



Capstone SW Foster Care (South West) Ltd

Statement of Purpose

February 2022

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INTRODUCTION

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) that each fostering agency produces a Statement of Purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the services it provides, the facilities that are provided, and how outcomes for children and young people will be achieved.

This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements, how the service is managed and 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.

Capstone Foster Care SW Ltd (Capstone South West) 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
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018

The Statement of Purpose produced in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations (England) 2011 includes:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service
- A statement about the services and facilities provided by the fostering service

A copy of the Statement of Purpose is available on the Capstone Foster Care 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 Capstone SW 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 updated (at least) annually by the Responsible Individual and Registered Manager and is presented to the Board of Directors. In this Statement of Purpose, you will find information about our approach to fostering and it aims to provide children, young people, parents, foster carers and other professionals with information about the objectives of our agency and the services and facilities we provide. Children and young people are also provided with a Children's Guide that is in a more accessible format.

ABOUT CAPSTONE FOSTER CARE (SOUTH WEST) LTD

Background

Capstone Foster Care South West Ltd is an independent fostering agency that provides fostering services for looked after children and young people aged 0-18. We believe that the very best environment for a child/young person to grow up in is a family. Unfortunately, not all children/young people are able to live with their own families, and they need an alternative.

Capstone South West recruits foster carers from different backgrounds, cultures and religions to ensure that choice is available to local authorities when seeking suitable placements.

Emphasis is placed on supporting foster carers so that they can undertake their responsibilities to a high standard and ensure children and young people are safeguarded.

Our foster carers reflect the spectrum of families in our society and may be single, married or in a relationship, have a disability, may be of any culture or ethnicity, have children of their own, step children or no children at all; some are people of religious faith and some do not practise a faith.

Capstone South West works towards returning children to their birth families when the placing local authority decides it is safe and appropriate to do so.

We believe that every individual has the intrinsic right to have his or her basic needs met in a respectful and supportive manner. Families deserve every reasonable opportunity to preserve their family unit and we recognise that the family is the foundation of our community. We believe that children living in nurturing, stable environments will mature into healthy productive members of society. Capstone South West seeks to deliver and develop further a fostering service where there is respect and recognition of the ethnic origin,

cultural background, religion, language of children and young people, their families and foster carers.

At the present time Capstone South West supports 100 carers and approximately 127 placements.

Our Goal

Our goal is to provide fostering services to children/young people and families for the purpose of building brighter futures for young people with 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.

Our Focus

Capstone South West's point of focus is always the child/young person and we seek to create a caring partnership clearly focused on his/her individual needs. Under the auspices of the Children Act 1989; Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; Children and Adoption Act 2002; Children Act 2004; and within the context of this partnership and co-operation between all those concerned with the wellbeing of children placed with us, we aim to provide and uphold the highest standard of care to children and young people placed with Capstone SW's foster carers.

Our Mission

The mission and the commitment of Capstone South West is to promote the growth and development of children and young adults, who are looked after by our foster carers to build brighter futures. We actively support inspection and monitoring of standards for all agencies concerned with the care of children and young people.

Our Values:

- Promoting excellent outcomes for children and young people – building brighter futures into adulthood
- 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, professionalism)
- Listening, hearing and acting for those we support (advocacy)
- Supporting and investing in our staff team to give their best

STATUS AND CONSTITUTION OF CAPSTONE SOUTH WEST

Capstone Foster Care (South West) Limited is a private limited company constituted under The Companies Act Company Number 4343716. It is a part of the parent company Capstone Foster Care Limited. The company has been in operation since 2002.

Capstone Foster Care Ltd operates across four regions; South West, North, Midlands and the South East. Capstone South West came to fruition following the acquisition of three separate agencies, namely Rural Foster Care, Woodside Foster Care and Windmill Foster Care.

Capstone South West is registered and inspected by Ofsted (Registration SC032760). Its current Ofsted rating is Good.

Capstone South West foster carers are spread across the region and are served by four teams, two of which are based in offices located in Gloucestershire and Hampshire. The other two teams work remotely across the Devon/Cornwall and Somerset/Wiltshire regions.

Capstone Foster Care Limited's Board of Directors; Richard Compton-Burnett, Simon Constantine and Peter Battle are 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 Area Director fulfil the statutory duties and responsibilities and ensure that all matters are reviewed regularly and in a planned way.

Capstone South West discharges the functions of local authorities in connection with the placing of children with foster carers. Capstone South West's constitution comprises of the following:

- The Responsible Individual, who has overall management responsibility for the organisation and its members;
- The Registered Manager, who is responsible for the day to day running of the Agency;
- Solicitors, who handle all legal aspects of the agency;
- Accountants, who give on-going financial advice and audit the agency's accounts;
- Fostering Panel members on a central list, who meet regularly for training and Panel business, and who provide strong Quality Assurance for the organisation;
- Administrators, responsible for records and administration in line with the agency's policies and procedures.

In addition to permanent staff, Capstone South West has a pool of people who work for the agency on a self-employed basis across a variety of roles. e.g. social workers who complete assessments of prospective foster carers, independent staff who can investigate formal complaints or undertake therapeutic work with carers and with children; specialist consultants in medicine, law and health and safety.

