



Statement of Purpose
2022-2023

Introduction

This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011); how the service is managed and maintains its fitness to provide fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and demonstrates how the welfare of children will be met and good outcomes achieved. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers.

Excel Fostering is run in accordance with the principles outlined in the following legislative and policy framework:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children & Families Act 2014
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, amended July 2013 and April 2014
- The Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010)
- The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (Revised May 2014 and January 2015)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children - a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (March 2015)
- Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations. Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013
- The Delegation of Authority to Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 (July 2013)
- Promoting the Education of Looked After Children – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2014 Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care (revised January 2014)
- Statutory Guidance on promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children March 2015

A copy of the Statement of Purpose is available on Excel Fostering's website and is provided to and/or made available upon request to:

- Ofsted
- Local authorities and other agencies using our services

- Foster carers, prospective foster carers
- All Excel Fostering staff members
- Any person working for the purposes of the fostering service
- Children and young people (subject to their age and understanding) placed with a foster carer of the fostering service and the parent/carers of any such child/young person

This Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and up-dated at least annually.

About Excel Fostering

Excel Fostering, part of the Capstone Foster Care Group is an independent fostering agency that was established in March 2009, and registered with Ofsted in October 2009, Ofsted Registration Number – SC396525. The agency is regulated by Ofsted and was given a 'Good' quality rating at our last inspection.

Our Registered Manager is Emma Miller.

The Agency is governed in accordance with:

- The Children's Act 1989
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- Children's Act 2004
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services
- Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014

Excel Fostering is part of the Capstone Foster Care Group having been acquired in May 2018. Whilst the Agency has grown organically since it was established to become a key provider of Fostering Services across the North West and Cumbria, it continues to maintain a strong family feel.

The Responsible Individual is Debbie Tomlinson who is actively involved in the day to day business and along with the Management Team, meets on a regular basis to review and develop the following:

- Safeguarding
- Strategic Vision
- Financial management and Performance
- Legal Compliance and Quality Assurance
- Policies and Procedures
- Culture, Vision and Values – Developing the service in line with best practice

Our Goal

Our goal is to provide community-based services to children and young people and families for the purpose of strengthening the family unit, preparing productive young adults and providing specialised, quality foster care. By meeting these needs in a caring, comprehensive and

professional manner we will impact positively on the quality of life for the children and families in our community.

Our Focus

Excel Fostering's point of focus is always the child/young person and we seek to create a caring partnership clearly focused on their individual needs. We aim to provide and uphold the highest standard of care to children and young people placed with our foster cares.

Our Mission

The mission and the commitment of Excel Fostering is to promote the growth and development of children and young adults, who are looked after by our foster carers, by supporting each child to have a healthy lifestyle, safe environment, to enjoy and achieve in education, to contribute positively into community and have economic well-being, whilst promoting and strengthening the family unit.

Excel 
Fostering



“ I can't praise Excel Fostering enough and I am so thankful to the team.
I couldn't do this job without the support, no chance. ”

D, Foster Carer

Status and Constitution

Excel Fostering is a private limited company constituted under The Companies Act Company Number: 06847044.

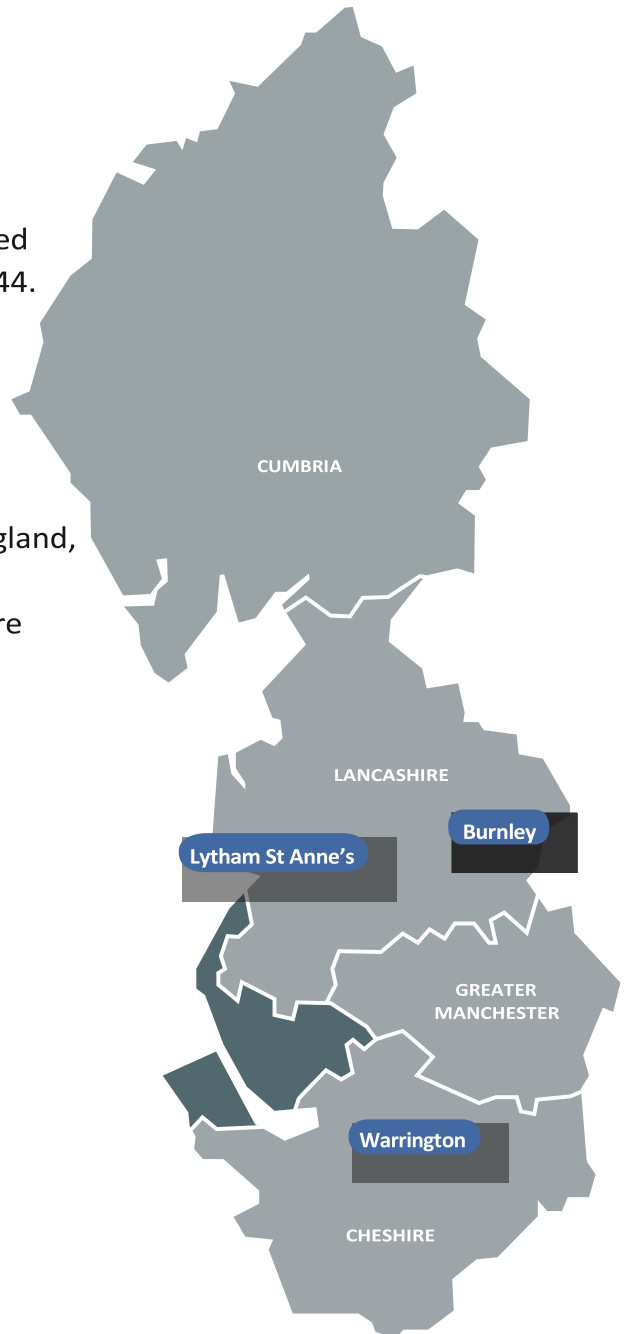
Excel was established in 2009 but was later acquired by the Capstone Foster Care Group in 2018 which is now Employee Owned Trust (EOT).

