

Statement of Purpose



APEX FOSTERING

PROVIDING HOMES WHERE CHILDREN THRIVE

Apex Fostering

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1.Mission, Status and Constitution

1.1 Mission

The aim of the organisation is simple,

To provide safe, loving homes where young people thrive.

1.2 Status

Apex Fostering is a private limited company established in January 2021.

The company's registered office is Brickfields Business Centre, High Road, Thornwood, Epping. CM16 6TH.

Registration number: 13117548

The company is registered and inspected by Ofsted and complies with the standards and expectations identified in the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and Amendments 2013, the National Minimum Standards 2011, and Fostering Services and Care Standards Act 2000.

The head office is in Epping, Essex.

The agency will take referrals from Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, outer London and the local authorities on the South-Central contract.

2.0 Culture, aims, objectives and principles

2.1 Culture

2.2 Aims:

- All children in our fostering households feel safe and loved.
- To ensure that children placed are supported to reach their potential.
- For everyone to work as an extended family to ensure foster carers and staff are supported to provide stability for young people.
- To ensure diversity and equality in all our areas of work where individual differences are recognised and seen as a strength.
- For staff and foster carers to work as advocates on behalf of young people and to work in partnership with the local authorities, schools and other service providers.
- To ensure everyone connected to the agency is encouraged to take part in the active development of its services.
- To be an agency where people come before profit.
- To ensure services are compliant with Fostering Regulations 2011 and exceed the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

2.3 Objectives

Standards of Care and Service Quality

3.1 Placement of young people

- Safety of both the young person and everyone in the fostering household will be the agency's priority.
- We will know our foster carers well and help them make decisions regarding the suitability of a child.
- We will undertake a thorough risk assessment and matching process.
- We will explore all areas of the referral and make sure areas such as contact, distance from school, support required are fully explored and where necessary additional funding is secured.

3.2 Assessment, Approval and Panel

Foster carers will be recruited from a variety of backgrounds to ensure the ability to meet the needs of children. Most enquiries will be via word-of-mouth recommendations and the website. All prospective foster carers will be given the opportunity to speak to an experienced foster carer to help them decide if fostering is something that they feel they could do. All enquiries will be responded to within 24 working hours. Home visits will take place within 5 working days.

The assessment and approval process will take place in line with regulations. Prospective carers will attend Skills to Foster training in the first half of their assessment. Approximate panel dates should be given to the applicant once their application has been approved by the Registered Manager.

Prospective carers will be sent a brochure of panel members along with their allocated time slot. A bank of experienced and thorough form F assessors will be formed. All form F's will be quality assured before each presentation.

Panel is independent of the agency. It makes recommendations on new applications, annual reviews, post allegation/complaint reviews, termination of approvals and advice on operational and policy issues where relevant.

Panel Members will be drawn from the Central List on a rotational basis. Panel members will be selected from a diverse range of backgrounds. These will be from the following backgrounds.

- Foster carers.
- Young people who have been in care.
- Education specialists
- Social workers who have extensive experience of working with young people in the care system.
- Counsellors/therapists

All panel members will be required to undertake training and an annual review.

Panel will convene in person or virtually depending on need.

3.3 Foster Carer Charter

It is essential that the expectations between foster carers and the agency are very clear and consistent. These should be outlined in the carer handbook and in their fostering agreement.

In summary, carers can expect.

- To receive a minimum of a weekly phone call and a monthly supervision.
- Support groups every 8 weeks.
- 24 hours staffed phone line.
- Regular training, which is delivered on-line and face to face, a wide selection of courses designed to meet their needs as foster carers.
- Carefully matched young people and support when it is needed.
- A peer mentor upon approval.
- Access to Fostering Network advice lines and independent support with allegations.
- Clear guidance and support with recording.
- Clear advice when needed.
- Regular clear communication.

3.4 Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Apex is an agency which believes in continual improvement and a culture of self-responsibility. This is encouraged at all levels.

