



ASPIRE FOSTER CARE

Statement Of Purpose

Aspire Foster Care.

Reg address: First Floor Office, 20 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 8SD
Company reg no: 5669293. Director: Nigel Grogan. Co Secretary: Nigel Sabell

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Operational Status of Aspire Foster Care

**Aspire Foster Care, (AFC), is a company limited by guarantee number
5669293**

Aspire Foster Care is an Independent Fostering Agency and became operational on the 1st April 2006.

AFC has a set of standards and criteria that it regularly revises and updates to reflect changes in legislation, policy and good practice in order to ensure the effective provision of the fostering services offered and for other services offered to children and families.

The numbers and grades of all staff are adequate for the effective provision of the fostering services offered by AFC.

AFC has a clear training and support programme for carers designed to support the carers in meeting the needs of the children placed.

AFC has access to appropriate medical, professional and legal advice.

AFC has one office, which is located in South Birmingham.

AFC Foster Carers and staff, are located across the Birmingham and surrounding areas.

Our referrals are predominantly from the West Midland Authorities, although we occasionally receive them from other parts of the country.

Our Purpose

To give looked after children the best possible positive experience of family life, via the provision of the highest standards of Foster Care.

Our Goal

Our goal is to work toward providing the best service for children and young people, Foster Carers and placing authorities.

Our motivation is the belief that children and young people are wonderfully unique individuals, whose lives can be positively influenced whilst they experience a period of time being looked after. It is essential that the key people involved in their care, demonstrate a Child-centred philosophy and are committed to Partnership working.

Statement of Principles

1. That all children have a right to some experience of positive family life, thus encouraging a sense of belonging and identity which will be of benefit to them in moving more successfully into adulthood.
2. That each individual family shall be free to function as is natural to them and shall not be subject to unnecessary interference, whilst acknowledging that each family will be accountable to AFC for carrying out their duties in accordance with AFC principles. Moreover, support, training and advice will be available from the Staff Team.
3. AFC is underpinned by our Christian ethos and therefore all prospective Foster Families will be made aware of and be expected to uphold the ethos and values of the organisation. AFC believes in the development of the whole child and is therefore committed to the emotional, physical and where appropriate, spiritual development of each individual child/young person.
4. That the skills and knowledge and services of a wide range of professional and lay people shall be drawn upon to ensure that each is given the chance to reach their potential and that families are adequately resourced and equipped in their task. (People are our greatest asset).

Aims and Objectives

Our aim is to 'improve the outcomes for children and young people in public care through the provision of a quality child care service'.

Our objectives are: -

- To recruit a diverse range of Foster Carers, from within the West Midlands region, who will provide a high standard of care to 'looked after children' aged 0 -18 years.
- To develop a "quality fostering service", including same day, respite and resources permitting, remand placements, for children and young people in the 'looked after' care system and when requested, to support young people through to independence.
- To develop plans with placing authorities in order to meet the individual needs of children and young people. These plans may include therapy, supervised contact, education, and life skills.
- Afford ongoing training and support services to all Foster Carers in order to promote their professional development, and to ensure that the focus is always maintained upon children and young peoples care, safety and progress whilst they remain 'looked after'.
- A focus on continuous improvement, quality assurance and a desire to meet or exceed all of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

Key objectives for 2010

- To increase our numbers of Foster Carers in order to provide a wider choice of placements to Local Authorities.
- To continue to secure provider contracts with existing and new Local Authorities
- To ensure that by the end of 2010, all Foster Carers will have completed the CWDC Foster Carer Induction Standards
- To improve the levels of post approval training for Foster Carers and levels of attendance at such training
- To improve our OFSTED rating when next inspected

Model of Care

AFC is committed to the principles which underly the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2002
- UK National Standards for Foster care
- Fostering Network Code of Practice on the Recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of Foster Carers
- GSCC Social Care codes of practice
- CWDC Induction Standards

AFC will seek to provide foster homes to meet the needs of individual young people and sibling groups. AFC will provide quality care in a family setting through a variety of foster care options.

Our aims and objectives are to meet the needs of deprived and damaged children and young people, within the environment of stable and supportive families, who are well supported to undertake this task.

The current information on patterns and outcomes for children and young people “looked after,” makes sobering reading. AFC intends to practically challenge these outcomes, by placing children and young people with Foster Carers who are committed to meeting their needs and where possible to assist children and young people in re-integrating back into their home communities.

