



# Statement of Purpose

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**Registered Manager:-**

Christine Clynch

**Responsible Individual:-**

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Frays Court  
71 Cowley Road  
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Middlesex, UB8 2AE

Last updated June 2011 Approved by Responsible Individual



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## **Introduction to the Fostering Provider**

Alpha Plus Fostering is one of a number of fostering agencies owned and managed by the National Fostering Agency Partnerships Limited (“NFAP”), an associate company of National Fostering Agency Holdings Limited. Ultimately NFAP are responsible for the whole organisation, though day to day operational responsibility lies with the Registered Manager.

Alpha Plus aims through its foster carers, to provide a safe, stable, caring and comfortable home enabling young people to make attachments and gain a sense of ‘belonging’, or within which the task of the placement can be achieved.

Emphasis is placed on helping young people to understand and/or resolve the problems that created the initial need for care and, by partnership with the placing local authority, ensuring that the young person’s physical, mental, emotional and educational welfare and development are promoted and safeguarded.

The values underpinning the work of Alpha Plus are embedded in the Statement and within the working practices of the organisation. These are:-

- Being child centred;
- Being flexible, adapting to new ideas and ways of working and being responsive to individuals needs;
- A commitment to learning and continuous improvement;
- Listening to children & their families;
- A commitment to equality and diversity;
- A commitment to partnership working with children, local authorities and where appropriate parents.

Alpha Plus is continuing to grow and develop throughout the North West and increasingly, beyond.

This Statement of Purpose replaces the previous Statement of Purpose dated September 2010 and is submitted for approval to the Registered Individual and is revised and updated annually. As and when this document and other information related to the service are updated, revised copies are sent to foster carers, Ofsted and the Local Authorities of the young people placed. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority social worker to ensure parents are given a copy of the revised edition, and we remind them of this, since as a provider we do not have their contact details. The Statement of Purpose has been compiled in accordance with Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards and Regulation 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

### **The Agency's Status and Constitution**

The agency was originally established as Alpha Plus Fostering, an independent fostering agency, in 2000 and underwent a change of status in 2007 to become Alpha Plus Fostering Limited. In April 2009 there was a change of ownership of the agency when Alpha Plus Fostering Limited became part of National Fostering Agency Partnerships Limited ("NFAP"), an associate company of National Fostering Agency Holdings Limited.

The agency continues to offer Local Authorities a quality childcare service through the provision of foster placements, which reflect the wide range of needs of looked-after children. The agency remains strongly committed to child-centred policies and practice and employ a holistic approach to childcare. All services comply with statutory requirements.

### **Name and Address of Registered Manager**

Name	Alpha Plus Fostering
Address	Hollinwood Business Centre Albert Mill Albert Street Hollinwood Oldham, OL8 3QL
Telephone	T: 0161 684 2323
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E-mail	info@alphaplusfostering.co.uk
Registered Manager	Christine Clynych

## **Name and Address of Responsible Individual**

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Address	Frays Court 71 Cowley Road Uxbridge Middlesex, UB8 2AE
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E-mail	info@nfa.ws
Responsible Individual	Iain Anderson

## **Ofsted**

All the activities of Alpha Plus Fostering are inspected and regulated by Ofsted who can be contacted at the following address:-

Name	Regulatory Inspector
Address	Ofsted's National Business Unit Royal Exchange Buildings St Ann's Square Manchester M2 7LA
Telephone	08456 404040
Fax	0161 618 8509

The agency operates as an independent fostering agency (Company Number: 06019106) and is registered with and inspected by OFSTED - Registration Number SC069335. This agency currently has a rating of 'Outstanding' and has retained this over the last 6 years.

