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1. Introduction

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with relevant statutory legislation, regulations and guidance including:

- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and 2014, 2021 Amendments
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Children Act: Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011) (and 2013 Amendments)

The Statement of Purpose provides a written statement outlining the aims and objectives of the fostering service. It also summarises the services and facilities provided by Evergreen Foster Care Ltd.

In accordance with regulations, Evergreen Foster Care provides copies of this statement to Ofsted; it is available to view on Evergreen's dedicated website and available on request to:

- any person working for the purpose of Evergreen Foster Care Ltd,
- any foster parent or prospective foster parent of Evergreen Foster Care Ltd,
- any child placed with a foster parent by Evergreen Foster Care Ltd, and
- The parent of any such child.

Other relevant legislation:

- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 1989
- UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018



2. The Aims and Objectives of our Service

At Evergreen Foster Care, we feel passionately about taking a holistic and therapeutic approach to providing care to children who have social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, and who may also have aspects of autistic spectrum condition. We strongly believe that timely intervention can bring children inner-peace and contentment, and enable them to become positive, valuable members of society.

At Evergreen Foster Care, we recognise the need for loving homes for children whose high-level needs are such that they have previously struggled in foster care, with family, or may have been cared for in children's homes and/or residential schools. Our primary aim is to provide a team of foster carers and homes that are supported and highly trained to address the needs of such children in a loving home environment. We recognise the high levels of resilience required by foster carers and provide a wider 'family' of co-carers (respite / regular breaks) to support the child and foster carer.

Our objective is to meet and exceed the requirements of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2011 to provide children with the best possible experience of being looked after, the opportunity and support to achieve positive outcomes and feel safe, and the confidence and motivation to aspire to do their best.

Our key priorities are to work in a way that:

- each fostering family cares for one foster child at any one time so carers can prioritise the needs specific to that child,
- each child/young person is thoughtfully matched, and planned with a foster carer to ensure the child and carers receive a bespoke, well thought out transition plan,
- children's emotional and physical wellbeing is paramount,
- ensures stable, secure, safe, and effective care for children, where they feel part of a family and have the opportunity to experience family life and achieve to the best of their abilities,
- supports better life chances for care experienced children by providing them with opportunities and experiences that promote achievable aspirations,
- actively involves children and carers in decisions pertaining to planning and service delivery,
- promotes effective partnership working to protect and promote the welfare of children within the context of current legislation and guidance,
- promotes education, training, independence, and the world of work,
- provides as wide a variety of families as possible to meet the diverse physical, emotional and cultural needs of the individual child,
- carefully monitors the progress of children,
- safeguards children and carers,
- provides a 'family' of carers for each child, e.g., primary carers and assigned co-carers to ensure consistency and predictability,
- retain highly trained carers and staff through a strategy that provides support, appropriate reward, and professional development,
- deliver a high-quality training and therapy programme that is bespoke and tailored to the needs of our families,
- offers an out of hours service,
- offers a therapeutic community to carers, staff and children.

We believe that each child in our care has the fundamental right to:

- be regarded as an individual and given our special attention,
- be cared for by people who can understand their needs,
- have fun,
- be treated equally, and no less favourably than others,
- receive respect and understanding regarding their cultural, religious and spiritual beliefs,



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- receive an education which enhances their life prospects in every respect,
- receive prompt attention in relation to all their healthcare needs,
- be safe, feel loved and always know that “someone cares”,
- be informed about all important decisions that affect them, and to have a say,
- be afforded privacy for themselves and their belongings,
- can think independently and make their own safe choices,
- complain about anything they feel is unfair or unjust, and to have that complaint listened and responded to,
- receive therapeutic intervention.

We aim to ensure that every family and/or placing authority feel their child is receiving the highest quality life experience and personal development provision with Evergreen Foster Care.

Therapeutic Community

We have chosen to follow the pathway of continuous professional development through membership of the Quality Network and Accreditation Project for Therapeutic Communities known as Community of Communities at the College Centre for Quality Improvement, Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Therapeutic Childcare standards function as a quality improvement initiative within which we may demonstrate our therapeutic work to an external audience, as well as to improve practices with children and staff.

