



# Statement of Purpose

## Scotland

Issue Date: April 2024



We're part of the Polaris Community



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# Introduction

This document outlines the way Foster Care Associates Scotland operates as an independent fostering agency.

We hope this document is clear and can be understood by children and young people, Foster Carers and staff. We welcome any comments about how we might improve the content or format. See contact details on back page.

Foster Care Associates Scotland (FCAS) Statement of Purpose is available to:

- Any person working for FCA Scotland.
- Our Foster Carers and prospective Foster Carers.
- Children and young people who are placed with our Foster Carers and the parents and families of any such child/young person.
- Local authorities.
- Colleagues from other social care agencies.
- The general public.

Our Statement of Purpose has been developed to meet the requirements arising from:

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007
- Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010
- Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- The Continuing Care (Scotland) Order 2015
- Health and Social Care Standards
- Independent Care Review

## FCA Scotland - Part of the Polaris Community

Polaris is one of the UK's largest leading communities of children's service providers. Within the community, we have independent fostering and adoption agencies who have been passionately improving the lives of young people for over 30 years, as well as Leaving Care services, Education and bespoke children's services contracts. Our nurturing community works collectively to support the very best outcomes for each and every child in our care. We're ambitious for our children and young people, families and staff, and believe in their futures.

## Our Mission, Vision and Values

At Polaris we have one ambition across our community – to transform the future of children and children's services.

“At the very heart of our Polaris Community is a common aim where everyone is committed to enabling every child and young person in our care to reach their full potential. We are ambitious for ourselves and our children. I am exceptionally proud that I am surrounded by an inspirational

team of staff and families who are completely committed to making a difference and to achieve the best outcomes for children across the UK.

**Jo August**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

# Vision

(what we aim to achieve)

To make a difference to children, young people and families that lasts a lifetime



# Mission

(purpose and what we do to achieve it)

Our mission is to provide safe and happy lives for the children who come to live with us



## For children and young people

- We aspire to help our children reach their full potential
- We respect and promote a child's racial, cultural and religious background and consider their gender and sexuality when finding the right family for them
- We understand the importance of stability for our children and want them to have a sense of belonging within their foster family, birth family and community
- We strive to ensure our children are ready and equipped for the next stage of their lives. We want our children to have the ability to be independent in their thoughts and actions and make positive contributions to society as adults

## For foster carers

We take the time to understand trauma and harm and adjust our care accordingly

- We recruit, assess and train foster families in such a way that equips their journey to ensuring children are safe and happy
- We listen and empower our foster families. Through consultation, support and learning they are equipped to meet the individual needs of children

## For all

- We are proactive in promoting equality and tackling all forms of racism and prejudice in order to help achieve a better society for our children and families to thrive
- We promote a learning culture wherein staff and foster carers build and maintain expertise in the field of children and fostering and work collaboratively with our professional partners
- We are compassionate and discreet in our approach to working with children and their families

# Values

(core principles and ethics)

“Safe and Happy” is the core of our being

- An intelligent, compassionate, creative, loyal, and adaptable approach to the delivery of fostering
- Security, safety and autonomy for our children, fostering families and staff
- Treating families and colleagues with respect, honesty, kindness and care with appropriate challenge where needed
- Leadership that models the vision, mission and values and behaviours to which we aspire



# Aims and objectives

FCA Scotland offers high quality family placements and related support services to children and young people who are looked after by local authorities.

Our primary aim is to give children and young people the opportunity to achieve their full potential and to live fulfilling lives in the community.

We work in partnership with local authorities to offer community based services within national frameworks, designed to meet a wide range of needs. We provide intensive, locally based support to our Foster Carers, children/young people and their families via multidisciplinary teams of childcare professionals.

## Our objectives:

- To provide a child-centred and inclusive partnership based approach which embraces children/young people, their families, Foster Carers, local authority and other agency colleagues.
- To do everything possible to achieve a stable placement, free from disruption, where a child/young person's needs are understood and met.
- To respect and promote the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children/young people.
- To consider fully the gender and sexuality of fostered children/young people when making placement decisions.
- To meet the needs of disabled children and young people including those with physical/learning disabilities, neurodiverse, sensory impairment, and those who have complex health needs and are life limited - also those that present with challenging behaviours due to their disabilities.
- To recruit Foster Carers from a wide range of backgrounds so that we can offer appropriate placements for children/young people.
- To provide 24 hour support for our Foster Carers and children/young people, 7 days a week.
- To provide ongoing training and development of our Foster Carers.
- To provide a workforce of managers, practitioners and support staff who are appropriately qualified and registered with their professional regulatory body, as well as being supported in continuous professional development.

## Status and constitution

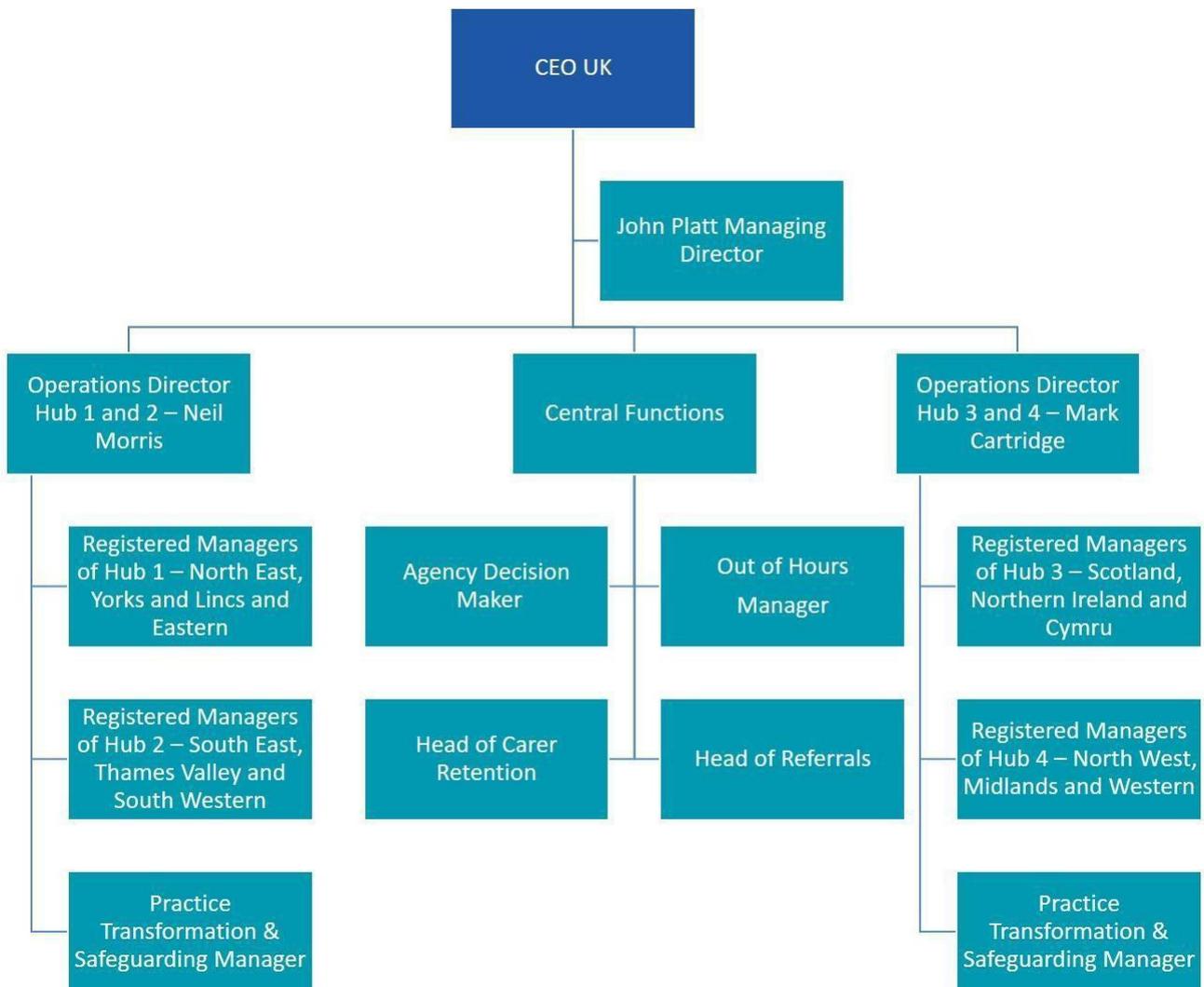
FCA Scotland, an independent fostering agency, is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (company number SC238143). We began operating in 2002 and have