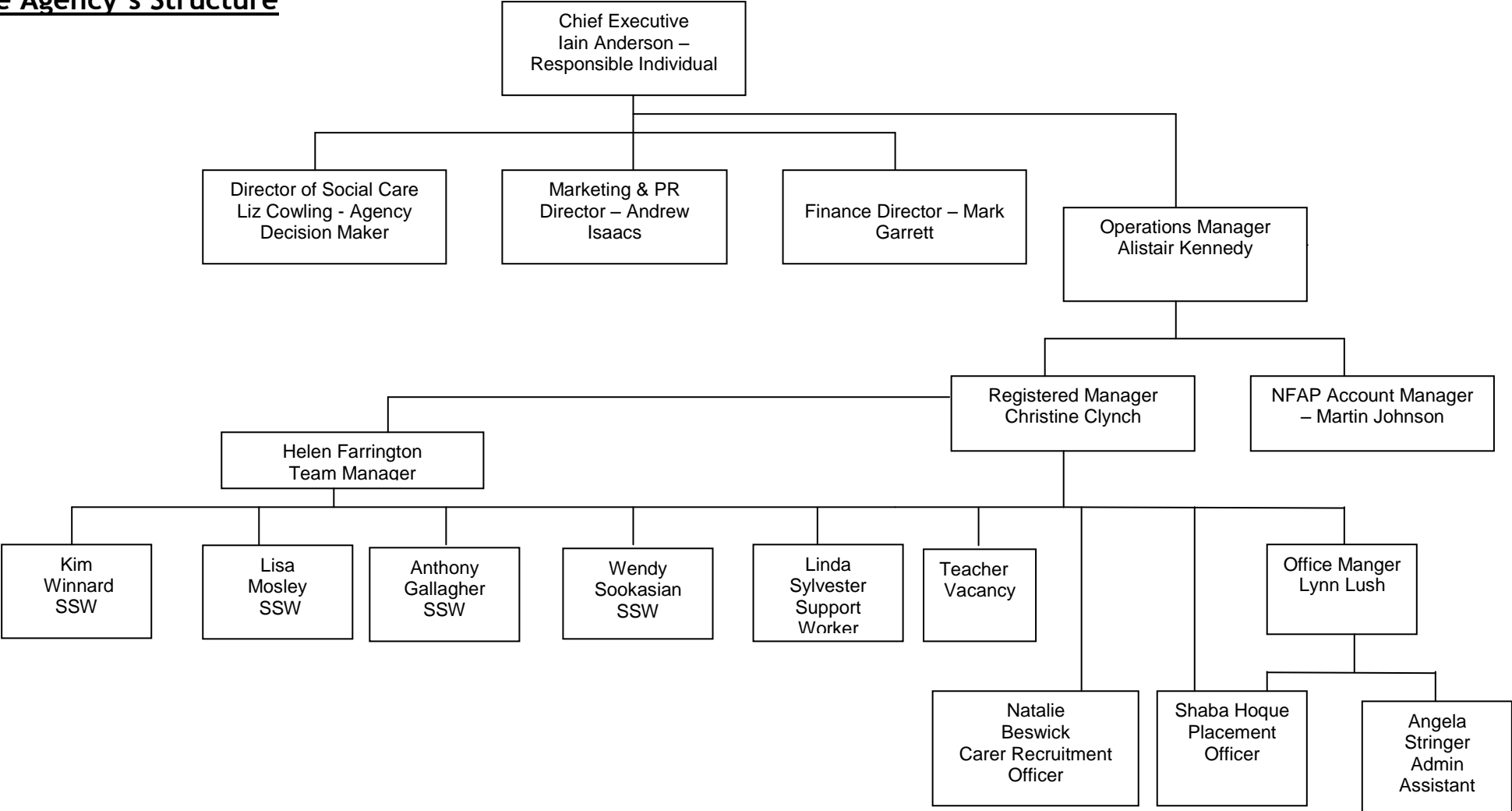
The agency is a full member of the Fostering Network.

The agency is placed in Tier 1 for all age related categories on the National Framework Contract for Independent Agencies in the Northwest.

## **Service Location**

The service is situated in Oldham and is ideally suited for road and rail links, being close to the M60, M67 and M62 networks. The premises are situated in a converted Mill just off Junction 22 of the M60 and have rooms available for foster carer training, panels and support groups. There is a young people's room from which the children and young people's groups and family contact can take place.

