Business Continuity Plan

Description

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https://sparksfostering.org/wp-content/uploads/speaker/post-5424.mp3?cb=1706882058.mp3

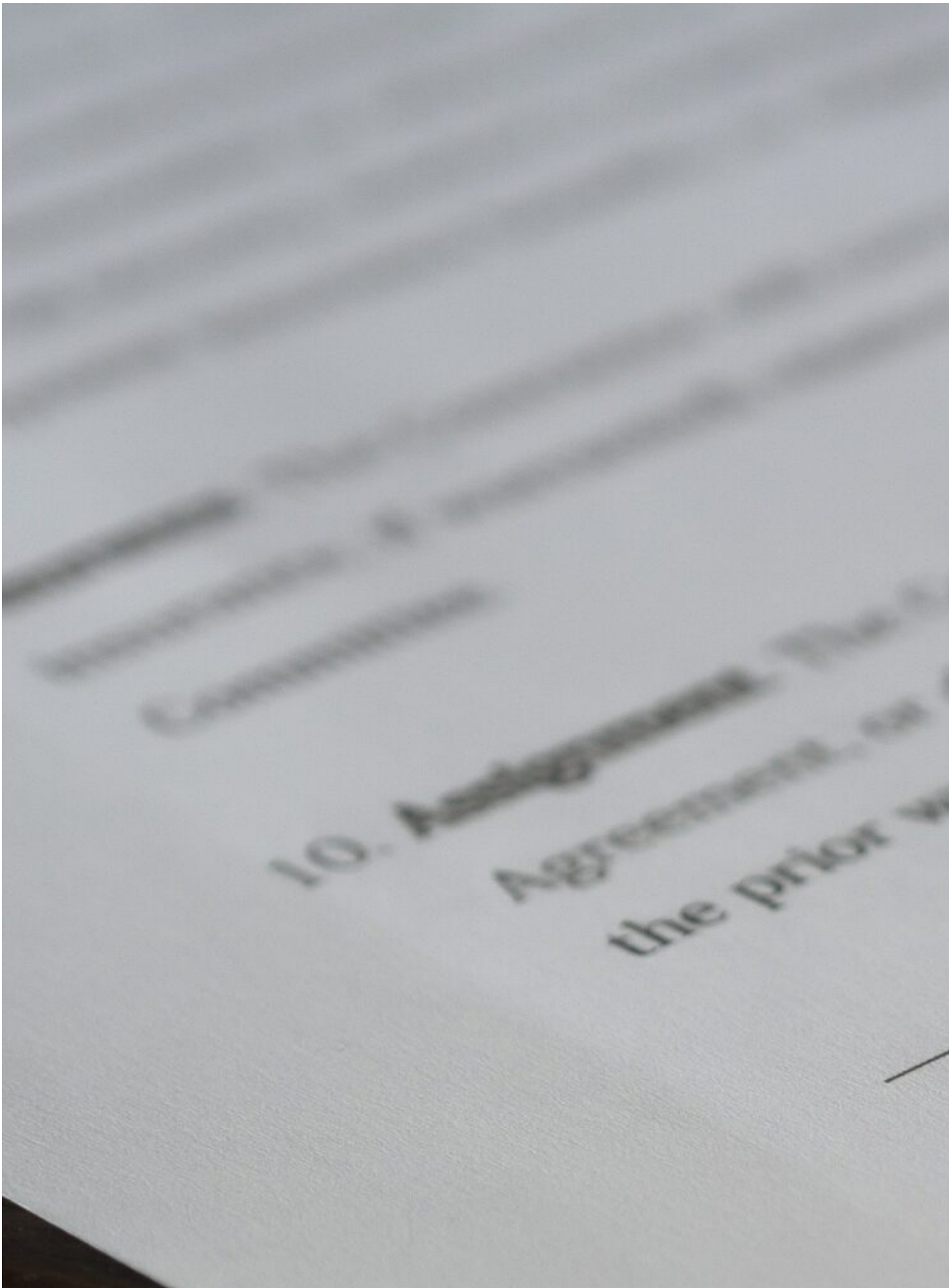
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Introduction to the Business Continuity Plan

This Business Continuity Plan outlines the steps to be taken if any incident threatens the success or viability of the fostering agency.

