

Family Matters Fostering Ltd.

“Good homes for kids who need them”

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE – September 2011

SC035158

Family Matters Fostering Ltd. is an Independent Fostering Agency, a private limited company established in March 2000 with two directors, Antony and Eleanor Meade.

Our foster carers are based in London, the South East, and the West Country. We believe that the very best environment for a child to grow up in is a family. Unfortunately not all children are able to live with their own families, and they need an alternative. We recruit and train ‘substitute’ families to care for these children until they reach an age where they can look after themselves. Our foster carers reflect the spectrum of families in our society and may be single, married or in a relationship, able bodied or have a disability, have children of their own, step children or no children at all, some are people of strong faith and some no faith at all.

As looked after children often lack the practical help and advice generally received within their own families from Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and trusted family friends, we have recreated this ‘extended family’ by using Carer Support Workers and Respite Carers. Carer Support Workers are generally family friends or other adult members of the foster carer’s own family who have a few hours a week to spare, in which they help the foster carers by looking after the foster child for a 4 – 8 hour period each week within or outside of the foster home. sharing the load, providing the benefit of variety, friendship and the support of other adults to these children. Respite carers will care for children on an overnight basis for up to 2 weeks a year to enable carers to have a complete paid break from fostering.

This means that foster children benefit from healthy relationships with a variety of interested and motivated adults, both young and old, who look after them one evening a week, as well as arranging some daytime activities and who may also have them to stay in their own home for a short period.

Our Fostering Mentors are experienced carers who act as mentors to less experienced carers, giving informal advice and help on practical fostering issues, helping to deliver our training programme to interested enquirers, undertaking informal consultations with the birth children of foster families and the foster children too. Our qualified Social Workers supervise the foster families and give more formal supervision and support. We also have an Education and Resources Coordinator who supports carers with arranging schooling, tuition, activities etc.

Foster carers and Carer Support Workers are not employees of Family Matters Fostering, but self-employed sub-contractors, a status which attracts some very useful tax benefits. Family Matters organises and facilitates regular training courses to which all carers, Carer Support Workers and Respite Carers are invited. These are facilitated by our own Social Work staff, our Fostering mentors and external trainers who are recognised experts in their field and the majority of the courses are linked to the CWDC standards and some result in recognised qualifications for the foster carers.

Management Structure.

Antony Meade
Managing Director
Registered Provider

Peter Higson FCA
- **Company Secretary**

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Audrey Carmichael
Registered /Operations Manager

Family Matters Fostering Ltd, is a private limited company constituted under The Companies Act. It has two directors one of whom is the Managing Director and the other the Company Secretary.

Antony Meade is Managing Director and plays an integral part in the day to day running of the Agency. He represents the Company on our Independent Fostering Panels in the south east and south west. Family Matters Fostering Ltd is registered in England and Wales Company number 06226357

Antony is also The Registered Provider. As such he is responsible for the overall running of the business and the monitoring and compliance of the Agency. He is the senior manager in Family Matters Fostering Ltd and the Agency Manager reports to him.

Peter Higson FCA, of Higson APS, is the Company Secretary. Peter is a Chartered Accountant who worked for KPMG for many years and has his own accountancy practice based in Kent. He has been involved in the management and the accounting of the organisation since its inception in 2000.

The Services we provide

- **Long Term Placements** – Until the child reaches independence.
- **Short Term Placements** – For any period or periods required
- **Parent and Baby Placements – specialist experienced carers.**
- **Sibling placements** – ensuring families can be kept together
- Respite/Short break placements **to assist families in crisis Dedicated education and training** - support for each placement.
- **Emergency Placements** – cost effective short term immediate placements that can become permanent if required
- **Special Guardianship Placements** – where the carer may opt to transfer to a Local Authority after a specified fostering period with Family Matters
- **Wide geographical area** of available placements across **Southern England**

All placements receive the same attention and dedication including;

- High quality care in a family setting for children and young people. This is enhanced by an organisational structure based on the familiar “extended

