



Information for Local Authorities TALAWA FOSTERING SERVICES – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

INTRODUCTION

Talawa Fostering Services is a steadily developing fostering agency. The Directors are Jan Lord and Sian Baptiste who between them have extensive experience in the field of substitute family placement, working with young people and business management. The Directors are committed to promoting the highest standards of care at all times, and maintaining the integrity of a child-centred approach is central to the Agency's service provision.

Talawa Fostering Services aims to serve the needs children and young people, including those of mixed ethnicity, by providing carers who will actively promote and nurture the ethnicity and identity of the children they are caring for. Our aim is to match as closely as possible the ethnicity of the carers to the children they are caring for.

Talawa Fostering Services will also aim to provide placements for groups of siblings who are entering the public care system. Too often, children who enter public care lose their ties with their brothers and sisters, when it is not possible to arrange for them to live together or within short distances from each other. Talawa Fostering Services will aim to recruit carers who can look after groups of children, ensuring that these most significant of family ties are not broken at the same time that children are being separated from their parents.

Both Directors' have direct experience of fostering over many years and this coupled with Jan's experience working as a manager in family placements informs Talawa Fostering Services' awareness of the varied and complex needs of children needing foster placements. As a professional agency, we aim to provide placements that meet the holistic needs of children. We believe that it is important that each child is cared for in an environment that ensures respect, dignity, safety and security.

It is essential that looked after children are given a voice and encouraged to comment on the services they receive. We aim to work in a respectful way with children, their birth families, our carers and other professionals.

Talawa Fostering Services believes that positive placements will aid positive outcomes for children and young people.

THE VALUES THAT UNDERPIN OUR WORK

In coming into the public care system, children face a tremendous amount of loss. Our service aims to recognise this, and to provide care in a way that will minimise unnecessary loss and provide children with as much continuity as possible. Understanding the impact on children of their life experiences before becoming 'looked after' is critical in this process. These issues are particularly significant for black and

minority ethnic children, and disabled children. We also recognise the stigma of being a ‘looked after’ child. Our aim is to enable children to fulfill their potential.

Talawa Fostering Services ensures that our carers receive appropriate training and support so they understand and work positively with the children’s experiences and needs.

Working in partnership is an important principle of the agency. We acknowledge that there is a power imbalance in the arrangements between the local authority, the agency, children and their families, and the carers. This will not prevent us from working in a spirit of partnership, where each party’s views will be listened to and acknowledged. Our expectation will be for open communication and sharing of information, however we will be mindful of our legal obligations and confidentiality considerations in general.

Each individual is unique and has an inherent right to develop their potential, regardless of their previous life experience.

Children have the right to be looked after by adults who offer them respect, concern, affection and experiences appropriate to their individual needs.

Adults need to respect the significance for the child of their birth family, their race, culture, religion and their origins.

SERVICE PROVISION - STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

The agency will place a high value on training and development for its carers. In line with the National Minimum Fostering Standards, foster carers and members of their household will be required to attend all core training as a minimum.

As part of our commitment to providing high quality support to children and their carers, each carer will have a named supervising social worker.

The safety and welfare of children will always be the paramount concerns of the agency. As such, all complaints and allegations will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

As our strap line suggests we believe that positive placements can lead to positive outcomes for children and young people, and therefore we are committed to the following:

Providing a service which has the child as the focus

Providing a service which values and respects carers and their families

Placing children with carers who will provide sensitive care; taking account of all of their needs, e.g. promoting education and physical and emotional well-being

Placements where children can be positively valued and supported, and nurtured in a safe environment

Promoting a service which positively provides placements to address the child’s cultural and racial heritage, including children of black and white parents

Providing carers who have a high commitment to ongoing training and development, with all household members fully involved in the process

Carers who can nurture the potential in children and build their self-esteem.

OUR CARERS WILL:

Help children/young people understand why they are looked after, to be as honest and sensitive as possible in their communications with children appropriate to their age and understanding;
Interact with young people on all levels, in order to build a trusting relationship;
Help to promote the child's dignity and nurture the development of positive self-image;
Help children and young people reach full potential educationally and socially;
Work with the children and young people at each child's own pace and in consideration of their feelings and opinions;
Positively promote the child's race/ethnicity, language, religion, cultural background and heritage
Have a knowledge, and understanding of child development, including the effects of abuse and work with a wide range of behaviour
Be committed to working with birth families
Demonstrate commitment to ongoing training and development
Support children to make positive moves through rehabilitation back to their birth family, onto a new permanent family or onto independence.
Have other relevant skills such as report writing, participation in planning meetings, reviews, and court work.

