



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE - SCOTLAND

JANUARY 2016

VISION:

The vision of the NFA is to be “Simply the Best” fostering provider

MISSION STATEMENT:

Delivering outstanding services for children and young people through enthusiasm and commitment

VALUES:

People: “Respect and consideration in how we treat people”

Respect for others and a team commitment to working together to collectively achieve our goals and aspirations.

Service: “Passion and integrity in what we do”

Extraordinary creativity in service and innovation by demonstrating our willingness to explore new approaches to improve the quality of life for children and young people in our care

Quality: “Excellence and trust in our outcomes”

All that we do meets or exceeds all statutory requirements and aims to achieve excellence through attention to detail and demonstrating best practice.

Finance: “Ethical and transparent in what we charge”

Being open and honest with our customers in being able to demonstrate value for money through our proposition and service offers

PRINCIPLES

The Principles inherent within The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and The Regulation of Care Act 2001, Children and Young Person (Scotland) Act 2014 and the National Care Standards Foster Care and Family Placement 2005 underpin the Policies and Good Practice of The National Fostering Agency (Scotland), its Foster Carers and Employees.

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) strives to attain leadership status across the UK by delivering with professional integrity high standards of quality care for the children placed with our Foster Carers.

The Welfare Principle

By providing focused solutions, our Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers ensure that the educational, health, identity and social welfare needs of children are paramount in their thinking and comprehensively delivered to achieve positive outcomes.

Valuing Individuality

By providing carefully matched, and professionally trained and supported Foster Carers, the National Fostering Agency (Scotland) provides each individual child placed with a responsive, effective and quality service.

Partnership & Consultation

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland), Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers strive to work in close partnership with the Child, Social Worker, Parent(s) and all other Individuals and Agencies involved in the Child's care.

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) believes that children's wishes and feelings should be taken into account and included in all care planning and review meetings. The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) recognises that within such planning Safe Caring is imperative.

Investors in People

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

Customer Services Excellence Award

NFA has successfully achieved and maintained the Customer Service Excellence Award, this new Government Standard for Customer Excellence builds on the legacy of the Charter Mark and concentrates on the detailed experience of customers and actions taken by organisations to recognise and understand their customers, to give them a

voice, to show how customers are listened to, and how their views shape the service. We believe that NFA are one of the first independent fostering organisations to achieve the award.

Leading Improvements for Looked After Children

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

CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE’S RIGHTS

Tam Baillie is Scotland’s latest Commissioner for children and young people (SCCYP) independent of both Parliament and the Scottish Government.

SCCYP promotes and safeguards the rights of children and young people living in Scotland. It is also their task to ensure that the promises made under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are kept. The Commissioner has a legal duty to keep on reminding everyone of the promises and can also set up an investigation if he thinks the promises are not being kept. If the Commissioner believes that a public, private or voluntary organisation is not keeping the promises made to children and young people, he can require them to attend a public investigation, examine them under oath and force them to produce documents.

The Safe, Active and Happy Action Plan sets out SCCYP’s priorities. The priorities were chosen following consultation with children and young people. Each year the SCCYP produces a report on its activities (including a specially formatted copy for children and young people). The SCCYP has an essential research role and produces valuable Reports e.g. Bullying and Cyber Bullying Mapping Approaches.

Tam Baillie and SCCYP can be contacted:

85 Holyrood Road
Edinburgh
EH8 8AU

Telephone: 0131 558 3733 | **Freephone:** 0800 019 1179 | **Fax:** 0131 556 3378

Email: info@sccyp.org.uk | **Website:** www.sccyp.org.uk

For information on children and young people’s rights, participation, policy and news, fun games and activities and helpful links.

Ministerial Vision for Scotland's Children/referred to as outcomes:

Safe: protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community.

Healthy: having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices.

Achieving: being supported and guided in their learning and in the development of their skills, confidence and self-esteem at home, at school, and in the community.

Nurtured: having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting with additional help if needed or, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting.

Active: having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community.

Respected*: having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions which affect them.

Responsible*: having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles in their schools and communities and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision.

Included: having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.

