



Statement of Purpose

An Information Document for all
Foster Carers and Service Users

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1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction

The Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Regulations and The National Minimum Standards 2011 focus on outcomes for children placed with foster carers by applying these standards. The Assessment and approval of foster carers; Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations 2013, gives updated guidance about the amended assessment and approval of foster carers.

OwnLife Fostering's Statement of Purpose gives an outline of how the welfare of children will be promoted, how the service is managed and how foster carers are supervised and supported. The Statement of Purpose effectively demonstrates its fitness to provide fostering services and includes methods on how the progress and experience of Looked After Children and their views are fed into the OwnLife Fostering service provision.

OwnLife Fostering is committed to providing children and young people with a homely, caring and safe environment in which they can thrive and fulfil their potential and personal goals.

At OwnLife Fostering our overall aims are that every child and young person looked after should receive the support they need to:

- Know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care: are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases and know how to obtain support and make a complaint (NMS 1).
- Have a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background (NMS 2).
- Enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately (NMS 3).
- To feel safe and be safe, and feel able to protect themselves (NMS 4)
- To reduce any absconding patterns (NMS 5)
- To live in a healthy, physically suitable, environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs (NMS 6, 10).
- To be able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities (NMS 7).
- To be able to make a positive contribution to the foster home and their wider community (NMS 7).
- Achieve their educational potential (NMS 8).

- To have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives (NMS 9).
- To be welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued (NMS 11).
- To feel part of the family and are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household; the child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement (NMS 11).
- To be prepared for, and supported into, adulthood so that they can reach their potential and achieve economic well-being (NMS 12).

Description and Philosophy of OwnLife Fostering Limited

OwnLife Fostering is based in South London and is part of a care group who provide services and accommodation to children and young people who are vulnerable and in need within the meaning of Children Act 1989 and 2004. Our sister company, OwnLife Ltd, already offers residential, semi-independence and supported independent programmes of care in the boroughs of Lewisham, Greenwich, Bromley, Southwark, Croydon, Kingston, West Sussex and a consortium of North London boroughs.

The name OwnLife was originally chosen to reflect our aim to inspire young people placed in our care to “own” and take control of their “own lives”. Not only do we practice the child and young person approach that responds to identified care plan needs, we also always provide a structure of support that aims not to give up on a child or young person. This provides the opportunity for Looked After children to experience a level of predictable consistent care and support. This consistency can make it easier for children and young people to see a link between what they do and what happens as a result.

OwnLife Fostering provides family placements within the UK for all children of diverse cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds from birth to 18 years of age. We also offer parent and child placements.

We believe:

- All children and young people, irrespective of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or social disadvantage have the right to develop their personal and educational potential to the full and the responsibility to contribute to society through positive citizenship
- All children and young people who require fostering are most likely to realise their potential if they have the opportunity to develop and grow in a safe and secure foster family home, which treats them with respect, dignity, and where they share with their carers, high expectations for their future
- It is of paramount importance to limit the number of moves from birth family through foster families. Stability of placement is a priority.
- Children and young people have the right to express their views and be a part of the decisions being made about their lives

Status

OwnLife Fostering Limited is a private company limited by shares and was registered

under The Companies Act in 2005, to operate in England and Wales. We are fit to deliver fostering services by providing a robust recruitment, assessment and matching service to achieve excellent outcomes for children and young people.

OwnLife Fostering is committed to working in partnership with local authorities and other professionals on the principle that child's welfare is paramount.

The company is registered with Ofsted and has a remit to carry out its business to benefit vulnerable children by:

- Recruiting and assessing foster carers and a knowledgeable, skilled staff team committed to the organisational goals and with the values and skills necessary to provide for the needs of the children and young people in our care so that their welfare is safeguarded.
- Having systems in place to ensure that there is good matching between the children or young people and their foster carers.
- Always putting the needs of the child and young people first.
- Providing a fostering service that will give children and young people a safe and happy family placement in an environment where they can flourish and develop their potential to the full thus enabling them to participate positively in society.
- Developing a positive culture throughout the organisation by encouraging disadvantaged children and young people to thrive emotionally and develop resilience, with the unstinting support of the foster carers entrusted with their care.
- Providing well-planned and structured programmes of care to meet identified individual needs of children to enable them to develop into balanced individuals and achieve well in education.
- Ensuring that foster carers practice is regularly monitored to ensure that all matters delegated to foster carers are promoted in accordance with placement plans and that foster carers are clear about their responsibilities for medical treatment that needs to be obtained.
- Remaining committed to continuous learning and improvement by listening to children, young people, foster carers, staff and other stakeholders. OwnLife Fostering will help children make their views known and understand their rights.
- Training and empowering foster carers to and encourage their foster child or young person to be involved in all aspects of their own care and to be actively involved in identifying opportunities for personal development.

- Preparing children for adulthood and support them to achieve economic wellbeing.
- Ensuring carers provide positive adult role modelling to young people and children.
- Endeavour to retain staff and carers to achieve continuity and stability in all placements by ensuring carers are well trained and supported in their fostering role.
- Ensuring good communication between the key people, in order that care plans are created and delivered to ensure that the young person's needs are fully met.
- Ensuring each child and young person has an individual programme to meet their needs, within the context of the foster family's daily life and routines.
- Evaluation and developing our own practice through consulting service users, parents, the foster carers and their families together with other agencies involved in the young person's lives.
- Working with our carers to maintain good family links in the interest of the child's overall development (unless there is child protection or other serious reasons not to). The significance of contact for looked after children, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half siblings and grandparents, is recognised by OwnLife Fostering as is the carer's role in this.
- Assessing risk factors specific to the individual child and young person, to record significant information and communicate to key people through regular reports and supervisory visits.
- Educating children and young people to stay safe.
- Providing for children and young people's medical and healthcare needs, in conjunction with the referring authority.
- Cater for children and young people's specific dietary needs and promote a healthy active lifestyle.
- Ensuring the needs of disabled children and children with complex needs are fully recognised and taken into account.
- Ensuring that children and young people are able to practice their own religion and maintain a genuine relationship with their own culture.

- Responding to any reasonable request from any child and young person, and by providing appropriate 24-hour emergency support, guidance, therapeutic services, sport and leisure activities.
- Having effective and efficient finance and administration systems that support and enhance the social work service.
- Having regular external quality monitoring systems in place to ensure consistent and safe practice throughout the organisation.
- Promoting methods of communication, which are appropriate to the user.
- Ongoing post approval training.

Principles and Standards of Care

OwnLife Fostering is committed to ensuring the provision of a high-quality fostering service that ensures the best possible standards of care, safety and protection for looked after children and young people.

OwnLife Fostering abides by the following:

- Care Standards Act 2000
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- Training, Support and Development Standards

We believe that children and young people in care are most likely to flourish when living as part of a family. To this end, we work to ensure we match the child or young person with a suitable, well-trained and supported foster family giving consideration to the wishes and feelings of the young person and all key people

Our foster carers are carefully selected, vetted, and provided with a 24-hour support line staffed by social workers. We work together as a team to sustain the original placement wherever possible. This underlines our passionate belief that moving a child or young person from one foster family to another is detrimental to personal developmental.