Excel Fostering operates across the North West of England, working in partnership with local authorities across Lancashire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Cheshire to provide safe and secure homes to young people.

Registered office:
243-245 Clifton Drive South,
Lytham St Annes,
Lancashire,
FY8 1HW

Burnley Satellite office:
Unit 1 Dominion Court,
Off Billington Road (Off Rossendale Road),
Burnley,
BB11 5UB

Warrington Virtual office:
1st Floor, Rutherford House,
Warrington Road,
Warrington,
WA3 6ZH



Board of Directors

Capstone Foster Care Group's Board of Directors consists of:

- Simon Constantine (Chairman)
- Richard Compton-Burnett (Non-Executive Director)
- Andrew Burton (NED) - (Non-Executive Director)
- Charles St. John (NED) - (Non-Executive Director)
- Catherine Lockett (NED) - (Non-Executive Director)
- Peter Battle (CEO)

The Board of Directors is responsible for the corporate governance of the company, including:

- The promotion of company culture and values
- The vision and mission of the organisation
- The strategy and direction of the organisation
- Regulatory and legal compliance
- Financial management of the organisation
- Quality assurance systems of the organisation
- The overall day-to-day operation of the organisation
- The management of the organisation's human resources
- The development and review of policies and procedures and implementation
- Corporate governance including meeting all legislative requirements

In doing so, the CEO and the Directors fulfil the statutory duties and responsibilities for a Director of a registered company and ensures that all matters are reviewed regularly and in a planned way.

Excel will undertake to discharge the functions of local authorities in connection with the placing of children with foster carers. Excel constitution comprises of the following:

- The Responsible Individual, who has overall management responsibility for the organisation and its members, responsible for complaints and safeguarding
- The Registered Manager, who is responsible for the day to day running of the agency
- Solicitors, who will handle all legal aspects of the agency
- Accountants, who will give on-going financial advice and audit the agencies accounts,
- Fostering Panel members on a central list who meet at least annually for training and Panel business meetings are held quarterly with the Registered Manager, Panel Chair, ADM and Panel Advisor.
- Panel members will provide a strong Quality Assurance for the organisation.
- Administrators, responsible for records and administration in line with the agencies policies and procedures
- In addition to permanent staff, Excel will have a pool of people who will work for the agency on a self-employed basis across a variety of roles. e.g. Social Workers completing assessments of prospective foster carers and clinicians providing support to both foster carers and young people.
- The agency ensures foster carers are subject to statutory checks including DBS and Medicals and pre provided with training both pre and post approval.

Excel Fostering and the Capstone Group has organisational memberships with:

- Coram/BAAF
- Fostering Network
- NAFP (National Association of Fostering Providers)
- Individual membership for each foster carer and staff member with Foster Talk

Employee Ownership Trust

As an Employee Ownership Trust, Excel Fostering, which is part of the Capstone Foster Care Group, is owned by its employees. We believe that being owned by our employees fits our values and our family culture as a fostering agency supporting carers, children and young people.

The Trust is governed by a panel of trustees who ensure that Excel Fostering continues to be managed in the best interests of its employees, foster carers and the children and young people we care for. These consist of a range of professionals experienced in the social care sector including:

- Richard Compton-Burnett - member of the Capstone Board of Directors
- Steve Blackwood - Employee representative trustee
- Alison Sargent- Employee representative trustee
- Andrew Winning - Independent Chairman

Standards of care

Excel Fostering aims to provide high standards of care at all times. It is acknowledged by the agency that a family-based setting provides better opportunities for children and young people. The positive quality of the family-based setting will ensure children and young people achieve their full potential.

