****

**Families First Fostering**

***‘****Where Family Matters’*

**Statement of Purpose**

**March 2024**



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 **Families First’s Vision**

**At Families First Fostering our vision is for children and young people to be cared for by dedicated therapeutic foster families where they can grow, develop and achieve. We recruit, assess and support people who share our vision and understand the importance of a child’s history, their uniqueness and potential. We focus on a strong therapeutic approach throughout our entire service.**

**Introduction**

Families First Fostering was established in 2019 by two social workers with vast fostering and adoption experience and personal experience as foster parents.

This Statement of Purpose is available on request to anyone working for the purposes of Families First Fostering, foster parents and potential foster parents, children placed with our foster parents, their birth parents and their Local Authorities.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated as necessary, at least annually. It is available Families First Fostering:

WWW.Familiesfirstfostering.co.uk

This statement has been produced in accordance with Regulation 3 of The Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011, Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards; Fostering Services 2011, Chapter 4 of The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services and any associated guidance and amendments.

This Statement sets out the Aims and Objectives of Families First Fostering and the Services and Facilities provided by the agency.

This Statement of Purpose is provided to Ofsted.

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**1. Key Principles of Families First Fostering**

* We are a Family owned and run small therapeutic fostering agency, with children at the centre of all that we do. Our priority is to provide the best possible support to the family around the child in every sense – The Fostering family, the birth family and the professional family around the child.
* We have made a conscious decision that our agency will remain small to maintain the ‘Family feel’ and continue to offer the best possible support to our foster parents and the children and young people they care for.
* We are committed to safeguarding children, young people, their families, our staff and foster parents. Everything we do must promote the safety and well-being of the children and young people we work with.
* We are committed to providing ongoing Therapeutic training & support to our foster parents in a way that achieves only the best outcomes for children and young people, striving to fundamentally improve the life chances of children and young people in our care.
* We will provide a child centred and inclusive approach and will treat all children and young people as individuals and take their unique needs, wishes and feelings into account in relation to the care they are receiving.
* We will continuously seek feedback from children, young people and foster parents to discover what our service users have to say about our service and feed back to them on how this has led to service development.
* To respect and promote the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children, young people and foster parents.
* We will comply with all government legislation and good practice guidelines relating to our service provision.
* We will take care to always make sure we have sufficient resources to support any expansion of Families First Fostering so that the quality of the service is always maintained.

***2.* Aims & Objectives of Families First Fostering**

* To ensure that children and young people have stability and choice in their foster placement and to ensure that children are carefully matched with therapeutic foster parents who are capable of meeting their individual needs.
* To provide a high quality therapeutic fostering service which offers the best possible standards of care, safety and protection for children supporting them to achieve their best possible outcomes.
* To recruit foster parents from a wide range of backgrounds to enable us to offer placements to children and young people with wide ranging needs.
* To provide 24 hour support to foster parents and children/ young people 7 days a week.
* To ensure that people who work in connection with Families First Fostering are suitable to work with children and young people and are managed, appropriately trained and supported to ensure the best possible outcomes for children young people in placement.
* To ensure that children and young people are supported in making contributions to their Care Planning and to the service they receive from the Agency.
* To promote equal opportunities for children, foster parents and all staff.
* To provide ongoing therapeutic support and a diverse range of other training to develop the skills and knowledge of foster parents so that they are able to support young people to prepare for, and build the skills necessary for, living independently.
* To ensure that appropriate records are kept in relation to foster parents, children and young people placed or referred to the Families First Fostering and that these are kept securely in line with our legal responsibilities.
* A strong Therapeutic parenting approach underpins all that we do and is supported by access to an experienced and qualified therapist. Therapeutic models used include PACE, DDP and Therapeutic Parenting.
* To ensure the assessment of prospective parents is robust and undertaken by suitably qualified social workers, ensuring the highest standards of care and safety. This is in the form of a Therapeutic Fostering Assessment.
* To ensure foster placements meet all of the individual needs of children and young people and will not discriminate because of disability, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender or class.
* To support children and young people to become and feel that they are an integral part of the family in which they live, providing stability and security.