**The Agency's Structure**



The agency is managed by a Registered Manager who reports to the Operations Manager of the National Fostering Agency Partnerships Limited (“NFAP”), through monthly meetings.

In managing the agency, the Registered Manager ensures that:-

- The agency works within the Regulations and Standards contained in the Care Standards Act 2000, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011;
- The agency’s policies and procedures are implemented and reviewed on an annual basis;
- The effective control and supervision of the agency’s activities;
- The service is delivered within the statutory framework and according to accepted standards of good practice and codes of conduct;
- There is access to relevant medical, financial, professional and legal support;
- There are sufficient resources made available to meet carer’s needs and promote the safety and welfare of the child.
- The management group share responsibility for developing policy and procedures, in line with national regulations and standards, to ensure a safe and stimulating environment for Looked After Children.

All social work staff employed by Alpha Plus holds a recognised social work qualification, and are registered with GSCC. Further qualifications include:

- NVQ5 in management;
- BA (Hons);
- Btec;
- Nursery Nursing;
- NVQ3 – Children and Young People;
- DipSW;
- PQ1
- MEd, BA (Hons);
- BSc;
- PGCE

### **The aims, objectives and principles of Alpha Plus**

**a) The primary aims and objectives of the agency are:-**

- To provide a high quality service for looked after children and young people of all ages whose needs have been assessed by the responsible Local Authority as being best met by placement with a foster carer;
- To ensure children and young people are only placed with carers who have been recruited, assessed, approved and reviewed in accordance with statutory regulation and national standards and guidance;
- To support, supervise and provide on-going training to carers so that they are able to provide a comprehensive service that addresses the physical, emotional, educational and health needs of the children and young people placed with them;
- To promote positively the concept of fostering;
- To bring together carers who will support, educate and inform each other and who will work in partnership with all relevant professionals and families involved in the child's life.

**b) In seeking to achieve these objectives, the agency's work is underpinned by the following:-**

- The belief that fostering is a positive service to children and families;
- A commitment to child-centred policies and practices;
- The need to employ a holistic approach to childcare;
- Respect for the role of carers as partners in a professional team;
- The need to support partnership and co-operative working between all those involved in working with the child and the child's family.

**Alpha Plus Standards of Care**

The agency is committed to the delivery of a service meeting the standards of care detailed below, which are compatible with statutory and regulatory requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The agency is inspected on a regular basis by OFSTED and copies of inspection reports are available from OFSTED or available on the agency's website. The messages from Every Child Matters are also incorporated into agency delivery and planning of services and monitoring of performance.

In pursuit of its stated aims and objectives the agency will employ policies, practices, procedures which seek at all times:-

- To ensure the provision of high quality care to children and young people in a safe, healthy and nurturing family setting;
- To meet the individual child's particular needs and promote their best interests, in accordance with the care plan;
- To protect the child from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation;

- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of a child's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background;
- To develop the child's sense of identity and self-worth;
- To consider fully a child's gender, sexuality and any disability they may have;
- To promote the child's health and well being, including their physical, mental and emotional welfare;
- To promote educational achievement and attainment;
- To promote and support agreed contact with the child's family and friends, in accordance with the care plan;
- To prepare the child for adult life through the development of relevant life skills and acquisition of the knowledge necessary to achieve this;
- To seek the opinions of children, their families and carers so that they can inform the planning and delivery of the agency's services;
- To recruit individuals and families from all parts of the community and with different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, who can bring a variety of life experiences to the fostering task, thereby enabling the agency to offer local authorities a range of placements, reflecting the wide range of children's needs;
- To achieve consistently high standards when recruiting and assessing carers;
- To have a properly constituted and independent Panel to consider assessments and make recommendations to the agency regarding the award, review, rejection or termination of approvals;
- To ensure consistency and continuity in the supervision, support and information carers receive;