- family” concept, with “Grandparent/Aunt/Uncle” figures providing all additional daytime, evening, weekend care alongside overnight respite care.
- Priority for the needs of the child or young person in determining each foster placement. We recruit and train a wide range of carers and carer support workers to meet a diversity of children’s needs and provide a “family” network of support.
 - Respect for the diversity of each child in the planning and provision of each placement.
 - Continuity in the lives of children and young people. By providing both main carers and carer support workers the load is shared, greatly increasing the viability of placements. Continuity of care is therefore protected, enabling the child’s emotional, physical, spiritual and mental well-being to be promoted and the child’s potential encouraged in all aspects of their life.
 - 24 hour support from Qualified Social Workers for foster carers and the children in their household.
 - A partnership embracing families and children, foster carers, social work staff and placing agencies with every individual working together in the best interest of the fostered child.
 - A standard of excellence in training, support and information for foster carers, with committed social work staff enabling them to meet the needs of each child and continually seeking to improve the service, through feedback from supervision sessions, training and development days and Carer Forums.
 - Respect, good pay and rest for foster carers and staff.
 - Accurate and efficient reporting methods to safeguard the fostered child and foster carers.
 - A responsible attitude to Local Authorities’ resources to ensure that as many children as possible receive the best possible care.
 - Daily monitoring of all placements and the provision of regular reports to Local Authority Social Workers of each foster child’s progress and any support issues.
 - Regular supervision of staff and carers ensuring each placement is monitored and supported, and the health and safety of all involved is constantly assessed.
 - Monitoring of the business issues and reports to OFSTED to ensure that the service provided is at the highest level and improved through constant evaluation, review and training.
 - Regular saving by/for children in placement.
 - The promotion of good health and health care training.
 - Preparation for independence as appropriate.
 - Individual development plans for each child, carer and staff member.
 - Commitment to anti-discriminatory policies, promotion of equal opportunities and valuing diversity for all.

Aims and objectives of the service

The aim of Family Matters Fostering Ltd is to provide stable and high quality foster care for children of all ages in whatever form this may be required tailored to the needs of the individual child.

Our objective is to supply this in such a way that each child feels valued and supported and is thereby encouraged to grow and to develop as an individual and move on with confidence to independence as a valued and productive member of society.

Each foster child is given a Children's Guide on placement which aims to set out in a child friendly manner what a child can expect from the agency and its carers and who to contact if they are unhappy with any aspect of the provision. This guide is reviewed regularly and we encourage the foster children to contribute to re-designing it, offering a substantial prize for the winner of the most accessible and comprehensive design. We are currently working on a video version of this guide for those who have literacy and learning difficulties, which will be available by the autumn of 2011. The sound track will be in eight languages to reach children from other cultures. Other translations will be available as needs arise.

Principles and Standards of Care

Working with Local Authority social workers, we endeavor to take the complexity of the young person's family background into account when a placement is being made in order to ensure an appropriate match. Our main priority is always the child's welfare and a consistent provision that will meet their individual needs. Our practice is to demonstrate a positive regard for the child's racial, religious and cultural background and sexual orientation and we take their needs, wishes and feelings into account in relation to placements wherever possible. We also seek to offer consistently high standards of care in a variety of settings, recognising that only a diverse choice of placements will ensure that a child's changing needs are consistently reviewed and accommodated. ,

Numbers, qualifications and experience of staff

Directors

Antony Meade. Managing Director and Registered Provider. Previously Director and Company Secretary of Family Matters Fostering for nine years. Approved foster carer from 1996-1999. General business management experience for 30 years.

Peter Higson. FCA Higson APS, Company Secretary

Eleanor Meade Founding Director of Family Matters. Managing Director for nine years now retired. Currently a member of the fostering Panel.

