



Brighter Futures Foster Care



Statement of Purpose



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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Statement of Purpose

The Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 provide a guide by which standards of care and the provision of services within fostering are measured. Brighter Futures Foster Care will focus on outcomes for children placed with foster parents by applying these standards in every aspect of its business. This statement of purpose gives an outline of how the service is managed and its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows how the welfare of children is at the centre of all our activities and outlines the systems that have been set in place to support foster parents, and ensure the business is effectively run.

The evidence is clear that children and young people within the care system are disadvantaged in many ways, and often do not achieve their full potential. Brighter Futures is committed to ensuring that the children/young people it supports are fully enabled to achieve the best outcomes possible and that the gap between them and children who are not looked after by the state is reduced, if not eliminated.

We will do this by recruiting, training and supporting foster parents of the highest quality and by working in a multi-agency way to help implement the child's care plan. We will seek to learn from changes in legislation and guidance and to pass on the lessons to staff and foster parents alike.

1.2 Description of Brighter Futures Foster Care

Brighter Futures Foster Care was established in October, 2007 to provide fostering services to children and young people who are in need as outlined within the Children Act, 1989 and from the Statutory guidance, regulations and National Minimum Standard of 2011. We have a clearly laid out vision, mission statement and business plan which explains how we intend to undertake and fulfil our business and practice ethos.

Brighter Futures Foster Care depends on foster families (single or partnered) to share their homes and offer a caring and safe environment for children and young people who are vulnerable and in need. In addition foster parents must have a sophisticated understanding of what it means to be looked after and be corporately parented.

1.3 Philosophy of Brighter Futures

We chose the name Brighter Futures as we feel it signifies hope for the future. No matter how much adversity a child has had to contend with, lives and future prospects can be turned around and enhanced. Young people who have been 'looked after' were involved in the decision regarding the name selection, as well as professionals and foster parents. Brighter Futures aims to be an inclusive agency that listens to people and wherever possible appropriately modifies its services to be more responsive to individual needs.

We aim to be respectful and professional in all our dealings and will value diversity in all its forms as strength. We ensure that the values we want to promote are embedded within our policies and training so that all involved in the agency are able to provide the best possible support to young people. We have deliberately chosen to approve foster parents who we feel will reflect the agency's ethos.

In our first inspection by Ofsted, the inspector stated that, "the most impressive aspect of the service is the enthusiastic atmosphere between the agency, foster children and foster parents." (Page 4, inspection report June, 2008). They also said that, "children feel happy and safe with foster parents who help them find stability".

1.4 Status of Brighter Futures Foster Care

Brighter Futures Foster Care was established as a partnership between the two Managing Directors, Mrs Justina Gay, the Director of Social Care and Ms Sali Ann Walker, the Business Director. In March, 2009 it became a limited company registered with Companies House. The company registration number is 6846257

2. Background to Brighter Futures Foster Care

2.1 Aspirations

It is the hope of the Directors that young people who are looked after by Brighter Futures will experience a high quality of care. We hope that by listening to young people and offering a range of support services they will be better placed to face the challenges of life. One of the Directors is from a social work and managerial background and one is an educationalist and Regional Director for many years with a national children's charity who has a business background. Both Directors have extensive experience of working with young disadvantaged people and the agencies, which support them.

2.2 Vision

Our vision is "We believe in finding and supporting families who will enrich the lives of children Forever!"

2.3 Values

Our six Values

- The needs of Children are at the heart of everything we do
- We give and expect Respect always
- Be part of the Solution
- Work to the best of our Ability
- Strive to maintain a good work/life balance
- One Team One Agency One Family

The needs of Children are at the heart of everything we do

We will work to ensure that the child is inspired and supported to exercise their rights and achieve their personal goals in life, negotiating skilfully to secure the best support is made available for the child.

We will work to protect the child from potential risk of harm.

We will work closely with our foster parents to enable the continuous development of their skills in order to meet the individualised needs of the child in their care.

We will create opportunities for individual foster parent and team reflection and provide continuous development through training courses, mentorship and support groups.

We will create a suitable environment for promoting open and honest conversations with children, foster parents, colleagues and external stakeholders.

We will work in close partnership with all stakeholders involved in the child's care to ensure that the very best outcomes are achieved for and with the child.

We will work to ensure that the viability of the agency is maintained at all times protecting the long term interests of the child and all stakeholders.

We give and expect Respect always

We will listen to the opinions of colleagues, looked after children, foster parents, and external stakeholders demonstrating interest in their thoughts and providing support for their diversity.

We will treat each other with fairness and monitor everyone's input towards the achieving of our goals fairly ensuring that we acknowledge equally the efforts of all colleagues who demonstrate commitment to achieving success.