Foster carers comprise the main body of the organisation and will be fully trained, assessed, medically fit and checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Capstone South West Foster Care SW Ltd has organisational membership with:

- NAFF (Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers)
- Individual membership for each foster carer and each member of staff with Foster Talk

STANDARDS OF CARE

Capstone South West 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 with them more likely to achieve their full potential.

At Capstone South West we will aim to exceed national minimum standards 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.
- Capstone South West Central List/Fostering Panel members are fully vetted and offered on-going training.
- Each foster carer's approval status is reviewed at least annually.
- Capstone South West and its foster carers support the maintenance of family contacts, friendships and community contacts for children/young people in placement. An anti-discriminatory approach is taken in providing for individual needs, including gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture.
- Capstone South West and its foster carers work collaboratively with the children, young person, their families, local authorities and other agencies.
- There is an ongoing commitment to promoting and safeguarding each child and young person's emotional and physical wellbeing, thus protecting them from all forms of abuse.
- 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.
- Each child or young person is provided with appropriate health care and given an opportunity to participate in any decisions about their health.
- Each child or young person has full access to educational resources, and positively promoting achievement and independence.
- 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.
- 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 family's care.
- Contact is maintained, if requested, for children and young people who leave a placement with Capstone South West.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Capstone South West works 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.

We believe that every child and young person has a right to experience living within a supportive family where they are valued and respected. We have a firm commitment to providing them with a safe, secure, caring and nurturing home environment.

Our core aim is to provide safe, high quality foster care placements for children and young

people, supporting and encouraging 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 household safer care plan and risk assessment for the child or young person in situ to support them to provide 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.
- Promote effective working partnerships with other agencies, local authorities, health and social services, parents, foster carers, to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children.
- Ensure that when matching placements, consideration is given to the gender, religion, ethnicity and disability of young people prior to any placement being made with Capstone South West foster carers.
- Promote effective partnerships between all key parties in the childcare team and, in particular, to ensure that all planning and collaborative working is in the best interests of the child/young person who is fostered.
- Provide stability in the lives of children and young people in our care and enable them to fulfil their potential.
- Provide commitment and focus on continuous service improvement, quality assurance and high-quality service provision.
- Value diversity by aiming to recruit and retain a wide range of carers from diverse backgrounds so that Capstone South West Foster Care can offer appropriate placements for children and young people.
- Promote a child-centred approach where the child or young person's safety and welfare come first.
- 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.
- 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.
- Ensure that all foster carers have access to and attend regular, ongoing 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.
- Support all foster carers in remaining child focused whilst working with and alongside birth families.

- Provide all foster carers with regular supervision (at least once a month), monitoring and support in order that the child/young person's opportunities are maximised and that the foster carers are constantly meeting the child/young person's emotional/achieving outcomes. The foster carers are provided guidance and are supported by a fully qualified designated Supervising Social Worker (SSW).
- Commit to support ongoing plans for fostered children by supporting transitional stages, such as reunification with birth families or on to semi-independent living or Staying Put.
- Guarantee a commitment to working in partnership with all those involved in planning and providing for each child or young person's care. This includes local authorities, birth families, the children or young people, foster carers, health professionals, education providers and other relevant professionals, individuals or organisations
- Provide 24-hour support for foster carers and the children or young people in their care, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year.

COMMITTED TO EQUALITY & VALUING DIVERSITY

Capstone South West Foster Care is 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.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

As an Employee Ownership Trust, Capstone Foster Care Ltd 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 Capstone Foster Care Ltd 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

Our Board of Directors, Richard Compton-Burnett, Simon Constantine and Peter Battle continue to be responsible for the corporate governance of the company, including the organisations:

- The promotion of company culture and values
- Vision and mission
- Strategy and direction
- Regulatory and legal compliance
- Financial management
- Quality assurance systems
- Overall day-to-day operation, including its management of human resources

- Development and review of policies and procedures and implementation
- Corporate governance, including meeting all legislative requirements

The CEO and the senior management team fulfil the statutory duties and responsibilities and ensure that all matters are reviewed regularly and in a planned way.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Capstone Foster Care has a Board of Directors that comprises:

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

The Board of Directors meets quarterly and is responsible for the overall strategic direction and all corporate and financial responsibility for the company.

There are other mechanisms in place to ensure the appropriate governance of the Group including:

- The Employee Owned Trust, panel of trustees who ensure that Capstone Foster Care Group continues to be managed professionally on behalf of its employees.
- The Senior Management Team which meets monthly to direct and monitor the operational and financial performance of the company's activities including business planning and policy development.
- The organisation's forums for discussion and monitoring of relevant issues including local management and staff team meetings, attended by managers, social workers and administrative support staff and whole regional events which inform practice.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY CAPSTONE SOUTH WEST

All placements made at Capstone South West are professionally 'matched' according to criteria which ensures the specific needs of children and young people are compatible with the skills and experience of our foster carers. Capstone South West recognise that the situations surrounding the placement of a child in foster care are often complex. It may be that short- term care is required while a family crisis is resolved; it may be that a therapeutic environment is needed, or a child has to be prepared for adoption.

Capstone South West has access to a range of approved foster carers who can meet the individual 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. Capstone South West Foster Care 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.

