



Statement of Purpose

Welcome to Young People at Heart

Young People at Heart was founded by Gary and Davina Cox and our first registration was granted by Ofsted on 9 April 2015.

Gary and Davina formed Young People at Heart as a not-for-profit organisation for one simple reason; they wanted to create an independent fostering environment where outcomes for young people were paramount for the organisation and everyone associated with it.

Being a not-for-profit organisation means there are no shares, so any surpluses are retained within the organisation for the benefit of the young people in care, not paid out to shareholders or investors as dividends or interest. Similarly, with no shares, there is no motivation to reduce costs and increase profits to increase the value of the organisation for sale.

Quite simply, everything the organisation does has the interests of young people at heart and that's the way Gary and Davina want it to stay. Young People at Heart will remain not-for-profit, overseen by the Cox family, to provide a safe, secure and stable environment for young people in care and our foster carers and staff.

Young People at Heart. Our name is our ethos.

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Introduction

We have prepared this Statement of Purpose for two reasons; firstly to give the reader an insight into our Young People at Heart ethos of putting outcomes for young people before profit, and secondly, from a regulatory perspective, to comply with the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (Standard 16) and the Fostering Regulations 2011 (regulations 3 & 4) and Care Standards Act 2000 requirements to prepare such a document. Both reasons are equally important.

Quality is the cornerstone of everything we set out to achieve. As you read this document, if there is anything you think we could do to improve our Statement of Purpose, please let us know by contacting us at the addresses at the end of this document.

Young People at Heart makes a copy of the Statement of Purpose available to:

- OFSTED
- Full time, part time, permanent, temporary or sessional staff members as well as panel members, independent reviewing officers and anyone else providing professional support services to the organisation.
- Foster carers and prospective foster carers
- Local Authorities placing or considering placing young people with us
- Young people placed or being considered for placement with us
- Family members of young people placed or being considered for placement with us

This document is also available on our website www.youngpeopleatheart.org

We consider the Statement of Purpose to be a living document so it will be updated annually, sooner if there are any significant or substantial changes to the agency, the legislation that governs us or anything we do. Any amendments we make will be approved by the senior management team and board of directors.

Our Values

As we work towards our objective of achieving the best possible outcome for every young person placed in our care, we have two simple but key values:

- Young people are at the heart of everything we do; and
- Quality is the cornerstone of our organisation.

Everything else, such as valuing and supporting our foster carers and staff, follows from these values in order to achieve our objective.

A comprehensive list of values is contained in the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and our foster carers and staff strive to ensure these values are incorporated into our daily practice. They are:

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.

- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account
- The significance of contact for looked after children, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised, as is the foster carer's role in this.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions.
- The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- Foster carers have a right to full information about the child.
- It is essential that foster carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.
- Genuine partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, fostering service providers and foster carers.

Outcomes

In the 2003 Green Paper, Every Child Matters, the five key outcomes that mattered most to young people were:

- being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;
- staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect;
- enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood;
- making a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour; and
- economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

We measure our young people's achievements against these five outcomes.

We have also incorporated the outcomes contained in the NMS into our service. These outcomes are divided into two components:

Outcomes contained in the Child focussed standards:

- Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint.
- The views of others with an important relationship to the child are gathered and taken into account.
- Children have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.
- Children enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately.
- Children feel safe and are safe. Children understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm, including neglect, abuse, and accident.
- Children rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly.
- Children who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return.
- Children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs.
- Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities.
- Children are able to make a positive contribution to the foster home and their wider community.
- The education and achievement of children are actively promoted as valuable in themselves and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.
- Children have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives.
- Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.
- Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued.
- Children feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household. The child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement.
- Children are prepared for, and supported into, adulthood so that they can reach their potential and achieve economic wellbeing.

Outcomes contained in the standards of fostering service:

- The fostering service recruits, assesses and supports a range of foster carers to meet the needs of children they provide care for and is proactive in assessing current and future needs of children.
- The fostering panel and decision maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care.

