



Statement of Purpose



‘Securing a child’s future.’



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Background

Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency is an Independent Fostering Agency, Registered by Ofsted in March 2009. We had a successful first Inspection in July 2010 when all the areas of assessment were rated as good. In our latest inspection in March 2019, we were rated as “Good”, we are proud of our achievement which has inspired us even more to continue building on our strengths.

Our Focus is to meet the needs of children who are temporarily or permanently separated from their families by providing high quality foster placements in line with our service objectives and Local Authority plans for looked after children.

We have a strong foundation towards recruiting Foster Carers who can support children from a range of backgrounds. We provide robust support packages to both children and foster carers including training pathways for foster carers following their approval. We have carers from a range of backgrounds and experiences. We aim to match children and young people from diverse backgrounds where ethnicity, linguistic, cultural, religious, and special needs meet specific placement requirements.

We ensure that children are matched with suitable foster carers who can offer safe care in a homely environment. We have been highly successful in establishing working relationship with Local Authorities Nationally, particularly around London and we are part of



Statement of Purpose

Bridging Gaps was founded by Zaneb Khan who had a vision and enthusiasm towards recognising the uniqueness from within the community to support children and young people who may be affected by disadvantage. BGFA passionately believe that children and young people should be encouraged to fulfil their ambitions, and this is supported through encouragement and good quality placements. Children and young people can aspire and develop through:

- A varied menu of activities offered to children and young people.
- A range of individualised and bespoke support packages
- Translation and interpretation support as and when required.
- Resource and Support Worker, offering individual support.
- Support with advice guidance for Education and Career choice to strengthen opportunity.
- Through Consultation “Have Your Say”
- Enjoy Life and Leisure Activities

The work we do as staff and foster carers is inherent within the:

- ✓ Children’s Act 1989 Specifically (Guidance and Regulation from Volume 4)
 - ✓ The Care Standards Act 2000
 - ✓ Fostering Service Regulations 2011
 - ✓ National Minimum Standards (NMS) 2011
 - ✓ Staying Put
 - ✓ Children Act
 - ✓ Children (Le
 - ✓ Children & Y
 - ✓ The Care Pl
 - ✓ The Care Pl
 - ✓ Amendment
- 
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 - es (Miscellaneous

Vision and Values

Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency recognises that children and young people are valued members of our community, and every child and young person should be supported and enabled to reach their potential. At Bridging Gaps, we know this can only be achieved by working in partnership with carers, attracting new and potential prospective carers, staff, and partner agencies to work openly and holistically:

- Maintaining and promoting safe working practices for staff and carers within a Safeguarding context
- Listen to children and young people and encourage them to participate in all aspects of the development of the service.
- Respect difference and diversity in every aspect of the service
- Be open to change and implement lessons learnt from reviews, inspections, staff, and stakeholder feedback.

A copy of the Statement of Purpose is provided to, and/or made available upon request to:

- Ofsted/Chief Inspector
- Any person working for the purposes of the fostering agency.
- Any child (subject to their age and understanding) placed with a foster carer of the fostering service and the parent of any such child.
- Local Authorities/ Health and Social Services Trusts
- Colleagues from other Social Care Agencies
- General Public

Our Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually.