consistently grown and evolved to meet the needs of looked after children and young people in the Scotland.

In accordance with the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989, we produce a

Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. Copies of these are available to the government commissions, which regulate independent fostering agencies and children's social care throughout the UK.

# FCA Central Organisational Chart



## OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Jo August was appointed Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in May 2019. Jo is one of the most experienced and successful leaders in the fostering sector in the UK and brings with her more than 20 years of professional experience. Jo has another interesting dimension to her profile and brings with her valuable and relevant insights from having herself grown up in a fostering family.

# Management structure

The strategic direction, service development and performance of FCA Scotland is monitored by the FCA Board of Directors who meet monthly.

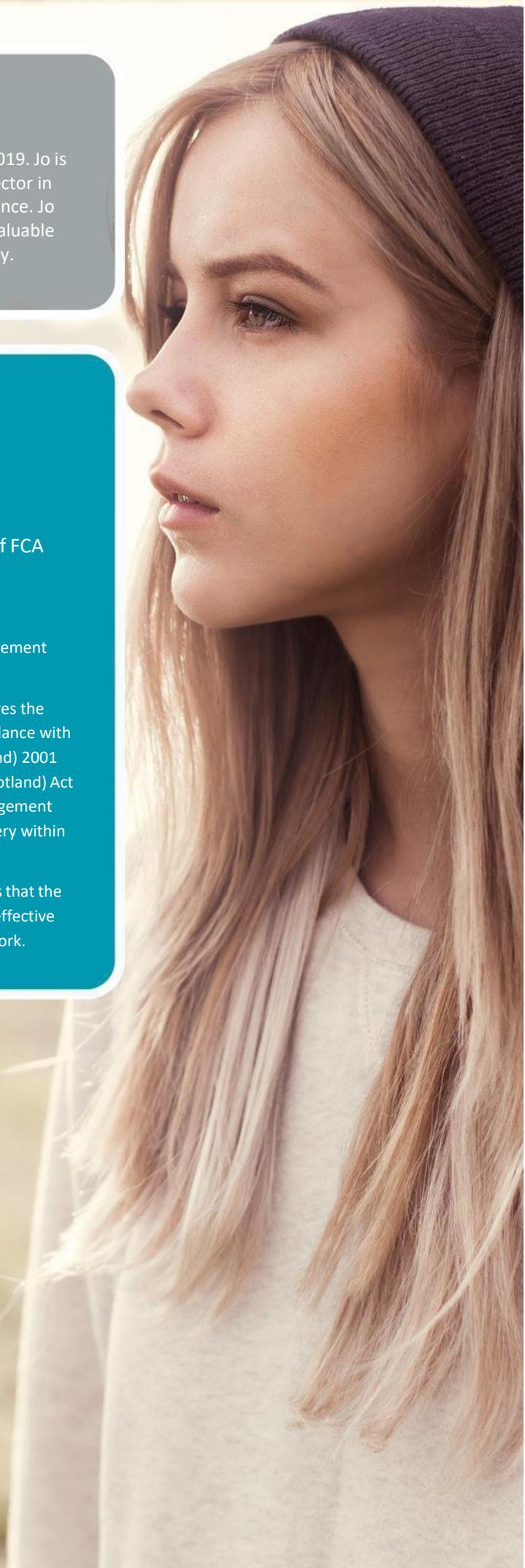
The Board of Directors is supported by a Senior Management Team which meets monthly to direct and monitor the performance of the company's activities, business planning and policy development. This team is supported by the Registered Manager and Heads of Service.

The Registered Manager reports to the Managing Director. Additional meetings take place periodically throughout the year to monitor performance, coordinate

service developments and implement strategies for problem solving.

The Registered Manager ensures the company is managed in accordance with the Regulation of Care (Scotland) 2001 and Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 legislation and has management responsibility for service delivery within Scotland

The Managing Director ensures that the Registered Manager receives effective ongoing supervision of their work.





## Our staff

### Qualified and Experienced Staff

- A considerable number of people work for our organisation in a variety of roles including social workers, therapists, participation and education workers, independent fostering panel members.
- Our Registered Manager is professionally qualified in line with the requirements of Regulations and National Minimum Standards.
- All social workers and their Team Managers are professionally qualified and registered individually with the Scottish Social Services Council. Some have post qualifying specialist awards and experience related to working with children and young people in foster care.

- All our staff have appropriate experience and qualifications and have access to supervision and line management.

### We value our staff!

- We have a flexible working policy which means that many of our staff work from home. This reduces unnecessary travel.
- We have an annual employee appreciation day when we show our staff how much we appreciate their hard work to make a positive and lasting difference to so many children and families each year.
- We have an employee forum and a staff group dedicated to providing advice and guidance about issues relating to diversity and inclusion

in the workplace.

