



Statement of Purpose

SILVER LINING FOSTERING AGENCY
2019-2020

Silver Lining Fostering Agency is the trading name of Silver Lining Fostering Ltd.

Contents

Contents	Page
Introduction	2
About Silver Lining	2
Vision	3
Mission	3
Core Values	3
Aims & objectives	3
Principles of care	6
Services provided by Silver Lining Fostering Agency	7
Management structure	9
Fostering panels	9
Recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers	9
Review and Termination of Approval	16
Referrals and Matching	17
Contact Silver Lining	19
Appendix A – Complaints Procedure	20
Appendix B- Family Friendly Service	25
Appendix C- Varied Uses of Family Friendly Carers	31
Appendix D- Organisational Structure	33

INTRODUCTION:

This statement of purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate legislation and guidance including:

- The Children Act 1989;
- The Care Standards Act 2000;
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; and
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011

The Statement of purpose, produced in accordance with Fostering Services Regulation 3, includes:

- Statement of the Aims and Objectives of Silver Lining's fostering service; and
- Statement as to the services and facilities provided by the fostering service.

A copy of this statement of purpose is available on our website and copies will be made available, upon request, to:

- Any person working for Silver Lining Fostering Agency
- Any foster carer or prospective foster carer
- Any child or young person placed with Silver Lining
- The parent/person with parental responsibility for a child or young person placed with Silver Lining.

It is reviewed and agreed annually by the Responsible Individual and Registered Manager. It is submitted on review to Ofsted and is published on the Silver Lining's website.

ABOUT SILVER LINING FOSTERING AGENCY:

Silver Lining Fostering Agency is the trading name of Silver Lining Fostering Ltd. Silver Lining Fostering Agency is an independent fostering provider recruiting and supporting foster families to care for children and young people looked after by local authorities across the South East and London boroughs. We aim to provide professional and accessible support services to foster carers, birth families and children. Silver Lining Fostering Agency aims to broaden placement choices and family support services by providing direct support to families and children at the edge of care as well as foster placements to looked after children. We aim to embed ideas from systemic practice as well as secure base model within all aspects of our service delivery.

The organisation is managed by experienced, qualified professionals who provide an innovative and needs led service to children, young people in foster care.

Silver Lining is based at: The Vista Centre, 50 Salisbury Road, Hounslow TW4 6JQ

Silver Lining Ltd. is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1989 (Company Registration No – 11087540).

VISION:

The vision of the Silver Lining Fostering Agency is to deliver an ambitious fostering service and create opportunities for positive change.

MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide an ethical, innovative and child focussed service to our key stakeholders- children, birth families, local authorities, foster carers and staff. Silver Lining Fostering Agency will place the interests of the children at the heart of its business and will strive to exceed expectations of our service users.

CORE VALUES:

- Keep the needs, rights and views of children and young people at the centre of all practice and provision.
- Value, respect and celebrate individuality, difference and diversity in all aspects of our work.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Adhere to confidentiality as appropriate unless an individual's safety and well-being is at stake.
- Work in collaboration with key stakeholders to achieve best outcomes for children and young people.
- Carry out all our relationships and dealings in a truthful, ethical and transparent manner.
- Behave in a manner that embodies the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.
- Be innovative and enterprising in our service delivery without compromising on standards.
- Be ambitious and go the extra mile for the children and families we work with.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES (Principles of Care):

Silver Lining Fostering Agency strives to deliver, with professional integrity, high standards of quality care for the children placed with our foster carers. We recognise the financial constraints faced by our customer authorities and strive to provide cost effective solutions through the provision of creative care packages for young people.

The agency is committed to the delivery of a service meeting the standards of care detailed below, which are compatible with statutory and regulatory requirements of:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: The National Minimum Standards 2011, amended 2013
- The Children's Act 1989, guidance and regulations Volume 4: fostering services (referred to as statutory guidance) 2011

- The Children's Act 2004
- The Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- National Standards for Foster Care and Family Placements Services

The messages from Every Child Matters are also incorporated into agency delivery and planning of services and monitoring of performance.

- **AIMS:**

Silver Lining's focus is always the child or young person in our care. We aim to provide children and young people with a positive, safe nurturing experience of substitute care within a family environment. In agreement with the Children Act 1989, we subscribe to the view that a child is best brought up in their own home with both parents playing a full part in their upbringing. We recognise that this is not always possible. Whenever it is considered to be in the child's best interests, Silver Lining Fostering Agency will work positively with the placing Children's Services Department to return the child to her/his parents or extended family.

Silver Lining's key objective is to develop services in order that children and young people can develop and grow within the five key outcomes areas of "Every Child Matters":

Be healthy

Stay safe

Enjoy and achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic wellbeing

Silver Lining Fostering Agency also sets out to be compliant with fostering regulations and to meet and exceed the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.

Our aims are:

- To provide a high-quality service for looked after children and young people of all ages whose needs have been assessed by the responsible Local Authority as being best met by placement with a foster carer.
- To provide a family support service referred to as Family Friendly Service that aims at offering good quality respite foster care placements to families where children are on the edge of care. Family Friendly Service is very much the preventative face of foster care in that placements are offered before, rather than after a situation has reached the point of breakdown. (please refer to appendix B for full details of the scheme)
- To ensure children and young people are only placed with carers who have been recruited, assessed, approved and reviewed in accordance with statutory regulation and national standards and guidance.

- To support, supervise and provide on-going training to carers so that they are able to provide a comprehensive service that addresses the physical, emotional, educational and health needs of the children and young people placed with them.
- To promote positively the concept of fostering.
- To bring together carers who will support, educate and inform each other and who will work in partnership with all relevant professionals, agencies and families involved in the child's life.
- To continually develop and improve our services and not to compromise on standards. To this aim we seek internal and external evaluation and feedback on our work.

- **OBJECTIVES:**

In pursuit of its stated aims the agency will employ policies, practices, procedures which seek at all times:

- To ensure the provision of high-quality care to children and young people in a safe, healthy and nurturing family setting.
- To meet the individual child's particular needs and promote their best interests, in accordance with the care plan.
- To have 24-hour support for carers, children/young people and placing authorities.
- To protect the child from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.
- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of a child's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background; and to consider fully a child's gender, sexuality and any disability they may have.
- To develop the child's sense of identity and self-worth.
- To promote the child's health and wellbeing, including their physical, mental and emotional welfare.
- To promote educational achievement and attainment.
- To promote and support agreed contact with the child's family and friends, in accordance with the care plan.
- To prepare the child for adult life through the development of relevant life skills and acquisition of the knowledge necessary to achieve this; providing opportunity for lifelong relationships.
- To seek the views and opinions of children and promote participation alongside, their families and carers to inform the planning and delivery of the agency's services.
- To recruit individuals and families from all parts of the community and with different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and life experiences, thereby offering local authorities a range of placements, reflecting the wide range of children's needs.
- To achieve consistently high standards when recruiting and assessing carers.
- To have a properly constituted and independent Panel to consider assessments and make recommendations to the agency regarding the award, review, rejection or termination of approvals.

- To ensure consistency and continuity in the supervision, support and information carers receive.
- To provide accessible training that enables carers to develop their skills and knowledge so as to better meet the needs of children placed with them.
- To offer placements that carefully match the particular needs of the child to the carer's skills, experiences and circumstances.
- To regularly review the stability of placements in order to ensure support packages remain relevant and resourced, minimising the potential for placement breakdown and poor outcomes for children.
- To be a responsible and competent employer; recruiting and employing an adequate number of appropriately experienced and qualified staff, who are able to meet the needs of carers and children, placed with them.
- To ensure the agency is organisationally sound and properly structured.
- To have procedures in place to control and supervise the agency's activities.
- To have arrangements in place to control and supervise the agency's finances, which are based on sound financial principles and recognised good practice.
- To organise and manage the agency's resources effectively to ensure the best possible service delivery and the safety of children.
- To maintain the skill and knowledge base of casual or independent staff, managers and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes.
- To monitor and review agency policies, procedures and practice on a regular basis.
- To implement administrative procedures and practices so that management and staff are able to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner.
- To maintain secure, separate and accurate records for children, carers and staff and ensure access to such records, in line with legislation.