Our aim is to work to a therapeutic model of fostering, bringing together a team of professionals around the child whilst providing continuous care and support as appropriate.

We ensure that young people have the opportunity to express their views and make their own decisions where appropriate regarding their emotional and physical wellbeing. We believe in consulting with all individuals, groups and organisations that are involved with OwnLife Fostering. This consultation will importantly include the children/young people presently cared for, their parents as well as foster parents and both sets of extended families.

Foster Carer Principles and Values

Written by the Foster Carers in October 2015

- We accept each child for who they are
- We do not judge
- We will be patient and tolerant
- We will evidence Resilience/reliability/dependence
- We will support, encourage and develop children
- We will put in place genuine boundaries
- We are trustworthy
- We will always listen, be realistic, honest, and respectful
- We undertake reflective practice
- We show empathy
- The welfare and safeguarding of the child is paramount
- We base our practice on partnership working
- We are child centred
- We always promote education and development
- We celebrate success and achievement and positively reinforce all the children we care for
- We respect confidentiality

Facilities and Services

OwnLife Fostering aims to provide family placements for a wide range of children and young people of all ages, including sibling groups, and parents with children, and those with special educational needs or disabilities.

As a high quality fostering service we recognise the need for a range of fostering services. We acknowledge that each placement type requires foster carers today to help children and young people thrive tomorrow and in the future.

Our range of placements is described below: -

Emergency placements:

Breakdowns in families happen at all times of the day and night. This can leave social workers to deal with a difficult dilemma at very short notice. OwnLife Fostering can ease these situations by providing a fostering service able to understand the trauma children and young people experience in these unfortunate circumstances.

Bridging placements:

This is a short-term flexible placement, focusing on ensuring the most sensitive transitions for children and young people.

Parent and child placements:

In these placements foster carers provide detailed and comprehensive assessment reports as part of parenting assessments. Foster carers undertake support and assessment functions.

Please see Appendix 1 for a full Parent and Child specification.

Sibling placements:

Sibling placements can either provide placements together or close by and the facilitation and supervision of contact between siblings is provided.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers/children:

A co-ordination of packages of support including immigration, supporting religious, language and cultural needs, integration with the community and appropriate faith groups.

Short-term fostering:

Sometimes it is necessary to have a foster family to look after a child or young person for a few weeks or even a few months. This allows time for the parents to sort things out in order that the young person may return home, or move to another appropriate and planned placement.

Long-term fostering:

In appropriate circumstances, it may be in the best interest of the child to become integrated into a foster family on a long-term basis. This arrangement can provide continuity and stability for the child or young person and provide the secure base from which to venture into the world of education and perhaps therapy. Sometimes these arrangements become permanent through matching at a local authority permanence panel.

Specialist Placements/ Children with Disabilities:

These are only offered to experienced, trained and skilled carers who are able and willing to look after children with special needs, for example, learning difficulties, Autism, ADHD, Down's syndrome, specific medical needs physical or complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Respite

OwnLife foster carers are available to take weekend and holiday respite for children who require a placement at these times from residential schools.

We can also provide short term respite to other foster carers.

These placements are managed in the same way as other placements with placement agreement meetings, support and supervision. They have a thorough matching process, risk assessment and support plan.

Complex needs.

The placements for children and young people with complex needs are managed in the same way as other placements in terms of matching, risk assessment and support planning. However, these placements attract a much higher level of support and often more creative methods of support according to the individual needs of the child or young person. We are able to arrange day and night support, night wake staff, transport, mentoring and direct work. Life story and therapeutic input are also possible.

OwnLife Fostering believes that if appropriate packages of support are available in a timely fashion to foster carers, then children and young people are more able to live in a family environment. This service is designed to be flexible and responsive.

The team of committed, skilled carers is supported by professionals in the field of childcare. These professionals have a wide range of experience of working with children and young people who have suffered neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

All children and young people placed with OwnLife Fostering are visited regularly as part of the role of the Supervising Social Worker. Every child or young person is seen alone regularly.

There are also a number of consultants employed by us who can be contracted to offer specialist advice and recommendations where a child or young person has difficulties or issues, which need to be addressed.

In line with support of the dedicated team OwnLife Fostering provides a range of services available and outlined below:

- Therapeutic support, counselling, psychologist and psychiatric services are available from a number of consultants who we call upon to meet specific needs of any child or young person
- 24-hour telephone support service that operates seven days a week
- Professional allowance and financial support which covers the full cost of a placement.
- Fostering Network Membership which offers independent advice and support, independence training, publications as well as legal help
- We provide high quality bespoke training that equips our foster carers with the skills they need to look after vulnerable children and young people
- Skills to Foster training offered to prospective applicants and a comprehensive induction package to new foster carers
- Individual or group work
- Representation and support for the child or young people at police stations and at court appearances
- Preparation for independence
- Transport or access to external services/facilities.

- Children's Guide to Services and Complaints which provide guidelines specifically aimed at children under 11 and young people 12 years of age and over. It includes important contact numbers children and young people can use to speak in private to an independent person or professional or to make a complaint.
- Foster Carer's Handbook and Staff Handbook which offer a guide to policies and procedures of all aspects of the fostering services.

When the number of carers is sufficient we will organise and facilitate:

- Participation Groups and Consultation Sessions for young people, children and their families, foster as well as support groups to create an opportunity to express their views regarding their emotional, physical health and wellbeing
- Fortnightly clinics for foster carers and or monthly foster carer support groups where they can discuss challenges they are experiencing with children in placement. Alongside these we will run Attachment Clinics where carers will receive training and guidance on issues related to 'attachment and stages of development' of children and young people (TDS, TSDS 5.1 a-c and 5.2 a).
- Social activities for the sons and daughters of foster carers
- A newsletter which runs regularly throughout the year for young people in OwnLife Fostering placements, and for foster carers.

PROMOTING WELFARE

Children and Young People's Rights

In the context of anti-discriminatory practice, it must be borne in mind that all young people placed through OwnLife Fostering have the following rights:

- To feel safe
- To have a choice regarding their clothing
- To keep contacts with their family and friends unless there are child protection issues
- To say what they think should happen in their future
- To be listened to and be heard
- To be educated
- To have pocket money
- To have a clothing allowance
- To see what is directly written about them
- To see a social worker
- To make telephone calls in private
- To give and receive letters/post privately
- To not be treated less favourably than anyone else on grounds of sex, religion, culture or sexuality

Prohibited Measures

The following measures are prohibited and are not allowed under any circumstances:

- Corporal Punishment.
- Deprivation of Food and/or Drink.
- Restriction or refusal of visits and communications, other than where visits by certain individuals may compromise the safety of the home.
- Requirement to wear distinctive or inappropriate clothing.
- The use or withholding of medication or medical or dental treatment.
- The use of accommodation to physically restrict a person's liberty.
- Intentional deprivation of sleep.
- Imposition of fines.
- Intimate physical searches.