The full context is provided through the publication 'Getting it Right for Every Child'

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF's mission is to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided in doing this by the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) believes that all Children and Young People placed with its Foster Carers have a right to:

- Protection from bullying, ridicule and emotional abuse in all areas of their lives
- Protection from all forms of violence, including physical abuse and corporal punishment, in all areas of their lives
- Protection from all forms of sexual exploitation, including prostitution and sexual abuse, in all areas of their lives
- A caring and warm environment that acknowledges their right to privacy and confidentiality within reasonable limits
- An environment that positively acknowledges their ethnicity, culture, religion, sexuality and any disability
- The opportunity to develop their own sense of identity and family history, including encouragement in valuing their own language, food, clothing and social presentation
- Consultation about their wishes and feelings regarding their Placement and Care Plan, including information about their rights and access to the Agency's and Independent complaints procedures
- An environment that actively encourages appropriate social behaviour by providing appropriate role models to encourage good citizenship

- An environment that is educationally stimulating, encourages reading books and using a computer together with support when making all educational and career choices
- An environment that actively meets their health and safety needs including the right of consent to, or refuse, medical examinations (dependant on age and understanding) and access and encouragement to a healthy diet and physical exercise
- Accurate and appropriate information, advice and counselling regarding, drugs, alcohol, smoking, relationships and sex education
- An Independent Visitor if they do not have regular contact with their family

Scottish Human Rights Commission

The Scottish Human Rights Commission promotes and protects the human rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, which form part of the law of Scotland through the Human Rights Act 1998 and Scotland 1998. The Commission also promotes and protects other human rights which have been guaranteed by international conventions ratified by the UK.

Contact details

If you would like to contact the Scottish Human Rights Commission call 0131 240 2989, or email hello@scottishhumanrights.com.

You can write to them at Scottish Human Rights Commission, 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS.

Their website is www.scottishhumanrights.com

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

The purpose of the Scottish Government is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.

The Minister for Children and Young People is Aileen Campbell. Crucial programmes and publications are:

- Getting it Right for Every Child
- The vision for Scotland's Children
- For Scotland's Children
- A Curriculum for Excellence
- Integrated Children's Services

And more recently

How Well Do We Protect Scotland's Children HMIE Publications www.hmie.gov.uk

For further information please do explore the extensive website: www.scotland.gov.uk

THE NATIONAL FOSTERING AGENCY SCOTLAND STATUS, EMPLOYEES & STRUCTURE

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) is an Independent Fostering Agency, Inspected and Approved by the Care Inspectorate.

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) currently employs:

Registered Manager – Leo McGrath

3 Team Managers

Quality Assurance Manager (part time)

11 full time Supervising Social Workers / 1 part time Supervising Social Worker

Learning and Development Co-ordinator

Referral Co-ordinator

1 full time Administrator

1 part time Administrator

All the National Fostering Agency (Scotland's) Managers, Supervising Social Workers are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council, have recognised qualifications in Social Work and have experience in Child Care and Fostering. All hold Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scotland Certificate (which are renewed by Disclosure Scotland every two years)

Quality Assurance

The NFA has a Quality Assurance Department which includes a National Director of Quality Assurance based centrally in Uxbridge. A Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for each of the NFA Regions. NFA (Scotland) has a Quality Assurance Manager, and a designated Learning and Development Consultant. The Quality Assurance Director has overall responsibility for ensuring consistency of service across the NFA's UK operations; the Quality Assurance Managers monitor Form F Assessments and advise the relevant Foster Care and Placement Panels for each NFA Region.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) is working in partnership with Local Authorities and currently provides Fostering Placements for approximately 200 Children and Young People.

Children's Guides are provided to all children over the age of five years who have been in an NFA placement for over a month. Each NFA foster carer receives a Children's Guide. Children's Guides are provided to ensure that Children and Young people are aware of whom the NFA are and what the NFA does. Also to ensure that they have access to the complaints system and the contact details for Tam Baillie; Scotland's first Commissioner for children and young people (SCCYP); contact details of the Care Inspectorate and a brief description of the role.

Children's Guides contain further information about what to do if children and young people are not feeling happy & safe, information about bullying and a 'have your say' feedback form which they can complete and return to the Supervising Social Worker. The feedback from children and young people is included within Foster Carers Annual Reviews and forms are monitored to ensure that foster carers are providing a high standard of care.

