



**The Homefinding  
& Fostering**

Agency

# Statement of Purpose



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# Introduction



This Statement of Purpose is for The Homefinding & Fostering Agency, an independent fostering provider (IFP) with our head office at 67 College Road, Maidstone, Kent. ME15 6SX.

Kent Homefinding and Fostering Ltd. Was incorporated on 18 May 1999, having started operations in 1996. Now known as The Homefinding & Fostering Agency, we were founded and are still run by our original team, including our managing director, Terry Casey, himself an experienced foster carer.

For almost twenty years, we have worked in close partnership with local authorities to help them find high quality foster homes for the children and young people in their care.

This document provides a broad range of information for a wide audience, which includes:

- Current and prospective foster carers
- Children and young people who are living with our foster carers
- Birth family members and other people connected to children and young people
- Local authorities that work with us or might wish to
- Members of our staff and contractors
- **Other colleagues in children's social care**
- The public

It meets requirements as set out by:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004
- The Fostering Services Regulations (2011)
- The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011)
- The Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (2015)

This document is reviewed and updated annually. The photographs included herein were taken during our activity days in August and October 2015. All have been considered in light of safeguarding best practice and appropriate approval for their use.

# Our mission and objectives

*Our mission is to provide safe, loving and affirming homes for children and young people, who cannot live with their birth-families and have been entrusted into our care by local authorities. Through exemplary and regular support provided to our foster carers, we effectively manage trauma, build confidence and ensure that young people leave our care with the life skills they need to become secure, happy and self-supporting members of society.*

Our objectives are:

- To provide high quality family life for children and young people with our foster carers with minimal disruption
- To ensure our foster carers are supported and supervised to full competency in the fostering task and respected as co- professionals
- To carefully match the individual needs of children and young people with our foster carers
- To understand, acknowledge, promote and respect individual cultural and religious difference and demonstrate and encourage a positive and healthy attitude to sexuality
- To support the academic and learning needs of children and young people , with high aspirations as a goal for all
- To ensure our foster homes are safe, loving, nurturing and stimulating environments where good physical health and emotional wellbeing is actively encouraged
- To include the views of children and young people in the decisions made about their lives and where appropriate use this knowledge to improve our services
- To work collaboratively and openly with local authorities and other services to achieve outcomes for children and young people that do justice to their potential

# Our status and constitution

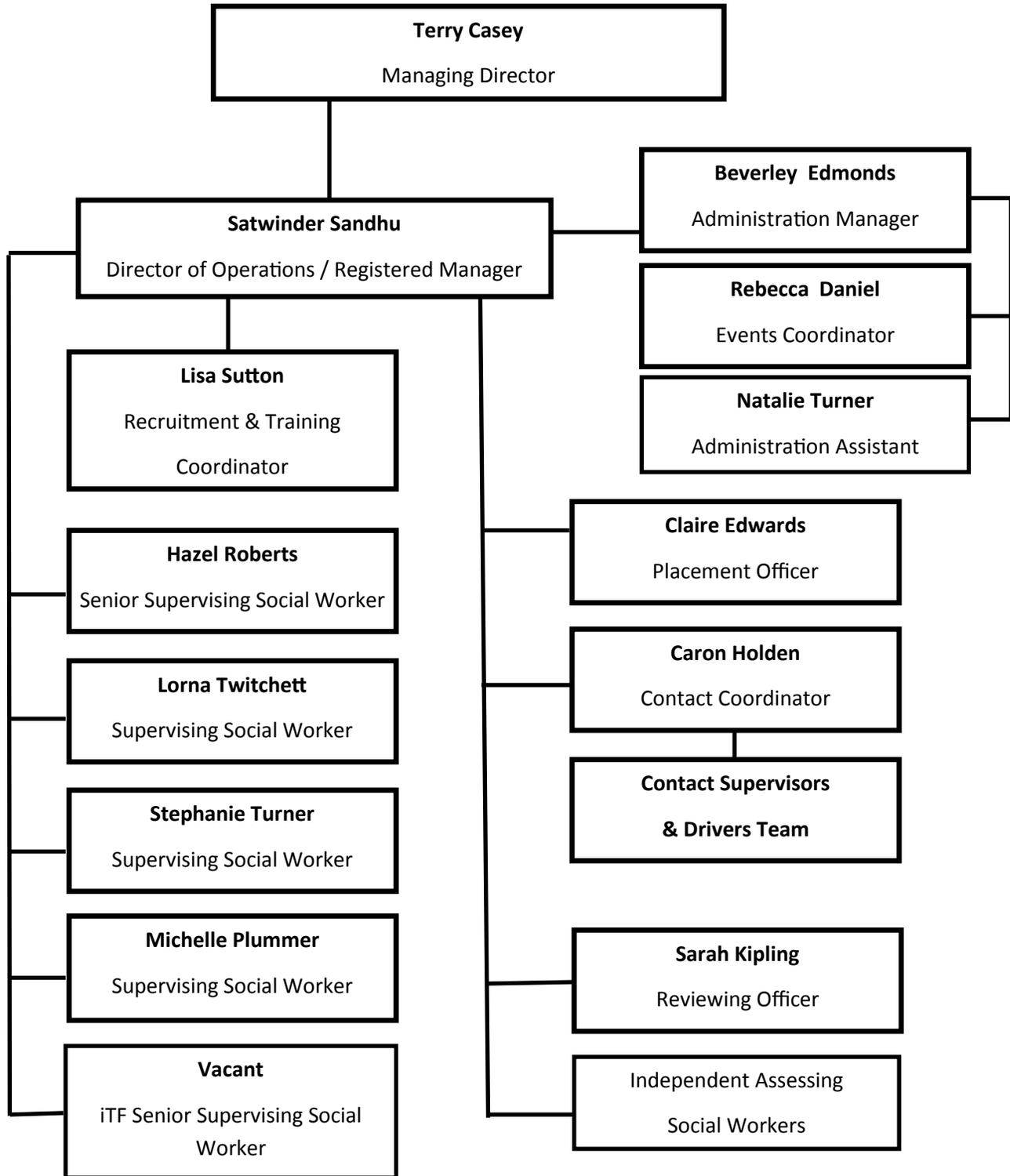
The Homefinding & Fostering Agency is:

- A private limited company registered in England and Wales under the Companies Act 1985 with company number is 3772302
- Registered as an independent fostering provider under provision of the Care Standards Act 2000
- Regulated by Ofsted under registration number is: SC036653
- Formed and owned by Terry Casey, who is the managing director and responsible individual
- Managed by Satwinder Sandhu, who is the director of operations and the registered manager.

The Agency Decision Maker for the company is Jayne Charlton.



# Our people



All members of our staff are fully and appropriately qualified for their roles and have a current enhanced DBS check. Social workers are registered with the HCPC. The registered manager is working towards a MBA. Please see our website for more detail on individuals.

# Our way of doing things

The Homefinding & Fostering Agency takes pride in its' good reputation shared among children, young people, care leavers, foster carers, birth parents and our customers.

We consistently focus on the needs of our foster carers so that they can best meet the needs of children and young people they care for.

Through collaboration with our foster care association established in 2015, 'The Sunshine Association' we have created meaningful values to guide our work. The Homefinding & Fostering Agency is genuinely committed to maintaining an ethos where these values can be positively incorporated into daily working practice:

## Value

*We are deeply proud of the outcomes achieved by our foster carers and members of staff. Everyone working for and with us is unique and this diversity is important to achieving our common goal of ongoing daily improvements and longer-term outcomes for the children and young people in our care.*

## Respect

*We recognise that all foster carers, children, young people and staff bring difference to the work we do because of who we are and our own life experiences. We collectively acknowledge and respect this and where possible draw upon our rich collective experience of individual benefit and the greater good.*

## Commitment and Discipline

*Doing what we should, when we should. Practising a high degree of professional discipline and working conscientiously. We will hold personal accountability, do what we say we will, and what must or ought to be done when it should be done. We will passionately uphold high standards of integrity and show the courage to say and do the right thing.*



## Stewardship

*We will create a legacy we can all be proud of. Where we elect to initiate change, we will endeavor to leave things better than we found them. We will protect our reputation as professionals and as a fostering agency. We will keep things simple by ensuring that change is meaningful, achievable and sustainable.*

## Honesty & Integrity

*We will always do what we believe to be the right course of action and do it to the best of our ability. Our professional work will be carried out fairly, ethically and transparently to strengthen the trust of our foster carers, our customers, our suppliers and all of our staff members.*

Since 1996 the staff and foster carers at The Homefinding & Fostering Agency have worked very hard to build a reputation with all our stakeholders based upon reliability, trust, cooperation and high quality practice. These values, agreed upon by all of our foster carers and staff will underpin our ongoing work.