THE FIVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

Being Healthy

The well-being, emotional and psychological health, and having a healthy environment in which to live is of paramount importance to us for all the children and young people in our foster care. Our carers promote the benefits of a healthy life style; are energetic and vigilant in promoting the health care of each child and young person encouraging regular health dental and optical checks (NMS 6).

Each child or young person is registered with a GP, dentist and optician local to their foster home unless it is practical for them to continue with their existing practitioners and have prompt access to medical services when needed.

All our carers are aware of their responsibility for the health of our children and young people. In particular, they help children and young people by providing guidance and support on dietary matters and exercise; drug, alcohol and substance abuse; sexuality, sexual relationships, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases; general health and personal hygiene issues; cultural and genetic differences and related illnesses.

All children and young people are actively discouraged from smoking. Applicants who smoke will not be considered suitable to care for children between the ages of 0-5, in accordance with BAAF guidelines. OwnLife Foster Carers are required not to smoke with Looked After Children and Young People, nor to smoke in the same room with a Looked After Child or in front of a Looked After Child.

Children and young people are encouraged to eat healthily and exercise choice in the food that they eat and to take part in physical activities which will provide positive physical and psychological benefits.

All medicines, whether prescribed or remedies recommended by a pharmacist, are kept in a double locked cabinet and accessible only by carers. Our Supervising Social Workers will carry out robust assessments of fostering households to ensure good standards of cleanliness.

Our carers are trained in first aid, but are not trained medical personnel, thus a GP is consulted in all cases of illness.

All accidents involving injury to a child or young person in the foster home as well as administration of medications are recorded in the daily diary, accident/medicine log and on the child or young person's case file. A report is forwarded to the social worker and parents where appropriate. Health updates are included in monthly summary reports and at review meetings.

Staying Safe

Foster carers and staff at OwnLife Fostering are trained in child protection and safeguarding procedures, to a standard approved by the local safeguarding board. All are familiar with our policy on Bullying and our 'Whistle blowing' procedure.

- All children and young people placed with OwnLife Fostering will be kept safe.
- OwnLife will actively and continuously seek the views of children and young people who become the recipients of OwnLife services and will always consistently update children and young people about our reactions to their opinions (NMS 1).
- OwnLife Fostering will work in partnership with all relevant agencies to ensure that children and young people are effectively protected from harm.
- All foster carers and social work staff are made aware of our child protection policy and procedures and are given appropriate training.

Allegations of abuse or bullying are managed promptly and handled as sensitively as possible. Carers respect the rights of all children and young people and any allegations of abuse or bullying, whether current or historical, are taken extremely seriously. If an allegation is made, we will work through every stage of the disclosure and the attendant ramifications with the child or young person and relevant authorities.

Listening to Children and Young People

Listening and responding to young people's views is very important to OwnLife. We ensure that at the start of a child's placement with our foster carers that all children receive a copy of our children's guide and the foster carer's family policy. The contents of both are explained by our foster carers, this includes showing details of useful names and numbers to contact if required and gaining each child or young person's views about the children's guide and how carer's family policies can be improved. Our supervising social workers are expected to speak to fostered children and young people about their views frequently and may undertake a joint visit with the child's social worker if appropriate, to ascertain the views of Looked After Children. OwnLife foster carers are also expected to support children and young people to prepare their views for Looked After Children review meetings (NMS 1, 7, 11).

Child Protection

Child protection issues vary from neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Every child and young person is subject to his or her placing authority procedure. In the event of an allegation of abuse, the Placing Authority and Registration authority will be informed immediately so that the appropriate procedure is invoked.

All carers will co-operate fully with external investigations to ensure that the full extent of any abuse is uncovered and that the children caught up in the issue receive proper

counselling. It is also important that the implications and side effects of any abuse are identified and given full consideration, so that they can be reflected in future care plans.

Bullying

In accordance with our Anti-Bullying Policy, if bullying occurs carers will work closely with both the perpetrator and victim to eradicate the problem. Intervention may be either by group discussion to resolve the issue or by working with all concerned on a one to one basis.

Whistle Blowing

Under the Whistle Blowing Procedures, all carers are encouraged and supported to raise any concerns they may have regarding malpractice, improper conduct or illegal actions on the part of anyone connected with OwnLife Fostering.

Carers are expected to be familiar with our policies on Child Protection, Bullying and Whistle blowing and to follow the procedures if related problems arise.

Safety in the Home

OwnLife Fostering carers are expected to maintain their homes to comfortable, clean and safe standards. Carers' adherences to safe practices are monitored by means of the supervisory social workers' monthly visit, including unannounced visits and OwnLife Fostering's safety checklist. Where alterations in the home or garden have to be made, or practices altered to make safe an item or the environment, plans and timescales are discussed and agreed with OwnLife Fostering.

OwnLife Fostering will not consider applicants who keep dogs identified by the dangerous dog's act for assessment. (A pet questionnaire /or dog assessment will be completed for carers who keep domestic animals at home.)

Enjoying and Achieving

Education

We recognise that education and training are crucial to children and young people's life chances. Given its high priority, we ensure that each child and young person has the opportunity to realise their full potential and their educational needs are addressed as a part of their Care Plan. (NMS 8).

We will work with our carers to ensure that the child or young person has the full-time education to which they are entitled. OwnLife Fostering carers are supported to maintain an existing educational placement if practicable or to be proactive in identifying local schools and other educational resources which can meet a range of educational needs.

Foster Carers encourage and assist young people around their educational needs when necessary and ensure a quiet time and area in the fostering household to do homework. Carers also support young people in school activities such as open evenings; medicals; school plays or sports days.

We will also encourage young people to continue with further education. In addition, each young person will participate in our training and preparation for independent living skills program.

Employment

We recognise the crucial role that employment can play in developing the identity of children and young people in care. Their ability to maintain and enjoy paid employment is crucial to their life prospects.

Our carers support our children and young people in seeking employment, help them to set goals for their own development and assist them in overcoming any skills deficiencies they may have.

We hold the belief that it is necessary to keep young people's aspirations high without being unrealistic. OwnLife Fostering carers therefore help children and young people not just in looking for work but in all the other areas that surround employment, including assessing options, preparation for interviews, purchase of specialist equipment and support around daily preparation for work. We will liaise with all external agencies in relation to supporting transition from school to further education, training and/or employment.

Careers Guidance and Work Experience are available. Assistance is given with job hunting and interview preparation as well as advice on available benefits, schemes and activities for the young person to investigate, with or without carers support (NMS 11 & 12).

Leisure

OwnLife Fostering carers promote the interest and the individual needs of the children and young people placed with them, making available opportunities for them to join children and youth organisations or community leisure activities. (NMS 7)

Children and young people are provided with a pocket money /leisure allowance which they are supported in managing.

