

# Statement of Purpose



<i>The Fostering Services Regulations (England ) 2011:</i>	<i>Reg 3(1)a,b</i>
<i>Relevant NMS:</i>	<i>16</i>

## **Statement of Purpose**

*Since 1988, Next Step has been committed to providing the best possible outcomes for children in care through its various services.*

*In 1995, Next Step responded to the need for more families to care for children and the fostering service was developed. Next Step has been providing high quality fostering services ever since, making positive, nurturing foster placements with professional foster families. By providing our foster carers with professional support, monitoring and training that is creative, comprehensive, regular and personalised, Next Step aims to provide a complete fostering service, tuned to both the needs of young people and their foster families.*

*Next Step is a child centred agency and we promote those individuals who have a child's interest firmly at heart to be foster carers. We ask that our carers have the insight and skills to develop their foster care to meet the required standards of professional excellence.*

*Next Step recognises that many of the children we look after will not be able to live within their birth families for much of their childhood and therefore we strive to involve parents as much as is possible and where appropriate, to ensure bonds can be maintained.*

### **The Purpose :**

*To give young people in care the stable and nurturing childhood they deserve so they may grow into confident, positive members of society.*

### **The Business:**

*Recruiting, training and supporting professional foster carers who are committed to providing young people with positive, nurturing family homes and positive childhood experiences.*

### **The Values :**

*Working with honesty, respect, understanding, Integrity, dedication and compassion, all children should be treated as individuals and supported to achieve their full potential.*

## Company registration and Legal Position

- Next Step is registered as a Private Limited Company known as Next Step Fostering Services Limited.  
Registration number : 05160087
- Next Step is registered with Ofsted under the URN number : SC036540
- Next Step is the Parent Agency within the Next Step Fostering Group of companies and holds the lead in some key organisational areas.
- Next Step are Members of NAFP, Coram BAAF and Fostering Network.
- Next Step are preferred providers to a wide range of placing authorities. Details are available on request.
- Next Step are regularly involved in local steering groups, national forums and working parties undertaking government and Local Authority consultations; all to contribute to the ongoing development of children's services.
- The Next Step Senior Management team meet fortnightly to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities;
  - To review the company's position in the sector and ensure Best Practice standards are met
  - To review the statement of purpose
  - To review critical policies such as safeguarding
  - To conduct business planning and development strategies.
  - To review and approve companywide policy developments
  - Review the company's financial position.

## Referrals

### Young people:

Next Step provides fostering services to young people from 0-18 and from any cultural or ethnic background. This age range is further widened by the addition of Parent and child placements and our determination to embrace the 'Staying Put' principles as addressed by each local authority (The Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance 2010 and the Fostering Regulations and Guidance 2011 (Children Act 1989))

### Locations:

Next Step works with many Local Authorities around London and the South East and has a growing number of carers at each sub office reflecting the ethnic diversity of the local area.

## Tendering and Commissioning:

Next Step is committed to entering into any commissioning process that it deems commercially viable and falls within our Geographical area.

### Referrals Staffing

A dedicated referrals team permanently based at head office making placements across each sub office. The team is experienced in providing fast efficient matching and communicating with Local Authorities and Foster Carers in order to make well informed and stable matches.

## Company Structure

Next Step is both a family owned and family run business and operate from its Kent based headquarters in Faversham Kent.

The company operates a group of 4 sub offices in West, East and South London and Medway. The sub offices fall under the direction of head office as a single Branch under one Ofsted Registration.

There are two other agencies in the Next Step Group both under separate Ofsted Registrations; Ryancare Fostering Ltd and Safehouses Professional Fostering Services. This Statement of Purpose is applicable only to Next Step Fostering Services Limited.

The sub offices are unable to carry out all the key activities of an independent fostering agency and depend on these to be undertaken at the head office. The following activities as listed in the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 are considered by Ofsted to be key activities:

- support, training and information for foster parents (includes supervision) (regulation 17)
- constitution and membership of a fostering panel (regulation 23)
- assessment of prospective foster parents (includes recruiting foster parents) (regulation 26)
- approval of foster parents (regulation 27)
- reviews and terminations of approval (regulation 28).