Capstone South West Foster Care's recruitment strategy reflects the needs of the regional demographics. Where black and minority ethnic children require a placement, Capstone

South West endeavours to place children and young people with families from their own ethnic background. However, we recognise that ethnicity may not be the only significant 'matching' criteria. If we are unable to provide foster carers from the same ethnic background, Capstone SW will seek to provide links in order to meet child's religious and cultural needs, in consultation with local authority colleagues, parents and professionals involved.

We offer a wide range of placements for children and young people of all ages. All placements are matched to ensure a good fit between the needs of children and young people and the skills and experience of foster carers and their families to meet those needs.

Range of placements:

Capstone South West will offer experienced and trained foster carers, supported by a professional fostering team, to local authorities. We aim to provide placements for a wide range of children and young people aged 0 – 18 years, including sibling groups, of various ethnic origins.

The types of placements the agency offers are:

Emergency placements

A placement that is made within 24 hours of it being requested and where there has been no prior plan. Some foster carers choose to specialise in short-term work and are able to accept unplanned, emergency placements whereby the foster carers' tasks would be to provide a place of safety and meet the immediate needs of the child. An emergency placement ideally should not exceed two weeks and it would be anticipated that an initial statutory looked after review would be arranged within one week of admission to placement.

Short-term placements

A placement that is made for any purpose, such as an assessment or bridging placement, which is planned, but not intended to provide a long-term placement for the child/young person. The period of short-term care could be for a few days, weeks or months, while plans are made for the child's future by the local authority.

Long-term placements/Permanence

These placements are for the longer-term needs of the child/young person, where adoption is not an option, and the foster carers look after a child/young person up to and, where appropriate, into adult independence, as a member of their family. Most foster carers prefer to have children placed with them on a long-term basis; giving the child permanency and progressing them on to (semi) independent living once they have developed the skills necessary and on-going support to live in the community. By providing a long-term placement, it enables children and young people to have a chance to flourish in a stable and supportive environment. Capstone South West has an on-going commitment to recruit foster carers for this role.

Parent and child placements

This type of placement is for parents who need support, observation, and guidance in caring for their own child. These placements may be appropriate for parents of any age and more than one child. Capstone South West ensures that parent and child carers are appropriately trained and equipped to provide short or long-term placements for parent and child/ren.

Sibling group placements

Capstone South West advocates keeping siblings together within a family environment, unless it is deemed inappropriate by the placing authority. Capstone is committed to ensuring that where possible sibling groups are placed together, following the agencies guidelines.

Solo placements

Where a child has additional and complex needs, Capstone South West can consider foster carers who can offer solo placements.

Placements for children with special needs

There are many disabled children and young people who need a foster family. This can include children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, sensory impairments or a combination of these. Capstone South West 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.

Intensive support placements - MATTS

Capstone South West has launched a new service called a Multi-disciplinary Assessment Treatment and Therapy Service (MATTS) for children and young people who have very complex needs and/or behaviours. The MATTS service is led by a Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist and a multi-disciplinary team works with the child therapeutically, helping the child recover from the trauma they have experienced to create change. The MATTS team provide clinical support to the foster family, helping them reflect on a child's behaviours and their own responses, as well as supporting the foster carers to manage the emotional impact on the fostering family.

More information is available in our MATTS service prospectus.

Unaccompanied child/young person

An unaccompanied child/young person is someone who is under 18 years of age, is separated from parents/family and is applying for asylum in his/her own right.

These young people come from other countries, may not speak English and can be frightened and confused. Our carers can provide a safe, stable and supportive home to these children/young people.

We support our carers and our young people through the emotional and legal complexities when dealing with the Home Office.

Services for Children and Young People

Providing a safe, secure and successful placement for children and young people is paramount. To support our placements, we ensure the children and young people in our care are fully supported and that their wishes and views are regularly obtained. We provide children and young people with an inclusive support package, which consists of the following:

- Children and Young Person's Guide/Handbook
- Guides on how to complain and who to talk to if they require support
- Online area for young people on the Capstone website
- Easy to use review 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 during the year
- Access to a dedicated Children's Champion

Services for Foster Carers

We believe that our package of support is crucial to the success of the foster placements. We expect our foster carers to provide a sensitive, professional, and high standard of service

to children and young people who are placed with them and, in return, they receive a comprehensive package of support.

Supervising Social Workers

Each foster family is allocated a Supervising Social Worker who visits regularly to provide support and supervision. They monitor standards of care, encourage high standards and help foster carers manage problems if and when they arise. They are also available for telephone consultation and liaise with the placing local authority social worker for the child/young person.

24-hour support/Out of Hours line

All our carers have access to a 24-hour support line that is staffed by our experienced and qualified social workers. Senior managers are always available and can be contacted by the social worker for any support and guidance. There is access to Out of Hours support to Capstone SW staff members, foster carers and children/young people 24 hours a day throughout the year.

Independent support

Foster carers are given individual membership of FosterTalk. This allows them access to advice and support, including legal advice, independent of the Agency. Their membership includes:

- Foster Carer Legal Advice Helpline
- Foster Carer Advice Line
- Foster Carer Tax and Benefit Advice
- Arrest and Interview Assistance
- Foster Carer Legal Expenses Insurance
- Foster Carer Online Forum
- Quarterly Magazine

Local foster carers support group

Our foster carers are encouraged to attend local support groups. Several support groups are organised for foster carers in each of our four regional bases. The sessions include speakers on matters of interest, consultation and an opportunity for foster carers to share and problem solve together.