PRINCIPLES OF CARE:

Commitment to Equality and Diversity

Silver Lining recognises the diverse society and communities in which we all live and work. We embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. We aim to recruit people from all backgrounds to reflect the demographics of the regions we cover. Silver Lining's **Equality Policy** applies to staff, foster carers, children and young people. Training is mandatory for all staff and carers to assist them to understand and value diversity. We want all children and young people in our placements, our foster carers and employees to feel valued and treated equally and fairly. Our goal is to ensure our values are embedded in our day to day working practices with all our stakeholders and service users. The service considers the needs of all young people referred in the areas of race, gender, culture, religion, sexuality, ability and geographic origin, and will endeavour to promote each young person's sense of identity through appropriately matched placements, and direct work in relation to a young person's cultural background. There is a commitment to challenging individuals or groups who discriminate against any of our young people in anyway and diversity is celebrated through daily living experiences.

Voice of children

Silver Lining supports UNICEF's mission is to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided in doing this by the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The management team at Silver Lining is committed to ensuring the involvement of service users, carers, staff and stakeholders when gathering information to help shape strategy, policy and procedures of the Agency, and to ensuring that quality standards, achieve ongoing and sustainable improvement through continuous review.

We expect supervising social workers to see each child on a regular basis, to ascertain their views about their care. The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are vital to the development of services and Silver Lining is committed to the involvement of the child and young person in all aspect of service design and delivery. To this end, Silver Lining organises Children and Young Persons consultation through questionnaires, online surveys, local activities and feedback forms for carers' annual reviews and LAC reviews all feed into service developments.

Children and young people have access to a dedicated email address and are invited to use this to provide feedback in relation to any aspect of their care whilst in placement.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY SILVER LINING FOSTERING AGENCY:

Fostering Services

We pride ourselves on finding the closest possible match when children need to be placed in foster care and identifying any additional training, support or resource required. We work in partnership with Local Authorities and all other agencies to achieve the best possible outcome for all children who need to be looked after. Silver Lining specialises in offering the following types of placements:

Emergency placements

Silver Lining provides a 24 hour a day emergency service. Many carers choose to specialise in short term work and are able to accept unplanned, emergency placements. An emergency placement ideally should not exceed a few days and it would be anticipated that the child or young person should be moved to a more suitable placement within a week in a planned way.

Short term placements

Provision of short-term care that could be for a few days, weeks or months, whilst plans are made for the child's future by the Local Authority.

Bridging placements

We can provide bridging placements for children or young people while permanency plans are being formulated. In such placements, Silver Lining foster carers work with children/young people and their families toward reunification or prepare children/young people for joining adoptive or long term/permanent fostering families, or for moving to a semi-independent or an independent living arrangement.

Respite placements

Respite placements are provided to give parents a break or offer additional support if they do not have their own support network. In addition, respite is also offered to our own foster carers and is available in order to support placement demands and needs.

Long term/permanent placements

These placements are where adoption is not an option, and the foster carer will care for a child/young person up to and into adult independence.

Solo placements

Silver Lining foster carers look after children and young people who may make considerable demands upon them and also upon the services of the Agency. However, occasionally a child or young person has very specific and complex needs which, initially at least, require a higher than usual level of support, monitoring and supervision. Because of his/her needs, a child or young person may require constant individual attention and supervision that precludes the placement of any other fostered children/young people or prohibits the use of any remaining placement vacancies within the foster home. With such placements there is usually higher-level input from the Agency.

Asylum seeker placements

Silver Lining aims to build a pool of very experienced foster carers from diverse backgrounds who are willing to advocate, access services and work within the child's care plan in supporting and caring for unaccompanied children and young people from outside the UK.

Disability placements

Silver Lining has foster carers who have experience and skills in caring for children and young people who are disabled and/or require specialist medical care.

Sibling placements

Sibling placements are for siblings who all are placed together into a foster care household. Silver Lining believes in keeping siblings together within a family environment, unless it is deemed inappropriate by the placing Authority.

Parent and child placements

Placements are available for mothers and/or fathers and their child, where foster carers can provide support and guidance to parent(s) and help them develop parenting skills. If requested, and by arrangement with the placing Local Authority, a formal assessment of parenting ability can be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced Silver Lining staff in conjunction with the Silver Lining foster carer.

'Family Friendly' Service

Family Friendly Service is organised as a Family Support service that aims at offering good quality respite foster care placements to families where children are on the edge of care. Family Friendly Service is very much the preventative face of foster care in that placements are offered before, rather than after a situation has reached the point of breakdown. The organisation of the service takes us back to the core principles of the Children Act 1989 which is that wherever possible children and young people should be supported to remain within their own families.

Family Friendly Service is organised so that it offers alternatives to families, allowing for an accommodation agreement to be arranged for a fixed period allowing the parents to remain the primary source of care. The service is organised to be flexible to respond to requests for placements at relatively short notice and will offer families a placement that is tailor-made to fit their situation at the given time.

Due to its very adaptable and flexible approach, Family Friendly Service as a service sits at the interface between family support services and fostering. Family Friendly Service offers an alternative arrangement for accommodation. The children and young people using the service, are not looked after by the Social Services Department.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE:

Responsible Individual- Dipti Thakur Kazi (Masters in Social Work, Bachelors in Social Work, Diploma in Systemic Supervision) Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management.

Registered Manager- Sania Khan (MA in Social Work, BA (Hons) in Social Work, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management, Diploma in Systemic Supervision, ILM Level 3 Diploma in Workplace Coaching.

Please refer to Appendix D for Organisational Structure

FOSTERING PANELS:

In accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, Silver Lining Fostering maintains a central list of persons suitable to sit on fostering panels whose overriding objectives are to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care. Our fostering panels meet on a regular basis. Panels have a balance of gender, ethnicity and qualifications and reflect our commitment to bring together individuals from different backgrounds.

Each panel has access to specialist legal and medical advice as required. The Independent Chair has several years' experience of working with children and young people in a variety of roles.

The Registered Manager is the panel advisor. Our central list of suitable panel members includes foster carers, a qualified nurse, special education needs practitioner, a formerly looked after child and qualified social workers.

RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL OF FOSTER CARERS:

Silver Lining Fostering Agency makes use of the competencies approach in all stages of the recruitment, assessment and approval of the foster carers.

We endorse the view expressed in the Fostering Network Code of Practice that the use of common, standard assessment tools, such as those produced by the Fostering Network and the BAAF Form F, will enable fostering services to achieve uniform standards.

We therefore make full use of the above tools in the recruitment, assessment and approval stages of fostering applications to Silver Lining.

We also seek to actively promote the Fostering Network values underpinning the competencies approach and to ensure that they are an integral part of the assessment process.

These are that:

- Child safety is paramount
- Individuals are respected
- Difference and diversity is valued
- Equality is promoted
- Discrimination is challenged
- Confidentiality is maintained
- Advice and feedback is provided in a constructive way
- Applicants are supported to demonstrate their competence
- Standards of childcare are explicit and agreed

Recruitment

Silver Lining Fostering Agency subscribes to the following statement: *“The aim of our recruitment campaign will be to attract potentially suitable people who may want to take up fostering and provide them with significant information for them to decide whether or not to make a formal application”.* (Fostering Network Code of Practice)

Silver Lining’s advertisements and other recruitment materials aim to promote the Agency’s specific selection criteria, which are as follows:

Previous employment in children’s services – paid or unpaid.