The Registered Manager will ensure that a comprehensive quality assurance system is in place in line with Fostering Regulations. Safeguarding issues will be the agency's absolute priority and the Registered Manager has lead responsibility for

this area. Within the reports and supervision of social workers it will be important to identify patterns, especially concerning individual young people to see how they can be supported more intensively, or our services improved. We use an electronic recording system called Intuitive Care which will allow for swift identification of key documents that are missing. The data will be regularly reviewed with safeguarding and complaints as standing items on the team meeting agenda.

The Business Manager will analyse growth and other data including satisfaction surveys and audits to ensure carers, young people and staff are happy with the services provided and to examine how services can be provided more effectively.

3.5 Complaints Management

The agency has clear policies regarding Complaints and Whistleblowing. These are readily available to children and young people and their families, foster carers, staff, local authorities and self-employed staff.

Complaints are treated swiftly and respectfully with the aim to resolve them at a local level. If the complaint is against senior staff, then an independent individual may be appointed to deal with the situation.

Complaints are an opportunity to identify where an aspect of the service may not be working and provide an excellent opportunity to develop a more robust system.

Complaints are reviewed at each team meeting unless they deal with confidential staffing issues.

3.6 Safeguarding

The safeguarding of children in our care is our primary concern. Not just the children and young people placed but also birth children and those visiting foster homes. All staff and self-employed staff employees are expected to ensure that the highest safeguarding practices are adhered to.

The agency policies on Missing Young People, Safeguarding and Exploitation are reviewed regularly and staff and carers receive regular training on these areas.

Allegations against staff are contained within the disciplinary procedure and allegations against carers are dealt with in the relevant policy.

4.0 Young People's Participation

The agency will seek to achieve the (LILAC) award in due course. Every effort will be made to ensure that young people have an opportunity to be involved in decisions regarding their care and a review of the quality of services they are provided with. They will be involved in recruitment, deciding upon activities, and producing resources.

The agency will have a young people's site on the website, and we also want to provide video clips of vacant carers so young people can 'see' their carer/s and home before they arrive.

We expect young people to help shape the future development of the agency. In due course we hope to have a representative for each area and form a youth council. Until then satisfaction can be measured from feedback.

5.0 Services to Children and Young People

5.1 Commitment to young people

Young people placed will be visited by their allocated Apex supervising social worker at least every 8 weeks and at this time will be seen alone so they have the opportunity to voice any concerns. Apex aims to ensure all young people feel included in decision making and are kept informed of any decision regarding their care.

The social worker will support the foster carer/s in order to support the young people in their care. The social worker will explore in relation to the foster carers that they are.

- Including the young person fully into family life
- Supporting the young persons' identity.
- Supporting the young person in learning and education
- Supporting contact with family members
- Giving them an opportunity to find activities/clubs they are interested in.
- Promote the young person physical and emotional well-being.
- Ensuring there are short breaks and holidays.

5.2 Services

Services available for children and young people include.

- Support to access full health and education services
- Access to national organisations for 'looked after young people'.
- Specific materials including young people's guides, newsletters and competitions.
- Events both locally and for the organisation as a whole.
- Activities and holidays
- Leaving care support
- A young people's section on the website.
- Access to tuition for children who need additional support.
- Individual and group work.
- Young people will be given a personalised memory box upon placement.
- Young people will receive a £20 voucher from the agency on their birthday and a £50 voucher at Christmas.

6.0 Services to Foster Carers

6.1 Support

It is expected that with excellent support carers will be able to manage the stresses of fostering with greater ease and this in turn will increase placement stability. As an agency it is our responsibility to provide this.

