



# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

## 2022 - 2023

### Shining Stars Fostering Agency

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Statement of Purpose Version

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## ABOUT

Shining Stars Fostering Agency is a private company registered under the Companies Act 2006 with company number 9768599. The registered address is: Regus Office, Lansdowne Building, No 2 Lansdowne Road, Croydon, CR9 2ER. Shining Stars Fostering Agency is registered with Ofsted. Our registration number is 1224685. We are judged by Ofsted to be OUTSTANDING in all areas.

We are accredited by the relevant professional bodies such as London Care Placements, Fostering Network, Coram BAAF, NAFP. All our foster carers are individual members of the Fostering Network.

This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of Shining Stars Fostering Agency, an independent Fostering Provider whose office is based in Croydon in South London and has been developed in accordance with appropriate statute law and regulations, including:

- The Children Act 1989 (and its later amendments including CA 2004) Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services
- National Minimum Standards Fostering Services (2011)
- The Fostering Service Regulations (2002 and 2011)
- The Children Act 2000
- UK ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Care Standards Act (2000)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

Shining Stars Fostering Agency's Statement of Purpose provides a range of information, which is intended for a wider audience including:

- Ofsted
- Children and young people who are placed with our foster carers
- The agency's staff and consultants
- Foster carers and prospective foster carers
- Local Authorities and Children's Trusts, who place, or are considering placing with Shining Stars Fostering Agency
- Colleagues from other social care agencies
- Health and educational establishments
- Any parent or guardian of any child placed with the fostering service
- The general public

The statement of purpose is available to download online from [www.shiningstarsfostering.com](http://www.shiningstarsfostering.com)  
A print version will be made available on request.

In addition to the statement of purpose, Shining Stars Fostering Agency provides children and young people with a welcome guide which is written and presented in an age-appropriate way to reflect their level of understanding. It has been translated into several languages representing the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children placed by Shining Stars Fostering Agency.

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually by the Senior Management Team of Shining Stars Fostering Agency.

## Covid-19 and its impact and relevance to the Statement of Purpose:

The COVID 19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges for all of us. This year saw a restructuring of the office systems to enable staff to continue to provide services to foster carers and children uninterrupted working from home due to the COVID 19 pandemic. While the agency managed to ensure services remained unaffected whilst working remotely there was greater responsibility to ensure that staff as well as foster carers and looked after children remained safe and in good health.

Shining Stars Fostering Agency managed to work well during the crisis because of forward planning and timely production of a Business Continuity Plan. During this quarter SSFA ensured all staff were set up to work remotely with laptops, passwords and remote access to their files and the cloud-based IT system CHARMS. It would be fair to say that the agency was able to rise to the unprecedented challenge and ensured that the welfare and safety of its children remained at the centre of all assessments and decision making throughout this difficult time. Foster carers and Looked After Children continue to receive the high standard of care with no compromises.

This Statement of Purpose was updated to reflect the changes to Shining Stars Fostering's service delivery in view of the Covid-19 pandemic and the respective Public Health and Government guidance. The interim arrangements ensured that Shining Stars Fostering could change and adapt their model of service delivery, while promoting the support and safety of the children, young people, foster carers and their families, as well as staff.

The agency continues to proactively employ and make full use of technology to preserve good communication throughout the service. This is to provide the best possible support and maintain the high standard of service to children, young people, foster carers, staff and all other related parties.

Specific measures and responses include (but are not limited to):

- Covid 19 business continuity plan completed and provided to all staff and service users.
- Covid 19 communication strategy put in place with regular meetings and opportunities to communicate at all levels providing regular updates to staff, children and young people and carers.
- Working from home arrangements implemented for all staff.
- Regular practice updates shared with foster carers and staff in line with government guidance through emails and updating the SSFA website on a regular basis.
- Other practice updates shared with external parties including local authorities, panel members and assessors.
- Contact arrangements for children updated to reflect the use of various communication platforms.
- Face to face support, utilising appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures, to foster carers, children, and young people in situations where it is considered necessary to preserve the stability of the placement and with the oversight and agreement of senior management.

- Recruitment strategy amended to include recruitment, initial visits, pre-approval training and fostering assessments via video conferencing.
- Interim online training plan implemented for foster carers to include induction and mandatory training.
- Participation work with children and young people, and individual targeted support including therapeutic intervention where this is needed, is taking place using technology.
- Monthly education reports completed, and young people provided with laptops where required to ensure continuity in education and schoolwork.
- Foster carer supervision visits, unannounced visits and support groups completed via video conferencing to ensure carers and young people felt supported.
- Foster carer annual reviews chaired by independent reviewing officers via video conferencing.
- Virtual panel meetings implemented.
- An interim carer training strategy (induction) to ensure training standards are met for new and existing foster carers, using available technology.

## INTRODUCTION



In summary, this Statement of Purpose produced in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations 2011 includes:

***A statement of the aims and objectives of Shining Stars Fostering Agency.***

***A statement as to the services and facilities provided by Shining Stars Fostering Agency.***

In addition, Shining Stars Fostering provides children and young people with a welcome guide which is written and presented in an age-appropriate way to reflect their level of understanding. We hope that the information detailed will illustrate our commitment to provide outstanding and sustainable placements for children in care.

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually or whenever necessary by the Shining Stars' Management Team. A copy of this statement is made available on request to Ofsted and purchasers of the service. It is also displayed on our website. Children and young people are provided with our Children's Guide (DfE, 2011), explaining our vision and purpose in an age-appropriate format. We work in relation to the legal and policy framework for Looked After Children (DFE 2010 / 2011 / 2013.)