At Excel we will aim to exceed NMS and provide excellent standards of care by:

- Ensuring that only those foster carers who are able to evidence commitment to the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and young people are approved
- Ensuring that Excel's Central List/Fostering Panel members are fully vetted and offered on-going training
- Ensure that each foster carer's approval status is reviewed at least annually
- Ensuring that Excel and its foster carers support the maintenance of family contacts, friendships and community contacts for children and young people in placement
- Ensuring that an anti-discriminatory approach is taken in providing for individual needs, including gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture
- Ensuring that Excel and its foster carers work collaboratively with the children, young people, their families, local authorities and other agencies
- Ensuring that there is an on-going commitment to promoting and safeguarding each child and young person's emotional and physical well-being, thus protecting them from all forms of abuse

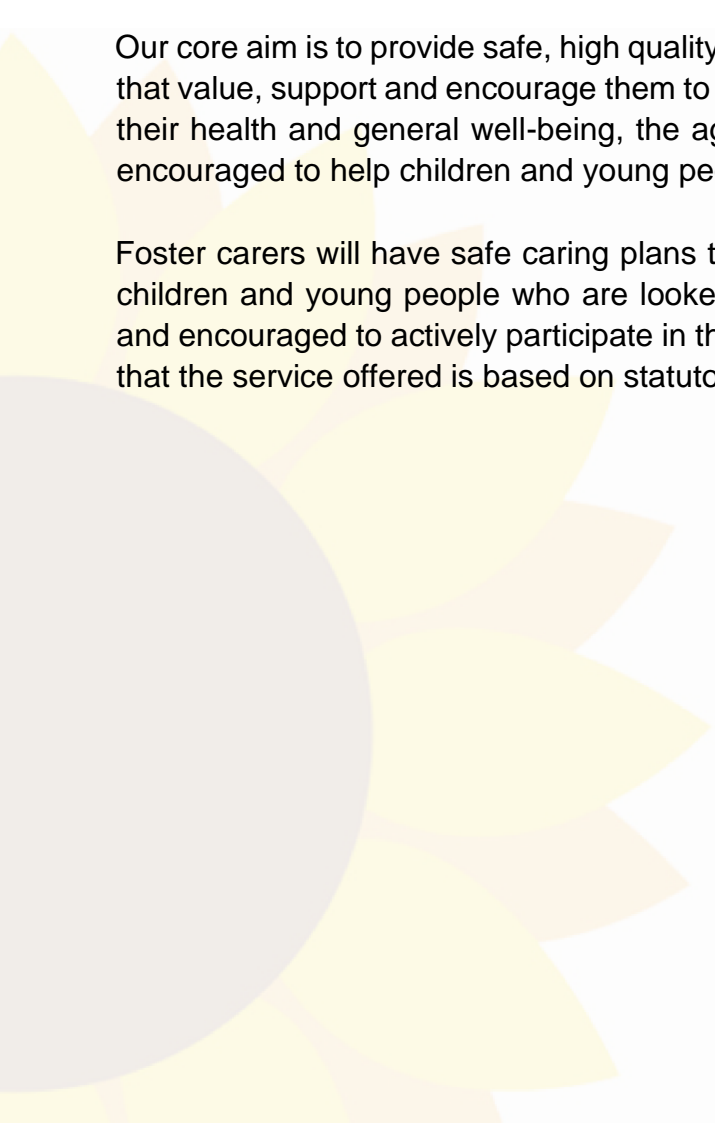
- Ensuring that as far as possible, the views and feelings of each child or young person are sought and they are involved in the decisions being made about them, with access to advocacy services where appropriate
- Ensuring each child or young person is provided with appropriate health care and given an opportunity to participate in any decisions about their health
- Ensuring each child or young person has full access to educational resources, and positively promoting achievement and independence
- Ensuring that each child or young person has appropriate support in preparing them for long-term fostering or adoption, or developing their skills for independent living, where appropriate
- Ensuring that where possible, on-going assistance and support is made available, as agreed by the local authority, to children and their families in the event of a young person returning to their birth families care
- Ensuring that contact is maintained, if requested, for children and young people who leave a placement with Excel Fostering

Aims & Objectives

Excel Fostering will work in partnership with local authorities who commission our services on an individual 'spot purchase' basis or through framework agreements at local and national levels. Our service is committed to multi-agency working and developing partnerships and protocols with organisations which can progress the needs of the children and young people in our care.

Our core aim is to provide safe, high quality foster care placements for children and young people that value, support and encourage them to grow and develop as individuals. As well as promoting their health and general well-being, the agency is committed to ensuring that foster carers are encouraged to help children and young people to reach their maximum academic ability.

Foster carers will have safe caring plans to support them to provide good safe parenting for all children and young people who are looked after. Children and young people will be consulted and encouraged to actively participate in their care and family life. We are committed to ensuring that the service offered is based on statutory requirements, sound principles and good practice.