It is essential that carers feel valued and that they are part of a support system which operates like an extended family. Carers will be called by the Director on their birthday and receive a card. They will receive flowers at significant events such as after an operation or loss of someone close. Small actions such as this will ensure carer loyalty. The following will be available to foster carers:

- Family Support Workers
- Holiday payment
- Membership of Fostering Network
- A named Peer Mentor
- Support Groups every 8 weeks
- Local and regional events
- Online handbook and policies
- Access to a comprehensive range of training

6.2 Training and Professional Development

Foster carers will be provided with a comprehensive range of opportunities for training and development. Prospective carers will attend the Skills to Foster training and first aid pre-approval. The supervising social worker will then identify additional training required by the new carers during supervision and then produce a personal development plan as part of their annual review.

All carers will be supported to achieve their Training, Support and Development Standards.

Training will be provided online and face to face. An extensive range of training will be provided, and a therapeutic training course offered to all carers.

6.3 Reviews

Carers will be reviewed annually. A Reviewing officer has been appointed to ensure there is consistency and objectivity applied across all reviews. These will be completed online or in person by the relevant person and will include feedback from the young person, household members, family support workers, school, local authority social workers, and any other relevant parties. _

Reviews can be held more frequently when there has been a complaint or allegation, a significant change in circumstances, or a de-registration is being considered.

7.0 Services to Local Authorities

7.1 Placements

Apex Fostering offers a range of placements.

- Long-term foster placements

- Siblings
- Parent and child
- Young people with specialist needs
- Staying put arrangements.
- Apex Xtra

7.2 Services

Apex maintains a positive commitment to working with the local authority to meet the young person's care plan.

Our services to the Local Authority include.

- Reports for reviews and other meetings
- Liaison and notification of safeguarding concerns
- Attendance at meetings relating to the young person.
- Family support work
- Recruitment of carers to meet each local authority's needs.

7.3 Parent and Child Placements

Apex will make sure parent and child placements are carefully monitored in line with local authority/court requirements and foster carers are supported with training and supervision as required.

7.4 Apex Xtra

Apex Xtra will be a specialist service dealing with young people with specific attachment issues, complex health issues and challenging behaviours. Carers will be intensively trained in therapeutic training. Social workers will receive group supervision from a therapeutic supervisor every 6 weeks. Foster carers will also have access to monthly clinical supervision where required and direct access to therapeutic advice.

To be part of the scheme carers will be interviewed. They will need to have at least 2 years' experience of fostering and/or extensive work experience of working with young people in a nursing/residential setting.

These placements will include family support as needed and additional respite as part of their packages.

8.0 Management Structure and Staffing



8.1 Structure

The Registered Manager, Louise Ridley of Apex manages the social work team.

The Business Manager will manage the Administration Officer and Placements Officer. The Placements Officer will liaise with supervising social workers regarding the suitability of placements and the Registered Manager will review and sign off on proposed placements.

Invoicing is undertaken by the agency accountants and payments are made by the Business Manager.

8.2 Qualifications, experience and responsibilities

The Registered Manager, *Louise Ridley* is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding, compliance and procedures are adhered to.

The Business Manager *Sali Walker* has substantial experience in terms of direct work with young people and the management of agencies providing services for young people. She has worked in fostering for 14 years and as well as being a qualified teacher she holds a master's in business administration.

The Director has ultimate responsibility for practice and business functions of the agency and is also the Responsible Individual.

Both Managers work closely together and depending on the area of responsibility are responsible for the development of policies, auditing, development of new services and research.

The Registered Manager, Louise will be supported by two senior social workers, one of whom will cover the northside (Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Hertfordshire and the other covers the southside (London and Essex).

Laura: Compliance Officer

Laura has been working in business administrative roles since leaving university, and takes great pride in her work; being both accurate and highly efficient. She has a great eye for detail and ensures everything that needs doing, gets done!

Laura is also planning to foster children herself in the future, and believes that a strong support network is key. She is extremely proud to be part of Apex Fostering, where providing homes where children thrive is our daily focus.

In Laura's spare time, she enjoys listening to live music and going to concerts, cooking meals from different ethnic backgrounds and is very creative with knitting – where she successfully makes her own clothes! She also loves exploring new places with her fiancée.

