Heath Farm Children’s Services

Statement of Purpose
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This Statement of Purpose has been produced to provide information to all interested parties, including:
- Any person working for the purpose of the fostering service
- Any Foster Carer or prospective Foster Carer of the fostering service
- Any child placed with a Foster Carer by the fostering service, and their parents
- Local Authority partners and relevant stakeholders

The Statement of Purpose, produced in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations includes:
- A statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service
- A statement of the services and facilities provided by the fostering service.

This Statement of Purpose and the service we provide has been developed in accordance with and reflects appropriate legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services Regulations (England 2011) (Amendments 2013);
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England 2011)
- The Care Planning and Fostering (England) Regulations 2010 (Amendments 2013) (Miscellaneous Amendments 2015)
- Working together to Safeguard Children 2018 and other national frameworks
- National Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services

A copy of the Statement of Purpose is provided, and/or made available upon request, to:
- Ofsted/Chief Inspector
- Any person working for the purposes of the fostering service
- Any child (subject to their age and understanding) placed with a Foster Carer of the fostering service and the parent of any such child

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated at least annually by the Senior Management Team.
Our Vision
We will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable young people in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

Our Mission
Every day we improve the lives of thousands of young people, their families and communities through a relentless focus on caring and learning.

Our Values
- Deliver Promises: Be accountable. Take responsibility. Focus on outcomes.
- Open & Honest: Be fair and transparent. Do the right thing. Act respectfully.
- Inclusive Spaces: Create safe, nurturing environments. Care about what we do and each other. Value diversity.
- Dream Big: Believe you can. Make positive changes. Inspire and innovate.
- OneTeam: Together we inspire trust, happiness and an infectious passion to accomplish our vision.

Together we inspire trust, happiness and an infectious passion to accomplish our vision.
The aims and objectives of the agency are:

- To provide a high quality service for looked after children and young people of all ages whose needs have been assessed by the responsible Local Authority as being best met by placement with a foster carer
- To ensure children and young people are only placed with carers who have been recruited, assessed, approved and reviewed in accordance with statutory regulation and national standards and guidance
- To support, supervise and provide on-going training to carers so that they are able to provide a comprehensive service that addresses the physical, emotional, educational and health needs of the children and young people placed with them
- To promote positively the concept of fostering
- To bring together carers who will support, educate and inform each other and who will work in partnership with all relevant professionals, agencies and families involved in the child’s life
- To continually develop and improve our services and not to compromise on standards. To this aim we seek internal and external evaluation and feedback on our work

Objectives

- The agency in pursuit of its stated aims and objectives, will employ policies, practices and procedures which will seek at all times:
- To ensure the provision of high quality care to children and young people in a safe, healthy and nurturing family setting
- To meet the individual child’s particular needs and promote their best interests, in accordance with the care plan
- To have 24 hour support for carers, children and young people
- To protect the child from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation
- To 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 they may have
- To develop the child’s sense of identity and self-worth
- To promote the child’s health and wellbeing, including their physical, mental and emotional welfare
- To promote educational achievement and attainment
- To promote and support agreed contact with the child’s family and friends, in accordance with the care plan
- To prepare the child for adult life through the development of relevant life skills and acquisition of the knowledge necessary to achieve this; providing opportunity for lifelong relationships
- To seek the views and opinions of children and promote participation alongside, their families and carers to inform the planning and delivery of the agency’s services
• To recruit individuals and families from all parts of the community. With different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and life experiences, thereby offering local authorities a range of placements, reflecting the wide range of children’s needs
• To achieve consistently high standards when recruiting and assessing carers
• To have a properly constituted and independent Panel to consider assessments and make recommendations to the agency regarding the award, review, rejection or termination of approvals
• To ensure consistency and continuity in the supervision, support and information carers receive
• To provide accessible training that enables carers to develop their skills and knowledge so as to better meet the needs of children placed with them
• To offer placements that carefully match the particular needs of the child to the carer’s skills, experiences and circumstances
• To regularly review the stability of placements in order to ensure support packages remain relevant and resourced, minimising the potential for placement breakdown and poor outcomes for children
• To be a responsible and competent employer; recruiting and employing an adequate number of appropriately experienced and qualified staff, who are able to meet the needs of carers and children, placed with them
• To ensure the agency is organisationally sound and properly structured
• To have procedures in place to control and supervise the agency’s activities

