

'FosteringMatters'

Statement of Purpose

England and Wales 2024

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Introduction

FosteringMatters Limited is one organisation.

It is an Independent Fostering Agency, incorporated in May 2004, which has been operational in England and Wales since September 2004. The three directors, Geoff Mc Kay, Eileen McKay and Mike Castledine jointly own FosteringMatters. Building on over 70 years of social work, family placement work and management experience between them, the directors believed that they could offer safe foster placements that produced good outcomes for children and at a fee that enabled Local Authorities to access our service and make us financially viable. FosteringMatters provides good foster care placements to children and young people throughout England and Wales.

The directors and staff are committed to the provision of services that offer safe quality care, integrity at all levels of operation and respect for all we work with, whether Looked After child or young persons, Local Authority employees, or foster carers. FosteringMatters provides a service that has care, pride and commitment as 'core' values.

From 2004 to present and ongoing FosteringMatters has been registered with and inspected by OFSTED in both England and Wales, as required under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. Our URN is SC061740. In England FosteringMatters works to the National Minimum Standards (Care Standard Act 2000).

In 2019 FosteringMatters registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014. Regulation and Inspection of Social Care, (Wales) Act 2016. Foster Panel 2018, Service Providers & Responsible Individuals Wales 2019 & Statutory Guidance. FosteringMatters have done this to legitimise our presence in Wales as legislation changed. This does not create for FosteringMatters separate services for England and Wales. FosteringMatters Ltd will continue as one organisation having long established capacity to run the service effectively.

FosteringMatters has signed the Foster Carers' Charter, which seeks to unite fostering services, carers and Local Authorities around a shared understanding.

This Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed at points of significant change or at least annually.

The office premise/facilities are exclusively for FosteringMatters use; no other person is registered to provide any other care service from our premises. No part of the premises is used for any other purpose. The building complies with disability legislation and has access

for disabled staff, service users and visitors, there is good W/C provision. It has a separate manager's office, a separate interview and meeting room that can be used for contact, play and activities, or training room, or panel room. There is a separate referrals room and a separate team room with meeting area, a separate administrator's room/secure filing room with lockable cabinets. It also has a foyer, separate kitchen and easily accessible car parking with disabled spaces. The office is open during normal office hours.

Records are all stored within secure systems. Our IT equipment is password protected and operating system is encrypted, and our file retention policy and IT policy are GDPR compliant.

FosteringMatters Mission Statement

FosteringMatters aims to provide services of the highest quality to children and young people, to foster carers and to Local Authorities. This Statement of Purpose outlines our goals, values and vision.

This vision always underpins our operation and practice.

Principles and Values

FosteringMatters always provides the highest quality services.

FosteringMatters directors and employees provide services that offer children and young people a genuine opportunity to achieve stability in their lives and to give them the opportunities and tools to maximise their individual potential. FosteringMatters ensures "the child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre" of all we do.

FosteringMatters always works with openness and honesty.

Our approach is informed by our view that all relationships should be underpinned by commitment to this value and that all services are offered to customers and service users in a way that ensures a sense of fairness and equity for all.

FosteringMatters' work and practice demonstrate respect for all, including the children and young people placed with us, their families and our customer local authorities with whom we seek to work in full partnership. We work with our foster carers in ways that demonstrate our full commitment to them and our sense of 'worth' for the hard work they do in providing a home, safe care and nurture for those children and young people who are unable, for whatever reason, to live with their own birth families.

FosteringMatters works in an ethical and open way with all Local Authorities in partnership.

Our fees and charges are clear, reasonable and cost effective, with transparency in regard to how these charges are utilised. Our carers receive fees and allowances that exceed those

recommended by The Fostering Network and we work closely with carers to ensure that these allowances are utilised to best advantage/benefit of young people placed as well as for the carers themselves.

FosteringMatters works tirelessly to ensure the young people in our care are safe, have a voice and their specific outcomes are identified, tracked and achieved.

FosteringMatters promotes equal opportunities for all, including individual language and communication needs and has a zero tolerance to discrimination in any form, this is underpinned by FosteringMatters Anti-Discrimination/Equal Opportunities Policy and training.

Each child or young person placed with us is treated as an individual with their own needs and potential, acknowledging their culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, personal health/disability, religion, language preference and with services tailored to suit.

Objectives

FosteringMatters provides competent, dedicated, well trained and knowledgeable carers to Local Authorities across England and Wales.