Social Work Staff

Full time Social Work Staff

Audrey Carmichael Operations Manager and Deputy Agency Manager; CQSW 1994; BSc (Hons) Health & Social Care Management; PQ Award in Social Work; Numerous occupational training qualifications; Worked in children's services for 19 years, including 12 years as a foster carer, concurrent with 6 years as a residential worker and 9 years in 'field' social work. Provides qualified cover for carers as required and supervision for link workers

- Julie Ames** Senior Social Worker. BSc Hons Social Science; CQSW; PQ. Childcare Award; 12 years Social Worker in children & families/disabilities; 7 years fostering social work.
- H C** Qualified Social Worker, with over 20 years experience working with Children and Families
- T H** Cert & Dip in Welfare Studies 1994; Dip in Social Work 1997; (Dip of Higher Ed. in Applied Social Studies); 9 years social work; 2 years working as Family Liaison Officer. Foster carer for 5 years.
- J R** Student Social Worker – Cornwall. Cert in Health & Social Care K100 (1st yr of DipSW); NVQ5 in Management; Area Supported Housing Manager for Domestic Violence/Mental Health projects; Shaftsbury Area Estate Manager for Sheltered Housing; Five Rivers Residential Manager Children’s Home; 4 years Housing Manager for YMCA; LA Housing Association; 7 years with fostering social work; currently studying OU DipSW Qualification
- L W** Advanced Certificate in Education 2006; Foundation Degree in Childhood Studies; Secretarial Studies. 4 years experience working in fostering; currently studying OU DipSW Qualification.
- T R** Qualified Social Worker level3, PQ1. Over 20 years experience working with children and families
- Education and Resources Coordinator*
- S W** BTec National Certificate in Social Care, Foundation Degree in Childhood Studies, Diploma in Secretarial Skills

Administrative staff
Full time Administrative staff

- A B** RSA I,II,III Typing and Shorthand, 2yr Sec Studies course CLAIT I,II. Extensive administrative experience in a number of office manager / PA / HR roles; CIPD CPP Qualification
- E W** Variety of GCSEs; CLAIT 1; NVQ2 Business & Administration; Experience in varying administrative roles
- H R** Business Management with Sport & Leisure Mgmt Degree (BA Hons); C&G Level 1 Spreadsheets & Presentation Graphics; RSA I & II Typing; RSA I Word Processing
- E R** TESOL Qualified teacher
- Part time administrative staff*
- G S** Office Cleaner

Accountants

Higson and Co.
45 Queen Street
Deal
Kent. CT14 6EY

Bankers

Royal Bank of Scotland
134 Sandgate Road
Folkestone
Kent CT20 2BZ

Legal Advisor

Sue Watler. Solicitor.
Rootes & Alliott,
27 Cheriton Place
Folkestone
Kent

Number of Foster Carers (at 30th August 2011)

32

Number of children in place (at 30th August 2011)

30

Number of complaints and their outcomes (from 1st Jan 2011 – 30th August 2011)

None.

Recruitment and Approval of Foster Carers

On receiving an enquiry from potential foster carers we assess basic suitability over the phone. If the enquirer demonstrates the life experience and skills that we look for, we invite them to an interview at our offices as soon as possible, or offer them a home visit.

At the initial interview we describe what is required of a foster carer working for Family Matters Fostering Ltd. and interview them in more detail to assess their basic suitability to become a foster carer with us. It also provides an opportunity for the enquirer to ask any questions.

If at this point we want to proceed with the enquiry we take, inspect, and copy the various documents and forms of identification for OFSTED, CRB and other checks. All relevant forms are completed and the enquirers are invited to attend a Foundations For Fostering training course.

Following the course, if the enquirers are assessed by the course facilitators as possessing the skills and qualities we require, and they want to proceed by converting their enquiry into an application, a qualified social worker conducts a home visit. If the home is deemed suitable and there are no issues thrown up by health and safety or other statutory checks, a qualified Social Worker is appointed to carry out a full assessment. This is an in depth report on their family and home life. During this time, and once satisfactory references have been obtained, both written and verbal, the candidates will work from time to time as Carer Support Workers to gain experience in working with looked after children and to enable us to assess their skills and gain evidence of their suitability for the task.

Once the Home Assessment is completed, the candidates, together with their assessing social worker, are invited to a Fostering Panel meeting, where their application will be considered.

We have two Fostering Panels, one covering the South East and one the South West. The Panels are chaired by David Pearson, ex CEO of CCPAS (The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service). The other panel members are drawn from our central list which includes medical, legal educational and social work professions, as well as foster carers who are not part of the agency and other members who have been through the care system themselves.

The Panel makes their recommendation regarding the applicant's suitability to the Panel Decision Maker, who makes the final decision regarding whether or not the applicant[s] become approved as carers for the Agency.