**3. Company Structure & Roles**

Families First Fostering Ltd is an Independent Fostering Provider. It is a Private Limited Company registered under the Companies Act 1985.

**Company Number: 12149799**

In accordance with the Companies Act 1985 and 1989, Families First Fostering has a Board of Directors which meets on a regular basis and is responsible for the corporate governance of the agency.

* ***Owner/Director/Registered Manager Rachael Davies***

 BA (HONS) Degree in Social Work

 Registered Social Worker with Social Work England

Rachael has a unique multi-dimensional background experience in fostering. Having grown up in a fostering family herself Rachael was approved as a foster carer alongside the undertaking of her Social Work degree. Her social work career has primarily focussed on the fostering sector and provided a wealth of experience in a number of roles including Supervising Social Worker, Principle Social Worker and Fostering Service Manager. Her role prior to becoming Registered Manager being that of a Fostering Service Manager for a large Independent fostering agency where she had responsibility for managing a team of Supervising Social Workers and overseeing all aspects of Foster Parent recruitment, assessment, supervision and review.

The Registered Manager is responsible for the recruitment and retention of staff and foster parents, writing policy, procedures and guidance, supervision and training of staff and foster parents and ensuring equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice are promoted within Families First Fostering. The Registered Manager runs the service ethically, effectively and efficiently to ensure delivery of a high quality service which meets the needs of children and foster parents and ensures that children placed are safeguarded and their welfare promoted. The Registered Manager ensures there are systems in place to monitor the quality of care provided in order to drive service improvements.

The Registered Manager is one of the Agency Decision Makers within the service.

The Directors are responsible for the strategic management of the Agency. The Directors meet quarterly to discuss matters arising in relationship to the function and performance of the Agency.

* ***Owner/Director/Responsible Individual Amanda Davies***

 Diploma in Social Work

 Post Qualifying award in Social Work

 Registered Social Worker with Social Work England

Amanda is an experienced and qualified social worker and her last role was working within an adoption team for a local authority. Her duties included training prospective adopters, assessment, family finding, matching and post adoption support. Amanda is also trained in birth records counselling. Previously before qualifying as a social worker Amanda was a Foster Parent with 11 years’ experience. Amanda has fostered over 40 children, many with complex needs and experiences of significant loss and trauma.

As the Responsible Individual, Amanda is responsible for supervising the management of Families First Fostering. Along with the other member of the Board, she will receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the service and monitor the management and outcomes of the service to ensure it is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children.

The Directors are responsible for the strategic management of the Agency. The Directors meet quarterly to discuss matters arising in relationship to the function and performance of the Agency.

* ***Agency Decision Maker (ADM) Andrea Royles***

 Diploma in Social Work

 Registered Social Worker with Social Work England

 Ex-Ofsted Social Care Regulatory Inspector

As an Agency Decision Maker, Andrea takes account of the fostering panel’s recommendations and any recommendation by the IRM before deciding whether or not to approve or continue to approve a person as a foster parent, and on what terms. Andrea is also a member of the board and contributes to the service improvement and development of policies and procedures. Andrea has a wider overview of the service via her attendance at quarterly board meetings where information is shared on the financial, strategic and operational progress of the service. Andrea is able to make recommendations to the service for improvements or changes. Andrea is invited to attend training that is offered to staff and foster parents and to participate in the activities undertaken by the agency.

* **The Team**

The team comprises those above and a multi-disciplinary group of experienced, skilled and qualified professionals. This includes, Two managers, a Quality assurance & Safeguarding Manager, Associate Therapist and Therapeutic Family support workers. A Senior Supervising Social Worker and three Supervising Social workers provide quality supervision and support to foster parents.

All staff employed by Families First Fostering are appropriately qualified and subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS), renewable on a three-year cycle. Written and verbal references are sought for all members of staff along with checks relating to their educational qualifications and identity. These are followed up with telephone calls to confirm references.

