



Capstone Foster Care North Ltd

Statement of Purpose

July 2022

Registered Office Address:

Capstone Foster Care North Ltd
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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 North Ltd (Capstone North) 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

Capstone North also strives to follow the best practices outlined in the UK Joint Working Party on Foster Care: National Standards for Foster Care and Code of Practice on the Recruitment, Approval, Training, Management and Support of Foster Carers (NFCA – now Fostering Network -1999).

The Statement of Purpose produced in accordance with 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 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 North 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 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 NORTH LTD

Background

Capstone Foster Care North Ltd is an independent fostering agency that provides fostering services for looked after children and young people 0-18. We believe that, usually, 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 North 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 (either heterosexual or same sex) 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 who do not practise a faith.

Capstone Foster Care may work 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 North 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.

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 North'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 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 North's Foster Carers.

Our Mission

The mission and the commitment of Capstone North 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.

STATUS AND CONSTITUTION OF CAPSTONE NORTH

Capstone Foster Care Ltd operates across four regions: North, South West, Midlands and the South East. Capstone North came to fruition following the acquisition of four separate agencies Premier Foster Care, Foster Care Options, Classic Foster Care and Fostering Yorkshire. Capstone North is registered and inspected by Ofsted (Registration SC065333). Its current Ofsted rating is Outstanding.

Capstone North Foster Carers are based across the North and are served by teams based in four local offices, Heywood, Oldham, Bradford and Barnsley.

Capstone Foster Care Ltd's 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

Capstone North discharges the functions of local authorities in connection with the placing of children with Foster Carers. Capstone North 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 agencies accounts,
- Fostering Panel members on a central list, who meet regularly for training and Panel business,
- Panel members, who 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, Capstone North have 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 direct work with children, specialist consultants in therapy, 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.

Capstone Foster Care (North) Ltd has organisational membership with:

- CoramBAAF (Membership No: FMIFP/41506)
- Fostering Network (Membership No. C770) corporate and individual membership for each foster carer
- NAFP (National Association of Fostering Providers)
- Individual membership for each member of staff with Foster Talk

STANDARD OF CARE

Capstone North 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 to help ensure they are more likely to achieve their full potential.

At Capstone North 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.
- Each foster carer's approval status is reviewed at least annually.
- Capstone North 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 North 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 families' care.

- Contact is maintained, if requested, for children and young people who leave a placement with Capstone North.
- Capstone North Central List/Fostering Panel members are fully vetted and offered on-going training.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Capstone North 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. We have two educationalists employed to support this aim.

Foster Carers will have safe caring statements and risk assessments 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 partnership with other agencies, local authorities, health and social services, parents, and 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 and their wishes and feelings prior to any placement being made with Capstone North 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 North 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.
- Ensure that all Foster Carers have access to and attend regular training and support groups and encourage them to comply with National Minimum 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 every 4 weeks), 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 needs and 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.

COMMITTED TO EQUALITY & VALUING DIVERSITY

Capstone Foster Care (North) 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 challenge 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.

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)
- Peter Battle (CEO)
- Catherine Lockett (Consultant)

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 NORTH

All placements made at Capstone North 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. Capstone North recognises 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 might need long term care, or the plan may be adoption.

Capstone North 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. Capstone North 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 Foster Care (North)'s recruitment strategy reflects the needs of the regional demographics. Where black and minority ethnic children require a placement Capstone North 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 North 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 to meet those needs.

Range of placements:

Capstone North 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 for a child or children which is needed in an emergency but will still be matched with a carer using our high standards

Short-term placements

A placement that is made for any purpose, such as assessment, bridging or remand, 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. A short-term placement may become a long-term placement if the care plan of the child changes and the Foster carer and the other Professionals involved feel this might be the best option.

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. Many Foster Carers prefer to have children placed with them on a long-term basis; giving the child permanency and progressing them on to independent living once they have developed the skills necessary 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 North has an on-going commitment to recruit Foster Carers for this role.

Parent and child placement

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 1 child. Capstone North ensure that Parent and Child Carers are appropriately trained and equipped to provide short or long-term placements for both parent and child.

Sibling group placements

Capstone North advocates keeping siblings together within a family environment unless it is deemed inappropriate by the placing authority. Capstone North is committed to ensuring that where possible siblings groups are placed together, and the agency is able to offer a range of sibling group placements.

Solo placements

Where a child has additional and complex needs, Capstone North have Foster Carers who can offer solo placements.

Bridging placements

Capstone North has Foster Carers who will work with children and birth families towards preparing children for a return home, adoption, long-term fostering, future placements, or work to plans aimed at supporting them into semi-independent living.

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 North 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

Capstone North have launched a new service called a Multi-Assessment Treatment Service (MATS) for children and young people who have very complex needs and/or behaviours. The MATS service is led by a Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist and a multi-disciplinary team to work with the child therapeutically, helping children recover from the trauma they have experienced.

More information is available in our MATS 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 various 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.

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 People's Personal Guide/ Handbooks
- Children's support workers to undertake specific pieces of work with children
- Educational support teachers to enhance children's achievement in school and college
- 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

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 (at least monthly) 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 North staff members, Foster Carers and children/young people 24 hours a day throughout the year.