Newsletters and website

We maintain contact with our foster carers through our central newsletter. This regular newsletter features 'news & views' from foster carers and children/young people, developments within Capstone South West specifically, foster care generally, forthcoming training opportunities and information regarding what's happening within Capstone South West and the service we offer. This is also available on the Carer Area of the Capstone Connect website.

Respite/Breaks from Care

As part of the support package, foster carers can request breaks from care. Capstone South West will work together with foster carers, the child and the local authority to identify a suitable placement for a child/young person, keeping their best interests in mind. In Capstone South West each carer gets a 14-day allowance per child (pro-rata from start date) and the respite year runs from April to March. Additional breaks can be taken when they have been negotiated with relevant LA and are in the child's interests

Initial & Ongoing training

Foster carers are given preparatory (Skills to Foster and Introduction to Therapeutic Fostering Awareness training) prior to attending panel and ongoing training in a range of subjects. Capstone South West expects all carers to complete core and specialist training after approval. Some examples of our training programme include: Safer Intervention, Child Protection/ Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, Safer Caring, Recording and Reporting,

First Aid and GDPR. Capstone uses a mix of face-to-face training and access to a comprehensive, accredited online training facility.

Fostering fees and allowances

Capstone South West operates to the Framework Contract for Independent Fostering Agencies. This ensures fees are transparent and inclusive. Capstone South West's fee schedule incorporates discounts for long-term and sibling placements.

Any additional services required in order to meet a child's or young person's individual needs and circumstances, over and above those outlined in a contract, are negotiated and agreed with the responsible local authority at the point of placement or at subsequent reviews. This could include specialised equipment for a child with disabilities and other exceptional or major expenses, as well as on-going therapeutic input from one of the professionals working within or commissioned by the agency.

The fee structure is re-assessed annually. The financial remuneration offered to the agency foster carers reflects the demands of the task and quality of service carers are expected to offer. Out of their allowance, foster carers are expected to meet the routine day to day cost of looking after a child. Further details are available on request.

Foster Carers' insurance is provided by an insurance company. Premiums are paid by the agency, although foster carers are required to have their own household building/contents insurance and are advised that they should make their insurance holders aware that they are fostering to ensure they are appropriately covered.

MATCHING

All placements are carefully '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. Capstone South West has a dedicated Placements Team who are the first point of contact for enquiries about placement choices and who liaise closely with supervising social workers, foster carers and local authorities to ensure the best possible match for the child/young person and foster carers.

At Capstone South West we work in partnership with the referring local authority to ensure that the proposed placement supports the following:

- Will be able to meet the child's physical, educational, emotional, health, cultural, religious and social needs
- Will consider the child's wishes and feelings
- Will be able to meet the needs for contact
- Will not disrupt any foster child already in placement
- Will not pose a risk to any child in the foster carer's household
- Will bring no substantial risk to any member of the carers' household or their property
- Takes into account the wishes of the child's family

RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT

Capstone South West 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.

Recruitment process

Referral/Enquiry

Capstone South West are constantly working to recruit a diverse range of foster carers. We aim to recruit carers to meet the needs identified in each area. We also expect to receive applications from people by word of mouth. We capitalise on the publicity generated by events and any relevant media programmes which may have a positive impact on our recruitment.

Following an enquiry from a prospective foster carer, a member of our Recruitment Team will take necessary information from the applicant to complete the referral form and will post/email the information pack to the applicants.

- There is immediate exclusion of any applicant who has been convicted of an offence against a child or any serious offence against an adult.
- All prospective foster carers must have at least one spare bedroom.

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 give general information and will also answer any initial queries. Information about fostering will be sent to the enquirer within three working days after the enquiry.

To continue with their application, enquirers will be told that they must:

- Have sufficient room to care for a looked after child
- Be over 21 years of age
- 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
- Be prepared to undertake a comprehensive CoramBAAF Form F assessment
- Be prepared to and able to attend preparatory training and commit to attend training and support groups following approval
- Facilitate contact between the looked after child and his or her family members.
- Facilitate school attendance

Application and Initial Visit

- When there is an enquiry by a prospective foster carer, details are logged on our database and the Fostering Recruitment Advisor will establish the enquirer's motivation to foster, bedrooms available for fostering, work commitments, preferred approval range, child care experience and inform the enquirer of expectations of foster carers by local authorities and Capstone South West.
- If both parties agree, then an initial visit is arranged, for which, if it is a two-parent household, both applicants have to be present. This will determine whether the enquirers meet the eligibility criteria, the Agency's expectations in relation to foster families, explore their motivation to foster, and answer any questions concerning their interest in fostering and address any specific issues.
- At the initial visit further details are established about the enquirers' motivation to foster. They are asked in detail about any convictions and possible restrictions to foster.