Along with the statutory issues covered in the Looked after Children agreements, NFA (Scotland) Supervising Social Workers will ensure that children are aware of their rights whilst in foster care and that they have the information they need with regard to pocket money, clothing allowance, savings, travel & lunch monies, and birthday and festival allowances.

Supervising Social Workers ensure that they meet independently with all children and young people placed at least four times a year, together with at least one unannounced visits, to ensure that their views are heard and recorded within NFA database recordings. Auditing and management systems help ensure the quality of the service provision.

Nationally, and locally, the NFA works closely with external agencies, both public and private, with the aim of meeting children's needs.

Protection of Children and Young People

The National Fostering Agency (NFA) recognises child protection as a key priority. NFA is committed to providing placements for children where they will be happy and safe and able to develop to their full potential.

To champion child protection NFA:

- Provides specialised training in child protection, from an approved provider, to all NFA employees. A range of child protection training for Foster Carers. Foster carers are requested to complete online child protection training prior to approval.
- Ensures clear child protection policies for employees and foster carers.
- Operates an annual Safeguarding Audit

- Formed a Safeguarding Committee

NFA frequently uses the term safeguarding
Defining Safeguarding:

Safeguarding children covers a complex and extensive agenda. The review defined 'safeguarding' as 'the process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care which is undertaken so as to enable children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.

NFA (Scotland): the term child protection is used, rather than safeguarding.

PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

NFA fully promotes educational achievement. Foster carers' abilities to promote education are addressed in all aspects of our services to foster carers: recruitment, assessment, approval processes, training and quality assurance.

The NFA operate a comprehensive Education Policy.

The Outcomes application will provide a baseline audit in the area of education. For example the number of children that are excluded from school, attendance, and exam results. In line with GIRFEC it will also measure achievement in a broader sense for example, membership of clubs, and national awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh.

The NFA publications emphasis the enjoyment of education and achievement and NFA newsletters 'LinkLines' and 'KidsLines/TeenLines' regularly feature:

- Book reviews, the benefits of reading and writing.
- The benefits and the risks of information technology
- Covers a range of subjects including: music, art science and sport
- Study tips
- Useful websites

SCOTLAND¹

Key messages:

- Many children do not tell anyone they are being abused or neglected and when they do tell they normally tell a friend, not an adult and particularly not a professional.
- Boys are less likely to seek help when they have been abused.
- When children seek help from agencies they seek help from ChildLine but ChildLine Scotland is only able to answer 48% of calls.
- Adults, particularly men, are often reluctant or anxious about contacting child

¹ It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright. Report of the Child Protection Audit and Review, Scottish Executive 2006.

- protection agencies when they have worries about a child.
- Young people and adults are often critical of the service they receive from child protection agencies.
 - The child protection system does not always protect children and young people.

For further information please read the NFA Child Protection Policy (Scotland)

FOSTER CARERS

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) currently has 141 Fostering households.

Recruitment

Service Plans produced by each local authority in Scotland shapes the National Fostering Agency (Scotland) recruitment strategy. Therefore the service is structured according to the researched needs of children and young people in different localities.

A Carer Recruitment Officer is in post in Scotland, working within the framework of Scottish legislation and regulation

The newly redesigned NFA website demonstrates a clearly focused online strategy for recruitment. Talking heads provide real life case examples from foster carers and children to help people think about what is involved in the fostering task before making an application.

Application Procedures

Anyone who wishes to become a Foster Carer for The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) can telephone the Registered Office or one of our Employees and request an application form.

At the initial point of telephone contact our workers complete a basic questionnaire which encompasses the issues of location, family size, accommodation and availability. This enables all applicants to be clear about accommodation and statutory expectations.

Once this initial process has been completed The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) arrange for an Initial Visit.

Initial Visits

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Initial Visits are supervised by our Team Managers and take place at the applicant's home with all household members present.

Our Initial Visit is designed to enable applicants to understand both the statutory and good practice requirements of the fostering task and to prepare applicants for the Home Study Assessment Process.

Some applicants find that they require a little time to reach their decision to go ahead with the National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Home Study Assessment; our Team Managers can arrange further visits at this stage if further information is required.