- To provide properly resourced training that enables carers to develop their skills and knowledge so as to better meet the needs of children placed with them;
- To offer placements that carefully match the particular needs of the child to the carer's skills, experiences and circumstances so as to minimise the occurrence of inappropriate placements and the attendant risk of placement breakdown and poor outcomes for children;
- To provide compensatory support to placements where necessary;
- To be a responsible and competent employer;
- To ensure the agency is organisationally sound and properly structured;
- To have procedures in place to control and supervise the agency's activities;
- To have arrangements in place to control and supervise the agency's finances, which are based on sound financial principles and recognised good practice;
- To organise and manage the agency's resources effectively to ensure the best possible service delivery and the safety of children.
- To recruit and employ an adequate number of appropriately experienced and qualified staff, who are able meet the needs of carers and children placed with them;
- To organise, manage and supervise agency staff so as to ensure their accountability and provide them with effective support;
- To maintain the skill and knowledge base of agency staff, managers and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes;

- To monitor and review agency policies, procedures and practice on a regular basis;
- To implement administrative procedures and practices so that management and staff are able to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner;
- To maintain secure, separate and accurate records for children, carers and staff and ensure access to such records, in line with legislation.

### **Anti-discriminatory practice**

Alpha Plus's Diversity Policy applies to staff, foster carers and young people. Training is provided to all staff and carers to assist them to understand and value diversity in working with colleagues and service users. Alpha Plus values and celebrates diversity and provides a detailed policy and guidance on promoting equal opportunities for "looked after" children.

The Service considers the needs of all young people referred in the areas of race, gender, culture, religion, sexuality, ability and geographic origin. The service will endeavour to promote each young person's sense of identity through making appropriate placements, and direct work in relation to a young person's cultural background.

There is a commitment to challenging individuals or groups who discriminate against any of our young people in anyway and diversity is celebrated through daily living experiences and educational programmes.

The service continues to work actively to promote diversity within the composition of the staff team and approved foster carers of the Fostering Provider.

### **Alpha Plus services and facilities**

#### **Placement Services**

Alpha Plus will discuss any request for a placement with the local authority having statutory responsibility for the child or young person. Such referrals will be processed in accordance with the responsible authority's procedure for making referrals and agreeing placements.

The agency accepts referrals for both planned and emergency placements and can offer choices to authorities requiring placements for sibling groups or children with complex backgrounds. Accordingly the agency has recruited carers who are able to offer a flexible service and will only propose placements with carers who have been properly assessed and approved, in accordance with statutory requirements.

The agency believes that children, their families, carers, the agency and local authorities are vital components in the placement process, with each partner having an important role to perform.

The agency expects the responsible authority, in all cases, to provide sufficient and relevant information to enable the matching process to begin and allow an informed choice to be made. The agency will also provide relevant information (including Form F's and other approval or review documentation) to the responsible authority, and will liaise with them in order to identify a carer able to meet the needs of the child or children concerned, having regard to the terms of approval and the current circumstances of the carer(s). It is this matching process, together with the support offered by the agency, which gives the best chance of a successful outcome for all concerned.

At the point of placement or the first planning meeting, the responsible authority is expected to provide the agency with more detailed information, including copies of appropriate LAC documentation and, where available, the child's Personal and/or Education Plan. This information will be shared as appropriate with the carer to enable them to look after the child(ren) and meet their needs in the most effective way.

Prior to a placement being made, the agency will liaise with the responsible authority regarding their responsibility in drawing up a Foster Placement Agreement which confirms the roles and clarifies specific expectations of all parties involved.

The agency expects to contribute to all meetings concerning any child placed through the agency and will provide reports for such meetings.

The agency provides written information about its services to local authorities, copies of which are available on request.

### **The Foster Care Agreement**

Each carer signs a Foster Carer Agreement with the agency. This sets out the terms of their relationship with Alpha Plus, including any conditions attached to their approval; mechanisms for reviewing and, if necessary, terminating approval; appeal mechanisms and complaints; clarification on the role and responsibilities of all those involved in placing a child; circumstances about which the agency must be notified; the agency's expectations of the carers and the services they in turn can expect to receive from the agency.

### **Other services offered by the agency to local authorities and the child**

The agency offers a range of placements to enable responsible authorities to extend their options in order to meet the needs of a child requiring placement.