Respect and recognition will always be given for the importance of ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of each young person and their families.

Consideration must be given to the gender, sexuality and any disability of the young person who is fostered, so that individual needs are met in every placement.

Continuity and consistency of training will have a high priority in order to support the Foster Carers and social workers thus enabling them to meet the needs of the child/young person, and where a young person is placed on remand, the objectives of the Court.

Respect for the Foster Carers will always be shown, as will the recognition of the uniqueness of each individual Foster family. This will always be a priority when identifying an appropriate placement for a child/young person.

Partnership working will be encouraged with all those involved in wanting what is best for the fostered child/young person.

Directors of Aspire Foster Care

Nigel Sabell Non executive Director, Company Secretary & Agency Accountant.

Nigel Grogan Managing Director

Management and staffing structure of Aspire Foster Care

Nigel Sabell.....Company Secretary & Responsible Individual.

Nigel Grogan..... Registered Manager.

Ann Moore..... Supervising Social Worker

Marie Fields..... Supervising Social Worker

Kay Sabell..... Office/Finance Manager

Julia Reddihough..... Administrative assistant

Kate Gooch..... Sessional Worker.

Nigel Sabell Chartered Accountant, Company Secretary and Agency Responsible Individual/Decision Maker.

Qualifications

Bachelor of Commerce.

Associate Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

Associate Member of the Institute for Independent Business.

Experience Nigel is a qualified Accountant, with significant experience of managing the finances and business strategy for organisations of similar size to Aspire. Nigel was a Local Authority Foster Carer for 4 years and is a Trustee of BIG Ministries, a Christian Children's Charity.

Nigel Grogan..... Managing Director & Registered Manager.

Qualifications Diploma in Social Work/Dip HE

BA Hons in Applied Social Science (2:1)

Diploma in Management

Experience..... Nigel has a total of 24 years experience in Social Care Work, including 12 years experience working in Independent Fostering Agencies, which includes previously establishing a Remand Fostering Scheme. He also has 3 years experience working in Local Authority children's residential units and 5 years in Local Authority Family Support Services.

Ann Moore..... Supervising Social Worker
Qualifications..... (CQSW) University of Central England
NVQ Level 1 Child Care and Education

Experience..... Ann has worked in a Children and Families Team with a Local Authority, and as a Senior Social Worker at a Child Protection Unit. She has chaired Child Protection Review Conferences and has also worked with schools as an Education Social Worker. Ann has worked as a Supervising Social Worker with Aspire for 4 years.

Marie Fields..... Supervising Social Worker
Qualifications BA Hons 1st class in Social Work
BA Hons in English/Politics

Experience..... Marie is the latest member of staff to join AFC. Marie has experience of setting up and running a lone parent support group and developing parenting classes. She has been a community lecturer, working with non English speaking asylum seekers. Marie also has 5 yrs experience in Local Authority child protection services.

Kay Sabell..... Office and Finance Manager
Qualifications..... Cert. Ed. (Manchester)

Experience..... Kay has previously worked for 4 years as a foster carer for a Local Authority. She has established and still runs an accredited pre school, registered with OFSTED, organising all administrative matters and managing a team of 5 staff. Kay has completed a number of courses including Child Protection, and First Aid. Kay has worked as an Administrative Officer with Aspire for 4 years.

Julia Reddihough Administrator
Qualifications Diploma in secretarial training (Leeds)
Level 2 in business administration

Experience Julia has worked at Aspire Foster Care for 3years in an administrative role and has several years previous experience in secretarial work.

Kate Gooch Sessional Worker.
Qualifications..... 5 A Levels (3A's 2 B's)
A post-graduate, LLB Law at Birmingham University

Experience..... Kate has worked, both as a play worker, often having a supervisory role, in an after school club and as a youth worker. She has experience of working with teenagers with learning and behavioural difficulties and has also worked as a sports coach, using her Community Sports Leaders Award. Kate has worked for 2 years as a Project Worker for an Independent Fostering Agency, supervising daytime activities for young people on remand.

Foster carers - Recruitment, Assessment and Approval

The Recruitment to Approval Process

No formal qualifications are required and any adult, over 21 years old, can apply to become a foster carer. Carers can be married, single or partners and will be chosen on their ability to meet the needs of children and the Agency. The process of becoming an Aspire approved foster carer has several stages, which culminates in them being considered by our Fostering Panel.