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY



Shining Stars Fostering agency is committed to equality of opportunity. Our vision places equality at the heart of our approach to policy making, service delivery and employment. We are fully committed to providing holistic services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day to day working practices with all children and young people, foster families, colleagues, customers, and any other stakeholders. We provide equal opportunities for all and do not tolerate discrimination. We are committed to identifying, understanding, and eliminating all barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment.

Shining Stars Fostering Agency encourages applicants from all sectors of the community and this is reflected in our recruitment activity and literature.

## PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION



At Shining Stars Fostering Agency, we value feedback from children, young people, foster carers and their birth children.

Supervising social workers are expected to regularly speak to children and young people during visits to obtain their views about their care. We also seek regular feedback from children and young people to shape and develop our service through questionnaires and support groups. Foster carers are also consulted with during visits, support groups and annual questionnaires.

In addition to the above Shining Stars have a Youth Panel and Youth Council that puts children and young people's voices at the heart of everything we do.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT



***“To provide a Fostering Service that is quality driven and changes lives of all those attached to it for the better. We believe in offering a nurturing environment to all in the agency, ensuring that the safeguarding and well-being of children looked after is paramount. We remain totally committed to a child centred culture by recruiting and training foster families that are able to provide children with love, care, understanding, resilience and patience”.***

The ethos of our fostering agency is based on values of nurture, which are embedded throughout all areas of operation. It flourishes in our fostering households and working culture and offers everyone involved with the agency a feeling of belonging to a family.

At Shining Stars Fostering Agency we define the parameters and expectations of our standards throughout all of our documentation, in particular our:

- Policies and procedures
- Foster Carer Handbook
- Foster Care Agreement
- Employee Handbook

Shining Stars Fostering Agency strives to exceed the National Minimum Standards at all times and ensure that the rights of all Children and Young People fostered, as well as those who foster, through Shining Stars are promoted in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The agency is committed to ensuring that Safeguarding procedures are always followed robustly to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded. To this effect the agency ensures that all our foster carers are trained in Safeguarding/Child Protection, Behaviour Management, Safer Caring, Attachment Issues and First Aid. This is in addition to a host of other training courses that are offered to foster carers such as CSE, Radicalisation, FGM, Gangs and Knife Awareness, Trauma Informed Care, Working with Asylum Seeking Unaccompanied Minors, Parent and Child Fostering and many more .

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



Shining Stars Fostering Agency is an independent fostering agency dedicated to providing outstanding fostering homes and families for children.

We are determined to make a difference to the lives of children by bringing a fresh perspective to foster care provision. We endeavour to place children at the heart of our organisation by placing them at the heart of a community which values them and supports their needs. In agreement with the Children Act 1989, we subscribe to the view that a child is best brought up in their own home with both parents playing a full part in their upbringing. We recognise that this is not always possible. Whenever it is considered to be in the child's best interests, however, Shining Stars Fostering Agency will work positively with the placing Local Authority to return the child to her/his parents or extended family.

Our strong, stable and caring family environment model involves placing children with carers who truly have faith in children, and more importantly, faith in their future.

Regardless of the circumstances a child has been through, we believe in delivering a foster care service that places their needs at the centre of everything we do and help provide a safe prosperous future for every child that is placed with Shining Stars Fostering Agency and our approved foster carers.

### Shining Stars Fostering Agency aims to

- Provide foster care placements and support packages for children and young people 'looked after' that offer a stable and consistent experience of family life, to enhance and maximize their life opportunities.
- Recruit and retain foster carers from diverse backgrounds thus ensuring a range of appropriate placements for children and young people.
- Respect and promote the ethnical, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children and young people.
- Make high quality matches between children and foster families where the skills and experience of the foster family provides the foundation for the improvement of the child's life.
- Develop a fostering service where partnership, working professionalism, respect, integrity and fairness are central to all aspects of the operations and provisions.
- Always apply a children-centred approach where the welfare of the child is at the centre of everyone's thinking and actions.
- Vigorously support and promote social interests and hobbies of children and young people so that they take part in a range of activities and lead an active and healthy lifestyle.

- Assist the Local Authorities in improving the well-being of children in every aspect of their lives including Five Outcomes as per 'Every Child Matters'.
- Provide a responsive, supportive and professional 24-hour service for foster carers, children/ young people and local authorities.
- Provide a commitment to the ongoing learning and professional development of the agency, foster carers and staff by ensuring a diverse training programme is available.
- Regularly consult with children in care so as to monitor their wishes and feelings and make improvements, amendments and changes within the service provision where appropriate.
- Establish, review and maintain policies and procedures that will comply with legislative and statutory requirements and expectations.
- Our foster carers can expect a minimum of four weekly supervisory visits along with a minimum of one unannounced visit a year.
- Supervising Social workers will keep in contact with their carers weekly and visit more frequently if required.
- Regular progress reports will be sent to the placing authority sharing the progress of the child/ young person.
- All carers have to meet the competencies set out by the TSDS within twelve months of approval and will be supported by their supervising social worker and a comprehensive training programme to achieve this.

## STATUS AND CONSTITUTION



Shining Stars Fostering Agency is registered as a limited company under the Companies Act 1985.

**Company Registration No: 9768599**

**Date of Registration: 9th September 2015**

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



In accordance with NMS 2011 standard 25.

The management activities are currently undertaken by the Registered Manager and Fostering Service Manager. The management activities are overseen by the Responsible Individual.

