



**changing futures**  
**fostering**

# **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

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## **Our Vision**

Changing futures for children through aspirational and well supported care.

## **Our Mission Statement**

We will support children and young people to build and sustain healthy relationships that will:

- support them to achieve the best outcomes possible
- lead them on to having effective strategies that will support their full and future potential

## **Our Objectives and Aims**

Changing Futures Fostering believes Children & Young People who are fostered thrive when they get care that:

- builds and supports their welfare and provide outcomes for change.
- Is strength led and recognises the impact of adverse experiences and how they can be overcome.
- Is embedded in therapeutic re-parenting that meets their individual needs

Changing Futures Fostering aims to develop a flexible delivery model for foster care that will meet the varied needs of the diverse population of looked after children and young people which they support. Changing Futures have considered the evidence base available in developing their model and we have adapted our model to meet local needs. We aim to:

- Improve placement stability and reduce placement breakdown.
- Stronger relationships that support looked after children, young people and fostering families.
- The provision of a robust and resilient structure, which offers support through times of crisis and transition- working towards a hub and spoke model/ team of fostering families.
- Improved respite care within the wider fostering team, providing an extended family support network of professional foster parents.
- Increased skills, confidence and role satisfaction for foster parents.
- Higher levels of foster parent retention and recruitment.
- Improved experience of peer support.

- Better experience of birth family contact, including siblings.

Costs saved, and costs avoided by greater placement stability and less use of respite.

## Introduction

Changing Futures Fostering is an independent foster agency based in Hartlepool. The sister agency of Changing Futures North East, a Charity that has over 20 years experience of providing frontline services to children, young people and families in the Tees Valley and East Durham.

Changing Futures North East started life delivering youth work from their base in the Headland, Hartlepool. It was set up by local parents who wanted more opportunities for local children. Young people helped get £1million from the lottery to create a youth centre that they then helped run.

The Charity is still focused on helping improving children's lives. It has changed how it helps children over time by understanding children's needs and learning from research, and from experience, about how best to help. Current services include mediation with parents in conflict, emotional wellbeing services for children and young people, and independent visitors to support children in care.

Changing Futures Fostering is a not for profit company limited by shares. All of the shares are owned by Changing Futures North East, the Charity. This means that if the company ever generates a surplus it will always be invested in helping local children.

Changing Futures Fostering was born from the 20yrs experience and knowledge of Changing Futures North East in:

- understanding the area, it's people, and the agencies that are there to help children in Tees Valley and East Durham
- helping people build and sustain healthy relationships which improve children's life chances
- understanding healthy relationships help children and young people heal from trauma and neglect
- using core skills to help children build and keep healthy relationships – including children who, because of their past, don't find it easy to form relationships with care givers that are healthy

## Changing Futures Fostering will keep children's potential at the heart of all they do.

As stated by the Fostering Network

***“foster parents must be treated as core members of the team working with a child, with the recognition and respect they deserve and the support they need”***

Changing Futures Fostering will strive to uphold this in all areas of our practice, putting the child or young person at the centre of all we do.

We will safely recruit, robustly assess and competently train foster parents to be fully equipped to provide the highest quality fostering to meet the needs of a range of children and young people placed with the agency.

We will adhere to statutory guidance and strive to exceed requirements in order to provide the best service to children, young people and foster parents.

As a not for profit organisation Changing Futures Fostering will not make profit from placing disadvantaged children within the agency. We will use any spare surplus to enrich the lives of children whilst remaining sustainable.

We will be aspirational for all children, young people, foster parents and staff to ensure that they meet their full potential whilst keeping children and young people safe and provided with opportunities that meet their needs, wishes and feelings.

We will provide therapeutic support to all children and young people by training, supervising and supporting our foster parents to enhance their existing parenting skills and to help them learn new therapeutic skills. This will help us make sure that children and young people get the skilled re-parenting they need to overcome the adversity they have experienced through the building of safe and strong relationships which help children grow and develop.

This statement of purpose has been developed in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations and with the appropriate statute of law and includes:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service.
- A statement as to the service and facilities provided by the fostering agency.

