

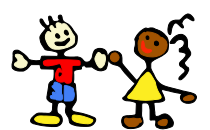
**Synergy Fostering**  
MATCHING NEEDS WITH CARE™

# Statement of Purpose

July 2022



Gurmeet Sodhi DipSW  
Shobha Harris BSc, CQSW  
John Barnes MSc



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION ONE – WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT ABOUT?</b>	<b>5</b>
HOW DO WE SHARE THIS WITH OTHERS?	5
CHILDRENS GUIDE	6
<b>SECTION TWO – MEETING OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>7</b>
OUR AIMS	8
CORE VALUES	8
OBJECTIVES	9
<b>SECTION THREE – ORGANISATION AND STAFF</b>	<b>10</b>
THE COMPANY	11
OPERATIONAL STAFF	11
FINANCIAL VIABILITY	14
RECORD KEEPING	14
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS	15
<b>SECTION FOUR– FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW</b>	<b>16</b>
RECRUITMENT STRATEGY	16
RECRUITMENT PROCESSING	16
REVIEW REPORTS	18
FOSTERING PANEL ACTIVITIES	19
<b>SECTION FIVE – PLACEMENTS AND PROCESSES</b>	<b>20</b>
FOSTER CARER / CHILD PROFILE	20
PLACEMENT MATCHING	20
COMPLAINTS AND OUTCOMES	21
CHILD PROTECTION	22
<b>SECTION SIX – FOSTER CARER CARER SUPPORT</b>	<b>23</b>
TRAINING	23
INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT	24
SUPPORT GROUPS	25
FOSTERING NETWORK	26
HANDLING ALLEGATIONS	26



PAYMENTS TO FOSTER CARERS	26
SEVERE ILLNESS IN FOSTER CARERS	27
<b>SECTION SEVEN – INDIVIDUALISED CHILD SERVICES</b>	<b>29</b>
CLOTHING FOOD AND ALLOWANCES	30
CHILD HEALTH	30
CHILD SAFETY	31
EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES	33
PROMOTING CONTACT	34
MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	34
STAYING PUT	35
<b>SECTION 8 - CONCLUSION</b>	<b>36</b>





## WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT ABOUT?

### SECTION ONE

This document is designed to assist service users and other professionals to understand the service offered by Synergy Fostering, our ethos and how we apply ourselves to this and the legislative standards that we are required to meet.

In the left margin you will find references to documents that we hold ourselves to; legislative requirements and other standards (in red) and Synergy Fostering documents (in blue). The main text explains how we apply ourselves to the achievement of the best possible outcomes for children in these areas.

In addition, the left hand margin also includes various references to internal procedures that identify how we meet our obligations in practice. Within the agency these procedures are used to train and coach our team in the pursuit of excellent outcomes for children in our care.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 3 AND 4**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 16**

### HOW DO WE SHARE THIS WITH OTHERS?

Synergy Fostering is required to publish a “Statement of Purpose” and “Children’s Guide” to our services. This identifies the aims and objectives of the agency so that this is clear for all our parents, foster carers, children, staff and responsible/placing authorities to read. It also helps us to make sure that we all try to meet the needs of children in our care.

A copy of this document:

- Has been made available to the Chief Inspector (Ofsted)
- Is on Synergy Fostering’s website

**WEBSITE:  
WWW.SYNERGY-  
FOSTERING.CO.UK**



- Is made available to our staff, prospective or approved foster carers, children placed with a Synergy Foster carer and the parents of (and any person who has parental responsibility for) that child

## CD 02 CHILDRENS GUIDE TO SYNERGY FOSTERING

### OUR CHILDREN'S GUIDE INCLUDES

- The agency's statement of purpose as it applies to the child
- An explanation how to access the Synergy Complaints' procedure
- The email and postal address together with the telephone number of the Chief Inspector (Ofsted)

We provide our Childrens Guide in three age related formats.

The Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide are reviewed annually by the directors. If these documents are changed, a copy is sent to the Chief Inspector (Ofsted) within 28 days and a copy supplied to each prospective and approved Foster carer and child / young person in placement (if age appropriate).



## MEETING OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### SECTION TWO

Synergy Fostering is an independent fostering agency established in May 2000 that seeks to provide for the needs of children in its care through:

- Directors and staff experienced and knowledgeable in many different aspects of social care provision, youth justice, child therapy and young people's development.
- Careful matching of Foster carers and looked after children to provide the maximum opportunity for stability and child development in children placed.
- Especially high level of support and training for our Foster carers provided by dedicated passionate social work staff with real experience of foster care and specific training matched to the needs of placements.
- A collaborative approach with other agencies and placing authorities that encourages teamwork in pursuit of the best outcomes for children in care.
- A supportive and passionate team diverse in terms of age, gender, culture and ethnic origins.