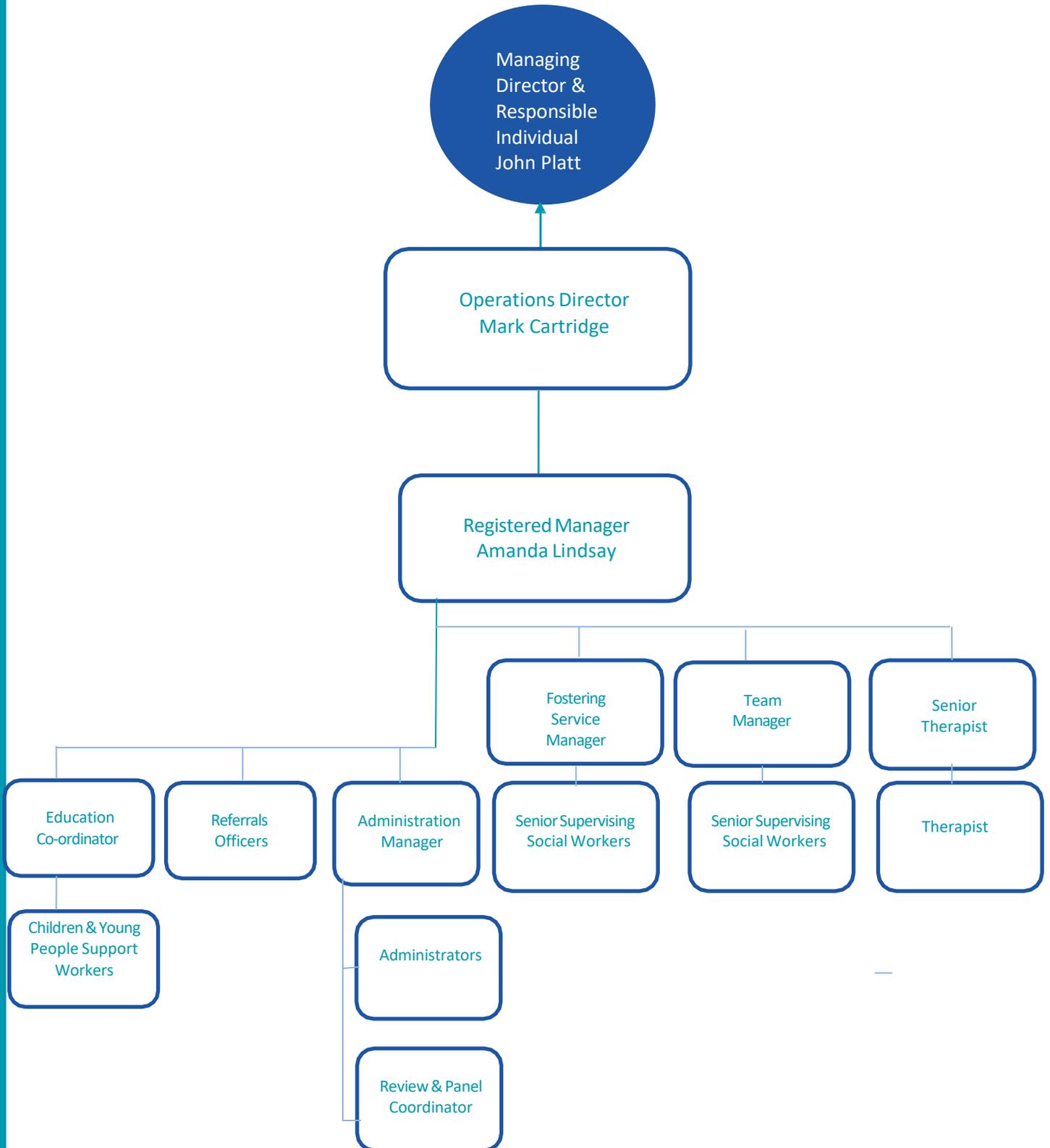
### Pre-Employment Checks

- All of our recruiting managers receive 'safer recruitment' training.
- Required checks and enquiries are completed for all staff to ensure that the welfare of children and young people is safeguarded. For all staff including casual and self-employed staff verification of any necessary formal qualifications is obtained.

### Insurance Cover

- All staff who undertake work for us on a permanent, casual and self-employed basis, are covered by appropriate professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

# FCA Scotland Organisational Chart



# Keeping the Promise

## The independent Care Review

In October 2016, Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon promised care experienced people that Scotland would do better to come together and love its most vulnerable children and give them the childhood they deserve.

She announced an Independent Root and Branch Review of Care ("The Care Review"), driven by those with experience of care. Between February 2017 & February 2020 the Care Review travelled across Scotland to listen really carefully to over 5,500 people. More than half of these people were children and adults who had been "in care". The rest were families and the paid and unpaid workforce.

FCA Scotland were proud to have some of our young people and carers participate in the Care Review and have their voices heard.

The Care Review heard that Scotland needs to change how it cares for children and young people and in February 2020 it produced 7 reports setting out the changes that were needed and how Scotland can make sure that these changes happen.

The work and recommendation of the Care Review received cross party support in the Scottish Parliament with all political parties making a commitment to deliver on the recommendations and to implement real and lasting change for children and young people. The Promise sets out Scotland's ambition for children and young people "We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential". There is also a special version of The Promise written for children and young people called The Pinky Promise.

### The Promise and The Pinky Promise

These two reports, tell Scotland what it must do to make sure it's most vulnerable children feel loved and have the childhood they deserve.

### The Plan

This report is intended to help Scotland figure out how to keep The Promise – so what needs to be done, by who, by when and how.

### The Money and Follow the Money

These two reports tell Scotland that it must change the way it thinks about investing in its children and families to keep The Promise and show the difference that will make.

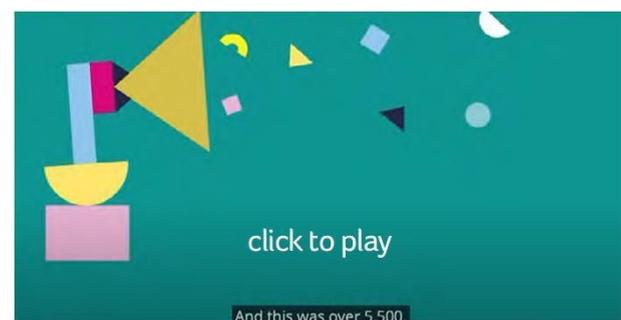
### The Rules

This report tells Scotland how complicated all the rules are, how some get in the way of The Promise, and how working with The Plan will change that.

### The Thank you

This tells the story of the Care Review and says thank you to all the children, families and others who were involved. The work and recommendation of the Care Review received cross party support in the Scottish Parliament with all political parties making a commitment to deliver on the recommendations and to implement real and lasting change for children and young people.

You can find out more about the Story of the Independent Care Review and The Promise here:



# Keeping the Promise At FCA Scotland

FCA Scotland have made a pledge to Keep The Promise and are working hard to deliver the recommendations set out in the reports. We believe and agree completely that children and young people should grow up loved, safe and respected and able to realise their full potential and we want to make sure that we do everything we can to make that happen.

