



**Capstone Foster Care (South East) Ltd
Midlands Region**

Statement of Purpose

June 2021

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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 SE Ltd, Midlands Region (referred to as “Capstone Foster Care Midlands” in this document) is run in accordance with the principles outlined in the following National Legislation and Policy Framework:

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004 (and its later amendments)
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, amended July 2013 and April 2014
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England) 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children & Families Act 2014
- 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 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 Foster Care Midlands 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 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. You will find in this Statement of Purpose information about our approach to fostering and a summary of our services. 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 EAST) LTD

Background

Capstone Foster Care Midlands is an independent fostering agency that provides fostering services for looked after children and young people. We believe that the very best environment for a child/young person to grow up in is a family. Unfortunately, not all children and young people are able to live with their own families, and they need an alternative. We recruit and train foster families to care for these children until they reach an age where they can look after themselves. 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, stepchildren or no children at all; some are people of religious faith and some who do not practise a faith.

Capstone 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.

Capstone works closely with local authorities and families to ensure that, wherever possible, children remain at home with their families and should foster care be necessary, that a range of placements are available to meet their needs appropriately. Capstone 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 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 Foster Care Midlands supports around 90 carers and around 150 children and young people.

Our Goal

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

Our Focus

Capstone Foster Care'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 Foster Care foster carers.

Our Mission

The mission and the commitment of Capstone Foster Care is to promote the growth and development of children and young adults, who are looked after by our foster carers, in line with the five outcomes described in the 'Every Child Matters' National Government Policy Framework by supporting each child to have healthy lifestyle, safe environment, to enjoy and achieve in education, to contribute positively in community and have economic well-being, whilst promoting and strengthening the family unit. 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

Capstone Foster Care Midlands is part of Capstone Foster Care (South East) Limited which is a private limited company constituted under The Companies Act Company Number 4486203. It is a part of the Parent Company Capstone Foster Care Limited.

Capstone operates across four regions: South East, South West, Midlands and North. Capstone commenced operations in 2002 (as Vision Fostering) and since this time has grown steadily. Capstone is registered and inspected by Ofsted (Registration URN SC1237336).

Our foster carers are based across the West and East Midlands with our main office being located in Kings Norton, Birmingham with satellite offices in Leicester and Stoke.

Capstone Foster Care's Board of Directors are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, including:

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

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

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

- The Responsible Individual, who has overall management responsibility for the organisation and its members, responsible for complaints and safeguarding.
- The Registered Manager, who is responsible for the day to day running of the Agency,
- Solicitors, who will handle all legal aspects of the agency.
- Accountants, who will give on-going financial advice and audit the agencies accounts,
- Fostering Panel members on a central list who meet regularly for training and Panel business.
- Panel members will provide a strong Quality Assurance for the organisation.
- Administrators, responsible for records and administration in line with the agencies policies and Procedures.
- In addition to permanent staff, Capstone will have a pool of people who will work for the agency on a self-employed basis across a variety of roles. e.g. social Workers completing assessments of prospective foster carers, independent investigations of formal complaints or direct work to support a child, 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.

Capstone Foster Care SE Ltd has organisational membership with:

- Coram/BAAF (Membership No: 37612)
- Fostering Network (Membership No. C802)
- NAFP (National Association of Fostering Providers)
- Individual membership for each foster carer with Foster Talk

EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP TRUST

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)
- 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 Ownership 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.

STANDARD OF CARE

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

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

- Ensuring that only those foster carers who are able to evidence commitment to the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and young people are approved.
- Ensuring that Capstone Central List/Fostering Panel members are fully vetted and offered on-going training.
- Ensure that each foster carer's approval status is reviewed at least annually.
- Ensuring that Capstone and its foster carers support the maintenance of family contacts, friendships and community contacts for children and young people in placement.
- Ensuring that an anti-discriminatory approach is taken in providing for individual needs, including gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture.
- Ensuring that Capstone and its foster carers work collaboratively with the children, young people, their families, local authorities and other agencies.
- Ensuring that there is an on-going commitment to promoting and safeguarding each child and young person's emotional and physical well-being, thus protecting them from all forms of abuse.
- Ensuring that as far as possible, the views and feelings of each child or young person are sought and they are involved in the decisions being made about them, with access to advocacy services where appropriate.
- Ensuring each child or young person is provided with appropriate health care and given an opportunity to participate in any decisions about their health.
- Ensuring each child or young person has full access to educational resources, and positively promoting achievement and independence.
- Ensuring that each child or young person has appropriate support in preparing them for long-term fostering or adoption, or developing their skills for independent living, where appropriate.
- Ensuring that where possible, on-going assistance and support is made available, as agreed by the local authority, to children and their families in the event of a young person returning to their birth families care.
- Ensuring that contact is maintained, if requested, for children and young people who leave a placement with Capstone.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Capstone Foster Care will work in partnership with local authorities who commission our services on an individual 'spot purchase' basis or through framework agreements at local and national levels. Our service is committed to multiagency 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 secure, caring and nurturing home environment.