We are interested in demonstrating the ways in which we work within a therapeutic environment and our continued full membership ensures we regularly reflect on our practice. We measure our practice, our development and achievements, against a detailed set of core standards in therapeutic childcare.

Our children, staff and foster carers are involved in the process of reflecting on personal achievements, and how our relational approach provides support and opportunities.

Each cycle enables us to provide written evidence to the College Centre, to implement our action plans, to measure areas of achievement and to identify those areas in which we can continue to develop.

Annual peer review forms an integral part of scrutinising and evidencing our therapeutic practice and learning from and sharing practice with members of other therapeutic communities.

Evergreen Foster Care are members of The National Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP) to ensure our continued professional development and to ensure we keep up to date with policy, guidance and legislation developments. Staff attend regular forums to discuss best practice with our professional peers.



3. Organisational and Management Structure

A Board of Directors is in overall executive control of the company and monitors all aspects of service provision. The Responsible Individual represent the board and organisation. Day-to day management and development of services is vested in the Registered Manager.

Board of Directors			
Clare Ratcliffe, Jon Armitage, Sarah Deaville, Amy Hopkin, Vivienne Hopkin, Corrine Sutherland, Debra Turner			
Responsible Individual (Representative of the Board) Sarah Deaville			
Agency Decision Maker Jacqueline Shore	Registered Manager (DSL) Clare Ratcliffe		Office Manager/ Administrator Niamh Minton
	Accounts Corinne Sutherland Laraine Ratcliffe Kirkwood Wilson		
Team Manager (DDSL) Alison Gregory (RM <i>app pending</i>)			
Panel Chair Chris Twigger	Supervising Social Workers		Family Support Workers
Vice Chair Simon Morton			
Panel Advisor Alison Gregory		Our Fostering Families	
Legal Advisor Nowell Mellor Solicitors	Medical Advisor Dr Timothy Ladbroke		
Independent Reviewing Officer Martin Knapper	Panel Members		



4. Services, Training and Development

Evergreen Foster Care is a specialised service that focuses on placing children moving on from residential schools or children's homes into high level, intensively supported, foster care families. The aim of Evergreen Foster Care is to provide families for children that would not be able to access standard foster care but who, if adequately supported could make the transition back to a family environment. We believe that although residential provision can provide a safe and secure placement for children, it is always preferable to be within a family environment. In our experience many children, who have been happy in residential care, move onto foster care too soon to be able to cope with the drastic change, and carers struggle to adapt to the high levels of need and attention that the children have become used to in a residential setting. Our aim is to provide a wider 'family' to ensure the primary foster carers have regular, planned breaks and children establish networks for later life. In our experience this helps to develop children's resilience and their ability to attach to safe adults.

Supervision

- Supervising social workers have regular contact with the foster home.
- Our carers have access to specialist advice and support.
- Supervising social workers or family support workers have at least 6 weekly contacts with the foster child as part of their duties.
- Primary carers are provided with 4-6 weekly supervisions, depending on need.
- Co-carers are provided with supervision 3 times per year, or as required, along with the opportunity to undertake training that may be relevant to them.
- All carers receive at least one unannounced visit per year.

Training and Support

We are committed to ensuring that our recruitment process enables us to attract prospective carers, who, with support and ongoing training, are able to offer the highest levels of care and nurture to children and young people. Evergreen Foster Care is rigorous in its assessment of prospective foster carers and is constantly in search of those who feel able to dedicate themselves to this demanding role. A comprehensive training programme is on offer to carers, staff and panel members.

Intensive initial training (pre-approval):

- skills To Foster (STF) training,
- child attachment and trauma informed practice,
- conflict resolution and Team Teach training,
- documentation and record keeping,
- paediatric first aid.