# Our range of services

The Homefinding & Fostering Agency provides services that offer a range of options for children, young people, their birth parents and others closely linked to them.

We specialise in permanence, investing heavily in the relationships our staff build with the children and young people placed with our foster carers needing permanent homes.

Our experienced placement officer reviews all requests made to the agency for fostering placements. We take telephone requests out of hours. We also subscribe to Placement Link, the new online matching service.

The full range of services on offer is:

## Short term fostering

We operate a service, which allows local authorities to refer children and young people to us for short term foster care. This can be from one night and up to two years. We operate an emergency service which allows for same day placements. Short term placements can also involve bridging and task-centred work whereby foster carers may care for a child or young person before they move to a permanent family, including via adoption.

## Long term fostering

Children and young people who are known to need a permanent new family can be matched with approved foster carers. Sometimes children and young people placed short term can be formally matched with their foster carers on a long term basis. Life Story Work is available on request for children in permanent placements.

## Parent & Child

A parent, or both parents, and child can be placed with one of our specialist foster carers who will support them in the care of the child, teach them new skills as well as assess their ability and capacity to manage independently once they leave the foster family.

## Sibling groups

We believe in keeping brothers and sisters together when it is right for them. Many of our foster carers are able to care for more than one child, including some who have the time and space for larger groups of four or five. Our social work team is experienced in contributing to Together or Apart assessments when local authorities need to determine the best plan for each child in a sibling group.

## Unaccompanied Young People

Children and young people who have come to the UK to seek asylum or refuge need foster care too and we have families who are experienced in this work and able to manage some of the unknowns and uncertainties involved.

## Respite

Many of our foster carers support one another by taking children and young people for short periods and are able to offer this service to local authorities too.

## Integrated Therapeutic Fostering

iTF is a new service that we provide with the children's charity Childhood First. The service enables children and young who need intensive therapeutic support, and yet are able to cope with a family setting, to experience a consistent family life at the same time as healing the trauma of their past, supporting their recovery and developing improved socialisation and life outcomes.

Launching in January 2016, this service will provide an alternative option for placing authorities midway between a standard foster care placement and a more specialised residential therapeutic placement. iTF foster carers participate in an accredited course of specialist integrated systemic therapy training and work alongside a therapist, the child or young person's social worker and their own supervising social worker.

At present one other IFP, AFA Fostering, run the service in their Norfolk and East Midlands teams.

# Our contact service

To support our fostering services we also offer a specialist Contact Service. Our team of contact supervisors, some of whom are former foster carers and social care professionals, are experienced and trained in supporting children and young people to have contact with their birth families and others involved in their lives.

We have three specialist contact rooms at our head office where contact can take place and we are also able to facilitate contact at other venues as necessary.

Detailed contact reports are always provided within 48 hours of each session and can be delivered sooner when required. The team are also experienced in court work as and when necessary during care proceedings.

Contact supervisors also act as a team of drivers and are able to support school runs and other transport needs, particularly where children and young people may be placed with foster families at some distance from their schools.

This service means children and young people very rarely have to change schools or colleges unnecessarily.

These services are included in our all-inclusive fee and also available for bespoke commissions at competitive rates.

The team are managed and supported by our experienced contact coordinator, and undergo regular training.



# Our foster carers

Applicants choose our agency because we stand out. Being founded by a foster carer, who himself fostered almost seventy children and young people means the needs of foster carers are fully appreciated and are central to our culture and the way we work. The support on offer from the staff that always go the extra mile, is also something that our foster carers tell us that they value.

Some of the foster carers with the agency today have been with us for the majority of the time that we have been operational. They choose to stay because of what the agency stands for, what we offer in terms of support, training and other benefits, and where we strive to get.

As of November 2015 there are 60 fostering households caring for 95 children and young people.

Our foster carers have their own association. This is called The Sunshine Association and has a fully represented committee overseeing their work. The Chair meets regularly with the registered manager to ensure foster carers' views are represented in the agency.

All foster carers approved by the agency have an annual development plan which gives them access to a wide variety of mandatory training such as safeguarding, First Aid and so on, as well as a variety of optional training courses. From 2016 we will deliver training in three tiers according to experience and ability.