Applicants with particular skills and experience in specific areas as learning difficulties, medical problems etc.

Applicants who show a willingness to work towards meeting care standards for fostering.

Applicants with experience of previous fostering and/or close involvement with someone who has already fostered.

An ability to reflect on life experiences and to mature through them.

An ability to see beyond children’s behaviour, and to link it to past trauma, where applicable.

An empathy for and natural ability to nurture children traumatised by separation from their birth families.

Applicants able to accept teenagers.

Applicants comfortable with parents visiting their home.

If living with a partner/ spouse, the relationship should be established and secure. In addition, Silver Lining will expect the applicants to have space in their home.

Plenty of physical and emotional stamina.

A commitment to attend training events and support groups.

A willingness to support a child's/young person's attendance for therapy, hospital appointment etc- including the provision of transport where necessary.

Priority will be given to progressing those applicants who appear to meet some or all of the above requirements.

All interested people who either respond directly to an advertisement or apply to Silver Lining in between recruitment campaigns, will have their enquiries recorded on a registration of interest form.

If appropriate, the Agency will send out an information pack in order to help the enquirer decide whether they feel they have the necessary skills for the job.

Enquiry form

Once the potential applicant has had an opportunity to find out about fostering and is keen to apply, they will be asked to complete an enquiry form over the phone or online. If the enquiry form is positive an initial home visit will be arranged.

Initial Home Visit

During the home visit, applicants will be given further information about fostering. The roles and responsibilities of Agency staff will be discussed as well as the assessment process itself. The need for all members of the household to consent to a DBS (Disclosure Barring Service, previously referred to as CRB) and other statutory checks will be explained and information on these checks (including medicals) will also be supplied. In addition, Agency requirements in terms of health and safety standards will be provided to ensure applicants meet certain essential criteria. If the home visit is positive, an application form can be completed following the visit or alternately this can be completed later.

Planning the assessment

All assessments will be carried out by appropriately qualified and experienced social workers.

The first assessment meeting will be to plan the assessment with the applicants. At this stage, Silver Lining will provide the applicants with information on the assessment process. The guide to the assessment process explains what the competencies are and how applicants will be expected to help identify and collect evidences towards their fostering portfolio.

When they have the first assessment meeting with applicants, Silver Lining assessors will explain to them that:

1. Certain requirements will be made of them during the process e.g. attendance at a preparation group, permission for statutory checks and references etc.
2. That the assessment has two stages and that specified statutory and safeguarding checks are undertaken under stage 1. These include DBS, local authority, medical, references and other checks are begun at this stage in respect of suitable applicants. If it is decided not to continue with an assessment because of information collected as part of stage 1, this will be communicated formally in writing.
3. Under stage 2 of the assessment, they will be able to see any "brief report" or final report and record any disagreement with it before this is considered by a fostering panel.

4. The assessor's report will make a recommendation to the fostering panel about their suitability to foster, including those children whom they might best be matched with, as well as their training and development needs for the future.
5. Applicants will be encouraged to give honest answers and not to exaggerate or give false information about their skills and/or experience. Doing this may lead to them not being able to cope in certain future placements.
6. The assessor will explain the competencies required for fostering and give initial help and advice in enabling applicants to link evidence with the skills required for fostering e.g. 'can you think of a time when you needed to be patient?' etc.
7. Leading on from the above, the assessor will also help the applicant identify skills or abilities they may find most difficult or need to develop.
8. In some cases both stages will run concurrently.

Preparation training

Applicants will be invited to attend a Skills to Foster preparation course along with other applicants. The course is led by experienced social workers and foster carers. We provide specialist training where carers will be approved for more challenging children.

The assessment process:

Assessment of prospective foster carers is undertaken using a competencies approach and the BAAF Form F report. Having explained the competencies, the assessor will then discuss each of them with the applicant and explore how they may obtain the evidence for each competency.

Gathering evidence or information

The Silver Lining assessing social worker will undertake the assessment in the following settings:

The applicant's own home.

During the Skills to Foster preparation course.

In other relevant settings e.g. a relevant workplace, such as a playgroup etc.

A variety of techniques will be used to gather evidence or information regarding the applicants' suitability to foster. These may include:

1. The BAAF Form F guidance and competencies list to assist applicants and assessors to work out what existing skills they already possess and what new ones they need to acquire.
2. Ecomaps, family trees and/or other personal history tools to gain information on an applicant's motivation to foster and how their past history may impact on future fostering.
3. Witness statements from other adults who can corroborate the applicant's ability to relate to and care for children - e.g. babysitting circle, helping out at school etc.
4. Discussion
5. Records and reports
6. Assignments and case studies

7. Role playing and simulation
8. Observations from the “Skills to Foster” preparation course
9. Shadowing other foster carers for a day, if appropriate

Care will be taken by the assessor to stand back and pay due attention to the life history of the applicant - rather than concentrating solely on the applicant’s current functioning and circumstances. The completed assessment will include a recommendation by the Silver Lining assessing social worker.

Statutory checks and references

Following written consent from prospective carers, Silver Lining will ensure that satisfactory clearance is received in relation to the following checks and references before the approval stage is reached.

1. Statutory checks

Proof of identity, Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) on all household members, Children’s Services Department’s record, Cafcass (if appropriate), Ofsted (if appropriate) Registration and inspection units, Previous applications to foster, Overseas check (if appropriate).

2. References

Personal x 3, each of whom will be interviewed by the assessing social worker, Ex-partner, where there have been children in common, Employer’s reference (if applicable), Health visitor (if applicable), School (if applicable)

3. Health report

Fostering medical by the GP followed by advice from agency medical advisor

4. Health and safety inspection

Following satisfactory clearance in relation to all the statutory and other checks, as well evidence that the applicant complies with health and safety requirements, the Silver Lining assessor will reach a point in stage 2 of the assessment when enough information has been collated about the applicant in order for an assessment recommendation to be made. This may be in the form of a brief report or a final report to a fostering panel.

At this stage, the applicant will be told the recommendation and reasons for it. Feedback should be given in a clear and constructive way and recorded in order to meet legal and Agency requirements.

The structure of the final report will be within the framework of areas covered by the BAAF F Form, including the competencies and consideration of the applicant’s learning and development needs to enable them to achieve the TSD (Training, Support and Development) standards within twelve months.

Prospective foster carers will sign the assessment report prior to submission to panel and where applicants suggest changes to the report, these are negotiated with the assessing social worker. Applicants have the right to add written comments or other information to their report if they wish.

Copies of brief reports or the completed BAAF Form F report are circulated to the Silver Lining fostering panel members in advance of their meeting.

The social worker will attend the fostering panel meeting to present her/his report. Applicants are invited to attend and may bring a supporter with them.

Approval

Silver Lining's fostering panel makes recommendations about the approval of prospective carer/s. The Agency Decision Maker considers the recommendations before notifying the applicants in writing. Where the decision is to approve them, the letter will specify any terms of approval.

Following approval, foster carers and Silver Lining sign a written agreement (the Foster Care Agreement) that sets out the terms and conditions of the fostering household's relationship with Silver Lining.

If, following consideration by the fostering panel, and a review of case papers and the final panel minutes, the Decision Maker considers that an applicant is not suitable to act as a foster carer the Decision Maker will write proposing not to approve them together with reasons (a "qualifying determination") and will invite them to submit written representation within 28 days of the notice or to request a review by an independent review panel through the IRM (further details can be provided).