Making a positive contribution

Children and Young people are encouraged to have faith in themselves, respect the faiths of others and to aim for positive outcomes. Carers have a key role in building young people's self-esteem to allow them to do so. They work in partnership, effectively and cooperatively with schools, social workers, support workers, parents and other professionals concerning their progress, behaviour, social integration and other aspects related to making a positive contribution to the community (NMS 2 & 3).

We strive to meet all the needs of children and young people, including the promotion of their cultural and religious identity. Consideration is always given to the racial origin and religious persuasion of a young person in every aspect of their care.

Religious beliefs often form the foundation of family life and racial and religious factors combine to make up an essential part of a child or young person's identity and life experience. We believe it is important therefore that children and young people continue to have positive experiences of their own culture and religion and our carers will encourage them in this.

Cultural identity is a powerful and complex force in all our lives and affects our attitudes and behaviour toward all aspects of life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

Our carers are trained to provide the support that a good parent would give their children and young people to enable them to meet the challenges of living independently and develop their life skills.

Taking into account the lengthy transition from childhood to adulthood OwnLife Fostering will ensure that child or young person is fully included in all discussions and plans for their future.

This can be achieved by helping foster children to develop capacity to make satisfactory and appropriate social relationships, self-esteem and enable the acquisition of the necessary practical skills.

It is paramount for us to involve key relevant people in improving practical skills of a child or a young person. It is also essential to provide a “preparing for leaving care programme” which includes preparation for work and/or further education for young people over 16 years of age.

Contact

It is important that children and young people maintain contact with their family and friends, especially those who are likely to have a positive influence on their lives. We actively support and encourage children and young people to maintain positive relationships. Carers are clear about their role in promoting contact with birth relatives (NMS 9).

To achieve these carers will work with the child or young person, their parents, families and friends and will:

- Treat all family members with dignity and respect.
- Ensure that family members know that priority will always be given to the young person's welfare but that they too have a right to be heard.
- Take care not to infringe privacy any more than necessary, respect the confidentiality of family members and only pass observations about them with their permission, unless it is essential to protect the young person.
- Be aware of the effects that the power of our professional involvement may have on family members.
- Listen to the concerns of the children and their families and be mindful of their fears and wishes when responding to issues.
- Consider the strengths and potential of family members as well as their weaknesses, problems and limitations.
- Ensure that all concerned are aware of their responsibilities and rights, including the right to services, their rights to complain, refuse services and any consequences of doing so.
- Use plain, jargon-free language and explain any technical terms.
- Be open and honest about their concerns and responsibilities, plans and limitations.
- Allow ample time and space for communication.
- Take care to distinguish between personal feelings, values, prejudices and beliefs, professional roles and responsibilities
- Carers record children's reactions to contact and this is fed back to the responsible authority by the agency.

We will ensure

- The transition of children and young people back to their birth family where this is identified as appropriate and is part of the care plan.
- That contact arrangements are maintained and facilitated at all times in line with the care plan and at the request of social workers and children or young people themselves where this is appropriate.

Life Story Work.

We understand the importance of life story work, the recording of milestones, the memory of our birth relatives, places, people, and events.

We encourage children, young people and parents to take photographs to record their time with us, choosing what to record and taking some control over their lives.

Every child and young person has a memory box, and every carer has the ability to take photographs. Encouraging children, young people and carers to think about what they would like to record about their placement is helpful in starting discussions about what they may remember about their history, their childhood, and their experiences. It is a useful way of capturing happy moments, significant achievements, or moments that may be challenging.

Outcomes Tracker

Our work is based on outcomes, and we track outcomes regularly every month for each child we are working with.

Disciplinary Measures

In caring for children and young people it is important that the focus is not just on negative behaviour. Our foster carers will always make a point of acknowledging children and young people when they have made an effort or have managed a difficult situation better than previously. Observing a child or young person doing something right is an important part of our practice.

In cases where a child or young person's behaviour becomes unacceptable however, it may be appropriate for the carer to use disciplinary measures. These should be in line with OwnLife's policies and procedures.

In extreme cases, however, a carer may feel it necessary to impose a sanction in order that agreed boundaries can be reinforced.

Sanctions

Any sanctions imposed will be in accordance with the Guidance to the Children Act, Volume 4, and Section 1: 82 – 91.

All sanctions are time limited, relevant to the events and above all, just. At all times the motivation for sanctions should be to improve the future behaviour of the children and young people.

The views of the child or young person on the sanction are sought and recorded.

Equal Opportunities

Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Equal Pay (Amendment Act 1983)
Public Order Act 1986
Race Relations Act 1976+2000
Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Equality Act 2010

Our guiding principle is to act in the best interests of the child. The work of OwnLife Fostering is based on promoting our service user's rights and responsibilities. This means that all aspects of our work, the people with whom we work and those we employ are not discriminated against on the basis of race, culture, religion, physical or intellectual ability, gender, sexual orientation or age etc.

OwnLife Fostering recognises that many of the difficulties faced by the children and young people with whom we work arise from injustice within the social structure. OwnLife Fostering will challenge such injustice in the many ways it impacts on the children in its care. It will also ensure that its own services are anti-discriminatory and positively promote the best practice possible life chances for the children and young people.

OwnLife Fostering recruits its staff and foster carers within a framework of equal opportunities, ensuring that those employed or contracted by the organisation are not treated less favourably because of their person's status as identified in this policy. Promotion and training opportunities are open to all in the organisation and are always allocated on the basis of professional ability and professional need.

OwnLife Fostering is committed to promoting Equal Opportunities in every aspect of the service. Training on equality and diversity is strongly promoted during the preparation process for new foster carers and forms part of the assessment. On-going training on equality and diversity is provided to all approved Foster Carers.

The need to recruit foster carers who are representative of the general population is reflected in the recruitment and retention strategy for foster carers, with an emphasis on black and ethnic communities. All promotional material makes it clear that foster carers from across the population are needed, including same sex carers, older carers and carers from the black and ethnic minority communities. Management information in the gender, race and disability of existing foster carers is analysed on a regular basis.

Specialised placements for children with disabilities will be provided when appropriate carers are identified.

Management information on race, gender and disability of the children requiring a placement are analysed on a regular basis.

Challenging Discrimination

We are opposed to all forms of discrimination, whether based on gender, religion, social class, being in the care system, sexuality or disability.

It is our policy and practice to challenge all forms of discrimination wherever and whenever they arise. This also incorporates bullying and child protection issues.

Our practice is to challenge incidents at the time they occur and then ensure that they are followed up with appropriate action taken by the carers or social work support staff member.

The social worker(s) of the child or young person or people involved will be kept informed of developments and action proposed.

Where incidents involving carers or staff occur, the matter will be investigated promptly and a report submitted to a Director as soon as possible. A range of options is then open to be followed including:

- Addressed in supervision
- Disciplinary or competency procedures invoked
- Formal warning
- Possible termination of contract of employment or de- registration of carer.