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

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

Our core objectives are:

- To develop an overall fostering service where there is respect for and recognition of the importance of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language of children and young people and their families and foster carers.
- To promote effective working partnership with other agencies, local authorities / health and social services, parents, foster carers, to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children.
- To 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 foster carers.
- To 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.
- To provide stability in the lives of children and young people in our care and enable them to fulfil their potential.
- Commitment and focus on continuous service improvement, quality assurance and high-quality service provision.
- To value diversity by aiming to recruit and retain a wide range of carers from diverse backgrounds so that Capstone Foster Care can offer appropriate placements for children and young people.
- To promote a child-centred approach where the child or young person's safety and welfare come first.
- To respect and promote the racial, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of foster carers and the children and young people. To provide a sensitive approach and respect for other cultures and diversity in promoting the needs of such individuals within our agency and community.

- To ensure that the views of children and young people placed with our foster carers are regularly sought and given due consideration, irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability etc.
- To ensure that all foster carers have access to and attend regular, on-going training and support groups and encourage them to comply with national standards. To acknowledge the hard work, skills and knowledge of our foster carers and provide them with a high level of support, training and encouragement.
- To support all foster carers in remaining child focused whilst working with and alongside birth families.
- To provide all foster carers with regular supervision (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/achieving outcomes. The foster carers are provided guidance and are supported by a fully qualified designated supervising social worker (SSW).
- To guarantee a commitment 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.
- To 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
- To 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 and all its subsidiaries are committed to providing a holistic service which embrace diversity and promote 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

Capstone Foster Care Midlands is part of Capstone Foster Care (South East) Limited, the company has a Board of Directors.

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

The Board of Directors are supported by a Senior Management Team which meets monthly to direct and monitor the operational and financial performance of the company's activities, business planning and policy development.

Each level of the organisation has a forum for discussion and monitoring of relevant issues appertaining to that particular level. In addition, there are local staff team meetings, attended by managers, social

workers and administrative support staff. Social workers and managers also hold regular practice meetings and training events.

The Senior Management Team comprises of the CEO, Directors, Area Directors and Registered Manager who are responsible for the day-to-day management and strategic development of the organisation. All members of the senior management are very experienced in their field and their qualifications include BSC (Hons), BA (Hons, PGCE, MSW, MBA, NVQ4, Diploma in Management Levels 4, 5 and 7.

The Area Directors are supported by a qualified and experienced team and each region is supported with a range of dedicated support services. The Recruitment and Panel teams (Operations) are responsible for the assessment and approval of foster carers in their respective region. A dedicated Placements Team in each region is responsible for the processing and matching of placements in accordance with legislation and internal standards.

We have a wide range of qualified social workers with post qualifying experience in local authorities and experience in child protection work within the health service and private / voluntary sectors. All social workers hold a recognised social work qualification and are Social Work England registered. Administration staff are qualified/experienced in the use of a range of IT software and data management systems and are appropriately qualified for the tasks, including the use of our database and recording system CHARMS.

All staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals as well as access to regular training and development.

Each region also has a pool of professionals who work for the organisation on an independent, freelance basis across a variety of roles, which include Form F assessors, independent investigators of formal complaints, Central List/Fostering Panel members and supervised contact supervisors. All independent / freelance workers are required to hold appropriate qualifications and have previous experience related to the work they are undertaking. A range of pre-employment checks are carried out on all staff including references and enhanced DBS checks in line with our safer recruitment policy.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY CAPSTONE FOSTER CARE

All placements made at Capstone Foster Care 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 Foster Care 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 has to be prepared for adoption.

