



Olive Branch
F O S T E R I N G

**Statement
of Purpose**

April 2024



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The Statement of Purpose outlines how Olive Branch Fostering operates as an independent fostering agency in England.

This document is available to:

- Ofsted
- Any person working for the purposes of the fostering service.
- Any child (subject to their age and understanding) placed with Olive Branch and the parent of any such child.

This document has been developed in line with:

- The Children's Act 1989
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2013
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards
- The Care Standards Act 2000

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, at least annually by the Senior Management Team and modified if necessary. The annual review cycle is January each year.

Director's Introduction

Olive Branch Fostering was started with the vision to offer every child in our care an opportunity to grow and develop in a loving and nurturing environment.

We are here to meet the increasing demand for safe and loving households for children and young people across England, by offering Local Authorities a selection of placement choices with foster families from diverse backgrounds and skills sets. This is done by working with a set of highly passionate and driven foster carers, who are supported by our dedicated social work team and provided with a comprehensive training programme.

Here at Olive Branch, we believe very strongly in making a positive social impact, and these beliefs are deeply rooted within our organisation to really make a difference to the lives of children and young people, and to our fostering families.

We are an Ofsted recognised, diverse, and inclusive agency. Our commitment to help looked after children, in our communities, is at the centre of everything we do. It is because of this 'child centered approach' that we really do our best to support our foster families to provide the best possible outcomes for the children and young people we care for.

Joanne
 Joanne Sharples
 Director of Olive Branch Fostering



"Here from the beginning, here for the future."

About Us

Olive Branch Fostering, is an independent fostering agency, and a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (Company Number: 09775450).

In accordance with the Companies Act 1985 and 1989, the organisation has produced a memorandum of association and articles of association. Copies of these are available to download from the Companies House website.

The organisation is registered and inspected by Ofsted (Registration No: 1230838)

Olive Branch Fostering is also registered with The Information Commissioners Office (Registration No: ZA148772) as required by the Data Protection Act 1998.



Our Team

Olive Branch Fostering is led by the Director and managed by the Registered Manager.

The Organisation's management, operations and activities are overseen by the Director, who is responsible for providing direction, management support and advice to the management team.

The Registered Manager is responsible for managing and coordinating all social work activities for the organization, management of the social work team and foster carers, and any other related provision or service relating to children and young people.

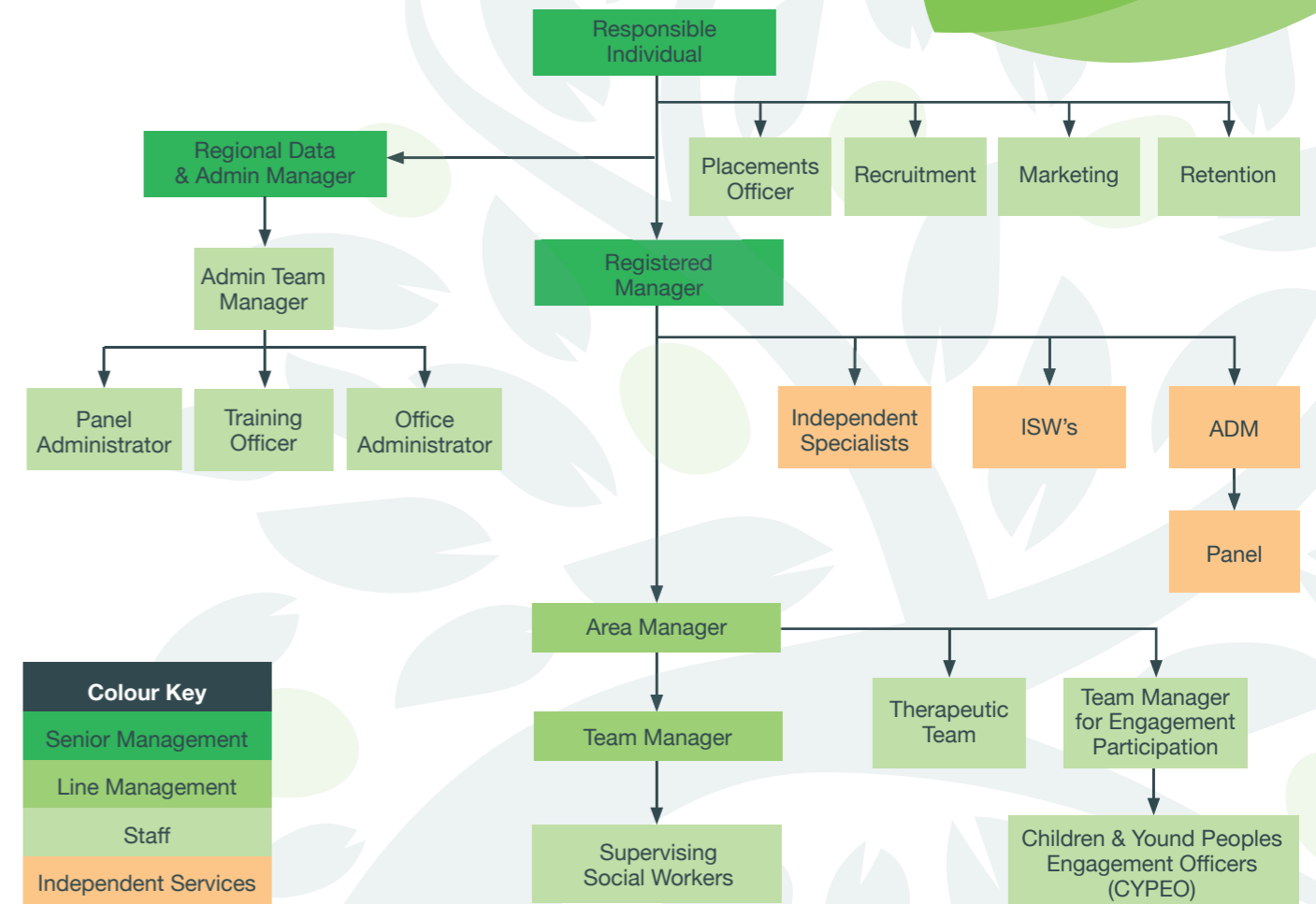
The Registered Manager will interlink with the Director to ensure that management, operational activity and performance targets are maintained across the organisation; and that such processes are effective within the legal framework for foster care, conforming to regulatory directives and legislation.

