

Statement of Purpose

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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Registered Office, Contact Numbers and Operating Hours

Little Acorns Fostering Ltd

**Rook Tree Barn
5.00pm**

Withersfield Road

Great Wratting

Suffolk

CB9 7DH

Telephone: 01440 732 010

Monday – Friday 9.00am –

Out of hours: 01440 732 019

www.littleacornsfostering.com

Our Mission Statement:

Little Acorns Fostering will fully support and value our foster carers recognising they are the cornerstone of the service we will provide. Working in partnership with our carers and the child's placing social worker we will work to ensure any child placed is able to thrive and achieve their true potential.

Little Acorns Fostering provides an individual and professional service to everyone involved in each child's placement. Each placement will be carefully matched to our foster carers approved status.

Our foster carers will have varied backgrounds but all will have the qualities needed to ensure that children placed with them will receive the stability and care they should expect.

Little Acorns Fostering tailors for the entire age range of children, from new born up to the age of eighteen. We offer a complete care package carefully planned for the specific child. The package ensures that support and backup is on hand to our foster carer at all times to enable the placement to be successful. We feel it is crucial to the success of any placement that the child's needs are paramount at all times.

Little Acorns staff and directors have extensive experience and expertise in the child care profession, both in the public and private sector. They are committed to providing a quality service, Safeguarding children and working in partnership with local authorities who access their services.

Our Vision:

"We want our children and young people to be strong in their words and deeds, to be able to withstand life's storms, grow and reach their potential and become people that others can lean on and trust"

Introduction

Little Acorns Fostering Ltd ("LAFL") an Independent Fostering Agency incorporated in July 2012, registered with Ofsted in February 2013 and more recently rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted in September 2017.

Located close to Haverhill, in Suffolk, central to the eastern catchment area, LAFL provides quality, trained foster carers on an outsourced basis to local authorities where an overflow of placement need exists. LAFL focuses on providing long term, stable placements through robust matching and "best in class" support services.

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

These regulations require fostering agencies to produce a Statement of Purpose which provides a useful source of information to staff, foster carers, prospective foster carers, children and young people who are placed with Little Acorns, their parents, significant others and colleagues from partner Agencies/Local Authorities.

Little Acorns Fostering aims to meet and exceed the requirements arising from:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act 1989;
- The Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- The National Fostering Agency – Policies and Good Practice Guidance

Little Acorns Fostering will provide a copy of the Statement of Purpose to OFTSED and on request will make a copy of it available to:

- any person working on behalf of Little Acorns Fostering
- any foster carer or prospective foster carer of Little Acorns Fostering
- any child (subject to their age and level of understanding) placed with a foster carer
- The parent/person with parental responsibility for a child or young person placed with Little Acorns Fostering

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed regularly, and at least annually, by the Management of Little Acorns Fostering and updated versions are then provided to carers, staff, Ofsted, young people placed within LAFL and accessible on the website, littleacornsfostering.com for parents and family members, colleagues from other social care agencies, and the general public also.

Our Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of Little Acorns Fostering is to provide a diverse range of high quality Foster Carers to Children In Care and young people. Through committed investment in training and support we look to develop professional and resilient carers who comply fully with the National Minimum Standards.

Little Acorns is committed to working in genuine partnership with local authorities, other agencies, health and social services trusts, parents and carers in order to achieve positive outcomes for Children In Care, including and at the foremost, to work toward reunification into the child's natural family and home.

Objectives:

Little Acorns Fostering's key objective is to deliver services in order that children and young people can develop and grow with an ethos aligned with secure base philosophy and within the five key outcomes areas of "Every Child Matters":

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

To support these five outcomes we aim too:

Safeguard children at all times and ensure that all carers and staff members are clear that it is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe from harm.

- To recruit, train and support Foster Carers from the East of England, ensuring they are equipped to provide a broad range of services for Children In Care and Young People
- To recruit carers from all cultural and ethnical backgrounds to reflect the needs of the demographic of the region.
- To provide foster placements where each child will have stability, security and a warm, safe, caring environment where they can thrive
- To ensure the cultural needs of each child will be met.
- To maximise educational opportunities for all children and young people where they can develop and achieve their full potential
- To ensure a child's physical and emotional health care needs are met and a positive healthy lifestyle is encouraged.