Ofsted requires that; *"if four or more of these key activities are carried out at an individual office, other than an independent fostering agency's registered premises, it is a branch, which must:*

- have its own registration
- have its own manager
- pay the relevant registration and annual fees
- be inspected separately.

Next Steps Sub offices only offers support, training and supervision focusing on the social work provision to families and young people.

The staff group is limited to Social workers and administration support managed by a Practice and Development manager.

Head Office roles and core functions of the business include:

**Registered Manager**

**Business Manager**

**Quality Assurance Manager**

**HR Manager**

**Admin Systems Manager**

**Finance Manager**

**Referrals**

**Assessment of prospective carers**

**Strategic Planning and Recruitment**

**Commissioning and Tendering**

### **The Management of Next Step**

The Next Step Senior Management Team Meets fortnightly to direct the company. The meeting has a full agenda which takes in feedback from the full Staff meetings with the Practice Managers, the Quality Assurance Manager and the Foster Carers consultation group.

The Panel Chair is also invited to give feedback to the Senior Management Team bi-annually.

The service holds regular meetings in order to keep up to speed with the frequent changes in legislation, inspection frameworks and commissioning strategies within the sector in order to respond accordingly.

### **Management Profile**

Next Step Fostering Services Limited is a medium sized independent fostering agency that is managed by people with a variety of experience within this field.

Alb and Maureen Ward are founding directors of Next Step.

**Lesley Ward**, Director of Next Step, is a qualified Social Worker who holds the Executive Diploma in Business Management. She has been involved with the company since 1988 and held the position of Registered Manager from 2002 to 2013. Lesley continues to lead and direct the company. Lesley also undertakes the role of Agency Decision Maker.

The Registered Manager is **Neil McCarthy**, a qualified social worker with a level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management. Neil has been involved with Next Step since 2006, initially as an Independent Social Worker.

**Daniel Lansley** is the Quality Assurance Manager. Daniel works within the Senior Management Team overseeing contracts, business relations with Local Authorities, policies and procedures and finance. Daniel has worked for Next Step since 2003 and has worked in the Link Work role, day time support to children, recruitment and referrals. Daniel has built his knowledge and experience within the company having undertaken many roles within it.

**Gay Williams** is the HR Manager and works within the Senior Management Team across the group. Gay is responsible for safer recruitment of all staff and oversees all personnel issues. Gay comes from an HR background and has a wealth of knowledge in working with people. Gay has worked for Next Step since 2010 joining as Office Manager and then taking on the senior position within the company. Gay has 30 years experience and holds a Masters Degree in Business and Management

**Mary Cattell** is the Senior Manager and Practice & Development Manager (Croydon Office). Mary has been involved with Next Step since 2002. Before this she was a foster carer for more than ten years. Mary has a wealth of fostering experience and is responsible for the day to day practice decisions within the company when the Registered Manager is unavailable.

**Charmaine Miller** is the Registered Manager based at our sister company Ryancare. Charmaine Qualified in 1993 with a Diploma and BA Hon's in Social Work. Charmaine is a Social Worker with 20 years' experience in Fostering and Adoption and recently worked with Ryancare for 4 years as Panel Chair until her recent appointment in Oct 2012. Charmaine has a particular interest in attachment theory and sibling placements.

The Registered Manager of Safehouses **Joy O'Brien Miller** who is a qualified social worker with an NVQ 4 in management and a diploma in therapeutic child care. She has been working within the social care sector for 18 years, and has been part of the Safehouses team since 2010.

The Practice Development Managers within each office are experienced social workers with many years' experience in fostering. They are responsible for the day to day running of their office both in terms of social work practice and the local staff. They are directly accountable to the Registered Manager.

## **Foster Carer Services:**

Next Step has developed a wide range of services and experience over the last 27 years.

### **Recruitment**

Next Step runs targeted recruitment campaigns for each office to respond to specific local authority needs.

### **Assessment**

Next Step recruits suitable people within the context of its Equal Opportunities Policy and subject to consideration by the Next Step fostering panel to become foster carers. Carers are assessed across the various 'Form F' categories and follows the 2013 amendments of a two stage process using the revised BAAF forms.

### **Panel and Review**

The Next Step Group Panel is drawn down from a central list of professional Social Workers and Professionals from the Medical and Education professions.

