

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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July 2022	1	Eleanor Newman
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# Statement of Purpose

## Our Mission Statement

*“In one hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”*

*Forest E Witcraft*



We have chosen this quote as our mission statement because we felt that it summed up what Eastern Fostering Services is trying to achieve across the range of its' services. It underlines the philosophy that we keenly adhere to, of the paramount importance of the values of our staff team and fostering families being focussed on supporting children to reach their potential, experiencing adults in a safe and warm way that helps in their journey of life, compared to material or 'status' achievements.



# Aims and Objectives

Our aim is to provide the best possible service we can, to support children and adults who are living in a fostering family setting. We aim to understand the world through the eyes of the child, to inform ourselves in terms of the impact their experiences may have had upon them, to educate and support our fostering families, to provide an alternate family setting from the family the children were born to, that holds them, nurtures them and prepares them for whatever their life plan will be.

Within that, our objectives with specific regard to our fostering service are to:

- Establish a diverse range of local fostering families who can enable children to stay in touch with the people and places that are important to them and meet children's individual needs.
- Work positively and collaboratively with all professional networks involved in children's care planning and to advocate for the needs and rights of children when needed.
- Develop a staff team that is driven by a clear motivation to put children at the heart of what they do, who are sensitive, professional, emotionally attuned and positive.
- Recruit fostering families who will provide a safe, understanding and nurturing environment for the children they care for, who are self-aware, and who can 'tread in the children's footsteps' when supporting them at times of distress.
- Support families to provide an environment for children that promotes and understands their health and educational needs and gives them the best life opportunities possible.
- Value and support fostering families to enable them to provide holistic care and to look after their own emotional well-being.
- Work to the requirements of the National Fostering Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and in accordance with all other relevant statutes, guidance and regulations.
- Recruit sufficient families to be able to offer choice to local authorities and to be able to facilitate sibling groups staying in touch even when living in different family units.
- Work to minimise the number of family moves experienced by individual children through a thorough knowledge of our fostering families, effectively assessing the information we receive at the point of referral and aligning what children need and what families can offer.
- Build a robust organisational structure that has clear lines of responsibility and accountability yet also retains the ability to swiftly respond to extra resource needs.

- Develop a 'learning organisation' that is based on reflective practice, having confidence in being able to acknowledge when we make a mistake, take the learning from it and improve through constructive practice development.

Running through all of our working practices is the aim to value and appreciate difference, challenge discrimination and be open to challenge ourselves, and set the scene for an equality-based service through understanding different needs and adjusting our approach and practices in a sensitive and open way.

### **Status and Constitution**

Eastern Family Services Ltd, an Independent Fostering Provider, is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 2006. Its' company number is 7563641. We trade as 'Eastern Fostering Services' in order to be more easily found when prospective foster carers are looking for information and to reflect more specifically the service we provide.

Eastern Fostering Services is regulated by Ofsted and inspected against national standards on a regular basis.

### **Safeguarding Children and Young People**

The safeguarding of children and young people is at the core of our service, and we encourage a culture of transparency and understanding that it is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that children are kept safe from harm.

Our Designated Safeguarding Officer is Eleanor Newman, and our Deputy Safeguarding Officer is Jo Elliott. Both ensure that they undertake regular specific training for their roles.

All foster carers and EFS staff members complete mandatory safeguarding training as part of induction as well as on an ongoing basis. This can cover a variety of topics as safeguarding is such a wide area, and we also deliver age adjusted training to our children and young people focussing on subjects important to them, such as internet safety and sextortion.