During the Initial Visit the applicant and the worker discuss the following areas:

- Motivation and Commitment
- Availability
- Accommodation
- Statutory Checks & Personal Referees
- The Home Study Assessment process and Form F
- The Skills To Foster Preparation Training
- Approval Status Target
- The Foster Care and Placement Panel

If the Home Study Assessment is to proceed then all members of the household over the age of sixteen years sign our Statutory Check Agreement Form and complete the Disclosure Scotland Checks.

If the Home Study Assessment is not to proceed then the manager will discuss the reasons with the applicant and the decision can be sent in writing if required.

All applicants have full access to The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Appeals and Complaints Procedures.

Home Study Assessments

Applicants must undergo the Home Study Assessment process. The assessment is undertaken by qualified and experienced Social Workers, working under the close supervision of the National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Regional Manager.

The Home Study Assessment process is undertaken using the format set out in the British Agency of Adoption and Fostering: Form F, and takes on average four to six months to complete.

By law, each applicant must undergo full Statutory Checks as part of their Home Study Assessment.

The Statutory Checks include:

- Disclosure Scotland Checks
- Full Statutory GP Medicals
- Independent Medical Advice
- Local Authority Checks
- Previous Fostering Reference (if applicable)
- Previous Child Care Reference (if applicable)

The results of all Statutory Checks are kept confidential.

However, our Referral Co ordinator will need to share the information with Local Authority Social Workers prior to any placement of a child being made with our Foster Carers.

This system does not infringe our Foster Carers' Rights under the Data Protection Act.

All applicants undergoing the Home Study Assessment must undertake The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) three day 'Skills to Foster' Preparation Course and be presented by the Assessing Social Worker at our Foster Care and Placement Panel.

Foster Care and Placement Panels

Details of the NFA (Scotland) Panel are in the Panel Policy (Scotland) The Panel also manages the Approval Status of all our existing Foster Carers through our Annual Foster Carer Review process.

All NFA Panel Members receive training in relevant legislation and NFA policy annually.

PLACEMENTS

Placements are made when a Local Authority Social Worker contacts our Referral Co-ordinator requesting a placement for a child.

Our Referral Co-ordinator will complete our Computer Database Referral Form and gather as much information about the child as possible.

This information will include:

- Has the child been referred previously?
- The Child's Plan
- Ethnicity, culture and language
- Family background
- Health information
- Educational information
- Contact arrangements with birth family
- Travel arrangements for school
- SW Education Plan - when not in full time education
- SW Risk Assessment - Absconding, police, drugs, sexually active

Our Referral Team can then make informed choices when matching children to a potential Foster Carer. A Matching Policy is in place. The details and background of the children are then shared with identified Foster Carers and their Supervising Social Workers.

The Referral Co-ordinator provides the various Foster Carers' Form Fs together with the relevant statutory checks. This system enables the Local Authority Social Workers to have greater control and choice over the matching process.

Task Centred Placements

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) provides task centred foster placements to Local Authorities. The length of a task centred placement is determined by the Child's Plan. The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) supports placement planning and our Foster Carers participate in introduction visits whenever possible.

Emergency Placements

Emergency Placements include same day emergency placement or the placement may be made during the night or at weekends. With such referrals there is often limited information available and it may be uncertain how long a placement is to last.

In such situations the Supervising Social Worker provides as much information as possible to the Foster Carer and ensures that a placement agreement meeting is convened at the earliest opportunity to ensure that all information regarding the Children and Young People is shared and a Child's Plan is put in place.

Long Term Placements

These occur usually in two ways:

The Foster Carer has an approval for long term and is put forward for specific referral. There may be a period of introduction prior to placement. The 'match' is agreed by the Placing Authorities Approval Panel.

Many of NFA long term placements are of children who were placed in short term placements, initially and who's placing authority decide should remain in the placement. These carers' Form F's are reviewed and updated to reflect their skills and capability to provide long term foster care. The Form F is presented to the NFA Approval Panel prior to a Local Authority Matching Panel.

Caring For You, Caring For Children

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) provides each Fostering family with a fully qualified and experienced Supervising Social Worker.