- To promote contact with the birth family and significant others during a placement and to encourage and facilitate this as appropriate.
- To ensure a plan is developed for the child's future and is acted upon within the timescales set at each review.
- To ensure all foster carers have training, guidance and support from a fully qualified designated Supervising Social Worker.
- To carefully match the needs of Children In Care and young people with the particular skills, experience and training of carers.
- To ensure 24 hour support for children, young people and foster carers.
- To engender a culture of continuous review and improvement.

Our Ethos and Principles

Little Acorns Fostering Ltd believes that a family placement is appropriate for the majority of Children in Care. We strive to provide family placements that afford the same love, encouragement, support and protection that all children are entitled to experience in their lives.

Children will be supported and encouraged to maintain links and contact with their families and community of origin and our foster carers will support these efforts.

Our Foster carers will encourage children to be proud of their background and supported to fulfil their potential, celebrating their talents and achievements into adulthood.

Children will be consulted, involved and listened to with appropriate consideration given to their views concerning important decisions affecting their lives. When it is considered not in the child or young person's best interest to act upon their wishes, they will be helped to understand why this is.

Children should be safeguarded in care, be protected from harm, including actions by other children or young people themselves. Little Acorns and foster carers will operate within the practice and policies agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Care Standards

Little Acorns Fostering aims to provide the highest standards of care at all times. We acknowledge that a family-based setting provides better opportunities for the majority of children and young people, compared to a residential environment.

The quality of the family-based setting is likely to determine whether a child will reach their full potential.

At Little Acorns Fostering, we will ensure our high expectations and standards of care are met by ensuring:

- Only those carers who have shown evidence of commitment to the safety and well-being of vulnerable children are taken forward for approval;
- Each foster carer's approval status is reviewed annually;
- Little Acorns Fostering and its foster carers understand and support the importance of and support the maintenance of family contacts, friendships and community contacts;
- An anti-discriminatory approach is taken when considering and providing for individual needs, including gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture, etc.;
- Little Acorns Fostering and its foster carers work collaboratively with the child/young person, their families, local authorities and other agencies;
- There is an on-going commitment to promoting and safeguarding each child/young person's emotional and physical well-being and protecting them from all forms of abuse;
- The views and feelings of each child/young person are sought and he or she is involved in the decisions being made about them - providing access to advocacy services where appropriate;

- Each child/young person is provided with appropriate health care and an opportunity to participate in any decisions about their health;
- Each child/young person has full access to educational resources, promoting achievement and independence;
- Each child/young person has appropriate support in preparing them for long-term fostering or adoption, or developing their skills for independent living;
- Where possible, on-going assistance is made available, as agreed by the local authority, to children and their families in the event they return to their care;

When considered appropriate, Little Acorns Fostering will encourage on-going contact for children who leave placement with Little Acorns Fostering. This recognises that Carers are an important part of their lives.

Facilities and Services

Little Acorns Fostering provides placements for children and young people of all ages up to 18 years. This includes individuals and sibling groups. Beyond 18, we support local authority “Staying Put” schemes.

Little Acorns Fostering has two Contact Suites for use for both Supported and Supervised Contact by Little Acorns in conjunction with the Local Authorities.

Types of Placements:

Emergency Placement

Little Acorns Fostering operates a 24-hour emergency service. Some carers are able to accept unplanned placements where the carers' tasks would be to provide a place of safety and meet the immediate needs of the child.

Short Term Placement

Little Acorns Fostering provides short-term placements whilst further plans are being made for the child (ren)'s care. Whilst in the placement, Little Acorns Fostering has Support Workers who can be allocated to provide specific services or undertake identified pieces of work with the child/young person. Foster carers will assist the local authority with assessments of need to better equip the social worker to make a placement in the child's best interest.

Parent and Child Placement

Little Acorns Fostering can provide foster carers who are equipped to provide short or long term placements for parent and child, regardless of the age of the parent. These carers are trained to undertake and/or contribute to Parenting Assessments.

Sibling Group Placement

Little Acorns Fostering is committed to ensuring that where possible, siblings groups are placed together and is able to offer sibling group placements: There are a number of carers who are able to take larger sibling groups to ensure that children do not need to be separated for practical reasons. Where this is not possible, Little Acorns Fostering will strive to ensure that children from sibling groups are placed as close as possible geographically to maintain regular contact.

