agency Fostering

Panel. The applicants will also be required to complete a Safe Care Policy, Fire Evacuation Plan and Carer Profile.

## Panel

Following completion of the assessment, the applicants are invited to attend the fostering panel with their assessor, whereby the panel will make a recommendation on approval. The fostering panel membership is made up of both agency staff and independent members, and their experience is derived from a variety of backgrounds including health, education, and social care and fostering and includes members who have experienced the care system. The function of the panel is to provide an independent quality assurance role, to consider the approval of applicants and the continuation of approval of existing carers.

Following panel presentation, the applicants will be notified immediately of the panel's recommendation in respect of their application. However the final decision as to the applicant's approval will be made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

If applicants are not in agreement with the ADM

decision, they have a right of appeal, which can be made direct to the agency, or the Independent Review Mechanism within 28 days.

If, at any time during the assessment, the assessor feels the application falls short of the standards required, this will be discussed with the Assessment Manager immediately. Any areas of shortfall must be fully explored and where training or support will not bring the applicant up to acceptable standards, the assessment must cease. The assessor will inform applicants of this decision and the reasons within 48 hours and present a brief report for consideration by the fostering panel.





# 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.

## Employees

Alliance Foster Carer encourages all employees to develop professionally through accessing e-learning, webinars, training courses and practice development workshops, provided both within the agency, and externally, including Local Safeguarding Boards.

Employees continue their training under the guidance of their regulatory body, and each year they participate in an annual appraisal, part of which includes an audit and review of training needs and continuing professional development. Individual learning needs are tailored towards career development and areas of special interest, which adds value to the regional service.

Team Managers benefit from a blended learning programme: Aspire, Achieve and Advance which develops managers to meet the challenges of the role. All Registered Managers are required to obtain the Diploma Level 5 in Leadership for

Health and Social Care and Children & Young People's Services.

## **Students**

Alliance Foster Care is an active and diverse learning environment, and therefore welcomes the placement of students from local universities. Supervising Social Workers and Managers are supported to undertake training to become qualified Practice Educators, where appropriate to their career interest and development.



# Complaints

Alliance complaints procedures aims to deal with complaints received in a prompt and equitable manner. The Registered Manager and Quality Assurance Manager are responsible for monitoring complaints and their outcomes.

## Complaints Policy

All children and adults with whom the company comes into contact have the right to receive a quality, professional service. If they do not feel they have received such a service, they have the right to complain and have that complaint listened to. All complaints will be acknowledged within seven working days, and will indicate whether it is resolvable at Stage 1, or will require Stage 2 investigation.

## Stage 1 Complaints – Informal Resolution

Where possible, we aim to resolve complaints informally, at local level, and this should be the preferred option. Complainants are encouraged to talk to the person with whom they have a complaint with in the first instance as this allows opportunity to explore the issue and seek any clarification, which often leads to informal resolution.

If the complainant is not satisfied with this initial response, they will be asked to put it in writing and sign a complaint referral form. The complaint will be dealt with within 10 working days (20 days for complex complaints).

## Stage 2 Complaints – Formal Consideration

If not resolved at Stage One, formal investigations will be undertaken by a trained and suitably experienced member of staff within 25 working days (50 days for complex complaints, extending to 65 days where necessary).

## Stage 3 Complaints – Independent Complaints Investigation with option of Independent Complaints Panel

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response at Stage Two, it can progress to Stage Three with the option of an independent review panel scrutinising the reports from the investigation with representation from the complainant.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may take advice from the Regulatory Authority.

## Name and Address of Inspection Body

All the activities of Alliance are inspected and regulated by Ofsted who can be contacted at the following:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- General Enquiries: 0300 123 1231
- About Concerns: 0300 123 4666
- Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Children's Commissioner

Children and Young People may also make a complaint to the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, based in England. They can do this by going to the appropriate website:

- [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk) (for England)



# Accredited Standards

## **Leading Improvements for Looked After Children**

Alliance Foster Care has successfully achieved LILAC – ‘Leading Improvements for Looked after Children’, with the key objective of developing a quality framework for involvement policy and practice targeting young people in care. The young people will make use of this framework to carry out assessments of local authority or agency services.

## **Investors in People**

As part of the NFA Group, Alliance Foster Care has achieved the Investors in People Gold Award.

## **Customer Services Excellence Award**

As part of the NFA Group, Alliance Foster Care has successfully achieved and maintained the Customer Service Excellence Award. This Government Standard for Customer Excellence builds on the legacy of the Charter Mark and concentrates on the detailed experience of customers and actions taken by organisations to recognise and understand their customers, to give them a voice, to show how customers are listened to, and how their views shape the service.



# Professional Membership

## **CoramBAAF**

Alliance Foster Care has a corporate membership with CoramBAAF. CoramBAAF promotes the highest standards of child-centred policies and services. It influences policy-makers, helps find new families for children and supports professions, adoptive parents and foster carers.

## **The Fostering Network**

Alliance Foster Care has a corporate membership with The Fostering Network which is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering. This means that they are uniquely placed to bring people and organisations together to improve the lives of children in foster care.

The Fostering Network works to raise the profile of foster care through lobbying and campaigning for improvements in foster care at UK, national and local level.

## **NWG**

Alliance Foster Care has a corporate membership with NWG which 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 National Fostering Agency Group) so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.

## **Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP)**

This is a national charity that enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.



# Contact Information

## Responsible Individual

- Patricia Jarrett
- Email: [pjarrett@nfa.co.uk](mailto:pjarrett@nfa.co.uk)

## Registered Manager

- New appointee commencing late Feb 2019 – details will be updated.

## Registered Address

- Name: Alliance Foster Care
- Address: 1 Maple Court, Ash Lane, Collingtree, Northampton NN4 0NB
- Telephone: 01604 879373
- Email: [admin@alliancefostercare.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Essential Addresses and Contact Details

### Children's Commissioner

- Address: Children's Commissioner for England, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT
- Tel: 020 7783 8330
- Email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

Free and confidential contact lines for children and young people:

- Tel: 0800 528 0731
- Email: [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

### Coram VOICE

This is a national charity that enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.

- Helpline: 0808 800 5792
- Email: [info@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@coramvoice.org.uk)
- Web: [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)





**Alliance Foster Care™**

**Alliance Foster Care Statement of Purpose January 2019**

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