• To have arrangements in place to control and supervise the agency’s finances, which are based on sound financial principles and recognised good practice
• To organise and manage the agency’s resources effectively to ensure the best possible service delivery and the safety of children
• To maintain the skill and knowledge base of casual or independent staff, managers and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes
• To monitor and review agency policies, procedures and practice on a regular basis
• To implement administrative procedures and practices so that management and staff are able to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner
• To maintain secure, separate and accurate records or children, carers and staff and ensure access to such records, in line with legislation
Section 03
Status & Constitution

Heath Farm Children’s Services is one of a number of fostering agencies owned and managed by the National Fostering Agency (NFA Group), having been acquired in 2017.

Senior Management is made up from within the NFA Group, who meet regularly and are responsible for the strategic direction and financial management of the organisation, with day-to-day responsibility remaining with the Registered Manager.

Senior management objectives include:
• Strategic vision and direction
• A child-centred culture, values and principles
• Quality assurance
• An annual business plan in-line with children’s and service users’ needs
• Developing the service in-line with best practice
• Financial management to ensure best value to local authorities
• Assimilation of new legislation and regulations into practice

The Agency is continually evolving and developing; growing in order to provide a national service whilst providing local offices throughout the UK. Our regional services are integrated into the Agency ethos, procedures and standards. Our national structure and investment enables us to continually develop, innovative, efficient and effective services for the benefit of Local Authorities and the children and young people for whom they are responsible.

Name and address of Registered Manager:
Name: John Terry
Address: 1st floor, Marlowe House, Markerstudy Business Park, Whitstable, CT5 3FE
Email: enquiries@heathfarm.org

Name and Address of Responsible Individual:
Name: John Keane
Address: 1 Merchants Place, River Street, Bolton BL2 1BX
Telephone: 01204 522667
Email: JKeane@nfa.co.uk

All the activities of Heath Farm Children’s Services are inspected and regulated by Ofsted:

Registered Number: SC060386
Last inspection can be found at: September 2018

Ofsted – Can be contacted at the follow address:
Name: Regulatory Inspector
Address: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
As an employer we are also committed to valuing equality and diversity within our workforce and to treating all employees and job applicants equally. Our goal is to ensure these commitments are embedded in our day to day working practices with all of our customers, colleagues and partners.

We provide equality of opportunity and do not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination. The Agency is responsive to any child’s racial, cultural and linguistic background and belief systems, taking into account their age, understanding, ability, and any special needs they may have arising from physical or intellectual impairment.

The Agency is committed to equality of opportunity for employees, Foster Carers, children and young people and will strive to ensure no individual will be disadvantaged due to race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other reason. Discriminatory behaviour will be robustly challenged and dealt with appropriately according to the circumstances.
Section 05
Safeguarding

Working Together to Safeguard Children: www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk
“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part and have a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children”.

Heath Farm Children’s Services prides itself on being child focused in all our work. We strive to be a reflective and learning organisation, taking on learning from Serious Case Reviews.

Staff are encouraged to “think the unthinkable” to be respectful yet challenging of carers, the LA and the organisation itself.

Our starting point is to listen to children as we believe that the greatest way to keep children safe is to listen to children and to take them seriously.

On placement all children are given a copy of the children’s guide which provides them with information about who they can talk to, or how to make a complaint.

Foster carers are given clear guidance around safe carer, and along with the household safe carer, a child specific safe care is drawn up. Risk assessments are completed at the point of placement, and updated at least annually or following any significant incidence, to reflect changes. The purpose of the risk assessment is not just to highlight risk, but to identify what children, carers, staff and others can do to address those risk and work towards lowering them.

Staff seek meetings with the Local Authority to discuss concerns and risk and share risk assessments.

The Registered Manager ensures the Quality Assurance Team is updated on all schedule 7 events and notifications. This allows for patterns to be explored and overview of learning to be drawn out. We strive to manage the situation, reduce the risk and learn from the situation.

Staff and carers receive mandatory training on safeguarding. Joint training with staff and panel members have focus on safeguarding and learning from Serious Case Reviews.

Team meetings are used to reflect on situations and team responses. We look to learn from research and incorporate it into our practice.

We have developed a number of champions for child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and County Lines to ensure that safeguarding remains high on all of our agendas.