We will speak respectfully to each other and acknowledge differences of opinion, personalities and styles of working, working to identify common ground where possible.

We will acknowledge colleague and stakeholder suggestions for improvement and ensure full understanding about the organisation's direction of travel.

We will treat people with courtesy respecting their time is equally as precious as our own.

We will work to agreed deadlines achieving personal objectives and supporting team members with their objectives for the good of the team.

We will work unselfishly to deliver the objectives of the business plan, putting the needs of the team before our own.

Be part of the Solution

We will work creatively to look for possible solutions to every challenge and provide options to the team when faced with a challenge.

We will maximise efficient use of available resources, including time, and support colleagues to succeed where possible.

We will make time for each other to offer support during times of greater pressure as a result of either work or home life issues.

We will plan the use of time effectively to be available at agreed times, and communicate effectively key messages to the team when required.

We will ensure that when required we offer to lend a hand, when able, to colleagues so that our organisation's reputation is protected at all times.

Work to the best of our Ability

We will strive to keep up to date with the latest best practice and promote evidenced based practice at all times.

We will communicate any changes proactively to all stakeholders and maintain records timely and with accuracy.

We will raise all concerns relating to the inability of achieving agreed goals in a timely way to avoid delay.

We will respect our colleagues and ensure that we work as self-sufficiently as possible preventing an over reliance on the time of colleagues.

We will take responsibility for ensuring that stakeholder issues are resolved to the best of our ability, involving team members as required, but taking personal responsibility for seeing that the issue is dealt with.

Strive to maintain a good work/life balance

We will look out for each other and give time to colleagues to support them in times of crisis.

We will use our time effectively to promote the best use of available time and support colleagues to manage their time well.

We will take responsibility for our own wellbeing and that of those we line manage ensuring that their time away from work is used well.

We will ensure that foster parents are given adequate time flexibly to meet their individual needs.

We will work flexibly when needed, recognising the impact of the workload on others within the team and supporting where possible.

One Team One Agency One Family

We will treat each other with respect and dignity acknowledging the principles of good team work and confidentiality.

We will work in a trusting way with professional competency and a positive attitude.

We will represent the agency positively at all times being mindful of the impact of our behaviour and language on others.

We will create opportunities for meaningful discussion when faced with challenging situations resorting to email as a medium for communication as a last resort.

We will ensure that all records are updated accurately and timely to inform team members of any changes.

We will aim to deliver the team objectives before our own personal objectives.

We will behave as a responsible member of the team, working to maintain a positive environment within which to work.

We will proactively create an environment where colleagues feel safe to express themselves and feel part of the team decision making process.

We will work with acknowledgement that after consultation is over and a decision is made, the decision is shared positively both throughout the agency and with external stakeholders.

Brighter Futures Foster Care aims to provide caring and supportive placements for children and young people which will enable them to achieve positive life outcomes.

We will achieve this by:-

- Ensuring that the views of young people and foster parents are sought and considered in the services provided.
- Ensuring that the most competent foster parents are recruited and are well supported via training, one to one supervision, peer support, support groups and telephone support, including out of hours.
- Recruiting suitably qualified and trained staff.
- Building strong relationships with the Local Authorities who refer to and use the service.
- Ensuring all staff are up to date and knowledgeable regarding legislation and current good practice regarding fostering.

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- Ensuring all our policies and procedures are clear and consistent and young people and foster parents receive accurate information about the work of the agency. All children receive a children and young people's welcome pack (children's guide to the service).
- Ensuring Brighter Futures demonstrates a positive respect for difference and diversity
- Prioritising stable placements for children where this is consistent with the child's Care Plan
- Promoting contact arrangements for children and young people where consistent with the Care Plan
- Providing every young person placed with the agency with a savings account opened on their behalf and a £10 book token to encourage them to build a selection of books.
- Ensuring that we are transparent in our pricing and represent good value for money.

In addition we will:-

- Support flexible working and family friendly policies, which promote health and well-being amongst the staff team.
- Ensure that Brighter Futures is a company that adopts energy saving, green policies.
- Ensure that the quality of service is not compromised during expansion.

2.4 Management Structure and Staffing

Justina Gay BA, CQSW – Director of Social Care

Justina was the Head of Regional Services with a busy private fostering agency based in London. Justina holds a professional Social Work qualification and has 30 year's experience as a social work practitioner and manager. This has included working as an Operations Manager for East Sussex Children's Services managing core service provision from Child Protection to Looked after Children. She has also been an approved mental health social worker and a practice teacher linked to Sussex University.

