

Statement of Purpose – February 2017

The services offered by GLF are underpinned by:

Children Act 1989 and 2004 (and its later amendments)
National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England) 2011
The Fostering Service Regulations (England) 2011 and 2013
The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013
The Children’s Bill 2013
The Children Leaving Care Act 2000
Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Statutory Guidance
UN Rights of the Child
The Disability Equality Act 2010
Human Rights Act 1998

1. The aims, objectives and principles of Greater London Fostering

Greater London Fostering believes that children’s needs are best met in the context of a nurturing family and that with appropriate support all children can benefit from a family life.

Although set up to recruit, train and support foster carers the organisation’s paramount concern will always be to meet the needs of those children referred to it for services.

GLF believes that all children can benefit from an individually designed programme aimed at addressing whatever levels of emotional and physical deprivation they have previously experienced.

All GLF foster carers, foster carer supervisors and other professionals involved will work together to plan and implement such programmes as directed by the placing local authority.

GLF believes that education is critical to the future of all young people. All effort will be made to help them fulfil their educational potential.

All children and young people have the right to expect their carers to be able to meet their needs in relation to race; faith, culture, and sexual orientation and ensure that all children and young people maintain their belief systems. GLF are committed to working sensitively and inclusively within the community we serve.

GLF staff and carers will promote the best possible quality of contact between children and families. GLF will (whenever it is consistent with a child’s care plan)

work in partnership with the placing local authority and the child's family towards maintaining and strengthening the child's family relationships with a view to rehabilitation.

Children who move on, whether they are returning to their birth family or to another placement should be able to take with them the memory of a positive experience whilst living with their GLF carers.

2. The standards of care to be followed by the agency

GLF allocate a Supervisor to share responsibility for the work of each of its foster families. Carers have access to telephone advice twenty-four hours a day 365 days of the year. An experienced social work manager is permanently available to provide support to the twenty-four hour service and to receive out of hours referrals.

Children in placement are seen regularly by the carer's supervisor. Their right to complain is explained to them in an age appropriate way at an early stage of their placement. When age appropriate they are given a copy of GLF's Children's or Young Persons Guide, which is available in a number of different languages.

Foster families are expected to maintain clean and comfortable accommodation and to provide appropriate food at all times. They must ensure that the children in their care have adequate pocket money, clothing, toys and other personal possessions.

Carers must do everything they can to support the child's cultural identity, preserve pre-existing religious affiliations and promote the child's general self-esteem.

Foster carers must promote regular school attendance whenever possible and take positive steps to achieve educational continuity and achievement for the children in their care. They should where appropriate assist the child's social worker in arranging local education and should always encourage children to fulfil their potential.

Foster carers must ensure that children are registered with a local GP within one week of placement. They are responsible for identifying and following up health concerns in consultation with their supervising social worker, the child's social worker and if appropriate the child's family.

All Foster carers are responsible for identifying and arranging suitable leisure activities for the children they care for.

Carers are responsible for children's safety whilst in their care. They attend training on the subject and regularly check their homes for health and safety risks and take remedial action where necessary. They are responsible for implementing the recommendations of their supervisor.

Foster carers are responsible for ensuring that foster children only travel in properly maintained and insured vehicles and always wear seat belts whilst traveling by car. They should ensure that their fostering activities are compatible with their domestic and motor insurance policies.

Foster children should not normally be left alone in the home unless this has been agreed with the young person's social worker or the foster carer has been given delegated authority to make this decision. They should not stay with friends away from the foster home overnight without the permission of their social worker unless the foster carer has been given delegated authority to agree such stays.

Carers must not agree to any plan which might involve significant risk. Any such plan must be agreed in advance by the child's social worker, unless the foster carer has been given delegated authority to agree such activities.

Foster families should identify regular baby sitters who can be checked by the Disclosure Barring Service and vetted by GLF. Foster children should not be left with babysitters who have not been checked by the agency unless they have delegated authority to use such a babysitter.

As a general rule all GLF foster children are expected to be included in plans for family holidays. Where this is inappropriate or where planned breaks are agreed as necessary GLF will make alternative plans in cooperation with the placing authority.

Foster families should not arrange holidays or overnight stays away from home without prior consultation with and the agreement of the foster child's social worker unless they have delegated authority to arrange such stays.

Greater London Fostering wishes to promote positive parenting. Foster carers should always concentrate on the importance of rewarding good behaviour rather than simply reacting to misbehaviour.