- Enquirers are informed of the need for health checks, local authority checks and DBS checks.
- The Assessment Manager will decide whether the enquirer is suitable to progress.
- Prospective foster carers who meet the eligibility criteria and are considered to be suitable are invited to submit an application for assessment. Until this application form is returned the agency cannot proceed to allocate them to an assessor for their Form F assessment. Applicants are advised to return application forms as quickly as possible and are offered help with completion.
- Anyone who is not permitted to proceed at this stage will be informed and given the reasons for the decision.

Planning the assessment

1. Applicants attend the Skills to Foster course during the assessment phase.
2. Applicants attend Introduction to Therapeutic Fostering Awareness training during the assessment phase.
3. Applicants are enrolled onto an online training site and allocated Safeguarding and Safer Caring courses.
4. Statutory checks are initiated.

The Assessment Process

All assessments are carried out by qualified and experienced social workers using the CoramBAAF 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. Capstone SW runs stage 1 and stage 2 of the assessment process concurrently. All applicants are informed in writing when they have successfully completed stage 1 and stage 2 of the assessment process.

The first assessment meeting is concerned with planning and timetabling the assessment. The assessment is carried out in line with the National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011 and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers statutory guidance 2013.

The assessor ensures further that the applicants are booked onto the Skills to Foster Training and the Introduction to Therapeutic Fostering Awareness training course. The assessor will explain the basic process of gathering information and evidence during the assessment as well as ensuring that applicants are aware of the process of obtaining DBS and local authority checks and medicals. Regulations and national minimum standards 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 regularly staying overnight.
- Local authority and other agency checks as required.
- Child health and education checks will be carried out on any school-age children in the household.
- Current/most recent employer references are needed for each applicant. Additional references from any previous employer where there was contact with children/vulnerable adults will be obtained.
- A medical examination undertaken by the applicant's own GP and reviewed by our Agency Medical Advisor
- A minimum of two personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process.
- Interviews will be carried out with applicants' own children and any other adults in the household.

- Where possible, interviews will be carried out with previous partners.

Gathering evidence or information

Capstone South West's allocated assessing social worker will undertake the assessment in the following settings:

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

A variety of techniques will be used to gather evidence or information regarding the applicant's suitability to foster. These may include:

- Eco-maps, family trees and chronologies to gain information on an applicant's motivation to foster and how their past history may impact on fostering.
- References from other adults who can corroborate the applicant's ability to relate to and care for children e.g. babysitting circle, helping out at school etc.
- Discussion
- Records and reports
- Case studies
- Role playing and simulation
- Skills to Foster preparation course
- Introduction to Therapeutic Fostering Awareness training course
- Online training in Safeguarding and Safer Care
- Homework assignments
- The assessment will include a recommendation by the assessing social worker

As mentioned above, during the assessment, administration will undertake a variety of statutory checks which include:

- Enhanced DBS Check
- Local authority checks
- Current employer references
- Current or previous fostering organisation references, where appropriate
- School/health visitor reports (on own child, if appropriate)
- Medical reports
- Social Media Checks
- References from all previous employment involving children and vulnerable adults
- Two personal references
- Overseas check (where appropriate)
- A health and safety report to be completed
- Where possible, ex-partners and children of an appropriate age from previous relationships

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

All Form F reports go through quality assurance to ensure we maintain an excellent standard of assessment and safe care practice before being presented to our Fostering Panel.

Fostering Panel

All assessments are considered by a properly constituted Fostering Panel which comprises of a variety of professionals and independent members, including foster carers, and people with experience of the looked after children system. This panel will make recommendations

to the agency regarding the suitability of the applicant to be a foster carer. The Agency Decision Maker considers the Panel's recommendations when reaching their decision regarding the applicant's suitability to foster. Prospective carers are expected to attend the Panel.

Post Panel

After the Panel, applicants are told the recommendation and the next steps in terms of the Agency Decision Maker's role. A Capstone South West staff member (Panel Advisor) helps to answer any further questions that applicants have.

Post Approval Induction

After the Agency Decision Maker has agreed their approval as foster carers, newly approved foster carers are informed about the outcome of the decision, with written confirmation within regulatory timescales. 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. It also includes a supervision contract.

Upon approval Capstone South West assigns a Supervising Social Worker (SSW) to support the foster carer in the fostering task. The Team Manager, a member of the Placements Team the SSW completes a post- approval visit and go through an induction. This induction process involves:

- Issuing the foster carer with details to enable them to access the Carer Handbook and Capstone South West Policies & Procedures which are stored on our secure database - Charms
- Discussion around the child referral and matching process in respect of timescales and processes.
- Discussion around future training courses and the answering of any immediate questions asked by the foster carers about the fostering task.

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 in Capstone South West 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.
- To work as part of a team at Capstone SW 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 & SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS

It is primarily the Supervising Social Worker's responsibility to manage and support the carer in the fostering task. Capstone South West's SSWs understand that they have a responsibility for ensuring that the needs of the child in placement are met, even though they do not have case management responsibility for the child. The SSW will visit the foster carer regularly both whilst a child is in placement, and when the carer has vacancies. All foster carers are enrolled as members of FosterTalk (financed by Capstone South West) which provides excellent up-to-date information, advice, support and legal insurance, should carers be the subject of an allegation.

Support

We regard our foster carers as the foundation of our service. We know from research that poor general support to foster carers has been found to be closely associated with them ceasing to foster. Therefore, we offer our foster carers a robust package of professional support and financial remuneration. All foster carers and looked after children/young people receive an exceptionally high level of support from Capstone South West management and staff. 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.