Sali Ann Walker BA, PGCE, Diploma in Fine Art, MBA – Business Director

Sali has over 20 year's experience of working with young people across a range of sectors including the NHS, social care, education and voluntary sector. Sali has also worked in the private fostering agency sector and for 7 years was a Regional Director for a national young people's charity, managing a broad portfolio of services for under supported young people across two regions.

In 2013 Justina and Sali stepped back from day to day involvement in the agency to focus on the future development and direction of the business.

Greg de Smidt BSc (Psychology), BSW - Registered Manager

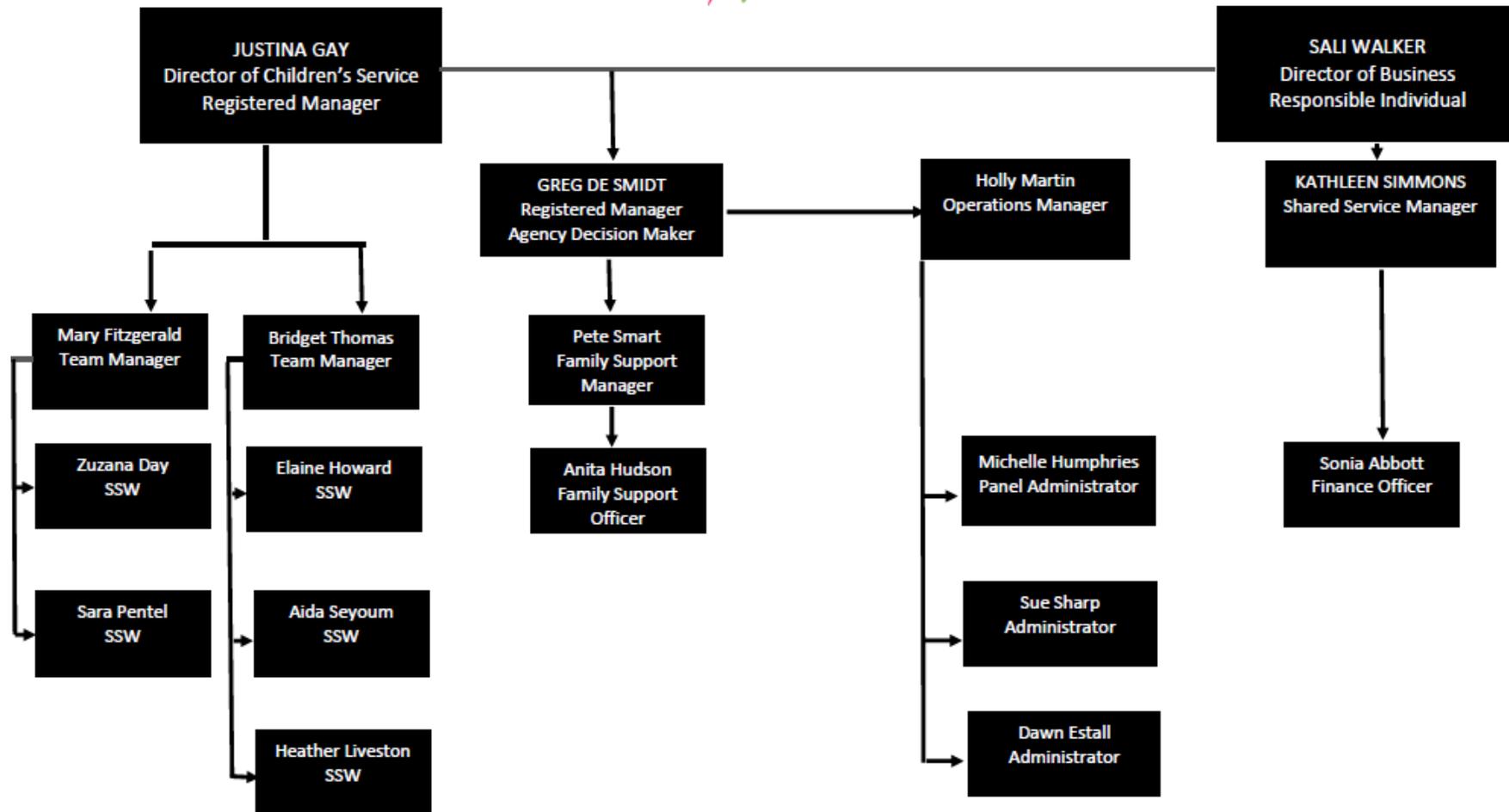
Greg joined Brighter Futures Foster Care in July 2014. Greg's role is to ensure best practice of service delivery to foster carer families and the children they look after. Greg has held senior management posts in fostering services for several years and has worked in a professional capacity with children and families for over 20 years.