- The responsible authority has information and support from the fostering service which it needs to facilitate an appropriate match between the carer and child, capable of meeting the child's needs and consistent with the wishes and feelings of the child, so maximising the likelihood of a stable placement.
- Children, their parents, foster carers, staff and the responsible authority/ placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the fostering service and what services and facilities it provides.
- The fostering service's operation meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose.
- The fostering service is provided and managed by those who are suitable to work with children and have the appropriate skills, experience and qualifications to deliver an efficient and effective service.
- The fostering service is financially sound.
- Where a service is to close or substantially change, there is proper planning, to make the transition for children, foster carers and staff as smooth as possible.
- There is careful selection of staff, fostering households, volunteers and the central list of persons considered suitable to be members of a fostering panel, and there is monitoring of such people to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm children.
- Foster carers receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively.
- A clear framework of training and development is in place and this is used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their training and development needs.
- Foster carers receive the support and supervision they need in order to care properly for children placed with them.
- Allegations and suspicions of harm are handled in a way that provides effective protection and support for children and the person making the allegation, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.
- Children and foster carers receive a service from staff, volunteers and panel members and decision makers who have the competence to meet their needs.
- Staff and volunteers are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a high-quality service to children.
- The fostering service is managed ethically, effectively and efficiently, delivering a service which meets the needs of its users.
- Records are clear, up to date, stored securely and contribute to an understanding of the child's life.
- The premises and administrative systems are suitable to enable the service to meet the objectives of its Statement of Purpose.
- Payments to foster carers are fair and paid in a timely way.
- Foster carers are clear about the fostering service's payment structures and the payments due to them.
- All significant events relating to the health and protection of children fostered by the service are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities.
- Family and friends foster carers receive the support they require to meet the needs of children placed with them.
- Children are cared for in line with their Placement Plan/Short Break Care Plan.

- The fostering service takes action to chase up outstanding reviews or visits from the responsible authority, contributes to those reviews and assists the child to contribute to their reviews.

Aims and Objectives

Our primary aim and objective is to achieve the best possible outcome for every young person placed in our care by providing a healthy and safe family environment in which the young person can develop to their full potential.

In practice, to achieve this we:

- Recruit foster carers we feel are able to provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment for young people with a wide range of needs through diversity and equality
- Conduct a high standard of assessment and deliver good quality training to best equip new foster carers for their role ahead
- Conduct DBS checks on all adult members of the foster household to protect young people in care from abuse or neglect
- Conduct medical checks on foster carers to ensure they are healthy enough to provide care and support for the young person and, as the organisation grows, employ health workers to ensure carers and young people have a positive approach to a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, vaccinations and age appropriate sexual awareness
- Work with foster carer households to develop a safety checklist for the foster home
- Encourage foster carers who smoke to stop. Smoking inside the home will be discouraged and no young people under five years old will be placed in a foster home where a member of the household smokes
- Ensure foster carers attend mandatory training and take advantage of specialised training for their particular needs
- Carefully assess each referral and match the needs of the young person to the skills of the foster carer and the needs of other young people in the home
- Provide every foster carer with a designated supervising social worker who will talk to the carers at least weekly, supervise the carers at least monthly and meet with the carers and young person at least quarterly
- Provide 24-hour support through an on-call service
- Adopt CHARMS as our electronic record keeping system from inception, to enable management to ensure that all records and supervisions are up to date and to provide effective and real-time outcomes monitoring data
- Work with foster carers and their local school to ensure the young person has access to education and any support necessary.
- Provide support for foster carers and young people by employing Social Work Assistants, who undertake direct work with young people and support foster carers at meetings and in times of need.
- Prepare young people for adulthood and independent living by working with foster carers and young people to expose young people to life skills, further education or vocational training opportunities and work experience
- Work with foster carers and young people to ensure the young person has the opportunity to partake in a range of appropriate social, sporting or leisure

activities, supported where necessary by a Young People at Heart Social Work Assistant

- Ensure that foster carers maintain contact with the young person's birth family and friends in accordance with their Care Plan
- Ensure every young person participates in formal and informal consultation about the services and support the organisation offers and has access to an independent advocate and knows how they can complain about any aspect of the service
- Where appropriate, conduct Life Story work with young people with our Social Work Assistants trained in Life Story work.

Organisation Details

Young People at Heart Limited was formed in September 2014 and registered as a not for profit organisation under company registration number 09198997. Ofsted registration was granted to our Essex office on 9 April 2015 under registration number SC486913. Our Essex Ofsted registration is based in East Tilbury, Essex.