Leadership & Structure

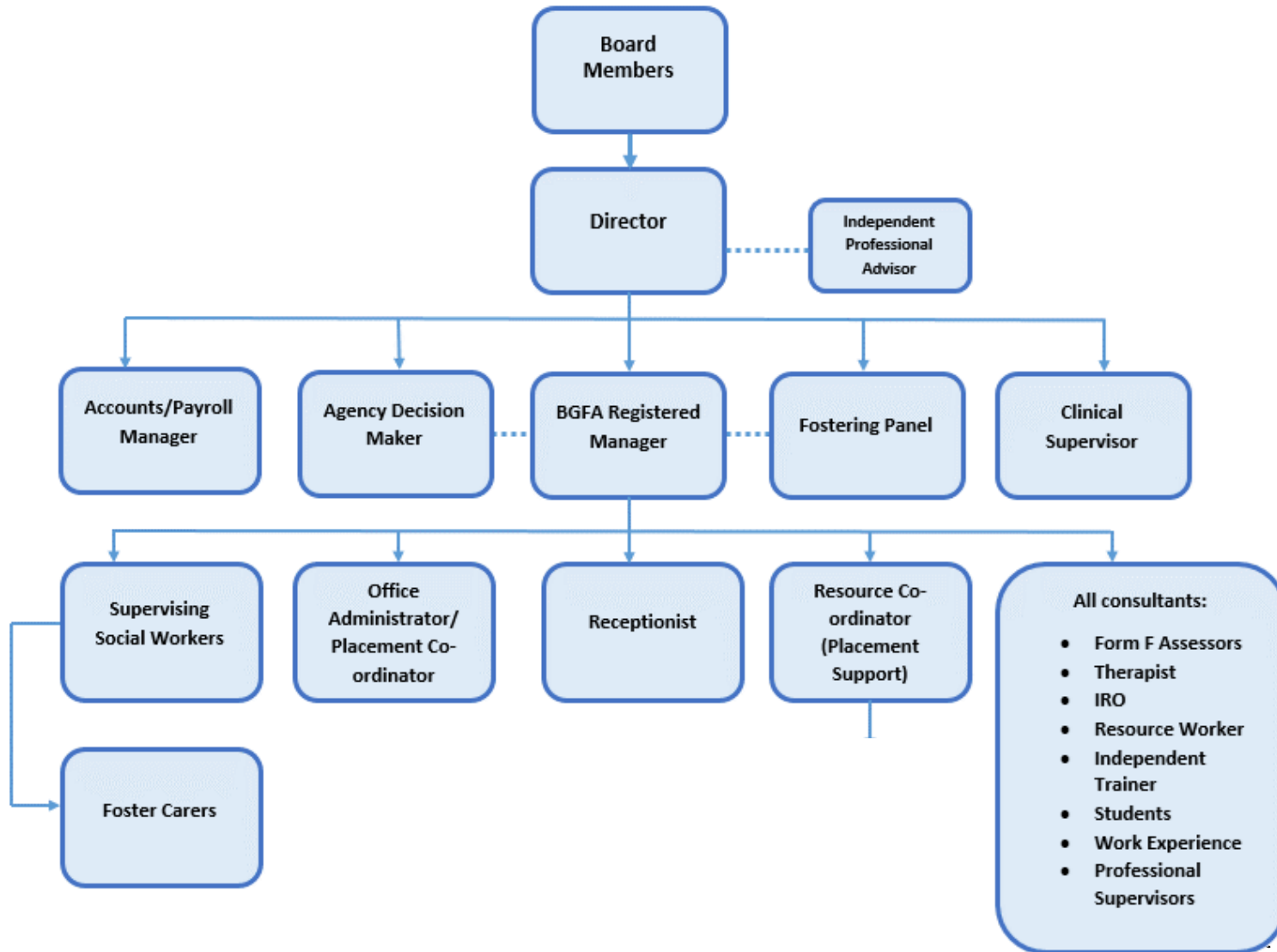
Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency has a Leadership Team and staff team who work closely together to deliver high quality services. Our work is based on honesty, integrity, inquisitive enquiry:

- Honesty - carers, children and young people and staff
“We Say How It Is”
 - Integrity – “You can Rely on Us.”
 - Inquisitive Enquiry – we ask searching questions to strive for continuous improvements.
-
- ✓ Our approach to service development is through creative and innovative approaches.
 - ✓ The recruitment of potential foster carers is to look far and wide, in order to offer choice to local authorities.
 - ✓ Working together with highly experienced staff in order to offer a holistic team of professionals from education, training and the social care sector.