### **Management and Staffing Structure**

Eastern Fostering Services has always aimed to deliver local services and is a medium size fostering agency that has grown organically and responsibly over the last 14 years. EFS prides itself on supporting a well-resourced team that can deliver a comprehensive and quality service. It is managed by one Director, and the management team comprises the Director, Social Work Team Manager, Practice Manager, and Operations and Admin Manager. The Responsible Individual for EFS attends management meetings and is closely aligned with the agency. EFS also has four experienced Supervising Social Workers, a Fostering

Family Finder, a Fostering Family Recruitment Co-Ordinator, three fostering administrators, one Senior Children and Young People's Worker who is our 16+ Co-Ordinator, and one Children and Young People's Worker. EFS has an Agency Decision Maker, Stuart Entwistle, who works closely with our management team and helps us in our agency development and improving practice.

As the agency is a relatively small service, we also use our professional networks in the locality, through established links that we have developed with specialist services. For example, we commission an experienced therapist to offer our fostering families (and children where appropriate) individual consultation on a regular basis. They have also developed a specific training course focussing on PACE principles for staff and carers, and they also facilitate training and reflective sessions for the staff team, fostering families and fostering panel. We also have close links with counsellors, legal advisors and we can source other types of therapeutic input such as EMDR. We have personally worked with all of these providers and know the quality and reliability of the services that they can offer.

The Eastern Fostering Services Board is responsible for the on-going formation, review and action in the following areas:

- The strategic vision and business plan of the company
- Company ethos, values and mission
- Quality Assurance of our services, including Safeguarding
- Policies and Procedures
- Legal compliance
- Financial management

## **Services Provided**

### **Time-Limited Fostering**

These arrangements are usually as a result of either children coming into the 'care system' or needing an urgent move from another fostering family.

There are various reasons why children need to leave their families of origin including, for example, family breakdown, illness, abuse or domestic violence. Generally, with shorter term arrangements, the court will be closely involved in the life plan for the child, and it is likely that family members will be explored, their parents' situation will be assessed, and all possibilities will be taken into account when a judge considers what the longer-term plan might be. We can support fostering families to look after children in emergency situations as well as working with plans to re-unify them with their families or work towards longer term living in a fostering family.

### **Permanent Fostering**

When children cannot return home and when adoption is not the right option, we can support families who want to make a long-term commitment to children until adulthood and beyond. We also have experience in supporting fostering families to prepare children for adoption.

### **Parent and Child Arrangements**

We can offer both supportive and assessment-based arrangements for young parents and their children, which provide a real opportunity for positive parental role-modelling to take effect in a family setting.

### **Fostering Refugee Children**

Eastern Fostering Services has developed considerable insight into the needs of children who have come without their families into the UK as a result of war or conflict in their home countries. We have worked closely with local authorities specialist teams and have a proven track record of positive work in this area. We have a specialist family who can support others and share their knowledge, not only of children's different cultural and religious needs, but also of the legal processes that are involved.

### **"Staying Put" Fostering**

We recognise that some young people need the continuing support of a family environment beyond the point where they reach legal adulthood and we will work with placing authorities to provide this continuum of care within our fostering families.

EFS has a flexible approach to its' provision and will work with authorities to achieve the best outcomes through whatever intervention is deemed most appropriate to meet children's needs.

# Recruitment and Assessment of Fostering Families

Eastern Fostering Services is committed to the recruitment of fostering families who can meet the individual needs of children and young people and provide them with a safe and nurturing environment in which to grow.

Prospective fostering families who decide to go ahead with their wish to foster are subject to a detailed assessment procedure. This includes:

- An Initial Home Visit
- A Medical Report
- At least 3 personal references
- Local authority check
- Identity checks, including an Enhanced DBS
- Overseas checks for longer periods of time spent abroad
- Financial checks
- Employment checks
- Previous partner references
- Health and safety assessments
- 6-10 home visits and interviews which include applicants, their children and any other household members
- A meeting with our therapist to reflect on the impact of the assessment and how this might inform fostering
- Full evidenced based assessment on the qualities, competence and suitability to become foster carers

The assessment process takes 4-6 months on average, and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay. We offer a mixture of face-to-face and 'virtual' opportunities to communicate and gather the information needed to complete assessment. We have found this can be time-efficient and helpful for busy families and we ensure this does not compromise the quality or robustness of assessments. All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held securely and in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and Data Protection regulations.