Our recruitment strategy in 2015 has focused primarily on social media. As a result, our Facebook page become one of the most 'liked' in the sector. This has promoted our brand and services and good quality enquiries from prospective foster carers are steadily increasing.

In 2016 we expect to recruit LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) and BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) applicants who are under represented in the agency. Our key target areas are London and west Kent, particularly the M2 and M20 corridor that connects the two.



# Our children and young people

The children and young people placed by the agency come from all backgrounds and many will have had difficult life experiences before they join one of our foster families. They range in age from a few hours to 18 years and over as we now also operate Staying Put allowing those young people in education or with additional needs to remain with their foster families until they are 21.

We produce three children and young people guides to fostering which are made available on placement and available on our website. Our foster carers are trained to appropriately explain what fostering is to children and young people of all ages.

In 2015, we introduced a revised feedback form for children and young people, the outcome of a project, which was led by our senior social worker and which included enthusiastic participation from children. It enables children and young people to submit feedback to us at any time via our website. So far feedback tells us children and young people feel safe, supported, listened to.

Many of our children and young people keep in touch with foster carers and staff even after they have left their foster families. Sometimes children and young people may move to another foster carer working with the agency if it is felt to be a better match, particularly for long term placements.

Over the course of each year, at least six events are hosted by us to encourage children and young people, and other children living in the foster home (birth children; grandchildren etc.) to meet, get together and to have fun.

Our social work team work closely with children and young people, alongside their own social workers, and get to know them well, meaning they can advocate for their wishes, feelings and needs and we are regularly told this input is highly valued by local authorities.

In line with our values we always want to do our very best for children and young people we work with and are continually seeking ways to improve our services. In 2016 our registered manager will host a children and young people's forum to hear first hand about their experiences with our foster carers and what ideas they have for improving this even further.

# Our quality

All applicants recruited by The Homefinding & Fostering Agency undergo a comprehensive and thorough preparation in Stage 1. Here we also undertake personal and professional references, health assessments and DBS checks as necessary.

We run our Skills to Foster preparation course in Stage 1, which is co-facilitated by a social worker and foster carer.

Our assessments in Stage 2 are booked in to our fostering panel for consideration four months after they begin. We work with a diligent team of independent social workers who do most of our assessments and are able to work flexibly according to the needs of fostering applicants. All paper and electronic records are stored securely.

Our panel is independent of the agency and they feed back that our assessment reports are very thorough. Local authorities say they find them professionally analytical and informative.

Applicants tell that they enjoy the assessment process and learn much about themselves. They do not find it too intrusive and understand it is about helping to ensure children and young people will be safe.

Our fostering panel is legally constituted to meet regulations and meets every second month or as required. Please see our guide to the panel on our website for more details.

Our experienced reviewing officer, undertakes annual reviews of fostering households to quality assure their work and development and recommend changes if those are required. The first review is presented back to panel and then again every third year or sooner if necessary.

Satwinder Sandhu, our registered manager, is legally responsible for making sure our services are compliant with law and regulations. Satwinder has over 20 years' experience of working in social care and he supports the teams to deliver work consistently and to the highest standards.



# Your feedback

Feedback forms are available at key stages of the fostering journey, before annual reviews and at any time for a child or young person. We also encourage feedback from birth children of foster carers, birth parents and our local authority customers, particularly commissioning managers, placement officers and social workers for children and young people.

The agency operates a Complaints procedure which is explained on our website. Allegations against staff or foster carers are covered by our safeguarding policy, which is also available via our website. All complaints should be sent to our registered manager at [satwind-er.sandhu@homefindingandfostering.co.uk](mailto:satwind-er.sandhu@homefindingandfostering.co.uk)



As an independent fostering provider, Ofsted inspects The Homefinding & Fostering Agency every three years. Our most recent rating is 'good with outstanding elements'. Our most recent report can be found on our website.

Anyone who wishes to raise concerns about our agency or our services to Ofsted, including our foster carers or if you are a child or young person placed with the agency, can do so in the following ways:

By post:

Ofsted,

Piccadilly Gate,

Store Street,

Manchester, M1 2WD

By telephone 0300 123 1231

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

Thank you to the following representatives who contributed to and reviewed this document: The Sunshine Association; A former Looked After young person; independent social workers; staff members and a birth child of foster carers.

Satwinder Sandhu  
Registered Manager  
November 2015