Bridging and Respite Placement

Little Acorns Fostering has and will recruit further carers who will work with children and birth families towards preparing for adoption, long term fostering, future placements or work to plans aimed at supporting Children In Care into independence.

Long-Term and Permanent Placements

Little Acorns Fostering provides carers who are approved for long-term placements and wherever possible, it will assist local authorities in finding and/or assessing long-term foster carers for a specific known child.

If an existing short-term placement is likely to be agreed as a long-term placement, the Agency will undertake an assessment to consider how the carers will meet the long term needs of the child and participate in the formation of a permanency report which will be presented to the local authority permanency panel.

Disability

Foster carers will be assessed for their suitability and skills to care for a child with a disability. Appropriate training will be provided for carers to enable them to undertake their roles competently and keep children and young people safe at all times. The knowledge of specialist professionals will be sought to support carers to fulfil this role.

Contact Suite and Supervision Service

Little Acorns Fostering also offers two purpose built and dedicated Contact Suites which can be commissioned whether or not the Local Authority has a Child/ Young Person placed with Little Acorns Fostering.

Our Management and Structure

Leonard David Gelernter (David Gee) – Responsible Individual & Chairman

David, as Responsible Individual and Chairman of LAFL, oversees the management of the agency ensuring we maintain our standards of services and operate within the regulatory framework.

David has a career spanning 53 years as director/founder of several companies including publicly quoted plc.'s. David was also a Justice of the Peace, a Magistrate with particular duties in Family Proceedings, chair of the Hillingdon Family Proceedings Court and sat on the London Executive Family Panel.

Cheryl Ann Jillions – Registered Manager and Operations Director

Cheryl has complete oversight of the agency and is responsible for the development of the fostering service and recruitment of fostering families ensuring our standards and reputation are not only preserved but enhanced.

Cheryl has 30 years' experience in the childcare arena and has been a qualified Social Worker for 20 years, Cheryl has extensive experience as an Area Manager and Registered Manager for Independent Fostering Agencies. Cheryl holds the DipSW/HE after studying at the University of the West of England and also holds a diploma in ILM Level 5 Management and Leadership.

Michael David Jillions – Business Services Director

Michael has been employed in a variety of financial institutions for 32 years, the last 22 of which have been in senior management roles. Michael's role in LAFL lies in corporate affairs ensuring the accounting and finance, legal, IT and back-office management is properly controlled. Michael also oversees all advertising and marketing for the agency.

Samuel Graeme Malcolm (known as Graeme Malcolm) – Fostering Manager

Graeme is focused on the day to day management of the Fostering service, including training, development and support of carers and staff ensuring the company is providing best in class services and promoting positive outcomes for Children In Care.

Graeme has 28 years' experience in the childcare arena. He has been a qualified Social Worker since 1996. Graeme has wide-ranging management experience in children's social care since 1999, including as a senior manager in a voluntary agency line managing a variety of regulated children's services, as a Fostering Manager in the Local Authority and as Registered Manager in an Independent Fostering Agency. Graeme holds the DipSW/HE after studying at Norwich City College/Anglia Ruskin University, a Certificate in Therapeutic Fostering from the University of Greenwich and a Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership from the Chartered Management Institute.

Nicol Robinson – Senior Practitioner

Nicol is responsible for Little Acorns governance and quality control and provides invaluable support and guidance to the Little Acorns team and her allocated Foster carers.

Nicol obtained the DipSW/HE in Social Work 23 years ago from Nottingham Trent University and has a BA honours degree in Social Work. She has previously worked in Children's Services, including setting up and managing a remand fostering project, working with young people involved in the Criminal Justice system and as a practice manager for a London Youth offending service. More recently Nicol has worked independently as a Practice Educator for MA and BA Social work students from the universities of Kingston, Suffolk and East Anglia and for an independent fostering agency.

Nicol also holds the Post Qualifying Award in Child Care, Post-graduate certificate in professional childcare studies and in Education and Training in human services as well as the Practice Teaching award from Kingston University and the introductory diploma in management (ILM).

Vicky Bigmore – Supervising Social Worker

Vicky has extensive experience of working with children, young people and families in both the statutory and voluntary sector. Supporting them through direct work and group work.