Work is undertaken one to one or as part of a group. We have involved young people in the development of that package which is now being shared with foster carers in order to support the work.
Heath Farm Children’s Services is part of the NFA Group and its agency structure. The NFA Group provides fostering across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. There are clear defined structures of regional teams and partner agencies.

**Company Structure:**

**NFA Group Management structure:**

- **Chief Executive**
  - NFA Group
  - David Leatherbarrow

- **Regional Director**
  - NFA Group
  - Remi Johnson

- **Responsible Individual**
  - John Keane

- **Registered Manager**
  - Heath Farm Children’s Services
  - John Terry
About Heath Farm

Heath Farm has been in operation since 1993 and is one of the first independent fostering organisations in England. Heath Farm grew and developed the model of multi disciplinary working, operating from a single site – a wrap around service for looked after children. This can now be seen at a national level under the banner of multi dimensional foster care, or as it is known in some areas treatment foster care.

Heath Farm Fostering provides three key services for looked after children - foster care, therapy and contact. We have strong links with Heath Farm School and children may attend this school. Our wrap around model of care supports children who have complex needs whilst working closely alongside local authorities and the child’s family. The organisation works closely with the key people involved in the child’s care and recognises the enormously important part they play both individually and collectively in caring for the child. It is an holistic service, which seeks to promote the child’s global development into early adulthood or their return to their family.

The main office is in Whitstable. Heath Farm School and Fostering sub office operates from a rural site located 10 miles from Ashford, a large market town situated in the centre of Kent. The M20 and high speed rail link run close to Heath Farm School provides a quick access to other parts of the country. This is particularly relevant for the child’s family and their local authorities who need to keep in frequent and regular contact.
Section 07
Employees

The Senior Leadership Team includes the Director of Operations, Regional Directors and Registered Managers who are responsible for the day-to-day management and strategic direction of the organisation.

Heath Farm Children’s Services Structure
NFA Group senior management team have a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of fostering and social care. The Operations Director, Regional Director, Registered Manager and Social Work Team Managers are qualified social workers registered with HCPC. The management group meet on a regular 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.
The Social Work Team

Team Managers and Supervising Social Workers are all qualified, HCPC registered and very experienced social workers, 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 social work team 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.

All permanent members of staff have training development plans specific to their area of expertise, receive monthly supervision and annual appraisals. In addition staff have access to associate therapists to reflect on complex practice issues. Heath Farm Children’s Services 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.
Section 08
Complaints & Outcomes

The Agency has a comprehensive complaints procedure.

All children placed with Heath Farm Children's Services 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, a Children’s Rights Worker will see the children on their own on a regular basis. Heath Farm Children’s Services 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. NFA Group welcomes feedback of all kinds and maintains copies of all complaints.

Heath Farm Children’s Services 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. The complaints procedure is available to children, Foster Carers and all stakeholders and is reviewed annually to check its satisfactory operation. The review is undertaken to identify any patterns and to review the actions taken on individual complaints.

The Agency’s complaints procedure places a strong emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and an early stage. All complaints are investigated and recommendations for consideration, resolution and action are addressed. We take a ‘lessons learned’ approach from all complaints to improve our agency.

All complaints are dealt with in accordance with our policy and procedures and, where appropriate, an independent investigation is held.

The Agency, where appropriate, reflects upon and takes appropriate action to improve policies, practices and procedures in order to address complaints promptly and resolve the matters identified.

Dissatisfied complainants can be referred to a Stage 3 Independent Panel.

For a copy of our complaints procedure or to make a complaint, please contact the Registered Manager on 01227 931778.
Section 09
Service Provision

The principles and purpose of the Agency with regard to service provision are:

