

Statement of Purpose

Our Mission Statement

“In one hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”

Forest E Witcraft



We have chosen this quote as our mission statement because we felt that it summed up what Eastern Fostering Services is trying to achieve across the range of its services. It underlines the philosophy that we keenly adhere to, of the paramount importance of “good adults” being able to influence better futures for children, particularly children who have lived in less than ideal circumstances.



Aims and Objectives

Our aim is to provide quality services to children and families that are responsive, local, affordable, and above all, valued by the people who use them.

Within that, our objectives with specific regard to our fostering service are:

- To establish a diverse range of local fostering families who can enable children to stay in touch with the people and places that are important to them and meet children's individual needs.
- To work positively and collaboratively with all professional networks involved in children's care planning.
- To develop a staff team that is sensitive, professional and positive.
- To recruit carers who will provide a safe and nurturing environment for the children they care for.
- To provide an environment for children that promotes their health and educational needs and gives them the best life chances possible.
- To value and support foster carers to enable them to provide comprehensive care and to look after their own emotional well-being.
- To work to the requirements of the National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and in accordance with all other relevant statute, guidance and regulation.

- To recruit sufficient carers to offer as many family matches as possible for the numbers of children needing a placement.
- To strive to offer a choice of placement, where possible.
- Through effective placement matching and support minimise the number of placements experienced by individual children.
- To build a non-hierarchical structure which keeps fixed costs to a minimum whilst still delivering a swift quality response to service requests.
- To develop a working environment that addresses the learning and developmental needs of all those connected with it.

Running through all of our working practices is the aim to appreciate difference, challenge discrimination and set the scene for an equality based service.

Status and Constitution

Eastern Family Services Ltd, an Independent Fostering Provider, is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 2006. Its' company number is 7563641. We trade as 'Eastern Fostering Services' in order to be more easily found when prospective foster carers are looking for information.

Management and Staffing Structure

Eastern Fostering Services is still at a relatively early stage of development as a small, local fostering agency. It is managed by two Directors, and employs an experienced Senior Supervising Social Worker, two supervising Social Workers and a Carer Support Manager. As the agency is still growing and developing services, we also use our professional networks in the locality, through an “associate” arrangement whereby we have established links with specialist services. For example, we commission a psychotherapist to offer our foster carers individual consultation on a monthly basis, we offer Storytelling sessions to our children, and we also have close links with counsellors, legal advisors and we can source other types of therapeutic input. We have personally worked with all of these providers and know the quality and reliability of the

services that they can offer. The Eastern Fostering Services Board is responsible for the on-going formation, review and action in the following areas:

- The strategic vision and business plan of the company
- Company ethos, values and mission
- Quality Assurance of our services
- Policies and Procedures
- Legal compliance
- Financial management

Services Provided

Task-centred Fostering

These placements are usually planned periods of care, although we recognise that family circumstances can be subject to change! We can support carers to look after children in emergency situations as well as working with plans to reunify them with their families or work towards permanency.

Permanent Fostering

When children cannot return home and when adoption is not the right option, we can support families who want to make a long-term commitment to children until adulthood and beyond. We also have experience in supporting foster carers to prepare children for adoption.

Family and friends foster carers (Kinship)

Where a family or friend comes forward to offer care to a child in a fostering family, we can offer to provide an assessment alongside a fostering placement if local authority resources are not easily available which has the potential advantage of saving time delay and its associated emotional impact on the child concerned.

Parent and Child Placements

We can offer both supportive and assessment based placements for young parents and their children, which provide a real opportunity for positive parental role-modelling to take effect in a “normalised” setting.

“Staying Put” Fostering

We recognise that some young people need the continuing support of a family environment beyond the point where they reach legal adulthood and we will work with placing authorities to provide this continuum of care within our fostering families.

Short Break Care

Short Break Care is the term used for the type of support that foster carers can give to children with disabilities and their families. Sometimes, the additional needs that children have can put huge pressure on their own families, but with a regular break or some support, it helps families to maintain their energy levels and continue to be able to care for their own children at home.

Short break care can take the form of an occasional weekend stay with a family on a monthly or other regular basis, or sometimes it may just be an overnight stay. We have offered daytime stays and activities to children with disabilities too, so they don't suffer the disruption of staying away from home but do get the opportunity to do something fun and for their families to get a small break. With Short Break care, it is important to remember that it is slightly different from other fostering, because the child is not “looked after” by the local authority. Our foster carers work closely with children's families in these circumstances and the families retain complete parental responsibility and decision making about their children.

EFS has a flexible approach to its' provision and will work with authorities to achieve the best outcomes through whatever intervention is deemed most appropriate in order to meet childrens' needs.

Recruitment and Assessment of Foster Carers

Eastern Fostering Services is committed to the recruitment of foster carers who can meet the individual needs of children and young people and provide them with a safe and nurturing environment in which to grow.

Prospective foster carers who make an enquiry are subject to a detailed assessment procedure. This includes:

- An Initial Home Visit
- A Medical Report
- At least 3 personal references
- Identity checks, including an Enhanced DBS
- Previous partner references
- Health and safety assessments
- 6-10 home visits and interviews which include applicants, their children and any other household members
- Full BAAF form F assessment on the qualities, competence and suitability to become foster carers

The assessment process takes 4-6 months on average and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay. All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held securely and in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and Data Protection Act.