Some of the main themes from the Independent Care Review which relate directly to fostering are around the importance of children and young people experiencing loving relationships in their fostering families, brothers and sisters being placed together and children and young people being able to continue their relationships with people who are important to them and foster carers even when they are no longer living with them. There are also other recommendations about language that is used, support for foster carers, education and the wider workforce.

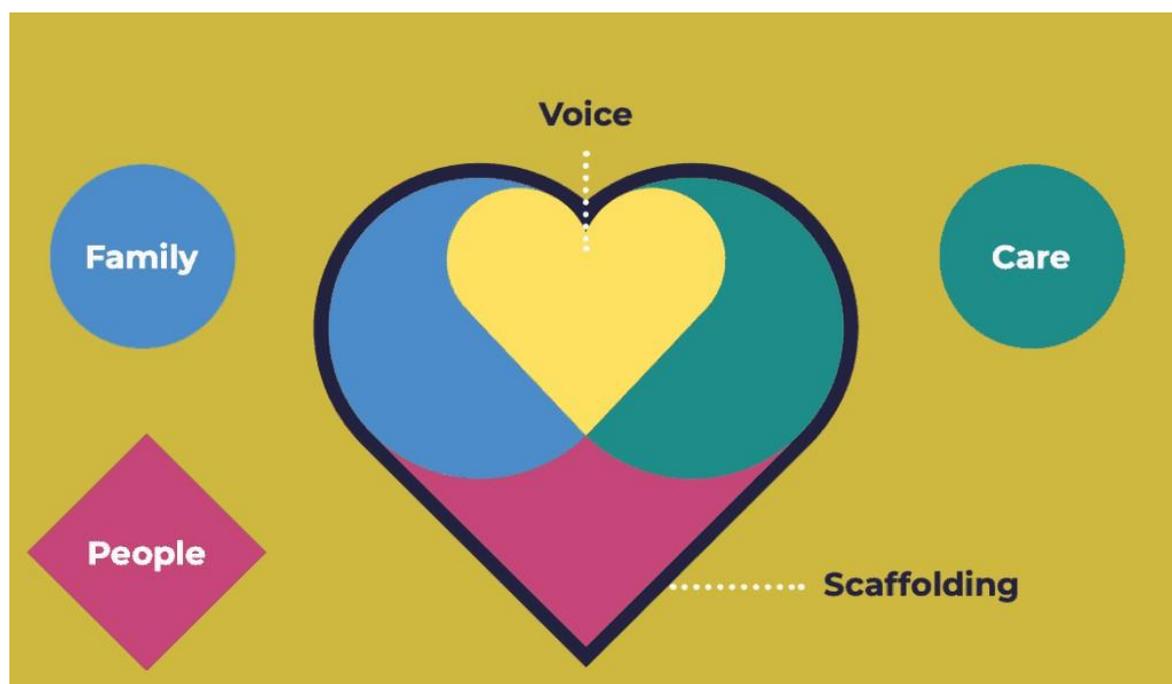
FCA Scotland have made excellent progress so far in our commitment to Keeping The Promise with participation opportunities and events for our children, young people and foster carers to enable them to understand The Promise, and also have their say and make suggestions about how we should be working and making changes in line with the foundations of The Promise. We are keeping in regular contact with our foster carers and young people in respect of the progress made and allowing them the opportunity for continual input and suggestions.

We have also been very proud to launch our Language That Cares 'Speaking Charter' where we have considered the impact that language has and with assistance from our young people have created a list of preferred words, ensuring that when speaking about our young people or writing documents, that we are mindful of understanding the lived experience and individuality of each child and young person and are not using words that describe them in a negative, stigmatising or stereotypical manner.

You can find out more about Keeping The Promise and download the reports here:

[www.thepromise.scot](http://www.thepromise.scot)

[www.carereview.scot](http://www.carereview.scot)



## We value our children and families!

In the past, FCA have ran annual National Photography Competitions which were open to all children and young people aged three years and above.

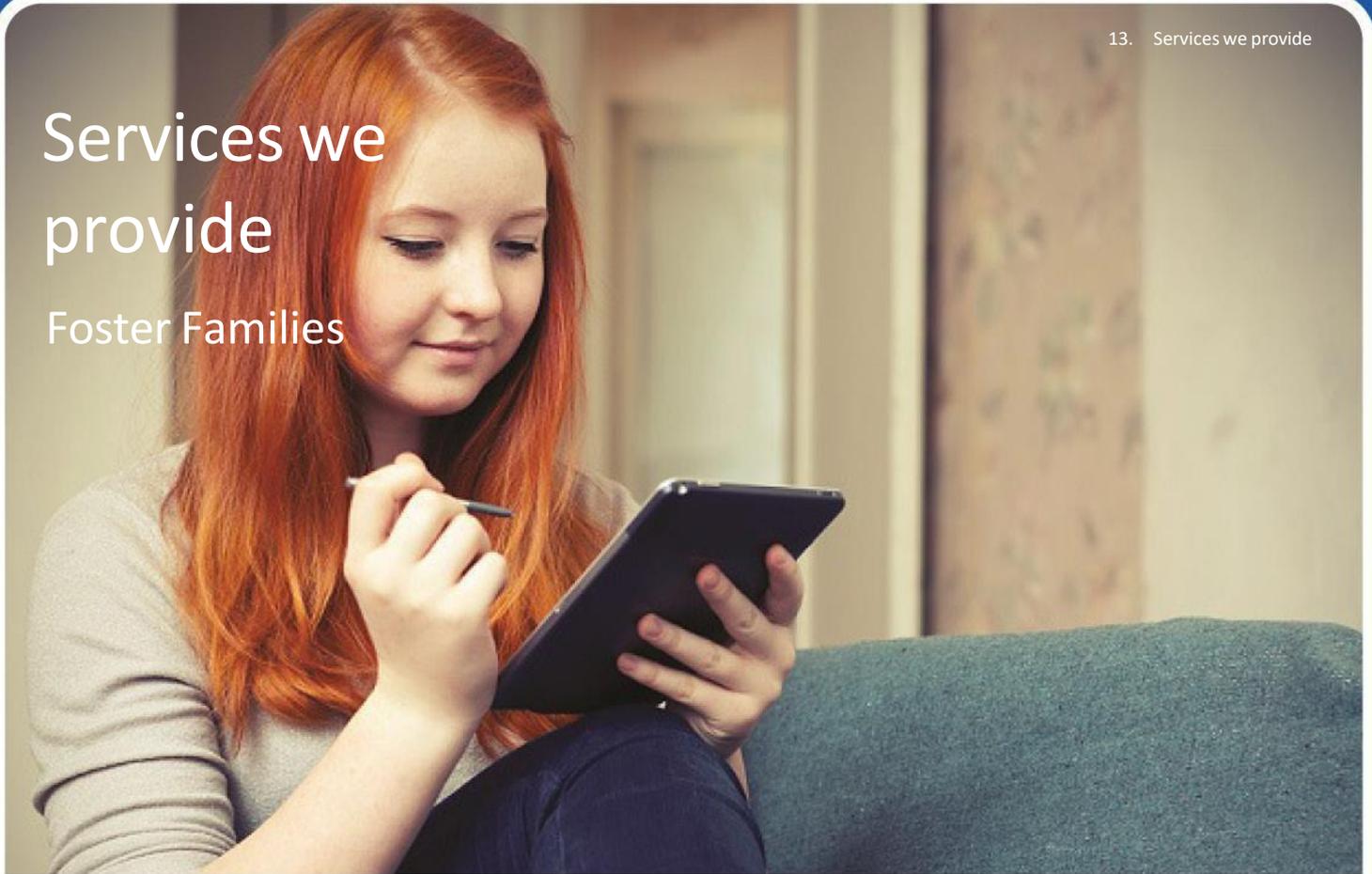
Photography is a fantastic medium, as it is inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of ability or academic aptitude. The project was inspired by a young person, who has a particular passion for photography and has worked alongside us to provide a young person's voice in the planning and preparations.