- To be fully compliant with the Fostering Service Regulations and other relevant statutes, laws and guidance
- To ensure the delivery of safe, child-centred care with comprehensive and robust safeguarding systems
- To recruit, train and assess a diverse Foster Carer population, enabling them to meet the complex and diverse needs of individual children referred
- To ensure that all fostering assessments are undertaken by experienced, social work qualified staff, with active participation by the applicants. The agency to provide a buddy (experienced Foster Carer) to applicants
- To ensure that all new fostering applicants complete Skills to Foster Training, as part of the assessment and approval process
- To ensure that all of our Foster Carers are fully supported and trained in order to meet the needs of children we look after, including appropriate responses to their behaviour
- To ensure that children and young people are matched to fostering families that can meet their individual needs, including, as far as is possible, their ethnic, cultural and religious need
- To ensure that all of our Foster Carers are committed to meeting the objectives of a child’s placement plan and care plan, including the promotion of appropriate contact
- To promote educational participation and attainment for all children and young people in our care, in line with objectives identified by the Department for Education (DfE)
- To maintain comprehensive and accurate records on the children and young people in our care, tracking progress and outcomes
- To ensure that all of the information held by the Agency is managed in accordance with data protection guidance and legislation in order to promote safety whilst safeguarding dignity and privacy
- To ensure that all our Foster Carers and their homes are fully compliant with health and safety risk assessment requirements
- To provide and maintain a 24 hour Out of Hours telephone support service, provided by a qualified social worker, and supported by an experienced, social work qualified manager, ensuring Foster Carers have access to appropriate advice and guidance at all times
- To provide all Foster Carers with a Personal and Professional Development Plan and Learning and Development Record (PPDPLDR) tailored to meet their learning objectives and equip them to meet the needs of approved placement types
- To provide a contact service
- 23 nights paid respite
- Access to professional counselling
- Participation in the Mocking Bird Project in conjunction with the Fostering Network
- To provide all Foster Carers with access to Carer Support Groups for networking, information sharing, skills development and peer mentoring opportunities
- To ensure that all of our Foster Carers are reviewed annually or earlier if required, and that the terms of approval are consistent with their assessed skills and ability
- To deliver a high quality fostering service, open and responsive to feedback and complaints, and pro-active in reviewing service provision to meet changing sector requirements
- The provision of a mentoring service to support young people who need practical support, this is a needs led service. Young people are allocated a mentor for a period of 6 sessions. This is reviewed and another set of sessions offered or the work is concluded. All our mentors are DBS checked and trained. The focus of the sessions can be:
  - Independent travel to college, school or contact
  - Online certificate in Food Hygiene to get a job in fast food.
  - CSCS cards for young people who want to work on building sites on apprenticeships or work experience
  - Personal hygiene
  - Relationships
  - Sexual health
  - Interview skills
  - Self-awareness
  - Semi independence skills
  - Identity awareness
Section 10
Fostering Panel

Heath Farm recognises the need for children to have contact with family members. Our commitment towards this is reflected in our contact service.

The Fostering Panel is made up of members largely independent of the Agency. They come from different backgrounds such as Education, Health and Social Care. Members also include Foster Carers, an employee of the Agency and those who have had previous experience of being Looked After. The Fostering Panel has access to medical and legal advice.

The Fostering Panel provides an independent overview and makes recommendations to the Agency on matters that are brought to it. It is child-focussed and aims to ensure that any new foster carers that the Agency recruit will care well for children and keep them safe.

The Fostering Panel has important functions:
- To recommend to the Agency whether applicants are suitable to be approved as foster carers
- To recommend any changes to a foster carer’s approval
- To discuss any serious concerns about a foster carer’s practice
- To recommend termination of a foster carer’s approval

The Fostering Panel members will consider the application to see if it meets the Agency’s fostering requirements. The Panel will then make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Applicants are not required to meet with the Agency Decision Maker.
Section 11
Mockingbird Family Model

The Mockingbird programme is an alternative method of delivering foster care with the potential to improve placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care.

What is Mockingbird?

The Mockingbird Family Model increases the protective factors around children through the simple provision of an extended network of family support.

The Mockingbird programme is an alternative method of delivering foster care with the potential to improve placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care and to improve support for, and retention of, foster carers.

It uses the concept of a ‘constellation’ which is where six to ten ‘satellite’ families of foster carers live in close proximity to a dedicated hub home of specially recruited and trained carers offering sleep overs (respite care), peer support, regular joint planning and social activities.

What is a Hub Home?

Relationships are central to the Mockingbird programme, with hub carers and foster carers providing frontline care along with social workers concentrating on relationship building.

The hub empowers families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate and offers children a more positive experience of care. The hub also builds links with other families important to the children’s care plans and to resources in the wider community which can provide them with enhanced opportunities to learn, develop and succeed.
What have we learnt?