All recruitment information is held on electronic personnel files. All those managing or working for the Agency are subject to Schedule 1 checks in accordance with The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

Families First Fostering holds insurance cover in line with Local Authority recommendations.

**4. Monitoring and Controlling**

* The management team is responsible for ensuring high quality practice. To support this, monitoring and quality assurance is undertaken on an on-going basis and reported to the management meetings which are recorded. Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Controlling activity is compliant with the legislation relating to fostering services.
* Roles are clearly defined between the Responsible Individual and Registered Manager. Line management roles and responsibilities within Families First Fostering are clear and are known to staff and foster parents.
* Reports are completed on a regular basis in line with Regulation 35 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations, 2011. These identify learning from the monitoring which is provided to Ofsted and to the Board of Families First Fostering.
* Three monthly National Minimum Standard 25 Reports go to the Board of Directors on the management, outcomes and financial state of the service; the outcomes for children and young people; and compliance with the conditions of registration.
* Families First Fostering informs the relevant authorities of events and notifications arising under Regulation 36 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations, 2011, within the required timescales.
* Communication between staff and foster parents is via regular Support Groups, newsletters, regular supervision visits and support visits / calls. Parents’ views on all aspects of the agency are sought at least annually.
* Families First Fostering contracts the services of an independent accountant to ensure that all financial procedures are up to date and these are monitored remotely via Quick books accounting software.
* Each placing authority is given a contract detailing the charges for each placement and what services this will include. Our costs are open and transparent.
* Each foster parent is given a financial statement detailing their weekly fee’s which are paid by the agency.
* All approved foster parents have a Foster Care Agreement which outlines their roles and responsibilities as foster parents and the responsibilities of Families First Fostering.
* Families First Fostering ensures that staff contracts of employment and Foster Care Agreements require disclosure of any conflicts of interest either in working for or on behalf of Families First Fostering or in caring for a particular child.
* In line with our Supervision of Staff Policy, the designated line manager is responsible for monitoring and auditing records to ensure compliance with Families First Fostering’s Policies and Procedures.
* The fostering panel provides independent scrutiny, reporting on the quality of reports presented to it and making recommendations about the suitability of people to foster. In addition, the panel can provide advice and guidance on other issues presented to it by the agency.
* Children and young people are encouraged to provide their views and comments on the suitability of foster parents for their annual reviews. Young people will also take part in regular consultation exercises which influence aspects of the agency’s practice.
* Young people will play an active role in the assessment of prospective foster parents and the recruitment of staff.
* Regular consultation with foster parents, including at their annual reviews, provides an opportunity for foster parents to provide their views about the effectiveness of the service.