Our diverse staff team comprises of a range of skills and experience in the practice and management of social care. Our friendly staff team at Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency consists of the following:

- Director
- Manager
- Supervising Social Worker
- Recourse Coordinator (Placement Support)
- Office Administrator & Placement Officer
- Accounts/Payroll Manager
- Receptionist
- Independent Reviewing Chair – for foster carers
- Agency Decision Maker
- Agency Professional Advisor
- Form F Assessors
- Independent trainer for Foster Carers
- Foster Carers

Management Structure



Service Improvement

Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency hold certification for specific ISO Awards. The ISO's management system standards are based on the principle of continual service improvement. This ensures that BGFA recognises, addresses, and develops strategies, policies and procedures to enhance service delivery through performance and regular review. The ISO Awards are for:

- ✓ ISO- 22301- Business Continuity
- ✓ ISO- 14001 – Environmental Management
- ✓ ISO- 9001- Quality Management
- ✓ We review our service with managers and staff monthly.
- ✓ We are keen to hear ideas and suggestions from staff, carers, young people and partner agencies in order to facilitate partnership development through consultation.
- ✓ We are reflective in terms of looking at what is working and focusing on where improvements can be made through lessons learnt.
- ✓ We have also retained Peninsula Business Services Ltd to provide advice on the management of Staff Recruitment and Welfare including Health & Safety matters.
- ✓ We are members of Coram BAAF, Fostering Network
- ✓ We successfully won a tender in 2013 and are Registered with West London Alliance as one of their preferred providers.



BGFA Mission through

Aims and Objectives

- ✓ Provide high quality care in a family environment for children and young people.
- ✓ Bring stability and security in lives of children and young people by providing a warm safe and caring environment in which to positively thrive in
- ✓ To ensure a plan for the child's future is acted upon within the timescales set at each review.
- ✓ To ensure that the children we look after benefit from educational opportunities.
- ✓ To ensure a child's physical and emotional health needs are met and a positive healthy lifestyle is achieved.
- ✓ To promote contact in line with the care/placement plan, birth family and significant others
- ✓ To ensure that all foster carers have access to quality training, guidance and the support and supervision of a fully qualified, designated Supervising Social Worker at all times.
- ✓ To implement and embed the Foster Carers Charter
- ✓ To implement the National Minimum Standards
- ✓ Respecting religious and linguistic backgrounds of children and young people
- ✓ To support and develop independent skills for a smooth transition into independence as an adult.
- ✓ Maintaining and supporting on-going relationships between the children and their birth families, preserving connections to their past and helping the children to establish a sense of individual identity.
- ✓ Careful consideration will be given to matching procedures to factors including gender, sexuality, disability of fostered children and young people when making placement decisions.
- ✓ A commitment to the recruitment of foster carers from diverse backgrounds so that BGFA can offer appropriate placements for children and young people.
- ✓ Maximum 24-hour support for foster carers and children/young people including a daily chat line service.
- ✓ Arrange community events for foster carers and children - giving the opportunity to meet children from similar situations and background.
- ✓ Set up a Fostering Network Forum to meet twice a year with practitioners from other organisations in the same field and local authorities to discuss relevant quality assurance issues, share good practice, develop or enhance procedures and promote a working in partnership policy, hence new business opportunities.
- ✓ To ensure that the cultural needs of every child are met.
- ✓ Provide options for Placement Choice
- ✓ Work alongside young people who wish to remain in care post 18yrs (Staying Put)

Commitment to Equality & Diversity

Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency is a diverse organisation. We value and celebrate difference amongst our staff, carers, and young people. As an organisation we want to ensure that everyone can fully participate in the social, cultural, and economic outcomes, offered locally within the community and beyond.

Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency opposes all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and disability. We recognise that discrimination creates barriers to achieving equality for all people, and we will challenge any form of discrimination.



Governance

Bridging Gaps an independent Fostering Agency is a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985, on 6th November 2006; company registration number is 5989754.