The Registered Manager is responsible for managing the end-to-end operational service in the provision of effective and safe provision of care for looked after children within the legal and regulatory framework for foster care. He is also responsible for managing and coordinating the



social work activities of the agency, ensuring effective and efficient service provision within the legal and regulatory framework for foster care. The Registered Manager of Shining Stars Fostering has extensive experience in social work and has been involved in the social care sector for more than 17 years, undertaking a range of positions in a leading Independent Fostering Agency and has undertaken management activities and leadership roles.

The Registered Manager has played an integral role in the development of policies and procedures and quality assurance models for the service. The Registered Manager is a qualified social worker registered with Social Work England (SWE) and has a Master's Degree in Marketing Administration from De Montfort University, Leicester.

The Manager brings a wealth of knowledge of good social work practice as well as the determination and passion to develop a strong and ethical fostering provision at Shining Stars Fostering Agency.

The Responsible Individual is a qualified Social Worker to Masters level with a level 7 qualification in Management. She has over 17 year's employment history in both the private and statutory roles and of running a Fostering Consultancy Service. The Responsible Individual is a highly enthusiastic and motivated professional, with a real interest in helping children, young people and their families. She possesses excellent communication and interpersonal skills, coupled with a highly organised and systematic approach to work. Prior to joining Shining Stars Fostering the Responsible Individual was a Registered Manager of an Independent Fostering Agency and has experience of managing other managers and senior staff at the operational level.

The Fostering Service Manager is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the service and staff supervision, ensuring the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people looked after and all the members of the fostering households, through promoting excellent quality standards in practice. The Service Manager has a wealth of knowledge and experience in children's services and extensive management experience in fostering for a leading Independent Fostering Agency.

The Service Manager is a qualified SWE registered social worker with 20+ years' experience and expertise in the fostering sector in England. He has developed and established a therapeutic fostering service and led through 2 'Outstanding' Ofsted Inspections. He is skilled in strategic and operational management, safeguarding, commissioning and contracting, quality assurance and training and has the right experience to lead, manage and ensure a nationwide Fostering Service team works cohesively together in all areas to promote stability, participation and achievement for children, young people, carers and staff.

### SAFEGUARDING

SSFA is committed to ensuring a safe environment for everyone connected to the service. We strive to ensure our foster carers homes are welcoming and safe, that are foster carers are reflective and skilled to provide a space for young people to settle and move forward in their lives. We work hard to identify potential risks and to minimise this through our wrap around service. We employ a Safeguarding Social worker with specialised safeguarding expertise to ensure we all have the right skills and knowledge to deal with the challenges of looking after children and young people who have experienced trauma in their short lives.



## WRAP AROUND TEAM



A wrap around team is made up of senior support workers and practitioners with diverse skills and experience including, a family therapist, specialist education, youth offending and mentoring experience. The team offers support to not only young people but also to all existing fostering households (including Family & Friends) who are experiencing challenging and difficult placements.

Foster carers, Shining Stars Fostering Agency staff and wrap around team members provide a core package of services to all our foster children. Our work starts when we are matching a child with foster carers. We are able to tailor a bespoke package and personalise support to build on and develop each child's individual strengths and qualities.



## STANDARDS OF CARE REQUIRED OF SHINING STARS FOSTERING AGENCY

Carers will undertake a minimum of a yearly review to assess their competencies and commitment to the fostering task. Carers have the opportunity to provide feedback on the services we offer to them. At this point we also seek feedback from the children in foster care and also their social worker. The outcome of the review is usually to agree continued approval and terms of this unless there are concerns regarding their practice that makes them unfit to continue fostering.

The supervisory role is primarily for the foster carer; however, supervising social workers will also spend time with the looked after child listening to them and ensuring they understand any decisions that may have been made for them. Such relationship building is essential to maintaining placements and enhances the carers' ability to provide a good standard of parenting.

## SUPPORT TO FOSTER CARERS

### **Supervisory home visits**

Foster carers receive monthly supervision from their Supervising social worker. Supervision provides a space for carers to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children /young people in placement. The training and development of foster carers is also monitored.

### **Unannounced visits**

Foster carers will receive two unannounced home visits a year. This is to complete checks to ensure a high level of care is being provided to the carers.

### **Transport**

Day to day transport for looked after children is managed by foster carers for instance for school runs and contact with birth parents. We will try and support if foster carers are unable to do at times subject to resources.

### **Appreciation**

Activity days are organised for our fostering families such as trips to the seaside and fun days. The achievements of children and young people are also celebrated on a regular basis where certificates and vouchers are sent. Children are also sent vouchers on their birthdays.

### **Record Keeping**

Foster carers are expected to record regular logs for the children in their care. These logs are then reviewed by the supervising social worker. Recording is an essential part of the foster carer's role which help monitor the child's journey.

### **Policies and Procedures**

All our foster carers have access to the foster carer's handbook which has the key policies and procedures along with useful guidance. We also have a wide range of policies and procedures online which foster carers have access to.

## OUR VALUES



We are committed to providing and developing services that address and exceed government targets for outcomes for children. These high standards are to be achieved through our organizational processes and the delivery of quality services for looked after children, our foster carers, commissioning local authorities and our staff.

Our ethos is respect and the celebration of diversity, promoting and ensuring equal opportunities in all the agency's operations, all of which are pre-requisites for a framework that can safeguard the welfare of children and help them to achieve and thrive.