Capstone Foster Care 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 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

Black & Minority Ethnic Children and Young People

Capstone Foster Care provides excellent services to children and young people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. We have an extensive ethnic mix of qualified social workers and foster carers, from different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds and who speak different languages.

Capstone Foster Care 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 will seek to provide links in order to meet a 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.

Capstone Foster Care aims to offer the following range of placements:

At Capstone we strongly believe that investing in children's futures will enable them to meet their full potential and achieve the "Five Outcomes" as stipulated in the Children Act 2004. Therefore, we aim to provide a high standard of services for children, young people, their families, local authorities and foster carers.

Local Authorities

Capstone 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. Capstone Foster Care provides a 24-hour a day emergency service. 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 assessment, bridging or remand, which is planned but not intended to provide a long-term placement for the child / young person. 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, 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 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 has an on-going commitment to recruit foster carers for this role.

Parent and child placement

This type of placement is for any parent who needs support and guidance in caring for their own child. Support, observation and assessment work can be carried out on behalf of the local authority. If required, qualified staff can prepare court reports and statements. Capstone provides foster carers who are equipped to provide short- or long-term placements for parent and child, regardless of the age of the parent. These carers will be trained to undertake and/or contribute to parenting assessments.

Sibling group placements

Sibling placements are for brothers and sisters who are placed together in a foster care household. Capstone Foster Care 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 siblings groups are placed together, and the agency is able to offer sibling group placements. We are able to offer carers who can take larger sibling groups to ensure that children do not need to be separated.

Solo placements

Placements where the child has additional and complex needs resulting in the foster carers having to offer constant supervision and support which would preclude the placement of another foster child in the same household.

Bridging placements

Capstone has foster carers who will work with children and birth families towards preparing children for adoption, long-term fostering, future placements or work to plans aimed at supporting them into (semi) independent living.

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 Foster Care 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

For children and young people who have very complex needs and / or behaviours that are especially challenging. These placements are supported by experienced foster carers.

Respite placements

Respite placements are provided to give parents a break or offer additional support if they do not have their own support network. In addition, respite is also offered to our own foster carers and is available in order to support placement demands and needs.

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 countries, may not speak English and can be frightened and confused. Foster carers are needed in most areas in the UK who can provide a safe, stable and supportive home to these children / young people.

Remand placements

Remand foster carers look after young people who are remanded by the courts into public care. These placements are usually short term and require the foster carer to work closely with the youth justice/offending teams

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:

- Capstone's Children and Young People's Personal Guide/ Handbooks.
- 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
- Participate in Capstone's survey, training, fostering panel and recruitment.

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

Independent support

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

- Foster Carer 24-hour Legal Advice Helpline
- Arrest and Interview Assistance
- Foster Carer Legal Expenses Insurance
- Foster Carer Accountancy Advice Helpline
- Foster Carer 24-hour Counselling Helpline
- Foster Carer Tax Advice
- Foster Carer Education Advisory Service
- Foster Carer Social Work Support Line
- Foster Carer Independent Financial Advice
- Foster Carer Medical and First Aid Helpline
- Foster Carer Discounts
- Foster Carer Online Forum
- Foster Talk Magazine

Local foster carers support group

Our foster carers are encouraged to attend their local support group along with their supervising social worker. These are held at local offices. A number of support groups are organised for foster carers providing expert speakers on matters of interest and an opportunity for foster carers to share and problem solve together. We do bi-monthly support groups for each office. In addition to this, newly approved foster carers can be supported by being 'linked up' with experienced foster carers as 'buddies'.

Newsletters and website

We maintain in contact with our foster carers through our newsletter, Embrace. These feature developments within foster care, forthcoming training opportunities and information regarding what's

happening within Capstone and the service we offer. Carers foster have the opportunity to contribute material and information to these newsletters.

2 weeks respite

As part of the support package, foster carers will be entitled to payment for 2 weeks respite, which is paid in two instalments in a year and is, calculated on pro rata basis. Foster carers can request respite breaks and Capstone will work together with foster carer and local authority to identify a respite placement for a child/young person keeping their best interest in mind.