If Silver Lining does not receive any representation within the above said period and there is no referral to the IRM, it may proceed to make its decision.

If Silver Lining receives written representation it will refer the case to its fostering panel for further consideration; and the Decision Maker will make its decision, taking into account any fresh recommendations made by the fostering panel, and will notify their decision to the applicant in writing.

If Silver Lining receives any recommendations from an independent review panel through the IRM, the Decision Maker will take these into account and then make their decision and will notify their decision to the applicant in writing.

Silver Lining's Decision Maker is Dipti Thakur Kazi (Responsible Individual). In exceptional cases where there might be a conflict of interest an independent ADM has also been appointed by the agency who will make the decisions in those circumstances.

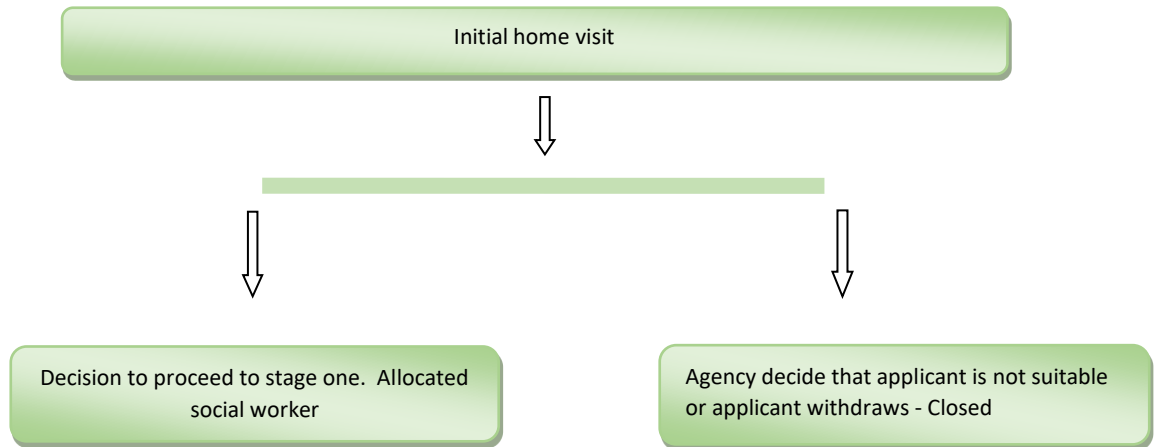
Fostering Assessment Process

Pre-assessment stage

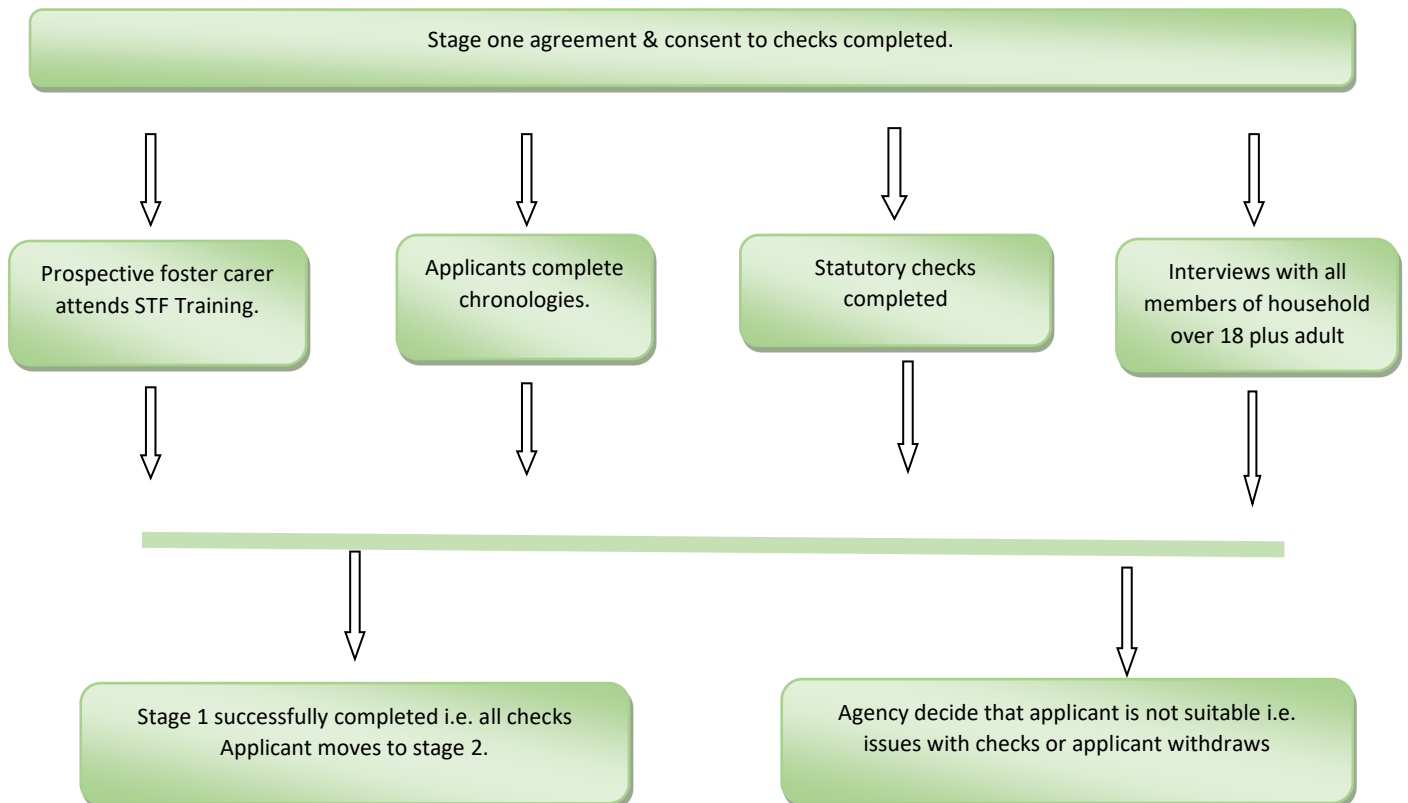


Applicants request information from the agency

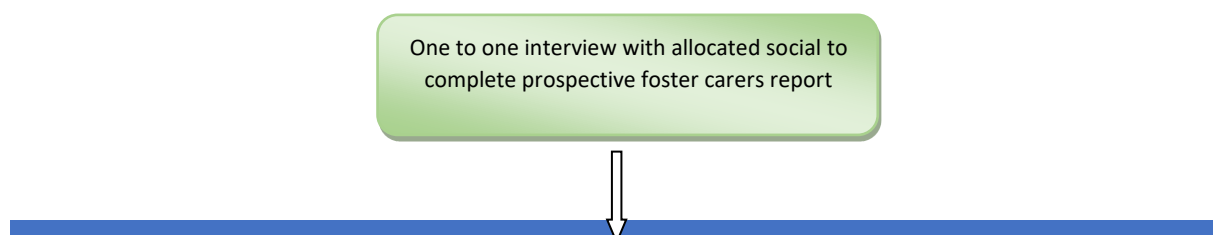


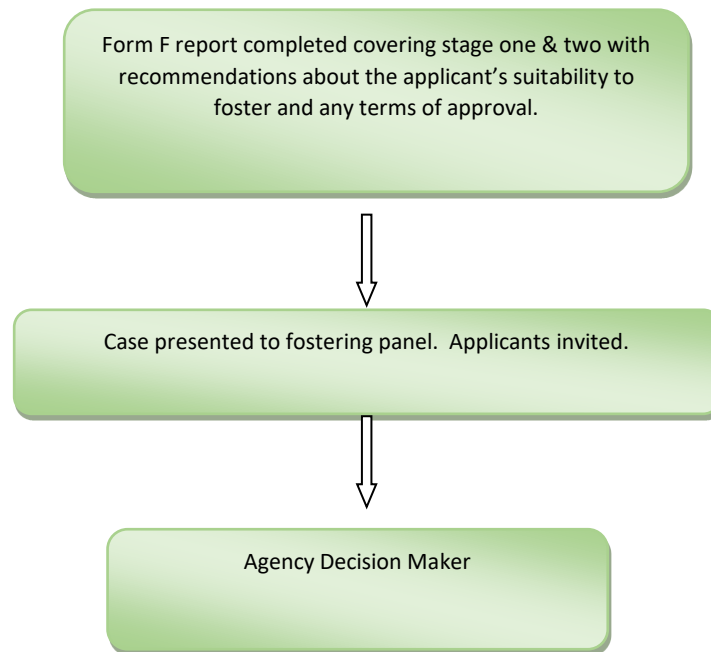


Assessment Stage 1



Stage 2 Assessment





During the fostering assessment process the agency may decide to fast track an application if there is a clear demonstration that the applicants are able to understand and meet the needs of our looked after children. This means that Stage 1 and Stage 2 will both be processed at the same time.

REVIEWS AND TERMINATION OF APPROVAL:

The Agency reviews carer approval annually or following a significant event or change within the household to ensure that the carer continues to be suitable in line with statutory requirements and that approval reflects their ongoing development. The review is usually conducted in the carer's home and recommendation is then overseen by an independent manager.

The agency may only propose to amend a foster carers terms of approval following a review in accordance with Regulation 28(2) of the Fostering Services Regulations amended 2013. Reviews are presented to panel following the first year of fostering and any significant event including complaints or allegations. applicants are invited to attend. Where a change of approval is proposed the agency must issue a 'qualifying determination' and provide details of the applicants right to appeal or access the IRM.

For all reviews a full report will be prepared by the agency Social Worker and contributions from the child's Social Worker and children placed will be sought. These will be shared with the carer. The review provides an opportunity for the agency and carer to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead. It takes account of:

- Recommendations of the previous review
- Enquiries made and information obtained by the agency
- Outcomes for children placed in this household since the last review
- Any significant changes in the household including to accommodation

- Training undertaken by the carer and support given
- The views of the carer and all members of the household including children who are/have been placed during this period
- The views of placing authorities
- Updates on all statutory checks
- Annual updates on Health and Safety checks
- Any concerns, complaints or compliments raised by the carers in relation to the agency

The review recommendation will then be presented to the Agency Decision Maker for approval. The carer will then receive confirmation of their re-approval in writing.

REFERRALS AND MATCHING:

On receipt of a referral from a local authority, Silver Lining placement team will consider the needs of the child and propose a match with carers available, based on:

- Their experience, knowledge and skills
- Their location and the distance from the foster home to the child's school and community
- Any other children in the placement
- The foster carer's own children and other family members
- The child's individual matching requirements including cultural needs and wishes

The match is made in consultation with supervising social workers and/or their line managers. All information known about the child from the referral will be shared with the potential carers. The placements team will present potential matches to the local authority, identifying how the carers can meet the needs of the child. If gaps in their ability to meet the child's needs are identified, additional support or services will be offered. A profile of the carers setting out details of the family, their home and their experience and training can be forwarded to the local authority for use by the child's social worker to introduce the child to the carers. The carers' form F and most recent annual review report together with any other information requested is forwarded to the local authority.

A risk assessment is completed on the making of a placement. It is not merely to identify risks, but to identify what steps can be put in place to minimise the risk and manage these. Risk assessments are updated at least annually and at any point when information comes to light which would require a fresh assessment.