The Supervising Social Worker is allocated to provide support to each Fostering family, together with monitoring each child's placement. A Supervising Social Worker is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The allocated Supervising Social Worker will visit carers on a monthly basis with support telephone calls every week or as required.

The Supervising Social Worker will be present whenever Children and Young People are placed, they will visit during emergencies and be present at any formal meetings with the Local Authority.

The Supervising Social Worker plays a key role in ensuring that Foster Carers receive appropriate training and support, and will assist the Foster Carer when completing and updating their Training Profile.

PARTICIPATION, CONSULATION AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

The National Fostering Agency (NFA) recognises the importance throughout its activities in Scotland, England and Wales of maintaining two-way transparent communication channels. A Participation Consultation and Engagement Policy is in place.

NFA has successfully achieved the LILAC award 'Leading Improvements for Looked After Children', with the key objective of developing a quality framework for involvement policy and practice targeting young people in care. The young people will make use of this framework to carry out assessments of local authority or agency services.

The Senior Management Team within the NFA is committed to ensuring the involvement of service users, carers, staff and stakeholders in participating with information that is considered to drive and shape the strategy, policy and procedures of the Agency. The SMT is also committed to ensuring that quality standards, process and procedures achieve ongoing and sustainable improvement through continuous review

NFA is committed to the involvement of the child and young person in all aspect of service design and delivery. A Children and Young Persons consultation group has been set up to structure the involvement of children and young people this is now known as VOX – the name the children and young people chose, they also designed their own logo. Young people's forums are demand led.

TRAINING POLICY

TRAINING OVERVIEW

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) is committed to the UK National Care Standards for Foster Care. These National Standards underpin the provision of high quality Foster Care for Children.

The NFA recognises the importance of Continual Professional Development and offers a comprehensive training programme to all its Foster Carers. To achieve this objective the NFA is committed to providing training courses, seminar topics at support groups, and access to books, DVDs and external training courses when appropriate. As well as providing an extensive catalogue of e-learning course through our external preferred suppliers.

All of the training provided by the NFA aims to enable Foster Carers to work with parents and children in the context of a multi-racial society and to develop positive attitudes to disadvantaged groups. In doing so each Foster Carer is provided with the training necessary to equip them with the skills and knowledge to provide high quality care for each individual child placed in their care.

The NFA's training courses are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure up to date information on National Legislation and NFA Policy is included.

The NFA's training programme runs from April to March: we are mindful in all planning of school holidays and encourage carers to establish opportunities for activities and learning at these times for children placed in their care.

Our Foster Carers are expected to participate in a variety of learning opportunities each year, to ensure our Foster Carers have easy access to the NFA's training courses we run our courses at local venues throughout Scotland. Including courses run on Saturday's to accommodate carers needs. We are also keen to acknowledge the transferable skills some carers acquire through their own work related training.

THE NFA TRAINING TEAM

The NFA employs a full time Group Training Manager, with named and dedicated Learning and Development Consultants across each of our regions. All of the NFA's Trainers have been through the nationally recognised 'Training for Trainers' course.

Each NFA Carer has an individual training profile, created at the point of Home Study Assessment. The training profile is continually updated with information about the Carer's attendance at training, e-learning courses completed, alongside any external training they may have attended and is pulled through into the Foster Carer's Annual Review Report.

Each of the NFA's Regions has a training administrator who maintains and manages the booking forms, e-learning profiles, databases and training profiles.

SKILLS TO FOSTER TRAINING

During the Home Study Assessment, and before placements are made, it is important for applicants to have the opportunity to attend a series of training sessions that introduce the fostering task and the NFA objectives.

The NFA has developed a specific three day training course, based upon the 'Skills to Foster' material provided by The Fostering Network.

The Skills to Foster introductory course is made up of new applicants, who are undergoing the assessment process, experienced Social Workers and Foster Carers. Course members have the opportunity to discuss the broad issues involved in becoming a Foster Carer, including safe caring skills, fostering and the law, identity, loss issues and case studies. A foster carer for the agency attends part of this training and imparts practical knowledge and experience to the group.

