

Blue Sky

FOSTERING



Statement of Purpose

2024-2025

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Introduction

The Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate statute law and regulations, including:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services

It aims to provide children, young people, parents, carers, employees and other professionals with information about the agency and the services and facilities we provide, including:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of Blue Sky Fostering
- Information about the services and facilities provided by Blue Sky Fostering

A copy of the Statement is made available upon request to:

- Ofsted
- Purchasers of the service
- Any person working for or with the fostering service
- Any child (subject to age and understanding) placed with the fostering service
- Any parent or guardian of any child placed with the fostering service

Children and young people are also provided with age appropriate welcome guides which are in more suitable formats for them to understand.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed at least annually by the Senior Management Team.



Our Vision

☞ To make a real and measurable difference to the lives of looked after children and young people ☞

From the outset in 2005 we decided to become large enough to offer security and influence, but small enough to still offer the personal touch and support often missing from larger providers.

At Blue Sky we have a set of values which describe the way in which we want to approach everything we do. They also reflect our promise to everyone who is part of the Blue Sky family.



Treat others as you would want to be treated

We treat others with kindness and respect, even if we disagree. If we have an issue we deal with it openly, respectfully and sensitively. We will always tread gently with people's feelings.

We recognise that everyone is a unique individual. We will always seek to understand others (and to see the other person's point of view) before we seek to be understood ourselves. We will strive to listen more than we talk.

Whenever we are working with or making decisions that affect the children in our care, our aspirations will always be the same as those for our own children.



We keep our promises

When we say we'll do something or we'll get back to someone, we do it. We do not let people down – colleagues, carers, customers or young people.



We are one family, we stand shoulder to shoulder

Whatever our role, we are valued for our contribution. We discourage unhealthy competition between colleagues and teams. We are one team and we all work together. We support each other. We take care of each other. We will always strive to provide the opportunity for young people, carers, colleagues and our customers to be the very best they can be.



A problem shared is a problem solved

We learn from our mistakes. We do not hide them for fear of blame. We share problems so we can work collaboratively to find solutions. We all take responsibility to share ideas and nurture other people's ideas. We encourage a 'can do' attitude.

Our Objectives

- Provide a responsive, supportive, professional 24 hour service for foster parents, children in our fostering families, and Local Authorities.
- To deliver foster care placements that provide children who are looked after with a stable and consistent experience of a safe, warm and caring family life, to maximise and enhance their potential.
- Promote a child centred approach throughout our practice, having the child's welfare as paramount in all our decisions.
- Ensure careful matching of each child's needs and wishes with the skills and qualities of a foster parent.
- Recruit and retain foster carers from diverse backgrounds ensuring a choice of appropriate fostering families for children and young people.
- Ensure the cultural and diversity needs of each child and young person are met.
- Promote the educational achievement of young people enabling them to benefit from a range of educational activities.
- Enable young people to develop social interests, hobbies and take part in a range of activities.
- Promote a healthy lifestyle and strive to ensure that every child's emotional and physical health needs are met.
- Promote family time with the child's family and significant others during the time they are cared for by us.
- To ensure that all foster carers have access to timely support, training and guidance from suitably qualified/experienced workers.
- A commitment to on-going learning and professional development of the agency, foster carers and colleagues.
- A commitment to developing our practice through user consultation and participation.
- To deliver best value at all times.



About Us

Blue Sky Fostering is registered and inspected as a fostering provider under the Care Standards Act 2000 / Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. Our structure enables us to provide high quality foster placements for children and young people who we care for on behalf of local authorities.

Blue Sky Fostering is an owner led company which has grown organically since it was founded in 2005 to be a key provider of fostering services across the south of England whilst continuing to maintain a strong family friendly feel.

Board of Directors:

Peter Mitchell, Simon Lockyer and Grace Wyatt.

Simon Locker is the founder of Blue Sky Fostering. He and Grace Wyatt are both qualified social workers. The purpose of the Board is to support the development of Blue Sky Fostering, but the Board of Directors (outside of founder, Simon Lockyer) do not have an active role in the agency. The Board of Directors meet regularly and are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, as well as determining and reviewing the following:

- Strategic Vision
- Quality Assurance
- Annual Business Plan
- Financial Management and Performance
- Policies and Procedures
- Legal Compliance
- Culture, Values, Vision and Mission