As FosteringMatters recruit's carers across several geographical areas we offer the Local Authorities in those areas placements that are local for children and young people. We believe that the placement of children and young people within their own localities and communities is generally in their best interests. Such placements are also in the interests of local communities and Local Authorities.

Working for Children

FosteringMatters recognises that we work with some of the most vulnerable members of society; maintaining a focus on safeguarding for children and young people in our care, along with an on- going consideration of their physical, emotional and educational development to meet their specific needs and potential. We are child focused and the child comes first.

FosteringMatters monitors and works towards the following Outcomes for Children with such information being shared with partners:

- Having the best start in life with a comprehensive range of education and learning chances.
- Being Healthy, free from abuse, victimisation exploitation and poverty.
- Staying Safe and safeguarded.

- Are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural and sexual identity recognised.
- Enjoying & Achieving, including access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Well Being

FosteringMatters attends all children's planning meetings.

Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases and know how to obtain support and make a complaint. Each child, and parent and child placed has an age-appropriate guide at the point of care which includes information about the services they can expect and includes contact details. Guides will be made available in the Welsh language and translated into other languages as required. They include for example details of Childrens Commissioners, OFSTED and CIW. The complaints process is also explained.

- The views of others with an important relationship to the child are gathered and taken into account.
- FosteringMatters raise the voice of the child, we regularly consult with children seeking their views. We have a social work assistant and part of their role is to enable and promote this. We have children's consultation documents.
- Children have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.
- Children enjoy good relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately.
- Children feel safe and are safe. Children understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm, including neglect, abuse, and accidents.
- Children rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly.
- Children who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively and with understanding on their return.
- Children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs.

- Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities.
- Children are able to make a positive contribution to the foster home and their wider community.
- The education and achievement of children are actively promoted as valuable in themselves and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.
- Children have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives.
- Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promotes individual development.
- Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued.
- Children feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household. The child's needs are met, and they benefit from a stable placement.
- Children are prepared for, and supported into adulthood so that they can reach their potential and achieve economic wellbeing.

Independence

FosteringMatters plays a significant role in assisting young people in their transition to young adulthood and in enabling such individuals to play their own part in society feeling integrated rather than feeling 'excluded' from the world around them. Important factors for young people being Looked After include skill and knowledge acquisition, a realistic attitude and expectation, to be resourced and supported that enables some risk taking. Such can be extended beyond a young person's 18th birthday within our Staying Put/When I'm Ready placements as necessary.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a priority at FosteringMatters, and we safeguard all children and young people placed. All foster children need to be safe from any form of harm. FosteringMatters provides a range of safeguarding training to staff, carers, children, and panel members. FosteringMatters monitors safeguarding regularly, through carer and staff supervision, team

meetings, practice meetings and management meetings, Local Authority monitoring and Ofsted and CIW data sets/notifications, all of which provides an opportunity to consider and reflect, with a view to improving practice.

Participation

FosteringMatters is a child centred service; we include children and young people, as appropriate in as many aspects of FosteringMatters services as practical. FosteringMatters recognises that children and young people play an integral part in the development of the services we provide; FosteringMatters will continually seek to hear the voice of the children and young people we care for. This includes a contribution to carer reviews, anonymous questionnaires, placement feedback and an opportunity to engage in our training (including on-line) in areas and issues that are important to them such as CSE and anti-radicalisation. Young people have the opportunity to contribute to FosteringMatters Newsletter. To assist in this FosteringMatters has a social work assistant with an element of her work being to obtain the child's voice.

Matching and Suitability of the Service

FosteringMatters works in partnership with Local Authorities and carers and children in order to identify and support appropriate and professionally matched placements for looked after children and young people.

Our dedicated referrals officer, registered manager, senior supervising social workers, carers and professional colleagues work together to ensure that children and their needs are well matched to carers who have the necessary skills to produce stable placements and good and best outcomes. We are proud of our very low placement disruption rate which validates our effective matching and suitability of service offer. FosteringMatters attaches great importance to the planning and matching process and views the process as underpinning safeguarding and good outcomes.

Children and young people placed with FosteringMatters carers can be assured that they are placed with the most committed and well-trained individuals, who are supported and supervised fully by experienced, professionally qualified, dedicated senior social workers who contribute to the compilation and implementation of their placement plan, their care plan, safe care plan and review.

The directors and staff of FosteringMatters are committed to ensuring that all children and young people placed with FosteringMatters receive individual care that is specific and carefully planned in their best interests.