The risk assessment extends to managing risk in relation to a child going missing and consults with the appropriate LADO regarding actions in the absence of these where there is a safeguarding concern. Clear procedures are in place in relation to accidents and critical incidents, behaviour management when physical intervention may be required, dealing with complaints allegations and standards of care concerns. The registered manager provides regular reports to the responsible individual regarding all such concerns, including their outcome and the length of time taken to resolve the issue.

Foster carers and SSWs receive mandatory training on recognising the signs of abuse, understanding the impact of abuse on the children they will be looking after and knowing what to do in the event of suspecting that a child is suffering harm.

Silver Lining is committed to increasing and updating knowledge of how to safeguard children, through the ongoing development of training informed by changing trends and needs. We regularly include articles

in the magazines distributed to all children in our placements about what to do if they are being bullied or how to keep safe when using the Internet.

Concerns about standards of care issues or allegations against carers are conducted using the clear policy and procedures set out. The Registered Manager oversees all cases where carers' conduct is being investigated and ensures that referrals are made to the appropriate LADO based on the carers' location. Carers subject to allegations of abuse or standards of care have access to independent support and advice, including legal assistance.

Following investigation, all cases are brought to panel in the form of a carer review, with a recommendation for the future management of the foster carer. Recommendations regarding referrals to the DBS barring list are considered by the Responsible person. Supervision of both staff and foster carers has child protection as a key element. Clear procedures are in place for escalating concerns to senior managers and through 24/7 cover, a timely response to concerns of children being at risk are addressed. Complaints, concerns and standards of care are regularly monitored.

CONTACT SILVER LINING FOSTERING AGENCY:

Silver Lining Fostering Ltd.

The Vista Centre, 50 Salisbury Road, Hounslow TW4 6JQ

Tel -0208 150 7238, 07405 234 222

Email – info@silverliningfostering.co.uk

Website – www.silverliningfostering.co.uk

Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint or have any concerns about a child in care with Silver Lining or otherwise, please contact:

Sania Khan – Complaints Officer & Registered Manager
Tel – 0208 150 7238, 07405 234 222

Please also see Appendix A for full details of our **Complaints Procedure**

Safeguarding

For any Safeguarding matters, please contact our Designated Safeguarding Officer – Sania Khan.

Tel – 0208 150 7238

For details please also refer to our **Safeguarding Policy**.

Appendix A

COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS – PROCEDURE

Contents

Legislation and guidance

Principles

Who can comment, compliment or complain?

Complaints by or on behalf of children and young persons

Complaints by a foster carer
Stage 1 - Informal Stage
Stage 2 – Formal Investigation
Stage 3 – Independent Investigation
Ofsted
Remedies
Monitoring and quality assurance
Representations

Legislation and guidance

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 regulation 18 sets out the statutory requirement for fostering agencies to establish a written procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children placed by the agency and foster carers approved by them. If the complaint is about a service directly provided by the agency, then the Complaints and Representations Procedure should be used. National Minimum Standard 25 states that fostering services should have a written policy and procedural guidelines on considering and responding to representations and complaints.

The Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services states that everyone involved with the fostering service, including fostered children and their families, should know about the complaints and representations policy and how to use it. Children and young people will still have the right to access to, and representation by, an independent advocate through their local authority and should be advised accordingly. Information about the complaints procedure must be included in the children's guide to the fostering service.

This is in addition to the requirement under section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989 for every local authority to establish a representations and complaints procedure. The placing local authority has a legal duty to investigate any complaint about its own services – including the social worker, care plan or contact arrangements – and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 amended the Children Act 1989 to require it to make an advocacy service available to that child to assist them to make a representation. The statutory framework is set out in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and the related statutory guidance (Getting the Best from Complaints: social care complaints and representations for children, young people and others, DCSF 2006).