Independent support

Foster Carers are given individual membership of Fostering Network. This allows them access to advice and support, including legal advice, independent of the Agency. The membership includes:

- Foster Carer Legal Advice Helpline
- Foster Carer Advice Line
- 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. A number of 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 in contact with our Foster Carers through our newsletter, *Embrace*. We also have send out a North Newsletter on a regular basis. These feature developments within foster care, forthcoming training opportunities and information regarding what's happening within Capstone North and the service we offer.

We also have an informative website which carers can access.

Respite/Breaks from Care

As part of the support package, Foster Carers can request breaks from care. Capstone North 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 North each Carer gets 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 been negotiated with relevant LA and are in the child's interests.

Initial & Ongoing training

Foster Carers are given preparatory (Skills to Foster and Therapeutic Parenting training) and ongoing training in a range of subjects. Capstone North expects all carers to complete a range of core and specialist training as post recruitment. Some examples of our training programme includes ;Behaviour Management, Therapeutic Fostering, Missing from Care, Radicalisation, CSE, Safer Caring, Recording, First Aid. Capstone North uses face to face training and a comprehensive online training facility.

Fostering allowance /fees

Capstone North operates to the Framework Contract for Independent Fostering agencies. This ensures fees are transparent and inclusive. Capstone North 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 particular 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 and are included within the Foster Carer Agreement.

Foster Carer's 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 providers aware that they are fostering to ensure they are appropriately covered.

MATCHING

All placements are carefully 'matched' to ensure that the identified 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 North 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 North we work 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 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

RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT

Capstone North 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 North advertises regularly for 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 our Recruitment Coordinator 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 be available to give general information and will also try to answer any initial queries. If the Recruitment Coordinators are not able to do so, a member of the social work team will return their call within two working days. Information about fostering will be sent to the enquirer within 3 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 make themselves available to undertake a comprehensive CoramBAAF Form F assessment, 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

Application and Initial Visit

- When there is an enquiry to foster prospective foster carer, details are logged on our database and the Recruitment Coordinator will establish the applicant's motivation to foster, the bedroom situation, work commitments, preferred approval range, child care experience and inform the enquirer of expectations of Foster Carers by local authorities and Capstone North.
- 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 applicants' motivation to foster. They are asked in detail about any previous relationships, convictions and possible restrictions to foster.
- Applicants are informed of the need for health checks, local authority checks and DBS checks.
- An application form and DBS check form may be completed at this stage if it is likely that the applicants are progressing to the assessment stage.
- The Quality Assurance and Recruitment Manager will decide whether the applicant 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. Statutory checks references and medicals 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 North run 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 National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers 2013.

The assessor ensures that the applicants are booked onto the Skills to Foster Training. 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 medicals and references from previous partners and friends. National Minimum Standards 2011, 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.
- 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 will be obtained.
- A medical examination undertaken by the applicant's own GP and reviewed by our Agency Medical Advisor
- A minimum of 2 personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process.
- Interviews will be carried out with birth children and any other adults in the household.
- Where possible interviews will be carried out with previous partners.

Gathering evidence or information

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

- The applicants own home.
- During the 'Skills to Foster' preparation course.
- In other relevant settings e.g. workplace, if appropriate.
- The homes of former partners (where appropriate) and those of referees

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

- Eco-maps, family trees and chronologies to gain information on applicant's motivation to foster and how their past history may impact on fostering.
- References from other adults who can corroborate the applicants' ability to relate to and care for children
- Discussion
- Records and reports
- Case studies
- Role playing and simulation
- Skills to Foster preparation course
- Homework assignments
- The assessment will include a recommendation by the Capstone North 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
- Employer and/or current fostering organisation references
- School/health visitor reports (on own child, if appropriate)
- Medical reports
- Current employment references
- References from all previous employment involving children and vulnerable adults
- 2 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 North 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.

All Form F reports go through our quality assurance process 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.

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.

Post Panel

After the Panel, applicants are told the recommendation and the next steps in terms of the Agency Decision Makers role. A Capstone North staff member 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 decision verbally and they receive written confirmation within regulatory timescales.

Upon approval Capstone North assigns a Supervising Social Worker (SSW) to support the Foster Carer in the fostering task. The Area Manager and the SSW complete post-approval visit and goes through an induction. This induction process involves:

- Issuing the foster carer with the Carer Handbook and Capstone North Policies & Procedures
- 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 - caring for a child's/young person's personal, emotional and developmental needs.

The main tasks for a foster carer in Capstone North 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 contribute towards 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 Capstone North 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 North's SSWs understand that they have a responsibility for ensuring that the child in placement's needs 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 Fostering Talk (financed by Capstone North) 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 North 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 North we maintain low caseloads so that 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 (NMS 21) 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, and usually two, unannounced visit by the SSW to the foster carer's home per year.

Foster Carers 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 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, their achievements 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 North 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 North will ensure that:

- All Capstone North 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 North, 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.
- 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 available to partners and 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 North 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 North 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 complete the workbook within one year of approval.