AS DIRECTORS WE WILL:

Endeavour to promote and demonstrate the integrity of the Agency in terms of our service provision and in our dealing with children and young people, foster carers, employees, social workers and other allied professionals
Ensure our agency operates within an anti-discriminatory framework
Recognise our responsibility for ensuring that standards of good practice are applied and maintained
Involve the child appropriately in the functioning of the agency – the voice of the child will inform agency practice and procedures
Consult with the children/young people, their families and others significant to them, foster carers, and staff, on their experience of the service and on required improvements
Work in partnership with local authorities and allied professional bodies.
Openly declare potential or actual conflict of interest in our dealings with local authorities, other agencies, prospective and approved foster carers
As Directors we fully embrace our role and responsibilities as 'corporate parents' for the children and young people who will be looked after by our foster carers.

SERVICE PROVISION: LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Our foster carers whom we consider are our most valuable assets are trained, skilled and supported to a high standard. As part of the service we offer we will work together with the child's social worker to contribute to the assessment of the child or young person; assist in the formulation and implementation of individual care plans; work to facilitate contact with the child or young person's family, and other significant people, and provide regular written reports to the placing agency.

Placing authorities are invited to contribute to reviews of our foster carers. We also welcome comments on any other aspects of our service.

Talawa Fostering Services is subject to continuous independent monitoring, and quality control.

We aim to work in partnership with local authorities and our wish is to have open and honest communication in our interactions with purchasers of our services.

The children, and young people placed with Talawa Fostering Services' foster carers will be offered the opportunity to live in a safe, structured, and supportive setting.

All our foster carers receive a copy of our 'Foster Carer's Handbook' which clearly sets out the legislative framework, principles, policies, guidelines and procedures. Our foster carers are clearly informed about their responsibilities and the responsibilities of all others involved in the fostering task.

At Talawa Fostering Services, we place great emphasis on the education of looked after children and we aim to work closely with the placing authorities to ensure that the young person being looked after receives all possible support to achieve his or her full educational potential. Sometimes, it is possible for the young person to continue at her/his current school. In many cases, the most suitable provision will be a school in the locality of the foster carer's home, and we encourage our carers to promote close links and working relationships with local schools and other educational support services.

We recognise that some young people find it difficult to sustain a place in mainstream education. If it becomes clear that the foster placement is being jeopardised by inappropriate or lack of an education provision, we will work with the placing authority to identify suitable support or alternative provision as may be appropriate. The placing authority is responsible for any additional education costs.

“Children who are looked after should have the same opportunities as all other children for education, including further education and higher education, and access to other opportunities for development. They should also, where necessary, receive additional help, encouragement and support to address special needs or compensate for previous deprivation or disadvantages”.

(The Children 1989 Act Guidance).

We have a handbook for children and young people, which will be given to all children and young people of an appropriate age.

In conclusion, Talawa Fostering Service is committed to recruiting and retaining a team of skilled, dedicated foster carers. We believe that the best way to achieve this is to offer comprehensive assessment, initial and ongoing training programmes, high levels of individual and group support and financial recognition appropriate to the task. Foster carers are valued members of the care team, afforded the status and respect commensurate with their responsibilities.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All employees working for Talawa Fostering Services will be expected to uphold the Agency's rules and expectations regarding confidentiality.

All employees will be expected to behave in a professional manner in their dealing with the general public and with allied professionals.

When disagreements arise in the working relationship, they will be dealt with speedily and openly, and in a professional manner.

Abusive, racist or other derogatory language will not be tolerated, even if presented in jest.

No allowance will be made for violent or threatening behaviour from any member of staff.

Any person working for Talawa Fostering Services must declare gifts received to their line manager. Gifts or tokens such as flowers or chocolates are acceptable. However, any other items cannot be accepted and must be declined. Monetary gifts are absolutely unacceptable.

Where the disagreement is between the agency and carers, there will be an independent element in resolving it. All carers and their families, and agency staff, will have access to the complaints procedure

When a young person is looked after by one of the agency's foster carers, they will be given a Children's Guide to the Agency, and a copy of the Complaints Procedure