Candidates are informed verbally and in writing of the agency's decision within three days normally but definitely within a maximum of seven days.

The process, from application to final approval takes approximately three to six months, and never more than eight months.

Recruitment of Carer Support Workers

Not everyone is able to be, or wants to be, a foster carer. Carer Support Workers are recruited to provide help with activities or evening/weekend sitting to give Foster Carers time off. They are often adult members or friends of families who foster and they help to share the load. They are paid for by the carer out of a specific portion of the fostering allowance that the company provides. They are provided to ensure that the Carers get regular breaks and the looked after children get to meet a good cross section of caring adults with whom that they can develop positive and supportive friendships. .

Whilst all foster carers will do some work as Carer Support Workers during their training, some people do nothing else.

The initial enquiry is handled in the same way as foster carers, in that the candidate is screened by telephone and then invited to an interview. At the interview an application form is filled out and checks and references started.

We then contact referees and once all the references and checks are back we invite the candidate onto a short training course aimed at equipping them to safely care for foster children over short periods of time.

Once this training has been completed, and subject to approval by the manager, the Carer Support Worker will provide sitting during the day or evening for up to 4-5 hours at a time, or they may take a young person out for recreational activities.

They complete a report at the end of every session of 'sitting' or activity and are trained to report back on anything that might be of note that the young person says or does. This is checked by the carer and forms part of the information that is fed back to the Local Authority and is recorded on the child's file.

Training Foster Carers

Fostering has always been a challenging task, and it has become increasingly demanding and complex. We believe that, with the excellent training we provide, the lives of the foster carers and the children they care for are made considerably easier.

This is a sample selection of training courses run for our carers:

- Child Protection
- First Aid
- Valuing diversity
- Caring for a child who has been abused
- Preparing a young person for independence
- Recording
- Health and Safety
- Education
- Contact
- Allegations
- Identity
- Care Standards & CWDC
- Internet risk and how to manage it
- Preventing Placement Breakdown
- Helping Children prepare for Independence
- Caring for Children with Learning Difficulties
- Valuing yourself as a carer
- Promoting Health
- Safe Caring
- Meeting Educational Needs
- Communicating with Young People
- Importance of Life Work
- Effects and Management of Bullying
- Drugs Awareness
- Managing Difficult Behaviours

All main carers are expected to study towards and achieve the CWDC Certificate in their first year with the agency and are then encouraged to achieve the NVQ Health and Social Care (Children and Young People) Level 3.

Supporting Carers

Our foster carers are part of a wider team that is responsible for the welfare of the children in their care. We recognise that effective support is an essential element of a successful placement and we are flexible and creative in our approach. The following support is offered to all our foster carers:

- One evening off each week, during which time child care is provided by a care support worker.
- Fourteen full days paid holiday per annum in addition to evening time off.
- Access to one or more of our social work staff 24 hours each day.
- Monthly supervision with their supervising social worker.
- Regular training courses.
- Development groups (Carer Forum)
- Additional out of school allowance and out of school activities.
- Holiday activities.
- Education and Resources Co-ordinator support - arranging and dealing with educational issues.
- Mentoring from a diverse team of Fostering Mentors
- Daily reporting on life in the foster home to enable the supervising social worker to identify when extra support may be needed.

Reviewing Carers

Apart from monthly supervision and un-announced visits to carers, under the regulatory reviewing system we conduct reviews on all our carers annually and after any major life change, event or complaint.

Reviews are made by a qualified social worker and they are designed to assess any changes in the foster carers' home and life experiences during the previous 12 months and the effect these may have on their ability and suitability to foster. The views of any children they have looked after are sought, as well as the child's social worker and parents. The review also considers the Carers Personal Development Plan and their progress.

The first annual review is reported to the Family Matters Fostering Panel for their consideration, with the following two being considered by an internal panel who report their conclusions at a full Panel meeting.

The next review, and each subsequent third review takes the form of an updated Assessment, which is submitted to Panel. Any review following a significant change or event is also considered by the Panel.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about Family Matters Fostering Ltd please contact us on 0845 226 9480 or mail@fosteringagency.com