## **Values & Beliefs**

At Changing Futures Fostering we have some core values and beliefs that will shape how we help children, foster parents and how we work with others:

### **Children are the heart of how we think and what we do**

- Children in care are best supported by being listened to and considered. They have the right to be involved in decisions about their care and their future.
- Children in foster families can find relationships with adults difficult and can have negative beliefs about themselves. This means they can struggle to build healthy relationships with foster parents without help. We will provide that help.
- Children often need support at home, at school, and in the community to do well. We will help them build a good network of supportive and appropriately challenging relationships.

### **Healthy relationships matter, and will be supported**

- The welfare of foster children, birth families, foster parents, birth children and professionals are important.
- The team around our foster families build and maintain strong relationships which will help foster families cope under pressure.
- Relationships change when families foster children. We will help foster families, including fostered children, plan for and deal with these changes.
- People with parental responsibility have the right to be involved in making decisions about their children's future.
- Where children see birth parents, we will support foster parents to support this if it's safe to.

### **We will try to understand what people need and want, and then help**

- Trauma, neglect and abuse can harm children's development. We will help foster parents understand how, and how to help.
- Foster parents help children best if they understand their own thoughts and feelings and those of family members and professionals.
- Some foster parents are experts in foster parenting. Some children in our care are experts in what works for fostered children. We will listen to, and learn from, all foster parents and all of the children in our care.

### **Foster parents need knowledge and skills, and tools to use**

- Foster parents are often best placed to help fostered children. Using therapeutic skills and knowledge when parenting will help children and foster parents to build better relationships. It will help children feel better and achieve more.
- Foster parents need tools to use to manage challenging behaviours. They need to know when to use which tools, and why.
- We will achieve change for children and young people through the provision of supportive and nurturing foster placements.

**Our values are based on the foundation of positive and healthy relationships and the belief that all members of a foster family have a right to be safe and supported.**

## Children & Young People

We will strive to keep children and young people at the heart of all we do.

We understand the need for healthy relationships in our lives from birth and throughout our lives. We know it has a bad effect on us if we don't have healthy relationships in life. We will support children to make and sustain healthy relationships with foster parents through training and therapeutic led support that allows children and young people to feel safe and cared for.

We will make sure children are safe and safeguarded. We will be aspirational in their care by:

- Believing in them and motivating them by supporting their own aspirations to achieve a successful childhood and adult life.
- Understanding the impact of their early childhood adversity and promoting change for them through needs led re-parenting.
- Keeping them at the centre of our practice throughout their journey.
- Recognising the impact of change and ensuring each milestone is supported and understood.

Wherever possible, we will involve children and young people (including care leavers) in:

- making decisions about their future
- making decisions about the way the agency runs and how it helps children
- helping the children's guide to remain up to date and relevant
- recruiting and training staff and foster parents

Staff will advocate for the children and young people, manage any associated risks and support them to have their voice heard. Supervising Social Workers will supervise foster parents in the fostering home.

Children & Young People will be provided with the support they need to attend meetings about them, if they want to. Independent advocacy will be offered where a child feels unable to attend and support will be provided on a continuous basis. Barriers to attendance will also be explored as we recognise the anxieties faced by children and young people and that it takes time to build up healthy relationships which will empower them to be fully involved in their care plan. We will ensure that their views are represented by someone they trust to speak on their behalf until a time they feel able to.

Participation groups will be held where fostered and birth children will be invited to share their knowledge and build relationships with the agency to support change.

We have the facilities to support independent living skills on site.

We will ensure that young people's plans reflect a needs led assessment process through multi agency working with their foster parents, social worker, teachers, health colleagues, and significant adults through the outcomes tracker process, supervision and attendance at meetings.

We will always celebrate our children and young people's achievements. We will make sure that they know how proud we are of them. We will be aspirational for them and support their goals as much as is possible.

Each child or young person will be treated as an individual. We will see them as unique and tailor support to their needs through the provision of therapeutic fostering placements.

We will regularly measure their progress whilst with us and strive to achieve positive outcomes.



We will support our children and young people to help us use language that supports their individual needs. This includes:

- the names they have chosen to be called by
- how they would like to refer to their fostering placement
- what they will call their fostering family

All birth family members will be treated with dignity and respect by Changing Futures Fostering. We will provide a guide for birth families.