Below was 2022's winner in Scotland:



# Services we provide

## Foster Families



### All children are placed and monitored in accordance with Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

We work closely with Local Authorities to understand their specific needs relating to foster placements in particular areas. We then look to recruit Foster Carers from a range of backgrounds who are able to provide high quality experiences for children in the care of Local Authorities. We aim to provide the following types of foster families:

**Emergency** – families who can look after children at short notice when urgently required. This may be any time including evenings and weekends.

**Short break** - families who can look after children for a break either on a regular basis or one off holidays.

**Interim** – families who can look after children for up to two years and maybe longer. The duration may be linked to further assessments of the child and other family members, together with court processes. Long term plans can be formulated in short term placements.

**Long term / Permanency** – families who can look after children on a long term or permanent basis which can be for several years. Foster Carers may take individual children or sibling groups. Long term placements are matched and ratified in conjunction with the responsible local authority.

**Solo** – families who can look after a child where the child is the only child or youngest / oldest child.

**Sibling** - Many of our Foster Carers are able to care for large sibling groups which ensures children remain with their brothers and sisters.

**Unaccompanied children and young people** - A number of our Foster Carers have experience of caring for children who arrive in the UK without a family or guardian.

**Specialist fostering** - some of our foster carers can look after children who have complex needs relating to disability, health needs or behaviours that other adults can find challenging. They usually receive enhanced packages of support or additionally purchased services when this is required.

**Continuing Care** - (part 11 of the Children Young People (Scotland) Act 2014)

- To enable a young person to remain in the placement they were in when they were looked after.
- To uphold the right of a young person to receive the same supports as when they were 'Looked After'.
- To provide young people with a more graduated transition out of care, reducing the risk of disruptions occurring in their lives while maintaining supportive relationships.

### Team Parenting

- All our placements are underpinned by Team Parenting, which is a systemic approach to working with children, young people and families and is described in detail on page 15. In addition to contributing to the establishment of a secure and stable placement, Team Parenting® centres on the needs of the child by ensuring that appropriate resilience based strategies and methods are undertaken in conjunction with educational and/or vocational interventions to support the positive and healthy development of young people in care. Furthermore it acknowledges the foster carer as the agent of change in the child's life.



## Matching Process

A matching process is followed to ensure that the skills and experience of our foster carers meet the needs of each child/young person who may be looked after by them. This includes completion of risk assessments and safer caring plans which are reviewed when necessary and appropriate.

### Placement Planning

Placement Agreements/Plans are prepared and agreed with service commissioners for each child. These include essential information, care plans and clarity about delegated authority for foster carers in relation to children and young people who will be looked after by them.

### Vacancy Hub

We have a Foster Family Vacancy Hub which provides a live vacancy list of foster carers who are available to offer a wide range of foster placements. This allows us to provide a convenient, efficient and easy tool for helping Local Authorities find homes for children and young people all over the UK.

**We support fostered children to maintain contact with friends and family, where appropriate.**

### Children and Young People's Support Service (CYPSS)

The CYPSS helps to support and sustain placements by identifying and meeting the needs of individual children/young people and their Foster Carers. The service was developed to provide appropriate packages of support to Foster Carers so that children and young people who would otherwise be unable to live within a family environment are able to do so. The workers make a significant contribution to our proactive participation strategy for children and young people by organising and supervising activities as well as consultation events such as young people's forums, achievements and focus groups. The

range of services we offer includes:

- Day support
- Out of Hours support
- Transport
- Supervision of Contact

- Wherever possible, planning is undertaken prior to the child moving to a new foster family. This includes introductions between carers and the child. We help children and young people settle in by providing welcome booklets and video profiles where possible.
- We ensure that the racial, cultural and linguistic needs of children and young people are addressed and consideration is given to their gender and sexuality when making decisions about what may be a good foster family for them.
- We ensure the homes of our foster carers fulfil all health and safety requirements.

## Team Parenting®

The Team Parenting model offers a therapeutic way of thinking about traumatised children and their emotional needs.

We at FCA Scotland acknowledge the need for all staff to have a basic understanding of attachment difficulties, developmental trauma, abuse or neglect, and that to promote the psychological wellbeing and development of children, or young people, with these complex life histories, the teams and families working with them may require therapeutic consultancy.

Team Parenting represents an approach to fostering, which brings people with different perspectives and experiences together, to form a well-informed and well-rounded team around the child or young person. The outcome is a deeper understanding of the complex issues that impact on the child reaching their potential and how best they can be supported.

All foster carers are supported by FCA Scotland social workers, and a range of other professionals, which may include therapists, support workers and educational staff who are accessible for involvement when needed.

The approach is consistent with NICE Guidelines, which recommend: *“For the ‘team around the child’ to provide effective care, professionals need to collaborate closely and share relevant and sensitive information”*

## The Components of Team Parenting

Team Parenting comprises of two key elements – an ethos and a menu of specific therapeutically-informed interventions, which are applied as appropriate, depending on the level of the young person’s need.

For example, these may include:

- Consultations – to foster carers, social workers, and others in network if appropriate (e.g schools)
- Joint family sessions – a safe and creative space for carers and children/young people to explore and express difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours, which they may be experiencing
- Therapeutically-informed support and development groups for Foster Carers
- Training – to Foster carers and staff on understanding and managing challenging behaviours, attachment difficulties, child development, abuse, trauma, self-esteem and relationships.

It may be possible to commission additional services such as individual therapy, specialist assessments, life-story work, post adoption work and early intervention work.