The management team meets regularly and are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, strategic development and planning, as well as determining and reviewing the Olive Branch Family's:

- Strategic vision and direction
- Aims & objectives
- Annual business plan / SAR / QIP
- Performance targets
- Policies and procedures
- Financial Management
- Legal compliance
- Quality assurance
- Culture, values and beliefs

"There is no 'I' in TEAM. No problems, only SOLUTIONS."

Organisational Structure



Colour Key
Senior Management
Line Management
Staff
Independent Services

Our Core Values



Our Aims & Objectives

Our aim is:

At Olive Branch Fostering, our aim is to provide high quality stable placements in a caring and family environment, to help looked after children in our communities.

Our Objectives are:

- To provide a safe and nurturing environment for the children placed in our care and one in which they are able to develop and reach their full potential.
- To provide a service of the highest quality with a commitment to maximising the full educational, social, psychological and physical potential of children placed with the organisation.
- Providing a fostering service which promotes and safeguards the physical and emotional welfare of the children placed in our care, recognising their cultural and religious backgrounds, and maintaining their sense of identity.
- To provide an out of hours service which is fully responsive to the needs of our foster carers and children/young people, and is available 24 hours a day.
- Respecting and promoting the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children and young people at all times.
- To adhere to our policies and procedures and to continually monitor and evaluate the services provided.
- To prepare, support and train foster carers to enable them to provide a high quality specialist service.
- To work in close partnership with local authorities to promote and safeguard the best interests and welfare of the child/young person.
- To retain foster carers and staff through a strategy that ensures they are appropriately supervised, supported, rewarded and developed.

And finally, to implement and streamline services and systems across the organisation to ensure children and young people can grow and develop within the five outcomes of "Every Child Matters":

1. Be Healthy
2. Stay Safe
3. Enjoy and Achieve
4. Make a Positive Contribution
5. Achieve Economic Wellbeing



Services We Provide

Olive Branch Fostering provides a wide range of placements for children and young people, from birth til the age of 18, these include:

- **Short Term** – This type of placement can start from as little as an overnight stay to a few months. Typically, these placements can consist of assessments, bridging, preparation for adoption/long term fostering, or a specific goal.
- **Long Term** – Young people who can no longer live with their birth family are placed in to a long term foster placement, until they are ready to move to independence.
- **Parent & Child** – This service is designed to help monitor and increase attachment between parent and child. These placements are more specialist and require a certain skill set from the carer. They are also closely monitored by our staff to ensure a safe and secure placement and extra support is available to the carer.
- **Sibling Groups** – Keeping brothers and sisters together, where it is safe to do so, is very important to us, which is why we offer this type of placement. It requires a lot of energy, determination and skill and we only offer these placements to our most capable and experienced foster families.
- **Respite** – Sometimes it is in the best interest of the child or young person to spend some time away from their families or full time foster carers. Respite placements are designed to provide just that, which means they can vary from a few hours a week to occasional weekends.
- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker** – Unaccompanied asylum seeking children can suffer from a range of physical and psychological issues, such as post traumatic stress disorders. This is a specialist placement that requires carefully considered planning and matching between foster carer and looked after child.
- **Emergency** – In the case of something unexpected happening, a child can be placed in to care at any time, without any notice. Our emergency placement service operates 24/7, with an expert on hand to help administer the transfer between the Local Authority and our foster carer. Only foster carers who are willing to be on call at all times are approved to offer emergency placements.
- **Therapeutic** – all the benefits of regular foster care, with the addition of offering a therapeutic approach to parenting children and young people, who have suffered abuse, trauma and poor attachment. Those offering therapeutic placements will receive extra training, ongoing support and an enhanced allowance to reflect the specialist nature of their role in helping change the life of a traumatised young person.
- **Pre placement foster planning** – is undertaken for every match made, this involves introductions between foster carers and children (where possible). In the case of emergency placements, immediate care planning is given timely attention.
- **Our Children: BASE** – Our children's charter has been developed to ensure that their voices are heard, and their expectations met. They are also part of our Fostering Advisory Board, a group of 4 representing all our children and young people within the agency. This charter has been based on the following principles and is something we are very proud to have developed:

Believe Achieve Succeed Enjoy

Support for Children & Young People

The best interests of the child will always remain at the forefront our provision and service delivery, ensuring safeguarding and individual development of the child conforms to the Every Child Matters criteria and that this is evidenced routinely between the foster carer and the child/young person.

We offer the following support to children in our care:

- Fostering advisory board
- Educational support
- Support visits with a supervising social worker
- Life Story / memory books
- Record keeping and advancement monitoring
- School trips / days out
- Children's form to discuss their placement and fostering in general
- Activities outside of school e.g. classes to learn new skills
- Annual achievement awards recognising each child individually for their achievements in the year
- Savings scheme – £10 per week while they are placed with us
- Supervised contact when commissioned by the placing authority
- Dedicated support worker



Recruiting & Approving Foster Carers

Olive Branch Fostering is committed to ensuring that the environment is safe, nurturing and enables the child/young person to grow. It is paramount that children and young people are placed in a professional setting where their safety and needs are met. The Organisation will not be influenced or discriminate against a person on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, age, gender, faith, sexual orientation or disability.

Step 1 - Register Interest

Every new applicant is given an interest form to fill out which contains basic information about the applicant. This may be completed via telephone.

Step 2 - Home Visit

One of our team will come out to visit the applicant at their home, to have a conversation about fostering and answer any queries. This applicant will also give consent to start the assessment process to become a foster parent.

Step 3 - Assessment

A qualified social worker is assigned to carry out the comprehensive assessment, of the prospective foster carer and their family members. This is called the Form F. The social worker will produce a report which will cover the following:

- Family background and childhood
- Adult life (including employment and previous relationships)
- Personality and current relationship
- Household members (including children) and lifestyle
- Other children (and adults) and social support network
- Fostering capacity (which includes providing warmth, empathy, encouragement, structure, boundaries, durability, resilience and commitment)
- Understanding identity and diversity

Part of the assessment requires us to carry out statutory checks which include:

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on applicants and adult household members
- Identity checks
- 3 referees, who will be visited by our social worker
- Employment reference
- Medical assessment report
- Ex-partner reference (if applicable)
- Health and safety assessment

The social worker will visit between 6 to 8 times to work with the applicants and their family to complete the assessment. It is a joint effort and everyone is encouraged to help with gathering the evidence for the assessment. The entire process usually takes between 4 and 6 months.

Once all the evidence has been gathered, the social worker will compile a report ready to be presented to the panel. Before the final report is presented to an independent review panel, the social worker and applicant will review the report and make any necessary amendments.

Step 4 - Panel

The applicants and the assessing social worker are required to attend the panel meeting where they are interviewed in line with the Form F report.

The panel is made up of independent members and experts from different professions who make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker on whether they think a person is fit to become a foster carer.