Initial & Ongoing training

Foster carer are given preparatory (Skills to Foster) and ongoing training in a range of subjects. Some examples of our extensive training programme includes, for instance, Caring for a child who has been sexually abused, court processes, safe care, recording skills, first aid. See further details below.

Fostering allowance /fees

Capstone operates to the Framework Contract for Independent Fostering agencies. This ensures fees are transparent and inclusive. Capstone 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, for example, additional educational support, 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 and takes effect from 1st April. 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 holders aware that they are fostering to ensure they are appropriately covered.

MATCHING PROCESS

All placements are closely 'matched' to ensure that the needs of the children and young people are met by the skills and experience of foster carers. Many of our foster carers have a wealth of experience or specialisms. Capstone has designated Placements and Duty Co-Ordinators in the Referral and 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 Foster Care we recognise the importance of carefully matching placement referrals for children and young people with our foster families. We work closely and in partnership with the referring local authority to ensure that the proposed placement supports the following:

- Reflects the expressed wishes of the child/ren
- Takes into account the wishes of the child's family
- Will be able to meet the child's physical, educational, emotional, health, cultural, religious and social needs
- Will be able to 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

Capstone also provides a placement service out of hours which means that children and young people can be placed with foster carers during the night.

RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT

Capstone Foster Care 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 advertise regularly for foster carers in many regions. We aim to recruit carers to meet the needs identified in each area. We also expect to receive applications from people who have heard of our comprehensive support package 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 / mail 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 one working day. Information about fostering will be sent to the enquirer within 48 hours of the enquiry.

To continue with application, enquirers will be told that:

- They must have sufficient room to care for a looked after child.
- Applicants must be over 21 years of age.
- They must be prepared to undertake an Enhanced DBS, health and local authority checks, and provide names of suitable referees, including a referee from any current or any previous employment related to children and consent to ex partners being contacted.
- They must be prepared to undertake a comprehensive BAAF Form F assessment, attend preparatory training and commit to attend training and support groups following approval.
- Will be required to facilitate contact between the looked after child and his or her family members.

Application and Initial Visit

- When there is an enquiry to foster then their 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 Foster Care.
- 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 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 manager who oversees foster carer recruitment together with the Recruitment Team will decide whether the applicant is suitable to progress to the Form F assessment stage.
- 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 their assessment. Applicants are advised to return application forms as quickly as possible and 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 are initiated.

The Assessment Process

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

The 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.

The assessor ensures further that the applicants are aware of the Skills to Foster 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 checks from the DBS, local authority and the GP. National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require the fostering service to undertake statutory checks as part of the assessment process. These are:-

- A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on all people who reside in the household who are over 18 and any persons staying overnight or supporting on a regular basis.
- Local authority and other agency 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.
- A minimum of three personal referees (one of whom should be a family member) 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's assessing social worker will undertake the assessment in the following settings:

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

A variety of techniques will be used to gather evidence or information regarding the applicants' suitability to foster. 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.
- Witness statements from other adults who can corroborate the applicants' 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
- Homework assignments
- The assessment will include a recommendation by the Capstone 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
- Three personal references of which at least two will be visited by a social worker
- 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 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 prospective foster carer reports (Coram BAAF Form F reports) go through our quality assurance to ensure we maintain an excellent standard of assessment, and safe care practice. Once completed a Fostering Panel date is identified and allocated.

Approval

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

All assessments are considered by a properly constituted Fostering Panel, which makes recommendations to the agency regarding the suitability of the applicant to be a foster carer. This may include any additional terms that the Panel considers should apply to a foster carer's approval status. The Agency Decision Maker takes full account of the Panel's recommendations when reaching their decision. Prospective carers are expected to attend the Panel.

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

Post Panel Induction

After the Panel meeting applicants are told what happens next and a Capstone staff member helps to answer any 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 a letter of confirmation within two working days.

Upon approval Capstone assigns a supervising social worker to support the foster carer in the fostering task. Supervising Social Worker completes post approval visit and goes through an induction. This induction process involves:

- Email or giving the Foster Carer the Foster Carers Handbook
- 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.