## The underlying principles of Team Parenting

- Our therapists are highly skilled, qualified practitioners from a variety of backgrounds – Drama, Art, Play, and Systemic therapists, Counsellors, and Psychoanalysts
- Team Parenting, a relationship based model, supports the view of a group of professionals and foster carers working collaboratively on a shared endeavour, valuing highly the expertise and contribution of all participants
- We provide a service that focuses on the foster carer and child, or young person in placement, providing practical suggestions on how to manage challenging behaviours and respond to what may be being expressed
- Together with learning opportunities such as foster carer training, Team Parenting meetings, led by FCA Scotland’s therapists provide a space to listen, and to learn about the child, helping everyone to understand the emotional needs of traumatised children in a deeper way, so that we can provide the right environment needed for recovery.

## Choices and Voices of Young People

Participation is the involvement of children and young people, creating opportunities for consultation and expression, and then using this information to inform practice and improve outcomes for children and young people. This underpins everything we do at FCA Scotland.

We strive to work in accordance with the following core principles:

- Engage with children and young people to make a positive and lasting difference to their lives.
- Work with children and young people to help them achieve.
- Consult, listen and hear the voices of children and young by providing them opportunities to participate in decision-making and influence services.
- Use evidence from participation as the basis for improving standards and improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Deliver innovative and excellent opportunities to young people through a well-trained and skilled workforce that have access to sufficient resources.

We have Children Support Workers to be the voice and champion of participation. A good example of participation includes the involvement of young people in interviews of staff and in journey to foster training.

Children and young people are also consulted about activities and may be asked to comment on and contribute to revisions of documents used by the service.

We offer apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to young people aged 14 and over in our Community.

We encourage our young people to have advocates and independent visitors and explain what they do in the Young Person's Guide.



## Social Work Service

In addition to the child's social worker from the local authority, all our Foster Carers are supported by an allocated supervising social worker.

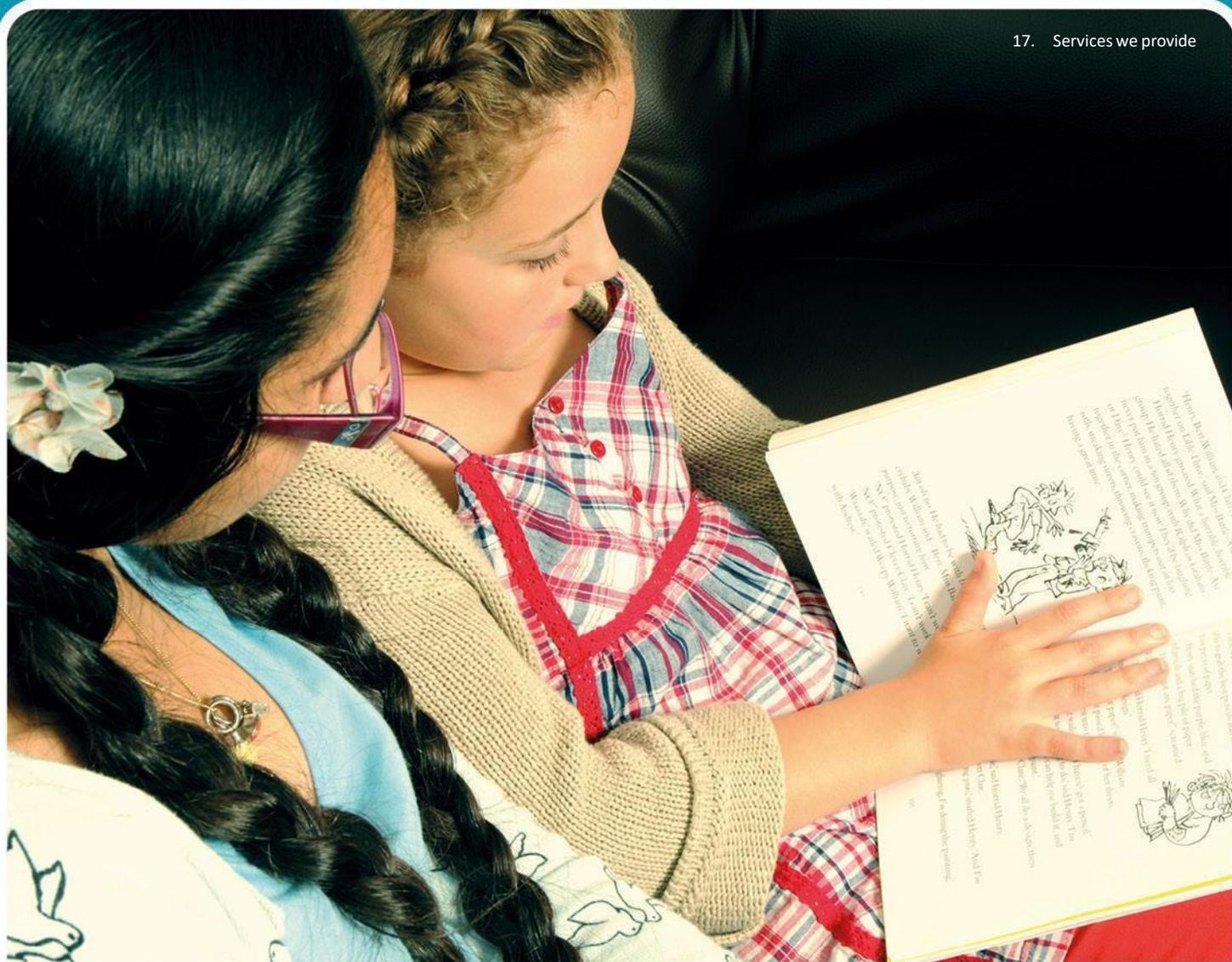
### Promoting Best Outcomes

We have an outcomes tracker which our social workers complete regularly with our Foster Carers to evidence the progress our children and young people are making. This is completed alongside foster carers and children and young people when they are old enough and want to be involved.

Our supervising social workers will:

- Provide supervision and support to foster carers in line with regulations and minimum standards.
- Maintain frequent contact with foster carers and children through visits and telephone calls.
- Make unannounced visits to the foster home.
- Provide advice, guidance and out of hours support to foster carers on their care of children in placement.
- Coordinate other support services as appropriate e.g. support work and respite care provision.
- Liaise with other professional service providers who may be involved and contribute to formal meetings about care plans for children and foster carer reviews.
- Identify and help respond to foster carers' training needs.
- Keep careful records of the progress of placements and achievements of children.

Our supervising social workers have a wide range of experience and many have specific expertise, for example in undertaking life story work, leaving care preparation and undertaking parent and child assessments.



## Education Support

We are committed to supporting all our children and young people to achieve their educational potential.

We are aware looked after children and young people can be particularly disadvantaged educationally. They are more likely than non-looked after pupils to have a disrupted education and additional needs that impact on progress, attainment and life chances. We recognise the significant role our foster carers and staff have in working in partnership with other professionals to promote educational achievement and positive outcomes for our children and young people.

### Promoting education

FCA Scotland's Education Co-ordinator maintains an up to date understanding of legislation and advice relevant to the education of children and young people in care. Under the guidance of the Director of Education, they share information with foster carers and staff about ideas, support, and good practice in promoting education.