In Capstone South West we maintain caseload levels that ensure SSWs have the time to support and develop their foster carers

Named Supervising Social Worker

Each of our foster carers has a professionally qualified dedicated supervising social worker (SSW) to ensure that carers are fully supported. The SSWs are always the first port of call for our foster carers. The SSW visits foster carers regularly to monitor the standards of care provided, assist the foster carer to play their part in the child's care plan and identify any training needs.

Supervision and support for foster carers is vital. It is important that the foster carer's work is recognised as providing the major component in meeting the needs of looked after children. Carer satisfaction and retention is essential for a healthy and safe fostering service.

SSWs are responsible for ensuring that the care offered to children in foster care meets the required standards. Visits to the foster carers take place at a minimum of four-weekly intervals. These can be increased as assessed need determines. As part of the monitoring of the work of foster carers, there will be at least one unannounced visit by the SSW to the foster carer's home per year.

Foster Carer Reviews

Approved foster carers will have their first review within 12 months. The first review following approval is always presented to the Fostering Panel. Subsequent reviews may also be presented to the Fostering Panel in situations where significant changes in the terms of approval are being considered, where there are serious concerns about suitability of the carer, following the investigation of any concerns about standards of care, complaints or allegations against the foster carer or where termination of approval is sought.

The review includes written feedback reports from the carer's SSW, the local authority social worker, children and young people in placement, children of the household, and the foster carers themselves.

The main aim of the foster carer review is to determine whether the foster carer(s) continues to be suitable to foster and whether there should be any changes in the terms of the approval. It is an opportunity to look at the progress the foster carer has made and to

set targets and goals for the next year within the annual development plan. Training needs are also assessed and a recommendation for future approval is made by the SSW. In Capstone South West the Carer Review involves the foster carers, their SSW and is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

As part of our commitment to carers, Capstone South West will ensure that:

- All Capstone South West 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 review.
- Foster carers have access to key personnel within Capstone South West, including experienced foster carers, administrators, social workers and managers.
- Foster carers can understand the relevance of the National Minimum Standards, in particular those which are child centred, to their own professional development through meetings with SSWs.
- Foster Carers can consult with key stake holders on their support needs which may be met in a variety of ways through specific training, support groups, email groups or mentoring.
- Foster carers are supported through independent support for foster carers if they are subject to an allegation.
- Support is available to partners, sons and daughters of foster carers through individual support by the SSW or support groups or activities in recognition of the involvement of all members of the family in the fostering task.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

At Capstone South West 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 Capstone South West 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 & Development (TSD) Standards and to complete the workbook within one year of approval.

Aims of the Capstone South West's training programme are:

- To equip foster carers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high quality care for the children and young people they look after.
- To assist foster carers in developing an understanding of the impact of neglect and emotional abuse on the development of children and young people, identifying the impact these experiences can have on behaviours and the formation of attachments.
- To ensure that all foster carers are given the necessary information and help to develop knowledge and skills to carry out their role and have appropriate

opportunities for career development.

- To ensure that foster families are enabled and empowered to support and guide children and young people to achieve positive outcomes and reach their full potential.
- To ensure that any warning signs in relation to safe caring or placement disruption are identified early to safeguard the best interests of all parties.
- To equip foster carers to work with parents and children in the context of a multi-racial society.

The Training Framework

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (17 (1)) state that the fostering service provider must provide foster carers with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. Standard 20 'Learning and Development of Foster Carers': National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 states that 'Foster Carers receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively'.

A clear framework of training and development is in place and this is used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their training and development needs.

Capstone South West Foster Care has a robust training policy and strategy. All foster carers are given the necessary help to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they require to carry out their role effectively and to provide foster carers with the appropriate opportunities for career development.

Capstone South West Foster Care provides a two-stage training programme to all 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 Capstone South West 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 two 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 six 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. Introduction to Therapeutic Fostering Awareness

In addition, Capstone South West requires prospective foster carers to attend specific training as part of the assessment process on therapeutic parenting and understanding the impact of neglect and emotional abuse on child development and attachment.

3. Pre-approval Online Training

All prospective foster carers are registered with an online training provider - Social Care Training Hub. Each applicant is allocated online courses in Safeguarding and Risk Management & Safer Caring which are completed prior to approval. Additional training sessions can be recommended, subject to applicants' understanding and developmental needs.

4. 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. Capstone South West has a dedicated training budget. It is essential for all 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 five 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.
5. Online training courses.

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. Capstone South West has a clear expectation that all foster carers will participate in training offered by the agency as fully as possible. There will also be the opportunity for carers to undertake online learning. There is an expectation that foster carers will complete the TSD portfolio and this expectation will be endorsed by the Fostering Panel on approval.

These opportunities will enable foster carers to meet the complex needs of the children and young people for whom they care, and to develop skills and knowledge to keep the foster family and the fostered children safe and protected.

POST APPROVAL TRAINING

MANDATORY TRAINING is compulsory training that is determined essential by the organisation for the safe and efficient delivery of services. This type of training is designed to reduce organisational risks and comply with national policies and government legislation and guidelines. Mandatory Training is consistent across The Capstone Group.