Whilst only 5 members are required for the Panel to be Quorate Next Step pride itself on being robust and have 8 members at each panel.

Next Step regularly reviews the work, practice and training of all carers and information is presented at the carers annual review.

### **Training**

Next Step provides a comprehensive training schedule of compulsory courses in years 1 and 2 for all foster carers and training up to diploma level is provided as part of the service. Accomplishments and experience are rewarded with progression through four assessment grades.

### **Supervision and Support**

Considered the core element of the business; Foster Carers receive regular personalised and comprehensive support from experienced Supervising Social Workers (SSW's). Next Step now undertake two unannounced visits a year to quality assure our families.

SSW's work closely with Local Authority counterparts to provide reports and communication regarding their young people.

### **Social Work Management**

The Practice and Development Manager provides regular, planned supervision to the Link Workers/Supervising Social Workers in respect of all social work matters and is managerially accountable for each placement regarding the quality of childcare practice. He or she provides professional support, advice and consultation where required.

### **Standard Fostering**

Next Step works with young people from many local authorities across London and the South East offering high

quality fostering homes with a firm focus on placement stability.

### **Foster Carers Charter**

Next Step subscribes to the Foster Carers Charter. This is a separate document available on request.

### **Children with disabilities (CWD)**

Next Step provides a limited number of placements to children with disabilities. There is access to a range of specialist support services for these families.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UAS)**

Located near the main port of Dover, the agency has a great deal of experience responding to the needs of UAS. Next Step offers specific training, guidance and expertise to our families working in this area.

### **Parent and child services**

In addition to the close supervision that all our families receive, Next Step has developed a parent and child service designed to provide even more regular support and supervision. Foster Carers who receive the specialist mother and baby training provide weekly reports and a tailored package of care according to the parent and child's individual care plan.

### **High Needs Fostering**

Next Step responds to a wide needs range. Foster Carers are equipped to provide therapeutic fostering for young people who display challenging behavior. They receive professional support and supervision to cope with these challenges.

### **Therapeutic Support**

Where needed, with funding from a Local Authority, child centered therapy can be put in place provided by a range of qualified therapists.

### **Assessments**

Next Step can undertake a range of assessments as directed by the Courts or requested by the Local Authority including parent and child assessments. Next Step has specialists within our in house team and access to third party professionals where required.

### **Refresh / Respite Provision.**

All families are entitled to 16 nights paid 'Refresh'. This provision is in place to provide families with time out from placements where the child's needs or behavior present a significant challenge for the family. If respite is not taken, or only partially taken, then a cash payment is made to the carer.

As an agency that values normal family life Next Step regard taking a refresh break as an emergency precaution and place a high value on a family remaining together.

### **Consultation groups**

Foster Carers have access to supervision groups and nominated members can report to the quarterly

consultation group. Direct access to the Director and Senior Management Team allow foster carers to have a voice in how the company is run and where improvements can be made.

**Other standard services offered include:**

24hour Support for Foster carers  
Membership to Fostering Network,  
Holiday allowances  
Travel allowances

**Young Peoples Services**

The services provided to Foster Carers are supplemented by services provided directly to our young people across all our offices.

**Welcome Pack**

Every child who joins Next Step receives a pack containing our welcome guide and useful information on their rights, health matters, and other publications and leaflets aimed at young people. The packs are gender specific in content to better inform young people of their rights.

**Children's Champion**

This group wide service provides a third party support for young people. Another avenue for children to have their voices heard and another person to offer appropriate support where required through a dedicated and confidential phone / text and email service direct to the Champion.

The service also takes part in young person's consultation groups, holiday activities and other inclusion activities and workshops and uses these as forums for obtaining feedback from young people for review at the Senior Management Level.

**Sessional Staff Support**

Children and young people who are not in mainstream education or who are embarking on the first steps to independence may be provided with additional daytime support by one of our sessional staff. This support is aimed at the 8 to 16 years age group although tailor-made support packages are available to children and young people of all ages.

**Holiday Activities**

Next Step arranges activities for young people during the school holidays. These are often open to birth children as well and provide an opportunity for all young people to mix and enjoy fun activities led by our staff team.