Fostering Panel and Approval

The assessment report is presented to Eastern Fostering Services fostering panel, which has a membership who have a variety of expertise and knowledge including members with backgrounds in education, fostering, parenting children with additional needs, attachment theory, social work, health and safety and some with experience of being part of a fostering family. The panel's function is to provide an independent quality assurance role recommending whether the applicant/s presented to them are suitable to become good foster carers.

The final decision for approval is made by the agency's Registered Manager – Eleanor Vanner. The fostering assessment is split into two stages and if the applicant/s are unhappy with any decision not to proceed, they have a right to appeal once the assessment has reached Stage Two, which is confirmed and explained in writing when the decision is made. This can be made direct to the agency or via the Independent Review Mechanism.

Learning and Development



Foster carers come with different experiences, education and backgrounds, and the task of fostering has changed over recent years, with an increased emphasis on the “professionalisation” of the role. It is therefore essential that any learning and development programme covers the requirements that the role entails but is also tailored to individual learning needs.

There are three broad Learning and Development phases that Eastern Fostering Services concentrates on, to reflect what experience tells us are the times when carers need the additional input, namely:

Pre-Assessment Preparation for Fostering

All potential carers attend the Skills to Foster programme devised by Fostering Network, and complete the accompanying workbooks. Skills to Foster is held over three separate days and includes subject areas such as:

- Why children come in to care
- How to promote a sense of identity in children
- How to work in partnership with parents and professionals
- How to understand the legislative framework around childcare
- Child development
- Attachment and loss
- Safer caring and how to formulate a household safer caring policy
- Raising awareness of abuse and child protection issues
- The impact of difference
- Moving on

Early Days of Fostering

Anyone wanting to become a foster carer has to complete the 'TSD' training, support and development standards for fostering and the Skills to Foster course is designed to help lay the foundations of this. Eastern Fostering Services then provides individual and group support to fostering families to ensure that they get the most out of the TSD learning and complete their portfolios within their first year of fostering. Other essential learning and development for the first year of fostering includes:

- First Aid training, with a specific emphasis on first aid for children
- Behaviour management
- Safeguarding children, including how to manage allegations and safer caring

Skills development for experienced foster carers

As foster carers gain practical experience, they often develop specific needs related to the children they are caring for, or the areas of special interest that they have. At EFS we take a dynamic approach to the development of our learning and development programme and we respond to identified needs for specific workshops as soon as possible by only setting out our workshops 6 months in advance. This gives us the opportunity to respond to new emerging needs and as we identify specific learning and development objectives through carer supervision and annual carer reviews, we can plan accordingly.

We have a clear aim to involve as many specialist community resources as possible in the delivery of training days rather than commissioning one trainer across a generic range, because we understand that fostering can be an isolating and misunderstood task, and therefore the involvement of the wider community has to be a positive step towards greater insight and co-operative working together.

Support to Children and Young People



All children and young people joining fostering families with Eastern Fostering Services will receive a welcome pack and children's guide. The pack takes the form of a personalised container where precious things such as health information or school certificates can be kept safely. The pack includes the following:

- A children's guide which is age appropriate, detailing contact details for social workers or other people involved in the child's life, as well as a checklist of questions to ask a new family, to enable the child to play an active role in a placement agreement meeting. (The Children's Guide has been translated as needed into different languages such as Pashto and Albanian)
- Anti-bullying information from the NSPCC.
- A diary.
- A pack of stamps and some envelopes.
- A photograph album and camera.
- A list of useful telephone numbers, such as Childline.
- A purse/wallet.
- Personalised items for the child or young person, according to their interests, age and ability

In addition, all fostering families will give children a welcome book specifically about their family.

All children and young people are visited regularly by the Eastern Fostering Services supervising social worker, and given opportunities to talk individually about what is happening in their lives. We are also mindful of the important part that the children of fostering families play and we hold specific events to recognise and value their role.

We realise that sometimes our fostering families need some practical support and that this can be a vital part of sustaining placements for children. We have therefore made provision within all of our placements for additional support to be offered through experienced children's support workers and this support can be tailored completely to the needs of the child and the family.

We believe in establishing supportive networks for all foster carers and children that we work with and we therefore hold regular events to keep the adults and children in touch with one another and build supportive relationships.

Complaints



We recognise that there should be a clear process to follow if anyone is unhappy with our service and we therefore have a complaints procedure in formats for adults and children.

If a difficulty cannot be resolved at a local level by the Director responsible, Eastern Fostering Services will commission a trained mediator to help resolve the situation satisfactorily.

For a copy of our complaints procedure, or to make a complaint, please contact Tony Jones on:

Tel: **01206 299775**

Email: tony.jones@easternfamilyservices.com

How to Contact Us

Our office base is situated on the Essex/Suffolk border, in East Bergholt. We can be contacted on the telephone number above or by email or through our website as detailed below:

Email: info@easternfamilyservices.com

Website: www.easternfosteringsservices.com