CONTINUAL PROFESSION DEVELOPMENT

The NFA's Group Training Manager worked closely with the Training Support and Development Standards in developing the new standards of training for Foster Carers set out in the Department for Education and the Scottish Government.

The NFA's training courses reflect these new standards and once a Foster Carer has been approved, the NFA is committed to their continual professional development

INDUCTION AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

During the first two years post approval, NFA's Foster Carers complete their induction training courses and compile portfolios evidencing their participation in training on: Safe guarding/Child Protection, working in partnership, understanding behaviour, Part 1, attachment and safer caring training are recommended to all foster carers throughout their fostering career. Alongside this they are also required to complete an online training course in Child Protection and Safe Guarding as well as two Data Protection e-learning courses.

Our induction courses were developed in partnership with The Fostering Network's Training Material and continues the knowledge and skills development from the Skills to Foster course. This ensures that carers have all the essential skills and knowledge to undertake the fostering task

Once our Foster Carers have completed their Induction Training as an agency we then focus on continuing professional development courses (CPDC). If, during the first two years, a Foster Carer has a specific development need arising out of a placement, they can attend the appropriate CPDC in addition to their induction courses.

Our Continuing Professional development courses cover a range of topics which are more specific to the needs of the children placed. They range from 'Attachment, Separation and Loss', through 'Promoting Positive Identity and Self Esteem', to 'Therapeutic Needs of Looked After Children'. C.S.E and Internet Safety.

Each year new continuing professional development courses are developed in line with the needs of children who are placed with our Foster Carers and from consultation with our Foster Carers at the training courses, support groups and Regional Forums. In addition induction courses are reviewed on a regular basis so they reflect legal and practice changes.

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) recognises carers develop skills transferable to the fostering task in a variety of settings. Annual foster carers' reviews should reflect learning from a multiplicity of sources i.e. discussions at exercises at support groups, attendance at day courses, participation in e-learning and summaries of relevant reading. NFA has developed training facilities on the website which will hopefully be a further source of information for foster carers.

Support Groups

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) encourages Foster Carers to have contact with other Foster Carers that live in their local area. In order to meet this need, in developed areas, the Agency provides regular Support Groups for its Foster Carers.

The Agency's Support Groups enable Foster Carers to share their experiences around The Fostering Task, as well as providing an arena for Foster Carers to discuss training, current issues and new developments in Policy relating to the Fostering Task. Regular guest speakers attend the Support Groups.

Foster Carer Forum

Two Foster Carer Forum Representatives are elected annually through the Agency's Support Groups, and these Representatives meet with The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Directors and Regional Managers twice a year to discuss issues relating to their Fostering Role. The Foster Carers Forum is designed to encourage Foster Carers to have an active role within The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Policy making framework.

Mentoring Service

The NFA offers a mentoring service to its Foster Carers. The Mentors are experienced Foster Carers committed to the concept of mentoring and supporting other Foster Carers. Scotland has a mentor, an experienced NFA (Scotland) Foster Carer.

Forums for Looked After Children and Sons and Daughters

In addition to seasonal events where birth children and looked after children can meet, share experiences and have fun, there is a Young Person's forum which is demand led.

The needs of the Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers are a crucial consideration and a Policy helps guide practice.

Each Supervising Social Worker ensures that they spend time with the sons and daughters of the foster carers they support, this is in addition to the time spent with, and the relationship built with the looked after child.

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Your Voice

VOX@nfa.co.uk is a mailbox – Created by the Quality Assurance Team in collaboration with the IT Team, to enable children and young people to communicate directly any issues, questions, and suggestions that they may have. The mailbox is publicised in Kidslines, Teenlines, Linklines and Local-lines.

Foster Carer Portfolio

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) provides its Foster Carers with a Foster Carer's Portfolio. The Foster Carer's Portfolio contains The Agency's Statement of Purpose, Foster Carer Agreement, Policies, Good Practice and Allowance Guidelines. It also provides a useful storage space for Training Certificates.

Newsletter

The National Fostering Agency provides its Foster Carers with a quarterly newsletter - Linklines. Linklines enables Foster Carers to keep up to date with current issues regarding the fostering task and provides a forum for carers to express their views and opinions. Linklines contains up to the minute information for Foster Carers on development work, changes in agency policy, training news and dates, and dates of forthcoming Support Groups. Linklines includes useful handouts for Foster Carers on issues ranging from asylum seeking children to allowance guidelines and holiday ideas for the young people placed.