## SERVICE PROVISION



Shining Stars Fostering Agency's service is designed to ensure the provision of a wide range of safe, secure and appropriate foster care placements for children and young people of all ages, with appropriately matched and approved Foster carers who are able to meet the individual needs of looked after children.

In order to achieve this there are a number of services and provisions which must be in place, the most prevalent of these include the following:

## RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

In terms of outcomes for children in care, we at Shining Stars Fostering Agency believe that who we recruit as Foster Carers is at least as important as the training, support and supervision we provide to foster carers once they are approved. This makes the recruitment and assessment processes crucial to us. Prospective foster carers have the right to be treated with dignity and respect; and young people have the right to assume that Shining Stars Fostering Agency is committed to the recruitment and approval of carers who are able to provide a high standard of care.

All prospective Foster Carers who make an enquiry are subject to rigorous assessment and vetting procedures. This includes the following:

### **An Initial Enquiry**

When there is an enquiry from a potential Foster Carer, the Agency undertakes telephone contact where information gathering is completed. If the enquirer meets the initial set of criteria an information pack is sent to them to provide details about the work of the Agency and the role of a Foster Carer.

### **Telephone Discussion**

Telephone contact will then be made with the prospective Foster Carer within one working day to book a home visit.

### **Initial Visits**

An initial visit takes place in the home of the prospective Foster Carer(s). The initial visit will be booked within five working days from the completion of the telephone call to the prospective Foster Carer. If the initial visit is successful and both parties wish to proceed, the relevant documentation is discussed, and an initial visit report is completed. The applicant is invited to complete an application form.

### **Application Paperwork**

The prospective Foster Carer(s) must complete an application form, giving detailed information about themselves and their family and consent to Shining Stars Fostering undertaking further checks and enquiries to determine their suitability to foster. These include:

- Enhanced DBS checks on all members of the household over 18 years. These involve disclosure of information about any criminal convictions or cautions and other information, which may be held by the Police or Government Agencies relevant to the protection of children.
- Enquiries to Social Services Departments and their Child Protection Registers.
- Enquiries to other Agencies where appropriate.

## **Medical Check**

The applicant(s) is/are required to have a full medical assessment completed by their GP and the report is made available to our Agency Medical Adviser for comment about the applicant(s) health and any impact this may have on their fostering potential.

## **References**

The applicant is/are asked to identify three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. One of these must be a relative of the applicant. When applicants have had previous partners, the agency requires their details as well: it is likely references will be sought from them, particularly when there are children from the relationship. References are also taken from past employers. References are taken in confidence but may not remain so. There may be a need to disclose the contents of a reference if it forms the basis of an agency decision not to approve a prospective carer.

## **Training**

All applicants are invited to Skills to Foster Training covering the responsibilities of being a Foster Carer and working with Shining Stars Fostering Agency. All prospective Foster Carers must attend this training.

Shining Stars Fostering Agency makes use of the competencies approach in all stages of the recruitment, assessment and approval of the foster carers. We endorse the view expressed in the Fostering Network Code of Practice that the use of common, standard assessment tools, such as those produced by the Fostering Network and the CoramBAAF Form F, will enable fostering services to achieve uniform standards.

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## **The assessment has two stages**

### **Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Fostering Assessment:**

In accordance with The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, which amended the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the process that Shining Stars Fostering Agency follows for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two stages. These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information required for Stage 1 as defined in Schedule 3 Part 1 of the Regulations, must be sought as soon as possible, and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received.

If during Stage 1 it is decided that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the IRM, nor to make representations to Shining Stars Fostering Agency.

However, if in Stage 2 a decision is made that the applicant is not suitable to foster then a brief report must be completed, the applicant advised and their comments sought within 10 working days. After the 10 days, or following receipt of the applicants' comments, whichever is sooner, Shining Stars Fostering Agency must send the report, any comments from the applicant and any other relevant information to the fostering panel.

The applicant may, within 28 days, seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to Shining Stars Fostering Agency.

All information obtained about prospective Foster Carers is held on file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the data protection Act 1998. Upon request some of this information can be viewed. References from external agencies and personal references, which are given in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and the relevant referees.

### Initial and ongoing training of foster carers:

We are very aware that fostering is a challenging task, therefore we provide a comprehensive training programme which covers all relevant areas of care including behaviour management, health and safety, first aid, attachment theory, fostering regulations and law etc. We also support our carers to complete and achieve the Training Support and Development (TSD) Standard. Often rewarding, Fostering can also be challenging and requires opportunities for reflection and learning.

We are committed to providing high quality learning and development opportunities that are accessible, credible and relevant to all our foster carers. The Training programme developed by Shining Stars Fostering is in line with National Minimum Standards to ensure that all Foster Carers receive relevant induction and continued professional development.

It is very important for us to recognize that every foster carer has a wealth of life experiences and skills which will contribute to the quality of their work and help them understand children and young people and their emotions and behaviours. However, at Shining Stars Fostering Agency we acknowledge that there are areas where our foster carers benefit from specialist training to help them meet the needs of children in their care. Alongside a dedicated programme for learning and development will be opportunities for bespoke learning tied to individual need and experience. As an agency we have made clear minimum expectations in relation to learning and development for all foster carers in accordance with best practice.

In addition to the Skills to Foster course which is completed as part of the assessment, we offer a comprehensive training programme and workshops for our foster carers. The courses include:

- Safeguarding
- Safer Caring including allegations
- Managing challenging behaviour
- First Aid
- Internet awareness
- Valuing Diversity
- Health and safety
- Attachment Theory
- Parent and Child Foster Placements
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)/Honour Based Violence
- Contact issues and working with birth parents
- Caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors
- Communicating and recording
- Working with children that are at risk or subject to sexual abuse
- Radicalisation
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Shining Stars Fostering will provide a bespoke training course for Foster Carers who choose to develop their skills in the area of Parent and Child Assessment. The course enables development of assessment skills, detailed recording and report writing.