Step 5 - Approval

Once approved, the applicant will receive written approval from Olive Branch Fostering, and will be assigned to a supervising social worker, who will supervise them and the child placed within their care.

In accordance with the Fostering Regulations 2013, all foster carers are required to sign and agree to a Foster Care Agreement Contract prior to caring for any child.

This is a contractual agreement between the foster carer and Olive Branch Fostering. It includes the following; terms of approval, carer reviews, care planning, financial issues, changes in circumstances, behavioural issues, allowance issues, notice period. Following each annual review, the agreement will be updated.

"Panel want to get a clear view of whether an individual or couple has a clear understanding of the specific needs of the children they'll be fostering."

Independent Panel Member

Education, Development & Support

We consider the education and development of our foster carers as a vital part of their time with us. Through our allocated supervising social workers, we help every foster carer to achieve the 'Training, Support and Development Standards' course, which is mandatory training that is to be completed within the first 12 months of fostering.

In addition to this, we also offer mandatory training courses to help develop the skills of our carers so they can offer the best possible care to their placement children. These courses are regularly updated, but here are some which we offer:

- Safeguarding
- Working with children who have been abused
- Safe caring
- Managing difficult behaviour
- Managing and promoting contact
- Identity and self esteem
- Valuing diversity and promoting equality
- Recording
- First aid
- Health and safety
- Health care of fostered children and young people
- Education of fostered children and young people
- Empowering children and young people
- Preparing children and young people for adulthood

We understand the role of a foster carer can sometimes be challenging, and this is why we offer a support package to all our foster carers to help them provide the best possible care to their looked after children.

Our support packages include:

- Emergency out of hours support.
- Access to 24 hour support. Out of working hours, a Duty Rota is in operation so that a member of staff is contactable at all times.
- Supervision from a qualified social worker
- All foster carers will receive at least two unannounced visits each year, as well as statutory supervision visits every 4 – 6 weeks.
- Every foster parent is allocated a supervising social worker who will visit them regularly and keep telephone contact to support them.
- Respite - should any respite be necessary, we will be supportive of a child-focused practice and require that any respite is taken in line with the child's care plan and with the local authorities' agreement. We will actively encourage carers to utilise their support network/close family members or friends who are known to the child.
- We will commit to supporting the birth children of foster carers, as they are an essential element of securing a positive family experience for children in care.
- A children & young person's support worker.

Financial Support

A level of financial support is offered to every carer to suit their skills and commitment to fostering. We will pay allowances directly into the foster carer's account by BACS transfer.

Annual Review

A review is carried out by the supervising social worker every 12 months, to make sure the foster carer and the organisation are happy with the progress being made. The review is considered by the panel, who decide whether to allow the foster carer to continue fostering for the next 12 months.

Carer Connect

Carer Connect groups are hosted regularly and we encourage all foster carers to attend to share their experiences and receive peer support.

Legal and financial advice is made accessible through membership with FosterTalk.

Birth children are included on days out and activities, because we know they also play a role in the looked after child's fostering journey.

Annual foster carer awards ceremonies are held, giving us a chance to recognise and celebrate their achievements.

"We never stop learning because life never stops teaching."



Complaints and Representations

Foster carers, staff, children and young people, and their social workers are provided with information on how to make a complaint via the Foster Carers Handbook, the Children's Welcome Guide and the Young Person's Welcome Guide. Olive Branch Fostering has a clear complaints procedure in place, which defines the steps taken when a complaint is made. If you require a copy of the complaints process, please contact our office.

The complainant can also write to the Registered Manager for further investigation. The Registered Manager will acknowledge the complaint within seven days, and the investigation will be completed within 28 days.

OFSTED:

Children, young people and foster carers have a statutory right to an independent complaints procedure through OFSTED.

Ofsted
Complaints Manager
NBU, Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

All complaints will be taken seriously and we endeavour to learn from them so that we can continually improve the service we offer.

Equality and Diversity

Olive Branch Fostering is fully committed to not discriminate on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability or age. To ensure these values are reinforced, we have a robust policy in place which defines our intent to deal with everyone in a fair and professional manner. This policy is written in line with the Equality Act 2010 and is available upon request.

Inspection

As a registered children social services provider in England, we are subject to external inspection by Ofsted. All inspection reports are available online at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>

Continual Improvement

We promote a culture of open feedback, sharing of ideas and learning from each other. We are always open to advice and guidance from all people and organisations we come in to contact with, because this helps us to continually improve our service.

Contact Us

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