Vicky obtained a BA(Hons) Social Work in 2012 and worked in the Local Authority Children Services, within Child Protection, Child in Need, Looked After Children and Children with Disabilities team.

William Jones – Supervising Social Worker

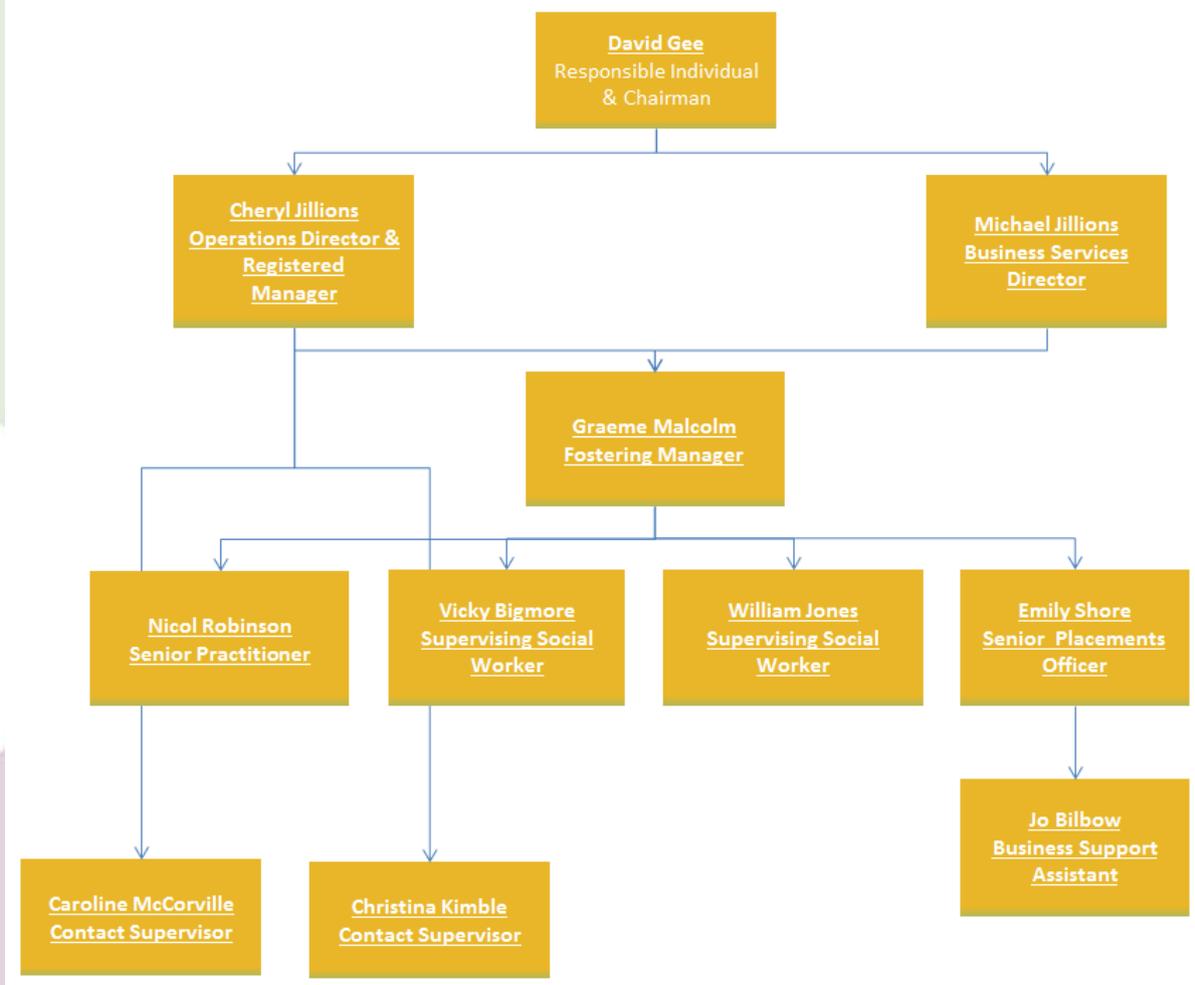
Will is a Newly Qualified Social Worker and joined the team in January 2018. Will came from a Local Authority within a Child Protection team with a desire for a more hands on and therapeutic approach. Will achieved a BA(Hons) Social Work in 2016, he has previously had placements within a counselling and child contact environment.