Regular Connect, Develop and Review (CDR) training and support sessions, in the areas of:

- Structure and routine – linked to behaviour plans.
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties facing children in care e.g., trauma, attachment etc...
- Behaviour systems and boundaries, rewards and consequences
- Therapeutic approaches (delivered by therapist)
- Detailed contingency planning.
- Understand the impact and effect of family time on all involved.
- Therapeutic Communities (delivered by therapist)
- Review of, and strategic planning for, placement progress and risk assessment and group problem solving
- Preparation for independence



- Safer caring and risk reduction
- Assessing and measuring progress and outcomes for children

We believe that foster carers want to feel part of a community and it is important to meet regularly to provide them with the opportunity to share, reflect, learn and develop their practice. These sessions take place when the children are at school and primary carers are expected to attend as part of their professional role. This helps Evergreen Foster Care to respond to issues before they affect the child, and for foster carers to feel part of a wider team.

Foster carers receive a paid membership to an online training service where they can access over 130 CPD accredited courses anytime, anywhere, from any device <https://evergreen.fosteringtraining.com>

This provides an opportunity for foster carers to respond to the needs in their fostering families as they emerge.

Courses include:

- Caring for children with sexually harmful behaviour
- Allegations
- Disclosures
- Men in fostering
- Communicating with children
- Positive parenting
- Therapeutic parenting with PACE
- Secure base model
- Transitions
- County lines
- Knife crime awareness
- ADHD
- Caring for a child with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Raising a LGBTQ+ foster child
- Honour-based violence and forced marriage, and many more.

Therapeutic Input

Evergreen Foster Care employ a full-time therapist. Our fostering families receive bespoke psychological and therapeutic input for either the whole family, the child or the carers individually, for the duration of their time with Evergreen Foster Care.

Plus:

- clinical psychologist consultancy and supervision for therapist,
- accreditation as a Therapeutic Community by the Royal College of Psychiatrists,
- the opportunity to take part in peer reviews of other therapeutic services,
- direct access to materials and advice that can support their family.



Other ongoing support:

- Out of hours service operated by the Evergreen staff team. This means that our foster carers can talk to people who know them and their family, any time of day.
- Attendance and support at professionals' meetings.
- Individual support following physical intervention or major incident.
- Therapeutic group reflection sessions with the therapist.
- Peer mentor support.
- Support with the implementation and review of child focused routines and strategies.

The fostering journey is challenging and unique for every child and foster carer. We understand the importance of providing services, which are welcoming, reliable, knowledgeable and innovative. For this reason, all foster carers receive a paid membership to **Foster Talk** where they can access financial advice, 24/7 medical helpline, free online events, discounted tax returns and discount vouchers for the whole family.

All foster carers, including all members of a household who are approved foster carers, are supported to achieve the Children's Workforce Development Council's Training, Support and Development Standards (**TSD**) for Foster Care. Foster carers can evidence that the Training, Support and Development Standards have been attained within 12 months of approval.

Foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio, which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service.

Secondary foster carers and those supporting the primary foster carers have access to regular training and support.

All training fits within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice and is organised to encourage and facilitate attendance by foster carers.

Regular Breaks

We recognise that being a foster carer to children with a wide range of difficulties can be isolating and at times challenging.

To this end, we aim to provide a wider 'family' to ensure that primary foster carers have regular planned breaks utilising dedicated co-carers or people within their own networks. These people then become key figures in the children's life. We know that this reduces carer fatigue and the breakdown of families, and that the children enjoy their time away from their primary foster carers, as it allows them to 're-set', without the pressure of meeting other's expectations. It also provides birth children time to navigate their own fostering journey.

5. Recruiting and Assessing Foster Carers

Applications to become a foster carer are welcomed regardless of gender, marital status, sexuality, race, disability, religion, culture or employment status. Anyone over the age of 21 years may apply to become a foster carer. We are committed to ensuring that our recruitment process enables us to attract prospective carers, who with support and ongoing training, can offer the highest levels of care and nurture to children and young people. Evergreen Foster Care is rigorous in its assessment of prospective foster carers and is constantly in search of those who feel able to dedicate themselves to this demanding yet rewarding role.

We look for people who can offer a long-term home for children, not just now, but for them to remain part of the children's lives when they become adults; we know this leads to greater positive outcomes for children in later life.