The organisation recruits, assesses, trains, supervises and supports foster carers, applying careful matching between the foster carer families and young people in care.

In September 2017, we opened a second office in Hereford, and in May 2018 we opened our third office in Barnsley, South Yorkshire. Hereford and Barnsley initially operated under the Essex registration, but on 22 February 2019, Ofsted registration was granted for our Yorkshire office under registration number 2500324. The Yorkshire office has since moved from Barnsley to Doncaster. Due to growth in Hereford, a separate Ofsted registration was granted on 7 October 2019 under registration number 2541624. Due to the proximity to the Welsh border, a Care Inspectorate Wales registration for the Hereford office was obtained on 3 December 2020 under registration number SIN-00012188-NXQN, to enable the organisation to support Welsh children placed with Welsh foster carers.

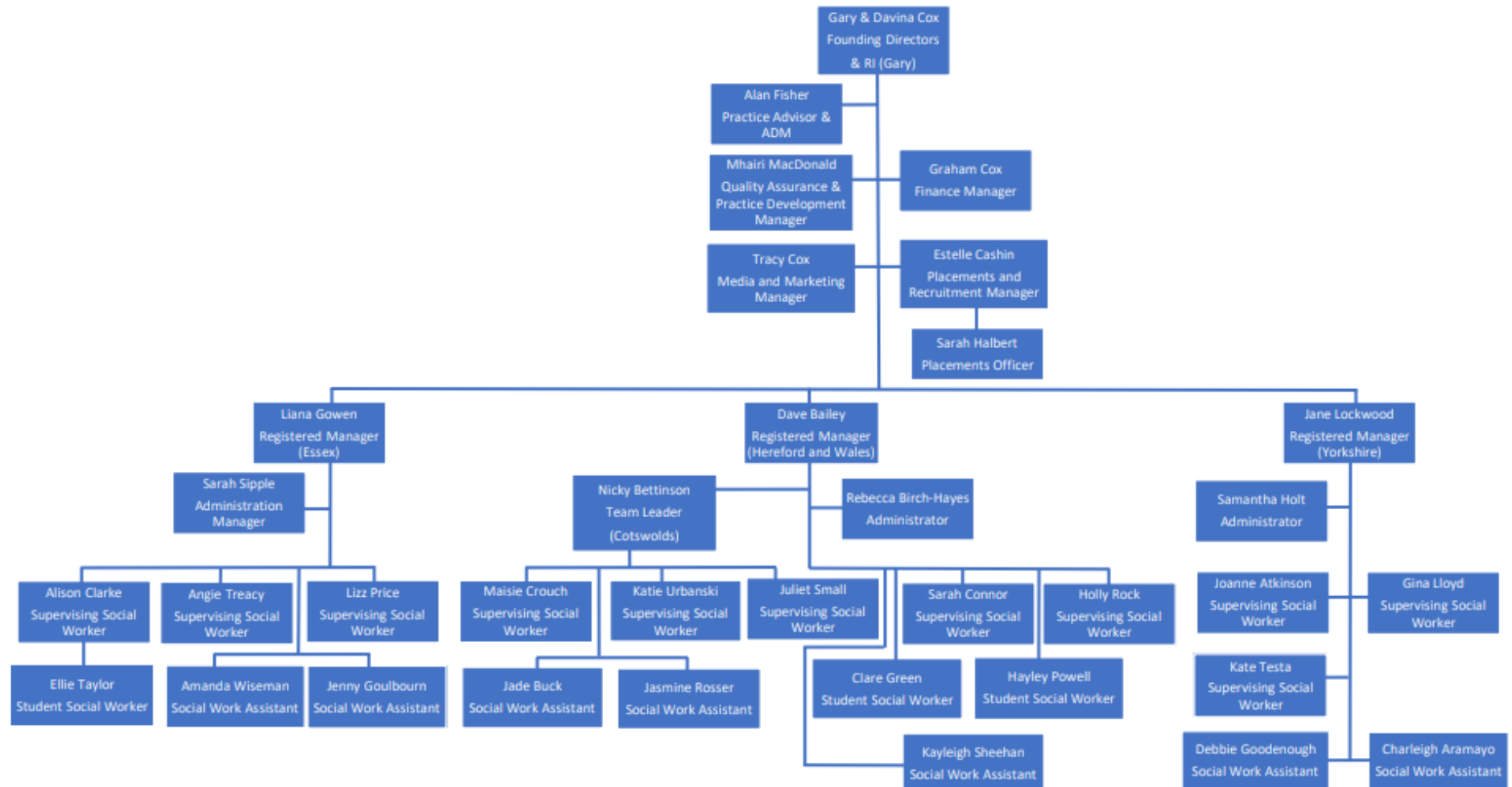
We hire training and activity facilities from not-for-profit organisations such as local scout groups, in order to support the local communities. As the organisation grows, the vision is to rent a converted house in the regions we operate in, with office space upstairs and training, life skills and contact areas downstairs to provide staff, foster carers and young people with a more permanent base from which to operate.