This includes:

- Support with contact arrangements (for example, supervision and transport);
- Access to the agency's education support service. This can be used to support individual children requiring additional help in school or who have been or are in danger of being excluded from mainstream education. The agency's Education Co-ordinator and Teachers will liaise and work with carers, the responsible authority, LEA and school, to achieve educational entitlement and social inclusion for the child, in accordance with any Individual and Personal Education Plans. The service also provides a Resource Library for carers.
- Promotion of the child's health and welfare through accessing relevant services; ensuring children are registered with GP's and Dentists and that carers take a proactive role in prioritising all health issues which are age appropriate.
- Access to qualified psychologist, health and child care consultants who will, with the agreement and support of the placing authority, offer individual support to children in placement or advice to their carers.
- Advocacy for and consultation with children.

- The use of the agency's standardised documents and proformas; including an individual service agreement and the associated terms and conditions of service setting out the basic contractual terms and conditions ahead of any placement being made; a Personal Education Plan including age-appropriate feedback forms for children.

### **Services available to carers and children in placement**

Each child placed receives a copy of the Children's Guide which details the services they can expect from the agency and information on how to make a complaint. This is presented in a format (including a CD version) that is child friendly and copies are available on request. These Guides (for older and younger children) were updated in May 2011 following consultation with the young people's forum. All children are asked to contribute to their carer's reviews on age appropriate forms.

Before beginning the formal assessment, all prospective carers receive a brochure explaining what is involved in the fostering task, what will be expected of them and information about the assessment, approval and review process. A home visit is then arranged to discuss the process in more detail. A copy of the brochure provided is available on request.

Recruitment, training, assessment, management and support of families is offered in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Providers. All Alpha Plus foster carers become individual members of Fostering Network at the point of approval.

Alpha Plus aims to enhance and support families in the task of providing consistently high quality care for young people. In so doing it is hoped to help them achieve harmonious living and positive relationships with the young people they care for and a rewarding experience of fostering. Support provided includes:

- Regular supervision
- Training
- Out of hours 24 hour social work support
- Social Events
- Educational support
- Newsletters

A comprehensive training programme is available to all the agency's carers, based on their identified needs including Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care.

Training is organised either internally or through external training providers. A crèche facility is provided to allow carers with daytime childcare commitments to attend training.

Additionally the agency organises specialist training/support. This currently comprises a Male Foster Carers Group and support groups. A children's forum facilitated and run by LAC is also in place and provides the opportunity for fostered children to contribute to the running of the service.

### **Children's Workforce Development Council - Standards for foster carers**

The Children's Workforce Development Council launched the Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers in May 2007. Approved foster carers need to demonstrate that they have met the standards within 12 months of approval.

Alpha Plus has implemented a programme of training and workshops for both foster carers and Supervising Social Workers to ensure all carers are able to achieve the standards in the required timescales.

## **Recruiting and Approving Foster Carers**

### **a) Recruitment**

The skills required of foster carers are varied and often wide-ranging and this is reflected in the diversity of people who become Alpha Plus carers. The agency recruits individuals and families from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and from all parts of the community, who can bring a variety of life experiences to the fostering task.

Alpha Plus is, strongly committed to ensuring carers receive a high level of support. Prospective carers are provided with accurate and realistic information about the fostering tasks and are made aware that fostering can be both time consuming and demanding. Written information is provided in the Foster Carers' Brochure and a visit from a qualified SW prior to being accepted on a training programme is conducted to ensure foster carer have the skills required and the motivation to foster a child.

**b) Assessment of prospective carers**

All assessments are conducted in accordance with the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) 2000 guidelines.

All candidates must:-

- complete a standard application form and provide comprehensive details about themselves and members of their household;
- provide details of any ex-partners with whom they have jointly parented a child unless there are exceptional circumstances to indicate this is inappropriate. Under new practice guidelines the agency is required to interview any ex-partners as part of the assessment process. We will also need to interview any children living at home with you and adult children who live away from your household;
- give their agreement for the required statutory checks to be undertaken;
- agree to undertake a medical with their GP, the results of which are sent to our medical advisor, who then advises the agency whether or not the applicant is medically fit to foster;
- provide the names of two referees who can provide an independent view of the applicant's abilities and suitability of the household;
- give their agreement to an employer's reference being sought by the agency.