**Young people's Finances**

Pocket money is provided at £10 per week  
Savings are provided at £5 per week minimum  
Pocket money and Savings amounts combined are set at £15 total, the distribution of this money is determined by the young person's age and understanding.  
Clothing allowance of £15 per week  
These funds are included within the foster carer's fee.

**Educational Achievement Award (EAA)**

Young people who either make significant personal achievements in school or make positive efforts in school can be nominated for our EAA. The award highlights up to four separate areas where a young person can receive an award. Awards are in the form of vouchers and a certificate which are issued annually.

**Theoretical Models and guiding principals**

**Outcomes Focused**

Next Step hold true to the ECM 5 outcomes and have built our services around Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution, Achieving Economic Wellbeing and Being Healthy.  
Next Step also look towards new and innovative approaches toward social care and embrace creative approaches to achieve positive outcomes.

Next Step employs a range of theoretical models in order to achieve the best outcomes for young people.

**The Therapeutic approach**

Now ubiquitous in modern Foster Care. Whilst there are different definitions of therapeutic foster care Stroul (1989, cited in Jivanjee, 1999b, p. 451) defined therapeutic foster care as a combination of the;

*"normalizing influence of family-based care with specialized treatment interventions, thereby creating a therapeutic environment in the context of a nurturant home".*

All Next Step Carers receive the training support and supervision to provide this specialised treatment in a nurturing environment and Next Step considers every family who foster with us to be providing a therapeutic environment. To support this approach Next Step provides many of the key characteristics often associated with Therapeutic social care.

- Specialised training.
- Small caseloads for our Social Work staff
- Comprehensive matching process.
- Regular supervision and access to clinical consultation.
- Access to Clinical treatment for children, carers and biological families from independent professionals where necessary
- Crisis intervention services provided by Advocate and sessional staff
- Co-ordination of all required services by Supervising Social Worker.



### **The Social Pedagogy approach:**

Next Step aspire to work towards this way of working. By adopting a more holistic approach, combining education with care and emphasizing a shared responsibility to care and raise young people by all adults in society. In the case of our young people these tasks are shared between the many adult role models that children in care already have; Foster Carers, Teachers, Social Workers, Supervising Social Workers, Advocates, Independent Reviewing Officers and more.

- Holistic education – education of head (cognitive knowledge), heart (emotional and spiritual learning), and hands (practical and physical skills);
- Holistic well-being – strengthening health-sustaining factors and providing support for people to enjoy a long-lasting feeling of happiness;
- To enable children, young people as well as adults to empower themselves and be self-responsible persons who take responsibility for their society;
- To promote human welfare and prevent or ease social problems.

### **Best Practice and Steering groups**

Next Step Fostering employees are regularly involved in steering groups, through NAFB and The Fostering Network local joint and national forums and working parties undertaking government and Local Authority consultations; all to contribute to the ongoing development of children's services as a whole.

### **Delegated Authority**

Next Step fully embraces the statutory right for Foster Carers to be given the required Delegated Authority to make decisions regarding aspects of care and decision making for young people in their care. Nicola Doyle, DA advisor to the DfE states "that all Authority should be delegated, unless there is a specific reason not to. Next Step fostering fully agrees with this statement. Next Step engages Carers and Local Authorities at every placement agreement or LAC review to ensure that Delegated Authority is fully considered and appropriately administered.

As an agency Next Step was instrumental in producing Delegated Authority conferences in Kent and London in order to inform the Local Authority Social Workers on the principals and the practice of Delegated Authority (DA).

In order to ensure DA is fully considered, Next Step has adopted the new BAAF placement agreement which includes a DA toolkit. Also the Fostering Network Toolkit has been provided to inform long standing placements

for children who have been with the agency for many years

### **Next Steps Company Philosophy:**

Each child is unique and their welfare paramount.

The child's family is the preferred place for child to live.

Where a child needs to be looked after outside the family there is no compromise in the provision of high quality individualized care.

Children have a right to feel safe, be protected, be treated with respect and dignity, be encouraged, nurtured, supported, helped, looked after, have their heritage promoted, be consulted, considered, be helped towards a personal sense of worth, wellbeing and independence.