The Management Team meets regularly and has responsibility for both the strategic direction and day to day operations of Young People at Heart.

These responsibilities include the

- Vision and Values
- Business Planning, Development and Financial Management
- Quality Assurance
- Legal and Statutory Compliance
- Performance and Evaluation
- Consultation and Feedback

Organisational Details – Management Structure



Future posts will include:

- Additional Supervising Social Workers and Social Work Assistants
- Education workers
- Therapists
- Training & Development manager
- Human resources manager

Initially, foster carer assessments have been conducted by sessional assessors under the supervision of the Registered Manager. As the organisation grows, supervising social workers will conduct assessments as part of their normal case load.

It is envisaged that social workers will carry caseloads of 10-12 carers and Social Work Assistants are employed at a ratio of one per 20 young people.

Education workers when recruited will have a case load of 20-30 young people. Therapists will eventually be employed and support caseloads similar to the education workers.

The Registered Managers for Herefordshire and Yorkshire have completed NVQ Level 5 management qualifications. The Registered Manager in Essex is currently undertaking her NVQ Level 5 management qualification. Social Workers employed by the organisation will come from a variety of roles, all with the necessary experience and skills to help young people achieve the outcomes Young People at Heart works towards in a safe care environment. We will also provide work placements for social work students.

All staff, permanent, temporary or sessional, are subject to the same employment and safeguarding checks. These include an enhanced DBS (with a subscription to the update service paid for by the organisation in the case of permanent staff, renewed every three years in the case of temporary or sessional staff) and reference checks followed by a confirmation telephone call.

All social work staff have a named line manager and they meet formally once per month for supervision. The Registered Managers' professional supervision will be conducted by an outside supervisor. They also have access to advice from one of the other Registered Managers, the Agency Decision Maker and the Quality Assurance and Practice Development Manager. A written record will be kept of all meetings. In addition, all staff are required to have an Annual Appraisal. An audit is undertaken periodically by the respective Registered Manager and the Responsible Individual to review the quality of records and ensure that foster carer supervisory visits and staff supervisions are being conducted timeously and to the required standard.

Types of Placements

Young People at Heart seeks to support young people from birth through to leaving care and Staying Put placements. We provide placements for a diverse range of ethnicities and young people with physical and learning disabilities. We expect that young people referred to us will exhibit some challenging behaviours and our foster carers and staff work to support these placements. We offer short, medium and long-term placements, catering for single, sibling groups and parent and child placements.

Short-Term Placements

Almost all of our foster carers are approved to provide short term foster placements and therefore we are normally able to meet local needs. Our short-term placements are offered for children with a wide range of needs and in a range of circumstances. Whatever the goal of the placement; whether this be to facilitate a return to birth family, a move to a permanent placement or to provide stability for a child whilst assessments or care proceedings are on-going, our team will work with the placing authority in line with the Care Plan. Short term placements need to be flexible and our carers are prepared to expect placements from a few years up to a number of years in duration.

Long Term or Permanent Placements

Many of our foster carers have the experience and skills necessary for providing placements to children that may last for lengthy periods of their childhood or may be planned from the outset as permanent care to support them through to independence. Carers who are approved to provide Long Term or Permanent Placements must first evidence that they have the ability and commitment to offer a child a place for life. Young People at Heart offer specialist training and support to Long Term carers in the knowledge that even after many settled years some relationships will experience periods of instability.