Heath Farm in conjunction with the Fostering Network have been working to the Mockingbird Family Model since the pilot started in 2015, as the first Independent Fostering Provider.

Overall, in the evaluation of the pilot participants were very positive about the model, reporting that it enabled foster carers and children and young people placed with them to:

- Develop supportive, non-judgemental peer relationships within the wider community
- Access one to one support from hub carers, who were described as extremely responsive to immediate requests for support and flexible to individual’s needs and circumstances

The hub carers’ own experiences and knowledge of fostering was particularly valued as well as ensuring that respite was provided by the same person on every occasion.
Section 12
Contact

Heath Farm recognises the need for children to have contact with family members. Our commitment towards this is reflected in our contact service.

At Heath Farm we believe that providing a safe and positive level of contact service for our children and young people is an important and indeed vital part of what we do.

For the looked after child contact is very often an essential element for them. As well as taking stock of legal directives, advice from the Local Authority and working with a whole range of professionals including current and past foster carers, we also work with our children and young people and their birth families to ensure that they receive their required contact in a safe and imaginative setting.

We believe that positive, well planned contact can help a child make sense of who they are, provide clues to their identity, build relationships and sometimes help heal or allow them to come to terms with the traumatic experiences they may have suffered in the past.

At Heath Farm we offer the use of a bespoke comfortable, private and well equipped contact suite with facilities for recreation and cooking. As well as a hands on approach, the Contact Co-ordinator has a pool of trained, competent and caring contact supervisors to draw on to help facilitate the contacts. Contacts can take place during the week or at weekends by arrangement or can be activity based depending on the needs of the child and recommendations by those involved. We try to listen to the needs of the child, as well as monitor and constantly assess our service to ensure quality control so that we deliver the best we can.
Section 13
Therapy

Currently four therapists are employed by Heath Farm on a consultancy basis and are managed by the Team Manager.

They include Child Psychotherapists, Family Therapist and Play Therapists. Children for whom therapy is felt to be appropriate can have an assessment very quickly. Therapists consult with the placing authority and regular reports are provided as therapy progresses. Therapists also consult regularly with foster carers, Supervising Social Workers and teachers. Children usually see their therapist weekly. This can be more frequent if necessary. Information regarding therapists’ qualifications is held at Heath Farm and is available on request.

During 2007, Heath Farm established a partnership with Family Matters who are providing short term focused interventions for a number of young people. This service is accessed through a referral to the Heath Farm Therapy Coordinator. For more information about Family Matters please visit their website www.familymattersuk.org
Our focus is always on delivering the best possible outcomes for children whilst ensuring they stay in the mainstream of society. The Agency believes that with the right Foster Carers and the right ‘match’ all Looked After Children can benefit from the experience of a placement with a foster family.

Solo/Complex Needs and Enhanced Placements
Every child is an individual with individual needs and in some circumstances these needs can be complex. The Agency is able to offer a number of placement packages to meet needs that are identified by the placing Local Authority as requiring additional support. In such circumstances a personalised package of support can be provided which will add additional resources to the placement and provide a greater likelihood of achieving successful outcomes for the child.

Additional support may come in the form of extra input from a qualified Social Worker or Support Worker or through guidance and consultation to the Foster Carer.

Specialist Placements
Step Down/Placements
Our Step Down scheme represents an intensely resourced package of foster care designed to support young people who are ready for a transition from residential to foster care or who are experiencing a period of significant instability in their care placements.

Step Down enables local authorities to place young people in the confidence that they will receive the support required to achieve stability in foster care. The support ‘steps down’ over the duration of the placement ensuring that this becomes a viable long-term option for the young person and the placing Local Authority.
**Children who present with Sexually Harmful Behaviour**

In response to an increasing number of requests from Local Authorities, the Agency has prioritised the development of Employees and Foster Carers to enable them to facilitate safe and positive placements for children displaying sexually harmful behaviour. Specialist training has been provided to both Foster Carers and staff to ensure safety is paramount balanced with achieving quality outcomes for those children and young people placed.

**Staying Put**

The Agency is able to offer ‘Staying Put’ for the benefit of both young people and Local Authorities. Our Staying Put scheme provides the option for young people to remain with their Foster Carers past their 18th birthday in circumstances where this is deemed to be in the young adults’ best interests and where this is a plan supported by the Local Authority. This can have many benefits for the young person and remove some of the pressure on local authorities in finding alternative living arrangements. Our Foster Carers are able to continue their support and provide valuable expertise, enabling young people to develop to a stage where they feel able to live more independently. Our Staying Put scheme is available for young adults over the age of eighteen.