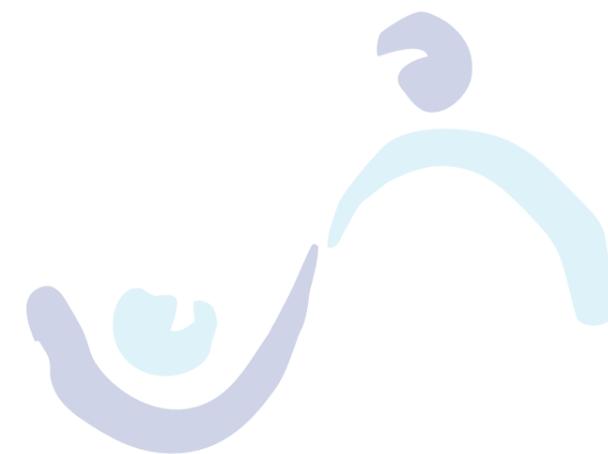
Management Structure

The Senior Management Team has responsibility for the strategic direction and day to day management of the organisation. The Senior Management Team consists of the Responsible Individual, ADM, the Registered Manager (at the current time this post is being covered by a Senior Operations Manager whilst Ofsted registration as Registered Manager is sought), Director of Relationship and Engagement, Therapeutic Led Care (TLC) Service Manager, and Senior Operations Manager. The Responsible Individual and Senior Operations Manager covering the post of Registered Manager are both qualified, experienced social workers. The Responsible Individual provides supervision to the Registered Manager.

The Senior Management Team have considerable experience in social work within the statutory, charitable and independent sectors. All have worked within the fostering / adoption field for many years in either executive, management, practice or development roles.

Members of the senior management team meet weekly as a Safeguarding Board to ensure the safeguarding culture across the organisation follows legislation, policy and practice guidance. The senior management team also meet regularly. The purpose of this team is to provide overall strategic direction for the organisation. This information is then disseminated to the Operational Management Team.

The function of the OMT is to consider how the focus of the Senior Management direction is embedded into practice / implemented consistently across the organisation.



Regional Team Structure

We have regional offices as a base for colleagues and foster carers in the communities we serve. Training and meeting facilities are available within our 6 regional offices in Hampshire, Devon, Kent, and Sussex. When there is a need to hold training or meetings for foster carers outside of these areas, rooms are hired locally. This means Blue Sky Fostering is able to deliver a local service close to the communities of children and foster carers.

Our IT network allows social workers to communicate effortlessly wherever they are based. In Ofsted Inspections in 2008, 2011, 2013, 2017 and 2022 Blue Sky Fostering received 'Outstanding' in all judgement areas based on this service delivery model.



Our Social Work Teams

The Registered Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the agency works alongside the senior management team.

The Registered Manager is responsible for the the oversight and management of the geographical areas. Each office has a team of Supervising Social Workers, Clinical Practitioners, Individual Workers / Social Work Assistants and an administrator.

Our placements include Therapeutically Led Care Services (TLC); placements with young people with complex needs; parent and child placements, standard placements and Staying Put. Educational progress is monitored and supported by the Blue Sky education team.

Our Support Service Teams

The Senior Management Team are responsible for overall management of the support services. The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring regulatory compliance and for looking at innovative ways of improving the quality of service delivered to young people, foster carers, colleagues and Local Authorities.

The Assessment Manager ensures that good quality carers are recruited, assessed, trained and presented to an effective fostering panel. The Assessment Manager is a qualified social worker with many years assessment experience in statutory childcare and fostering. The Panel and Review Manager is an experienced administrator. Our TLC core services team provide oversight, guidance and direction to colleagues and carers delivering therapeutic led care programmes to children and young people.

The Participation Lead works directly with young people, foster carers and colleagues to ensure young people are involved in all stages of participation (young people led participation, agency led participation). The Participation Lead also takes a lead on the delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, with the agency being the first fostering agency to provide this award.

The Training Co-ordinator organises and reviews all carer training with oversight from a senior manager.

Standards of Care

At Blue Sky Fostering, we aspire to provide the best possible care for our children and young people, and for our fostering families. Our expectations are defined throughout policies, procedures, and practice guidance underpinned by our fostering agreement.

Blue Sky Fostering defines the parameters and expectations of our standards throughout all our documents.

Service Provision

Blue Sky Fostering aims to work in partnership with local authorities to ensure the provision of a wide range of placements for children and young people of all ages with foster carers. At Blue Sky Fostering, we believe our role is to offer a complimentary service to Local Authorities to enable the provision of a wide range of safe, secure and appropriate foster care options including:

Standard Fostering Emergency Placements are provided at short notice and supported by a 24 hour emergency response service.

Bridging Placements are a short term, flexible placement, focussing on ensuring the most sensitive transition for the child into and from the placement.