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In addition to the above the agency has also introduced a Secure Base Model approach in working with Foster Carers and Looked After children. We have introduced a full day session on secure base model as part of the preparatory Skills to Foster course as well as post approval training on the subject for all our foster carers to familiarise them with the five dimensions of care giving. This will enable them to incorporate these in their daily practice to help children to move towards greater security. The secure base model gives them a better understanding of the attachment issues enabling them to manage major emotional or behavioural crisis. It also considers how children's relationship with foster carers can enable the child/young person to develop competence in the outside world and manage often complex relationships with birth family members.

We have also introduced the use of a Secure Base Model approach in the assessment of prospective foster carers. The model provides a framework for considering the skills and capacities associated with offering care as part of family life in foster care and the final analysis sections of all our assessments of prospective foster carers from February 2018 address the five dimensions of the Secure Base model.



## Post Approval Induction

Following assessment and approval all Foster carers receive a thorough induction. This includes ensuring that carers are clear about the policies and procedures, including Safeguarding/Child Protection, Safer Caring and health and safety. Induction also includes the following areas:

- Working with Shining Stars Fostering
- Support and Supervision
- Training and development
- Referring and matching
- Finance

### **The first 12 months and TSDS:**

Each foster care household should be able to evidence through a workbook how the TSDS for foster care has been achieved within a year of approval. Progress towards the achievement of the TSDS has become an important element of the assessment process as well as the Skills to Foster Training. All foster carers are provided with extra one to one support to enable them to complete the workbook within the given timescales.

### **Continuous Training and Professional Development**

At Shining Stars Fostering Agency it is an expectation that each fostering household attends at least four training courses per year and according to their needs, which includes Safeguarding. Specific courses are arranged for individuals with particular needs.

## HOW WE SUPPORT OUR FOSTER CARERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The following list encompasses the main areas of support available to our foster carers:



### **Allocated Supervising Social Worker**

Every foster family has an allocated, fully qualified supervising social worker through Shining Stars Fostering Agency. This is the key element to the support which we provide to our carers. The supervising social worker visits the fostering households regularly, accompanies foster carers to meetings and is in regular phone contact with them. They support, encourage, guide, train and work with the carer every step of the way.

### **24/7 Support**

All of our carers have 24/7 access to a member of staff for any form of emergencies. This can be very important when carers are faced with a difficult to handle situation or indeed any form of emergency.

**Training: As stated above.**

These continue to be virtual at the moment. This will be reviewed in October 2021 by the management and a decision made about returning to face-to-face training and support groups depending on the COVID 19 infection rates in England.

### **Regular home visits**

The allocated Supervising Social Worker visits the fostering home at least once per month, but often more frequently. The frequency of the home visits is needs lead and depends on the requirements of the foster carer and the child or young person in placement.

### **Telephone calls**

This is another needs lead service. Supervising social workers keep in frequent telephone contact with their allocated foster carers and encourage them to keep in regular contact.

### **Unannounced Visits**

All Shining Stars Foster Carers receive minimum one unannounced visit a year.

### **Social meetings/Support groups**

We arrange and facilitate meetings where carers can meet likeminded people and share their experiences, learn from each other and get to know people who can become part of their support network.

### **Family outings**

We also organise and facilitate activity-based events for foster carers and their families e.g. a trip to a sea side, or an end of year celebration.

### **Newsletter**

Shining Stars Fostering Agency produce a regular newsletter in which contributions from foster families, as well as children and young people will feature alongside articles from staff and management.

### **Fostering Network Membership**

All Shining Stars Fostering Agency carers are entitled to an annual membership of the Fostering Network, paid for by the agency, which provides advice and guidance as well as access to legal advice, advice regarding health issues and insurance.

## REVIEWS OF FOSTER FAMILIES



In compliance with the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, all Foster Carers and their approval status is reviewed annually. The Annual Review determines whether approval of the Carers should be renewed and / or whether there should be any changes made. The Foster carer review provides an excellent

opportunity to celebrate good work and ensure that the quality of care provided meets the Standards demanded by Shining Stars Fostering Agency. To be effective, the review has to be based upon reliable evidence regarding the Standard of Care that has been provided. The foster carer review should be seen as a process, considering afresh the Foster Carer's approval and any significant changes in the household and support network, rather than a one-off event or a rubber-stamping exercise. In this way, the Foster Carer Review is a key part of Shining Stars approach to quality assurance.

The Foster Carer Review also provides an opportunity for the Foster carer to provide feedback upon the quality of Supervision and the support they have received, and to reflect upon the learning and development needs of Foster Carers and their individual training profiles. Reviews take place in line with regulatory requirements of a Foster Carer (Regulations 28(2)) and includes written feedback reports from the Carer's Supervising Social Worker, the Local Authority Social Worker, children and young people in placement, children of the household / Carers and the Foster Carers themselves.

The first Foster Carer Review, is completed within 12 months of approval and must be presented to the Fostering Panel. Any Foster Carer Review carried out for one or more of the reasons listed above must also be presented to the Fostering Panel. Any Foster Carer Review which concludes that Foster Carers are no longer suitable to be caring for looked after children/young people must be presented to the Fostering Panel. Shining Stars will ensure that following the first review, every three years, reviews are also presented to the Foster Panel to ensure compliance and quality assurance.