The BGFA's Board of Directors meet regularly, usually every three months and are responsible for determining:

- The agency's vision and values
- That BGFA's organisational structure and capabilities are appropriate for implementing chosen strategies.
- The agency's policies
- Major financial management to ensure best value to local authorities.
- The effectiveness of the agency's annual business plans, strategies, and policies.
- The business continuity plans and ensuring the updating and enhancement of systems and procedures which are constantly changing.
- Annual business plan in line with children and service users' needs
- Developing the service in line with best practice



The Role of the Panel

The aim of Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency's fostering panel is to ensure that all approved applicants provide safe placements that meet the needs of any child young person placed in their home.

The primary legal function of the fostering panel is to consider and make recommendations about an applicant's suitability to act as a foster carer and recommend the terms on which general approval is given.

A further function of the fostering panel is to give advice and make recommendations on other matters or cases as the fostering service may refer to it. Other matters include annual reviews, changes of approval, approval terminations and allegations, complaints, and any other issues for discussion.

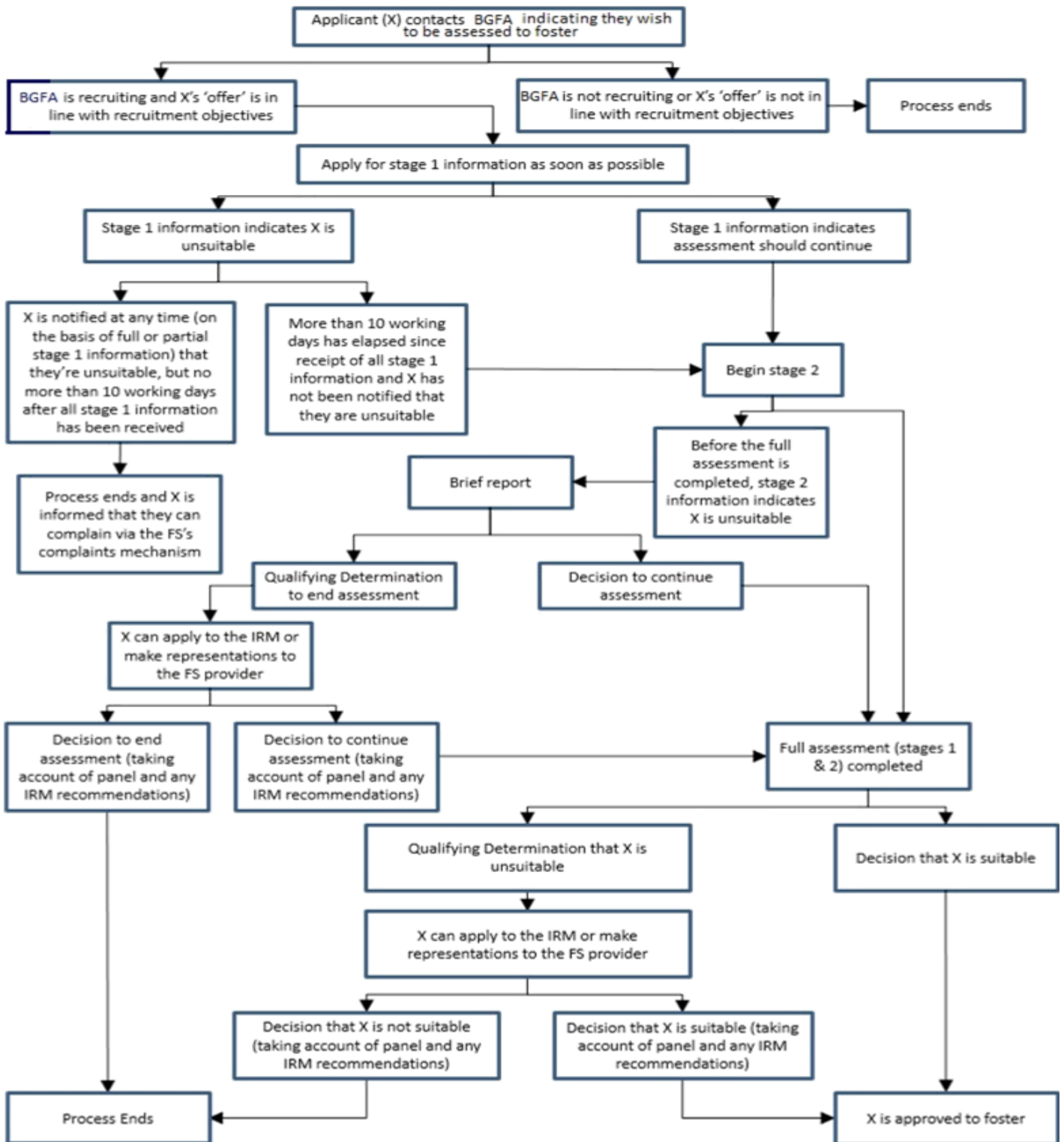
The fostering panel has been set up in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011. A complete copy of the fostering panel policies and procedures is available for inspection by foster carers, placing authorities and other statutory bodies.