Emily Shore – Senior Placements Officer

Emily takes care of our placement matching ensuring any referrals we receive are given proper consideration and undergo the correct matching process. Emily also liaises with the Local Authorities and carers to facilitate all aspects of placing a child or young person with one of the Little Acorns carers. Emily is also a Business Support Co-ordinator, assisting the Supervising Social Workers with their paperwork and making sure all of the relevant systems are kept up to date.

Jo Bilbow – Business Support Co-ordinator

Jo joined the team in December 16 to support Emily & the Supervising Social Workers with all aspects of administration duties, along with various general office tasks.



Staff Recruitment and Training

We aim to ensure that we have sufficient staff in place to deliver the service to the standards set out in this document. To this end, Little Acorns Fostering will ensure that our Supervising Social Workers have no more than twelve fostering households with active placements in their case load.

Robust recruitment procedures are undertaken for every member of staff where their experience, skills and suitability for each post will be assessed.

Enhanced Updating DBS checks are carried out for all members of staff without exception.

Little Acorns Fostering will commit to relevant post-qualifying training for Social Workers to ensure they are kept abreast with all current trends, legislation and regulations.

Annual appraisals are undertaken to identify gaps in knowledge or skill base to ensure appropriate training is given at all levels. Their training is in line with the HCPC requirements including their continued registration as a Social Worker.

Little Acorns believes in “growing your own” team of people and will develop staff according to their potential.

Quality supervision with all members of staff is provided on a regular basis to ensure that all staff feel safe and are suitably equipped in the knowledge of their roles.

Fostering Panel

An Independent Fostering Panel has been formulated for the agency's sole use. This comprises Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and panel members from a variety of appropriate backgrounds and experience such as Police, Child Protection, Health, Education and Local Authority Foster Carers.

Each member of the Fostering Panel Central List is Enhanced DBS checked and have current references from previous employers. The agency will undertake annual appraisals and training with each member and continue to recruit new members ensuring a diverse group of people from various backgrounds are available.

Each panel sitting will be documented by the Panel minute taker and paperwork agreed by all members prior to sending to the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker will contact the panel members regarding the outcomes of that panel, verbally within two days and in writing within five days.

Any Agency Manager who has supervised the assessing Social Workers Form F process will not be permitted to sit on Panel.

Assessing Social Workers will present their Form F's to Panel in person, along with the potential fostering family.

Our panel has access to specialist legal and medical advice as required

Recruitment and Approval Process for Foster Carers

Initial Enquiry

On receiving an enquiry from (a) potential foster carer(s), a suitably trained member of LAFL staff will conduct a scripted questionnaire identifying their suitability. If deemed suitable from this call, a LAFL Social Worker will call the potential carer to discuss their enquiry in more depth, both further assessing their suitability and providing greater insight into Fostering.

Initial Visit

An initial visit is then organised in the home of the prospective foster carer(s) by a LAFL Social Worker. During this visit the Social Worker will carry out a more detailed assessment on the individuals and their suitability to be Foster Carers, including their home environment. The Social Worker will again talk in more depth about what it is like to become a Foster Carer and provide as much information as possible to enable the individual(s) to decide whether they would still like to pursue Foster Care.

Following this visit a "cooling off" period is allowed to enable both the Social Worker and the Potential Foster Carer/s to reflect on what they have learned. The Social Worker will discuss each case with the Registered Manager and a decision on their viability reached.

Form F

Following the initial visit, if the Foster Carer wishes to proceed and the LAFL Social Worker is satisfied from the initial visit, the prospective carers will be invited to attend a "Skills to Foster" course at LAFL's offices. This course follows The Fostering Network's "Skills to Foster" model and forms part of the Form F assessment. LAFL uses the Form F1 competence based format published by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)

This includes:

- Verification of identity and personal history.
- Details of health
- Information about other adult members of the household
- Disclosure Barring Service (DBS / Disclosure Scotland) enhanced checks on all adult members of the family. Any person having lived overseas will require an Interpol check.