AFC will use a variety of methods to recruit interested applicants, including advertising media, such as the Internet, Yellow Pages, other widely read publications and personal recommendation. On approach to AFC, all applicants will be screened by the Agency, at whose discretion an informal visit will be arranged.

Home Visit	To make sure that applicants understand what is entailed in professional fostering and are likely to meet the basic requirements. The task will be discussed and an application form sent to them if agreed by the Registered Manager.
Application	Application form is received. Applicants will be invited to Foster Carer preparation group training.
Training	A four day introductory training course which enables prospective carers to gain an understanding of what is expected of foster carers and the type of children they will be expected to care for. It is during the training that prospective foster carers often make the decision to proceed or not. Applicants new to fostering undertake foundation training that follows the Fostering Network's Skills to Foster' course with elements from other training also incorporated.
References	An enhanced CRB check is required for all adults in the family. Checks on Local Authority and Child Protection records, Education (school age children), and employment (including fostering) and personal references will be sent for, once the application is received. A full medical report and interviews with personal referees will be completed during the assessment period.
Assessment	All our prospective foster carers are subject to a rigorous competency based assessment. All recommended statutory references are taken up. At least two personal referees are interviewed, as well as employment references being taken up, if relevant. An allocated Assessing Social Worker will visit the prospective foster carer to gain information about all members of the household in order to assess their experience and suitability for fostering with Aspire. Subjects covered are individual profiles,

relationships/partnerships, support networks, valuing diversity, vulnerabilities and parenting capacity.

Panel The completed assessment or Form F report is presented to the Fostering Panel. During the Panel Meeting the applicants are asked questions about any issues raised by the Panel Members and then informed if they have been approved. The Panel Meeting Minutes are approved by the Responsible Individual and then the foster carers are approved and ready to take placements. The Aspire Fostering Panel will recommend the scope of approval for each household. The final decision is made by the RI (Responsible Individual), one of the Directors of the company. Approval criteria may change over time, but only with the approval of the RI.

The Aspire Fostering Panel

The Aspire Fostering Panel is made up of predominantly Independent members, and includes School Teachers, Social Workers, ex and current Local Authority Foster Carers and a Health Visitor.

The Panel considers:

- First time approvals
- Re approvals for changes to foster carer's status
- First annual reviews of foster carers
- Complaints and allegations against foster carers

The Panel receives management information about the outcome of foster carers' annual reviews and Responsible Individual (RI) decisions.

The Panel works with Aspire in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, Aspire Policies and the Aspire foster carer profile, job description and practice agreement (available on request).

The Panel makes recommendations to the Agency about approval status and criteria. The Panel may also recommend certain requirements, such as additional or specialist training, before placements, or specified types of placement, should be made.

All Panel recommendations go to the RI (Responsible Individual,) for the final decision. Any RI decision contrary to a recommendation of the Panel will be reported back to Panel at a subsequent meeting.

The Panel will also consider all complaints and allegations against foster carers and will recommend whether the carers should continue to foster and if so on what basis. The Panel oversees the quality of the assessment and review process, acts in an advisory capacity for aspects of Aspires fostering work, hears appeals against decisions of the RI (where relevant), and advises on complaints

After Approval: Successful applicants will continue to receive the necessary information about the task of foster caring, covering how placements will be made, payments organised and developing and assessing their skills. Foster carers sign a Foster Carer Agreement which commits them and Aspire to certain ways of working, including:

- The Fostering Services Regulations & Standards 2002
- Adherence to the stated philosophy and established working practices of Aspire
- The principles of teamwork and partnership
- A training and development programme that includes regular attendance at training events and support group meetings
- Annual review and appraisal

Management support of foster carers

Supervising Social Worker

Every foster carer has a named supervising social worker to oversee their professional development and provide day to day support. The supervising social worker will visit once every three weeks (subject to holidays, sickness etc or by special agreement, and no less than once a month) and is responsible for completing the foster carers' annual review.

Emergency Support

Foster carers have access to advice and support from an Aspire social worker 24 hours a day.

Specialist Advice

Specialist advice, from experts in a particular field is provided to social workers and foster carers when the need is identified at a planning or strategy meeting.

Respite/Holiday

Carers are entitled to up to 14 nights respite per annum. (Pro rata, for children not in placement the full year). For Permanent Placements the rate of respite may be negotiated.