The name "Synergy" Fostering was chosen to reflect our belief that working together towards a common goal will deliver a benefit to the child that is far greater than any one agency could deliver.

---

#### OUR AIMS

We aim to:

- work in the best interest of children ensuring no-one loses sight of why we have chosen to work with them.





- commit to best practice that may require challenging foster carers, our own staff or staff from placing authorities to ensure that the rights and needs of any individual child as prescribed in law, statutory guidance and accepted best professional practice are satisfied.
- provide stability to foster children and young people enabling them to reach their full potential.
- respect and promote the child or young person's racial, cultural, religious and linguistic background
- consider, amongst many factors, the child's gender, sexuality and any disability when matching the child's needs in placement decisions
- recruit foster carers from diverse backgrounds and with extensive transferable skills and life experiences
- share our experience and help each other to do the best for the children and young people in our care
- show our children and young people the resilience and tolerance they need to build trusting relationships
- provide external and internal training for the development of foster carers and staff.

---

#### CORE VALUES

Synergy Fostering believes that holding core values is essential to our work with children in Foster Care and for our foster carers.



- **People** - we will promote diversity in our organisation and everyone's opinion will be considered and valued. We will support the development and training of everyone who is involved with our organisation in support of the child.
- **Integrity** - It is always our intention to do what we say we will do, and to only commit to actions that we believe we can achieve.
- **Flexibility** - Our service will always be in the best interests of the child. Sometimes we will need to perform in a special way or take actions that are not in our own self interest but in the interests of the child.
- **Involvement** - It is our intention to take an inclusive approach to our work. Involving people in the decisions that we take and at each stage of the plans which we implement.
- **Safety** - The decisions and choices that we make will always be those that are most likely to result in safety for everyone who is involved in our organisation in particular the children in our care.

---

#### OBJECTIVES

As a social care enterprise, Synergy Fostering must add value to society through the results of our work.

Synergy Fostering provides young people with placements that enable them to flourish and reach their full potential in circumstances where that might not otherwise have occurred. Each child we assist in this way, will add more value to our society by reaching his/her full potential.

We maximize this potential through the high retention level and ever growing experience of our culturally diverse foster carers who can provide emergency, respite, short and longer term placements to children and young people in care and staying put arrangements to the age of 21 including:



- Unaccompanied minors
- Sibling groups
- Young parents and their children
- Teenagers
- Young people on remand
- Young people with complex needs

Our training is tailored to the current needs of our carers so that we can help increasingly complex placements particularly with therapeutic fostering for complex needs caring and additional needs such as autism or special dietary needs.

We will continue to extend the excellent record we have for placement retention by ensuring we match referred children to the most suitable foster carers and provide individual support for the placement needs.



## OUR ORGANISATION AND STAFF

### SECTION THREE

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 5,6,7,8,27**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 17**

#### THE ORGANISATION

Synergy Fostering is a limited company wholly owned by three directors. The directors are a combination of social workers with extensive experience across a range of service disciplines including children and families, fostering, mental health, elderly, probation and legal services and commercial experience from industry.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 25**

Gurmeet Sodhi is the agency decision maker with over 25 years' experience in social care whose management skills have been accredited at NVQ level 7.

Shobha Harris has over twenty years' experience in social care with NVQ level 7 and takes the role of Registered Manager at Synergy Fostering. Shobha Harris and Gurmeet Sodhi provide operational cover for absence and are not normally absent from the organisation at the same time. If this happens, a suitably qualified staff member would be appointed under the supervision of the company secretary.

John Barnes is the company secretary with more than 25 years' experience in commercial organisation general management. All of the directors have been involved with the organisation since 2000 when it was formed.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 32**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 27**

The organisation is based in Surrey Quays London SE16 in an area known as Tavern Quay. The office is secured by automated locking system that prevents un-necessary periods with unlocked doors.



**IN 01 17 BUSINESS  
CONTINUITY PLAN**

All of our archived records are stored electronically, all records are stored electronically in multiple locations for added data protection. The contents of the office are fully insured and in the event of unforeseen circumstances there is a business continuity plan in operation. The plan is tested annually to quickly get the organisation functional again following major disruption.

Our organisation makes extensive use of IT systems including Microsoft Office, the internet and CHARMS database for fostering record keeping. Our IT systems are regularly firewall and virus checked for integrity and backed up with redundant systems to ensure that it can function in the event of equipment failure.