## Our Fostering Offer

We aim to recruit foster parents who have relevant personal or/and professional experience that will help them effectively foster children and young people.

We understand the need to help foster children and foster parents build healthy relationships. We understand how children and young people can struggle due to their adverse earlier experiences. We will support all members of the team around the child to use this knowledge, along with skills and appropriate tools. This will help promote and maintain successful foster placements.

We will work closely with local authority colleagues to ensure, where possible, that children and young people are matched to foster parents who are skilled and insightful. We will match children with foster parents who can support them to overcome the impact of early childhood experiences and traumas.

We will build on existing local authority relationships and work together to safeguard the children and young people who have been placed with Changing Futures Fostering.

## Types of Placement

We will strive to provide placements including:

- **Short term** – Caring for a child or young person from 1 night to a couple of years. Short term placements will give the local authority the opportunity to ensure any court proceedings and assessments are completed whilst the agency provide a safe and consistent home.
- **Long term** – Foster Parents will care for the child or young person until they are an adult. They will provide them with a home for the rest of their childhood in line with their local authority permanence plan.
- **Short Break Care** – Providing a planned break or support to a child or young person in crisis. Wherever possible, internal short break care will be provided by approved foster carers of Changing Futures Fostering.
- **Sibling Placements** – Where possible siblings need to be placed together (unless an assessment states otherwise) and this will be achieved where possible.
- **Specialist placements including parent & child** – All specialist placements will be considered on receiving a referral. The matching and risk assessment process will be used to ensure appropriate placements are made and support provided.
- **Staying Put** – We will support young people to remain with their fostering family if they wish to do so after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Supporting Foster Parents

**Supervising Social Workers** will be a central part of our support offer to foster parents, they will all be trained in the Changing Futures through Fostering model and can offer supervision to support therapeutic re-parenting. They will assess with each foster parent their strengths and vulnerabilities/ challenges and will work together with their foster parents to further develop their foster parenting skills. Each Foster parent will have a clear personal development plan and their progress will be tracked each supervision and progress against agreed targets recorded.

The allocated Supervising Social Worker will visit the fostering household monthly and during each supervision visit, Supervising Social Worker's will provide Foster Parents with an opportunity to discuss and reflect on what is going well for the children and young people they care for. They will discuss any issues for either the child or young person and issues impacting on the fostering household.

**Supervision** is an opportunity to reflect on established skills and learning gaps and plan together for future learning opportunities. Within this Supervising Social Worker's will explore the impact of the relationships within the fostering household.

**24/7 Phone support** will be provided to all foster parents and they will be answered by a qualified Social Work practitioner. Where needed home visits will take place to provide support.

**Foster Parents** will also be a vital support network to their fellow foster parents and skills will be identified through supervision to ensure that support offered is appropriate.

**Support Groups** are a vital part of the peer support and we will offer a safe space for Foster Parents to meet on a monthly basis to discuss any issues, support each other and update on agency business.

### Recruitment & Assessment Process

Changing Futures Fostering is committed to ensuring we attract potential foster parents:

- from diverse backgrounds, to help us meet the individual needs of children
- who have the initial attributes and skills
- who may have established skills through previous fostering experience

to foster our children & young people and to help keep them safe and to realise their potential.

Our suitability criteria will include:

- A main carer who has flexible work commitments to meet all elements of the fostering task and can drive or has access to excellent transport resources.
- At least one vacant bedroom that is not used by anyone else
- A clear understanding of the household membership and its suitability to foster.

Once an initial enquiry is made and the decision is made to complete a home visit, this will be carried out by a qualified social worker who is experienced in the recruitment and support of

foster parents. During this visit a more indepth understanding will be gained and appropriate information recorded to assess motivation and suitability.

If motivation and suitability to foster is identified as positive and the agency will make the decision to invite to apply. Stage 1 of the recruitment process will commence, on receipt of a fully completed application form.

Whilst all statutory checks and references, as set out in Schedule 3 of the Fostering Regulations 2011, are being undertaken, preparation will start towards the second stage of the assessment process including training and commencement of the assessment home visits.

During Stage 2, the assessment process becomes more intense with home visits where a qualified Social Worker will assess information including personal history, education & employment and previous significant relationships. All assessment discussions will link to the skills needed to foster children and young people.