FosteringMatters protects all children and young people placed from all forms of abuse. FosteringMatters puts Safeguarding children at the forefront of our work and in its policy, practice and values which enables children in our care to be safe and protected from harm.

Services Offered

FosteringMatters works in accordance with and fully recognises all of the principles inherent in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As FosteringMatters works within English and Welsh Regulations, Statute and Guidance, we always work to the higher standard, which is reflected in our policies, and procedures.

FosteringMatters provides a wide range of placement options for age groups 0-25, and all genders including:

- Emergency Placements
- Short term Placements
- Long term Placements
- Permanent Placements
- Respite Placements
- Bridging Placements
- Pre-Adoption Placements
- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Placements
- Parent and child Placements
- Placements for children with complex needs, including disability.
- Staying Put/When I Am Ready arrangement placements (post 18 years old)

FosteringMatters is able to offer placements that are regarded as not 'mainstream'. We work with Local Authorities to identify suitable placements for parent/s and baby/child, placements, for children with disability and/or identified special needs, or other issues that require more specialist knowledge and care- complex needs children.

Partnership

FosteringMatters offers a high standard of service provision and works in partnership with our Local Authority customers, monitoring and developing services to meet the requirements of those Local Authorities.

FosteringMatters supports Local Authority social work staff in their responsibilities to statutory Looked After Children processes.

FosteringMatters obtains feedback from Local Authorities with the intention of managing and developing services that meet Local Authority requirements and expectations including, Local Authority monitoring and QPA processes.

FosteringMatters activities such as carer support groups, ensures that all carers work fully in partnership with FosteringMatters, with Local Authority Social Work staff and with the families of looked after children and young people. We do this to maximise the welfare,

stability and development of looked after children and young people and achieve a good outcome/successful placement.

FosteringMatters recruits and approves carers who have demonstrated the right commitment and ability to fostering; we provide training that enables them to offer the standards of care that we require.

Foster Panel

The role of the FosteringMatters Foster Panel is to make: a recommendation on the approval of new Foster Carer applicants, a recommendation on the statutory review of approved Foster Carers, a recommendation on the de-registration of Foster Carers and to act as part of the appeal process when de-registration is being considered.

FosteringMatters Foster Panel plays a significant role in the Quality Assurance process. Each panel member is required to complete a Quality Assurance Form for each panel application.

The panel liaises closely with FosteringMatters management through the Panel Chair, an essential Quality Assurance element. Panel QA feedback to FosteringMatters operations is considered and assimilated.

The Foster Panel Central List includes a wide range of experience. The Independent Chair and the Vice Chairs are qualified and experienced professionals. There is currently one member who is care experienced, three independent members, as well as experienced, qualified and Social Work England and Social Care Wales registered social workers. Panel members develop their ability and effectiveness with business meetings and training, sharing training with staff, carers and online.

Joint panel and operational staff training is arranged to enhance understanding, communication and ensure best practice.

Foster Carer Approval

FosteringMatters recruits foster carers from a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnicities, geographical locations, linguistic difference, economic situations and from differing family compositions. This diversity enables us to provide the most suitable match to meet the needs of children referred to us. Potential applicants are not discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, language, age or economic status. However, prospective Foster Carers must be able to meet the needs of any child placed.

FosteringMatters carries out rigorous assessments of prospective foster carers and uses the BAAF Form F as the primary foster carer assessment tool. The process includes a detailed assessment of the candidates' background including their childhood, their educational experiences, their own life experiences, their upbringing, their own parenting experiences, their values and attitudes to diversity and any specific skills they may have e.g. working with disabilities, working with adolescents. This enables a good understanding of the applicants and their ability/resource and together with careful consideration and analysis of all information a recommendation as to suitability to foster. Full checks including DBS, Local Authority checks, and references are obtained and interviewed, considered and contribute to assessment.

All foster carers undertake initial training, receive induction, a handbook including FosteringMatters policies and procedures. A copy of the Statement of Purpose and all foster carers sign a foster care agreement.

Carer Reviews

FosteringMatters ensures that reviews of carer's approval are undertaken in respect of all carers on an annual basis in line with statutory requirements and exceeds statutory requirements with the good practice of returning carer's annual reviews to Panel on a three year cycle. The reason for carer reviews is to determine if the carers are suitable to foster for the next year and to continually improve the services offered by FosteringMatters and to ensure that all carers receive the support and training that is required to allow ongoing improvement to service.

FosteringMatters consults with Local Authority staff in order to gain relevant feedback and information in regard to placements and carers for carer reviews.