**IN 03 15 INSURANCE**

Foster carers' homes are all insured for the purpose of fostering and these policies are checked by the agency to ensure they cover the appropriate risks. The agency is responsible for all risks as a result of following our procedures.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 19,20**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 24**

**OPERATIONAL STAFF**

The operational team is led by a Team Manager with three supervising social workers. The manager is supervised by a suitably qualified social work trained person. All supervising social workers are registered social workers with prior experience of working in social care with children and families.

There are two administrators one of whom has specific responsibility for the fostering panel and the other, the financial aspects of the service. The placement officer responsible for placement matching is supervised by the Agency Decision maker. All staff administrators have attended training in data protection.



**IN 06 13 STAFF  
RECRUITMENT**

All staff are selected using appropriate, accessible selection techniques such as interviews, tests and group exercises. Their suitability is also checked through a series of referencing approaches including DBS checks, job references and qualifications checks at a minimum.

**IN 10 13 STATUTORY  
CHECKS POLICY**

**IN 01 01 DBS  
PROCEDURE**

**IN 10 10 REFERENCING  
WHISTLEBLOWING**

Synergy Fostering has a clearly communicated whistleblowing policy that encourages all staff to contact suitable authorities should they believe that some form of mal-practice may be happening.

**IN 03 07 CODE OF  
CONDUCT**

**IN 06 08 MATERNITY  
POLICY**

**IN 06 06 GRIEVANCE  
PROCEDURE**

**IN 06 05 DISCIPLINARY  
PROCEDURES**

**IN 06 01 ABSENCE  
POLICY**

All staff participate in bi-weekly team meetings where the organisation prioritises workload and tracks progress of improvement activities and allocates resources in support of placements. There are staff employment procedures and policies in place to cover equal opportunities, health & safety, recruitment, maternity/paternity, code of conduct, absence, disciplinary and grievance.

Staff are encouraged to report areas where they believe there could be ethical or legal issues at team meetings. Any such issues are recorded and addressed with urgency.

**IN 02 01 ESCALATION  
POLICY**

In general, staff are encouraged to resolve issues locally but where there is no resolution and issues remain unaddressed there is an escalation procedure staff follow to gain management attention that will lead to formal complaint if appropriate.

**IN 03 32 SUPERVISION  
POLICY**

Social work staff are also involved in regular supervision which is formally recorded and they also have annual appraisals which include the views of children in care where they provide them.



**IN 07 08 ASSESSMENT  
OF FOSTER CARERS**

Prospective foster carer assessments are carried out by assessors with relevant foster care experience and all assessments are overseen by the Registered Manager.

**IN 01 14 FOSTER CARER  
TRAINING**

All staff undertake annual training needs assessment as part of their reviews and appropriate training to develop in the areas identified is planned. Staff are encouraged to attend internal and external training courses, so that they continue to develop knowledge and skills and are conversant with current guidance and legislation.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 25**

All staff members have role descriptions identifying their responsibilities and limits of authority and lines of accountability.

**IN 09 01 – IN 09 11  
JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

There is an internal procedure management and audit system that includes both social work and business processes that ensures staff are trained in the activities they undertake. This is used as a part of the induction process to bring new staff into the organisation.

The audit and review system ensures that procedures are regularly reviewed against the National Minimum Standards and other regulatory requirements and that they are fit for purpose internally.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 20,21,22,30**

Records and data are regularly reviewed by the agency to ensure that the evidence is in compliance with the agency policies.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 18**

Ofsted reports from previous inspections are available to staff. Ofsted inspections from other agencies are regularly reviewed to establish potential areas for improvement in the agency as they are published.



In addition we are in support of developing the Social Work profession and as a result to date (2022) have provided nine social work student placements. We work in partnership with Brunel University, who have selected these students.

**IN 04 01 – 17 FINANCIAL PROCEDURES**

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

Synergy Fostering has managed its financial affairs effectively since it began. In fact the organisation has never needed to secure funds from any other source than its own means. Our financial processes are all proceduralised. Our accounts are audited by a qualified accountant each year who is kept informed of the future direction of the organisation.

In the event of closure Synergy Fostering accepts its responsibilities to provide an ongoing solution that is in the interests of the children placed.

**FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 22, 26 30-33**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 26**

**RECORD KEEPING**

Records are maintained by the agency and its foster carers that are subject to data protection and confidentiality policies. These policies are shared with all staff to ensure that they understand their obligations.

**PS 06 01 DATA PROTECTION POLICY**

**IN 03 09 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Records are maintained in a way that enables others to understand the situation when reading that information at a later date. Regular checks of records are undertaken to establish the quality of entries and to provide feedback to those writing the records if there needs to be improvement.