Short Term Placements can be providing care for a few days, weeks or months while plans are being made for the child's long term future.

Long Term Placements are where foster carers provide permanent care for a child up to and into adult independence where adoption is not an option.

Permanency is promoted and encouraged to offer a stable home for life.

Sibling Placements are placements where siblings are either placed together or separately with us facilitating family time between siblings.

Single Placements have highly experienced carers looking after children and young people who have very complex needs and/or challenging behaviour.

Respite Breaks are where foster carers provide a break for parents and additional support where their own support networks are lacking. This can be an overnight stay or a couple of weeks.

Unaccompanied Children are placements for separated children. Support packages include immigration; supporting religious, languages and cultural needs; integration with community and faith groups.

Blue Sky Specialist Fostering Parent & Child(ren) Placements provide a safe and supportive placement to a parent & child(ren). Some parent & child(ren) placements can also be an assessment placement where Blue Sky employees and carers assess the parenting capacity.

Blue Sky's Therapeutic Led Care (TLC) service aims to meet the needs of those children and young people who cannot manage or thrive at the current time in a standard placement.

Blue Sky wishes to offer a fostering placement to all children and young people including those with more complex needs and also young people who need the support of our Therapeutic Led Care (TLC) services.

The TLC service provides intensive support to both the children and young people and also their carers. The TLC service works with children and young people of all ages. Services are based heavily in trauma recovery, attachment based parenting and also behaviour modification. Carers receive additional training. The TLC Service Manager and TLC Practice Manager receive consultation from Blue Sky's Consultant Clinical Psychologist. The TLC team consists of qualified therapists, DDP trained practitioners and experienced and skilled social workers and some colleagues trained in behaviour modification via the Social Learning Centre in Oregon. DDP training is provided to social workers.

TLC is offered as two services – under 12 and +12. The main aim of the under 12 service is to support children and young people to make the much needed progress to form secure and trusting attachments with their caregiver in order to begin to view the world differently and to be enabled to accept that their environment can be safe and secure. The main aim of the +12 service is to support and teach the young people through an intensive programme to build the skills needed to be supported to thrive in a lower level, less intense and less structured environment.

The Matching Process

BB We recognise and respect that every child and young person is a unique individual BB

At Blue Sky Fostering all placements are carefully 'matched' to ensure that the needs of children and young people can be best met by the foster carers put forward with their level of skills and experience.

Referrals are initially received by the Placements Team, who liaise closely with the social work team, local authority colleagues and foster carers, to ensure that the child's needs will be fully met through the best possible match.

Children and young people placed with Blue Sky Fostering will never be expected to share a bedroom with another fostered child or child of the foster carer, other than where they are siblings.



Supporting Carers to care for Children

Blue Sky Fostering Supervising Social Workers recognise that despite not having case management responsibility for the child, it is their responsibility to ensure that the needs of the child are paramount.

Monthly supervision meetings take place between the Supervising Social Worker and foster carers, as well as additional support visits as required. Supervision meetings focus on positive developments for the carers and children, as well as areas of concern. The Supervising Social Worker also has responsibility for assisting the carer in their career development and identifying training and development needs and methods for developing the carer's skills and knowledge.

A record of supervision is provided to the foster carer and placed upon their fostering file following the supervision.

Supervising Social Workers ensure that they regularly see and speak with children and young people alone when visiting the home.

Team Meetings

Regular Foster Carer Team meetings are held across the Blue Sky Fostering region to enable foster carers to meet and socialise together, share good practice ideas, develop peer support and receive information from the agency. The meetings are attended by Blue Sky colleagues and at times also attended by managers.

Emergency Support

Blue Sky Fostering provides a 24/7, 365 days a year on-call service to foster carers staffed by suitably knowledgeable Blue Sky colleagues who have access to an on call manager. There is also always a senior manager available for the on call manager to consult with. This team also provide a family placement service for Local Authorities for the placement of children in an emergency.

Annual Review

All foster carers have an annual review to ensure that they continue to be suitable to hold registration and approval as a foster carer. The Reviewing Officer, supported by the Blue Sky business team, ensures that all statutory requirements are fulfilled.

Policies & Procedures

Foster carers have access to a comprehensive Fostering Handbook. The handbook contains information, policies and procedures on all aspects of the fostering task.

Record Keeping

Foster carers are expected to maintain records of events and information pertaining to the child or young person living with them and are able to upload these directly onto the agency's secure database.