All assessments are conducted by a qualified social worker registered with the General Social Care Council, who then prepares a written report covering:

- the applicant's motivation in wanting to be a foster carer;
- their capabilities and competencies;
- the feelings, views and involvement of other household members, including the applicant's children;
- any existing demands made on the applicant;
- the suitability of the accommodation and if the home meets the regulatory health and safety standards, as well as the agency's additional

requirements, e.g. that the house is sufficiently large for the child to have their own bedroom.

c) **Approvals and Review of Approval**

All assessments are considered by a properly constituted and independent Panel, which makes recommendations to the agency regarding the suitability of the applicant to be a foster carer. This may include any additional terms that the Panel considers should apply. The agency decision maker takes full account of the Panel's recommendations when reaching her decision. Prospective carers are asked to attend the Panel. The Agency undertakes competency based first reviews based on National Guidelines and Standards.

All successful applicants are provided with a Foster Care Agreement, confirming their appointment as an agency carer. It also gives details about the terms of approval and how this will be reviewed, as well as the role of the local authority making the placement.

d) **Review and Terminations of Approval**

The Agency reviews carer approval to ensure that the carer and their household continue to be suitable, in line with statutory requirements. The review is conducted by an independent Reviewing Officer at the agency's offices annually, or whenever the agency considers it necessary, for example, if there are changes in the composition of the household or changes in the carer's health or a serious complaint or allegation of abuse has been made against the carer or member of their household. The agency may only propose to amend a foster carers terms of approval following a review in accordance with Regulation 28 (2) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Where a change of approval is a recommendation the foster carer and the agency must be in agreement with the changes to a foster carer's approval. All reviews are presented to Alpha Plus Fostering Panel, in some cases foster carers would be asked to attend panel. Where a change of approval is proposed the agency must issue a 'qualifying determination'.

For all reviews a full report will be prepared by the agency social worker and contributions from the child's social worker and the LAC will also be requested. Foster carers will be given copies of the above to read.

The review provides an opportunity for the agency and carer to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead. It takes account of:

- enquiries made and information obtained by the agency.
- the outcomes of any placements made since the last review.
- training undertaken by the carer and support given.
- the views of the Carer and members of their household and any child who is or has been placed during the previous 12 months, as well as the views of the responsible authority or authorities.
- updates on statutory medical and CRB checks (at least once every three years).
- Any concerns, complaints or compliments the carers may have about the agency.

b) **Appeals**

**There are two options available to foster carers to challenge an agency's decision regarding their approval they are:-**

**Alpha Plus Fostering Panel**

If the carer is not satisfied by the 'qualifying determination' reached by the agency regarding approval or conditions attached to approval or the termination of approval, he or she has the right to appeal against the decision. This must be in writing and within 28 days of the notice date.

The case will then be referred back to the agency's fostering Panel for consideration and the agency will make a decision taking into account the recommendations of the Panel and will notify the carer in writing. This will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days.

A copy of any amendment or notice issued is always given in writing to the carer, with a copy going to the area and responsible authority.

**IRM**

If the foster carers disagree with the 'qualifying determination' they can within 28 days of receiving the 'qualifying determination' letter, they can apply to the Secretary of State for a review by the IRM. The IRM is a review process conducted by a Review Panel which is independent of fostering service provider.

If a foster carer chooses to use the IRM the review panel will, where appropriate:

- review their suitability as prospective foster carer(s) to foster a child,
- review any proposed changes to their terms of approval,
- Make a fresh recommendation to the agency on your suitability to foster a child and the terms of their approval, including approval for a specific child.

If the foster carer(s) makes no representation or application within the allocated period then the agency can proceed to amend the terms of approval.

The agency must review their decision but are not under any obligation to change their original approval

## **Fees**

### **a) Agency fees**

The Agency operates to the Framework Contract for Independent Fostering agencies. This ensures fees are transparent and inclusive. The Agency Fee Schedule incorporates discounts for long-term and sibling placements.