Vicki: Administrator

Vicki joined Apex as the Family Matching Coordinator/Admin in February 2023, she wanted to combine admin experience with fostering to make a difference to other people's lives. Vicki has worked in administration for the last six years, where she started in finance administration and moved up to managing an admin team, as well as having a couple of years as a wedding coordinator! She excels at being organised, having a high attention to detail and staying calm under pressure.

Vicki and her partner welcomed a beautiful baby girl in summer 2023. She has a cheeky miniature dachshund too. She loves spending time with my family, going on walks, taking her little girl swimming, to the beach and exploring new places especially on the water, on their paddleboards/kayaks! Vicki has a passion for photography and fashion, and after completing an Art and Design course at college.

Jo: Family Finding Coordinator

Jo recently joined the Apex Team, but has been involved with fostering for a number of years. Jo's day-to-day role is admin support, where she thoroughly enjoys being highly efficient and getting things done!

Jo recently retired from fostering, but had previously been a foster carer looking after teenage boys with very complex needs, a role she was extremely devoted to. Her experience and kind nature is invaluable to our team. Furthermore, Jo has been an independent panel member for two different fostering agencies.

For the past 25 years, Jo has been a part-time yoga teacher and has now focused her attention on meditation and relaxation for the promotion of mental wellness. In her spare time, Jo is very passionate about the art of classical dressage training and spends as much time as she can with her beautiful horses.

Clare: Social Worker Northside

Clare joined Apex Fostering in April 2023 as an experienced SSW. Previously she worked for a local authority for 25 years. Clare qualified as a Social Worker in 2004 and has been part of a fostering service since 2008.

15 years has given her a vast amount of knowledge, training and experience in the areas of children in care, fostering/special guardianship and adoption.

Clare is passionate about supporting foster carers, their families and the children they care for, with a focus on providing therapeutic support, and is committed to safe and nurturing environments, allowing families to flourish.

Wife and mum of two children, she likes to travel with her family and do outdoor activities and long walks. She also enjoys gardening and horse riding!

Stacey: Area Manager Southside

Stacey has worked within the health and social care field for the past 10 years. In 2020, she earned her qualification as a Social Worker, following the completion of a Bachelor's degree in Childhood Studies and a Master's degree in Social Work.

Her journey in social work has been deeply rooted in supporting children and families, particularly those facing vulnerable circumstances. Stacey has focused on the needs of looked after children and unaccompanied asylum seekers between the ages of 16-18. From roles on a leaving and aftercare team to assessments team spanning infancy to 18 years old.

Her passion lies in nurturing positive family dynamics.

She cherishes moments spent with her own family, exploring new destinations through travel and watching movies.

Kerry: Area Manager Northside

Kerry began working with children and families in 1997 whilst employed as a drug and alcohol support worker. She went back to university as part of her role and gained her Social Work qualification in 2001.

Working with children with complex trauma sparked Kerry's special interests in attachment, trauma and therapeutic parenting and she is adept at assessing babies, children and young people and using attachment theories to inform practice.

Working for LAs, agencies & courts has given Kerry a wealth of experience in areas from Children in Need to Child Protection & Care Experienced Children.

Kerry enjoys special days with her sons and their families, and loves walks on the beach with her two dogs. She helps her local area to foster, rehome or release animals.

All independent staff will be subject to enhanced police checks and other references as required by the post. Safer recruitment practices will be adhered to in all recruitment. (See structure chart)

8.3 Safer recruitment

Apex is committed to ensuring that the welfare and safety of young people is paramount. All staff and independent contractors will be subject to an enhanced DBS checks and other checks and references depending on their role. They will also commit to policies which implement our vision to keep young people safe.

9.0 Contact Details

All staff work remotely but the agency has its head office at.

Brickfield House, High Road, Thornwood, Epping, Essex CM16 6TH

The agency telephone number is 0333 044 0339.

E-mail: info@apexfostering.uk

Website: www.apexfostering.com