Young People at Heart also offers training which prepares carers to support older children to develop crucial life skills supporting their pathway to independence.

Sibling Groups

Sibling placements are for brothers and sisters who are all placed together with foster carers. Often the need to maintain relationships between siblings is the key consideration for a Local Authority when searching for the right placement. Young People at Heart have carers who are particularly experienced in providing placements that enable sibling groups to remain together in a single household.

Respite Placements

Respite placements are available with Young People at Heart on both an emergency and planned basis. Many foster carers have all the skills necessary to meet the needs of Looked After Children but due to other commitments or personal preferences are not able to offer ongoing placements.

Emergency Placements

Young People at Heart has a range of skilled carers who are approved to offer emergency placements. Whilst we would always prefer to make placements on a planned basis, emergencies happen and with wide geographical coverage we are often in a position to respond. Emergency placements can be offered to a specific Local Authority as and when the need arises. Our referrals team are always quick to respond and our out of hours service is available to support placement matching out of normal office hours

Foster Carer Recruitment

Young People at Heart recruits foster carers who have the potential to meet the needs of a young person placed with them. Some applicants may have previous experience of fostering or have significant experience of working with children in another setting. Others may have their own family or simply be able to demonstrate an insight into young people that will enable them to develop the necessary skills to care for young people in the care system.

While seeking to grow the number of foster carers in the UK, Young People at Heart is also pleased to welcome enquiries from experienced foster carers from other providers who want to provide their services in a not-for-profit environment. One overriding condition on carers transferring from another organisation is that the interests of the young person must not be compromised.

Enquiries to become foster carers are welcomed from people regardless of gender, marital status, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, religion, culture or employment status. Any applicant convicted of an offence against a child or a serious offence against an adult will not be able to foster with us. All foster households will need at least one empty bedroom.

Matching Process

All placements are closely 'matched' to ensure that the needs of the children and young people are met by the skills and experience of foster carers. Many of our foster carers have a wealth of experience or specialise in areas to meet the needs of children who have been abused, have challenging behaviours or for children who have specific medical requirements etc. Our referrals workers will offer placement choices and will liaise closely with Managers, Supervising Social Workers, foster carers and local authorities to ensure the best possible match for child and foster carer. All children and young people are different and in a sense all placements are unique.

The Assessment Process

Following receipt of an enquiry to become a foster carer, a home visit will be arranged. We refer to this as an 'Initial Visit' and it is an opportunity to have an honest, two way discussion about fostering and whether it is right for the applicant. If both parties are happy to proceed and once a completed application form has been received by the

agency, a qualified social worker will be allocated to conduct an assessment with the prospective carer and their family. We use the BAAF Form F which is widely used in fostering assessments.

The assessment consists of two stages:

- Stage 1 comprises statutory checks and personal references. These include an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, Local Authority checks, a medical and references from employers, the applicant's current fostering organisation if already fostering and at least two personal references. We will also conduct a safety review in the home and risk assesses any pets. If there is any indication in Stage 1 that the applicant is unsuitable to foster, the Agency Decision Maker will consider whether the assessment can continue or whether it should be terminated and the reason will be explained to the applicant.
- Stage 2 is conducted in the applicant's home. The social worker preparing the Form F will visit the family between six and eight times. Sometimes the family will be seen together and sometimes on their own but it is important to remember that this is a joint venture and requires the full participation from the applicants and their family. The Form F will gather personal information about the family, their relationships and partnerships and their support network. It will also explore the impact they think fostering will have on them. If concerns are raised about the applicant's suitability to foster during the Stage 2 and the assessor wishes to terminate the assessment, a brief report will be completed and presented to Young People at Heart's independent foster panel. A recommendation will be made by the foster panel regarding continuing or ending the assessment and the Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision about terminating the assessment based on the brief report and recommendation by foster panel.

Once the Form F is completed, the applicants have the chance to read and comment on the assessment. The Form F will then go to Panel. The Panel is made up of a number of independent people who have expertise working with young people. Their backgrounds cover social work, health, education, psychology and a foster carer from a Local Authority. We also have a young person who has experience in the care system on our Panel. The prospective carer will attend panel with the social worker who prepared the Form F. The Panel may ask questions and after deliberating will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker who has the final decision of whether to approve the applicants as new foster carers. When approved, the foster carers receive and sign a Foster Carer Agreement with Young People at Heart and local authorities are advised of their availability to receive a placement.