Prospective foster carers also complete mandatory training as part of their assessment, including Paediatric First Aid, Safeguarding Children and Caring for Traumatized Children.

## **Fostering Panel Role**

The assessment report is presented to Eastern Fostering Services Fostering Panel, which has a membership who have a variety of expertise and knowledge including members with backgrounds in education, fostering, parenting children with additional needs, attachment theory, Social Work, health and safety and psychology. The Panel also uses the services of an independent Medical Advisor and has a Social Work Advisor at every meeting.

The Panel's function is to provide an independent quality assurance role recommending whether the applicant/s presented to them are suitable to become registered foster carers. Assessment Panel meetings are always held face-to-face.

The final decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker, Stuart Entwistle. Eleanor Newman can also act as Agency Decision Maker where necessary but does not routinely. The fostering assessment is split into two stages and if the applicant/s are unhappy with any decision not to proceed, they have a right to appeal once the assessment has reached Stage Two, which is confirmed and explained in writing when the decision is made. This can be done direct to the agency or via the Independent Review Mechanism.

If the assessment is terminated by Eastern Fostering Services in Stage One, applicants can use the Eastern Fostering Services complaints procedure. Applicants have a right to see records directly relating to them, through a Subject Access Request, but should bear in mind that third party information received may not be shared.

The Fostering Panel also has a role in ongoing quality assurance of registered fostering families. Once approved, fostering families suitability is reviewed at least annually (more often if needed) and the Fostering Panel considers all first reviews, and subsequently every three years. These meetings are generally held virtually.

## **Learning and Development**

Foster carers come with different experiences, education and backgrounds, and the shape of fostering has changed over the years, as we learn more about the impact of trauma and how we can understand and support children with the effects of this. It is therefore essential that any learning and development programme covers the requirements that the role entails but is also tailored to individual learning needs. There are three broad Learning and Development phases that Eastern Fostering Services concentrates on, to reflect what experience tells us are the times when carers need the additional input, namely:

## **Pre-Assessment Preparation for Fostering**

All potential carers attend the Preparation to Foster programme and complete homework tasks and reflection activities. Preparation to Foster includes subject areas such as:

- Why children come into care
- How to promote a sense of identity in children
- How to work in partnership with parents and professionals
- How to understand the legislative framework around childcare
- Child development
- Attachment and loss
- Safer caring and how to formulate a household safer caring policy
- Raising awareness of abuse and child protection issues
- The impact of trauma
- An introduction to therapeutic parenting from our carer nurture lead

Prospective foster carers are linked with our carer nurture lead and are enrolled into a specific What's App group for new applicants, supported by a small group of experienced fostering families to help guide them through the process and answer any questions they may have as they progress through their assessments.

## **Early Days of Fostering**

Anyone wanting to become a foster carer must complete the 'STSD' training, support, and development standards for fostering and the Preparation to Foster course is designed to help lay the foundations of this. Eastern Fostering Services then offers individual and group support to fostering families to ensure that they get the most out of the STSD learning and complete their portfolios within their first year of fostering. In addition, all new foster carers complete an induction pack which familiarises them with the essential policies and underpinning procedures of the agency. Other essential learning and development for the first period of fostering includes:

- First Aid training
- Supporting distressed behaviour in children
- Safeguarding children, including how to help keep children safe online
- Carer nurture lead workshop
- Our bespoke Careapy course

## **Skills development for experienced foster carers**

As foster carers gain practical experience, they often develop specific needs related to the children they care for, or the areas of special interest that they

have. At EFS we take a dynamic approach to the development of our learning and development programme and we respond to identified needs for specific workshops as soon as possible. This gives us the opportunity to respond to new emerging needs and as we identify specific learning and development objectives through carer supervision and carer household reviews, we can plan accordingly. To provide equality of opportunity to all carers, we offer a mix of face-to-face workshops and online courses, as well as individual sessions with Social Workers and our Therapist. We work with a quality online training provider who provides an excellent range of engaging and relevant subjects. This allows flexibility for carers who may have children at home more than usual and also caters for a range of experience levels. We have also run courses during school holidays whilst providing an activity for children, to enable carers to attend who might struggle in term time.