Our core objectives are:

- To develop an overall fostering service where there is respect for and recognition of the importance of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language of children and young people and their families and foster carers.
- To promote effective working partnerships with other agencies, local authorities, health and social care services, parents and foster carers to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children.
- To ensure when matching placements consideration is given to the gender, religion, ethnicity and disability of young people prior to any placement being made with Excel Foster Carers.
- To promote effective partnerships between all key parties in the child care team and in particular ensure that all planning and collaborative working is in the best interests of the child/young person who is fostered.
- To provide stability in the lives of children and young people in our care and enable them to fulfil their full potential.
- Commitment and focus on continuous service improvement, quality assurance and high service provision.
- To value diversity by aiming to recruit and retain a wide range of foster carers from diverse background so that Excel Fostering can offer appropriate placements for children and young people.
- To promote a child centred approach where the child or young persons safety and welfare come first.
- To respect and promote the racial, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of foster carers and the children and young people. To provide a sensitive approach and respect for other cultures and diversity in promoting the needs of such individuals within our agency and community.
- To ensure that the views of children and young people placed with our foster carers are regularly sought and given due consideration, irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability etc.
- To ensure that all foster carers have access to and attend regular training and support groups and encourage them to comply with national standards. To acknowledge the hard work, skills and knowledge of our foster carers and provide them with a high level of support, training and encouragement.
- To support all foster carers in remaining child focused whilst working with and alongside birth families.

- To provide all foster carers with regular supervision, monitoring and support in order that the child and young persons opportunities are maximised and that foster carers are constantly meeting the child or young person's needs and achieving outcomes. The foster carers are allocated a qualified supervising social worker (SSW)
- To guarantee a commitment to support ongoing plans for looked after children by supporting transitional stages such as reunification with family, long term permanent care placement or on to independence or staying put.
- To guarantee a commitment to working in partnership with all those involved in planning and providing care for children and young people. This included Local Authorities, birth family, the child/young person, foster carers, health professionals, education providers, Independent Reviewing Officers and any other relevant professionals, individuals, or organisations.
- To provide 24 hour support for foster carers and the children and young people in their care, 7 days a week with access to on call support service.



Excel is committed to equality, promoting identify and valuing diversity

Excel Fostering and all its subsidiaries are committed to providing a holistic service which embraces diversity and promotes equality of opportunity. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day to day working practices with all children and young people, foster families, colleagues, customers and any other stakeholders. We will provide equality of opportunity and will not tolerate discrimination.

Our values:

- Promoting excellent outcomes for children and young people - making bright tomorrows
- Putting safeguarding at the heart of the agency and making it everyone's responsibility
- Investing in children leaving care, supporting transitions to independence and access to opportunities.
- An outstanding quality of service for foster carers and their families (training, support and professionalism)
- Listening, learning and acting for those we support (advocacy)
- Supporting and investing in our staff team to give their best.

Services we provide

Professional matching process

All placements made at Excel Fostering are professionally 'matched' according to rigorous criteria which ensure the specific needs of children and young people are compatible with the skills and experience of our foster carers. Excel Fostering recognises that the situations surrounding the placement of a child in foster care are often complex and carefully consider this in the matching process to determine the most appropriate placement provision.

Excel Fostering provides access to a pool of foster carers who can meet the range of needs of the children and young people within its area. We seek to offer placements to children from a diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and generally believe children are best placed within their own locality. Excel Fostering subscribes to the view that in principle children are best placed with foster carers of the same ethnic origin. However, we also recognise that this may not always be possible, and we believe that this fact alone should not deprive a child/young person of the experience of family life. On occasions the most pressing and specific needs of a child might be best met by foster carers with special skills but who happen to have different ethnic origins to the child/young person.

Multidisciplinary Assessment Treatment and Therapy Service (MATTS)

Multidisciplinary Assessment Treatment and Therapy Service is a bespoke therapeutic service to support placements. MATTS is a Tier 3 service, which is the equivalent of a community CAMHS service. It was set up in recognition and support of CAMHS services being stretched and the need to support children and young people to establish long-term stability.

The MATTS service is led by a clinical lead in every region and is overseen by the MATTS clinical director. All our clinicians are specialists in trauma led therapeutic practice with children and young people and have extensive experience of working alongside looked after children and fostering families.