**IN 03 26 RECORDING PROCEDURE CARERS**

**IN 03 39 RECORDING PROCEDURE CHILDREN**

Where appropriate records are shared with those involved during the writing process so that they understand what is being written about them.

**IN 03 21 LIFE HISTORY WORK**





**IN 01 02 ELECTRONIC  
FILING PROTOCOL**

We have an electronic system for recording casework which enables multiple staff to update appropriate records and for automated reminders of statutory obligations.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 36 SCH 7**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 29**

**SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**

The agency has procedures for handling the notification and management of significant events. All staff are encouraged to report all events that are abnormal even if these may not be considered significant enough to escalate further by the Registered Manager. All events are recorded and those which need them are investigated and communicated to the relevant authorities.

**IN 03 20 NOTIFICATION  
OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**



# FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & REVIEW

## SECTION FOUR

FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 26,27,28

NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 13

### RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

In order to attract potential foster carers to the agency we have identified media that have proved to be effective. While we continue to invest in new and different methods of connecting with potential foster carers such as social media and various events; the majority of our investment of resource is focused on:

- Facebook engagement
- Incentivising existing foster carers to identify other friends / relatives who might wish to foster
- Some face to face recruitment at local events such as community activities and religious groups
- Our website

We regularly monitor the effectiveness of our recruitment strategy in terms of number, type and quality of applicant to establish where we need to make changes in tactics.

IN 07 12 APPROVAL OF  
FOSTER CARERS

### RECRUITMENT PROCESSING

There is a defined procedure for assessing prospective Foster carers:

- All new fostering enquiries are screened to ensure that there is no obvious reason why individuals should not foster and can offer sufficient accommodation and time to provide care.
- Once basic suitability has been established, an information pack will be sent to the prospective Foster carer.



- We will arrange to make a home visit and establish further information about suitability and aptitude of the applicant. This is normally completed within two weeks if the applicant agrees.
- The prospective foster carer will be invited to participate in the Skills to Foster course during this time. Observations from the training are used to inform the assessment process.
- An application form is issued when the applicant's suitability has been assured at this stage.
- A decision is taken by the agency decision maker whether this prospective foster carer is suitable for the next stage; statutory & health checks.
- If statutory checks are successful, a formal assessment is begun within ten days if not already started.

After this point in the process, should any aspect of the assessment lead the agency to believe that the applicant is not suitable to foster, a report will be presented to Fostering Panel to explain the reasons for ending the assessment.

Assessments are completed using a structured Form F template. Assessors are supervised by the Registered Manager. Assessment will typically involve a number of visits to a carer's home to obtain information about her/his childhood and experience of being parented, current lifestyle, skills and experience of looking after children.

Prospective foster carers are provided with information about the panel review process and their part in this activity.

A 'health & safety check' of the applicant's home is also undertaken and includes a risk assessment of any relevant pets.



When the above process is completed the assessor prepares a report for the panel, which will include the Form F and supporting evidence that illustrate the applicant's suitability to foster (including outcomes of checks and references undertaken).

The draft Form F report is shared with the applicant, who signs to confirm s/he has read the report. All applicants are invited to attend the panel.

The panel will then make recommendations about the suitability of the applicants to become foster carers and the types and age range of children who should be placed with them. Panel recommendations are passed on to the applicants verbally by the panel chairperson when prospective applicants attend.

Recommendations of the panel are then referred to the Agency Decision Maker and written confirmation of the agency's decision is sent within 5 five working days for the agreement of minutes.

#### IN 05 01 PANEL APPEALS

Prospective foster carers can appeal against a decision within 28 days following the internal procedure or directly to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

#### FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 26,27,28

#### NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 13

#### REVIEW REPORTS

Existing Foster carers have an annual appraisal, referred to as an Annual Review. Review reports are submitted in advance of the meeting for the Foster carer to review and the meeting is chaired by the Team Manager. The report contains recommendations for development and evidence of suitability for the foster carer to continue fostering. The report is a balanced review of both achievements and development areas.