Aims of the Capstone North'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 and sexual 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 Service Regulations 2011 (17 (1)) states 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 state 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 North 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 North Foster Care 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 Capstone North qualified social work staff along with an experienced Foster Carer. 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 – 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 North has a dedicated training budget. It is essential for all Capstone North 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 North 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.

- A typical training programme includes the following courses:
 - Attachment and Child development (Core training)
 - First Aid (Core training)
 - Safer Caring (Core training)
 - Managing Allegations
 - Recording and Reporting (Core training)
 - Safeguarding/Child Protection (Core training)
 - Equality and Diversity (Core training)
 - Internet Safety (Core Training)
 - Education and Looked After Children
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
 - Sanctuary Seeking Children
 - County Lines and gang Awareness
 - Radicalisation
 - Mermaids – Transgender awareness
 - LGBT
 - Working with Sexually Abused Children
 - Working Towards Independence
 - Promoting Positive contact
 - A Child's Journey Through Placement
 - Therapeutic Parenting
 - Separation and Loss
 - Emotional Trauma
 - Sensory Processing
 - Parent and Child Placements
 - Transitions and moving on

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 North is comprised of three tiers:

- Pre-approval training

- Induction – New carer and core training
- Ongoing personal development 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 supervision and 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. The Personal Development Plan is reviewed annually at the foster carer review.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Capstone North 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 children who are looked after, 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 at least annually (or more often as required).

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

At Capstone North 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 North or a person acting on their behalf.
- b) A parent of him or her or person with parental responsibility.
- c) Any Capstone North Foster Carer or family member.
- d) Any Capstone North staff member.
- e) Any person which Capstone North 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, Registered Manager or Regional Director. Alternatively, you can use one of our leaflets and return it to us or email us at: enquiries@capstonefostercare.co.uk.

The complaints procedure

There is a maximum of three stages, but a complaint can be resolved and completed at any stage, depending on whether the people involved agree on the outcome.

Stage 1 (informal)

Most complaints are resolved at this stage and Capstone North will always try and resolve a complaint at stage 1 by meeting face to face with the complainant and, if appropriate, a mediator.

- a) The meeting should take place within 10 working days from the time of receiving the complaint.
- b) If the problem cannot be resolved informally and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, the complaint will move to stage 2.
- c) If the complainant is a child, he/she will be given help to express his/her views clearly, with the help of an advocate if necessary.

Stage 2 (formal)

The designated complaints officer or a senior worker/ manager will be tasked to investigate the complaint, or in some cases this may be an independent person, who would consider the complaint and formulate a response within 28 days. Before the expiry of the 28-day period the agency should inform the following persons:

- a) The complainant
- b) If different, the person on whose behalf the complaint was made, unless the agency considers he/she is not of sufficient understanding, or that it might be likely to cause serious harm to his/her health or emotional condition
- c) The independent person (as identified by Capstone North and not associated with the complaint)
- d) Any other person whom Capstone North considers has sufficient interest in the case (e.g. in the case of a looked after child, the responsible authority)
- e) The Fostering Panel where appropriate

The information should include the proposed result of the agency's consideration of the complaint. At the same time, the complainant should be informed of his/her right to ask, within 28 days, to have the complaint referred further to a complaints panel if he/she is unhappy with the agency's decision.

Stage 3 (formal)

If the complainant does exercise his/her right to stage 3 and informs the Agency (in writing and within 28 days of completion of the stage 2 response) that he/she is dissatisfied, the matter should be referred to a complaints panel, where he/she may be able to have their complaint considered. The panel should include an independent person (who may not necessarily be the same person who acted as an independent person at the first stage). Within 24 hours of the panel meeting their recommendations and their reasons for reaching such recommendations should be sent to:

- a) The Directors of Capstone North
- b) The complainant
- c) The (original) independent person, if different from the independent person on the panel
- d) Any other person whom the agency considers has sufficient interest in the case (e.g. the Local Authority)
- e) The Fostering Panel where appropriate

Appointment of Independent Persons

If a complaint is made against the Regional Director, Responsible Individual or the Register Manager then the other Capstone North 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.

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 (North) Ltd			
Responsible Individual:	Debbie Tomlinson			01706 623540
Registered Manager:	Bev Maymond	Heywood Office		01706 623540
Designated Safeguarding Officer:	Bev Maymond	Heywood Office		01706 623540
Designated Complaints Officer:	Designated complaints officer	Heywood Office		01706 623540
Out of Hours Numbers:		01457 829400		
	Our main Regional offices are:			
<u>Heywood Office</u>	<u>Bradford Office</u>	<u>Barnsley Office</u>	<u>Hull Office</u>	
Longford House Hall St Heywood Rochdale OL10 1DP	Cyprus House 51 -53 New Line Bradford BD10 9AS	Unit 16 Kendray Business Centre Thornton Road Barnsley S70 3NA	Bizhub Hull Melton Court Gibson Lane Melton East Yorkshire HU14 3HH	
01706 623540	01274 622622	01226 771666	01482 638400	