Services for children and young people

- Children and Young People's Personal Guide/Handbooks
- Easy to use review feedback forms that are age appropriate
- Various social activities during the year
- Preparation for independence support
- The opportunity to be part of Children's Consultation and Participation events conducted

Foster carer support

- Supervising Social Workers
- 24 hour support/ Out of Hours line
- Independent support
- Local foster carers support groups
- Newsletters and website
- Respite
- Initial and ongoing training
- Fostering allowance /fees



Types of placements

Excel Fostering aims to offer the following types of placements:

- **Long-term and permanent** - planned placements where a child or young person needs to be fostered up to leaving care and where adoption is not an available option. The child or young person becomes part of the family, creating bonds that will last a lifetime.
- **Short-term** - this can be anything from a couple of days to a couple of years. These are temporary placements for children and young people until any plans for their future are confirmed.
- **Emergency** - this isn't usually planned, and can often be at short notice. If you agree, a child or young person will usually be placed with you within 24 hours – with an unknown duration at first.
- **Therapeutic** - a type of fostering with therapeutic support provided to foster carers and young people in line with assessed need.
- **Siblings** - fostering brothers and sisters to keep them together through their foster care placements.
- **Solo placements** where the child has additional and complex needs resulting in the foster carers having to offer constant supervision and support which would preclude the placement of another foster child in the same household.
- **Bridging** - Excel Fostering has foster carers who will work with children and birth families towards preparing children for adoption, long-term fostering, future placements or work to plans aimed at supporting them into (semi) independent living.
- **Children with special needs** - Excel Fostering has a range of foster carers who have experience and skills in caring for children and young people who have a disability and / or require specialist medical care.
- **Unaccompanied asylum seeking children** - giving unaccompanied young people a safe environment after they have arrived in the UK.
- **Parent and Child** - parents (mother/father/ both) can be placed in foster care together with their baby/child/children. This can be when a mother has a baby and it's a difficult experience for her, meaning she needs extra help - yet adequate support is not always available from her family or friends. In a lot of cases, the mother of this placement could also be young herself.

During the parent and child's stay with the foster carers, an assessment of the parent's ability to parent the child takes place over a three month period.
- **Respite** - respite foster care is a type of short-term fostering placement where a child would be placed with a foster family in order to provide support to children and their carers

“

Excel get better and better and more professionals are joining the team which means they can offer more support within different areas, for example, my foster daughter now has a support worker.

”

D, Foster Carer

Matching Process

All placements are closely ‘matched’ to ensure that the needs of the children and young people are met by the skills and experience of foster carers. Many of our foster carers have a wealth of experience or specialisms. Excel Fostering has a dedicated Placements and Social Work Team who are the first point of contact for enquiries about placement choices. We work closely and in partnership with the referring local authority to ensure that the proposed placement supports the following:

- Reflects the expressed wishes of the child/ren
- Takes into account the wishes of the child’s family
- Will be able to meet the child’s physical, educational, emotional, health, cultural, religious and social needs
- Will be able to fulfil the requirements of family time arrangements agreed in line with the child’s care plan
- Will carefully consider the impact on any child already residing in the fostering household including carers own children.
- Will assess any known risks and implement robust risk management plans to ensure the safety of the young person and other members of the fostering family

Excel also provides a placement service out of hours which means that children and young people can be placed with foster carers during evening, weekends and bank holidays.

Recruitment and Assessment

Excel Fostering is committed to recruiting foster carers who can provide high quality foster care. Anyone over the age of 21 years may apply to become a foster carer. Applications are welcomed from all people, regardless of gender, sexuality, marital status, employment situation, culture, and religion. The process of selection is rigorous and designed to ensure commitment and compatibility to the fostering task.

All members of the public who contact the agency about becoming foster carers will need to provide the agency with brief information about their current circumstances. The agency will be available to give general information and will also try to answer any initial queries within a timely manner.

To continue with application, enquirers will be told that:

- They must have sufficient room to care for a looked after child.
- Applicants must be over 21 years of age.
- They must be prepared to undertake an Enhanced DBS, health and local authority checks, and provide names of suitable referees, including a referee from any current or any previous employment related to children and consent to ex partners being contacted;
- They must be prepared to undertake a comprehensive BAAF Form F assessment, attend preparatory training and commit to attend training and support groups following approval.
- Will be required to support children to maintain links with those important to them in line with the child's care plan and promote family time arrangements to achieve this.

Assessment process

All assessments are carried out by qualified and experienced social workers using the BAAF Form F template and process. The assessment process is to determine the applicant's capacity to meet the needs of any children and young people likely to be placed with them.

The assessment is carried out in line with National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require the fostering service to undertake statutory checks as part of the assessment process. These are:-

- A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on all people who reside in the household who are over 18 and any persons staying overnight or supporting on a regular basis
- Local authority and other agency check as required
- Child health and education checks will be carried out on carers own children
- Current/ most recent employer references are needed for each applicant. Additional references from any previous employer where there was contact with vulnerable children and adults will be obtained
- A fostering medical undertaken by the applicants own GP and considered by the allocated medical advisor.
- A minimum of three personal referees (one of whom should be a family member)

Gathering evidence or information

Excel's assessing social worker will undertake the assessment in the following settings:

- The applicant's own home.
- During the 'Skills to Foster' preparation course.
- In other relevant settings e.g. workplace, if appropriate.