Review of Approval

The Agency undertakes competency based first reviews based on Regulations, Standards & Statutory Guidance. In accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, all foster carers and their approval status is reviewed annually. The annual review determines whether approval of the foster carers should be renewed and / or whether there should be any changes made. The review includes written feedback reports from the carer's supervising social worker, the local authority social worker, children and young people in placement, children of the household, and the foster carers themselves.

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 are as follows:

- To provide an environment that is stable, safe and supportive for a child or young person in their care.
- To be supportive of contact to enable the child or young person to stay in touch with family members or people who are important to them, as guided by the care plan.
- To promote the child's health, emotional, social and educational development.
- To be sensitive to and promote the child or young person's cultural identity, confidence and self-esteem.
- To be an advocate for children and young people empowering them to make decisions.
- To provide safe boundaries in which children and young people can be responsible and learn to have positive and consistent behaviour.
- Work as part of a team at Capstone 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 Foster Care's supervising social workers understand that they have a responsibility for ensuring that the child in placement's needs are paramount, even though they do not have case management responsibility for the child. The supervising social worker 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 Foster Care) which provides excellent up-to-date information, advice and 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 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.

Our carers make a real difference. At Capstone Foster Care we believe that their valuable input deserves rewarding. We do this in several ways including celebrating the achievements of our foster carers and ensuring that they are given a professional service from all aspects of the agency. This is in order to ensure that they can carry out the day-to-day role of being professional foster carers and providing a quality placement to the young people placed with them. Together we work as a team to ensure we can help children and young people have the best outcomes possible during their time with their foster carers and the agency.

Named Supervising Social Worker

All foster carers have an identified supervising social worker (SSW). The SSW visits foster carers regularly (NMS21) 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.

Each of our foster carers has a professionally qualified dedicated Supervising Social Worker to ensure that our carers are fully supported. The Supervising Social Workers are always the first port of call for our foster carers.

Capstone recognises that 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.

Supervising Social Workers are responsible for ensuring that the care offered to children in foster care meets the required standards. Supervising Social Workers will visit and telephone the foster carer regularly. 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 Supervising Social Worker to the foster carer's home per year.

Foster Carers Reviews

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

The main aim of the annual review is to determine whether the foster carer's approval continues to be suitable to foster and whether there should be any changes in the terms of the approval.

The annual review 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 Supervising Social Worker and the Reviewing Officer.

Capstone will ensure that:

- All Capstone foster carers have a Supervising Social Worker who fulfils the function of a line manager and provides support. The Supervising Social Worker's visits are treated as a supervision session with an agenda and record of the meeting.
- The foster carer's training, support and development needs are regularly reviewed, and their progress appraised at the foster carer's annual review.
- Foster carers have access to key personnel within Capstone, 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 managers and Supervising Social Workers.
- Capstone seeks the views of specific groups of foster carers (e.g. black and minority ethnic carers or male carers) on their support needs which may be met in a variety of ways through specific training, support groups, email groups or mentoring.
- Foster carers are also offered support through a counselling service or an independent supporter for foster carers if they are dealing with a particularly stressful situation (e.g. when an allegation has been made). This is likely to be provided via their Foster Talk membership.
- Foster carers are expected, enabled and encouraged to attend training sessions and support groups.
- Support is made available to partners and sons and daughters of foster carers through individual support by the Supervising Social Worker or support groups in recognition of the involvement of all members of the family in the fostering task.

FOSTERING PANEL

Capstone Foster Care's Fostering Panel makes recommendations regarding the recruitment, approval, annual review, re-approval and / or termination of approval of foster carers.

Membership of the Panel

In accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, Capstone's Fostering Panel members are people from the Agency's central list. The central list includes members of various backgrounds and professions who have knowledge and experience relevant to their considering cases and making recommendations.

Capstone has also appointed a member of the central list as Fostering Panel Vice-Chair who chairs Panel meetings if the Panel Chair is not in attendance or the post of Chair is vacant.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

At Capstone Foster Care 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 Foster Care 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 appropriate timeframe of one-year post approval.