Principles

Silver Lining Fostering Agency believes that foster carers, children and young people have a fundamental right to have their views heard and to be taken notice of in the development of the service. These views may be in form of a complaint about the service, constructive ideas for how to improve the service or in the form of a compliment about how a service was delivered. All comments, compliments and complaints provide vital information to inform the future policy, planning and development of the service as well as identifying the areas of the service which are successful and valued. They help to identify any gaps in service provision and should lead to the development of better services. When something goes particularly well, or particularly badly, we need you to let us know that we can repeat successes and correct mistakes. Your comments and complaints are an essential part of this process.

Who can comment, compliment or complain?

Any child, foster carer, member of staff, family member or indeed any person who has had an involvement with Silver Lining Fostering Agency is entitled to comment about the quality of any of the services, whether positive or negative. A foster carer, relative or friend can also do so on a young person's behalf.

A comment or complaint may include such things as quality of communication, staff behaviour or attitude, decisions we have made, support for carers or children, or quality of care in the home.

If the matter is urgent e.g. a Child Protection issue, an allegation, or an incident involving the child's health and safety, call the office or the out of office hours' number on 07405234222.

Complaints by or on behalf of children and young persons

Any looked after child or young person may complain about an aspect of their care to their placing authority, whose own complaints procedure will be available to the child via the social worker. However, if the complaint relates to an aspect of the service provided by Silver Lining Fostering Agency, agreement will be reached with the placing authority about which agency will investigate the complaint. When a complaint is made directly to Silver Lining Fostering Agency by or on behalf of a child, the placing authority social worker will be informed. Agreement will then be reached with the placing authority about which agency will investigate the complaint.

Complaints may be made by the child, foster carer, parent, social worker, friend, relative or Silver Lining Fostering Agency's staff member. The complaint may concern any aspect of the service received from Silver Lining Fostering Agency. Our **Children's Guide** contains written information on how to make complaints, including the availability of independent support and advice.

Children will be assured that their complaints will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and they will receive written notification of the outcome.

Children will be reassured that by making a complaint they will not be subjected to any form of punishment or reprisal.

Complaints by a foster carer

Complaints may be made to any Manager about any aspect of the service received from Silver Lining Fostering Agency. The complainant will receive written acknowledgment of the complaint and details of the planned investigation. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Stages set out below.

No person who makes a complaint will be subject to any form of recrimination or reprisal.

All foster carers at Silver Lining Fostering Agency will have access to independent advice and support.

Stage 1 - Informal Stage

We hope that most things someone is concerned about can be settled by speaking to the person they normally deal with, or by discussion with that person's immediate line manager, and this is the informal route we would like people to try first.

We would always encourage foster carers to talk with their supervising social worker or their line manager about any complaint that they have and to try to resolve the matter with them. Unless matters are urgent, we expect informal routes of resolution to be explored first.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

If someone is not satisfied with the informal response they get, or if they wish to complain formally to Silver Lining Fostering Agency, they can do so at any time to the Registered Manager who is the Complaints Officer at the address given below. They can call or put their concerns in writing if they wish.

The Complaints Officer (Registered Manager)

Silver Lining Fostering Agency
The Vista Centre, 50 Salisbury Road, Hounslow TW4 5AH
info@silverliningfostering.co.uk

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within seven working days, including an indication of whether it is planned to try to resolve the complaint via internal investigation or, in the case of potentially serious complaints, to move straight to the independent investigation stage.

The Complaints Officer will ensure that the complaint is properly investigated. This stage of the process should be completed within 28 days of the commencement of the investigation unless it is exceptionally agreed with the complainant this period may be extended. The Complaints Officer will ensure that there is a written report to include findings and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint which will be available to the complainant.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome they may request within 28 days of the date of the dispatch of the report to them that the matter be referred to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Independent Investigation

A request for an independent investigation should be made in writing to the Complaints Officer who is the Registered Manager.

The request will be acknowledged in writing within seven working days, including details of the proposed investigation.

An Independent Person will be appointed to investigate the complaint. This person will hold a professional social work qualification and have relevant experience in foster care. The Independent Person will interview persons involved in the complaint and will have access to all policies and procedures and, with relevant permission, access to the foster carer's and to the child/young person's, files and records. They will prepare a report of their investigation, including conclusions and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint. This report should be completed within 42 days of the acknowledgement letter, unless it is agreed with the complainant that this period may be extended.

The Complaints Officer (Registered Manager) will consider the Independent Person's report and write within ten days of its receipt to the complainant setting out their proposals for resolving the complaint.

Details of the investigation/proposed resolution will be available for information to the fostering panel.

This marks the end of the complaints process. If the complainant is not happy with the final outcome or indeed at any stage of the process, they can contact Ofsted.

Ofsted

Any foster carer or a child/young person may choose to contact our regulator, Ofsted, directly regarding any complaint/allegation concerning the standard of service provided by or a foster carer, or about the management of our service. Silver Lining Fostering Agency will co-operate fully with any investigation conducted by Ofsted.

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
Fax: 0300 123 3159
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Registered Manager will automatically refer any serious complaints against foster carers to Ofsted, for information, and will advise Ofsted of the outcome of any investigation.

Remedies

If we make a mistake, we will apologise and try to take remedial action to put things right. We may ask the complainant to suggest what they would like us to do. We will always try to put them back to the position they would have been in but for our mistake. We will also try to ensure that the same mistake does not happen again.

For example, we may decide that one or more of the following can be done to put things right:

- Provide or change a service to the complainant
- Provide an explanation or information to the complainant
- Review service user literature (leaflets, website, posters and so on)
- Review a policy or procedure
- Arrange training or guidance for employees

Monitoring and quality assurance

All complaints, representations and allegations against foster carers are monitored by the Registered Manager and reported to the management group. Their outcomes are annually evaluated as a basis for informing future service provision. Comments and compliments are also collated, analysed and included in management reports. Information from these processes is shared with staff and the fostering panels.

Representations

Foster carers and applicants to foster are entitled to make representations, in writing, or in person, to a Silver Lining Fostering Agency fostering panel in relation to their approval as foster carers - in instances where the agency makes a “qualifying determination” in relation to one of the following areas:

The agency proposes not to approve the applicants as foster carers.

The agency proposes to change the foster carer's terms of approval;

The agency proposes to terminate the foster carer's approval.

In these cases, the foster carer/applicant will receive a letter containing the qualifying determination and will have 28 days in which to confirm whether they wish to make representations or to refer their case for review to an independent fostering panel.

The Silver Lining recognises that carers have choices and that in some instances decisions are made to move between approving agencies. In these circumstances the Fostering Network Protocols are followed,

and the agency work closely with responsible Local Authorities to ensure that the care experiences of any children in placement are not detrimentally affected by the transfer.

Appendix B

Family Friendly Service

1. Background

1.1 Many Local Authorities have for many years been seeking preventative Children and Family services that can offer help to families whose children are on the edge of care. It is clearly recognised that family life is often difficult and all families experience their ups and downs. Most families are able to resolve these difficulties by being able to call on extended family and friendship networks to give themselves a breathing space. However, families who can't rely on these built-in resources can really struggle, and children can end up being looked after by the local authority.

1.2 The Children Act 1989 set in place a preventative agenda with such concepts as working in partnership with parents to offer Accommodation, a more positive renaming of Voluntary Care. A key element of this approach was that local authority care was a tool for helping families resolve problems rather than a removal of their responsibilities. However, it is fair to say that the preventative agenda of the CA'89 was severely eroded because of the concentration of scarce resources on child protection.

1.3 Since the mid-nineties there has been a refocusing on prevention and social inclusion through better identification of need and working with parents to prevent admission into the public care system. The Green paper 'Every Child Matters' and the resultant Children Act 2004 has provided an opportunity for local authorities to do a thorough assessment of the needs of children young people and their families and draw together new innovative ways in which the local community can support them.