This is a working document and may need to be edited if new and unexpected circumstances present a threat or challenge to Sparks Fostering.



Fitness of premises

Location of premises

Sparks Fostering is based at Deansgate Square, Manchester; however, the majority of the work completed will be remote, in the foster carers' homes and in venues local to the foster carers. Therefore, should there be any problems (such as a fire or other access issues) at Deansgate Square, it would not affect the functioning of Sparks Fostering.

Health and safety

Deansgate Square is managed to high standards and as such, the venue has robust health and safety processes and procedures. It is expected that fostering homes would also follow the household health and safety policy completed during their assessment (and reviewed annually). Any venues booked for Sparks Fostering work would be expected to have good health and safety standards.

Health and safety considerations for venues ensure that there are no risks in the venue which could cause harm to the people using the venue; for example, there should be no exposed wires, no trip hazards, there should be easily accessible fire exits and safe access for people with physical limitations.

Fire regulations

Any venue that is utilised for Sparks Fostering work should have safe fire regulations. Fire risk assessments should be completed by the people responsible for the venue (and they should be willing to share the assessment if requested). Examples of points that should be considered in fire safety assessments include: all heaters should be secured so they cannot be knocked over; sources of ignition and flammable materials should be kept a safe distance apart; appropriate fire-fighting equipment should be accessible; fire exits and escape routes should be clearly marked; and staff should be appropriately trained.

Deansgate Square has water sprinklers, and each room is fire safe for several hours. If there is a fire at Deansgate Square, there is no need to evacuate the building – the fire service would arrive to tackle the fire within the room before the fire has time to spread.

Insurance

Deansgate Square property is covered by its own insurance. If there is any damage to Deansgate Square, it won't have any impact on the functioning of Sparks Fostering.

Staffing

Absence of Registered Manager

In the absence of the Registered Manager, the Responsible Individual will appoint an appropriately

experienced individual to run the agency. Ofsted will be notified of any absences or changes of the Registered Manager. Staff, foster carers and children will also be notified of significant changes.

Staffing numbers

It is the responsibility of the Registered Manager to ensure that there is sufficient staffing to support foster carers and the children we look after. Sparks Fostering takes the welfare of its staff, foster carers and children very seriously and as such, it's important to Sparks Fostering that staff are not pushed to work beyond their capacity.

Staff retention

As well as having sufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff, Sparks Fostering aims to provide a work culture which helps to bring out the best in staff. Staff are expected to support each other to be the best they can be, to excel in their work, to have a good work/life balance, to be able to confide in each other and support each other, and to provide excellent support to foster carers and care for the children we look after. By providing an excellent work environment, we aim to provide stability within the team, which subsequently improves the support we give to the children we look after, and improved likelihood of success for the agency.

Foster carer retention

Sparks Fostering understands that foster carers have made a significant commitment by caring for children looked after, and so Sparks Fostering takes all reasonable steps to support the foster carers to be successful, confident and happy in their role. Sparks Fostering will work to build foster carers knowledge, resilience and skills so they are able to excel in the challenges of foster care. Sparks Fostering staff are expected to have a strong professional relationship with foster carers and to support foster carers who may have any concerns or reservations about their role so that the foster carers do not feel disappointed in the support they are offered.

Sparks Fostering asks foster carers to speak with supervisors if they have any concerns about their experience with the agency so that any issues can be rectified as soon as possible. If differences or expectations cannot be resolved and foster carers wish to move to another agency, Sparks Fostering will aim to make it a smooth transition and will prioritise the needs of the children during the process.

Security of information

Storage of paperwork

Sparks Fostering is a paper-free organisation. Staff, foster carers and children should not have hard copies of confidential information if it can be avoided. All documents should be scanned and uploaded to the agency software.

If paper copies of confidential information have to be kept for any reason, the information should be stored in a locked cabinet.

Paper copies and laptops should not be left unattended at any times, which includes leaving items in the car, on public transport or offices/rooms that are not secure. Leaving confidential information unattended may lead to disciplinary action. If confidential information is misplaced, the Sparks Fostering Registered Manager must be notified immediately.

IT security and network issues

The Sparks Fostering website holds all the policies and procedures that should be read by staff and foster carers; all of the information on the website is backed up and can be restored.