Disability

OwnLife Fostering provides care for children and young people, some of whom may have physical, emotional, learning or multiple disabilities. We will support carers to ensure that the child or young person's special needs are fully assessed and met. Carers act as the child or young person's advocate in ensuring that the young people in their care enjoy the highest standard of medical, education and social care.

OwnLife Fostering makes every effort to ensure that the proposed carer's skills and expertise match the assessed needs of the referred young person and that accurate up to date knowledge is maintained.

OwnLife Fostering aims to ensure that young people living with disability are fully integrated in their foster homes, schools and communities and have the same rights and opportunities that all children have.

Throughout carers encourage and assist a disabled young person to develop an optimum level of independence and to live a full rewarding and enjoyable life. OwnLife Fostering will support foster cares to challenge institutional discrimination, if it inhibits individual freedom. Carers have training in "disability- specific safer caring training" for those caring for disabled children and young people

Carers will always encourage children and young people with disability in their care to have links with their disabled peer group and to value these links.

3. RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT and APPROVAL OF FOSTER CARERS

Recruitment

OwnLife Fostering has a recruitment strategy based on careful examination of referral data. We recruit carers from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds in order that we may take account of differences in ages, gender, ethnic background and the disabilities of the child/young people referred.

OwnLife Fostering recognises and values learned child-care skills but equally values and seeks to recruit prospective carers who demonstrate personal qualities such as warmth and humour. We value previous experience but consider every application upon its own merits and in accordance with its established policies and procedures.

OwnLife Fostering in accordance with its Recruitment Policy and the Fostering Regulations carries out rigorous checks, which include DBS, Local Authority, Health, Education, and carer's GP.

OwnLife Fostering requires three references and takes these up by visiting the referees.

OwnLife Fostering has adopted the BAAF smoking policy.

OwnLife Fostering does not accept applications from people who misuse drugs and alcohol.

Assessment

OwnLife Fostering is committed to the recruitment of foster carers who have the dedicated commitment and ability to 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. Our process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two parts. These will be carried out concurrently, however the information required for Stage 1 will be sought as soon as possible and a decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed stage 1 will be made within 10 working days of all information the stage requires being received.

Stage 1 of the Assessment includes the following information:

- Applicant's full name, address and date of birth
- Details of applicant's Health, supported by Medical Report
- Particulars of other adult household members
- Particulars of children in the applicant's family

- Particulars of household accommodation
- The outcome of any request or application made by the applicant, or any other member of the applicant's household to adopt children or for registration for early or late years' provider
- Name and address of any fostering service that the applicant has been an approved to foster carer for the preceding 12 months
- Names and addresses of two persons who will provide personal references for the applicant
- In relation to the applicant and each member of their household aged 18 or over, an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificate
- Details of any current or previous marriage, civil partnership or similar relationship

If in stage 1 it is decided that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the independent review mechanism (IRM) or to make representations to us. But if in stage 2, following a brief or full report, it is determined that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant will be informed in writing that they may (within 28 calendar days) seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to the provider

Stage 2 of the Assessment; this is carried out through several home visits and interviews with applicants and household members in order to fully complete Form F, which includes:

- Details of personality
- Religious persuasion and capacity to care for a child from any other religious persuasion
- Racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and capacity to care for a child from a different background
- Past and present employment or occupation, standard of living, leisure activity and interests
- Previous experiences (if any) of caring for their own or other children
- Skills competence and potential relevant to their capacity to care effectively for a child placed with them.

Once a stage 2 assessment has been started it must be completed, unless:

- The assessment is terminated following a brief report
- The applicant withdraws from the process
- The applicant is deemed unsuitable as a result of stage 1 of the assessment (where stages 1 and 2 have been carried out in parallel)
- It becomes apparent that the applicant or an adult member of their household has been convicted or, or cautioned for, a specific offence as defined in regulation 26(6)

During stage 2, if information comes to light that an applicant is unlikely to be suitable to become a foster carer, a report will be prepared describing progress with the assessment and the reasons that the applicant is thought unlikely. This is referred to

as a 'brief report' by which is meant that it does not reflect a completed assessment. The applicant will be given a copy of the report and allowed 10 days to give their observations, which will then be presented to the fostering panel with the report itself. Taking account of the panel's recommendation, the decision maker will then determine whether the full assessment should be completed or to issue a qualifying determination stating their intention not to give approval as a foster carer.

If a qualifying determination is issued, the applicant has the right either to make representations to the fostering service or to apply to the IRM for a review

The assessment process which is carried out by a qualified Social Worker takes no longer than three months, except in exceptional circumstances, specifically if the applicant is unavailable e.g. due to a pre-planned holiday. Every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay. The Form F assessor will keep applicants aware via an assessment plan that informs each applicant if they are at stage one of the assessment process, stage 2 or if their assessment involves assessment stage 1 and 2 taking place concurrently.

All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held on file in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations (2011) and Data Protection Act 1998. The completed report which is called a Form F assessment is given to foster carers to read and approve before it is presented to Panel members.

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 and must attend an initial 2-day training course.

Fostering Panel and Approval

The assessment report is presented to OwnLife Fostering's fostering panel. To ensure continuity of service we have a pool of people who collectively have a variety of expertise and knowledge including medical, social care, education and / or experience of being in care, from which we draw five members for each panel.

This independent fostering panel makes recommendations as to the suitability of prospective foster carers and provides feedback to OwnLife Fostering's Decision maker who in turn makes a substantial decision of approval.

OwnLife Fostering undertakes to work to the highest, standards in relation to the operation of its foster care panel, employing and utilising the very best professional advice available.

The panel includes experienced social work managers, independent members including an independent foster carer and can be advised by both medical and legal advisors.

The OwnLife Fostering panel is responsible for ensuring, thorough, consideration of verbal and written reports that the assessment process has been adequately completed and that it has adhered to the requirements of law and agency policy.

The panel advises on the number, ages and gender of young people that may be cared for at any time. If the foster carers are unhappy with the final decision or the terms of their approval, they have a right to appeal. This can be made to the agency or directly to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

The IRM is a national review process conducted by a Review Panel which is independent of OwnLife Fostering and will review your circumstances and make recommendation to your agency on the concerning matter. Carers may use this process if they disagree with the panels and or stage 2 assessment decisions.