1.4 Family Friendly Service/Support Care is one such concept, is ideally placed to make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives set out in the Green Paper and the Children Act 2004, as its main focus is on supporting parents and carers who are at the heart of improving children's lives.

1.5 The service has been named, Family Friendly Service as this attempt to focus more on what is intended to happen in practice and draws attention to the family and carers' partnership relationship.

2. Service Description

2.1 Family Friendly Service is organised as a Family Support service that aims at offering good quality respite foster care placements to families where children are on the edge of care. Family Friendly Service is very much the preventative face of foster care in that placements are offered before, rather than after a situation has reached the point of breakdown. The organisation of the service takes us back to the core principles of the Children's Act 1989 which is that wherever possible children and young people should be supported to remain within their own families.

2.2 The service recognises that often parents under stress ask for a break; quite often young people do so also. With a lack of choice, a child being looked after was possibly the only option available to the family but not necessarily their choice. Although periods of accommodation are sometimes inevitable, it always constitutes a breakdown of family stability. Also, the traumatic implications of the crisis on the family, is often multiplied by the separation of the child and this in effect may obstruct an effective return home.

2.3 In recognition of such events, Family Friendly Service is organised so that it offers alternatives to families, allowing for an accommodation agreement to be arranged for a fixed period allowing the parents to remain the primary source of care. The service is organised to be flexible to respond to requests for placements at relatively short notice, and will offer families a placement that is tailor-made to fit their situation at the given time.

2.4 Due to its very adaptable and flexible approach, Family Friendly Service as a service sits at the interface between family support services and fostering. As a service it can be applied to a range of other services to strengthen and support the care given by parents and carers.

2.5 The service aims to provide children and young people 0 - 18yrs, with short day care and/or overnight stays away from home to relieve family tension. The children using the service are assessed as being at risk of being looked after and are in need of additional support to help the family stay together.

2.6 Family Friendly Service offers an alternative arrangement for accommodation. The children and young people using the service, are not looked after by the Local Authority. Parents/guardians maintain all their parental responsibilities for their child, including expenses such as clothing, travel, pocket money, school travel and activities.

2.7 Family Friendly Service aims to offer parents a chance not only to have a break, but also to feel they are being listened to and having their difficulties acknowledged. The support care arrangements are intended to reduce the tension that is threatening family breakdown by working with a strong emphasis on co-operation and joint decision making with families. The aim is to offer a resource that is perceived by parents as being positive and helpful in a practical way.

2.8 Family Friendly Service support care arrangements are planned in conjunction with other work being carried out with families and acts as a part of a package of support offered to the family. The intention is that the period of calm achieved by the support care breaks will allow for work to be carried out in a family environment that is more engaging and sustainable and therefore more able to offer a clearer focus on the work that needs to be done to improve the situation. Home will remain the base for the child whilst the short breaks away from home will be part of their support package.

3. Legal Status of children using the service

3.1 A major factor of the organisation of support care services is the need to clarify the legal status of the children and young people using the service. An overnight stay with a foster carer constitutes a period of accommodation, i.e. under section 20. However, support care placements can be as little as once a month for one night so applying looked after procedures would clearly be very cumbersome and would

go against the general ethos of the Family Friendly Service which has been organised to be flexible and easy to access with parents retaining their full parental responsibilities. What is more, applying LAC procedures would have an adverse effect on the recording of the looked after children indicators.

3.2 In solution to this some local authorities, for the purposes of support care placements, have chosen to apply the amendments to The Adoption and Children's Act 2002, to use Section 17 to offer accommodation without triggering of a looked after episode. Other safeguards can be put in place i.e. that all children and young people referred to the service should have undergone an Initial Assessment. Also, all Family Friendly Service carers undergo a full fostering training and assessment, with the relevant checks. Carers are approved and reviewed annually.

3.3 As support care has grown, many other local authorities have applied the same principles and have accommodated using Section 17. However, better guidance and clarification of the Section 20 versus Section 17 issue is needed, as this might encourage more authorities to develop support care services.

4. Referral criteria and process

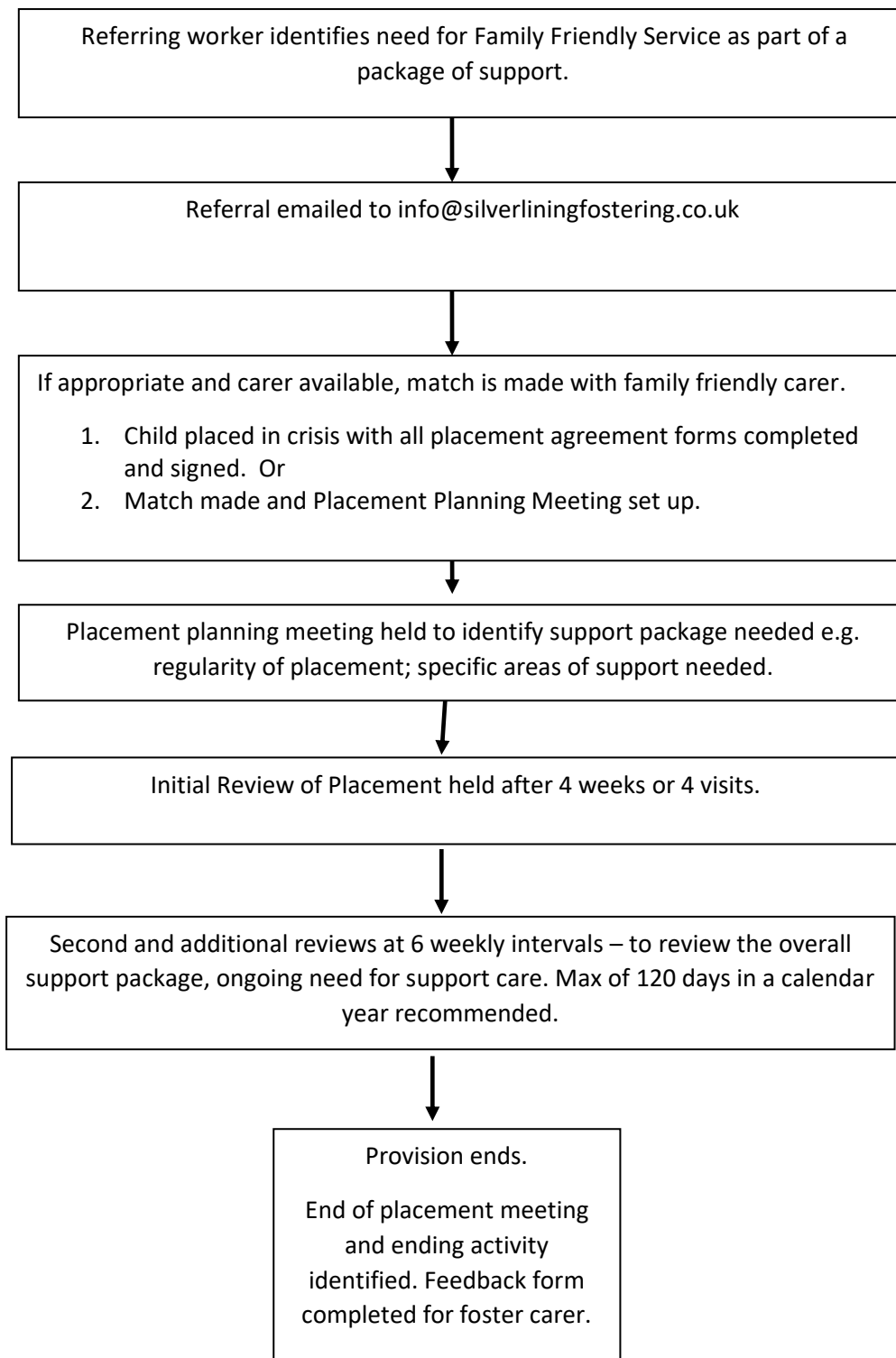
- age range 0-18 years
- child or young person and/or their family have been assessed to be at requiring this intervention.
- Family Support Carers are needed whilst family work is on-going

4.1 Referral Process:

Referrals to Family Friendly Service can be taken from any local authority where children and young people are assessed as being at risk of becoming looked after and respite support is needed to be provided whilst work is being done with the family.