We have a clear aim to involve as many specialist community resources as possible in the delivery of training days rather than commissioning one trainer across a generic range, because we understand that fostering can be an isolating and misunderstood task, and therefore the involvement of the wider community has to be a positive step towards greater insight and co-operative working together. Some of our foster carers have run sessions to share their own areas of expertise and we welcome this.

## **Support to Children and Young People**

All children and young people joining fostering families with Eastern Fostering Services will receive a welcome present and children's guide. The welcome present is completely tailored to the child's individual personality and likes and is delivered by their EFS Social Worker:

There are two children's guide formats, according to age, detailing contact details for social workers or other people involved in the child's life, as well as a checklist of questions to ask a fostering family, to enable the child to play an active role in a fostering agreement meeting. (The Children's Guide has been translated as needed into different languages such as Pashto and Albanian). We have also developed a Children's Guide to complaints, using more accessible language than the adult version, and with reduced timescales for response. In addition, all fostering families will give children a welcome book specifically about their family.

All children and young people are visited regularly by the Eastern Fostering Services Supervising Social Worker and given opportunities to talk individually and reflect about what is happening in their lives. We are also mindful of the important role that the children of fostering families play, and we make concerted efforts to recognise and value their role. We have a specific group called 'My Best Family Fosters' for children of fostering families and they meet

regularly to share experiences and build supportive friendships. Our Children and Young People's Workers also offer individual support if a group setting isn't appropriate or extra time might be needed.

We complete support plans for all children in our care, which are 'live' rather than 'one-off' documents, which consider any additional risks and challenges as well as how we will support the development of skills, interests and hobbies.

We realise that sometimes our fostering families need some practical support and that this can be a vital part of sustaining arrangements for children. We have therefore made provision for additional support to be offered through experienced children's support workers, and this support can be tailored completely to the needs of the child and the family.

We believe in establishing supportive networks for all foster carers and children that we work with and we therefore hold regular events to keep adults and children in touch with one another and build supportive relationships.

We have two Children and Young People's Workers in the team, who support individual children, consult children about their well-being, and organise our regular events and get-togethers, including our annual camp and forest day.

We also have our Children and Young People's Forum, which they have named 'Choices for Young Voices'. This group meets regularly in school holidays and informs EFS on lots of important things. All new prospective fostering families are asked to complete their answers to our young people's questions, and they use the group to review these answers and share their view, which forms part of the fostering family assessment. The group has also formulated questions to ask applicants at panel stage and have participated in interviews for staff team members.

## **Complaints**

We recognise that there should be a clear process to follow if anyone is unhappy with our service and we therefore have a complaints procedure in formats for adults and a separate leaflet to accompany our Children's guide.

If a difficulty cannot be resolved at a local level by the Director, we will refer to our Responsible Individual Andy Robins. If a complaint remains outstanding, Eastern Fostering Services will commission a mediator to help resolve the situation satisfactorily.

For a copy of our complaint's procedure, or to make a complaint, please contact us on:

Tel: 01206 299775

Email: [team@easternfosteringservices.com](mailto:team@easternfosteringservices.com)

### **How to Contact Us**

Our office base is situated on the Essex/Suffolk border, in East Bergholt. We can be contacted on the telephone number above or by email or through our website as detailed below:

Email: [team@easternfosteringservices.com](mailto:team@easternfosteringservices.com)

Website: <https://eastern-fostering-services.com>

Alternatively, Ofsted can also be contacted and their details are;

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You can contact Ofsted online through the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website address too.