Any additional services required in order to meet a child's particular needs and circumstances, over and above those outlined in a contract, are negotiated and agreed with the responsible authority at the point of placement or at subsequent reviews. This could include, for example, additional educational support, specialised equipment for a child with disabilities and other exceptional or major expenses as well as ongoing therapeutic input from one of the professionals working with the agency.

The fees structure is re-assessed annually and takes effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

### **b) Carers' fees**

The financial remuneration offered to agency carers reflects the demands of the task and quality of service carers are expected to offer. Out of their fee, carers are expected to meet the routine cost of looking after a child. Further details are available on request and are always included with the foster carers agreement.

## **Insurance**

Alpha Plus has an insurance package (arranged through the National Fostering Agency Partnership) which is fully comprehensive and covers all the agency's activities and legal obligations. It is based on Fostering Network standards and covers both carers and the agency, as follows:

- Personal and Public Liabilities (indemnity limit £5 million);
- Employer's Liability Insurance (indemnity limit of £10 million).
- Professional Indemnity (indemnity limit £5 million);
- Abuse & Molestation (indemnity limit of £5 million);
- Foster Carer's Public Liability, All Risks, Thefts and Malicious Damage insurance whilst a child is in placement, excluding damage to motor vehicles and property already insured (limit £100,000 for one occurrence).
- Medical Malpractice (indemnity limit of £5 million).

The Foster Carer's insurance is provided by Market UK Limited Insurance Group via D E Ford Insurance Brokers. Premiums are paid by the agency although carers are required to have their own household contents insurance and are advised about the information they need to pass on to their insurers about their carer role. However, the agency will meet any excess on the individual carer's household contents policy in the event of a claim arising from the child's circumstances, needs or actions except where it is agreed otherwise

## **Complaints and Compliments**

Alpha Plus Fostering Provider endeavours to strive for the highest standards for all its service users. Subsequently, we are committed to providing the best possible advice for children, carers and local authorities alike.

In accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, National Minimum Standards, and based on the documents, Getting the Best from Complaints - social care complaints and Representation for children, young people and others (1989 + 2004 Children Act), Care Planning & Case Reviews Regulations 2010. Alpha Plus Have a written procedure for considering any complaint or representation made by the Services foster carers. Alpha Plus Fostering Provider believes that foster carers have a fundamental right to have their views heard and to be taken notice of in the development of the Services. All complaints/comments provide vital information to inform the future, policy, planning and development of the service as well as identifying the areas of the service which are successful and valued. They help to

identify any gaps in service provision and should lead to the development of better services.

As an organisation we welcome feedback of all kinds and will respond as soon as possible to any comments/compliments. A copy of Alpha Plus's complaints procedure is provided to all foster carers and is available on request. In addition to Alpha Plus's Fostering Children's Information which details how a child/young person can complain, each child and young person will have a copy of its own Local Authorities complaints procedure and this will be explained to him or her.

There was one complaint made during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 in relation to the care provided to a young person. An investigation was undertaken and Ofsted concluded that the Agency was complying with Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Agency remains committed to improving practice and learning any lessons from complaints and actively encourages feedback about all aspects of its service.

### **A statement of the agency's financial position**

The agency's income is generated entirely by fees paid by the local authorities for placements with agency carers for looked after children. These fees are detailed in the agency's Schedule of Fees.

The agency's expenditure comprises fees to foster carers, staff salaries and the expenses associated with the running of the service. There is also a commitment to improving and enhancing services to carers and children

Accounts are available for inspection on request.

The most recent accounts to March 2011 indicate that the Agency has a sound financial base and remains viable.

### **Alpha Plus foster carers**

The total number of carers approved by the Agency on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 is 55 carers.

2 families was deregistered during this period as a result of their resignation

### **Children placed with Alpha Plus**

During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011 a total of 77 children were placed with agency carers. Seventy one of the seventy seven children placed at the start of the period remained in placement throughout the year - 92%. This represents a high level of stability in placements.

There was one disruption of placement during this period