We pride ourselves on having a range of foster carers from all walks of life. We are selective in our recruitment due to the specialised fostering service we offer.



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Evergreen Foster Care use a range of avenues for recruitment; however, we remain a small and specialised agency, and only work with a select number of children each year. On that basis, we wait to find the right people to become foster carers and to join our service.

Evergreen Foster Care's website provides information for prospective foster carers as well as more general information about fostering.

The Process

- **Initial Enquiry**
Once a prospective foster carer has enquired, they will complete a telephone screening questionnaire to discuss their suitability and desire to foster. This takes around one hour. The questions are designed to explore their motivation to foster and their fit with the Evergreen model of fostering. If both parties want to proceed to the next step, the prospective foster carer will be invited to an information session (if deemed necessary) or proceed straight to a home visit.
- **Home visit / information event**
This provides a face-to-face meeting between Evergreen Foster Care and the applicant and their household. This will take at least two hours. Applicants will be provided with realistic information about becoming a foster carer with Evergreen. This is their opportunity to decide if they want to proceed.
- **Assessment**
A qualified social worker will undertake a full and comprehensive, analytical fostering assessment and will produce a report that covers:
 - Any other children or adults in the household
 - Individual profiles of applicants
 - Relationships and partnerships
 - Health and safety, including pets.
 - Employment and address history
 - Support network
 - Description of family life
 - Parenting capacity
 - Personal outlook, motivations and ethics
 - Ethos and understanding of the specialist role within Evergreen Foster Care

The social worker will visit the home several times to work through the application process, this is a joint project and will require input from applicants and their family. As part of the assessment process, potential carers will be required to attend and pass pre-approval training.

During the assessment, Evergreen Foster Care will also carry out a variety of statutory checks which include:

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Local Authority checks
- Current or previous fostering organisation reference
- School/health visitor reference (on own child, if appropriate)
- Medical reports
- Current employment references
- References from all previous employment involving children and vulnerable adults.
- Personal references
- Overseas checks where appropriate
- Financial assessment
- **Panel**
Once the assessment is complete, the report will be presented to the fostering panel. The panel is made up of a variety of professionals and independent members, who have the appropriate qualifications and experience to serve as panel members. Often applicants can feel nervous about this, but it is the panel members job to make people feel at ease to get the best flavour of what the applicant can bring to fostering.
- **Approval**



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The panel members make recommendations, with the final decision being made by the Agency Decision Maker. Upon approval applicants will be advised in writing and allocated a supervising social worker, this is where the matching and introduction process will begin.

Following approval, new foster carers will begin to engage in their robust, bespoke training programme.

We are currently piloting a new form of assessment for our primary foster carers which would mean prospective foster carers gain a Level 2 Award in Therapeutic Parenting. This enables assessors and applicants to feel confident about the applicant's ability to foster a child from trauma using therapeutic parenting techniques.

6. Matching and Suitability of our Fostering Families

Our ultimate objective is to have long-term, well-matched fostering families. We want the homes to work for the children, and we want to retain foster carers in the fostering sector. We believe we go above and beyond to achieve this through a variety of strategies. As most of our placements are long-term and planned, where we can, we will follow this model of best practice.

- How do we select, match and place children with our foster carers?

Local Authorities can refer directly to Evergreen Foster Care. Following the initial filtering of these, the Registered Manager will contact the Local Authority for further information, including a discussion with the child's social worker. Assuming, Evergreen Foster Care feel the child is a fit for our fostering model, a visit to the child will be completed. This can last anywhere up to three hours, and the idea is to assess the child's needs and to gather their views on what they would like from a foster carer. It also gives the opportunity to talk to their current home, carers and staff, and shadow routines and approaches. Once a suitable fostering household has been identified by Evergreen Foster Care, the Local Authority will be sent a formal offer with details of our intended match. A meeting between the LA, Evergreen, foster carer, therapist, social workers will be completed to share information and inform placement requirements. When all parties are happy to proceed, a step-down and matching meeting will take place, highlighting plans for introductions and transition.