Kidslines and Teenlines are the quarterly magazines for Looked after Children and Sons and Daughters. Young people on the Editorial Board help us produce what children and young people want to read.

The Registered Manager for Scotland also produces a regular newsletter for foster carers called Regional Lines.

ANNUAL FOSTER CARER'S REVIEW

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) reviews the Appointment of Foster Carers on an annual basis. The Foster Carer's Annual Review provides an opportunity to assess the work of the Foster Carer over the previous year. The decisions taken at the Annual Review are recorded and placed on our Computer Database.

However, there are other significant changes in circumstances that could trigger an early Foster Carer's Review. For example:

- A significant change in health
- A change to household membership
- A serious Complaint or Child Protection investigation
- A recent criminal conviction

Foster Carers' lives are not static and the Annual Review provides an opportunity to discuss changes in a Foster Carer's Appointment Status: the type of fostering, number of children or their ages. It provides an opportunity for Foster Carers and Young People to discuss their views about the service The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) is providing.

The Foster Carers Annual Review is written by the allocated Supervising Social Worker and is split into two basic sections.

Section One - You And Your Family.

This section covers all basic information about the Fostering household:

- Changes in circumstances
- The effect of fostering on birth children
- Statutory issues such as medicals and police checks
- Training profile & training needs for the coming year
- Details of the nominated carer and regular visitors

Section Two - The Fostering Task.

This section is a descriptive report and assessment by the Supervising Social Worker and covers the quality of service provided by the Foster Carer for each individual child placed.

Areas covered include:

- Health
- Education
- Self-care skills
- Contact
- Identity & social presentation
- Social and emotional development
- Complaints

The Foster Carer Annual Review is carried out and, along with the Supervising Social Worker's report, written reports will be gathered from:

- Each Foster Carer & their Children
- Each Child placed
- Each Child's Social Worker
- Parental views (where appropriate)

The first Annual Review after approval must go back to Panel for them to assess how Carers have been coping with the Fostering Task in their first year; and ratify the recommendation of continued approval. Thereafter reviews must be presented to panel at least every 3 years.

When securing a placement for Foster Carers, The Referral Co ordinator will provide the relevant Local Authority with the most recent Annual Review along with the Form F.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Complaints Procedure deals equitably and speedily with any Complaint made by Foster Carers, Social Workers or Children.

Complaints by Foster Carers

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) recommends that any complaint made by a Foster Carer should first be discussed with their Supervising Social Worker. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage then a meeting will be arranged between the Foster Carer and the Area Manager to resolve any concerns.

If the Foster Carer is still not satisfied, they will be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Director for investigation. The Director will acknowledge this complaint in writing within seven days and the investigation will be completed within 21 days (or as long as it necessary to reach a satisfactory outcome).

Complaints by Children, Parents or Social Workers

The Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carer will be informed immediately of any complaint made by a Young Person or a Parent. In the first instant the complainant is encouraged to resolve the matter directly with the Foster Carer. The Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker and the Young Person's Social Worker can provide support in this task and will hold a Disruption Meeting.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they will be asked to put their complaint in writing to The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Director for investigation. The Director will acknowledge this complaint in writing within seven days and the investigation will be completed within 21 days. (or as long as it necessary to reach a satisfactory outcome).

The National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Registered Manager will inform all parties of the outcome of the investigation in writing following its completion.

Allegations of Abuse

All Allegations of Abuse are immediately reported to our Registered Manager, the Local Authority Child Protection Team and the Care Inspectorate.

All Allegations of Abuse are dealt with by the Child's Local Authority Child Protection Teams.

Care Inspectorate (SCSWIS)

The Care Inspectorate inspects, regulates and supports improvement of care and social work and child protection services across Scotland.

All Children placed have a statutory right to an Independent Complaints Procedure through the Care Inspectorate.

All Foster Carers have a statutory right to an Independent Complaints Procedure through Care Inspectorate

SCSWIS Enquiries: 0345 600 9527 Email: enquiries@scswis.com
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