**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 22**

Annual Review reports are referred to the panel twelve months after approval and then on a three yearly basis after that. Each annual review is considered by the Agency Decision Maker and may be referred to panel before the three yearly review if deemed necessary. Foster carers who have been subject to allegations are also reviewed at the first panel following conclusion of the investigation.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 14,20,21**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 19,23-29**

**FOSTERING PANEL ACTIVITIES**

The agency has a panel membership central list that includes:

- An independent chairperson who is a qualified social worker and ex-police officer.
- An independent vice-chair.
- A director of Synergy Fostering (who is the Panel Advisor)
- An adult who were formerly placed in residential and foster care
- A Supervising Social Worker with more than three years post qualifying experience employed by Synergy
- Two foster carers with over 20 years of experience
- An Educational Psychologist who works for a London Borough with secondary school age children
- A health experienced former nurse
- Panel Administrator and minute taker

**IN 05 09 FOSTERING  
PANEL**

Panel training is undertaken annually, the content of which is discussed in the panel to include aspects of development that the panel feel they would benefit from.

Our panel procedure explains the constitution and operation of the meeting. The procedure explains how quality assurance of reports is maintained. It also stipulates minute taking and preparation routines that meet the necessary standards.



## PLACEMENTS & PROCESSES

### SECTION FIVE

#### FOSTER CARER/ CHILD PROFILE

At the end of July 2022, the agency had 27 Foster carer families from diverse backgrounds based in and around the London area. This comprised of 15 Caribbean families, 4 Black African families, 4 Indian/Pakistani families, 2 African /white families, 1 Indian/white family, 1 Chinese family and 1 white family

There were 33 children in placement and a further 3 young people over the age of 18 in either staying put or young parent and child placements.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 11,17**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 11,15,31**

#### PLACEMENT MATCHING

Synergy Fostering believe that matching needs with care is the most important part of establishing stable placements. We put significant effort into establishing the most accurate picture of potential placements so that we can find the match within our foster carer population. We look for connections and common ground from which foster carers and placed children can find trust and understanding that ultimately leads to child development and stability.

**IN 07 07 PLACEMENTS**

Should children need to move on it is important that this is done in the interests of the child and procedures exist for managing the movement of children to other placements and settings.

**IN 03 22 PARENT AND  
BABY PLACEMENTS**

Special consideration is given to Parent and Child Placements due to the modified responsibilities for their care. These are explained in a separate procedure.



## IN 01 16 EVALUATION OF SERVICE PROVIDED

After a placement is completed the agency seeks feedback on the results of the placement from those involved and uses this to improve it for future users.

## COMPLAINTS & OUTCOMES

There were two substantiated complaints or allegations about foster carers with the agency in the last year to July 2022 and few in the history of the organisation.

## IN 03 08 COMPLAINTS

Synergy Fostering has a complaints procedure which sets out how complaints can be made by or on behalf of children placed with any of our foster carers and how such complaints will be dealt with. There is also a child friendly version of the procedure provided to children to encourage them to voice concerns without fear.

## CD 03 CHILDRENS COMPLAINT LEAFLET

The Complaints procedure provides for informal resolution at an early stage, sufficient independence, includes contact details for Ofsted and is made known to everyone working in the organisation, parents of children placed and where age appropriate children themselves.

We have a mechanism in place to capture the positive outcomes that our young people in care experience. This enables us to recognize the good work of foster carers and other members of the organisation and to celebrate the successes of the young people in care. While for some children relatively modest advances should be considered as positive outcomes there are some which are more remarkable. Some examples of recent successes include:

- One child aged 13, had a reading age of 7 years when he left junior school but in the last 2 years his reading age has increased to 12 years 7 months



due to the support from the carers and their adult daughter who is a qualified teacher.

- One young person with additional and complex needs who became unmotivated to attend college and had a low mood following the last COVID related lockdown was supported to attend college by the carers and the placing authority by putting in a taxi to transport her to and from college. This resulted in significant improvement in attendance and motivation enabling her to gain functional skills qualification in English and Maths level 2.
- One child with additional needs was given the continuity and consistency of attending her nursery despite the geographical distance from the carers home resulting in significant improvements in relation to her social and language development.
- One child commented on how her carer has helped her to think before doing or saying something which has helped her to remain calmer.
- One child has shared that her carer has helped her to control her anger and look at other ways of expressing how she feels.
- Two young people from the same fostering household have been scouted to play for football teams.
- One young person who arrived in this country as a young unaccompanied minor was successfully supported in transitioning to his own accommodation and to go to University to study music.
- One child was successfully transitioned to her forever family after being in placement with her parent who failed her parenting assessment.
- A sibling group of 3 children who had been in placement for over 2 ½ years were successfully supported to be rehabilitated to their mother's care. The foster carers supported the mother in understanding how to support her son with complex health needs.
- One young person has incorporated the healthy eating habits of her foster carer and this has resulted in her gaining more energy, better sleep and improved mood and behaviour. This has been noted by the birth family members who all contribute the significant changes in the young person down to the foster carers approach and guidance.