In addition to the above, the service has a number of other staff:

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- Team Mangers: We have two team managers who are qualified and senior social workers. The Team Managers provide leadership, supervision and support to the supervising social workers and also hold a caseload of foster parents to whom they offer supervision and support.
- Supervising Social Workers: Our SSWs are each responsible for offering supervision and support to foster parents within a geographical area. They cover, Brighton/West Sussex, East Sussex/Kent, Essex, Hampshire, London and Hertfordshire. All are very well qualified with many year's experience.
- Family Support Manager: The Post is held by a worker with many year's experience in the family support field.

The service is supported by a finance team and by administration team (Central Services). Please refer to our current staff structure chart on the next page.



2.5 Embracing diversity

Brighter Futures has a diversity policy that applies to staff, foster parents and associated professionals. It covers all recognised legal frameworks and good practice. The policies adopted make it clear that it is not our intention to discriminate on grounds of race, disability, colour, creed, religion, language, sexuality, age or marital status. We also encourage parents and staff who were 'looked after themselves' as they have a unique insight into the specific needs of children and young people who are 'looked after'.

3. Standards of Care

3.1 Legislative background and care standards

The principles and standards of care are in keeping with the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, the Children and Young Peoples Act 2008 as set out in the National Minimum Standards, Guidance and Regulations 2011 and subsequent amendments. Foster parents must demonstrate their capabilities in providing safe care for children and young people who are placed in their care, and that they are able to understand and demonstrate their ability to ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is safeguarded and promoted.
- Due consideration is given to the child's wishes and feelings in light of age and understanding.
- The child's religious, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic needs are promoted.

Foster parent are required to promote all the dimensions of the child's/young person's needs and promote their welfare in such areas as their education, health, emotional and behavioural development, identity, social presentation, family and social relationships and self-care skills.

If any child or young person who is placed with a foster parent alleges any form of abuse as defined within the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006), against a foster parent, preferred provider or member of staff, the allegation will be managed in line with the Brighter Futures safeguarding policy, which will include notifications to Ofsted, the placing authority, and area authority LADO. If upheld, this may lead to a number of outcomes which could include:-

- Moving the child/young person to an alternative placement.
- The foster parent's approval being reviewed by Panel with a view to de-registration.
- Preferred Provider or member of staff being subject to personnel procedures
- Offering the foster parents, preferred provider or member of staff further training and support.
- Setting tasks for the foster parents, preferred provider or member of staff to complete.

3.2 Services provided

In line with the aims of Brighter Futures, a range of services are provided to children/young people, foster parents and professional agencies. These are outlined below. Information about Brighter Futures services is outlined in the following documents:-

- Information for prospective parents
- Children/young person's guide
- Foster parents handbook

Brighter Futures provide placements for all children/young people from birth to 21 years of age. We provide emergency, short-term, long-term, permanent and bridging placements. Foster parents are provided with a high level of training and support.

As well as requiring foster parents to open a bank account for the children/young people after a young person has been with us for 6 months we put £10 a week away for that child. The money is held in a separate client account and even if the business were to go into liquidation this

money would be secure. The money is not made available to the young people but is kept by the agency for the future in the hope that it may provide some of the costs of becoming independent such as a deposit for accommodation or funding towards a car.

This money is made available to children/young people when they cease to be looked after by Brighter Futures. This money is in addition to the savings provided by foster parents.

Brighter Futures provides a 24-hour emergency service. This out-of-hour's service ensures that foster families can contact a named member of staff in an emergency for advice, support, guidance and information. The out of hours workers have the EDs contact details for all the local authorities that we have children placed from.

3.3 Services to children/young people

Brighter Futures offers a range of services to children who are fostered with our foster parents to ensure that children/young people's health, educational, psychological and emotional needs are met. The principle form of service provision is the recruitment of foster parents for children who are unable for whatever reason to live with their birth families or relatives. We also provide support to the foster parents who may need assistance to manage challenging or difficult behaviour. We have a family support service which recruits appropriately vetted family support workers who are supervised and offered access to a comprehensive training programme.

In recognition of children/young people's needs for identity and self-esteem Brighter Futures will aim to offer culturally matched placements. In cases where this is not possible Brighter Futures will discuss with the local authority services that may support the child or young person's sense of self-worth, and will also offer them full information on other areas in which available foster parents would be able to meet the child's needs.

The needs of children and young people are listened to and acted upon by the agency. We have systems in place to ensure that young people are able to give feedback in a safe environment. Young people can contact the Complaints Manager directly if they have any concerns. Children and young people are also offered opportunities to express their views at the foster parents annual review and are able to influence the agency in a number of ways ranging from designing the Christmas card to amending the Children's Guide.