FosteringMatters also seeks the views of children in placement and foster carer's children. Carer's homes are health and safety checked at least annually, including equipment checks, pet and dog assessment, and family safe care plans.

Reviews of carers will be held more frequently when in FosteringMatters' opinion it is deemed necessary to do so, for example where there is a contentious issue/allegation.

Working as a Carer with FosteringMatters

FosteringMatters believe that the recruitment and retention of dedicated and competent carers is fundamental to our success.

Recruitment and retention successes are based firmly upon the highest level of support, professional fee, good management and meaningful training. There is no “them and us” within FosteringMatters, we are all part of the same team.

To enable our carers to meet the needs of the children they look after, carers receive from FosteringMatters:

- Dedicated support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, using only FosteringMatters SSWs.
- Minimum of a monthly supervisory visits from a dedicated supervising social worker (SSW).
- Regular phone support from a SSW.
- Support in meeting the child’s educational needs.
- Support of SSW at professionals’ meetings.
- A Professional fostering fee/allowance when a child is in placement.
- Training that aids carer skills and development, including Initial Skills to Foster, post approval training, and regular on-going training.
- Carer support group meetings.
- Fostering Network membership for all carers.

Training

All FosteringMatters carers have access to regular training. All foster carers have an individual training profile that is monitored to ensure continuous learning. Our foster carers are supported to achieve fulfilled lives and supportive communities. It is essential for carers to continually improve their level of knowledge and ability and that access to appropriate training on a regular basis provides the opportunity for this development.

It is a requirement that FosteringMatters carers attend training.

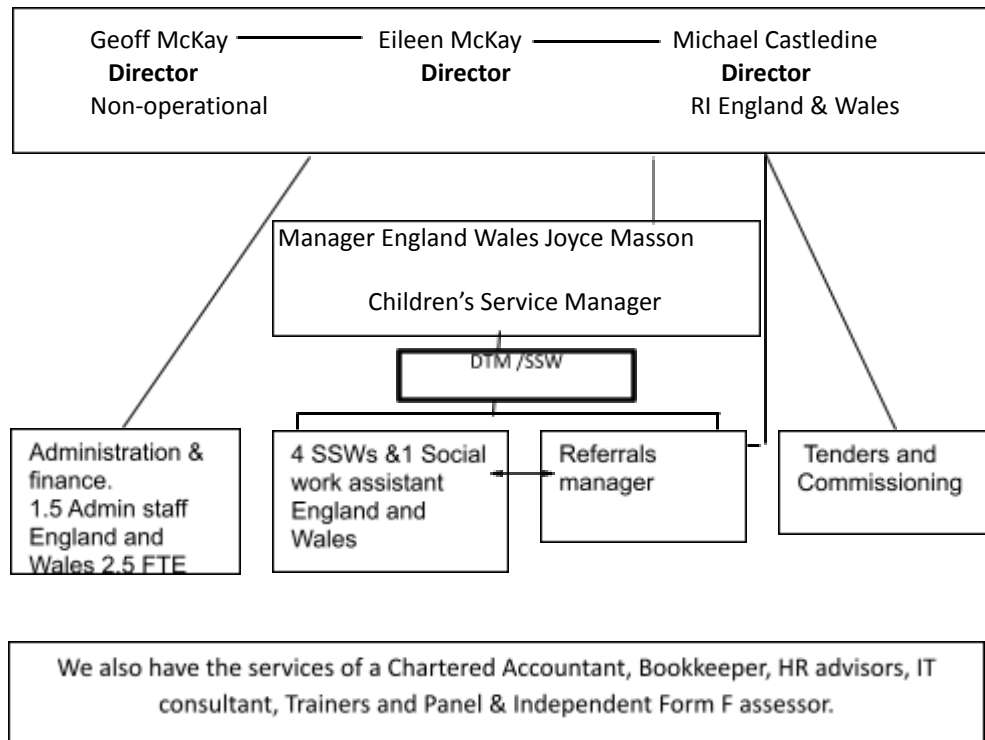
FosteringMatters offers Fostering Network Skills to Foster preparation training and ongoing post approval training for all carers. The training provided is sourced according to carers needs and levels of experience.

FosteringMatters provides a balanced mix of resources; some training is provided 'in house' by experienced and qualified professional staff, whilst other more specialist programmes are provided by externally sourced organisations.

FosteringMatters ensures that all carers are able to progress through their fostering career, building knowledge and skills as they do so, including online certified modules that enable carer knowledge gaps to be addressed quickly for a specific young person.