---

#### CHILD PROTECTION

Synergy Fostering has comprehensive child protection policies which are shared with the network of local safeguarding officers at placing local authorities. The Local Safeguarding Children's





Board and Local Authority Designated Officer in our home borough of Southwark have had the opportunity to comment on our procedure. Our Social Work Director is responsible for child protection in the agency and manages allegations and investigations.



## FOSTER CARER SUPPORT

### SECTION SIX

FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 17, 28

NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 20

IN 01 14 FOSTER CARER  
TRAINING

#### TRAINING

Synergy Fostering believes that quality training is at the heart of stable placements providing ongoing and appropriate training opportunities for all its staff, panel members and foster carers.

Immediately post approval foster carers undertake the TSD workbook activities and a Synergy Fostering induction workshop designed to quickly build skills and understanding of the agency practice. New foster carers have a more experienced local “buddy” allocated to them to provide some additional support and encouragement through the basic training.

In addition to the induction training there are a suite of courses provided for all foster carers that form a basic grounding in the main aspects of fostering. Foster carers are expected to keep their skills up to date by regularly refreshing their learning in these areas.

Further more advanced courses are offered for more specialist training where the agency has identified additional types of care that are necessary to address the referrals received eg Remand training, Autism and managing difficult behaviour courses.

Existing foster carers with over one year since approval have all completed the TSD qualification and new Foster carers are encouraged to complete this within 12 months of joining the organisation. Any failure to meet this standard is monitored by the management and panel arrangements.



Foster carers and the agency keep records of their training and experiential learning so that appropriate recognition is received for training completion.

Foster carers training needs are reviewed as a whole on an annual basis across the organisation to establish the future programme of events. The event programme including all courses available is published to Foster carers from time to time.

It is also recognised that Foster carers sometimes have previous skills upon which to draw, or will receive training from elsewhere e.g. from being employed in other areas of social care. Every effort is made to ensure that these skills are recognised, recorded and transferred. In some circumstances foster carers will be able to share these skills with others in the agency.

All existing fostering households have at least one parent with a CWDC Certificate of Successful Completion for the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care as required.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 17**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 21**

#### INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Each Foster carer has an allocated named Supervising Social Worker who provides regular supervision. If the needs of a child / young person on placement or court proceedings require it, this frequency may be increased.

**IN 03 32 SUPERVISION  
POLICY**

It is the responsibility of the Supervising Social Worker to assess the needs of the placement with regard to the foster carers and the child / young person placed. This assessment will inform decisions about appropriate training for foster carers.



There is a member of the fostering team 'on call' via a mobile telephone at *all* times when the office is closed (including weekends and bank holidays).

#### CT 11 RESPITE CONTRACT

Foster carers are encouraged to care for children in placement as their own children and are not expected to take respite during placements except in exceptional circumstances. However, it is recognised that foster carers may wish to take breaks from service from time to time between placements.

#### IN 03 03 FOSTER CARER HANDBOOK

Foster carers are provided with a Foster Care Handbook containing all relevant materials from the agency including a copy of this document. Foster carers are expected to refer to the handbook to provide guidance on the agencies approach to various issues and situations.

#### SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups take place monthly focussing on different aspects of fostering such as parent and child, therapeutic fostering and male support groups for example.

The support groups are for foster carers to discuss issues arising from their fostering experience and for the organisation to listen to the areas of development foster carers want from the organisation. It also provides an opportunity to pass on information about the organisation and any planned developments.

There is also a male support group in active operation within the agency.

At previous support group meetings topics have included training programme development, support needs to enable complex needs placements and fostering allowance.



## FOSTERING NETWORK

Synergy Fostering are members of Fostering Network as an agency. The agency meets the cost of individual membership for all foster carers to the Fostertalk organisation so they get quarterly magazines and updates and more importantly their independent telephone support.

## FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 11,12,17,30,36

## NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 22

## HANDLING ALLEGATIONS

Foster carers and staff understand the importance of reporting situations where children's safety might be threatened. The agency understands its obligations to report such incidents to appropriate authorities.

## IN 07 02 MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST FOSTER CARERS

All allegations will be investigated and the agency will provide whatever co-operation is necessary to investigate allegations thoroughly and efficiently. We will take care to make sure that the foster carer is supported through these difficult investigations.

## FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 17, 27

## PAYMENTS TO FOSTER CARERS

Foster carers are paid allowances and training rewards in line with the placement of children in their care. The payments are reviewed regularly to ensure that they represent suitable payments for the activities undertaken.