Following general approval by the Agency Decision-Maker all carers receive a letter confirming the details of their approval together with any conditions attached to this approval. They are also required to sign a copy of the agency's Fostering Agreement. A copy of this information is held on each carer's individual file.

All general approvals are made subject to approval being confirmed by an annual review that is brought back to the fostering panel.



Foster Carer Assessment & Approval Process



NB - This diagram illustrates how stages 1 & 2 of the assessment process fit together. It is **not** intended to cover all actions a BGFA must undertake as part of the process – BGFA will refer to the regulations and statutory guidance for this information. It should be noted that at any point in the process applicants (1) can withdraw, in which case the process ends; and (2) can complain to the BGFA (and must be informed of their right to do so if they are turned down in stage 1). IRM = Independent Review Mechanism; www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk/fostering

Pre-Approval Training and Development

All prospective Foster Carers are required to attend skills to foster training prior to their approval. **The basic topics covered in these sessions are:**

- ✓ Promoting sense of identity
- ✓ Managing difficult behaviour
- ✓ Working in partnership with birth parents and other professionals
- ✓ Legislative framework
- ✓ Child development
- ✓ Safe caring
- ✓ Awareness of child abuse and protection issues
- ✓ Diversity- challenging discrimination
- ✓ Attachment and loss

Learning Outcomes:

- Help foster carers become better at doing their job.
- Improve knowledge, develop, and refine skills.
- Establish an explicit, positive framework of values, which promotes equality of opportunity.
- Encourage foster carers to reflect and look at the effects of discrimination in all parts of the community, recognising that they care for children in the context of a wider society, and that for many children discrimination is a fact of everyday life.
- Ensure that all foster carers are competent and confident in safe caring and in protecting children from harm.
- Encourage foster carers to take responsibility for their own professional development through the creation of individual training profiles.

Post Approval, foster carers attend an induction training day which looks at the following subjects:

- An introduction to Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency
- Role of Supervising Social Worker and other support
- Online pathways training programme and continuous development (TSD)
- Referrals and matching process and placements
- Policies, procedures, and report writing.

Within the first 12 months carers are required to attend and complete the following courses in line with the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (England):

- Online pathways training programme which includes attachment, safer caring, managing challenging behaviour, education and contact
- Group training including safeguarding, first aid, recording, health and nutrition.

There is an expectation that all carers will attend training on a regular basis. This equips carers with the skills and knowledge to enable them to provide quality care to children and young people in placement. We offer group training and online training (for those carers that are difficult to reach). Failure to attend/complete without good reason may lead to approval status eventually being withdrawn.

All Carers continue to complete training; a minimum of 6 courses during the year. All training is renewed annually during the foster carer's annual review.

As part of ongoing professional development, carers who demonstrate a commitment to training and completion of the TSD workbook are offered the opportunity to undertake Level 3 Diploma Caring for Children and Young People.

Further development and refresher courses as identified during the annual review and to increase foster carer's skills and knowledge are offered as part of the carer's continued professional development. Training relating to placements requiring specific skills will also be provided.

All foster carers, staff and children's/young people's placing Local Authorities / Health & Social Services Trusts are provided with information about Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency Representations and Complaints Procedure through Placement Agreements, joining documentation and induction.