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

Excel Fostering aims to complete the assessments within 24 weeks from allocation of the case unless there are extenuating circumstances. The National Minimum Standards 2011 state that an application/assessment should be considered by the Fostering Panel within eight months from application.

Approval

The independent Fostering Panel comprises a variety of professionals and independent members, including foster carers, and people with experience of the looked after children system.

All assessments are considered by Fostering Panel, which makes recommendations to the agency regarding the suitability of the applicant to be a foster carer. This may include any additional terms that the Panel considers should apply to a foster carer's approval status. The

Agency Decision Maker takes full account of the Panel's recommendations when reaching their decision. Prospective carers are expected to attend the Panel.

All successful applicants are provided with a Foster Carer Agreement, which confirms their appointment as an agency foster carer. It also gives details about the terms of approval and how this will be reviewed, as well as the role of the local authority making the placement.

Post approval induction

After the Agency Decision Maker has agreed their approval as foster carers, newly approved foster carers are informed about the decision verbally within two working days and they receive a letter of confirmation within five working days.

Excel Fostering allocates a supervising social worker to support the foster carer in the fostering task. Supervising Social worker completes post approval visit and goes through an induction.

Foster carers

The foster carer's role is a professional one of caring for a child's/young person's personal and developmental needs.

The main tasks for a foster carer with Excel Fostering are as follows:

- To provide an environment that is stable, safe and supportive for a child or young person in their care
- To be supportive of contact to enable the child or young person to stay in touch with family members or people who are important to them, as guided by the care plan
- To promote the child's health, emotional, social and educational development
- To be sensitive to and promote the child or young person's cultural identity, confidence and self-esteem
- To be an advocate for children and young people empowering them to make decisions
- To provide safe boundaries in which children and young people can be responsible and learn to have positive and consistent behaviour
- Work as part of a team at Excel Fostering and make available times to attend meetings on behalf of the children and young people
- Helping children and young people transition in a sensitive, professional and positive way
- Taking responsibility to maintain a level of professionalism by attending regular training and support meetings to further develop knowledge and skills
- Being responsible in handling confidential information

Management and support of foster carers

Here at Excel Fostering we work closely with our foster carers to ensure that they provide the highest standard of care to the children and young people that are placed with them. We provide:

- **Support** - We offer our foster carers a robust package of professional and financial remuneration. All foster carers and looked after children/young people receive an exceptionally high level of support from Excel's management and staff.
- **Named supervising social worker (SSW)** - Each of our foster carers have a professionally qualified dedicated SSW to ensure that they are fully supported. Our foster carers receive regular visits from their supervising social worker, who works to ensure that the welfare of the child and/or young person is being safeguarded and promoted, and to identify support or services needed to enhance the child's/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

- **Foster Carer Reviews** – Each approved foster carer will have a review undertaken annually with a review meeting being chaired by an Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer. The carers first review will be presented to the Fostering Panel and subsequently reviews will be presented at 3 yearly intervals. The main aim of this is to determine whether the foster carers continue to be suitable to foster, whether there should be any changes in the terms of the approval, check progress of the foster carer(s) and set targets and goals for the year ahead.

We will ensure that:

- All Excel foster carers have a SSW who fulfils the function of a line manager and provides support. The SSW's visits are treated as a supervision session with an agenda and record of the meeting.
- The foster carer's training, support and development needs are regularly reviewed, and their progress appraised at the foster carer's annual review.
- Foster carers have access to key personnel within Excel Fostering, including experienced foster carers, administrators, social workers and managers.
- Foster carers are able to understand the relevance of the National Minimum Standards, in particular those which are child centred, to their own professional development through meetings with SSWs.
- Excel Fostering seeks the views of specific groups of foster carers (e.g. black and minority ethnic carers or male carers) on their support needs which may be met in a variety of ways through specific training, support groups, email groups or mentoring.
- Foster carers also have access to independent support (e.g. when an allegation has been made). This is likely to be provided via their Foster Talk membership.
- Foster carers are expected, enabled, and encouraged to attend training sessions and support groups.
- Support is made available to partners and sons and daughters of foster carers through individual support by the Supervising Social Worker or support groups in recognition of the involvement of all members of the family in the fostering task.

Training

At Excel Fostering we recognise that the only way to achieve excellence is by investing in foster carers. We therefore seek to promote a competent and motivated team of foster carers through continuous development in order to enable the delivery of high quality services to the children and young people in our care, their families and other agencies who we are involved with.

The training programme developed by Excel Fostering is compliant with the National Minimum Standards ensuring that all foster carers receive relevant induction and continued professional development. Foster carers are expected to meet the Training, Support and Development Standards and complete the workbook within their first year of approval.