4. POST-APPROVAL ACTIVITIES

Foster Care Agreements

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

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

All carers have access to the Fostering Handbook which details:

- Standards of care
- Annual carers review process
- Support and training
- Insurance provision
- Complaints and appeals
- Confidentiality procedures
- Child protection procedures

Post Approval Induction

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

1. Safeguarding children and young people and recognising risk indicators
2. Working in partnership with OwnLife Fostering, including the support and supervision of foster carers as well as understanding the role of a foster carer
3. Good practice related to foster carer professional development
4. Recording Skills and ways how to communicate effectively
5. Child Development
6. Attachment and Loss
7. Safe Caring
8. Foster carer Finances
9. Referral and matching process
10. Promoting individual identity
11. Promoting independent living skills and pathway plans

5. TRAINING

OwnLife Fostering has a training schedule, which promotes a career model for foster carers. We aim to provide excellent training on a wide range of topics related to foster care and appropriate to the assessed needs and analysis of the carers, staff and other members of the organisation. Our training and assessment framework, which incorporates the **T**raini**S**upport and **D**evelopment **S**tandards, exceeds the National Minimum Standards and is underpinned within a framework of equal access to training and learning, anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunity. The training strategy includes:

1. Home assessment and teaching
2. Skills to Foster Training
3. **T**raini**S**upport and **D**evelopment **S**tandards (TSD) for foster carers
4. Post approval training taken with peer groups and staff members of the organisation.
5. Supporting foster carers professional qualifications such as NVQ level 3
6. All potential carers attend training as part of their initial assessment, prior to completing their assessment. Subjects covered include:
 - Being Healthy
 - Staying Safe (Includes safeguarding/child protection)
 - Enjoying and Achieving
 - Making a Positive Contribution
 - Achieving Economic Wellbeing
 - A First Aid Course

Foster Carers and their household members are expected to attend 30 hours of training/development which will include on line training courses.

Workshops

These run on a continuous programme for those in assessment, new and existing carers. Workshops include:

- Parent and Child Placements
- Working with Adopters
- Looking after Asylum Seeking Children
- Attachment Disordered Children Theory & Practice
- Children who display sexualised behaviour
- Contact Issues
- The Educational Needs of Looked After Children
- Hellos and Goodbyes
- Health and safety and security in fostering household
- Understanding Domestic Violence
- Promoting Positive Behaviour /De- escalation techniques
- Challenging Behaviour
- Child Protection, Complaints & Allegations
- Diversity and Equality or Working with children from other ethnic/ religious and cultural backgrounds.
- Understanding and Working with Eating Disorders
- Information Sharing, Record Keeping & Confidentiality
- Preparation for Independence
- Promoting care plans
- The role of a foster carer
- Emotional Development
- Men working in the health and social care sector
- Working with Professionals
- Drugs, Alcohol & Substance Misuse
- Life Story Work
- Contact with Birth Family
- First aid with Paediatrics-
- Safer Caring
- Equality and Diversity
- Working with disabilities

All foster carers are encouraged to gain further professional qualifications to demonstrate their competence as carers.

OwnLife Fostering maintains, through a supervisory social worker, an up-to-date profile of training completed by carers and an analysis of carer's further training needs.

6. SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS

OwnLife Fostering's 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.

OwnLife Fostering aims to offer the optimum levels of support, supervision, guidance and training to carers and believes that the recruitment and retention of committed and highly capable carers is essential to its operations.

Foster carers are given support and assistance through a structured system of regular monthly supervisory visits from their social worker, together with a comprehensive out-of-hour's service. 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.

Children and young people in placement will be seen regularly by the carers' supervising social worker who, will always attempt to understand the young persons' view of the placement so that any difficulties can be addressed in conjunction with the young person's own social worker at an early stage.

OwnLife Fostering recognises the significant contribution carers' birth children play in successful placements. Regular consultation, events and opportunities are provided for birth children to come together and discuss with the agency's staff, and other birth children, the impact, positives and negatives of sharing their home and families. OwnLife Fostering ensures that carers' birth children feel fully supported by the agency.

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

Regular foster carer group meetings are held across London 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 OwnLife Fostering staff and are regularly attended by senior management, by invitation from the Foster Carers Association. They are held in venues convenient for foster carers.

OwnLife Fostering recognises the significance and importance of understanding attachment issues and their impact upon children and young people. Alongside support clinics, OwnLife Fostering provides foster carers with attachment training/groups where they can come together with an experienced psychotherapist/psychologist or social worker to discuss case studies and develop their knowledge of attachment. Individual sessions are also available to carers who need specific assistance.

Our practice is based upon written guidelines, which are available to local authorities, children and young people in placement, their families and the agency's foster carers.

The agency's complaints procedure will be explained to the child or young person by the carer's supervising social worker as soon as possible after placement.

7. Reviews of Care Plans for Looked After Children (LAC).

There is a statutory requirement on all placing authorities to conduct regular and timely reviews of Care Plans for all children and young people placed with us. We thus ensure that our arrangements for reviewing the programmes of children and young people are consistent with the requirements of legislation and contribute to long term planning for the individual child or young person's needs.

The principles of consultation and involvement of children and young people and their families, the provision of written programmes, the setting of objectives and time scales, together with clear arrangements for education and health care are critical to a young person's development.

Reviews are for planning and facilitating change and should focus on the child or young person.

Children and young people are encouraged to prepare for Reviews in good time and to believe that this will have a long-term beneficial effect on their lives. Wherever possible the review is held, where the child or young person is most likely to feel comfortable and will be prepared to contribute to the decisions taken at the meeting. Relevant people such as family members are invited to participate in the review process and we facilitate this if necessary.

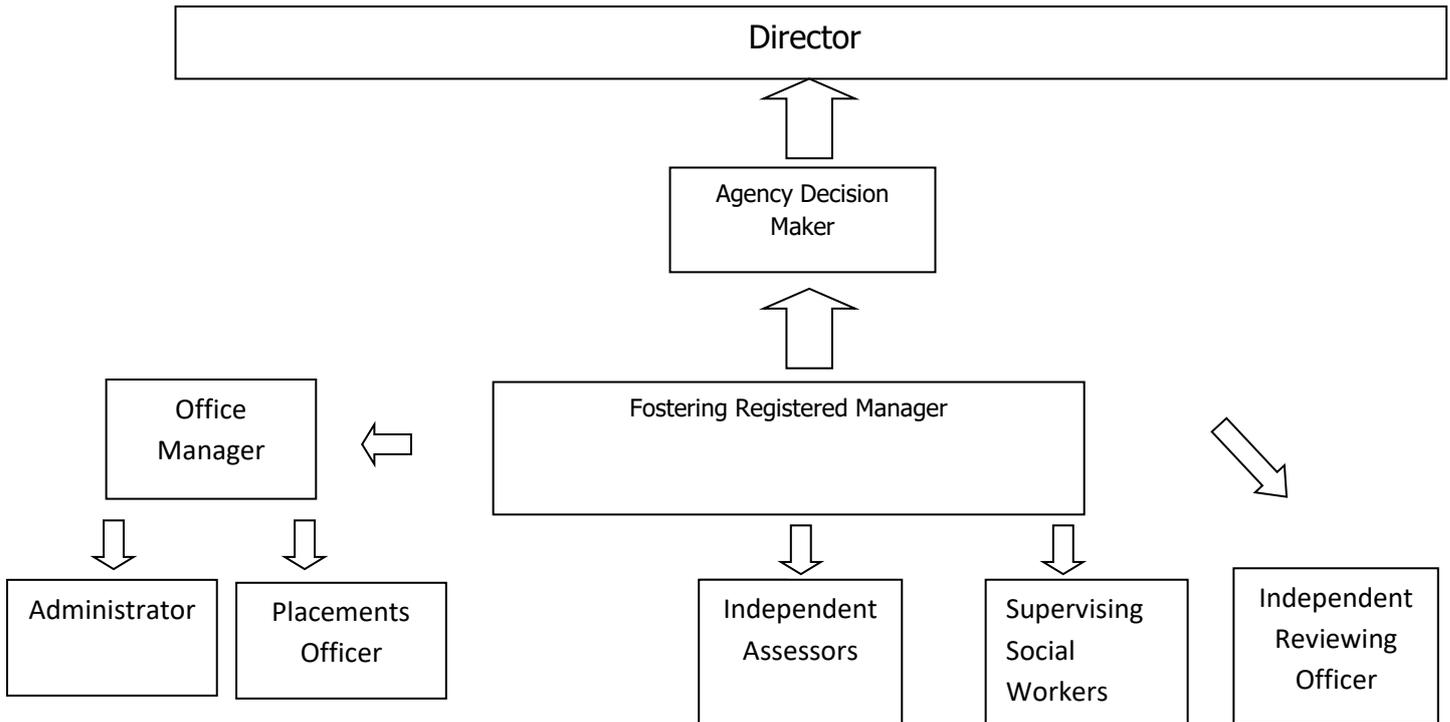
Finally, we recognise that it is our responsibility to ensure that timescales are met for reviews, no matter the difficulties involved in arranging for the attendance of all parties concerned.