### **Panel**

The completed assessment will be presented to our independent panel.

The panel is made up of at least 5 members who have a wealth of expertise working with children and young people. Potential foster parents will be invited to attend the panel.

Panel members can be from a social work, education, health or fostering background including foster parents from other agencies and leaving care experience.

The panel play a vital role in quality assurance and ensuring safe recruitment. They will make a recommendation which will then be ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

We will inform people if they have been approved or not in writing. If approved, we will inform foster parents in writing about the type of fostering they have been approved for, the age range they can foster and number of children.

After a year foster parents will have an annual review that will also be presented to the panel.

## **Training & Development**

We recognise that our commitment to training foster parents needs to be strong, timely and appropriate to the needs of children and young people.

Alongside the support of qualified staff, foster parents will be provided a good level of training from the onset of their journey. This will provide them with the knowledge and skills to care for children and young people who have faced adverse childhood experiences.

### **Pre-Approval Training**

Changing Futures Through Fostering is:

- The initial training that supports prospective foster parents to have the knowledge and toolkit to start their fostering journey.

It includes in the ten sessions:

- An introduction to fostering
- Why do children come in to care and
- An introduction to Changing Futures Fostering
- The importance of therapeutic reparenting
- An introduction to the fostering model “CAAPPE” and mentalisation based therapy.
- Potential families will have the opportunity to look at themselves as the tool for change

### **Post-Approval Training**

This will be a package of training that will include:

- The impact of trauma
- Safer Caring
- Safeguarding which will include roles & responsibilities and how everyone will work together.
- De-Escalation training
- First Aid
- Therapeutic techniques that support caring for traumatized children
- Promoting healthy relationships
- Managing challenges and
- The positive impact of fostering

All foster parents will complete the Training, Support & Development Standards known as TSD within 12 months of approval.

We will also offer bespoke training to meet the needs of individual children and young people.

All training will be delivered by appropriately qualified practitioners.

## **Staffing Structure**

**The Responsible Individual is Martin Todd** - Martin has worked in the Voluntary and Community sector for 16 years as a frontline practitioner, service manager and senior leader. He is a qualified youth and community worker with additional training in various therapeutic interventions for children, young people and families. Working to develop and deliver a range of services and projects for the benefit of children during his time in the charitable sector has provided valuable experience of direct work, multiagency and disciplinary working.

Martin holds a Masters Degree in Consulting and Leading in Organisations (Psychodynamic and Systemic Approaches) achieved following study with Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. He applies this learning and thinking to teams, groups and organisations in public and voluntary sector organisations, as well as in leading the child and family services delivered by Changing Futures North East where he is also the designated safeguarding lead for children and adults.

**The Registered Manager is Sarah Richardson.** Sarah qualified as a Social Work in 2008 from the University of Sunderland and she is Social Work England registered.

Completing her final year placement in local authority fostering, Sarah made a decision that she would like to work in fostering for her future career including working as a Supervising Social Worker in a local authority and spending the last eight years working for a not for profit independent fostering agency. Sarah worked as a Placements Officer, Form F Assessor, Supervising Social Worker and for the last four and half years as a Team Manager and Panel Advisor.

Sarah also has experience working in Human Trafficking in a project supporting women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Prior to undertaking her degree, Sarah worked in frontline social work teams including a safeguarding duty team and Children with a Disability team as a Social Work Assistant.

**The Company Secretary is Joanne Hay.** Joanne Hay is the Business Support Manager for Changing Futures North East. Joanne has 6 years' experience with CFNE, during which time she has performed many of the duties of Company Secretary.

Additionally, Jo is involved with preparation of accounts and liaises with the accountants. Jo holds a ATT L3 Diploma in Accounting and is working towards a BA (Hons) degree apprenticeship in Management (3<sup>rd</sup> year).

**The Fostering Consultant in Therapeutic Practice is Sally Wood.** Sally Wood is an independent consultant to CFF, as well as being a Consultant Family Therapist and qualified and registered supervisor of Systemic Practice.