## IN 03 19 FOSTERING ALLOWANCES 2012

Payments are made one week in arrears directly to the foster carer. Changes to placements are reflected as quickly as possible in foster carers' payments. Guidance is provided on the use of monies in support of the allowance structure.

## ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM GUIDELINES



The loan or purchase of equipment to support a placement is discussed and clarified before purchase and recorded on a loan agreement if appropriate.

**IN 03 30 SEVERE ILLNESS  
IN FOSTER CARE**

**SEVERE ILLNESS IN FOSTER CARERS**

From time to time foster carers will suffer severe illness and arrangements will have to be made to accommodate this. In all circumstances the needs of the child must come first, but this does not mean the child will be removed as a result of the assessment that needs to take place.



## INDIVIDUALISED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

### SECTION SEVEN

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 11**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 2**

Each child / young person is treated as a unique individual. The care provided for each child is documented in the care plan, recorded in the foster carer logs and discussed during supervision to reinforce the importance of positive outcomes for the children in care.

**IN 03 32 SUPERVISION  
POLICY FOR FOSTER  
CARERS**

Supervision is structured around the following “Every Child Matters” five outcomes:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying & Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Well-being

We respect and put each individual’s physical, emotional, cultural, intellectual and spiritual needs ahead of other considerations.

We respect the likes and dislikes of each child.

We encourage individual interests and talents through the provision of a range of activities.

We aim to maintain a settled and stable environment for each young person to thrive in.

**IN 07 11 PREPARING  
YOUNG PEOPLE FOR  
INDEPENDANCE**

We support and encourage each young person to develop their full potential at the pace that is most appropriate for them, including independent living skills for older children.



We ensure that foster carers work in partnership with the child / young person, their family and other professionals.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 11**

We develop nurturing, trusting and caring relationships between foster carers and the child / young person. We do not permit any form of physical restraint or chastisement or children in our care.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 12**

We encourage a collaborative approach based upon the care plan of the placing authority between foster carer and birth parents for the benefit of the child / young person.

**IN 03 23 PAYMENT  
BREAKDOWN**

**CLOTHING, FOOD AND ALLOWANCES**

Children are encouraged to participate in the choice and preparation of food (if appropriate to age and understanding) providing the child with opportunity for involvement with food related decisions.

Children and young people are provided with a clothing allowance and pocket money to spend in collaboration with the foster carer's guidance.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 15**

**CHILD HEALTH**

Synergy Fostering foster carers are responsible for ensuring that they make the health of any child in their care a high priority. Promoting the health and well-being of children and foster families in general often leads to positive outcomes in other areas of the child's life.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 6,7**

**IN 03 05 CHILD'S  
HEALTH AND SAFETY  
POLICY**

Specifically we expect:

- the child to be immediately registered with a GP, dentist and optician or other specialist (as appropriate)





**IN 03 06 CHILD  
MEDICATION AND FIRST  
AID**

- appropriate frequency of checkups are completed
- the placing authority to ensure that a health assessment is undertaken at intervals of 6 months for those under 5 and annually in the case of children aged 5 and over
- safe storage of medicines in the foster home, accessible only by those for whom intended

All our foster carers are qualified in first aid and new foster carers are enrolled on a training course as soon as practical after approval.

**IN 03 08 ALCOHOL AND  
DRUGS**

Children and young people are alerted to the issues associated with drugs, alcohol and smoking. All our foster carers promote a smoke free atmosphere as being the norm in their homes.

**CAREPLANNING  
REGULATIONS 2010  
SCHEDULE 1**

Foster carers are provided with as full a description as possible of the health needs of the child and clear guidance about the decisions delegated to the foster carer and where consent for medical treatment needs to be obtained. A written 'health care plan' is kept as part of the care plan for each child

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 11,12**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM**

**CHILD SAFETY**

Child safe care is central to the organisation. Every member of staff who has access to young people in care is trained in the following responsibilities:

- Treating children and young people with respect and dignity
- Ensuring that their right to privacy and confidentiality is upheld
- Keeping children and young people safe from abuse
- Keeping children and young people safe from accidental injury or death

**IN 03 04 CHILD  
PROTECTION**



- Recognising the vulnerability of children and young people and their susceptibility to bullying and discrimination
- Appreciating the risks of sexual or labour exploitation
- Observing the behaviour of young people for signs for influence from extremism.