**5. Services Provided.**

*Families First Fostering will meet a range of needs by providing:*

1. Emergency and short-term foster care

2. Permanent care through long-term fostering

3. Respite care

4. Parent and Child Placements

* Families First Fostering is underpinned by a strong therapeutic parenting approach which is threaded throughout all that we do. Therapeutic training is offered and regular therapist led reflective groups for foster parents and staff. Models used include PACE, DDP and Therapeutic Parenting.
* Families First Fostering employ Therapeutic Family Support Workers who can undertake direct work with children and young people, including work on their Life Story, Wishes and Feelings, and Emotions. They are also able to offer direct support to foster parents, when needed.
* Families First Fostering provides a large number of activities and events each year for children, young people, foster parents, children who foster and wider families. These provide opportunities to build supportive relationships for both foster parents and children.
* Families First Fostering advertises to recruit suitable foster parents. Following an initial visit, candidates’ applications are processed and relevant checks undertaken, including DBS checks for all adults in the household. Candidates are asked to complete a Level 2 qualification in Therapeutic Fostering and are offered the opportunity to attend other relevant training during the assessment period. When an application is accepted, the assessment starts with minimum delay.
* Once applicants have been recommended for approval by the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker has agreed approval, they are allocated a qualified social worker and monthly, formal supervision takes place. Unannounced visits take place at least annually. Every foster parent must undertake a core training programme. They are supported to complete the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Parents within 12 months of approval.
* Support Groups take place monthly to enable foster parents to develop informal networks amongst themselves and provide further opportunities to share and learn new skills. Each foster parent’s approval is reviewed annually and more frequently in certain circumstances.
* Foster Parents are provided with an electronic copy of the Foster Parent handbook where they can access all of Families First Policies and Procedures.
* Foster Parents and staff are supported to engage in a wide range of training undertaken alongside one another to promote shared learning and support our strong therapeutic parenting model throughout all that we do. Specialist therapeutic training including PACE and DDP is provided to all of our Foster Parents and Staff in addition to the core training programme and a range of specialist training courses provided to ensure that Foster Parents are equipped to be able to meet the individual needs of their children and young people.
* Each foster parent is provided with support to access up to 14 nights respite per annum in line with the child or young person’s needs.
* Specific matching is undertaken on all placements demonstrating how a child’s needs will be met by the foster parent taking into account their skills and experience. This establishes any areas where additional support will be required to support the foster parent in meeting the needs of the specific child.
* Ensuring that foster parents have access to as much information as possible either prior to or upon the point of placement is essential in managing any risks associated with the placement. A Matching Form and Safe Care Plan are completed at the commencement of the placement. The Safe Care plan is reviewed and updated as risks change in relation to specific children and young people.
* All foster parents and Local Authorities have 24-hour support from a qualified social worker.
* Individual files are held for each child in placement on CHARMS, which is a secure electronic database. All Foster parents and staff also have personnel files on CHARMS, which include information on training, case records, statutory checks etc.
* Any allegations of abuse made against a foster parent are documented and dealt with immediately and appropriate referrals made to the relevant authorities. Ofsted is notified in line with Fostering Regulations, 2011. The Responsible Individual is responsible for ensuring Safeguarding systems and procedures are in place. The day to day responsibility for Safeguarding lies with the Registered Manager and, in their absence, with a Team Manager. Safeguarding is monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure that policies and procedures are adhered to.
* Administrative records on CHARMS are maintained to ensure that there is clear accountability for, and evidence of, work undertaken. This is the responsibility of the Registered Manager, Team Managers and QA Safeguarding Manager and is reviewed at management meetings on a regular basis.
* All records are stored securely on CHARMS, which is password protected. Information is only shared in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**6. Fitness of Premises for use by a Fostering Service.**

The Agency is based at **7D Whitebridge Estate, Whitebridge Way, Stone, ST15 8LQ**

* The premises is security alarmed and all data is stored appropriately in accordance to Data protection and GDPR guidance.
* The registered office is used for any meetings/ training/ groups for children, foster parents or staff.
* The agency is fully insured for death, injury, public liability, damage or other loss.

 **7. Financial Requirements.**

* A Business Plan is in place and all matters relating to Families First Fostering’s viability are overseen by the Directors and Chartered Accountants, Howards. These records are available upon request to placing authorities.
* The Agency has a clear breakdown of services and charges which will be made available to all placing authorities.
* Foster parents are self-employed and, therefore, will pay their own tax and national insurance. Guidance and support on this is included in the Foster Parents’ Handbook. Foster parents are given annual financial reports. Advice and support to foster parents in dealing with their tax and national insurance liabilities is also offered via Membership to the Fostering Network which is provided by Families First Fostering to each Fostering household.

**8. Comments & Complaints.**

* All children and young people placed with Families First Fostering are advised on the comments and complaints procedure and provided with a guide highlighting these procedures. The Children’s Guide provides a list of numbers and appropriate helplines, including details of the child or young person’s social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer, Ofsted and the Children’s Commissioner for England.
* Foster parents and other professionals are also advised on how to make a comment or complaint about the agency. This policy is made available to all staff of the agency and, upon request, to others wishing to make a comment or complaint.