- What is the introduction and transition?

Designed to offer the maximum chance of success. We ensure the child and foster carers are provided with the information about each other. Children are told by a trusted person. They are given time to process the information and ask questions. They are provided with a profile of the foster carer, including videos and photographs of the household and family members. Plans are child led with a focus on flexibility and inclusion. Foster carers will be given the opportunity to meet the child in a safe place and gradually increase the time they spend together, moving towards overnight stays. Transitions can last anywhere between 2-9 weeks, depending on how it goes. They are bespoke and tailored to the carer and children's personalities and interests.

- How do we monitor and track progress and outcomes once children move in?

Evergreen Foster Care use a monitoring tool known as the Outcomes for Children's Scale. This tracks personal progress in six key areas; self-control and management of behaviour, social skills, self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem, skills for independence, approach to learning and attitude to health. This evidences the progress the children are making in their home, it reminds foster carers why they do what they do, and it shows areas for growth and development. Children and foster carers have targets to work towards. We have high aspirations for our children, and so do the foster carers. Our overall aim is for children to become the best version of themselves, and to feel happy and safe.



7. Complaints and Outcomes

Evergreen Foster Care actively encourages children to explore their feelings constructively. Children are also encouraged to become more assertive and value themselves more highly. Within this context, children are made aware of their right to complain should they feel they have been treated unfairly or disrespectfully.

Evergreen Foster Care aims to provide a high-quality service to the children and young people in foster care with us. Feedback on how we perform will be sought and will be considered as an opportunity to make improvements.

As required by Ofsted, Evergreen Foster Care has a written Complaints Policy alongside information in The Children's Guide.

All staff and Foster Carers will receive training in the process; there are written policies, procedures and guidelines for all to follow. All will listen carefully to what a child is saying and be alert to their concerns; particularly if they express unhappiness about any aspect of their care or treatment.

Child protection issues will be dealt with in line with our Safeguarding policy and procedures. There will be no form of reprisal against a child who makes a complaint.

Should a person involved in the child's life such as foster carers, parents, social workers, IRO's feel they need to make a complaint, they should follow the procedure outlined in the Evergreen complaints policy, which is readily available.

Our written guidelines about the complaint's procedure identify two types of complaints along with the appeals process:

- Informal complaint
- Formal complaint
- Appeals process.

Bullying

Everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture, which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying.

All children and young people have a right to feel confident that their home is a safe and healthy environment. We want to ensure that all children, young people and staff remain safe from bullying behaviour and have the opportunity to thrive and prosper, emotionally and socially. When bullying is encountered, the agency will ensure that the procedures are in place to allow:

- Reporting and recording of the incident.
- Concerns or incidents of bullying to be properly monitored.
- Appropriate action to be taken in response to incidents of bullying and that these are followed up.

This will ensure that people feel listened to and understand that their concerns have been, and will be, taken seriously. The agency will provide guidance and training that encourages an understanding and appreciation of what bullying is, and how it impacts on self and others.

Everyone involved in looking after children shares responsibility for countering bullying and for creating a culture which positively encourages acceptable behaviour and reduces or prevents the likelihood of bullying. Foster Carers must be alert to the risk of bullying and should take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour. To help achieve this, each foster home should have its own strategies for countering bullying, and this should be reflected in the foster carers safer caring policy. Where bullying is not persistent or less serious, it should be notified to the supervising social worker at the first



opportunity. The supervising social worker will inform the child's social worker and what further action to take. Serious or persistent bullying must be notified immediately to the supervising social worker, who will notify the child's social worker. Consideration will be given to whether a Child Protection Referral should be made.

8. Contact Details and Offices

Registered Office

Evergreen Foster Care Ltd, S.17, Genesis Centre, North Staffs Business Park, Innovation Way, Stoke-On-Trent, ST6 4BF.

Tel: 01782 366361

Mobile: 07368586813

Email: admin@evergreenfostercare.uk

Web: www.evergreenfostercare.uk

The Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner

20 Great Smith Street, London. SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk / Web: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

[About the Children's Commissioner for England | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

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