- Equip foster carers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high quality care for the children and young people they look after.
- Ensure that all foster carers are given necessary information and help to develop their knowledge and skills to carry out their role and have appropriate learning and development opportunities.

- Fostering families are enabled and empowered to support and guide children and young people to achieve positive outcomes and reach their full potential.
- Learning and development opportunities are supportive of safer caring and risk management plans, aiming to provide placement stability for children and young people.
- Enable foster carers to work with children and their families reflective of their individual needs.

Training Framework

Excel Fostering has a training policy to ensure all foster carers are given the necessary help to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes that they require to carry out their role effectively.

Excel provides a two stage training programme to all of its foster carers that comprises:

1. Pre-approval Training - Skills to Foster

Prior to approval by the Agency all prospective foster carers are required to attend a 'Skills to Foster' course which is presented by a qualified trainer or by Excel's qualified social work staff. In the case of couples, both must attend this training and undergo assessment and checks. The Agency recognises and values the contribution of existing foster carers to the recruitment process and actively supports their involvement in recruitment activity. The course runs over 2-3 days and is an integral element of the assessment process. Where appropriate a separate session is available for the birth/resident children of the family.

The course comprises 6 sessions covering the following:

Session 1: What do Foster Carers Do?

Session 2: Identity & Life Chances of the Children and Young People?

Session 3: Working with Others

Session 4: Understanding Behaviour & Caring for Children

Session 5: Safer Caring

Session 6: Transitions

The course will introduce individuals to the challenges of foster care, the kinds of experiences children may have gone through and why they may behave in certain ways. The course will provide individuals with information about professionals they will be working with and set out expectations of being a foster carer.

2. Post-approval – Mandatory/Core Training Programme & Carer Development Training

Our training programme provides foster carers with the opportunity to explore and understand issues essential to their role, and to identify their future learning and development needs. Excel Fostering has a dedicated training budget. It is essential for all Excel foster carers to achieve the minimum level of knowledge and skills encapsulated in the Standards.

Opportunities for training and support will therefore be provided at four levels:

1. Support, discussion and evaluation at the foster carer's home.
2. Participation in foster care groups e.g. support groups, social events.
3. Participation in formal training events with other foster carers and social workers.
4. Completion of TSD standards within 12 months of approval as foster carers

Excel Fostering to provide a blended approach to training including online, virtual and face to face training.

Training Support and Development (TSD) Standards

Standard 1: Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people

Standard 2: Understand your role as a foster carer

Standard 3: Understand health and safety, and healthcare

Standard 4: Know how to communicate effectively

Standard 5: Understand the development of children and young people

Standard 6: Keep children and young people safe from harm

Standard 7: Develop yourself

There is a strong commitment to ensure that foster carers have access to the right support and development opportunities. Training and development is an intrinsic part of fostering. Excel Fostering has a clear expectation that all foster carers will participate in training offered by the agency as fully as possible.

In line with the Fostering Regulations, Foster carers are expected to complete safeguarding training within their first year of approval and subsequently refresh this every three years. Likewise, foster carers are expected to complete First Aid training which again is refreshed every three years.

“ The support we have received from Excel Fostering has been excellent. Our social worker is always at the end of the phone and through email if we ever need to contact her. The training available is brilliant and we could not fault our review or panel meetings at all. We are always listened to and any grievances we may have are dealt with immediately. ”

V

Foster Carers

Services Policies and Procedures

Excel Fostering has comprehensive foster carer policies, procedures and practice manuals in accordance with regulations. The Foster Carer's Handbook contain information on law, child protection, behaviour management, health and safety matters, care planning, training, financial

Services Complaints Procedure

At Excel Fostering we strive to provide the highest standard of service to children, parents, foster carers and Local Authorities.

We encourage feedback from everyone who receives services from us. We are proud to note that over the years we have received overwhelmingly positive reactions.

Foster carers, children and other professionals are encouraged to freely express how they feel about the service provided to them. Comments about a particular issue or compliments about something we have done really well are always appreciated.

How to make a complaint

You can call our office and ask to speak to the Registered Manger.

Children may also contact the Children's Commissioner on 020 7783 8330 or 0800 528 0731 or via the website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk.

Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Who can make complaints or representations?

Any child, foster carer, member of staff, family member or indeed any person who has had an involvement with Excel or the Capstone Foster Care Group is entitled to comment about the quality of any of the services, whether positive or negative. A foster carer, relative or friend can also do so on a young person's behalf. A comment or complaint may include such things as quality of communication, staff behaviour or attitude, decisions we have made, support for carers or children, or quality of care in the home.

Complaints by or on behalf of children and young people

Any looked after child or young person may complain about an aspect of their care to their placing authority, whose own complaints and representations procedure will be available to the child via the social worker.