Support and Supervision of Foster Carers

Every foster carer approved by Young People at Heart has a fully qualified Social Worker to support them. Foster carers are visited at least once a month by their social worker, more frequently if required. The monthly visit is an opportunity for the foster carers and

social workers to address any areas of concern or difficulty and is typically referred to as a Supervision Meeting. In addition, the foster carers receive a telephone call weekly and may receive visits from other Young People at Heart staff, such as our Social Work Assistants. There is also telephone support available from a Young People at Heart social worker 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition to the regular visits, each foster care household receives at least one unannounced visit per year and an annual Health and Safety Audit on the carer's home.

Annual Reviews of Foster Carer's Approval

All of our foster carers are reviewed at least annually. The first annual review is presented to Panel, with the foster carers in attendance, and any reviews recommending a change in approval will be presented to Panel as a Review of Approval. Foster carer's annual reviews will also be presented to Panel every three years thereafter.

The annual review is an opportunity to identify any training or development needs, to discuss progress and set goals for the following year.

Initial training

During the assessment process the potential foster carers attend a training course called 'Skills to Foster'. This gives them a good introduction into key areas and will contain accredited training in First Aid and Safeguarding. Other areas covered include managing difficult behavior, the legislative framework, why young people come into care, the importance of working in partnership with birth parents and other professionals, awareness of child abuse and child protection issues, safe caring, diversity and record keeping.

Foster Carer Training and Development

Young People at Heart believes foster carers should continually develop their skills. Some training is mandatory, to comply with the Fostering Service Regulations and the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Care. A number of programs are offered.

Mandatory and Ongoing Training and Development

During their first year after approval, foster carers are expected to take part in a number of mandatory programs. These include safer caring, safeguarding, promoting healthy living, recording skills, first aid, promoting positive behaviour, E-Safety, de-escalation techniques, attachment, contact, education Prevent (Radicalisation/Extremism) and a culture, religion and diversity program.

All Young People at Heart foster carers are expected to attend at least 25 hours of training per annum aimed at improving the outcomes for young people in their care. Examples of programs offered include preparation for independent living, HIV/AIDS awareness, dealing with ADHD and drug awareness.

Training programs are delivered by Young People at Heart staff or contracted trainers at venues convenient to groups of foster carers. We also pay for foster carers to attend relevant training provided by organisations such as the Fostering Network or BAAF and give access to online training through an approved provider.

We will also encourage foster carers with two years' experience to undertake a BTEch or NVQ Level 3 and 4 qualification. This will be paid for by Young People at Heart.

Participation and Consultation

Young People at Heart actively seeks the views of foster carers, young people and our Local Authority customers on the services we provide and the outcomes we achieve, during the annual review process and at the end of the placement. These views and suggestions are recorded in our Participation Strategy and contribute to the development of the organisation.

Foster carer's views on their placements and on Young People at Heart are included in their Annual Review, as are the views of their birth children. We also ask the young person in placement for their views on their placement and we also consult with our carer's birth children about how they have managed during the time that there have been other children in the household. These views are important to us and they can help us to understand the families better and identify any potential problems.

We also ask foster carers and young people to participate in discussing proposed initiatives that affect them. This involvement has included training requirements and interviewing prospective staff members. We also make use of the MInd of My Own app to receive feedback from young people.

We are continually developing our website and seek input from foster carers and young people on design and functionality. We have also invited birth children and young people to work on the graphic content of our Young People's guide.

Complaints Process

The Young People at Heart complaints procedure is available to all foster carers, young people, customers and staff. We review it annually to ensure it is up to date and to identify any areas of concern.

We aim to resolve any complaints at an informal level. Where complaints cannot be resolved at this informal level they will be referred to the Registered Manager who will notify the Responsible Individual of all complaints and representations. As the organisation grows, a written record of all complaints will be reviewed by the Board of Directors.

Allegations

Any allegations of abuse will be dealt with in accordance with the Young People at Heart Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Procedures. We will work closely with the appropriate local authority and ensure that Ofsted is kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation. We will also carry out an internal investigation of procedures of any area relating to the allegation to establish whether any procedures need to be amended.