Foster carers promote excellent attendance at school and a positive attitude to learning, including support with homework. They also encourage their children and young people to continue learning beyond the classroom by taking part in clubs and activities in and out of school.

Foster carers attend meetings with schools to ensure they are fully aware of their child's progress, any additional needs, and how to support their learning at home.

Supervising social workers discuss education in supervision sessions and reviews to track progress and ensure we are being aspirational about the levels our children and young people can achieve. When there are concerns, we support foster carers to discuss these with the school and advocate for their child.

### Celebrating Success

We value education in the broadest sense and acknowledge exam results are not the only measure of success. We know our children well and how they have progressed from different starting points.

We recognise their various educational achievements, academic and otherwise, and celebrate these with them.

# Recruiting and assessing Foster Carers

Our recruitment and assessment process takes 4-6 months on average. Every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay.

## Recruitment:

- We operate a central Fostering Advice Hub Centre where a dedicated team request basic information from potential carers, answer any preliminary queries they may have about fostering and distribute literature about the work of the agency.
- A Carer Recruitment Adviser undertakes an initial screening of the potential carers and based on the information gathered recommends whether the potential carers should make an application.

## Application Process:

- Potential Foster Carers complete an application form, giving detailed information about themselves and their family and consent to complete necessary checks and enquiries to ascertain their suitability to foster.
- Applicants are required to have medical examinations completed by their GP to ensure that there are no underlying issues that may affect their ability to foster. Reports are made available to our Agency Medical Advisor for his/her comments.

### These include:

- Verification of identity and personal history
- Disclosure Scotland PVG checks on all adult members of the household
- Enquiries to Children's Social Care Authorities and their Child Protection Registers
- Enquiries to other agencies as necessary.
- Applicants are asked to identify at least three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. References from external agencies and personal references, which are provided in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and relevant referee(s).

## Assessment

- A qualified social worker will carry out an assessment, which requires full participation by the applicant(s). She/he will visit them at their home, generally on 6-8 occasions, to collect information about all members of the household and the applicants' experience and skills in relation to fostering. This forms the basis of an assessment report. We use the Form F1 format published by Coram BAAF.
- An Assessment Manager will supervise the work of the Assessing Social Worker with day to day contact and at least 2 formal structured supervision meetings. This is to ensure regulatory compliance throughout the assessment, to ensure that the assessment remains focussed on key issues to inform an appropriate evidence based recommendation and ensure robust Quality Assurance of the assessment process and the report.
- A Recruitment Support Officer (RSO) will be allocated as an end to end administrative support person throughout the assessment to ensure that necessary checks are sought and chased and as a supportive ongoing point of contact for applicants to discuss any issues within their assessment.
- A robust approach is taken to preparing all applicants for the challenges of the fostering role throughout their assessment, primarily by using 'Next Steps to Fostering with FCA Scotland.' This is an electronic tool which supports the applicant(s) and the Assessing Social worker to work together to discuss key aspects of the role using a narrative text and links to a series of videos. The applicant is asked to complete a reflective workbook during their assessment which should evidence understanding and reflections and any areas of further learning need. The workbook should inform aspects of the assessment report and should be available to the Supervising Social worker following approval to further inform an understanding of the applicant(s) understanding and support / learning needs.

- All prospective Foster Carers attend preparation training during their assessment. Our training provides further information about the responsibilities of being a Foster Carer and working with FCA Scotland.
- The Form F assessment report is shared with the applicant(s) and then presented to our Fostering Panel, to assist the decision making process. Applicants are invited to attend the Panel meeting with their assessor.

## Fostering Panel:

- The Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of applicants to be approved as Foster Carers with FCA Scotland. Applicants will be informed of the recommendation of panel on the day of panel itself. The recommendation will inform the decision of the agency.

## Approval:

- The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) reads and considers all the assessment information and taking account the recommendation of the Fostering Panel makes the decision to approve applicants or not. The ADM is usually a manager in our Quality Assurance and Safeguarding team who may assist in making decisions about approval or re-approval of Foster Carers.
- Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision. All information obtained about prospective Foster Carers is held on file and some sections are available to view on request.
- Applicants are informed of their right to appeal in accordance with the regulations applying in the jurisdiction in which they are residing.

We welcome enquiries from Foster Carers who wish to transfer from other agencies and aim to make the process as quick and smooth as possible.



## Reviews of Foster Carers

We have a detailed procedure for completing reviews of Foster Carers which reflects Scottish, regulations, Health and Social Care Standards, and good practice guidance.

In addition to the requirements to conduct annual reviews, we also undertake additional reviews when appropriate (e.g. following a serious complaint or incident or; where a change of terms of approval is proposed). Independent Reviewing Officers may be used for such reviews and the review may also be presented to the Fostering Panel. In addition to making recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker the Fostering Panel provides quality assurance of the process and content of reviews to the agency.

Our review procedure focuses on core competencies for Foster Carers. We always seek external feedback from children's social workers, education providers and others involved with the child. The review also provides a forum to recognise and celebrate the achievements of children and our Foster Carers.

# Training and support

## Training provided for foster carers and staff

We pride ourselves on being a learning organisation and are proactive in helping both employees and our foster carers to develop their skills, knowledge and experience.

In Jan 2023, the new and refreshed training offer from Learning & Development was launched. This offers a more consistent approach across the whole community and will provide a broader range of relevant training and development opportunities.

The new offer provides...

- A fresh, revised and consistent mandatory training pathway for all foster carers and staff across the community
- More diverse complementary training opportunities
- A more consistent trauma-informed behaviour support approach (PRICE) across the community
- A refresh of the Learnative platform
- As of January 2023 the new mandatory pathway of training was made available. This is a blended learning approach with a mix of virtual, face to face and e-learning

We are committed to providing high quality training that is accessible and relevant to all of our foster carers.

### Introduction to Fostering

All of our foster carers complete preapproval training during their assessment that explores the Next Steps on their journey to become a foster carer, what it is like to be a young person in foster care and to explore knowledge and skills required to prepare them to be foster carers such as the role of a foster carer, working together, understanding children and young people, safer caring, promoting resilience and successful outcomes, transitions - moving on.

### Induction

We have an online induction course which looks at the key areas to equip foster carers with the necessary skills and confidence to take their first child/young person.

### Mandatory training

Once approved, there is a comprehensive programme of ongoing training and development available; starting with mandatory courses that all foster carers will receive.

These include more specific training in safeguarding, emergency first aid

medication and health care, health and safety in the home, PRICE (protecting rights in a caring environment) training, recording and reporting training, equality, diversity and inclusion training, and safer caring.

### Complementary training

We have a wide range of courses available both online and face to face that will be discussed with foster carers and will inform their Personal Development Plan to further develop knowledge and skills in particular for those who may have specialist placements or to meet the specific needs of particular children.