When a complaint is made directly to Excel or Capstone Foster Care Group by or on behalf of a child, the placing authority social worker will be informed. Agreement will then be reached with the placing authority about which agency will investigate the complaint. If any complaint relates to an aspect of the service provided by Excel and is brought to our attention, this will always be investigated.

Our Children and young people's guide as well as a Complaints and Compliments leaflet contains written information on how to make complaints, including the availability of independent support and advice.

Children will be assured that their complaints will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly in accordance with the stages set out below and that they will receive written notification of the outcome.

Complaints by a foster carer

Complaints may be made to Excel or the Capstone Group about any aspect of the service received from the agency. The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of the complaint and details of the planned investigation. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the agency's complaints policy.

All approved foster carers are members of Foster Talk, who they can approach to see independent advice and support.

Contact details for Ofsted:

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

Excel Fostering

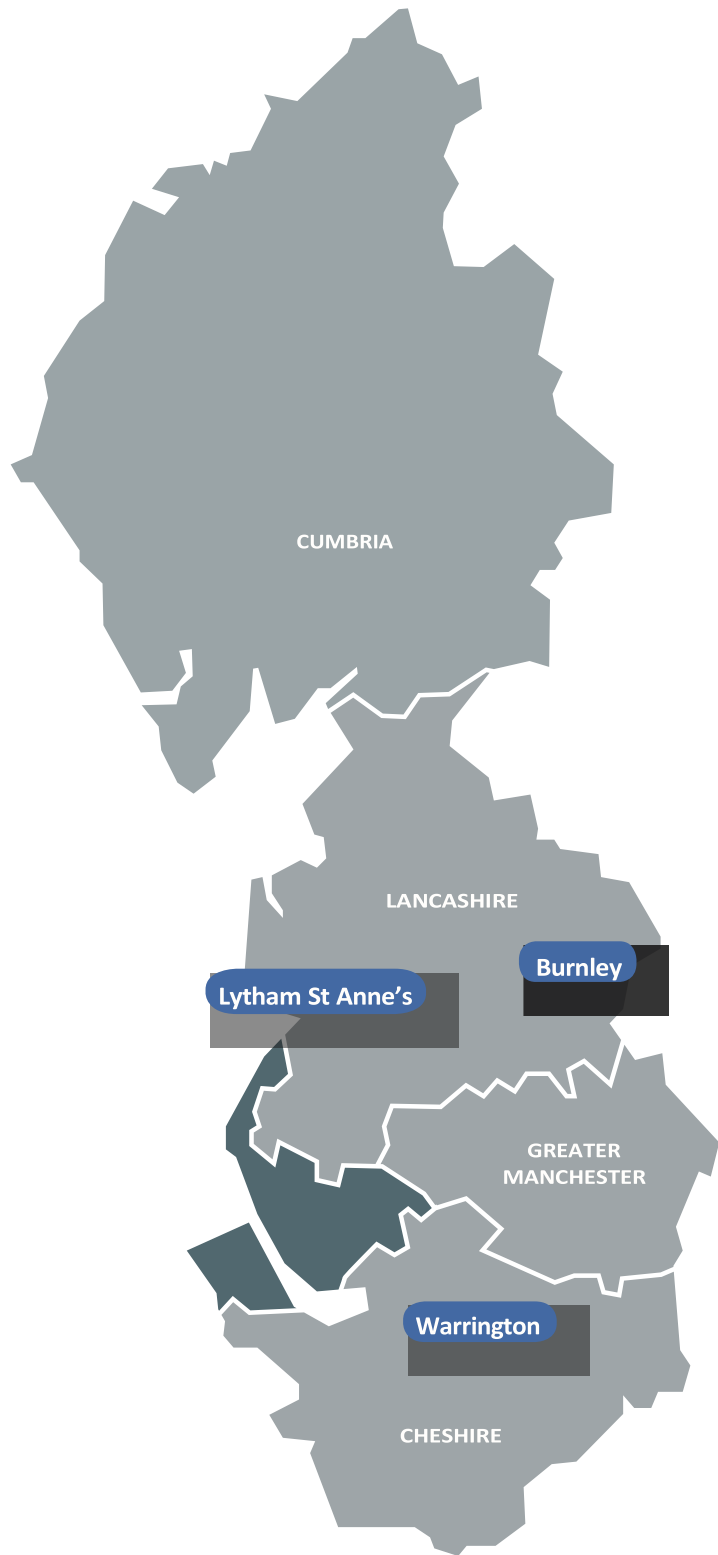


Expert, local support

Find your local team

Here at Excel Fostering, we have local community-based teams across the North West based in Lytham St Anne's, Burnley and Warrington which helps us to maintain the family feel that our foster carers know and love.

Visit our website to find your nearest team and how to get in touch for more information.



Call us free on

01253 712 734

or visit our website:

www.excelfostering.com