Placements are reviewed regularly with a focus on supporting young adults to gain all the skills that they need to move on.

**Additional services**

The Agency is committed to providing the highest quality of placements together with ‘added value’ support services for Local Authorities.
Learning and Development for Foster Carers

Our Foster Carers and Employees have a vital role to play in providing support and security to many vulnerable children and young people. It is a challenging and rewarding job to help them manage the impact of abuse and family difficulties whilst beginning the transition to stability and independence. Effective and safe foster care requires knowledge, skill and dedication on the part of everyone concerned.

We provide a comprehensive range of learning and development opportunities to Foster Carers and Employees focussed on the promotion of safety, security and professional practice. Our Safeguarding training encompasses Basic Awareness, Safer Caring, Managing Allegations and Complaints, Child Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Trafficked Children, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Domestic Violence and the Prevent Strategy.

Foster Carer Training

We expect all of our Foster Carers to take part in learning and development activities. These include internal and external group training sessions facilitated by social workers and subject experts, online sessions accessible at home, support groups focussed on particular practice areas, and reading and learning conducted in the carer’s own home.

We have a very clear expectation that all of our Foster Carers complete the learning activity outlined in their Personal and Professional Development Plan.
Learning and Development after Approval – Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Induction
After being approved, Foster Carers complete an induction. This is a one-to one session with the Supervising Social Worker.

Employee Learning and Development
The Agency provides a monthly supervision and annual appraisal process for all employees. In addition we offer both internal and external training opportunities linked to specific roles. Our social work employees have a career development path that starts, if required, with our ASYE Programme and embraces Safeguarding, Practice Learning, Foster Carer Supervision and Assessment Skills. Other job roles also have access to role specific training.

Employee Learning and Development
Heath Farm Children’s Services welcome the placement of students in its region. Supervision Social Workers are supported to undertake training in becoming Practice Teachers. The whole team support the students on placement by offering them a wide range of learning opportunities.
Section 16
Management & Support

The key to successful foster placements is the management and support system available to our Foster Carers.

- All Foster Carers have an allocated, qualified Supervising Social Worker (SSW)
- All Foster Carers have access to our emergency out of hours support service, which is staffed by a qualified social worker, and supported by a qualified manager
- Agency Managers are accessible to Foster Carers, ensuring open communication and a prompt and responsive service
- We provide all of our Foster Carers with Fostering Network membership. This provides them with a range of independent support services, including legal services and insurance

Supervision
Each Foster Carer has an allocated SSW, with a manageable caseload of fostering households, to ensure carers are provided with appropriate professional support and supervision.

It is the SSW’s responsibility to manage and support the Foster Carer in the fostering task; ensuring the needs of children and young people are paramount, and each is afforded opportunities to progress and excel.

The SSW maintains telephone contact and undertakes professional supervision with the carers. The frequency of supervision may increase if the demands of a particular child or young person require it. Supervision is an opportunity to discuss the needs of children and young people placed, and consider how best to achieve progress and desired outcomes.

The SSW will provide professional advice, guidance and support to ensure Foster Carers are maintaining the high quality of care expected, and that placements are fully compliant with Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

Supervision visits must take place irrespective of whether there are children in placement, ensuring Agency and Foster Carers remain connected and fully appraised of all matters.

Supervision also provides the opportunity for reflection and learning, and enables the SSW to work collaboratively with the Foster Carer to assess skills, competence and abilities and formulate a tailored Personal & Professional Development Plan that will add to the Foster Carer’s Learning and Development Record (PPDPLDR).

Additional support is provided by our Support Workers that can include individual interventions with children according to assessed needs, or crisis support to Foster Carers.

Emergency Support (On-Call Service)
All Foster Carers have access to our emergency out of hours support service which is staffed by a qualified social worker and supported by a qualified manager at all times. This is available outside office hours every evening, weekend and Bank Holiday, ensuring our Foster Carers have 24 hour support and advice at all times, and that safeguarding concerns and placement challenges are responded to in a timely manner.