We Foster Too - supporting children who foster

Blue Sky Fostering recognise the significant contribution children of foster carers play in successful placements. Events and opportunities are provided for them to come together and discuss with agency colleagues and other children of foster carers, the impact, positive and negatives of sharing their homes and families.

Foster Talk Membership

All Blue Sky Fostering foster carers are entitled to annual membership of Foster Talk. This is paid for by Blue Sky Fostering and gives the foster carers access to advice and guidance including financial and legal advice and insurance.

Finance

All registered Blue Sky Fostering foster carers receive an allowance paid every fortnight during placement. The level of this allowance is dependent on the type of placement and experience of the foster carer.

All foster carers are self-employed and as such must pay their own tax and National Insurance which is a nominal amount. Detailed financial guidance alongside details of a specialist accountant to assist with tax issues is provided with the Fostering Handbook. Foster carers are entitled to 2 weeks paid respite, alongside a mileage allowance for excessive mileage taken.

Data Protection

We use a secure encrypted system to send information externally about young people and foster carers. We take Data Protection seriously and have ensured all colleagues have received GDPR training to ensure personal and personal / sensitive information is safe and secure.

Having Fun

At Blue Sky Fostering we recognise that taking care of other people's children is a serious business and can be challenging and at times stressful. Blue Sky Fostering encourages foster carers to come together and socialise. We also organise regular social events where carers can have fun with likeminded people.

Supporting Children & Young People

Our Supervising Social Workers / Individual Workers speak to the children and young people in a Blue Sky Fostering placement alone at regular intervals. This is of course on top of the placing social workers duty to visit children regularly.

Blue Sky believes if appropriate packages of support are available to foster carers; children and young people are more able to live in a family environment. Blue Sky's service is designed to be flexible and responsive.

The range of services available for children & young people include:

- Regular events, activities and opportunities for participation
- Social activities for the children of foster carers
- Access to national organisations for looked after children and young people
- Practical assistance with transport or access to external services / facilities
- Supervised contact with families
- Life story or permanency preparation
- Education & therapeutic professionals to provide assistance directly to children or advice to our social workers

Education

Children who are looked after have often had disrupted schooling and can sometimes struggle in a school environment. We have an experienced education team who provide practical and emotional support, training and guidance to carers. We have seen a steady increase in educational stability and achievements.

Participation Groups

The voice of the young person and their participation in the continued development of Blue Sky is of central importance. We have a dedicated Participation Lead who oversees the delivery of participation by the local teams. Young people inform us on developments for the agency and engage in young people led participation. Young people are invited to contribute to their own magazine/ newsletter or video, 'The Blue Sky'.

Events for the children of foster carers are also run to enable foster carers' children to prepare for fostering and share experiences with other children and young people who live in fostering families.

Recruitment, Assessment & Approval

Blue Sky Fostering is committed to the recruitment of foster carers who can meet the needs of children and young people through the provision of high quality care. All prospective foster carers who make an enquiry are subject to a rigorous assessment and vetting procedure.

This includes:

- Initial Home Visit
- At least three references
- Previous partner references
- A minimum of 8 interviews with applicants and additional sessions with household members
- Medical report
- Identity Checks, Enhanced DBS
- Health & Safety assessments
- A two stage assessment process with mandatory training
- Full Form F assessment

The assessment process takes 4-6 months and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay. All information obtained is held on file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Panel

The assessment report is presented to Blue Sky Fostering's independent Panel. The Panel is made up of a minimum of 5 members who have a variety of expertise and knowledge including health, advocacy, education, social work, foster care and experience of being in care. The function of the Panel is to provide an independent quality assurance role recommending whether the potential carers presented to them are suitable to become good foster carers.

The final decision for approval is made by the Agency Decision Maker - a senior manager who is social work qualified and has extensive fostering experience. If the applicants are unhappy with the final decision they have a right to appeal.

This can be made direct to the agency or direct to the Independent Review Mechanism.

Panels are held virtually across the Blue Sky region.

Foster Care Agreements are completed following approval, covering a range of contractual information and undertakings including:

- To care appropriately for children & young people in placement, as identified in the foster placement agreement
- To inform Blue Sky Fostering of any relevant significant changes to their household or details
- Follow procedures laid down within the agency's handbook

All foster carers have access to the Fostering Handbook which details:

- Standards of care
- Support & Training
- Complaints & Appeals
- Child protection procedures
- Annual carer review process
- Insurance provision
- Confidentiality procedures
- Behaviour management policy

Training & Development

In order to offer children and young people a high standard of care our foster carers are trained and equipped to meet the demands of the task.