CORE TRAINING is specific training provided to enhance Foster Carer's skills and facilitates and supports further knowledge and learning in specific areas for Foster Carers providing care to vulnerable children and young people. Core Training may vary across regions taking into consideration regional differences and requirements – Training can be identified as core training through analysis of the Registered Manager's Regulation 35 report, or risk management requirements, ensuring that regional trends and themes are considered alongside the demographics of children in placement.

MANDATORY TRAINING

Newly approved Foster Carers are expected to attend the Mandatory courses within 12 months of approval. These courses will complement the learning required to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards handbook.

- Paediatric First Aid
- Medication and Children's Health Care
- Safeguarding children
- Safer Caring/Managing allegations (all members of household discussed with SSW)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- GDPR (online)

These mandatory courses are refreshed every 3 years:

- Paediatric First Aid - recognised trainer
- Medication and Children's Health Care
- Safeguarding children
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Whilst the aim is that mandatory training should be completed face to face, there may be circumstances where training can be completed virtually/or online providing the SSW is satisfied that the learning objectives have been met and evidenced.

CORE TRAINING - Approved Foster Carers Continued Professional Development.

(i) Each region will provide Foster Carers with a training calendar which outlines which courses are mandatory or core training explicitly and what is expected of Foster Carers within their regions.

(ii) The regional training programme is clear about expectations around training for both primary and secondary carers. People learn in different ways and have different developmental needs; therefore, an individual and flexible learning approach will be adopted by regions. The Capstone Group will ensure that all learning opportunities are accessible and available to all Foster Carers.

(iii) From year 2 onwards – (Both) Foster Carers will be required to attend a minimum of 3 training, learning and development opportunities per year. All training opportunities must be recorded through Foster Carer reflective discussions, completion of Foster Carers logs and uploaded to their file on charms.

(iv) (Both) Foster Carers (unless agreed by the SSW) are expected to attend any specialist training to ensure the placement is successful and specialised and/or specific training for individual children placed with Foster Carers will be identified by the SSW and Team Manager. Such training may also be provided to additional members of the household if appropriate.

(v) Where a Foster Carer is offering a MATTS placement the clinicians will identify specific training as required.

(vi) The Capstone Group encourages Therapeutic Trauma Informed Training (e.g. currently The Fostering Changes course) and this will be scheduled into the Foster Carer's PDP. Regions will set

out what is expected from their carers on an individual basis in relation to this.

(vii) Advanced Managing Children's behaviour courses (Safer Intervention) will be provided to Foster Carers when identified by the allocated SSW, Team Manager or Registered Manager to ensure that safe holding practices are managed safely when required to do so for children within placements.

A typical training programme could include the following courses:

- First Aid
- Safe Care/Managing Allegations
- Recording & Reporting
- Safeguarding
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- GDPR/Data Protection
- Safer Intervention
- Child Development & Attachment
- Internet Safety
- Children's Education
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Therapeutic Parenting
- Missing from Care
- Drug Awareness
- Working with Sexually Abused Children
- Unaccompanied Minors
- Attachment Disorder
- Working Towards Independence
- Stress Management
- County Lines
- Separation and Loss
- Emotional Trauma
- Preventing Placement Breakdown
- Parent & Child Placements
- Fostering Changes
- Safer Intervention Training

It is also important that foster carers are able to document and evidence their skills and knowledge throughout their fostering career. Learning and development within Capstone South West is comprised of three tiers:

- Pre-approval training
- Induction – New carer and mandatory training
- Ongoing personal development/core training

The training policy details the elements contained in each of these tiers, the associated standards as well as outlining the variety of training methods employed. Foster carers' training needs are constantly monitored by SSWs and are formally evaluated through reviews of the foster carer's terms of approval.

Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan (PDP), as required within Section 7 of the Training, Support and Development standards, drawn up in conjunction between the SSW and the foster carer.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Capstone South West has comprehensive foster carer policies, procedures and practice manuals in accordance with regulations. Our policies and procedures contain information on all aspects of caring for looked after children including: legislation, child protection, behaviour management, health and safety matters, care planning, training, financial matters, meeting the needs of children and young people, education, complaints and grievances, and record keeping.

Our policies are updated by the central quality assurance team as required to reflect changes in legislation or practice.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

At Capstone South West 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 to the services we provide. However, sometimes we get things wrong on such occasions, our complaints procedure will be implemented.

Who can make a complaint?

- a) Any child who is being looked after by Capstone South West or a person acting on their behalf.
- b) A parent of him or her, or person with parental responsibility.
- c) Any Capstone South West foster carer or family member.
- d) Any Capstone South West staff member.
- e) Any person whom Capstone South West considers has sufficient interest in a child's welfare to warrant his or her representations being considered by them.

How to make a complaint?

You can call any one of our regional offices and ask to speak to the Team Manager or if he/she is not available, speak to a Senior Manager. Alternatively, you can use one of our leaflets and return it to us or email us at: complaints@capstonefostercare.co.uk

The complaints procedure

There are two stages, but a complaint can be resolved and completed at either stage, depending on whether the people involved agree on the outcome.

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 the Capstone 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.

If the matter is urgent e.g. a safeguarding issue, an allegation, or an incident involving the child's health and safety, please call the office or the out of office hours number directly.