In relation to foster carer's performance, their Social Workers also conduct reviews on how they met foster children's needs, how they developed and what have they learnt. This will allow us to support and guide foster carers in their practice.

8. THE ORGANISATION

OwnLife Fostering team will consist of a director, registered manager, and administration personnel, supervising social workers, and consultants. We aim to promote the development of the child's independent living skills in an 'age-appropriate way and where the development of these skills is a core component of the care plan.

The Company's structure



Management and Staff Structure

The Fostering Registered Manager is **Maureen Barnes**

The Fostering Responsible Individual is **Carol Hammond**

Staff Team comprising the following.

- Decision Maker: **Eva Lindsay**
- Supervising social workers.
- Training: Delivered by internal practitioners, foster carers and or freelance trainers
- Administration and staff: **Vikki Clements - Office Manager, Christine Alchin – Administrator, Charlotte Charlemagne – Placements Officer**

Central List of Panel Members:

Chair: Amy Weir

Amy has worked in children's social care and with children in care for more than 30 years. Her various roles have always been focused around ensuring the best possible decisions are made for children. Amy has worked for and with Local Authorities, Ofsted and independently during which she has always supported service change and improvement for children in care and those who need safeguarding.

Amy has a thorough understanding of the legislative and regulatory basis for fostering panels. She is personally and professionally committed to ensuring that children in care achieve the best possible outcomes and that they fulfil their potential.

Amy approaches her role as chair in a positive manner and with an understanding of the commitment given by the potential foster carers in order to reach the stage where they are coming before the panel.

Edward Atkinson

Ed is a solicitor with many years' experience, in the early years he divided his time between family and a criminal practice. He has worked for over thirty years in Brixton. He founded Hallmark, Atkinson and Wynter and was a partner in this practice for twenty-four years. He now works as a consultant to Wainwright Cummins Solicitors. This enables him to continue to work as a criminal solicitor, some of his clients span generations and continue over decades. He continues to have enthusiasm for working with people of all ages. He deals with case work at all stages from the police station to Crown Court advocacy.

Julie Chambers

Julie has enjoyed being a foster carer for 10 years, though would be the first to admit that there have been challenging times as well as great highs. She also works in a mainstream secondary school as a communicator and teacher of deaf children, having considerable experience and knowledge of the education system, especially in Special Educational Needs. The support of a school and it being a place of consistency is something Julie recognises to be key in a young person's life, especially in times of uncertainty. Education can be one of the stepping stones out of the care system into independence.

Julie is part of a 'rainbow' family. Having mixed race children, she is aware of how important race and culture are when considering how children are raised. Julie and her family also have personal experience of disability.

She is passionate about foster carers being advocates for children in their care, for their health, education and family life. She believes children and young people are individuals and unique and should be treated as such, respecting their faith, culture, sexuality, abilities and race.

Julie feels all children have the right to a loving family life, whatever the family make up.

KT Forster

KT is a Justice of the Peace, and was appointed to the Inner London Family Panel in 2012. Sitting between the busiest family court and the Principal Registry has given her the insight and experience in the environment of family and children's law to enable her to make robust decisions regarding parental responsibility versus the welfare of the child. When she has to make the decision that a child be taken into care she is passionate that the guardians, adoptive parents or foster carers who offer that care are suitable, prepared, supported and equipped to offer that child the opportunities to fulfil their potential which before had fallen short of their rights and expectations as children.

KT is also a Befriender in a Prisoners Family and Friends Charity since 2010 which has given her the experience and insight into how children are affected by conflict or changes and the skills to help re-build families.

KT exercises sound, balanced and unprejudiced judgement in all that she does.

Alistair Hastings: Vice Chair

Alistair has eighteen years' experience working with young people in care, both in Residential and in Semi Independent settings. He has an NVQ4 in Health & Social care and is currently completing a management qualification.

Alistair also has extensive experience of working with adolescents with challenging behavior and has a good knowledge of the Regulations and Standards associated with looking after young people in care.

He also has a range of practical skills which enable him to engage effectively with young people to ensure that the young person is able to complete their Pathway plan and achieve good outcomes from the placement.

Sandra Heera

Sandra is a registered qualified social worker who has worked in various Child Care settings for more than 35 years. She has specialised in Fostering and Adoption work since 1991, working for a London Borough for several years before moving on to a National Adoption agency and then the Independent Fostering sector. She has undertaken the full range of Fostering and Adoption work including Assessments, Direct work with children, and support/supervision of foster carers. Having produced reports for a variety of panels, she has a good understanding of what is required, and appreciates how it feels to present work to panel. Sandra has sat as a panel member on both Adoption and Fostering panels, and as Panel Adviser on a Local Authority panel.

Sandra now works as an Independent social worker, sitting on a number of Foster panels, undertaking Foster Carer Reviews and supporting carers under investigation. She has an interest in how poor attachment experiences and separations impact on Fostering outcomes.

Pauline Rennie-Peyton

Pauline is a Chartered Counselling Psychologist with many years' experience working with individuals, couples and families. She specialises in human relationships and is currently writing her second book. Her first book Dignity at Work became a valuable tool for both victims of bullying and organisations. She also works in the field of trauma helping people return to their normal lives after road traffic accidents or acts of violence against them. She has been called in to deal with victims and organisations when there have been national and international tragedies. In addition to her clinical work she is an organisational consultant and trainer working with relationships in professional organisations. She has worked as a harassment investigator, team builder, stress management trainer and mediator.