- Enquiries to Social Services Departments and their Child Protection registers and other agencies (i.e. own children's school) where appropriate.
- The applicant(s) is/are required to have a medical examination completed by their GP and the report is made available to LAFL's Medical Advisor for his/her comments about the applicants' health and any impact on fostering potential.
- The applicant(s) is/are asked to identify at least two personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process.
- Work references will be applied for including any previous employment involving children and vulnerable adults.
- A reference from any previous fostering service and reading of files.
- Evidence of leave to remain and work in the UK.

A qualified Social Worker carries out a full assessment. She/he visits the applicants' home, generally up to 10 occasions depending on the length of the visit, to meet and collect information about all members of the household and the applicants' experience and skills in relation to raising children and fostering. The information obtained forms the basis of an assessment report. A separate Child assessment report is also prepared in relation to the Carer/s own child/children.

During the assessment process, applicant(s) will be assisted in compiling a portfolio of written material giving examples of relevant experience and skills, forming the competence element of the assessment evidencing their relevant abilities.

The content of the Form F assessment, except for the confidential references, are shared with the applicant(s) and then presented to a LAFL Independent Fostering Panel

To assist in the decision making process, applicants will attend the Panel meeting

The Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of applicant(s) to be approved/appointed as (a) foster carer(s) with Little Acorns Fostering Ltd

The LAFL Decision Maker receives the recommendation of the Fostering Panel and, on behalf of the agency, makes the final decision about approval/appointment

Applicants are informed verbally about the agency's decision within 2 days and in writing within 5 days. The assessment process takes 3-6 months on average and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay. We will complete all Form F's within 8 months as a maximum. All information obtained about prospective foster carers is held on file. On request some of this can be viewed. References from external agencies (Police, Social Services, Medical) and personal references, which are provided in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and relevant referee(s).

Training Provided for Foster Carers

LAFL recognises that fostering has become increasingly demanding and complex. LAFL is committed to providing the highest quality training that is accessible and relevant to all our foster carers and their support networks. Training and continued development is viewed as an extremely important element of LAFL's support to foster carers. LAFL has a brand new purpose built training facility based in a new barn at our head office.

Comprehensive pre approval/appointment training is provided. This is based on the Fostering Network's 'Skills to Foster' model and Personal Development Plans are identified throughout this process.

Training is provided to:

- Enable foster carers to become better at doing their job
- Improve knowledge, develop and refine skills
- Establish an explicit, positive framework of values, which promotes equality of opportunity

- Encourage foster carers to reflect and look at the effects of discrimination in all parts of the community, recognising that they care for children in the context of a wider society, and that for many children discrimination is a fact of everyday life
- Ensure that all foster carers remain competent and confident in safe caring and in protecting children from harm
- Encourage foster carers to take responsibility for their own professional development through the creation of individual training profiles i.e. TDS
- All Foster Carers will complete their TDS training within 12 months

Training at all levels incorporates certain key elements:

- Child protection
- Working with children who have been abused
- Radicalisation
- Safe caring
- Managing difficult behaviour
- Identity and self esteem
- Valuing diversity and promoting equality
- Recording
- First Aid
- Health and Safety
- Health care of fostered children/young people
- Education of fostered children/young people
- Empowering children/young people
- Preparing young people for moving on and adult independence

Support for Foster Carers

LAFL values the work foster carers do and the contribution they make to the lives of children and young people. Appropriate support for the families who foster is vitally important to a successful placement. LAFL provides creative and flexible support arrangements for children/young people and their foster carers. Identifying and arranging the necessary level of support occurs when a child/young person and foster family are 'matched' at the placement planning stage. This support is then monitored and adjusted throughout the placement.

LAFL offers the following support to all our foster carers:

- Access to LAFL support services 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, 365 days of the year
- Supervision and support from a dedicated, qualified and suitably experienced LAFL Supervising Social Worker
- Frequent visits (never more than 4 weeks) and regular telephone contact from the Supervising Social Worker
- Respite facilities
- Regular focus group meetings
- Family Support workers to work with children and young people and children who foster
- TDS Training
- A level of financial support that values the skills of foster carer(s)
- Each Fostering family will have their own support networks. The identified people will be "enhanced" DBS checked and interviewed by the agency to ensure they are clear of their roles and responsibilities when caring for the CIC in the absence of the foster carer. Training opportunities are also provided.
- Dedicated Foster Carer Support Group

LAFL believe this package provides a positive way of ensuring that foster carers are fully supported and that placements are successful. Children and young people referred to the agency may have experienced many rejections and LAFL attempts to minimise this happening again. Foster carers joining LAFL are expected to be resilient and be prepared to work hard in what can be difficult circumstances. It is for these reasons that we recognise the value of good, high quality, relevant and responsive support. Each new foster carer that joins the team is paired with a more qualified fostering family to assist with the transition. This 'Buddy' system adds to the carers support network, guidance, induction and initial training process.