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 the Capstone 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 the Capstone Group and is brought to our attention, this will always be investigated by the Capstone Group.

Our **Children's Guide** 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 the Capstone Group about any aspect of the service received from the agency. The complainant will receive written acknowledgment of the complaint and details of the planned investigation. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Stages set out below.

All Capstone Group foster carers are members of FosterTalk, who they can approach to seek independent advice and support.

Informal discussion

We hope that most matters someone is concerned about can be settled by speaking to a person they normally deal with in the Capstone Group, and this is the informal route we would like people to try first. We would always encourage someone to talk with their supervising social worker or the team manager about any concern that they have and to try to resolve the matter with them.

An informal discussion to resolve the situation should take place and be resolved within five working days and a note of the course of action taken and the outcome recorded on the carer or child's case record.

Formal Complaint Stage 1 – internal investigation

If someone is not satisfied with the informal response they get, or if they wish straightaway to complain formally to the Capstone Group, they can do so to our registered manager (the 'complaints officer'), at the office address. They can put their concerns in writing if they wish or ring the registered manager directly.

Capstone will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days, including an indication of whether it is planned to try to resolve the complaint via internal investigation (Stage 1) or, in the case of potentially serious complaints, to move straight to the independent investigation (Stage 2).

The registered manager will investigate the complaint and interview all relevant people or will allocate another manager or independent social worker to do this. This stage of the process should be completed within 28 days of the commencement of the investigation, unless it is exceptionally agreed with the complainant this period may be extended. The investigating manager will complete a written record with findings and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint which will be available to the complainant.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request within 28 days of the date of the dispatch of the report to them that the matter be referred to Formal Stage 2.

If the complaint involves the Registered Manager

If the complaint involves the Registered Manager, then the Formal Stage 1 complaint should be directed to the Area Director - Steve Blackwood via email:

Steve.Blackwood@capstonefostercare.co.uk

Formal Complaint Stage 2 – independent investigation

A request for an independent investigation should be made in writing either to the registered manager or the Area Director. The request will be acknowledged in writing within five working days, including details of the proposed investigation.

The Area Director will appoint an independent person to investigate the complaint. This person will be independent of The Capstone Group, will hold a professional social work qualification and have experience in foster care services.

If the complaint is against the Area Director, then the Operations Director or CEO will be involved in identifying an independent person.

The independent person will interview persons involved in the complaint and will have access to policies and procedures and, with relevant permission, access to the foster carer's and/or the child/young person's, case records. They will prepare a report of their investigation, including conclusions and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint. This report should be completed within 28 days of the independent person's appointment, unless it is agreed with the complainant that this period may be extended.

The Operations Director, or the CEO if the complaint relates to the Area Director, will consider the independent person's report, and write within ten days of its receipt to the complainant setting out their proposals for resolving the complaint.

This marks the end of the complaints process. If the complainant is not happy with the outcome, or indeed at any stage of the process, they can contact Ofsted.

Appointment of Independent Persons

If a complaint is made against the Area Director, Responsible Individual or the Registered Manager then the other Capstone Group Directors/CEO will be involved in identifying an independent senior person to act as a Complaints Officer. These may be staff from other regions not involved in the complaint or someone who is totally independent of the Agency.

Peter Battle, CEO, can be contacted via email if a complaint relates to the Area Director. His email is Peter.Battle@capstonefostercare.co.uk.

Any recommendation made by the person investigating a complaint will be considered by an appropriate Director for the necessary course of action and Ofsted will be informed of the outcome immediately.

Complaints can also be made direct to Ofsted. Their contact details are:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate 4
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel.: 0300 123 1231

Capstone Foster Care (South West) Ltd			
Responsible Individual:	Steve Blackwood		
Registered Manager:	Karen Marks		
Designated Safeguarding Officer:	Karen Marks		
Designated Complaints Officer:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Karen Marks</td> <td> Unit 5, Scott Law House Lynch Road Business Park Berkeley Gloucestershire GL13 9TA Tel: 01454 423 820 Mobile: 07584 311 989 </td> </tr> </table>	Karen Marks	Unit 5, Scott Law House Lynch Road Business Park Berkeley Gloucestershire GL13 9TA Tel: 01454 423 820 Mobile: 07584 311 989
Karen Marks	Unit 5, Scott Law House Lynch Road Business Park Berkeley Gloucestershire GL13 9TA Tel: 01454 423 820 Mobile: 07584 311 989		
Out of Hours Numbers:	Bristol/Gloucestershire & Somerset/Wiltshire carers – Tel: 01373 836699 Press 9 when prompted Devon/Cornwall & Hampshire/Dorset carers – Tel: 01626 323840 Press 9 when prompted		

Capstone South West Offices	
Bristol & Gloucestershire Office Unit 5, Scott-Law House Lynch Road Business Park Berkeley Gloucestershire GL13 9TA Tel: 01454 423 820	Hampshire Office Room 3, Basepoint Aviation Business Park Enterprise Close Christchurch Dorset B23 6NX Tel: 01425 475 701
	Devon Virtual Office Basepoint Yeoford Way Marsh Barton Trading Estate Exeter EX2 8LB Tel: 01626 323840