The parents, carers and relatives of looked after children have a right to be kept informed, involved and consulted as appropriate. They have the right to be treated as individuals with respect and without being judged.

Individual care planning is imperative at the outset of each placement followed by regular reviews to ensure all the needs of the child are met.

Children have a right to expect the very best professional care from foster carers. Therefore Next Step is committed to the provision of quality support, supervision, advice, consultation and training to enable carers to meet the child's needs. In addition there is 24-hour support available to carers from Next Step staff and a Manager to cover on-call decisions.

The organisation's staff make a major contribution to the service and receive high quality, structured supervision, support and training in order to facilitate best practice in all their activities.

Next Step Fostering Services Limited is committed to working in partnership with all who have an involvement in a child's life.

Next Step Fostering Services Limited is committed to its Equal Opportunities Policy and to working in a manner that is anti-discriminatory in practice.

Next Step Fostering Services Limited actively self-regulates its work and maintains openness to ongoing critical evaluation. It welcomes comment from the children/young people, carers, staff, independent workers, placing authorities, panel members and any who have a contribution to make. Next Step Fostering Services Limited welcomes the arrival of the inspectors from Ofsted, any commissioning Local Authorities or other representatives.

Next Step Fostering Services Limited has a commitment to keeping abreast of developments in fostering and is

making appropriate changes where they are required, appropriate and provide improvements in the service.

Next Step Aims to maintain its family focused approach to the business and as such does not aim to exceed a manageable number of families per office. Finding a balance between small enough to offer a personalized service and big enough to compete in the sector.

**Safeguarding**

Next Step is committed to the highest standards of child protection and safe care. The agency keeps its Safeguarding Policy under review to ensure it is maintaining best practice. Our policy is signed off by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in Kent as per Standard 22.4 which says that the fostering service’s child protection procedures should be submitted to the LSCB and the LADO. This is in relation to the Fostering Services Regulation 12.

The Safeguarding policy contains links and reference to Kent Safeguarding Board and the London Safeguarding board’s child protection procedures. Next Step require all foster carers to be internet connected and therefore easy access to these procedures is possible.

The Agency has effective and established procedures around safeguarding with key members of staff in positions of responsibility.

Foster Carers and staff are provided with the agencies Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as part of their induction and / or their handbook.

**Complaints**

Next Step records all complaints made against its foster carers, other associated professionals and its own service.

There is a complaints ledger to this effect managed by the complaints officer.

The complaints procedure is well established and robust and the company is in a strong position to investigate any complaints made and liaison with the LADO’s and safeguarding boards is maintained throughout these processes.

Next Steps Advocate will also be involved supporting young people where a complaint is made by them. The Advocate can signpost the young person to other advocacy services or provide direct support to that young person where requested. This support is always undertaken with the full knowledge of the young person’s social worker and the families supervising social worker.

**Financial Statement**

The Directors feel that it is essential to ensure that the Company is financially stable to allow for the continued training and support of the foster carers and all services to guarantee that all needs of the children in care are provided. The company is run in such a manner as to ensure that finances are available to fulfill the objectives outlined in our statement of purpose. As a private company the business does not use bank loans, or investors’ money to achieve its objectives.

**Insurances**

Next Step is insured pursuant to the NMS and various contractual obligations. The insurances are handled by our insurers and cover:

- |    |   |                           |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| 1. | Employer’s Liability  | £10,000,000 (ten million) |
| 2. | Public Liability  | £5,000,000 (five million) |
| 3. | Professional Indemnity  | £5,000,000 (five million) |
| 4. | Original certificates of insurance are held at Next Step’s Head Office and are displayed in the reception office. |                           |
| 5. | Copies of the up to date certificates are stored at head office   |                           |
| 6. | Any changes in insurance requirements are dealt with promptly by the Business Manager.                            |                           |
| 7. | Updated certificates are requested and all documents on display and on the system are replaced.                   |                           |

***Date of Policy review:***

18/06/13 (DL and SMT members GS, NJM, LAW – Amendments made by LAB)

27/08/13 (DL and SMT members RJS, NJM, LAW – Amendments made by LAB)

16/09/13 (DL, LAW, RJS. Amendments made LAB).

6/11/13 DL

9/6/14 DL

30/09/14 DL

15/09/15 NM and DL