Sparks Fostering uses secure software to manage and store information. The software used by Sparks Fostering also has backup facility, so if there are any problems with the software, the information can be restored quickly.

Device and software security

Staff and foster carers are expected to have passwords to secure all devices and software holding confidential information (including mobile phones). Passwords should not be repeated across different accounts, and they should be sufficiently complex so they cannot be hacked or guessed by others.

Financial viability

The Director of Sparks Fostering ensures that the agency has sufficient finances to achieve the aims and objectives set out in the agency's statement of purpose. A financial forecast and clear accounts are kept by the Director, and shared with the management team.

As required in fostering regulations, a qualified accountant certifies that Sparks Fostering annual accounts indicate the service is financially viable and likely to have sufficient funding to continue to fulfil its Statement of Purpose for at least the next 12 months.



Insurance

Click here to view the insurance certificate, which covers liability that may be incurred by the fostering agency in respect of death, injury, public liability, damage or other loss.

The premises (at Deansgate Square) and its contents are insured by the property owner, Renaker.

The agency has sufficient funds to replace any other items which may be damaged or stolen (such as IT).

Staff and foster carers are expected to insure or replace the personal items which they need as part of their roles (e.g. their cars and IT equipment).

Environmental considerations

Extreme weather

If transport is stopped due to extreme weather, foster carers (including children), and staff are expected to remain in their homes and stay in contact with each other remotely (via phone and video calls). Contact for the children (with family and significant others) and education may also be carried out remotely if the children's social worker requests it.

Contagious diseases

In the instance of the breakout of a serious contagious disease, Ofsted would be notified of the outbreak and government guidance would be followed. A policy with specific guidance would be written by the Sparks Fostering Safeguarding Lead and shared with all foster carers and staff (and children and local authorities where appropriate to do so). Isolation may be required in some instances and Sparks Fostering would offer support wherever possible.

Malicious behaviour

Unethical behaviour of foster carers or staff

Sparks Fostering provides extensive information, training and support to foster carers and staff to ensure that high practice standards are maintained; however, despite this, there is a risk that some staff and/or foster carers may behave in an unacceptable way, which may place children at risk of harm, or may affect other members of the organisation. There are processes in place to identify such behaviour (such as the complaints/allegations policy, supervision, and reviews). If such behaviour isn't identified and acted on quickly, it could affect any individuals involved and also could threaten the viability of Sparks Fostering.

For this reason, line managers are expected to maintain a professional relationship with their staff, with appropriate professional uncertainty and challenge. Staff and foster carers are expected to respond favourably to respectful challenge.

Poaching foster carers

According to the Fostering Transfer Protocol, fostering agencies should not approach foster carers of other providers. Foster carers are expected to notify the Registered Manager if they have been approached by another fostering provider.

Reputation risk management and media

Sparks Fostering staff and foster carers should not speak with media or other organisations without the guidance and consent of the Sparks Fostering Registered Manager. If staff or foster carers are approached by media or other organisations to talk about their fostering experience, the Sparks Fostering Registered Manager should be notified at once. If the Registered Manager and management committee feel that it is a positive opportunity for Sparks Fostering, training, advice and support would be provided so that the information can be provided safely and appropriately.

Closure of agency

Notifying staff and partners

As outlined in the fostering regulations, the Registered Manager will notify Ofsted, the responsible authority and where different the placing authority, if closure of the service or substantial change to the service significantly affecting the care, welfare or placement of children, is likely or actively being considered. The Registered Manager will work with the Responsible Individual and placing authorities to ensure as smooth a transition for children and foster carers as possible.

In the event that Sparks Fostering ceases to operate, and does not make an arrangement for another fostering agency or a local authority to take over its fostering service, then the local authority fostering services in whose area Sparks Fostering is situated (“the new fostering service”) will by default take over responsibility for the agency’s approved foster carers. The new fostering provider will, within 16 weeks of the date on which the old agency closes, carry out a new assessment of any foster carer for whom it has assumed responsibility, or else their approval will be terminated. In the event that the new fostering service undertakes an assessment but makes a qualifying determination regarding approval, the foster carers would have the right to make representations to the provider or apply to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism for a review.

Date Created
2022/07/03
Author
user