These include:

- Working with children with disabilities
- Caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Children moving from residential care
- Parent and child
- Therapeutic courses
- Other Safeguarding topics such as Child sexual exploitation, County Lines, Contextual Safeguarding, ESafety and Radicalisation
- Wellbeing topics such as menopause
- Behavioural support topics such as risky behaviours, recognising challenging behaviour, and emotional wellbeing

- Mental health topics such as suicide awareness and anxiety awareness

**We actively encourage and support our staff to develop their skills, knowledge and professional qualifications.**

There is an extensive catalogue of learning opportunities available for staff at all levels and in all roles within the organisation. This can include training relevant to their current role or to help them prepare for future roles. These include:

- The Social Work Academy
- Safeguarding courses
- Development opportunities for leaders and aspiring leaders (in addition to the leadership development programme)
- Apprenticeships

We believe in learning alongside peers and offer joint training sessions for both staff and foster carers to enable the sharing of best practice and experiences.

All our training is mapped to regulations and national minimum standards and cross referenced to the Training Support and Development Standards in England.

Foster carers and staff are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate ongoing personal and professional development.



## Support for Foster Carers

The support package we offer values the work of our Foster Carers and the positive contribution they make to the lives of children/young people. We recognise that appropriate support for the families who foster is vitally important to ensure stability and continuity of care for children and young people. .

All of our Foster Carers have access to the following:

- Access to a member of staff 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, 365 days a year.
- Supervision and support from a qualified and experienced supervising social worker.
- Regular visits and frequent telephone contact from a supervising social worker.
- Access to support from the agency therapist when required.
- Regular support group meetings.
- Access to a legal advice helpline and specialist independent support scheme.
- A level of financial support that values the skills of Foster Carers.
- Organised activities for children/young people.
- Membership of FosterTalk. This offers advice on fostering and educational issues as well as free legal advice, legal expenses insurance, advice on tax and personal finance issues. There is also a quarterly magazine and monthly e-newsletter to help Foster Carers to keep up to date on items which may be relevant to them.
- Corporate membership of the Adoption and Fostering Alliance ( AFA) and CORAM BAAF.
- A short break package, usually up to 14 nights, which meets the needs of both the child and the Foster carer.
- An exclusive online platform which gives access to news and updates, blogs to lots of shopping discounts and great deals from some of the major retailers.

## Carer Voice

We work alongside our Foster Carers to develop our fostering provision. This means that we have carer representative roles in each local area and national carer forums. The voice of Foster Carers is central to the continuous improvements of the service we provide. We encourage feedback at all levels, this includes consultation for carer reviews and other more anonymous surveys.

## We value our Foster Carers!

We take pride in how we communicate and engage with our Foster Carers

We have an annual Foster carer appreciation day when we show our Foster Carers how much we appreciate their hard work to make a positive and lasting difference to so many children and families each year.

# Quality Assurance & Safeguarding

We have a designated Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (QAS) Team which works across the Polaris Community to ensure that safeguarding is given the highest priority and that improving quality is constantly on the agenda.

**We aim to:**

- Lead the sector in terms of quality
- Achieve best outcomes for the children and young people in our care.
- Create the best place to work for our Foster Carers and staff
- The Fostering Practice Transformation and Safeguarding Manager works closely with the Hub Operations Manager, Registered Managers and other staff in advising and supporting them to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed correctly and that the agency is a learning and constantly improving organisation. We promote a culture of continuous improvement, giving careful attention to feedback about services offered by any individuals or organisations with whom we come into contact.
- Governance is provided by the monthly Safeguarding and Compliance Board (SCB) that is chaired by the Director for Quality Assurance with attendance by the CEO, Managing Directors and the Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding. The SCB reports into the quarterly Quality Board which is independently chaired.
- The SCB enables a line of sight on key performance and exceptions in relation to the quality of care, performance, and learning from service and case reviews. The Quality Board provides an additional layer of scrutiny and appreciative inquiry in order to further drive up standards, quality and outcomes for children and young people.

- Our ambition is to continue to strive for excellence in all that we do and outstanding outcomes for children, young people and young adults whom remain with their fostering families.

## Regulatory Inspections

As a registered provider of social care we have regular inspections of our agency. We welcome inspections as a means of monitoring the service we provide and encouraging us to strive for outstanding outcomes for the children placed with our foster carers.

Inspection reports are publicly available through the relevant inspectorate website which can be accessed via the FCA website. They are also available from the relevant regional office or from the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team at [contactus@thefca.co.uk](mailto:contactus@thefca.co.uk).

We have an internal service review process which provides a mechanism for oversight and scrutiny, highlighting strengths and areas for development as part of a continuous cycle of service improvement.

## Complaints and compliments

- We take all complaints seriously and ensure they are investigated in accordance with our complaints procedure.
- We always work to improve practice following any complaints.
- All children/young people placed with our foster Carers are informed of the Representation and Complaints Procedure on commencement of placement. Information on this is also included in the guide to the service which is given to children and young people.
- Leaflets and posters about the complaints process are available which are accessible to the wide age range of children and young people placed with us.
- All Foster Carers, staff and placing local authorities are provided with information about our Representation and Complaints Procedure.
- Complaints are reviewed monthly by the Polaris Board, with an annual report provided to the SCB and Quality Board
- Local Complaints analysis is included in our annual review of the quality of care provided by the agency.
- A record of all compliments received is also maintained and included in quality of care reviews to inform any changes to practice.



# Useful contact details

FCA Central Services, Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road,  
Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcs B60 4AD.

T: 01527 556 480

## FCA Scotland Registered Office

Pavilion 3  
Gateway Office Park  
Cambuslang Way  
Glasgow  
G32 8ND

T: 0141 6461400

F: 0141 6429317

[www.fcascotland.co.uk](http://www.fcascotland.co.uk)

Children and Young People's Commissioner  
Scotland,  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh EH7 4NS  
0800 019 1179

<https://cypcs.org.uk/contact/>

Regulatory Body

Scottish Care Inspectorate

Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee, DD1 4NY

Tel: 0845 600 9527

Web: [careinspectorate.com](http://careinspectorate.com)

## Amanda Lindsay (Registered Manager)

E: [Amanda.lindsay@thefca.co.uk](mailto:Amanda.lindsay@thefca.co.uk)

We maintain a wide range of publications about the services we provide to children and young people, Foster Carers and commissioning authorities. These provide both a national and local focus and include:

- Printed information for children placed with our Foster Carers.
- Summaries of surveys, projects, consultation events and other original research conducted with our customers, Foster Carers and service users.
- Publicity materials describing specific projects/services.
- Current charges/terms for all service provision.

Please contact your local FCA Scotland office.

0141 646 4805

[www.fcascotland.co.uk](http://www.fcascotland.co.uk)

[contactus@thefca.co.uk](mailto:contactus@thefca.co.uk)