Complaints

1. Who Can Make a Complaint?

A child, a parent or carer of a child, a foster carer or anyone else for whom the agency has agreed to provide a service can make a complaint under this procedure. Individuals are also able to make complaints on behalf of others if it is considered they have "sufficient interest" to do so.

Children will be encouraged to take up issues in the most appropriate way and they will be supported to do this. If it is possible to identify a way forward with a complaint which is informal and therefore easily resolved, this should be the best way forward.

It is the responsibility of carers and support staff to help children to deal with their complaints sympathetically and actively, whether the complaint is about the agency or the placing authority.

Anyone making a complaint is also able to withdraw their complaint at any stage.

2. What Can Be Complained About?

- A problem
- The quality of service
- The delivery or non-delivery of a service
- The way in which the agency carries out its policies and practices.

All serious complaints will be notified to the Regulatory Authority.

The Complaint Stages

The agency is committed to resolving conflicts and concerns at an early stage – Stage One - wherever possible, but in the interests of transparency and a commitment to individual interests/rights, individuals are able to complain at Stage Two in the first instance if they so wish.

The agency will ensure that complainants are kept up to date regarding the progress of their complaint. In the event that any complainant is not satisfied at any stage, they may and should avail themselves of the right to make a complaint to the Regulatory Authority.

STAGE ONE:

Stage one is an informal process which consists of a meeting between the complainant and the Service Users – Registered Manager (Cheryl Jillions). This meeting will be scheduled once a complaint has been received in writing or recorded by means of other communication by the Service Users – Registered Manager (Cheryl Jillions).

Part of this discussion may cover whether it would be more appropriate for the complaint to be directed to the local authority with responsibility for the child's placement under the local authority's complaints procedure.

A letter of resolution or outcome will be issued in response to informal complaints by the Service Users – Registered Manager (Cheryl Jillions), including details of how the matter was investigated, by whom and with the relevant facts to support the outcome.

STAGE TWO:

This stage will be activated if the complainant is not completely satisfied with the outcome of Stage One, or if at the outset they require that the matter be dealt with by someone other than an employee of the fostering agency. The complainant will be advised that they must put their complaint in writing to the Service Users – Registered Manager (Cheryl Jillions), who will then contact the complainant within five working days to advise that he/she has instructed an Independent Complaints Investigating Officer in relation to the complaint and will advise them of his/her name and the expected time frame for the investigation.

A report will be completed following the investigation, detailing how the matter was investigated, by whom and what outcome was reached with relevant evidence to support the report's conclusions.

STAGE THREE:

This is the final stage of the complaints process. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two investigation, they must confirm this in writing, including reasons for their dissatisfaction, to the Service Users – Registered Manager (Cheryl Jillions), who will undertake to arrange for the case to be reviewed by an Independent Panel within 28 days.

The Panel will be made up of:

- A Fostering Panel member
- A member of the Board of Directors
- A manager or staff member of the service
- An independent individual of such background and experience as required
- A chairperson if none of the above can fulfil that role

In any event no person implicated in a complaint, or a relative or close association of theirs may sit on the Panel or be involved in any investigation, and the Panel will be constituted in such a way to afford true independent appraisal of the complaint.

The Panel will consider the documentation available in relation to the complaint and any further written representations that the complainant wishes to make in relation to the investigation. The Panel will reach a decision within 24 hours of meeting and the complainant will be advised of the outcome in report form to include any actions in order to resolve the situation within 7 days.

Should the complainant still not be satisfied with the outcome of Stage Three, they may take advice from the Regulatory Authority.

Little Acorns shall supply to the Ofsted at its request a statement containing a summary of any complaints made during the preceding 12 months and the action taken in response.