'FosteringMatters'

Organisational Structure and Staffing Arrangements 2024



Directors Eileen McKay, Mike Castledine and Geoff McKay own FosteringMatters and are qualified and experienced Social Workers and managers.

All Directors are professionally qualified Social Workers. All Social Workers are professionally qualified social workers. All Managers are professionally qualified managers and social workers.

Mike Castledine is the Ofsted Responsible Individual and CIW Responsible Individual. He supervises the Manager (along with Director Eileen McKay) and is full time in the organisation based in the office in Gloucester. He visits/samples all aspects of the service on a frequent basis: he has good capacity as he works full time to meet all the requirements of the RI role across England and Wales. He is integral to the day to day running of FosteringMatters, he is the ADM, he attends team and practice meetings and has daily service overview. He attends support groups, meets carers and children.

Joyce Masson is an experienced and qualified Social Worker and Manager, SWE & SCW registered. Joyce is the Registered Manager England and Manager (registered with CIW) Wales. Joyce manages all day to day running of FosteringMatters in England and Wales. She has good capacity to supervise and support all social workers, working in England and Wales. She manages all appraisals, and her responsibilities are in the monitoring, audit and QA of the service and has the lead in the development of the service. She attends all team and

practice meetings and has daily service overview. She attends Safeguarding meetings, support groups, meets carers and children and attends panel meetings as required.

FosteringMatters has clear HR recruitment processes. Staff all have clear role and job descriptions. All staff receive induction. FosteringMatters currently employs four qualified and experienced Senior Supervising Social Workers who are SWE/SCW registered, one of whom is the Deputy Team Manager. The SSW team and the Senior Administrator are supervised by the Manager. The SW assistant is supervised by the DTM. Each SSW and member of staff receive frequent regular professional individual supervision. These are recorded and a file maintained. Each member of staff has an annual appraisal. Each SSW supervises a managed caseload, predominantly within a geographical band, where workers live and work flexibly, the ratio is 1: 10 approximately SSW/carer households. Low caseloads give good working capacity for SSWs and manager capacity. One SSW lives and works in Wales and three SSWs live and work in England.

There are separate monthly team and practice development meetings and monthly and fortnightly manager meetings.

FosteringMatters foster carers will only be supervised by qualified social workers.

FosteringMatters commitment to staff training is on a regulatory professional body, service, and personal level. In addition to ongoing Post Qualification training all FosteringMatters staff and Panel members are encouraged and resourced to attend training relevant to their roles. There is a set training standard that includes mandatory training elements.

FosteringMatters demonstrates its commitments to the social work profession and advancement by regularly supporting Social Work students. Which helps FosteringMatters practice obtain up to date working methods and current theoretical underpinning of work.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

FosteringMatters provides services that has a rigorous quality assurance system which contributes to ensuring that the children we care for are provided with a high level of care.

In addition to the independent quality assurance function provided by the foster panel, FosteringMatters data collection and monitoring enables managers and staff to track and monitor the progress of children throughout their time with our foster carers. Our internal systems and IT equipment ensures that records and checks are up to date.

SSW/carer supervision and SSW/manager supervision and manager/director supervision are discussed and recorded in detail. There is analysis and scrutiny, and views are professionally challenged to ensure safe and joined up plans are made. There is time within these

supervisions to reflect upon practice and learning, this process extends into SW practice meetings, team meetings and manager meetings, where a risk register is compiled by the RM which provides a focus for considerations and actions. This process is underpinned with sampling of items such as individual safe carer plans, carer supervision and SSW supervision and reports to ensure that they meet the quality requirements.

Our Ofsted and CIW data sets, reporting, and annual panel reports provide quality assurance functions. We review the service as a whole quarterly and report on this six-monthly and annually to the provider and regulator.

FosteringMatters engages with Local Authorities and consortia groups in Fostering Framework and Monitoring activities that establishes and maintains a QA focus, identifying and addressing any shortcomings and celebrating achievement.

Complaints and Representation

FosteringMatters has a complaints and representation system in place managed by the manager Joyce Masson, including centralised management for monitoring and analysis. This policy, as with all others is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with legislation.

FosteringMatters manages complaints and representations properly and in a timely manner. FosteringMatters tries to resolve issues informally and where possible, directly between the complainant and the subject of the complaint, but where formal process is instigated, we will resolve issues in a thorough and timely manner. FosteringMatters strives to provide services that are of the highest standard at all times, with the result that complaints are low in number, but when made are investigated thoroughly and any learning included within our services.