Aims of the training programme

- Equip foster carers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high quality care for the children and young people they look after.
- Ensure that all foster carers are given the necessary information and help to develop knowledge and skills to carry out their role and have appropriate opportunities for career development.
- Foster families are enabled and empowered to support and guide children and young people to achieve positive outcomes and reach their full potential.
- Any warning signs in relation to safe caring or placement disruption are identified early to safeguard the best interests of all parties.
- Foster carers can 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 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 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 qualified social work staff. In the case of couples, both must attend this training and undergo assessment and checks. The Agency recognises and values the contribution of existing foster carers to the recruitment process and actively supports their involvement in recruitment activity. The course runs over 2 days and is an integral element of the assessment process. Where appropriate a separate session is available (to children who foster) 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 has a dedicated training budget. It is essential for all Capstone foster carers to achieve the minimum level of knowledge and skills encapsulated in the Standards.

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

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

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 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 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:

- Behaviour Management - Core
- First Aid - Core
- Safe Care and Health & Safety - Core
- Safeguarding/ Child Protection (including radicalisation, CSE, Gangs, County Lines) - Core
- Fostering Changes – 12 week course
- Managing Actual & Potential Aggression
- Attachment
- Equality & Diversity
- Drug Awareness
- Working with Sexually Abused Children
- Unaccompanied Minors
- Working Towards Independence
- Stress Management

It is also important that foster carers can document and evidence their skills and knowledge throughout their fostering career. Learning and development within Capstone 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 supervising social workers and formally evaluated through annual reviews of the foster carer's terms of approval.

Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan, 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 by the Reviewing Officer, the Foster Carer and the Supervising Social Worker.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Capstone Foster Care has comprehensive foster carer policies, procedures and practice manuals in accordance with regulations. Our manuals (The Foster Carer's Handbook and our Social Workers' Policy Information) contain information on law, 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 manuals are updated annually (or more often as required).

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

At Capstone 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.

Who can make a complaint?

- a) Any child who is being looked after by Capstone or a person acting on their behalf.
- b) A parent of his or her or person with parental responsibility.
- c) Any Capstone or family member.
- d) Any Capstone staff member.
- e) Any person which Capstone 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 our office and ask to speak to the Complaint Officer or if he/she is not available, speak to a Senior Manager. Alternatively, you can use this leaflet and return it to us. You can also email us at: complaints@capstonefostercare.co.uk

Children may also contact the [Children's Commissioner](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk) on 020 7783 8330 or 0800 528 0731 or via the website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk.

Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

The complaints procedure

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 and 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 where someone has concerns can be settled by speaking to a person they normally deal with within our services, 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 foster carer(s), applicants, or child's file.

Formal Complaint Stage 1 – Regional Investigation

If someone is not satisfied with the informal response they get, or if they wish straightaway to complain formally to us, they can do so via the 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.

We 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 regional 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 to do this; Team Manager or QA Manager will investigate the complaint in the absence of the Registered Manager. 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. The investigation report and findings must be appropriately shared with all involved parties.

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

If the complaint involves the Registered Manager or Area Director

If the complaint involves the Registered Manager, then the Formal Stage 1 complaint should be directed to the relevant Area Director Tim Clayton via email: tim.clayton@capstonefostercare.co.uk

If the complaint relates to the Area Director, then Peter Battle – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) can be contacted via email: peter.battle@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 (external to the region/organisation, as required) to investigate the complaint. This person will be independent of the Ofsted registration, will hold a professional social work qualification and have experience in foster care services.

If the complaint is against the Area Director, then the 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 Area Director, or the CEO if the complaint relates to the Area Director, will consider the independent person’s report, and write within ten working 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.

Contact details of Ofsted:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate 4
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel. 03001231231

Capstone Foster Care (South East) Ltd – Midlands

Responsible Individual Jacci Kirkland

Registered Manager Vacant

Designated Safeguarding Officer Erin Campbell

Designated Complaints Officer Erin Campbell
Capstone Foster Care South East Ltd
28 The Green
Kings Norton
Birmingham
B38 8SD

Telephone No: 0121 374 2650
Mobile: 07563381929

Out of Hours Number 0121 374 2650

Our Local Offices are

<p>Registered Office Birmingham Office 28 The Green Kings Norton Birmingham B38 8SD</p> <p>Tel: 0121374 2650</p>	<p>Leicester Office The Old Rectory, Main Street, Glenfield, Leicester, LE3 8DG</p> <p>Tel: 0116 232 5115</p>	<p>Stoke Office Business Lodge, Trent House, 234 Victoria Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2LW</p> <p>Tel: 01782 390226</p>
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