Organisation that could be contacted should the person wish to take the issue further:

1. The Director, Ofsted Notifications, Royal Exchange Buildings, St. Anne's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA
Tel: 0300 123 1231.
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted will not respond directly to your complaint but are there to ensure that Little Acorns Policies and Procedures are followed accurately.

If a child or carer is unhappy about a change in their Care Plan or their Placement Plan this should be brought to the attention of their social worker who may be able to resolve the matter. If this isn't the case the child's independent Reviewing Officer may be contacted. It is the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer to make sure that Children In Care are aware of the local authority's Complaints Procedure, which must comply with the Children Act 1989 and associated regulations, and to assist the child to access independent support and advice to enable them to use this procedure if they wish to do so.

All complaints and allegations received into LAFL are centrally monitored by the senior management team to ensure issues are managed and reported to the appropriate regulatory bodies and undertaken in a timely manner.

If any complaint is made to any employee of Little Acorns that is clearly of a child protection nature, then that complaint will be immediately passed on to the relevant Local Authority Child Protection Safeguarding Team and Ofsted will be informed.

If at any time during an investigation into a complaint it becomes clear that there may be child protection implications, the current investigation will be halted and the relevant Local Authority or Trust notified immediately, the responsible authority and Ofsted will be informed.

Where a complaint is made against a registered person, Ofsted will be notified; both of the nature of the complaint and of the outcome. This action will be undertaken by the Responsible Individual of Little Acorns Fostering.

Quality Assurance, Data Protection and Record Keeping

Feedback from all parties that use the service will be sought on a regular basis. Service Users will be involved in the recruitment process of our staff and carers where appropriate.

The Registered Manager is responsible for the annual household review of all foster carers, ensuring companywide compliance with policies and procedures. The Registered Manager has an overall monitoring and auditing role in

relation to all aspects of Little Acorns Fostering work in conjunction with the Business Development Manager who oversees the Quality Assurance aspect of the service.

All newly approved foster families will be reviewed within the first year of their approval to ensure they are meeting their Personal Development Plans and training criteria that is set during the Form F assessment.

The Independent panel will review the Household Review process on a yearly basis, unless there are significant changes to their circumstances in which case we will conduct a review at that time. These circumstances include –

- After the final strategy meeting of a s.47 investigation involving a carer(s)
- Where allegations have been made regarding a carer(s) child care practice and no S47 investigation is pursued.
- Where there has been a breakdown in the approved carer's relationship resulting in one carer moving out of the household. In this instance both carers will be subject to review except where one/or both carers has given notice of an intention to resign.
- Where there has been the death of a carer.
- Where a carer has been diagnosed with a serious illness.
- Where a carer has started living with a new partner.
- Where a carer is not working in partnership with the agency including a lack of willingness to attend training.

The Annual Household Review will address the carers training and development needs for the next year and suggest, if required, alterations to their approval status. The ECM outcomes are covered to provide a picture of how the carer works with the children and young people in their care. Reports will be requested from the Child's Social Worker, the Supervising Social Worker, carer/s, the child/young person in placement, the birth family (if appropriate) and any other interested party.

The first review report is presented to the Fostering Panel for their recommendation and comments and subsequently the Little Acorns Decision Maker for approval.

Data Protection, Record Keeping and Access to recorded Information

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that all staff understands their responsibilities to maintain records, and to include children and young people in the recording process. We treat confidentiality and data protection (e.g. safe storage of records) very seriously. We will only share information with other agencies with the agreement of the child and/or family, unless we have a significant concern about harm to a child (in line with government guidance on information sharing).

All requests for access to records should be made in writing to Michael Jillions – Business Services Director using the details below;

Little Acorns Fostering

Rook Tree Barn

Withersfield Road

Great Wratting

Suffolk

CB9 7HD

mick@littleacornsfostering.com

Insurance

Little Acorns Fostering is fully and comprehensively insured against risk, loss and business disruption, namely but not limited to:

- Employers Liability - £10 million
- Public Liability - £10 million
- Professional Indemnity - £1 million

Important Policies and Procedures

Little Acorns has a full and comprehensive set of Policies and Procedures in compliance with this Statement of Purpose and the following Standards and legislation. As these are developed, updated versions are provided to the carers, staff and any other interested party. Our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are monitored and verified by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act 1989;
- The Children & Young Persons Act 2008

This Statement of Purpose is available as required and by request in other formats.