4. Recruitment, Assessment, Approval and Support of Foster Parents

4.1 Initial enquires

Brighter Futures operates a duty system that responds to all enquires and requests from individuals and couples to be considered as foster parents. The following actions are then taken:-

- An initial screening telephone interview.
- Basic information is sent about our fostering services to help people decide whether they wish to proceed.
- If they wish to proceed, a home visit is undertaken by a senior manager or supervising social worker to explain the agency's processes and policies.
- When an application is completed, a request is made for stage 1 information about the applicant, their family and any other person involved. Disclosure Barring System (DBS), local authority and a range of other checks are undertaken.
- All applicants attend a Skills to Foster preparation course. This has been developed by the Fostering Network and is delivered by an experienced consultant.
- Those who attend the course then decide whether they wish to proceed, and Brighter Futures decided whether they wish to proceed with the prospective carer's application.

4.2 Assessment Procedures

Assessments are carried out by HCPC registered social workers. Our social work assessments follow the competency based assessment method. This means that applicants are asked to demonstrate their competence to become approved foster parents. Throughout the assessment information is gathered using the CoramBAAF assessment form - Form F. The assessment, which consists of a series of interviews, takes place in the applicant's home, usually over a period of 6-8 sessions.

The assessment focuses on the individuals applying to become foster parents and their family. We make a detailed assessment of their past experiences and help them to think about their reasons for applying to become foster parents.

Brighter Futures takes up personal/professional references, plus employee/ landlord references/school/health visitor/children and ex-partners. At least two referees are visited in person.

Applicants do not have to be professionals. However, they need to have a willingness to care for children/young people between the ages of 0-21 years who cannot live with their family and are in need of alternative care. They must be able to demonstrate that they want and can make a difference to young people. They must be able to provide a room in their home to accommodate children or young people. Throughout the assessment process applicants are advised and helped to gather information and evidence providing examples of their relevant experiences and skills. This contributes to the assessment process and informs the Form F which is presented to the Fostering Panel.

4.3 The Fostering Panel

Brighter Futures Panel has a key role to play in the agency's decision-making process. They are governed by the regulations that are set out under the National Minimum Standards, Guidance and Regulations 2011. The panel is independent of Brighter Futures and has a remit to make recommendations about the approval of foster parents to the Agency Decision Maker. The Panel considers first reviews of foster parents ongoing approval. Foster Parents attend their first review and any subsequent reviews as required. They will also consider any reviews presented to panel following serious complaints or allegations made against foster parents.

A central list of Panel members with a wide range of professional and personal experience is available to draw upon and wherever possible, an independent foster parent is also included in each Panel. Where there are complaints relating to foster families, the Fostering Panel may be consulted and may recommend to the Agency Decision Maker what action needs to be taken by the agency.

4.4 Reviewing Foster Parents

The first annual review is conducted within a year after approval and presented to the Brighter Futures Panel. Based on this report they are able to make a recommendation about the foster parents fitness to remain registered and any changes required to their approval. Foster Parents are required to attend Panel for their first review and as deemed necessary thereafter. All other reviews are conducted by Brighter Futures on an annual basis and the report submitted to the Agency Decision Maker.

4.5 Support to foster parents

High quality support and monitoring makes a significant difference to foster parents. Brighter Futures offers the following types of support to foster Parents:

- Supervision/Support meetings with a Brighter Futures social worker every month or more often depending on need.
- A local foster parent's support group, which is held approx 4 times a year/
- Telephone support via the supervising social worker or placements manager.
- Emergency out of hour's service which operates outside regular working hours and which provides information, advice and guidance.

4.6 Training Services

Brighter Futures provides a range of training opportunities for foster parents and staff to ensure they remain up to date on legislation, issues and best practice. We ensure that foster parents experience a range of in-house and external training courses and can also attend national courses and seminars. Brighter Futures wish to be seen and operate as a 'Learning Organisation' for staff and foster parents alike. We encourage and support foster parents with their learning and development, believing that this will in turn provide good adult role modelling for children.

5. Accountability

5.1 Making a complaint

The agency has its own internal complaints policy. This can be activated by phone, email or in person. Brighter Futures like all independent fostering agencies is accountable to Ofsted. A foster parents information pack and young people welcome pack are sent to all foster parents and children, and provides information about how to make a complaint about the agency. There is a complaints policy and young people can make their complaint via e-mail as well as in written form, in person or on the phone.

Prospective foster parents receive a leaflet about the Internal Review Mechanism and are made aware of what the organisation does.