Anne Thornton-Patterson

Anne Thornton-Patterson began her career as a Residential Worker in children's homes in the Midlands eventually coming to London and taking up the post as Principal Officer for Adult Day Care - Learning Disability and Mental Health in Wandsworth. She has many years of experience working with families across inter departmental boundaries and liaising with health care professionals.

She has experience working with long term fostering for adults with learning disabilities transitioning from children to adult services as well as running support groups for foster carers.

For the past fourteen years, she has worked as a clinical hypnotherapist specialising in trichotillomania and other anxiety disorders. Her book on trichotillomania is currently with her publishers.

Peter Robinson

Peter is a qualified social worker and has a Masters in social work. Before retiring he was a manager for the London borough of Lewisham in their leaving care team. He has been a member of the Lewisham fostering panel and has managed teams in children and families.

Peter has extensive experience of complex child care cases.

Greg Sorrell

In addition to being a Panel Member, Greg is our adviser on all educational matters. His role as a Senior Ofsted Inspector of Schools and those Children's Homes who also provide education, gives him a solid understanding of the needs of young people in care .

Greg brings a wonderful sense of humour to all that he does and matches that with his thorough professional approach. He is fair and supportive to both carers and those for whom they care.

Greg is passionate about ensuring that young people in care receive all the support they can have so as to ensure they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Minute Taker: Hilary Payne

Foster Carers:

- Joan Lloyd
- Susan Jones and David Ede
- Arlene Wright-Gordon
- Sarah Crossley
- Sharday Manahan
- Tim Spencer and Aga Wierzbicker

- Lynn and Francis Murray
- Genevieve Campbell
- Leighann and Andrew Ferguson
- Regine Aston
- Paula Fuller

Consultants:

- Education: Greg Sorrell, Ofsted Inspector of Educational Facilities
- Psychotherapy and Mental Health: Dr Pauline Rennie-Peyton, Msc.AFBPsS
www.renniepeyton.com
- Child Protection: Mike Hames ex DS at the Metropolitan Police ; created the first national police squad to pro-actively target child abusers
- Legal: Ed Atkinson.

9. COMPLAINTS

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

OwnLife Fostering will commission an independent social worker to investigate the complaint further, if the complainant continues to be unhappy following the informal problem-solving stage.

Complaints Procedure

We seek to promote the rights of children and young people to be consulted and to participate in the decision making which affects their lives. Children and young people in our care are also entitled to a consistent standard of service and care.

It is therefore our duty to provide them with access to independent people and organisations, in the event of an issue or complaint, which cannot be amicably resolved in-house. This will also help young people as they get older, to move towards taking control of their own lives.

In the event of a complaint or grievance, we operate an Advice and Complaints procedure that is available to all carers, children and young people in our care. Access to consultants, who provide an independent element in any unresolved complaint, is also made available when required. We try to ensure that the child or young person

understands the significance of the procedures and that there will be no adverse effect on their care as a result of filing a complaint.

All representations and complaints are treated seriously and dealt with both positively and promptly.

It is also our duty to advise children and young people on effective avenues of representation if a complaint or problem has not been satisfactorily resolved in-house. Available options are:

- Talking to their social worker in relation to disputed decisions.
- Talking to their Independent Reviewing Officer
- Talking to or telephoning our registered manager.
- The Children's Rights Director, Ofsted
- Talking to a representative from Voice.
- Talking to Childline.
- Contact the help line at the Who Cares Trust.
- Use of an independent advocate (see below).
- Consulting a solicitor.
- Contacting a local Councillor or Member of Parliament.
- Utilizing the relevant local authority's complaint procedure, especially if the problem concerns that authority.

This information is contained in our Children's Guide/Handbook which is given to all children on arrival.

Our foster carers are expected to help children and young people in accessing these resources and advising them that they have the right to use the procedures if they have a problem with the care received from OwnLife Fostering or their carers, especially if our complaints procedure has been exhausted without resolving the issue.

Any complaint or issue involving possible sexual or physical abuse will give rise to the need to consider whether Child Protection Procedures should be applied.

Outside representation will be available for such matters as:

- Challenging decisions made by us or our carers
- Raising issues about the standard of care.

- Ensuring action is taken about alleged infringement of rights, abuse or ill treatment (including bullying).

Our full policies and procedures document are available on request.

Number of Complaints to Date: One

Young Person's Complaints Booklet

If a foster child or young person has a problem with the care received from OwnLife Fostering or with their Local Authority, they should talk to:

Your foster carer OR

The registered manager OR

Your family OR

Your social worker OR

Independent representative OR

Another young person

If you cannot sort it out - ask to make a Complaint or contact someone at any of the organisations listed at the back of this booklet.

What Happens: Stage One.

We will discuss with you who is going to help you.

Your complaint will be written down and recorded.

You will sign to say that it is correct.

We will arrange for the people who are involved to discuss the problem with you and see if it can be sorted out.

This should all happen within two weeks.

You will get a letter saying what has happened and you will be asked if you are satisfied.

If you are not satisfied: Stage Two

A senior person at OwnLife Fostering will be asked to look at your complaint. This will not be someone involved before.

An independent person not connected to OwnLife Fostering will be asked to take part in the investigation.

They will speak to you and to anyone else involved.

You should get a letter in 28 days to tell you what has been decided.

You will be asked if you are satisfied with the outcome.

If you still disagree: Stage Three

A review panel will be set up to look at this. The people on the panel will not have been involved before.

We will make sure you have someone to help you understand things and go with you to talk to the panel. You can choose the person.

10. CHILDREN'S GUIDE

In accordance with the National Minimum Standards (2011), we have prepared a Children's Guide. Foster Carers are requested to go through the guide with children/young people who are placed with them and ensure that they understand their rights. The Children's Guide contains a list of important contact numbers that children and young people can use if they would like to speak to an independent person. It is also explained in an easy to understand way how to make a complaint.

11. USEFUL CONTACTS

If you feel you need to talk to or get advice from someone completely independent of OwnLife Fostering, you should call any of the following organisations.

Child line:	0800 1111 (Free phone)
Voice:	0808 800 5792 (Free phone)
Children's Legal Centre:	020 7580 1664/01206 873820
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:	0800 800 5000 (Free phone)
Children's Rights Director, Ofsted	0800 528 0731 (Free phone)
Action for Children	0300 123 2112

If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact us. We welcome your interest and comments.

Maureen Barnes, Registered Manager,

OwnLife Fostering Ltd,

Premier House, 1 Cobden Court

Bromley, Kent. BR2 9JF

Tel: 020 8313 3304

Reviewed on the 4th November 2014 by Maureen Barnes (Registered Manager) and Carol Hammond (Responsible Person)

Updated:

- **20 March 2015**
- **1 June 2015**
- **4 September 2015**
- **4 November 2015**
- **14 December 2016**
- **November 2017**
- **23 November 2018**

To be reviewed in full in November 2019