Individual Personal Development Plan and Career Development

Aspire offers foster carers a well paid career opportunity working from home. A personal development plan will be provided for each carer, once approved by panel.

Directors' Visits (could be planned or unannounced visits)

Foster Carer Support Group

This is arranged by the foster carers.

Safe Care and Record Keeping

All carers are expected to follow agency guidance about safe care practices for themselves and their families and to develop their own "Household Safe Caring Policy". This enables Aspire to place, with confidence, children who have experienced abusive situations. It also aids the investigation of allegations and reduces the risk of unfounded allegations being made.

A comprehensive record is kept of all placements, including education and health and often an individual daily log kept by the carer. Carers are required to complete review and other reports and more detailed reports for assessment cases.

Insurance Cover

Insurance is provided for household damage and in the event of allegations and all foster Carers will become individual members of the Fostering Network

Placements and Services provided by Aspire Foster Care

Placements Provided

The following placements are available:

Planned short term, task centered placements

Working towards specific goals. These may include assessment placements, bridging, preparation for adoption, permanency or placements which meet other specific care, plan objectives.

Planned longer term placements

For individual children, or young people and sibling groups. Carers are available who are able to make a longer-term commitment and offer stability for young people until they move on to independence.

Sibling Placements

Are available, in order to keep children and young people together. Carers will have been assessed as having sufficient space, skills and energy to take on this demanding task.

Parent and child placements

Will be offered with carers who have sufficient experience and training and an interest in helping young parents to develop their parenting skills and who can offer assessment and monitoring as required.

Unplanned, short notice or emergency placements

May also be available including the possibility of placements for asylum seekers, or other specialist requirements.

Services provided

1. The provision of supervision and support by a qualified social worker in addition to that given by Local Authorities.
2. Provide quality training for all Foster Carers. This will commence during the assessment process and continue with regular post approval training events for Foster Carers.
3. Where possible, AFC will facilitate the provision of respite for Foster Carers as appropriate.
4. Emergency cover (24 hours every day of the year). Each foster carer to receive contact numbers as part of their Foster Carer Handbook.
5. Any specific therapeutic support package or leaving care programme will either be provided by the placing authority or arranged/provided by AFC at an agreed cost.
6. Support of contact arrangements between the placed child and his/her birth family where agreed and in the best interests of the child.

Aspire Foster Care

Number of Foster Carers, including respite, approved on 1st April 2010 17

Number of children in placement on 1st April 2010 16

Total number of Complaints received between April 1st 09 and 31st March 2010 1

Number of Formal Complaints received 1

Compliments, Comments and Complaints

All Foster Carers will be made aware of Aspire Foster Care Complaints Procedure as part of their induction training. Children will be verbally informed and formally notified of the procedure via the Children & Young Persons Guide. Local Authorities will also be made aware of the policy and be expected to inform the parents of such. Any complaints will be taken seriously and addressed as a matter of priority. A copy of this procedure will be given to any party entitled to it (FSR 2002 18.3).

All children and young people will be given a copy of a 'Children and Young Person's Guide'. Included in the guide is an explanation of who they should talk to if they have a problem or complaint. In the event of a complaint being made by a young person, it will be taken seriously; and AFC will ensure that s/he is safeguarded from any reprisals and the child's social worker for the placing authority will be informed.

If a child has infrequent contact or none with his birth family s/he is entitled to the provision of an Independent Visitor via the responsible placing authority. The role of the visitor is to 'visit, befriend and advise' the child/young person. Some children may require the support of an advocate to assist if they have particular and specific special needs.

We want everyone to be satisfied with our service, however, if anyone is feeling dissatisfied with any aspect of Aspire Foster Care, attempts will be made as soon as possible to resolve the issue in an informal way. It is not intended that all problems that arise in day-to-day childcare should be elevated to the status of a complaint. A matter, which is promptly resolved to everyone's satisfaction, when drawn to the attention of a member of the Aspire Foster Care team, is not something that requires referral to the formal 'Complaints Procedure'.

This procedure is to provide a framework for handling complaints that have not been sorted out by discussion. All complaints to be dealt with under this procedure are wherever possible, to be presented formally, in writing. The complaint will be logged in the 'Complaints Book'.

A copy of AFC'S complaints procedure can be provided upon request

Ofsted should be informed of all complaints, the contact details being as follows.

**Ofsted's National Business Unit, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square
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