Carers must not in any circumstances smack, or use any sanctions which includes any form of humiliation to the children in their care. Foster carers must refrain from using any measure of control, restraint or discipline which could be considered excessive or unreasonable. Our directive is dialogue at all times with children and young people with the aim to de-escalate and defuse any situation.

Where the use of physical restraint is used as the last resort, to prevent immediate serious risk or harm of the child or another person, the carer should make a written record of the circumstances and tell their supervising social worker what has happened immediately.

Foster carers should expect to be questioned about and advised on any or all their domestic arrangements which impact on children, both by their supervising social worker and representatives of the placing local authority.

GLF carers and staff will seek to work in cooperation with the placing authority.

Within the framework of the child's care plan, carers must be prepared to promote to the best possible quality of contact between children and their families.

3. The services and facilities to be provided by the fostering service

GLF can offer the following:-

1. Emergency, short, medium and long term placements
2. Assessment and bridging placements
3. Respite and holiday placements
4. Placements for sibling groups
5. Ethnic diversity in placement
6. Parent and child placements
7. Placements which prepare children for independence
8. Enhanced fostering

GLF can arrange the following at cost:

9. Therapy and Counselling
10. Psychiatric Assessment
11. Supervised Contact
12. 24 hour escort facilities
13. Home Tuition

GLF offers foster carers:

14. Twenty four hour telephone access to their supervisor
15. Regular visits and supervision by their supervisor
16. Efficient financial systems
17. On-going training and development in line with a regularly agreed individual plan.
18. Regular agency social activities.

4. The status and constitution of the agency

Greater London Fostering is a conventional limited company set up in 2002.

5. The management structure of the agency

The agency has two Directors, Linda Norwood and Richard Norwood. Marcella Denis is the Registered Manager. Melanie Yearwood is The Operations Manager and Responsible Individual.

6. A description of the agency's foster carers, their number and the numbers recruited

GLF currently (February 2017) has 107 foster families

The agency has recruited 17 families in the last year.

7. The number of children placed by the agency

The agency has 128 children in placement at the time of writing this statement.

8. The process for recruiting and approving foster carers

Foster carers are recruited by personal recommendation and direct advertising. When the agency is approached by a prospective applicant they are visited by a member of staff. Or an experienced foster carer who assesses and discusses with the applicant/s the feasibility of them becoming foster carers.

Prospective applicants are then invited to attend the next GLF Skills to Foster training course. Preparatory training has runs on a monthly basis. GLF seek to recruit applicants who have suitable or transferable core skills, which can be nurtured and supported into the role of approved carers. The course is jointly facilitated by a GLF social worker or manager and one of the agencies more experienced foster carers. As part of the training prospective applicants are given the opportunity to meet other GLF foster carers.

Applicants who wish to continue with their application are then invited to complete and return the application form.

Full assessments are undertaken on prospective applicants by experienced, qualified social workers, using the BAAF form F format.

Applicant families are visited in their homes on at least six occasions and each individual in the application is separately interviewed.

Applicants are expected to contribute written material towards their assessment and third party evidence of their child care experience is obtained.

In addition to providing written references the two personal referees are visited by the assessing social worker.

Evidence of the applicant's identity is required e.g. birth and marriage certificates.

Enhanced DBS (formerly known as criminal records bureau) and other statutory checks are undertaken on all applicants. The agency is registered to undertake its own DBS checks.

All applicants who are felt to be unsuitable during the assessment are told in writing the reasons for the discontinuation of the assessment process.

Applicants who successfully complete the assessment and training / preparation are presented to the GLF fostering panel with a recommendation for approval as a GLF foster carer.

Following approval the foster carer signs the GLF foster care agreement which commits the foster carers and the agency to certain ways of working which include:

1. Adherence to GLF philosophy and working practices
2. A learning and development programme which includes regular attendance at training events and support meetings.
3. Annual review and appraisal.
4. Comply with all safeguarding and Health and Safety Requirements.
5. To proactively support the care planning of Looked After Children and optimise the 'life chances' for all GLF Looked After Children.

GLF services operate from the following addresses with a contact number of 0208 3478741:

The Quadrangle
86 Romford Road
Stratford
E15

124 Gipsy Hill
London
SE19 1PL

*Please note the Gipsy Hill office will be relocated as of the **27th March 2017** to:-*
20/22 Gipsy Hill
London
SE19 1NL