Our formal complaints procedure is in three stages (found on next page), however, Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency places an emphasis on resolving complaints during Stage 1.

Complaints Process

Stage 1 (Informal)

Resolution through explanation, discussion, and negotiation

Stage 2 (Independent Investigation)

If the problem cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint in writing must be submitted within 28 days. The complaint will then be investigated by an independent person who will provide written comments to the Agency, the Agency will draw up a written report containing the following:

- a) Details of findings, conclusions, outcome against each point of the complaint
- b) Recommendation about how to remedy any injustice to the complainant.

A copy of the report will be provided to the complainant and any representatives. If the complainant does not agree with the decision, they must inform the Agency in writing within 28 days of receiving the response that they are dissatisfied. The matter will then move onto stage 3 (the complaints panel)

Stage 3 (Complaints Panel)

The panel will meet within 28 days and will consider any oral and written submissions. The complainant or their representative or advisor have the right to attend and speak at the panel.

Within 24 hours of the complaints panel meeting, recommendations, and reasons for reaching such recommendations will be sent to the complainant.

For a complete copy of our complaints procedure or to make a complaint, please contact the Registered Manager on 01753 868686.

Ofsted can also be contacted directly should any individual choose to discuss a concern or complaint about our foster service and feel unable to directly approach the service. Their contact details are:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 03001231231
Whistle blower hotline: 03001233155
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or
whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Management and Support

BGFA values the work foster carers do and the contribution they make to the lives of children and young people. Appropriate support for the families who foster is important to a successful placement. BGFA will provide creative and flexible support arrangements for children/young people and their foster carers. Identifying and arranging the necessary level of support occurs when a child/young person and foster family are 'matched' at the placement planning stage. This support will then be monitored and reviewed throughout the placement.

Individual Support

Therapists who provide expert guidance and support to foster carers of children/young people who are experiencing serious emotional difficulties. Individual therapy is offered as and when required by the responsible Local Authority.

Buddying is also available for newly approved Foster Carers,

All Foster Carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker; it is the Supervising Social Worker's responsibility to manage and support the foster carer in the fostering task. BGFA Supervising Social Workers and foster carers understand that the child's needs are paramount.

Support Groups

Regular support group meetings enable the opportunity to network and share good practice and any issues that can be raised.

Foster Carers are also expected to have a nominated support network and support person that has been DBS approved which is identified at the initial assessment process. Moreover, BGFA offer training as and when required.

Respite carers are approved through the Form F process and are available when respite is required.



Record keeping

Foster carers maintain a daily record of the children they look after. Maintaining recordings is an important part of the Foster Carers role and accurate, factual objective recordings help monitor the child's journey

Foster care annual review

All Foster Carers are formally reviewed annually, which is an opportunity to appraise the past year. The annual review is achieved by and IRO.

Unannounced visits

All BGFA foster carers receive at least two unannounced visit each year in line with national standards and regulations.

In addition, BGFA completes a welfare visit undertaken by the manager, to further ensure accommodation and care provided to a foster child is in keeping with the high-quality expectations of the Agency.

Out of hour's service

At weekends, bank holidays and at night all our foster carers have access to our emergency duty team which is staffed by Supervising Social workers with back up manager.

BGFA also provides a 24-hour family placement service available to local authorities for the emergency placement of children and young people, including transport.

Foster Carers Handbook and Policies

BGFA have developed a comprehensive, but easy to understand, Foster Care Handbook that all carers have access to in order to aid them with their fostering task.

Pandemic and Natural Disasters

During or in the aftermath of any natural disaster or violent weather when entire communities can be displaced and in need of help and support , leaving the Local Authorities under immense pressures , we will help our communities to rebuild by working together as teams with the Local Authorities to help and get back to normal lives as soon as possible in particular where it is in our own hands to support our own field of work by providing additional support to our fostering families so that we can open up more space where we can for Local Authorities to be able to place children over the normal placement limits, be flexible and hold our fee rates until the Local Authorities have stabilised their financial statues , and we will keep to an open policy where additional support is required with staffing and other practical resources required to ensure all children and foster carers are supported as per their individual needs.