Further safeguards are provided by the following activities and procedures:

**IN 03 39 SAFE CARE AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR**

**IN 03 02 CHILD MISSING FROM CARE**

**IN 07 02 MANAGING ALLEGATIONS**

**IN 06 13 STAFF RECRUITMENT**

**IN 03 01 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**CT 10 FOSTER CARE AGREEMENT**

**IN 07 03 KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ON THE INTERNET**

- Procedures on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of foster children
- Procedure on the steps to be taken if a child is missing from a foster carer's home without permission
- A written policy on safeguarding those placed with foster carers from abuse or neglect including procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation
- Each supervising social worker will ensure s/he visits the child in placement regularly and two un-announced visits are undertaken each year.
- All staff are recruited according to strict policies regarding DBS and other checks as well as their experience of child care and understanding the needs of looked after children
- All households are subject to annual 'health & safety checks'
- Unrelated children are not permitted to share bedrooms
- The 'foster care agreement' clearly outlines expectations of foster carers, including the fact that corporal punishment and other humiliating forms of discipline are prohibited
- Foster carers have comprehensive written guidance on the safe use of the internet



## IN 06 03 BULLYING

- There is written information and training available concerning the vulnerability of young people, their susceptibility to bullying and dangers of abuse by sexual exploitation.
- All foster carers are aware of the policy on safe caring and risk assessment.
- All placements are carefully matched, using all available information.
- There is specific advice available to safeguard children from different kinds of bullying such as cyber-bullying.
- Synergy foster carers are aware of the particular difficulties that may be faced by young people who are placed trans-racially or trans-culturally. In addition, we can provide interpreters in order to promote the wishes and feelings of these young people.

## FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 16,

## NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 7,8

### EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES

All foster carers are expected to offer an environment in which education and learning are valued and the foster carer establishes an expectation of regular school attendance. There are a number of significant educational achievements that children in our care have achieved with the guidance of our foster carers.

## IN 03 35 EDUCATION

We take all reasonable measures to ensure the child / young person has an appropriate education provision available, including undertaking significant travel commitments to achieve this.

We help the child / young person to develop confidence, social skills and an ability to select and participate in interests and activities of their choice. There are numerous examples of hobbies and leisure activities undertaken by children in our care



including Competing in Robot Wars, swimming, football, trampolining, cheerleading, dance, writing (stories and novels), drama, horse riding, playing the guitar, cycling, cooking and baking, gymnastics, art.

Foster carers liaise with schools; attend parents evenings, open days, in conjunction with birth parents when appropriate and as identified in the placement agreement.

Foster carers are given appropriate support in order to ensure that the child or young person is encouraged and has opportunities to attain her/his full potential.

Foster carers are given support when children are not on the roll of an identified school in order to provide educational opportunities and potential school places. Foster carers are urged to ensure that the Pupil Premium is spent on the child placed with them and not used by the school for other purposes.

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 16,**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 1,3,7**

**IN 03 28 CONTACT WITH  
PARENTS AND SIBLINGS**

**IN 03 17 DELEGATED  
AUTHORITY**

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 16,**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 1,3,7**

#### PROMOTING CONTACT

The agency encourages its Foster carers to participate and facilitate contact unless this is not deemed appropriate on child protection grounds. Contact is discussed during the placement matching process to establish how and whether the expectations and interests of the foster carer can be accommodated.

Foster carers will accept responsibility for some additional decision making as detailed in the delegated authority schedule agreed with the child's social worker.

#### MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION



Synergy Fostering ensures that Foster carers act on their responsibilities to include young people in their decision making:

**IN 03 03 CHILD OR  
YOUNG PERSONS  
REVIEW REPORT**

- Seek the views, wishes and feelings of children / young people and act upon them unless contrary to their interests or adversely affecting other household members.
- Provide the child / young person with opportunities to develop mutually beneficial friendships with peers.
- Provide the child with a variety of experiences and opportunities e.g. trips; overnight stays etc which will develop self-esteem.

**STAYING PUT**

**FOSTERING SERVICES  
REGULATIONS, 2011  
SECTION 16,**

The agency recognises the need to enable children in care to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 if they and their foster carers wish for this arrangement to continue.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM  
STANDARD 1,3,7**

We will work with placing authorities to establish a framework of agreements and payments that fully support the needs of the young person without under valuing the activities of the foster carer or the agency.

**IN 03 12 STAYING PUT**



## CONCLUSION

### SECTION EIGHT

The Synergy Fostering Team are dedicated to the needs of young people in our care and we seek to ensure in the first instance they are encouraged to become a thriving individual who can play a valuable part in society. We also realise that we are an employment organisation and we seek to empower and inspire our team to do their best work in the pursuit of our goals. We also recognise the need to satisfy our other statutory stakeholders and strive to meet all of the regulations and standards set for us by legitimate authorities.