Sally has over 30 years' experience in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, working as a Clinical Lead in a Specialist Fostering and Adoption Service for over 10 years. Working for the Anna Freud Centre, Sally was part of the team developing Mentalisation Based Approaches in Fostering and Adoption, working with the NSPCC on a national project evaluating the delivery of a Reflective Fostering Programme for Foster Parents.

She also provided the clinical supervision for a research project based in Hertfordshire evaluating Mentalisation Based Therapy approaches in Fostering. She has piloted and delivered group- work interventions for both groups of foster parents and adoptive parents. Sally will

provide ongoing support in developing and delivering therapeutic training to foster parents for CFF.

**The Fostering Panel Chair** is Sam Underwood. He is an experienced panel chair across the North East of England and has extensive knowledge of Independent Fostering Agencies and spent his career in education, including as Primary school Headteacher. Sam has been Fostering Panel Chair since January 2021 and has supported the development of the fostering panel as well as contributing to agency development.

**The Supervising Social Worker** is Mark Gwilt. Mark has been a social worker for over three decades including managing a children with disabilities service and working in frontline children in care teams. He has significant experience of working with people including families and supervising staff and was also a foster parent for a number of years caring for a young person with autism. Mark and his family still remain a vital part of his life today.

#### **The Board of Directors include:**

**Karen Simmons, Chair.** Karen Simmons is a qualified social worker with over 32 years' experience in children's services which includes roles in senior management, practice leadership and assessment, social work lecturing and training.

Karen is Social Work England registered and has an M.Sc. in Social Work. Her experience encompasses senior management responsibility for local authority services for early help; statutory children's social care services; fostering, adoption; residential care and youth offending services primarily in London and North East authorities. In relation to fostering, she has acted as Panel Chair and as Agency Decision Maker for a local authority.

Throughout her career, Karen has continued to be committed to improving the life chances of children and their families and to championing social work. Since 2018, she has worked with local authorities on their improvement journey providing diagnostic and development support, training and senior leadership coaching. Her role as Director is to bring her experience of managing a fostering service and services to looked after children to support the establishment and delivery of the fostering agency.

**Graham Alton – Vice Chair.** As CEO of Changing Futures North East for the last 12 years, Graham has led development of and overseen services to improve outcomes for children, in particular by supporting key relationships within families to enable improvements in parenting. In recent years Graham has secured substantial inward investment into Hartlepool services including loan financing for the fostering agency.

He has a BA (Hons) in Leadership and Management and a L3 qualification in tendering and procurement practice.

Graham currently sits on the Boards of Hartlepool Children's Strategic Partnership and Healthy Relationships Partnership (a cross sector systems change initiative) and is involved with other local regeneration and voluntary sector partnerships. He has also worked as a Director / Trustee of Relate North East and Headland Development Trust, an economic regeneration Charity.

**Gill Lamb – Board Member.** Gill is the Chair of Trustees for Changing Futures North East and

joined the Changing Futures Fostering Board in mid 2022. Gill has an extensive career in teaching and has been a senior leader for over a decade specialising in governance, safeguarding and mentoring. She has a particular interest in ACES and supporting teaching staff to understand the impact of trauma.

All staff employed by Changing Futures Fostering Ltd will be subject to an induction, monthly supervision and an appraisal that leads to a personal development plan to support their professional development.



The fostering service will be inspected by OFSTED in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards.

OFSTED contact details are:

OFSTED

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 1231231

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Changing Futures Fostering Ltd registered address is:

3 Abbey Street

Headland

Hartlepool

TS24 0JR

Tel: 01429 363127

Email Address: [Enquires@changingfuturesfostering.co.uk](mailto:Enquires@changingfuturesfostering.co.uk)

Website Address: [www.changingfuturesfostering.co.uk](http://www.changingfuturesfostering.co.uk)

### **Safeguarding**

Please contact Sarah Richardson, Registered Manager, who is our Designated Safeguarding Officer.

### **Complaints**

In line with the Fostering Services Regulations we have a complaints policy and procedure and if you wish to make a complaint or discuss a concern please telephone:

Sarah Richardson, Registered Manager.

We also welcome compliments which we would ask you to also direct to Sarah via email:

[sarah.richardson@changingfuturesfostering.co.uk](mailto:sarah.richardson@changingfuturesfostering.co.uk) or by telephone on 01429 363127.