Our training and assessment framework, which incorporates the Training, Support & Development Standard (TSD), exceeds the National Minimum Standards and is underpinned within a framework of equal access to training and learning, anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunity.

Skills to Foster Training

All potential carers attend this two day training as part of their initial assessment, prior to concluding their assessment. Alongside this we offer pre-panel workshops and online training in order to prepare applicants more fully for the fostering task.

Post Approval Induction

Following assessment all foster carers receive a thorough induction. This includes ensuring that carers are clear about policies and procedures including child protection, safe care and health and safety. Induction subjects include:

- Working with Blue Sky Fostering
- Training and Development
- Finances
- Support and Supervision
- Referral and matching process

The First 12 Months & TSD

Within the first 12 months, foster carers are required to complete a workbook in line with the Training Support & Development Standards (TSD).

Blue Sky provides numerous courses (both facilitated in house and externally) to assist foster carers in meeting these standards and developing their skills and knowledge.

After the induction process approved foster carers are invited to start their Level Two core training.

Courses include

- Child Protection / Safeguarding
- Recording / Data Protection
- Diversity & Discrimination
- De-escalation
- Attachment & Child Development
- Safer Caring including Health & Safety
- Administering Medication

Level Two courses include

- Digital Families
- Managing Allegations
- Drug & Alcohol Awareness
- Promoting Sexual Health
- Parent & Child Assessments
- CSE & Missing From Care
- Self-harm Awareness
- Caring for a YP who has been sexually abused
- Family Safe Care
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Promoting Identity

Level Three / Four

- Independent learning / specialist courses
- Foundations for Attachment

Statistics

Statistics as of 1st April 2024

Blue Sky Fostering had 230 fostering families approved to take a range of placements aged 0-18 years. This includes foster carers who cater for sibling groups, parent & child, disabilities and children with challenging behaviours requiring our TLC service.

255 children and young people were placed with Blue Sky Fostering approved foster carers.

Ages

The young people in our care up to 31/03/2024 were aged:

- 0-5 - 11.9%
- 6-10 - 21.2%
- 11-18 - 59.9%
- 18+ - (Staying Put) 7%

Success

Blue Sky foster carers survey 2023-2024

“It’s all about the child and making sure the child has the best out of their lives with you... we’re there to fight for them. There’s been a lot of happiness and it has changed our lives because we’ve learnt so much more about the need and why fostering is so important and we’re glad to be part of that.” – Lee & Karen, Blue Sky Foster Carers.

“Seeing him develop and grow and form an attachment with his mum has been the most rewarding thing. It is very satisfying knowing that I have helped a family go on to independence to live safely together.” – Mary, a Blue Sky P&C Foster Carer.

“Since becoming a single foster carer and things changing with the boys, Blue Sky has put in extra support. There are people looking out for me, reminding me to look after myself.” – Lia, a Blue Sky Foster Carer.

Young people’s survey

- 99% of our young people state they are happy in placement and that they feel their carers are ‘good at what they do.’

Complaints and Outcomes

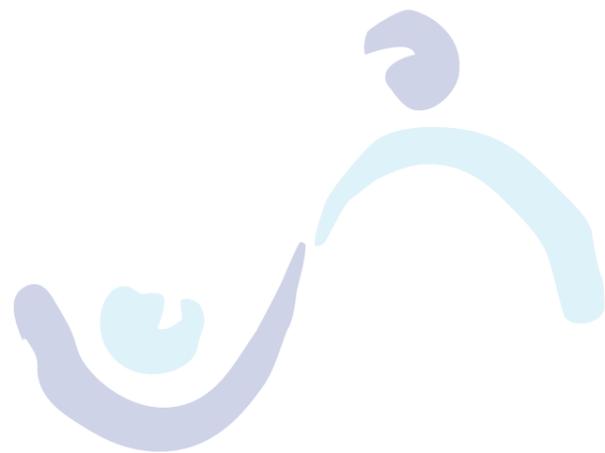
Blue Sky Fostering has a comprehensive complaints procedure, which is made widely available in different formats suitable for children, young people, carers, parents and professionals.

Again, Blue Sky Fostering exceeds the National Minimum Standards by commissioning a social worker that is independent from the team / carer to investigate the complaint further, if the complainant continues to be unhappy following the informal problem solving stage.

For a copy of our Complaints Procedure or to make a complaint, please contact the Registered Manager on **01794 590 003**.

We welcome requests for a copy of this document in Braille, Audio, Large Print, Alternative Languages and E-text formats.

Please phone **01794 590 136** to request a copy.



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0800 035 6499
www.blueskyfostering.co.uk