For formal Foster Carer Review meetings a Independent Reviewing Officer will have sight of all written contributions and will refer to these in working through the identified areas for discussion. Any areas of difference or disagreement between the contributors must be reflected within the Reviewing Officer's report indicating clearly any proposed or necessary course of action to remedy these.

## HOW WE LOOK AFTER AND CELEBRATE OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



All children and young people in placement with Shining Stars Fostering Agency are visited regularly as part of the role of the Supervising Social Worker. In undertaking this, due consideration is given to the role and involvement of the local authority social worker, so that there is clarity between the roles and responsibilities of each agency and social worker. The Supervising Social Worker ensures that the best interests of the child and/or young person are being safeguarded and promoted, and identify further services that are appropriate to promote their physical, mental and emotional welfare.

We believe that with appropriate and targeted packages of support for Foster Carers, children and young people are able to live more naturally, in a family environment. We believe that it is important to remain flexible, responsive and forward thinking when working with children in care. We offer the following range of services available for children and young people in our care:

- Assistance to pursue a hobby or interest, including holiday activities
- Participation in Looked after children and Birth Children's support groups
- Practical assistance with transport and access to external facilities and services as agreed with the placing local authority
- Supervised contact with birth families where requested and appropriate
- Support in carrying out Life story work
- Children and Young person's guide
- Information on children's helpline through children and young people's guide

Shining Stars has a dedicated Education Lead to work with the foster carers and the team in promoting education and to ensure that our children and young people are offered opportunities to achieve their potential and enjoy fulfilment in their lives.

In addition to the above Shining Stars Fostering Agency has also introduced a 'Comfort Box' for newly placed children with SSFA Foster Carers.

### What is the purpose of the Comfort box?

Our 'Comfort box' is a welcome box and is our commitment to show our children and young people that we do care about their health and wellbeing and give them a sense of feeling loved, as some young people may have never felt this in their lives before.

This comfort box will be given to the children and young people when they first come in our care. It contains various things such as a throw, pair of towels, toiletries, night lamp, diary etc. At SSFA we would like to make sure they get off to the best start by building trust with them from the very first instant.

We hope our 'Comfort Box' will help the children in care to feel safer and more secure when entering care and hope it will help them to build relationships and connections with their foster

carers and the supervising social worker. It's very important to us that they feel loved and cared for under any circumstances and that's what we think our 'Comfort Box' will do for them.

### SSFA Step Up Pack

Shining Stars is passionate about improving the lives and life chances of care leavers and keeping this in mind we have recently introduced 'Leaving Care Pack' which is like a set up pack that would be given out to young people moving on to independent living to assist them with their move. The Leaving Care Pack consists of some of the essential items such as:

- Kettle
- Toaster
- Set of Towels
- Duvet
- Pillow
- Ruck sack
- Bedding set
- Throw

## MATCHING OF FOSTER FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Matching is of primary importance and the needs of the Looked After Child are assessed carefully to assist this process. We work closely and in partnership with the referring Local Authority to ensure that the proposed placement supports the following:

- Reflects the expressed wishes of the child/children
- Takes into account the wishes of the child's family
- Will be able to meet the child's physical, educational, emotional, health, cultural, religious and social needs
- Will be able to meet the needs for contact
- Will not disrupt any child already in a placement
- Will not be harmful to any child of the carer
- Will bring no substantial risk to any member of the carers' household or their property

All information is shared with the Foster Carer and their Supervising Social Worker to enable an informed decision regarding the matching, to be formulated. A good fit between the needs of the matched child/young person and the skills of Foster Carers is at the core of the decision-making regarding placement. A Matching pro forma is adhered to throughout the process of taking and matching a referral, involving the Foster Carer, Supervising Social Worker and a Manager.

All placements must be negotiated through the child or young persons' Local Authority either through an individual placement contract or as part of a wider contract of service provision commissioned by the Local Authority.

## PROVISION OF A RANGE OF PLACEMENT TYPES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



The types of fostering we offer at Shining Stars Fostering Agency range from emergency placements to planned placements, as well as more specialised types of foster care such as remand fostering. The type of fostering we provide varies from case to case, depending on the needs of the individual child.

### Emergency Placements

Are defined as being same day placements (within 24 hours). The agency should receive a brief synopsis of the young person's behaviour and placement history, this should be accompanied by a recent report either from the Social Worker or the last placement.

### Short Term Placements and Bridging Placements

This is one of the shorter-term types of fostering. A child or young person in a bridging placement may be awaiting a more permanent placement such as a long-term foster family, an adoptive family, or a family assessment centre. The period of this type of fostering placement could be anything from a few days to weeks or months, whilst plans are made for the future of the child with the relevant Local Authorities or social services departments.

### Respite placements

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

### Long Term Placements

Where the child/young person is expected to remain until independence.

### Parent and Child Placements

Placements will be made available for mothers and/or fathers and their child, where foster carers can provide support and guidance to parent(s) and help them develop parenting skills. If requested, and by arrangement with the placing Local Authority, a formal assessment of parenting ability can be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced staff in conjunction with the foster carer. Comprehensive written assessment reports, for use in child protection conferences, planning meetings, statutory reviews or court proceedings, can be prepared.

## Remand Placements

Remand Foster Carers look after young people who are remanded by the courts into public care. These placements are usually short term and require the carer to work closely with the youth justice/offending teams to gain the best outcome for the child.