Foster Carer Reviews
All Foster Carers are reviewed each year, and the process is consistent with Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards. The review system incorporates a comprehensive range of consultation to ensure the views of everyone involved are incorporated, and the performance of Foster Carers is evaluated effectively. The annual review is an opportunity to appraise the carers’ past year of fostering, to assess and review training needs, and set any specific objectives.
In addition, the annual review monitors the Foster Carer’s satisfaction with the service they receive from the Agency. Any issues that are identified are fed back to Registered Managers.

When concerns arise about a carer’s practice, or their ongoing commitment to professional development they will be addressed as part of the Foster Carer review, and can include a review of their approval at the Fostering Panel.

**Unannounced Visits**
In accordance with Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards, the Agency conducts unannounced visits a minimum of one Unannounced Visit to each foster home annually. We strive to complete 2, particularly where there have been significant concerns. At least one of these will be conducted by qualified social workers, with at least 1 being completed by a worker other than the allocated SSW.

The purpose of the visits is to assess the home circumstances and care provided, ensuring the high standards that the Agency requires are maintained at all times.

**Support Groups**
Regular support groups are held across the Agency, in locations accessible to Foster Carers. The groups are led and facilitated by SSWs, with Foster Carers actively contributing to the agenda and participating in the groups.

These groups provide an opportunity for carers to network with one another, to share skills and experiences, and to provide peer support. In addition, it enables the Agency to stay closely connected to carers and keep them informed of Agency developments, the changing world of foster care, changes in fostering legislation, new research and best practice.

**Foster Carer Quality Group**
Foster Carer Quality Group provide an arena for Foster Carers to comment on Agency policy, practice, service delivery and service development. They also promote the sharing of ideas on best practice. Regional Foster Carer Representatives meet several times a year with Senior Agency Managers.

**Independent Support**
Foster Carers receive support from various professionals including independent experts. All Foster Carers are registered members of Fostering Network who provide support to Foster Carer households. This includes high quality specialist support, advice and information, legal expenses insurance, and rewards for Foster Carers with access to a huge range of discounts.

The Agency also commissions – an independent, advocacy support service to Foster Carers, provided on a needs led basis. This provides our carers with professional, independent support during difficult situations, including allegations. The service provides a 24 hour response and an allocated Independent Advisor who provides impartial, objective information, enabling carers to make informed decisions when in difficult or stressful circumstances.

**Policies & Procedures**
The Agency has a comprehensive and easy to understand Foster Carer Handbook. This is accessible online to all of our approved Foster Carers, along with additional resource material, to guide and aid them in the fostering task. The Handbook contains information on fostering legislation, guidance, finance, access to records, safeguarding, health and safety matters, health, education, managing behaviours and a plethora of other subjects relevant to the fostering task.
Section 17
Contact Details for Other Agencies

Children’s Commissioner
Anne Longfield, Children’s Commissioner
Office of Children’s Commissioner for England,
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street,
London, SW1P 3BT
T: 020 7783 8330
E: Info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
Freephone for children and young people
T: 0800 5288330

Voice
Voice is a national children’s charity that empowers children and young people in care and in need, and campaigns for change to improve their lives.
320 City Road, London, EC1V 2NZ
T: 020 7833 5792
www.voiceyp.org
E: info@voiceyp.org

Youth Advocacy Services
Provides independent and confidential social and legal advice, information and advocates
0800616101
help@nys.net

A National Voice
Run for and by young people who are or have been in care in England.
0161 2375577
www.anationalvoice.org

ChildLine
A free helpline for children to talk about any problems.
08001111
www.childline.org.uk

Ofsted
All the activities of NFA are inspected and regulated by Ofsted who can be contacted at the following address:
Regulatory Inspector, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
T: 0300 123 1231
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Section 18
Professional Membership

The Fostering Network
The Heath Farm Children’s Services 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
Heath Farm Children’s Services 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 so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.
Leading Improvements for Looked After Children
NFA group 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.

Customer Services Excellence Award
NFA group has successfully achieved and maintained the Customer Service Excellence Award, this new 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. We believe that NFA are one of the first independent fostering organisations to achieve the award.

Investors in People
The National Fostering Agency group is recognised as an Investor in People and has held the Award since 2004. In October 2013 the NFA Group achieved the Investors in People Gold Award. NFA Group will continue to be an investor in people.