Children/Families referred to Family Friendly Service are, therefore, already open to child social work team and an Initial Assessment has been completed.

Referral process for accessing Family Friendly Service



5. Support

The Family Friendly Service has been developed within Fostering regulations and Fostering standards. Therefore, all carers are allocated a supervising social worker who will carry out on-going supervision and annual reviews.

6. Recruitment and retention of carers.

Fostering recruitment team will be responsible for recruiting the Family Support Carers and will present their assessment to Foster Panel.

7. Successes and Pitfalls of Family Friendly Service

7.1 Successes

- Parents in control – an important distinction between Family Friendly Service placements and other forms of accommodation is the strong emphasis on partnership with parents. Family Friendly Service offers a parenting break whilst giving a clear message that parents are still in control. Children are made aware that home remains their base.
- Family Friendly Service has strong ethos on intensive time-limited service delivery to help the family get back on their feet but to discourage dependency on the service.
- The service will offer a flexible response depending on the families' needs. The arrangements are regularly reviewed with everyone involved with the placement, thus, promoting a very individual tailor-made model for each family.
- Family Friendly Service aims to strengthen inclusion and involvement by recruiting the carers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Carers will help integrate families into their community to access resources and be involved in local initiatives.
- Models similar to Family Friendly Service have proven to be successful in engendering a different dynamic between parents and traditional Foster Carers and have witnessed a more equitable relationship between parent and carer. This has helped to breakdown the stigma of social care services involvement with family life.
- Family Friendly Service aims to be cost effective in that children are prevented from becoming LAC. Placement episodes are time-limited.

7.2 Pitfalls

- Similar services are provided by some local authorities in house however the appetite for commissioning this service from an IFA remains untested.

8. Aims and Objectives of the Family Friendly Service

8.1 Family Friendly Service is a service for children in need and as such delivered in ways that recognise and is sensitive to the diversity and heritage of children accessing the service. The service recognises that social isolation is a key factor in many of the requests for support care. Support carers therefore have a valuable role in reducing this isolation by working in close partnership with parents by offering them a lifeline at difficult and testing times. It also enables the possibility to offer more flexibility and choice in placement options to meet the needs of families.

8.2 The service aims to strengthen community inclusion and involvement by matching carers residing in the same borough or living at close proximity to the families they are supporting. By having in common with the families they are working with a shared locality, the service aims to have at hand, carers who are equipped and able to help integrate families with young children into their community to access appropriate resources. Also, to be able to support young people to become involved in local initiatives.

8.3 The focus on Family Friendly Service Placements will always be on rehabilitation home and building on family strengths and resilience. Family Friendly Service has proven to be successful in encouraging a different dynamic between parents and 'traditional foster carers' and has witnessed the development of a more equitable relationship between parent and carer. A key aim is to break down the stigma associated with social care services involvement with family life and to facilitate the strengthening of parenting skills in a non-threatening and co-operative way.

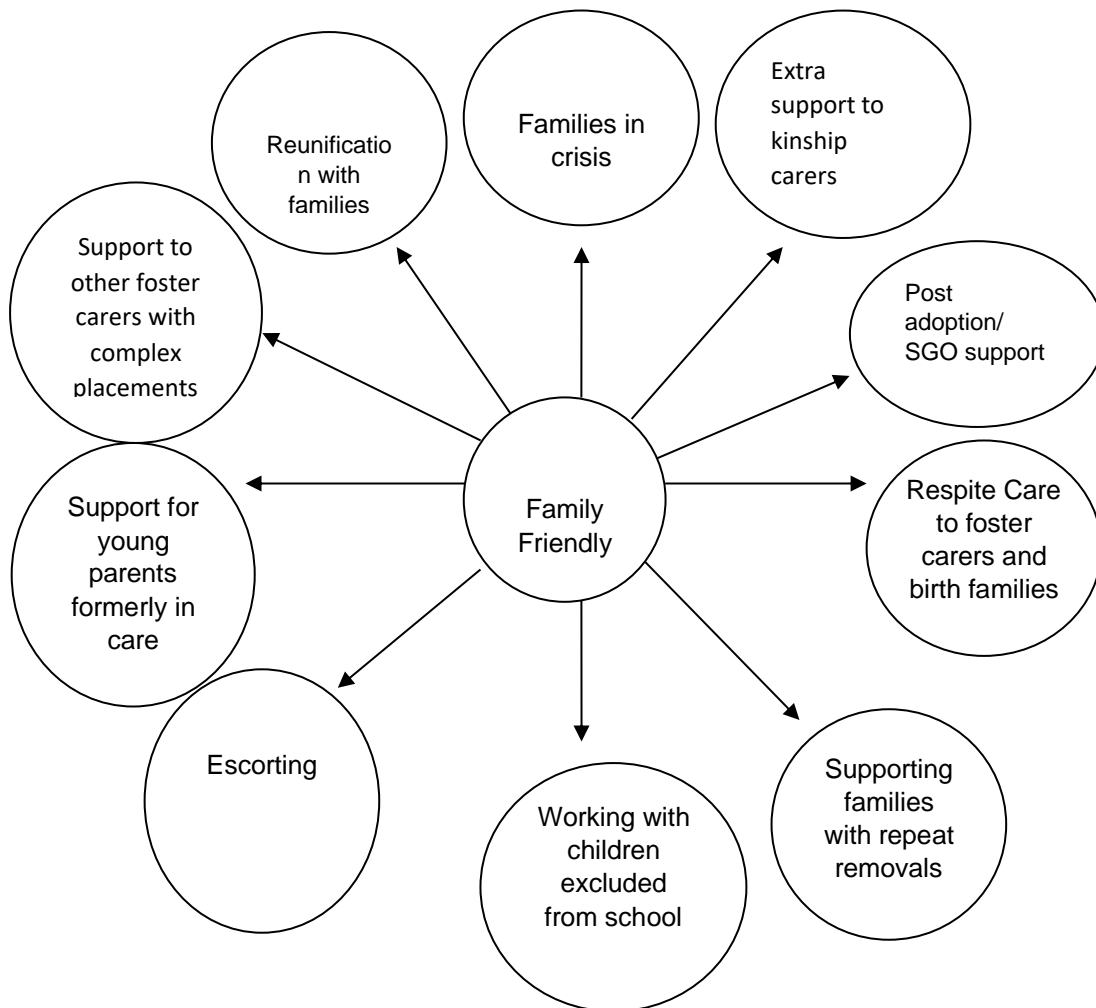
9. Conclusion

9.1 Family Friendly Service is a simple concept that reflects very well the spirit of the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. It is flexible and effective in offering realistic and practical support to families experiencing difficulties in their lives. The service is valued by parents and can be used in a variety of ways to promote continuity and stability for children.

9.2 Family Friendly Service is still very much a small service, but it has great potential for further development. Family Friendly Service has proven to be cost effective and will continue to strive to work creatively with children and their families to offer a positive alternative to episodes of care.

Appendix C

Varied Uses of Family Friendly
Carers



Ref: 'Support Care' – How family placement can keep children and families together.

APPENDIX D

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