## Sibling Placements

Sibling placements are for brother and sisters who all are placed together into a foster care household. Shining Stars believes in keeping siblings together within a family environment, unless it is deemed inappropriate.

## Placement of asylum-seeking children and young people

Given the current refugee crisis Shining Stars would like to recruit experienced foster carers from diverse backgrounds who are willing to advocate, access services and work within the child's care plan in supporting and caring for children and young people deemed to be unaccompanied asylum seekers and where their residency status within the UK is yet to be determined. Shining Stars Fostering is able to provide additional training for its Foster Carers to address support in immigration, religion, language and cultural needs and integration within the community and local faith groups.

## Solo Placements

Shining Stars will also provide care for children and young people whose needs are so complex requiring a higher level of support and supervision, which precludes the placement of any other child or young person alongside. If requested and by arrangement with the placing authority, additional support services can be made available to such placements.

## Stay Put Arrangements

The Children and Families Act 2014 (section 98) made amendments to the Children Act 1989 by inserting section 23CZA. Although local authorities can provide 'staying put' type arrangements to any care leaver, a legal requirement was placed on local authorities to advise, assist and support both the young person and their former foster carers when they wish to stay living together after the 'former relevant child' reaches their 18th birthday. This is known as a 'staying put arrangement'.

The young person staying put is no longer a looked after child after they reach 18 years of age. They are a young adult and a care leaver. They are entitled to support as a care leaver up to the age of 25 and will be allocated a personal advisor. A staying put arrangement is governed by the care leavers' legislation and statutory guidance rather than the fostering services regulations.

At Shining Stars Fostering Agency we acknowledge that looking after a young person until they are 21, when necessary, in exceptional circumstances, requires different skills – new boundaries, growing independence, developing life skills – which is recognised and imparted to all foster carers considering this arrangement, through training and support.

## SOCIAL WORK SERVICE



In addition to the child's social worker, a supervising social worker is allocated to support and supervise every foster carer with the placements they provide.

### The Supervising Social Worker

Maintains regular contact with the foster carer and children in placement through monthly placement visits and regular telephone calls.

- Makes a minimum of one unannounced visit to the foster home every year.
- Provides advice, guidance and support to the foster carer.
- Participates in the out of office hours management and support to carers and local authorities.
- Investigates and co-ordinates other support services as appropriate.
- Liaises with other professionals and contribute to reviews and formal meetings in respect of care planning.
- Provides formal supervision, identifies and responds to foster carers training and development needs.
- Keeps accurate records and provides regular updates, keeping local authority social workers informed of the progress of young people in placement.
- Shining Stars Fostering Agency employs Supervising Social Workers who are suitably qualified and experienced to undertake the role.

Every effort is made to match children with families that reflect their religious, cultural and diversity needs. Issues around safeguarding/child protection will be dealt with immediately, in line with agreed procedures.

School attendance and academic achievement will be promoted for all children and young people, in line with the DoE. Written records and logs on each child or young person are maintained and shared with the placing authorities, as appropriate.

Corporal punishment will NOT be used in any circumstances. Guidance is provided on the use of sanctions and a written record kept of any implementation.

## SHINING STARS FOSTERING PANEL



In accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the NMS 2011 Standard 14, Shining Stars Fostering has recruited persons suitable to sit on fostering panels. This includes members and professionals who have knowledge of the local areas for which they are considering cases and making recommendations. This includes



professionals from education, health, social work, an ex-care leaver, a foster carer from another Independent Fostering Agency, counsellor/therapist and the Police. Our Panel has a balance of gender, ethnicity and qualifications and reflect our commitment to bring together individuals from different backgrounds and expertise. A member from the LGBTQ community is also represented at Shining Stars Panel.

Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of applicant(s) to be approved as Foster Carer (s) with Shining Stars Fostering, and reasons for their recommendation. The final decision for approval is made by the Agency Decision Maker, who must take account of the Fostering Panel's recommendations before deciding whether or not to approve a person as a Foster Carer, and on what terms and the reasons for approval. Their decision must be made within seven working days of receipt of the Panel's recommendation through the panel minutes. The ADM should also record the reasons for their recommendation. Once the decision is made the prospective Foster Carer should be informed verbally within two working days and confirmation is sent in writing to them within 5 working days.

Shining Stars Fostering Agency regards the Fostering Panel as a valuable and indispensable source of Quality Assurance, professional accountability and feedback. The agency has also identified a Panel Advisor who will be available to advise Panel on any legislative and Care Standard issues.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Shining Stars Fostering Agency has comprehensive Foster Carer policies, procedures and practice manuals in accordance with regulations. Our Foster Carer's Handbook and manuals contain information on Safeguarding/Child Protection, Safer Caring, First

Aid, Behaviour Management, Children Missing from Care, Unauthorised Absence, Health and Safety Matters, Training, Financial Matters, Meeting the needs of Children and Young People, Education, Complaints and Grievances, Preparation for Adulthood, Contact and Working with Birth Parents, Record Keeping and others. The Handbook is updated regularly. All our policies and procedures are also available on our website and can be easily accessed by professionals and our foster carers and looked after children.

## FINANCE



In accordance with NMS 2011 Standard 28 Foster Carers will receive an allowance in order to provide for all of the practical needs for a Looked After Child. With regards to the fostering allowance there are certain minimum amounts of the allowance which are allocated for specific purposes, i.e. pocket money, travel, leisure, phone, clothes and others areas. Foster Carers will be advised that the allowance has to cater for all of the children / and young people's needs and they must budget with the allowance so as to be able to cover larger expenses e.g. the purchase of a laptop. Where carers feel that a particular need cannot be met by the allowance, carers are asked to address this with their supervising Social Worker.