Resource Services



BGFA's Resource Service is integral to providing a range of effective needs-led services for children/young people and foster carers. The development of the Resource Service is based on the agency's belief that all foster placements should be provided with as much support as possible, our resource service is additional to any other support put in place and is available immediately as and when the need arises.

The range of services offered includes:

- ✓ Day support to maintain a placement – this could be an educational programme or structured activities because a child/young person is not attending school.
- ✓ Transport for a child/young person to attend school, contact visits, BGFA activities or holidays, or where appropriate, transport for foster carers.
- ✓ Supervision of contact between a child/young person and his/her birth family
- ✓ BGFA holidays and social activities for foster children/young people
- ✓ BGFA social activities for the sons and daughters of foster carers

The Resource Service is flexible and responsive to the needs that arise, and the above examples are not exhaustive. The Resource service will be managed/supervised by the BGFA's Registered Manager.



Services Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency Provides

BGFA offers a wide range of placements for children and young people of all ages with foster carers.

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.

Fostering Placements

All placements are negotiated through the child or young person's Placing Authority (the Local Authority) either through individual placement contract, or as part of a wider contract of service provision commissioned by the Care Authority.

BGFA has a designated 'Placements Officer', including Duty Social Workers who are the first point of contact for enquiries about placement choices.

Bridging Placements

A bridging placement will form part of a longer-term plan for a child/young person and can sometimes be of two years duration. In such placements BGFA foster carers will work with children/young people and their families toward:

- Reunification, or
- Prepare children/young people for joining adoptive or
- Long term/permanent fostering families or
- For moving to a semi-independent or
- An independent living arrangement.

Long Term Placements

Our Foster carer's approval includes the possibility of long-term fostering placement where appropriate. BGFA's foster carers will ensure that children/young people/sibling groups placed on a long term/permanent basis, benefit from ongoing review and planning to ensure the best possible outcome.

Short Term Placements

BGFA foster carers will undertake task centred work with children/young people and their families in situations where the purpose of a placement, and the intended duration, are explicit or can be estimated with relative accuracy.

Enhanced Placements

These placements are intended for children and young people with care histories that include previous foster placement disruptions, unsuccessful residential care placements, or the imminent prospect of residential care, the risk of being placed in secure accommodation or discharge from secure accommodation. In order to maximise the likelihood of placement success, additional comprehensive support packages will be provided i.e. including monthly progress review meetings and written monthly reports.

Solo Placements

BGFA foster carers will routinely look after children and young people who may make considerable demands upon them and also upon the services of the agency. However, occasionally a child or young person may have complex needs requiring specific and targeted intervention. Some placements may also start off as standard and due to level of complexity, there may be a need to review in partnership with Local Authorities a solo placement criterion.

Asylum Seekers

Bridging Gaps Fostering Agency has a pool of foster carers who have experience of what it is like to be an asylum seeker due to their own personal experiences.

These carers are very suited for the placement needs of asylum-seeking young people some of whom may have faced traumas and need continuous support to overcome them.

Emergency Placements

BGFA will provide a twenty-four-hour service. BGFA's foster carers are able to accept unforeseen, emergency placements for individual children or sibling groups.

Parent and Child Placements

Some parents need extra support to care for their children. That is why we offer parent and child placements. These involve a parent and child living together in a foster carer's home and give parents and their children the best opportunity to develop their parenting skills in a natural, nurturing family environment.

**Visit Us
At Bridging Gaps**

For more information visit us at:

Norwich Union House,
9 Mackenzie Street,
Slough,
Berks,
SL1 1XQ

Contact information:

Email:

info@bgfa.co.uk

Phone:

01753 868686

<http://www.bgfa.co.uk/>

Facebook: Bridging gaps fostering agency.

Instagram: @bridginggapsfosteringagency

Twitter: @bridginggapsFA