Foster Carers are entitled to 2 weeks respite per year, a mileage allowance barring the first 20 miles of each journey, and individual membership to Fostering Network. Detailed financial information

and guidance will be supplied to Foster Carers within their Foster Carer Handbook and a detailed annual statement will be provided at the end of each financial year.

All Foster Carers are self-employed and as such must ensure they pay their own Tax and National Insurance. Further financial information and guidance on finances is supplied to Foster Carers during their induction.

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



In accordance with NMS 2011 Standard 25 Shining Stars Fostering has developed a comprehensive complaints procedure and will appoint an Independent Complaints Officer if the need arises.

The Complaints procedure is made widely available to service users and is reviewed regularly to check satisfactory operation and to identify any patterns and action taken on individual complaints.

Shining Stars Fostering reviews complaints made as a serious matter, but also as a way to hopefully learn and improve the level of service provided. In relation to any complaints received Shining Stars Fostering will aim to reflect and take appropriate action in order to change policies, practices and procedures, addressing the complaints and resolve matters identified in order to prevent future occurrence.

The policies and procedures have been developed to respond to issues raised by:

- Local Authority
- Any child who is being looked after by Shining Stars Fostering or a person acting on behalf of the child.
- A parent of his or hers or person with parental responsibility.
- Any Shining Stars Fostering Foster Carer or family member.
- Any Shining Stars Fostering staff member.
- Such other person as Shining Stars Fostering considers has sufficient interest in the child's welfare to warrant his or her representations being considered by them.
- Our Complaints Procedure has three levels and places emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and an early stage.

#### Stage 1: Informal Stage

We hope that most things someone is concerned about can be settled by speaking to the person they normally deal with, or by discussion with that person's immediate line manager, and this is the informal route we encourage people to try first. We would always encourage foster carers to talk with their supervising social worker or their line manager about any complaint that they have and to try to resolve the matter with them. Unless matters are urgent, we expect informal routes of resolution to be explored first.

#### Stage 2: Formal Investigation

If matters cannot be resolved at this level, and they wish to complain formally to Shining Stars Fostering, they can do so at any time to the Manager who is the Complaints Officer at the address given below:

Yasir Farooqui

Registered Manager

*Shining Stars Fostering Agency Limited, The Lansdowne Building*

*No 2 Lansdowne Road, Croydon CR9 2ER*

*Tel: 020 8263 6260*

*Email: info@shiningstarsfostering.com*

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within seven working days, including an indication of whether it is planning to try to resolve the complaint via internal investigation or, in the case of potentially serious complaints, to move straight to the independent investigation stage.

The Complaints Officer will ensure that the complaint is properly investigated. This stage of the process should be completed within 28 days of the commencement of the investigation unless it is exceptionally agreed with the complainant this period may be extended. The Complaints Officer will ensure that there is a written report to include findings and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint which will be available to the complainant.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request within 28 days of the date of the dispatch of the report to them that the matter be referred to Stage 3.

### Stage 3: Independent Investigation

A request for an independent investigation should be made in writing to the Registered Manager. The request will be acknowledged in writing within seven working days, including details of the proposed investigation.

An Independent Person will be appointed to investigate the complaint. This person will hold a professional social work qualification and have relevant experience in foster care. The Independent Person will interview persons involved in the complaint and will have access to all policies and procedures and, with relevant permission, access to the foster carer's and to the child/young person's, files and records. They will prepare a report of their investigation, including conclusions and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint. This report should be completed within 42 days of the acknowledgement letter, unless it is agreed with the complainant that this period may be extended.

The Complaints Office will consider the Independent Person's report and write within ten days of its receipt to the complainant setting out their proposals for resolving the complaint. Details of the investigation/proposed resolution will be available for information to the fostering panel. This marks the end of the complaints process. If the complainant is not happy with the final outcome or indeed at any stage of the process, they can contact Ofsted.

### OFSTED

Any foster carer or a child/young person may choose to contact our regulator, Ofsted, directly regarding any complaint/allegation concerning the standard of service provided by a foster carer, or about the management of our service. Shining Stars Fostering Agency will co-operate fully with any investigation conducted by Ofsted.

## Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate 4, Store Street, Manchester M1 2 WD

Tel. 0300 123 1231

Email : [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

The Registered Manager will automatically refer any serious complaints against foster carers to Ofsted, for information, and will advise Ofsted of the outcome of any investigation.

Our complaints policy and procedures do not seek to replace or restrict the child and/or other individuals of their rights to make independent complaints and representations to outside bodies.

Please note that for the purpose of this complaints policy and its procedures, allegations and concerns about safeguarding and child protection issues, are not managed under these procedures, but separately using the Agency's Safeguarding Policy and the guidelines of the Local Authority in which the foster child lives.

We are always pleased to receive comments about our work. It is useful for us to know when we have done a good job, as well as when things have gone less well. This helps us maintain and enhance our service.

Please address all your comments or feedback in writing and send to:

Yasir Farooqui  
Registered Manger  
Shining Stars Fostering Agency  
The Lansdowne Building  
No 2 Lansdowne Road  
Croydon CR9 2ER  
Tel: 020 8263 6260  
Email: [info@shiningstarsfostering.com](mailto:info@shiningstarsfostering.com)  
[www.shiningstarsfostering.com](http://www.shiningstarsfostering.com)

